



**ARJUN KAPOOR STARTS FOOD BIZ STARTUP WITH AIM TO IMPROVE GENDER PARITY**

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**YES, THE MOUNTAINS ARE UNDER PRESSURE AND THE YOUTH MATTE**

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**JASON BATEMAN NEXT DIRECTORIAL IS THRILLER TITLED 'SHUT IN'**

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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Sikkim Police stops SPCC president from protesting CAB at MG Marg

**SAGAR CHHETRI  
GANGTOK, 12 DEC:**

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee president, Bharat Basnet, was stopped by Sikkim Police from registering his and his party's protest against the Citizen [Amendment] Bill. Mr Basnet was on his way to MG Marg to sit in dharna against CAB at the Gandhi Statue there when he was stopped by Sikkim Police at Amdo Golai on NH10 and disallowed from proceeding any further.

Mr Basnet had announced his plans to hold a protest at MG Marg while addressing a press conference yesterday and Sikkim Police went into overdrive to ensure that this did not happen. SP [East] Hari Prasad Chhetri was at MG Marg with a police team, but before he could stop Mr Basnet, another team of police personnel stopped him at Amdo Golai itself at around 12:30. The SPCC presi-

dent was proceeding to MG Marg along with other State Congress leaders at the time.

Soon, the SP-East and other senior police officials also arrived at the scene and then began around two hours of excited discussions which ended with Sikkim Police holding firm and Mr Basnet returning home.

Mr Basnet expressed his "deep disappointment" over Sikkim Police stopping him from protesting CAB.

SP-East, in turn, contended that protests or dharnas of any type are prohibited from MG Marg following a notification issued in 2011.

While they did not explain why the police could not wait till Mr Basnet had begun his "unauthorized" protest given that anticipation or suspicion is hardly enough justification for such elaborate bandobast, officials did offer an option. He could hold his



protest in front of the District Administrative Centre which is the designated spot for dharnas and protests.

The SP stressed that the police did not stop Mr Basnet from registering his protest against CAB, only that he was stopped

from doing so at MG Marg.

Mr Basnet, however, refused to shift his protest to the DAC complex and insisted that he be allowed to go to MG Marg which he insisted was his fundamental right. After an argument stretching around two hours, Mr Bas-

net finally returned home.

The SP-East explained that the SPCC president had announced his plans to hold a dharna at MG Marg and because this was not allowed, he was stopped.

"He did not even take any permission and we cannot allow pro-

tests at MG Marg as per the government notification. We have not denied his freedom of expression and he can hold the protest at the designated place in front of DAC," he said.

Addressing media-persons, Mr Basnet expressed his dissatisfaction.

"Using my fundamental rights, I just wanted to place my message peacefully in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue at MG Marg. Sikkim needs CBI, not CAB and that is what the people want," he said.

He also thanked Sikkim MPs Hishey Lachungpa and Indra Hang Subba and Congress MP, Gaurav Gogoi, for speaking for Sikkim during the CAB debate. He believes that if all political parties, organisations and individuals of the State come together, Sikkim's future can be saved. He also thanked all individuals who turned up to support his protest.

### JNU students boycott exams over fee hike issue

**NEW DELHI, DEC 12 (PTI):** The Jawaharlal Nehru University students boycotted the exams on Thursday over the hostel fee hike issue, even as the School of Sanskrit and Indic Studies (SSIS) saw students appearing for their papers. Sources said exams were also held in School of Engineering

and the Atal Bihari Vajpayee School of Management and Entrepreneurship.

Professor Hari Ram Mishra of the SSIS said there was full strength of students who appeared for exams in the 10 am to 1 pm shift.

There was no immediate reaction from the varsity administration.

### Anti-CAB stir: People defy curfew, police open fire as Assam turns into war zone

**GUWAHATI, DEC 12 (PTI):** Thousands of people defied curfew in Guwahati on Thursday and took to the streets, prompting police to open fire, even as protests against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill intensified in Assam.

Police said they had to open fire in Lalung Gaon area in Guwahati after stones were hurled by protestors. The agitators claimed that at least four persons were injured in the shooting.

Police also had to fire in the air in several other areas of the city, including the Guwahati-Shillong Road which

turned into a war zone as protestors vandalised shops and buildings, burnt tyres and clashed with security forces.

Students' body AASU and peasants' organisation KMSS called for a mega gathering at Latashil playground in the city, which was attended by hundreds of people.

Notwithstanding the restrictions, several prominent personalities from the film and music industry, including icon Zueen Garg, joined the gathering along with college and university students.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Sarbananda

Sonowal have betrayed the people of Assam by ensuring passage of the Bill," AASU advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya said at the meet.

Leaders of the AASU and the North East Students' Organization (NESO) said they will observe December 12 as 'Black Day' every year in protest against the passage of the Bill in Parliament.

Kamrup district witnessed an absolute shutdown with offices, schools and colleges closed for the day. Shops were also shut, with no transport plying as all major roads, including the NH 31, being blocked.

*Contd. Page 2*

### 315TH BIRTH ANNIV OF TEYONGSI SIRIJUNGA CELEBRATED AT MARTAM CM announces grants to help communities celebrate festivals grander

**GYALSHING, 12 DEC [IPR]:** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] attended the 315th birth anniversary of Teyongsi Sirijunga celebrations organised by Mahatma Teyongsi Sirijunga Sawan Yen Celebration Committee at Sirijunga Mangheem, Martam in West Sikkim today.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by Deputy Speaker, Sangay Lepcha; IPR Minister Lok Nath Sharma; PHE Minister Bhim Hang Subba; Political Advisor to the CM, MK Subba; SBS Chairperson, DB Gurung; Agriculture Deptt Principal Secretary, R Telang; Secretary to the CM, SD Dhakal; Horticulture Secretary, MT Sherpa; Agriculture Secretary, RC Bhutia; DC West, Karma R Bonpo; ASP West, PVG Satish; ASP Nakul Pradhan; HoD of line departments, officials and dignitaries.

The CM, in his address, appreciated the



committee's efforts in making the 315th Birth Anniversary of Teyongsi Sirijunga a grand success.

He congratulated the Limboo community for their hard work and efforts and mentioned that the birth anniversary was not just an important occasion for the Limboo community but for all Sikkimese.

The CM stated that the State of Sikkim

strives for cultural and communal harmony hence all Sikkimese festivals are to be viewed as State festivals.

He stressed on the importance of the farming community and their services to the state and how each individual is responsible for the state's progress at large.

The CM mentioned that the Model Village project inaugurated by him earlier today was

an initiative of the Government to enhance the capabilities of hardworking individuals to do much better.

He also advised the beneficiaries to use the benefits with care and absolute responsibility.

The CM made various announcements regarding the production of Milk and incentives related to it. He also stated that each dairy farmer who can produce 10 litres of milk per day

would be given special incentives and that similar incentives would also be given to the farmers and producers of agriculture and horticulture products.

The CM also urged the public to make good use of Community Recreation Centers. He also announced that the establishment of University of Animal Husbandry at Rungdu, West Sikkim would be placed soon in the Assembly.

He also mentioned that the demand for renovation and beautification of Sirijunga Mangheem would be done at the earliest. He further announced that the Teyongsi Sirijunga Study Center at Hee Patal would be further developed and completed in the coming years.

The CM also mentioned that a grant of Rs 5 lakh would be given to the celebration committees of various cultural committees during their festivals.

*Contd. Page 2*

## Why Sikkim's Citizenship – SSC and COI - Battle is not over?

**JIWAN RAI**

The lengthy litigation over the alleged fake COIs has finally been disposed with no significant outcome for those who were hoping for the allegations to be proven true. The verdict has said that the allegedly fake COIs were not forged. The only consolation for those who are concerned about the forging of COIs due to systemic weaknesses is that the state government will bring about changes in the manner of issuance of the certificate. It will now be issued on high security holographic papers and the concerned department will start digitizing the process of issuance.

How Sikkimese people in general will react to this verdict is hardly relevant to the larger context of the matter. That is precisely because Sikkim has a history of people reacting late to matters that have a significant political bearing. If a counter-narrative to the Sikkim-India merger were to be believed, in the 1975 referendum, the Sikkimese people did not vote for the merger but for the abolition of the monarchy. They displayed their disapproval of the merger at least four years later by supporting the late NB Bhandari who promised a demerging of Sikkim. But even then, the public verdict was not necessarily resounding.

The deafening silence over the court verdict in the Biraj Adhikari versus State of Sikkim and others case therefore hardly reflects the general public mood. Nor does it dismiss the case at least practically from the minds of many Sikkimese people. It may

take some time for Sikkimese people to forget the anecdotes of several of their neighbours hitchhiking in from outside and getting planted in Sikkimese soil - in a similar manner to how, according to panspermia, the supposed space-faring life-forms arrived, survived and thrived on planet Earth. The 'genuine' Sikkimese who claim their origin in this 'Sikkimese primordial soup' guarded by the Sikkim Subject Register, 1961 will never disbelieve the story of fake COIs. If it adds no substantive value to being Sikkimese, they need this story at least to justify their self-pity, 'poor-us-every-one-takes-undue-advantage-of-our-simplicity' attitude.

Laying aside the alleged forging of COIs, there are several issues concerning SSC and COI which need serious attention from those who want these documents to be truly meaningful. Let me list four of them:

**MISOGYNY:** The concept of the Sikkim Subject Certificate is premised on a patriarchal system which is highly objectionable. Many Sikkimese daughters have been cruelly deracinated simply because they married non-Sikkimese husbands. Isn't it ridiculous that Sikkimese men are conveniently silent about such a horrendous discrepancy?

**OMISSIONS:** That the Sikkim Subject Register is the data-base for issuance of Sikkim Subject Certificates and Certificates of Identification is fine but the list thereof is not exhaustive. When the enumeration

for Sikkim Subject Register was undertaken, many names were left out for various reasons. Some parents deliberately hid their children's names, fearing a tax burden. Many had migrated out of Sikkim in search of livelihood opportunities. Some had died, leaving children who also remained unlisted in the register. This is proven by the fact that there are many Sikkimese today who possess old land documents but their names are missing from the Sikkim Subject Register. Such citizens have a COI with no serial and volume number for obvious reasons which unjustifiably disqualify them from a tax exemption.

**EXPIRATION:** During the monarchy, several outsiders were employed by the Sikkim Government who were eligible for COI issuance. For reasons best known to the law framers of the day, the third generation descendants of such COI holders lose their eligibility to apply for Sikkim citizenship. In the post-Chogyal dispensation, it is patently undemocratic and even inhuman simply because it divests an entire generation of their fundamental right to citizenship.

The whole concept therefore is in dire need of urgent and smart legislative reforms. Given that it is anchored in pre-merger laws, how the present Sikkim establishment will work around it is not an easy question to answer. Also, given the fact that Sikkim politics is more emotion-driven than it is reasoning-based, one wonders whether Sikkim

will ever grow mature enough to be magnanimous towards the victims of the aforementioned flaws - namely, Sikkimese women, those whose names are missing from the Sikkim Subject Register and the third generation descendants of those outsiders who served under the Chogyal's rule.

