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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Sports Dept plans constituency and GPU level football tournaments

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC (IPR):** A coordination meeting of the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs was held at Paljor Stadium Conference Hall, Gangtok, today. The meeting was presided by Secretary, Department of SYA.

The meeting mainly deliberated on the following agendas: Inter Constituency Football Tournament 2019-20; Sporting Activities at GPU Level 2019-20; and inter Coaching Camp and talent hunt Programme.

The Inter-Constituency Football Tournament 2019-20 under Rural Sports will be conducted at two venues - Jorethang and Paljor Stadium - in the first round. The final round will be played at Jorethang Playground on



the occasion of Maghey Sankranti.

The entries should be completed by 28 Dec, 2019 and the fixture will be drawn in the Chamber of Minister, Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of Sik-

kim on 03 Jan, 2020.

Sporting activities at all Gram Panchayat Level under RDD will be conducted as per the decision of the Government. The Sports Department will give full technical support for conducting

these sports activities.

The Department will also conduct the winter coaching and talent hunt programme in 13 Sports disciplines at four Districts as usual from 05 Jan, 2020 to 31 Jan, 2020. Another programme of

talent hunt will also be conducted for U-13 and U-15 year boy's football players.

The meeting was attended by all PETs, Coaches and officers of the department from all four Districts.

## Alliance will form govt in Jharkhand, Hemant Soren will be CM: Cong

**NEW DELHI, DEC 23 (PTI):** As the JMM-led alliance appeared set to cross the majority mark in the Jharkhand Assembly polls on Monday, the Congress exuded confidence that the alliance will form the government with Hemant Soren as chief minister.

All India Congress Committee in-charge for Jharkhand, RPN Singh said, "We will form the government as we fought the elections for the people of the state by raising issues that affect their

lives and livelihoods. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah tried to divert the attention of the people away from fundamental issues but the people did not get swayed."

Reiterating that Hemant Soren of the JMM will be the chief minister as declared earlier, Singh said the Jharkhand results are a defeat of BJP's "arrogance and diversionary tactics".

Congress coordinator for Jharkhand polls Ajay

Sharma said this is the defeat of BJP's corruption and its arrogance.

BJP gave tickets to corrupt candidates whom the people rejected. The Congress kept the focus on people's issues and articulated common man's problems which the BJP failed to solve, Sharma said.

The JMM-Congress-RJD alliance in Jharkhand is leading in 42 out of the 81 seats of state Assembly till 12 noon on Monday, while the ruling BJP is ahead in 28 seats.

## RTO arrested in stolen vehicle registration case

**ARPAN PRADHAN**

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

Sikkim Police has arrested senior Regional Transport Officer (East) of the Transport Department, Government of Sikkim, for his alleged involvement in a stolen vehicle registration case.

RTO, Prem Vijay Basnet, was arrested today at Gangtok for allegedly processing registration of stolen vehicles brought to Sikkim from outside. Police has found that the registration papers of these stolen vehicles were signed by the RTO who also allegedly did not follow the required rules and procedures while registering the vehicles.

According to sources, Mr Basnett has been arrested and is under police custody and the case is under investigation. Sources have said that the Police have seized three vehicles which were stolen vehicles and brought in to Sikkim from other states of the country.

If sources are to be believed there are many stolen vehicles in the state which are being investigated by the police. Most of the stolen vehicles are from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and there could be an inter-state gang involved in these crimes, say sources.

It is learnt, that the police had arrested one person in a car theft case two months ago, however, he was released on bail so the police could not take the investigation further.

Since the RTO is the main authority in charge of registration of any vehicle brought from outside the state, he

Prem Vijay Basnett will be produced before the court on Tuesday for police remand for further investigation, sources said.

## One killed, 7 injured in road mishap at Lower Samdong



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA**

**DIKCHU, 23 DEC:**

One person was killed and seven others injured in a road mishap at Lower Samdong near Jurassic Park on the Dikchu-Singtam road.

The deceased, 67-year-old Gopal Chettri, the owner-driver of the

vehicle [a Mahindra Maxx SK-03P-1371], was killed on the spot when the vehicle plunged about 200 feet off the road, it is informed.

The accident occurred at around 4:30 pm when the vehicle was plying towards Dikchu from Lower Samdong.

Upon learning about

the accident, residents from Lower Samdong and Lower Kambal rushed to the spot and evacuated the survivors.

The injured have been referred to Gangtok after receiving first aid at Dikchu PHC while the body of the deceased has been sent for post mortem.

## Christmas Mahotsav at MG Marg

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

Members of different churches from in and around Gangtok came together here at MG Marg for a grand Sikkim Christmas Mahotsav 2019.

The two-day Sikkim Christmas Mahotsav concluded with a series of

cultural and musical performances on Monday evening.

The event was organized by United Sikkim Welfare Society of Sikkim [UCWSS] on the theme, "Peace and Harmony".

MG Marg was also decorated with a lot of colour and lights give it a Christmas feel.

## Govt regulates access to Secretariat

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

The State Government has come out with a circular today to "regulate the entry to the Secretariat". The new rules for entry have been made to ensure safety of office property and records and also for convenience of visitors,

officers and staff, the circular issued by Home Department reads.

From 06 Jan, 2020, onwards, public will have to enter the Secretariat from Gate No 2 on the Ground Floor and obtain passes from the Reception counter on the same floor. They will also have to deposit

the passes at the counter before leaving.

Public will not be allowed to enter the Secretariat from the Basement I and II through lifts and stairs.

Only government employees will be allowed on the first floor gate on production of an Identity Card.

## Thousands take to streets in Latur to denounce CAA, NRC

**LATUR, DEC 23 (PTI):** Social activists, political workers and people from different walks of life on Monday took out a peaceful march demanding scrapping of the amended citizenship law and boycott of the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) here in central Maharashtra.

The march, with the theme 'Sandhidhan Bachao, Desh Bachao' (Save the Constitution, Save the country), was organised under the banner Amhi Laturkar (we, residents of Latur) and comes amid nationwide protests against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the NRC.

The 'maha morcha' started from the Ganjgolai area around 11 am and passed through Hanuman Chowk, Gandhi Chowk, and Ashok Hotel before ending at local Tehsil office in the afternoon.

Thousands of local residents, including students, women, lawyers, along with members of several political parties and social groups participated in the morcha.

The marchers held aloft placards with messages like Reject CAB! Boycott NRC! 'We want constitutional India, Not



Naziwad' 'Chala NRC virudh mohim rabvyu ya Bharat dehsala vachvyu ya, (lets start a campaign against NRC and save India) and 'We are for rights not riots. The demonstrators raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and also shouted constitution zindabad, our unity zindabad.

During the morcha, around 1,500 volunteers, with black ribbons tied on their arms, stood on both sides of the road to help police maintain order and

in crowd management. Police personnel were deployed in large numbers in the city to maintain peace.

When the morcha started from Ganjgolai, traders closed down their shops and commercials establishments to show solidarity with the protesters.

Later, delegations of the demonstrators submitted two separate memorandums, listing their demands, to the President of India through the Latur district collector and tehsildar. Their demands included scrapping the CAA

and the proposed NRC. The CAA promises Indian citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The new citizenship law, passed by Parliament and approved by the President, has triggered massive protests across the country.

CAA's critics say the law is discriminatory and violates the core values of the Constitution. The controversial NRC is supposed to document bonafide Indian citizens and identify illegal immigrants.

## Jadavpur University students, protesting against CAA, thrashed, molested; 3 held

**KOLKATA, DEC 23 (PTI):**

A group of Jadavpur University students who were protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act in Kolkata's Baghajatin area was allegedly thrashed and some of the women taking part in the agitation were molested, police said on Monday.

The incident happened late Sunday night when the students were holding a demonstration in front of Baghajatin I Block, a senior officer of the Kolkata Police said, adding that three persons have been arrested.

"A group of eight peo-

ple allegedly attacked them with wooden sticks and thrashed the male students and molested the women demonstrators. The attackers also broke their camera and further threatened them," the officer said.

The students then went back to the Jadavpur University campus, around 2 km away, after which a police complaint was lodged.

"Acting upon credible inputs, three persons have been arrested. They have been booked under relevant sections of the IPC and we are further investigating the matter," the officer said.

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## Rape of minors: Convict should be mercilessly punished, says HC

**MUMBAI, DEC 23 (PTI):**

Persons accused of sexual offences against minor victims should be “mercilessly and inexorably punished”, the Bombay High Court said while upholding the conviction of a 29-year-old man for raping a five-year-old girl.

A single bench of Justice Prithviraj Chavan on Friday dismissed an appeal filed by Sagar Dhuri, challenging a special court order of June 2018 convicting him for sexually assaulting the victim and sentencing him to ten years in jail.

“The dicta is loud and clear as to how such offences are required to be dealt with. Such persons are a menace to the civilized society and, therefore, they should be mercilessly and inexorably punished,” the court said.

“This is a case in which there is no question of reformation of the appellant as he was quite a grown up male who knew the consequences of his act,” Justice Chavan noted.

According to the prosecution, Dhuri, who used to live in the same neighbourhood as the victim in Thane district, called the girl to his house in April 2015 under the pretext of showing her songs on his mobile phone and sexually assaulted her.

The victim’s friend, who was looking for her to play with, found her in the convict’s house and informed a woman residing in the neighbourhood.

The woman peeped through a hole on the convict’s door and found the girl lying down and the convict on top of her following which she called the victim out and took her to her mother and narrated the incident.

A police complaint was then lodged and the accused was taken into custody. The high court, while upholding Dhuri’s conviction and sentence, relied on the statements of witnesses and also the evidence given by the victim.

## RIL shares fall nearly 2 pc; m-cap drops by Rs 17,990 cr

**NEW DELHI, DEC 23 (PTI):** Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) fell nearly 2 per cent on Monday after the government sought to sell 20 per cent stake to Saudi Aramco.

The scrip declined 1.78 per cent to close at Rs 1,571 on the BSE. During the day, it dropped 2.77 per cent to Rs 1,555. On the NSE, it fell 1.76 per cent to close at Rs 1,570.95.

