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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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SKM functionaries withdraw FIRs against Akshay Sachdeva

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 DEC:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha women's wing chief coordinator, Kala Rai and others have withdrawn two different First Information Report (FIR) filed against former Inspector General of Police, Akshay Sachdeva for atrocities committed against SKM workers in 2013.

The compliance report of withdrawal with regards to two FIRs filed against Sikkim Police and Akshay Sachdeva was submitted by the state government to the Supreme Court on 21 Nov following which the court disposed of the writ petition.

The bench headed by Justice AM Khanwikar and Justice Dinesh Maheshwari while disposing of the writ said that in view of compliance affidavit filed by Resident Commissioner, Ashwani Kumar Chand, Government of Sikkim on 21 Nov, 2019, nothing remains for consideration in this Writ Petition.

In the compliance report, it is said that petitioners have withdrawn their two FIRs against the Sikkim Police and Askhay Sachdeva, the then IGP, Law and Order since the case has been settled out of court.

Following the earlier court observation, the State government had suspended Akshay Sachdeva for his role in the lathi charge against SKM party workers in the party head office at Tadong on 11 February, 2013.

Mr Sachdeva has been suspended for three months and later reinstated after the State Government constituted inquiry committee submitted their report to the State Government.

Speaking over the phone, Advocate General from New Delhi, Vivek Kohli said that since the two FIRs have been withdrawn by the complainants, nothing is left for adjudication.

Mr Sachdeva is presently posted as Recovery-cum-Chief Vigilance Officer, State Bank of Sikkim at Gangtok.

CM visits Gyalchen Karma Thrinlay Monastery in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, 03 DEC [IPR]:

On the final day of his two-day tour of Arunachal Pradesh, Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay], visited Gyalchen Karma Thrinlay Monastery at Bishum Phodong where he was accorded a warm welcome in traditional manner and entertained to a rich cultural and religious presentation.

Dirang MLA, Phurba Tshering, Bomdila MLA, Dongru Siongju, DCs of Bomdila and Dirang along with a large number of locals were present to welcome the Chief Minister.

The Dirang MLA conveyed the message of the Arunachal CM for the occasion and expressed gratitude towards Mr Tamang for his visit to Bishum Phodong.

He also made special mention of Sikkim being an exemplary State of the North East and remarked at its peace and tranquillity.

The Chief Minister was all praises for the Arunachal Government and its Chief Minister



for according him such a warm reception and welcoming him to their beautiful state.

He said that this was his first visit to Arunachal Pradesh and that he was very pleased and happy to visit this beautiful state which has similar culture, traditions and unity in di-

versity like Sikkim,

Mr Tamang made special mention for the kind of welcome he received and said that Arunachal replicates Atithi devo bhava in its attitude.

He stated that he was very impressed with the kind of development Arunachal Pradesh has

achieved in the field of sports and skill development and also mentioned the progress made by Arunachal Pradesh in the field of Hydel generation and said that the two states could work together especially in tourism and Hydel sectors.

He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to-

wards Union Minister Kiran Rijjuji who hails from Arunachal Pradesh for doing his best to see the 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje visit Sikkim.

He also thanked Pasang Tshering Rimpoche for the kindness showed on the delegation from Sikkim.

Korean actor Cha In-ha found dead at 27



SEOUL, DEC 3 (PTI): Korean actor Cha In-ha, best known for his roles in K-dramas "The Banker" and "Love with Flaws", was found dead in his apartment on Tuesday. He was 27.

In-ha's death has once again raised concerns about the vulnerability of young stars in the Korean entertainment industry as it comes days after K-pop singer Goo Hara was found dead at the age of 28. Fellow K-pop star Sulli had also com-

mitted suicide in October this year at the age of 25.

Korean entertainment website soompi reported the news with a statement from the actor's agency Fantagio.

"We feel devastated to deliver such heart-breaking and unfortunate news. On December 3, actor Cha In Ha left our sides. We are truly heart-broken to deliver sad news to everyone who has sent lots of love and support to Cha In-Ha until now. We are filled with

grief at this news that is still hard to believe, read the statement.

The cause of death has not been reported though the agency requested fans to avoid rumours and "speculative reports to not be released in order for his family, who is experiencing greater sadness more than anyone due to the sudden sad news, to send him away peacefully. As wished by his family, the funeral will be held privately.

Protests continue in T'gana against vet rape and murder

HYDERABAD, DEC 3 (PTI): Protests by students, lawyers and various other sections of society continued on Tuesday in Hyderabad and other places in Telangana over the rape and murder of a woman veterinarian near here last week, as agitators demanded death penalty for the four accused.

Rallies, candle-light marches were organised demanding that the culprits be hanged.

A 22-year-old man was arrested for allegedly making vulgar comments on the social media about the veterinarian.

He was arrested after cyber crime police in Hyderabad registered a case on November 30 after some unknown people uploaded photos of the victim and made objectionable comments about her, a senior police official said.

A protesting woman lawyer claimed that existing laws, which were made during the British raj, needs to be changed.

Congress activists led by head of women's wing Nerella Sarada held a protest at Pa-



tancheru, demanding prohibition on liquor and control of obscene videos and films.

Consumption of alcohol and watching obscene videos are contributing to a rise in crimes against women, she claimed.

A fast track court should be set up to try the case and the culprits punished within a month, Sarada said.

Candle light marches were organised in Hyderabad and

elsewhere against the incident.

State Finance Minister T Harish Rao said parents should check the behaviour of their sons and help in moulding them as responsible citizens.

Education Minister P Sabitha Indra Reddy, speaking at an event here, said teachers should guide the students in imbining discipline.

Meanwhile, the petition filed by police in a court at Shadnagar here, seeking custody of the four accused

in the case, is likely to come up for hearing on Wednesday.

Taking a serious view of some news channels and social media sites disclosing the identity of the 25-year-old woman veterinarian, besides airing images of the accused, the police on Tuesday issued notices to them with a direction to stop it.

The police had said the victim's real name should not be used in

29 Public Prosecutors dismissed

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 DEC:**

The State Government has dismissed 29 Public Prosecutors including five Senior Government Advocates.

In a notice of discharge issued by the Secretary, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Department on 02 Dec, the 29 lawyers have been informed that "...the state government has deemed it appropriate to dispense with your services."

Their services will come to an end on 01 Jan, 2020.

Speaking to SummitTimes, a senior advocate said that the termination was "unceremonious" and included some senior PPs who have served for more than 30 years. He also said that the government has the right to do so, Sikkim has among the highest conviction rates in the country, a feat which can be attributed to the services of the terminated Public Prosecutors.

India conducts fresh night trial of Prithvi-2 missile

BALASORE (ODISHA), DEC 3 (PTI):

India on Tuesday successfully conducted another night trial of its indigenously developed nuclear capable Prithvi-2 missile as part of a user trial for the armed forces from a test range in Odisha coast, a defence source said.

The flight test of the surface-to-surface missile was carried out barely a fortnight after two back-to-back trials of the Prithvi-2 were conducted successfully at night from the same base on November 20.

"Today's trial of Prithvi-2 missile was successful and the test met all parameters. It was a routine



trial," the source said.

The trial of the surface-to-surface missile, which has a strike range of 350 kilometres, was carried out from a mo-

bile launcher of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur near here at around 7.50 pm. Prithvi-2 is capable of carrying

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Rajya Sabha passes bill to amend SPG Act

NEW DELHI, DEC 3 (PTI):

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill to amend the Act governing the elite-Special Protection Group (SPG) with Home Minister Amit Shah rejecting the opposition's charge of political vendetta and asserting the government was concerned about security of all 130 crore Indians and not just the Gandhi family.

Replying to a debate on the SPG (Amendment) Bill, Shah said that the BJP does not carry out any action with a vindictive approach and it was the Congress that took many such decisions in the past.

He said no discussion happened when security cover reviews with

respect to former prime ministers including PV Narasimha Rao, IK Gujral, Chandra Shekhar, HD Deve Gowda and recently Manmohan Singh were undertaken.

"Security cover must not be treated as a status symbol by individuals. The SPG security cover is meant specifically for the prime minister and must not be enjoyed by any other individual," he said. The Congress, which criticised the amendment, walked out of Rajya Sabha saying it is dissatisfied with the Home Minister's reply on the amendment to the SPG Act.

The government, Shah said, takes the decision of providing security cover on scientific

threat analysis for a particular individual.

The passage of the amendments to the SPG Act will pave the way for only the prime minister and his "immediate family residing with him at his official residence", as well as any former prime minister and members of his immediate family "residing with him at the residence allotted to him for a period of five years, from the date he ceases to hold the office of Prime Minister" to be given SPG cover.

Shah said if anyone it was Narendra Modi who will be impacted by this amendment as cover will be withdrawn after five years of his ceasing to be the Prime Minister.

turn to pg 02

40 families join BJP in Rabongla



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

A coordination meeting of Bharatiya Janata Party, Sikkim Pradesh, was held under the chairmanship of the state president, DB Chauhan, at Rabongla in South Sikkim on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by vice-president, Bharat Dulal, general secretary, SB Karki, MLAs, Raj Kumari Thapa and TT Bhutia, senior leaders and workers of the party.

A BJP press release informs that more than 40 families from different parts of South District have joined BJP. The release adds that the meeting also discussed various organizational activities of the party.

In his address, the state president informed about ongoing organizational election of the party and said that the election process will be completed in a few days. He further urged the party workers to deliver their respective responsibilities towards the people. He stated that future strategies of the party would be decided after the completion of the organizational election.

The release informs that the meeting was also addressed by BJP MLA, Raj Kumari Thapa, South District president, CL Gurung and vice-president, Bharat Dulal. It is added that the party in-charge of different constituencies also raised their issues of their respective constituencies.

Ex-minister Gawande convicted of assaulting govt officer

AKOLA, DEC 3 (PTI): A court in Maharashtra's Akola district on Tuesday sentenced former state minister Gulabrao Gawande to three months' imprisonment for assaulting a government servant. Sessions court judge Manish Ganorkar also imposed a fine of Rs 2,500 on Gawande, a former MLA from Akot in the district.

Gawande was accused of getting into an altercation with an official of the Public Works Department over the quality of road construction work and assaulting him six years ago.

He was charged under IPC section 353 (Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty). The court acquitted another accused, former MLA Gajanan Dalu, from the case.

