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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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U-16 boys begin Vijay Merchant Trophy with resounding win over Meghalaya



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 OCT: Sikkim's under-16 Boys Cricket Team won its inaugural match against Meghalaya today at the Vijay Merchant Trophy 2019-20 at KIIT Cricket Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Sikkim won by an innings and 114 runs and earned seven points in the Northeast and Bihar Division. Sikkim is scheduled to play five matches in the tournament.

The match had begun on 11 October with Sikkim winning the toss and opting to field first and restricted Meghalaya to 134 runs thanks to some brilliant bowling by Yawar Hussain who scalped six wickets backed by Captain

Tarun Sharma taking three wickets and MD Salil Ahmed taking one wicket.

Sikkim went on to score 274 runs, of which Yawar made 62 runs, Wahajat Mehdi 54 runs, Tarun Sharma 40 runs, Adiv Tamang 36 runs, MD Arif 31 runs, giving the team a lead of 140 runs.

In response, Meghalaya was bundled out for 26 runs.

Tusya Naman Sharma took 6 wickets and Yawar Hussain 3 wickets.

This is for the first time that two Sikkim bowlers have posted five-wickets hauls in a match.

Sikkim will be playing against Mizoram next, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur.

Cong to oppose release of Rajiv's killers: TNCC chief

NEW DELHI, OCT 13 (PTI): The Tamil Nadu unit of the Congress on Sunday said it would strongly oppose any move to release any of the seven convicts, held guilty in former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassination case.

"There are so many prisoners including convicts in prisons of Tamil Nadu. Why is there a motivated demand for releasing Rajiv's killers only?" Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K S Alagiri told PTI over phone.

He said any decision to release the convicts would set a "bad precedent" and "highly disturb the social order and peace in Tamil Nadu".

Alagiri was reacting to a recent meeting that NDA-ally PMK's founder president S Ramadoss and his son and Rajya Sabha member R Anbumani had with Prime Minister Narendra Modi here for his intervention for the release of Rajiv Gandhi's killers.

Questioning the bids of "intervention in the justice system", Alagiri said the law of the land should be allowed take its own course.

It is for the court to decide the matter, he added.

Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on May 21, 1991 during an election meeting at Sriperumbudur near

Chennai by a suicide bomber of the banned LTTE.

In a memorandum to Prime Minister Modi, Ramadoss had argued that the Supreme Court last year had allowed the Tamil Nadu government to decide on the release of seven convicts -- Murugan, Santhan, Perarivalan, Robert Payas, Ravichandran, Jayakumar and Nalini.

The Tamil Nadu government later on September 9, 2018 had passed a Cabinet resolution recommending to Governor Banwarilal Purohit for the release of convicts, but his office has been delaying the matter, he said.

"Tamils all over the world expected that the governor would take a decision shortly. But even after one year and one month after receiving the letter, the office of Tamil Nadu governor has not taken any decision and is procrastinating this matter. This has disappointed and distressed millions of Tamils all over the world," Ramadoss said.

"It is rather unfair," he said, adding the seven convicts were in prison for the last 28 years and keeping them in jail any further without any strong reason would be a serious violation of the human rights.

HSP RELEASE 7-POINT MANIFESTO FOR GANGTOK BY-ELECTION

Bhaichung appeals to voters to reiterate that Sikkim is not for sale

SAGAR CHHETRI GANGTOK, 13 OCT:

Hamro Sikkim Party released its election manifesto for Gangtok constituency for the upcoming by-poll here on Sunday. The party has dedicated its seven-point manifesto to the people of Gangtok.

Addressing a press conference here this evening, HSP working president, Bhaichung Bhutia, who is also the party candidate for Gangtok stressed that the by-poll was very important for the people of Sikkim because it offered them a chance to save Sikkim.

He appealed to voters of Gangtok and Martam-Rumtek constituencies,



both in East Sikkim, to come forward and cast their votes to save Sikkim and to show that they will not allow Bharatiya Janata Party to enter Sikkim through the back-door.

BJP, it may be recalled, polled barely 2% of the votes in the assembly elections held earlier this year and saw all its candidates lose their deposits. In the

recent months, however, it has acquired 10 MLAs in the House after they defected from the SDF into BJP.

HSP has adopted "Sikkim is not for Sale" as its poll slogan, a tagline which has not gone down well with the authorities who have taken down HSP hoardings and banners with this slogan.

Meanwhile, the BJP is now in a seat-

sharing arrangement with SKM which has left two of the three constituencies going for by-elections on 21 Oct.

Mr Bhutia appealed that it was time for voters to convey clearly that such surreptitious acquisition of power despite a clear mandate conveying otherwise will not be tolerated.

Meanwhile, the seven-point HSP

manifesto promises to establish a fully operational OPD and Emergency services at the Old STNM Hospital, involve all stakeholders in the Gangtok Smart City project and curb the traffic problem with multi-storied parking facilities and initiating discussions with the Army to open the cantonment road at Tadong for civilian traffic to ease congestion.

The manifesto also promises to create children's parks and play areas in the city, construct a dedicated amphitheater for events and programs, promote different sports activities during weekends at available infrastructure

in and around Gangtok and find a permanent solution to clean up waste and drainage management in some sections of MG Marg.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that HSP was in politics with "clean intentions" for the people of Sikkim and their rights.

He mentioned that the party will not make any compromises when it comes to the interest of the people of Sikkim and with regard to the Constitutional safeguards for Sikkim.

Likewise, HSP spokesperson, Biraj Adhikari, assured that upon winning the election the HSP MLA will work on these issues on a priority basis.

SKM-BJP alliance will win all three constituencies: DB Chauhan

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 OCT:

Bharatiya Janata Party's Sikkim unit president, DB Chauhan, today expressed confidence that the BJP-SKM alliance will win all three seats going in for by-elections. As for the contest from SDF and the independents, Mr Chauhan believes they are not even in the race.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Chauhan claimed that the electorate at all three constituencies have expressed full support to the BJP-SKM alliance and that the result will bear this out.

As for the alliance, it will provide double engine government to the people to fulfill all their all hopes and aspirations, he said.

Although SKM and BJP have entered into a seat-sharing alliance for the by-elections, they are not yet officially in alliance in government.

"This election is not



to form the government but to protect the interest of Sikkim and its people as the state already has strong government of SKM party and there is a BJP government at the Centre," he said.

Likewise, BJP MLA and spokesperson, Raj Kumari Thapa, who was among the 10 SDF MLAs who defected to the BJP recently, echoed Mr Chauhan's confidence and assured that BJP would work in the

interest of Sikkim and its people.

Responding to media queries, Mr Chauhan denied that BJP had anything to do with the removal of HSP campaign banners and hoardings which carried the slogan, "Sikkim is not for sale."

He did however liken the slogan to a separatist call and accused HSP of deceiving the people and playing with their sentiments. HSP has

meanwhile denied the suggestion and its working president, Bhaichung Bhutia, today explained that "sale" comment was directed at the politics and politicians and an appeal to the people to reject BJP's designs on Sikkim despite not having the mandate.

Meanwhile, senior BJP leader Kiren Rijju is scheduled to visit Sikkim and campaign here on 17 October.

Golay campaigns in Poklok-Kamrang

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 OCT:

In continuation of his election campaign in Poklok-Kamrang, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president, Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay], addressed public meetings at Dong and Chisopani GPUs on Sunday.

He was accompanied by senior leaders of the party.

An SKM press release informs that the CM accused his predecessor, SDF president Pawan Chamling, of having completely ignored the people of the constituency despite winning elections consistently from this constituency.

He further alleged that SDF pursues the

sole agenda of deception and hence routinely misguides people on communal issues. On the same, he assured that SKM would work for every community and all sections of the society.

Mr Tamang alleged that Mr Chamling was trying to misguide the people again by using anonymous leaflets and rumours.

On the same, he urged the people not to go fall for misinformation and rumours.

He alleged that the SDF has been using the youth for personal benefit but never provided the youth with opportunities within the party. SKM, in contrast, was a youth-centric party, he added.



He further claimed that the SKM government has ended the culture of victimization and violence in Sikkim.

As for the constituency, he assured to work for the people of Poklok-Kamrang and make it a model constituency

of the State. He also assured to fulfill all hopes and aspirations of the people of the constituency and appealed to the people to support SKM in the by-election. Mr Tamang expressed confidence that he will win the by-election.

Normal life continues to be hit in Kashmir for 70th day

SRINAGAR, OCT 13 (PTI): Normal life remained hit in Kashmir for the 70th consecutive day on Sunday since the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution as the main markets continued to be shut and public transport stayed off the roads, even as the weekly flea market here was open, officials said.

The weekly flea market, locally known as the "Sunday market", was open as several dozen vendors put up stalls on the TRC Chowk-Lal Chowk road, they added.

The market witnessed a huge rush of customers as people from different areas of the valley thronged it to buy clothes and other items in view of the approaching winter, the officials said.

The other markets and business establishments remained shut across the valley, even as a few shops were open here in the city till 10:30 am, they added.

Auto-rickshaws and a few inter-district cabs were seen plying here, but other modes of public transport were off the roads, the officials said, adding that the movement of private cars was less as compared to Saturday.

Mobile services remained suspended in Kashmir except in the Handwara and Kupwara areas in the north since the night of August

4. Internet services across all platforms also continued to be snapped in the valley, the officials said.

State government spokesperson Rohit Kansal told a press conference on Saturday that post-paid mobile phone services across all networks would be restored in Kashmir on Monday noon.

He also said about 99 per cent areas in Jammu and Kashmir were free from restrictions on the movement of people.

On August 5, the Centre abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave a special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and bifurcated the state into Union territories.

Most of the top-level and second-rung separatist politicians have been taken into preventive custody, while mainstream leaders, including former chief ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, have either been detained or placed under house arrest.

Another former chief minister and the Lok Sabha MP from Srinagar, Farooq Abdullah, has been arrested under the controversial Public Safety act, a law enacted by his father and National Conference founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1978, when he was the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir.



check out an experiment with some podcasting from Sikkim.

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<https://soundcloud.com/tshering-eden-506860426/stray-thoughts-o1>

TSRTC driver succumbs to burns: strike enters ninth day

HYDERABAD, OCT 13 (PTI): A 55-year-old TSRTC driver died on Sunday, a day after he set himself ablaze, even as the strike by the transport employees in Telangana entered the ninth day.

D Srinivas Reddy, who was part of the group of employees on a state-wide strike for the last nine days, died of burn injuries, hospital sources here said.

The driver had doused himself with kerosene and set himself ablaze near his house in Khammam, about 190 km from here, reportedly in protest against the government not acceding to the demands of striking employees.

However police said they were investigating the reason behind his suicide.

As news about Reddy's death spread, a large number of striking employees of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation gathered near the hospital, but police at the spot whisked them away in police vehicles.

Protests also broke out in different parts of the city and other places, with employees raising slogans and holding the state government responsible for Reddy's death.

The employees have been on strike since the last nine days, demanding merger of RTC with the government and recruitment to various posts, among others.

