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# Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## SKM CELEBRATES 7TH FOUNDATION DAY

# Golay threatens statewide bandh if Govt ignores demands



**REBYNA RANA**  
**RNAGPO, 04 FEB:**  
Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president, PS Tamang [Golay] has given an ultimatum to the Sikkim Democratic Front government to fulfil SKM's charter of demands announced today by 25 Feb, failing which the party will call a state-wide bandh on 26 Feb. He said this while addressing a large gathering of supporters during the celebration of SKM's 7th foundation

day at Mining Ground, Rangpo today. "Seven is considered a lucky number and we are celebrating SKM's 7th foundation day today. Now, only seven weeks are left for SKM to form the government," said Mr Tamang. He went on to allege that the state government has ordered special gram sabhas to be held today in order to prevent people from attending the SKM foundation day celebration. But people

ignored that special gram sabha and came here in large numbers, he added. "The SDF government has become scared of SKM and its public support. The turn out today shows that Parivartan will happen in 2019. People of the 21st century are not lured by money or Janta Mela benefits. They have made up their minds to bring a systemic change in Sikkim this time," stated Mr Tamang. Taking on the "goonda party" allegation, Mr

Tamang said that political murders have been taking place in Sikkim since 1994. "Who is responsible for the political murders that have taken place in Sikkim since 1994? Under whose government did such political murders take place? SKM is not a goonda party but has come forward to stop the goondagardi of SDF," said the SKM president. The Chief Minister keeps blaming SKM, HSP and BL organisations of

causing hindrances in LT Assembly seats being granted but it is the SDF party which is in power, he said. SDF has failed to deliver LT seats and is now blaming others, he further alleged. "The SKM government will give LT seats, we have the formula," said Mr Tamang. According to the party, more than 1800 people from across the State joined SKM today. Among those who joined the party today are LP

Tiwari (Retd Secretary cum Writer), Genden Lachungpa (Retd Chief Principal Secretary), LB Chauhan (Vice President BJP), GR Kulal (Retd Principal), Nar Maya Gurung (Sitting Panchayat) and Rohit Neopaney (Sitting Panchayat). The celebration today was also attended by Sangha MLA, Sonam Lama, acting president & Shyari MLA, KN Lepcha, party leaders and a large number of supporters from across the State.

### SKM DEMANDS

- Limboo Tamang Assembly seats - The State government must extract a firm conclusion from the Centre.
- Restore Nepali Assembly seats - a proposal for restoration of Nepali seats must be sent to the Centre and get a written assurance from the Centre.
- Tribal status for left-out Nepali communities.
- Apology from CM to all women for menstruation comment.
- Regularization of all casual government employees who have worked for more than 5 years.
- Regularization of all ad-hoc teachers who have worked for more than 5 years and fulfil criteria. State government must frame separate laws to regularise those who do not fulfil criteria.
- One Family One Job appointment orders to have 'they will be regularised after five years' instead of 'the appointment is purely on temporary basis'.
- All arrears with allowances must be given to employees in single instalment.
- Home Guards who have served for more than 5 years must be absorbed in Sikkim Police, IRB and Sikkim Armed Police.
- Regularization of all medical and non-medical staff working for more than 5 years under National Health Mission.
- All loans taken by unemployed youth must be waived.
- Set minimum wage at Rs. 20,000 for local workers in all private companies.
- 90% locals to be employed in all private companies.
- Syndicates and stands to be given to taxi drivers associations.
- Distribute laptops to all students, even those who are studying outside the State.
- Fulfilment of IPHS norms in all four district hospitals.
- Withdraw notification banning CBI from entering Sikkim.
- Termination orders to officers on service extension by 25 Feb.

## LOWER TERMINAL POINT OF NAMCHI PASSENGER ROPEWAY INAUGURATED Ropeway a step towards modernizing South Sikkim, says CM

**NANMCHI, 04 FEB (IPR):** Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling inaugurated the Namchi Passenger Ropeway, lower terminal point which has been designed, constructed and operated by Damodar Ropeway and Infra Ltd, near PWD Guest House today. The ropeway has been constructed in two sections namely Section I and II, the former starts at PWD Guest House and terminates at Rock Garden, covering a length of 2.1 km with the total travel time of 12 minutes. While presenting the technical report, Secretary, Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Mr TT Bhutia brought to



light that the ropeway carries a number of advantages in terms of ecology, traffic management and spatial planning which offer the visitors a

unique aerial view. It may be mentioned here that the Passenger Ropeway (Section II) from Samdruptse to Rock Garden was inaugurated on

01 Aug. 2016. The maximum speed of the Section II ropeway is of 3 seconds and will cover the distance of 640 meters. Addressing the gath-

ering, the Chief Minister extended his congratulations on the inauguration of this ropeway and added that Namchi and the public of the state has received an added tourism attraction in the form of this ropeway. He also spoke in brief how this project was envisioned in the year 2003 and shared the hurdles faced in giving shape to this colossal project. The State Government consistently and vigorously pursued this massive ambition of construction of ropeway in Namchi so as to transform the South District Headquarters as a town

## Need to conserve local breeds of farm animals: CM

**CM INAUGURATES VETERINARY POLYCLINIC AT BOOMTAR**  
**NAMCHI, 04 JAN (IPR):** Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling inaugurated the District Veterinary Polyclinic, at Boomtar in Namchi today. At the outset, the Chief Minister along with the dignitaries also inspected the Polyclinic. The Secretary presented the technical report of the Polyclinic wherein he informed that the Veterinary Polyclinic has been built at a project cost of Rs 4.87 crore funded under North East Council (NEC) with a financing pattern of 90:10.



Speaking about the District Veterinary Polyclinic, the Chief Minister expressed his gratitude to the land donors and various other stakeholders involved in building this clinic. He dedicated the clinic to the public of Namchi and urged them to inculcate a

sense of ownership and responsibility in maintenance of this clinic. The Chief Minister also shared the imperative need to protect and multiply the amount of agricultural domestic animals which are locally

## Panth dishonest, deserves to be in SKM: SDF

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 04 FEB:** Sikkim Democratic Front has strongly condemned former SDF MLA, BS Panth's comments that the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has lost his mental balance. SDF has asserted that the statement is proof of Mr Panth's selfishness and dishonest politics. In a press release issued today, SDF has said that after changing many parties, BS Panth is now with SKM, a

party full of people with vested interests and the most appropriate place for someone like Mr Panth to flourish. SDF has alleged that Mr Panth, who has been using politics to fulfil his personal interests, cannot stand with the fair and inclusive policies, programmes and discipline of SDF. The release adds that baseless and false allegations do not make any difference to Pawan Chamling or SDF.

## Saradha story: A decade of huge fund collections, another of investor outcry and political fallout

**KOLKATA, FEB 4 (PTI):** Thousands of crores of rupees were raised for over a decade from lakhs of investors, but then defaults began on payments to investors who were promised huge returns and political fallouts appeared inevitable. The ongoing stand-off between the CBI and the West Bengal government has its roots in two alleged ponzi scams associated with the Saradha Group and the Rose Valley Group, which got busted in 2013. The fund-raising schemes, allegedly without necessary regulatory ap-

provals and popularly known as 'chit funds' in this region, had been operating in West Bengal and its neighbouring states since 2000 and had mopped up thousands of crores of rupees from lakhs of investors. Both the groups had invested heavily in sectors like tours and travels, realty, housing, resorts and hotels, entertainment and media. Saradha Group, a consortium of over 239 private companies, is said to have mopped up Rs 4,000 crore from over 1.7 million depositors before it collapsed in April 2013. Rose Valley, on

the other hand, is said to have mopped up around Rs 15,000 crore. Those associated with the two groups -- Sudipto Sen of Saradha and Gautam Kundu of Rose Valley -- were allegedly close to West Bengal's Left Front leaders earlier, but political pundits say they allegedly switched sides once Trinamool started gaining ground in the state. However, fortunes of both the groups started faltering towards the end of 2012, after complaints began pouring in about their alleged payment defaults. Saradha col-

lapsed by April 2013 and Sudipto Sen along with his trusted aide Debjani Mukherjee fled from West Bengal. This led to thousands of Saradha collection agents assemble before the TMC headquarters and demand action against Sen. The first cases against Saradha were lodged at Bidhanagar police commissionerate which was then headed by Rajeev Kumar. Kumar, a 1989 batch IPS officer, along with his team had then arrested Sen along with Debjani from Kashmir on

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## HC for FB affidavit on paid political content regulation steps

**MUMBAI, FEB 4 (PTI):** The Bombay High Court Monday asked Facebook why it is reluctant to strictly regulate paid political content in India when it was implementing stringent scrutiny systems in the UK and the US.

Hearing a plea seeking directions to the Election Commission to prohibit individuals from posting political or poll-related advertisements or paid political content on social media platforms 48 hours before poll day, the high court directed Facebook to file an affidavit listing steps it could initiate to regulate such content, particularly ahead of the elections this year.

"Since Facebook already implemented a strict scrutiny system to regulate such ads in UK and USA then why is it reluctant to do so in India?" questioned a bench of Chief Justice Naresh Patil and Justice N M Jamdar.

The bench was hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by lawyer Sagar Suryavanshi seeking directions to the ECI to prohibit all persons, whether politicians or private individuals, from posting advertisements related to politics or elections, or paid political content on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and

Twitter, 48 hours before election day.

In the last hearing, the high court had directed the ECI (Election Commission of India) and Facebook to submit suggestions on the steps that could be taken to regulate such content.

Facebook counsel Daraius Khambatta Monday told the bench that while his client was ready to remove any objectionable paid political content from its site, the direction from the same must come from the ECI or any such authority. "We can't implement a system of self-censorship. However, if the EC, or other authorities flag an advertisement, we are ready to take it down immediately," Khambatta said.

The petitioner, however, argued that in several western nations, if one wished to post a paid political content or advertisement, they were required to furnish a valid identity proof and a proof of residence. The petitioner's lawyer, Abhinav Chandrachud, sought the HC's directions to Facebook to demand similar documents in India too for posting political content or advertisement.

"When you can put strict conditions in UK and USA then why are you reluctant to do so in India?" the bench asked Khambatta.

## Need to conserve...

born and bred in the state as the survival rate of these animals are high. He directed the Animal Husbandry department to secure these types of local breeds.

Mr Chamling reiterated that the State Government has provided ample openings for anyone who is interested in dairy and animal husbandry business as there is a fixed market in the state itself. The state government has also given 60% subsidy to pursue this sector, he added.

The Polyclinic has four components and the main Polyclinic is a two-storied building where the ground level will be used for clinical examination of animals, carrying out surgical operation and diagnostic laboratory facility including X-ray and ultrasound. The first level will include a facility for training hall and office rooms for doctors.

The second component is construction of 5 unit class II quarter for veterinary doctors with parking space. The third component is construction of carpeted approach road and drainage facility and protective wall, the 4th component consist of construction of fencing along with the boundary.

Present during the inaugural ceremony were SLA Speaker, KN Rai, Minister Animal Husbandry, Livestock, Fisheries and Veterinary Services, Somnath Poudyal, Secretary Animal Husbandry, Dr Kumar Bhandari alongside various officials.

## Saradha story...

April 18, 2013 and the state government formed a special investigation team (SIT) under him.

The SIT had arrested the then TMC Rajya Sabha MP and journalist Kunal Ghosh for his alleged involvement in the Saradha chit fund scam.

