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SummitTIMES

Vol 04 | Issue 320 | Gangtok | Thursday | 05 December 2019

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

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Man kills two in Upper Dzongu

WANGCHUK BHUTIA
MANGAN, 04 DEC:

Two persons were murdered at Sumindang Lingdem in Upper Dzongu, North Sikkim, on 02 Dec. The murder reportedly took place at a cardamom curing shed (bhatti) located 20km from Lingdem road. The accused, Pradeep Khatiwara [31 yrs], has been arrested by Mangan Police.

According to the police, the accused along with the two victims had gone to the field to harvest cardamom. The accused reportedly used an axe, sickle and wooden plank to commit the murder.

The accused is originally from Nepal but currently residing at Chandey, Mangan, North Sikkim.

The murders came to light after a Chandey resident informed the police that the body of a woman was lying in the cardamom field about 50ft below the cardamom curing shed.

The deceased have been identified as Dhan Kashi Tamang [56 yrs], w/o Late Ran Bdr Tamang, r/o Nepal, temporarily residing at Chandey, Mangan, North Sikkim and Mikmar Lepcha [27 yrs], s/o Sonam Lepcha, r/o Chongrang, Tashiding, West Sikkim, temporarily residing at Chandey, Mangan, North Sikkim.

The dead bodies have been sent to STNM Hospital for autopsy.

A case under Section 302 of the IPC has been registered against the accused and the case is under investigation.

Jio brings new plans, prices rise by up to 39pc

NEW DELHI, DEC 4 (PTI): Reliance Jio on Wednesday announced new plans which will be costlier by up to 39 per cent compared to older plans for its customers.

The company, however, claimed that it has priced all the new plans up to 25 per cent cheaper than the new call and data tariff plans rolled out by its competitors Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea.

According to new tariffs, Jio customers will have to pay Rs 555 for 84-day validity and 1.5 GB of data per day, which is 39 per cent higher than the earlier plan of Rs 399 offering same features.

The company has raised the price of Rs 153 plan to Rs 199; Rs 198 plan to Rs 249; Rs 299 plan to Rs 349; Rs 349 plan to Rs 399; Rs 448 to Rs 599; Rs 1,699 plan to Rs 2199, and Rs 98 plan to Rs 129.

The Rs 199 plan is a month long valid plan, which offers 1.5GB per day, and is about 25 per cent cheaper than the plans of rivals offering similar benefits at a price of around Rs 249.

MP raises tribal status demand for left out communities in Parliament



Non-inclusion was historic mistake: Subba

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 DEC:

Lok Sabha MP, Indra Hang Subba, raised the matter of including 11 left out communities in the Scheduled Tribes list today during the Parliament session in New

Delhi. He was allowed under Rule 377 by the Speaker to read out this matter which he had submitted last Friday.

In his address, Mr Subba said, "Only about 40 per cent of people of Sikkim are included in the list of Scheduled Tribes. Remaining 60 per cent of them are either categorised as OBC or in General category."

He added that the

importance and urgency of including 11 left out communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes lies in the fact that these communities are also socio-educationally backward and economically weak at par with other Scheduled Tribes of Sikkim.

"It was a historic mistake when all these communities were not included in the list of

Scheduled Tribes at par with other tribes of Sikkim," stated the MP.

He called for the inclusion of these 11 left out communities for "greater justice and equality".

The 11 left out communities are Khas [Chhetri-Bahun], Rai, Magar, Gurung, Sanyasi/Giri, Thami, Dewan/Yakha, Newar, Sunwar/Mukhia, Jogi and Bhujel.

Opposition slams govt over state of economy

NEW DELHI, DEC 4 (PTI): The Opposition on Wednesday attacked the government in Lok Sabha over the slowdown in the economy which has hit a six-year low growth of 4.5 per cent during the second quarter of the current fiscal. Many opposition members expressed concern over slippages on the fiscal front.

Participating in the debate on Supplementary Demands for Grants, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said that the manufacturing growth has come down to average of 3 per cent in the last five years. Automobile is one of most affected segments, he said, adding it

has posted worst figures in the last two decades. Besides, he said, the consumer spending has also come down. "We have seen decline in consumption... including of essential food items," he said.

He said that the Centre has a "dismal record of budgetary failure" and in the present scenario there is a possibility of fiscal slippages. The government revised the fiscal deficit target to 3.3 per cent, he said, adding every year the government made commitments and failed to meet them.

"You will see slippages in fiscal deficit this year," he said.

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Bar Association issues legal notice to SKM worker for Facebook post

Threatens to seek Rs 1 cr in damages

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 DEC:

The Bar Association of Sikkim has issued a legal notice to a Sikkim Krantikari Morcha worker, Chetan Bhattarai, for his derogatory remarks against the legal fraternity on a Facebook post made on 02 Dec.

Mr Bhattarai is accused of posting, "Unnecessary liabilities created by RB Subba during SDF tenure has been dismissed," referring to the issuance of Discharge Notice No: 21(634) L7PAL/2019/405 dated 02 Dec, 2019.

It may be mentioned that the state government had issued discharge notice to 29 Public Prosecutors on 02 Dec.

"It is disheartening to note that despite putting

in many years of hard work and dedicated service as Government Advocates and Public Prosecutors, your derogatory and defamatory allegation of them being "Unnecessary Liability" is uncalled for and offensive," the legal notice issued by BAS general secretary, TR Barfungpa states.

Addressing the media here at Gangtok, Mr Barfungpa said that the Bar Association of Sikkim has also considered the service rendered by the concerned members who were assigned to various posts in the courts and tribunals. He also added that use of the word 'fired' for the lawyers who were given discharge notice is not appropriate.

BAS has demanded

that Chetan Bhattarai tender unconditional apology to the Bar members listed in the discharge notice and also to the Bar Association of Sikkim.

The association has further demanded that the said unconditional apology be published in all print and social media with a copy to the Bar Association of Sikkim within 48 hours from the receipt of the notice failing which the Bar Association of Sikkim will initiate legal proceedings against him claiming as damages Rs.1 crore for damaging the reputation and image of the members of the Bar Association of Sikkim. Bas further said that he shall also be liable for criminal offence.

Grace Foundation wins Phoenix Cup 2019



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 DEC:

Grace Foundation emerged champion of the Phoenix Cup an inter-rehabilitation centre football tournament, here at Paljor Stadium today. In a closely contested final match this afternoon, Grace Foundation finally beat Freedom Facility in a tie-breaker to lift the champion's trophy.

The tournament was organized by Social Justice & Welfare Department as part of the State

Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction. A total of 11 rehab centers from different parts of the State had participated in this week-long football tournament.

The final match had Minister to Social Justice & Welfare Department, Dr MK Sharma, as the chief guest accompanied by Secretary, SJWD, Dhan Jyoti Mukhia, and Secretary, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Kuber Bhandari, among other dignitaries.

The full time of the

match ended in a 2-2 draw.

The match then proceeded to the tie-breaker through penalty shootout, in which Grace Foundation converted four shots into goals and Freedom Facility managed to score two goals. Rewaj Lucksom was adjudged the Man of the Match.

The winning team received a cash prize of Rs 10,000, and the runners-up team received Rs 5,000.

Chidambaram gets bail from SC after 105 days in custody

NEW DELHI, DEC 4 (PTI): After 105 days in custody, former Union finance minister P Chidambaram on Wednesday night walked out of Tihar jail hours after the Supreme Court granted him bail in a money laundering case linked to the INX Media with some conditions like restraining the senior Congress leader from talking to the media about the case.

Chidambaram, 74, stepped out of Gate no 3 of the prison at 8.10 pm to a rapturous welcome by hundreds of Congress supporters. His son Karti was on hand to receive the Congress veteran.

Dressed in his trademark long-sleeved white shirt and dhoti, the former union minister, whose custody entered the 106th day on Wednesday with most of the time spent behind bars, was surrounded by a posse of newsmen and photographers before he was taken in a car to his Jor Bagh home. Asked to



comment on his release, a calm and composed Chidambaram, a Rajya Sabha MP, said he cannot comment on the case and will obey the Supreme Court order but hastened to forcefully add that not a single charge has been framed against him.

"The fact is that after 106 days of pre-trial incarceration there is not a single charge framed against me as I speak

now," said Chidambaram, who is expected to attend the Rajya Sabha proceedings on Thursday. The Congress leader said he will talk more on Thursday.

Chidambaram has been in the custody of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and in Tihar jail since his dramatic arrest by the CBI sleuths from his Jor Bagh home in the

national capital on the night of August 21. While the CBI is probing the corruption case linked to the INX Media, the ED is investigating the money laundering case. "I am very happy that my father is coming home. It has been a long wait, it has been an unwanted incarceration. I am very grateful that the Supreme Court has given him bail," Karti told reporters.

The relief for Chidambaram triggered a political slugfest with the Congress welcoming it as truth prevailing at last and that his incarceration was "vengeful and vindictive" while the BJP derided the party for "celebrating corruption". The BJP also sarcastically said finally Chidambaram too joins the long list of OOB (Out On Bail Club).

Allowing Chidambaram's plea for bail, the apex court also ordered that he can't leave the country without its permission and

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Opposition slams...

He also asked about the government's roadmap for its vision of making India a USD five trillion economy.

The national rural poverty has risen and 30 million people have fallen below India's official poverty line, Tharoor said.

During the debate, Vinayak Raut (Shiv Sena) said unemployment is on the rise, the farmers are in distress and traders are unhappy.

He claimed that the Mudra scheme to provide loans to marginal sections of the society has the maximum number of non performing assets.

Raut said people should benefit from such schemes and they should not remain on paper.

Shiv Sena recently broke ranks with the NDA to form a government in Maharashtra with the support of the Nationalist Congress Party and the Congress.

DNV Senthilkumar S (DMK) said there is a need to increase funds for Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) to better serve the people.

His view was supported by other members from the opposition as well as the ruling side.

The first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants seeks Parliament approval for additional spending of Rs 21,246.16 crore, including over Rs 8,820 crore in the newly formed Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh in the current fiscal ending March 2020.

The total cash outgo will be about Rs 19,000 crore. The government has sought Rs 8,820.62 crore as grants for Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh in lieu of the erstwhile state's share of 14th Finance Commission Award.

Another Rs 4,557 crore will be infused in the IDBI Bank through recapitalisation bonds, while Rs 2,500 crore will go into recapitalisation of state-owned insurance companies.

Chidambaram gets...

should neither try to influence witnesses nor tamper with evidence.

Making clear its order would not be construed to be the findings on merits of the case, the court said his alleged complicity would be examined during the trial.

Setting aside the Delhi High Court's November 15 verdict denying the former union minister bail, a three-judge bench, headed by Justice R Banumathi, granted the relief to him on a personal bond of Rs 2 lakh with two sureties of the like amount.

The bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and Hrishikesh Roy, restrained Chidambaram from giving any press interview or making any statements with regard to the case.

The top court, which observed that economic offences are grave in nature, said "grant of bail is rule and refusal is exception".