Reddy, who had suffered around 90 per cent burn injuries, was shifted to a hospital here on Saturday night from Khammam and succumbed at around noon on Sunday.

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy condoled the death and said the incident has pained him very much.

"Suicide is not the solution. Nobody should resort to such steps in future," he said.

Reddy urged the Telangana Government to resolve the RTC strike issue amicably by holding talks with the unions.

He also extended his condolences to the bereaved family.

Leaders of the opposition Congress and BJP in Telangana also condoled Reddy's death and conveyed their condolences to the bereaved family members.

Nearly 48,000 workers of employees and workers unions of TSRTC began an indefinite strike from October 5 on a call by the Joint Action Committee of TSRTC.

On Sunday, Telangana Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao alleged that some political parties were provoking the union leaders and claimed it was a "political conspiracy" against the government.

"Congress or BJP did nothing for RTC employees. Did any BJP government in other states merge their state transport corporations? Parties should stop the dramas," he said.

Minister for BC Welfare and Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakar alleged that political parties were instigating the unions for their political gains.

He cautioned the workers not to fall prey to such vicious attempts and added that the government had never said it would privatise RTC.

The ministers further said the government never promised to merge RTC with the government and it (merger of RTC) was neither the government's policy nor in the party's manifesto.

Give a national party the chance to work for you, BJP's YT Lepcha appeals

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 OCT:**

Bharatiya Janata Party's candidate for Gangtok, YT Lepcha, today assured that he was committed to work for the overall development of Gangtok and will work to make it a model constituency.

He, accompanied by leaders and party workers of the BJP and Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, is keeping busy campaigning door-to-door in the constituency.

Speaking to media persons on Sunday, Mr Lepcha insisted that the by-poll was not for so much for the seat as to give "justice" to the people of Gangtok constituency.

"We have been going to the people with the commitment of BJP of 'Sab Ka Saath, Sab Ka Vikash, Hune Chaina

Kasailai Pani Pakshapath' and working day and night on this slogan," he said. He stated that BJP and SKM leaders and workers have been working together for the people of Gangtok.

"We have noted down all issues and problems faced by the people of Gangtok and shared with us during our door-to-door campaign and after winning the election we will work on these issues on priority basis to secure the future of the coming generation," Mr Lepcha said.

He mentioned that the people of the capital were still lacking basic facilities and assured to work on the traffic congestion and the problem of drinking water supply and irregular power supply. On the same, he said



when the Centre and the State would work together then these issues can be addressed effectively.

He assured to work on every issue of the constituency as a sincere "Chowkidar," the moniker used by

the BJP during the last elections.

He added that the election was not to form the government since the State and the Centre already had governments, but to establish an alliance so the State receives more

development when both governments work together and fulfill all the hopes and aspirations of the people.

He called on the voters here to see the work of a national party in the constituency.

"The Centre is ready

to provide all assistance to Sikkim and the State government is also ready to take this assistance to the people and when these two governments would work together then there is nothing impossible for Sikkim," Mr Lepcha said.

DMK claims 30 EVMs for bypoll in TN shifted suddenly

CHENNAI, OCT 13 (PTI): The DMK on Sunday alleged 30 Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) meant for the October 21 Nanguneri Assembly by-poll in Tamil Nadu have been "suddenly shifted" for "unknown reasons."

DMK Organisation Secretary and party's Rajya Sabha member R S Bharathi wrote to Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer Satyabrata Sahoo seeking an enquiry into the matter.

He urged the EC that the EVMs be restored back to their original place and be kept under adequate protection without giving room "for any suspicious activities.

According to information from the

chief agent of Congress candidate Ruby R Manoharan, "30 EVMs which were kept for bye-election at Nanguneri Taluk Office are suddenly shifted to Tirunelveli Collectorate for unknown reasons during the mid-night of October 12," Bharathi said in his letter.

DMK's ally Congress is contesting the by-poll, necessitated due to the resignation of sitting MLA H Vasantha Kumar (Congress) following his election to the Lok Sabha from Kanyakumari in April this year. Bharathi said there was no intimidation given by any official before shifting of the EVMs, "which is totally in violation of the mandatory instructions issued" by the EC in this connection.

NEW DELHI, OCT 13 (PTI): Foreign portfolio

investors withdrew over Rs 6,200 crore from Indian capital markets in the first two weeks of October, as global recession fears and trade war concerns weighed on sentiments.

Foreign investors pulled out a net amount of Rs 4,955.2 crore from the equities and Rs 1,261.9 from the debt segment, taking the total net withdrawal to Rs 6,217.1 crore during October 1-11, as per latest depositories data.

Overseas investors were net buyers in the preceding month and had infused a net sum of Rs 6,557.8 crore in the domestic capital markets

(both equities and debt), according to the data.

The foreign portfolio investors (FPI) in October went back in "hibernation mode" after remaining net sellers in September when the inflows were driven by slew of economic reforms announced by the government, said Himanshu Srivastava, senior analyst manager research at Morningstar Investment.

"However, things have remained muted after that, as FPIs have turned risk-averse with fears of global recession and trade war gaining momentum. Moreover, the Indian economy has also been facing significant headwinds

and has failed to pick pace so far. More recently, world bodies like IMF, ADB and Moody's have cut growth forecasts of India, which dented sentiments further," Srivastava added.

Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO at Groww said: "The new FPI/FDI classification might affect the mood of foreign investors for some time. The reduced GDP forecast by Moody's and other institutions seems to be affecting the foreign investors also. India's troubled banking and financial sector is definitely making investors jittery".

Arun Mantri, technical and derivative analyst at Karvy Stock

Broking, said the FPIs have been net sellers so far in October "tracking global headwinds".

"This has occurred despite the government's major announcements to revive animal spirits. The major reason behind the selling is the rising fear is a global recession, and weak investor sentiment due to the ongoing trade war between US and China," he added.

For the future course of FPI flows, he said, in the short to medium term, FPIs flows will depend on the corporate earnings, global trade developments and government actions to curb the slowdown in the economy.

World Bank cuts India's growth projection to 6 per cent

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, OCT 13 (PTI): After a broad-based deceleration in the initial quarters of this fiscal year, India's growth rate is projected to fall to 6 per cent, the World Bank said on Sunday.

In 2018-19, the growth rate of the country stood at 6.9 per cent.

However, the bank in its latest edition of the South Asia Economic Focus said the country was expected to gradually recover to 6.9 per cent in 2021 and 7.2 per cent in 2022 as it assumed that the monetary stance would remain accommodative, given benign price

dynamics.

The report, which has been released ahead of the annual meeting of the World Bank with the International Monetary Fund, noted India's economic growth decelerated for the second consecutive year.

In 2018-19, it stood at 6.8 per cent, down from 7.2 per cent in the 2017-18 financial year.

While industrial output growth increased to 6.9 per cent due to a pick-up in manufacturing and construction activities, the growth in agriculture and the services sector moderated to 2.9 and 7.5 per cent, respectively.

In the first quarter of

2019-20, the economy experienced a significant and broad-based growth deceleration with a sharp decline in private consumption on the demand side and the weakening of growth in both industry and services on the supply side, the report said.

Reflecting on the below-trend economic momentum and persistently low food prices, the headline inflation averaged 3.4 per cent in 2018-19 and remained well below the RBI's mid-range target of 4 per cent in the first half of 2019-2020. This allowed the RBI to ease monetary policy via a cumulative 135 basis

point cut in the repo rate since January 2019 and shift the policy stance from neutral to accommodative, it said.

The World Bank report also noted that the current account deficit had widened to 2.1 per cent of the GDP in 2018-19 from 1.8 per cent a year before, mostly reflecting a deteriorating trade balance.

On the financing side, significant capital outflows in the first half of the current year were followed by a sharp reversal from October 2018 onwards and a build-up of international reserves to USD 411.9 billion at the end of the fiscal year.

PM to skip oil CEO meet over scheduling issues

NEW DELHI, OCT 13 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi is believed to have cancelled a brainstorming meeting with global oil and gas experts and CEOs, which was slated for October 14, over scheduling issues, sources said.

The fourth annual meeting that coincides with the CERWeek - the world's premier energy event - was scheduled for Monday afternoon but was cancelled due to the Prime Minister's engagements, they said.

The meets, held under the aegis of Niti Aayog, have been a sounding board for the government to reorient policies to attract the illusive investment in finding new oil and gas reserves and bringing them to production so as to cut India's oil import dependence.

French energy giant Total SA's Chairman and CEO Patrick Pouyanne and UK's BP plc Group Chief Executive Bob Dudley were among the leaders who were scheduled to attend the meeting with the Prime Minister on October 14.

The meeting and other such feedback mechanism had led to the government doing course corrections on some of its policies, particularly the exploration licensing

policy and natural gas pricing rules.

The government had, going against the industry advise, brought in a revenue sharing model for allotting oil and gas acreage. Under the 2016 policy, bidders offering highest share of oil and gas to government were allotted the blocks but the regime failed to attract big names to exploration scene as companies preferred risks to be covered.

Two years later, the government reversed it and went back to allocating blocks to companies that offered largest exploration programme with a guarantee of first recovering all such cost from oil and gas found.

Similarly, the 2014 policy of pricing natural gas at rates prevalent in gas exporting countries failed to enthuse any new investments, prompting it to bring in a new rate for fields in difficult areas such as deep sea.

At the last edition of the brainstorming on October 15, 2018, "subjects such as expansion of oil and gas infrastructure in India; enhancing exploration and production; potential in solar energy and biofuels; and the Union Government's holistic approach to the energy

sector came up for discussion," according to an official statement issued on that day.

Modi's first meeting was on January 5, 2016, where suggestions for reforming natural gas prices were made. More than a year later, the government allowed higher natural gas price for the yet-to-be-produced fields in difficult areas like deep sea.

In the second edition in October 2017, suggestions were made for giving out equity to foreign and private companies in producing oil and gas fields of state-owned ONGC and OIL.

Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) this year offered dozens of small discovered field for bidding by foreign and private firms.

The meeting, coordinated by the Niti Aayog, focuses on challenges posed by volatile oil prices, impacted by changing geopolitical situation.

The meetings look at measures to attract investments and steps for making it easier to do business in India.

The government is looking at private investment to raise domestic oil and gas production, which has

stagnated for the last few years while fuel demand has been rising by 5-6 per cent annually. India is dependent on imports to meet 83 per cent of its demand, and more than half of its natural gas requirements.

The Prime Minister in 2015 had set a target of reducing India's oil dependence by 10 per cent to 67 per cent (based on import dependence of 77 per cent in 2014-15) by 2022. Import dependence has only increased since then and the government is now looking for ways to raise domestic output.

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo and India's Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan were also scheduled to attend the Monday meeting, they said.

Also slated to attend the meeting were ONGC Chairman and Managing Director Shashi Shanker, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) Chairman Sanjiv Singh, GAIL India head Ashutosh Karnatak, Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) Chairman Mukesh Kumar Suran, and Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) Chairman D Rajkumar.

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Day-11 at Foundation Day football tournament at Dikchu



SUMMIT REPORT DIKCHU, 13 OCT:

The eleventh day of the 78th Foundation Year Open Men's football tournament at Dikchu Senior Secondary School saw Gor Secondary School humble Dikchu Senior Secondary School 4-0 today.