A CBI probe into the chit fund scam was ordered by the Supreme Court in May 2014 after senior Congress leader Abdul Mannan filed a plea.

Several top TMC leaders and MPs like Srinjoy Bose, TMC leader Rajat Majumdar and the then transport minister Madan Mitra were arrested by the CBI.

Senior BJP leader Mukul Roy, who was then TMC general secretary, was also questioned by the CBI in connection with the scam in 2015.

In mid-2015, Kundu of Rose Valley Group was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and in December 2016 and January 2017, TMC MPs Tapas Pal and Sudip Bandyopadhyay were arrested for their alleged involvement in the Rose Valley case.

In the last few months, the CBI has seized what is being seen as paintings of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee that were allegedly bought at huge costs by the so-called chit fund owners.

In January 2019, the CBI also arrested film producer Srikant Mohhta for his allegedly involvement in the Rose valley chit fund scam.

On February 2, the CBI claimed that Kumar had been "absconding" and was "being looked for" in the Saradha and Rose Valley ponzi scam cases.

On February 3, a team of 40-odd agency officers arrived at Kumar's official residence to question him but they were stopped by sentries and the Kolkata Police officials and these developments eventually led to Chief Minister Banerjee sitting on a dharna for what she has called her 'Save Constitution' protest.

## SDF's constituency-level committee for Upper Tadong meets

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 04 FEB:**

A meeting of Sikkim Democratic Front's constituency-level monitoring and campaign committee for Upper Tadong was held under its chairman, Menlon Lepcha, at College Valley, Tadong, on Monday.

The meeting was at-

tended by ward councillor Geeta Tewari, general secretary Kiran Chettri, Lakit Gurung, secretary, Anand Gazmer, district committee general secretary, Prabhat Gurung former panchayat president Mohan Gurung, panchayat secretary Tashi Bhutia along with youth of the party.

A press release informs that the committee president, Mr Lepcha, stressed that the SDF government has reached development and benefits to the people and added that every constituency has witnessed overall development.

Mr Lepcha mentioned

that this overall development, peace, security and restoration of complete democracy in Sikkim were the biggest achievements of SDF party. He added that the people of Sikkim have already decided to bring SDF back to office to maintain and continue the peace and harmony in the State.

## BJP misusing CBI, Mamata's response equally undemocratic: Left parties

**NEW DELHI, FEB 4 (PTI):**

Left parties on Monday said while the BJP-led NDA government was "misusing" federal agencies, Mamata Banerjee's response to it was "equally undemocratic" and accused both of sabotaging the probe into ponzi scams.

CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury, in a tweet, said the sit-in by Banerjee in Kolkata came within hours of the Left Front's rally at the Brigade Parade Grounds in the city, and alleged that it was also aimed at diverting public attention from the rising protests by the people of West Bengal against both the BJP and the TMC.

In an unprecedented development, a number of CBI officers, who had gone to question Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar in connection with chit fund scam cases, were bundled into police jeeps, whisked to a police station and briefly detained on Sunday.

Hours after the incident, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee began a sit-in right in front of the Metro Cinema to protest "insults" she faced at the hands of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah and claimed the CBI knocked on the doors of Kumar without a search warrant. The CPI, in a statement, claimed that the bitter tussle between the Kolkata police and the CBI, and the "equally undemocratic response" by the Mamata Banerjee government have put the country in a "civil war-like situation".

"The autocratic misuse of central agencies like CBI, ED and IT departments by the Narendra Modi-led NDA government at the Centre to target political opponents across the country and the equally undemocratic response by Mamata

Banerjee-led West Bengal government to protect the Saradha chit fund scam accused have put the country in a civil war-like situation. It is the responsibility of the centre to resolve the logjam and save the democratic fabric of the country," the Communist Party of India statement read.

"Saradha scam is a very big scam and transparent and independent investigation is necessary to bring the guilty to book. Centre should call for an all-party meeting to redefining centre-state relations," the Communist Party of India said in a statement.

The CPI(M) Politburo in a statement said the BJP government, contrary to

its election promises, had not taken action against those accused in the various ponzi scams in the last four years, but was doing so now. "During this period, many of the Trinamool Congress leaders who were prime accused in these scams like MPs Mukul Roy, and Hemanta Sharma, moved over to the BJP. Clearly, both the BJP and the TMC were sharing the spoils of such a loot, slowing down the investigation as ordered by the Supreme Court," the party said.

It further said against this background, the Centre's action against the Kolkata police commissioner "smacks of political motivation."

"The response of the TMC government and the Chief Minister, given their record of murder of democracy in Bengal, is also politically motivated. The CPI(M) has consistently demanded that the culprits of this gigantic scam must be booked and punished, their properties confiscated and this must be used to return the money looted from the people. This was sabotaged by both the BJP and the TMC," the CPI(M) said.

## Delhi govt launches 'zero fatality corridor' project on Burari-Bhalaswa stretch

**NEW DELHI, FEB 4 (PTI):**

The Delhi government Monday launched its annual road safety action plan rolling out a 'zero fatality corridor' project for reducing the number of fatal incidents on the outer ring road stretch between Burari and Bhalaswa Chowk. Delhi witnessed 1,691 road crash fatalities last year and the government is adopting a new approach to tackle this, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said.

"The zero fatality corridor pilot project is aimed at reducing deaths to near zero levels on this particular stretch. After evaluating the impact of the initiative, we will replicate the model in other parts of the city," Gahlot said. The three-km stretch between Burari Chowk and Bhalaswa Chowk, having four black spots, witnessed 67 deaths due to road accidents in 2016 and 2017, said the SaveLIFE Foundation, that will undertake a scientific investigation of high number of road crashes on the stretch.

"We will give a detailed report on the safety audit of the stretch in three months. However, interim reports will be available in next few weeks," said Piyush Tiwari, the CEO of the Foundation. The project will entail a scientific study to reduce the conflict involving pedestrians and cyclists on one hand

and the cars and heavy vehicles on the other, he said.

The Transport Minister said that nodal officers have been appointed in various departments for smooth coordination to execute the action plan mandated by road safety policy, notified by the Delhi government in July last year. The action plan also calls for commissioning road safety audit of top 20 accident prone zones in the city. Such zones are places around 500 metre diameter having three fatal or total 10 accidents.

It also provides for a Road Safety Fund to be maintained through 50 per cent of the fine money realised by the Transport department's enforcement wing and traffic police. Officials said it is estimated to be around Rs 90 crore annually. The fund will be used to implement road safety measures including infrastructure development and improvements.

The Save LIFE Foundation's ZFC model is well-known for reducing road crash deaths by 30 per cent on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway. It attempts to reduce road crash deaths through a 360-degree intervention, panning road engineering, police enforcement, rapid emergency care and road-user engagement, said a government statement.

## AG files contempt petition against advocate Prashant Bhushan

**NEW DELHI, FEB 4 (PTI):** Attorney General K K Venugopal Monday filed a contempt petition in the Supreme Court against activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan for allegedly scandalising the court with his recent tweets on the appointment of former interim chief of CBI M Nageswara Rao.

The contempt petition refers to the February 1 tweets by Bhushan in which he allegedly said that the government appeared to have misled the apex court and perhaps submitted fabricated minutes of the meeting of the high-powered Selection Committee headed by the Prime Minister.

Venugopal, in his petition, said Bhushan deliberately intended to cast aspersions on the integrity and honesty of the Attorney General who had placed the minutes of the meeting before

the apex court during the February 1 hearing.

During the February 1 hearing, Venugopal had in a sealed cover placed before the bench, headed by Justice Arun Mishra, the minutes of the meeting of the Selection Committee which was held last month for appointing the new CBI chief.

Venugopal had informed the bench that the Centre had taken the permission of the Committee to appoint Rao as an interim CBI Director.

The Selection Committee comprises the Prime Minister, the leader of the largest opposition party and the Chief Justice of India or his nominee judge of the apex court.

The top court was hearing a petition filed by NGO Common Cause challenging the Centre's decision to appoint Rao, an IPS officer, as the interim CBI director.

## Purification ritual at Sabarimala not due to women entry: Tantri

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,**

**FEB 4 (PTI):** Sabarimala temple Tantri (head priest) Kandararu Rajeevaru Monday described as 'baseless', the allegation that the purification ritual he conducted at the Ayyappa shrine on January 2 was due to the entry of the two women of menstruating age.

In his 11-page explanation to the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), which manages the Sabarimala temple, he said the ritual was held to restore the 'grace' of the deity, which was lost as the temple faced many controversies and allegations during the Chithira Atta celebrations and the Mandala-Makaravilaku festival. "The temple was facing many issues during the Chithira Aatta celebration and mandala-makaravilaku festival.

When such issues come up, we need to perform a purification ceremony to revive the lost grace of the deity," Tantri said in his explanation.

He also said that since there was no puja on December 31, 2018, the next day-January 1, 2019, witnessed huge crowds, prompting him to perform the ritual on January 2. "Hence, the allegations that the temple was closed due to the women's entry and the act was against the Supreme Court order of September 28 are baseless," he said.

The Tantri also said that it was not necessary to take permission from the TDB to perform the rituals. "The ceremony was conducted after informing all the devoswom officials who were present at the Sanidhanam at that time.

I had informed the TDB president and the Devaswom Commissioner that purification of the idol was being done and the door of the sanctum sanctorum was not closed fully as alleged," Tantri explained in his letter. He also said he had a telephonic conversation with TDB president A Padamakumar and Board member Shankar Das on the need to perform a purification ceremony and the ritual was done with full co-operation of the Devaswom Board officials. On the rights of his family

Tazhamon Madom to perform the puja at Sabarimala, the Tantri said his post was not a government appointment.

"The Thazamon family has been conferred with the priestly duties for generations. This is not a government appointment," he said.

The TDB, the apex temple body in Kerala, had sought an explanation from the head priest for the purification rituals performed after two women of menstruating age entered the hill temple. The over two-month long tumultuous annual pilgrimage season at Sabarimala had witnessed frenzied protests by devotees and right wing activists against the entry of young women.

After 42-year old Bindu and Kanakadurga, 44, offered prayers at the Lord Ayyappa temple on January 2, the sanctum sanctorum was closed under tantri's directive to perform the 'purification' ritual, which is carried out when there is a violation of temple customs. Rajeevaru faced harsh criticism from Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Devaswom Minister Kadakampally Surendran and other ministers over the purification rites.

Senior Kerala minister G Sudhakaran had even called him a "Brahmin monster" for conducting the ritual.

"The tantri is a symbol of caste devil. He is not a Brahmin. He is a Brahmin monster. He is a Brahmin becomes a monster, he will be a terror," the minister had said. Meanwhile, the Kerala State Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes had sent a show-cause notice to Rajeevaru over the purification rite performed at Sabarimala. "Bindhu, one of the women who entered the Sabarimala shrine, was a Dalit. We have received 2-3 complaints, stating that the purification rite was performed because of that and the ritual was against her," the commission had said.

Earlier, there were media reports that the CPI(M)-led LDF government planned to remove the tantri for conducting the purification rituals, but the TDB had rejected the reports.

# Sikkimese students excel in ICPE's All India School Contest

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 04 FEB:

Sikkimese students have performed exceptionally well in the All India School Contest hosted by Indian Centre for Plastic in the Environment [ICPE]. A student from Sikkim has won the second prize in All India level while two other students stood in the second and third positions under the East Zone category. Likewise, two schools from Sikkim have also been selected as winners for sending maximum number of entries in the contest.