It said the ED's claim that he can tamper with evidence cannot be accepted on "face value" as he is neither in political power nor holds any post in the government.

Chidambaram would have to join further investigations if asked by the probe agency, it added.

Chidambaram's wife Nalini, who is a senior lawyer, said she was happy that he got the bail.

The CBI registered its case on May 15, 2017, alleging irregularities in a Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) clearance granted to the INX Media group for receiving overseas funds of Rs 305 crore in 2007 during Chidambaram's tenure as finance minister. The ED lodged a money laundering case after that.

News that its senior leader would finally be returning home led to relief in the Congress camp but also triggered a political row with the BJP.

"Truth finally prevails #SatyamevaJayate," the party tweeted from its official handle.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said Chidambaram's incarceration was "vengeful and vindictive".

"I'm glad that the SC has granted him bail. I'm confident that he will be able to prove his innocence in a fair trial," Gandhi said in a tweet.

Chidambaram's lawyer and Congress colleague Abhishek Manu Singhvi described the Supreme Court ruling as "excellent light after a rather long tunnel". He termed the order "balanced", "nuanced" and "comprehensive" and in favour of human rights and balanced jurisprudence.

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor was more circumspect and said "justice delayed is justice denied". The bail should have been granted much earlier, he said.

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury alleged that the government hatched a "big conspiracy" against the former finance minister as he had been its sharp critic.

The BJP, however, was unsparing in its criticism of the opposition party and brought in leaders such as Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in its response.

"Classic case of @INCIndia 'Celebrating Corruption'!!
"So finally Chidambaram too joins the long list of OOBBC(Out On Bail Club) in the Congress ..He joins the coveted Club,some members of which are:1)Sonia Gandhi 2)Rahul Gandhi 3)Robert Vadra 4)Motilal Vohra 5) Bhupinder Hooda 6)Sashi Tharoor Etc Etc", BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said on Twitter.

The apex court said it was initially not inclined to open the sealed cover material placed before it by the ED. But since the high court had perused the material, it was imperative for the top court to go through the documents, it added.

After pronouncing the verdict, the court directed its registry to return the sealed cover material back to the ED.

GYALSHING, 04 DEC (IPR): Minister-cum-MLA of Gyalshing Bermiok constituency, Lok Nath Sharma, led the joint inspection visit to Fenglakha Ram Banvas centre through a trekking trail at the core of Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary, along with the District heads and officials of line departments, West District, today.

The inspection team began trekking at 8.45am from Dorak Bijanbari/Hee Patal and reached Fenglakha Ram Banvas centre at 10:20am covering a distance of 4.5KM to make the spot more presentable and functional at the earliest.

After reaching the Ram Banvas centre, Minister Mr Sharma visited existing infrastructure of two Banvas huts, meditation centre, cafeteria, traditional houses of different communities, barracks, etc.

The structures were found neglected in terms of maintenance after completion of construction work in 2017. Mr Sharma stressed on immediate repair and restoration.

Thereafter, the Minister chaired a meeting



to resolve the existing issues and urged concerned departments to submit concept report in order to prepare a comprehensive master plan for execution of works with integrated approach of all departments.

While interacting with the officials and public, Minister Mr Sharma directed concerned departments to gear up for execution of work within a month and assured to sort out issues of fund constraints.

He directed the Roads

and Bridges for construction of road and Power Department for laying route from Barsey to Ram Banvas premises.

Rural Development Department was directed to ensure water supply with the construction of rain water harvesting tank. He shared his vision to transform Ram Banvas as a popular tourist destination at international level for nature lovers and tourists. He also advised to exhibit cultural and traditional symbols of all communities.

Earlier, ACF, Urmilla Subba proposed welcome address and shed light on the purpose and objective of the joint inspection. She said that the Banvas centre could not generate revenue despite huge investment.

The inspection team comprised of more than sixty members including Block Development Officer Dentam BAC, Bijay Subba, Superintendent Engineer Power Deptt, Sonam Dorjee Bhutia, Divisional Engineer, Tourism Deptt, DP Sharma;

Divisional Forest Officer/Wildlife, Nisha Subba, Assistant Conservator of Forest, Urmilla Subba, Range Officer Dentam Rajeev Gurung, Block Officer, Pujan Tamang, Deputy Director Fisheries, Lobsang Tamang, Divisional Engineer Roads & Bridges, Phurba Bhutia, Assistant Engineer Rural Development Department, Dipendra Adhikari, Assistant Engineer Building & Housing Karandeep Baraily, officials, field staff and others.

Sudunglakha discusses Gram Panchayat Development Plan



SUMMIT REPORT RHENOCK, 04 DEC: Sudunglakha GPU under Rhenock Block Administrative Center convened a Gram Sabha today to discuss its Gram Panchayat Development Plan 2020-25.

The Gram Sabha was chaired by Panchayat President Tila Rupa Sharma accompanied by Vice President Sashi Gurung, members Shova Devi Chettri, Purnamaya Pradhan and Pempodem Lepcha and was attended by Panchayati Raj functionaries, line department officials with SDM Rongli, PR Dulal and members of the five wards.

Ward Panchayat members read out of Ward Sabha's five year prospective plan and the Panchayat President placed the annual plan.

The Gram Sabha dis-

cussed issues related to trade licenses and announcement of bio-diversity committee which was formed with the Gram Panchayat President heading it.

Similarly discussions on sanitation by-laws and garbage fee were also held.

BDO, Rhenock, Swabhaw Gurung, explained the process of finalizing a GPDP and importance of Gram Sabha to all members. He advised the GPU to raise Rs 50,000 for rural sports.

The Gram Sabha passed proposals for beautification of Kali Khola Waterfall, Darpaney Dhunga, revenue collection from trade license and other resources, repairing and renovation of the old road at Sudunglakha, tourism, maintenance of water source, garbage fee etc.

Mock drill conducted in Gyalshing



GYALSHING, 04 DEC (IPR): Mock drill on disaster preparedness was conducted in Gyalshing, West Sikkim today under

the direction of DC West, Karma R Bonpo. The mock drill was conducted at 5 different locations of Gyalshing.

West Bengal...

Bengali Hindus, has changed the political narrative in West Bengal, with the TMC appearing to be in an advantageous position over the BJP, he added.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill or CAB, which aims to provide citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, has been slammed by several opposition parties as communal and divisive with Congress threatening to go to Supreme Court to challenge the proposed legislation.

At a briefing of the cabinet meeting, Union minister Prakash Javadekar said the government has taken care of the interests of everyone and "the interest of India".

Minister visits fire-ravaged family at Chingthang GPU

CHINGTHANG, 04 DEC (IPR): IPR Minister Lok Nath Sharma, who also happens to be the area MLA of Gyalshing Bermiok, visited the family of Santu Chettri at ward no 4, Chingthang Gram Panchayat Unit, who lost their house to

a fire last night. He took stock on the damaged property and assured to provide ex-gratia assistance and support from the government. The upper floor of the two-storeyed building was reduced to ashes in the fire incident.

U-23 Men's Tournament hosted by SICA concludes



SICA to next host U-23 Women's One Day

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 04 DEC: Under-23 Men's One Day Tournament was hosted by Sikkim Cricket Association (SICA) at Odisha from 31 Oct to 22 Nov, 2019.

After getting full membership, this was the first time that SICA was entrusted with organizing a tournament by the Board of Control of Cricket in India (BCCI), a press release informs.

During the tournament, 45 matches were played between 10 teams - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Puducherry.

All the matches were played in four different venues - KIITS Cricket Stadium, Bhubaneswar; Vikash Cricket Ground, Bhubaneswar; DRIEMS University Ground, Cuttack; and Ravenshaw University Ground. These venues were taken up by SICA

for hosting the tournament.

SICA's Cricket Operation Manager, Afzal Hussain and Logistic Manager, Mayelmit Lepcha were based in Bhubaneswar, Odisha one month before the start of the tournament under the guidance of SICA executives for getting various things done for hosting the tournament such as setting up the venues for the matches, accommodation for the BCCI match officials and various teams, transportations and many more. SICA had also appointed Nayan Tshering Bhutia as the co-ordinator heading the tournament.

SICA has credited the tournament's success to the tireless effort put by all the Executives and Administrative Staffs of SICA.

Many challenges were there for the successful closure but it was well supported by respective venue in-charges and supporting staff, KIIT management, and Odisha Cricket Association, the release mentions.

BCCI has now asked SICA to host the Under-23 Women's One Day Tournament.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com

ANTHYESTHI KRIYA (SUDDHI KARYA)

Anthyesthi Kriya (Suddhi Karya) of our beloved sister Late Meena Gajmer who left for Paramdham on 30th November, 2019 falls on Friday, the 6th December, 2019. All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers to the departed soul at our residence at Lingding Zero below Lingding Junior High School, ICAR - Lingding Road. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us in the hour of bereavement.



Narendra Gajmer, Chetan Gajmer (Younger brothers), Indira Gajmer, Pushpa Gajmer (Younger sisters), DK Gajmer, DB Gajmer (Cousin brothers).
Contact: 8101480557, 8768773529, 9735963493.

ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

13th days Anthyesthi Kriya of our beloved mother Late Mrs. Pushpa Darnal of Gangtok (Deorali) who left for her heavenly soul on 27th November, 2019 falls on 09th December, 2019.

Venue - Lexicon More Pathar Ghatta Road, Ashiyana apartment, Matigara near Royal Academy school.



Contact No -
Ms. Karuna Rai Daughter
Mr. Lakshan Darnal (Elder Son) 9635831527
Mr. Mahesh Darnal (Younger Son) 9775438955
And all family members

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

For details contact: 9083826462

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

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

For more details: 9083826462 /9832556698

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

Flat Land no cutting required. Price 30 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

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to book advertisements in SummitTimes call 03592-208698, 9734152541, 9647102692, advertise@summittimes.com,

ICAR-NOFRI empowers Sikkim Central Prison inmates



GANGTOK, 04 DEC (PIB): The ICAR-National Organic Farming Research Institute (NOFRI), Tadong organized two-day Training cum Skill Development program on 'Organic Farming' for the inmates of Sikkim Central Prison, East Sikkim during December 02-03, 2019 under AICRP PET Project, AICRP Mushroom Project and All India Network Project on Organic Farming (AINPOF) in order to increase awareness, motivate and strengthen the livelihood education of the inmates on organic crop production by dissemination of scientific knowledge as a step towards rehabilitating them after their incarceration period.

tations were made for quick transfer of technologies. During the program, a total of 25 inmates attended the program and benefited from the technical know-how. ICAR-NOFRI also provided various inputs viz., organically permitted bio-pesticides, bio-fungicides, bio-fertilizers, seedlings of Cole crops, untreated seeds, vermibeds and plastic sheets for low cost plastic tunnels and shelters to Superintendent of Police, State Central Prison. The program was organized on the initiatives of Superintendent of Police, KL Tenzin and Additional Superintendent of Police, Renu Raj Chettri, State Central Prison, Rongyek, East Sikkim.