**WEAKENING CONVICTION:** The biggest of all the challenges, is Sikkim's ability to uphold its constitutionality against the dominant political conviction at the national level. Fundamentally, these core-Sikkimese legislations have survived because of the asymmetrical federalism that Sikkim is entitled to through Article 371F. However, the structure of citizenship law is changing in India. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is just a foreshadower of what to expect nationally. A generation ago, it was absurd to think that religious identity would be the deciding factor in the citizenship of many Indians. What will unfold if a Hindu Rashtra is actualized is a question not many have the courage to ask. Believe it or not, the notion that the abrogation of Article 371F will not make much difference to Sikkim is being metastasized among a small section of the Sikkimese populace.

Sometimes, I have wondered if the Sikkimese silence over political issues such as these is strategic. Only time will tell. For now it is time for some of us to start reading into people's reluctance to realize the urgency to talk about issues that are central to our being Sikkimese.



# State-level Sakewa celebrations to be held at Paruhang Saptan Mangkhim

## SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 12 DEC:**

The state-level Sakewa celebration will be held on 16 December at Paruhang Saptan Mangkhim here at Ranka Rai Gaon. Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] is scheduled to attend as the chief guest.

Addressing a press conference here today, Sakewa Celebration Committee chief patron, Mohan Dungmali, explained that members of the Rai community were basically nature worshippers and that Sakewa was a thanksgiving to nature for the harvest.

He added that Rais have traditionally cele-



brated Sakewa at their respective homes and that a state-level celebration was an effort to bring them together to celebrate in a grander manner at one place.

"This is also an occasion to create awareness about our language, culture, tra-

ditions and heritage among the younger generation for sustained conservation and promotion," he said.

Responding to media queries, Mr Dhungmali informed that Paruhang Saptan Mangkhim at Ranka Rai Gaon was the

first "international-level" Mangkhim of the Rai community and was in the final phases of completion.

The foundation stone of the Mangkhim was laid by the then CM, Pawan Chamling, on 27 Nov, 2009. He mentioned that the

inauguration of Paruhang Saptan Mangkhim was likely to be held by June next year.

"This Mangkhim will also serve as an international research and cultural centre of the Rai community offering courses on cultural and traditional practices of the community apart from housing a library, museum, an amphitheatre and other facilities," he said.

SCC advisor, Dr SK Rai, in turn, mentioned that the festival was also to motivate and encourage the younger generation towards understanding their culture, tradition, language and practices.

## Chasok Tongnam celebrated at Ambotey



## SUMMIT REPORT

**JORETHANG, 12 DEC:**

A 315th birth anniversary of Teyongsi Sirijunga Sawan Tongnam and Chasok Tongnam were celebrated at Ambotey Mangheem under Poklok Kamrang constituency in South Sikkim today.

The program was organized by Yuma Sey Sey Me Chumbo [YSS-MC], a press release informs.

SKM party in-charge for Poklok Kamrang, KB Rai, was pres-

ent as chief guest accompanied by Krishna Kumari Rai, the Chief Minister's wife, as guest of honour, South Zilla Adakshya Tshering Dem Bhutia, BDOs, Panchayat members and the people from different walks of life.

While addressing the gathering, the chief guest called on the Limboo community to use occasions like his to reiterate their efforts to protect the identities, traditions and culture. He

also assured to provide support from the State Govt for the upgradation of the Mangheem.

Chasok Tongnam is the most important festival of the Limboo community.

Special attractions of the day were the felicitation program, Chabrun dance (Kelang), folk dance performances, Mangar dance, Tamang dance, Nepali dance and Dhaan naach.

Later, prizes were distributed to all the participants.

# IMD at Mangan

**WANGCHUK BHUTIA**

**MANGAN, 11 DEC:**

Malling Youth Club celebrated International Mountain Day at the Community Hall here on 11 Dec.

Lachen Mangan MLA, Samdup Lepcha, attended as the chief guest accompanied by Affected Citizen of Teesta general secretary Gyatso Lepcha, PN Lepcha, teachers and SKM party supporters.

During the programme, the ACT general secretary spoke about Mantam land-

slide and said that the slope collapse occurred due to the poor condition of the soil.

He also highlighted that people of Dzongu have already demanded that the Mines & Geology Department carry out a re-survey in Dzongu and rued that this has not happened yet.

He pointed out that Dzongu had been severely hit by the 2011 Earthquake and added that residents want the remaining hydel projects in Dzongu to be scrapped.

The chief guest,



while addressing the gathering, explained the significance of International Mountain Day and how, even though it was being observed for the first time in North

Sikkim, the people here have always worshipped mountains.

He also observed that officials had stayed away from the observation and that this was not a good trend.

In the evening, The Diwas Rai Project, an Eastern-Western fusion band from Gangtok, performed at the community hall as part of the day's events.

## Sikkim-BJP wants people to understand CAB before condemning it

## SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 12 DEC:**

Bharatiya Janata Party's Sikkim unit has called on people to comment on the Citizen [Amendment] Bill only after having thoroughly studied it first and also appealed to all intellectuals of the State to study the mat-

ter and place the truth in front of the people.

The Sikkim BJP president, DB Chauhan, points out that CAB has been passed by both houses of the Parliament and was a promise included in the BJP manifesto. Dissatisfaction over the Bill and the protest

against it, he said was due to misinformation spread by opposition parties.

A BJP press release adds that the Centre has cleared its stand for Sikkim but some political parties and individuals have been indulging in "politics" on the issue despite

knowing that Sikkim was protected.

The release asserts that Article 371F already provides protection to Sikkim and its old laws and that Union Home Minister Amit Shah has also clearly explained this.

The release claims

that misinformation on CAB was weakening the national integrity of the country.

The release adds that every Sikkimese needs to think seriously about the problem of influx issue and claims that the Sikkimese are losing opportunities to outsiders.

## Hindu Bangladeshis in Barak Valley happy with CAB

**GUWAHATI, DEC 12**

**(PTI):** The picture in the three Bengali dominated districts of the Barak Valley is a study in contrast to the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, which is in the throes of violence and protests against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill.

The Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh in the Bengali-dominated Cachar, Karimganj and Hilakandi districts whom PTI spoke to expressed happiness over the passage of the bill in Parliament as they are hopeful that they would now get their much sought after Indian citizenship and not remain stateless any more.

Most of them had fled their homes in Bangladesh in the face of religious persecution and had taken shelter in India.

A person from Karimganj district who identified himself as Bhola told PTI that he has been compelled to leave his home at Begumganj in Noakhali district of Bangladesh and take shelter in India as he had refused to agree to a Muslim's proposal to wed his daughter.

"I have two daugh-

ters and one son. The man wanted to marry my 16-year-old daughter. I refused to give my permission and that very night he and some Muslim persons attacked my house. We were forced to hide in the jungles.... Nobody gave shelter to my family and we were forced to come to India," he recounted.

The man said he along with his family had entered Karimganj via Tripura.

"Now my family can be saved by CAB and we can get Indian citizenship. My family is very happy," Bhola said.

Biswajit Nath, who is also from Karimganj, said he was born there but neither his nor his family members' names were not in the final National Register of Citizens.

"We had submitted all the necessary details but our names did not figure in the NRC list. My family members were under mental pressure.

"We have found a new life since the CAB was passed last night. We can now get Indian citizenship," he said.

Similar sentiments were expressed in Hai-

lakandi district by a person named Benu Das, who was released from a detention camp after nearly four years.

Das said he is not aware of the provisions of the CAB but is hopeful of getting Indian citizenship.

In Cachar district, the family of 60-year-old Sulekha Das is hopeful of getting her released from the detention camp at Udarbound.

"Only time will say whether my mother-in-law will get Indian citizenship. But the main priority for the family is to get her released from the detention camp," said her daughter-in-law.

Nabadwip Das, also from Cachar, said he had come to India during the Bangladesh Liberation War from Bhanugach in Sylhet district of Bangladesh.

Das said he is very happy that the bill has been passed by Parliament as he has no Indian citizenship certificate and was anxious about the fate of his children.

"I feel my problem will end now. My children will now get Indian citizenship on the basis of the CAB," he said.

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## Anti-CAB stir:....

Police said they had to fire three rounds in the air in Rangia town as protestors threw stones and burnt tyres.

Agitators were also baton-charged at several places in the town.

Police also fired in the air in Golaghat district to disperse protestors who blocked the NH 39, officials said.

Tea garden workers stopped work in Lakhimpur and Charaideo districts and also at Numaligarh in Golaghat district and some areas in Tinsukia district.

All educational institutions across the state are closed.

Five columns of the Army have been deployed in different parts of the state and are conducting flag marches in Guwahati, Tinsukia, Jorhat and Dibrugarh, officials said.

Several flights and trains to and from Assam have also been cancelled.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslim refugees coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan after facing religious persecution there.

## 315TH BIRTH ANNIV...

The CM also made a special mention to the Citizen [Amendment] Bill announcing that the Central Government has given preference to Sikkim and that Article 371 F would be protected at all costs.

Mr Tamang thanked the Union Home Minister for his gesture towards Sikkim and Article 371F.

The Minister, in his address, mentioned his happiness for the program and its success. He extended his gratitude towards the CM for his presence which made the event more auspicious. He also informed that the Model Village would be a good initiative for the public where all necessary equipment and other materials were provided by the Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry Department.

He also directed that the officials to help the beneficiaries with the given equipment.

Tokens for various schemes, equipment and other necessary items under Agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and Fisheries to encourage the farming community of West Sikkim were given to beneficiaries by the CM.

The inauguration of the Model Village for Chingthang GPU and two wards of Bermiok-Berthang GPU were done by the CM. The Bermiok Community Hall was also inaugurated by CM prior to the program.

Also during the program, a book titled, "Jholangi," authored by SD Dhakal translated in Limboo language by KB Limboo, was released by the CM.

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## ANTHESTHI KRIYA



The Anthesthi Kriya of Late D. B. Chettri of 5th Mile, Tadong, who left for heavenly abode on 5th of December, 2019, falls on the 17th of December, 2019, Tuesday.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our relatives, friends, well wishers, who supported us during the hour of bereavement. We would also wish to invite all of you to join us in the last rites to offer prayer for the eternal peace of our father at our residence at 5th Mile, Tadong, below Saraswati Mandir, Gangtok.

**Kirti & Binata Kumari & Agni Pavitra & Beeru Raju & Doma Sita & Sonam**

## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### 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



# Dr Ambedkar Fellowship Award for Poonam Lakhandri



## SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 12 DEC:**

Gangtok-based journalist, Poonam Lakhandri, was conferred the Dr Ambedkar Fellowship Award 2019 in recognition of her contributions to

journalism.

Ms Lakhandri works with Nayuma News Channel besides contributing for All India Radio, Gangtok.

The award was presented in New Delhi during the 35th Na-

tional Conference of Dalit Writers organised by the Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya Akademi on 08 December.