Gawande's lawyers said they would file an appeal and seek bail for their client. He has not been arrested yet. Manoj Bais, then deputy engineer with PWD, had filed a complaint that on May 31, 2013, Gawande and his supporters manhandled him, alleging that the quality of the construction of road between Balegaon and Akola was not good.

Awareness cum Capacity Building Workshop at KVK East



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

National Horticulture Board (Gangtok centre), Sikkim, sponsored one-day "Awareness cum capacity building workshop in Potential Horticulture Cluster Sprout Area of East Sikkim (Sikkim)" was successfully conducted at Kri-shi Vigyan Kendra, East Sikkim, Ranipool on 03 Dec, 2019 with partici-

pation of eighty farmers from various villages of East Sikkim district and presentation by scientists from ICAR-NOFRI, Tadong and faculty from CAEPHT, CAU, Ranipool.

A press release informs that Centre In-charge NHB, Gangtok (Sikkim), Alok Kumar, organized the one-day workshop in collaboration with Horticulture Department, Govern-

ment of Sikkim and Kri-shi Vigyan Kendra, East Sikkim (ICAR), Ranipool to spread awareness about various schemes of the board so that farmers may adopt the various horticulture activities with support from the board and other governmental agencies or through bank-loans for their social upliftment.

Deputy Director (Horticulture), JP Rai,

cal know-how.

He urged the different line departments to do more collaborative works for achieve the targeted goal of doubling the farmer's income by 2022. Professor (SWCE), CAEPHT (CAU), Prof Deepak Jhaharia, Ranipool covered the scope of plasticulture engineering technologies in northeast hill region with special reference to Sikkim. Scientist (Horticulture), Dr Sudip Kr Dutta, delivered a power point presentation on Hi-Tech cultivation of major fruits crops of Sikkim.

SMS (Plant Breeding), Dr JK Singh, SMS (Agronomy), Dr Manoj Kumar, SMS (Agromet), Santanu Das and Tirtha Chettri participated and helped in smooth running of the programme. The meeting ended with the vote of thanks from In-charge NHB (Gangtok), Alok Kumar.

addressed the gathering and interacted with the farmers to discuss problems and prospects of horticultural farming in their field. Head, Dr PK Pathak, KVK East Sikkim briefed about the different ongoing activities of KVK East Sikkim for upliftment of the rural livelihood and employment opportunity of the farmers through latest agricultural technologi-

Sikkim beats Arunachal in Cooch Behar Trophy



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

Sikkim Under-19 Men's Cricket team defeated Arunachal Pradesh in the Cooch Behar Trophy (Multi-Day) being played at KIIT Cricket Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Sikkim beat Arunachal Pradesh by 121 runs, earning 6 points for the team 02 Nov, 2019, a press release informs.

Arunachal Pradesh won the toss and chose to field first. Sikkim scored 223 runs in the first innings of which Pranav Rajvanshi the opening batsman scored 145 runs

becoming the first batsman of the team to score a century of the season.

In the first innings of Arunachal Pradesh they managed to score 195 runs. Sikkim bowlers bowled well to the opponent. Sankalp Singhai took 6 wickets, Md Aadil Alam 3 wickets, and Anwesh Karan Sharma 1 wickets. Sikkim was leading with 28 runs in the first innings.

In the second inning Sikkim scored 213 runs. Arun Chettri scored 64 runs, Subhojeet Halder (42), Anwesh Karan Sharma (19), Arif Ahmed

Ansari (18), Yogesh Gupta (13), Pranav Rajvansi (9), Robin Limboo and Ingsho Limboo (6) each. Chasing the target of 242 runs to win, Arunachal Pradesh was all out for 120 runs.

Once again Sikkim bowlers spelled brilliantly. Sankalp Singhai took 4 wickets, Md Aadil and Anwesh 2 wickets each, Ingsho Limboo and Bhim Lal Luitel 1 wicket each.

Salkalp took total 10 wickets in this match along with Md Aadil who took 5 wickets. Sikkim will play Puducherry next on 06 Dec at Siechem Stadium, Puducherry.

Chief Justice tours Namchi and Yangang



NAMCHI, 03 DEC (IPR): Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim, Justice Arup Kumar Goswami visited District and Sessions Court at Namchi, today. He was accompanied by Registrar General, KW Bhutia, OSD High Court of Sikkim, Subarna Rai and other officials.

Upon his arrival the Chief Justice was given a warm welcome by District and Sessions Judge (South), Jiwan Kharga, Chief Judicial Magistrate (South), Ranjita Pradhan, Senior Civil Judge cum Judicial Magistrate (South), Jwala D Thapa and other officials from District and Sessions Court, Namchi. A guard of honour was also presented by IRBn.

The Chief Justice inspected various divisions and sections under District and Sessions Court, Namchi.

During his visit he also met and interacted with the members of Namchi Bar Association wherein they briefed the Chief Justice regarding the working of the association. The Chief Justice gave them valuable suggestions, guidance and advise and enquired about the under construction building of Alternative Dispute Redressal Forum in the District and Sessions Court premises.

Thereafter, the Chief Justice visited Siddheswara Dhaam at Solophok along with other officials.

The Chief Justice along with other officials also visited and inspected Court of Civil Judge cum Judicial Magistrate at Yangang Subdivision and interacted with officials and staff.

Typhoon Kammuri kills two in Philippines, closes Manila airport

Typhoon Kammuri killed at least two people in the Philippines on Tuesday as it tore roofs of houses and forced the international airport in Manila to shut down. The storm roared ashore late Monday and passed south of Manila -- home to 13 million people -- and thousands of athletes at the regional Southeast Asian Games.

As the typhoon was exiting the Philippines it hit one last major landmass, the central island of Mindoro, where one man was crushed by a falling tree and another killed by a flying piece of lumber, police said. Ahead of the storm's arrival a 33-year-old man was electrocuted on Monday while securing a roof against the winds, which by late Tuesday weakened to a maximum of 140 kilometres (85 miles) per hour.

Authorities were still assessing the storm's impact, but a small local airport was seriously damaged, many power poles toppled and homes

were battered. "A lot of trees fell... There were a lot of roofs flying during the typhoon too," said Junie Castillo, a disaster officer in one of the areas first hit. Due to the high winds, Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport was "closed for operations", general manager Ed Monreal told AFP. It was not clear when flights would resume, but authorities gave an estimate of 11:00 pm (1500 GMT) Tuesday and said their decision would depend on the weather.

Nearly 500 flights were cancelled, and officials warned passengers not to come to the airport. One of the terminals AFP visited, which would normally be bustling with morning departures, was occupied by a handful of staff and stranded passengers. One traveller, 23-year-old Canadian Constance Benoit, was hit with a nearly day-long delay to her flight back home.

MP raises high altitude wage issue with Union Minister



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

Lok Sabha MP, Indra Hang Subba met Minister of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Narendra Sing Tomar at his office in the Parliament House and apprised him on various issues related to schemes under Rural Development Department, an SKM release informs.

The MP also submitted a letter regarding high altitude wage rate in MG-NREGA. He informed

the Minister that there are three Gram Panchayats viz. Lachen Dzumsa and Lachung Dzumsa under Chungthang Block in the North District and Gna-thang GP under Gangtok Block in East district which are at an altitude more than 8001 ft and they fall under the category of high altitude wage rate.

The Minister responded very positively and assured all possible help to the Department of Rural Development, Government of Sikkim.

India conducts...

500-1,000 kilograms of warheads and is powered by liquid propulsion twin engines.

The state-of-the-art missile uses an advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hit its target, the source said.

The missile was randomly chosen from the production stock and the entire launch activities were carried out by the Strategic Force Command (SFC) of the armed forces and monitored by the scientists of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of a training exercise.

"The trajectory of the missile was tracked by radars, electro-optical tracking systems and telemetry stations by the DRDO along the coast of Odisha," said the source. The downrange teams onboard the ship deployed near the designated impact point in the Bay of Bengal monitored the terminal events and splashdown.

Already inducted into the armoury of the defence forces in 2003, the nine-metre-tall, single-stage liquid-fuelled "Prithvi" is the first missile to have been developed by the DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

Rajya Sabha...

On the security breach at the residence of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, he said the security was informed that her brother Rahul Gandhi would be visiting her in a black "Tata Safari" SUV but instead of him some Congress workers from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh came in a similar vehicle and so were allowed in the house.

He said a high-level inquiry has been ordered into the security breach and three personnel have been suspended.

He said three members of Gandhi family have been given Z-plus top-grade security cover with ambulance and are guarded by personnel who were part of SPG previously.

Replying to the Left's charge of BJP acting with political vendetta, he said 120 workers of BJP and RSS have been killed in Kerala.

Protests continue...

media and social media and requested them to refer to her as "#Justice for Disha" to protect anonymity, confidentiality and the rights of the victim's family.

The gruesome rape and murder has led to a nation-wide public outrage.

The charred body of the woman, working as an assistant veterinarian at a state-run hospital, was found under a culvert in Shadnagar near here on November 28 morning, a day after she went missing.

The four men, all lorry workers, aged between 20 and 24, were arrested on November 29 for allegedly raping and killing the woman by smothering her and later burning her body. The four are under judicial custody and lodged in high security cells in Cherlapally Central Prison here where police tightened security by deploying additional personnel.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

For details contact: 9083826462

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

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

For more details: 9083826462 /9832556698

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College.

Flat Land no cutting required. Price 30 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

GYALSHING, 03 DEC (IPR): Minister-cum-MLA of Gyalshing Bermiok constituency, Lok Nath Sharma chaired a coordination meeting to prepare a comprehensive plan for the upcoming 315th Birth Anniversary of Teyongsi Sirijunga at Sirijunga premises, Martam, today.

Chief Minister of Sikkim, PS Tamang has consented to be the chief guest on the Birth Anniversary of Tyeongsi Sirijunga at Martam on 12 Dec, 2019.

The meeting had open interaction on

initial progress of the preparations made for the celebration and further discussed at length on logistical and other arrangements including ritual worship, construction of stage, power connectivity, water supply, sanitation, culture programme, arrangement of furniture, fooding, transportation etc. Thereafter the work responsibilities have been distributed to different assignees for smooth accomplishment of the programme.

Minister, Mr Sharma who is also the Chief Patron of the Organiz-

ing Committee, in his brief address, marked the Birth Anniversary of Sirijunga as a spiritual programme and urged people to fulfill assigned responsibilities with complete dedications and contributions.

