

## Cross country run held at IMA

DEHRADUN, OCT 21/--/ A cross country run as part of the training schedule of the gentlemen cadets of Autumn term 2018 was held at the prestigious Indian Military Academy (IMA) on Friday. The event, which tests the limits of physical endurance, determination and



Indian Military Academy, Dehradun (File Photo)

will power of the gentlemen cadets, was flagged off by Commandant of IMA Lt Gen S K Jha. The most colourful and awaited event of the academy saw participation of 810 gentlemen cadets of IInd and IIIrd term running a course of approximately 12 kilometres, a statement issued by the IMA here said. Keren Company of the Bhagat Battalion attained the first position with 742 points, while Basantar Company of the same Battalion got second position with 706 points, it said. Jessore Company of the Manekshaw Battalion came third on difference of average score with 706 points, the statement said. Gentleman Cadet (GC) Shivkant Yadav of the Alamein Company with a timing of 38.16 minutes got first position, while GC Himanshu Kashyap of the Dograi Company and GC Abhishek Rai of the Alamein Company came second and third with timings of 38.32 and 38.39 minutes, respectively. PTI

## Tourism ministry wants restricted area rules relaxed in Sikkim for foreigners

NEW DELHI, OCT 21/--/ Foreign tourists can now visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands without any restrictions as the Home Ministry has modified its earlier order which made it mandatory for them to register with the Foreigners Registration Officer within 24 hours of their arrival, a source in the ministry said. The step was taken on the suggestion made by the Tourism Ministry to boost the foreign tourist arrivals in the Union Territory through an order dated September 17. This order follows an earlier directive which allowed foreigners to visit 29 inhabited and 11 uninhabited islands in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which were prohibited for visitors under the Foreigners (Restricted Area) Order, 1963, without any restrictions. PTI

## Taxis overcharge in festive season in Sikkim

SUJAL PRADHAN

GANGTOK, OCT 21/--/ With the festive season still on and the arrival of tourists at its peak, the local people of Sikkim are faced with a shortage of taxis; in the capital town of Gangtok as well as in other parts of the State.

In terms of tourism, the state of Sikkim never had it so good. The State has, according to data of the tourism department, already played host to more than 1.3 million tourists in the past nine months. But due to the flow of tourists and the travels due to festivities, commuters are faced with a situation where the taxis are overcharging. Almost all the taxi stands are filled with either locals or tourists standing in queues, waiting for taxis. People have to wait for hours to get just one taxi. The experience of travellers is that drivers are telling tourists that there is a shortage of taxis and they would arrange for seats if the passengers were ready to part with amounts double or triple the regular fare. "Due to Dashain there is no taxi. Only a few taxis are available so you will not get any other taxi," they would tell the passengers, compelling them to pay double the actual fare, a Sikkim police personnel said on Sunday. He had already booked four drivers for overcharging. "We want everyone to come forward and help us stop such illegal practices," said the policeman. Sources in the travel sector said around 1000 light vehicles were arriving in Gangtok daily and around 500 vehicles going down to Siliguri. Local people travelling from Siliguri to Gangtok said, however, that the shortage of taxis was not that acute but a section of drivers were after easy money. Some drivers were keeping their vehicles away and creating an artificial crisis to charge exorbitant rates. Such people were not concerned about the welfare of the industry, it was complained. The normal day taxi fare from Siliguri to Gangtok is Rs 250 but on Sunday they asked for Rs 400, one passenger said. "As there was no taxi, we were obliged to pay." The State Transport department has decided to deploy an additional city runner bus and one additional bus on the Gangtok-Siliguri route in view of the tourist season. This year, the State Government has set a target to bring two million tourists to the state. They even have framed a tourism policy but it may not have addressed the issue of taxi shortage.

## Chinese intrusion in Dibang Valley in Arunachal



A view of Upper Dibang Valley (File Photo)

ITANAGAR / NEW DELHI, OCT 21/--/ A group of Chinese Army personnel briefly came to the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang Valley in July but returned after Indian security personnel objected to it, official sources said.