Avasthe, ICAR-NOFRI briefed about the overall activities of ICAR-NOFRI. He stressed upon the importance of scientific knowledge for commercial and intensive production of organic crops and animals to bring about perceptible change in the organic production scenario of the region. He said that hi-tech low cost vegetable production technologies, conservation agriculture technologies, organic nutrient management and animal production technologies are available with ICAR which can be a good source of income for the inmates in future.

Senior Scientist (Horticulture), Dr Ashish Yadav coordinated the program and briefed about

ICAR-NOFRI role in developing technologies for organic production systems. He discussed about the intensive vegetable production techniques under low cost plastic tunnel and plastic rain shelters. Dr Yadav also practically demonstrated the construction of low cost plastic tunnels to the inmates in Sikkim Central Prison.

Senior Scientist (Agronomy), Dr Raghavendra Singh Sikkim discussed the organic conservation agriculture and package of practices for maize and leguminous based cropping system. He emphasized on the importance of inclusion of leguminous crops in cropping system for improving the soil ferti-

ty. Dr. Singh practically demonstrated the installation of vermibed.

Scientist SS (Plant Breeding), Dr Chandan Kapoor deliberated on 'Seed production in organic farming' and Scientist (Plant Pathology), Dr Chandramani Raj talked on 'Insect pest management in organic production system'.

Scientist (Plant Pathology), Dr Shweta Singh talked on 'Organic oyster mushroom production techniques' and 'Disease management in organic production system'. Dr. Singh practically demonstrated the Organic oyster mushroom production techniques.

Scientist (Veterinary Microbiology), Dr Mukesh Bhatt discussed in detail about the backyard poultry and dairy management techniques. He emphasized on the importance of Vanaraja birds which has gained popularity in Sikkim as backyard poultry. He briefed about the disease management in dairy and backyard poultry. He also stressed on maintaining hygienic conditions in rearing the animals.

Superintendent of Police State Central Prison, KL Tenzin and Additional Superintendent of Police State Central Prison, Renu Raj Chettri, Rongyek, Sikkim played very active role in organizing the program.

Sikkim Newar Guthi holds Vastu Puja for new office



ARPAN PRADHAN GANGTOK, 04 DEC:

Sikkim Newa Guthi recently organized a "vastu puja" in preparation for the shifting of the Guthi office to under-construction Newar Guthi Bhawan here. The prayer was led by Guruju Alankar Pradhan and was chaired by Govind Prasad Pradhan of the Central Advisory Council accompanied by Surya Bir Tuladhar as guest of honour.

The Guthi's chief patron

[parampara], Dr CL Pradhan, made a brief presentation on Newari rituals.

Similarly, a brief report on the construction was placed by the Guthi's construction committee chairperson, RK Pradhan, along with reports on finance by Ganesh Pradhan and a brief presentation on the Newari Khada by HN Pradhan.

On the occasion, the Sikkim Newar Guthi also honoured and felicitated Surya Bir Tuladhar for his contributions towards

the community and the land owners Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan and Dr Sheela Pradhan for providing the land at a nominal cost for the construction of the Sikkim Newar Guthi Bhawan.

The welcome speech was placed by Guthi acting president Hari Prasad Pradhan and the programme was also addressed by SNG general secretary Anita Pradhan and assistant GS Uday Pradhan.

On-the-Job-Training for IT students at SRM concludes

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 04 DEC:

A 15-day On-the-Job-Training Program for Class XII Vocational IT students has concluded at SRM University Sikkim.

The program was attended by 82 students from 11 different Government Schools of East Sikkim, a press release informs.

During the training session the students were exposed to NET, C#, Java and Data Base Management System. An exclusive session on current trends in IT, with reference to Artificial Intelligence was conducted

for the students.

In addition to this, the students were also given exposure to managerial skill, communication skills and soft skills. An interaction session with Siddhant Raj Tamang, Kollyhood's new face from the movie "Appa," was also scheduled for these students by the University.

Mr Tamang inspired the students to follow their passion and to work hard for their dreams.

The participating schools expressed their gratitude on being able to undergo such training. The Vice Chancellor of the University, Prof

Ch Satish Kumar, during the valedictory session, appreciated the enthusiasm of the students and encouraged them to develop skills within themselves.

He also said that the principal and teachers of various schools can approach the university well in advance for specific training and mini projects, which will be the real learning for the students.

The winner of the Quiz competition was appreciated during the closing ceremony and the participants were presented Letters of Experience.

Sikkim squad prepped for Dr BC Roy Trophy in HP

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 04 DEC:

A 21-member team will represent Sikkim at the Junior National Football Championship for the Dr BC Roy Trophy 2019-20 to be held at Mandi in Himachal Pradesh. The state team, accompanied by Alpan Lepcha as coach and Dorjee Gay Bhutia as team manager, will be leaving for the championship on Thursday.

The Sikkim squad comprises of Abit Mohamad, Besu Hang Limboo, Gautam Singh, Aninav Thapa, Dewan Mangar, Aryan Bagdas, Kailash Tamang, Aman Rai, Prajit Pradhan, Sagar Mohanta, Rudra Chettri, Bishal Subba, Narendran Chettri, Pratham Sundas, Noel Baraily, Sidanth Darjee, Ronak Pradhan, Anoj Chettri, Peush Parsai, Amar Tamang and Deo Kumar Chettri.

Sikkim has been placed in group-A along with Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Tripura and



Tamil Nadu for the league round of the championship and will be playing its first match against HP on 10 December, which will be followed by a match against Gujarat on 12 December, then Tripura on 14 December and final league match against Tamil Nadu on 16 December.

The group topper will qualify for the knock-out round of the championship.

Speaking to media persons this morning, Sikkim Football Association president, Menla Ethenpa, informed that 45 footballers from across the State had participated in the selection trials. He added that the state team was provided a 21-day training camp organized by SFA at Paljor Stadium and was now all set to give the best performance in the

championship.

"We have a strong team this time and we are very hopeful for a good result," Mr Ethenpa said.

Team coach Mr Lepcha said, "We have good players in every position this time and the team is in high spirits and good form to give a good fight. We are very hopeful for a better result from the State team."

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PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
(Regulation 31(2) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016)
In the matter of
BLUEFERN VENTURES PRIVATE LIMITED
(in Liquidation)
Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Regulation 31(2) of the IBBI (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016, the List of Stakeholders in respect of Bluefern Ventures Private Limited (in Liquidation) has been filed with the Adjudicating Authority Guwahati Bench on 18.11.2019.

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Liquidator
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IBBI/IPA-003/IP-N00082/2017-2018/10705
Place : Kolkata
Date : 04.12.2019

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Funeral will be held on 04/12/2019 from 11am at Bhanu Gram, Below Diesel Power House. Gangtok

All well wishers and relatives are requested to join us

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Back to School

Time to rediscover the altruistic awareness that gave Sikkim its first village schools

There are so many schools celebrating their golden jubilees around the State that one tends to forget how long half a century really is. It was in 1969 that America put a man on the moon and this year even India had its Chandrayaan-2 moment and Mars is being mapped and studied. 1969 was also the year of Woodstock and the 3.5 lakh rock-n-roll fans who landed there, now, even a Tik-Tok video attracts many more fans and likes. Fifty years ago, John Lennon and Yoko Ono got married and held a Bed-in for a week for world peace, now people watch Big Boss and peace is still awaited. 1969 was also the year when the Beatles recorded their final album and people still listen to the Beatles and although there are stars with more fans now, it is unlikely that their music will survive that long.

Yes, fifty years is a long time. Governments don't last that long and most times, neither do memories. In this light, every school that has crossed the 50 mark of educating Sikkim deserves the collective thanks of the Sikkimese people. For institutions to last that long, continuing what they had taken upon themselves five decades or more ago is indeed commendable.

Anniversaries are also important times to sit back, celebrate, re-capsulate, and more importantly, plan. Although there were some schools already in existence even earlier, education on a larger scale came to Sikkim mostly in the fifties and sixties. That makes Sikkim rather young as far as its history of formal modern education goes. This should also make it more energetic and plan afresh how it wants to educate its young in the next fifty years. There are now enough schools across the State. In fact education in Sikkim, despite its difficult terrain, is more accessible than in most other States in India. The State has the numbers, now it should focus on quality. This will not take much effort really, because the infrastructure is already in place, a more coherent policy and consistent support should improve the quality of education in Sikkim schools.

Even as the government tinkers away, the people too need to rediscover the spirit that brought modern education to the lay people. State support for education in the initial years was essentially for the elite or to feed the requirement of "literate" public servants as Sikkim's interactions with the outside world increased. This explains the existence of schools of slightly older vintage in the capital. The more exciting engagement was happening in bastis where elders realized the obvious benefits of formal education and donated land and houses to run classrooms and cajoled teachers into educating the village children. Most of the rural schools in Sikkim were a result of private philanthropy which were later taken over by the government. Most of such schools have a proud line-up of alumni and triggered a snowball effect of awareness and prosperity. Visit any village in Sikkim with a school, even a primary school, of fifty years or older and chances are that there will be enough success stories there to warm even the most pessimistic of minds. As much as the physical school, it was the intangible impact of intent which lifted the area to a new level. That spirit needs to be found again.

Meanwhile, for the policy makers, an attendant focus needs to be on education after school – the colleges, all, professional, vocational and regular. College education is India's strength and remains, let's accept it, Sikkim's weakness. This needs to be corrected soon. The degree colleges don't inspire much confidence even though there are more of them than even five years ago. Unfortunately, even with the ones that are doing reasonable well, local presence is abysmally low. Students need to be inspired to target berths beyond the quota and this is where better schools will have a role to play. For the government, more importance on policy framing and making sure that good and cheap institutes for further education are set up in Sikkim needs to be prioritized.

After another fifty years, schools still celebrating anniversaries should be able to look back and reaffirm that the right direction was taken fifty years ago.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Haiti crisis highlights the need for a strong civil service

JEAN-FRANÇOIS SAVARD, EMMANUEL SAEL & JOSEPH JR CLORMEUS
theconversation.com

For several weeks, Haiti has been struggling with a new political crisis, one that has its roots in an old problem. The trigger this time was the rise in fuel prices. But the demonstrators who have filled the streets for weeks are mainly denouncing the corruption that has plagued the mandate of President Jovenel Moïse. The protesters are demanding his resignation.

Corruption is nothing new in Haiti. Although the political situation was much more stable during the reign of Michel Martelly between 2011 and 2016 — partly due to the influx of international aid and support from Western powers that no longer exists today — corruption was still present.

Why is it that the Haitian political regime is unable to get rid of this scourge?

From 2010 to 2015, the École Nationale d'Administration Publique offered a master's degree program for managers in Haiti as part of a Canadian federal government project to strengthen the capacity of the Haitian civil service. In this context, I was able to go to Haiti three times to give training. By working closely with Haitian officials in this way, I was able to observe the difficulties in implementing policy.

The two doctoral students who co-author this article, Emmanuel Saël and Joseph Jr Clorméus, both worked as civil servants in the Haitian public administration for eight and seven years respectively. The analyses and conclusions we present are based on our professional experiences and research.