This All India School Contest was organised by ICPE mainly to encourage children to think about their environment, their roles

and responsibilities in protecting it with focus on plastic waste.

Sharon Rai from VCGL Government SSS, Ravangla in South Sikkim stood second in the All India School Contest, while Parsis Rai from Kyongsa Girls SSS in West Sikkim secured the second posi-

West Sikkim stood third in the East Zone category. Likewise, Nandugaon SSS in South Sikkim and Gyalshing Girls SSS in West Sikkim were awarded for sending maximum number of entries in East Zone category.

Indian Centre for



tion and Den Hang Limboo from Sakyong SSS in

Plastics in the Environment was established in



January 1999 as a voluntary technical body on the recommendation of the Task Force set up by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India. The Centre promotes plastic recycling and waste management technologies to address the issue among other activities.

Regarding the same, ICPE in association with

HRDD, Government of Sikkim organised All India School Contest Award Ceremony for Eastern Zone on 29 Jan here at Human Resource Development Department conference hall.

In the prize distribution ceremony, senior officials of HRDD and ICPE handed over prizes to winning students and representatives from winning schools.

# India, Pak should hold dialogue to resolve Kashmir issue: Faesal

SRINAGAR, FEB 4 (PTI):

Former IAS officer Shah Faesal Monday said India and Pakistan should hold dialogue to resolve Kashmir issue as it was a political problem that cannot be ended by development packages.

"When the politicians are asked what is the issue, they say 'Kashmir is a problem. Give them monetary packages'. Some portion of the 2004 package is yet to be spent. Do we only need money? Is Kashmir a beggar?"

"We want to tell them that Kashmir is a political problem," he said.

Advocating dialogue, Faesal said India and Pakistan should sit together to resolve the Kashmir issue.

"They should not play with the lives of Kashmiri people by throwing money around," he said.

Faesal, who resigned from the government service last month, was addressing his maiden public rally in his home district of Kupwara in north Kashmir, 100 kilometres from here.

He said the situation in Kashmir over the past few years forced him to be the voice of the unheard people.

"While I raised my voice against atrocities being committed on different minorities in the country, the situation in Kashmir over the past few years forced me raise my voice. We saw our PhD scholars were martyred, there is no one to talk about the educated youth.

"Politicians are holding to their chair and minting money while Kashmiris are making

sacrifices for their political rights. There is no one taking note of this," he said.

The former IAS officer likened his tenure in the IAS to a jail term.

"To tell you honestly, I spent the last 10 years in a jail. During these 10 years, in many ways I tried to serve my people and succeeded as well. But what I saw in these 10 years, despite being a senior government officer, the fire in my heart, the atrocities and injustices I saw, I used to feel helpless.

"I was looking for an avenue where I could talk for the people of Kashmir and also work for their betterment," he said. He also claimed that the political scenario in the state was coming in its way of being self-reliant.

# Governor's greetings on Sonam Lochhar & Losar

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 FEB:

On the occasion of Sonam Lochhar and Losar, Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad has extended warm greetings and good wishes to the people of Sikkim, a Raj Bhavan press release informs.

In his message, the Governor has said, "The celebration of Sonam Lochhar by our Tamang brethren manifests yet another colour of rich Sikkimese cultural diversity. It reaffirms our faith in almighty as the bestower of all

our triumphs and accomplishments as we congregate to pray and offer fresh harvests to our deity.

Similarly, Losar, the Tibetan New Year, symbolises hope and aspirations for a new beginning. The festival of Losar is an occasion to reflect on our deeds and achievements in the year gone by and renew our pledge to work for well being of all in the New Year.

May the festivals of Sonam Lochhar and Losar strengthen bond of brotherhood among all faiths, community



and sects and nourish the peace, prosperity and harmony prevailing among all Sikkimese."

# Losar & Sonam Lochhar greetings from CM

GANGTOK, 04 FEB

[IPR]: Chief Minister,

Pawan Chamling and Smt Tika Maya Chamling have extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim on the sacred and joyous occasions of Losar and Sonam Lochhar.

"It is a joyous occasion for not only the Tibetan and the Tamang communities but for all the Sikkimese people to acknowledge the richness of culture and tradition through similar practices that symbolize unity and brotherhood.

I wish everyone a successful, happy, prosperous and a peaceful year ahead. May it bring wisdom and strength, may it bring



welfare and well-being, may it bring

love, harmony and may peace prevail in

our State and in our lives," the Chief Minister

# Sukna scam: SC sets aside sacking order against ex-military Secy, says GCM proceedings vitiated

NEW DELHI, FEB 4

(PTI): In a major relief to

former military secretary Avadhesh Prakash, the Supreme Court has set aside the December 2017 order of Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) holding him guilty of charge of "unbecoming conduct" with a punishment that he need not be given arrears of pension from the date of dismissal of service till the date of passing of order.

The top court held that the GCM was not "validly constituted" in Prakash's case as it consisted of members below his rank of Lieutenant General, and refused to remit back the case to the authorities for fresh GCM which is done in "normal course".

A bench of justices A K Sikri, S Abdul Nazeer and M R Shah also set aside the December 2017 order of Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) holding him guilty of charge of "unbecoming conduct" with a punishment that he need not be given arrears of pension from the date of dismissal of service till the date of passing of order.

The court noted that Prakash has already retired from service and only one charge was established against him which was also not of very serious nature, as it quashed the GCM and AFT orders and directed

payment of all benefits including pensions within three months to him.

"It is a travesty of justice that a person holding the rank of Lieutenant General is tried by the GCM which consisted of members below his rank," the bench said Monday.

"Such a composition cannot be countenanced in law. We are, therefore, of the opinion that the GCM was not validly constituted. Once that finding is arrived at, entire proceedings held by the said GCM stand vitiated," it said.

The inquiry against Prakash was ordered by the then Chief of Army

Staff, General (retd) VK Singh, who is now a Union Minister. After GCM had pronounced him guilty in the case, Prakash had approached the AFT against the order.

The Sukna land scam had first surfaced in 2008 and involves the transfer of land next to the Army's 33 Corps Headquarters in Siliguri, West Bengal, to a real-estate developer.

The apex court said that in accordance with the provisions of Rule 40 of the Army Rules, 1954, in Prakash's case members of the GCM could be of the rank of Lieutenant General or above.



**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**  
**SIKKIM STATE TEACHERS' RECRUITMENT BOARD**  
**GANGTOK - 737101**

Ref. No: 19/SSTRB/2019 Dated: 04/02/2019

### EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Applications are invited from eligible local candidates for filling up of 249 vacancies of Post Graduate Teacher through Direct Recruitment.

1. The eligibility Criteria & educational and professional qualification are as under:-

Sl. No.	Subject	No. of vacancy	Method of Recruitment	Pay Scale	Age Limit	Education & Other Qualification
01.	English	30	By Direct Recruitment through written examination and Viva-Voce.	Level 15, Cell 1 of Pay matrix of SGS (Revised Pay) Rules, 2018.	Should have attained the age of 21 years and should not have crossed 40 years in terms of Notification No. M(3)(55)/DOP/PT-III, dated: 03.07.2017.	Post Graduate in concerned subject with at least 50% marks (45% for SC/ST & OBC) from recognized University and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) from National Council for Teacher Education recognized institution
02.	Political Science	17				
03.	History	17				
04.	Geography	23				
05.	Economics	19				
06.	Sociology	09				
07.	Hindi	22				
08.	Nepali	21				
09.	Commerce	16				
10.	Physics	24				
11.	Chemistry	15				
12.	Maths	19				
13.	Biology	17				
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>249</b>				

Following category wise vacancies have been allotted for filling up of Posts of Post Graduate Teacher in 13 various subjects however, as for filling up of 21 post of Post Graduate Teacher (Nepali) roster points has been relaxed vide Notification No. 99/GEN/DOP, dated: 14.12.2017.

Sl. No.	Category	Eng.	Pol. Sc.	Hist.	Geog.	Eco.	Soc.	Hindi	Com.	Phy.	Chem.	Math	Bio.
1	UR	3	2	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	2	3	2
2	BL	4	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2
3	BL (W)	2	1	1	2	2	--	2	1	2	1	2	1
4	OBC - CL	4	2	2	3	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	2
5	OBC-CL (W)	2	1	1	1	1	--	1	1	2	--	1	1
6	OBC- SL	4	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
7	OBC- SL (W)	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
8	ST	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
9	ST (W)	1	--	--	1	--	--	1	--	1	--	--	--
10	SC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
11	SC (W)	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
12	PT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
13	MBC-SL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
14	WSS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>

(Eng. - English, Pol. Sc. - Political Science, Hist. - History, Geog. - Geography, Eco. - Economics, Soc. - Sociology, Com. - Commerce, Phy. - Physics, Chem. - Chemistry, Bio. - Biology.)

- Candidates fulfilling the above criteria may submit their applications in the prescribed format available in the Sikkim State Teachers Recruitment Board Office after submitting a Bank Receipt of Rupees 200/- (Rupees Two hundred) only payable in the State Bank of Sikkim under the revenue Head 0202-102-03-Edn. The amount once deposited shall not be refunded or adjusted against any purpose.
- Application form will be issued from 11.02.2019 at the office of SSRTB, Upper Syari, Gangtok. Last date for the receipt of application is 08.03.2019 (within office hours). No application shall be accepted after 3.30 p.m on 08.03.2019. The Board will not be responsible for late receipt of application due to postal delay or otherwise. Applicants are advised to go through the Advertisement scrupulously and fill in the form accordingly.
- Candidates are advised to submit the following documents along with the filled application.
  - Attested copies of Marksheet and Pass Certificate of Class X, XII, Graduation, Masters Degree issued by the recognized Board and B.Ed. degree issued by NCTE recognized institution.
  - Attested copy of Sikkim Subject/COI
  - Attested copy of Caste/Class Certificate.
  - Unmarried Certificate in case of unmarried female candidates and COI/SSC of husband's as well as marriage certificate in case of married female candidates issued by the appropriate authority.
  - Attested copy of valid Local Employment Card.
  - Two copies of pass port size photograph having imprinted name and date of birth at the bottom of the photo.
  - In-service candidates may apply with a copy of NOC issued by the concerned authority.

**The examination will be held in two phases:**

- Written examination
  - Paper I - Consisting of General English, General Knowledge & Teaching Aptitude (MCQ)
  - Paper II - Main Subject (Subjective)
- Classroom Demonstration.
- Viva-voce.

**Admission at all stages of examination for which applicants are admitted by the Board viz. written examination, classroom demonstration and viva-voce will be purely provisional and is subject to satisfying the prescribed eligibility conditions. If, on verification at any stages of the examination process, it is found that applicant do not fulfil any of the eligibility conditions, their candidature for the post will be cancelled by the Board without further notice.**

Admit card will be issued in due course of time. No TA & DA will be paid for attending the written examination and viva-voce.

