



**AMC'S KEVIN CAN F— HIMSELF
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THROUGH COLLABORATIONS,
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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Sikkim-BJP wants delayed appointment of Nepali lang teachers expedited

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 22 FEB:

Bharatiya Janata Party has accused Education Department of not showing any interest in filling up 101 vacancies for post-graduate Nepali language teachers.

In a press release issued today, the BJP-Sikkim president, DB Chauhan, points out how applications were invited to fill these vacancies back in the year 2018, but the process is yet to be completed.

On the same, the party has demanded that the present government take interest in the matter and deliver justice to Nepali language students of the State.

Applications to fill these posts, Mr Chauhan informs, were called in September 2018 and exams completed by February 2019.

A full year since, and the results are still awaited, BJP points out and has demanded that Education Department's lackadaisical attitude in this matter be corrected and the hiring process be completed at the earliest.

Around 3,000 tonne gold deposits found in UP's Sonbhadra

SONBHADRA (UP) FEB 21 (PTI):

The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has discovered gold deposits to the tune of around 3,000 tonnes in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh, almost five times India's current reserve of the yellow metal, officials said on Friday. The gold deposits were found in Son Pahadi and Hardi areas here, district mining officer K K Rai said. Work on finding gold reserves in Sonbhadra was started almost two decades back in 1992-93 by the Geological Survey of India, he said, adding that auctioning of these blocks through e-tendering would start soon.

The deposits in Son Pahadi is estimated to be around 2,943.26 tonnes, while that at Hardi block is around 646.16 kilogram, the official said.

Besides gold, some other minerals have also been found in the area, Rai added. As per the World Gold Council, India currently has 626 tonnes of gold reserves. The new reserves are almost five times that amount and estimated to be worth nearly Rs 12 lakh crore.

The British reportedly were the first to initiate the process of finding gold reserves in Sonbhadra region, which is more in news for being a Naxalism-hit area.

Interestingly, Sonbhadra - the second largest district of Uttar Pradesh - is the only district in the country which shares borders with four states -- Madhya Pradesh to the west, Chhattisgarh to the south, Jharkhand to the south-east and Bihar to the east.

Maha village passes resolution against CAA, NRC

AURANGABAD, FEB 22 (PTI): Patrud village in Beed district of Maharashtra has passed a resolution against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

The gram panchayat of Patrud in Majalgaon tehsil passed the resolution at its meeting held on February 2. The copy of the resolution has gone viral on social media. "There is confusion in the society over the CAA and NRC. All the people residing here are Indians, but don't have any documents to prove their nationality. Hence CAA and NRC should not be implemented in the village," the resolution says.

A resident of Pathrud, Eknath Maske, said, "The population of the village is around 18,000. The villagers were against the new citizenship law and NRC. Hence we decided not to implement these things in the village and passed a resolution." Gram sevak Sudhakar Gaikwad said, "The government's move on CAA and NRC affected the social fabric of the village. Therefore, the villagers decided to pass this resolution."

Chandrashekhar Azad dares RSS chief to contest elections

NAGPUR, FEB 22 (PTI): Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad on Saturday asked RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat to contest direct elections to test the actual public support for the "Manuvadi" agenda of the Sangh. Addressing a meeting of Bhim Army workers at the Reshimbaug Ground here, located close to the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) headquarters, Azad demanded ban on the Sangh to end "Manuvad".

"I want to give a suggestion to the RSS chief... Take out the veil of lies and come to the field. It is democracy.. contest direct elections with your agenda, and people will tell you if 'Manusmriti' or Constitution will run the country," Azad said.

He said the new-citizenship law (CAA), the National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register (NPR) are the "agendas" of the RSS.

In the Dalit narrative, "Manuvad" is based on "discriminatory" 'Manusmriti'--an ancient legal text of Hinduism. On Friday, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court allowed the Bhim Army to hold a meeting of its workers at Reshimbaug ground with certain conditions, after the local police denied the permission fearing law and order issue.

Referring to the Nagpur Police's contention, Azad said two ideologies will always clash.

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Rs 8.2 cr Literary Centre at Kyongsa in sorry state

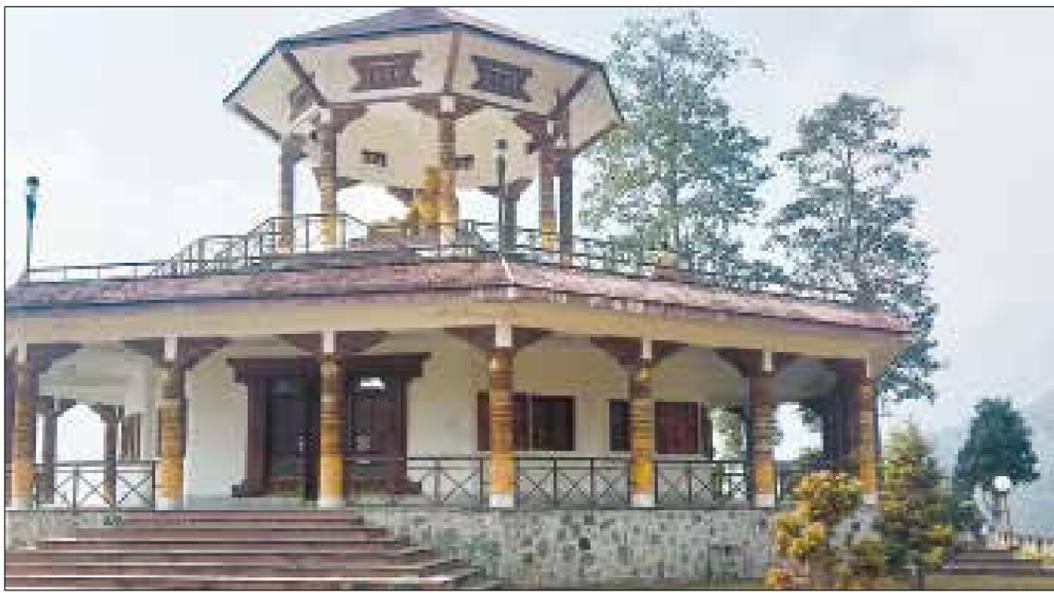
RUDRA KAUSHIK

GYALSHING, 22 FEB:

Research Centre for Indian Nepali Literature and Culture, established at Kyongsa near Gyalshing in West Sikkim, is wasting away due to lack of maintenance and proper utilization. The centre was constructed at a cost of Rs. 8.22 crore by the former SDF government through the Culture department.

Apart from a few occasions such as Bhanu Jayanti and some literary functions, the centre, which is located below Kyongsa Sports Ground, remains unused. Although the centre remains open throughout the year, since it is located away from town, other community centres located in close proximity to Gyalshing are preferred for public functions. The Research Centre, a public facility established with an aim to cater to the literary aspirations and needs of the people of the state is gradually turning into a forgotten public infrastructure.

The centre houses a library, librarian's office, gallery, museum, reception, lounge, statue of Bhanu



Bhakta Acharya, etc. The first floor houses a multi-purpose hall, office, general office and lounge. This administrative and pavilion block has a plinth area of 12,685 sq ft and 9,888 sq ft respectively. The statue outside the centre is in a sorry state as it is exposed to the elements and needs maintenance. Rain water seepage has disfigured the walls of the meditation hall constructed on the ground floor of the centre.

Minister inspects Kayum Bridge construction, reassures land owners

MANGAN, 22 FEB [IPR]:

Roads & Bridges Minister, Samdup Lepcha, today inspected the construction of the 255 metre long Kayum Arch Steel Bridge in upper Dzongu.

The Minister inspected the foundation works being undertaken by the Mohindra Tube Pvt Ltd [MTPL] at a total budgeted cost of Rs 88.54 crore. The Minister was accompanied by the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha in-charge of Dzongu constituency, Chingkipu Lepcha, Assistant Engineer, Roads & Bridges, Deepak Pradhan, Site Engineer Rakesh Burma and Akhil Pandey.

Mr Burma explained the technical aspects of the bridge and informed that the work was pro-

gressing on a war footing and assured that the construction will be completed by March 2021.

He also informed that the land owner had raised objections due to delay in land compensation.

In this context, the Minister met with the land owners, Karma Lepcha, Tshering Ongdup Lepcha, Tsewangdup Lepcha, Gay Tshering Lepcha and Yong Tshering Lepcha at Kayum and reassured them that there was no need to worry about land compensation since once the surveyor completed the report regarding land compensation bill, the total amount will be released to them within 20 days.

Further, he directed



that MTPL shall be held responsible for any damage caused during the course of the bridge construction.

Apart from this, the

Minister also inspected the condition of the Mantam-Bey road.

It was found that road was in poor condition therefore necessary di-

rections were given to AE-Roads & Bridges to prepare a new estimate for up-gradation and strengthening of the Mantam-Bey road.

It was learned that an

alternative steel bridge at Leven-Linzya and Foot Suspension Bridge for Tingvong and Sakyong will also be built in the near future.

Bomb blast in Pak, earthquake in Nepal as grounds for lawyers' strikes irk SC

ABHISHEK ANSHU

NEW DELHI, FEB 21 (PTI):

Strikes by advocates for "flimsy reasons", like bomb blast in a Pakistan school and earthquake in Nepal, on all working Saturdays for more than the past 35 years in three districts of Uttarakhand has caught the attention of the Supreme Court which rapped them for resorting to such a "joke".

The issue came to the notice of the apex court while it was hearing an appeal against the verdict of the Uttarakhand High Court which had held as "illegal" the strikes or boycotts of court work on all Saturdays by lawyers in Dehradun and in several parts of Haridwar and

Udham Singh Nagar.

In its September 25, 2019 verdict, the high court had referred to the 266th report of the Law Commission, which had analyzed data on loss of working days on account of strikes by lawyers and had opined that it affects functioning of courts and contributes to the ever mounting pendency of cases.

As per information sent by the high court to the Law Commission with respect to Uttarakhand for 2012-2016, advocates were on strike for 455 days during this period in Dehradun district, followed by 515 days in Haridwar district.

Referring to the Law Commission's report, the high court

had noted that strikes by advocates or their abstinence from courts varied from local, national to international issues, having no relevance to the working of the courts, and were seldom for justifiable reasons.

"To mention a few, bomb blast in a Pakistan school, amendments to Sri Lanka's Constitution, inter-state river water disputes, attack on/murder of an advocate, earthquake in Nepal, condoling the death of near relatives of advocates, expressing solidarity to advocates of other state bar associations, moral support to movements by social activists, heavy rains.... and even for kavi-sammelans," the high court had noted in its

verdict. The appeal against the high court's verdict came up for hearing before a bench of Justices Arun Mishra and M R Shah on Thursday.

"This is happening everywhere in the country. This is a fit case to initiate suo motu contempt. How can bar association say that they will continue with the strike?" the bench remarked.

"Things have collapsed," the bench said, adding, "The order (of high court) is fully justified". "We cannot permit things like this. Everybody is going on strike. Today, strike is going on in every part of the country. We should be very harsh now. How can you say that the bar will be on strike on every Saturday?"

the bench said.

"You are doing a joke. Family member of advocate dies and the entire bar will go on strike? What is this," the bench said while reserving its order on an appeal filed by a lawyers' body of Dehradun. The counsel appearing for the petitioner told the bench that strike has stopped in Dehradun district.

In its verdict, the high court had noted that "genesis of this peculiar form" of protest of boycotting work on Saturdays for over 35 years was traceable to western Uttar Pradesh, of which the aforesaid districts formed part of, before the state of Uttarakhand was created on November 9, 2000.