In the second match

of the day, Makha SS defeated LFC Thasa by 6-5 in a penalty shootout. Panchayat President, Lum/ Gor/ Sangtok GPU, Phurmit Lepcha, was present as the chief guest today accompanied by Norjay Lepcha, the ward panchayat of Gor, as special guest.

Cousins release Hamro Sikkim



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 OCT:

Cousin brothers from Gangtok, Santosh Shivakoti and Shivraj Shivakoti, today released their song, Hamro Sikkim.

The music video on the song is scheduled to be released in November.

The song has been presented by Gangtok-based The Beat Entertainment.

Speaking to media persons this afternoon, the cousins dedicated their song to Sikkim and its people.

"We were born and have grown up in Sikkim

so we wanted make our contribution to Sikkim so we came up with this patriotic song dedicated to our State and to further promote love and brotherhood among the people," they explained.

They added that the song also tries to present the culture, tradition and practices of Sikkim. This is their first project under Beat Entertainment and more are in the pipeline.

The music video is in its last phase of completion and has been shot at tourist spots across the State.

Baptist Church celebrates 50 yrs of Rev PS Tingboo as Man of God



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 OCT:

The Baptist Church of Sikkim, Gangtok, today felicitated Senior Reverend PS Tingboo of Evangelical Presbyterian Church of

Sikkim, Gangtok, on the completion of 50 years of dedicated and successful pastoral ministry.

The felicitation ceremony, organized under the initiative and leadership of Reverend



Joseph Tamang, was attended by the entire congregation, a press release informs.

A brief introduction to the inspiring journey of Reverend Tingboo

was read out by church member Ajit Subba following which, Rev Tamang presented the citation and a shawl and offered prayers for the continuing good health of Rev Tingboo.

Sidibung FC wins Dussehra Cup at Darap

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 OCT:

Sidibung FC lifted the Dussehra Cup at Darap, West Sikkim, after beating United Brothers in a tie-breaker on Saturday.

The winner was decided in tie-breaker after a thrilling 90 minutes of regulation time which ended in a 2-2 draw. Pemba Rai and Sanu Hang Limboo scored for Sidibung FC while Karma Lendup Lepcha and Phip Raj Limboo scored for United Brothers.

In the tie-breaker that followed, Sidibung FC converted four against United Brothers' one to take home the trophy and a cash prize of Rs. 1.1 lakh.

The runners-up team was awarded Rs



70,000 and a trophy.

Sidibung FC central defender Sachin Pradhan was adjudged man of the match, while Pem Tshering Sherpa, who scored two crucial goals for Sidibung FC in the semi-finals, won the man of the tournament honour. Sonu Hang Subba, also from Sidibung FC, was the highest scorer of the tournament.

The tournament was organised by the youth of Darap.

Celebration committee president Meena Hang Subba said, "We organise this tournament every year during Dussehra to promote young footballers and to celebrate Dussehra. We have different themes every year."

This year, the tournament focused

on generating T u b e r c u l o s i s awareness and on promoting 'Fit India Movement' among the local populace, a press release informs.

The tournament was inaugurated by area MLA, Minister Bhim Hang Subba, on 02 October, while the final day had local dignitary Sherman Tamling as the chief guest.

4 arrested for printing, circulating fake currency

COIMBATORE, OCT 13 (PTI): A fake currency-printing unit was busted here on Sunday and four people have been arrested, police said.

Currencies with a face value Rs 14 lakh in different denominations were seized, the police said.

The printers fell into the dragnet when some shopkeepers

caught two persons trying to circulate the fake currencies late Saturday evening and handed them over to the police.

On interrogation, the duo, one of whom is taking up coaching for IAS examination, is said to have confessed to circulating the fake notes for the last one month, police said.

Based on the information, police caught Dhanraj, the kingpin of the unit, in the early hours of Sunday and learned that he was printing the notes in a rented house and circulating them with the help of three people. Another person was also held in connection with the racket.

Sports Ministry throws open four Delhi stadia for all

NEW DELHI, OCT 13 (PTI): In an unprecedented move, the Sports Ministry has decided to provide access to four of it's sporting infrastructure, including the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium and Karni Singh Shooting range, free of cost to federations and athletes from November 1.

The decision was made in an effort to promote the Fit India Movement and to make playfields and sporting infrastructure accessible to all sports persons across the country, the ministry said in a statement.

The first phase will see stadiums in the capital, including Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (JLN), Indira Gandhi Stadium (IG), Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium and Karni Singh Shooting Range being opened for state and national federations to host competitions, tournaments and leagues of all sporting disciplines.

Each stadium has been earmarked for a specific sport. JLN will host football leagues, training and competitions

organised by federations, while IG stadium will be earmarked for wrestling, boxing, judo and badminton. Shooting competitions will be hosted at KSSR and hockey and swimming at National Stadium.

Talking about the move, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said the government is trying its best to provide aspiring athletes with enough playfields to children and those interested in fitness and sports.

"The Ministry has at its disposal some of the best sporting infrastructure of the country, and needs to be utilised for the benefit of promoting the sporting culture and ecosystem in the country," Rijiju said.

"The intention of the ministry is to increase use of existing sports infrastructure by 3 times in the next 3 months. I am sure this step will not only promote fitness, but will also prompt more youngsters to compete in sport and help us identify more talent for the country," he added.

However according to a ministry source, the electricity charges will

have to be borne by the federations as per usage.

"But in case the competition is of national level, Sports Authority of India may bear that cost on case-to-case basis," the source said.

The new policy will also allow non-SAI coaches to train their athletes at the stadia without any charge, provided that the coach has a minimum of at least 10 wards under his or her tutelage.

Training sessions can be booked by a coach online from November 1 and the coach can charge a reasonable training fee from his or her trainees.

Youngsters, who aren't training for any sport professionally, will also have access to these stadia and can play a game of their choice by advance online booking against available slots. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) and Hockey India have already charted out a roadmap for conducting a number of leagues and competitions in the next three months, the statement said.

Chujachen's upgraded library to be inaugurated with quiz and declamation contest

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 OCT:

The library upgraded by Wandering Souls of Sikkim [WSOS] at Chujachen Government Senior Secondary School is scheduled to be inaugurated on 15 October.

To mark the inauguration of this, the third library upgraded by WSOS, a Pakyong Division Level Inter School Quiz & Declamation Competition is also scheduled with

the support of ADC (Dev), Pakyong, a WSOS press release informs.

All the 10 senior secondary schools under Pakyong Division have confirmed their participation, it is learnt.



Uttarakhand rout Sikkim by 253 runs at Vijay Hazare Trophy

DEHRADUN, OCT 13 (PTI): Medium pacer Sunny Rana returned with a career-best 5/26 as Uttarakhand bowlers bundled out Sikkim for just 52 to script a massive 253-run victory in their Plate Group Vijay Hazare Trophy fixture here on Sunday.

A target of 306 proved too big for the Sikkim batsmen who tumbled like a pack of cards to fold their innings in 21.1 overs with Rana being the wrecker-in-chief and was well-supported by Mayank Mishra (2/2) and Pradeep Chamoli (2/15).

Uttarakhand (26 points) jumped to the top of the Plate Group standings with a two-point lead over Pondicherry, who however have a match in hand.

Only two Sikkim batsmen -- Ashish Thapa (16) and Plazor Tamang (15) -- managed double digit scores as Uttarakhand bowlers went on a rampage at the Kasiga School Cricket Ground.

Earlier, opting to bat, skipper Unmukt Chand and Karn Kaushal set the foundation for Uttarakhand with a 120-run opening partnership, hitting identical scores of 54.

After a brief hiccup, Avneesh Sudha (69) and Tanmay Srivastava (53) took charge of the proceedings for a fourth wicket partnership of 117 runs.

But it was Saurabh Rawat (20) and Sunny Rana (16) who propped up the total, adding 36 runs in nine balls to take them past the 300-mark.

Brief Scores: At Kasiga School Cricket Ground: Uttarakhand 305/9; 50 overs (Avneesh Sudha 69, Karn Kaushal 54, Unmukt Chand 54, Tanmay Srivastava 53; Padam Limboo 2/50, Plazor Tamang 2/63, Ishwar Chaudhary 2/67).

Sikkim 52 all out in 21.1 overs (Sunny Rana 5/26, Mayank Mishra 2/2, Pradeep Chamoli 2/15). Uttarakhand won by 253 runs. Points: Uttarakhand 4, Sikkim 0.

At Tanush Academy Ground: Arunachal Pradesh 112 in 40.1 overs (Riyan Parag 4/27, Pritam Das 3/23).

Assam 116 for no loss in 14.3 overs (Pallavkumar Das 76 not out, Swarupam Purkayastha 36 not out). Assam won by 10 wickets. Points: Assam 4, Arunachal Pradesh 0.

At Abhimanyu Cricket Academy: Manipur 170 all out in 49.3 overs (Sultan Karim 47, Johnson Singh 42; Parvez Ahmed 4/30, Arbar Kazi 3/18).

Mizoram 161/8 in 50 overs (Taruwar Kohli 64 not out, Arbar Kazi 48; Thokchom Kishan Singh 2/17, Lamabam Singh 2/23, Bishworjit Konhoujam 2/35). Manipur won by nine runs. Points: Manipur 4, Mizoram 0.

EXPO JORETHANG

STARTING FROM 15TH OCTOBER 2019

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◉ Kolkata Leather ◉ Mumbai Jewellery ◉ Saharanpur Furniture ◉ UP Bed Sheets ◉ Bhagalpuri Silk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◉ Rajasthani Kurties ◉ Handicraft Items ◉ Delhi Curtains ◉ Aurvedic Medicine ◉ Delicious Food Items
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Disinterest Feeds Ignorant Outrage

Trust deficit inspires blind faith

The disturbing levels to which disinterest/ fake pride has gripped the nation is evident in the ravenousness delight with which the theatrics of a CRPF constable dissing human rights was lapped up by the media and sold the people, or the disinterest with which the continuing humiliation of Kashmir is received by the nation at large or the ignoring of the frightening trend in which a right-winging students' union browbeat an institution and a scholar away from the classroom.

Yes, the previous paragraph is recounting incidents from the previous fortnight alone. Push the timeline back a bit and more incidents of prejudice-driven shallow stereotypes and the worrying absence of disgust in the public domain tumble out. The trust deficit mentioned here is the now common attitude towards the established system – the same system which the country wanted up-ended when they handed a thumping victory to Narendra Modi in 2014 and returned him to office again earlier this year. The same condition is what could have manifested in Brexit in the UK and Trump in the US.

There may be several reasons why people across the world are behaving in ways which can only be called irrational, and one of the dominating reasons zeroed in on by analysts has been the near universal frustration with status quo.

While the frustration is real, the reasons are not always based on facts and almost always inject a deeper sense of being persecuted and ignored. As these feelings fester, there comes along a leader who manages to infuse pride where imagine and manufactured insecurities have been seeded and convince constituents of his disruptor abilities to deliver a fitting reply to everything that the people have an issue with.