THE POISONED LEGACY OF THE DUVALIERS

To return to the original question: How do we explain this endemic corruption in Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas (and among the poorest in the world), with 80 per cent of its population living below the poverty line of \$2 a day?

The answer is both simple and complex.

Let's start with the simple answer. In their book *Why Nations Fail*, published in 2012, authors Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson explain that states fail when their formal institutions are too weak, thus opening the door to informal institutions.

In the case of Haiti, this idea is easy to understand. From Duvalier père (François) to Duvalier fils (Jean-Claude), the political system of the time was essentially based on informal institutions cre-

ated from scratch by François Duvalier. These institutions are governed by unofficial and generally unspoken rules, which result in some form of sanction for those who do not respect them. Individuals seek to comply with these rules in order to do "like others" and avoid the sanctions that result from non-compliance with informal rules.

After coming to power in 1957, François Duvalier quietly weakened the country's formal institutions and strengthened informal institutions that had specific objectives to keep him in power. He used a three-step strategy: keeping his people under-educated, strengthening his power through voodoo beliefs and eliminating opponents.

In addition to the wealth accumulated by Duvalier through the misappropriation of public funds, Jean-Claude Duvalier inherited informal institutions and practices set up by his father in 1971.

When the son was forced into exile in 1986, he left behind a country with no real public institutions and very few financial resources. Its funds had either been squandered or diverted. To stay in power for so long, the Duvaliers also had implemented a system of rewarding the "friends" of the system, which we now call corruption.

In the absence of strong formal institutions, informal institutions have established themselves in the Haitian state regime, elevating corruption to the forefront of the country's operating practices. Indeed, no president has been able to weaken corruption so far, often because it allows these same presidents to rise to power.

CREATING AN ACCOUNTABLE PUBLIC SERVICE

Let us now continue with the complex answer. If we accept that the weakness of formal institutions in the Haitian political system explains the strength of corruption, then how can we weaken these informal institutions in favour of formal institutions that benefit the people?

It would be an illusion to think that a single solution can put an end to corruption in Haiti. But we still argue that the fight must begin with the creation of a new public management system. Its implementation requires the modernization of the political-administrative apparatus — a new way of doing things that is based on meritocracy instead of sponsorship and transparency rather than the opacity that characterizes the overall functioning of the Haitian public administration.

But there are several obstacles to such a change.

First, accountability, essential in public administrations and in the fight against corruption, is

absent. Haitian legislation makes ministers, secretaries of state and directors general (in Québec and Canada, the latter are called deputy ministers) the sole authorizing officers for public decisions. It thus makes civil servants mere executors, as can be seen in Haiti's Decree on the Central Administration of the State, adopted in 2005.

In other words, Haitian government directors, managers and other officials are not subject to any accountability rules, which encourages patronage and, possibly, corruption. What's more, the legal and regulatory framework does not provide for any other form of accountability of public administration officials, particularly to civil society.

REDESIGNING REALITY

Transparency and information dissemination is another mechanism to fight corruption. Unfortunately, in Haiti, the dissemination of information, particularly financial information, outside of audit or control procedures laid out by law is not an obligation for public entities.

For example, the official budget document, which is generally published on the website of the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, presents a forecast that differs greatly from reality, since it is often subject to reorganization in its implementation. This means that in practice, the operations carried out do not correspond to the information disseminated by the government.

However, efforts to strengthen the accountability system have nevertheless been made as part of recent administrative reforms in Haiti.

In this context, over the past 15 years, successive governments have created several control, monitoring, investigation and audit bodies. This is important to facilitate the culture of accountability.

Nevertheless, it will also be important to strengthen the accountability framework by making public servants more accountable. They must be given more freedom of action, but they must also be directly and publicly accountable for their management.

This is the way to strengthen formal institutions in Haiti and weaken informal institutions — and corruption.

[Jean-François Savard is Professeur agrégé, École nationale d'administration publique (ENAP); Emmanuel Sael is Doctorant en administration publique, École nationale d'administration publique (ENAP); Joseph Jr Clorméus is Doctorante candidate in public administration, École nationale d'administration publique (ENAP)]

Islamophobic attacks mostly happen in public. Here's what you can do if you see it or experience it

DERYA INER & MEHMET OZALP
theconversation.com

The second Islamophobia in Australia Report launched last month, in the same week a graphic video showing a pregnant Muslim woman being punched and stomped on circulated widely on social media.

Earlier in October another video went viral, showing two New South Wales police officers verbally abusing two Muslim women, threatening to falsely charge them as an accessory to murder. In both cases, the victims were women and visibly Muslim, wearing a head covering (hijab), and the perpetrators were white men. These examples correlate with the report's findings, where 71% of perpetrators were male and 72% of victims were female.

Alarming, most Islamophobic attacks occurred in public, and yet only 14% of bystanders got involved or intervened. And of those, only one in three defended the victim. The majority of witnesses simply passed by without paying attention.

ISLAMOPHOBIC INCIDENTS RECORDED NATIONWIDE

The second biennial Islamophobia in Australia report analysed 349 Islamophobic incidents reported to the Islamophobia Register of Australia, from 2016-2017. Combined with the previous report, 592 online and offline cases were recorded in the last four years. But this represents only the tip of the iceberg.

Both reports conclusively show Islamophobia in Australia does exist and is a persistent social issue, one that overwhelmingly targets women, a vulnerability that stems from being identifiably Muslim when wearing a hijab.

It is also alarming that the incidents in public spaces not only continued to occur regularly, but their prevalence increased since the previous report.

Guarded places, such as shopping centres, train stations and other

crowded areas saw 60% more harassment than unguarded places – an increase of 30% since the previous report. Islamophobia in shopping centres was most common, accounting for 25% of reported incidents.

This could be because public spaces give more opportunity for



Islamophobic people to cross paths with Muslims. Yet, the presence of a crowd, CCTV cameras and guards didn't appear to deter them.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU SEE AN ATTACK

Hate crimes are rarely prosecuted in Australia, and together with the lack of bystander intervention and pervasive negative stereotypes of Muslims, perpetrators seem more emboldened. But public opinion is where the most important opportunity to prevent Islamophobia lies. If witnesses to Islamophobic hate incidents intervene, it would strongly discourage perpetrators and others with similar sentiments.

So, if you see an Islamophobic incident in a public, guarded place like a shopping centre, the first thing you can do is directly report to the security guards, who can take the perpetrator away. Witnesses should also consider reporting the incidents to the Islamophobia Register and the police. In fact, witnesses reported 41% of all physical cases recorded in the report.

The second thing you can do is

comfort the victims. Victims, who were often left in tears, say they felt traumatised, deeply disappointed, publicly ridiculed and, as a result, extremely distressed. A smile or simply saying, "don't worry, this is your country just like all other Australians", would go a long way to alleviate the intense feeling of not being accepted.

And third, witnesses should get involved. In one reported case, when a Muslim mother with her three children was severely abused, the support from surrounding people discouraged the perpetrator, who quickly left. Here, the mother describes the support she received afterwards.

"I was really upset and crying and my kids were in shock [...] Everyone was looking at us and the woman from Donut King came over and offered a seat, a cup of tea and some drinks for my kids. Security

moved us to the management office soon after that but not before a sister who I happened to sit next to said she had removed her hijab and abaya because she was tired of being harassed. Another beautiful lady gave me a much-needed hug and some kind words only someone who knows discrimination could share and another wanted to buy my kids donuts. The staff in the management were very kind and gave my children colouring in."

In another case, high school students defended their Muslim friend, whose name was scribbled on a toilet door, calling her a terrorist.

Her friends scribbled over it and wrote if u knew her u wouldn't say that about her.

The presence and behaviour of the police is another key factor. Victims reported immense relief and trust in Australia and its institutions when they felt police showed understanding, even if the case couldn't lead to a criminal charge. But police attended only half of the 22% of the incidents reported to them. And in some cases, police explained to victims how there's freedom of speech

in Australia and they can't do much.

In 11% of the cases where police became involved, they were constructive and comforted the victim.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE ISLAMOPHOBIA

First – stay strong and know you've done nothing wrong just for being a Muslim. Remembering this can give you the courage to call for help from bystanders. In the earlier case of the Muslim mother with three children, it was her firm and loud response to the abuser that attracted attention and led to people offering help. Victims should also report the cases to the police and to the third-party reporting platforms, such as Islamophobia Register Australia.

Even if the incident doesn't fall into a crime category, it can still be helpful for police to monitor the perpetrator, while the register can provide advocacy and use the reported incidents to raise public awareness in its reports. And victims should seek counselling from organisations in every state and territory designed to help victims, such as Victim Services in NSW. The Australian Human Rights Commission also receives complaints and provides advocacy services across Australia. The Islamophobia Register Australia page provides detailed information about where to report and All Together Now gives instructive advice on tackling racism.

Mosques and Muslim organisations can also provide a safe space for victims to talk about their experiences. Even if you don't feel the need for counselling, discussing the experience can help make sense of it all in a meaningful way. Islamophobia in Australia is a social problem that affects a significant portion of society. Recognition of Islamophobia does not diminish the achievements of Australian society and the success of its multiculturalism.

It will merely highlight a social problem that cannot be ignored or downplayed any longer.

[Derya Iner is Senior Lecturer, Charles Sturt University; Mehmet Ozalp is Associate Professor in Islamic Studies, Director of The Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation and Executive Member of Public and Contextual Theology, Charles Sturt University]

AIIMS-Kalyani to be operational from Feb: Official



KALYANI (WB), DEC 4 (PTI): The outpatient department of the under-construction Kalyani campus of AIIMS in West Bengal's Nadia district is expected to be operational from February next year, a senior official of the institute said on Wednesday.

Shree Krishna, Deputy Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS),

Kalyani, said classes of its first batch have commenced from September 4 at the College of Medicine and JNM Hospital in the town, located around 50 km north of Kolkata.

"Infrastructure at the campus would be readied for conducting classes of the second session from August next year," he said.

The official said boarders have started staying at the hostel in

the campus. "Girls and boys are staying at designated floors of the five-storied hostel of AIIMS, Kalyani. Most of the other buildings in the campus are in the completion stage," he said.

At present, Biochemistry, Anatomy, Physiology and Community and Health Medicine are being taught by AIIMS, Kalyani, he said, adding that the institute has 19

faculty members and four more are scheduled to join soon. Krishna said AIIMS, Bhubaneswar is the mentor of the Kalyani campus and its first board meeting was held in Delhi on November 7, during which experts provided guidelines for developing it.

The curriculum has been developed with the help of faculties of other AIIMS campuses,

Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore and Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), Puducherry, he said.

The 180-acre campus of AIIMS, Kalyani will be equipped with modern medical facilities upon completion and people of West Bengal and the northeast will be benefited by it, Krishna added.

Perceptual differences between India, China on border issues: Defence Minister

NEW DELHI, DEC 3 (PTI): There are perceptual differences between India and China on border issues, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday asserting that the Indian Army is fully alert and the border is secured.

