



HOPE WE CONTINUE TO MAKE FILMS THAT BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER: AMITABH BACHCHAN
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Welfare Dept to organize mass awareness on substance abuse

Series of activities to include Children's Parliament, Inter-Rehab football, etc

SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 21 Nov:

Social Justice & Welfare Department is organizing a series of activities to create mass awareness on substance abuse. The department has prepared awareness activities under the State Action Plans for drug demand reduction. The department has appealed to every individual to come forward to eradicate substance abuse from the State and to lead the young generation on the healthy and productive path.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Minister for Social Justice & Welfare Department, Dr MK Sharma, mentioned it was high



time for everyone to make people aware about substance abuse and to take strong action against it.

"We have not been able to get the desirable results despite our efforts against substance

abuse due to lack of awareness among the masses. So it is high time for everyone to join hands to spread awareness on substance abuse especially among target group of youths in produc-

ive age," he expressed. He appealed to all to deliver their responsibilities to create mass awareness.

The Minister mentioned that the fundamental components of this series of activities

are awareness, capacity building and intervention. He informed that the department is all set to organize a series of sports, music and other creative activities especially among the youth to encourage them in healthy and creative fields. He informed that the department has come up with an idea to conduct the Children's Parliament in the State.

The Children's Parliament is scheduled to be held on 25 Nov at Manan Kendra, which will have students from different schools. The Children's Parliament will have 23 parliamentarians from South Sikkim to run the parliament, which will be witnessed by students from different schools of the State. Dr Sharma informed that the Children's Parliament will discuss existing laws regarding substance abuse and will decide future course of action on this issue.

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Workshop on challenges & opportunities in NSS concludes



GANGTOK 21 Nov: The two-day long state-level workshop on Challenges and Opportunities in National Service Scheme [NSS] concluded here on Thursday.

The valedictory function today had the Secretary, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Kuber Bhandari, as the chief guest.

In his address, Mr Bhandari congratulated the programme officers and coordinators for working actively for the society and the people through NSS activities in their respective institutions.

He commended that the workshop had pro-

vided a wonderful opportunity to NSS programme officers and coordinators to present their activities and services delivered through their volunteers. The Secretary advised the participants to prepare an action plan for the entire year without hampering academic sessions at their respective institutions.

The workshop was organized by the Sikkim State NSS Cell in collaboration with the Department of Youth Affairs, Guwahati, and was attended by 100 programme officers and programme coordinators from differ-

ent schools, colleges and universities.

The NSS Regional Director, Guwahati, Deepak Kumar, took various sessions related to NSS activities and engaged in an interaction session. He expressed happiness with the performance of NSS Sikkim and congratulated all involved.

Sports & Youth Affairs Additional Director [NSS], Doma Tshering Bhutia, thanked the Minister, KN Lepcha, Secretary, Kuber Bhandari and NSS Regional Director for their constant support and guidance to NSS activities in the State.

SPCC opposes Citizenship Amendment Bill at AICC high level meet



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 Nov:

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee [SPCC] has expressed its opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Bill during a high level committee meeting of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) held in Guwahati on 06 Nov, 2019.

The meeting led by former Union Minister and Rajya Sabha MP, Jairam Ramesh was held to gather opinions of the north-eastern states on the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) and National Register of Citizens (NRC).

As per a press release, SPCC said that National Register of Citizens is welcome here if it ensures to safeguard the future of the original Sikkimese as guaranteed by the provisions of Article 371F of the constitution. Anything otherwise would be futile and against the conditions of the merger, it added.

The SPCC delegation had president, Bharat Basnet, working president, Dr Dipendra Gurung, treasurer, Karma Tashi Bhutia and ST cell chairman, Aita Singh Tamang.

Expressing its opposition to CAB, the SPCC delegation stated that its

outcome would adversely affect Sikkim and its people due to the very reason that the provisions of Article 371F have not been followed in letter and spirit, leaving the Sikkimese Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalis vulnerable to the threats of further influx.

The major brunt of population influx due to CAB is expected to be borne by Sikkim, due to its geographical proximity with Northern West Bengal and Bangladesh, according to SPCC.

"The recently ousted Sikkim Democratic Front party had supported CAB in the Lok Sabha and the present Sikkim Krantikari Morcha government has promised to request the central government not to implement CAB in Sikkim. This only reflects their willingness to change their stand whenever the chances to serve their vested interests arise," the SPCC delegates said.

They highlighted that unchecked influx has reduced the ethnic communities of Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali to a minority. They further accused regional political parties of using Article 371F to gain public support and

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AP ropes in IIM-Ahmedabad to check graft in govt depts

AMARAVATI, Nov 21 (PTI): In a move to curb graft, the Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday formally signed an agreement with the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad under which the latter will undertake a study to identify corruption in administration at all levels.

IIM-A Public Systems Group professor Sundaravalli Narayanaswamy and AP Anti-Corruption Bureau Director General Kumar Vishwajeet exchanged the agreement in the presence of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Under the agreement, the IIM-A will complete the study by February 2020 and sub-

mit its report, a release from the Chief Minister's office said.

IIM-A will come up with guidelines to curb corruption from the village level to the top echelons of the government.

It will study the functioning of government departments, including the newly-introduced village and (Municipal) ward secretariats, income and expenditure requirements of the administration and the lacunae in the present governance system, the release said.

A study would also be conducted on proper utilization of the existing resources, increasing the quality of governance to achieve positive results.

The IIM-A will suggest remedial measures to end corruption in various departments, the release added.

The Chief Minister said rooting out corruption would ultimately benefit the common people immensely.

The new village and ward secretariat system was intended to ensure all benefits reach eligible beneficiaries directly, leaving no room for corruption, he pointed out.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, Director General of Police Gautam Sawang, Principal Secretary Praveen Prakash and other officials were present on the occasion.

Conference-cum-International Buyer Seller Meet begins

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 Nov

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, 'APEDA' under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, jointly with the Government of Sikkim and Indian Chamber of Commerce organized the first Conference cum International Buyer Seller Meet for organic products from 21-22 Nov, 2019 in Gangtok, to showcase the strength of North East Region (NER) and Sikkim in particular, in its effort to open the export window for Sikkim organic products.

The event was inaugurated by Agriculture Minister, Loknath Sharma, in the presence of other dignitaries.

A total of 17 buyers from 13 countries viz., France, Switzerland, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal and Bangladesh, 25 major exporters and 28 FPOs/FPCs from Sikkim participated.

As per a press release, Importers/Buy-



ers spoke about their business, commodities of interest and promised to explore import of NER specific organic produce.

Exhibition stalls were set up to display a wide array of organic products viz., cherry pepper, kiwi, mandarin orange, buckwheat, tea, black pepper, large cardamom, ginger, turmeric etc. to promote the organic products of Sikkim by APEDA, Govt. of Sikkim, the FPOs/FPCs and various other agencies.

In his inaugural speech, Minister Sharma mentioned that agriculture is one of the priority sectors for the government of Sikkim with the primary focus to generate more income for farmers in the state, for which, the state government is making necessary efforts for value addition and processing and is optimistic that the buyer seller meet will create huge demand in the international market.

He also requested the international

buyers to develop long term relationship with the FPOs/FPCs and progressive farmers. Further, he stressed on the fact that robust supply chain is the need of the hour to connect the consumers with the farmers, for which 28 FPOs have been formed in Sikkim to promote organic farming and value chain development focussing on turmeric, cardamom, and ginger with clear need for developing food processing units and cold storages in the state along with effective marketing strategies and investments.

Principal Secretary, Agriculture & Horticulture Departments, R Telang, informed that the state is focussing on developing food processing industries to promote processed foods and value addition from the state, which will also reduce logistic costs and bring more profit to the farmers of the state.

Deputy General Manager, APEDA, Dr Saswati Bose, explained the role of APEDA in promoting export from the

turn to pg 02

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Pragya Thakur nominated to key committee on defence

NEW DELHI, Nov 21 (PTI): Controversial BJP MP Pragya Thakur and three-time chief minister of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir Farooq Abdullah, who is detained under the stringent PSA, have been named to the 21-member joint consultative committee of parliament on defence.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will be chairing the committee, which will comprise 12 members from Lok Sabha and 9 from Rajya Sabha.

Thakur, a first-time MP from Bhopal, is an accused in the 2008 Malegaon blasts case, and is currently out on bail. She is facing trial for multiple charges under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Minister of State for Defence Shripad Yesso Naik, BJP's J P Nadda and NCP leader Sharad Pawar are also members of the panel, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.

Abdullah was placed under house arrested on August 5 after the Centre announced the withdrawal of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, besides bifurcating it into two union territories. The Lok Sabha MP from Srinagar Parliamentary seat was slapped with the controversial Public Safety Act on September 17. Thakur's nomination to the panel has triggered a political row as Congress attacked the government, saying it was unfortunate for the country that an MP accused of "spreading terror" has been nominated as member of a defence-related committee.

"Modi has not been able to forgive her from the heart" but she has been given the responsibility on important issues such as the country's defence. That is why if there is Modi, anything is possible," tweeted Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala.

The Bombay High Court granted Thakur bail on health grounds in April 2017 after the NIA dropped charges against her under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act. The consultative committee also includes TMC's Sougata Roy and DMK's A Raja. Besides the 21 MPs, the committee also has Arjun Ram Meghwal and V Muraleedharan, both junior ministers for parliamentary affairs, as its ex-officio members.

Thakur, the Bhopal MP, has often hogged headlines for her controversial statements.

She stoked a controversy when she claimed that Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse was a "patriot". Though she apologised for the remark, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that he would never forgive Thakur for the comment. The MP was issued a show-cause notice by BJP ahead of the 2019 general election.

She previously earned the opposition ire when she claimed that then Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare was killed in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks due to her "curse".

Minister convenes coordination meeting at Lingchom-Tingda

MANGAN, 21 Nov [IPR]: Forest Minister Karma Loday Bhutia, chaired a coordination meeting with Panchayats members and head of offices under Kabi Lungchok constituency at the Community Recreation Centre at Lingchom Tingda in North Sikkim today. Mr Bhutia is also the area MLA of Kabi Lungchok.

The meeting was attended by the North Zilla Adhyaksha Namdu Lepcha, District Collector [North], Tenzing T Kaleon, Additional DC [Dev], Somnath Adhikari, HoDs from various departments, Panchayat members of the constituencies and the local public.

The objective behind the meeting was to bring efficiency, improvisation and coordination among



government officials and panchayat members of the district.

The Minister, in his address, emphasized on the importance of self-generated and sustainable employment

opportunities by the local bodies for local youth through sports and tourism.

He urged the Panchayats to create an efficient system of local governance and pursue holi-

stic development.

The Minister also stressed the need to repair the highway passing through Kabi and also invited the people to approach his office regarding any grievances and

assured them that he would pursue their demands with the higher authorities.

The North Zilla Adhyaksha expressed her delight with the fruitful co-ordination meeting held today and reminded the Panchayats that they were mediator responsible to carry grievances of the people to the competent authorities.

The DC [North] said that Sikkim has all the components to become a first-class state and that in order to achieve this, each and every citizen must enhance their skills and entrepreneurship levels with behavioural modifications.

The DC also directed the HoDs to ensure punctuality in their offices and maintain proper records.

Each Thursday, Counselling Day at DC Office

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 NOV:

First session of Each Thursday, Counselling Day was conducted by DC East, Raj Yadav and ADC East, Bharani Kumar, today.

A press release informs that in the two-hour session, both the DC and ADC cleared all doubts of students and explained career options available after 12th and graduation.

The DC also spoke about Civil Service preparation, smart study, how to read, time management, importance of civil service preparation, etc.