The trust deficit, the distrust of the old order, is now so strong that when people are told that their government will take over control of their finances to fight the big, bad black money hoarders, everyone lines up meekly outside banks and ATMs, often fighting among themselves, but not asking how this will happen and how much black money the government will be able to “bring back” thanks to the privation that the people are embracing will. The trust deficit which we have allowed ourselves to get so deeply infected by, makes us blind adherents of the counter-narrative, and this is why we need to be able to do better.

We need to begin by accepting that there is a disturbing trust deficit in the society, and that this is essentially a community affliction even though the noises are mostly screamed individually and in private. Most people, for instance, have reservations about how the politicians function, seeing “hidden agendas” behind everything. We have arrived at a situation where people who are expected to decide policy matters, drawing their decisions from years spent honing statecraft in the public domain, are rarely taken at face value any more. Every decision, move and promise is slotted to fit an ulterior political motive, and because there is this staggering suspicion we have of the traditional models, we fall in line when that Order is challenged, even if the challenge is only in claims and not explained in any detail. Remain unquestioning, and we invite in more of the same Big Brother, but this time one which is jacked up on the steroids of complete public endorsement and a dangerous sense of righteousness.

The issues which we face are not just about corruption or poor service delivery, but more about our own incompetence as citizens. As a people, we have consistently failed to address issues in time and have noticed situations only after they have become so enmeshed, entangled and complicated that perspective and context have been lost. We get “inspired” by slogans when we should be looking for arguments that convince us. Instead of collaborating and building consensus, we look for leaders and then look away when the same leaders exploit the situation or compromise solutions with either their incompetence or, even more dangerously, their conspiracies. It is when we play into such cycles that we end up in easily irritable mind-spaces, applauding grotesque politicking as instances of nation-building, ignoring sellouts as inspired deal-making, ugly majoritarianism as reclaiming history and aspiring for privilege as a matter of right...

Panama celebrates its black Christ, part of protest against colonialism and slavery

S. KYLE JOHNSON

THECONVERSATION.COM

Panama's “Festival del Cristo Negro,” the festival of the “Black Christ,” is an important religious holiday for local Catholics. It honors a dark, life-sized wooden statue of Jesus, “Cristo Negro” – also known as “El Nazaraeno,” or “The Nazarene.”

Throughout the year, pilgrims come to pay homage to this statue of Christ carrying a cross, in its permanent home in Iglesia de San Felipe, a Roman Catholic parish church located in Portobelo, a city along the Caribbean coast of Panama.

But it is on Oct. 21 each year that the major celebration takes place. As many as 60,000 pilgrims from Portobelo and beyond travel for the festival, in which 80 men with shaved heads carry the black Christ statue on a large float through the streets of the city.

The men use a common Spanish style for solemn parades – three steps forward and two steps backward – as they move through the city streets. The night continues with music, drinking and dancing.

In my research on the relationship between Christianity, colonialism and racism, I have discovered that such festivals play a crucial role for historically oppressed peoples.

About 9% of Panama's population claims African descent, many of whom are concentrated in Portobelo's surrounding province of Colón. Census data from 2010 shows that over 21% of Portobelo's population claim African heritage or black identity.

To Portobelo's inhabitants, especially those who claim African descent, the festival is more than a religious celebration. It is a form of protest against Spanish colonialism, which brought with it slavery and racism.

HISTORY OF THE STATUE

Portobelo's black Christ statue is a fascinating artifact of Panama's colonial history. While there is little certainty as to its origin, many scholars believe the statue arrived in Portobelo in the 17th century – a time when the Spanish dominated Central America and brought in enslaved people from Africa.

Various legends circulate in Panama as to how the black Christ got to Portobelo. Some maintain that the statue originated in Spain, others that it was locally made, or that it washed ashore miraculously.

One of the most common stories maintains that a storm forced a ship from Spain, which was delivering the statue to another city, to dock in Portobelo. Every time the ship attempted to



leave, the storms would return.

Eventually, the story goes, the statue was thrown overboard. The ship was then able to depart with clear skies. Later, local fishermen recovered the statue from the sea.

The statue was placed in its current home, Iglesia de San Felipe, in the early 19th century.

Stories of miracles added to its mystique. Among the legends in circulation is one about how prayers to the black Christ spared the city from a plague ravaging the region in the 18th century.

CATHOLICISM AND AFRICAN IDENTITY

Since its exact origins are unknown, so are the artistic intention behind the Jesus statue. However the figure's blackness has made it an object of particular devotion for locals of African descent.

At the time of the arrival of Cristo Negro, the majority of the Portobelo's population was of African descent. This cultural heritage is significant to the city's identity and traditions.

The veneration of the statue represents one of many ways that the black residents of Portobelo and the surrounding Colón region of Panama have engendered a sense of resistance to racism and slavery.

Each year around the time of Lent, local men and women across Colón – where slavery was particularly widespread – dramatize the story of self-liberated black slaves known as the Cimarrones. This reenactment is one of a series of celebrations, or “carnivals,” observed around the time of Lent by those who identify with the cultural tradition known colloquially as “Congo.” The term Congo was originally used by the Spanish colonists for anyone of African descent. It is now is used for traditions that can be traced back to the Cimarrones.

During the carnival celebration, some local people dress up as the devil, meant to represent Spanish slave masters or complicit priests. Others don the dress of the Cimarrones.

Many of the participants in both the black Christ and carnival celebrations of Panama are Catholics as well. Together they participate to bring to light the Catholic Church's complex relationship with Spanish colonization and slavery. Many Catholic leaders in the 16th to 18th centuries justified the enslavement of Africans and the colonization of the Americas, or at least did not object to it.

A REVERED TRADITION

Many people from throughout Panama have donated robes to clothe the statue. The colors of the robes donned by the statue varies throughout the year. Purple is reserved for the October celebrations, which likely reflects the use of purple in Catholic worship to signify suffering.

These robes draped on Panama's black Christ are meant to represent those placed on Jesus when he was mockingly dressed in royal garb by the soldiers torturing him before his crucifixion.

Evoking this scene perhaps serves to remind the viewer of the deeper theological meaning of Jesus's suffering as it is often understood in Christianity: Although Jesus is the Son of God prophesied to save God's people from suffering and should thus be treated like royalty, he was tortured and executed as a common criminal. His suffering is understood to save people from their sins.

Some pilgrims specifically come during the October festival to seek forgiveness for any sinful actions. Some wear their own purple robes, the color indicating a sign of their suffering – and, of course, that of the black Christ.

[the writer is Doctoral Student in Systematic Theology, Boston College]

How barnacle geese adjust their migratory habits in the face of climate change

THOMAS OUDMAN

theconversation.com

The climate is changing at an unprecedented rate, and so are the environments of many plant and animal species. Populations die out in places that become intolerable, and thrive in other places that have become more benign.

But for many species, population growth in new places does not keep up with the decline elsewhere. For some species, such as polar bears, such benign places do not even exist. And even if they do, species still face a significant problem: they need to find them.

This problem is perhaps more serious for migratory animals, which have to adjust to not one, but several changing environments that they visit throughout the year. Even after finding a new habitat one year, they must find it again the next, and every year after that. How on earth do these creatures know where to go?

This question is not trivial: many migratory populations are declining. What seems to be killing them is their inability to adjust to multiple changing habitats at once. The problem might be that it is hard for them to learn new migratory habits.

GEESSE LEAD THE WAY

But a few migratory species are thriving. Among them are barnacle geese, a small-sized goose that winters in Europe and traditionally breeds on the Arctic tundras of Siberia, Svalbard and Greenland. So, how are they doing so well?

We barely know the exact routes of many migratory species, let alone how these have changed over time. But here, barnacle geese are the exception. Ever since their near extinction in the 1950s, when fewer than 500 geese were left, scientists have been monitoring their numbers. The geese were observed in their wintering area at the Solway Firth, between Scotland and England, all along the Norwegian coast during spring migration and up to Svalbard.

Each spring from the 1970s onwards, researchers went to Helgeland on Norway's west coast to observe the geese arriving from the UK to fill their bellies on grass. These fat reserves are essential to complete the second part of their journey north to Svalbard, where they breed.

In the early 1990s, bird researchers discovered a handful of barnacle geese in Vesterålen, 350km to the north-west of Helgeland, while they were



counting pink-footed geese – another vulnerable goose population. Since then, the number of barnacle geese in Vesterålen in spring has been increasing steadily.

From the 2000s onwards, goose observers at the traditional feeding site in Helgeland started to see numbers go down. Currently, the majority of the whole population (now 40,000 birds strong) stops off in Vesterålen.

Rapid adjustments? Certainly. The number of geese in Vesterålen in spring has actually grown faster than can be explained by the birth rate alone, meaning that what we're seeing is not just “the survival of the fittest”. In addition, many individual geese must have switched to feeding in Vesterålen later in life.

Along with counting geese, international research groups have been catching geese in the breeding areas on Svalbard since the 1960s, fitting juvenile geese with plastic leg rings with letter codes. This allowed goose observers along the Norwegian coast to actually know which bird they were looking at, and even how old it was.

Since 2000, these observers have gathered enough observations of ringed barnacle geese each year to allow proper calculations. This has enabled us to show that geese are indeed switching to Vesterålen in big numbers. In addition, the probability for individual geese to move to Vesterålen has been increasing, and young birds are far more likely to switch than older ones.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

So are these changes a response to climate change? We analysed the grass growth during the feeding period at both locations, which we could estimate from daily temperature and sunshine levels. The start of grass growth in spring has advanced more than three weeks since the 1970s, leading to a strong increase in grass availability during the goose staging period in spring at both locations. But availability is not all that counts.

Barnacle geese arrive in Norway at the end of April. In the 1970s, the snow usually had just melted at that time, and the first grass shoots were coming up. In recent years, the grass was already long when the geese arrived, and contained more cellulose. This is much more difficult for geese to digest than young grass, resulting in a lower rate of fat storage.

Vesterålen is further north, and spring starts much later than in Helgeland. This means that due to climate warming, the annual timing of grass growth in Vesterålen now is how it used to be in Helgeland. Fresh new grass now is just emerging in Vesterålen when the geese arrive, enabling the geese to gain weight fast. So yes, the switch makes sense.

Does that mean that the geese know that the new place is better? Not necessarily. Most of the switchers are young birds, which do not have much experience. Instead, we think that they follow experienced birds to Vesterålen, perhaps after they have arrived in Helgeland to find there is not enough food to go around. Geese operate in families, staying close to their long-term partners and relatives. They might exchange more information than we know.

It's the group travelling that does the trick for geese, allowing them to profit from the discoveries of others. The question that remains is why other bird species have not evolved in the same way. Perhaps geese have always lived in a more dynamic environment than other migratory species.

Think of shorebirds, which have been dependent on the same shorelines and inter-tidal areas for thousands of years. For them, the current rate of climate change might be something they have not evolved to deal with. Perhaps we are creating a world in which all birds would be better off acting like geese.