In all, nine individuals from Sikkim were feted at the event.

Expressing happi-

ness over the award, Ms Lakhandri said the award has brought her joy and shouldered her with more responsibility to work harder and to serve the society through journalism.

## Protest at India Gate against citizenship amendment bill

**NEW DELHI, DEC 12**

**(PTI):** A motley group of protesters gathered at the India Gate here protesting against the "divisive" Citizenship Amendment Bill which passed the Rajya Sabha hurdle on Wednesday.

The protesters raised anti-BJP and anti-government slogans and asked the President not to sign the Bill into a law.

The police appealed the playcard-carrying protesters to disperse but to no avail.

Many protesters live streamed the protest on

Twitter and Facebook, while others turned on the flashlights of their mobile phones, lighting up the protest site.

"Now, the decision will be made on the street. This Bill will perish before it is born. The people of India have time and again rejected such Bills. The government wants to bring it through a C-section surgery, but it will perish in the process," one of the protesters, Kapil Sharma, 45, said.

The protesters, who filled the air with the

sound of their claps and dhapli, urged President Ram Nath Kovind not to sign the Bill, "which divides society on the basis of religion, into a law".

"The President is the representative of the people of India. If the people reject it, how can the President sign it," Sharma said.

"The President should strike down the Bill, before the Supreme Court do so. If he is your President, he is my President too," a student, Khalid, 25, said.

The Indian Union Muslim League has approached the Supreme Court against the citizenship bill. Its petition argues that the proposed law violates the Constitution by allowing citizenship based on religion.

Completing the legislative process for giving Indian citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, the contentious bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. The Lok Sabha had cleared it on Monday.

## Anti-CAB protests: Mobile Internet, messaging services withdrawn in Meghalaya

**SHILLONG, DEC 12 (PTI):**

The Meghalaya government on Thursday withdrew mobile Internet and messaging services across the state for the next 48 hours due to deteriorating law and order situation triggered by protests over contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, officials said.

The services have been withdrawn since 5 pm Thursday.

The district adminis-

tration in the state capital has also clamped curfew in areas under two police stations in view of the "serious" deterioration of law and order.

The curfew will come into effect from 10 pm to night till further orders, they said.

Additional Home Secretary C V D Diengdoh issued the order after receiving inputs from the police and the district administrations across the

state, they said.

"Messaging platforms like SMS, WhatsApp and social media platforms like facebook, twitter and You Tube are likely to be used for transmission of information through pictures, videos and text that have the potential to cause civil unrest and exacerbate the law and order situation," Diengdoh said in the order.

Burning and vandalisation of vehicles this

afternoon led to chaotic situation in the Police Bazaar area and Jew Duh area, resulting in imposition of curfew in all neighbourhoods that include areas under Sadar PS and Lumdingjiri PS, District deputy commissioner M W Nongbri told PTI.

She said at least 20 localities will be affected by the curfew which will be effective from 10 pm tonight until further orders.

# Aurora begins at Sunrise Academy



## SUMMIT REPORT

**RANGPO, 12 DEC:**

Rhenock MLA Bishnu Kumar Khatiwada inaugurated the nine-day talent hunt student festival, Aurora 2019, at Sunrise Academy, Duga, under West Pandam constituency in East Sikkim today, a press release informs.

Organising committee president, DB Chettri, in his informed that such a program was being held in the area for the first time.

The MLA, in his address, congratulated the entire organizing team the initiative and shared that the State Government was also

considering a policy to provide a national and International platform for local talent.

As part of the Fest, a two-day Indo-Nepal Karate Championship, organized by Sikkim United Karate-DO-As-sociation, also got underway today with more than 100 martial

artists from Sikkim, Nepal, Siliguri, Darjeeling and the surrounding areas participating.

Auditions were also held for the dance competition organized as part of the festival.

A stall put up by Namchi Candles also drew large crowds.

## Easter Himalaya represented at IMD workshop in Almora



## SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 12 DEC:**

International Mountain Day was observed at GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment & Sustainable Development, at Kosi Katarmal, Almora on 11 Dec with around 300 scientists, researchers, policy makers and farmers from all over India and

Nepal in attendance.

To celebrate this day, the GBPNHESD, Almora in collaboration with the MoEF&CC, NMSHE, Bird, CHEA, ICIMOD (Nepal), WWF, BSI, ZSI, ICAR, Tata trust, UNDP, IUCN and WII organized a three-day workshop on "Himalaya Matters in a Changing World" from

09-11 Dec, 2019.

A team consisting of nine scientists and professionals and three students participated in this event from the Khangchendzonga Landscape India.

Ujjal Ghosh, CCF Wildlife North West Bengal, Dr DP Pradhan, Addl Director, Animal Husband-

ry Department, Prof Deepak Jhajharia, CAEPHT, Dr Sunita Pradhan, ATREE, Dr MS Foning, DISHA-Kalimpong, Dr Rajesh Joshi, Dr D Kumar, GBPNHESD, Dr Kailash S Gaira, Dr DK Agarawala represented Khangchendzonga Landscape India at the workshop.

## Bus terminus set on fire in Assam's Dibrugarh

**DIBRUGARH (ASSAM), DEC 12 (PTI):**


A bus terminus of the Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) in Dibrugarh was set ablaze by protestors on Thursday, officials said. A large number of people reached the ASTC terminus at the Chowkidingi area of the city and vandalised the complex and set it on fire, they said.

Army and fire tenders were rushed and they doused the flames without much damage, a senior district official said.

Senior officials of the district administration, including an additional deputy commissioner, are at the spot and monitoring the situation.

The state has been on edge as thousands of angry persons protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill came out on streets defying curfew, thumbing their nose at Army contingents staging flag marches, and clashing with police across cities.

Two persons have died in Guwahati after police opened fire on protestors, an official said.



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## Mangan Nagar Panchayat Mangan, North Sikkim

It is notified for the information that the Mangan Nagar Panchayat has declared all wards under its jurisdiction of Open Defection Free Plus (ODF+) as per the protocol laid down by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of India as a part of Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban.

Feedbacks/objections in this matter are invited from the General Public within fifteen (15) days from issued of this notice.

Sd/-  
Municipal Executive Officer  
Mangan Nagar Panchayat

  
**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**  
**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**  
**TASHILING, GANGTOK**

No.Exam/2019-20/44

Dated 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2019

## NOTIFICATION

It is hereby notified for general information of all concerned that the Government has decided to postpone the State Teacher's Eligibility Test, 2019 (STET) scheduled to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2019 (Saturday) till further order.

Sd/-  
Director-Examination,  
Education Department



## Pahads and Pahadis

*Yes, the mountains are under pressure and the youth matter*

11 December was International Mountain Day. It passed largely unobserved in Sikkim as perhaps it went forgotten across most of India which is unfortunate because the theme this year was significant – “Mountains Matter for Youth”.

Pressures of modernity put too much stress on mountain lifestyles, and what is worse, the ‘development’ model of the plains is being increasingly imposed on Hill People. Nation-building is ruthlessly invoked to force mountain people to side-step sustainability practiced through generations and allow the recklessly ill-informed plunder of their resources. And one group that will suffer the most as a result and has no say in how things are done are the youth. The margins are under stress because of the greed of the plains. This has strained the careful balance that hill communities have evolved after generations of living with the environment as against the mainstream civilisational model which is built on the exploitation of natural resources. The demand for resources abundant in the mountains has always been there, but the pressure has increased in the past half a century or so; a coercive pressure which the mountain communities have not been able to resist or manage too effectively.

The disintegration of mountain environments has accelerated as more and more hill communities converted to lifestyles which distanced them from the land which was earlier integral to their livelihoods and survival. This is not to suggest that hill societies should be discouraged from aspiring for and acquiring modern luxuries and amenities and stay locked away, paused in a moment in time as museum pieces. The rush of modernity has however been too quick and the rootedness to the land which defines all rural populations [which most hill societies were until very recently] was snapped too suddenly in the hills. The crossover not being smooth, the communities felt themselves maladjusted and this is obvious in the crumbling urban infrastructure and desolate ruralscapes which define mountains at least in our country and increasingly also in Sikkim.

The observance of International Mountain Day on the theme “Mountains Matter for Youth” would have thus presented an apt opportunity not only for the plainsfolk to learn about how things were in the mountains [and continue to be in some pockets], but also for the Hill People to begin the process of anchoring their identities and responsibilities with more purpose and through that process, begin to prepare better for changes which are going to hit them hard. The Youth need to be involved in this process of relearning and rediscovery and course corrections.

The Day itself marks the anniversary of the International Year of Mountains as designated by the UN for the year 2002, and IMD was then projected to “achieve a stronger engagement of actors/ institutions and the civil society in sustainable mountain development”. This approach, tied with the theme for the day this year, would have been best served if sustainable mountain development programmes were based more on traditional arrangements of the hill people instead of the powerpoint presentations by resource persons speaking in generalisations which strike no resonance with the ‘stakeholders’. It is another matter that even that did not happen and there are no surprises there because although mountains cover approximately one-quarter of the world’s surface, it is home to barely 12% of the human population. The voice of the hill people does not thus carry very far when it comes to framing policy and establishing priorities.

Thus far they have been spoken on behalf of, sometimes by well-meaning and informed well-wishers and also as often by opportunistic issue mongers or condescending elites. If a world body accepts that Mountain Life is under “pressure”, it is perhaps time that the mountain people were allowed direct access, a voice that is truly representative of what is at risk not only for them but also the rest of the world if the mountains, its ecological balance and its people are allowed to crumble away. The pahadis have been pushed around for so long that one begins spying conspiracies when the purpose of International Mountain Day 2019 is introduced as being one to bring focus to that the youth matter after corporate houses in cahoots with policy makers have sold fictions like “sustainable development in mountain regions” and “eradication of poverty in mountain regions”.

# Why Myanmar is charged with genocide of Rohingya Muslims

CATESBY HOLMES

THECONVERSATION.COM

Myanmar’s leader Aung San Suu Kyi is defending Myanmar in court against accusations of genocide.

According to a case brought by the country of Gambia at the United Nations’ International Court of Justice, the Myanmar military in August 2017 carried out a systematic, targeted campaign of terror, rape and murder against its Muslim population.

UN investigators say as many as 10,000 Rohingya – a Muslim minority in this Buddhist-majority nation – were killed. Another 730,000 Rohingya fled the massacre for Bangladesh, joining 300,000 Rohingya who had previously fled oppression in Myanmar.

Suu Kyi said during hearings at the Hague on Dec. 11 that the charge of genocide is “misleading” because “cycles of intercommunal violence” in Myanmar date “back to the 1940s.” The Myanmar military explains its campaign as a counter-terrorism effort against a violent Rohingya extremist group.

The Conversation has been following the Rohingya crisis closely. Here’s what you need to know about this persecuted Muslim group.

### 1. A BRITISH COLONIAL LEGACY

The Rohingya story begins well before the 1940s, with the British colonization of Myanmar in the 1820s.