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Our Future on Earth 2020

WE ARE LIVING IN A GLOBAL, INTERCONNECTED WORLD AND SO IS THE CHALLENGE

PD RAI

The Australian wild fires, dominating media headlines, shows the myriad of areas touched upon: human lives and properties destroyed, the biodiversity loss of an estimated billion animals, public debates over climate change. The wildfires show the complex, interlinked challenges facing our planet in 2020 – a big picture that can be hard to discern from our small corner of our world.

Add to all this now the spread of the corona virus out of Wuhan in China. It is just short of a pandemic. So we are truly living a fully and powerfully interconnected world.

Jeff Bezos, the billionaire owner of Amazon and the Washington Post, has said that he will set up a fund to fight climate change – US\$ 10 Billion. This is the response to his own employees telling him that he is not doing enough to fight Climate Change. His is an instance of action being taken by different stakeholders. So is youth icon Greta Thunberg.

We also know now that there is a dramatic change in climate across our own country and indeed in the Himalaya. The weather is much warmer than before and in Sikkim too we feel it. Though this year we are experiencing a colder and prolonged winter, the years gone by have been much warmer and drier. We are pretty certain that we are getting adversely impacted by Climate Change and that many of our glaciers in the State are receding at great speed. It is also forecasted and through climate science that the Himalaya will warm up much more than the plains.

To make sense of these challenges and work towards solutions, we must understand these links, tensions and trade-offs. This is why the international

research organization Future Earth has produced Our Future on Earth 2020. To tell this unfolding global story, scientists have synthesized the latest peer-reviewed research on the state of our planet, recognizing that in a complex Earth system, there are no isolated events. This knowledge will ensure we can develop our societies "without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", as the Brundtland Report put it in the 1987 landmark "Our Common Future".

A survey of 300 scientists published with the report has emphasized how one global crisis could cascade onto another. Scientists saw four areas that presented the biggest cascading risks -- Extreme weather, climate change, biodiversity loss and water shortages. Heatwaves, for example, could spark rises in basic agricultural foodstuffs. The Indo Gangetic Plains of India are at risk with the rising and accelerated melting of the glaciers of the third pole. It is now estimated that the third pole has lost a third of its ice.

Politics should be working for the cause of ensuring that our societies are adapting and we are doing everything within our powers to stem the global warming and adhering to the less than 2 degrees rise in the planet's temperature as agreed by world leaders. But alas this is not the case. Yet we should not lose heart. While politicians are using digital marketing techniques to reach out to neglected parts of the electorate, the digital revolution nonetheless has a huge potential to contribute to sustainable development – from helping companies reduce their emissions to empowering people to monitor and protect ecosystems.

2020 is a critical year for sustainability with just

a decade left to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The UN Convention on Biological Diversity will also set new biodiversity targets in 2020, creating a framework for our dealings with nature for years to come. Hundreds of business and cities are signing up to climate declarations. But for these efforts to succeed, we must recognize our shared risks. Let us do whatever it takes to help our Himalaya retain its ice caps and glaciers. We have to do more by way of sensitizing our youth and our children. After all it is their future we are talking about. Let us work together to make this happen.

In the end, our continuing future on Earth is a story we are all creating together.

The action that we need now is going to be based on our own understanding of how our local environment will be impacted. Hence, our initiatives of keeping our polluting and heating industries out of Sikkim; of making an effort to grow our food locally and organically will all go a long way in helping us adapt. Oranges and other crops are also climbing up and we need to find other varieties to grow in the farmlands. Adaptation is a must and for that we have to rely on basic local research.

The report will help us in this and also point our own scientists, social scientists, engineers and our society at large in the right direction.

[The report was released the world over – In Gangtok on 22/02/2020 – to access the report please go to <https://futureearth.org/publications/our-future-on-earth/>

(The writer is currently a member of the Governing Council of the Future Earth: South Asia, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore).

Cancellation of fake CoI not enough, says SSSF
Demands cancellation of benefits
derived from fake CoI



SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 22 FEB:

The recently formed, Save Sikkim Subject Family [SSSF] has asserted that cancellation of fake Sikkim Subject and Certification of Identification is not enough but the administration should also cancel all benefits received on the basis of the fake Sikkim Subject and CoI.

Addressing a press conference here today, SSSF state chief coordinator, Pema C Sherpa informed that SSSF is a group of individuals who have been working against fake Sikkim Subject and CoI issue for many years and now they have come together under the forum of SSSF.

He said that the administration should immediately deregister land and cancel all benefits received on the basis of fake Sikkim Subject and CoI.

SSSF coordinator, Madan Tamang mentioned that fake Sikkim Subject and CoI holders have snatched away the rights of the people of Sikkim and the organization will go to any extent to fight for the rights of the people.

The fake CoI of a former Minister was cancelled recently but all of

his benefits should also be cancelled immediately, he stated. He urged the State to immediately clear its stand and take action on this matter.

He also demanded stringent action against Panchayats, IB and police personnel who are responsible for verification before the issuing of CoI.

Another coordinator, Ganga Ram Rai shared that SSSF has also decided to sit on a hunger strike next month on this issue. On the same, he urged the state government to immediately take action against the fake Sikkim Subject and CoI holders in the interest of the genuine people of Sikkim.

"We receive threats while working on this issue so we would like to request the government to provide us security for our safety," he said.

Another coordinator, Lha Tshering Lepcha said that all fake Sikkim Subject and CoI holders should come voluntarily to surrender their certificates.

Another coordinator, GY Bhutia stated that the government should clear its stand on this issue and not play vote bank politics to save such fake Sikkim Subject and CoI holders.

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Central team visits West Sikkim to check COVID-19 preparedness



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 FEB:

A central team comprising of Regional Director, Dr S Sen; Dr Dipak Pal, AIHPM, New Delhi; Dr Amit Aggarwal, RMLH, New Delhi visited West Sikkim to check preparedness for COVID-19 (Corona virus) along the State's border with Nepal.

The team arrived on 18 Feb and held a preliminary meeting with the CMO, DSO and other health officials.

They also visited the 5-bedded isolation ward prepared for COVID-19 patients at the AYUSH Hospital, Kyongsha and suggested ways and means to make it more methodical and systematic.

The team also visited the border check-post at Uttarey where they interacted with health workers, ASHA, AWW, public, students, police personnel and panchayats.

Police personnel

posted at the border and Health staff were sensitized on the COVID-19 screening process.

The entry register at the check post and passenger screening register were checked.

No cases of suspected COVID-19 have been reported in Sikkim till date.

The team visited Uttarey, Sopakha and Gumpa Dara where also they interacted with the locals and panchayats.

On 20 Feb, they met SDM Tushar Nikhare and

briefed him on the purpose of their visit.

District Collector Karma R Bonpo was also briefed telephonically by the team.

The visit concluded on 20 Feb with some recommendations on how to strengthen the preparedness plan.

State as well as the District officials are already working towards fulfilling recommendations made by the Central team informs CMO-West Dr Anusha Lama.

Sikkim marathoners leave for Int'l Pathibara Marathon



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 FEB:

A team of five long distance runners from Sikkim left on Saturday to participate in the International Pathibara Marathon to be held on 25 February at Taplejung, Nepal.

The team, which is

led by Marathon Man of Sikkim, Amar Subba, has Kessangla Bhutia, Shiva Hang Subba, Buddha Singh Subba and Jatin Chettri.

The team members reached Darjeeling today and are scheduled to leave for Nepal from Pashupati on Sunday.

Chandrashekhar Azad dares..

"While we believe in Constitution, they believe in 'Manusmriti'. This country runs only on Constitution and not on any other ideology. This 'Manuvad' will end in the country only if a ban is imposed on the RSS," said Azad. Since the RSS runs the BJP, Prime Minister visits the Sangh chief with folded hands and briefs him, he said.

"They talk about Constitution but push the Manusmriti agenda," he alleged.

Azad also accused the RSS of trying to end reservation system through backdoor.

"Our people are still to get any positions or posts (in government jobs)...One day, we will have our prime minister and governments in other states. We will give you reservation. We will give reservation to other sections of the society. We will become givers and not takers," Azad said.

He dared the Sangh chief to hold a discussion on the reservation system.

Azad also appealed to the Shiv Sena-headed Maharashtra government to not allow the NPR in the state "in the interest of the people".

Azad alleged that governments are not allowing protests even for the right cause of people.

"If we take to streets to protest we get punished. However, they do not know that those who are keen to save the nation are not afraid of any punishment, be it lathi, jail or court cases," he said.

Azad is currently out on bail in the case of allegedly inciting people during an anti-CAA protest at Jama Masjid in New Delhi on December 20.

"In future also if we don't get permission, we will knock the doors of court. We had asked for eight hours freedom (permission for the Bhim Army meeting on Saturday) and the respected court (the Bombay HC) allowed us three hours. We respect court, three hours are enough," he said referring to the HC's order on Friday.

Azad said they have called for a Bharat Bandh on February 23 on the CAA-NRC-NPR issue.

During his speech, he also referred to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's reported statements.

Know Your Army mela at Krishna Nagar



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 FEB:

The Army organised a 'Know Your Army Mela' at DL Roy Memorial Stadium at Krishna Nagar, Kolkata, today to spread awareness among students regarding the Indian Armed Forces and inform them about the

various career avenues available for them in the Forces.

The Mela included a weapons and equipment display and an interactive session.

More than 870 students from approximately 21 schools and 15 colleges of Krishna Nagar attended the Mela.

Coordination meeting held to discuss film policy draft

GANGTOK, 22 FEB [IPR]: A coordination meeting on the draft Film Policy was organised here by the Information and Public Relations Department at Tashiling Secretariat.

The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the draft film policy and take feedback and suggestions from the Chief Secretary and related departments. The policy is scheduled to be released during the Global Cinema Festival being held from 28 Feb to 01 March here in Gangtok.

The meeting was chaired by Chief Secretary SC Gupta and



attended by DGP A Shankar Rao, Additional Chief Secretaries VB Pathak and Dr Jayakumar, Principal Secretary, RDD, CS Rao, Principal Secretary, Forest, ML Srivastava, Principal Secretary Health, K Sreenivasulu, Secretary Culture, Vidhya Subba, Secretary, IPR Department, Namrata Tha-

pa and HoDs of various line departments.

At the outset, the IPR Secretary gave a brief introduction to the draft film policy through a power-point presentation.

She explained the objectives of the Policy and setting up of Film Development Council, film facilitation office

and salient features of the policy.

Development of infrastructure, setting up of multiplexes, and film and television institutes were also touched upon. The Chief Secretary appreciated the initiative of the department and assured to extend all possible support.

One of the main aspects of the policy is setting up of a single-window system which will facilitate filming in the state. It was decided to convene a meeting to discuss the modalities of this single window system with the concerned departments.

Former India footballer Ashok Chatterjee dies

KOLKATA, FEB 22 (PTI): Former India footballer Ashok Chatterjee, who was a part of the country's bronze-medal winning teams in the Merdeka Cup in 1965 and 1966, died here on Saturday.

He was 78 and is survived by his wife and musician son Sandip.

Chatterjee, who made 30 appearances for the senior national team, made his international debut when he came on as a second-half substitute for PK Banerjee against Japan in the Merdeka Cup in 1965.

He scored 10 goals for India, including a brace against Japan in their 3-0 win at the group league stage in 1966 Merdeka Cup.

Condoling his death, All India Football Federation President Praful Patel said in a release: "It is sad to hear that Mr. Ashok Chatterjee is no more. His contribution to Indian Football will never be forgotten. I share the grief."

AIFF general secretary Kushal Das said: "Ashok Chatterjee will be alive in his achievements. He has been the inspiration of so many Footballers. May he Rest in Peace."

Chatterjee also represented India in the 1966 Asian Games in Bangkok, and the Asian Cup Qualifiers in 1967. He was also a part of the Indian team in the Merdeka Cup in Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur from 1965 to 1968.