[the writer is Postdoctoral Researcher, School of Biology, University of St Andrews]

Triple murder: Bengal BJP seeks central agency probe

KOLKATA, Oct 13 (PTI): West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Sunday demanded that the triple murder in Murshidabad district should be investigated by a central agency as the state police had “failed” to find out those involved in the crime.

Ghosh told reporters on the sidelines of a programme here that the ruling Trinamool Congress was “unnecessarily doing politics” with the gruesome incident.

Replying to a question, Ghosh said, “While the culprits are still at large, the TMC is politicising the incident, they are seeing politics in the BJP’s demand for an impartial probe into the triple murder.

“The state police is yet to arrest those involved in the crime. It should be probed by a central agency to unravel the truth.”

Trinamool Congress secretary general Partha Chatterjee countered the BJP saying, the saffron party was politicising the “unfortunate” incident and state investigating agencies were on the job.

Congress leader Manoj Chakraborty, who visited the area on Sunday, said “a fair and speedy investigation should be carried out.”

Meanwhile, a CID team visited the site of the triple murder and spoke to the father of the deceased teacher to gather information about his friends, a district police officer said.

The team interrogated the detained business partner of the deceased teacher Bandhu Prakash Pal, who was reported to have lent some money to the man but had not got it back, the officer said.

“A probe is on and we are hopeful of arresting the culprits soon,” he said.

The bodies of Pal (35), his pregnant wife Beauty and 8-year-old son Angan were found lying in a pool of blood in their house at Jiaganj on Tuesday when Durga Puja festivities were on.

The triple murder had acquired political overtones with the BJP and West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar hitting out at the Mamata Banerjee government over the killings and the RSS claiming that the teacher was its supporter.

His family members have denied affiliation with any political group.

“A total of four persons had been detained, two have been let off after questioning,” the police official had earlier said.

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Travel restrictions lifted, Bengalis eager to visit Kashmir

AMITAVA ROY KOLKATA, Oct 13 (PTI): The wanderlust in Bengalis appears to have been reignited, following the much-anticipated lifting of travel restrictions to Jammu and Kashmir, as people thronged its tourism office here with queries on making a trip to the ‘paradise on earth’.

Having missed out on the opportunity to visit the state during the Durga Puja holidays, travellers from West Bengal are now eager to pack their bags and visit the Valley, officials said.

There is great interest and curiosity over visiting J&K among travellers from West Bengal, who account for the second highest number of domestic tourists to the state after Gujarat, said Ahsan-ul-Haq, the officer in-charge of the Jammu and Kashmir Tourist Office here.

“Even during the restrictions, we were getting lot of queries from interested travellers in Bengal,” Haq told PTI.

He said that the J&K administration’s decision

to restore postpaid mobile phone services from Monday will go a long way in getting Kashmir “firmly back” on the tourism map of the country.

The officer admitted that the lack of mobile connectivity was impacting the tourism industry in that state, since visitors who had made bookings earlier could not get in touch with the travel operators and hotels.

In a major step towards easing the 69-day lockdown in the Kashmir Valley, authorities on Saturday announced that some 40 lakh postpaid mobile phones will become operational from Monday noon.

Jammu and Kashmir was opened to tourists from October 10.

The state administration on August 2 had issued a security advisory asking tourists to leave Kashmir as soon as possible, citing terror threat in the Valley.

The advisory was issued just before the Centre announced the negation of the Article



370 of the constitution and bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories on August 5.

Anil Panjabi, Chairman (East), Travel Agents’ Confederation of India, said that tour operators in Kolkata and other places in West Bengal are now flooded with queries about travel to the Kashmir Valley.

“We are hoping that a large number of tourists from West Bengal will travel to Kashmir now that the restrictions have been withdrawn,” Panjabi said.

He said that during the 2018 Durga Puja holidays, around 3,500 tourists from West

Bengal visited Jammu and Kashmir, but none could make the trip this year during the festival season, owing to the restrictions.

Panjabi added that over 6,000 people travelled to the picturesque Valley in 2018 from the eastern state, and the number is likely to increase three-fold in 2020.

The official said that he plans to take a delegation of tour operators from West Bengal to J&K in November to explore tie-ups with agents and hotels, and would also invite them to visit Kolkata for similar purpose.

Haq said the queries

from potential travellers mainly revolve around the security situation and connectivity in the Kashmir Valley.

“As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), J&K is the safest compared to other states and the crime rate is negligible,” Haq claimed.

The state is also safe for solo women travellers and other female tourists, including hikers, he said. “A few months back, a woman research scholar of history from Calcutta University visited Awantipora alone to explore the ruins of ancient temples there, and we helped her with all necessary information,” Haq said.

BJP creating ‘talent pool’ for 2021 West Bengal polls

PRADIPTA TAPADAR KOLKATA, Oct 13 (PTI): Looking to consolidate the gains made in West Bengal in the Lok Sabha polls earlier this year, the BJP’s state unit is creating a “talent pool” to identify candidates from among its cadre for the crucial 2021 assembly polls.

According to party sources, the exercise is aimed at grooming BJP cadre as strong ground-level leaders and is expected to be completed by year end or early 2020.

The saffron party won 18 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal in the April-May parliamentary polls, only four less than the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress’s (TMC) 22.

This was a significant improvement for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) compared to just two seats that it bagged in the state in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

“We have started the process of identifying four members of our party from each constituency

for the talent pool. The chosen partymen will be groomed as future organisational leaders and probable candidates for the 2021 assembly

polls,” West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh told PTI.

The exercise is aimed at grooming party cadre as both organisational and mass leaders and making them the party’s face in their respective areas, said a senior party leader who did not wish to be named.

The BJP will pick its candidate for an assembly seat from among the selected four members based on an internal assessment of their performances. The remaining three will be given organisational responsibilities, he said.

“The selection of the probable candidates will be based on their track record of the last few years and a thorough background check. Preference will obviously be given to old timers, but if a new entrant from another party is better he will also get a chance,” the BJP leader said.

Party full-timers will be given priority during selection, he added.

Elaborating on the need for the creation of the “talent pool”, another senior state BJP leader said though the party has made deep inroads into various parts of West

Bengal, it still lags behind the ruling TMC in terms of strong ground-level leaders.

“During the Lok Sabha poll campaign we had felt the lack of good leaders and faces in a number of assembly constituencies who could put up a fight against the TMC. It was then that this idea of creating a pool of leaders first came up. The exercise has been taken up after thorough discussions with the central leadership,” he said.

The chosen cadres will undergo internal party training and take part in workshops which will sensitise them about various issues both at national and state levels, he added.

The cadres will be asked to identify local issues, build public opinion, connect with the voters in their respective areas and create awareness about the ideology and policies of the BJP and its government at the Centre, a senior party leader in North 24 Parganas district said.

The Lok Sabha poll results indicated a tectonic shift in West Bengal politics with the BJP emerging as a key player.

According to the

results, the saffron party bagged a staggering 40.5 per cent vote share and it was ahead in 126 assembly seats in the state.

Based on this, the “talent pool” creation exercise has been divided into four categories, a BJP source said.

“We have divided the exercise in A, B, C and D categories as per our result in the Lok Sabha polls. The 126 seats where we have taken a lead will be under category ‘A’ and the 75 seats where we are in a close second position will be under category ‘B’.

“The seats where we are in the second position with a distant margin will be in category ‘C’ and the seats where we are third will be in ‘D’ category. The target is to get the exercise done in 200 seats by December this year,” the source said.

The BJP has also decided to revamp the party organisation to bring in better organisers and political workers into its fold.

Earlier, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya had said that a revamp in the party organisation in districts and areas where the party is weak is in the offing.

Father demands justice after student beaten to death in Bangladesh

REDWAN AHMED DHAKA, 13 Oct [THEGUARDIAN]: The father of an engineering student who was beaten to death at his university halls in Bangladesh has demanded justice for his son, as protests against politically motivated attacks on campuses continued.

Abrar Fahad, 22, who was allegedly targeted after he criticised the government in a Facebook post, was found dead at his university halls of residence in Dhaka on Monday.

It is claimed that he was attacked by students linked to the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), an influential student wing of prime minister Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League.

Barkat Ullah, Fahad’s father, said his son had hoped to study a PhD, and wanted to serve his country. “The university administration has to take strict measures to stop such incidents,” he said. “They should know what’s happening inside their dormitory. They have to hold them accountable.

“If they can do that, then maybe these kind of incidents will stop happening.”

Fahad’s death has caused outrage across the country, prompting protests this week by students at the universities of Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi, and demands for authorities to clampdown on political violence on campuses.

Human rights groups have condemned groups such as BCL, which have been accused of beating student protesters and stifling debate. Last year, university and school students who had launched a protest calling for greater road safety were beaten with sticks and machetes in attacks widely blamed on the Awami League and its youth wing.

Authorities took no action against those carrying out the violence, according to Human Rights Watch, but instead detained the protesting students.

A first year student from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) in Dhaka, where Fahad was studying, said students did not feel safe in halls of residences. “We never speak freely,” he said.

Fahad was in his second year at Buet, the most competitive university in the country, where he was studying electrical and electronic engineering.

Friends said he was attacked because he had recently written a Facebook post criticising deals signed during Hasina’s recent visit to New Delhi. These included controversial deals on water sharing and on exporting petroleum gas to India, which many argued were not in the country’s interests.

According to an autopsy report, he died of severe internal bleeding from beatings with blunt objects such as cricket game stumps or sticks.

“Fahad was a very simple person. He had a naive mind. My son, he wanted to go abroad for higher study,” Ullah said.

A m n e s t y International South Asia described his murder as a “horrific crime that must be investigated immediately”.

“Abrar was only exercising his peaceful right to freedom of expression in his Facebook posts criticising the government,” the human rights group said in a statement.

Hasina has promised justice to Fahad’s family. At least 11 students have reportedly been arrested in connection with his murder.

On Wednesday, hundreds of students and teachers took part in a silent procession at Buet. A second student at the university, who also wished to be anonymous, said that the humiliation and beatings of students had been repeatedly ignored by Buet’s leadership.

“The ragging [bullying and beating] has always been a massive problem. For many past incidents, we reported them to authorities. But they never took any serious action. And this was a result of their negligence,” the student said.

“The perpetrators never thought they’d face any consequences,” he added. “It’s a shame that someone has to get killed to bring the issue under spotlight.”

41 middlemen arrested for trafficking labourers to other states

BHUBANESWAR, Oct 13 (PTI): At least 41 middlemen have been arrested for allegedly trafficking labourers to other states during a special drive launched by police in Odisha’s Balangir and Nuapada districts, a police officer said on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, special police teams conducted simultaneous raids on several locations in the two west Odisha districts on Saturday and picked up 41 agents indulging in illegal human trafficking, the officer

said.

While 25 middlemen were arrested and nine cases registered in Balangir district, 16 agents were taken into custody and six cases slapped in Nuapada in connection with illegal trafficking of labourers, he said.

The agents were nabbed when they were engaged in an exercise to finalise deals with several labourers who had gathered at these places.

The accused

persons were engaged in trafficking labourers illegally to different states - Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Karnataka -, he said adding that the middlemen will be interrogated thoroughly to obtain details of their modus operandi.