Further, he called for active coordination and cooperation to succeed comprehensive preparatory plan with selfless spirit and devotion. Further he advised to maintain sanctity and religious ethos within the Sirijunga premises and surrounding area as a mark of respect of spiritual centre.



SMIT students march for women's safety

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

Students of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, Majhitar, East Sikkim took out a candle light march on Monday to protest

against rape and violence against women.

The march started from the college campus, covered Majhitar bazaar and ended back in the college.

Around 200 students including profes-

sors and head of administration of SMIT were present in the candle march.

The march was held in protest of the gang rape and murder of a veterinary doctor in Hyderabad last week.

UCWSS discusses Sikkim Christmas Mahotsav

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

A meeting of United Christian Welfare Society of Sikkim [UCWSS], East District, was held here at UCWSS office on Monday. The meeting, which was chaired by UCWSS president, Elder Patrus Gurung, was

attended by other office bearers of the organization, a press release informs.

After thorough discussion, the meeting unanimously decided to organize Sikkim Christmas Mahotsav 2019 in a grand manner on 22 and 23 December at Gangtok.

Namsoong celebration scheduled for 02-04 Jan



MANGAN, 03 DEC (IPR): Minister for Roads and Bridges-cum-Patron-in-chief for Namsoong Celebration Committee, Samdup Lepcha chaired a preparatory meeting for Namsoong celebration with the Heads of Departments of North District here at the Conference Hall of Election Office, DAC, Mangan, today.

The meeting was attended by Dzongu MLA, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, District Collector, North, Tenzing T Kaleon, Superintendent of Police, North, Sonam Gyatso Bhutia, and other dignitaries. It was unanimously decided that the tentative date for Namsoong celebration would be 02 to 04 Jan, 2020.

Minister, Mr Lepcha assured that he will serve the committee sincerely.

The Minister directed GREF and the Roads and Bridges Department to keep the road clear leading up to Nampridkang ground and clean up the blockages lying on either side of road. Further, he hoped that these Namsoong celebrations will be a landmark event.

Furthermore, he stressed on better traffic system, proper electrification, smooth road condition, regular water supply and cleanliness during the celebration.

MLA, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha extended gratitude on behalf of the people of Dzongu to the Minister for accepting the post of Chief Patron for Namsoong Celebration Committee. He sought better co-ordination from every department to make the festival a grand success.

During the meeting, the District Collector, North, Tenzing T Kaleon gave instructions to HoDs of the various line departments of the District and informed that today's meeting is basically conducted to entrust their respective duties pertaining to the celebration.

Superintendent of Police, North, Sonam Gyatso Bhutia assured that the law and order will be maintained in a smooth way during the celebrations.

General Secretary, Namsoong Celebration Committee, Samten Lepcha said that Namsoong is one of the oldest festivals celebrated in Sikkim. He requested support from the District Administrative Centre to make this festival a grand success.

Preparations on for student fest Aurora 2019



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

Fifth meeting of organising committee of Aurora 2019 at Duga, East Sikkim, was held in the premises of Sunrise Academy today where committee badges were handed over to all executive members by president, DB Chettri.

Aurora 2019 "the rising" a first of its kind student fest is going to be held at Duga, West Pendang Constituency from 12-20 December.

The fest will have Volleyball, Badminton and International Kara-

te Championship under the guidance of Karate Association India (KAI), acting, singing, dance, debate, quiz, speech, fashion show, blood donation camp, free health check-up camps, various exhibition stalls by young entrepreneurs of Sikkim.

Different schools of neighbouring constituencies have also confirmed their participation in the Fest.

Mr Chettri, president of the organising team, informed that 1st Indo Nepal Karate Championship 2019 will be organised during the first three

days from 11 to 13 Dec.

The Karate Championship will be organised in association with Sikkim United Self Defense Shito-Ryu Karate Association affiliated with Shito-Ryu Karate Association of India.

Poem recitation competition in two categories - up to 10 years and from 10 to 16 years will be organised.

Open Extempore Competition will be organised on 19 Dec. Fashion show for the children from 8-15 years will be the special attraction on 18 Dec. [from Sanjay Agarwal]

As if we produce mosquito larvae: Mamata slams oppn for politicising dengue deaths in Bengal

KOLKATA, DEC 3 (PTI): Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Tuesday that 27 people have died of dengue this year in West Bengal, as she hit out at the opposition "for politicising" the issue.

Banerjee, while speaking during a discussion on the matter in the Assembly, said around 44,000 people are affected by the vector-borne disease in the state.

"We don't want any deaths. We have been able to save thousands of people who were affected by the vector-borne disease. But the opposition parties of the state instead of raising awareness are only interested in politicising the matter," she said.

"In the health sector, Bengal is a model for the entire country. But the opposition parties are only interested in maligning the state to serve their own po-

litical interests," Banerjee added. She said around 85 people died of dengue in 2018 and the state government has been able to bring down the number of deaths this year.

"Around 3,000 doctors, 4,000 nurses and 51,000 government employees are working day and night to tackle the menace of dengue in the state. Around Rs 475 crore has been allotted to tackle dengue," she said.

Comparing the number of deaths that occurred during the erstwhile Left Front government in Bengal and in other Congress and BJP-ruled states due to malaria, swine flu and dengue, Banerjee lauded the efforts of the TMC government for "better handling of the menace".

Asserting that she was not taking the dengue outbreak lightly by citing figures of previous

years, she said even if one person dies due to the vector-borne disease, it is sad and efforts should be made to prevent that.

"Unless and until we ourselves are aware, the problem can't be solved. The opposition is behaving in such a way that as if we produce these dengue larvae," she said. "If we were really able to produce these mosquitoes we would have asked them to bite CPI(M), Congress and BJP, so that they can understand the pain before making baseless allegations against the government," Banerjee said.

Criticising the CPI(M) and the Congress for walking out of the House as their demand for discussion be held on the issue under Rule 185 was allowed, Banerjee said if the opposition was not willing to hear the government then what was the need for discussion.

Pickleball team leaves for All India Championship



SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 03 DEC:

A five-member Sikkim Pickleball Association [SPA] left for the All India Pickleball Ranking Championship 2019 to be held from 06 to 08 December at Shree Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex, Balewadi Stadium, Pune in Maharashtra.

The state team has

Thupden Dorjee and Priya Gurung from Bahai School, and Samridhi Sharma, Ananthika Chhetri and Bhumiika Sherpa from Paljor Namgyal Girls senior secondary school.

The team, which was accompanied by coach, Sangay Tshering Lepcha of Bahai School, left for the tournament on Monday.

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DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
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WALK IN INTERVIEW

CRTI, an autonomous body under the Department of Information Technology, Government of Sikkim is conducting a "Walk in Interview" on 10th January 2020 for filling up 1(one) post of System Engineer and 1(one) post of BMS/NOC/Helpdesk Engineer of State Data Centre.

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In Pursuit of Happiness

...no, not mercenary materialism

No, this is not a moral science lesson. It will however begin with reference to an international conference the State Government had organized several years back on “Science, Spirituality and Education” with the Dalai Lama as a special guest and speaker. The conference was motivated by a felt need to work on school curriculums in a way that would tease out more empathy and deeper engagements from students and deliver Sikkim the much-needed involved citizenry for the future.

The Dalai Lama had charmed the audience with his ready wit and open mind and set the conference on course by suggesting that the participants deliberate over how common sense, and not necessarily religious regimen, if harnessed with conscious empathy, could deliver an education which inculcated moral ethics. Individual moral ethics, he stressed would link together to deliver genuine social empathy which would in turn manifest in the evolution of more compassionate societies peopled by citizens with a stronger sense of universal responsibility and calmer dispositions. Strife and an unbridled pursuit of material acquisitions, whether at the individual or collective community level, have come to define the 21st century which has now almost made a virtue out of mercenary materialism. Proof of this faulty prioritization is apparent in how “happiness” is now increasingly being sought in acquisitions and not so much in the satisfaction derived from contributing to the world. While the former results in competition and hence conflict, the latter is a more personal experience which is not in competition with anyone else and hence does not lead to strife. Also, as societies get more and more obsessive with acquiring more to be happy, they can also slip into depression when they cannot gather enough ‘benefits’. Sikkim should understand this phenomenon well because it has to be accepted that apathy - that listless lack of interest and refusal to get excited or engage - underlines social response and engagements here.

This apathy does not necessarily stem from denial or oppression, but is born from an inferred sense of loss over not having “acquired enough”. Even as this manifests in listlessness in outward behaviour, internally, the mind is agitated and it is perhaps in this internal disquiet that Sikkim can find the reasons to explain the high suicide rates, addiction and other social challenges, including corruption and even the universal inurement towards dishonesty. Obviously, what has happened in Sikkim, as in societies across the world, is that the pursuit has been for a warped interpretation of happiness, one that is incomplete.

Sikkim requires to seek out answers on how to address the paradox of so many social ills haunting a land of such few material worries. Expecting solutions to be provided and executed by someone else or the government would doom the possible solutions to failure because social course-corrections require social engagement, not governmental or even divine interventions. To return to what the Dalai Lama has often said, Change depends on individual action. Divine intervention, he stresses, is fine so long as it is for individual consolation, but for change and betterment, it is individual action that is needed. This proactive engagement needs to be internalised by Sikkim at the individual, then community and governance levels. A generation groomed with a stronger sense of universal responsibility will also be one with a clearer sense of self and more importantly, with more respect for the aspirations and needs of others. That is the kind of generation which Sikkim needs to reach out for and chalk up as resolution for the New Year...

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Sadfishing: Frequently sharing deeply emotional posts online may be a sign of a deeper psychological issue

CHRISTOPHER HAND
theconversation.com

When Kendall Jenner recently shared a series of emotionally-charged Instagram posts about her experiences with acne, the 24-year-old model was immediately accused by many online observers of “sadfishing” – particularly because the post was a paid brand partnership with a skincare product used to treat acne.

Although the term “sadfishing” is relatively recent – coined at the beginning of 2019 by writer Rebecca Reid – many people are probably familiar with the act of fishing for sympathy online, whether they’ve seen it happen, or are guilty of it themselves. Reid defines sadfishing as the act of posting sensitive, emotional personal material online to gain sympathy or attention from the online community.