Speaking in Lok Sabha during the Zero Hour, Singh said transgression by Chinese forces do take place and Indian forces also too go for patrolling along forward locations.

"Whenever a situ-

ation of confrontation comes between forces of both...they handle it maturely," Singh said.

"All this happens due to perceptual differences between India and China on issues related to border," he said. Singh said forces of the two countries are mature enough and settle their disputes amicably.

Chowdhury raised the issue in the wake of spotting of a Chinese ship in India's exclusive economic zone in the Andaman sea.

Congress to take out rally in Delhi on Dec 14



JAMMU, DEC 4 (PTI): The Congress will take out a mega rally in Delhi on December 14 to protest against the state of the economy, unemployment and unprecedented price hike due to the wrong policies of the BJP government at the Centre, a party leader said here on Wednesday.

"The Congress is organising a mega rally in Delhi on December 14 to protest against the economic crisis, large-scale unemployment and unprecedented price hike," the chief spokesperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) said.

He added that members of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) and the PCC, including former ministers, former legislators, district presidents and leaders of the frontal wings of the party's state unit from Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, would take part in the rally.

The rally would be

taken out as part of the party's nationwide programme against the "worst kind of economic slowdown, leading to large-scale unemployment and an unprecedented price hike", which was a matter of great concern to the countrymen, the Congress spokesperson said.

The wrong economic policies of the BJP-led government over the last six years had brought the country to this situation of financial emergency and as against the promise of generating two crore new jobs annually, those employed in the private sector were losing their jobs, he added.

The December 14 rally would aim at turning the attention of the countrymen towards the prevailing economic situation and impressing upon the government to take corrective measures in the larger interest of the common man, the Congress spokesperson said.

AIUDF writes to Amit Shah requesting withdrawal of CAB



GUWAHATI, DEC 4 (PTI): The All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday, requesting him not to introduce the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Parliament as it is "against the interest of people of Assam and the whole country".

The AIUDF has opposed the bill as it will have "severe impact on the socio-economic and political aspects of the country", the letter said.

"We appeal to you to initiate necessary measures so that the bill which goes against the interest of the people of Assam and the whole country, is not brought on the floor of Parliament," it said.

Earlier in the day, the Union Cabinet cleared the bill that seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan if they faced religious

persecution there, sources said.

A bill to amend the the Citizenship Act, 1955, is likely to be introduced in Parliament in the next two days, the sources said.

The AIUDF firmly stands by the Assam Accord of 1985 which had fixed March 25, 1971 as the cut-off date for the detection of foreigners in Assam, said the letter, a copy of which has been sent to Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

"AIUDF's clear stand is for detection and expulsion of all post 1971 foreigners from Assam irrespective of caste, creed and religion through due process of law," it said.

Assam is a "heterogeneous state" having a large number of people belonging to different tribes and castes such as Bodos, Dimas, Tiwa, Mising, Motak, Moran, Koch-Rajbongshi, and Muslim and Hindu communities, the party leaders said.

All the communities of people are residing peacefully for centuries together but the proposed bill is "bound to disturb the peaceful existence of people in Assam", nine signatories to the letter claimed.

The letter, made available to the media here, has been signed by the party's Vice President Attwal Mazid and other office bearers.

"After partition of the country, Assam has already borne the burden of about 25 lakh registered and unregistered refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and this state is not in a position to bear the burden of anymore refugees," it said.

It may be mentioned here that "due to lack of industries in Assam, the state is not in a position to solve the gigantic unemployment problem and the proposed amendment shall add to the woes of the people", the letter said.

Manipur govt terminates services of 82 officers

IMPHAL, DEC 4 (PTI): The Manipur government has terminated services of its 82 officers after a court order on pleas alleging irregularities in the state civil services examination conducted in 2016, according to an official order.

Their appointment letters issued on April 18, 2017 have been cancelled in compliance with the Supreme Court's November 22 verdict, said an order issued by the state Department of Personnel and Admin-

istrative Reforms (Personnel Division). Pleas were filed in the Manipur High Court by the unsuccessful candidates of the Main Examination conducted by the Manipur Civil Service Commission (MPSC) in 2016, alleging irregularities.

The high court then constituted a two-member panel to probe the matter. The probe revealed "irregularities and discrepancies", including absence of examiners' signatures on answer scripts, manipulation of

marks and allotment of marks without evaluation of answer scripts, advocate Pushpa Gurumayum, representing the petitioners, told PTI.

The high court on October 18 not only quashed the appointment orders, but also directed the CBI to probe the exam within three months.

Following this, the successful candidates filed a petition before the Supreme Court, appealing against the order, but it was dismissed on November 22.

Fast track court set up to try woman vet case

HYDERABAD, DEC 4 (PTI): The Telangana government on Wednesday issued orders for setting up a fast track court to try the four men accused of the gang rape and murder of a woman veterinarian near here last month.

The government designated the court of First Additional District and Sessions Judge in Mahabubnagar district as special court for speedy

trial of the case.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had on Sunday announced setting up of a fast track court for expeditious trial of the case. The charred body of the 25-year-old woman veterinarian was found under a culvert at Shadnagar near here on November 28 morning a day after she went missing.

The four men, all lorry workers, aged be-

tween 20 and 24, were arrested on November 29 for allegedly raping and killing the woman by smothering her and later burning her body.

They are under judicial custody and lodged in high security cells at Cherlapally Central Prison here.

The incident led to a nation-wide public outrage with protests demanding death penalty for the four.

J-K lawyers intensify agitation, start hunger strike



JAMMU, DEC 4 (PTI): Lawyers, who are protesting the J-K government's decision to divest judicial courts of powers to register documents related to immovable properties, on Wednesday went on a hunger strike.

Members of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court Bar Association (JKHCBA) have been on an indefinite strike for over a month against the decision.

The token hunger strike began today after a decision to continue the ongoing agitation was unanimously taken at the association's general house meeting, the organisation's president, Abhinav Sharma, told reporters here.

Judicial work in the high court and its subordinate courts in most parts of the Jammu region remain hit since

November 1 due to the strike by the lawyers, who are demanding a roll back of the order.

The JKHCBA-Jammu held the meeting at the conference hall of the district court complex in Janipur here.

The lawyers are staging the sit-in at the high court complex.

"The strike will go on and we are going to intensify it further till the power to register various documents is restored back to the judicial magistrates," Sharma said.

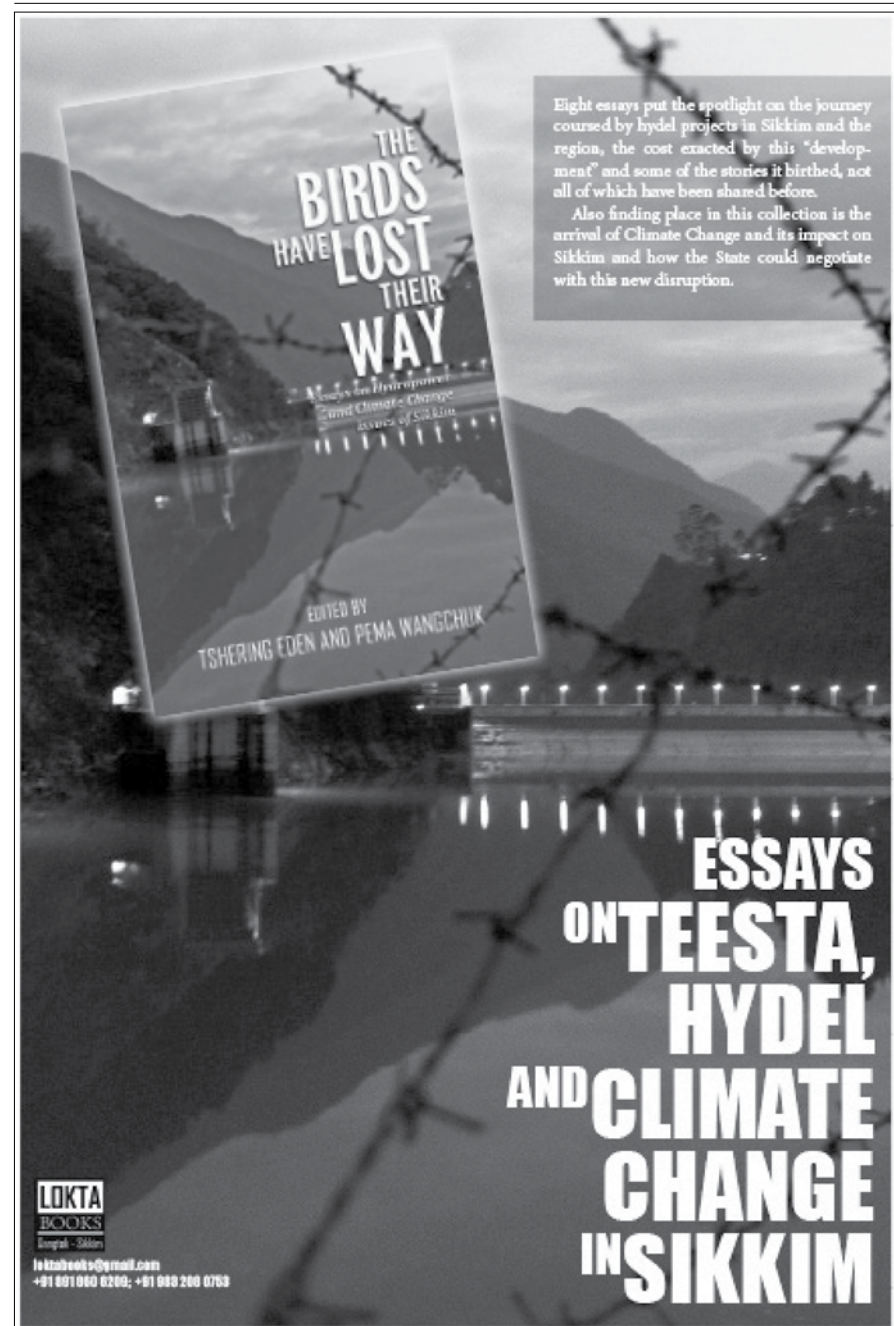
On October 23, the state administrative council (SAC) headed by then Governor Satya Pal Malik accorded sanction to the creation of a new department, under the overall administrative control of the revenue department, to provide hassle-free and speedy services to citizens for

registration of documents pertaining to immovable properties.

The documents include those related to sale, gift, mortgage, lease and bequest, among others.

Earlier, the revenue department was involved in only issuing documents such as the 'Fard Intikhab' (authentication of property with reference to original record) and cost estimation of land on the ground of which registry of the same was being done by judicial officers.

Last week at a conference, Union Minister Jitendra Singh while referring to the demands raised by different sections, including the lawyers, said "we are not going to succumb because there will be no end to it if one demand is met."



F1 Esports season crosses line before top gamers steer out of virtual world



PAUL MACINNES
theGuardian

The 2019 Formula One Esports series will come to a climax at a shopping centre in west London on Wednesday. Inside the Vue cinema on Fulham Broadway a customised arena will host racers from 10 different teams, each associated with an official F1 team, as they complete the final three grands prix of a virtual season. Up for grabs is prize money of \$500,000 (£385,000). But there is also the chance to shape the future of the sport, both online and off.