Anyone who wants to attend the counselling on Thursday in the DC office can register themselves by calling 03592-284444 & 7477411494/9434103133.

Minister launches MIS for Industries

GANGTOK, 21 Nov (IPR):

Minister for Commerce & Industries, Government of Sikkim, BS Panth launched the Management Information System (MIS) for industries of Sikkim at Tashiling Secretariat today. Additional Chief Secretary, Commerce & Industries Department, Dr. Thomas Chandy was also present on the occasion.

The MIS will provide a platform for all industrial units to record their details on various aspects of industrial operations on a regular basis.

On the occasion, Minister, Mr Panth stated that this was a new initiative of the State Government to make it easier for departments to monitor the activities of the industrial units. He said that this will also make it easier for the units to provide information required by government departments as they don't need to visit each and every department to convey information.

Additional Chief Secretary, Dr Thomas Chandy, while thanking the Government for its support to the industrial sector said that this new platform would enable the various departments like Labour, DESME, Health to access and share information easily and also analyse the data relating to industrial activities historically in digital mode. He stated that the application would be up-scaled subsequently to bring more and more functions into its ambit.

The MIS will be accessible to all industrial units including micro, small and medium industries as well as large industries. The Commerce & Industries Department will provide log-ins to all units and they would be able to log-in and feed information regularly on the system. The analysed data will also be put in the public domain, it was informed.

Coordination meeting on Child Protection at Rongli

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 NOV:

Coordination meeting with stakeholders of Rongli Sub Division on Child Protection was held at Mangal Deep Resort in Rongli on 20 Nov. The meeting was chaired by Sub Divisional Magistrate, Rongli, PR Dulal and was conducted by Youth Development Society of Sikkim (YODESS) Childline Service 1098, Rongli Subcenter.

The programme was attended by Gram Panchayat of different Gram Panchayat Units, SDM Rongli, officers of Education Department, Rongli and Rhenock Police In-charge, Medical Officers of Rongli PHC and Rhenock CHC, ICDS supervisors, School's head, media, representatives of Drivers Association with other NGO, Yodess and Child line team.

In his welcome note, Executive Secretary, Mani Kumar Gurung, highlighted the objectives of the meeting. Manager of YODESS, BK Sunar presented a report on the activities carried out by YODESS and Child Line.

YODESS felicitated Rhenock-based journalist, Bhanu Raj Thapa for being conferred with the Grameen Patra-karita Puraskar-2019 by Press Club of Sikkim on National Press Day. The programme concluded with the vote of thanks by Arishna Rai, team member Childline.

Basic Course in Japanese to start in West Sikkim



GVALSHING, 21 Nov (IPR):

District Collector, West Sikkim, is organizing a 6-month basic course in 'Speaking and Learning Japanese Language' for educated, unemployed youth of Sikkim. The main objective of the course is to equip the candidates with basic skill of Japanese language to enable the candidates to apply for employment and study prospects in Japan in the near future.

Chief Minister, PS Tamang (Golay) has expressed his vision of skilling the youth and making them ready for employment in developed countries like Singapore, Japan. South Korea and other advanced countries.

This course is being conducted to take forward the vision of the Chief Minister.

The application forms along with complete bio data of the candidates have to be sent to the District Collector, West Sikkim latest by 08 Dec,

2019 and the course will start at Kyonsa, Gyalshing from 17 Dec onwards.

The priority will be given to candidates who are graduates, nurses, ITI pass and technically qualified as the employment opportunities are brighter. The candidates from West District Sikkim will be given priority due to it being an Aspirational district.

The course will be conducted by two faculty members, Sonam Bhutia and Haruko Niwa. Mr Niwa is from Tokyo Japan and has completed her education from Musashino Arts University, Tokyo.

Japan is a lucrative employment destination due to its aging population and strong demand for skilled manpower. There is strong cultural affinity between Japan and Sikkim. The people of Sikkim are culturally hospitable and share similar features with the Japanese population.

SPCC opposes...

at the same time, violating and diluting its provisions.

The meeting was attended by former union minister Jitender Singh, Member of Parliament and AICC Secretary Manickam Tagore, senior lawyer Mohamad Ali Khan and AICC General Secretary and former union minister Mukul Wasnik. The team met with Pradesh Congress office bearers and party workers from all the north-eastern states.

Welfare Dept...

This will be followed by inter-rehab centre football tournament from 28 Nov to 03 Dec at Paljor Stadium. The department is also organizing a flash mob at MG Marg on 30 Nov and other creative activities to create awareness.

The Minister informed that the department has decided to organize these activities frequently by involving different sections of the society until the desirable results are attained. He stated that the department has been working to remove stigma by changing the mindset of the people.

Likewise, Secretary to Social Justice & Welfare Department, Dhan Jyoti Mukhia mentioned that the department has prepared the State Action Plans to take the issue of substance abuse seriously and for drug demand reduction. She mentioned that the department is engaging NGOs, students, rehab centres and other sections of the society to create mass awareness.

Conference...

North Eastern region (NER), APEDA's role in the National Programme on the Organic Production (NPOP) and initiatives taken by APED including organizing the national and International conferences and B2B meetings to promote exports from India.

Director, ICC, Madhuparna Bhowmick, added that the conference cum international buyer seller meet will bring the opportunity to the traditional growers of spices, kiwis, cardamom and other crops across Sikkim to get their chance to interact face-to-face with the international buyers and country-wide array of exporters.

The inauguration ended with vote of thanks by Principal Director, Agriculture, Govt of Sikkim, MK Pradhan.

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GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

For details contact: 9083826462

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

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

For more details: 9083826462 /9832556698

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

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

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Roadside just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

Archery and boxing squads leave for National School Games



GANGTOK, 21 Nov (IPR):

The fourth and fifth batches of Sikkim teams for national-level competitions left for the National School Games today. The Archery U-17 and Boxing U-14 teams received a warm send off from Paljor Stadium today.

The teams were selected from the recently-held state-level Annu-

al School Sports Competitions at Gangtok.

The U-17 archery team [girls and boys] comprises of Arvind W Chettri, Dinesh Rai, Prayash Gurung, Arjun Hingmang, Thupden R Lepcha, Pempa Doma Sherpa, Barsa Rai, Susmita Tamang and Khushboo Gurung and has Dawa J Lepcha as coach and Diki Dolma Lepcha as man-

ager. Their competitions begin on 24 Nov at Kadam, Andhra Pradesh. The boxers are Krishna Rai, Tshering D Sherpa, Ayush Mangar and Jayant Dagar, and their contest begins 25 Nov at Karnal in Haryana. Anoj K Pradhan is accompanying the team as coach and Pravin Limboo is the manager.

Arpan Lepcha wis the Che-de-Misson, it is informed, Secretary, Department of Sports & Youth Affairs and Director [Sports] offered khadas and extended best wishes to the team today.

Pritam Rai returns after winning North East Idol 2019

REBYNA RANA

GANGTOK, 21 Nov:

Pritam Rai, 26 years, has returned home after winning the North East Idol 2019, the grand finale of which was held on 16 Nov.

Speaking at a press conference here today at the Press Club of Sikkim, his mentor and renowned singer, Remanti Rai said Pritam Rai won the title due to his hard work and talent which impressed the judges and also attracted a large number of votes from the contest followers.

Pritam is from Rongli and is studying B.Ed in Namchi. He was not trained in singing but received support from his parents and was mentored by Remanti Rai.

It was informed that Pritam edged past other competitors due to his



versatility when he sang 'Breathless' the famous and difficult song by Shanker Mahadevan.

After winning the North East Idol 2019, Pritam has landed a 3-year contract with Amzi Arts Private Ltd, an organisation based in Arunachal Pradesh and organizers of the contest. He also received Rs. 2 lakh cash prize and a Santro car. Pritam drove the prize all the way from Arunachal Pradesh to Gangtok.

"We have high hopes that Pritam will take this legacy forward and encourage the youth of

Sikkim. We have faith in him," said Ms Remanti to media persons.

Pritam Rai thanked voters and supporters for helping him win the contest.

"The journey was good, far beyond my expectations because the love and hospitality which I got from the jury and people has left me speechless. I got to learn a lot. I want to thank all the voters from both [outside and inside] state and hope to keep receiving love and support from them," he said.

Pritam added that his father and Remanti Rai are his inspirations.



RANKA RECEIVES HOMEOPATHIC HEALTH CAMP: A health check-up camp which included an awareness program was organized at Rey Mindu GPU here at Ranka today. Homeopathic physician, Dr VK Prasad attended to the patients at the camp which was supported by Governor Ganga Prasad, SBL Homeopathic Medicine Company and Social Justice Empowerment and Welfare Dept, a press release informs.

Sikkim Philatelists bag 5 medals at WEBPEX- 2019

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 Nov:

Sikkim won two silver and three bronze medals at Ekla Cholo Re 2019, West Bengal State Philatelic exhibition held at Kolkata. The philatelic exhibition was held at the Academy of Fine Arts, Maidan, Kolkata from 16-22 Nov, a press release informs.

Roshan Prasad and Sishir Pradhan won silver for their exhibits 'The Story of Cricket' and 'The World of Football'. Ganesh Kumar Pradhan, Sunita Gurung and Tanishka Pradhan won three bronze medals for their exhibits, Philatelic Exhibition of India, Special Cover Issued in Sikkim and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Seven philatelists from Sikkim Philatelic and Numismatic Society [SPNS] had participated in the exhibition and five of them won medals which is a big achievement for Sikkim, says Secretary SPNS, Shital Pradhan.

This time we had three new entries and it is encouraging all three brought laurels to the state, he added.

Roshan Prasad and Sishir Pradhan had submitted five frames for the exhibition while rest of the philatelists had displayed single frame exhibits.

Minister visits Veterinary Centres at Tumin Dhanbari

TUMIN DHANBARI, 21 Nov (IPR): Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Minister, Lok Nath Sharma visited Veterinary Stockman Centre running from a rented house at Tumin Dhanbari, this evening.

He took stock of the availability of medicines, manpower and directed staff to make veterinary services available round the clock. He also directed them to report to the higher authority, immediately, in case of any shortage in requirements.

Thereafter, he visited another Stockman Centre which was in a dilapidated state before its inauguration and directed departmental official to submit estimate report for repairs and necessary maintenance work so that the rented Stockman Centre can be shifted to its own infrastructure.

Later, the Minister visited rented VLW centre at Tumin Dhanbari and took details of the Stock Register and minutely checked issue of facilities to the beneficiaries.

Further, he encouraged VLW along with the field workers to submit authentic field based report and to be more proactive to increase productivity of the farmers in their interest. He also advised officials to find out required land for departmental infrastructure and submit estimate report for furtherance of action.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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ABYF Baptist Church and EPCS-Namchi reach quarterfinals of United Cup



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 Nov:

ABYF Baptist Church and EPCS Namchi have made it to the quarter-final round of the ongoing Sikkim United Cup 2019.

In a pre-quarter final match played on Thursday at Paljor Stadium, ABYF outplayed IEC-Sakyong 3-0 with Ajay Subba of ABYF Baptist Church

adjudged the Man of the Match for his hat-trick.

The next match was more keenly contested and saw EPCS Namchi defeat Wok XI 2-1 and reach the quarterfinals. Wok XI goalkeeper, Nimdup Lepcha, was adjudged the Man of the Match.

Likewise, EPCS Sang edged past Word of Life Church, Lingding, 3-2 to

enter the pre quarter-final round of the tournament. Kunal Tamang of Word of Life Church was the Man of the Match.

On Friday, the first match will be played between HPC-Darjeeling and Mazzaroth at 1pm, followed the match between Shiloh Church, Lower Martam, and United Christian at 2:30pm.