The company’s market valuation dropped Rs 17,990.13 crore to Rs 9,95,888.87 crore on the BSE.

In trading volume terms, 12.74 lakh shares of RIL were traded on the BSE and over one crore units exchanged hands on the NSE.

Last week, the government moved the Delhi High Court seeking to block Reliance selling 20 per cent stake in its oil and chemical business to Saudi Aramco for USD 15 billion, in view of pending dues of USD 3.5 billion in Panna-Mukta and Tapti oil and gas fields.

# SMTWA counters NGCCS allegations, claims it acted in interest of drivers

**SAGAR CHHETRI**

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

Sikkim Motor Transport Workers Association [SMTWA]-Singtam president, Tinku Adhikari, today refuted and condemned allegations leveled against his organization by New Generation Contractor Cooperative Society [NGCCS], Singtam.

Responding to allegations leveled by NGCCS president, Ta Tshering Lepcha, Mr Adhikari maintained that the decisions of the association being challenged by Mr Lepcha were in the interest and on the request of drivers of the syndicate.

The NGCCS president had recently accused SMTWA of vindictive conduct in cancelling vehicles inducted to ply



from Singtam during NGCCS’ tenure.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Adhikari countered that not all such vehicles had been turned away. He claimed that “only 15” vehicles plying on the Singtam-Gangtok route had been denied “turns”

by SMTWA.

The vehicles, he claimed, belonged to government employees and businessmen, were plying with temporary registration numbers and some of which were registered in other districts.

Mr Adhikari contend-

ed that all drivers relying solely on the profession were still running their vehicles from the syndicate.

He added that the association had given one month time to all member drivers of the syndicate to submit related documents to se-

cure their empanelment with the syndicate and after that process, 15 were found to be operating outside of the prescribed rules.

This confrontation results from the State Government’s decision to take the operations of taxi stands away from cooperative societies and return them to driver syndicates.

SMTWA joint secretary, Ravi Chettri, in turn alleged that the cooperative society had worked illegally and provided turn to vehicles of government employees and businessmen and not to unemployed youth as was prescribed. He added that to accommodate vehicles which did not have the route permits was also wrong.

## Governor launches WASH



**GANGTOK, 23 DEC [IPR]:** Governor Ganga Prasad launched WASH [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene] project in Sikkim at a special function held here at Chintan Bhavan today.

During the programme, the Governor also launched the WASH mobile application.

This is the second initiative of Sulabh International in Sikkim’s schools following the success of installing sanitary napkin vending machines in 20 government schools across the State.

The launch programme was organized by Education Department with the support of Alkem Laboratories and Sulabh Sanitation and Social Reforms Movement. The WASH programme is implemented by Sulabh Sanitation and Social Reforms Movement with the support of Education department to support the Swachatta Campaign.

Education Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha, founder of Sulabh Sanitation and Social Reforms Movement, Dr Bindeshwar Pathak were present as special guests.

The programme was also attended Additional

Chief Secretary, Education Department, GP Upadhyaya, officials from the department, teachers and students and members of Sulabh Sanitation and Social Reforms Movement.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor said, “School children are the main driving force of change in their household, society and communities. I hope the launch of WASH programme in all government schools will make an impact in Sikkim as it was good record in past, where people were imparted with the knowledge of hygienic practices across the country.”

The Governor said that students and teachers should be more sensitive towards sanitation, hygiene and water conservation. The issue of sanitation, health and education should be taken up vigorously. He expressed confidence that the Education Department in collaboration with Sulabh Sanitation and Social Reforms Movement will remain committed to playing a significant role in maintaining proper hygiene, sanitation, water conser-

vation, education etc.

The Education Minister expressed gratitude towards Dr Pathak for implementing such project in Sikkim.

Earlier, the founder of Sulabh Sanitation informed that WASH has helped reduce incidence of diseases related to hygiene, improved enrollment and influenced hygienic practices at homes. The WASH programme promotes safe and sufficient number of toilets, safe and sufficient amount of water for hand-washing and drinking.

The Additional Chief Secretary informed that the department was providing logistic support in reaching out to schools across the State. The one year project will be implemented with the aim to bring about a behavior change among students by laying stress on sanitation and hygiene practices.

Under Garima Project, two schools, namely Rangpo Government Senior Secondary School, and Yangsum Government Secondary School, West Sikkim were awarded Best School Award.

Likewise, Best Teacher award was given to Ambika Dhakal of Temi Government Senior Secondary School. Five volunteers were also conferred Best Volunteers awards.

Earlier, a brief report on WASH in School project was presented by a student member from Sanitation Club, New Delhi.

## Annual function at Mangsari School

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

The 3rd Annual Function cum felicitation program of Mangsari Government Secondary School was observed at Mangsari Mining Ground under Soreng Chakung constituency in West Sikkim on Sunday.

The program was organised by School Management Committee (SMC) and UDHD Minister, Arun Upreti was the chief guest while the concerned area MLA, Aditya Golay was present as a special guest.

Chief guest, Arun Upreti underlined the emphasis laid by SKM Government in providing quality education to the



students of the State.

The attractions of the day were Cultural Program, Tambola, Felicitation, Volleyball final tourney.

The Hills Open Volleyball final match was played between Daramdin (United Club) and Mangsari (Dokan Dara)

in which Mangsari won the match by 3-1 sets.

It may be mentioned here that the tourney had started from 16 Dec. Later, the chief guest, Arun Upreti handed over cash prize of Rs 60,000 to the winner and Rs 50,000 to the runner-up team along with trophies.

## Agri Minister attends Denzong Losoong celebration



**NAMCHI, 23 DEC [IPR]:** Agriculture Minister, Lok Nath Sharma attended Denzong Losoong celebration being held at the Community Play Ground at Ralong, today.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Mr Sharma shed light on the celebration of series of festivals of various communities in different parts of the state. The Minister spoke on various schemes and programmes dedicated to the farmers being implemented under Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Departments. He encouraged dairy farmers to increase milk production by taking advantage of financial incentives to be implemented from the next financial year.

He also informed that the state government has registered more than fifteen thousand farmers under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samman Nidhi Yojana wherein the beneficiaries will be provided

financial support. Few farmers have already received the 1st installment of Rs 2000.

Minister Mr Sharma also shared the state government’s commitment to expedite the developmental pace and other activities from the next financial year. He also touched upon the future scope of Integrated Process Unit of Sikkim IFFCO Organic Limited.

The Minister in his concluding remarks extended his best wishes on the occasion of Losoong, Namsong, Christmas and New Year 2020.

During the celebration, the first semifinial match of Denzong Losoong Open Football Tournament was also played between Munal FC and PCI FC.

The programme was also attended by Deputy Director, Horticulture Department, Robin Gurung, Veterinary Officer, Dr Kenzong Bhutia, Panchayats, monks from Ralong Monastery and other locals.

## KVK South celebrates National Farmers Day



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

Krishni Vigyan Kendra, South Sikkim, Namthang, celebrated National Farmers Day/Kisan Diwas at Ruchung Village in collaboration with Lupin Foundation on 23 Dec.

About 45 farmers participated in the programme.

Senior Scientist and Head KVK South, IP Shivakoti extended his best wishes to farmers on the occasion of Farmers Day and briefed the gathering about National Farmers Day.

CSIR Head, Lupin foundation, Rajiv Kumar, highlighted various farmer oriented activities that are being carried out by Lupin under CSIR.

The major activities of the day were Lecture on Soil Health Management in organic farming by ADO Soil Testing Lab, Yograj Pradhan, Namthang, Livestock Infertility Camp and awareness on Insurance for livestock and crops by VO, Dr Deepika Pradhan Namthang, SMS Animal Science, Dr Chewang N Bhutia and SMS Extension, Meena Pradhan.

Quiz Competition was also held for farmers and distribution of Mineral mixtures & vitamins, Anthelmintics and other Infertility related medicines which was supplied by Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences, South District.

## Sikkim outplays Nagaland in Col CK Nayudu Trophy



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

After sharing points in the first match of the Col CK Nayudu Trophy against Pondicherry as the match was drawn due to rain, Sikkim outplayed Nagaland in the second match played today at Nagaland Cricket Stadium, Sovima, Nagaland by 3 wickets.

A press release informs that Nagaland won the toss and chose to bat first. In their first innings, Nagaland made 280 runs off 110.4 overs, where one of their players named Wahid scored 121 runs the highest of the innings.

Chandra Bahadur Chettri and Mohammad Saptula took 3 wickets each, Dinesh Kumar Dhoobi took 2 wickets, Chandan Kumar and Harit Chauhan took 1 wicket each. In Sikkim’s first innings 310 runs were scored off which Parth Palawat scored 110 runs, Mohammad Shahbaz 52

runs, Harit Chauhan 46 runs, Akash Luitel 35 runs, Chandra Bahadur Chettri 25 runs in 110.3 overs, taking the lead of 30 runs.

In the second innings, Nagaland was all-out for 196 runs, giving the target of 166 runs. It was Saptula’s brilliant spell that thrashed the opponent taking 8 wickets and Harit bagged 2 wickets. Sikkim reached the target in 46.3 overs scoring 168 runs. Harit scored the innings highest of 44 runs, Shahbaz 37 runs, Saptula 35 runs, Parth 16 runs, and Sanjay Chettri 11 runs.

“It was a good game altogether, where boys’ played well with both bat and bowl. The trainer and physio of the team equally share this victory for their continue effort keeping the players fit on and off the field. We are looking for the next match against Manipur,” said Coach, Som Tshering Lepcha.

## CAEPHT celebrates Kisan Diwas at Soureni



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

College of Agricultural Engineering & Post-Harvest Technology celebrated Kisan Diwas at Soureni, Assam Lingzey, on 23 December.

The day is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister, the Late Chaudhary Charan Singh.

Dean, CAEPHT, Prof PP Dabral, handed over the solar tunnel dryer constructed in the field of D Biswakarma at Soureni under the SCSP funds

of All India Coordinated Research Project on Plasticulture Engineering Technologies on the day.