Currently third in the standings is Renault Vitality's Jarno Opmeer – lying 43 points behind the leader, Ferrari's David Tonizza – and this year's title might be just out of reach for the 19-year-old Dutchman. A podium finish, however, would still be a welcome improvement for the team who finished bottom of the classification last year.

Something significant is also happening on Thursday, when Opmeer will become the first esports athlete to test-drive

Renault's F1 simulator. Housed in their base at Enstone in Oxfordshire, the simulator is a critical tool in helping the team to fine-tune their F1 cars, and for Daniel Ricciardo and Nico Hülkenberg to get used to driving them. Costing by some estimates as much as £20,000 an hour to run, it has not been a facility made available to gamers.

Opmeer, it is true, came to esports through traditional racing. A member of the Renault Academy, he was encouraged to try out for virtual competition at Enstone this spring. He took part in the qualifying tests and was selected, alongside Germany's Cedric Thomé. Renault Vitality's third racer, Simon Weigang, was chosen from the pro draft, a pool filled by winners of online heats from around the world.

"Formula One is one of the few games where the skillset required to perform is the same as that in the actual sport," says Nicolas Maurer, the CEO of Team Vitality, currently the biggest esports team in France as well as

Renault's partner in F1 Esports. "Of course there are differences, mainly the physical part; you don't get the lateral force when you're driving the video game. But Jarno being accepted to the real F1 simulator shows that you can build from video game to the sport and back, so it's very interesting in that regard."

No doubt it is also a handy piece of marketing. The truth is that F1 is a minnow in the esports ecosystem. While the game itself has been well reviewed, and the latest version reached No 2 in the UK sales charts, its online audience is small in comparison to heavyweights like League of Legends or Dota 2. "It's a successful product but still only for a niche audience," says Maurer.

Pushing the narrative that F1 Esports is as close as it gets to the real thing, and that it is taken seriously by the high-precision world of F1 proper, is one way of setting the game apart from the competition. If the strategy is successful it might help to sell more copies and, Renault hopes, sway

decisions when those gamers (preferably Chinese) come to buy their next car. But there are also real, sporting benefits to be had if F1 and F1 Esports can work in tandem, or perhaps even converge.

"[It] is still a new industry and a few years back if you wanted to win at esports all you needed to do was sign the best talent," says Maurer. "Then we started to add coaches, video and data analysis, that was the next step. Nowadays, if you want to win in the biggest competitions of course you need the best talent, you need the best resources around and you need the best training infrastructure. In that last part, where you use physical and mental conditioning we're using a lot of what Renault can help us with. They are using their coaches and their experts to help us train our esports athletes and that's very interesting and that's one of the ways we can achieve the performance we're looking for. That's a big, big part of the partnership."

Renault have further

plans for working with Opmeer and co, including opening their enormous telemetry suite to analyse data during esports races. In F1, data is taken from hundreds of sensors that record the output of thousands of parts. In F1 Esports there are 190 data points, and 12 customisable elements that allow for one trillion unique combinations. That's a difference but not a huge one. With each new version of the game, that gap will close. Some inside Renault believe it will be only a few years before the simulation in the game matches that of their expensive invite-only machine.

Soon Renault might be able to test real-life changes through mass virtual practice. It might also create a whole new generation of drivers. McLaren's Lando Norris, fresh from a rookie season in F1, says not only is the compatibility between the two disciplines real but the limitless practice gaming that makes possible can offer benefits.

"In the future I think you can get people who start in esports and come over," he said. "I don't think they can go straight from esports to Formula One, they would have to still do some steps: F3, F2 and so on. But I think there's already been some drivers who have proved that having skills on the simulator can translate very well on to the actual racetrack."

"The better the simulators get and everything then the higher the chance of something like that happening."

Chennaiyin FC appoints Coyle as new head coach



CHENNAI, DEC 4 (PTI): Indian Super League team Chennaiyin FC on Wednesday appointed former Burnley and Bolton Wanderers manager Owen Coyle as the new head coach till the end of the season.

The 53-year-old Scot replaces Englishman John Gregory, who parted ways with the two-time champions on Saturday after a lacklustre start to the ongoing ISL season.

"I am incredibly proud to join Chennaiyin FC as Head Coach."

I believe we possess a squad with great potential and the hunger to do well, complimented by an ardent fanbase always backing us. I can't wait to get started," Coyle said in

a club statement. Coyle begins his stint as CFC head coach with an away game against Jamshedpur FC on December 9.

He has previously managed English Premiership teams- Burnley and Bolton Wanderers- and is credited with getting the former promoted to the Premier League in 2009.

"Owen (Coyle) is a renowned name in British football, with a fantastic career as both player and coach. We are really happy and excited to have him onboard."

Our conversations with Owen have been really promising and we are certain he will steer us back to glory. I wish him the very best as he begins

his tenure with us," the Chennaiyin FC co-owners said jointly in a statement. Coyle enjoyed a long and impressive career as a striker with the likes of English Premier League Bolton Wanderers along with Dundee United and Motherwell in the Scottish top flight among other clubs, the statement said.

A Scot by birth and an Irishman by descent, Coyle has scored more than 300 goals in his entire playing career and has also appeared at the international level with the Republic of Ireland.

Chennaiyin is placed ninth in the points table with just five points from six matches which includes one win.

Socceroos to face Argentina at Copa America



CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA, DEC 4 (AFP): Australia will face Lionel Messi and Argentina in next year's Copa America after being drawn alongside the tournament co-hosts.

The Socceroos, one of two guest teams invited to the South American football championship, will also face Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay and Chile in Group A.

In Group B, Asian champions Qatar, the other guest nation, will face Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru, with all games taking place in Colombia.

The first round designations for Australia and Qatar were the only major issue left to be decided at Tuesday's ceremonial draw.

The other teams in the two groups had already been determined based on geographical proximity to co-hosts Argentina and Colombia, which are separated by some 4,350 miles (7,000 kilometers).

Australia coach Graham Arnold said his team was relishing the prospect of facing Argentina in Buenos Aires.

"That's what it's all about, it's about testing ourselves at the highest level," Arnold said following the draw. "The players are so excited to have this great opportunity."

The former international striker speaks from experience: Arnold was a member of the Socceroos team which lost to a Diego Maradona-inspired Argentina in a 1993 playoff for a spot in the 1994 World Cup.

"In the old days in the 1990s we played Argentina and Maradona over there and if you speak to the players involved they'll tell you what a great experience it was," Arnold said.

"Our boys haven't really had the experience of playing in South America. So to be able to play in South America in those great stadiums in that environment is going to be a buzz."

- SPLIT FORMAT -

The 2020 Copa America marks the first time in the modern history of the tournament that the event is being co-hosted. Argentina and Colombia were chosen as hosts after South American football's governing body CONMEBOL turned down an offer from the United States Soccer Federation to hold an expanded 16-team edition of the Copa America.

The 2020 tournament will also see a change in format.

At this year's Copa America, won by host nation Brazil, the 12 teams taking part in the event competed in three first round groups of four teams, with the top two in each group and the two best third placed teams advancing to the quarter-finals.

Next year, the tournament will instead see two first round groups of six teams. The top four finishers in each group will qualify for the quarter-finals.

Tournament co-hosts Argentina will kick off the tournament against bitter rivals Chile on June 12 in Buenos Aires.

Chile scored back-to-back victories over Argentina in the finals of the Copa America in 2015 and 2016. Argentina defeated Chile in the third place play-off at this year's tournament.

Australia will open their tournament against Uruguay on June 13.

The Socceroos have a history with the two-time world champions, losing to the Uruguayans in a two-legged play-off for a place at the 2002 World Cup before eliminating the South Americans on penalties in 2005 to clinch a place at the 2006 tournament in Germany. Qatar, meanwhile, who finished bottom of their group at this year's Copa America to exit in the first round, will open their tournament against Peru on June 14.

The June 12-July 12 tournament is the 47th edition of the Copa America, the oldest international competition in world football.

I will get another chance to surpass Lara's 400: Warner



ADELAIDE, DEC 4 (PTI): Explosive Australian opener David Warner believes that he will get another chance to have a crack at Brian Lara's world record individual Test score of 400 after missing out against Pakistan here.

Warner was left stranded at 335 not out when Australia skipper Tim Paine declared the innings on Saturday.

Lara, who was in Adelaide on that day attending to some commercial engagements, was getting ready to meet Warner and congratulate him if the Australian went past 400 runs.

Warner later met Lara and shared a picture with the legendary West Indian batsman in an Instagram post.

"Great to catch up with the legend himself. Maybe one day I will get another chance to Knock 400 off," Warner said in

the post. Lara also feels that Warner will achieve the milestone sometime in future.

"I still think Warner may have time to do it in his career. I know he is not a spring chicken but as soon as you get that 300 you know how to get 400. He may get another shot at it," the former West Indies captain said.

"He is a very attacking player and that is the sort of player who can always set you up for a win. I know you need stabilizers but you also need one or two players like David Warner and Sir Vivian Richards who can take the game with their bats."

Lara broke the record of highest individual Test score twice, first when he overtook compatriot Gary Sobers' 36-year-old record of 365 by scoring 375 against England in 1994 and then again when he bettered his own record to reach 400 in 2004.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer urges patience to see fruits of Manchester United labours

MANCHESTER, 04 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer believes Manchester United fans are behind him and has said "patience is key" after the club's worst start to a season for 31 years.

Solskjaer's side have won four of 14 league matches and are closer to the relegation zone (six points) than the top four (eight) going into Wednesday's game at home to Tottenham. Yet the manager is confident that supporters can see the bigger picture.

"I can just go on the evidence of the game days and supporters I've met," he said. "There's not many I've met that say: 'You've got to do something different.' They can see what we're trying to do. They know there's a lot of work being done behind the scenes – putting a culture into the team, with what's happening here at Carrington [in training]. We just need results. All the six games we've drawn, I feel we should've won. That's the evidence; that's all the answer we can give."

As Solskjaer approaches the one-year anniversary of his interim appointment at the club, on 19 December, he believes patience is required as he attempts to make United contenders again.

"Everyone knows continuity is one of the keys of success," he said.

"Some clubs have more patience than others, some clubs don't have that time and continuity. We have a plan in place and hopefully we can get the results to speed it up. "Sometimes it doesn't go at the speed you want but it's still going in the right direction. There's different aspects to this: it's on the pitch, it's behind the scenes, it's what's happening in the club."

Solskjaer did not wish to offer a precise gauge of United's progress under him. "How long is a piece of rope?" he said. "Results will change moods but the mood behind the scenes is positive. I can't sit here and just talk about that; we want results. I feel we're going to stick to the plan we've put together. Results will probably speed that up."

He says he has no fear of the sack despite the recent removals of Unai Emery by Arsenal, Quique Sánchez Flores by Watford and Mauricio Pochettino by Tottenham. "No, it doesn't make me more concerned. I'm just focusing on my job and that's doing as well as I can."