Stating that the drive against labour agents operating in the state will be intensified, the officer said that the move will play a major role



in checking illegal human trafficking by middlemen.

Police said the agents, are sent to far off places outside the state after being

agents, are sent to far off places outside the state after being

paid some advance money. Most of them are tortured, harassed and made to work in inhuman conditions, they said.

The drive against labour agents has been stepped up following a direction from Director General of Police B K Sharma as part of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik’s ‘5T’ initiative seeking to achieve progress through Transparency, T e a m w o r k , Technology and Time leading to Transformation.

'Football is forbidden': how girls in a Lebanon refugee camp kicked back

LES ROOPANARINE
THEGUARDIAN

A secret pitch where girls can play football away from the disapproving gaze of religious leaders and the rise of a top female football referee are among the unlikely success stories emerging from a refugee camp in north Lebanon.

Under the aegis of a project to encourage learning through sport, Nahr el-Bared, a camp where thousands of Palestinian and Syrian refugees continue to live hand-to-mouth in dire conditions, has become the improbable setting for a minor cultural revolution.

Change was set in motion after religious leaders in the community attempted to prevent girls from playing football and ban female coaches at an education centre supported by the global charity Right To Play.

"One day, during Friday prayer, the religious people said: 'We have female coaches in the camp, teaching people how to play football. We can't allow this, it can't happen. Girls cannot play football'. So they took away the players from our coaches and assigned a male coach instead," says Sarah El Jizi, head coach in the Beirut area for Right To Play's sports and humanitarian assistance project.

"They were worried because the girls were wearing shorts – by shorts, I mean long shorts – and shirts with half sleeves. They were not comfortable with the girls wearing these uniforms and playing in front of everyone."

The unlikely solution was to build a wall. Or rather, build behind a wall. "There was a space

at the back of an education centre," explains El Jizi. "So Right To Play renovated it and built a football pitch for the female players to play without being seen by the community."

"The female coaches kept on convincing the players and their parents to continue the training, and now they have more girls participating than before and can play freely."

Shielded from public view, the girls are cheered on from the sidelines by male family members and friends. There are also mixed games, used by the coaches to foster female leadership and a wider spirit of inclusion. In one such activity, called girls score, female team captains are nominated and tasked with choosing team-mates – and monopolising the scoresheet.

"Only girls can score the goals," explains Nimtaz-Tanya Noordin, Right To Play's senior UK communications manager. "This puts girls at the heart of the team and gives them confidence. Importantly, it ensures boys pass the ball to the girls and see them as equal."

"By involving boys... we are sowing the seeds of long-term social change to overcome the deep-rooted discrimination and attitudes that persistently disadvantage girls and women."

The battle is far from won. Girls may now able to play football in one sequestered corner of Nahr el-Bared, but women remain prohibited, their participation limited to occasional tournaments staged outside the camp by Right To Play.

Slowly, though, attitudes



are changing – not least among the girls themselves. "They are becoming more confident," says El Jizi. "It's changing their lives and how they interact with their neighbours, families, brothers, sisters."

It is also transforming their prospects. One girl, Latifa Kilani – "she is better than all the boys," says El Jizi – now plays for the national under-16 women's team. Another, Sanaa el Cheikh, has opened up her own football academy in Quobbeh, Tripoli, enabling her to support her brother and sister following the death of her parents. She was recently selected as a coach for Ansar Al Mawada Sports Club, a third division men's team in Tripoli – a rare precedent.

Such achievements would once have been unthinkable

for anyone from Nahr el-Bared. Twelve years ago, the camp was razed to the ground in a conflict between Lebanese security forces and Islamist militants. In the aftermath, the UN Relief and Works Agency declared it the scene of a "chronic humanitarian crisis". The reconstruction effort that followed was the largest project ever mounted by the organisation.

Although a funding shortfall of \$66m (£54m) remains, significant progress has been made. Of the 27,000 residents forced to leave in 2007, the majority have returned to the camp. However, an estimated 7,137 people – 1,600 families – are still waiting. "The majority of these are renting private accommodation or living in temporary shelters, many of

which are in extremely poor condition," said a UN spokesman.

El Jizi paints a bleak picture of life in the camp: "The refugees experience poverty and their electricity keeps cutting off; they don't have safe spaces and there is no access to public facilities."

Football pales into insignificance in such circumstances. But if day-to-day survival remains the imperative for many in Nahr el-Bared, Zeinab Halabi, from Lebanon, who started as a volunteer with Right To Play three years ago, is living proof of the shaping influence that sport can have on the fortunes of girls and women.

"Without Right To Play I wouldn't be where I am today," says Halabi, 28, a former kickboxer who once claimed the title of strongest Arab woman

in a weightlifting competition. "I take self-confidence from sport."

In a country where female football coaches are few and far between at any level, Halabi has managed Montada North Lebanon, a Lebanese Women's Football League side, and is currently match commissioner for the men's first division, a role no woman has previously held. But it is her decision to divorce her husband over his refusal to let her be involved in football that has given her a measure of fame.

A kickboxer who became her coach and then her spouse, Halabi's former husband asked her to turn her back on the game soon after they were married. "He asked me to stop, even though I had a girl's team and not a men's," she recounts.

"He said: 'You have to stay in and wait for me to come home and cook and clean.' So I told him: 'I'm not a slave, I have my own world and you told me you respect that. I have my own life, and it's about football. It's your world and my world – we cannot stay together.'"

The subsequent parting was acrimonious, with Halabi threatening to call the police on her husband when he turned up to a training session and became abusive. But she takes pride in her actions and has become a role model for young girls in Nahr el-Bared.

"I always support the girls and tell them that they can do what I'm doing today," says Halabi. "I tell them: 'If you want to be like me – and you can be better than me – you have to do sport and, in time, you can find what you want.'"

Griffin grabs one-shot Houston Open lead



LOS ANGELES, OCT 13 (AFP): **LANTO GRIFFIN** "FREE-WHEELED" HIS WAY TO A SEVEN-UNDER par 65 to seize a one-shot lead in the Houston Open in pursuit of his first US PGA Tour title.

Griffin on Saturday had nine birdies on the par-72 Golf Club of Houston course for an 11-under total of 205.

He was one stroke in front of fellow American Mark Hubbard, whose five birdies included three in a row at 15, 16 and 17 in a three-under 69 for 206.

Second-round leader Peter Malnati struggled to get anything going, settling for a one-over par 73 that dropped him into a tie for third on 207 alongside Cameron Tringale and Beau Hossler, who both shot 68.

Hossler lost the 2018 Houston Open in a playoff against England's Ian Poulter.

Griffin, a 31-year-old two-time winner on the Korn Ferry Tour, was among the players who had to complete the second round on Saturday morning after darkness halted play on Friday.

"Yesterday played really tough," said Griffin, who was pleased to be two-under par and bogey-free when play stopped on Friday, but returned to play his last five holes in four-over.

That included a double-bogey six at 18.

After that disappointment, he said, "I just kind of felt like I was out here free-wheeling it in (the third) round. 'I felt confident all day,'" added Griffin, who

birdied three in a row at the third fourth and fifth and then raced up the leaderboard with six birdies on the back nine.

Griffin rolled in a 23-foot birdie at the 10th, then birdied 12, 13, 14 and 15 – where he got up and down for birdie from a greenside bunker.

After a hole-out for birdie from a greenside bunker at 17 he led by two at 12-under.

But he stumbled again at 18, going far right off the tee on the way to a bogey that dropped him to 11-under just as Malnati's back-to-back birdies at 12 and 13 moved him to 11-under.

But Malnati, seeking a second tour title to go with his 2015 win at the Sanderson Farms Championship, slipped back with bogeys at 16 and 18.

If England walk off the pitch because of abuse, racism wins

HOWARD GAYLE
THEGUARDIAN

I was shocked to hear that England's players are considering walking off if they hear racial abuse from the crowd when they play Bulgaria on Monday night. There is something poignant about the resilience black players have shown over the past 40 years. They have always reminded themselves of who they were representing and the decision has always been not to leave the pitch, no matter what is happening in the stands.

I think it will set the game back if England walk off.

The ramifications extend a lot further than the result. Many black people I have spoken to in and out of football think that racism will win if England head down this path.

Where does it go from there? For many years I have said that racism in football provides fascist movements with a vehicle to promote their message and taking this initiative will play into their hands.

Players have to stay



on the pitch. If they walk off, the people chanting abuse have achieved their aim. Are England going to walk off if they are 3-0 up with 10 minutes left? Will they make that statement? Think about it. The team bus is on the way to the game and fans are surrounding it, banging on it, shouting racial abuse. Are the players going to tell the driver to turn around and go to the airport? Of course not.

Another potential ramification is whether the racists will react badly if the teams go off. Will they feel wronged? Will they want some kind of payback outside the stadium? Will they

aim their anger at England fans? What if there are black England fans at the game in Sofia?

Uefa and Fifa think that fans will self-govern, that other fans will stop the racist chanting when they hear it, but this just leads to anarchy on the terraces. The people doing this have an agenda – they want violence. The risk is going back to the dark days of hooliganism.

Uefa and Fifa have to do more. They have to deal with it ruthlessly after the game and the punishment should be known before the game. This is a popular sport, a spectator sport.

I know that Gareth

Southgate has said that England have faith in Uefa's three-step protocol, but imagine people watching at home waiting for 10-15 minutes for something to happen if the referee takes the players off in the event of racist chanting.

We also have to look at it from a playing perspective. The players will need to warm up when they return to the pitch to guard against injury.

The problem is that Fifa and Uefa are reactive, not proactive; they act after the event. The punishments they hand out for racism have been menial. They should have a ruthless mindset if there is racist chanting. Be radical. If your fans racially abuse players or spectators your next three or four games should be away from home. If it happens, the ban should be increased.

I never thought about walking off when I was playing. It was not an option and black players back then probably would have been on their own if they had protested

by walking off. Your manager probably would have just brought on a substitute.

What comes into question is your mental state. Modern players are paid vast amounts of money to be in this arena. If someone abuses you on the streets, away from that arena, how will you behave? Are you going to give up on life?

Players can call on sports psychologists these days. There are so many resources available to them. Players of my generation did not. We had to get on with it. That is how people judge your character. This is a social problem, not a football problem. The only way to silence the racist voices is to shut the stadiums down, to play behind closed doors.

The best advice I can give to Tammy Abraham or anyone is to play well. Score a goal, score a hat-trick. Then go and stand in front of them again to say they cannot beat you, they cannot affect you. Walking off is tantamount to submission. They have won if you do that.

Italy clinch place at Euro 2020 as Spain made to wait

PARIS, OCT 13 (AFP): Italy became the second team to qualify for Euro 2020 after a 2-0 win over Greece, while three-time champions Spain edged closer to the finals despite conceding a stoppage-time equaliser away to Norway.

Chelsea midfielder Jorginho dispatched a second-half penalty as Italy, wearing green kits for just the second time in history, registered a seventh straight win in Group J on Saturday.

The Azzurri, who failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, added a second in Rome on 78 minutes through a deflected strike from

Juventus forward Federico Bernardeschi.