“Lots of us sadfish sometimes, and that’s okay. Attention seeking is a perfectly legitimate thing. There’s nothing wrong with wanting attention.” — Rebecca Reid (@RebeccaCNReid) October 1, 2019

However, sadfishing is increasingly being used to accuse people of attention-seeking, to criticise people, or to belittle a person’s online content – whether they were actually sadfishing or not. When Justin Bieber made a post detailing his mental health struggles, for example, he was met with a variety of responses, including accusations of sadfishing. However, it’s almost impossible to know if someone is genuinely sadfishing or not. And everyone from regular people to politicians and entertainers have been accused of sadfishing for attention or trying to exaggerate the importance of a particular issue.

The concept of online “sadfishing” is relatively new, which means there’s currently no research examining these behaviours. However, parallels can be drawn with sadfishing and general attention-seeking behaviour, where a person acts out to gain attention, sympathy, or validation from others. Attention-seeking behaviour is associated with low self-esteem, loneliness, narcissism, or Machiavellianism (the desire to manipulate other people).

However, it’s difficult to understand the motivations of social media users just by reading through their posts or online activity. It might be the case that so-called sadfishing posts are intended to genuinely highlight an important or sensitive is-

sue, such as depression or anxiety. Others might simply be sharing information with little regard for the response it might generate. Some so-called sadfishing posts might even exist only to exploit or provoke readers.

ATTENTION-SEEKING AND SADFISHING

Although everyone can be guilty of sadfishing, celebrities are more commonly accused of sadfishing by online users, especially if they’ve shared personal details about struggles they’ve faced.



These accusations can often become hostile, with many celebrities becoming victims of online abuse as a result. But what impact does even just observing online abuse have on observers?

Recent research had participants read a series of celebrity tweets, some of which were emotionally negative. They were then asked to judge if these celebrities were to blame for any abuse that they received. The study found that the way a person perceived the severity of online abuse depended upon how strongly they exhibited narcissism, Machiavellianism, or psychopathy – the so-called “dark triad”. Results showed that people who exhibited higher dark triad characteristics gave less sympathy to celebrities.

It’s likely that if a person exhibits these dark triad personality traits, they will be more likely to judge posts as less genuine, or an example of sadfishing. It’s also likely that these traits influence whether or not a person is a sadfisher. People who score high in narcissism and Machiavellianism are more likely to exhibit attention-seeking behaviour – which may mean they’re more likely to sadfish.

But like real-world attention-seeking behaviour, sadfishing might reflect a deeper problem, such as a personality disorder. For example, histrionic personality disorder is characterised by high levels of attention-seeking, and begins in early adulthood. These people have an excessive need for approval, are dramatic, exaggerate, and long for appreciation.

Sadfishers may be hard to recognise, unless they admit to these behaviours openly. Although presenting sensitive or deeply personal information publicly might lead to accusations of sadfishing, it’s possible that these accusations may be incorrect. Wrongly accusing someone of sadfishing when they’ve genuinely reached out for support – rather than for attention – can have a powerful impact on that person’s health.

A person wrongly accused of sadfishing may be at risk of experiencing lowered self-esteem, anxiety, and shame. They might also be discouraged from seeking support from family, friends, partners, or support workers.

But people who deliberately “go sadfishing” should know their actions can potentially effect the well-being of others. Posting deeply emotional content, such as about serious health concerns, might also cause readers to experience anxiety, physical or mental stress. Although social media can provide a supportive place for people to talk about their mental health or other health issues, it’s important to know that disingenuous posts could do more harm than good.

Social media users should think carefully about what information they share and with who. Those genuinely needing support might find it better to reach out to people close to them privately as they might be able to provide support, or even share their own experiences. It’s also important to make contact with support services such as healthcare providers or professional support groups.

Despite its new name, sadfishing is simply just a new label for attention seeking. This deliberate attention seeking can have a negative impact on both the person writing the post, and those reading it.

[the writer is Lecturer, Psychology, Glasgow Caledonian University]

Dopamine fasting: an expert reviews the latest craze in Silicon Valley

CIARA MCCABE
theconversation.com

It’s the latest fad in Silicon Valley. By reducing the brain’s feel-good chemical known as dopamine – cutting back on things like food, sex, alcohol, social media and technology – followers believe that they can “reset” the brain to be more effective and appreciate simple things more easily. Some even go so far as avoiding all social activities, and even eye contact.

The exercise, dubbed “dopamine fasting” by San Francisco psychologist Dr Cameron Sepah, is now getting increasing international attention. But what exactly is it? And does it work? As someone who studies the brain’s reward system, I’d like to share my knowledge with you.

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter – a chemical messenger produced in the brain. It is sent around the brain conveying signals related to functions such as motor control, memory, arousal and reward processing. For example, too little dopamine can result in disorders like Parkinson’s Disease, involving symptoms of muscle rigidity, tremors and changes in speech and gait. One of the treatments for Parkinson’s is the drug L-DOPA, which can cross the blood-brain barrier and be converted into dopamine to help ease the symptoms.

Dopamine is also important in the reward system in the brain. It is activated by primary rewards like food, sex and drugs. Importantly, the brain’s reward system can “learn” over time – cues in our environment that we associate with potential rewards can increase the activity of dopamine even in the absence of an actual reward. So just being in a sweet shop and thinking about sweets can activate our brain’s dopamine.

This expectation and anticipation of rewards is called the “wanting” in neuroscience language. As one of the main symptoms of depression is

“anhedonia” – the lack of wanting, interest and pleasure in normally rewarding experiences – dysfunctional dopamine regulation has also been linked to this disorder. Some treatments for depression, such as the drug bupropion, are designed to increase dopamine levels in the brain.

So, given the important role of dopamine in vital functions in the human brain, why would we want to fast from it?

day normal functions. Further, simply banning a particular reward, like social media, isn’t going to reduce the levels of dopamine per se, but rather it can help reduce the stimulation of dopamine.

Therefore it is possible to reduce the amount of dopamine activity. But the key to doing this is to reduce our exposure to the triggers associated with the rewards that initiate the wanting for the rewards in the first

out the unhealthy behaviours.

For example, if you go on your phone too much in the evenings when you are alone, try turning off the notifications sounds. This way dopamine is not being activated by the cues and therefore not signalling the urges to pick up the phone. And if you think you drink too much alcohol – ending up in bars with work colleagues most nights of the week – try to go some-



The idea of dopamine fasting is based on the knowledge that dopamine is involved in unhealthy addictive behaviours.

As described, dopamine underpins wanting. For instance, a drug addict may say they no longer want to take drugs. But when in certain places where drug-related cues are present, the brain’s wanting system kicks in and addicts are overcome with strong urges to take the drug. Dopamine fasters believe that they can reduce desires and craving for unhealthy and even unwanted behaviours by reducing dopamine.

DOES IT WORK?

First we need to be clear, it is certainly not advisable, even if we could, to reduce the amount of dopamine in the brain as we need it for every-

place. After all, it is these cues that initiate the craving and the desires to engage in behaviours that help us get the rewards. Thus just cutting out rewards doesn’t necessarily stop the brain from making us crave them – activating dopamine.

However, that this would “reset the brain” is not really correct – there is no way of even knowing what the baseline is. So from a neuroscience perspective, this is nonsense for the time being.

If you find that you want to cut down on what you feel are unhealthy behaviours, such as spending too much time on social media or overeating, then you could start by reducing your exposure to the environmental cues that trigger the desires to carry

where else in the evenings, such as the cinema.

The symptoms of unhealthy behaviours are similar to the signs of substance abuse. These might include spending the majority of the time engaging in the behaviour, continuing the behaviour despite physical and/or mental harm, having trouble cutting back despite wanting to stop and neglecting work, school or family. You may even experience symptoms of withdrawal (for example, depression, irritability) when trying to stop.

In these instances, you may want to think about removing the cues that stimulate your dopamine neurons – a sort of dopamine fasting.

[the writer is Associate Professor, University of Reading]

West Bengal NH toll plazas ready for FASTag: Official



KOLKATA, DEC 3 (PTI): All the 15 toll plazas of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) in West Bengal are ready for implementation of FASTag from December 15, a senior official said on Tuesday.

The National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC), an initiative of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, seeks to ensure seamless movement of traffic and collection of user fee as per notified rates, using passive radio frequency identification (RFID) technology.

The Ministry had announced

that from December 1, toll payments on highways would be accepted only through FASTags, later extending the deadline to December 15.

"All the 17 toll plazas under my command, including 15 in West Bengal and one each in Jharkhand and Odisha, are ready with the requisite infrastructure for FASTag," NHAI Bengal Chief General Manager (CGM) R P Singh told PTI.

While the NHAI will continue to operate at least one 'cash lane' in each toll plaza, vehicles entering the FASTag lanes with-

out the tags will have to pay double the toll, the official said.

Singh said he couldn't speak on the number of such tags being sold in the state as several agencies are involved in the selling.

"We are distributing FASTags for free at all the toll plazas but some banks are also selling them," he said.

Several banks are selling the tags at prices ranging from Rs 25 to Rs 100, sources said.

One has to link the FASTags with a payment gateway or a bank for usage. All the available

mode of recharges such as debit card, credit card, net banking and Unified Payments Interface have been enabled for loading money to the FASTag account.

The NHAI has started help-line number '1033' for any assistance regarding FASTag.

The Dhulagarh toll plaza in Howrah district is the busiest in the state, with an average of 45,000 to 46,000 vehicles crossing it every day, followed by the one at Palsit in East Burdwan district, which witnesses daily traffic of around 40,000 vehicles, NHAI officials said.

WB assembly adjourned for two days as bills slated to be placed yet to get governor's nod

KOLKATA, DEC 3 (PTI): In an unprecedented development, West Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee Tuesday adjourned the House for two days as bills slated to be placed in the assembly are yet to get the nod of Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

The House will remain adjourned till December 5, Banerjee said in the Assembly.

The House will again start the session from December 6 at 11 am, he said.

"The House will be adjourned for two days. The bills which were scheduled to be placed won't be tabled as they

are yet to receive the nod of the governor:

"We had sent those bills for printing but can't place them in the Assembly as they are yet to get the nod," Banerjee said.

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar is at loggerheads with the TMC government on a number of issues.

Last week he had hit out at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "humiliating" him "on every occasion" and not briefing him regularly.

Dhankhar had also slammed Speaker Biman Banerjee for "violating protocol".