The British encouraged migrant laborers to come and work the rice fields of Myanmar, drawing many Rohingya into the country from neighboring areas. Census records show that between 1871 and 1911, the Buddhist country’s Muslim population tripled, according to Engy Abdelkader of Rutgers University.

In exchange for political support, the British promised to give the Rohingya their own Muslim territory within Myanmar, then called Burma. But Myanmar gained its independence in 1948, leaving the Rohingya to be ruled by a government they had not backed.

Myanmar officials didn’t just reject the Rohingyas’ request for an autonomous state, Abdelkader says. “Calling them foreigners, they also denied them citizenship,” she writes.

Within a few years, many Rohingya staged a rebellion against the new Myanmar government. It was brutally crushed, beginning a decadeslong cycle of repression that culminated, eventually, in the August 2017 massacre.

### 2. FALL FROM GRACE

Aung San Suu Kyi once seemed like a leader unlikely to defend gross human rights violations.

Before taking power in Myanmar in 2016, Suu Kyi was a Nobel Peace Prize winner. She had been imprisoned and then exiled, for fighting to bring human rights and democracy to this longtime military dictatorship. Her win in Myanmar’s first-ever democratic elections three years ago was celebrated worldwide.

Soon, however, Suu Kyi’s “international reputa-



tion would be in tatters,” write Anthony Ware and Costas Laoutides.

They cite Myanmar’s jailing of two Reuters reporters who in 2017 documented the atrocities committed against the Rohingya as the beginning of Suu Kyi’s fall from grace as a moral leader.

“It is notable that it was Suu Kyi’s civilian government that prosecuted the journalists, not the military,” they write.

Then came her apparent indifference to the suffering of the Rohingya. As reports of ethnic cleansing emerged, the world reacted with disbelief as Suu Kyi stayed silent.

### 3. GENOCIDE IS DOCUMENTED

In September 2018, the United Nations released a searing report detailing state violence against the Rohingya and demanding that Myanmar’s military leadership be held accountable for “genocide.”

The use of this blunt and powerful word was intentional, write Max Pensky and Nadia Rubaii, who study mass atrocities at Binghamton University.

“In the complex world of global diplomacy, using the term “genocide” to describe a state’s attacks on its own population is extremely rare,” they write. “Genocide occurs when any number of violent acts are taken with the ‘intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.’”

Since the creation of the United Nations after World War II, few countries have been accused of genocide, among them Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

After the UN’s report drew global attention to the atrocities in her country, Suu Kyi publicly defended the military’s campaign against the Rohingya.

“With hindsight, we might think that the situation could have been handled better,” was her sole public expression of regret.

### 4. LIFE IN LIMBO

As Suu Kyi tries to avert prosecution by the Hague, the nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh live with danger and uncertainty.

## Researchers asked 2,500 Jewish and Muslim people what they find offensive – here’s what they said

JULIAN HARGREAVES

THECONVERSATION.COM

Accusations of antisemitism have been swirling around the Labour Party since Jeremy Corbyn’s election as leader in 2015. He has been accused of harbouring antisemitic views and offering public support to party colleagues labelled as antisemitic. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party have faced accusations of “en-demic” Islamophobia.

In the run-up to the 2019 general election, the main political parties have repeatedly accused each other of antisemitism and Islamophobia. Away from politics, there are widespread concerns about prejudice targeting Jews and Muslims. But the narratives are often simplistic and without supporting data. We hear much from politicians, community leaders and experts. We hear far less from “everyday” people and know relatively little about what Jewish and Muslim members of the public are likely to find offensive.

A recent study, published in Ethnic and Racial Studies, is the first known study to compare antisemitism and Islamophobia using statistics and found varying levels of sensitivity towards antisemitism and Islamophobia among British Jewish and Muslim communities. The study offers a rare insight into the sensitivities of “everyday” people within both communities.

Statements designed to reflect antisemitic attitudes were shown to nearly 1,500 Jewish people, and 1,000 Muslim respondents were shown statements designed to be Islamophobic:

#### ATTITUDES TOWARDS JEWS:

- Israelis behave ‘like Nazis’ to-

wards the Palestinians

- Does not consider Jews living in the UK to be British

- Jews are not capable of integrating into British society

- The interests of Jews in the UK are very different from the interests of the rest of the population

- Jews have too much power in British economy, politics, media

- The Holocaust is a myth or has been exaggerated

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MUSLIMS

- Most Muslims sympathise with terrorists

- British Muslims do not share western values

- British Muslims have no interest in integrating into British society

- The interests of Muslims in Britain are very different from the interests of the rest of the population

- Muslims have too much influence in Britain

- Muslims often overreact to criticism of the their religion

There was more certainty within the Jewish group about whether the statements were antisemitic or not. For each statement, only 1-3% of Jewish respondents answered “don’t know”. The Muslim group were less certain. For each Islamophobic statement shown to the Muslim respondents, between 15% and 22% answered “don’t know”.

Jewish respondents and Muslim respondents who knew how to “diagnose” the statements differed in their sensitivity towards them. The most offensive anti-Jewish statement was the statement about the Holocaust: 96% of Jews considered it antisemitic. Other statements were perceived as antisemitic by between 82% and 94% of Jews – large absolute majorities. Description of Israelis as being Nazi-like towards the Palestinians was seen as antisemitic by the smallest absolute

majority of Jews, 73%. In stark contrast, none of the statements about attitudes towards Muslims were seen as Islamophobic by a majority of Muslim respondents.

#### DIFFERENCES WITHIN EACH GROUP

The study also found differences within each group. Jewish respondents aged over 40 were between 80% and 90% more likely to be sensitive than those aged between 18 and 39. Age was not a factor for Muslim respondents.

Education played an important role for both groups, but seemed to push sensitivity in opposite directions. Muslim respondents with degrees were 63% more likely to find all statements offensive. They were 70% more likely to be sensitive about Muslims not sharing western values. By contrast, Jewish respondents with degrees were 35% less likely than those without to be sensitive towards the linking of Israelis and Nazis. Jewish respondents in education were 66% less likely than those in employment to be sensitive to all the statements. They were 56% less likely to be sensitive to the linking of Israelis and Nazis.

Being born in the UK made a difference for both Jewish and Muslim groups. Jewish respondents born in the UK were 40% less likely to be sensitive towards the linking of Israelis and Nazis than those born in the rest of Europe. By contrast, UK-born Muslim respondents were around twice as likely as those born in Asia to be sensitive to all the statements

#### EXPLAINING THE FINDINGS

What does it all mean? How are we to explain the findings? The role of age in shaping sensitivity among the Jewish respondents could reflect

Bangladesh has tried its best to manage the refugee crisis, says Cornell University professor Sabrina Karim, who visited refugee camps there in January 2018. The government established a new agency to coordinate international humanitarian aid and sent soldiers to guard sprawling new settlements in a previously uninhabited border area.

“But there are other issues that the government cannot completely control,” Karim writes.

That includes communicable diseases like the bacterial throat infection diphtheria, which has killed 45 Rohingya in Bangladesh since 2017, as well as malnutrition.

“Additionally,” observes Karim, “there are concerns about environmental damage as the government cleared forest reserve land to build the camps.”

### 5. A LOST GENERATION

When scholar Rubayat Jesmin visited the Rohingya camps in July 2019, it was their youngest residents that most worried her.

“It is a dismal existence for all,” writes Jesmin, a Bangladeshi doctoral student at Binghamton University. “But it is the plight of the roughly 500,000 Rohingya children living in limbo that strikes me as bleakest.”

Though some Rohingya children take part-time classes from aid groups or Islamic schools operating in the camps, they are not permitted to attend Bangladeshi public schools. Rohingya children in Bangladesh have no access to a formal education and no way to earn degrees.

Growing up in unstable conditions, with no possibility of study, Jesmin says Rohingya children “are at risk of becoming a lost generation.”

Jesmin met a Rohingya boy, seven-year-old Mohammed, whose eyes lit up when he told her he wanted to be a doctor. But, he quickly added,

“I know my dreams will never come true.”

*[the writer is Religion Editor/ International Editor, The Conversation US]*

the role of memory around the Holocaust and events such as the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the 1967 Six-Day War. Pivotal events shaping Islamophobia – the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, 9/11 and 7/7 – are more recent. When it comes to British Muslims and Islamophobia, perhaps the present matters more than the past.

Being born in the UK appeared to increase sensitivity for Muslim respondents but not for Jewish respondents. Perhaps present conditions in the UK are more likely to shape sensitivity towards Islamophobia than antisemitism (although the ongoing Labour Party row may be flattening out such differences).

The role of education suggests that understandings of Islamophobia are not equally distributed among British Muslims. This contrasts with antisemitism, with its longer history as a concept and demonstrably wider reach. Islamophobia is often debated at an elite-level in ways that are not always communicable to a wider audience. For example, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims’ use of “expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness” being targeted in its definition of Islamophobia seems highly likely to evade everyday understandings. Whatever the true explanation, simplified descriptions of the impacts of antisemitism and Islamophobia on Jewish or Muslim communities simply won’t do. The study shows that assuming all Jews and all Muslims react to antisemitism and Islamophobia in the same way is likely to be inaccurate.

*[the writer is Senior Research Fellow at the Woolf Institute, Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge]*

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## Airlines cancel flights to Assam



**NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI, DEC 12 (PTI):** Airlines on Thursday cancelled flights to various cities in Assam in the wake of unrest in the state.

IndiGo, Vistara, Air India, SpiceJet and GoAir are among the carriers that have cancelled their flights.

With respect to the ongoing unrest situation in Assam, a few Guwahati and Dibrugarh-bound flights have been cancelled on Thursday, an IndiGo spokesperson said in a statement.

"We are operating relief flights at capped fares for passengers who are currently at these locations," the statement said.

The airline has waived rescheduling/cancellation for passen-

gers travelling to and from Guwahati, Dibrugarh and Jorhat till December 13.

In a tweet, Vistara said it has cancelled flights "as per government advice due to current disturbances in Assam".

"Flight UK725 (IXB-DIB) and UK726 (DIB-IXB) are cancelled for today. We are offering free change/cancellation to Guwahati and Dibrugarh flights through Sunday, December 15," it said.

An Air India spokesperson said that only its flights between Kolkata and Dibrugarh have been cancelled.

A GoAir spokesperson said the airline has cancelled flights to Assam on Thursday.

Calls and messages to Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Khrola seeking comments on the ministry's advisory to cancel flights to Assam did not elicit any immediate response.

Assam has been witnessing unrest in the wake of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), which was passed by Parliament on Wednesday.

The proposed amendments seek to grant citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan facing persecution there. Guwahati, the epicentre of anti-CAB protests, was placed under indefinite curfew on Wednesday night while the Army was called in at four places.

## JNU holds meeting with hostel presidents

**NEW DELHI, DEC 12 (PTI):** A meeting is underway between the Jawaharlal Nehru University administration and the hostel presidents on Thursday to discuss issues related to hostels.

The JNU administration had called the

meeting of all hostel presidents at 12.30 pm to discuss matters related to hostel affairs, according to Chintamani Mahapatra, Rector-I of the varsity.