Roberto Mancini's side joined Belgium in the draw for next year's finals, where Italy will play their first two group games at the Stadio Olimpico.

Spain dropped their first points in Group F as Joshua King converted a 94th-minute spot-kick to rescue a 1-1 draw for Norway following a foul by goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga on Omar Elabdellaoui.

Sergio Ramos broke the Spanish international appearances record as he won his 168th cap in Oslo to overtake Iker Casillas.

The visitors led when

Saul Niguez slammed home from 20 yards moments after half-time but Spain were denied a seventh win in a row as King's equaliser kept Norway in the running.

"It's a real pain to lose points in the final seconds. It's complicated to play against a team who knew that if they lost they were pretty much out," said Spain captain Ramos.

Norway last qualified for a major tournament at the 2000 European Championship and are fourth in the group, four points adrift of neighbours Sweden with three games to play.

Sebastian Larsson

netted two spot-kicks as Sweden cruised to a 4-0 rout of Malta to reclaim second place behind Spain. Marcus Danielson broke the deadlock on 11 minutes in Ta' Qali and home skipper Andrei Agius also scored an own goal. Romania remain a point behind Sweden following a 3-0 win in the Faroe Islands secured by second-half goals from George Puscas, Ionut Mitrita and Claudiu Keseru.

SCHMEICHEL DENIES SWITZERLAND - Kasper Schmeichel produced a series of excellent saves as Denmark defeated Switzerland 1-0 to pull level with the Republic of

Ireland in Group D.

Leicester City goalkeeper Schmeichel pulled off superb stops to deny Granit Xhaka, Admir Mehmedi and Ricardo Rodriguez before Yussuf Poulsen grabbed an 84th-minute winner for Denmark in Copenhagen.

The Danes moved up to 12 points alongside group leaders Ireland, who drew 0-0 away to Georgia, while Switzerland are four points off the pace but with a game in hand.

"We battled for the whole game, there was a tremendous atmosphere. I think that was one of my best performances for Denmark," said Schmeichel.

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Pak PM leaves for Tehran to mitigate tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ISLAMABAD, OCT 13 (PTI): Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan left for Tehran on Sunday on a day-long visit to help mitigate tensions between bitter regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Tension has been simmering between the two countries ever since the start of attacks on Yemen in 2015 by a coalition-led by Riyadh and execution of a prominent Shia cleric in the Gulf Kingdom in 2016.

Iran and Saudi Arabia came close to blows after damaging September 14 attack on oil facilities in the Gulf Kingdom. Saudi and its allies blamed Iran for the attack, a charge which Tehran denied.

On October 11, an Iranian-owned oil tanker was hit in Red Sea waters off the Saudi coast.

“As part of his initiative to promote peace and security in the region, Prime Minister Imran Khan will be undertaking a visit to Iran on October 13,” the Foreign Office (FO) said.

It said that during the visit, the Prime Minister Khan will have meetings with the Iranian leadership, including supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

Besides issues relating to peace and security in the Gulf, bilateral matters and important regional developments will be discussed, the FO said.

It will be the Prime Minister's second visit to Iran this year.

Khan is accompanied by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sayed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari.

Khan had a bilateral meeting with President Rouhani on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in New York in September.

Diplomatic sources said that officials from Pakistan visited both Iran and Saudi Arabia ahead of Khan's visit to pave ground for his mediatory role.

They said Khan was expected to visit Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to convey the developments regarding his meetings with the Iranian leadership.

Khan said in September that he was also asked by President Donald Trump to play a role in reducing tension between the two countries.

Pakistan has been trying to improve ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia due to its close ties with both nations.

Former premier Nawaz Sharif also visited the two capitals in 2016 to seek reduction in their differences.

Hope and desperation inspired Hong Kong's 'national anthem', says incognito composer

EMMA GRAHAM-HARRISON HONG KONG, 13 OCT [THE GUARDIAN]: The orchestra wear hard hats and gas masks, the choir emerges from a swirl of tear gas-like smoke, and as the music swells, cutaway shots show crowds thousands-strong marching through the streets of Hong Kong.

The video is for the song Glory to Hong Kong, which was written as a protester anthem but has become something even bigger for many residents – a kind of national anthem for a city that never had one.

It is sung and celebrated everywhere, from demonstrations to shopping malls, a ubiquitous soundtrack to a four-month-old movement that has itself expanded from an uprising against a controversial extradition law to embrace much broader pro-democracy aims, and a defence of Hong Kong's way of life, the city's civic freedoms and rule of law.

“It is widely regarded as an anthem for protesters who assert the Hong Kong identity,” said Kenneth Chan, a political science professor at Hong Kong Baptist University and former member of the ex-colony's legislative council. “The Hong Kong identity is civic in essence, though



clearly there has been a nationalistic turn in recent years, especially among younger people.”

Glory to Hong Kong's Cantonese lyrics are part of its appeal, in a city where most people's mother tongue has always come second to the language of distant authorities, whether the English of colonial rule or the Mandarin of Beijing. Partly crowd-sourced – in the spirit of the leaderless protests – these lyrics mix words that recognise the pain and bloodshed of the last four months with soaring tributes to the city's people and hope for its future.

But both the music and the bulk of the lyrics are the work of one man, who has remained anonymous, making online posts under the name “Thomas”. He first thought the city needed an anthem during the “umbrella movement” five years ago, but couldn't come up with

anything that worked.

“The protest songs that Hong Kongers used to sing were not truly reflecting what we are facing or how we feel, and they couldn't boost our morale as they were too pop-like,” he told the Observer in an online interview. “I tried to write something then, but failed to come up with a melody that was good enough. Then I put it to the back of my mind until June this year.”

When the protests started again, so did his nagging sense that a better protest song was needed. In the early days many marched to the hymn Sing Hallelujah to the Lord, but its Christian message meant it didn't appeal to everyone; others favoured Do You Hear the People Sing from the musical Les Misérables, but it had no particular link to Hong Kong. So Thomas marched, and thought, and listened to other anthems, official

and unofficial – he was particularly inspired by the US civil war song The Battle Hymn of the Republic – but also music as varied as baroque choral compositions and Japanese pop.

“Their music is often a mixture of desperation and hope,” he said, of the ‘J-pop’ songs, a combination that matches sentiment in Hong Kong. Protesters know they face daunting odds, up against the might of the Chinese state, but are determined to continue anyway. It took several months before Thomas managed to write something he thought worked. “I planned for an anthem, something solemn, that truly reflects our emotions and situation, something that can unite us all,” he said.

“You cannot create emotions without actual experience. I was with the crowd protesting through those months, and turning those

memories and emotions into melody.”

He released the first version in late August, in an online forum used by protestors to coordinate; copyright is free for all non-commercial use. By mid-September, it seemed to be everywhere, both online and in the streets. Just one single version – with choir and orchestra in the protective outfits of “frontline” protesters, who have been battling riot police in the streets – has been seen over two million times on YouTube.

There are dozens of others, ranging from live footage of a spontaneous singalong to an acapella take, and ones with English-language lyrics.

Despite that popularity, he was surprised when people started talking of it as a national anthem – “The movement that started in June was nothing related to independence,” he said – but proud that it had achieved his original aim of unifying and inspiring the protesters.

“Music solidifies our beliefs, boosts our morale even in bad conditions,” he said. “As a musician, I may offer something more powerful, that helps people to become mentally strong. Helmets may protect them from a baton once or twice, but ideas are bulletproof.”

Five-year-old boy among 30 Rohingya arrested for travelling in Myanmar



VIDHI DOSHI NEW DELHI, 13 OCT [THE GUARDIAN]: Myanmar faces calls to release 30 Rohingya men, women and children arrested in September while trying to travel from Rakhine state to the city of Yangon.

A total of 21 Rohingya face up to two years in jail under Myanmar's Residents of Burma Registration Act, which stipulates that citizens must be in possession of “registration cards” to prove their identity.

The act has been used against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim minority, who are denied citizenship of the country and are officially stateless.

Nine children travelling as part of the group were sent to juvenile detention centres. A five-year-old boy's fate is yet to be decided, activists said.

Authorities told Radio Free Asia that the Rohingya, having left villages in Rakhine state where they reportedly faced violence and ethnic cleansing, were attempting to reach Malaysia.

They allegedly paid traffickers between 500,000 and 700,000 kyats (£270-£380) to transport them to Yangon, where they hoped to find work or passage out of Myanmar.

“It's a cruel irony that these Rohingya will be trading what was effectively confinement to open-air detention in Rakhinestate for confinement in a state prison in Patheingyi,” said Brad Adams, executive director at Human Rights Watch (HRW).

The Rohingya have faced waves of persecution in Myanmar. In 2017, amid alleged mass slaughter and arson attacks in their villages, more than

700,000 Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh, settling in refugee camps near the border.

Within Myanmar, Rohingya are prohibited from travelling outside certain areas without official permission. Myanmar considers Rohingya people illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and denies them access to basic services and rights.

Phil Robertson, deputy director of HRW's Asia division, said many Rohingya remaining in Rakhine state live in virtual imprisonment, with daily life subject to multiple restrictions such as limited access to money and jobs, constant monitoring by police and violent vigilantism. “It's like apartheid,” he said. “It's a horrific situation that has gone unnoticed by the world.”

Human rights organisations have warned repeatedly that ongoing negotiations between Bangladesh and Myanmar about returning Rohingya refugees could lead to further persecution, especially because Myanmar continues to deny Rohingya Muslims citizenship.

Adam said the imprisonment of Rohingya trying to leave the country “stands as a clear marker to the United Nations and foreign governments encouraging the return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh that Myanmar has no interest in granting its Rohingya population fundamental freedoms”.

The jailed Rohingya said that they had initially set out as a group of 44 from Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine state, where they lived in townships. But their group shrunk after authorities stopped them at a jetty.

Kurdish politician among nine civilians shot dead by pro-Turkey forces in Syria

QAMISHLI, 13 OCT [AP]: Turkish-backed proxies leading a ground offensive on Kurdish-held border towns in north-eastern Syria have killed nine civilians including a female politician, a human rights monitor has claimed.

The civilians were shot dead on a highway after being taken from their cars by Turkish-backed militias who had crossed the border as the push into Syria deepened. The killings were captured on camera phones and the gruesome scenes have raised the spectre of ethnic bloodletting emerging five days into the Turkish offensive. Ankara's proxies are Syrian Arabs from elsewhere in the country and their foes are Kurds with long ties to the territory.

“The nine civilians were executed at different moments south of the town of Tel Abyad,” the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights claimed.

A Kurdish political leader, Hevrin Khalaf, and her driver were among those killed on Saturday, according to Kurdish forces. Handheld videos captured by the assassins widely distributed on the internet also show several people being repeatedly shot by the side of a road. Their killers are heard to shout insults as they fire their military weapons at them. US officials have suggested the footage is authentic.

Khalaf, 35, was “taken out of her car

during a Turkish-backed attack and executed by Turkish-backed mercenary factions”, the political arm of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said in a statement. “This is a clear evidence that the Turkish state is continuing its criminal policy towards unarmed civilians.”