Awareness program for Adolescent Girls held at Sichey school



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 Nov:

Awareness program for Adolescent Girls under Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAGs) was organised by CDPO, Urban Project Gangtok, Social Justice and Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim at Sichey Senior Secondary School today.

A press release informs that the scheme is under Ministry of Women and Child Development which is for girl

children under the age of 11-16 years of age.

CDPO, Hissey Ongmu Lepcha gave a brief introduction on the importance of this scheme. She further elaborated on the harmful effects of junk food on children in this age of adolescence.

Joint Director, Nutrition, Bharati Pradhan, highlighted issues like anemia and requested the children to have proper and balanced diet daily and psychological

effect of the same.

HPEO, Health department, Lhamu Bhutia, spoke on the basic health issues pertaining to the girls of such age. Amrit Sharma highlighted on POCSO (Amendment Act, 2019) and other issues relating to child abuse and cybercrime.

In the program, the Anganwadi worker spoke on menstrual hygiene and problems related to adolescent girls. Hygiene kits were also distributed to the girls.

National Tobacco Control coordination committee meets

GANGTOK, 20 Nov (IPR):

A State Level Coordination Committee meeting of National Tobacco Control Programme was held at the Conference Hall, Tashiling Secretariat, Gangtok, today. Chief Secretary, S.C. Gupta, chaired the meeting which was attended by Secretary, Rural Development Department, C.S. Rao, Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, K. Sreenivasulu, District Collector, Raj Yadav, along with the representatives from various line Departments.

In the meeting, the Chief Secretary stressed on making use of different media such as social media and print media for creating awareness among the masses for effective implementation of N.T.C.P. He directed the department to make short catchy videos, posters and banners.

The Chief Secretary directed the District Collector (East) to conduct a weeklong workshop for Nodal Officers of the different departments for sensitization on various aspects of N.T.C.P.

In the meeting, Dr. P. M. Pradhan, Mission Director, National Health Mission gave the welcome speech. It was followed by a PowerPoint presentation on National Tobacco Control programme by Dr. Baroon Subba, Additional Director cum Nodal Officer, N.T.C.P. The meeting concluded with the vote of thanks by T. Targain, Joint Director, Sanitation Cell.

Temi Tea Mr Sikkim finalist Anil Jeremy Rai

NITESH R PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 21 Nov:

A student, Anil Jeremy Rai, is a guitar-artist by heart. He has a deep interest in modelling which has made him take part in projects outside Sikkim. This year he feels he has a good chance to win the coveted Temi Tea Mr Sikkim 2019 Manhunt.

Why Mr. Sikkim Manhunt?

Mr Sikkim Manhunt is a platform that will change the negative perspective of the glamour world. As we all know that there were very few or almost rare opportunities for men who are into fashion and this glamour world but through these Manhunt Pageant opportunities are increasing rapidly in our state. I feel like I can make my passion and dream come true and make my way to the top in this glamour world through this platform.

What are the qualities that make you stand out in this crowd?

I am an enthusiastic person and I never quit. I am talented and confident. I am passionate about my dreams. The quote "Nothing is Impossible", pushes me more to do things that are impossible.

What if you win or lose this competition?

If I win this competition I will give my 100% in making my dreams come true in this field. I will continue this as my fulltime career and I aspire to be an inspiration to others who wants to pursue this field.

But if I lose this competition I will work hard more with dedication. I will be consistently persistent and persistently consistent.

Define yourself.

I am a humble family guy and a loving person. The best thing I can boast about is I believe in the Almighty Living God. I like to help people who are in need and are suffering. I like to console those who are struggling with de-

pression and facing challenges in their lives with words of encouragement and financially (though I'm not financially free). Lastly, I believe in taking all positive and negative things in life positively and turning them into valuable knowledge and sharing them with others.

What is the one thing that can unite humanity?


The one thing that can unite humanity is "Love" because sharing is loving and sharing unconditional love means receiving unconditional love in



return. Love never fails and I would like to quote a verse, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13:13.

Any appeal/message.

My message to all those out there: Be yourself and let nothing bring you down because you were fearfully and wonderfully made. You are the best version of yourself. Believe in yourself and push towards your dreams and goals.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
TASHILING, GANGTOK- 737103

No. GOS/TECHED/2001/V(2) Pt.file-IV/1052 Dated: 14/11/2019

NOTICE

The Directorate of Technical Education, Education Department, Government of Sikkim invites applications in the prescribed format from local eligible candidates for filling up of posts of Lecturers at Advanced Technical Training Centre (ATTC), Bardang, East Sikkim and Centre for Computers and Communication Technology (CCCT), Chisopani, South Sikkim as indicated below:-

Sl. No.	Post	Vacancy	Minimum Essential Qualification (as per AICTE norms)	Pay Scale (in Rs.)	Remarks
Advanced Technical Training Centre (ATTC), Bardang, East Sikkim					
1.	Lecturer, Civil Engineering	02	B.Tech in Civil Engineering with First Class or equivalent from AICTE recognized University.	Level - 9A Entry pay 56,100/-	Written Test on Civil Engineering of 85 Marks and Viva Voce for 15 marks.
2.	Lecturer (Chemistry)	01	Master's Degree in Chemistry with first class or equivalent at Bachelors or Masters Level from UGC recognized University. Candidate must have Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics at Bachelor's level.	Level - 9A Entry pay 56,100/-	Written Test on relevant subject of 85 Marks and Viva Voce for 15 marks.
Centre for Computers and Communication Technology (CCCT), Chisopani, South Sikkim.					
3.	Lecturer, Computer Science	01	B.Tech/B.E. Degree in Computer Engineering /Computer Science & Engineering with First Class from AICTE recognized University.	Level - 9A Entry pay 56,100/-	Written Test on relevant subject of 85 Marks and Viva Voce for 15 marks.
4.	Lecturer, Mathematics	01 (on Contractual/ Adhoc)	M.Sc in Mathematics with First Class from UGC recognized University. Candidates must have Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics at Bachelor's level.	30000/- consolidated (all inclusive)	Written Test on relevant subject of 85 Marks and Viva Voce for 15 marks.

Please note: (In case where no class/ division is awarded minimum of 60% marks in aggregate shall be considered equivalent to first class/division. If a grade point system is adopted the CGPA will be converted into equivalent marks as per AICTE norms.

*Contractual /Adhoc appointment for six month as replacement faculty, no extension will be given after expiry.

Other requirements:

- Candidates must be in possession of either Sikkim Subject Certificate or Certificate of Identification issued by the competent authority.
- Candidates should be fluent in English with good communication skills and sound temperament.
- Age limit as per Government of Sikkim norms.
- No Objection Certificate from the present employer, if employed will be required.

Terms and Conditions:

- Selection of candidates will be made on the basis of written test and viva voice for the above posts.
- Candidates selected for the posts will be initially offered 01 (one) year contract term with consolidated pay.
- Contractual Consolidated pay per month will be Rs.30,000/- (Thirty thousand only) all inclusive.
- The pay scale as mentioned will be implemented after the completion of the contract term and will be based on work performance and recommendation of the regularization committee of the Institute.
- On successful completion of the contract period the candidate will be under probation of 2 years and will be regularized only on successful completion of the probation based upon the recommendation of the regularization committee.

Interested candidates may download the form available in the webportal www.sikkimhrdd.org of Education Department, Government of Sikkim from 20/11/2019. The filled in application form may be submitted at the Directorate of Technical Education, Education Department, Tashiling, Gangtok, East Sikkim or ATTC, Bardang, East Sikkim or CCCT, Chisopani, South Sikkim with a bank draft of Rs.500/- drawn in favour of Director, Technical Education, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok alongwith the requisite documents.

Last Date of submission of application : 2nd December 2019.

Syllabus will be made available in the webportal www.sikkimhrdd.org.

A common written test for the above posts will be held as per the details given below:-

Date of written test	9/12/2019
Time	10:30 AM
Venue	ATTC, Bardang, East Sikkim

After scrutiny of documents, admit cards of the eligible candidates will be sent through email in the id provided in the application form.

The Directorate of Technical Education, Education Department reserves all rights to the selection procedure and appointments.










Director
Technical Education
Education Department, Govt. of Sikkim.

R.O. No. 256/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20
Date: 15.11.2019

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

presents
(OUR VERSION OF)
SHAKESPEARE'S

THE TEMPEST

DATE: 26TH NOVEMBER, 2019

TIME: 3PM ONWARDS

VENUE: MANAN KENDRA AUDITORIUM

Unnoticed Worries

Social concerns remain real and immediate

Another year is drawing to a close and although there was not much that happened by way of natural calamities and a lot transpired by way of political realignments, social concerns remained entrenched as the real problem areas of Sikkim. As one looks back at the year past, one cannot help but realize that not enough is being done to address social challenges which were amplified through 2019.

Reports about suicides come so often that this newspaper has decided not to carry them as individual news items anymore for fear of making the suicidal among the Sikkimese think it to be “normal”, making their decision to hang the noose that much easier. The frequency of news-reports about suicides had also become so regular that the society at large appears to have grown inured to it. Ditto for substance abuse and the crackdown on substances of abuse. Apparently, these don’t trigger deeper enquiries any more, and only sometimes fuel an online rant. Sexual offences also continue to haunt, and of late, worryingly, there has been a noticeable increase in this horror visiting minors, in most cases at places that we are supposed to secure for them – their homes and our schools.

The incidents were spread across Sikkim, drug busts, suicides and sexual offences occurring in West and South Sikkim as frequently as they do in East or North Sikkim. By now, it is clear to all in Sikkim that crimes, all crimes including those against children, are not specific to any area or profile and have infiltrated every strata of society and region. It is a worrying scenario, but what is even more disturbing is the continuing absence of earnest social or governmental involvement in addressing these situations. At the end of another eventful year, it needs to be admitted that the Sikkimese society has failed itself miserably.

Addiction continues to convert more people at still younger ages, corruption refuses to contain itself and suicide remains an option that many continue to take. Much as some would want us to believe, these are not problems erupting out of poor governance, they are ills that a poor social fabric foments. There have been few, very few, instances where people have come together to further a collective cause, the manner in which individuals and their organisations came together for earthquake relief being one such case in point. But the wave of humanity appears to have crested in the wake of the earthquake and then collapsed back to the routine. There have been too many indications of a disinterested society more comfortable at sweeping its responsibilities under the carpet than addressing issues and solving them. Violence against minors and the disturbing number of suicides are too obviously disturbing and frequent to escape notice any more, and yet, with alarming facility, these distressing signals remain ignored.

The lethargy one often associates with the bureaucracy, it stands proven, is as acute among the people who should make up the civil society and Sikkim remains the poorer for it. Every initiative that should have come from the people has come from the government instead. This does not always work, because if the people themselves are not motivated enough or concerned enough, then mere legislations are of little help. The present times are times of change, rapid change, and unless the society remains involved in this change, monitoring and moulding it, it will soon realise that they have mutated into something ugly when they could have metamorphosed into something much prettier. With our vacuity, we also cripple the chances of an improved future for the coming generations. That will be a guilt difficult to live down...

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

So You Want to be an Autocrat? Here's the 10-Point Checklist

Shelley Inglis

theconversation.com

Democracy is in trouble, despite popular uprisings and dynamic social movements in Lebanon, Hong Kong and across Europe and Latin America.

Scholars say countries across the globe are experiencing a rise in autocratic rule, with declines in democratic ideals and practice. Autocratic rule – also known as authoritarianism – is when one leader or political party exercises complete power to govern a country and its people.

The year 2008 was when democracy peaked, according to a prominent democracy advocacy group, Freedom House. That’s when the world had the highest percentage ever of fully “free countries,” at 46.1%. That declined to 44.1% in 2018, though full or partial democracy is still the most common form of governance.