They said it was "not a transgression" and that the Chinese army personnel came to the Indian side due to varying perception of the Line of Actual Control—the de facto border between the two countries. The sources said the incident took place around July 25. A source in Itanagar said Lok Sabha MP from Arunachal Ninong Ering wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the incident, quoting media reports and inputs given by locals in Dibang valley. In the letter, he suggested that the government should take up the issue of "Chinese transgressions" in Arunachal Pradesh with Beijing. A group of Chinese Army personnel intruded around 300 metres into the Demchok area in eastern Ladakh and pitched four tents in the area in July. They came to the Indian side of the border in the garb of nomads and pitched the tents. The Chinese Army personnel later left the place after India protested against it. Officials said such transgressions are not unusual as there were varying perceptions of the LAC by both China and India. India regularly takes up all such incidents at the appropriate level with Chinese authorities. India and China share a nearly 4,000-km-long border. The number of "transgressions" by the Chinese Army into the Indian territory rose to 426 in 2017 from the 273 in 2016, according to official figures. PTI

## Pawan Chamling visits Bologna University, Instituto Dante and Voltaire

EOI CORRESPONDENT

GANGTOK, OCT 21/--/ Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on Friday visited Bologna University in Italy, the oldest university in the world, and visited different faculties, said an IPR release issued in Gangtok. The Chief Minister also visited Instituto Dante and Voltaire in Milan on Sunday. He has been on a visit to Italy to accept on behalf of Sikkim the gold in the Future Policy Award in Rome. Founded in 1088, Bologna University is the oldest functional university in the western world and offers courses in subjects varying from architecture, cultural heritage, classical philosophy and Italian studies, physics, astronomy, agriculture and food sciences. The Chief Minister was welcomed by the Vice Rector for International Relations Ms. Maria Chiara De Franceschi. She took Chamling around the university complex and its faculties sharing historical details of the university as it evolved over the centuries. She handed over a collection of the university literature, magazine and some texts as token of gifts. The Chief Minister handed over few publications on Sikkim and the organic products from Sikkim as a token. In Milan, the Chief Minister paid tribute to the giants from the world of literature and philosophy after whom the Instituto Dante and Voltaire had been named and who had shaped the literacy landscape of all the subsequent centuries through their works.



Pawan Chamling at Bologna University --- IPR

## IN BRIEF

### Arunachal CM hands over Rs 37.73 cr for land compensation by Army

ITANAGAR: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has handed over Rs 37.73 crore to several beneficiaries of West Kameng district as compensation for land acquired by the Army in 1960s following the Sino-Indian war, official sources said on Saturday. People of Tukpen received Rs 13.17 crore while those of Singchung got Rs 24.56 crore. The Army had acquired land following the war of 1962 to build infrastructure such as roads, bridges and bases. PTI

### Grenade attack on CRPF vehicle in Imphal, one killed

IMPHAL: A CRPF jawan was killed and another injured when a grenade was hurled at their vehicle by suspected militants at Nagampan area of Imphal town in Manipur on Saturday, police said. The incident took place at around 6.30 pm and the CRPF jawan who was identified as Umesh was killed on the spot in the blast, the police told PTI. The vehicle was transporting a small contingent of CRPF personnel from Kangpokpi district to their camp at Lamphel in Imphal West district. PTI

## Oli to invite Modi to 'baraat' of Lord Rama from Ayodhya to Janakpur

KATHMANDU, OCT 21/--/ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be invited by his Nepalese counterpart KP Sharma Oli to attend the symbolic wedding procession of Lord Rama from Ayodhya to Janakpur in Nepal on December 12, a media report said on Wednesday.

The two leaders "had discussed about the plan. The Prime Minister will send a letter to Modi inviting him to take part in the wedding procession in Ram-Janaki temple," Oli's chief adviser Bishnu Rimal was quoted as saying by the Kathmandu post. "Modi will bring the baraat from Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama to Janakpur where Sita was born," the paper said. According to the Ramayana, Lord Rama of Ayodhya had married Sita in Janakpur. "Discussions and prepara-

tions are going on about the visit of PM Modi to Janakpur, but his visit is yet to be confirmed," the paper quoted Prime Minister Oli's Press Adviser Kundan Aryal as saying. Modi's planned visit coincides with Bibaha Panchami, the day Ram and Sita wedded, accompanied by a symbolic wedding procession (baraat), the paper said. During the 4th BIMSTC Summit held here in August, both prime ministers had discussed the plan of Modi taking part in the Bibaha Panchami on December 12 and then inaugurating the Janakpur-Jayanagar railway track, the paper said. In May, Modi visited Janakpur where he inaugurated a bus service between Ayodhya-Jankpur and announced Rs 100 crore aid to the Province No 2. Janakpur is known as the birth place of Sita. A

massive Janaki temple was built in memory of Sita in 1910. The three-storied structure made entirely of stone and marble is 50-metre high and spread over 4860 sq feet. Both prime ministers will jointly inaugurate the Janakpur-Jayanagar railway line that has almost completed its test drive, the paper said. In the first week of August, railway officials successfully completed the test-run of the route that was lying dormant for the last four years, the paper said. Nepal's Department of Railway has also already announced that train wet leased from India for the Janakpur-Jayanagar-Kurtha railway sector would start this December. The Janakpur-Jayanagar-Kurtha broad-gauge railway line was built at a cost of Rs 880 crore with support from India. PTI