Jailed Lalu re-elected RJD chief

PATNA, DEC 3 (PTI): Incarcerated Lalu Prasad was on Tuesday re-elected as the national president of his Rashtriya Janata Dal for the 11th consecutive term, though the charismatic leader remained conspicuous by his absence here on the occasion.

Prasad, who had founded the party in 1997, is at Ranchi serving sentences in fodder scam cases and his nomination papers were sub-

mitted at the RJD state headquarters by his sons Tejashwi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav.

Prasad's duly authorised papers were brought here by close aide and party MLA Bho-la Yadav, filed in presence of other RJD bigwigs like national vice president Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and state president Jagadanand Singh among others.

He was subsequently declared elected unopposed.

Sule pitches for social security for media personnel



NEW DELHI, DEC 3 (PTI): NCP member Supriya Sule on Tuesday pitched for social security for media personnel, saying in times of "breaking news", they work for long hours under harsh conditions.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, she said when Maharashtra was witnessing a political crisis, she saw camerapersons riding pillion

on two wheelers following politicians.

"It is dangerous ... There were women reporters who stood outside houses (of politicians) without washrooms and food," she said.

Sule asked members to give their views on social security for media personnel so that the issue can be taken forward.

Kolkata cops reach Delhi to probe bank frauds; Romanian, Turkish gangs under scanner



KOLKATA, DEC 3 (PTI): City cops are taking help of the Delhi Police to probe the cases of bank frauds after over 50 people complained that money was withdrawn from their accounts, a senior official said on Tuesday.

A team of the Kolkata Police is visiting the national capital to probe the complaints of frauds, which is believed to have originated from there, said Murli Dhar, Joint Commissioner of Police (crime).

In the last two-three days, Jadavpur and Cha-

ru Market police stations have received 44 and 13 complaints, respectively, involving a combined amount of Rs 14 lakh.

"All the money has been withdrawn from Delhi and it is surmised that Romanian or Turkish gangs are behind the fraudulent operation," he said.

The cases at Jadavpur and Charu Market police stations are being probed together by the anti-bank fraud team of the Kolkata Police, the officer said.

He said police have spoken to bank officials who have assured that

measures are being taken to prevent such frauds in the future.

They have told police that anti-skimming devices are being installed at ATMs.

"We have told the bank to repay the affected customers as soon as possible," he said. Police teams will also patrol areas, particularly where unguarded ATMs are located, the officer said.

He said bank officials have suggested that customers should alter their ATM PINs frequently as a preventive measure.

SC to hear after four weeks PIL seeking greater autonomy for ECI



NEW DELHI, DEC 3 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear after four weeks a PIL seeking that the chief election commissioner and election commissioners be appointed by a three-member collegium.

The collegium will comprise the prime minister, the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha and

the chief justice of India.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant took note of submissions that the plea needed an urgent hearing.

"We will list it for hearing after four weeks," the bench said.

BJP leader and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay

has filed the PIL seeking to ensure more autonomy for the chief election commissioner's (CEC) office and election commissioners.

The plea has also sought an independent secretariat for the Election Commission of India (ECI) and that it should also be given the power to make rules.

No coercive step against WB Cong leader, HC to police

KOLKATA, DEC 3 (PTI): The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday directed the West Bengal police not to take any coercive step against state Congress leader Sanmoy Bandopadhyay, whose arrest in October for "violating" the Cyber Crime Act had led to a political furor.

Justice Sabyasachi Bhattacharya also directed the police to preserve video footage of his arrest from his residence and incarceration at Khardah police station in North 24 Parganas district.

The court directed the police not to take any coercive step against Bandopadhyay, a Congress spokesman

in West Bengal, till further orders.

Bandopadhyay had moved the high court seeking quashing of the FIR against him by the police, claiming that it was based on trumped-up charges. He also alleged that he was subjected to physical torture at the Khardah police station on the night of his arrest.

The court posted the matter for further hearing in January again.

Bandopadhyay, who was arrested by Purulia district police for alleged violation of the Cyber Crime Act on October 17, was granted bail by a court there after three days.

Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury had accused the police of arresting Bandopadhyay for circulating posts critical of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) government.

Bandopadhyay's arrest is a classic example of intolerance of the highest order, Chowdhury had alleged.

Reacting to the allegations, senior TMC leader and party chief whip in state Assembly, Nirmal Ghosh had said Bandopadhyay was arrested as there were several criminal charges against him and claimed that it had nothing to do with criticism of the state government.

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MP farmer claims onions worth Rs 30k stolen

MANDSAUR (MP), DEC 3 (PTI): A farmer has alleged that thieves harvested and carted away seven quintals of onions worth over Rs 30,000 from his field in Mand-saur in Madhya Pradesh, police said on Tuesday.

Onions, now the staple of political debates besides the kitchen due to its skyrocketing prices, are retailing at Rs 100-120 per kilogram across the country.

The incident here, which took place in the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday, is the second one reported in the state over the last few days.

Farmer Jitendra Kumar of Richha Bachha vil-

lage has claimed thieves took away his onion crop, weighing seven quintals, spread over four highas (1.6 acres), Narayangarh police station in charge RS Bilwal said.

"The complainant has told us the stolen crop was worth Rs 30,000. A team will visit the site to assess the complaint details and then further action will follow," Bilwal said.

Earlier last week, a trader from Shivpuri district had filed a police complaint claiming his truck carrying 40 tonnes of onions, worth Rs 20-22 lakh, was stolen while being transported from Nashik in Maharashtra to Gorakh-pur in Uttar Pradesh.

JNU students' protest over fee hike spread to IIMC



NEW DELHI, DEC 3 (PTI): The protest against hostel fee hike at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University spread to the neighbouring IIMC on Tuesday, where stu-

dents protested against the "unaffordable fee structure". Indian Institute of Mass Communication students staged a strike in the campus against the high tuition

fee and "unruly" hostel and mess charges, they said.

JNU has been seeing a strike by students for close to four weeks against hostel fee hike.

THE BIRDS HAVE LOST THEIR WAY

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.

EDITED BY
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ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM

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Megan Rapinoe's clean sweep is reward for excellence on and off field

SUZANNE WRACK
theGuardian

It is a clean sweep. Megan Rapinoe's lifting of the Ballon d'Or adds to a stunning year for the 34-year-old forward. A World Cup, Golden Ball, Golden Boot, Fifa best player of the year is joined by perhaps the most coveted individual prize.

"I can't believe I'm the one winning it in this field," said Rapinoe, in a video because she was unable to attend the awards ceremony in Paris. With Uefa's European player of the year, Lucy Bronze, finishing behind her, her USA teammate Alex Morgan third and a shortlist that included the NWSL and W-League top scorer, Sam Kerr and Arsenal's WSL golden boot winner, and the Netherlands all-time top scorer, Vivianne Miedema, Rapinoe is right to be as humbled as she seemed.

Yes, her domestic season was modest. No goals, no assists and six starts for Reign FC, partly owing to the NWSL season being played during the World Cup. However, it is hard to think of many others – any others – who could have shouldered the weight of on-field and off-field responsibilities in such empathic style.

Critics point to the



three penalties that contributed to Rapinoe's six World Cup goals as a sign of the winger benefiting from a heavy dose of good fortune. But where she stepped up, many others faltered. At 1-0 down in their last-16 tie against Sweden, Canada's record goalscorer, Christine Sinclair, who was then two goals shy of the international goal-scoring record, passed the penalty-taking buck on to Manchester City's Janine Beckie, whose effort was saved.

Nikita Parris's two penalty misses against Argentina and Norway led to her being relieved of that particular duty,

leaving Steph Houghton to step up and attempt to level their semi-final with USA from the spot. Her tame effort was saved by Alyssa Naeher. In other words, taking penalties is not easy and taking penalties in a World Cup is even harder.

The calm efficiency with which Rapinoe dispatched one after another is worthy of praise, not criticism. That she did while surrounded by a media frenzy that would provoke many others to buckle is all the more impressive.

When the video emerged of Rapinoe saying: "I'm not going to the fucking White House"

in response to being asked whether the USA team would visit Donald Trump should they win the World Cup and receive an invitation, she could have distanced herself and chosen to adopt the often repeated "I'm focused on the football" mantra. Instead she embraced the platform she had been given.

"Megan should win first before she talks," Trump tweeted in response. "Megan should never disrespect our Country, the White House, or our Flag, especially since so much has been done for her & the team."

With her own words

threatening to come back and bite her, Rapinoe scored twice. Not in a walkable game but in a quarter-final against the hosts, France, at Parc des Princes, a game many had hoped would be the final.

Via video in Paris on Monday, the 34-year-old's message was unusually standard, a series of thank yous "to my teammates, coaches and the US Soccer Federation for allowing me to be the person I am on the pitch but also the one I am off it."

It is possible Rapinoe felt she had said her piece at September's Fifa Best awards. There

she used a brutally honest and radical speech to condemn racism and homophobia, launching an impassioned plea to the footballing elite and beyond to "lend your platform to other people. Lift other people up. Share your success. We have a unique opportunity in football, different to any other sport in the world, to use this beautiful game to actually change the world for better. That's my charge to everyone. I hope you take that to heart and just do something. Do anything."

Her nod to Raheem Sterling and Kalidou Koulibaly's stances on racism, Iran's "Blue Girl" Sahar Khodayari, the gay footballer Collin Martin, female LGBTQ footballers and the battle for equal pay was coupled with a call to arms, a challenge for their voices not to be the lone voice.

In 2019, Rapinoe has discovered how best to use her voice to amplify those of others. That the chant of "equal pay" echoed from the Stade de Lyon to the field of Burlington high school reflects how far her and the influence of the US team extends. But let's not forget that none of that would be possible without a series of extraordinary individual performances in extraordinary circumstances.

Messi takes leadership in his stride to clinch sixth Ballon d'Or

MADRID, DEC 3 (AFP): Lionel Messi won a record-breaking sixth Ballon d'Or on Monday after another sublime year for the Argentinian, whose familiar brilliance remained undimmed even through difficult times for club and country.

Despite Barcelona's collapse at the end of last season and Argentina losing to Brazil in the semi-finals of the Copa America, Messi's genius was ever-present in 2019, for which he now stands alone in the history of the game's most prestigious individual prize.