Yet unless Spurs, Manchester City on Saturday and then Everton the following weekend are beaten, Solskjaer will not better the 26 points from 17 matches José Mourinho accrued before he was sacked last December. Mourinho re-

Japanese doctor who helped Afghans for decades among six killed in attack

A Japanese doctor whose long career was dedicated to helping some of Afghanistan's poorest people was among six people killed Wednesday in an attack in the east of the country, officials said.

The armed assault in Jalalabad city, the capital of Nangarhar province, was the second deadly incident involving aid workers in recent days and prompted appalled reaction in Afghanistan and internationally.

Tetsu Nakamura, 73, was the head of Peace Japan Medical Services -- known as Peshawar Kai in Japanese -- and had been working in the region since the 1980s, when he began treating patients with leprosy in Peshawar in neighbouring Pakistan.

A spokesman for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani called Nakamura "one of the closest friends of Afghanistan". He "dedicated his life to helping and cooperating with our people", spokesman Sediq Seddiqi said.

Attallah Khogyani, a spokesman for Nangarhar's governor, said Nakamura, who had been shot in the chest, was in the process of being transferred to a hospital in Bagram near Kabul when he died.

Five Afghans were also killed: three of Nakamura's security guards, a driver and another colleague, Khogyani said. The attack comes as humanitarian groups are on high alert just days after an aid worker for the UN was killed in a bombing in Kabul.

On November 24, Anil Raj, an American who worked for the UN Development Programme in Afghanistan, died when his vehicle was targeted.

In a statement condemning Wednesday's incident, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan expressed "revulsion" at Nakamura's killing.

It was "a senseless act of violence against a man who dedicated much of his life to helping" Afghanistan's most vulnerable, UNAMA said. Mitsui Fukuoka, an official with Nakamura's organisation, told reporters in Tokyo the motive for the attack was unclear. "We have no idea what was the reason behind the attack, whether it was a simple robbery or whether it was conflict of interest," Fukumoto said.

- War opponent -

Nakamura was famous in Japan for his aid work, which dates back decades. Peshawar-kai was founded by associates of Nakamura, who had lived and worked in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 1984. In 2003 Nakamura, a native of the southwestern Japanese city of Fukuoka, won the Philippines' Ramon Mag-saysay Award for peace and international understanding -- often called Asia's Nobel Prize.

Fond of sporting Pashtun dress, Nakamura was an outspoken opponent of the 2001 US-led war that ousted the Taliban regime, whom he defended as able administrators.

China warns US of a 'price' for Uighur bill

China warned Wednesday that a "price must be paid" after the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed legislation seeking sanctions against senior Chinese officials over the crackdown on mainly Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang.

The legislation adds to tensions between the two superpowers just as they are locked in negotiations to finalise a "phase one" deal to resolve their protracted trade war. US President Donald Trump had already angered Beijing after he signed legislation supporting pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong, prompting China earlier this week to impose sanctions on US-based NGOs and suspend future visits by US warships to the semi-autonomous territory.

Hours after the Uighur Act of 2019 passed the House late Tuesday, the Chinese foreign ministry said the bill should not become law and issued an ominous warning: "For all wrong actions and words... the proper price must be paid."

The legislation condemns Beijing's "gross human rights violations" linked to the crackdown in the northwestern region of Xinjiang, where upwards of one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are believed



to be held in re-education camps. The measure, which passed 407 to 1, is a stronger version of the bill that cleared the Senate in September. The texts must be reconciled into one bill for Trump's signature.

The latest House measure condemns the arbitrary mass detention of Uighurs and calls for closure of the re-education camps where, according to rights groups and US lawmakers, they have been held and abused.

The bill notably urges Trump to slap sanctions on Chinese officials behind the Uighur policy, including Chen

Quanguo, the Communist Party chief for Xinjiang.

"Today the human dignity and human rights of the Uighur community are under threat from Beijing's barbarous actions, which are an outrage to the collective conscience of the world," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told her colleagues shortly before the vote. Congress "is taking a critical step to counter Beijing's horrific human rights abuses against Uighurs," she said. Pelosi lashed out at Chinese authorities for orchestrating a crackdown that includes pervasive mass state surveil-

lance, solitary confinement, beatings, forced sterilisation "and other forms of torture."

- 'Wantonly smears China' -
When asked if the bill could impact trade talks, Hua did not directly answer the question. But she said there was "no way this can have no effect on China-US relations as well as the two countries' co-operation in important areas." In an earlier statement, Hua said the bill "wantonly smears China's efforts to eliminate extremism and combat terrorism" in Xinjiang. The Chinese state-owned tabloid The Global Times quoted experts

as saying Beijing will take "strong countermeasures" including releasing an "unreliable entity list" that could sanction and restrict some US entities in the country and impose sanctions on US officials.

Last month two huge leaks of official documents offered more details about China's network of internment camps in Xinjiang.

Government papers obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) outlined the need to prevent escape, double lock doors and constantly monitor detainees -- even during toilet breaks.

The New York Times reported, based on internal papers it had obtained, that Chinese President Xi Jinping ordered officials to act with "absolutely no mercy" against separatism and extremism in Xinjiang in 2014 following a deadly knife attack blamed on separatists.

Rights groups and witnesses accuse China of forcibly trying to draw Uighurs away from their Islamic customs and integrate them into the majority Han culture.

After initially denying the camps' existence, Beijing cast the facilities as "vocational education centres" where "students" learn Mandarin and job skills in an effort to

steer them away from religious extremism, terrorism and separatism.

- 'Wipe out Uighur identity' -
The House bill would require the State Department to produce a report within one year on the crackdown in Xinjiang. And it would require the Commerce Department to ban US exports to entities in Xinjiang that are known to be used in the detention or surveillance of Muslim minorities, including facial recognition technology.

Thomas Massie, the sole member of Congress to vote against both the Hong Kong and Uighur bills, said he did so because he considered the issues to be Chinese domestic affairs.

"When our government meddles in the internal affairs of foreign countries, it invites those governments to meddle in our affairs," he said in a tweet.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio warned that China's government and Communist Party are "working to systematically wipe out the ethnic and cultural identities" of Uighurs.

The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), an advocacy group, said the US action "paves the way for other countries to act" and "gives Uighurs hope".

Germany kicks out Russian diplomats over Berlin murder



Germany expelled two Russian diplomats on Wednesday after prosecutors said Moscow could be behind the killing of a former Chechen rebel commander in a Berlin park.

Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian national, was shot twice in the head at close range in Kleiner Tiergarten park on August 23, allegedly by a Russian man who was arrested shortly afterwards.

The case has been compared with the poisoning of former Russian agent Sergei Skripal in Britain last year with a Soviet-era nerve agent, widely blamed on Russian intelligence.

The attempted murder plunged relations between Britain and Russia into a deep freeze, leading to tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions.

After Germany's move on Wednesday, a Russian foreign ministry representative pledged "retaliatory measures".

"A politicised approach to investigation issues is unacceptable," said the representative, adding that Germany's statements were "groundless and hostile".

The suspect in the Berlin killing was said to be riding a bicycle and was seen by witnesses afterwards throwing the bike and a stone-laden bag with a gun into a river.

He has until now been named by police only as Vadim S but

evidence revealed by German prosecutors on Wednesday indicated a possible fake identity.

"The foreign ministry has today declared two employees of the Russian embassy in Berlin as personae non gratae with immediate effect," the ministry said in a statement.

"Despite repeated high-ranking and persistent demands, Russian authorities have not cooperated sufficiently in the investigation into the murder."

Federal prosecutors in charge of intelligence cases earlier on Wednesday said they had taken over the investigation.

"There is sufficient factual evidence to suggest that the killing... was carried out either on behalf of state agencies of the Russian Federation or those of the Autonomous Chechen Republic," the prosecutor's office said in a statement.

Chechnya has been led with an iron fist since 2007 by Ramzan Kadyrov, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

- Russian ministry link -

Outlining the results of their investigation so far, the statement said Vadim had travelled from Moscow to Paris on August 17 and then on to Warsaw on August 20.

He left his hotel in Warsaw on August 22 and his movements between then and the murder were unclear, it said.

Prosecutors said his visa for travelling to Europe indicated he was a civil engineer working for a company in Saint Petersburg. But the company was not operational and a fax number for the firm was registered to another company belonging to Russia's defence ministry.

Prosecutors said the man's features matched those of a suspect in a 2013 murder in Moscow in which the suspect also approached the victim on a bicycle.

The investigative website Bellingcat on Tuesday said the suspect in both murders was 54-year-old Vadim Krasikov, who grew up in Kazakhstan when it was part of the Soviet Union before spending time in Siberia. German media said the suspicion was that Russian intelligence agencies had recruited him after the 2013 killing.

Bellingcat said the victim had fought in the second Chechen war in 1999-2002, then continued supporting Chechen separatists from his native Georgia.

He also lived for a time under an assumed identity as Tornike Kavtarashvili, according to media reports.

Bellingcat said he "recruited and armed" a volunteer unit to fight Russian troops in Georgia in 2008.

After surviving two assassination attempts in Georgia, he had spent recent years in Germany and applied for asylum.

Pep Guardiola says Manchester City would be 'crazy' to think about the title

JAMIE JACKSON BURNLEY, 04 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Pep Guardiola stated it would be "crazy" for Manchester City to think about retaining the title due to the deficit to Liverpool, which is eight points after Tuesday's win at Burnley.

The champions won 4-1 and were back to their most impressive as two Gabriel Jesus goals and one piece from Rodrigo and Riyad Mahrez were answered only by Robbie Brady.

If Liverpool beat Everton on Wednesday their lead over City will again be 11 points. Guardiola joked initially when asked about City's chances of again being champions.

"The title is over," he said. "Nobody gives us a chance. Like everyone says, we are out, we have no chance. We are thinking [only about] ourselves and the next game."

"Our team is stable and that's what we want. For the distance we are behind Liverpool it would be crazy to think about the title, we have to think about the derby [on Saturday], the other competitions we have, and take this rhythm forward. To think how many ways [we can get] close to them is a stupid way to think. We are thinking about ourselves and the next game -- [take it] game by game."

Guardiola also praised Rodri after the midfielder caught the eye. "He was incredible for his physicality, and [also for] the way he trains, how he wants to learn. It's nice to talk tactics with him. He gives his opinions about the way he plays," the manager said. "He's perfect for this league, and I think Man City bought an incredible player for the next years."

NATO unity on the line as Turkey row festers

NATO leaders sought to make a show of unity on Wednesday as they met to conclude their annual summit, but the alliance's chief admitted a festering row with Turkey was still unresolved.

What should have been a celebration of NATO's 70th birthday has been overshadowed by bitter rows about money and the future strategy of the alliance. Last year, the Western allies' get-together was derailed by US President Donald Trump's demand for greater European defence spending, but 2019's provocateur was France's Emmanuel Macron.