~ SummitTIMES ~
CLASSIFIEDS

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

Stars of Hope launches Kick TB campaign

ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 22 FEB:

Stars of Hope has started its Kick TB campaign under the initiative JEET - Joint Effort to End TB, with its first collaborator, Sasonians FC, a press release informs.

As part of the campaign around 50 footballers from the club will wear the JEET jersey while playing in order to spread awareness about the initiative.

The jersey from the club was launched today at Paljor Stadium, Gangtok. The launch was carried out in the presence of Founder-Chairman, Stars of Hope, Bikash Thapa and Founder, Sasonians FC, Pranay Thapa.

Sasonians Football Club cum Sasonians Soccer School was started in the year 2017 under the leadership of Founder, Pranay Thapa,



with the motive to provide a platform to aspiring and the hardworking young footballers from the Hills.

"JEET is an initiative of Stars Of Hope, under the close guidance & support of State TB cell, Sikkim, which started in the year 2018 with the vision to End TB in Sikkim by collaborat-

ing with various Social Organizations, NGOs, SHGs, Government Bodies, thus bringing out a joint force against TB," said Bikash Thapa.

The project runs under the leadership of Mr Thapa and under the guidance of Assistant Program Officer, State TB Cell, Sikkim, Nirmal Gurung.

Under JEET, various unique campaigns are being introduced like TB free homes, TB free village and TB free institutions.

"The JEET project will be working in three phases. The first phase aims at creating awareness among the youth and general public in order to break social

stigma related to TB. The second phase will constitute an exhaustive survey to find active cases of TB. The data so collected will be used to provide necessary medical services to patients. The third phase will constitute awareness on preventive measures to nullify the risk factors of TB," informed Mr Thapa.

Chinmaya Mission book release

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 FEB:

On the occasion of Maha Shivratri and International Language Day, the Nepali translation of the book titled - "In Indian Culture...Why Do we...?" written by Swamini Vimalanda and Radhika Krishnakumar of Chinmaya Mission was released on 21 Feb in a function organized by Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Gangtok. The book was translated into Nepali by Ratna Subba.

A press release informs that Bhakti Basnet was the Moderator of the three-hour programme which was chaired by president of Nepali Sahitya Parishad-Sikkim, Rudra Poudyal.

President of Chinmaya Mission-Sikkim Centre, Ganesh Pradhan along with general secretary of Chinmaya Mission, SK Sarma were present as guests of honour. Former president



of Press Club of Sikkim, Bhim Rawat welcomed the guests and gave a brief profile of today's programme.

Mr Sarma gave a background of how Chinmaya Mission worldwide was formed by Swami Chinmayanandaji to bring more happiness in the life of the people worldwide based on the tenets explained by Vedanta and Upanishad. The publisher Tanam Subba gave his impressions on the book which was followed by a talk by Ratna Subba.

Dr LP Sharma talked about the book and compared western scientific thoughts with the Vedantic thoughts and concluded

how scientific our age old knowledge is.

Bansuri Vadan by Ravin Sharma and Dinesh Sharma, Bhajans by Jeewan Sharma and Pranita Nepal were also part of the function.

Naresh Chhetri rose to call upon the youths and all to see that this book reaches more people.

Chief guest, Rudra Poudyal summarized the need to impart spiritual knowledge along with secular knowledge to make education complete and worthy for the future of mankind.

The programme concluded with vote of thanks by Tara Prasad Dhungel.

SSLA felicitates medal winning strength lifters

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 FEB:

Sikkim Strength Lifting Association [SSLA] has felicitated its strength lifters for bringing medals and laurels for the Country and the State in the recently held 8th International Strength Lifting & Inclined Bench Press Championship 2020 at Bangkok, Thailand.

Sikkimese strength lifters clinched 22 medals, which includes 17 gold medals, 04 silver medals and 01 bronze medal for the country. SSLA chief coach, Pema Dorjee Bhutia was adjudged as the Champion of Champions in master's category and another strength lifter from Sikkim, Pempa Tamang has set a record in inclined bench press by lifting a total weight of 252.05 Kgs in master's category.

It has to be mentioned here that eleven strength lifters from Sikkim were part of the 67-member India team in the championship. India emerged as the overall champion in the championship, which had the participation of eight countries.

In the championship, Chandra Kumar Chettri, Pema Dorjee Bhutia, Ram Dhoj Rai, Pempa Tamang, Santosh Gupta, Madhu M Majhi and Manisha Tiwari bagged two gold medals each for the country, while Homnath Siwakoti, Kalpana Chettri and Bhim Raj Gurung won 1 gold medal and 1 silver medal each. Likewise, Kishore Dungalmai Rai clinched 1 silver medal and 1 bronze medal for India.

In a felicitation programme here on Saturday, SSLA executive members congratulated all medal winners by offering khadas and further expressed best



wishes for upcoming competitions.

In his address, SSLA president, Tenzing D Denzongpa congratulated all medal winners for making the country and Sikkim proud in an international platform. He further congratulated Pema Dorjee Bhutia for winning the champion of the champions title for the fourth time in the international championship and to Pempa Tamang for setting a new record. He mentioned that SSLA has been working hard to promote strength lifting in the State to bring out more national and international lifters from Sikkim.

Mr Denzongpa assured to work for the betterment of strength lifters of the State by extending all possible support to take them to higher levels. He also shared his plans and programmes to promote strength lifting among youth to engage them in productive and healthy activities. He informed that the association will organize the state-level strength lifting championship at Gangtok later this year.

While sharing his experience in the championship, SSLA chief coach, Mr Bhutia mentioned that twelve lifters from Sikkim were shortlisted in the team India but one lifter, Edu Tshering

Bhutia could not make it to the championship due to health issues. However, he expressed that it was a proud moment for the State that all eleven lifters from Sikkim have won medals for the country. He congratulated all medal winners for giving their best in the championship and encouraged them to continuously motivate the young generation in sports and productive

activities. Mr Bhutia expressed his gratitude to SSLA for extending all support to the lifters.

"If we receive the same support from all sides then we have lots of potential to produce more national and international lifters from Sikkim," he said.

The programme was also addressed by SSLA general secretary, Sonam Tshering Bhutia.

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(Advt. No. 21354/11/0016/1920)

Government of Sikkim
Health & Family welfare Department
New STNM Multispecialty Hospital
Sochakgang, Gangtok

Ref No. 87/STNM Dated: 20/2/2020

NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

The sealed quotations are invited from the interested and Registered Medical shop located at Gangtok for the supply of Emergency Medicines and Consumables for the Year 2020-2021 for New STNM Hospital, Sochakgang, Sichey. Date of issue of Quotation :3rd March 2020 to 5th March 2020 (11AM to 3 PM). Date of submission of Quotation : 19th March within 12.00 PM Date & Time of tender opening : 19th March 2020 at 2.00 PM

Terms and condition:

- The quotation form can be obtained from the office of Senior Accounts Officer, New STNM Hospital on any working days from 3rd March 2020 to 5th March 2020 from 11 AM to 3 PM on production of State Bank of Sikkim Challan of Rs. 2000/-duly signed by Senior AO, New STNM Hospital credited under head 0210-01-800 other receipt from 11 AM to 3 PM.
- The interested Firm should produce COI/Sikkim Subject/Residential Certificate, Valid Drug License, Valid Registration Firm, Valid Trade License, GST Registration and clearance certificate, Experience certificate and full address of the shop at the time of submission of quotation form.
- The quotation should accompany TDR of Rs.1,00,000/- (One lakhs) against the supply of Emergency medicines and consumables from the State Bank of Sikkim in favour of Senior Accounts Officer, New STNM Hospital, Sochakgang. The department will not be liable to pay the interest on the said amount.
- The Tender Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotation without assigning any reason thereof and reserve to award the work to any bidder found competent.

For further information, visit or contact to the office of the undersigned.

Sd/-
PCC Cum Medical Superintendent
New STNM Hospital, Sochakgang.

R.O. No. 373/IPR/Pub/Class./19-20
Date:21.02.2020

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
NORTH SIKKIM, MANGAN

WALK IN INTERVIEW

Applications from interested and eligible candidates are invited for filling up the following posts purely on Ad-hoc basis on consolidated pay, under Education Department, North District, The term of appointment will be for the current academic session., i.e.; till the end of academic session 2020 for PRTs and GTs, whereas for PGTs the term will end on 31st March 2021.

A panel list will be prepared on the basis of merit and the vacancies that may arise during the session on account of retirement/transfer/ long leave etc. will also be filled from the merit list.

The candidate who qualifies should work anywhere in North District. The appointments are made purely based on the need of a particular school. And hence, **once appointed no transfer requests will be entertained.**

If any person on the merit list denies to accept the posting given to any school, he/she has to give the denial in writing, immediately, and the next person in the list will be eligible for the appointment.

Having denied the acceptance of the posting order, the candidate will lose his merit seniority and will reach to the bottom of the list and has to wait for his next chance.

Candidates having degrees from universities outside Sikkim must get copies of their testimonials attested from Examination Cell, Education Department Gangtok. No copies without attestation will be considered.

Interested Candidates may submit their applications with relevant documents including CoI and Employment Card to the District Education Office on or before 26th February 2020. (No Applications will be accepted after 4.00.p.m. 26/02/2020)

For Further details contact: Exam Cell, District Education Office, Mangan : 9083484256, 977597907, 9775449079

Walk-in - Interview Dates:

1. PGTs & GTs:	02/03/2020	10.00 a.m onwards
2. PRTs :	03/03/2020	10.00 a.m onwards

Venue : Conference Hall , District Education Office, Mangan.

Deputy Director
District Education Office
Mangan, North 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

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.

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.

If you seek help, you may call :

-Toll free no. 104
District surveillance Officer
EAST : 7029372100
WEST : 9593297809
NORTH : 9641957468
SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Working Towards a Civil Society

Start grooming them young through collaborations, discussions and disagreements

Social Capital is counted in one's relationship with others in a community in which citizens have a tendency to engage in civic affairs, band together in voluntary groups, come together for collective action. This Social Capital, once it has matured into an instinctive collectif of concerned citizens becomes what we know as a Civil Society.

All are aware that in the present times of multiple sources of information, it becomes difficult to sift the rumour from the news and it is expected of a Civil Society to become the conduit that filters this barrage of information and also mould public opinion. This is definitely a tall ask and the responsibility is tremendous. What makes the task even more daunting is that one is never sure whether a society has fully awakened or whether it is still in the process of finding itself. A Civil Society after all grows from the same faculties that make the masses. This challenge apart, it is still a state worth aspiring to. Now, let us see where Sikkim stands. Community participation is the first investment into building a healthy reserve of Social Capital. Sikkim has seen active community participation, but it is unfortunate that this participation has not cut across caste and community divides. The Sikkimese society has yet to find its collective voice. The high point was achieved by the hydel protests mounted against Rathong Chu in the nineties and the more recent one by ACT. The nadir was scrapped in the communal posturing of communally inclined organisations. The middle ground, that much preferred Buddhist way, however, has hardly seen any activity. The only other examples of community involvement have been stands taken by isolated groups for sectional causes. That said, it is also from the experience of such organisations that a Civil Society could have been carved. The problem with the organisations which speak in the name of civil society is that they have always stopped after raising issues. They have never stepped out of their comfort zones and sought out collaborations and wider discussions to help arrive at solutions. They have always done their homework and worked out their arguments, but unless they involve a larger cross-section of the society in their debates they will continue to be seen as parochial or communal. The moment such statements are tempered with voices representative of other communities; the moment they can sit across the table and speak to each other, we know that a Civil Society has germinated.