Prof MS Seveda, Head of Department of Renewable Energy Engineering, spoke about the significance of the day and briefed the gathering about the distribution of solar lights to 25 farmers of the village.

Prof RP Misra informed that the PET centre is now going to develop plastic-based poultry sheds at Padamchey, East Sikkim under SCSP.

## ~ 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





## Flash mob against substance abuse by Bojoghari School

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

A flash mob to generate wide awareness against substance abuse was performed by students of Bojoghari Senior Secondary School here at Naya Bazar on Monday evening.

The event was organized by

Social Justice & Welfare Department in association with the Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India [SAATHI] team of Bojoghari School.

This flash mob was the last event in a series of activities conducted by the Department under the State Action Plan for

Drug Demand Reduction.

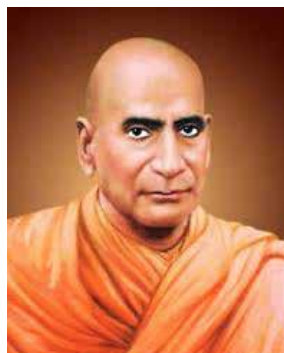
There are three components in the state action plan - awareness generation, capacity building and intervention and this flash mob was part of awareness generation.

The department has held Children's Parliament, football

and other sporting competitions, musical and other activities to create mass awareness against substance abuse.

Seeing the good response and public involvement, the department has decided to give continuity to these activities next year as well with new concepts.

## Governor pays homage to Swami Shraddhanand



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad has paid homage and rich tribute to Late Swami Shraddhanand on his 93rd death anniversary, a Raj Bhavan communiqué informs.

A renowned educationist and social reformer, Swami Shraddhanand was a prolific Arya Samaj missionary who estab-

lished universities and educational institutions in his pursuits to change the society through education. He also worked tirelessly towards bringing harmony and mutual trust between the fragmented Indian society during early 20th Century.

"His teachings, life and contribution to society and the nation have inspired millions in the country and abroad to dedicate life for the welfare of underprivileged and downtrodden in the society. Let us all endeavour to walk the path shown by Swami Ji and move collectively towards reasoning and enlightenment for the betterment of all", the Governor has said.

## Logo of New Heaven Dance Academy launched



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

Mr Royal Plaza Sikkim Demazong 2019, Anand Lamichaney, launched the logo of New Heaven Dance Academy at Rangpo today, a press release informs.

Distinguished guests present on the occasion included Sangita Khawas [Mrs Sikkim 2018 contestant], Bikash Prasad, Shital Pradhan [blogger, Proud to Be a Sikkimese], students of the Institute and their guardians.

New Heaven Dance Academy was recently re-launched and this time its logo was officially released. Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director cum Choreographer of the Institute, Bishnu Suman congratulated Anand Lamichaney for winning the coveted titles.

Suman further said that Anand Lamichaney

was his former student at the dance academy.

It is a big achievement to have a former student launch the Dance Academy's logo, he added.

Sangita Khawas also spoke on the occasion and shared her experience during the first ever Mrs Sikkim competition. She congratulated Suman for his hard work and thanked him for giving an opportunity for children to engage at Rangpo.

Anand Lamichaney spoke of days he had spent with his dance teacher. He assured promotional help for the Institute.

Mr Lamichaney is the winner of Royal Plaza Mr Sikkim Demazong 2019 and four additional titles of Mr Alamode, Mr Multimedia, Mr Talented and Mr Tourism in the recently held Mr. Sikkim Man Hunt 2019.

## KASS event in Singtam



**YOGEN THATAL  
SINGTAM, 23 DEC:**

Krypton Arts Society of Sikkim, a Singtam-based NGO, organized a painting competition and exhibition at Singtam bazaar today.

While students from eight schools were invited, only four schools participated today - Bardang Secondary School, Sumin Lingzey Secondary School, Little Angels

Academy and Sakyong Chisopani JHS School.

Also today, V Matrix Dance Academy performed an energetic dance.

Apart from dance, song (solo) performances by the teachers, poetry recitation was also performed today.

MEO, Prakash Kharel of Singtam Nagar Panchayat was present as chief guest and Gopal Chettri

from DHS was present as resource person.

Bivek Subba from Little Angels Academy stood first while Mandeep Lamichaney from Sakyong Chisopani came second in junior category. Simran Kumari from Sumin Lingzey Secondary School came first and Bishnu Mangar from Bardang Secondary School second in Senior category.

## Annual Day at Namcheybong School



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

Annual Day was celebrated at Namcheybong Senior Secondary School with area MLA Em Prasad Sharma as chief guest today.

The program started with a cleanliness drive covering the entire school campus. The school, it may be mentioned here, has been adopted by the area MLA as part of Safai Abhiyann. The chief guest, ward panchayat, the entire school family, SMDC members, and guardians

participated in the cleanliness drive.

Principal Sabita Sharma presented the annual report of the school and congratulated students who performed well and asked all the rest to work harder in the next session.

Prizes were given away to toppers from LKG to IX and students who excelled in co-curricular activities.

An award instituted in the memory of the Principal's father, the late Tulsi Ram Sharma, was conferred on Dawk-

it Lepcha for the scoring highest marks in Nepali in CBSE 2019. The award carries a cash component of Rs 5,000 and a felicitation letter.

She was also conferred another cash prize of Rs 5,000 by local entrepreneur, Dewakar Basnett, for topping CBSE 2019 at the school.

Addressing the students, the MLA urged them to work hard and aspire to achieve success in life. He also requested guardians to support teachers in holistic development of the students.

## Adampool JHS celebrates Annual Day



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 23 DEC:**

The Adampool JHS near Ranipool celebrated its Annual Day in grand manner today.

The celebration was held in collaboration with Radha Upadhaya Smarak Guthi, Rumtek and had area

MLA, Sonam Tshering Venchunga, as the chief guest accompanied by other dignitaries as special guests.

The programme included an exhibition of products created from waste by teachers and students, meritorious students' award ceremony

by Radha Upadhaya Smarak Guthi, cultural performances etc.

Headmistress, Nirupa Rai, welcomed the guests and the chief guest, in his address, assured all possible support to the school. The programme ended with prize distribution.

## Dikchu School wins Open Men's Football tournament



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA  
DZONGU, 23 DEC:**

Dikchu Senior Secondary School defeated the Legend Boys by 2-1 goals and lifted the Open Men's Football tournament trophy at Gor Secondary School, Dzongu in North Sikkim today.

The final match of the tournament was held today on the occasion of School Annual day. A total of 24 teams from across the state had enlisted their names for the tournament.

The winner was awarded cash award of Rs 30,000 while the runner-up team was awarded with the cash prize of Rs 20,000 with the trophy.

The function was attended by Chief Engi-

neer, Bindeswari Prasad, Roads & Bridges Department, Government of Sikkim as chief guest.

Headmistress of the school, Tseten Lhamu Lepcha, underlined about the academic performance of the school.

Zilla member, Tshering Gyatso Lepcha, informed about the incomplete construction and maintenance of roads in the GPU and also placed a memorandum to the Chief Engineer for early resolution of the same. He also highlighted the long pending work of bridge at Phee Khola connecting Shagyong village with Gor.

The chief guest also tasted and declared Yelow house the winner of

innovative Lepcha traditional food.

Addressing the gathering, the chief guest appreciated the environment friendly initiatives undertaken by Gor Secondary School.

The raffle was also drawn of which the winning numbers are as follows; 1st Prize - 0633, 2nd -1301, 3rd - 0323, consolation prizes - 1361, 1244, 0087.

The function also saw the prize distribution of the school academic of the year. The students of the school also presented colorful cultural programme.

Also present in the function were panchayat and the Zilla members, SMCs, teachers, students and the general public.

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## Violence Cannot be the State's Monopoly

*Ahimsa is the best policy, but it takes two to tango*

The chatterati and the apologists are going hoarse condemning the violence supposedly unleashed by anti-CAA protestors in their various demonstrations. Yes, violence is wrong, but there is a lot that is wrong with how the State has responded and too many inconsistencies in its pick-and-choose model of denouncing some violence and preferring to ignore too many others. Yes, buses were torched in the protest rally taken out by Jamia students in Delhi, and yes, students at AMU were aggressive as well. Their heated emotions can be explained to the feeling of extreme wrong they saw in the Citizenship Amendment Act. There is, however, no excuse for the violence unleashed by the cops in response. Pulling students out of their rooms and thrashing them and invading libraries and toilets to beat up more students and then making them march with their hands raised proves the current Central government's success in othering not just the Muslims of our country but also everyone who challenges their narrative and can make informed decisions. It is after all the same dispensation which was not moved when people were lynched because they belonged to a particular faith or caste or when a cop was killed in UP, police stations attacked and property destroyed. Karni Sena expressing itself with violence or Jat protests holding the nation's capital hostage were not received with disgusting comments about the clothes revealing the arsonists or urban naxals misleading people. And this is not about whataboutery, it is about recognizing that a dangerous experiment is afoot which needs to be challenged and cannot be distanced just because some of the expressions have been violent.

The State cannot be allowed to have a monopoly on violence, especially not when it singles some sections out for especially strong crackdowns.

Tear gas and lathicharges are recourses made available to the cops to disperse violent mobs. Once the crowd is dispersed, the job is done. To go after people and assaulting them and their properties is about taking revenge, settling scores and dispensing kangaroo court justice. But there is only so much professionalism one can expect from a force which answers to a BJP Chief Minister who is thirsting for "revenge" for public property destroyed in mob violence. Stereotypically inconsistent, the same individual commanded a "sena" which used to roam around attacking couples and dispensing instant justice and has preferred to not interfere or comment when mobs have murdered people based on rumours.

The last time we checked, however, we were still, thankfully, a democracy and no force in Khakhi had been provided the responsibility of dishing out punishment. Those who look at provocation as an excuse for the violence unleashed by the State do themselves and the Constitution a disservice. But if that be the stream of argument one likes to go with, then the first act of violence was by the State when it decided to choreograph and manage the protest marches because that is tantamount to denial of the right to expression. Too many agencies have been compromised, too many have willingly co-opted and the police force was one of the first to capitulate to political masters in our country. This being the case, it is natural for lay citizens to be suspicious of everything that the cops do and question their intentions every time they make a suggestion. Put an irritated crowd of people face to face with cops doing anything more than just keeping watch and the situation is bound to deteriorate into violence. And the force has done nothing thus far to suggest otherwise.