## India, China in touch over landslide blocking main stream of Brahmaputra

NEW DELHI, OCT 21/--/ India and China are in regular contact over the situation arising out of a landslide blocking the main stream of Brahmaputra river in Tibet, the Ministry of External Affairs has said. According to MEA Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar, all relevant authorities of the central government and state governments concerned have been apprised about the emerging situation to enable them to take necessary precautionary measures.

People living along the banks of Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh have been moved to safer places after China informed India about possible flash floods in the area due to

formation of an artificial lake in Tibet. In Assam, districts bordering Arunachal Pradesh have been asked to remain alert in view of possibility of a flash flood. "On October 17, the Chinese side informed us about a landslide blocking the

main stream of Yarlung Zangbo/Brahmaputra River in the Tibet Autonomous Region," the MEA spokesman said on Friday. "Based on the information provided, all relevant authorities of the central government and concerned state govern-

ments have been apprised about the emerging situation to enable them to take necessary precautionary measures in this regard. We are in regular contact with the Chinese side for further updates," he said. Yarlungzangbo river, originating at southeast of Mount Kailash and Manasarovar in Tibet, is the upper stream of the Brahmaputra river which passes through Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Sources said the landslide which is physically inaccessible. They said the Chinese side is extending all cooperation in sharing relevant information with India. PTI



The Yarlung Zangbo gorge in Sikkim (File Photo)

## China trying to use Tibetan Buddhism to promote Belt and Road Initiative

BEIJING, OCT 21/--/ China is trying to use the Tibetan Buddhism as a soft power tool to further its ambitious multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the region as it developed Tibet to become Beijing's gateway for trade to South Asia through Nepal, according to experts. China is vigorously pursuing the BRI, a pet initiative of President Xi Jinping, which offered billions of dollars of loans for infrastructure projects to different countries as it looks to expand global influence. The BRI, however, evoked negative reactions in India as the controversial multi-billion dollars China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) remained its flagship project. India has protested to China over the CPEC as it is

being laid through the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. In a new initiative, China held a two-day symposium in northwest China's Qinghai Province on Tuesday to discuss how Buddhism could better serve BRI and resist separatism, state-run Global Times reported. Tibetan monks and scholars took part in the event, the report said. Tibetan Buddhism in which the Dalai Lama plays a pivotal role has following in different countries besides India. It has strong following in countries like Nepal and Mongolia.

Elaborating on the symposium, Qin Yongzhang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), told the Global Times that Tibetan Buddhism can serve as a bridge

between the BRI countries to better communicate with each other, since the religious and cultural beliefs are similar in Central and South Asia.

One immediate challenge of promoting the BRI through Tibetan Buddhism comes from India, which has been holding back for geopolitical reasons, Qin said. The Dalai Lama has established a separatist base in India, and has been advocating the "traditional culture" as leverage to expand his influence, Qin added. China in recent years has developed infrastructure in Tibet with rail, road and air connectivity. It is now in the process of establishing a rail link to Nepal with plans to connect to India. The CASS and the state-run China Tibetology

Research Centre attach strategic importance to the project to promote China's BRI through Tibetan Buddhism, Qin said. Soft power like religion, if used properly, will convert to hard power, Xiong Kunxin, an ethnic studies professor at Tibet University in Lhasa, told the daily. During this year's International Buddhist Conference, Yin Shun, the deputy head of China's Buddhist Association, noted that the construction of the China-proposed BRI has injected new energy into China-Nepal ties, the report said. China also built a relationship with Mongolia through Tibetan Buddhism, Qin said, noting that Mongolia has sent monks to study at the Lama Temple and High-level Tibetan Buddhism College of

China, both located in Beijing. Buddhism has a significant role in curbing separatism, religious extremism and terrorism while implementing the BRI because it pursues harmony and opposes violence, Xiong said.

The Tibet Autonomous Region will benefit from the BRI, which will stabilize the region and boost its economy by developing border trade and cultural tourism, wrote Zhao Kejin, deputy director of Tsinghua University's Institute of International Studies. Tibet has more than 1,700 Tibetan Buddhist temples, 46,000 monks and nuns. Zhou Wei, chief of the China Tibetology Research Centre's Institute for Religious Studies, had said. PTI