But why has Sikkim denied itself a Civil Society? If recent history is to be believed, then the people did unite for change in the seventies and won it. It is from such upheavals that a Civil Society usually shakes out. It was perhaps because the seventies was a bubble and a Civil Society requires much sounder foundations. They don't happen by accident, they have to be nurtured and groomed until they become instinctive. Sikkim should extend such support if it wants a Civil Society without having to go through the strain of suffering radical voices before better sense prevails. This can be achieved by inculcating a sense of community participation among the students. The first step would be to make them comfortable in a group. Just the classroom will not do. Something more focussed like book clubs, art groups, even a more effective Scouts & Guides and NCC culture. Once their comfort level increases, they should be inducted into more serious issues like those relating to children and environment. Issues that are more immediate for them. Of late we have seen massive student involvement in AIDS awareness through Red Ribbon Clubs, but this initiative without the first step remains but cosmetic. If we pace the grooming well, a Civil Society will be at hand within a generation. Or, we could continue with our trial and error method and continue with a society that speaks only in its kitchens.

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

Cambodia punished by EU over human rights violations – through limits to its trade access

RHONA SMITH
THECONVERSATION.COM

The jobs of many hard-working women in Cambodia are at risk after the EU announced its intention to partially withdraw free access for Cambodian goods to the EU market due to the country's "serious and systematic violations of human rights".

As one in a group of least-developed countries, Cambodia enjoys the most preferential trade arrangement with the EU under the Everything But Arms (EBA) tariff, which offers quota and duty-free access to the EU single market for all goods except arms. Cambodia currently exports more than €5 billion of goods to the EU, most from its thriving garment sector.

In order to qualify for the EBA scheme, countries have to comply with many different UN and International Labour Organisation conventions on human rights.

Standard tariffs will now apply for certain products to Cambodia, including low-added-value garments and shoes, travel goods and sugar. But other products are still covered by the EBA, including high-added value clothes and shoes, and bicycles.

USING TARIFFS AS A LEVER

This partial withdrawal of preferences of a country under the EBA tariff is unprecedented. The EU has fully and partially withdrawn trade preferences in the past – for Sri Lanka and Belarus – but these countries were under less beneficial arrangements in the Generalised Scheme of Preferences.

The EU's decision to only partially withdraw preferences for Cambodia arguably reflects the adverse impact of a full withdrawal on the socio-economic rights of the thousands of people working in the affected sectors. A full withdrawal would arguably also restrict current supply chains into the EU.

The withdrawal is due to occur in August, but any objection from the EU Council or parliament. The Cambodian government has time to ameliorate the situation, and the withdrawal decision could be reversed should the political space be opened significantly in the next few months. The EU Commission would look for the estab-

lishment of active political opposition, removal of restrictions on NGOs and more freedoms of assembly, expression and association.

However, the view of the Cambodia Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is clear: it called the EU's decision "unjust" and "politically driven". The government also refutes the claims of violations of human rights. A spokesperson said the government: "Remains firm in its principled position in rejecting any attempt by external parties in their use of trade and development assistance as pretexts to justify their interference in Cambodia's internal affairs."

Such rhetoric is familiar to those in Cambodia. The government has frequently railed against external interference in the internal affairs of the country. It has engaged in discussions with the EU for two years, since "enhanced engagement" was initiated after concerns were expressed in the European Parliament and at the UN. The process to temporarily suspend EBA privileges was initiated in February 2019.

FREEDOMS CURTAILED

Such decisions on trade preferences are not technically sanctions, but they are designed to encourage the state to move into closer alignment with civil, labour and political rights. The EU is particularly concerned about the lack of a credible political opposition party in Cambodia, after the former opposition was dissolved by the Supreme Court in late 2017. The country is now a de facto one-party state.

The leader of the former opposition, Kem Sokha, is currently on trial for treason after he was detained in September 2017. His release from house arrest in November 2019 was welcomed by the EU but was not enough to assuage concerns. Human rights defenders, especially those working on land issues and civil and political rights, are frequently arrested, followed and have their activities curtailed, as I've detailed in my role as the UN's special rapporteur for human rights in Cambodia.

There are ongoing violations of rights and freedoms in Cambodia, though the country has made

much progress made in the wake of its tragic past. The EU has acknowledged this progress in several areas.

SETTING A PRECEDENT

The loss of this export market could have a negative impact on the socioeconomic rights of many people working in the textile sectors. Around 800,000 people, mostly women, are employed in factories.

A fifth of Cambodia's exports to the EU are affected, worth almost a billion euros. But the measures taken by the EU against Cambodia are unlikely to have as dramatic an impact as some feared. As the EU targeted its withdrawal at lower value items, where more people work, it will affect them, but the higher-skilled sector won't be affected. Moreover, there are opportunities for Cambodia to conclude trade agreements with China (currently an influential development partner) or indeed with a post-Brexit UK, which has been one of the EU's largest importers of Cambodian products.

Nevertheless, the shockwaves may reverberate further. The EU continues to monitor human rights and labour rights in other EBA beneficiary countries including Myanmar and Bangladesh. Either or both could yet have their trade preferences fully or partially withdrawn.

The EU's decision to partially withdraw preferences appears an attempt to balance its concern over civil and political rights with concerns over the impact a full withdrawal could have on socioeconomic rights of Cambodian workers, and perhaps the EU's own markets. The Cambodian government continues to emphasise its success in securing the peace and dramatic economic progress in the country in the 21st century. The EU decision focuses on justice and freedom but tries to mitigate the impact on development. It is a move that could have implications around the world for countries that do not uphold their human rights commitments.

[the writer is Head of School, Newcastle Law School, Newcastle University]

Why do people believe con artists?

BARRY M. MITNICK
THECONVERSATION.COM

What is real can seem pretty arbitrary. It's easy to be fooled by misinformation disguised as news and deepfake videos showing people doing things they never did or said. Inaccurate information – even deliberately wrong information – doesn't just come from snake-oil salesmen, door-to-door hucksters and TV shopping channels anymore.

Even the president of the United States needs constant fact-checking. To date, he has made an average of 15 false or misleading public claims every day of his presidency, according to a tally from the Washington Post.

The study of business history reveals that people everywhere have always had a sweet tooth for the unreal, enthralled by what should be taken as too good to be true.

Cognitive scientists have identified a number of common ways in which people avoid being gullible. But con artists are especially skillful at what social scientists call framing, telling stories in ways that appeal to the biases, beliefs and prominent desires of their targets. They use strategies that take advantage of human weaknesses.

UNPLEASANT REALITY

Often, people who are "emotionally vulnerable" are unwilling to accept an unpleasant reality. Consider Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the British author who created Sherlock Holmes, the ultimate deductive rationalist – a character who said, "When you have eliminated the impossible whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

Yet, after experiencing family tragedies and the horror of the deaths in World War I, Doyle publicly announced in 1916 that he subscribed to Spiritualist beliefs, including that the spirits of the dead can communicate with the living.

In 1922, Doyle visited Harry Houdini in his home in New York City and was shown a clever magic trick involving automatic writing on a suspended slate. Houdini could not convince a stunned Doyle it wasn't paranormal activity.

ENVY AND OPPORTUNISM SIDE-LINE DOUBT

Sometimes people covet what their peers have already achieved so badly that they will overlook the obvious and deceive themselves and

others in an effort to claim better opportunities and a better life.

In 1822, a Scottish con man, Gregor MacGregor, convinced countrymen seeking easy wealth and their neighbors' better lives to buy bonds, land and special privileges, fill two ships and sail to an idyllic country, the Land of Poyais.

MacGregor priced land in Poyais to make it affordable to Scottish tradesmen and unskilled workers who had heard of promising South American investments but lacked the means to take advantage of them. Poyais had a distinctive flag, its own currency and a diplomatic office in London. The only problem was that Poyais did not exist. Most of those who sailed died on the Mosquito Coast of Honduras. Some of the few survivors were so taken in that they refused to accept that Poyais did not actually exist and argued that it was MacGregor who had been defrauded.

GREED IS BLINDING

Greed can prevent people from seeing that they have made a decision that defies common sense.

In 1925, the con artist Victor Lustig took advantage of the French government's public complaints that it would cost more to renovate a decaying Eiffel Tower than to demolish it. He gathered together scrap iron dealers, convinced them the tower would be taken down and sold it to one of them. Then he sold it again. Lustig gained a reputation as the "man who sold the Eiffel Tower."

IGNORANCE OF CUSTOMS AND BUSINESS PRACTICES

Swindlers can find opportunity in their marks' ignorance and unfamiliarity with local customs. The confidence man George C. Parker sold the Brooklyn Bridge four times, usually to recent immigrants who did not understand that the bridge could not be sold. He also sold Grant's Tomb, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Statue of Liberty.

MISERY GENERATES DESPERATE BELIEF

Desperate people can suspend disbelief. People believe promises have to be true when the alternative is too miserable. John D. Rockefeller's father, William, was a bigamist and seller of alleged cures and ineffective patent medicines to ailing

people, riding the circuit through rural towns. Bill "Doc" Rockefeller is said to have tutored his son, the builder of the Standard Oil Trust, in business.

SOMETIMES IT'S JUST ABOUT TRUST

People believe stories because they trust those who tell them. They don't know how to, or don't want to bother to, investigate the claims – or see no need to do so.

Starting as early as the mid-1980s, swindler Bernie Madoff sought investors in his Ponzi scheme among wealthy Jewish retirees and their philanthropic organizations in the U.S., and, in Europe, among members of aristocratic families. His victims simply trusted others in the group who vouched for Madoff and his investments.

CLAIMS ARE DIFFICULT OR COSTLY TO DISPROVE

In 1912, a skull, some bones and other relics were found in Piltdown in East Sussex in the U.K. The remains appeared to be from a creature who could be the long-sought "missing link" between apes and humans. It took over 40 years to confirm that Piltdown Man was a hoax, and over 100 years to identify who forged it. It's hard to disprove untruths – consider the ongoing searches for Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster.

PEOPLE WANT DREAMS TO BE TRUE

Sometimes, despite built-in skepticism, people badly want improbable but wonderful things to be true – to move the world with a dream. For instance, if alien spacecraft had really crashed and were being analyzed in Area 51 in Nevada, it could mean that interstellar travel is possible.

REPETITION – THE HALLMARK OF SOCIAL MEDIA – CREATES BELIEF

Hearing a false claim over and over can be enough to generate belief in it. A common advertising and public relations strategy is to be extremely visible by multiplying "impressions," so people see the message everywhere.

INDEPENDENT MATCHING CLAIMS ARE SEEN AS CREDIBLE

Repetition alone may not be sufficient. When people try to assess whether something is true, they often look for objective reasons on which to base their belief, such as finding two similar, independent

judgments about events. In my research I call this the "Rule of Two."

On social media, users often see a claim repeatedly, posted by different friends or connections. The same information seems to come not only from everywhere but from apparently independent sources. But often there is just one source, though easy online sharing makes it appear there are more than that. That is why so many observers worry about the role that social media has assumed in politics – it can lead people to believe that false claims are true.

PEOPLE BELIEVE WHAT OTHERS APPEAR TO BELIEVE

People have a built-in willingness to defer to confident assertions made by an apparently expert or legitimate authority. In experiments by Stanley Milgram, ordinary people complied with directives from the scientist to administer to subjects what they (falsely) believed were painful shocks. A passionate and convincing swindler, often masquerading as an expert – for example, an art dealer or researcher of miracle cures – exploits that weakness to get people to believe false claims.

A related mechanism introduced by Robert Cialdini is called "social proof": Seeing someone else do what you are thinking about doing frees you to act. It's evidence of the correctness of the action. This is why con men often use "shills," helpers who confirm to the victim that the con man's scheme is legitimate.