Definitions of democracy vary. All citizens in a democracy have the ability to vote in elections, which should be free and fair. Independent media, freedom of speech and assembly and the rule of law feature in most contemporary perceptions of democracy.

Democratic declines are most notable in the regions with the world’s largest concentration of democracies. That includes Europe, North America and Latin America.

One example: The United States in 2018 was rated a “flawed democracy,” dropping from 21st to 25th place among 167 countries and territories.

In the old days, autocrats often came to or retained power through military coups and violent crackdowns. Now the shift from democracy to autocracy is slower and less obvious. While control over security forces remains essential in the autocratic playbook, overt strong-arm tactics aren’t.

TOP 10 LIST

I spent more than 15 years with the United Nations, where I advised governments and democracy advocates on how to strengthen the rule of law, human rights and democratic governance. I’m now a scholar of international law.

I’ve learned that today’s leaders with authoritarian tendencies aren’t just interested in using brute force to rise to power.

They are smarter, more resilient and can adjust their methods to take account of new developments, like modern technologies and a globalized economy. Here are some of the newest tactics used by would-be authoritarians:

1. EXTEND EXECUTIVE POWER

The mainstay of today’s authoritarianism is strengthening your power while simultaneously weakening government institutions, such as parliaments and judiciaries, that provide checks and balances.

The key is to use legal means that ultimately give democratic legitimacy to the power grab. Extreme forms of this include abolishing presidential term limits, which was done in China; and regressive constitutional reforms to expand presidential power, like in Turkey.

2. REPRESS DISSENT AND CITIZEN EFFORTS TO HOLD GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE

Restrictions on funding and other bureaucratic limitations silence the ability of the people to hold accountable those in power. More than 50 countries have passed laws that stifle citizen groups. Democracies have also jumped on this bandwagon. Limitations on permits for public protest, de-

tention of protesters and excessive use of force to break up demonstrations are frequently used tools.

3. CAPTURE ELITE SUPPORT AND, WHEN NEEDED, DEMONIZE THEM TOO

Economic growth and prosperity are critical to retaining elite or oligarchical support for autocratic leaders. Whether through state-owned businesses, media conglomerates or more sophisticated connections between governments and free-market corporations, money and politics, translated into government favors for the rich, can be a toxic mix for democracy.

Ironically, popular distaste with elite corrup-



tion is so high that modern autocratic populists, such as President Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, have even risen to power on anti-corruption promises.

4. APPEAL TO POPULISM AND NATIONALISM

Most would-be autocratic leaders today exploit existing tensions within complex societies in order to solidify their support. In many places, fears of migrants and refugees have fueled resurgent nationalism, driving policies like U.K.’s Brexit. In India, religiously based nationalism has maintained the power of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Blaming external forces for a country’s problems, such as Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán’s demonization of George Soros, a Hungarian-born philanthropist who supports democracy-building, is also common.

5. CONTROL INFORMATION AT HOME; MISINFORM ABROAD

While propaganda and state-owned media is not new, control of modern technology and information has become a key battleground.

China has developed sophisticated technologies to censor and prevent the circulation of unwanted information and to track individuals in society.

Russia is at the vanguard of state media control at home while generating misinformation abroad. Many smaller countries have used internet blackouts to block organizing and communicating by social movements.

6. CRIPPLE THE OPPOSITION

Damaging the opposition parties, while not completely destroying them, is now essential. Infiltrating parties, co-opting members and using pure scare tactics are some possible actions in the autocrat’s playbook. This serves the purpose of retaining a target for pseudo-political competition while also stymieing the potential for new, more democratic forces to gain traction.

7. COVERT ELECTION MANIPULATION

Mostly gone are the days of vote-rigging and vote-buying as a path to power. Would-be autocrats

have found cleverer ways to tilt the playing field in their favor. These new tactics include hampering media access, gerrymandering, changing election and voter eligibility rules and placing allies on electoral commissions.

8. PLAY THE EMERGENCY CARD

Some autocratic leaders continue to use traditional strong-arm tactics, like declaring states of emergency, to enable further repression.

Since 2001, using the threat of terrorism or organized crime has played well for furthering autocratic rule. President Rodrigo Duterte’s drug war, which seems to have resulted in thousands dead in the Philippines, is one illustration.

Since an attempted coup in 2016 up until 2018, for example, Turkey was under a state of emergency which enabled President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to jail and persecute academics, government officials, media and human rights advocates.

9. EXTEND YOUR MODEL AND INFLUENCE

Today’s autocratic rulers are not keeping to themselves. Using the international stage and their growing economic prowess, countries like China are spreading their influence through funding initiatives such as the Belt and Road to build infrastructure across Asia to Europe. They’re hiring professional consultants to advise and lobby foreign capitals for policies that reinforce their power.

10. LEARN AND SHARE

Characterized as “autocratic learning” by scholars, national authorities from Russia, China, Iran, Venezuela, Belarus, Syria and other places are developing and exchanging models for containing threats of social movements and the so-called “color revolutions.”

International meetings and intergovernmental clubs can provide a platform for exchange. For example, Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia has successfully rallied neighbor governments to help oppress opposition to his rule using the regional organization ASEAN. Government officials in Malaysia recently blocked Cambodian opposition members from returning to their country via Malaysia.

DIRECTION UNKNOWN

Some experts claim the world is at a “tipping point” where decreasing faith in democracy will drive the dominance of autocracy globally.

The social movements of today inspire some hope that civil society – a key ingredient for democracy – though under pressure, is fighting the trend.

Nonetheless, strengthening democracy across the globe will prove impossible if even the most established democracies today fall prey to the tactics of would-be autocrats.

[the writer is Executive Director, University of Dayton Human Rights Center, University of Dayton]

Mobile access won't fix the digital divide. Fixed-line is needed too

RYAN HAWTHORNE &
LUKASZ GRZYBOWSKI
theconversation.com

Mobile services have had an important and positive impact on developing countries where they are the main means of connecting to the internet. However, mobile services have capacity constraints. They use limited radio frequency spectrum, which means that mobile data typically has usage limits. They also have high prices per unit (per gigabyte), which results in lower use per connection.

Fixed-line broadband, on the other hand, has significantly lower prices per unit. It is often offered on an uncapped or unlimited basis, and therefore has higher usage per connection. This enables a wider range of services. Fixed lines are expensive to roll out, but these costs are falling.

So a question arises: is mobile enough for developing countries like South Africa?

It’s an important question because there is a substantial “digital divide” between countries, as well as within countries like South Africa. This difference in access to digital technology also exists between households that have access to the internet at home, and those that do not.

In a recent paper we looked at the question of substitution between fixed and mobile broadband services. Our results show that having a computer and access to an internet connection at work or school are at least as important in driving

broadband penetration as reducing mobile data prices.

Our findings suggest that relying solely on mobile networks to bridge the “digital divide” is not enough. Policymakers and regulators should consider ways of expanding access to computers and internet at work and schools, together with expanding access to fixed-line broadband.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Overall, only 10% of households in South Africa report having access to the internet at home. This compares to almost 50% across developing countries. But even the low average internet access in South Africa masks important regional disparities.

In the Western Cape, for example, 26% of households have internet access at home, compared to 2% in Limpopo. This suggests that access to the internet in South Africa is very low overall, and highly skewed, reflecting the extreme levels of inequality.

In our paper, we show that access to the means of using the internet, such as owning a computer, plays an important role in household choices of fixed or mobile data services. Where a household has a computer, fixed and mobile are less likely to be substitutes.

Our research shows that if fixed-line coverage was expanded to the entire population and computers were available to all, fixed-line broadband penetration would increase significantly by 9.6 percentage points, while mobile broadband penetration would increase by half of a percentage point.

This is consistent with the pos-

itive relationship we observe between having a computer and home internet access across countries (see Figure 2).

Our results also corroborate survey evidence in South Africa and other countries that identifies the high cost or lack of equipment, such as computers, as being a barrier to using the internet at home. The price of subscribing to a service plays less of a role.

We also show that when consumers access the internet at work or school they are less likely to see fixed and mobile data services as substitutes. Having an internet connection at work or school would add an additional 5.7 percentage points to fixed-line broadband penetration, and 3 percentage points to mobile broadband penetration. This is over and above the effect of expanding fixed-line coverage and providing households with computers.

This may be due to “learning effects” where users of high-speed internet at work and school learn applications for high-speed internet at home.

In addition, being employed, and being self-employed in particular, makes fixed and mobile data services weaker substitutes. Unemployment in South Africa is currently 38.5%. At higher levels of employment and particularly self-employment, more fixed-line services will be needed.

This is important in view of a recent study. The study shows that the expansion of high-speed internet access in African countries, including

South Africa, results not only in greater employment but also in greater productivity.

IMPLICATIONS

These results have several implications for regulators and policymakers in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Regulators have so far focused largely on interventions in respect of mobile data services. But our findings suggest that this is not enough to expand access to broadband.

Firstly, it is important to stimulate demand for broadband services. This can be done by providing the tools, such as computers, for using such services. Furthermore, our results suggest that ensuring individuals have access to the internet at work and educational facilities would likely increase broadband adoption.

Secondly, our findings show that, for large groups of consumers, fixed and mobile complement one another. This means that greater fixed-line broadband adoption leads to greater mobile data adoption, and vice versa. The number of consumers that see fixed and mobile data as complements is greater at higher levels of employment and self-employment. It is also higher among those who have more access to computers and greater connectivity at work and at schools.

This suggests that relying solely on mobile networks to bridge the digital divide is not enough.

[Ryan Hawthorne is Economist, University of Cape Town; Lukasz Grzybowski is Associate Professor, University of Cape Town]

PM should talk to experts, pol parties to tide over economic crisis: Mamata

MURSHIDABAD (WB), Nov 21 (PTI): Opposing the Centre's decision to hive off and disinvest shares in several PSUs, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should talk to experts and all political parties to tide over the economic crisis.

She asserted that shoring up funds by selling off government stake in central public sector firms (CPSUs) could only provide temporary respite.

"The Centre should look for a permanent solution instead of advocating stopgap measures. Unless there is economic stability, such measures cannot be the solution," Banerjee told newsmen here.

While an elected government should be allowed to work independently, "it should also seek opinion of all other parties" on issues affecting the country, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo noted.

"I feel the prime minister should talk to experts in the country and hold an all-party meeting to overcome the crisis,"



she added. In the biggest privatisation drive ever, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved sale of government's stake in blue-chip oil firm BPCL, shipping firm Shipping Corporation of India and cargo mover Concor, and decided to cut shareholding in select public sector firms below 51 per cent to boost revenue collections that have been hit by the slowing economy.

Banerjee said partic-

ipation of private partners in PPP model could be allowed in specific areas as was done by her during her tenure as the railway minister. Selling off companies owned by the central government was not a wise decision, she insisted.

"If the Centre sells off everything, what will be there with the government?" she asked.

Questioning the Centre's decision to amalgamate several PSU

banks, the chief minister said the merger of United Bank of India with two other banks would pose problems for the state government.

"Several schemes of our government run through banks, so if UBI's headquarters is shifted out of the state, the future of these schemes might be in question," she said.

The TMC boss claimed that the government was selling off

national carrier Air India and key units in defence production and telecom sector in order to raise funds.

Banerjee said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should talk to all political parties to find ways to generate employment in the interest of people.

Iterating her criticism of the Centre's decision to demonetise Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 banknotes in 2016, she said, "India is a country where cashless society cannot be effective; people do not have money."

Banerjee asserted that disinvestment of government shares in CPSUs would not create jobs. Earlier, too, the Centre had taken the disinvestment route, but the measure failed to boost the economy, the chief minister claimed.

"The central government has said that the current disinvestment plan announced on Wednesday will fetch anywhere between Rs 1.76 to Rs 1.80 lakh crore, but this would not rejuvenate the economy in the long term," she added.