So, condemn mob violence, sure, but don't allow that to take focus away from the issue at hand – the divisive and deeply problematic nature of CAA. And make sure that police action, whether in Delhi or UP or Bengaluru is condemned as well. There should never be a situation where we condone the use of excessive force by the police.... never.

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## How did the Rebels beat the Empire in Star Wars? The answer is closer to home than you think

ALASTAIR MARSH  
*theconversation.com*

It may all have happened a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, but there's a secret weapon in every Star Wars film that's found almost everywhere humans live on Earth. It explains how the scrappy Rebel Alliance were able to defeat the mighty Galactic Empire, with all its high-tech weaponry, vast space armada and the Death Star.

Even with the help of Jedis, The Force, ewoks and a wookiee, Luke Skywalker and the rebels skirted annihilation on many occasions. We believe that their ultimate victory owed less to their mystic powers and allies, and instead to something more down-to-earth.

In several key moments throughout the series, the survival of the rebels depends on their ability to escape the Empire's clutches, by retreating to, and defending, fortified bases. These are spread out on remote planets throughout the galaxy, in often hostile environments, from snowbound Hoth to desiccated Crait.

It's time to finally give the Rebel Alliance's engineering corps the credit it deserves. The fate of the galaxy was decided not by light sabres – but by concrete.

### THE SNOWS OF HOTH

At the start of The Empire Strikes Back, things are looking grim. The Empire have cornered the remnants of the Rebel Alliance on the ice planet, Hoth. Fortunately, General Leia and co are able to defend Echo Base long enough for their allies to evacuate. The base is built into subterranean caves, but concrete is still needed for the roofs and floors of the spacecraft hangars, and the defensive laser cannon emplacements.

But how could they make all that concrete when temperatures on Hoth are consistently below 0°C? Concrete doesn't set by drying out, but by a hydration reaction, which consumes water. If the water in the concrete mix is frozen solid, it can't take part in the hydration reaction, and so the concrete can't

develop its strength.

So how did the Rebel engineers get around this? A cheat solution for small structures is simply to make the concrete in a place it's not freezing, and then bring it in. This is known as "pre-cast" concrete. Engineers are currently using this to upgrade the Rothera research station in Antarctica – the most similar place to Hoth there is on Earth.

But shipping all that concrete through space isn't practical. Engineers on Earth have a better solution – they use special rapid-hardening cement that contains calcium aluminates. This reduces how long the "danger zone" lasts, during which the cement must be protected from freezing. This quick-hardening ability allowed the French Army to build gun emplacements quickly in the first world war, and could have helped fortify rebel defences on Hoth.

### THE SALT LAKES OF CRAIT

In 2017's The Last Jedi, the rebels were almost wiped out again by the pursuing Imperial fleet. They take shelter on the barren planet of Crait, covered by flat, dried up salt lakes. The rebels regroup in an old base built into a mountain that's protected by colossal, metal blast doors, supported by a reinforced concrete structure. Outside lie the vast salt flats and the attacking Imperial forces. Compared to the laser cannons of the First Order, salt would seem the least of the rebels' worries. But in fact, salts can be one of the most destructive substances for reinforced concrete.

Reinforced concrete contains steel rods to make it stronger and resist bending. But if CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere and chloride in the salts diffuse into the concrete, the steel can corrode, blister and weaken the concrete by expanding. This is sometimes known as "concrete cancer" and has been a contributing factor in several engineering disasters on Earth, including the collapse of the Morandi bridge in Genoa in 2018. In that particular case it is believed that salts carried in the sea air accelerated the deterioration of the structure.

Were the Rebels foolish to build reinforced

concrete bases where salt is everywhere? Actually, this type of corrosion needs a certain level of humidity in the air. Crait has very little water, or none at all. In such a dry environment, corrosion wouldn't happen. So thankfully for General Leia and co, the mountain base was in a good enough condition to resist the bombardment – just long enough for Luke Skywalker to intervene. But how did they make all that concrete in the first place with so little water?

Given that concrete needs water to set, a planet without water would prove tricky. The Middle East on Earth is largely desert, but there's still a lot of concrete production, much of it made with desalinated seawater, which is expensive. On planets where there isn't even seawater, water is too dense and precious to use for anything but keeping humans alive. There's no easy fix for this, but it's possible the rebels took a similar approach to scientists designing constructions on our Moon – using alternative binding materials instead of cement, such as sulphur, which could be mined from lunar rocks.

### BACK ON EARTH

While the battle for the fate of the galaxy concludes in the cinema, the battle for the future of humanity continues here on Earth. Cement is the largest manufactured product on Earth by mass, and generates about 8% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, which is more than all of aviation. Concrete is the second most-used substance on Earth – only water is used more. The world as we know it would not exist without concrete.

But the concrete saga is by no means over. At the UK's National Centre for Infrastructure Materials, our research is helping to tackle two of the biggest challenges – reducing the environmental footprint of producing concrete and making the sure that the lifetime of concrete infrastructure is as long and robust as possible. May The Force be with us...

*[the writer is Research Fellow in Civil Engineering, University of Leeds]*

## How tackling 'rape myths' could help increase convictions at trial

LARA FLYNN HUDSPITH  
*theconversation.com*

A major review into the low rate of successful rape prosecutions has suggested that there is a "larger systemic problem" in how complex cases such as rapes are investigated by the UK police and prosecuted by the Crown Prosecution Service. Despite an increase in the number of reported rapes in recent years, conviction rates are at an all-time low, with the latest figures showing a 27% fall in convictions between 2017-18 and 2018-19.

One issue identified as potentially contributing to low conviction rates is preconceptions among jurors. Many people may believe what have been termed "rape myths": biased expectations and misconceptions around the realities of rape. And belief in these myths could influence jurors' decisions.

Research has revealed various types of damaging misconceptions that jurors may hold. For example, in a mock trial the "jurors" had erroneous expectations: one believed that rape would result in vaginal tears in 99.9% of cases, while another believed that strangulation of the victim would be common. As these perceptions are drastically different to the reality of reported rapes, this demonstrates the danger of such beliefs – jurors may wrongly acquit because the evidence they are shown differs to their biased expectations.

Recent research with real jurors shows they also may be unaware of the realities of rape. Cheryl Thomas, professor of judicial studies at UCL, reported that although most jurors interviewed did not believe

in the "obvious" myths, such as that all rape allegations will be reported immediately, some were unsure regarding others.

In particular, there was uncertainty as to whether perpetrators are likely to be known to the victim. This is worrying given that it is well-established that most rapes are committed by someone that the victim knows. For example, UK government figures show that from 2016 to 2017, 45% of rapes or attempted rapes of women were committed by a partner or ex-partner, and 43% were committed by someone otherwise known to the victim. Jurors may have wrong ideas about the prevalence of "stranger rape" that may colour their perception of what a "real" rape is, and acquit on this basis.

These sorts of misinformed expectations have been shown to have an impact on verdicts. Mock-trial research at the University of Huddersfield found that the more deeply a person believes in rape myths, the more likely they are to acquit. Also, the deliberation process did not change people's views – instead, many "jurors" in the mock trials had decided on a verdict pre-deliberation, which their discussions did not change.

As research increasingly suggests that jurors may find it hard to set rape myths aside, some have argued that jury trials in rape cases are no longer suitable.

### POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM

A recent BBC Radio 4 programme, considered alternatives to current practice that included trials before a judge sitting alone, or screening jurors. There are potential problems

with both suggestions.

For example, judges may not necessarily be better at setting aside their assumptions than jurors. There have been instances of judges making worrisome statements during rape cases. One judge reportedly made comments that indicated the complainant was somewhat to blame for her assault. Another's comments implied that they did not believe the complainant's allegation to be true.

When it comes to screening jurors, careful consideration would have to be given to the measure used to identify to what extent a person believed in rape myths and the point at which such beliefs would disqualify them from sitting as a juror. Another issue is that jurors may not answer a questionnaire truthfully – they may give the answers they believe the court wishes to hear.

Instead of either of these approaches, judges have been given guidance on how to address the jury where there is a risk of stereotypes and assumptions around rape, to be tailored to the circumstances of the case. For example, in cases in which there is no reported struggle or resistance by the complainant, judges may bring up the difference between consent and submission. This is a step in the right direction, but perhaps an alternative, more standardised approach is needed.

Recent court observations have shown that judges directions to the jury in rape trials are not applied consistently. A standardised approach, such as providing leaflets or videos prior to every case, would ensure that all jurors on rape trials receive information around rape myths. This sort of educational material could un-

derscore which factors are relevant to the jury's decision and which are not. It could clarify conditions of consent, for example, emphasising which factors should not be considered when determining whether consent was given, such as the complainant's clothing.

This sort of information is important – not just to guard against the influence of jurors' beliefs, but also against the influence of defence barristers when their case draws upon those same rape myths. This occurred during a rape trial in Cork in Ireland last year, when a barrister showed jurors the complainant's underwear, suggesting the style demonstrated her consent.

### CREATING EFFECTIVE COUNTERS TO RAPE MYTHS

A pre-trial video for jurors addressing rape myths is being piloted in England, however, these sorts of materials need careful thought before being widely deployed.

It's essential that the materials are based on comprehensive research to ensure that their content and format are effective in addressing biased views. Research on attitude change and models of cognitive processing must be considered, taking into account the fact that different people absorb information and learn in different ways.

If British courts adopt this approach, it will help jurors understand what is relevant in their decisions, and this could lead to an increase in conviction rates. In turn, this may encourage more victims and survivors of sexual assault to report to the police, and perpetrators may yet be deterred from offending.