Research by Hugo Mercier and others, as well as my research on the theory of testimonials and ongoing work with Robert C. Ryan on the "skeptical believer model," argues that human defenses against scams and falsehoods are more robust than the entertaining tales of bridges sold and voyages to nonexistent paradises would suggest. In more ways than one, social interaction can become a "con-test."

Society – including government – cannot function well if every claim requires fact-checking. Yet con artists thrive, year in and year out, in business, politics and everyday experience. Ultimately, however, a world of "alternative facts" is not the world that our dreams want to be true.

[the writer is Professor of Business Administration and of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh]

Krishna Bose, academician and former TMC MP, dead at 89

KOLKATA, FEB 22 (PTI): Academic-turned-politician Krishna Bose died on Saturday due to age-related ailments.

She was 89.

Bose, the former Trinamool Congress MP from the Jadavpur constituency, was unwell for quite some time, family sources said.

She died at a private hospital off EM Bypass at 10.22 am, they said.

Bose was admitted to the hospital with irregular heart beat on February 16 and suffered a cerebral infarct on February 17 and remained in critical condition, a senior doctor said.

"She was suffering from age-related ailments for quite some time. She suffered her second stroke a few days ago and was admitted to the ICU," her son Sumantra Bose said.

She was married to Sisir Kumar Bose, nephew of Subhas Chandra Bose.

Born on December 26, 1930, to constitutional expert Charu Chandra Chaudhuri in Dhaka, Bose taught at the City College in Kolkata for around 40 years. She headed the English department for several years and later also became the principal of the college.

Though Bose started in active politics as a member of the Congress, she was close to Mamata Banerjee and switched sides when the Trinamool Congress was formed.

"I lost someone respected, loved & admired by me. Saddened & shocked to hear about the demise of Krishna Basu, ex-TMC MP & wife of freedom fighter Dr Sisir Bose. Being a part of

Netaji's family, she was a revered social reformer, renowned poet & a courageous educationalist," Banerjee said in a tweet.

"Krishna di was a mother to her son's Sumantra & Sugata, daughter Sarmila as well as the whole Trinamool family. Her immense contribution to Indian society & Bengali culture will be revered for times to come," she added.

Bose was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1996 on a Congress ticket, then in 1998 and 1999 as a Trinamool Congress candidate.

She is survived by sons Sugata and Sumantra, and daughter Sharmila. Sugata, the Gardiner Professor of History at Harvard University, had won from the Jadavpur constituency on a Trinamool Congress ticket in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

Bose was Chair of the Council of the Netaji Research Bureau and also headed the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs during her third stint as the MP.

Bose has written several books, including 'Netaji: A Biography for the Young', 'Ek Nambhar Bari' and 'An Outsider in Politics'.

Her body was taken to her Sarat Bose Road residence in south Kolkata around 1 pm and then it will be brought to the Netaji Bhavan on Elgin Road, according to family sources.

The chief minister will be visiting Netaji Bhavan where hundreds of the former lawmaker's followers are also expected.

She will be cremated in the evening.

Bury phoenix club will begin life in 10th tier of English football

LONDON, 22 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: Bury AFC, the phoenix club launched after Bury's expulsion from the Football League, will begin life next season in the 10th tier of the English pyramid.

The North West Counties Football League has approved an application from Bury AFC for them to join the league next season.

Bury were expelled from the Football League last August after failing to secure new ownership when a last-minute takeover bid collapsed.

The original club appear to be heading for liquidation after the owner, Steve Dale, defaulted on the company voluntary arrangement (CVA) he agreed last summer to settle Bury's £5m debts, having failed to provide the money required to fund them.

On Friday, the NWCFL confirmed that 11 clubs had applied for promotion to Step 6 (the ninth and 10th tiers) providing they meet the ground grade H criteria by 31 March.

Nine of those clubs must finish in the top five of their respective Step 7 competitions. However the new clubs Bury AFC and FC Isle of Man have been listed for inclusion to join the league.

A message posted on Bury AFC's Twitter account read: "Bury AFC are listed below for in-

clusion (to the) North West Counties Football League for 2020/21. This confirms our belief that we are the only team currently with an application in to play football in Bury next season. BRING. IT. ON."

East Bengal to take on TRAU FC



IMPHAL, FEB 22 (PTI): Tiddim Road Athletic Union (TRAU) FC will be playing host to struggling Kolkata giants East Bengal in the I-League here on Sunday, looking to avenge their defeat in the away leg.

The solitary I-League meeting between the two sides ended in heartbreak for TRAU in Kalyani, with Marti Crespi scoring a late winner to deny the visitors their first league point.

East Bengal were top of the table back then while the league debutants were rock bottom but the tables have turned since and drastically so.

TRAU went on to forge a seven-game unbeaten run, which saw them rise to third in the table but have lost some steam following

ABSU urges Centre, Assam govt to release Ranjan Daimary

KOKRAJHAR (ASSAM), FEB 22 (PTI): The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) has appealed to the Centre and the Assam government to release NDFB(R) chief Ranjan Daimary, who was one of the signatories to the Bodo Peace Accord.

Daimary is serving life sentence for his involvement in the 2008 serial blasts in Assam in which 88 people were killed.

The militant leader, who was released on bail two days ahead of the signing of the Accord on January 27, was sent back to jail on February 20.

ABSU president Dipen Boro, in a press note issued here on Saturday, urged the central and the state governments to release Daimary "in the interests of implementing the Accord and for lasting peace"

in Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) of Assam.

"ABSU appeals... for the greater interest of the implementation of the Accord and peace-building process and giving the mark of respectable opportunity for the leadership of NDFB to join the mainstream through the Accord after they have shunned the path of armed struggle," the release said.

The Accord was signed between the Centre, the Assam government, all the four factions of the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB), the ABSU and civil society group United Bodo People's Organisation.

Other NDFB factions have also sought the immediate release of Daimary and warned of protests if the demand was not met.

The ABSU, in the release, also condemned the recent killing of a person in Udalguri district, that falls under BTR. The students' body demanded stern action against those responsible for the incident.

It said that the killing was attempted at destabilising the atmosphere in BTR and also appealed to all the communities to maintain peace in the region.

Manipur university VC dismissed over irregularities

NEW DELHI, FEB 22 (PTI): Manipur University Vice Chancellor Adya Prasad Pandey was dismissed by the government following complaints of financial and administrative irregularities, according to an HRD Ministry order.

The human resource development (HRD) ministry on Friday dismissed Pandey after an inquiry.

In an inquiry report, he was found indulging in "financial and administrative irregularities, including misconduct, dereliction of duties, abuse of power and lack of commitment, causing great harm to the academic environment and bringing the varsity into disrepute", the order stated.

Pandey was placed under suspension in 2018 after violent protests erupted on the varsity's campus which led to prolonged shutdown of the institute.

"The President of India, on consideration of facts and materials available on record and reply submitted by Adya Prasad Pandey... in exercise of the power conferred upon him in terms of sections 13 of Manipur University Act, 2005, has been pleased to dismiss him from his post with immediate effect," the order stated.

Pandey was not available for comments on the issue.

Chennai, Aizawl face off in bid to move up

COIMBATORE, FEB 22 (PTI): Bidding to improve their positions, defending champions Chennai City FC and Aizawl FC will lock horns in an I-League match here on Sunday.

With just one point separating the two sides, Chennai (15) and Aizawl (14) are currently placed eighth and

10th on the points table respectively.

The hosts did create a flurry of scoring opportunities in their last game against TRAU but were denied three points by the goalkeeping heroics of Shayan Roy.

Reflecting on those 90 minutes, Chennai City coach Akbar Nawas

said, "Yes, it was frustrating not to win the game against TRAU but we have to take the positives and continue building on the same in our next game."

Weighing in on their next opponents, he added, "Aizawl are a tough team to play. They have the ability to eke out wins but we are defi-

nately gunning for three points which is obviously crucial at this stage of the season."

Aizawl were on course to coming away with a draw from Margao against Churchill Brothers but the Red Machines caused stoppage-time heartbreak for the visitors and head coach Stanley Rozario admit-

ted that his side needs to learn to play smarter in the dying moments.

"My players need to learn how to play during added-on time. They need to manage the time better by defending and playing safe and for that, more focus and concentration is needed," the Aizawl coach said.

Food festival offers authentic Arunachali cuisine

NEW DELHI, FEB 22 (PTI): Be it the exotic 'Tumpuluk Chok' or lip-smacking 'Chura Pa', everything is "organic and healthy" at the ongoing Arunachal Food Festival serving the rich and famous delicacies of the North East.

The three-day festival, organised by the Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) in collaboration with the government of Arunachal Pradesh, is taking place at The Oudh in The Ashok Hotel.

The culinary sojourn kicks off with an array of appetizers -- 'Tumpuluk Chok' (salad of cherry tomato with herbs), 'Putu' (buckwheat noodles with fermented soya beans and chives), 'Papuk' (Chicken with banana flower) and 'Lutker' (dry meat with chilli flakes), among others.

"Arunachal Pradesh is very rich and vast in its cuisine. There are 25 tribes and close to 100 sub-tribes, and all



of them have a different style of cooking, which is also showcased in the festival's menu," chef Arvind Rai, executive chef, The Ashok Hotel said.

According to the chef, only organic and natural ingredients -- like "turmeric, bamboo shoots and banana flower" -- have been used for preparation of the dishes.

The elaborate menu also boasts of other authentic Arunachali delicacies like 'Khazi'

(cheesy rice recipe that uses red rice and fermented soya bean and chives), 'Bresi' (sweetened rice made with dry fruits and saffron) and 'Chura Pa' (cheese based curry).

"This will be a first such event where specialized chefs from

Arunachal Pradesh will be helping the chefs of ITDC to cook delicacies for the event. Also, most of the dishes at the event will be made with locally sourced ingredients from Arunachal Pradesh," Jitendra Narain, IAS, Principal Resident Commis-

sioner, government of Arunachal Pradesh, said.

Beside the special cuisine, the festival also showcases dance troupes, handicrafts and organic spices from Lohit district of the state.

The feast goes off the table on Sunday.

Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey caused by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this "development" and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before.

Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

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World Rugby to assess if its policies on transgender players 'are appropriate'

LONDON, 22 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: World Rugby plans a comprehensive review of the sport's policies relating to transgender players. Moves will begin at a forum next week which is bringing together independent experts and leaders in the fields of sports science, biology, medicine, ethics and law, as well as rugby administration, medical and playing representatives.

The rugby union governing body, whose current policy follows that of the International Olympic Committee, is consulting with expert voices and the global women's game before the London summit.

However with latest research suggesting that a reduction of testosterone does not lead to a proportionate reduction in strength and power, World Rugby says it is important for contact sports such as rugby "to find an appropriate position for player welfare and risk".

World Rugby's chairman Bill Beaumont said: "There is growing recognition of the importance of autonomy of gender identity in society, and all sports are currently evaluating their policies to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the modern sporting and societal landscape. Rugby is no different, and this forum makes it possible to explore the best available evidence and hear the relevant expert opinions."

The governing body will also ask elite players for their views through a questionnaire to gain a representative view from the game's top levels.

Beaumont added: "World Rugby's vision is 'a sport for all, true to its values' and we are committed to exploring the evidence from experts in the field of biology and medicine, together with insights provided by leading legal, ethical and social minds, to determine whether the current guidelines are appropriate for all participants."

"We are undertaking an extensive consultation process that includes obtaining the perspectives of players who will be directly affected by this policy in both elite and community rugby. This is important in achieving transparency and buy-in."

World Rugby's chief medical officer Eanna Falvey said: "Sports organisations and the medical community alike appreciate that this is a complex area to negotiate. It is especially complex in a contact sport where size, strength and power can be influential."