Hasina and Mamata to hold meeting on the sidelines of Indo-Bangla cricket match

KOLKATA, Nov 21 (PTI): Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will hold a brief one on one meeting on the sidelines of the India-Bangladesh cricket test match here on Friday.

Banerjee told reporters in the city on Thursday that there will be a courtesy meeting between Hasina and her at 6 PM at the hotel where the Bangladesh premier will be staying.

"Tomorrow Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will be coming to the city to watch the day and night India-Bangladesh cricket test match. Apart from being present at the grounds during the inauguration and felicitation programme, we (Hasina and herself) will also have a one on one courtsey meeting at 6 PM tomorrow," Banerjee said.

According to sources in the Bangladesh Prime Minister's office, both the leaders will be present during the match and the felicitation ceremony.

Hasina and Banerjee share a very cordial relation and have mutual respect for each other, the sources said.

The Bangladesh premier will watch the day and night cricket test match between India and Bangladesh in Kolkata on Friday, the ministry of external affairs had said on Thursday.

The agenda of the meeting was not disclosed neither by the CMO nor by the Bangladesh Prime Minister's office. It is also not known whether the issue of Teesta water agreement that both New Delhi and Dhaka are keen to seal since September 2011, will be discussed by the two leaders.

Banerjee, who is a

key stakeholder in the issue as she is at the helm in West Bengal, has been opposed to the agreement as she maintains that it will affect the people of the state.

The Teesta water agreement was to be signed during the then prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh in September 2011. It was postponed due to objections raised by Banerjee, who had also dropped out of the prime ministerial delegation.

Earlier this month Bangladesh Foreign minister, A K Abdul Momem during his visit to the city had expressed the hope that the issue will be resolved when Hasina meets Banerjee during the cricket match here.

India is taking on Bangladesh in its maiden day and night test match, which will be played at the iconic Eden Gardens stadium from Friday.

Over 1,000 vacant posts in CBI: Govt

NEW DELHI, Nov 21 (PTI): There are over 1,000 vacant posts in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against its sanctioned strength, the Rajya Sabha was told on Thursday.

Out of the sanctioned strength of 5,532, a total of 4,503 were filled leaving a vacancy of 1,029, according to a data given by Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh in a written reply.

"The CBI is taking active steps to fill up these vacancies," he said. A large number of vacancy is in executive ranks.

Out of the total sanctioned strength of 5,000 in the executive ranks, there are 4,140 employees at place. Around 296 law officers are working against the sanctioned strength of 370.

A total of 67 technical officers were posted in the CBI against the to-

tal strength of 162, the data said.

The CBI derives its powers for the investigation of crimes under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.

"The central government does not interfere in the investigation of cases carried out by CBI. The Director, CBI has been vested with greater financial and administrative powers," the minister said.

All zeros: When no batsman of a team scored a run



MUMBAI, Nov 21 (PTI): In a rare instance, no batsman of a team was able to score any run in a cricket match and the team lost by a massive 754 runs in an U-16 Harris Shield game here.

The game was played between Swami Vivekanand School and Children's Welfare Centre School from suburban Andheri.

And it was the batsmen from the Children's Welfare Centre School, who could not score even a single run, as all of them were dismissed for a duck (zero).

The team, however, was all out for seven runs and all of those were extras - one bye and six wides. The Swami Vivekanand Interna-

tional School, Borivali, one of the prestigious schools, had piled up 761-4 in 45 overs with their one down batsman Meet Mayekar remaining unbeaten on 338 off 134 balls with seven sixes and 56 fours.

However, the batsmen from Welfare School succumbed to pressure and were unable to score a single run individually.

For Vivekanand, Alok Pal (6-3) and Varad Vaze (2-3) shared the spoils.

This game was probably the most mismatched one in the 126-year-history of the Harris Shield.

Several former India and Ranji players in their teens have taken part in the tournament, one of the noted ones in city's cricketing circles.

Rose Valley ponzi scam : ED conducts search operations

KOLKATA, Nov 21 (PTI): Enforcement Directorate sleuths on Thursday conducted search operations in the residential premises of a Rose Valley officer and in the apartment of the wife of its chairman Gautam Kundu, who is now in jail in connection with the ponzi scheme scam, sources in the investigating agency said.

The search operations were conducted in New Town and in up-scale South City, a shopping and residential complex, in Kolkata, the sources said.

The ED has been probing the collapse of the chit fund firm Rose

Valley which collected nearly Rs 12,000 crore from the general public luring them with abnormally high returns and subsequently failing to deliver.

"This is a routine process in the course of the investigation", the sources said adding the search operations were conducted at the Rose Valley officer's residence in New Town and the flat of Subhra Kundu, the company chairman's wife, in South City.

During the probe several Trinamool Congress leaders had been interrogated and jailed. The leaders included TMC

MP Sudip Bandopadhyay and MLA Tapas Pal. They were granted bail by Odisha High Court as both of them were taken for further questioning to Odisha.

The ED had also questioned Bengali film personalities like Rituparna Sengupta and Prosenjit Chatterjee for acting in films produced by the Rose Valley group.

Even IPL team Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) chief executive officer, Venky Mysore had been interrogated by the investigating agency for getting sponsorship from Rose Valley for the IPL tournament.

Narada tapes case: Special CBI court grants bail to suspended IPS officer



KOLKATA, Nov 21 (PTI): A special CBI court has granted bail to suspended IPS officer SMH Mirza in the Narada sting tapes case on a plea that his son was ill and that he had been in custody for 55 days, his lawyer said on Thursday.

Special CBI court judge Anupam Mukhopadhyay allowed Mirza's bail prayer on the condition that he would not leave West Bengal without the court's permission.

The judge also asked him to meet the investigating officer in the case

once a week. Mirza's lawyer Shyamal Ghosh said the court took up the petition on Wednesday and granted bail to the suspended officer on an out-of-turn prayer owing to his son's ill health.

The court directed that the matter would be taken up for hearing again on November 26.

In his submission before the court, Ghosh said Mirza had been in custody for 55 days and cooperated with the CBI in its investigation into the case all along.

Judge Mukhopadhyay had on November 13 re-

jected Mirza's bail plea and extended his judicial custody till November 26.

Mirza was the superintendent of police of Burdwan district when the sting operation was conducted by Mathew Samuels of the Narada News portal.

In the Narada tapes, which had surfaced ahead of the 2016 West Bengal polls, people resembling senior Trinamool Congress leaders and Mirza were seen accepting money from representatives of a fictitious company in return for favours.

Speaker cautions Cong member against questioning his impartiality

NEW DELHI, Nov 21 (PTI): Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday cautioned a Congress member against questioning the Chair's impartiality.

The incident happened during the Zero Hour after Ravneet Singh Bittu, a Congress MP from Punjab, raised the issue of the Union government's decision to withdraw SPG security cover given to the Gandhi family and was cut short by the Speaker midway.

Members are meant to speak briefly during the Zero Hour.

Birla pointed out that the issue has been raised several times earlier as well, as he asked another member to raise his matter.

"You have also joined hands with them," Bittu told the Speaker while pointing to BJP members.

Birla then stopped the member, who had stood up to speak, and cautioned the Congress member against questioning the Chair in such a manner.

"Don't speak in such a manner about the Chair. You will get another

chance to speak," the Speaker said.

Bittu cited the assassinations of the then prime minister Indira Gandhi and later her son and former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi by terrorists to highlight the threat to Sonia Gandhi, who is Congress president, her MP son Rahul Gandhi and daughter Priyanka Gandhi.

The Home Ministry had recently withdrawn the SPG cover to them and replaced it with Z+ security.

Mizoram court sentences Myanmarese man to life imprisonment for killing wife

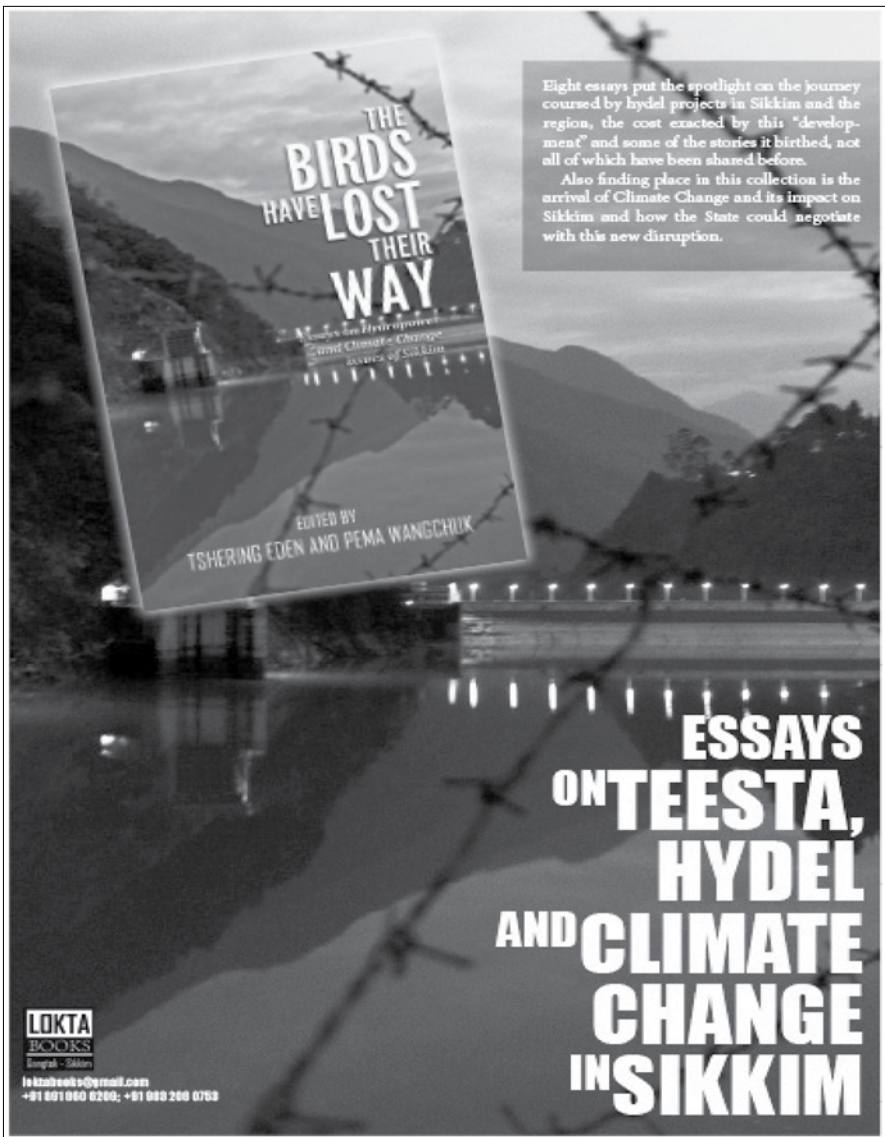
AIZAWL, Nov 21 (PTI): A court here sentenced a 39-year-old Myanmarese man to life imprisonment till death for killing his wife over suspicion of adultery two years ago.

In the judgement pronounced on Wednesday, Additional District and Sessions Judge Liansangzuala also slapped a fine of Rs 3,000 on Vanlalunna, a native of Tahan C

Group in Myanmar living in Aizawl.

The court also sentenced Vanlalunna to three months' imprisonment for violating section 14 of the Foreigners Act, 1946, and staying illegally in India.

According to the prosecution, he killed his wife Cheuzakimi while she was working in a jungle near Aizawl on August 7, 2017.



Chhetri is like 29-year-old, there's no replacement for him: Stimac

NEW DELHI, Nov 21 (PTI): Indian football team coach Igor Stimac feels that talismanic captain Sunil Chhetri is "playing like a 29-year-old" and remains irreplaceable for the next few years.