*[the writer is PhD Researcher, University of Huddersfield]*



# Governor shown black flags by JU students

**KOLKATA, DEC 23 (PTI):** West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was shown black flags on Monday by a section of students at the Jadavpur University where he went to attend a meeting as its chancellor.

The students, protesting against the governor's stand on the proposed nationwide NRC and the Citizenship Amendment Act or CAA, surrounded his car and shouted slogans when he reached the main gate of the campus around 2 pm.

The governor was stuck for around 30 minutes amid the protests by CPI(M)-backed SFI, Arts Faculty Students Union (AFSU), AISA and FETSU.

He was escorted to the venue of the meeting at Aurobindo Bhavan after Vice Chancellor Suranjan Das and other varsity officials intervened.

Dhankhar was at the campus to attend a meeting of the JU's court -- the highest decision-making body of the prestigious university. However, he left the meeting midway around 4.10 pm.

As the students blocked his way again, Dhankhar said he had a hunch that he will face protests but still decided to visit the campus to find a way out of the impasse



over cancellation of the special convocation.

The varsity earlier cancelled the special convocation where Dhankhar was supposed to confer D.Litt and D.Sc to some eminent people. It was scheduled for December 24.

The JU authorities said it will instead hold a simple ceremony in which only students will be awarded degrees and certificates.

"I do not want your careers to be affected due to the situation. I came here to discuss with you and find a way out.

I am not the governor who never listens to the students," he said as over 300 students gheraoed

him at the stairs of Aurobindo Bhavan.

When the students questioned him on police action at Jamia Millia Islamia campus in Delhi, Dhankhar said, "I am the governor of West Bengal and I can answer queries about the state."

He asserted that he believes in autonomy of educational institutes and will never work in the behest of any political party.

Even as the protests continued with students raising "go back" slogans, Dhankhar told them to submit a representation at Raj Bhavan and he will be glad to sit and discuss their issues. "If I have answer to your queries

I would certainly give them," he added.

Later, in a series of tweets, Dhankhar said, "Was at Jadavpur University for two hours. Had interaction with agitated students on various issues and indicated that am keen to connect with them further at Raj Bhawan. The Jadavpur University Court meeting could not be held and instructed C to have iat Raj Bhawan this evening (sic)."

He alleged that the state administration was "not at all responsive" regarding his visit to the varsity.

A Jadavpur University Teachers' Association (JUTA) spokesperson

said the court meeting was still underway and likely to decide on going ahead with the convocation on Tuesday.

The Left students' unions said the governor was making "unwarranted interference into the autonomy of the institute".

AFSU general secretary Debraj Debnath said, "The governor did not reply to any of our queries. He couldn't explain why he kept issuing pro NRC and CAA statements and asked protestors to withdraw their agitation. We will keep boycotting him whenever he comes to the campus." "We don't consider him as chancellor," he said.

## Protests against CAA continue in Assam

**GUWAHATI, DEC 23 (PTI):** Protests against the contentious citizenship law continued in Assam with agitators staging sit-ins across the state on Monday.

However, no violence from anywhere in the state was reported.

Former Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, who was the founder of the Asom Gana Parishad which is an alliance partner of the ruling BJP in the state, joined a sit-in at the Gandhi Mandap, a memorial for Mahatma Gandhi atop the Sarania Hill in Guwahati with his party colleagues to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

As a part of the series of programmes, announced by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) for the week, litterateurs, people from different walks of life, social activists took part in a protest programme at the Latastil field in the city.

Protests were also staged in different parts of the state where people held up the symbol of Assamese culture -



Gamosa - with 'No CAB' and 'We oppose CAB' written on them.

The Krishak Mukti Sangram Parishad (KMSS) also held a demonstration at Chachal in the city against the legislation and demanded release of their leader and RTI activist Akhil Gogoi who was arrested on December 17 by NIA.

Assam has witnessed one of the worst violent protests by the public in its history with three rail stations, a post office, a bank, a bus terminus, shops, dozens of vehicles and many other pub-

lic properties being set ablaze or totally damaged.

Already five persons, including four in firing by security forces, have lost their lives since December 11.

After the Rajya Sabha passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill on December 11 night, the state erupted in protests, in which agitators engaged in pitch battles in almost every major city or town, forcing the administration to impose curfew.

With the situation is turning to normal, the curfew has been lifted from several cities.

## Thousands join 'peace rally' of Muslim outfits in B'luru



**BENGALURU, DEC 23 (PTI):** Thousands of people from Muslim community on Monday staged a "Peace Rally" here against the Citizenship Amendment Law and proposed National Register of Citizens.

Waving the national flag and holding placards, the protestors raised slogans demanding withdrawal of the NRC and CAA as they marched through city roads.

The rally, called by around 35 organisations under the banner of Joint Action Committee of Bengaluru, culminated at the Quddus Saheb Eidgah

Maidan. Road traffic was badly hit at several parts of the city.

Elaborate security arrangements had been made to avert any untoward incident, which by-and-large remained peaceful till the afternoon, police said.

A report from Mangaluru, which was rocked by violent protests over the CAA last week leaving two people dead in police firing, said the city remained largely peaceful after curfew was lifted Monday morning.

City police commissioner P S Harsha requested public to share

videos or photos regarding the violence in the city on December 19 for further investigation.

In a tweet he said, "I appeal to public who have any photo or video content regarding riots that happened in mangaluru city on 19th Dec to mail it to mangalurunorth-mgc@gmail.com or send a WhatsApp message on 9480802327. It would help the investigation team in upholding the truth, he said.

Police said the prohibitory orders will continue to be in force in the city till Monday midnight.

## CISF takes over security of Indian Museum at Kolkata



**KOLKATA, DEC 23 (PTI):** A contingent of armed CISF commandos on Monday took over the security of India's 'oldest and largest' museum -- the Indian museum -- located in Kolkata, a senior official said.

A total of 59 personnel of the paramilitary force, led by an Assistant Commandant (AC) rank officer, were inducted at the museum to secure it against all kinds of threats including those from terrorist elements.

An induction ceremony was held at the museum that was attended by West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar. "The museum is known by dif-

ferent names like Asiatic Society Museum, Imperial Museum and then later as Indian Museum, Kolkata. It is the largest and oldest museum in India.

"The museum is a huge monument located in the heart of Kolkata and is an autonomous organisation under the administrative control of the Union ministry of culture," a CISF spokesperson said.

It is an institution of national importance and a vast collection of rare and extremely valuable artifacts. Thousand of visitors come to the museum every day, the spokesperson added.

The Central Industri-

al Security Force (CISF) will provide round-the-clock armed security cover to the museum, control the overall access to the facility and vehicle-borne quick-reaction teams of commandos will also be stationed at vantage points to respond in case of an attack or sabotage-like activity at the facility, a senior official said. The force last year had taken over the security of the historic Victoria Memorial located here.

With this induction, the CISF now has a total of 347 units under its security cover across the country, the spokesperson said.

## No place for NRC in Andhra Pradesh, says CM

**KADAPA (AP), DEC 23 (PTI):** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday announced that his government was opposed to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and would not implement it in the state.

Addressing a public meeting after launching some developmental works here, the Chief Minister asserted that his government was against the NRC.

After I landed here on Monday, several minority groups came to me and

requested that I make a statement on NRC. I told them clearly that state government will not support it, the Chief Minister said. He recalled that Deputy Chief Minister Amzath Basha had made a statement on the issue a few days ago.

He had discussed the issue with me before making that statement. I fully endorse that. The entire government is committed to it. We are against NRC and there is no question of supporting it, Jagan told the minorities.

## Lazio's Supercoppa triumph means a damp end to Juventus's golden decade

**NICKY BANDINI**  
**THEGUARDIAN**

The 2010s will be remembered, in Italian football, as a decade dominated by Juventus: winners of eight out of 10 Scudetti, four Coppe Italia and four Supercoppe as well. Yet they began with a different team – Inter – winning the treble. They end amidst suggestions that the Old Lady's crown might once again be starting to slip.

Perhaps such talk is premature. Juventus will end 2019 sitting joint-top of Serie A. Alongside them, however, are an Inter team coached by Antonio Conte, the man who led their own charge back to the summit eight seasons ago. The Nerazzurri have scored more goals while conceding fewer, and rounded out the year with a 4-0 demolition of Genoa.

Juventus finished the year on a very different note. They also won their final league game, Cristiano Ronaldo sealing victory over Sampdoria with a gravity-defying header on Wednesday, but still had one more commitment to fulfil. This year's Supercoppa

– officially rebranded as the Coca-Cola Supercup – would be played in Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

Their opponents were Lazio. Or, to put it another way, a team that beat them 3-1 in the league just two weeks ago. Juventus had evolved since: Maurizio Sarri experimenting for the first time with a front three of Ronaldo, Gonzalo Higuain and Paulo Dybala.

He dared to start them all together in Riyadh. The outcome was exactly the same as it had been in Rome. If anything, Juventus looked worse. They had at least started brightly against Lazio in their league fixture, grabbing an early lead only to falter after Rodrigo Bentancur exited with a knee injury and Juan Cuadrado was shown a red card.

There were no such mitigating factors this time around. Lazio scored first on Sunday, Luis Alberto side-footing home from 10 yards out. Despite yielding possession to Juventus, and an equaliser to Paulo Dybala on the stroke of half-time, they continued to look by far the more dangerous side.

## No need of fresh NRC in Assam, if SC allows 20 pc re-verification in border districts: Himanta

**GUWAHATI, DEC 23 (PTI):** Assam government on Monday said there will be no need for the state to be a part of the proposed nation-wide NRC, if the Supreme Court allows re-verification of its 20 per cent names from the border districts.