"By bringing together the world's leading experts for the first time at our forum we will be able to consider all evidence, considerations and viewpoints as we move towards developing an updated policy that is proportional, appropriate and good for all."

Fury v Wilder II: Fighters unveil bulked-up physiques on eve of rematch

BRYAN ARMEN GRAMHAM

LAS VEGAS, 22 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: There was a time when Deontay Wilder would have been one of his country's most famous sportsmen, which makes the 34-year-old among the biggest casualties of boxing's retreat toward the margins of the American mainstream.

There is no good reason why Wilder, a crowd-pleasing knockout merchant in a chiselled 6ft 7in package who is unbeaten in 43 professional fights, with 41 wins inside the distance, should not be a household name by now. He has made 10 heavyweight title defences in the five years since winning the WBC's version of the championship, one more than Mike Tyson and Joe Frazier in their reigns.

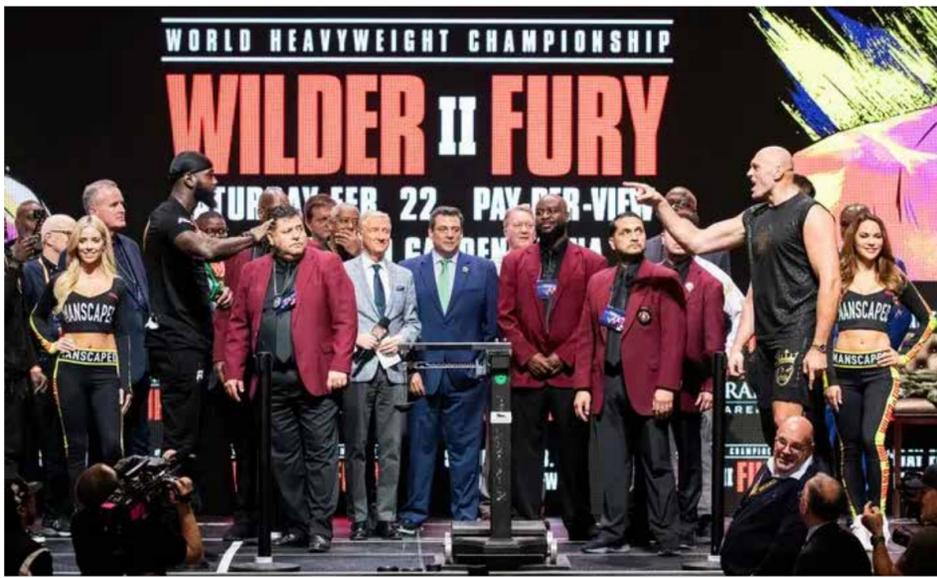
So why has it not happened? Some of it is down to boxing's decision to throw itself behind a payroll amid an explosion of entertainment alternatives. Some can be attributed to the emergence of four sanctioning bodies, an alphabet soup that has fractured a championship that was once handed over cleanly from one to the next. A bit more can be chalked up to plain old lousy promotion.

Mainly, though, it is

down to competition. Specifically, Wilder's lack of a big-name rival as a yardstick of how good he really may be. In Tyson Fury, he has found one. This very odd couple will come together for the second time in 15 months on Saturday night at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, where they faced off one final time at Friday afternoon's weigh-ins.

The impeccably fit Wilder came in at a career-high 231lb and Fury tipped the scales at 273lb before a rollicking capacity crowd squarely behind the challenger, the latest nod to the American's bewildering domestic conundrum. Fury has been open about his intent to pack on ballast for the rematch, eating six meals and drinking eight litres of water daily in search of a size advantage against the lighter American. It's a bold tactic for a fighter who weighed 256½lb in their first encounter and in the same range for interim bouts against Tom Schwarz (263lb) and Otto Wallin (254½lbs), yet the 42lb weight difference on Saturday night will be two pounds less than when they fought in December 2018.

Afterward, both fighters pointed and barked at one another from a distance for two minutes rather than come together for the tradi-



tional staredown, which the Nevada Athletic Commission had banned following the shoving match at Wednesday's final press conference. "I just told him, '24 hours, 24 hours,'" Wilder said. "He's nervous. Nervous energy as always."

When the waiting is over the two unbeaten giants with 71 professional wins between them, the two best fighters currently in boxing's prestige division, will meet in the most important heavyweight championship fight since the second fight between Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield in 1999. The big-fight atmosphere on the Las Vegas strip has offered a throwback to

those days: Fans queued outside the arena since early Friday morning to catch a brief glimpse of Wilder and Fury on the scales, with the state fire marshal locking down all entrances due to the excessive crowds at least an hour before it started.

With a win, Wilder will take his first step into the discussion of the all-time great heavyweights. Make no mistake: this is a legacy-defining fight on both sides. Should the Gypsy King win back the title, it is not hyperbolic to say it would complete one of the greatest comebacks in modern sporting history given the depths

of his very public bout with addiction and mental illness, which saw him balloon to nearly 25st during a 31-month layoff.

But Fury, who did not make a single defence of the IBF, WBA and WBO titles he won from Wladimir Klitschko, says he plans to fight only three more times even if he wins on Saturday night. For Wilder, the sky is the limit. He has already been called the biggest puncher in the history of boxing (with apologies to Ron Lyle and Earnie Shavers), but at the moment, his career-best win is against the Cuban veteran Luis Ortiz. Until he adds a top-flight name like Fury to his ledger, it

is all barroom theory.

Wilder must solve the enigma who left him looking ordinary for long stretches of their first meeting in downtown Los Angeles, when the 6ft 9in Fury spent most of the evening racking up points and using every trick in the book to negate Wilder's heat-seeking right hand. The American finally scored a knockdown in the ninth round and an even heavier one in the 12th, which left Fury seemingly unconscious on the way down, but the challenger somehow made it to his feet and to the final bell, where the ringside judges handed down a stalemate.

But, rather than go

into an immediate rematch, each took a pair of fights in the interim.

"Round 12 has been on his mind since day one," Wilder said this week. "That's why he stayed away from the [immediate] rematch. Round 12 has been living in his head for a while."

Fury has made no secret of his intention to go for a knockout in Saturday's fight, even if the tactics fly in the face of conventional wisdom. But Wilder, on several occasions during the final run-up, has said he does not believe a word that comes out of the challenger's mouth.

"I'm not worried too much about what he says, I just want to see what he does," Wilder said. "I am a man of action."

Should Wilder win, all conversation will turn to a unification showdown with Britain's Anthony Joshua, who holds the other three belts in boxing's prestige division. That could mean an opportunity to crown the first undisputed world heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis in 2000. Regardless, "I just want to let the world know that we have a badass named Deontay Wilder here in America, and he ain't going nowhere for a very long time," Wilder said.

Newcastle defy statistics and show Premier League table can lie

LOUISE TAYLOR
THEGUARDIAN

Steve Bruce sits in Rafael Benítez's old chair in the centre of the room where his predecessor once held court. The walls are still the same colour, the furniture has not moved and the vending machine in one corner remains temperamental but, these days, the mood is very different.

Where Newcastle's former manager entertained his audience with colourful off-the-record tales of, among other things, Cristiano Ronaldo, the Neapolitan Camorra and Marcelo Bielsa, Bruce has recently faced some awkward journalistic inquiries? "Have you been lucky?", "Are you in a false position?" and "Is playing this way sustainable?" are just three sample questions from recent media debriefs.

Given that Newcastle travel to Crystal Palace on Saturday 13th with 31 points – one more than Roy Hodgson's side – such queries may seem a little puzzling yet, in many ways, this is a team defying gravity.

Benítez used to delight in, repeatedly, reiterating a pet theory.

"Football is one big lie," he claimed. "In football everything is a lie." Some Newcastle fans fear the Dalian Professional manager's thesis extends to the Premier League table. Is the points column telling a big fat fib about their team's capabilities and Bruce's management? After all, judged on almost every conceivable metric – possession, touches, pass completion, goals scored, chances conceded and accurate crosses – Newcastle rank among the top tier's bottom three teams. If anyone requires a perfect definition of "conundrum" they need only buy a ticket at St James' Park.

Or is this extremely harsh on Bruce who, given the limitations of inheriting a squad widely tipped as relegation certainties last summer, has done an ostensibly impressive job? His side may be low on quality, pace and creativity but sterile statistical analysis does not reflect their invariably indefatigable spirit, resilience and togetherness. Let alone the cleverness and discipline of much evidently well-coached defending.

Bruce is generally



warm and affable, rarely losing his sense of humour or proportion, but the suggestion he is a lucky general represents a red line he describes as an "insult". Yet some disappointing recent results, culminating in last Sunday's 4-0 reverse at Arsenal, have provoked fears fortune could finally be frowning and Newcastle regressing to the point where they will be "found out" and sucked into relegation waters.

"We've done OK," says Bruce. "We've had huge injury problems but shown incredible resilience. Our

results can't be a fluke, not over 26 games, anyway. The players have resilience and pride. They're a good set who roll up their sleeves and make sure they have a go; when you've got a team like that, you've always got a chance."

Newcastle – seven points ahead of third-bottom West Ham – routinely command around 30% possession and have seen Martin Dubravka, their outstanding goalkeeper, make more saves than any other Premier League counterpart.

If Dubravka appears

increasingly indispensable the way his teammates weather countless attacking storms also reflects Bruce's intelligent man-management of players previously in thrall to the much respected, and trusted, Benítez. The Spaniard remains the elephant in the room, not least because he patented the safety-first, contain and counter, painting by numbers, 3-4-3 system swiftly copied by Bruce.

Following heavy early season defeats at Norwich and Leicester, the latter felt he had no

option but to abandon a high-risk experiment with a back four and more aesthetically pleasing "progressive" passing.

Yet where, last season, Newcastle's deep defending was perceived as part of a refined tactical plan, their interminable back-pedaling is now interpreted as a consequence of sheer inability to retain possession. That may be a case of invidious managerial comparisons but it is also legitimate to ask whether Bruce has taken pragmatism to the point where aspirations

have dropped and players are underachieving. His advocates hint that the side's dependence on that counterattacking default mode reflects a Benítez "brainwashing" but such semantics mask the reality that teams are only as good as their strikers.

Joelinton has lacked decent service but the £40m Brazilian centre-forward – scorer of one league goal – is a definite downgrade on Salomón Rondón, his predecessor. Tellingly half Newcastle's 24 league goals have been scored by defenders.

Considering the peculiar backdrop of Mike Ashley's idiosyncratic ownership and frequently restrictive recruitment policies, the "beauty contest" simmering between Benítez loyalists and Bruce disciples arguably appears pointless and disrespectful.

With takeover talk receding – reports that a friend of Kim Kardashian is a fixer for Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund's mooted buyout are met with weary eye rolls at St James' – Bruce seems stuck with Ashley and "Rafa-ball". Given that imperfect context, he has surely earned the right to claim the league table does not lie.

Self-belief kept Poonam confident of playing in T20 WC after finger injury in Dec

SYDNEY, FEB 22 (PTI): A finger fracture leaving her T20 World Cup participation in doubt, India leggie Poonam Yadav says self belief gave her the confidence of playing the showpiece and it showed in her demolition of Australia in the opening match here.

Injured during a pre-tournament camp

in December, the canny leg-spinner missed the preparatory tri-series in Australia and her participation in the showpiece was thrown into doubt.

But the way she bamboozled Australia in the tournament opener, her absence may have been a blessing rather than a curse. Poonam took four wickets to help India win

by 17 runs on Friday.

"I did not know myself it (injury) would turn out to be this bad. After the injury I focused on the diet and on fitness," she said.

"I was confident I could bowl at any time. (WV) Raman Sir (India head coach) asked if I was mentally ready. I told him mentally I

was, but it was also necessary for me to be physically prepared," Poonam was quoted as saying by the ICC.