**Note: The syllabus for the written exam will be displayed in the Notice Board of SSTRB, Upper Syari, East Sikkim. The Board shall not entertain any application on review or RTI, correspondence till the entire process of recruitment is completed.**

SD/-  
Controller of Exams  
Sikkim State Teachers Recruitment Board

R.O. No.: 658/IPR/PUB/Class/18-19  
Date: 04.02.19

# SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

## Death Due to Disengagement

*When a society refuses to engage, the shocking becomes the new normal*

Suicides have become so frequent, and the general response to them so uninvolved that this newspaper has stopped reporting on suicides on a day to day basis, fearful that the commonplace nature of such deaths will convince those contemplating such ends that this is a "normal" means to opt out. But there is nothing normal about a suicide. It is a traumatic experience for everyone touched by it – the victim, the families, the friends and even the police personnel who have to recover the bodies and draft reports about the incident. Why, even journalists who have to report on these incidents are left disturbed. Why then is it that suicides do not figure in public and political discussions? Is it not worrying that something which can be addressed and is yet allowed to take away so many lives from Sikkim's midst is not attracting the attention of leaders beyond the occasional lip-service?

Speak to any cop, especially the ones posted at the more remote out-posts where they respond more to recover bodies of suicide victims than law & order situations, bringing down limp bodies of lives that could have been saved and one does not sense disinterest from the routineness of the matter but a frustration over why lives end in this manner so often in Sikkim. They return to this thankless task every day, reporting to their beats knowing that their policing of yesterday has made no dent in the nexus of disinterest and insensitivity that spawns suicides in Sikkim. What is worse, the society at large is not only disinterested, but also complacently dismissive, reading of social challenges like suicides and drug busts with shallow comments of this being caused by corruption and materialism.

This is a dangerously uninvolved attitude. These are social challenges, situations that need to be met with social engagement and supported by a political will which creates the enabling laws and environment to redress the situation. Those who pass superficial judgements, blaming these societal trends on law & order failures and not the society, are causing perhaps even more damage than the indifference with which the community at large is responding to the challenges. Among all the factors that sustain substance abuse, societal indifference contributes the most. Suicides in Sikkim manifest in the failure of adequate awareness, or even interest, about mental health. Economic destitution has not claimed lives here yet. Lives are being lost and put in harm's way because a civil society refuses to come together in Sikkim.

Community engagement, when genuinely crafted, automatically leads to spontaneous involvement. And one is referring here not only to substance abuse and suicides. Look at how consistently mute the people and their organisations have remained in Sikkim in the face of every situation that has confronted the State. There is neither any spontaneity in jubilant celebrations nor any instinctive revulsion when misfortune comes visiting. The only voices that find comment indulge in rounds of condemnations and counters and are exclusively politically inspired. The lay citizens remain aloof because they have not cobbled together organisations which are not only not politically compromised, but also neither forceful nor forthright. In this vacuum, issues are manufactured and forced on the people and genuine problems remain unaddressed. Also manifesting because of this involvement deficit are social challenges which grow ever more staggering and confounding. Superficiality and token gestures do not solve any problem, and the situation with suicides is much too pervasive to even be called a "problem" any more – they have become the new normal for Sikkim. Unless the society invests some real involvement, this "normalcy" will keep getting worse and the State the poorer.

And no, don't look at the government to solve this problem. It cannot do so on its own because those who are harm's way are around families and their immediate circle of friends and only they can catch the warning signs in time. The government could help by arranging proper awareness and access to experts, but it will have to be the lay people who walk the way to help and encourage others to do the same. Given how things have been, even the first step has not been taken. As a result, by the time you finish reading this, chances are, that a panic call has gone through to another police outpost reporting an unidentified body found hanging in a neighbourhood somewhere in Sikkim...

## Dark matter may not actually exist – and our alternative theory can be put to the test

JURI SMIRNOV  
theconversation.com

Scientists have been searching for "dark matter" – an unknown and invisible substance thought to make up the vast majority of matter in the universe – for nearly a century. The reason for this persistence is that dark matter is needed to account for the fact that galaxies don't seem to obey the fundamental laws of physics. However, dark matter searches have remained unsuccessful.

But there are other approaches to make sense of why galaxies behave so strangely. Our new study, published in the *Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics*, shows that, by tweaking the laws of gravity on the enormous scales of galaxies, we may not actually need dark matter after all.

The Swiss astronomer Fritz Zwicky discovered in the 1930s that velocities in galaxy clusters were too high to account for how much matter we could see. A similar phenomenon was described by several groups of astronomers, such as Vera Rubin and Kent Ford, when they studied the motion of stars at the far edges of the Andromeda Galaxy.

The velocities of the stars far from its centre were expected to decrease, as they experience less gravitational force. That's because, according to Newton's second law of motion, the gravitational pull on orbiting matter can be equated to a product of its mass and acceleration (which is related to velocity).

However, the measurements showed that there was no such decrease in velocities with distance. That led scientists to believe there must be some invisible matter there to create a stronger gravitational pull and faster stellar motion. In the past decades, countless other probes of gravitating systems at very large length scales indicated the same problem.

### BEYOND DARK MATTER

The mystery of what dark matter actually is remains the ultimate challenge of modern fundamental physics. The core question is whether it is indeed a missing mass source, such as a new type of matter, or whether the gravitational law is simply different at gigantic length scales.

While the first option seems very tempting, we haven't actually found any dark matter yet. Also, while gravity laws are well tested within the solar system, one has to be careful extrapolating this to scales which are at least one billion times larger.

One well known attempt to get rid of the need for dark matter is Modified Newtonian Dynamics (MOND), which suggests that Newton's law of gravity becomes irregular when the gravitational pull is very weak – as is the case in the outer regions of the galaxy.

But this theory, although successful in many respects, hasn't passed the same stringent tests as our standard model of cosmology, which includes dark matter.

The main problem is that MOND cannot explain the missing mass problem in galaxies and galaxy clusters at the same time. Another very strong argument against MOND is based on the observation



of colliding galaxy clusters, where the stars of each galaxy pass through each other, but the gas clouds stick together and stay behind. A famous example is the Bullet Cluster, which consists of two such colliding clusters. Observations suggest that dark matter follows the stars in these events, which have a lower total mass than the gas cloud. MOND cannot explain why that is.

### SPACE BUBBLES

We set out to tweak the laws of gravity in a different way. Our approach assumed that a phenomenon known as Vainshtein screening is at work. This suggests that each sufficiently dense, compact object in space generates an invisible sphere around it which determines how the laws of physics behave with growing distance. This sphere is a theoretical concept to help us understand the difference between small and big scales, rather than an actual physical membrane.

According to our theory, within this bubble the laws of ordinary Newtonian gravity that we see in our solar system hold for objects interacting with the massive body at the centre. Outside the bubble, the theory suggests that the gravitational pull by the central object can be significantly enhanced – even though there is not more mass present.

The bubble size would be proportional to the mass of the central object. If, for example, in a galaxy this sphere has a radius of a few thousand light years – a typical distance at which signs of dark matter is observed – the corresponding sphere of our sun would have a radius of 50,000 astronom-

ical units (one such unit is the distance between the sun and the Earth). However, the edge of the solar system is only 50 astronomical units away. In other words, there are no objects we could observe that far from the sun to test whether the sun has a different gravitational pull on them than it has on Earth. Only the observation of entire systems very far away allows us to do that.

The surprising effect is that the size of the Newtonian bubble grows with the enclosed mass in a particular way. This means that the law of gravity changes at different length scales in galaxies and clusters of galaxies respectively and therefore it can explain the apparent dark matter in both systems simultaneously. That's not possible with MOND. Furthermore, it is consistent with the observation of the Bullet Cluster. That's because the gas clouds left behind in the collision are not compact enough to generate a sphere around them – meaning that the apparent dark matter is only notable around the more compact stars. MOND doesn't distinguish between stars and gas clouds.

To our big surprise, our theory allowed us to explain the stellar velocities in galaxies a lot better than with Einstein's general relativity, which allows for dark matter to exist. So there may actually be less mysterious dark matter out there than we think – and maybe even none at all.

We plan to further investigate this interesting phenomenon. It could also be responsible for the high variability of galactic motion, for which we gather more and more evidence.

Any massive body warps the space and time around it, according to general relativity. As a result, light rays take an apparent turn around the object rather than travelling in a straight line – an effect dubbed gravitational lensing. An extremely interesting test of our finding would be the observation of precise gravitational light deflection by individual galaxies, which is albeit a difficult measurement. Our theory predicts a stronger light deflection for very compact galaxies so, excitingly, it could one day be falsified or confirmed by such a measurement.

[the writer is Post doctoral researcher of Physics, University of Southern Denmark]

## Why screen time for babies, children and adolescents needs to be limited

JOHN J REILLY, ANTHONY (TONY) OKELY, CATHERINE DRAPER & MARK S. TREMBLAY  
theconversation.com

There is increasing concern about the amount of time children and adolescents are spending in recreational screen time. There's also increasing controversy over whether or not screen time is actually harmful.

Since 2016, we (researchers who've contributed to the development of the 24-hour movement guidelines for children and adolescents) have led a number of wide-ranging reviews of the scientific evidence on the impact of screen time from infancy to early adulthood. We examined whether or not the amount of recreational (spare time, non-educational) digital screen use influences health. These included risks such as obesity, reduced sleep, low physical fitness, anxiety and depression. We also looked at the impact of recreational screen time on social and emotional as well as cognitive and language development, well-being and educational attainment.

These reviews demonstrated that high levels of screen time, now typical among children, are associated with potential harm. And they showed clearly that less recreational screen time is better for avoiding obesity, and for promoting sleep, physical fitness, and cognitive, social and emotional development.

Over the past three years the evidence reviews generated authoritative guidelines nationally in Australia, Canada, South Africa, the UK and internationally.

We were all involved in the development of global guidelines for zero to four year-olds for the World Health Organisation (WHO). These guidelines all recommended that recreational screen time should be limited in infancy, childhood and adolescence.

### LIMITING SCREEN TIME

Guidelines from Canada, Australia, and South Africa recommend that recreational screen time should be avoided in the under two's, limited to one hour per day in two to four year-olds, and to two hours per day in five to 17 year-olds.

Based on our collective experience in developing these guidelines it's clear that these limits on recre-



ational screen time are needed for a number of reasons.

First, the evidence suggests strongly that limits are required. The recommendations to limit screen time were based on a rigorous, widely-accepted, and evidence-based approach. This included systematic reviews, critical appraisals of the evidence, national and international consultation and review, and transparent reporting.

Second, less recreational screen time is clearly better. There is evidence in support of the specific time limits recommended and our wide consultation with stakeholder individuals and organisations – including parents and families – suggests that they find time limits helpful.

Third, our recommendations that recreational screen time should be limited are consistent with other recent and thorough reviews of the evidence conducted by authoritative bodies such as the WHO and the World Cancer Research Fund. These reviews highlighted the important role of recreational screen time in the development of obesity, many cancers and myopia.

Our specific recommendations are also consistent with those made by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Canadian Paediatric Society.

Taking a laissez-faire approach to screen time would be to ignore the wider context. This is that modern childhoods are characterised by low physical activity, excessive sitting and time indoors. Children and adolescents also suffer from poor motor skills, high levels of myopia, increased risk of type 2 diabetes and hypertension.

And as new forms of screen time emerge, a precautionary approach is required – some limits on recreational screen time would be prudent until it is clear that there are

negligible harms.

### STILL TIME TO ACT

Some argue that the "genie is out of the bottle" in relation to screen time. But this is defeatist. The same arguments could have been made in relation to control of tobacco and alcohol and sugar. But it is now accepted that unlimited exposure to these substances isn't compatible with public health. And constraints are accepted as essential.