The 35-year-old Chhetri has been in prolific form in recent years but since netting India's lone goal in the 1-2 loss to Oman in September, he has not found the target in the last three matches of the 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign.

Asked if he has found any player in India who can replace Chhetri in the future, Stimac said, "I don't know why people mention about replacing Sunil, he is not going anywhere. He is fit and doing his best. He is very valuable to us. His body is like a 29-year-old."

"As long as he is training like he is doing right now and giving his best for the national team, he will be with us, I can assure you that. "He (Sunil) had some great chances, there was one against



Afghanistan which normally Sunil scores nine out of 10 times. It did not happen that day, but that does not mean that something has changed

in his game. It happens in football," the Croatian said on the sidelines of the launch of the 13th I-League here. Chhetri is currently the second

highest international goal scorers among active players, only behind Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo. He is the most-capped player and

also the all-time top scorer for the Indian national team, with 72 goals in 115 appearances.

Stimac said the current team also has players who can score goals and he was hopeful of them stepping up and getting the job done for India. "But at the same time. I will have chance to find out a few more players like Sunil Chhetri. I hope that once Jobby Justin starts playing games he will start scoring goals," the head coach said.

"I hope a few other players like Seiminlen Doungeel from FC Goa will start playing as central forward and Manvir Singh start scoring goals. We have some options," added Stimac.

Doungeel scored an injury-time goal in India's 1-1 draw against Afghanistan in Dushanbe, Tajikistan earlier this month. The Indian team is virtually out of contention for a 2022 World Cup third round spot after losing 0-1 to Oman on Tuesday.

Content with one fight every 5-6 months: Vijender



NEW DELHI, Nov 21 (PTI): Gearing up for his 12th professional bout in four years, Indian boxing star Vijender Singh on Thursday said he is content with his progress in the circuit despite the fight schedule not being particularly busy.

The 34-year-old, who is undefeated so far, will square off against Ghana's two-time former Commonwealth super middle-weight (76kg) champion Charles Adamu in Dubai on Friday.

Adamu is eight years older to him.

"I don't expect him to put up too much of a challenge because I have noticed he is slower than me. So, despite his experience, I think I will have the edge," Vijender told PTI from Dubai on the eve of the 10-round clash. "So I am relaxed, nothing to worry there," he added.

Adamu comes into the contest with an experience of 47 bouts, of which he has won 33 (26 knockouts). The Ghanaian is also an Olympian and won a bronze medal for his country in the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

Given that he wasn't particularly worried about how things might pan out on Friday, Vijender spoke of his future plans.

"I will probably be fighting in India next and people can expect that to be a big one. Obviously I can't give out the full details for now," he said.

His most recent fight was in July, when he made his debut in the USA after being signed by Hall of Famer Bob Arum's Top Rank Promotions. He didn't compete at all in 2018 and his last

appearance in front of home fans was back in December 2017 in Jaipur.

"Once in five-six months suits me just fine because I also need to spend time with my family. It's already been two months since I have been with my wife and children and it is difficult for me to manage beyond that," said the former Olympic bronze-medallist.

The six-footer from Haryana also said that he would be fighting in the US too but before all that is Friday's showdown, the one for which he has prepared by sparring a little bit more than usual.

"I have actually taken quite a beating during those sessions. Hopefully, that would mean lesser work when I compete because I will be already battle-hardened," he quipped.

Manu wins gold in World Cup Finals



PUTIAN (CHINA), Nov 21 (PTI): India's Manu Bhaker fired her way to the gold medal with a junior world record in the women's 10m air pistol event of the World Cup Finals here on Thursday.

The 17-year-old Bhaker shot 244.7 to claim the top prize in the prestigious season-ending tournament of International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF).

Her compatriot, Yashaswini Singh Deswal finished sixth in the final of the event.

Serbia's Zorana Arunovic won the silver with 241.9, while Quian Wang of China bagged the bronze with 221.8.

In the men's 10m air pistol event, Abhishek Verma and Saurabh Chaudhary qualified for the final. Verma topped the qualifications with 588 while Chaudhary was seventh with 581.

France are getting serious again – but will they end a decade of decline?



PAUL REES

PARIS, 21 Nov [THEGUARDIAN]: The appointment of Shaun Edwards as defence coach shows France are getting serious again. No country has won more Six Nations titles in the professional era than Les Bleus, tied on seven with England, even though their last success was in 2010. Since then, they have tended to bumble along in the bottom half of the table, absent away and not too often in at home. Their last victory at Twickenham in the championship was 2005, in Cardiff it was 2010 and they have not won in Dublin in the tournament since 2011.

Bernard Laporte, who as a coach enjoyed success in the Six Nations, tried in his capacity as the president of the French Rugby Federation to secure a non-Frenchman to succeed Jacques Brunel as head coach after the World Cup: he had in mind Joe Schmidt and Warren Gatland, but he needed the approval of clubs for the unprecedented move and failed.

So he turned to Raphaël Ibañez, who as a player at Wasps worked under Edwards, and appointed him manager with Fabien Galthié taking over from Brunel. Although given Galthié was part of the management team in the World Cup he was effectively in place six months earlier than advertised. As the hosts of the 2023 World Cup, Laporte expects France to be contenders, much as they were in 2007 when the country first staged the event and he was in his final year as the national side's head coach.

They reached the semi-finals at that tournament when they tried to impersonate England and went down to the real thing having lost to Argentina in Paris and defeated New Zealand in Cardiff on the way there. It was classic France, up one week and way down the next, but at least they had a shape to them.

They have meandered since then, inconsistency in selection reflected in performances at a time when Wales and Ireland, followed by England, brought in coaches from overseas.

This year's Six Nations reflected their decline this decade, blowing a 16-point interval lead in Cardiff before stunning the crowd at Twickenham with their defensive ineptitude having opted not to pick a specialist full-back. They were 26-0 down in Dublin before scoring two late tries and victories over Scotland and Italy took them to fourth, but again a country with one of the highest playing populations in the world game failed to muster a challenge for the title.

France have lacked coherence this decade, moments of brilliance unable to compensate for the lack of an identity. Even with Galthié in harness, if not nominally in charge, the World Cup campaign exposed their nature, 17 points ahead in the first-half against Argentina and Tonga only to be hanging on at the end to win both matches by two. They were 12-0 up against Wales in the quarter-final only to fail to score a point in the second half, not helped by a mindless act of foul play by Sébastien Vahaamahina.

The second row's elbow on Aaron Wainwright highlighted the self-destructive nature of a side that has long forgotten how to win tournaments: sloppy mistakes let Tonga and Wales back into matches they should have been shut out of and a failure to exert control when it is needed is perhaps a consequence of the way they have messed about at outside-half this decade and regularly been rudderless. In the words of the song, every time they get to the final piece they start disassembling.

They only won one second half in the World Cup, against the United States after a late flurry. The aggregate score in that period against Argentina, Tonga and

Wales was 9-42 compared to 56-20 in the first period. It suggests a lack of conditioning, but the problem appears to be as much mental as physical. Edwards will help change that: language should not be an issue because no one will fail to understand the meaning of his icy stare.

France are 10-1 to win the Six Nations, behind the odds-on favourites, England, Ireland and Wales. They start with the beaten World Cup finalists on the first Sunday in February in Paris. They have lost on the opening weekend for the last three years, the last two despite home advantage, and the new regime will not have had an autumn campaign to bed in.

If Galthié masters selection, an area which separates the best coaches from the rest, France will become a force again. Who he goes for at outside-half will offer a guide: Romain Ntamack was the preferred choice in the position during the World Cup, but he was in the midfield on Friday night at King'sholm when Toulouse, after gifting Gloucester two tries in the opening half in the manner of the national side, dominated in the second half.

The variety of Camille Lopez's kicking undid Harlequins at Clermont Auvergne the following day while that evening Matthieu Jalibert kicked 20 points for Bordeaux-Begles in their victory over Wasps and tormented them with his running game. He won his solitary cap as a 19-year old at the start of the 2018 Six Nations only for injury to return him to relative obscurity.

France's last Six Nations title came in the year that Toulouse won the Champions Cup for the fourth time. They have not appeared in a final since or even enjoyed a home quarter-final. As the club rises again, Les Bleus' soufflé is being prepared with a new recipe; England will be the first to find out if it is half-baked.

Kohli says pink ball feels like heavy hockey ball, braces up for fielding challenges

TAPAN MOHANTA

KOLKATA, Nov 21 (PTI): The pink ball feels like a "heavy hockey ball" to Virat Kohli, who is extremely wary of the challenges its weight, hardness and colour could pose while fielding.

Indian cricket will finally embrace the pink revolution when Kohli's formidable team lock horns with a deflated Bangladesh in their maiden Day/Night Test starting here on Friday.

"One thing that surprised me was the fielding sessions. In the slips balls hit so hard it almost felt like a heavy hockey ball, all those synthetic ball that we're used to play with in the younger days," Kohli said on the eve of the match.

"It's purely because of the extra glaze on the ball, it is definitely much more harder. For some reason it felt heavy and even the throws took a lot more effort than the red colour to reach the wicketkeeper."

India had their first brush with the SG pink ball after they wrapped up the opening Test inside three days in Indore.

India had a session under lights at the Eden Gardens on Wednesday. "I think during the day, high catches will be very difficult. With the red or white ball you have the idea of when the ball reaches you but with the pink ball if you don't look at it your palms are gone."

"Fielding session for me was far more challenging. People are going to be surprised how challenging pink ball can be."



Visibility in twilight has also been cited as one of the biggest challenges the historic match could pose. "Not having a great visibility and the ability to pick that colour makes it even more difficult. The decision making has to be very precise like the idea of off stumps. Even when we practised yesterday we felt as if the ball is far but it hits you very quickly."

"The extra glaze of the ball is making it travel faster. It hits the hand hard. It should excite everyone. Sometime you have to change the template. I think we have to be very precise and our skills will be tested in this Test."

Since the first Day/Night Test between Australia and New Zealand in 2015, 11 matches have been played under lights, but in Indian conditions the dew could play a more influential role, according to Kohli.

"That is one difference in playing day-night

Test in India compared to any other country. Apart from that I don't really feel there is any major difference. Dew is something which is definitely going to be a factor in India in the late last session. "We spoke to the match referee yesterday. You can't really predict how much mopping or cleaning of the dew is required at what stage, you never know when the dew is going to arrive."

"He (match referee) had the same discussion that we'll have to play it as it comes and manage it in the best way possible. That's the only change I see." According to the skipper, the pink ball will do a lot more away from India.

"Obviously the pitches and how much the Kookaboora does is a different ball game altogether. I think the pink ball will do a lot more in foreign conditions than it would in India, probably in the second and third sessions as well."

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Hong Kong campus stalemate as US bill sets up China clash

A dwindling core of hard-line protesters held their ground on Thursday at a Hong Kong university besieged for days by police, as the US passed a bill lauding the city's pro-democracy movement, setting up a likely clash between Washington and Beijing.

China did not immediately respond to the passage in Washington of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, which voices strong support for the "democratic aspirations of the Hong Kong people." But China had already threatened retaliation if the bill is signed into law by President Donald Trump, and state-run media warned Thursday the legislation would not prevent Beijing from intervening forcefully to stop the "mess" gripping the financial hub.

"Some may expect this to deter Beijing. Such thinking is naive," the Global Times said. "If we take this US bill seriously and shrink from tackling riots, Hong Kong will suffer from an accelerated collapse of the rule of law and be erased from the modern world." Hong Kong's benchmark stock index fell 1.5 percent, leading Asian markets lower over fears



that Congress's move could throw a spanner into the delicate US-China effort to reach a trade deal between the world's two largest economies.