The 28-year-old bowler said she never lost hope of playing in the T20 World Cup.

"Within myself I had the belief I would make the comeback in time. The good thing is I got

hurt about one-and-a-half months before the World Cup.

"God is great - whatever bad had to happen has already happened."

With a small stature and desire to float the ball high, Poonam's style is not a replicable one in the women's game and Australia opening batswoman

Alyssa Healy admitted that her side failed against the Indian.

"She bowled that first over pretty regulation as a leg-spinner and then slowed it up immensely after that, so we probably just didn't adapt to that well enough. We've planned for that. We just didn't probably

play as smart as what we should have.

"Obviously we don't get leg-spinners coming out at 60kmph very often, and she's incredibly skilful at that. It was more the individual batters," Healy said.

Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur lauded Poonam for her efforts.

Dozens detained as Kazakh opposition calls for protests



Police in Kazakhstan detained dozens of activists Saturday after two opposition groups announced plans to hold anti-government protests in the oil-rich Central Asian country.

An AFP correspondent saw police detain at least ten activists from the unregistered Democratic Party who were attempting to hold a protest in the largest city Almaty.

Eyewitnesses said that police had detained up to 70 people, who were en route to the site where the group said it would hold a protest.

Authoritarian Kazakhstan has long faced criticism from local and international rights groups for its restrictive laws regulating demonstrations.

Zhanbolat Mamay, a filmmaker and prominent figure in the Democratic Party was arrested and sentenced to three days in administrative detention on Friday.

Mamay told AFP by telephone Friday that "at least ten" members of his group had received sentences of up to five days in detention earlier this week -- a measure he said was intended to prevent the Democratic Party holding a conference.

He was detained later in the day.

Another group, Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK), also announced plans to hold a

rally on Saturday.

A Kazakh court banned the group as extremist in 2018, and the country's state prosecutor on Friday warned citizens not to participate in the group's protest.

DCK's France-based leader, Mukhtar Ablyazov, thanked the state prosecutor for giving the group "an advert" ahead of the demonstration.

Ablyazov, a former energy minister, banker and long-time opponent of Kazakhstan's regime has said the court ruling is simply a pretext to crack down on the group.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev pledged to reform laws governing freedom of assembly shortly after succeeding long-ruling Nursultan Nazarbayev as president last year.

But civil society groups in the Central Asian state have expressed dissatisfaction with a new draft law, which they argue would entail fresh restrictions.

Currently activists risk arrest if they hold demonstrations without permission from the authorities, which is almost never given for political demonstrations.

Nazarbayev, 79, who became Kazakhstan's president the year before its formal independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, is still widely viewed as dominating policymaking in the vast republic of 18 million people.

Afghans mark start of week-long partial truce amid isolated attacks

A week-long, partial truce appeared to be largely holding across Afghanistan on Saturday, with jubilant civilians celebrating in the streets to mark a potentially historic turning point in the war, even as isolated attacks threatened to undermine the process.

The Taliban, US and Afghan forces have all agreed to a so-called "reduction in violence" marking only the second lull in fighting since 2001.

"It is the first morning that I go out without the fear of being killed by a bomb or suicide bomber. I hope it continues forever," Kabul taxi driver Habib Ullah said, while in other parts of the country people danced in the streets after the truce kicked in at midnight.

However in Balkh province in the north, Taliban fighters attacked a district headquarters near the provincial capital of Mazar-i-Sharif, killing two Afghan soldiers, a local official told AFP. There were also reports of a separate incident in central Uruzgan province.

General Scott Miller, who leads US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, did not directly address those incidents, but stressed that Western forces would continually monitor the situation.

"We've stopped our offensive operations as part of our obligations," Miller told reporters.

In the event of any breaches of the truce, Miller said the US would communicate with the Taliban through various channels set up in Doha, where the insurgents have a political office.

"As more days go on



we will have a better understanding of what trends are," Miller said.

"Very clearly this is a conditional effort, this is a trial period."

The partial truce is expected to set the conditions for Washington and the insurgents to sign a deal in Doha on February 29 that could, ultimately, pull US troops out after more than 18 years and launch war-weary Afghanistan into an uncertain future.

A successful week would show the Taliban can control their forces and demonstrate good faith ahead of any signing.

It also gives a much-needed respite to civilians, who have long borne the brunt of the bloody conflict. The UN's Afghanistan mission said Saturday that more than 10,000 people had been killed or wounded in the war in 2019 alone.

In Kandahar in the south, considered the Taliban heartland, and the eastern province of Jalalabad, dozens of Afghans could be seen

dancing the attan -- a traditional Pashtun dance -- in the streets in celebration overnight.

In Kabul, which for years now has been one of the deadliest places in the country for civilians, those who spoke to AFP were more wary.

Shopper Emamuddin, who like many Afghans goes by one name, said Afghans want peace "whatever it takes".

"A week of no violence will pass in a blink of the eye," he said.

"They should find a long-lasting solution for this country's problem."

- Dangerous moment -

Details of how exactly the reduction in violence will work have remained scant.

The US has said there is an "understanding" for a "significant and nationwide reduction in violence across Afghanistan", while Afghan security forces will remain "on active defence status" during the week.

In Kandahar, one insurgent told AFP he had

received orders to stand down -- but another said he had only been ordered to refrain from attacking major cities and highways.

Any truce comes fraught with danger, and analysts warn the attempt to stem Afghanistan's bloodshed is laced with complications and could fail at any time.

Since the US invasion in 2001 there has only been one other pause in the fighting -- a surprise three-day ceasefire between the Taliban and Kabul marking the religious festival of Eid in 2018.

Afghans responded joyfully, with Taliban fighters, security forces and civilians hugging, sharing ice creams and posing for selfies in previously unimaginable scenes.

Perhaps in a bid to avoid such scenes, the Taliban have instructed their fighters to stay away from government-controlled areas during the truce, but a senior Afghan security official said

the insurgents would be welcome with "open arms".

Washington has been in talks with the Taliban for more than a year to secure a deal which would see it initially reduce troop levels from approximately 12-13,000 to an expected total of about 8,600.

In return, the Taliban would give security guarantees and a promise to hold peace talks with the government in Kabul.

Conflict in Afghanistan has forced hundreds of thousands of Afghans to flee into neighbouring Pakistan, where they are monitoring developments in their homeland closely.

"I am hopeful the peace agreement will bring peace in Afghanistan and we will be able to return," said Amir Khan, a father of six who fled Afghanistan 35 years ago and now lives in Peshawar on the Pakistani side of the border.

"We were not given any chance to become Pakistanis, so better to return to our origin."

China virus cases drop as foreign fears rise

Fears mounted Saturday over the growing spread of infections outside China from the new coronavirus outbreak, as the World Health Organization warned of a shrinking window to stem the spread of the deadly disease.

The warning came as Europe saw its first deaths from the COVID-19 strain, which has now reached more than 25 countries and caused more than a dozen fatalities outside China.

On Saturday, Italian news agency ANSA reported that a woman in the northern region of Lombardy had died after contracting the virus, a day after a 78-year-old man from the nearby Veneto region became the first local person in Europe to succumb to the illness.

The new wave of cases in Italy has also triggered a lockdown of ten towns -- a move with echoes of China's sealing off of entire cities in central Hubei province, the epicentre of the virus where millions remain under quarantine.

A second person also died in South Korea, where the numbers of cases spiked, authorities said Saturday, while the death

toll in Iran reached five and a number of new cases were reported across the Middle East.

As cases surged outside China, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that the "window of opportunity" to contain the international spread of the outbreak was "narrowing".

He cautioned that if countries did not quickly mobilise to fight the reach of the virus, "this outbreak could go in any direction. It could even be messy."

The outbreak has now claimed 2,345 lives in China and infected more than 76,000 people.

The number of new cases in China outside Hubei has been generally declining, although new outbreaks have emerged in several prisons and hospitals.

On Saturday Chinese authorities reported nearly 400 fresh cases nationwide, less than half the previous day and just 31 outside Hubei.

A WHO-led team of experts are to visit Wuhan, the capital of the province, on Saturday.

- International spread -

Cases of the deadly virus were reported in a range of countries

in the Middle East, including the first cases in Israel and Lebanon.

Iraq and Kuwait, which share borders with Iran, were on high alert for a potential outbreak after banning travel to and from the Islamic republic, although they have not confirmed any cases domestically.

More than 400 people have been infected in South Korea, many linked to a hospital and a religious sect, and two people have died, making it the hardest-hit country outside China.

The latest group of passengers disembarked from the coronavirus-stricken Diamond Princess cruise ship in Japan on Saturday.

Several Australians and an Israeli evacuated earlier this week after being cleared in Japan tested positive for coronavirus on landing back in their home countries -- fuelling questions about Tokyo's policy of allowing former passengers to return home.

Two former Japanese passengers in their 80s have died.

The British government said an evacuation flight left Japan Saturday, with 32 British and European pas-

sengers on board.

As fears spread of the virus in Japan, Tokyo 2020 Olympic organisers postponed training for their army of volunteers due to the coronavirus outbreak -- but said that there was "no consideration" of cancelling the Games.

- 'Tough' economy - Beijing has so far downplayed any possible long-term impact on the Chinese economy from the outbreak, which has paralysed much of the country.

Chen Yulu, China's deputy central bank governor, told state broadcaster CCTV on Saturday that economic growth would "quickly rebound".

China's financial system has "extremely strong toughness" to respond to risk, he said.

The country's ruling council, the Politburo Standing Committee, has also dismissed the potential economic fallout, urging local governments earlier this month to "continue striving" to achieve this year's economic development targets.

Chinese officials are also keen to show the country is returning to work.

Almost all the country's chain su-

permarkets have now reopened, commerce official Wang Bin said Saturday, as well as half the country's department stores and shopping malls.

But only a third of rail construction and 15 percent of civil aviation projects have re-started work.

Beijing was already tackling a slowing economy before the virus struck and has closed many businesses, factories, tourist sites and travel routes in a bid to contain the epidemic.

In a letter to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation thanking the organisation for its financial support, Chinese President Xi Jinping said China was at a "critical moment" in the fight against the outbreak.

In the latest unprecedented measure, state media said Wuhan officials were bringing in seven river cruise ships to house medical workers.

The People's Daily said that the ships will provide another 1,469 beds and help accommodate some of the tens of thousands of medical workers brought into the city to help treat coronavirus patients.

Exiled Dalai Lama marks 80 years as Tibet's spiritual leader

The Dalai Lama on Saturday marked the 80th anniversary of his enthronement as the spiritual leader of Tibet, a position held almost entirely in exile and as a target of constant vilification by the Chinese state.

Hundreds of miles from Lhasa's imposing 1,000-room Potala Palace, the sandal-wearing monk now ministers to his fellow Tibetan exiles from Dharamsala in the foothills of the Indian Himalaya.

He remains the universally recognised face of the movement for Tibetan autonomy, but the global spotlight he enjoyed after winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 has dimmed and the deluge of invitations to hobnob with world leaders and Hollywood stars has slowed.

Partly because the ageing leader has cut back on his punishing travel schedule, but also due to China's growing economic and political clout.

Beijing accuses the 84-year-old Dalai Lama of wanting to split China, and regularly refers to him as a "wolf in a monk's robe".

His office said there would be no commemoration of the anniversary and a teaching event scheduled for March -- that usually would attract devotees from across the world -- has been cancelled over coronavirus fears.

Born into a peasant family in the Tibetan village of Taksar on July 6, 1935, he was identified as the incarnation of Tibetan Buddhism's supreme religious leader at the age of two after picking out objects that belonged to his predecessor.

He was given the name Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso -- Holy Lord, Gentle Glory, Compassionate Defender of the Faith and Ocean of Wisdom -- and two years later arrived in Lhasa where he was formally enthroned as the 14th Dalai Lama.