Khalaf was the secretary general of the Future Syria party. Mutlu Civioglu, a specialist in Kurdish politics, described her death as a “great loss”.

“She had a talent for diplomacy, she used to always take part in meetings with the Americans, the French, the foreign delegations,” he said.

Turkey and its proxies began the offensive on Wednesday to push back the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the backbone of the SDF, from its border.

The proxies are Syrian former rebels who had fought against the regime of the country's president, Bashar al-Assad, before being co-opted early last year to fight Kurdish groups in the north-western town of Afrin. Some of the rebel factions among the Turkish alliance had previously been supported by the US and Qatar in the early years of the Syrian war.

But as the war morphed into a series of intertwined conflicts and the Syrian opposition steadily disintegrated, rebel alliances shifted. The Arabs now leading

the fighting have received widespread training and support from Turkey.

The first video of the killings, posted on the Twitter account of the Ahrar al-Sharqiya rebel group, shows two people in civilian clothes kneeling on the ground as a fighter next to them announces they have been captured by the faction.

In the second, an unidentified fighter opens fire at a person on the ground wearing civilian attire.

The Observatory confirmed the authenticity of the videos but Agence France-Presse could not independently verify them.

The deaths brought to at least 38 the number of civilians killed on the Syrian side since the start of the assault, according to the Observatory. It said 81 Kurdish fighters had been killed in the clashes.

Ankara says the YPG is a “terrorist” group with links to Kurdish rebels in Turkey who have been waging an insurgency for three decades.

Later on Saturday the Syrian National Army, the banner under which the Ankara-allied former rebels fight, said it had ordered commanders to “continuously supervise combatants on the frontlines to prevent any abuse”.

Perpetrators of possible abuses “would face the most severe sanctions and be brought to justice for military disobedience”, it said.

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VIDEO NEWS SECTION

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Idina Menzel in talks for evil stepmother role in Sony's 'Cinderella' musical



Actor-singer Idina Menzel is in negotiations to portray evil stepmother in Sony's musical version of "Cinderella".

The news comes just a day after it was reported that Emmy-winner Billy Porter was in discussions with the studio for the role of fairy godmother in the reimagination, written and directed by Kay Cannon.

According to Variety, singer Camila Cabello boarded the project in April this year and will work on the music of the film. The singer will also be involved in the music of the film.

The movie will be produced by James Corden and Leo Pearlman via their Fulwell73 banner. It will be a music-oriented version of the traditional tale of the orphaned girl with an evil stepmother.

The original "Cinderella" film, a Disney animated drama, was released in 1950. It spawned two live-action remakes -- a 1997 movie, starring Brandy and Whitney Houston, and a 2015 version, which featured Lily James in the lead.

Cinema and streaming can happily co-exist: Ajay Devgn

With his production "Tribhanga" slated to debut on Netflix, Ajay Devgn is the latest Bollywood star to join the streaming boom in India and the actor is of the opinion that the two mediums can happily co-exist rather than being competitors.

Devgn said numbers prove that there is demand for both the mediums and he believes nowadays it is only the story that grabs the attention of the audiences.

"Both streaming and cinema can happily co-exist. Each year we see the box office collections going up and we also see more and more people choosing to stream content direct to their homes.

"It's ultimately what the viewers want and what we know is that they want both. What the entry of streaming services has done and rightly so, they have made the story the central hero. If the story is engaging and entertaining, people will continue to watch," he told PTI in an interview.

Ajay is foraying into digital space with Netflix film "Tribhanga", which the actor is producing. His wife, actor Kajol, is making her own digital debut with film, in which she stars alongside Mithila Palkar and Tanvi Azmi.

Shah Rukh Khan, Karan Johar and Anushka Sharma are some of the people from Bollywood whose content will be available on Netflix.

Ajay said "Tribhanga" is just the start



of his relationship with the streamer.

"'Tribhanga' definitely marks the start of our relationship with Netflix. We will continue to work with them to tell as many stories as we can," he said.

When asked whether he would like to headline a Netflix Original film or series, Ajay said, "There is nothing in the pipeline as yet but never say never."

The multi-hyphenate star further said as an actor, "it's the story and the ability to take those stories to the

audience is what matters to me".

Ajay believes his movies such as "Gangaajal" and "Apharan", both directed by Prakash Jha; Mani Ratnam's "Yuva" and period piece "The Legend of Bhagat Singh", were "ideal fits" on a streaming platform.

"Tribhanga", being directed by Renuka Shahane, will stream exclusively on Netflix.

The project is produced by Ajay's Ajay Devgn Films in collaboration with Bannijay Asia and Alchemy Productions.

Farhan Akhtar injured during 'Toofan' shoot

Actor-filmmaker Farhan Akhtar on Sunday revealed he suffered a hairline fracture in his hand while shooting for his next "Toofan".

The 45-year-old actor took to Instagram to share the update.

"When nature plays Tetris... and yup, that's my first legit boxing injury... a hairline fracture on the hamate found among the carpal bones of the hand," Farhan wrote as he shared an X-ray image.

"Toofan", a sports drama, is being directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra and will feature Farhan in the role of a boxer.

This will be the actor-director duo's second project post "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag", a 2013 biopic on legendary Indian athlete Milkha Singh.

The film also stars Paresh Rawal and Mrunal Thakur and will hit the screens on October 2, 2020. It is co-produced by Excel Entertainment and ROMP Pictures.

Russell Crowe to star in horror film from Miramax

Two-time Oscar-winning actor Russell Crowe is set to headline a supernatural horror movie for Miramax.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the yet-untitled project Joshua John Miller and MA Fortin from their own script.

Crowe, 55, will play a troubled actor who begins to unravel while shooting a horror film. His estranged daughter wonders if he's slipping back into his past addictions or if there's something more sinister at play.

The movie will be produced by Kevin Williamson along with Ben Fast and Bill Block.

Jennifer Aniston takes dig at 'big Marvel movies'

Jennifer Aniston believes Marvel films are responsible for the diminishing quality of movie experience. In an interview with Variety, the "Friends" alum was asked what made her return to the television fold.

She said part of the reason was that superhero films are ruling the movie industry and she has no interest in them.

"It wasn't until the last couple of years when these streaming services were just sort of exploding with this amount of quality that I actually started to think, 'Wow, that's better than what I just did'.

"And then you're seeing what's available out there and it's just diminishing and diminishing in terms of, it's big Marvel movies. Or things that I'm not just asked to do or really that interested in



living in a green screen," the 50-year-old actor said.

Aniston added that she wants Hollywood to return to the era of Meg Ryan.

"I just think it would be nice to go into a movie theatre, sit cozy. I think we should have a resurgence. Let's get the "Terms of Endearment" back

out there. You know, 'Heaven Can Wait', 'Young Frankenstein', 'Blazing Saddles' and 'Goodbye Girl'," the actor said.

Aniston is currently promoting Apple TV+ series "The Morning Show", in which she stars alongside Steve Carell and Reese Witherspoon.

Aries:

The decisions you make are yours and yours alone. No explanation needed. If you have chosen to walk away from something the world perceives as significant, don't look back. You are being guided by your higher self right here and in this moment. For some of you, this is a time of consciously cultivating meaningful relationships. Remember, elimination is an integral part of this process.

Tip: Choose yourself.

Taurus:

Your winning streak is strong, Taurus. And that charisma? Let's not even get started about that. Trust yourself to achieve the impossible. This chapter of your life calls for big dreams and big actions. Remember, a healthy body and mind are integral to your success. Know when to push yourself to do more and when to rest.

Tip: A healthy body and mind will support you to achieve the impossible.

Gemini:

Let go of the need to arrive at your desired destination at a given time. The journey is where the magic is at, Gemini, and right now you are being

asked to practice, strike for perfection, and polish your skill set. What if doing the same thing everyday is the secret to your success?

Tip: Become a master of your craft.

Cancer:

Quickie, who? You're in the mood for a full-blown fiesta. If you find yourself making your way back home as soon as the clock strikes 6, you've only got the stars to blame, Cancer. Single crabs, expect the unexpected, especially if you are ready to put yourself out there. The only thing you need to keep in mind: sometimes it's better to engage without any strings attached.

Tip: Things are getting heated up around here.

Leo:

Think of this as a resting period. You're gathering your resources and getting ready for the next big phase, which promises to be an adventurous one. You might need to make a few investments in the beginning, especially if the project is yours. Ensure you have adequate financial reserves. Yes, this means having to cut costs at this point. But you'll know why the sacrifice was needed from your end once it all comes together.

Tip: Create a reserve.

Virgo:

The real question is: how much are you willing to put up with? If you have reached your wit's end, it's time to make a few changes. The world is not going to be happy to see you choose yourself. It doesn't have to. Stop looking outside of yourself for support or seek external validation. Some of you could be dealing with physical pain at this point. Take care of your shoulders and back, Virgo. Remember, it's okay to ask for help.

Libra:

If you want it, go get it, Libra. Stop beating around the bush. This chapter of your life requires a direct approach, both personally and professionally. You're gifted with the kind of charm that makes it very hard to turn you down. This is also a time of elimination; of doing away with the things that have served their purpose in your life. Listening to your head this time around will help you make space for the new.

Tip: Be direct in your approach.

Scorpio:

It's their loss, not yours. Don't be weighed down by heavy emotions like remorse and sadness. Buy yourself a cup of hot chocolate and tell

yourself five amazing things about you. Self-love or narcissism? Who is to tell, Scorpio! Did you know that the element of water has been synonymous with healing and rejuvenation since the beginning of time? If you don't have the option of spending time by the lake, soak your feet in a bucket of salt water and let that negativity go.

Tip: Tell yourself five amazing things about you.

Sagittarius:

Bone-breaking exhaustion. That's what the cards are pointing towards. Take a break, Sag. It is more critical now than ever. You have been pushing yourself beyond your limits, refusing to delegate or seek help. At this rate, you could risk everything you have worked so hard for: work, health, relationships. Remember, people can't always preempt our needs, given what they are going through in their personal lives. There's no shame in asking for support at this point.

Tip: Take that much needed break.

Capricorn:

You are not this or that, Capricorn. Beware of compartmentalising yourself. You could be freewheeling spirit in the morning, an Americano-sipping boss babe as soon as the clock strikes

9, and Cardi B when you find yourself at the club later in the night. Embrace the soulful and the sensual. Accepting all parts of you will ultimately lead to liberation.

Tip: Give yourself the gift of acceptance.

Aquarius:

Trust that Justice will prevail; that good will triumph over evil, and that the goddess will show up for you in her myriad forms. The divine feminine energy is at its peak after all! On your part, continue to act conscientiously, Aquarius. When it comes to decision-making, check in with both your head and your heart. Retreating into your sacred space before you take action will give you the clarity you need at this moment.

Pisces:

"Maybe our girlfriends are our soulmates and guys are just people to have fun with." What Carrie Bradshaw said, Pisces! Get ready for a day of joy, celebration and madness. Somebody call 911 because you and the crew are about the burn up the dance floor. But don't just mingle with those you know. Allow yourself to work the room. The Universe is giving you a chance to expand your social circle.