In addition, in many parts of the world the genie may not yet be out of the bottle. In many low- and middle-income countries exposure to recreational screen time may still be relatively low among children.

There is also scope to prevent excessive screen time in babies and young children, acting before adverse, or at least sub-optimal, lifestyle habits become established later in childhood or adolescence.

Screen time harms can be indirect as well as direct – recreational screen time increases with age and as it does it displaces more beneficial forms of sedentary behaviours such as reading. Screen time also displaces physically active play, and sleep.

Recreational screen time may seem to be an inevitable part of modern life. But even from infancy and early childhood, we should all be concerned about the potential for harms – at least until new, robust evidence demonstrates no harm. The most prudent approach would be cautious, attempting to follow recent evidence-based guidance that recreational screen time should be restricted.

[John J Reilly is Professor of Physical Activity and Public Health Science, University of Strathclyde, Anthony (Tony) Okely is Professor of Physical Development, University of Wollongong; Catherine Draper is Senior Researcher, University of the Witwatersrand; Mark S. Tremblay is Professor of Pediatrics in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa]

### Kolkata police-CBI face-off: WB governor submits report to home ministry

**KOLKATA, FEB 4 (PTI):** West Bengal Governor K N Tripathi has submitted a report to Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on the situation that unfolded in the city after a CBI team was allegedly obstructed by the police from questioning Kolkata Police chief Rajeev Kumar in the Saradha scam, Raj Bhavan sources said Monday. The contents of the report were, however, not immediately known. "The governor has submitted his report to the MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs). Today, in the morning he spoke to Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh," sources told PTI.

The report was prepared by combining the report of the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau and the reports submitted to the governor by the state chief secretary and the home secretary late Sunday night, the sources said.

In an unprecedented development, a number of CBI officers, who had gone to question Rajeev Kumar in connection with chit fund scam cases, were bundled into police jeeps, whisked to a police station and briefly detained on Sunday. Hours after the incident, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee began a sit-in right in front of the Metro Cinema to protest "insults" she faced at the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah and claimed the CBI knocked on the doors of Kumar without a search warrant.

Tripathi had last night summoned the state chief secretary and state director general of police and asked them to take immediate action to resolve the situation.

Rajnath Singh had called up the governor to know the facts of the "unfortunate and unprecedented situation of CBI officers being manhandled, detained, intimidated and obstructed", the officials said. The home ministry on Sunday evening received information that CBI officers in Kolkata had experienced "intimidation and threat to personal safety in course of investigation into the Saradha scam being conducted under the directions of the Supreme Court", they said.

The ministry has deployed central forces at the CBI office and residential premises of the probe agency officials in the state and it is now "closely monitoring the situation", they said.

According to the CBI, IPS officer Rajeev Kumar, who led a Special Investigation Team of the West Bengal Police probing the ponzi scams, needs to be questioned regarding missing documents and files but he has not responded to notices to appear before the agency.

Kumar, a 1989-batch IPS officer of West Bengal cadre, did not even attend a meeting with Election Commission officials who had gone to Kolkata to review election preparedness.

According to officials in Delhi, the Union Home Ministry will examine the role of some IPS officers in the alleged obstruction put up against a CBI team probing the Saradha ponzi scam in Kolkata and whether they violated the service conduct rules while preventing questioning of city police commissioner Rajeev Kumar.

## Nilambar Acharya appointed Nepal's envoy to India

**SHIRISH B PRADHAN KATHMANDU, FEB 4 (PTI):** Nilambar Acharya, Nepal's former law minister, has been appointed as the country's ambassador to India, a position that was vacant since October 2017.

The position of the Nepalese ambassador to India was vacant for more than a year after Deep Kumar Upadhyay resigned to join politics.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Sunday administered oath of office to Acharya at the Rastrapati Bhawan at Sheetal Niwas.

Bhandari congratulated Acharya for being an ambassador to a very close neighbour of Nepal.

Acharya is the first Nepalese ambassador to



take oath of office and secrecy from the president under a new provision. Earlier, ambassa-

dors were administered oath of office by Supreme Court chief justice. A Moscow University grad-

uate, Acharya was initially left-leaning but later joined the Nepali Congress party. He was min-

## Congress accuses CBI of not taking action against Sarma in Saradha scam

**GUWAHATI, FEB 4 (PTI):** The Assam Congress on Monday accused the CBI of not taking action against state Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over his alleged involvement in the multi-crore Saradha chit fund scam. "The CBI is yet to take any action against Sarma and investigations against him have stopped after he joined the BJP," Assam Pradesh Congress spokesman and former minister Pradyut Bordoloi told reporters here.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had alleged on Sunday night that Sarma was involved with the chit fund scam, he said.

"He (Sarma) was investigated for his involvement in the scam while he was in Congress but after he joined the BJP, it stopped," she said.

Bordoloi claimed that "Apart from Saradha, the BJP had earlier accused Sarma of being involved with the Louis Berger scam. A number of ar-



rests were made in Goa in connection with this scam but no action has been taken in Assam".

"It seems Himanta has been cleared in all the cases after he joined the BJP," he said.

The BJP had mentioned Sarma's "involvement" in the Louis Berger case in the party's manifesto during the 2014 Lok Sabha but "once he joined BJP, the party be-

came silent and trained their guns at West Bengal", Bordoloi said.

"Himanta has a history of changing allegiance to save his skin. When TADA cases were slapped against him, he left the ULFA to join Congress and then joined the BJP to save himself from the Sarada and Louis Berger cases", he added.

In July 2015 Louis Berger International Inc, a New Jersey-based

construction management company, had told a US court that it bribed government officials in India to win the contract for project management consultancy in a water supply project in Guwahati.

The then Congress government led by Tarun Gogoi had ordered a CID probe but the Gauhati High Court later ordered a CBI inquiry into the allegations.

## Rahul assures NE delegation Cong's opposition to Citizenship Bill, say leaders

**NEW DELHI, FEB 4 (PTI):** Congress president Rahul Gandhi Monday assured three delegations of the civil society, students, farmers and activists from the Northeast that his party will oppose the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, claimed leaders of the organisations.

The delegations of North East Students' Organisation (NESO), Forum Against Citizenship Act Amendment Bill (FACAA), led by renowned academician Hiren Gohain, and 70 organisations of Assam, including Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), met Gandhi and sought his cooperation to stall the bill in the Upper House, where the legislation is pending.

"We have apprised the Congress president about the people's apprehension about the bill and how it can hurt the indigenous people of the Northeast, its languages and culture. He assured us that the Congress party will oppose the bill in Rajya Sabha," NESO advisor Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharjya told PTI.

The delegation of FACAA, led by Gohain, also met Gandhi separately where they told him that the bill will violate the basic tenets of the Constitution and the



secular foundation of citizenship in the country as it provides for citizenship to all Hindus who come from the neighbouring country. "The Congress president told us that the party will oppose the bill and will not allow to destroy the language and culture of the Northeast," convenor of FACAA Manjit Mahanta told PTI.

The third delegation, comprising 70 organisations of Assam, met Gandhi and sought his intervention in "scuttling" the NDA government's "agenda" to impose the bill on the people of the Northeast.

Gandhi gave the assurance that he would do the needful to ensure that the bill does not get the approval of the Rajya Sabha, a member of the delegation said.

The bill provides for according Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis from Ban-

gladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after seven years of residence in India instead of 12 years, which is the norm currently, even if they do not possess any document.

The legislation was passed by the Lok Sabha during the Winter Session on January 8 and has been awaiting Rajya Sabha nod.

There has been strong opposition in Assam and other Northeastern states against the bill.

Political parties have been protesting on the grounds that the bill seeks to grant nationality to non-Muslims who have come up to December 31, 2014, thereby, increasing the deadline from 1971 as per the Assam Accord.

Also, according to the Assam Accord, all illegal immigrants who have come after 1971, irrespective of their religion, have to be deported and this bill violates that.

Addressing the joint sitting of Parliament, President Ram Nath Kovind Thursday said the bill will give justice to persecuted minorities of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan through Indian nationality.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also announced that the bill is an "atonement of the wrong that was done during India's Partition. India will safeguard all who had been victims of the Partition".

## 245 sedition cases filed in Assam since 2016: Minister



**GUWAHATI, FEB 4 (PTI):** The Assam government on Monday said as many as 245 sedition cases were registered across 17 districts since the BJP-led alliance came to power in the state in 2016.

In a written reply in the assam assembly, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said 245 sedition cases were filed against various individuals and banned organisations since May 26, 2016, when the present coalition government took charge.

The front page of the reply mentioned the figure as 251 in 19 districts, but in the annexure attached to it with district-wise details, there was repetition of the districts Biswanath (5 cases) and Sadiya (1 case).

Excluding these two districts, the actual number of sedition cases filed in the state during this period stood at 245 in 17 districts.

Replying to a query by the Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia of the Congress, the minister said sedition cases have been filed against militant groups such as ULFA(I), NDFB(S), NDFB(B), KLO, NSLA, NSLA(AT), UPLFS, NSCN, DHD, DHNA, NSCN(IM), ZUF and ATF, among others.

Such cases were also registered against several individuals, Patowary said on behalf of Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, who also holds

the Home portfolio.

Two sedition cases were slapped on RTI activist-cum-peasant leader Akihil Gogoi in Dibrugarh district and Guwahati city.

Along with Gogoi, cases were registered last month against eminent intellectual and Sahitya Akademi awardee Hiren Gohain and journalist Manjit Mahanta for their comments on the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

Patowary, however, did not elaborate on the alleged offences of the accused, apart from providing the names of the individuals and a few members of the militant groups.

Kokrajhar district topped the list, where 88 cases were filed against NDFB(S), KLO and NSLA(AT), he informed the House.

It was followed by Chirang with 43 cases and Tinsukia with 40 cases, during the last two years and eight months, he said.

The minister said that Cachar, Golaghat and Dima Hasao were the other districts with double-digit sedition cases -- 19, 18 and 11, respectively.

The other districts that saw registration of sedition case were Darang (2), South Salmara (1), Dibrugarh (1), Sadiya (1), Hojai (1), Biswanath (5), Nalbari (2), Dhemaji (5), Charaideo (5), Nagaon (2) and Guwahati city (1), he added.

### Assam govt gives two different figures in Assembly on number of detected foreigners

**GUWAHATI, FEB 4 (PTI):** The Assam government on Monday gave two different figures in the state Assembly on the number of foreigners detected in the state. The issue was pointed out by BJP MLA Numa Momin as Point of Order immediately after the Question Hour and he urged the Speaker to take strict action against the "callous officials".

Giving a reply for the starred question number 36, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said a total of 1,03,764 persons were declared as foreigners from 1985 to August 2018. This question was raised by the ruling party MLA Binanda Kumar Saikia and was taken up for discussion during the Question Hour.

In a separate query, which was unstarred question number 57, by Momin, Patowary gave a different figure and said 94,425 foreigners were detected from 1985 to August 2018.

## Starc on fire as Australia thrash Sri Lanka to win series

**CANBERRA, FEB 4 (AFP):** A resurgent Mitchell Starc took five wickets as Australia wrapped up a confidence-boosting 2-0 series thrashing of Sri Lanka Monday, with the tourists skittled for 149 in the second Test at Canberra. In front of a sparse crowd on day four, Sri Lanka resumed on 17 without loss, needing a daunting 516 to win and ended 366 short.