The state government does not accept the existing National Register of Citizens (NRC), the final version of which was published on August 31

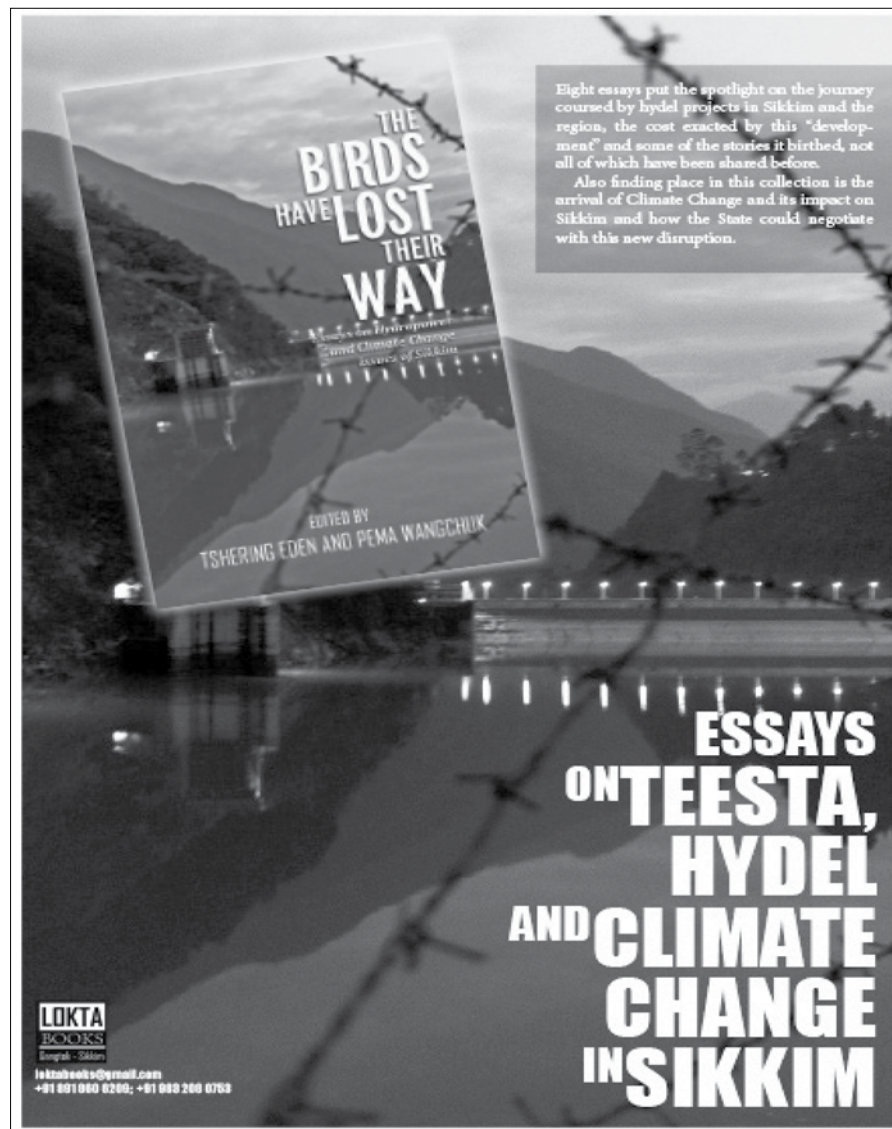
with over 19 lakh exclusions, Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told a press conference.

"If the Supreme Court accepts our demand of 20 per cent re-verification in border districts, we (Assam) don't need a national one. We are sure lots of mistakes will be found out in the re-verification process," he said.

The Assam government had earlier submitted an affidavit in the

apex court praying for re-verification of 20 per cent names in the draft NRC in border districts, but the plea was denied.

"The PM yesterday said there is no plan for a nation-wide NRC. So we have to pursue only in the Supreme Court. If it does not listen to us, we will have to approach the Government of India. The NRC was published under the supervision of the Supreme Court.





## Mikel Arteta and Carlo Ancelotti the perfect tonic for Arsenal and Everton

**NICK AMES**  
**LIVERPOOL, 23 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** Watching the faces file out of the Goodison Park dressing rooms it was impossible to tell that most of those emerging had been involved in one of the least eventful Premier League games in memory. Everton and Arsenal had created no more than three goalscoring chances between them but anyone who stopped to reflect was keener to dwell on the possibilities that lie ahead.

Behind those doors both sets of players had just been addressed by their managers: the first time Carlo Ancelotti and Mikel Arteta had debriefed their charges on a matchday. The consequence was a collective spring in the step, a bubbliness out of keeping with what had passed and a sense of optimism that this time, under managers who set huge stock in making individuals better, things may just be different.

“Be brave, take responsibility and work hard for each other” had been the essence of Arteta’s message to Arsenal, six of whose starting XI were aged 23 or under. The building blocks would be enough this time. Even if the end product was sorely lacking they duly ran, battled, showed for the ball and did most of the basics that have seemed inconvenient to many of their more senior colleagues.

They were enthused to learn afterwards they had done much of what Arteta is seeking, although at least one of their teammates could have given them fair warning of those criteria. “For sure,” Calum Chambers said when asked whether it was clear, during the two seasons he played alongside Arteta at Arsenal, the midfielder would become a manager. “When I came here he was one of the senior players; he helped me and gave me advice on positional play. He was a very intelligent player – you could always tell he had that side to him. I’m excited; everyone’s excited to work with him and learn his philosophy.”

Chambers had just put in one of his best performances of the season at centre-back and been named the man of the match, even if he will have tougher afternoons. He was 19 when he joined Arsenal from Southampton and, within two months, would make his England debut. Since then he has plateaued, with loans to Middlesbrough and Fulham punctuating a bit-part presence at his parent club, and at 24 it is time to discover exactly where his ceiling lies.

This is what Arteta will have to judge and there are several other examples of players in Arsenal’s squad who occupy that grey area between potential and fully known quantity. Lucas Torreira and Rob Holding are others, while refining the more frustrating tendencies of the younger Matteo Guendouzi will surely be a high priority. It is not necessarily anyone’s fault when footballers fall short of early expectations; but they were usually signed for a reason, and Arteta inherits a number of individuals who are not too far gone to reset.

Perhaps that is one reason why the word “excited” arose several times in Chambers’s short conversation. “He was proud of the way we worked and how we worked hard,” he said of Arteta’s reaction; banality on the pitch had quickly translated into buoyancy off it.

Ancelotti has a similar task but his focus may be different. He is a proven cajoler of top-level players and one of the niggles over his suitability for the role is that Everton have few of those but Gylfi Sigurdsson comes close when operating at the peak of his powers. The Iclander is out of form, even if a first-half free-kick was one of Everton’s better efforts, and not usually the most effusive speaker but there was a sparkle in his eyes when the prospect of learning under the three-times Champions League winner was raised.

“I’m delighted,” Sigurdsson said. “He’s obviously a fantastic manager with a lot of experience and a lot of success, so he definitely knows what he’s doing. He knows what he’s talking about, so I think the boys will have a lot of respect. We just can’t wait to start working with him.”

# Andy Robertson says victory on world stage can spur Liverpool to league title

**ANY HUNTER**  
**DOHA, 23 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** Andy Robertson has said victory in the Club World Cup can propel Liverpool towards further honours in 2020 as they strive to add the Premier League title to their world and European crowns.

Liverpool’s 1-0 triumph in Qatar delivered a third trophy inside six months and ensured they have won every competition bar the Community Shield. The priority remains a first domestic championship since 1990 and while the unbeaten Premier League leaders have a 10-point lead over Leicester going into their visit to the King Power Stadium on Boxing Day, Robertson believes lifting a first world title in Liverpool’s history can act as extra motivation in the new year.

“That’s three for 2019,” the defender said. “In the calendar year we have won the Champions League, Super Cup and now this. To win three in any calendar year is special – and these are big ones.

“The Champions League is absolutely massive. The Super Cup and the Club World Cup are massive to us. We are really excited about it but we have got to take the momentum into 2020. Hopefully there are a couple more of these scenes of us lifting trophies above our head to



come. “It’s an incredible feeling to win it and it makes this week worthwhile. We took it seriously even though maybe people back in England didn’t. The whole of South America was behind Flamengo. You could see how many fans came over and made a fantastic atmosphere for them. In England, they wanted us to prioritise the Carabao Cup but you don’t get many chances to be world champions. We took ours and rightly so.”

Liverpool were dismayed that, after the trophy presentation, Fifa officials prevented Jürgen Klopp and his players from going on to the running track at the Khalifa International Stadium to celebrate in front

of their fans. But nothing could detract from the achievement of winning the club’s first world title at the fourth attempt.

Alisson, a decisive influence against Flamengo as well as in the semi-final victory over Monterrey, has been enraptured by the Club World Cup since his boyhood team Internacional defeated Barcelona in 2006. That sensation was surpassed by lifting the trophy in Doha and, as the Brazil player described it, writing a new chapter in Liverpool’s illustrious history.

The goalkeeper said: “As a supporter you feel you are inside, you are involved, you are there suffering together with the team. It was a good emotion I had with my

friends and my family [in 2006] ... I love that club but being on the pitch, playing, helping the team, is really fantastic. It’s even more special that it is the first time Liverpool has achieved this title. We put, again, our names in the history of this big club.

“As a team, we are making special things. The boss keeps us together and we try to make the difference not just on the pitch but off the pitch with the supporters. Every time we say, ‘We are Liverpool, this means more,’ maybe it makes no sense for those who are not Liverpool supporters but we really try to make this special for everybody. Not just for us players, but also the supporters

who are all around the world following us. “We need to give the best on the pitch. They have already the history but we are making history again.

“Football is like this. Thursday we have another big match and this is the beauty of football. You always have the new opportunity of new things. We try to make history again because we have a big goal and that is the Premier League and to try to defend the Champions League title.”

Fifa awarded Mohamed Salah the Golden Ball for the player of the tournament, while the match-winner, Roberto Firmino, was named man of the match against Flamengo.

Jordan Henderson had legitimate claims to

both individual prizes too, having deputised for Virgil van Dijk in central defence for the first time in his career against Monterrey before producing an outstanding performance in the final.

Robertson said: “We have got big names in our squad but Hendo shows what Liverpool is about. He does it in every single performance he puts in. He showed it when he played centre-back. He cruised it! He was magnificent against Flamengo, the best player on the park. “Hendo is underappreciated to some but, to us in the dressing room, we appreciate everything he does. That is the most important thing. In England maybe they don’t give him the credit he deserves. That will soon change.”