He said a meeting with all deans of schools and chairpersons of

special centres had also been scheduled to discuss matters related to holding of end-semester examinations.

Students boycotted exams on the first day on Thursday in protest against the hike in hostel fees.

## West Bengal CM inaugurates field office of Tajpur port

**DIGHA, DEC 11 (PTI):** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday inaugurated the field office of the Tajpur port, which will be set up in West Bengal's Purba Medinipur district.

The state government had earlier this year announced plans to develop the Tajpur deep sea port on its own.

The chief minister inaugurated the office through a remote link from the podium of the Bengal Business Conclave being held here.

She later announced that the next Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) will be held on December 15-16, 2020.

On the inaugural day of the business meet, there was proposal from ITC for fresh investments to the tune of Rs 1,700 crore in personal care products segment, an official of the group said.

Wagon mak-



er Titagarh Wagons vice-chairman and managing director Umesh Chowdhary said that his company has received a contract from the Pune Metro for aluminium coaches, which are being built with Italian technology in Uttarpara.

"We are also training more than 100 young engineers and they will be going to Italy for training. The project will generate revenue of Rs 2,500 crore in the next five years and employ more than 1,000 people," he said.

He said the group has also started building ships for the Navy and

ocean research purposes and are planning to expand the operations.

"We are in touch with Finance Minister Amit Mitra for land," Chowdhury said.

Harshavardhan Neotia, chairman of the Ambuja Neotia Group, announced plans to build a five-star hotel in the state, while proposal of constructing another four-star accommodation in partnership with Hyatt was also made.

At the inaugural session of the business meet, three Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) were signed.

## Stones thrown at Assam police chief's convoy in Guwahati

**GUWAHATI, DEC 12 (PTI):** Stones were thrown at Assam Police chief Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta's convoy on Thursday when he was touring the city, ravaged by violent protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

The cavalcade was on the Guwahati-Shillong Road near Chris-

tian Basti where it was attacked. Stones were thrown at several vehicles in the convoy that was on its way from the Secretariat.

The convoy had to stop several times as the entire stretch was blocked by protesters who put up wooden structures and iron

barricades.

When the vehicles stopped in the Christian Basti area and security personnel were clearing the road, some protesters threw stones. No one was hurt and no damage occurred.

Stones also hit the vehicle of this PTI journalist who was at the spot.

## World Bank suggests creating 'brand northeast'

Kolkata, Dec 12 (PTI): The central government should consider creating a brand for the northeast to better leverage the potential of the region, the World Bank said.

The 'brand northeast' should be built on elements such as healthy living, environmental sustainability, social responsibility and the service sector, a World Bank study has suggested.

"The study shows agriculture and service sectors have the greatest potential in the northeast. The relative com-

parative advantage of the region can be harnessed in fruits and vegetables, spices, bamboo and medical tourism," Sanjay Kathuria, lead economist and coordinator of the World Bank, told PTI on Thursday.

Kathuria said for promoting these sectors, there is a need for better coordination among state governments of the northeast and creation of a brand for the region.

"The initiative will require coordination among state govern-



ments of the region which can best be done by DoNER Ministry and the North East Council (NEC)," he said.

Kathuria said while global branding exercise could be leveraged for

promoting individual products from the region, cluster promotional activities for specific sectors and value chains will further help in the efforts.

The branding cam-

paign should also stress on the intrinsic strengths of the region, he said.

The World Bank official said the objective is to create more employment opportunities, particularly for women and the poor.

"This is particularly because women comprise a high percentage of the labour force in the northeast," he said.

Kathuria also stressed on the need for improved connectivity between the northeastern states and other parts of India.

## AASU, KMSS call for a protest in Guwahati

**GUWAHATI, DEC 12 (PTI):** Despite imposition of curfew in two places of Assam, students' body AASU and peasants organisation KMSS have asked people to step out of their homes at 11 am here on Thursday to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill that was cleared in Parliament.

An indefinite curfew had been imposed in Guwahati and Dibrugarh since Wednesday evening while the Army was called in at four places, including the state capital, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Jorhat districts.

"This fight against the bill will be very long. We urge people to come out and join the protest gathering at 11 am at Latashil field in Guwahati," All Assam Students' Union (AASU) chief advisor Samujjal



Bhattacharya told reporters.

Popular singer Zubeen Garg also appealed to people and the artist community to join the AASU-led programme.

Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) advisor Akhil Gogoi said "We request people to come out of their home

and protest against this communal legislation. We appeal to people not to damage public property."

Meanwhile, tea garden workers stopped work in Lakhimpur and Charaideo districts and also at Numaligarh in Golaghat district and some areas in Tinsukia district.

All educational institutions across the state are closed.

Internet services have been suspended in 10 districts,

beginning 7 pm on Wednesday, as massive protests raged across cities, to prevent "misuse" of social media to disturb peace and tranquility and maintain

law and order.

Thousands of anti-CAB protesters had descended on the streets of Assam on Wednesday, clashing with police and plunging the state into chaos of a magnitude unseen since the violent six-year movement by students that ended with the signing of the Assam accord.

## 3 French cyclists cross trouble-torn Guwahati enroute to Myanmar

**GUWAHATI, DEC 12 (PTI):** Three French cyclists, who travelled through the streets of Guwahati on their bicycles on Thursday on way to Shillong amidst the indefinite curfew, said they did not face any problem from the protestors or the police.

The three - Cedric, Chummany and Mikael said they are on a cross continent cycle trip from France to Myanmar.

The three said that they had entered India from Nepal a week ago.

Asked by a PTI correspondent, who met the cyclists in front of the state secretariat, whether they had faced any problem due to the large scale protests against the Citizenship Amendment Bill and the indefinite curfew, Cedric said "No problem".

"In some places police stopped us and asked us why we are cycling during protests. When we told them we are on a cycling trip from



France to Myanmar, they allowed us to go," he said.

Cedric, who is in his 40s, said "Curfew is not new to us. We have seen such situations (curfew) in France too. We have lot of protests against the government in our country."

Asked whether they are scared, he said "a little".

"But local people have helped us a lot by telling us which roads to avoid."

"We cycle during the

day and take rest in any lodge or hotel at night," Cedric said.

About the route the cyclists will take, he said they will go to Shillong from Guwahati and then move to Silchar.

From Silchar they

will cycle to Manipur and then enter Myanmar through Moreh.

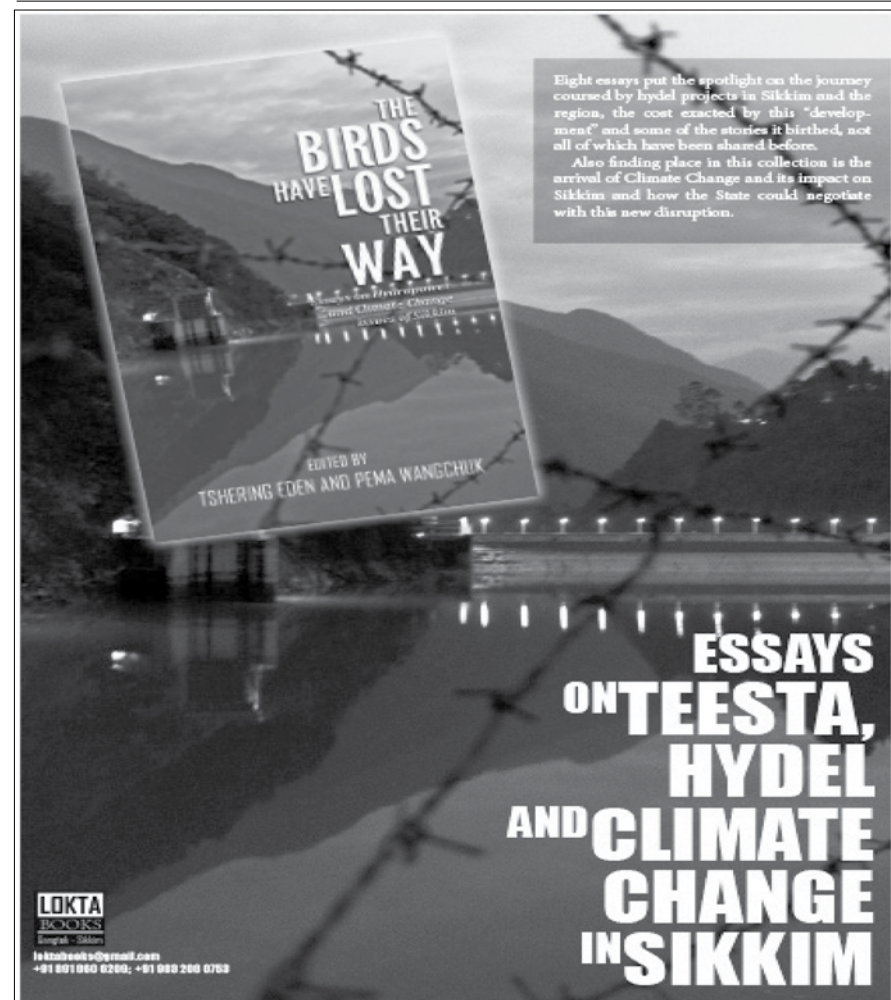
They travelled through the arterial Guwahati-Shillong Road to reach the Meghalaya capital which virtually turned into a war zone

as protestors vandalised shops and buildings, burnt tyres and clashed with security forces.

An Indian guide is with the three French nationals to help them pass safely through Guwahati.

Thousands of people defied curfew in Guwahati on Thursday and took to the streets, prompting the police to open fire even as protests against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill intensified in Assam.

Police said they had to open fire in Lalung Gaon area in Guwahati after stones were hurled by protestors. The agitators claimed that at least four persons were injured in the shooting.





# Champions League's full English another staging post in march of the superclubs



**BARNEY RONAY**  
**THEGUARDIAN**

Well, fancy seeing you here. For all the pep and vim, the high-energy caffeine-football combinations of Red Bull Salzburg, there was a feeling of certainty about Liverpool's progress to the last 16 of the Champions League.

The ability of Jürgen Klopp's team to win even when the opposition bring their A-game has been a feature of the season. A simple explanation, beyond luck and "LIVARpool" conspiracy theory, is that their base levels are just so high. This is a team of extreme qualities: physical strength, speed, attacking skills. They have more ways to win, more ways to wear you down, like a heavyweight champ who can dawdle through five rounds and still produce at any stage that lights-out right-hander.

At the end of which victory for Liverpool on Tuesday, combined with Chelsea's defeat of Lille at Stamford Bridge, was significant in other ways. Four English teams out of four will enter the draw for the last 16 of the Champions League. It is a full house completed with a match-day to spare, making it three

years in a row that no English team has failed to reach the knockout stages.

Even here there is a degree of uniformity. The same four teams, with the addition of Manchester United, have occupied the Premier League spots across that three-year period.