There was little resistance from the under-strength visitors who wilted under a pace onslaught led by spearhead Starc, who ended with 5-46 and took 10 wickets in the game as he emphatically bounced back from a lean spell.

Tim Paine set the big run chase after declaring Australia's second innings at 196 for three, following their mammoth first innings 534 for five declared. Sri Lanka were bowled out for 215 in reply.

Dimuth Karunaratne and Lahiru Thirimanne had survived a tough six overs on Sunday ahead of stumps, and they resumed with hopes high of putting up a fight.

Sri Lanka bowling coach Ramesh Ratnayake had made clear the team wanted to at least take the game into a fifth day to provide some momentum ahead of a Test tour to South Africa, starting in Durban later this month. But Karunaratne did not heed the message.

He failed to add to his overnight eight with Starc, bowling at close to 145 kph (90 mph), clipping his leg bail in only the third over of the day.

It was a big blow for Sri Lanka with the experienced opener their best batsman in the first innings before he was struck in the head by a Pat Cummins bouncer.

Captain Dinesh Chandimal also failed to deliver, struggling against the speed and bounce of a fired-up Starc, bowling at perhaps his best over the past year.

He poked at an away swinger and was caught at slip for four by Marnus Labuschagne, capping a miserable series in which he managed just 24 runs in two Tests.

Niroshan Dickwella was next in, promoted to number four from his usual six and the wicketkeeper-batsman was building a handy partnership before Thirimanne was removed by Cummins for 30.

Thirimanne tried to fend off a short ball from the pacesetter but it ricocheted off his bat and Cummins took an athletic diving catch.

It went from bad to worse for Sri Lanka with Dickwella bowled by Starc for 27 just before lunch and Kusal Perera, cleared to play after taking a hit on the helmet on Sunday, out for a golden duck next ball.

They went to lunch at 87 for five with Dhananjaya de Silva lasting just six balls after the break before he offered a weak shot to Jhye Richardson and sent an easy catch to Travis Head at mid-on.

## Aguero hat-trick sinks Arsenal, City close gap on Liverpool

**MANCHESTER, FEB 4 (AFP):** Pep Guardiola was glad to see Manchester City's clinical best return as Sergio Aguero's hat-trick closed the gap Premier League leaders Liverpool to just two points in a 3-1 win over Arsenal on Sunday.

The champions were let off the hook by Liverpool's 1-1 draw with Leicester on Wednesday, 24 hours after City's shock 2-1 defeat by Newcastle with what Guardiola described as an unrecognisable performance.

This time City did take advantage of playing a day before Jurgen Klopp's side, who travel to West Ham on Monday, to pile on the pressure and jump back ahead of Tottenham, who had leapfrogged City into second on Saturday.

"After what happened at Newcastle, everybody thought we would be seven points behind, everyone expected Liverpool to beat Leicester," said Guardiola.

"But a lot of things are going to happen until the end of the season, a lot of games will be tough. That is the real Premier League, you know better than me what that means and what we have to do.

"The most important thing today was the players showed why they are a good team. We didn't



recognise ourselves in the previous game at Newcastle. Today, at least, we came back."

Aguero's seventh goal in as many games in 2019 - and his 10th in his last dozen against Arsenal - was the highlight of a thoroughly dominant performance.

For the second time in a week, the Argentine scored inside the first minute to give City the perfect start by heading home Aymeric

Laporte's cross.

However, just like on Tyneside on Tuesday, City failed to press home their advantage as Laurent Koscielny profited from some slack defending to head home an equaliser just 10 minutes later.

**- GUNDOGAN'S DELIGHTFUL PASS -**

Guardiola's men were knocked out of their stride for most of the remainder of the first half, but retook the lead in style just a minute

before the break when Ilkay Gundogan's delightful lofted pass teed up Raheem Sterling to cross for Aguero to tap home.

In contrast, the second half was a stroll and City should have more than just the one goal to show for their dominance.

Sterling was the provider again for Aguero to secure his 10th Premier League hat-trick in controversial fashion as the ball came back off

the striker's arm before rolling over the line just after the hour mark.

"He was born with that talent, he will die with that talent," added Guardiola on Aguero's goalscoring ability.

A sixth consecutive away league game without a win sees Arsenal slip down to sixth behind Manchester United, who were 1-0 victors at Leicester earlier on Sunday, and three points adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea in the battle for Champions League football next season.

"They showed their superiority over 90 minutes but, above all, in the second half," said Arsenal boss Unai Emery.

"We need time to reach our target and need to be calm, patient."

Kevin De Bruyne, Bernardo Silva and Aguero again peppered Bernd Leno with powerful shots that the German kept out to maintain some respectability for Arsenal.

But that is all they had to show for another sorry away performance that leaves their chances of avoiding a third straight season in the Europa League fading.

"We still have big games and I think we need more away wins, because at home we play very good," said Leno.

"We win many games at home, but I think to go into the top four again we need more away wins.

## 'Don't send me to Bahrain': refugee footballer pleads in Bangkok

**BANGKOK, FEB 4 (AFP):** A refugee footballer fighting an extradition request appealed for his freedom Monday, pleading "please don't send me to Bahrain" as he arrived in shackles at a Bangkok court, which extended his detention by another two months.

Hakeem al-Araibi, a Bahraini refugee and Australian resident, fears torture and even death if he is returned to his homeland.

Araibi was convicted in absentia on charges of vandalising a police station in Bahrain, but says he was out of the country playing in a match at the time of the alleged offence.

The player has said he believes he is being targeted over his criticism of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) president Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, a member of Bahrain's ruling family.

Araibi was stopped at Bahrain's request at a Bangkok airport in November when he arrived in Thailand for his honeymoon. He has been held in detention since then as Thai courts decide whether to send him back to the Gulf state.

"Please don't send me to Bahrain," he pleaded as he arrived at the court where former Australian football captain Craig Foster and other campaigners were on hand to lend support to the embattled player.

"Your wife sends her love! Hakeem, Australia is with you, mate," Foster shouted.

The court said Araibi would be given

60 days to object to the extradition request and would need to present his case in April when the judges reconvene.

Along with the objection papers, the footballer's lawyer Nadthasiri Bergman said they needed to submit evidence "to show the court that Hakeem's extradition to Bahrain will pose danger to his life."

Outside the court, Foster, who has been leading a protest in the football community for Araibi's freedom, said the case was politically motivated and represented "retribution from Bahrain to Hakeem".

"We continue to call on the Thai prime minister to show some mercy... Don't be pushed around by Bahrain and just let him go home," Foster said.

Australian premier Scott Morrison has previously called on his Thai counterpart to release the 25-year-old, saying that returning him to Bahrain would infringe on his rights under international law.

"We are asking the Prime Minister to allow Hakeem al-Araibi to return to Australia," Australian ambassador-designate Allan McKinnon reiterated Monday outside the court, adding that representatives of 15 other countries were present to observe the proceedings.

Araibi had played for Bahrain's national youth team before he fled his homeland and was granted asylum in Australia, where he plays for the semi-professional club Pascoe

Vale FC. "We believe if Hakeem is not released there have to be some sanctions levied on Bahrain and Thailand," international players' union FIFPro's vice president Francis Awaritefe, a former Australian football player, told reporters outside the court.

Both countries "should at least be excluded from being able to host" international matches, he added.

FIFA's head of sustainability and diversity, Federico Addiechi -- who was present for the hearing -- told reporters FIFA has had numerous exchanges at a "formal and informal level" with Bahrain, Thailand, Australia and the AFC.

"We want to show our support to him... to ensure the right thing happens and (Hakeem) goes back to Australia as soon as possible," Addiechi said.

The detention of a recognised refugee such as Hakeem sends the message to the world that Thailand is "not safe for refugees," said Human Rights Watch's Phil Robertson.

Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Sunday in a statement that Araibi had fled the country while awaiting trial on charges of arson and "possessing incendiary devices. It added that issuing an international warrant for his arrest is "standard practice".

Araibi violated the terms of his bail the statement said and has "the right to appeal" his conviction.

## FC Goa women's team wins India leg of Global Goals World Cup



**NAVI MUMBAI, FEB 4 (PTI):** FC Goa women's football team representing the Forca Goa Foundation were crowned champions of the Global Goals World Cup held here.

In all, 24 all-woman teams competed in the football event which took place for the first time in India. The champions will now represent India at the Global Goals Activist Trophy to

be held in New York in September; a media release said Monday.

The Global Goals World Cup aims to create awareness and celebrate entities that champion United Nation's 17 sustainable development goals, as well as drive progress and change in their communities.

The Indian leg of the day-long sporting event was organised at a school here Saturday.

## Indian women's hockey team shocks Ireland 3-0 in 2nd friendly

**MURCIA (SPAIN), FEB 3 (PTI):** Indian women's hockey team dished out a spirited performance to notch up a stunning 3-0 victory against World cup silver medallists Ireland in their second and final friendly to end their tour of Spain on a high here on Sunday.

India had drawn the first match 1-1 against Ireland on Saturday.

India's attacking prowess stretched the Irish defenders right from the start as the forwardline made potential forays into the striking circle.

Navjot Kaur found the first breakthrough for India when she converted a splendid field goal in the 13th minute to help India take a 1-0 lead.

An Indian infringement in the second quarter saw Ireland being awarded a PC but it was well-saved by India's defence.

In the 26th minute, a timely assist by the experienced Deep Grace Ekka helped Reena Khokar double India's lead to 2-0 ahead of the 10-minute half-time break.

India continued to keep up a discipline structure but in the me-

lee gave away a PC to Ireland only minutes into the third quarter. But India's strong defence kept an Irish goal at bay.

The final quarter saw India set up a powerful attack that fetched them a PC which was well-converted by Gurjit Kaur who was the highest goal scorer for India in this Tour. "I am proud of the team because playing six matches in nine days can be very difficult and the last two matches we have played without our skipper Rani who has a shoulder strain," said an elated Sjoerd Marijne, Chief coach of the Indian women's hockey team.

"Today we were particularly good as we controlled the whole match and had them in our circle only six times. We have played good structure, with good disciplined hockey.

"One of the things we have improved in this tour is personal leadership and taking responsibility. I am not only seeing the score, it's good to win 3-0 but I am happy with individual performances."

Earlier, India had levelled the four-match series against hosts Spain.

## Footballer Sala's missing plane found: investigators

**London, Feb 4 (AFP):** The wreckage of a plane carrying Argentine footballer Emiliano Sala and his pilot has been found two weeks after it disappeared in the English Channel, one of the investigators said on Monday. Sala, 28, was flying from France to join his new club, Premier League side Cardiff City, when the light aircraft disappeared on January 21 north of the island of Guernsey. Shipwreck hunter David Mearns, who was hired by the striker's family after the official rescue effort was called off, said the plane was found on Sunday morning. "It is broken but most of it is there," he told BBC radio.

Sala's father Horacio spoke of his shock from his home in Progreso, Argentina, telling Cronica TV: "I can't believe it. It's a bad dream." A spokesperson for Britain's official Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) told AFP: "I can confirm it has been found." A further statement is expected later on Monday. Mearns said his private company, Blue Water Recoveries,



had found the wreckage before calling in the AAIB to take a closer look. "They dove with their remotely operated vehicle, that's a submersible with cameras and lights, and indeed confirmed that it was the plane," he said.

"They saw the registration number and the biggest surprise to both of us was that most of the plane is there."

Asked if the bodies of Sala and the British pilot, David Ibbotson, would be inside, he said: "That's a possibility."