The French president has called for a renewed strategic dialogue with Moscow and demanded that Turkey explain itself over its assault -- backed by Syrian rebels Paris sees as extremists -- on Kurdish forces and its purchase of the Russian S-400 air defence system.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meanwhile has threatened to hold up NATO efforts to bolster the protection of the Baltic republics against Russia

unless the allies brand the Kurdish militias who defeated the IS group in Syria as "terrorists".

Amid fears Erdogan could even veto the summit declaration and with barely two hours to go before the leaders sat down for their sole roundtable, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg admitted a solution to the row with Turkey had still not been found.

"I'm confident that we will be able to find a solution to the issue related to the updating the revised defence plans," he said as he arrived for the summit at a luxury golf hotel in Watford, on the outskirts of London.

"I discussed this with President Erdogan last night and we are working on the issue as we speak."

The summit host, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, played down the dispute.

"There is far, far more that unites us than divides us, and I think one thing every leader here is absolutely resolved upon is the vital importance of NATO for our collective security," he said as he arrived.

- Palace jesters -

The leaders met in various groups in London on Tuesday before having dinner with Queen Elizabeth II in Buckingham Palace, but Macron refused to withdraw his charge that NATO strategy is "brain dead" and Trump continued to insist some capitals were "delinquent" in paying their way.

The row set up a tense last day of what NATO had hoped would be a 70th anniversary show of unity for the "most successful military alliance in history", and a demonstration that the West can stand up to challenges from Russia and China.

Adding to the dis-

jointed mood, the leaders of Britain, Canada, France and the Netherlands were caught on camera at the palace reception mocking Trump's lengthy media appearances.

After Macron's one-on-one pre-summit meeting with Trump had been preceded by a lengthy question and answer session with the media, Johnson was seen asking him: "Is that why you were late?"

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Black Widow: Why Red Guardian's Physique Is Much More Than a Fat Joke



Tuesday brought forth the first teaser for Black Widow, the much-anticipated solo film for Scarlett Johansson's Natasha Romanoff. Uniquely enough, the trailer itself managed to put to focus on several other characters from Widow's mythos — characters like Yelena Belova (Florence Pugh), Melina (Rachel Weisz), and Red Guardian (David Harbour). Despite the spy thriller aspect of the film, there were a few moments in the trailer that created that lighthearted tone the masses have come to expect from a movie produced by Marvel Studios. Then, as the trailer begins to wind down, Melina looks at Red Guardian and offers probably the harshest jab of the whole bit. "You got fat," the Oscar-winning actress says.

As you might expect, the internet quickly lit ablaze with those claiming Marvel was fat-shaming the character. Just months after we all went through a similar process with Thor's new Avengers: Endgame look, the cycle started to repeat itself. But like Bro Thor, it would seem there's a story underneath what we see on the screen.

Moments after Melina's character shoots that rough job Alexei's way, we see the character fighting Taskmaster in hand-to-hand combat. When we first see the two fighting, he's winded and disheveled, but quickly dusts himself off

and gets right back into the fight. Seconds earlier, the characters in the movie were making fun of him for putting on some weight and now, we see the character holding his own against one of the Marvel universe's best fighters, someone who can mimic his every move.

Even with the little we've seen, it would appear the movie — and Red Guardian himself — will follow a storyline not unlike that of Thor's Endgame arc; therein lies the essence of the "joke." Years after last being active, it looks like the character hops right back into action, regardless of his physical or mental state. He uncovers the suit he once loved and is thrilled when it fits — something most of us heavy people have always enjoyed, right?

He then proceeds to kick some ass, even when those close to him cast their doubts — even when they think he's too out of shape. It's a story about perseverance and shining bright in the face of adversity. It's far too early to comment on Red Guardians full arc, so maybe by the time the movie is released, this piece is null and void. But what we've seen of the character so far has been a good spotlight for body positivity and inclusion — at least in the mind of this writer.

Black Widow is set to bow May 1, 2020.

Here's the best way to stream all things Cardi B



Chances are when you think of music streaming services to stream artists like hip-hop superstar Cardi B, you think of Spotify or Apple Music. The platforms have reigned as the streaming front-runners for years now, boasting more than 150 million paid (combined) subscribers. However, several new music services have entered the playing field and proven legitimate alternatives.

Many feature exclusive content, while others feature sound quality that will convert the staunchest audiophiles. TIDAL, for example, offers premium options boasting must-see content and master-quality music streaming. Here's what the landscape looks like for hip-hop fans pondering a music streaming service.

How to stream Cardi B albums online

1) TIDAL

Launched in 2014 and acquired by Jay-Z the following year, TIDAL is the first artist-owned streaming service and claims to pay the highest royalties of

all its competitors. But it's also a smart choice or audiophiles who don't mind shelling out extra money for a higher-quality listening experience. Tidal HiFi uses FLAC-based audio files, which offer a fuller and more realistic sound than mp3 files, while Tidal Masters allow users to stream digital music in the highest possible resolution. These files have the quality of original master recordings—in other words, you're hearing the closest version of these songs as the ones that came out of the studio.

This means you can listen to Cardi B's growing catalog of hit songs in the highest quality available among the major music streaming leaders, while also getting premium content that can only be found first on TIDAL properties.

Recently, TIDAL's RapRadar podcast/show featured Cardi B with rapper and co-host T.I. discussing their roles in hip-hop and their Netflix music reality television series, Rhythm + Flow.

You'll Be Able to Watch Chapter 7 of The Mandalorian Earlier Than Expected

Christmas is coming early for Star Wars fans, and we're not talking about the highly anticipated release of Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker on Friday, Dec. 20 or all of that adorable Baby Yoda merchandise that is now available for purchase. No, we're talking about the fact that "Chapter 7" of The Mandalorian, the live-action Star Wars series currently airing weekly on Disney+, will be released two days earlier than previously expected, on Wednesday, Dec 18. This change is to accommodate an exclusive sneak peek of the Rise of Skywalker that will accompany the episode.

The log line for "Chapter 7," which is the penultimate episode of the show's first season (it has already been renewed for Season 2), reveals that an "old rival extends an invitation for The Mandalorian [Pedro Pascal] to make peace."

Disney+: Everything to know about the streaming service

Now, this isn't quite Mad Men levels of mystery, but it's still not much to go on. Who is this old rival? The image associated with the log line in Disney+'s press release features Giancarlo Esposito as Moff Gideon, a former governor under the Empire whose life changed in the wake of the events of Return of the Jedi. Might he want to make peace? Guess we'll find out on Dec. 18.

The Mandalorian (usually) airs Fridays on Disney+. Sign up for Disney+ and find out what else is coming to the new streaming service.

Drinking 'Strong Beer' Is Just As Good for Your Gut As Taking Probiotics, Study Finds

Put down your Activia. There may be a more enjoyable way to support gut health — with beer. According to a professor at Amsterdam University, strong beers can be "very, very healthy" for gut health when consumed in moderation.

Eric Classen presented his beer-based probiotic research at a conference hosted by probiotic drink maker Yakult. Classen's research revealed that strong Belgian beers like Hoegaarden, Westmalle Tripel, and Echt Kriekenbier have more probiotics than their weaker counterparts, according to The Telegraph. The difference is in the fermentation process. While most beers are only fermented once, a beer (like a strong Belgian) that goes through fermentation twice has more of a specific type of probiotic yeast that kills disease-causing bacteria in the gut.

Regular probiotics are most commonly linked to a healthy digestive tract and increased immune system support. Classen concluded that "if you drink just one of these [probiotic rich] beers every day it would be very good for you." Just don't go too far the other way as excessive drinking can damage the healthy bacteria in your gut.



FUN HOUSE! The actress, Ariel Winter wears a lacey top paired with black pants at the VIP opening night for Dumpling & Associates pop-up art exhibition in Los Angeles.

Aladdin Star Mena Massoud Says He Hasn't Had a Single Audition Since Movie Made \$1 Billion



"I want people to know that it's not always dandelions and roses when you're doing something like Aladdin," Mena Massoud says

Mena Massoud thought landing the lead role in Aladdin would elevate his career to a whole new world.

In an interview with The Daily Beast published on Tuesday, the actor, 28, said he has had a total of zero auditions since playing the titular role in the live-action Disney remake, which was released in May.

Despite Aladdin crossing the \$1 billion mark at the worldwide box office, becoming the biggest hit of Will Smith's career, Massoud

said no new opportunities have come his way.

"I'm kind of tired of staying quiet about it," he said. "I want people to know that it's not always dandelions and roses when you're doing something like Aladdin. 'He must have made millions. He must be getting all these offers.' It's none of those things. I haven't had a single audition since Aladdin came out."

He later added: "The big truth is I haven't really seen a big anything from [Aladdin]."

Massoud said that when he tells others about the lack of casting interest after his major Hollywood breakout, they don't believe him.

what do you do when the opportunity of a lifetime comes knocking at your door and you have roughly three seconds to decide if you want to get on board?

Tip: Act in time.

CANCER: Mark Twain said, "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why." You are not your limitations, Cancer. You are not the pain and suffering that has threatened to bring you to the ground. You are strength, courage and resilience. You are a Buddha in human form.

Tip: Prepare for a rebirth.

LEO: This phase of your life requires single-minded focus. Keep your eyes on the prize and refuse to waver no matter what. Your resolve will be tested, Leo, and your willingness to commit to your goals will ultimately determine the outcome.

Tip: Born to slay.

VIRGO: Packing your bags to go off into the wilderness? Plan with precision, Virgo. Leave no loopholes. This will ensure things run smoothly for you and everybody else involved. Some of you may feel like you're in the midst of chaos and confusion. You may or may not agree with everything they say.

Tip: Plan with precision.

LIBRA: We often lose out on opportunities because of our inability to embrace change. If things are easy and monotonous, life would become lacklustre. And that is why you need to shake things up once in a while, or prepare yourself for a roller coaster ride. Overheard at the cosmic conference: your life never look the same.

Tip: Here comes the big change.

SCORPIO: We all have our versions of what's right and what's wrong. But

our version of the truth may not be the universally accepted one. That's something you need to keep in mind when you look at the world around you from the eyes of judgement.

Tip: Let go of the judgements.

SAGITTARIUS: You have clarity on both your short and long term goals. It's time to get proactive about the life you want to build for yourself, Sagittarius. Let focus, structure and discipline become your power words. Adhering to a routine will help you get to the finish line much faster.

Tip: Focus on the big stuff.

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

withdraw from the noise outside.

Tip: Withdraw from the noise outside.

AQUARIUS: Count your blessings, Aquarius. What you will realise in the process of giving thanks: you live a charmed life and are supported by a crew that's constantly cheering for you. Share the love, waterbearer. The support you are receiving is not limited to your personal life.

Tip: Share the love.

PISCES: Holiday season is (almost) upon us, but you're getting into the spirit early. What this day calls for: a celebration that involves your best people. For some, this may be a time of moving into a new home. Sounds like the perfect occasion to experiment with that strawberry sangria, and serve it with your signature recipes.

Tip: You're getting into the holiday spirit early.