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain will have a scan on Monday to discover the extent of the ankle ligament damage he sustained against Flamengo. The midfielder, who has been unfortunate with injury during his Liverpool career, rolled an ankle in a second-half challenge with Everton Ribeiro and was on crutches when the squad departed for home on Sunday.

Liverpool’s medical staff treated the injury during the flight but, with Klopp expressing concern the ligament could be ruptured, Oxlade-Chamberlain requires a scan.

## Average annual salary of Premier League players tops £3m for first time

**SEAN INGLE**  
**LONDON, 23 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]:** The average salary for a Premier League footballer has exceeded £3m a year for the first time, according to the latest Global Sports Salary Survey, which also highlights the financial muscle and worldwide popularity of English football’s top flight.

The average pay for a first-team squad member is £61,024 a week – a figure that has risen more than £10,000 in only two years.

Manchester City’s squad earn more than double that, with the champions’ players taking home an average of £134,000 a week (£6.98m a year) before bonuses.

That makes Pep Guardiola’s squad the top earners in English football and the 13th-best-paid global sports team in the GSS survey, which tracks the pay of 10,070 players in 350 teams across eight major sports.

Barcelona have retained their status as the best-paid team in world sport. The average basic first-team pay at the La Liga champions is £9.83m per year for the 2019-20 season, much of which is down to Lionel Messi’s deal in 2018 that pays him more than £50m a season, including guaranteed image rights’ fees.

Real Madrid remain second (£8.9m) with Juventus (£8.08m) moving from ninth to third in this

year’s survey, which includes only basic annual pay and not signing-on fees, loyalty bonuses or performance add-ons.

Basketball teams from the NBA fill out the rest of the places in the top 10, with the Portland Trailblazers fourth (£8.03m), the highest-paid basketball team. Of the top 20 teams in this year’s list 15 are from the NBA and five from elite European football: Barcelona, Real Madrid, Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City.

Manchester United (£7.65m) are the second-highest English club in 33rd place. They have fallen 23 places during the past year, largely owing to players’ wages dropping after they failed to make the Champions League and a notable rise in NBA salaries.

The NBA remains comfortably the top-paying league across world sport, with average basic salaries of almost £6.7m per man this season.

The report also notes average crowds in the Premier League in 2019-20 are on course to be the highest in top-flight English history, breaking the record set in the 1948-49 season. As the report’s editor, Nick Harris, points out: “In an age of football saturation, weariness at cynical owners, asset-squeezing, rampant agents’ greed and widely perceived sky-high ticket prices, record all-time crowds would be remarkable.”

## Atalanta hand ‘embarrassing’ AC Milan worst loss in 21 years

**MILAN, DEC 23 (AFP):** Slovenia international Josip Ilicic scored two terrific goals as Atalanta demolished AC Milan 5-0 in Serie A on Sunday to climb up to fifth and hand the fallen Italian giants their heaviest defeat since 1998.

It was an “embarrassing” performance by the seven-time European champions, said club manager Zvonimir Boban.

Atalanta fans even taunted Milan with shouts of ‘Serie B, Serie B’, confidently predicting relegation for their storied rivals this season.

Atalanta captain Papu Gomez fired the hosts ahead on 10 minutes when he gathered the ball on the left wing and drifted into the area before blasting beyond Gianluigi Donnarumma. Mario Pasalic, on loan from Chelsea, added a second on the hour in Bergamo when he flicked in a flashing drive from Robin Gosens.

Ilicic made it 3-0 with a clinical finish after a Pasalic assist and the Slovenian attacker struck again on 72 minutes when he curled a majestic strike into the top corner from 20 yards.

Luis Muriel then replaced Ilicic and scored with minutes of his introduction, pouncing on hesitancy from Donnarumma to round out a resounding victory. Atalanta have scored a league-best 43 goals this season and trail



Roma by four points in the race for the final Champions League spot.

The Bergamo side are competing in the Champions League for the first time this season and were drawn against Valencia in the last 16 after scraping through the group stage.

The defeat was Milan’s worst loss since going down 5-0 to Roma in 1998. “We have to work and improve. We en-

tered the pitch with too little technical and tactical clarity. It’s a terribly insufficient performance,” admitted Milan coach Stefano Pioli. Milan club manager Boban, a former midfield great with the club, said it will be a miserable holiday period.

“It was an embarrassing performance. We will have to wake up and react. It will not be a good Christmas,” said the Croatian. Napoli needed a goal

in the fourth minute of stoppage time from Macedonian midfielder Elif Elmas to secure a comeback 2-1 win at Sassuolo. It was their first victory in the league since October 19 having gone eight matches without a win. Furthermore, it was a maiden triumph as coach for Gennaro Gattuso who replaced the sacked Carlo Ancelotti but whose first outing had ended in a 2-1 defeat to Parma last weekend.

Sassuolo were ahead after 29 minutes when 19-year-old Hamed Junior Traore volleyed home.

Brazilian Allan levelled for Napoli just before the hour with Elmas bundling home the winner in injury time. Napoli are now eighth, seven points off the Champions League places. In other matches Sunday, ninth-placed Bologna saw off Lecce 3-2 while Mario Balotelli came off the bench to score in Brescia’s 1-1 draw at Parma. Inter Milan and reigning champions Juventus are locked on 42 points at the top as the Italian league prepares to head into a two-week winter recess.

Romelu Lukaku scored twice as Inter beat Genoa 4-0 on Saturday while teammate Sebastiano Esposito became the club’s youngest scorer in more than 60 years. Juventus had overcame Sampdoria 2-1 on Wednesday before taking on Lazio in the Italian Super Cup in Saudi Arabia on Sunday. Lazio won 3-1 for a fifth Super Cup triumph.



## Australian PM dismisses 'reckless' calls to curb coal

**SYDNEY, DEC 23 (AFP):** Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday rejected calls for "reckless" and "job-destroying" cuts to the country's vast coal industry in the face of a deadly climate-fuelled bushfire crisis.

Morrison's conservative government has fiercely defended the lucrative coal industry in Australia, which produces a third of global coal exports and provides work in key swing electoral districts.

"I am not going to write off the jobs of thousands of Australians by walking away from traditional industries," Morrison told the Seven Network, in one of several morning interviews rejecting calls for further action.

"What we won't do is engage in reckless and job-destroying and economy-crunching targets which are being sought," he told Channel 9, responding to calls for more climate-friendly policies.

Morrison's media blitz came as he sought to limit the political fallout from a much-criticised Hawaiian holiday -- taken as bushfires destroyed an area the size of Belgium and unleashed toxic smoke into Australia's major cities.

Conditions eased markedly on Monday, but authorities said in the last few days almost 200 homes have been damaged by fires in South Australia and New South Wales.

Authorities said that little was left of the small town of Balmoral, south west of Sydney, where 67-year-old artist Steve Harrison told public broadcaster ABC he had been forced to weather the fire from a make-shift kiln.

"I ran to my ute but my garden was already on fire, the driveway was on fire, the road was on fire so I couldn't evacuate," he said. "The day before I had actually built myself a small kiln down the back - a coffin-sized kiln - just big enough for me to crawl inside."

"I was in there for half an hour while the firestorm went over. It was huge, just glowing orange-red everywhere. Just scary. I was terrified."

Bushfires occur frequently in Australia, but scientists say several weather phenomena have come together to make this spring-summer bushfire season among the worst on record.

Record-low rainfall, record-high temperatures and strong winds have made the situation more combustible, and according to scientists, are influenced by climate change.

Morrison has insisted Australia will meet its 2030 emissions targets.

"I'm going to maintain the course of responsible management, responsibly addressing the changes of climate change and responsibly ensuring that we can grow our economy in what is a very tough climate at the moment," Morrison told the Seven Network.

# 40 years on, veterans still grapple with Soviet-Afghan war

At his home in the mountains north of Kabul, former mujahideen fighter Shah Sulaiman closed his damaged eyes, took a sip of green tea and thought bitterly of Afghanistan's war against the Soviet Union that started four decades ago.

"When we fought against the Soviets, we were expecting a good future," said the 62-year-old father, who was blinded in one eye and suffered a leg wound when he trod on a landmine during the conflict in 1985. "Unfortunately things turned out for the worst."

This month marks the 40th anniversary of the Soviet Union's "intervention" -- or invasion -- of Afghanistan, the beginning of a decade-long guerilla war that killed up to two million Afghans, forced seven million more from their homes and led to the deaths of more than 14,000 Soviet troops.

"(It) brought only misery and destruction to Afghans and Afghanistan," recalled Sulaiman, who commanded a unit of 12 men in the Panjshir valley, a heartland of mujahideen resistance north of the capital.

In the decades since the war, which ended in 1989, Afghan veterans like Sulaiman and former Soviet soldiers have had to grapple with the physical and emotional wounds of a bloody conflict whose purpose and consequences remain angrily contested. While the war was a mujahideen victory, what came next saw Afghanistan plunge deeper into misery and fighting, with veterans blaming the conflict for the rise of the Taliban and the ongoing violence that besets the country to this day. In Russia, former Soviet soldiers are still trying



ing to make sense of a war the public condemned at the time and that observers say hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union. "We defended our southern borders, and I still think our presence in Afghanistan was essential," said Ilias Daoudi, 52, a former Soviet intelligence official who lost a leg in a 1986 landmine blast in Herat, in western Afghanistan.

"A big country like ours has to control what is happening in neighbouring regions."

- 'Right' decision -

Regular Soviet soldiers began arriving in Afghanistan after Moscow's December 24, 1979 deployment order to support a pro-Soviet regime in Kabul and quell a nationalist Islamist insurgency that was pushing back against the atheist communists and their reforms. More than 600,000

troops from the USSR would eventually cycle through Afghanistan, playing a part in a Cold War proxy conflict that also saw the United States arm and fund mujahideen fighters including Osama bin Laden.

"It was my religious duty to do Jihad (holy war) against the Soviets because our country was invaded by them and they were spreading communism and infidelity in Afghanistan," Sulaiman said.