**- 'BEST WE COULD HAVE HOPED FOR' -**

Sala was flying to Cardiff after transferring from French team Nantes in a 17 million euro (19.3 million) move -- a record deal for the Welsh team.

The plane, a Piper PA-46 Malibu, vanished from radar around 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of Guernsey, with pilot Ibbotson the only other person aboard. The family hired Mearns after the official rescue team gave up their search, saying there was little chance of

finding anyone alive.

"This is about the best result we could have hoped for the families," Mearns told Sky News.

Suspected debris from the plane washed up on the Normandy coastline in France last Wednesday. Top footballers were among more than 4,500 contributors to a crowdfunding page that raised over 300,000 euros (343,000) to look for the wreckage. Horacio was the only member of the Sala family to stay behind in Argentina as the

others rushed to France and Guernsey to try to help with the search.

"I talk to them every day," he said.

"They kept saying days were going by, and that there had been zero word on Emiliano, or on the plane." The authorities will now resume control of the investigation, Mearns said. The AAIB hired offshore supply ship Geo Ocean III for three days, starting on Sunday, but the search will be dependent on the weather.

At Cardiff's match against Bournemouth on Saturday, Sala's photograph appeared on the front cover of the match-day programme. The two captains laid floral tributes on the halfway line before what the club called a "silent reflection".

Sala's name, in the Argentina colours, was also spelled out behind one of the goals as supporters held cards aloft. Cardiff manager Neil Warnock said Sala would have been "really proud" of the team after they won 2-0 in their first home match since the plane vanished.

# UAE gives pope pomp-filled welcome ceremony at visit's start



**ABU DHABI, FEB 4 (AP):** Pope Francis opened his historic visit to the United Arab Emirates on Monday with a grandiose, pomp-filled welcome ceremony before he was to address faith leaders in a show of religious tolerance in a Muslim region known for its restrictions on religious freedom.

Francis arrived at the Abu Dhabi presidential palace in a simple Kia hatchback, but was greeted with an artillery salute and military flyover by a country now at war. Even for a nation known

for its excesses, the Emiratis' red-carpet welcome was remarkable for a pope who prides himself on simplicity. It featured horse-mounted guards escorting the pontiff's motorcade through the palace gardens while the flyover trailed the yellow and white smoke of the Holy See flag as cannons boomed.

Francis stood somberly between Abu Dhabi's powerful crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and the Emirati vice president and prime

minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, as the Vatican and Emirati anthems played and delegations were introduced.

Francis' speech to the gathering of faith leaders later in the evening is the highlight of his brief, 40-hour visit to Abu Dhabi, the first to the Arabian Peninsula by a pope. His trip culminates on Tuesday with the first-ever papal Mass on the Arabian Peninsula a gathering expected to draw some 135,000 faithful in a never-before-seen display of

public Christian worship here. Francis arrived in the Emirati capital late on Sunday, hours after making an appeal from the Vatican for urgent cease-fire in war-torn Yemen so that food and medicine can get to its people, who are suffering the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The Emirates has been Saudi Arabia's main ally in the war in Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is fighting the country's Houthi rebels, and Francis' pre-trip appeal

was a way for him to avoid embarrassing his hosts with a public denunciation of the humanitarian costs of the war while in the region.

"The cries of these children and their parents rise up" to God, he said at the Vatican before heading to Rome's airport for his flight.

In a sign that regional politics was playing a not-insignificant role in Francis' visit, the papal plane flew north of Qatar and around the peninsular, energy-rich nation on his flight Sunday.

Four Arab nations Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been boycotting Qatar since June 2017 as part of a regional political dispute. Tensions are still high between the nations, especially after Qatar's win at the Emirates-hosted Asian Cup soccer tournament this past week.

By avoiding Qatari airspace, Francis omitted sending a telegram of greetings to the country's ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, as he would do when flying through the airspace of countries. He sent one when passing by the island nation of Bahrain.

## Trump comments spark Iraqi demands for US exit



**BAGHDAD, FEB 4 (AFP):** Iraqi politicians on Monday hit back at Donald Trump after the US president said he plans to keep American forces in the country to spy on Iran.

In an interview with CBS television, Trump reaffirmed his determination to pull the United States out of "endless wars" in Syria and Afghanistan but said American troops would stay on in Iraq, partly "to be looking a little bit at Iran".

"We spent a fortune on building this incredible base. We might as well keep it," he said, referring to Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq that he visited in December.

"If somebody is looking to do nuclear weapons or other things, we're going to know it before they do," he said in the interview aired on Sunday.

His comments sparked a new round of demands in Baghdad for US forces to leave the country.

"The Iraqi constitution rejects the use of Iraq as a base for hitting or attacking a neighbouring country," President Barham Saleh said.

Saleh said US forces were in the country legally under an agreement between the two countries, but that "any action taken outside this framework is unacceptable".

Iraq's government plays a delicate balancing act between its two main allies, Washington and Tehran, which are

bitter enemies.

The US has been leading a coalition to crush the Islamic State group which grabbed swathes of Syria and Iraq in 2014, and multiple offensives have since ousted the jihadists from all but a sliver of territory in eastern Syria.

Baghdad's position has also been complicated by Trump's shock December decision to pull troops out of neighbouring Syria, prompting pro-Iran factions to step up calls for an accelerated US withdrawal from Iraq.

Sabah al-Saadi, a member of parliament in the bloc led by influential anti-American Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, has proposed a bill demanding a US pullout.

Trump's latest remarks had made passing such a law "a national duty".

Deputy speaker of parliament Hassan Karim al-Kaabi, also close to Sadr, said they were a "new provocation", weeks after the US president sparked outrage in Iraq by visiting US troops at Ain al-Asad without meeting a single Iraqi official.

Officially, Iraq says there are no American bases on its soil -- only instructors deployed at Iraqi bases.

Kurdish MP Sarkawt Shams tweeted that the mission of US troops in Iraq was "to help Iraqi security forces against terrorism, not 'watching' others".

## Taliban to take part in 'intra-Afghan' talks in Moscow

**ISLAMABAD, FEB 4 (AP):** The Taliban said Monday they will participate in what they call "intra-Afghan" talks in Moscow designed to bring together prominent Afghan figures, including former President Hamid Karzai, opposition figures and tribal elders but no Kabul government officials.

The two-day meeting in the Russian capital, which starts Tuesday, is seen as another step in a process aimed at resolving Afghanistan's 17-year war, a process that has accelerated since the appointment last September of US peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad.

Khalilzad has been holding separate negotiations with the Taliban even as he presses for a dialogue that would bring together all key Afghan players.

However, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's office criticized the meeting in Moscow, saying that Afghan politicians attending the gathering were doing so "in order to gain power." Ghani's chief adviser, Fazel Fazly, tweeted that it was "regrettable."

Suhail Shaheen, spokesman for the Taliban's political office in the Gulf Arab state of Qatar, confirmed the Taliban participation. Their delegation is to be led by Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai.

The Taliban have refused to talk to Ghani's government, which they denounce as a US puppet.

A statement released on Monday by Afghans attending the Moscow meeting described it as "the first step toward intra-Afghan dialogue."

Along with Karzai, the former president, many of the 38 delegates from Kabul have held prominent government positions. Two presidential hopefuls are among those going to Moscow, including Hanif Atmar, who resigned as Ghani's security adviser last August, apparently over differences with the president.

Also on the list are powerful warlords turned politicians and former Taliban insurgents who reconciled with the Kabul administration.

The Moscow gathering will further isolate Ghani, who has been irked by Khalilzad's direct talks with the Taliban as well as the U.S. envoy's successive rounds of talks in regional countries.

al people were wounded and some were screaming before the ambulances arrived," said another witness, Abdulahi Mohamed.

The Russian government has denied orchestrating the meeting, Monday's statement from Kabul said the Moscow-based Council of Afghan Society, an organization of the Afghan diaspora in Russia, was behind it.

It said the participants would discuss a range of issues, from a cease-fire, supporting Khalilzad initiatives to further "intra-Afghan" talks and ways to ensure a "powerful and democratic central government" in Afghanistan.

Washington has made no comments so far about the Russia-hosted talks.

Since the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, following the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Washington has spent more than USD 1 trillion on Afghanistan. President Donald Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire to bring US troops home, adding to the urgency of Khalilzad's mission.

Reports late last year suggested Trump was considering withdrawing at least half of Washington's estimated 15,000 troops from Afghanistan by the summer.

## Nine killed in Somali market car bombing: police

**MOGADISHU, FEB 4 (AFP):** At least nine people were killed and several wounded when a car loaded with explosives blew up near a mall in a busy market in the Somali capital on Monday, police said. "The blast occurred close to Mogadishu mall and it has caused death and destruction. Nine civilians were confirmed dead and several others were wounded," police officer Ahmed Moalin Ali said.

"The terrorists parked a vehicle loaded with ex-

plosives in the vicinity of the mall to kill the innocent civilians." He said some of the victims died in a building that collapsed as a result of the blast in the Hamarweyne market.

"I saw the dead bodies of four people recovered from the debris of a collapsed building and three others were strewn dead outside after the blast had blown them," said shopper Munira Abdulkadir. "I was not far away from the blast location, but I was lucky to have survived, sever-

al people were wounded and some were screaming before the ambulances arrived," said another witness, Abdulahi Mohamed.

Mogadishu is regularly targeted by the Al-Qaeda affiliated Islamist group Al-Shabaab.

The group was largely driven out of Mogadishu in 2011 and has lost many of its strongholds. But it retains control of large rural swathes of the country and continues to wage a guerrilla war against the authorities.

## Trump says he 'does not necessarily agree' with intelligence agencies



**WASHINGTON, FEB 4 (PTI):** US President Donald Trump has said he does not always agree with the conclusions of his intelligence chiefs and pointed out past intelligence failures as a reason to reject their assessments of the threats posed by Iran and North Korea.

Trump rebuked his intelligence chiefs last week after his director of national intelligence and leaders of the CIA and FBI testified before Congress on global threats and contradicted the president on Iran, North Korea and ISIS.

During a Congressional hearing last week, top American spymasters Dan Coats, National Intelligence Director, and Gina Haspel, CIA Director, told lawmakers that Iran was abiding by the 2015 nuclear deal.

Trump said he disagrees with the assessment of his intelligence leaders that Iran is abiding by the nuclear deal. He claimed that Iran is going ahead with its nuclear weapons programme.

He also said the national security advisers' false assessment on Iraq led the US to engage in a war that it should never have been.

The US' intelligence services had said that the then Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction that became the basis of American invasion in the Middle East nation. However, the assessment was later proven wrong, he said.

"I have intel people,

but that does not mean I have to agree (with their assessments)...people that said Saddam Hussein...in Iraq had nuclear weapons...Those intel people didn't know what the hell they were doing, and they got us tied up in a war that we should have never been in," Trump told CBS News in an interview.

As a result of that intelligence assessment under the Bush administration, Trump said the US spent USD 7 trillion in the Middle East and lost hundreds of lives.

Trump said he disagrees with the assessment of his intelligence leaders that Iran is abiding by the nuclear deal. He claimed that Iran is going ahead with its nuclear weapons programme.

"When I look at Iran, I look at it as a nation that has caused tremendous problems," he said.

In 2015, Iran agreed a long-term deal on its nuclear programme with the P5+1 group of world powers - the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany.