It is all part of a wider trend. Worried about the anticompetitive effects of a conference-style European super league, about the oligarchical giants seizing the means of production (sorry, Gazprom!), about the grabbing hands grabbing all they can? Don't fret. We're already there anyway. Well, almost. Eleven of the top 16 richest clubs in Europe are in that Champions League last 16.

Look down the Uefa rankings and the only missing faces are Arsenal, Sevilla, Manchester United, Roma and Porto, none of whom made it to the group stages, excluded from the top table by the pesky uncertainties of sporting competition.

The only real surprises in the post-Christmas lineup are the elimination of Ajax, ranked 21 in Europe, at the hands of Valencia, ranked 28; and the ousting of Benfica,

ranked 20, by Zenit St Petersburg, ranked 22. RB Leipzig are the only real outsiders, ranked 43 by Uefa and a fine example of corporate "disruption", a startup team, brilliantly run and managed, but a piece of ambush marketing as much as a long-treasured sporting dream.

Does any of this matter? It is 28 seasons since European football set itself on this path with the abandonment of the old format. The chief effect has been the kind of economic common market Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn preached against, a feat of uber-capitalism whereby superclub corporations are born and stronger markets allowed to dominate the small and the weak.

There were 16 different flags in the last 16 of the final European Cup. That had fallen to 10 by 2015-16, to seven last season and even fewer this time. Ajax provided the perfect case study this season. Semi-finalists last year, a team built on good husbandry and good practice, but deprived instantly of their two best players by the Euro giants and demoted at a stroke to also-rans.

Again, does any of this matter? Perhaps

not as much as it might at first glance. For one thing the Premier League has only really found its stride in the last two seasons. These cycles come and go, based more often in details and good management. The more remarkable part of the last quarter century is how competitive European football still is at that top end, how resilient it remains.

Plus of course a high-class football team is a thing of beauty however it comes into being. The transformation of Chelsea from dour oligarch's trinket to exemplar of youth, parsimony and exuberant football has been an enforced act of alchemy. But the team who beat Lille featured eight different nationalities, three academy products and have been a joy to watch this season.

Similarly Tottenham have spent £120m, net, in the last four years, have been brilliantly well-managed and are shot through with homegrown players. Liverpool's ascent provides a more salutary kind of model: enlightened management crossed with unanswerable finances and a powerful, geographical-

ly rooted sense of identity. You don't have to be a financial juggernaut to dominate European club football but it helps if you're also an exceptionally well-run football machine.

Of these three clubs Chelsea look the most vulnerable over two legs at this level, a team who attack with abandon and often defend the same way. The presence of José Mourinho at Spurs has been hailed as an elevation to instant European dark horse status, which tends to overlook the fact Mourinho has mustered one losing semi-final in the last six years.

Liverpool clearly have it in them to win this competition again, although it would involve pushing the boundaries: no English club has retained the European Cup since Nottingham Forest 39 years ago. No English club has ever done so while winning the league the same year.

Manchester City have perhaps the most intriguing route from here. City's support may not be sold on the Uefa dream but their manager retains an obsession with this competition. The team will get stron-

ger as Aymeric Laporte and Leroy Sané return, as Fernandinho slips back into midfield, and as the focus narrows in spring. The poverty of their recent defending may suggest otherwise. But for various reasons City are perhaps the most likely English winners.

Getting there will be tough; but not as tough as it has been. Many of the traditional heavyweights look a little haggard. Barcelona still have the greatest club footballer of all time on their books. Juventus have the tools to beat anyone. Real Madrid are, as ever, Real Madrid. But right now Paris Saint-Germain are perhaps the team to beat, provided Neymar and Kylian Mbappé stay fit and functional; and provided they can find the right blend in front of a thrillingly powerful midfield.

Much can change before February. For now the Premier League can bask once again in its own good health; not to mention another full hand of four from four, achieved this time with a lack of jeopardy that speaks to the strength and depth, the high-functioning quality of the product.

## Focus on fitness and recovery ahead of Olympics: Rani Rampal

**NEW DELHI, DEC 12 (PTI):** Focus will be on fitness and recovery as the Indian women's hockey team looks to play quality matches against top sides as part of its preparation for the Tokyo Olympics, said skipper Rani Rampal.

The Indian team is currently in Bengaluru for the ongoing National coaching camp which will end on December 15.

After a three-week break for Christmas and New Year, the core group will return to camp on January 5 to prepare for the New Zealand Tour.

"One of the primary focus for us will be on fitness and recovery. While the plan is to play top quality matches against good teams in the lead up to the Olympics, all of us need to manage our body and mind well," she said.

"We will need to peak at the right time and going by the weather in Tokyo around the time of the Olympics, I believe fitness will play a huge part in how teams fair," she added.

It has been an eventful season for the Indian team as it booked the ticket to 2020 Olympics, where for the first time in the history of the game it will make back-to-back appearances.

In the lead up to the qualifier, the team also scripted creditable victories against quality sides

like Spain, Ireland, Japan, China, Korea, England among other countries.

Their feat has brought several accolades, awards and recognition in this past one year which Rani sees as a new era for women's hockey in the country.

"The fact that people never expected any great result from the Indian Women's Team always bothered us. No one expected us to win, just a participation would bring satisfaction. But now I see that attitude change towards the Indian women's hockey Team," she said.

"We have proved with our performances in 2018 and 2019 that we can achieve greatness too."

The experienced striker received the Sports Person of the Year Award at the FICCI India Sports Awards here on Wednesday.

"Personally this award is a big boost for me to do better and contribute to my team's performance. I also think this kind of recognition highlights Indian Women's Hockey among a different genre of people who are not necessarily hockey followers," she said.

"I believe this will only help the sport grow. I would love to see the Indian Team inspire more women take up the sport professionally."

## Gabriel Jesus hits hat-trick in stroll for Manchester City against Dinamo Zagreb

**JAMIE JACKSON**

**ZAGREB, 12 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** Gabriel Jesus was Manchester City's star performer with a hat-trick that made it 500 goals in an impressive 199 games of Pep Guardiola's management. "It's nice, these four years together we've had fun and an incredible amount of good moments. Hopefully we can [do] 500 more – in two months," said the manager, joking.

Jesus said: "When I was young, I'd think about the Champions League. It's a very special moment when I score and a hat-trick as well."

With Phil Foden pulling the strings – and Dinamo Zagreb around – from midfield Jesus had admirable support on a night when Benjamin Mendy also gave a reminder of why he was signed.

City were already in the last 16 as Group C winners but required a morale-boosting victory after a dire run of form. For this challenge Guardiola retained Rodri, Jesus and Ilkay Gündogan from Saturday's loss to Manchester United, made Foden's 50th City appearance a fourth start this term and handed Eric García a full debut in the competition.

All that meant this outing might not be the best barometer of form and mood. Yet the way Nicolás Otamendi lost Dani Olmo before he volleyed Damian Kadzior's ball past Claudio Bravo was the latest addition to a catalogue of defensive calamities. The finish was supreme but caused more questions regarding a rearguard who have now kept one clean sheet in their past 12 matches.

For a packed Stadion

Maksimir this was the dream beginning – City fans apart – as Zagreb required victory to retain any chance of qualification. For the visitors it was poor, but Foden zipped the ball through midfield allowing City to launch the quick attacks Guardiola desires.

An angled pass to Mendy allowed the left-back to whip in a cross that had Jesus leaping and Dominik Livakovic punching away just in time.

Olmo may have scored once more when running through – Otamendi again could not get near him – but he blasted his shot over. Next Olmo's flick found Mislav Orsic and this time Bravo saved the header.

What City had lacked in the run of two wins in seven matches was quality in the boxes, as Guardiola says. An illustration of what was required came via the equaliser. Riyad Mahrez swept the ball into the back post after a dire run of form. For this challenge Guardiola retained Rodri, Jesus and Ilkay Gündogan from Saturday's loss to Manchester United, made Foden's 50th City appearance a fourth start this term and handed Eric García a full debut in the competition.

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For a packed Stadion

## Coutinho adds finishing touch as Bayern Munich brush Tottenham aside

**DAVID HYTNER**

**TURIN, 12 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** José Mourinho rested key players with Tottenham already certain to finish this Champions League group in second place and the manager had wanted the club's fringe players to show their ability; to give him one or two selection headaches for the Premier League challenges ahead.

First the good news. Ryan Sessegnon, on his first Spurs start, showed flickers of his pace on the left wing, worked diligently in defensive terms, made good decisions and enjoyed a moment he will never forget when he lashed home the equaliser for 1-1. Sessegnon had plenty of time to feel the hammer of his heart but he concentrated purely on the cleanness of the finish. It flew past Manuel Neuer from 12 yards, beating the Germany World Cup-winner at his near post.

Yet the positives for Mourinho were hardly abundant in supply and he could feel a small dent to the feelgood factor that had built up over the first five games of his tenure.

Bayern Munich were too good, even without Robert Lewandowski, who was rested. Happily

for Spurs, this was not another shellacking to follow the 7-2 in October. But there was the impression that the home team had played within themselves and still managed to highlight weaknesses in the Spurs rearguard, particularly on the flanks, where Kyle Walker-Peters and Danny Rose endured difficult evenings.

Kingsley Coman, Thomas Müller, who came on as a substitute, and the excellent Philippe Coutinho scored the goals and Bayern will be intimidating opponents in the knockout rounds, despite their domestic struggles. For Spurs, the attention turns to Sunday's visit to Wolves, which will be followed by the home game against Chelsea a week later. Mourinho made the point this was more akin to an information-gathering exercise.

"Today was play and prepare a game when you put more emphasis on the players who rest than the players who play," he said. "I try to hide that feeling but the players are intelligent guys and they understand my focus was not on today. My focus was on what next."

"This team is not what I call a team. When I

call a team it is when you work together and develop principles together. We organised a team so we could rest some players and have some security [in the game]. By the end of February, I understand my players better and they understand me better."

Everything was fixed beforehand in terms of the group permutations, with Spurs knowing that they will be paired with Paris Saint-Germain, Juventus, Barcelona, RB Leipzig or Valencia in the last 16. Playing the second leg away from home represents a big disadvantage in Mourinho's eyes but if Spurs could get through to the open draw for the quarter-finals he feels anything could happen.

"It was important to come here and get out with a result," Mourinho said. "My wish is that we can be back [here] and if we can be back it will be a quarter-final or semi-final, for a proper match."

It was disappointing to see how flat Spurs were at the outset, how lacking in intensity they were and Bayern took a grip. They went close when Benjamin Pavard drew a sharp save out of Paulo Gazzaniga and Thiago Alcântara could not smuggle home the



rebound, and the breakthrough followed shortly afterwards. Serge Gnabry's low cross deflected off Moussa Sissoko to fall kindly for Kingsley Coman, who beat Gazzaniga with a composed finish. Coman would be forced off with an injury.

At 1-0, it was possible to fear for Spurs. Apart from one Sessegnon burst and shot, they had offered nothing. But they were settled by his goal, which followed a ball from Giovanni Lo Celso that was deflected on its way through. The 19-year-old, whose integration after his £25m summer move from Fulham has been delayed because of injury, felt a rush of emotion when his shot ripped past Neuer, although

Mourinho would take a tough-love line with him. "He always arrives in dangerous positions and he is a good finisher," he said. "He can improve. He lost too many individual duels. He has a lot to develop but the potential is there."