Exhausted protesters draped in gold and silver medical blankets periodically trickled from the now-quiet campus of Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), which days earlier saw fiery clashes between police and protesters armed with bows, arrows and Molotov cocktails. Since then, hundreds

have fled out of fear or deteriorating living conditions, most of them quickly arrested by police and likely to face rioting charges. But dozens remained holed up in buildings or were seen walking the campus in small groups, masked and dressed in the movement's signature black or carrying bows and arrows.

In some areas, materials used for making Molotov cocktails were strewn about, as makeshift signs warned against smoking near the

flammable materials. Defiant graffiti was emblazoned across the campus, including messages such as "You can kill a man, you can't kill an idea." - "Pull back from the cliff" - Hong Kong's nearly six months of turmoil began with a now-shelved bill to allow extraditions to China, which revived fears that Beijing was slicing into the city's freedoms.

Millions of angry citizens have taken to the streets or disrupted the city's transport network in a movement that snowballed into wider

calls for free elections and an inquiry into alleged police brutality, demands that Hong Kong's Beijing-appointed leaders have rebuffed.

The troubles have already tipped Hong Kong's economy into recession and the threat of a change in trade status brought fresh gloom.

Hong Kong is a semi-autonomous Chinese region and US policy treats its economy as separate from the rest of China. That has been a key factor in the city's rise as an

international financial hub, and left it exempt from the crippling tariffs imposed by Trump's administration.

The new US bill would require an annual review of that status, which could be revoked if the city's unique freedoms are quashed. "If the bill becomes law, investors will be hesitant to take on the risk," Hao Hong, head of research at Bocom International, told Bloomberg News. "There are too many moving parts, it's very tricky."

US and Chinese negotiators are working toward a trade agreement, and markets had rallied in recent weeks on optimism it will be signed off soon.

Beijing has accused the United States of fuelling Hong Kong's protests, and China's state media made clear the government's anger over the Hong Kong democracy bill. The People's Daily, mouthpiece of the all-powerful Communist Party, called it a "grave provocation".

Mahinda Rajapaksa to be sworn in as Lanka PM

COLOMBO, NOV 21 (PTI):

Sri Lankan President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa's elder brother and former strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa will be sworn in as the new prime minister on Thursday.

Gotabhaya on Wednesday named Rajapaksa as the new prime minister after incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe announced his resignation from the post following the election debacle.

Rajapaksa, the main opposition leader, will be appointed as prime minister after incumbent Wickremesinghe steps down formally on Thursday, his spokesman Rohan Weliwita was quoted as saying by Times Online. The former president, who will function as Prime Minister of the caretaker cabinet until the general election, is expected to be sworn in at 1 pm before assuming office at around 3 pm, it added.

Rajapaksa was appointed the prime minister on October 26, 2018 by the then President Maithripala Sirisena, who sacked Wickremesinghe in a controversial move that plunged the country into an unprecedented constitutional crisis.

Australian PM denies climate link as smoke chokes Sydney

SYDNEY, NOV 21 (AFP): Australia's Prime Minister on Thursday denied his climate policies had caused unprecedented bushfires ravaging the country and insisted his government was doing enough to tackle global warming.

As blazes that have scorched swathes of countryside continued to spread and the country's largest city was cloaked in hazardous smoke, conservative leader Scott Morrison defended his climate record, saying Australia was "doing our bit".

His comments came after weeks spent refusing to speak about the link between climate change and deadly fires described by the emergency services as unprecedented in number and scale for the early bushfire season.

"The suggestion that any way shape or form that Australia -- accounting for 1.3 percent of the world's emissions... are impacting directly on specific fire events, whether it is here or anywhere else in the world, that doesn't bear up to credible scientific evidence," he told ABC radio. As more people in the southeast of the country were told to evacuate their homes and schoolchildren in Sydney were again forced to play indoors, Morrison dismissed mounting calls for action.

Australia, he said, was "doing our bit as part of the response to climate change" and sought to frame the issue as a global concern.

Scientists, former fire chiefs and residents touched by bushfires have all drawn the link be-

tween this season's more intense fires and climate change.

Drought, unseasonably hot, dry and windy conditions have fuelled the unprecedented blazes. Scientists believe many of those factors are made worse by rising global temperatures.

On Thursday bushfires burned across every region of Australia with residents in Victoria warned to leave high-risk areas and officials in New South Wales reporting more than 600 homes have been destroyed in recent weeks.

Morrison is facing calls to cut greenhouse gas emissions and rapidly transition to renewable energy -- a sensitive debate in light of Australia's lucrative mining industry.

Australia has committed to globally agreed climate targets to help limit warming, but its emissions continue to rise and targets are only being met with the use of some creative carbon accounting -- using credits gained in past decades.

While Australia's burning of fossil fuels accounts for only a fraction of global emissions, coal dug up Down Under and burned around the world makes the country a major emissions exporter.

Devastating fires along the country's east coast have claimed six lives since mid-October.

Now the fire danger has moved into states further south, with a so-called "Code Red" -- the highest possible fire risk in Victoria -- being declared in the state's north-west for the first time in a decade.

"What that means is that if we see fires in those areas they will be fast-moving, they will be unpredictable, they will be uncontrollable," emergency management commissioner Andrew Crisp said.

Country Fire Authority chief Steve Warrington told people living in rural areas to leave for the safety of cities.

"We are saying, 'do not be there, do not be there when a fire occurs, because you will not survive if you are there'," he said. "There is a good chance if a fire occurs that your home will be destroyed."

The fire danger was also elevated to "severe" in the island state of Tasmania off mainland Australia's southeastern coast, where a total fire ban was declared.

For the second time in three days, smoke from bushfires blanketed Sydney, Australia's biggest city and an area that is home to more than five million people, sending air quality plummeting to hazardous levels.

In South Australia, the state capital Adelaide was also shrouded in bushfire smoke and residents were being told to stay indoors for health reasons.

More than 110 fires are still burning in worst-hit New South Wales and neighbouring Queensland, while in South Australia more than 40 fires broke out during catastrophic fire conditions Wednesday.

The country is bracing for challenging fire conditions to continue throughout the Southern Hemisphere summer.

Pope Francis kicks off Asia tour with Buddhist temple visit

BANGKOK, NOV 21 (AFP):

Pope Francis will visit one of Thailand's famed gilded temples Thursday to meet the supreme Buddhist patriarch, on the first full day of his Asian tour aimed at promoting religious harmony. The 82-year-old pontiff is on his first visit to Buddhist majority Thailand, where he will spend four days before setting off to Japan.

His packed schedule a day after touching down in Bangkok includes a meeting with the king and the prime minister before leading an evening mass expected to draw tens of thousands of people from across Thailand, where just over 0.5 per cent of the population is Catholic.

He also has an appointment with the Buddhist Supreme Patriarch at the glittering gold Ratchabophit temple in Thailand's historic old quarter, built 150 years ago by Thailand's former king mixing traditional and gothic styles.

It is a highly symbolic visit for the head of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics, who carries a message of peace, reli-

gious tolerance and nuclear disarmament on his sweep through Asia. "Pope Francis always respects other religions, always treats his counterparts with respect... that's why he would like to pay respect to the leader" of the Buddhist faith in Thailand, said Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, who helped with some of the visit planning.

Before arriving, Francis praised the Southeast Asian country as a "multi-ethnic nation", and hoped his trip would strengthen the Catholic community's bonds of friendship with "many Buddhist brothers and sisters".

Earlier Thursday the Pope was met by Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Cha-O-Cha at government house for a red carpet welcome with dozens of top officials.

He was accompanied by his cousin Sister Ana Rosa, who has lived in Thailand for decades and will be accompanying the pontiff as a translator.

In a speech to civil society, officials and diplomats, he said the visit with the patriarch was "a sign of the importance

and urgency of promoting friendship and inter-religious dialogue". The Pope's trip to Thailand is the first papal trip to the country since pope John Paul II visited in 1984.

It coincides with the 350th anniversary of the first Catholic missionaries who established the "Mission de Siam" in the late 17th century.

Pope Francis arrived Wednesday in the Thai capital where he was greeted by cheering worshippers who lined the streets hoping for a glimpse of the Catholic leader in his motorcade.

He heads to Japan on Saturday, where he will visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two cities devastated when the US dropped atomic bombs at the end of World War II in 1945.

The pope, who years ago had hoped to be a missionary in Japan, has made strong calls for the ban of the "immoral" use of nuclear weapons.

Since Francis' election six years ago, he has made two trips to Asia, visiting the Philippines and Sri Lanka in 2014, followed by Myanmar and Bangladesh in 2017.

Online fundraiser for bushfire-hit koalas tops Aus\$1 mn

An online fundraiser for koalas injured in devastating bushfires topped Aus\$1 million (\$680,000) on Thursday, making it Australia's biggest campaign on the GoFundMe platform this year.

Deadly bushfires have ravaged vast swathes of eastern Australia, and wildlife carers estimate the blazes have killed hundreds of koalas this month in New South Wales state alone.

A crowdfunding page set up by the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital to provide automatic water drinking stations for wild koalas soared past Aus\$1 million, with donations



from more than 20,000 people from countries including the United States, France and England.

The wildlife charity's "Help Thirsty Koalas Devastated by Recent Fires" drive, which had an initial goal of just Aus\$25,000, got more donations than any other campaign in Australia this year, GoFundMe said,

and is the second-biggest since the platform launched Down Under in 2016. It is one of 700 bushfire-related fundraisers launched on the platform in the past 10 days, which to date have raised a combined total of Aus\$2 million.

The next-biggest has raised Aus\$60,000 to support firefighters and

people impacted by the blazes, which have killed six people, razed hundreds of homes and scorched about 1.5 million hectares (3.7 million acres) of land since October.

The koala hospital, some four hours north of Sydney, has rescued 31 koalas from the scorched bush in recent

weeks, and said it had been "overwhelmed by the kindness, good wishes and support from the Australian and international community".

It plans to use the excess funds to deliver koala drinking stations to other parts of the state, purchase a water-carrying vehicle to replenish the stations, and to establish a koala breeding programme.

With more than 1.3 million hectares (3.2 million acres) of land scorched in the state, the fires have also destroyed large tracts of the tree-dwelling marsupial's habitat.

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CHRISTMAS IS ALMOST HERE! The singer/songwriter, Kacey Musgraves made a shimmery presence at The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon performing a new holiday song just in time for the holidays.

Environment on 'Harry Potter' sets was very protective: Robert Pattinson

LOS ANGELES, NOV 21 (PTI): Robert Pattinson looks back fondly at his "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" days as the actor says he felt protected and cared for during the film's shooting.

Pattinson was 18 when he made his feature film debut with the 2005 movie, portraying the character of Cedric Diggory from JK Rowling's book universe.

During "HFPA in Conversation" podcast with Kristien Gijbels, the 33-year-old actor recalled his experience of working on the film, directed by Mike Newell.

"It was a really nice environment on Harry Potter. Even compared to movies I've done since, it was very protective. The way the kids were treated... In 'Harry Potter' they were at school and they were kind of doing work at the same time... It felt like a very friendly family environment," Pattinson said. He particularly has fond memories of the press tour that he went on while promoting the film, in which he starred alongside Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint.

"It was amazing. Especially during that press tour. I remember going to Tokyo for the first time, and sitting in my room looking out over the city and being like, 'How has this happened?' I really like that movie..."

Hope we continue to make films that bring people together: Amitabh Bachchan

BY SHUBHA DUBEY

PANAJI, NOV 21 (PTI): Cinema is a universal medium that brings people together keeping aside the differences of their social and modern lives, said megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Thursday. The 77-year-old veteran, who was declared as the recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in September this year, is being honoured at the ongoing 50th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) with a retrospective.