It came after years of tension over Iran's alleged efforts to develop a nuclear weapon. Iran insisted that its nuclear programme was entirely peaceful, but the international community did not believe that.

Under the accord, Iran agreed to limit its sensitive nuclear activities and allow international inspectors in return for the lifting of crippling economic sanctions. Trump in May last

year withdrew the US from the Iran nuclear deal, calling it "defective at its core".

Trump also indicated that he is not in sync with the assessment of his intelligence chief on the nuclear weapons programme of North Korea.

North Korea is unlikely to fully give up its nuclear weapons, the US intelligence report said.

Asserting that there has been a tremendous progress in the ties between the US and the North Korea, Trump said both he and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un are looking forward to the scheduled meeting between them, the exact date and venue of which will be announced in the next few days.

"He (Kim) is looking forward to it. I am looking forward to it. We have made tremendous progress...(Kim) has a chance to have North Korea becoming an economic behemoth. (North Korea) has a chance to be one of the great economic countries in the world. (Kim) He can't do that with nuclear weapons," he said.

Trump and Kim met in Singapore last June to discuss denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

At the time, Mr Trump claimed this meeting had ended the North Korean nuclear threat.

The two leaders signed an agreement pledging to "work toward complete denuclearisation" but there was no agreed pathway and little progress has been made since then on the issue.

**THE BIRDS HAVE LOST THEIR WAY**  
EDITED BY TSHERING EDEN AND PEMA WANGCHIK

Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey coursed by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this "development" and some of the stories it has 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.

**ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM**

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## Ranveer Singh raps his way to the runway at LFW Summer/Resort 2019

**MUMBAI, FEB 4 (PTI):** Ranveer Singh turned the ramp into a 'desi' underground hip hop jam session as he walked the runway with "Gully Boy" team and city-based rappers on the final day of Lakme Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2019.

The 33-year-old actor wore a monochrome athleisure attire from the new collection of fashion brand Love Gen, the label started by Bhavana Pandey, Dolly Sidhwani and Nandita Mahtani.

Ranveer, along with rapper Naezy and co-actor Siddhant Chaturvedi, performed on the songs "Apna time aayega" and "Asli hip hop" from Zoya Akhtar's upcoming directorial.

"It was a very unique show. Our film is all about music and music was at the heart of our show. There were great performances, live music and the entire gang has authentic rappers. They contributed to every bit of the film," Ranveer said.

The actor said he loved the limited edition 'Gully-Gen' collection, which includes jackets, hoodies, track



pants and T-shirts.

"I loved it. It is the first time that any of movies had merchandise, turned right," he added.

Zoya and film's producer Ritesh Sidhwani were also present.

Post the show, which was held at the JioGarden, Bandra-Kurla Complex here, Ranveer took on the DJ stage and rapped for the crowd present at the venue.

The actor, known for his enthusiastic and energetic spirit, left the audience surprised when he broke into an impromptu performance.

As fans cheered him on, the Bollywood star crowdsurfed giving the final day of the fashion gala one of the most unforgettable moments.

Inspired by the underground rap scene in Mumbai, "Gully Boy" features Ranveer in the lead with Alia Bhatt and Siddhant. The film also stars Kalki Koechlin and Vijay Raaz in pivotal roles.

Produced by Ritesh, Zoya and Farhan Akhtar, "Gully Boy" is set to hit the screens on February 14.

The LFW concluded Sunday.



**TWINS!** Chris Pratt poses with his Lego alter ego at the premiere of *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part* in Westwood, Calif.

## Demi Lovato deletes Twitter after comments about 21 Savage spark backlash



**LOS ANGELES, FEB 4 (PTI):** Demi Lovato went off Twitter after she faced flak for remarks over rapper 21 Savage's arrest by US immigration officials. The singer courted controversy on Sunday during the 2019 Super Bowl when she made a comment about the recording artiste, who was taken into custody by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement following a "targeted operation" in Atlanta.

21 Savage is facing deportation. The Grammy-nominated rapper came to the US as a teenager in 2005 from the UK but did not leave when his visa expired a year later.

Taking a dig at the viral news of the rapper's arrest, Lovato tweeted, "So far 21 Savage memes have been my favorite part of the Super Bowl." Social media users, including Offset, called her out for her comments. "ALL THE MEMES AND S\*\*T AINT FUNNY WHEN SOMEBODY GOING THROUGH SOME. PRAYING FOR MY DAWG AINT S\*\*T FUNNY HIS FAMILY (sic) DEPENDING ON HIM," he wrote.

Lovato, 26, soon tried defending and clarifying herself but to no avail. "If you're gonna come at me for making a joke, try coming at me with some original not involving drugs," she wrote. "F\*\*k Twitter. This is why I don't tweet anymore," she wrote in another post.

Many of the memes that made jokes at the rapper's expense had to do with American Revolution-era images and British monuments. The "Confident" hitmaker clarified which image she found amusing.

The picture showed a person writing on paper with a feather-tip pen and a bottle of ink next to it, seemingly from the Victorian era. The meme was captioned, "This how 21 Savage be writing his verses." "FYI this is the s\*\*t I'm laughing at... Not the fact that anyone is getting deported," Lovato wrote.

The singer, who recently returned from rehab, wrote a cryptic note on Instagram. "This break couldn't last long enough tbh (sic)," she said. After deleting her microblogging account, Lovato wrote another note on her Instagram Story about her tweets. She also shared screenshots of comments people made about it, including calling out her overdose and drug use.

"Wasn't laughing at anyone getting deported. I know that's not a joke...not have I EVER laughed at that. The meme I posted/was talking about was of him being writing with a feather pen. Sorry if I offended anyone. "But it's no excuse to laugh at someone's addiction, let alone their OD," she said. Lovato recently celebrated six months of sobriety after her July overdose.

## Grateful that people still accept me with open arms: Juhi Chawla

Juhi Chawla says she is grateful that even after three decades in the film industry, the audience looks forward to watching her films.

The actor, who was one of Bollywood's reigning stars in the '90s, believes her dedication and loyalty to the craft is key to her relevance in Bollywood. "People still accept me with open arms and I love the fact that the makers have a role for me. I am totally grateful for all this. I don't want to question it or analyse anything. "Acting is all I know.

I don't know what I would be doing other than this. I am a good worker with a happy attitude and will be on the sets whenever there is a good opportunity," Juhi told PTI in an interview. The actor said she was initially unsure of her path but found her way over the years.



"When I started I did not know where I was headed, I did not know what were my strengths were. As I started working more, I realised that when there is a fun sequence, I enjoy it a bit more. It comes easier to me," she said. Juhi also praised the new crop of actors, who she believes are brave with their choices.

"They are unbelievable. Today, the young girls are very brave. Alia Bhatt doing films like 'Udta Punjab' and 'Raazi'. She is stepping out of her comfort zone. Chawla's last release was "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga", which reunites her with frequent collaborator, Anil Kapoor. Also featuring Sonam Kapoor and Rajkumar Rao, the film released on February 1.

**ARIES:** Goals! Goals! Goals! Today's Aquarius new moon invites you to dream without limits. Where would you like to be in six months' time? What would you like to have accomplished? Get the manifestation ball rolling NOW. This lunar light could also bring a wave of fresh faces into your world. Keep expanding your social network and trying new experiences on for size.

**TAURUS:** You're movin' on up, Taurus, as today's new moon in Aquarius hits your tenth house of ambitions and accelerates your ascent up the ladder. Even if your lofty goals aren't doable in their current form, don't abandon them. It may simply be a case of paring down to a more basic 1.0 plan. Create a solid foundation that you can easily build on later.

**GEMINI:** If you find yourself at a crossroads with a key relationship on Saturday, Gemini, don't panic. You'll know which way to turn without a GPS. Diplomatic Venus in your partnership house teams up with game-changer Uranus, bringing on a

make-it-or-break-it moment. Suddenly the fog lifts, and you'll have the clarity to decide whether or not to ink the deal, move in together or whatever next step you're deliberating.

**CANCER:** Today's skies feature a new moon in Aquarius and your smoldering eighth house, amping up your magnetic mojo. Are you in a relationship that's been progressively deepening? You could take a concrete step to make it into an official "thing." If you've been struggling with someone who can't make a firm commitment, it's ultimatum time.

**LEO:** It takes two to make a thing go right! And as today's Aquarius new moon sparks your seventh house of partnerships, your desire for a real commitment could heat up. Newer romances might move into "official" territory, and longtime couples get a titillating reboot. In business, a collaborative venture or contract negotiation may pick up speed. Explore all kinds of synergies. Joint missions could reach dynamic duo status over the coming six months!

**VIRGO:** Today's new moon in Aquarius electrifies your sixth house of healthy living, launching a six-month phase of increased vitality. Take the first steps toward clean eating, regular fitness regimens or forming a positive new habit. Don't try to do this "perfectly." Focus on establishing a sustainable routine that can bring long-lasting results, even if they don't come overnight.

**LIBRA:** Your love life gets a shot of mojo, courtesy of a new moon in Aquarius and your passion sector. Single? Never mind waiting for The One to right-swipe you. Slide into the driver's seat and seek out promising prospects. Your amorous efforts might be rewarded before the corresponding full moon on August 15. Fame could also come knocking under this lunar lift. Be proactive and make sure the world is aware of all the amazing gifts you have to offer.

**SCORPIO:** There's no place like home as today's Aquarius new moon in your domestic fourth house beams into Chateau Scorpio. Besides ensuring you have

at least one little corner you can call your own, you'll be inspired to feather your haven with brand-new decorative touches. If you're looking to move, pore over the real estate listings—the place of your dreams could emerge. A powerful woman or mother figure may assume a stronger role in the next two weeks!

**SAGITTARIUS:** Today's Aquarius new moon revs up your communication house, sparking synergies with like-minded people. Seize the day and join forces on a trial project. Your combined efforts could reach a high point by the corresponding full moon this August 15. If a course or workshop related to writing, media or DIY skills catches your eye, sign up! As the zodiac's eternal student, this won't just banish the winter blues, but might also help you bank a profitable new skill!

**CAPRICORN:** Make it rain, Capricorn! Today's new moon in Aquarius electrifies your second house of finances, launching a six-month cycle of prosperity. Get clear on what you'd like to accomplish during this lunar-powered phase and put an action plan in

place. Use these moonbeams to advance your ambitions, and you could reap the rewards by the corresponding full moon on August 15.

**AQUARIUS:** Your fresh start is here, Aquarius! Today, 2019's only new moon in your sign marks your "official" New Year. Like a ribbon-cutting ceremony for your resolutions, this lunar lift instructs you to invest in your grand goals and given them your all. By the time the corresponding Aquarius full moon rolls around on August 15, your star could be shining brighter than ever!

**PISCES:** Has a once-important situation in your life passed its expiration date, Pisces? It's time to start letting go. Today's Aquarius new moon activates your twelfth house of release and healing. Slowly (but surely) close the door on relationships you've outgrown. And say goodbye to past pain! Whether a self-destructive behavior or a toxic relationship, you now feel prepared to remove it from your life. You might want to cut off all ties, but cold turkey usually isn't successful. View it as a process, one that lasts until the corresponding full moon on August 15.

## REQUIRED FOR CANADA

Nurses,  
Caregivers,  
Chef-Waiters-Butchers-Bakers,  
Driver,  
Farm Workers - Meat Packers  
IT PROFESSIONAL



Walk for Interview & Resume Submission

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