Spurs may have led on 33 minutes had Sissoko not fluffed the final ball when well placed but they always looked vulnerable at the back. They rode their luck when Alcântara missed an open goal after Gnabry's shot had come back off the post but they were soon behind again. Gnabry's cross deflected off Toby Alderweireld; the impressive Alphonso Davies's shot hit the post and Müller stabbed home.

The half-time damage might have been worse, with Coutinho denied by the crossbar from 25 yards.

One of Mourinho's laments has been the lack of time he has had with his players, how he must develop his style "while we are running". It felt like that here, with Spurs lacking cohesion. Eric Dier and Sissoko struggled to set any kind of tone in possession from central midfield while Christian Eriksen only came into the game in the closing stages.

Coutinho's goal for 3-1 was a lovely curler from the edge of the box and although the Spurs substitute, Son Heung-min, twice went close following Eriksen passes, the die had been cast.



## Rohingya refugees reject Aung San Suu Kyi's genocide denial

**COX'S BAZAR (BANGLADESH), DEC 12 (AP):** Rohingya refugees accused former Myanmar pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi of lying to the International Court of Justice in testimony Wednesday in which she denied that her country's armed forces were guilty of genocide against the Muslim minority group.

Suu Kyi, who is now Myanmar's leader, told the court that the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to neighboring Bangladesh was the unfortunate result of a battle with insurgents.

She denied that the army had killed civilians, raped women and torched houses in 2017. Critics describe the actions by the army as a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide that forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee.

"The world will judge their claim of no genocide with evidence," said a Rohingya leader, Mohammed Mohibullah, who is chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights.

"A thief never admits he is a thief, but justice can be delivered through evidence. The world has obtained evidence from us, he said at the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district.

"Even if Suu Kyi lies, she won't be spared. She will certainly face justice. The world should take steps against her, he said.

Nur Kamal, another refugee at Kutupalong, also rejected Suu Kyi's testimony.

"The military cordoned off people and killed them by opening fire, setting them ablaze isn't this genocide? Will this be justified if Syu Ki says so?" Kamal said.

"The world will not accept that. The whole world has seen the level of torture of us. It is still going on," he said.

A legal team from Gambia, acting on behalf of the 57-country Organization of Islamic Cooperation, asked the International Court of

Justice in The Hague to take all measures within its power to prevent all acts that amount to or contribute to the crime of genocide in Myanmar.

Gambia alleged that genocide was committed and is ongoing.

Suu Kyi accused Gambia of providing a misleading and incomplete account of what happened in Myanmar's Rakhine state in August 2017.

Her appearance at the court was striking in that she was defending the same military that kept her under house arrest for about 15 years.

She was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize in absentia for championing democracy and rights under Myanmar's then-ruling junta.

Buddhist-majority Myanmar has consistently denied violating human rights and says military operations in Rakhine state, where most Rohingya lived, were justified in response to attacks on security posts by Rohingya insurgents.

A U.N.-established investigation earlier recommended the prosecution of Myanmar's top military commanders on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for the crackdown on the Rohingya.

Earlier this year, the U.N. Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar said rapes of Rohingya by Myanmar's security forces were systemic and demonstrated the intent to commit genocide. It said in a report the discrimination that Myanmar practiced against the Rohingya in peacetime aggravated the sexual violence toward them during times of conflict.

Bangladesh and Myanmar have signed an agreement to start repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh, but two attempts failed when no one came forward to return voluntarily, citing continuing security concerns in Myanmar.

# Fukushima clean-up reduces radiation levels, but not all

**PARIS, DEC 12 (AFP):** Clean-up efforts at Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant, destroyed by a massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011, have significantly reduced radiation levels but untreated forested areas remain a problem, scientists said Thursday.

The disaster, second only to the massive Chernobyl meltdown in 1986, spewed radioactive material over a huge area, with the Japanese authorities targeting 9,000 square kilometres (3,500 square miles) of the most contaminated land for remedial work.

This involved scraping off the top five centimetres (two inches) of soil which was found to reduce the most common radiation source of Caesium 137 by about 80 percent, according to a review of studies on the clean-up operation published in the journal Soil.

Lead author Olivier Evrard, researcher in the



climate sciences and environment laboratory at the University of San Quentin-en-Yvelines near Paris, said this technique was proving to be effective in dealing with Caesium 137 in the most accessible areas.

Caesium 137 "is the biggest risk for the population over the medium- and long-term as it can persist in the environment for

up to three centuries if it is not dealt with," Evrard said.

This method however has serious drawbacks, not least the cost at 24 billion euros (27 billion) so far, the review said.

It had also generated massive amounts of material, 20 million cubic metres of topsoil, most of which will have to be safely stored for perhaps 30 years and eventually treated.

The main concern is that remedial work has only been done on arable and other easily accessible land while forested areas, which account for about three quarters of the contaminated zone, have been left untouched.

It is believed these forests will act in effect as radiation reservoirs for years to come as material slowly washes down from them, the scientists said.

They said that while no work on the forest areas was currently planned, research "underlined the need... for concerted actions" to tackle this problem.

Another method of decontamination considered was to grow plants which absorb Caesium 137 direct from the soil "but the studies show that the return is not good," Evrard noted.

## Greenpeace chief locked out of UN climate meet amid protests

**MADRID, DEC 12 (AFP):** Hours after sharing a podium at 196-nations climate talks with Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, the head of Greenpeace International found herself locked out of the building Wednesday along with hundreds of other observers ejected from the talks.

Jennifer Morgan, who has been attending the troubled UN negotiations for 25 years, said the expulsion was without precedent.

"This afternoon there was a peaceful protest outside of the plenary," Morgan told AFP.

"The protesters were abruptly and roughly moved out of the building. When I tried to get back in I found that the security had closed access to all observers."

Credentialed observers -- including research institutes, NGOs and other civil society groups -- play a critical role in the talks, which are tasked with saving the world from runaway global warming.

"We are the ones who



can apply pressure and hold governments accountable," Morgan said.

"When we are not in the building, we are not able to do that."

"I call on the Secretary General to intervene here to make sure that youth and citizens around the world can engage and have their voices heard in these negotiations," she added.

United Nations officials, when asked about

the lock-out, had no comment.

More than 200 youth and indigenous rights activists were thrown out of talks, set to end Friday, after staging a protest demanding that nations take urgent action to avert catastrophic climate change.

The protesters chanted "Climate Justice Now!" and "Shame! Shame! Shame!" for several minutes before security in-

tervened and pushed the activists into a car park, where they were briefly held.

"This is the critical phase of the negotiations -- the ministers are now involved," Morgan said.

"They cannot think that just because they are keeping us out of the building that we will not hold them accountable for what happens inside."

Negotiators in Madrid are hashing out the

rulebook for the landmark Paris accord, which aims to keep global temperature rises "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit).

But national carbon cutting pledges submitted in annex to the 2015 treaty are inadequate, and would collectively see temperatures rise at least 3C above preindustrial levels, a recipe for widespread human suffering, scientists say.

## New Zealand planning retrieval of bodies on volcanic island

**WHAKATANE (NEW ZEALAND), DEC 12 (AP):** New Zealand officials said they'll begin Friday to recover eight victims' bodies believed to remain on a small island since a volcanic explosion there earlier this week.

Continuing volcanic activity has delayed the retrieval of the eight bodies from ash-covered White Island, where an eruption occurred Monday as 47 tourists were exploring the landscape. Eight people were confirmed killed and dozens were severely burned in the blast of steam and ash.

New Zealand medical staff were working around the clock to treat the injured survivors in hospital burn units.

The enormity of the task was clear when Dr. Peter Watson, a chief medical officer, said at a news conference that extra skin has been ordered from American skin



banks. Hospital personnel anticipated needing an extra 120 square meters (1,300 square feet) of skin for grafting onto the patients, Watson said.

White Island is the tip of a mostly underwater volcano that's about 50 kilometers (30 miles) off New Zealand's North Island and has been a popular attraction visited by thousands of tourists each year.

Authorities say 24 Australians, nine Americans, five New Zealand-

ers, four Germans, two Britons, two Chinese and a Malaysian were visiting the island at the time of the eruption. Many were from a Royal Caribbean cruise ship that had left Sydney two days earlier.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Thursday some injured Australians had been medically evacuated and such flights would continue.

Australia previously said up to 10 such patients would be trans-

ferred to hospitals in Victoria and New South Wales states for further treatment.

New Zealand's GeoNet seismic monitoring agency on Thursday lowered White Island's volcanic alert level to 2, noting there's been no further eruption since Monday, when the level had briefly been raised to 4.

Its alert level since late Monday had been 3 on a scale where 5 signifies a major eruption.

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## Arjun Kapoor starts food biz startup with aim to improve gender parity

**MUMBAI, DEC 12 (PTI):** Actor Arjun Kapoor has become an entrepreneur, investing in an emerging food delivery startup and said the focus is to bring a positive social change towards gender parity in society.

The startup, foodcloud.in, is looking to reach out to outstanding stay-at-home women cooks and empower them as entrepreneurs through the platform, a release said.

"Our startup is aiming to bring about a positive social change towards gender parity in our society. It is a venture that is extremely close to my heart and I have been doing my best to raise awareness about this platform for the past couple of months," Arjun said in a statement.

"I do feel this unique and impactful platform will serve a massive social purpose and contribute towards empowering homemakers and stay at home women to either maximize their own income or even contribute towards their overall family income," he added.

According to the "Panipat" actor, this can be an important stepping stone towards finding self-reliance and self-empowerment.

As per the release, since the announcement, over 4,000 women from Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata have signed up on the platform and have started their own small businesses.

"I'm delighted with the response that I have got so far and the team is constantly on the lookout to find the best



stay at home chefs from various cities and bring them on the platform. We are looking to find the best culinary heroes from every locality of India," he added.

The venture runs on the premise of home cooks delivering food to customers from their kitchens. The company plans to expand to six other Indian cities.

## 'The Matrix 4' to release on May 21, 2021

**LOS ANGELES, DEC 12 (PTI):** "The Matrix 4" has landed a release date and the much-awaited sequel in the popular sci-fi action franchise will hit the screens on May 21, 2021, the studio Warner Bros has announced.

Interestingly, the untitled film will lock horns with Lionsgate's "John Wick: Chapter 4", with both projects starring Keanu Reeves.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, it was "Akira", the manga adaptation that is Taika Waititi attached to direct, that was supposed to be released on the date now taken up by the Matrix film.

"Akira" was put on hold in July when Waititi signed on to helm a fourth "Thor" film for Marvel Studios.

"The Matrix 4" will see series stars Reeves and Carrie-Anne Moss, reprise their roles as Neo and Trinity. Jada Pinkett Smith is also set to return as Niobe.

Lana Wachowski, one half of the Wachowskis who directed all the three films in the sci-fi action franchise with sister Lilly, will write and helm the new project.