Four years after his last Ballon d'Or, Messi pulled clear of the five next to the name of Cristiano Ronaldo, and now owns twice as many as Johan Cruyff, Michel Platini and Marco van Basten.

In 54 appearances this year, Messi has managed an astonishing 46 goals and 17 assists while for Barca alone he hit 41 goals and 15 assists in 44 matches, which included seven doubles and three hat-tricks.

"It's like he is extra-terrestrial," said Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde in March.

"Every time he gets the ball something extraordinary seems to happen."

Messi's first season as club captain brought a third consecutive La Liga title and he scored the winner in the game that clinched it, a 1-0 victory over Levante.

He also claimed his sixth Pichichi Trophy as the division's top scorer, with 36 goals in 34 matches.

But Barcelona unravelled as their 3-0 advantage over Liverpool -- to which Messi contributed a brace -- went up in smoke at Anfield and the club crashed out in the semi-finals of the Champions League.

They were then beaten by Valencia in the final of the Copa del Rey, when Messi's tap-in proved a consolation, but it was his voice that spoke loudest in defence of coach Valverde, whose survival owed much to the support of his captain.

Messi had led the way on the pitch too, particularly during the run-in when he scored 16 goals in 12 games as Barcelona put together a relentless winning streak. "This league has one person's name on it," wrote Diario Sport.

- 50TH CAREER HAT-TRICK -

He scored his 50th career hat-trick in a 4-2 win at Sevilla and in April, another hat-trick began with a free-kick into the top corner and ended with a sweeping chip from the edge of the area that was so good even the Real Betis fans felt compelled to applaud.

When asked about their reaction, Messi said: "To be honest I don't remember anything like that."

His goal was nominated in the FIFA Puskas Award's 10-long shortlist.

"I have not seen any player like Messi in the history of football," said Betis coach Quique Setien. "His goal was something you do playing Playstation."

Indian attack is fantastic but spinners tend to struggle in Australia: Ponting

MELBOURNE, DEC 3 (PTI): Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting is in awe of India's "fantastic" pace attack but feels their spinners tend to struggle Down Under, making his country's bowling unit a stronger force here.

Helped by an impressive battery of fast bowlers, led by Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma, India have risen to the pinnacle of Test rankings. The trio also played an instrumental role in the breakthrough series win in Australia last summer.

Ponting said even though India currently boast of a strong bowling attack, their spinners tend to struggle when it comes to playing in Australian conditions. "I'm taking ours every day of the week. India's is fantastic; Bumrah and Shami have been amazing for the last couple of years and then you put Umesh Yadav into the equation with Ishant Sharma, they've got some very, very good fast bowlers," Ponting was quoted as saying by 'cricket.com.au'.

"And when you put (spinners Ravi) Ashwin and (Ravi) Jadeja in there, their attack is very good. But their spinners struggle more in Australia, Nathan Lyon has a much better record in Australia than the Indian spinners have," he added. Australia recently defeated Pakistan 2-0 in the two-match Test series to move to the second position in the World Test Championship rankings behind India.

Atlético Madrid get on the wrong side of Lionel Messi's genius once again

SID LOW
theGuardian

"It smelt of danger," Diego Simeone said. Late on Sunday night, all drenched in black, Atlético Madrid's manager could see it coming and so could everyone else, a ball collected 50 yards out that felt like an open goal. Chests tightened: there was a long way to go, a lot of defenders in front of him – five six, seven of them – a passage so tight and a target so small it was hard enough to see, let alone hit, but it already felt like Lionel Messi had escaped. They had, after all, seen this so many times before: the same moment, the same movement, the same outcome, simultaneously happening in slow motion and stuck on fast-forward, which defines him somehow. It was all so very Messi.

He had been waiting, watching, Simeone said. Now, with four minutes left Messi went, like Luke Skywalker beginning his approach into the trench. "He's infallible when he runs; he has the radar open," Ernesto Valverde said. Inside he went, away from Saúl Ñíguez. Away from Thomas Partey. He played the ball to Luis Suárez and kept going, brushing past Thomas again. Almost there, almost there. Suárez gave it straight back. And then, enclosed but able to see the light, just in range, Messi guided the kind of shot that destroys the Death Star. Press pause the way he seems able to press pause and you see four men alongside him, an alley where the only route out is his route, a tiny opening between Jan Oblak's hand and the post. Which, with astonishing inevitability, is exactly where it went.

"A golazo, a golazo," Simeone said afterwards. "All you can do is applaud." He didn't actually do so of course as Messi dashed off celebrating, thudding his chest, teammates pilling on, but you knew what he meant. He'd been powerless there, they all had, and now they were beaten. It hadn't been Messi's best game, some said: just the 66 passes, nine dribbles, three chances created, and one 60-yard run. But with the 99th touch of his 701st game, the night before he was expected to collect his sixth Balon d'Or – more than anyone else ever and still less than he might have done – he had won another match. 85 minutes, one-nil again.

There was much else to pick up from this game: Greizmann's poor return to the Metropolitano, toy rats on his plaque outside, his



every touch whistled and his one shot sailing over; Ivan Rakitic's return to the team; Suárez's overlooked, decisive role in every clear chance to Héctor Herrera's performance in midfield; Kieran Trippier's superb crossing; Atlético's new reality, Simeone calling this "a transitional year". Above all, it had been Marc-André ter Stegen, hands so fast, wrists so strong. But then it became about Messi again. And if that suggests Messi gets talked about too much, the opposite might actually be true.

Eighteen months ago, Simeone had said if you get Messi to swap sides, you get a different result. That day, a Messi free kick – that other signature goal of his – had given Barcelona a 1-0 win at the Camp Nou. Now it had happened again only in Madrid, rounding off a week that might have sunk Barcelona but which saw them still on top, set for the season. Victorious against Dortmund on Wednesday, four days later they had beaten Atlético too. "These are games that win you the league," Sergi Roberto said.

"Messi and the same story as ever," AS's headline called it. "That showed what it is to have the world's best player," Atlético director Clemente Villaverde said. "He's the one that makes the difference. The reason why he's the best is that he does it with terrible ease," Saúl insisted. So much ease that people make the mistake of thinking it's easy, a failure every time he doesn't do it. Which really isn't that often, considering. As Jorge Valdano once put it: "Messi is Maradona every day." Even Maradona wasn't Maradona every day.

This goal, another winner, was Messi's first at the Wanda Metropolitano. Against Atlético, at least: he had scored here in the Copa del Rey final against Sevilla, his 28th in a final. But it was also his 30th goal against them. Simeone has never defeated Barcelona in the league, in 16 attempts. Messi has scored more against Atlético than anyone except Sevilla. Valencia and Real Madrid follow close behind, always beating up on the little guys. Yes, they have played the bigger teams more often, but that still means he is running at 0.64 goals per game against Madrid, 0.77 against Atlético, 0.97 against Sevilla and 0.85 against Valencia. To put that into context, in a 38-game season solely against Atlético, he would get 29.2 goals, competing for the Pichichi every year, winning it in most of them.

As if goals are the only thing. "I'd like to have an explanation for Leo," Valverde said of the player who perhaps too often is the explanation for his team. In El País, Ramón Besa noted how Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's famous 1969 article "Barça! Barça! Barça!", the beginning of a process in which the concept of *més que un club* was created, articulating an identity for Barcelona, has given way to "Messi! Messi! Messi!" There is a debate to be had about the risks inherent in Messi-dependence, the structural flaws and his own culpability in that, but no real debate about the reality of it. In his 701 Barcelona games, in which he has scored 613 goals, Messi has also got somewhere 235 and 250 assists, depending on which stats you believe.

Another questionable stat appeared over the weekend. Messi had played 66 passes against Atlético, the figures said, but it was 67; it's just that one of them was into the net. He so rarely seems to shoot in the traditional sense. Often, he doesn't even seem to really kick the ball: he sort of runs into it and then it runs off in exactly the direction he wants it to. Watch it again – watch his passes too – and he does not draw his foot back, let alone swing a leg. Yet the ball travels as if he had walloped it. It's like he sees the move in slow motion but won't let anyone else do the same, executing it too fast for that, no pause, no hesitation, no breaking stride. "A goal seen a thousand times and a thousand times astonishing due to his astounding ability to adjust his shots to the

run," wrote Pepe Sámamo in El País.

The ball that Suárez laid back to him, Sámamo said, was a "golden ball." And that, of course, was the theme everyone else went for. "A golden ball," said the cover of Marca, the photo capturing the moment Messi finished it. "That's why he's the Ballon d'Or," said the front of El Mundo, assuming he is. Sport and El Mundo Deportivo turned up in the same dress for the second day running. "A test forged in fire," they said on Sunday morning; "Golden Goal," they said on Monday morning, test passed. Messi had led them through the flames again.

Messi is expected to collect the Ballon d'Or on Monday. It would be his sixth and logic suggests it will be his last. Now 32, France Football reported that he told Neymar that he will be gone in two years. And then what? There will be complaints of course, cases made for other players – brilliant, all of them – and calls of injustice at awarding the prize to the man who provided more assists and more goals than anyone else last season, Europe's top scorer and the Champions League's top scorer too, the man whose candidacy is discredited with the same criteria used to accredit others. But when he picked up the ball a long way from goal Simeone already smelled danger, a predictability about the extraordinary moment that was unfolding which served as another, timely reminder that no one has played better than Leo Messi in 2019. Maybe no one has played better than Leo Messi, full stop.

Malaysian ex-leader Najib takes stand in 1MDB trial

KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 3 (AFP): Former Malaysian leader Najib Razak took the stand to defend his conduct in the 1MDB scandal Tuesday, as the first of several trials linked to the multi-billion-dollar fraud entered a crucial stage.

Huge sums were stolen from sovereign wealth fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad, allegedly by the ex-prime minister and his cronies, and spent on everything from high-end real estate to artwork.

His coalition was ousted at the polls last year after six decades in power, largely due to public anger over the scandal, and he has since been arrested and hit with dozens of charges linked to the looting of the investment vehicle.

The 66-year-old went on trial in April over the controversy, in a case centring on the transfer of 42 million ringgit (10.1 million) from a former 1MDB unit into his bank accounts. Najib denies any wrongdoing.

The High Court ruled the trial should proceed on the strength of the prosecution case, with Najib's team now set to present his side of the story. Defence proceedings began with the for-



mer leader giving testimony under oath. His performance may be key in determining whether he can persuade the judge of his innocence.