"I've always felt that cinema is a universal medium, one that is beyond language and beyond all kinds of other factors that keep coming into our social and modern lives.

"When we sit inside a dark cinema hall, we never ask the caste, colour, religion of the person sitting next to us. Yet, we enjoy the same film, the same songs, we laugh at the same jokes and cry at the same emotions," Bachchan said at the inauguration of the retrospective. The actor added that in this fast disintegrating world, there are only few things, including cinema, which promote the idea of community and peace.

"I hope that we continue to make films that will bring people together and disintegrate this rather odd system of keeping sides due to colour, caste and religion, bringing us all into one community, making us hold hands together to appreciate our creativity and take a step forward and making this world a more peaceful place."

During the film festival, which runs till November 28 in Goa, celebrated films of the star including "Sholay", "Black", "Piku", "Deewar" and "Badla" will be screened.

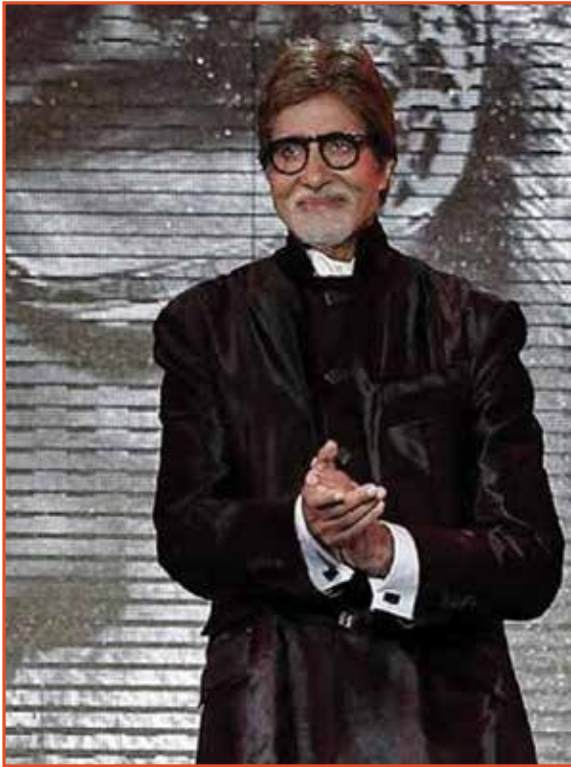
"Paa", directed by Bachchan's frequent collaborator R Balki, opened the retrospective.

The cinema icon, who was also the guest of honour at the IFFI opening ceremony on Wednesday, said coming to Goa has always been a beautiful experience for him.

"Coming to Goa has always been like coming home. My very first film was shot here and ever since then we've had many opportu-

nities to work in this wonderful place and receive the hospitality of all the Goanese during various things and shootings." Bachchan also congratulated IFFI on its 50th edition and for providing the movie enthusiasts an opportunity to watch the world cinema.

"It has been 50 years of my journey in this film industry, it started in 1969, and it is the 50th edition of IFFI and I congratulate



late IFFI for conducting themselves in such a wonderful manner.

"Each year, we find a growth in the delegates that come here, the choice of films that are brought to the country, giving us an opportunity to see the works and creativity of other parts of the world," he said.

Also present at the event were Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, Information and Broadcasting Secretary Amit Khare, IFFI festival director Chaitanya Prasad, veteran filmmaker Ramesh Sippy and former president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) John Bailey, who is heading the International Jury at the festival.

Grammys 2020 Snubs And Surprises

The short lists for the 62nd annual Grammy awards that celebrate the best in music feature a slate of rising talent that edged out a number of expected acts. Fans bemoaned the absence of a number of artists old and new on the list, which included a few quirks - including Michelle Obama.

Here's a look at who got left out and what raised eyebrows in this year's Grammy race:

- SNUBS -

Once a perennial favourite, Taylor Swift was nominated for just three awards, and only one in a major category, with her seventh album Lover missing out on a potential Album of the Year award. Many fans expected the wildly popular K-pop boy band BTS to score at the 2020 gala, but they were completely ignored by Grammy voters.

Bruce Springsteen, who boasts 20 wins over his iconic career, also failed to win a nomination for his solo work Western Stars, and the Boss' critically acclaimed Springsteen On Broadway Netflix special missed out on Best Music Film.

Pop acts Ed Sheeran and The Jonas Brothers also had little to show after Wednesday's nomination announcement, getting just one nod each. Many forecasters expected Chance the Rapper to at least get a Best Rap Album nomination, if not Album of the Year, but the artist only snagged a Best Rap Song nomination.

The Queen of Pop herself was also left out: Madonna, a seven-time Grammy winner with 28 nominations to her household name, was passed over for her 14th album Madame X.

- SURPRISES -

Best album nominations for experimental indie act Bon Iver and buoyant alt rockers Vampire Weekend came out of left field, though both records were critically acclaimed. Genre-bending rapper Lil Nas X jumped to the head of the pack this year with six nominations, as he rode the wave of his country-rap Old Town Road overnight success.

Industry watchers expected the 20-year-old sensation to earn nods for Best New Artist and Record of the Year -- but his Album of the Year win for his critically panned EP 7 was a head-scratcher. And the relatively obscure



controversial legal battles that roused accusations that they were facing racism. The latter was arrested in February in his hometown Atlanta by US immigration agents who said he had been living stateside illegally since overstaying a visa that expired in 2006, when he was a minor -- and to the surprise of his fans was discovered to have been born in Britain.

Mill this year ended his years-long saga that became a flashpoint in the national debate over the US criminal justice system's treatment of black people. The vocal advocate for criminal justice reform spent years behind bars and dealt with constant parole issues before finally pleading guilty to a misdemeanor gun charge to end the case.

Michelle Obama is up for an award on music's biggest night for Best Spoken Word Album, for the audiobook of her memoir Becoming. If the former US first lady won it would be her household's third Grammy: former president Barack Obama has already snagged two Grammys in the same category for his books.

She faces an eccentric group of rivals that include Michael Diamond and Adam Horovitz of the Beastie Boys for Beastie Boys Book and John Waters, the performer known for his transgressive cult films, for Mr. Know-It-All.

Mira Sorvino, Rory Culkin join Quibi series 'Emma'

LOS ANGELES, NOV 21 (PTI):

Actors Mira Sorvino and Rory Culkin have boarded the cast of Quibi horror series "Emma". The two actors join AnnaSophia Robb, Michael Gaston and "Game of Thrones" alum Hannah Murray in the cast.

The show will chronicle the dark journey of a young woman (Robb) down on her luck and pregnant under mysterious circumstances. She must deal with the increasingly disturbing effects of her pregnancy and the potential conspiracy surrounding it. The series is being directed by Mary Harron and produced by Dark Castle Entertainment and Propagate. It recently started production.

Ben Hatai has penned the script and he is also serving as executive producer alongside Harron, Alex Mace, Hal Sadoff, Ben Silverman, Howard Owens, Greg Lipstone and Rodney Ferrell.

Lata Mangeshkar doing 'much better': Family



MUMBAI, NOV 22 (PTI): Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, who is still in the Intensive Care Unit of a hospital, is doing "much better", her family said on Thursday, adding they can't comment further.

Mangeshkar, 90, was admitted to the Breach Candy Hospital after she complained of difficulty in breathing last week.

"Lata ji is doing much better now. Beyond this, we can't comment. Please respect our

privacy," Mangeshkar's niece Rachana Shah told PTI.

The hospital sources refused to comment on the status of the veteran singer's health. In her over seven-decade long career, Mangeshkar has sung more than 30,000 songs across languages.

She is considered one of the greatest playback singers in Indian cinema. She received the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour, in 2001.

ARIES: Aries, what you're experiencing is a true match of minds. Allow yourself to explore this connection. Talk about what awakens your passion, what inspires you, and the things that set your soul on fire. You will find that the two of you are similar in many ways. Stay in the present.

Tip: Get to know them on an informal level.

TAURUS: Given that there are a multitude of pathways available to you, it's easy to feel confused about which way to go. Here's a simple exercise to make the decision-making easier. Visualise each of the options before you. At first glance, one may seem easier, but the thought of destination could stir up anxiety and heaviness. The seemingly difficult one will, on the other hand, evoke a sense of calmness.

Tip: Make a choice in alignment with your highest goals.

GEMINI: So what if you have lost in love, Gemini? So what if you've had your heart broken over and over? Don't let that be the reason you build fortresses where healthy boundaries are enough. This phase of your

life demands that you recognise the blessings and open yourself to that drug called love. While you're at it, awaken your empathy and forgive those who were unable to be there for you in a manner you would have liked them to.

Tip: Learn to love again.

CANCER: Why are we so quick to judge our emotions or label them as 'good' or 'bad'? Observe what's coming up instead of engaging with it. Embrace the human experience in its entirety, moon child. At the same time, be conscious of the way in which you communicate your truth to others. You'll be surprised by how quickly you will move past the so-called challenges when you create a safe space where each party feels seen and heard.

Tip: Learn to witness your emotions.

LEO: How much of your past do you want to carry into the future, Leo? Something to think about when you find yourself turning your back to a brand new opportunity on the horizon. Being present to what is, rather than what was, will help you make the right decisions. Some of you may find that your trust

issues are especially triggered today. It's easy to assume the worst case scenario and convince yourself that everything is going downhill. You know what's easier though?

VIRGO: Your mood: making love, making art, making coffee and making magic. Throwback to your weekly guidance: an unconventional romance is on the cards and it promises to inspire your inner artist. The Universe is asking you to keep your preconceived notions aside and stay open to this connection. Give them a glimpse of your world, Virgo. Tell them what gives you a reason to wake up every morning and the things that set your soul on fire. Know that true intimacy isn't about being perfect.

Tip: Be your most authentic self.

LIBRA: Your true self and the ego self are at war, Libra. Which of the two voices are you going to listen to? Remember, letting go of the false self will help you see people as they are, awaken your empathy and usher in peace and harmony into your existence. Even if you have to be the first one to apologise, know that it is for your greater good.

Today also brings with itself a significant shift in your interpersonal relationships.

Tip: Let the true self triumph.

SCORPIO: Scorpio, this is a brand new page in your book of sexual awakening. Here's the thing about self-love: it makes you alluring to everybody around. Know that you have the power to choose who you want to share your energy with and to maintain distance from. Just be sure to communicate this to your partner(s) in a conscious manner. Tip: Choose who you desire to share your energy with.

SAGITTARIUS: If there's anything 2019 has taught you it's that things don't always unfold the way we imagine they would—and that can only be a good thing. If you are feeling limited by your circumstances, step back and reassess. Perhaps there is something internal that needs to be shifted before you move ahead. Some of you may feel like your partner is pulling the ghosting act on you. Tip: Let things unfold in divine time.

CAPRICORN: Intimacy cannot take place if you're stuck on the idea of being perfect.

This phase of your life requires you to let go of the masks and allow yourself to be your most authentic self. This is the only way to connect with your co-conspirators on a deeper level. Tip: Here's to a tribe that's as weird and wonderful as you.

AQUARIUS: A gift is not about extravagance or grand gestures. It's about love, care, and attention to detail. Today, you're being asked to go out of your way to do something thoughtful for the one(s) you love. It's amazing how a bouquet of flowers can turn somebody's day around.

Tip: Do something out of the ordinary for the one(s) you love.

PISCES: Sometimes it's better to do things by the book. Allow yourself to be wooed, pursued and treated like the goddess you are. Pisceans who are getting ready to tie the knot could be planning a traditional ceremony. Remember, it's not just about you. There's a good chance your families are involved at this point. To keep things harmonious, find a middle ground.

Tip: A traditional ceremony could be on the cards.