Aleksandar Hemon and David Mitchell have co-written the script with Lana Wachowski, who is also attached



to produce with Grant Hill.

Previously announced cast members also include "Aquaman" star Yahya Abdul-Mateen, Jessica Henwick and Neil Patrick Harris.

## Jason Bateman next directorial is thriller titled 'Shut In'



**LOS ANGELES, DEC 12 (PTI):** Actor-filmmaker Jason Bateman has found his next directorial project in the thriller "Shut In", set at New Line. Bateman, who recently won the Emmy for outstanding directing for a drama series for Netflix series "Ozark", will also produce the film, reported Deadline.

The movie is described as edgy thriller in the vein of "Panic Room", in which a single mother is held captive by her violent ex, with her two young children left at risk. She must do everything to protect them and survive.

Debutante writer Melanie Toast has penned the script.

Negotiations are on, but sources said production is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2020. Bateman last directed "The Family Fang" and "Bad Words". He is also attached to direct a film based on the Hasbro board game "Clue", featuring Ryan Reynolds at Fox/Disney.

Michael Costigan alongside Farah Films' Dan Farah, Vertigo's Roy Lee and Cinestate's Dallas Sonnier are also attached to produce.

## Pierce Brosnan joins Camila Cabello-starrer 'Cinderella'

**LOS ANGELES, DEC 12 (PTI):** Former James Bond star Pierce Brosnan has boarded the cast of Sony's retelling of the fairytale "Cinderella".

The film stars singer Camila Cabello in the title role, with Billy Porter as the fairy godmother and Idina Menzel as the evil stepmother. British actor Nicholas Galitzine will star opposite Cabello as Prince Robert.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Brosnan will play the king, father to Galitzine's Robert.

To be directed by Kay Cannon, the film is billed as "a modern reimagining" of the traditional story, with "a musical bent thrown in for good measure".

Cabello will also be involved in the music of the film.

Popular TV host-actor James Corden will produce the project along with Leo Pearlman through their banner Fulwell73.

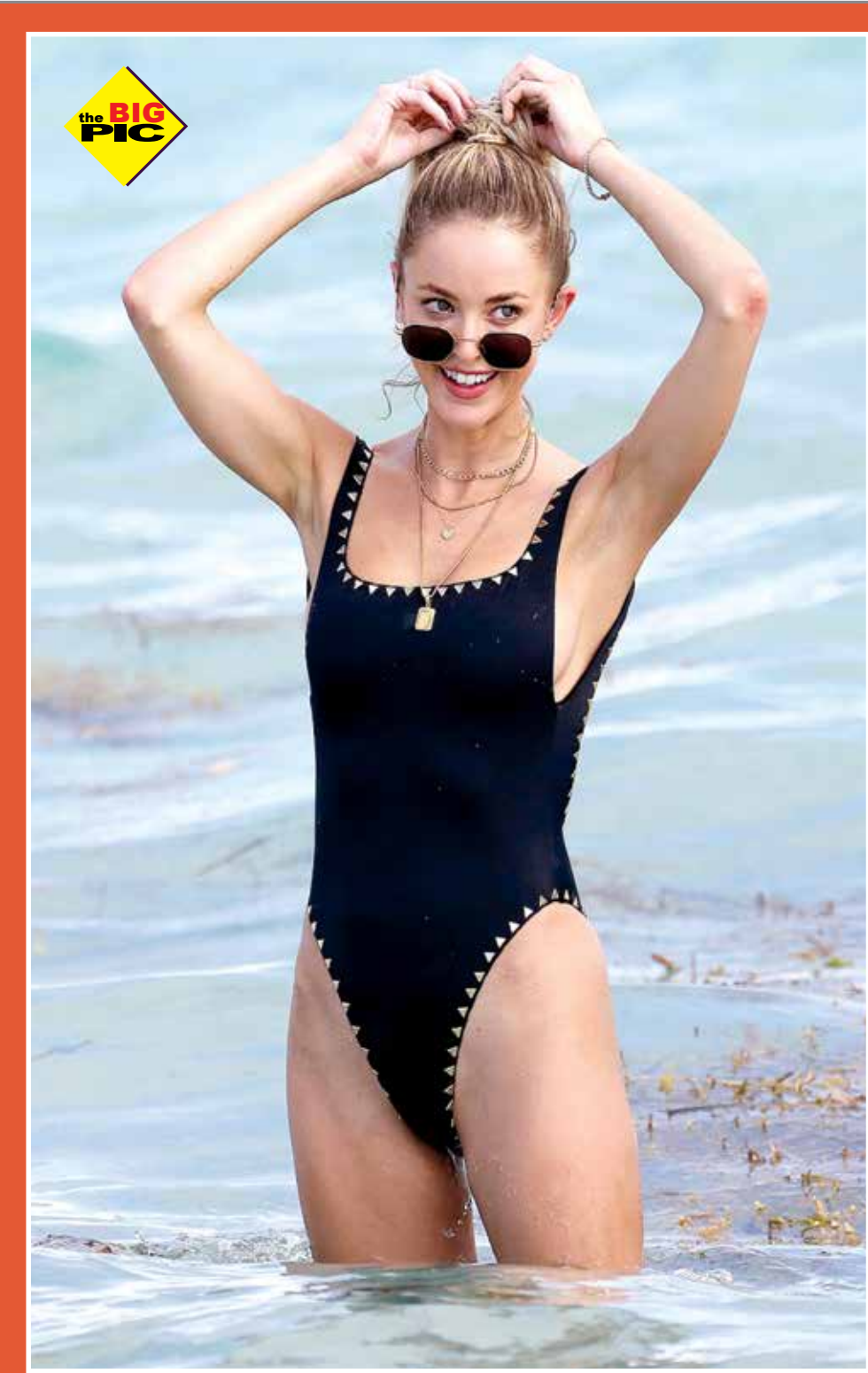
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**DECEMBER SUN! Blogger, Kaitlynn Carter splashed around at Miami Beach.**

## Shakuntala Devi biopic to release on May 8, 2020



**MUMBAI, DEC 12 (PTI):** "Shakuntala Devi - Human Computer", the biopic on the math genius is set to hit the screens on May 8 next year, actor Vidya Balan announced on Thursday.

The actor took to social media to share the news.

"Get ready to be enamoured by her wit, charm & of course, genius! Watch the video to know when #ShakuntalaDevi is coming to theatres near you!" Vidya captioned the clip revealing the date of release.

Directed by Anu Menon, the film also features Sanya Malhotra and Jisshu Sengupta.

Menon has written the story along with Nayanika Mahtani with dialogues penned by Ishita Moitra.

Shakuntala Devi, the mathematical wizard, was known for her ability to make incredibly swift calculations. Shakuntala's genius was first discovered at the age of 5, when she solved a math problem for 18-year-old students.

The film is backed by Sony Pictures Networks Productions and Vikram Malhotra-led Abundantia Entertainment.

**Aries:**  
The bad news: it's over. The good news: it's over! Aries, you have freed yourself from a karmic cycle that had been holding you back. Move forward with dignity and grace knowing that the best is yet to come. If you find yourself questioning the authenticity of a certain relationship, detach. The truth will dawn upon you when you remain silent. Remember to make yourself a priority as you do.

**Taurus:**  
If you've experienced upheaval on the personal front, pause, breathe and recalibrate. There's nothing you can do to undo the damage. What you do have dominion over is this moment. Do the inner work, Taurus. In moments of solitude, the old pain will resurface. Become witness of what's coming up instead of engaging with it. Karma has its own way of adjusting the scales. Tip: Take the time you need to heal.

**Gemini:**  
There's so much you don't know about the situation. But don't hit the panic button just yet. Let the fog clear, which it will. For now, it's best not to take important decisions. Some of you may

be doubting the intentions of your partner or a loved one. Instead of imagining the worst, have a talk with them. Listening to both what they are saying and what they are not saying will give you the clarity you need.

**Cancer:**  
Endings are seldom easy to come with. But what good is holding on going to do? Resisting change will only prolong your suffering. Let 'forward and onwards' be your mantra, Cancer. Turn your attention to what's coming up rather than what's gone. Trust that the chaos you are experiencing is but a blessing in disguise. Things may or may not shift overnight for you. Be patient with yourself and the divine plan that's unfolding.

**Leo:**  
Could the end of 2019 have a surprise in store? Stay open, magical one. The Universe wants you to experience divine love. Somebody who's been in the circle for a while could end up expressing their feelings towards you. Alternatively, you could be in the mood to kiss under the mistletoe. This could be a wonderful beginning for everybody involved. Let the fear and

the worry go..

**Virgo:**  
You heart knows what it wants. It's your mind that needs to be convinced. Once they're working on the same team, you will be able to communicate your truth in an effective manner. Remember, you cannot change the past. Let go of the negative emotions like regret. They're only weighing you down. Trust that karma will intervene and set things right on your behalf. Tip: Trust the law of karmic justice.

**Libra:**  
When gets gives the relationship a name, you know they are ready to accept the responsibility that comes with it. Take the next step knowing that you are divinely protected. This could be the start of something brand new. Librans in the market for love could meet somebody who surprises them with old-school charm. Parenthood is also on the cards for some.

**Scorpio:**  
Don't you love it when the Universe intervenes on your behalf? Expect many surprises, Scorpio, both from your beloved and the mysterious forces above. If there is something the two of

you have been working towards together, like a team, trust that it will come through in the most unexpected way. Some of you could be thinking about getting into business with your partner or a loved one. You've got nothing to worry about as long as there is mutual respect and trust.

**Tip:** The Universe is in the mood to throw a surprise your way.

**Sagittarius:**  
Did you know that some people deal with loneliness and depression by putting their bodies out there in the hope that somebody will touch their soul? Could this be you, Sagittarius? This chapter of your life requires you to work through your wounds inside out. Confront the demons you have been running away from. As for the people you have been involved with, let them know where you stand instead of playing the ghosting game. Everybody deserves the truth.

**Capricorn:**  
Don't you love when the things that once triggered you evoke no feelings whatsoever? You are the image of peace and calm, Capricorn. Overheard at the cosmic conference: this is the best way to get things done. Some of you could

be experiencing a case of #ThrowbackThursday, and quite literally so. Does the person who has reappeared deserve a place in your inner sanctum? Not so fast.

**Tip:** Hello, Master of Zen!

**Aquarius:**  
Your mood this week: making love, making art, making coffee, and making magic. An unconventional romance is on the cards, and it promises to awaken your inner artist. Remember, authenticity is your biggest superpower. Be exactly who you are and trust that they will love you a little more with each breath you take. Things may or may not progress to the next level instantly. .

**Pisces:**  
Pisces, what you're experiencing at this moment is a true match of minds. Allow yourself to explore this connection, but remember to stay in the present. Overheard at the cosmic conference: you are about to make a fresh start in the realm of love. Those who have been holding their feelings back for the fear of being abandoned or rejected, let go of the old traumas. It's now safe for you to let your most authentic self be seen and heard.