He will also face cross-examination from prosecutors and is expected to be on the witness stand for around four days. Najib arrived at the court in a blue suit and held a brief Muslim prayer with supporters at the building's steps.

"I am as prepared as I can be," he told AFP.

He began his testimony reading from a 243-page statement, recalling his long career in politics and ministe-

rial posts he held since 1978, including the post of finance minister. Answering questions from his lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, Najib said he was not the architect of 1MDB, which was formed in 2009 after the government took over the Terengganu Investment Agency and renamed it.

Najib had said in a Facebook post last month that his testimony "will enable me to give a true picture of events and prove that I am not guilty" and "an opportunity to clear my name in court". He is facing four charges of corruption and three

counts of money-laundering in the trial over former 1MDB subsidiary SRC International. Prosecutors have argued that Najib wielded huge influence over the unit and knew that stolen money was being funnelled from it into his accounts.

But in an opening statement in court before Najib took the stand, his lawyer Shafee said they will prove that Najib "did not misappropriate funds... either directly or indirectly" and "did not act dishonestly".

The amount transferred to his account "was done without his knowledge or involvement" as

the transactions "were being manipulated by third parties without his knowledge and approval," Shafee said. "Ultimately, we will pray for an order that (Najib) be acquitted and discharged of all seven charges," he said.

The case is one of several 1MDB-linked trials investigating Najib's conduct. The biggest opened in August, centring on allegations he illicitly obtained over 500 million from the fund. US authorities, who are also investigating the fraud as money was allegedly laundered through the American financial system, believe 4.5 billion was looted from the fund.

Putin signs off law to label journalists as foreign agents

MOSCOW, DEC 3 (AFP): Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a controversial law allowing independent journalists and bloggers to be labelled as "foreign agents", a move that critics say will violate media freedom.

Russian legislation passed in 2012 already gave authorities the power to brand media organisations and NGOs as foreign agents, a term that has Soviet-era overtones.

The new law, which now extends to individuals, will come into effect immediately, according to a document published on the Russian government website.

Foreign agents, defined as involved in politics and receiving money from abroad, must register with the justice min-

istry, label publications with the tag and submit detailed paperwork or face fines.

Nine human rights NGOs, including Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders, have expressed concern that the amendments may be aimed not only at journalists, but also at bloggers and internet users who benefit from scholarships, funding or revenues from a relevant media outlet.

NGOs said in a joint statement last month the law was "a further step to restrict free and independent media" and "a strong tool to silence opposition voices".

Authors of the bill have said it is intended to "perfect" existing legislation on "foreign agents" that already covers NGOs

and media organisations.

Russia says it wants the law as a tit-for-tat mechanism if its journalists are defined as foreign agents in the West.

Russia first passed legislation allowing media organisations to be slapped with the label in 2017, after Kremlin-funded RT television was declared a foreign agent in the United States.

Russian opposition politician Alexi Navalny's organisation has been branded a foreign agent, as has US-financed media outlet Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe and Voice of America.

The term foreign agent was used negatively during the Stalinist era in the 1970s and 1980s for opponents accused of being paid by the West.

Trump campaign bars Bloomberg News, alleging 'bias'



WASHINGTON, DEC 3 (AFP) President Donald Trump's campaign said Monday it was banning journalists from Bloomberg News from its electoral events, claiming "bias" by the media group owned by presidential rival Michael Bloomberg.

Brad Parscale, the Trump 2020 campaign manager, said the decision was made after Bloomberg News announced it would not investigate the company boss or his Democrat competitors.

"As President Trump's campaign, we are accustomed to unfair reporting practices, but most news organizations don't announce their biases so publicly," Parscale said in a statement.

The Trump campaign will no longer credential representatives of Bloomberg News for rallies or other campaign events, and will decide "whether to engage with individual reporters or answer inquiries from Bloomberg News on a

case-by-case basis," Parscale added.

Bloomberg News editor-in-chief John Micklethwait said in response: "The accusation of bias couldn't be further from the truth. We have covered Donald Trump fairly and in an unbiased way since he became a candidate in 2015 and will continue to do so despite the restrictions imposed by the Trump campaign." Trump took to Twitter to blast "Mini Mike" Bloomberg for the news organization's coverage decision.

"Mini Mike Bloomberg has instructed his third rate news organization not to investigate him or any Democrat, but to go after President Trump, only," the president wrote.

"The Failing New York Times thinks that is OK, because their hatred & bias is so great they can't even see straight. It's not OK!" he added in a swipe at the newspaper after its executive editor condemned the Trump

campaign's decision. Michael Bloomberg's decision to seek the Democratic presidential nomination prompted the news agency, one of the world's biggest, to spell out guidelines last week on how it would handle any conflicts of interest.

The media group said it would not investigate Bloomberg's family or foundations, nor his Democratic rivals, but would publish or summarize investigative pieces on all Democratic candidates.

"There is no point in trying to claim that covering this presidential campaign will be easy," Micklethwait said in a memo to staff last week, citing the company's policy of not writing about itself or direct competitors.

Micklethwait said the journalists would cover the campaign's news "in much the same way as we have done before," with the exception that articles will explicitly state that Bloomberg News's owner is a candidate.

Musharraf admitted to hospital in Dubai: reports

KARACHI/DUBAI, DEC 3 (PTI): Pakistan's former military dictator General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf was admitted to a hospital on Monday in Dubai after he developed "heart- and blood pressure-related" complications, according to media reports.

The 76-year-old former president, who is living in Dubai in self-exile, was admitted to the Dubai American Hospital on a stretcher, citing "emergency treatment requirement" which was later confirmed by sources in his All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) party, Dawn News reported. "He has some serious health issues and lately had been complaining of some pain in the chest, and anxiety," said the party's spokesman.

"The doctors visited him at his place of stay and recommended immediate admission to avoid any further complications. The former president has undergone a few tests which will help determine the state of his health," he said.

Dr Muhammad Amjad, Musharraf's close aide and the ex-chairperson of the APML, said that the former president was rapidly becoming weaker due to an unknown disease, which is why he was unable to return to Pakistan to face the treason case, Geo News reported.

In May, Musharraf's health deteriorated and he was rushed to a hospital in Dubai. Before that in January also he

was shifted to a hospital when he fell sick.

The previous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government had filed the treason case against the former president in 2013 over the imposition of extra-constitutional emergency in 2007.

Musharraf, who has been living in Dubai since March 2016, is facing treason charges for suspending the Constitution in 2007, a punishable offence for which he was indicted in 2014. The former army chief left for Dubai for medical treatment and has not returned since, citing security and health reasons.

Musharraf became Pakistan's first army chief to be charged with treason when he was indicted on March 31, 2014. He pleaded not guilty to five charges and dismissed them as being politically motivated.

A special court on November 19 concluded the trial proceedings in the case against Musharraf for declaring a state of emergency on November 3, 2007, and had said that a verdict would be announced on November 28.

However, the Islamabad High Court stopped the special court from announcing its judgement on November 28.

he special court in Islamabad had ordered the former military ruler to record his statement in the case by December 5.

If found guilty, Musharraf could be sentenced to death or imprisonment for life.

North Korea's Kim opens huge mountain development



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has opened a flagship construction project close to Mount Paektu, a symbol of the Korean nation and officially the birthplace of his father and predecessor, state media reported Tuesday.

The ceremony was held in snowy scenes before thousands of soldiers and civilians, and portrayed as a demonstration of the resilience of the North, which is subject to international sanctions imposed over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

It comes with time running out on Pyongyang's demand for the US to offer it fresh concessions by the end of the year, and ahead of Kim's New Year speech on January 1, a key political set-piece in the isolated country.

Kim donned a black leather trench coat and gloves for the opening, and -- surrounded by fur-hatted officials -- cut a red ribbon in front of a statue of his father Kim Jong Il.

Winter already has North Korea's far north firmly in its grip, and icicles hung from buildings, Korean Central Television (KCTV) footage showed -- the largely empty streets covered

in snow. Banners proclaimed: "Long live the great leader of the force of our party and country, comrade Kim Jong Un!"

Kim had "worked heart and soul to turn Samjiyon County, the sacred place of the revolution, into the utopia town under socialism", the official KCNA news agency said.

The Korean people were, it said, "advancing along the straight road chosen by themselves without any vacillation despite the worst trials".

Nuclear negotiations with the United States have been deadlocked since the Hanoi summit broke up in February, and Pyongyang has issued a series of increasingly assertive comments in recent weeks as its time limit approaches.

In a separate report Tuesday, KCNA quoted vice foreign minister Ri Thae Song saying: "What gift the US receives for Christmas depends entirely on the US' decision."

- White horse -
Pyongyang has poured huge resources into the rebuilding of Samjiyon, the closest town to Mount Paektu, a dormant volcano that straddles the border with China.

Kim is closely associated with the scheme and has visited the area several times, reportedly

riding a white horse to the mountain's summit in October.

The vast Samjiyon project includes a museum of revolutionary activities, a winter sports training complex, processing plants for blueberries and potatoes, and 10,000 apartments.

Thousands of workers swarmed over the site during construction, AFP saw, many of them soldiers. Much of the North Korean army is devoted to construction.

Students have been sent to work on the scheme during university holidays, KCNA reported previously, while diplomats say children have also been deployed.

According to North Korean propaganda, Kim Jong Il was born at the nearby Mount Paektu Secret Camp where his own father Kim Il Sung was fighting the Japanese -- although independent historians and Soviet records say he was actually born in Russia, where North Korea's founder was in exile.

The official story plays a central role in Pyongyang's teachings about the Kim family, who have led the country for three generations, and every year 100,000 or more students and workers are taken on study trips to the area.

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LET IT SNOW! The Hustlers star, Keke Palmer bears the cold in a monochromatic blue ensemble while arriving to the SAG-AFTRA Foundation Robin Williams Center in NYC.

Marvel Releases First Black Widow Movie Trailer

Before Avengers: Endgame hit theaters earlier this year, reports had all but confirmed that Marvel Studios was going to be making a standalone Black Widow movie with Scarlett Johansson reprising the role that she began back in Iron Man 2. That was before anyone knew that Black Widow would sacrifice her life in Endgame, leaping off the cliff at Vormir to ensure Hawkeye could return with the Soul Stone and use it to stop Thanos. That action helped explain a lot about the upcoming Black Widow movie, mainly that it's going to take place before Infinity War and Endgame. The rest of the movie's plot has been shrouded in mystery, but we now know just a little bit more about what's to come in the solo film, as Marvel Studios has unveiled its first trailer.