In 1950, aged 15, he was hastily enthroned as head of state after the Chinese army invaded Tibet.

For the next nine years he tried to keep Tibetans out of harm's way. But the effort failed in 1959 when China crushed a popular uprising.

Fearing for his life, the young monk trekked through the Himalayas accompanied by a 37-strong entourage, and crossed into exile in India.

There he set up a government-in-exile and launched a campaign to reclaim Tibet that gradually evolved into an appeal for greater autonomy -- the so-called "middle way" approach.

- Successor? -

It is unclear how, or even whether, the current Dalai Lama's successor will be named, but few religious leaders have had to give the matter as much thought.

Zubcic storms to giant slalom World Cup win in Japan



Croatia's Filip Zubcic produced a sizzling second run to win the Japan leg of the men's World Cup giant slalom on Saturday.

The 27-year-old trailed in 12th place after the first run at Yuzawa Naeba but stormed to the best combined time of two minutes, 37.25 seconds, edging out Switzerland's Marco Odermatt by seven tenths with American Tommy Ford taking third.

"It was a difficult race, the quality of the snow wasn't good," Zubcic told reporters.

"I made a big mistake on the first run, but I was able to get it back on the second without having to go for too much in the turns."

Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen, who took silver in the giant slalom at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics,

led after the first run, clocking 1:16.63 ahead of countryman Leif Kristian Nestvold-Haugen.

Nestvold-Haugen went on to finish fourth with Kristoffersen fifth, followed by another Norwegian, overall World Cup leader Aleksander Aamodt Kilde sixth.

Kilde, who captured his first victory of the season in last week's Super-G at Saalbach, tops the standings on 1,022 points with Kristoffersen on 948 and France's Olympic bronze medalist Alexis Pinturault a further 50 points behind.

Slovenia's Zan Kranjec, currently leading the giant slalom rankings, finished ninth. The Japanese leg was held despite fears over the deadly coronavirus that forced the cancellation of the men's downhill in Yanqing, China last weekend.



MODELS IN MILAN! Models, Gigi Hadid and Kendall Jenner arrived at the Fall/Winter 2020 Versace show during Milan Fashion Week.

Marvel's The Punisher Star Jon Bernthal Rallies Around Bullied 9 Year Old

People all over the world have been showing their support for a young boy named Quaden Bayles, who was born with Achondroplasia, a form of dwarfism, and has been the victim of frequent bullying. His mother shared his story on social media, including one video where Quaden is crying in their van and saying he just wants to die. Many have started sharing messages of support with Quaden, including Marvel's The Punisher star Jon Bernthal, who responded to the video with a message of love and courage.

Hey little man. For what it's worth you have taught my family so much. You have inspired us and in our home you are a hero. Thank you for your courage, stay strong the world is watching and you have so much beautiful power. From me and my boys. We are with you and we thank you.

In the video Quaden's mother calls for a change in approach to anti-bullying programs, saying the ones in place simply aren't working.

"I've just picked up my son from



school, witnessed a bullying episode, rang the principal and I want people to know — parents, educators, teachers — this is the effect that bullying has," Bayles says in the video. "This is what bullying does. So can you please educate your children, your families, your friends, because all it takes is for one more incident, and you wonder why kids are killing themselves."

In addition to Bernthal, others have also called for support for the young man and his family, with some even creating a GoFundMe page to

help send him to Disneyland.

We hope things get better for Quaden, and wish him and his family the best.

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AMC's Kevin Can F— Himself casts Schiff's Creek star Annie Murphy as lead

The dark comedy will deconstruct the passive sitcom wife stereotype. AMC is adding a little bit of Alexis to its TV lineup.

Schiff's Creek star Annie Murphy has been cast as the lead on upcoming series Kevin Can F— Himself, a dark comedy deconstructing the role of the passive, agreeable sitcom wife. The show will be a mix of multi-camera and single-camera format to further emphasize how perceptions change when Murphy's character moves away from sitcom domesticity and finds her rage.

The show was created by Valerie Armstrong (Lodge 49), executive produced by Rashida Jones and her writing partner Will McCormack, and will be run by Craig DiGregorio (Shrill).

The title is a nod to canceled CBS comedy Kevin Can Wait, which controversially killed off lead Kevin James' wife played by Erinn Hayes, making room for Leah Remini to reunite with her King of Queens costar as the

new female lead.

Discussing Kevin Can F— Himself, Hayes told Vulture she'd read the pilot script and would "kill to be in it," but was nervous that her connection to the title would make her a distraction as the lead.

While Murphy will now be playing main character Allison, no other cast has been announced for the show, meaning there's still hope Hayes could be involved in some way.

Kevin Can F— Himself does not have a premiere date yet, but will consist of eight, hour-long episodes.



F9: Vin Diesel Reveals New Poster for Fast & Furious 9



Fast & Furious 9 is almost here and fans are still flipping out over the dramatic reveals in the trailers. Vin Diesel posted a brand new image for the film to his Instagram account. The photo showcases a much younger Dom Toretto working on a car with that infamous necklace hanging from his neck. That chain and pendant have been all over some of the other posters from the film. It seems that while family is one of the core themes of the series as a whole, things will be even more personal in this installment. But, F9 is still going to bring the ruckus and so much action that the series star had to tell the press about how intense the stunt work can be in this series.

"For some stunts, they basically put a car at the end of an apparatus and spin you around and make you throw up," Diesel told MTV International. "It's one of the tools needed to do some of the crazier stunts." Michelle Rodriguez chimed in, "The tumbler. Most of it is special effects these days, and stunt doubles because of insurance, but the fighting sequences are always my favorite."

Justin Lin is happy that his crew is so devoted to bring the best out of each and every shot. "I feel lucky, we have the best people in the world," Lin said. "Any idea that comes into my head, I share with them in a room and I see this kind of blank stare which I know is a good sign, because that means we're gonna

go figure out how to do it."

Check out the description for the upcoming film below:

"Vin Diesel's Dom Toretto is leading a quiet life off the grid with Letty and his son, little Brian, but they know that danger always lurks just over their peaceful horizon. This time, that threat will force Dom to confront the sins of his past if he's going to save those he loves most. His crew joins together to stop a world-shattering plot led by the most skilled assassin and high-performance driver they've ever encountered: a man who also happens to be Dom's forsaken brother, Jakob (John Cena, next year's The Suicide Squad)."

Fast & Furious 9 stars Vin Diesel, Charlize Theron, Michelle Rodriguez, Helen Mirren, Jordana Brewster, Ludacris, Tyrese Gibson, Nathalie Emmanuel, Lucas Black, John Cena, Michael Rooker, Cardi B, and Finn Cole, and will be directed by Justin Lin.

Fast & Furious 9 will hit theaters on May 22nd, 2020.

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Hollywood Rallies Behind Severely Bullied Boy With Dwarfism After Heartbreaking Video Goes Viral

A heartbreaking video showing the agony of a 9-year-old Australian boy with dwarfism suffering from school bullying has touched the heart of Hollywood.

The video was posted online by the mother of Quaden Bayles, the boy who was

shown in the video wishing someone would kill him after terrible taunting by his schoolmates. Bayles has made news before on bullying. Snopes says that in 2015, a video report from from the Australian news station Studio 10 featured then 4-year-old Quaden:

Wolverine star Hugh Jackman spoke out on Twitter, telling the boy, "You have a friend in me." Jackman, one of Australia's biggest stars, also asked his fans to be vigilant against all childhood bullying. "Life is hard enough," Jackman said.

ARIES: Aries, there's so much you want to do, so much you want to create, and the Universe is holding space for this magical process. Now is not the time to doubt yourself or your abilities. You have so much to offer the world. Birth and fertility in the literal sense may be on the cards for some of you. Desire to bring your own into this world? The forces are with you.

TAURUS: "When something really matters to you, let it go. Say to the Universe, you know what I want. Give it to me in the path of least resistance. Give it to me the easiest way possible. Give it to me in any way I can get it." An Abraham Hicks quote to reinstate the joy and optimism you were feeling when you first began this journey. Don't let your vibration drop now, Taurus. You have many miracles to witness, and this is just the beginning.

GEMINI: Not every story ends in a happily-ever-after. But it doesn't have to be a tragic tale either. Be grateful for the moments you have shared, Gemini. Give thanks for the good memories you have created together. Just don't try to make this romance anything

more than what it is, which will ultimately lead to pain and heartache. Some of you could be parting ways with a loved one. Don't doubt yourself for a second. Know that the emotions you have felt in those moments are real.

CANCER: Springtime is almost upon us, Cancer, bringing with it fresh ideas and brand new possibilities. Be mindful of the guidance that's coming through. The aha moments that make you realize there's something magical brewing inside. This could help you take your life in a whole new direction. Some of you may have made a fresh start recently, in which case this is the nurturing period. Trust that the seeds you have painstakingly planted will show the first signs of life.

LEO: Ever noticed a child armed with a crayon. For them, the world is a playground. There is no wall on the house or the neighbourhood that isn't worthy of their art. Today, we're asking you to seek inspiration from these little geniuses and allow yourself to flow with the cosmic current of creativity. There is magic waiting to be born through you, Leo.

VIRGO: The trouble is, you already think you've lost. What you don't realize is that you are armed with inner resources, and that Spirit is co-creating with you in every moment. Let go of the fear. Release the self-doubt. Raise your vibrations to believe that you have already manifested the desired outcome. This belief will help create the shift you desire.

LIBRA: The trouble is, you're spending too much time worrying about the 'how' and the 'why' of things, when you should be focusing on your part of the creation process. Everything else will take care of itself. Libra, Spirit is with you, co-creating miracles in every moment. So raise your vibrations and believe in the divine plan. Know that you are exactly where you need to be, and are making wonderful progress.

SCORPIO: "Going with the flow is responding to cues from the Universe. When you go with the flow, you're surfing the life force. It's about wakeful trust and total collaboration with what's showing up for you." A Danielle LaPorte quote that accurately describes the grace with which you are riding the cosmic

currents. As for that inner glow, it's a product of the love and acceptance you're feeling for yourself. You are not perfect, but you are you, and that is all that matters in this moment.

SAGITTARIUS: Observe the patterns in your life. The memories that refuse to leave you, even though you've tried to purge them over a period of time. Truth is, the roots of the given situation are anchored in your past. Our souls have lived millions of lives, Sagittarius. There's a chance an experience you had in one of them is triggering these emotions. Alternatively, a childhood incident may be the cause. If you are unable to work through the trauma, turn to an expert. A therapist, a hypnotherapist or a past life regression expert may help you find the answers you are looking for.

CAPRICORN: There is more than enough to go around, Capricorn. So, where is this feeling of lack arising from? Could our own limiting beliefs be creating a sense of mistrust? Is there a childhood trauma that's holding you back from believing that you are worthy of the good stuff? Awareness is the first step to breaking old patterns and raising your vi-

bration. Allow yourself to receive, wild one. Know that abundance is your true nature.

AQUARIUS: Rise, light workers, rise! It's time for you to step out of the spiritual closet. It's time to share your gifts with the world. You have been blessed with the ability to inspire others to connect with their true purpose, and find the courage they need to realign with The Source. So, trust in yourself and actively work towards raising the Collective Consciousness. We are in the Age of Aquarius, after all.

PISCES: Funny how we turn to others in times of crisis instead of listening to the guidance that's coming through from our own being. Everything you need is within you, Pisces. Awaken to the ancestral wisdom in your bones. You can only start to live consciously as you by re-establishing that lost connection with your inner self. A good way to become aware of the guidance that's coming through is to maintain a journal and record the very first thought or feeling that comes to you. Chances are, it's coming from a higher place.