Marvel released the trailer for Black Widow on Tuesday morning ahead of its presentation at CCXP in Brazil this weekend. The action and spy thrills that were promised to fans are definitely present in the first footage from the movie. See for yourself in the video above!

In addition to Johansson, Black Widow boasts an all-star cast that includes beloved Stranger Things star David Harbour, Midsommar breakout Florence Pugh, Oscar-winner

Rachel Weisz, O-T Fagbenle, and Ray Winstone. Cate Shortland directed the film with a screenplay from Ned Benson and Jac Schaeffer.

"We just wrapped Black Widow like two weeks ago or something like that so it's very fresh in my mind and I don't have the total perspective on it yet," Johansson said just before Thanksgiving. "It's a film about self-giveness and it's a film about family. I think in life we sort of come of age many times and you have these kind of moments where you're in a transitional phase and then you move sort of beyond it and I think in the Black Widow standalone film I think the character is at, when we find her, a moment of real crisis, and throughout the film, by facing herself in a lot of ways and a lot of things that make her, her, she actually kind of comes through that crisis on the other side and we start to be able to reset where she's a more grounded, self-possessed person. So that's her journey, well, I hope anyway."

Are you looking forward to Marvel's Black Widow? What did you think of the new trailer? Let us know in the comments!

Black Widow arrives in theaters on May 1, 2020.



Salman Khan's Kick 2 To Release On Eid 2021

Good news for Salman Khan's fans. The actor's much-awaited film Kick 2 will reportedly open in theatres in May 2021, stated a report in Bollywood Hungama. Kick 2 is the sequel to the 2014 blockbuster Kick, which also featured Jacqueline Fernandez in the lead role. A source close to the project revealed that the makers have reportedly decided to release the sequel on Eid in 2021. The source told Bollywood Hungama, "As we all know, Ramzan Eid is now synonymous with Salman Khan releases. So what better than this holy festival to bring Kick 2? Even part 1 had released on Eid in 2014. Hence, Kick 2 will hit theatres in May 2021. Since Eid falls on May 13 in 2021, Kick 2 might also arrive the same day and thus have the advantage of a four-day weekend."

He added that director-producer Sajid Nadiadwala has selected 2021 for release as he needs time for "shoot and post-production" tasks. "The script has been locked and the final touches and dialogue-writing is in process. Sajid Nadiadwala, the producer and also director of Kick 2, needs time for all stages - pre-production, shoot and post-production. Hence, it has been decided to release the film only in 2021," revealed the source.

It has also been reported that Jacqueline Fernandez, Kriti Sanon and Pooja Hegde are in talks for the spot of lead actress in Kick 2. The source told the publication that Pooja Hegde and Kriti Sanon have reportedly signed the "three-

Sajid and Salman arrive at a consensus, the lead actress will be locked," added the source.

Salman Khan releasing his films on Eid has now become an annual event. His movies released during the festival



film deals with Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment" and because of it, they are reportedly the "contenders for the lead role" along with Jacqueline. "Sajid Nadiadwala will put forward the names of Jacqueline Fernandez, Pooja Hegde and also Kriti Sanon to Salman Khan. Even Kriti has a similar deal with Sajid Nadiadwala and she's close to them as she was launched in their film. So once

have always ruled the box office and joined the Rs 100-crore club. It started with Wanted, which released on Eid in 2009. Since then, the tradition has been followed by Dabangg (2010), Bodyguard (2011), Ek Tha Tiger (2012), Kick (2014), Bajrangi Bhaijaan (2015), Sultan (2016), Tubelight (2017) and Bharat (2018). Salman Khan will again treat his fans on Eid next year with Radhe.

Questlove to make directorial debut with 'Black Woodstock'

LOS ANGELES, DEC 3 (PTI): Musician Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson is set to direct a feature documentary about the Harlem Cultural Festival.

Titled "Black Woodstock", the project will focus on the 1969 Harlem, New York, counterpoint to the infamous Woodstock festival.

The event, held in Harlem's Mount Morris Park one year after the death of Martin Luther King, Jr, featured performances from Sly and the Family Stone, Stevie Wonder, Nina Simone, BB King, the Staple Singers, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Mahalia Jackson, the 5th Dimension, David Ruffin and many other black musicians.

"I am truly excited to help bring the passion, the story and the music of the Harlem Cultural Festival to audiences around the world.

"The performances are extraordinary. I was stunned when I saw the lost footage for the first time. It's incredible to look at 50 years of history that's never been told, and I'm eager and humbled to tell that story," Thompson said in a statement to RollingStone magazine.

"Black Woodstock" will be produced by David Dinerstein and Robert Fyvolent with RadicalMedia joining as creative and production partners.

Thompson is a drummer, DJ, music producer, best-selling author of "Mo' Meta Blues" and "Mixtape Potluck", and member of hip-hop group The Roots.

He is also the musical director for "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon," with the Roots serving as house band for the program.

Quinta Brunson to star in HBO Max's single-camera comedy

LOS ANGELES, DEC 3 (PTI): Actor-comedienne Quinta Brunson is set to play the lead role in an untitled single-camera comedy.

According to Variety, the series has received a put pilot commitment at streamer HBO Max. Brunson has also co-written the half-hour project with Michelle Nader.

The story revolves around "an ambitious millennial flying

up the ladder at a media start up company who is unexpectedly tasked with running the newly hired, PR crisis averting team of diverse writers made up of green Internet newbies." Nader will serve as a showrunner and executive producer.

Warner Bros Television, which locked an overall deal with Nader last year, will produce.

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Taapsee Pannu to feature in Mithali Raj biopic



MUMBAI, DEC 3 (PTI): Actor Taapsee Pannu has come is set to star in "Shabaash Mithu", a film on Indian women's cricket team captain Mithali Raj. "Shabaash Mithu" will be backed by Viacom18 Studios and directed by "Raees" helmer Rahul Dholakia.

Taapsee said she is honoured to play the role and has already started feeling the pressure of stepping in her shoes.

"I don't think I want to trade this place with anyone else right now. She has always been brave and strong to back truth and her idols, and that is the connect I feel with her. The way she changed the way women's cricket is perceived and seen in India is truly a story worth telling," the actor said in a statement.

"Kudos to Viacom18 Studios for choosing to tell this story. I look forward to working with Rahul Dholakia for this first of its kind story and to learn yet another sport which is treated as a religion in our country, cricket," she added.

Announcing the film on Mithali's birthday, Ajit Andhare, COO, Viacom18 Studios, said the story idea struck him about a year ago while

watching the movie "Hidden Figures". "After securing the rights we worked with several external writers to develop the script. However, it was our own creative director Priya Aven who cracked the script I was looking for. So, it's a completely home-grown film for us. Mithali Raj is a name that stands for women power in the world of Indian cricket.

"Playing her will be the fearless Taapsee Pannu, who is not just a powerhouse of talent but also the face of the new age woman in Bollywood. Viacom18 Studios is proud to bring this untold story of rise of Indian women cricket to life on screen," he added.

Mithali said with the film, she will get a bigger platform to reach young women who are dreaming to make it big.

"I have always stood for and voiced my opinion for equal opportunity for women not just in cricket but across all fields. I want to thank Ajit Andhare and Viacom18 Studios for not just bringing alive my story on screen but also for giving me a bigger platform to be able to reach out to young women who dare to dream," she added.

ARIES: Cosmic truth: you have to try on different pairs of jeans before you find the right one. This week, you're being asked to apply the same wisdom to your dating life. You may or may not meet 'the one' when you're waiting for your Uber to arrive.

Tip: Be open to what your love life is offering you in the now.

TAURUS: Wikipedia describes emotional intelligence as "the capability of individuals to recognise their own emotions and those of others, discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour, and manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt to environments or achieve one's goal(s)."

Tip: Use your emotional intelligence to move past the current set of challenges.

GEMINI: A Steve Maraboli quote

to help you kiss goodbye to worries, fears, anxieties and troubles: "I love that this morning's sunrise does not define itself by last night's sunset."

Tip: Come back to that space of joy within you.

CANCER: "Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time." Let this poetic verse by John Lubbock inspire you to withdraw from the noise outside.

Tip: Hit the pause button.

LEO: The truth may or may not be easy to convey. But it's your truth, Leo. It's what you stand for. Speak up for yourself. If they love you like they say they do, they will appreciate you being authentic. Some of you may be at a point where you feel inspired

to upgrade your relationship status. Again, this is not an easy conversation to have.

Tip: Be honest with yourself and others.

VIRGO: The trouble is, you are trying to do everything at once. As a result, you are not being able to do anything at all. Prioritise, Virgo. Let 'one thing at a time' be your mantra from now on. Some of you may find that your personal life is at odds with your professional life.

Tip: Set some time aside for the people who matter.

LIBRA: "Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will." Let these wise words by Suzy Kassem help you reinstate your faith in yourself. A great change is on its way, and if you want it to bring you the blessings you desire, you need to be brave enough to seize the day.

Tip: It's time to go big.

SCORPIO: We might be unable to undo what is done, but we can take the time to understand and learn from it. Let go of the regret, fear and guilt. Replace the negative emotions with joy and lightness instead. Freeing yourself off the emotional baggage is the only way to move ahead.

Tip: Replace regret with wisdom.

SAGITTARIUS: Are you letting one unpleasant situation make you question the entire relationship? Learn to view certain arguments in isolation rather than from the point of view of being interconnected. While you're at it, ask yourself if you are overlooking their perspective.

Tip: Restore the balance within first.

CAPRICORN: Lo and behold, Capricorn! They are about to break the silence. The real question is: are you ready for the conversation? Word for

the wise: stay open. You won't know what really happened unless you allow yourself to listen.

Tip: Open yourself to the conversation. **AQUARIUS:** The fight or flight response is activated when we feel threatened or attacked. But the important question is: are you really unsafe, or are your unhealed traumas the reason you are acting a certain way? Learning to respond rather than react is the only way to salvage the situation.

Tip: Once you master patience, you master everything.

PISCES: Sitting by the windowsill, staring into oblivion, is just an escape strategy. It will not provide you with the answers you are seeking. The only way to deal with a problem is to look it in the eye and acknowledge its presence.

Tip: Choose the road less travelled.