In Russia, veterans seek to recast the war as a necessary step to counter the threat of rising Islamism in Afghanistan and Muslim-majority Soviet republics.

The decision to send troops in 1979 was the "right" one -- not just for the communist bloc but on a personal level too, said Vladimir Vchivtsev, 58, who spent 16 months in Af-

ghanistan as a Soviet reconnaissance officer.

"War is the best school of life, where you learn to think quickly and find the best solutions," said Vchivtsev, who was blinded in an explosion in Khost province in 1987.

The conflict was extremely unpopular with the Soviet public at the time and was officially condemned in 1989 at the height of leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of "glasnost", or transparency.

But as part of an overall re-evaluation of the war's legacy, Russia's parliamentary defence committee has -- under pressure from veterans -- backed a draft resolution saying Soviet troops helped Afghan authorities fight "terrorist and extremist groups" and curbed the growing security threat facing the USSR.

- Left with 'nothing' -

Sidique Rasulzai was a teenager when the Red Army arrived in Kabul, and he had no idea what was coming.

"I didn't know it was war. My parents told me that was something that happened in Palestine, I would never have thought that it could happen to us, that it would last 40 years," recalled Rasulzai, who joined the Soviet-backed Afghan army in 1985 and served for more than three years.

He remembers the Soviets transforming Kabul, constructing apartment buildings with central heating, roads, and even an electric bus system. "I liked the communists," he said. "They were educated, not like the mujahideen."

To this day, signs of the Soviet war abound. Defunct tanks and abandoned helicopters and personnel carriers still dot parts of the countryside, and in cities such as Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, huge Soviet structures still dominate the skyline.

After the Soviets left in February 1989, the communist government was unable to sustain itself and civil war broke out. By the mid-1990s, the Taliban -- rooted in the mujahideen movement -- were sweeping to power. Rasulzai ultimately fled Afghanistan for India in 2015 as the international military presence began to rapidly dwindle. He worries Afghanistan is headed for a new civil war once the US withdraws under an eventual deal with the Taliban. Rasulzai now has a small shop in New Delhi and barely manages to pay the bills.

"In Afghanistan, I had everything," he said, "now I have nothing except for security."

## China denies allegations of forced labour at Shanghai prison

China Monday denied allegations that prisoners were being used for forced labour, after a British newspaper reported that a London schoolgirl found a message in a Christmas card claiming to be from inmates at Shanghai's Qingpu Prison.

Supermarket giant Tesco said at the weekend it had stopped production at a factory in China after one of its charity cards was found to contain a cry for help from a prisoner who made it, according to the Sunday Times newspaper.

Beijing has rebuffed the claims, which it said were "made up".

"I can tell you responsibly that, after seeking clarification from relevant departments, Shanghai Qingpu prison does not at all have ... forced labour by foreign convicts," said foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at a regular press briefing in Beijing.

Geng also attacked former journalist Peter

Humphrey who wrote the article -- who was himself detained in Qingpu prison until his release in 2015 -- and said he had invented a "farce" to "hype himself up".

The note written in the card asked the person who found it to contact Humphrey, who then took the story to the Sunday Times.

"We are foreign prisoners in Shanghai Qingpu Prison China," said the message, in a charity card featuring a kitten in a Santa hat.

"Forced to work against our will. Please help us and notify human rights organisation."

- Prison labour -

Humphrey wrote in the Sunday Times that he was jailed on "bogus charges that were never heard in court", and said the note-writers were certainly "Qingpu prisoners who knew me before my release."

Qingpu Prison -- which has both domestic and international prisoners -- says on its website that holding

foreign inmates from 40 nationalities "offers a lawful platform for cultural exchange."

The website shows several modern buildings, one with a glass facade, behind a green lawn and a blue sky and says it offers inmates "lessons on general law, morals, culture, skills and other basic education."

But this is in stark contrast to what former inmates say of their experiences in China's notoriously opaque prison system.

Humphrey said he contacted fellow ex-prisoners after being contacted by the girl's family.

One of them said that for at least two years inmates in the foreign prisoner unit had picked designs and then packaged the Tesco cards, sealing the boxes and putting them into shipping cartons.

International companies are coming under mounting pressure to ensure their business in China does not involve any abuse of hu-

man rights.

Tesco -- which is Britain's largest retailer and the world's third-biggest supermarket chain -- said Sunday it "would never allow (prison labour) in our supply chain."

And separately the head of fund manager Fidelity International defended her firm's investment in Hikvision, a Chinese surveillance company accused of contributing to human rights abuses, in a BBC radio interview on Monday.

Hikvision's technology has allegedly been used to monitor the Uighur Muslim minority in China's Xinjiang region.

**HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?**  
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## Another 18 prisoners dead in new Honduras jail clash: military

**TEGUCIGALPA, DEC 23 (AFP):** Eighteen people were killed in Sunday afternoon violence between prisoners at a jail in central Honduras, less than two days after another 18 died in violence at a separate facility, a military spokesman told local media.

The spokesman for the combined national security force known as Fusina released a list of names of the 18 dead and two injured, saying that "firearms, knives and machetes" were used in the clash in El Porvenir prison north of the capital Tegucigalpa.

The violence followed overnight unrest earlier in the weekend at a facility in the northern port town of Tela that killed 18 inmates and wounded 16 others.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, grappling with a recent wave of prison killings, had ordered the army and the police on Tuesday to take full control of the country's 27 prisons, which are badly



overcrowded with some 21,000 inmates.

On Saturday, top military officer General Tito Livio Moreno indicated that the military would be deployed in 18 penal centers identified as "high risk."

Hernandez announced the crackdown after the killings on December 14 of five members of feared gang Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) by a fellow detainee at the high-security prison in La Tolvá, 25 miles east of Tegucigalpa.

That came just a day after Pedro Idelfonso Armas, the warden of El Pozo -- the country's main high-security prison, in the western city of Santa Barbara -- was

shot dead in the south of the country.

Honduras has been plagued by drug trafficking, gangs, poverty and corruption.

It suffers from one of the highest homicide rates in the world outside areas of armed conflict, having registered 41.2 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2018.

To fight this scourge, Hernandez created a military police force financed by a new tax, and built special prisons for gang members.

The sky-high crime rate has been a key factor behind a wave of migration toward the United States, notably by minors who say they fear being forced into gangs.

## Pak govt denies permission to Maryam Nawaz to travel abroad

**ISLAMABAD, DEC 23 (PTI):** The Pakistan government has denied permission to PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz to travel abroad, saying those involved in any economic crime and institutional fraud could not be allowed to leave the country, according to a media report on Monday.

Maryam, the 46-year-old daughter of Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, was placed on the no-fly list in August 2018 in an alleged corruption case.

"The rules concerning placement of the name of persons on Exit Control List (ECL) do not allow the government to entertain her application to remove her name from the no-fly list," Babar Awan, senior lawyer and aide to the prime minister on legal affairs, was quoted as saying by the Dawn News. Headed by Law Minister Farogh Naseem, the subcommittee

of the federal cabinet that deals with ECL cases rejected Maryam's plea, as she had sought the facility for flying to London to look after her ailing father, Awan said.

Sharif, the PML-N supreme had left for London on November 19 in an air ambulance to seek medical treatment in London, a month after the three-time premier was released on bail from a seven-year prison sentence for corruption.

Referring to the ECL rules, Awan said even if a person has valid travel document to proceed to any destination outside Pakistan, the government could stop them from leaving the country for being involved in corruption and loss to government funds.

Maryam would not be allowed to proceed abroad as those involved in any economic crime, embezzlement of large government funds and institutional fraud could

not get permission to leave the country, he said.

Earlier, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information Firdous Ashiq Awan after the December 18 meeting of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) core committee had also said that the government would not accept Maryam's request.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in a statement issued on Sunday said, the government's decision to bar Maryam from travelling abroad did not surprise anyone, considering that the PTI regime had always been desperately looking for opportunities to victimise and persecute the PML-N leadership.

"The decision of the sub-committee has no logical reason for keeping Maryam on the ECL," PML-N Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb claimed.

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# Lesbian Culture Went Viral, Finally, in 2019



**HOLIDAY IN THE SUN!** The singer, Rita Ora is seen looking festive in a red bikini in St Barts.

## Robert Pattinson says he doesn't know how to act



**LONDON, DEC 23 (PTI):** Actor Robert Pattinson says before shooting a scene he has to force himself into character as he doesn't "really know how to act".

The actor, who will next be seen in the black-and-white psychological horror film "The Lighthouse", said he would "drink mud from puddles" and "punch himself in the face" to prepare for a shot.

"Because I don't really know how to act, I kind of wanted to somehow make it real, and one of the ways I've always thought makes that a little bit easier is if you shake up your physical state just before action," Pattinson told The Observer.

"You end up walking into a scene having a

different... feeling," he added.

The 33-year-old actor said he would often gag so hard he would throw up.

"And I forgot I had a mic on the whole time, so the producers and the director, before every single take of the movie, would get... It kind of puts everyone else off," he said.

Pattinson described himself as a "catastrophist". "I'm always thinking that the worst-case scenario is actually going to happen. So when it does happen, I'm like: 'Gah! OK! I'm prepared!'"

The actor stars alongside Willem Dafoe in the Robert Eggers-directed film as two lighthouse keepers slowly slipping into insanity on a remote island.

Hear the phrase "gay culture" and you'll likely think of gay male culture, and the elements of it that've been normalized and celebrated. That's been the way of things for decades now. From Brokeback Mountain's Oscar wins to Queer Eye, gay male culture has historically been given a louder and prouder platform than any other letter in the LGBTQ+ acronym. But this year felt different. This year ... felt lesbian.

In 2019, there was a paradigm shift in how social media, and pop culture broadly, perceived gay women. It was as if lesbian culture—its memes, language, and stories—was suddenly mainstream.

Over the past decade, queer girl culture has been seeping through the cracks of Tumblr, Reddit, and Twitter. But it wasn't until 2019 that it seemed lesbian culture was lionized and adopted by the masses. To borrow a phrase from Billy Eichner, "Let's go, lesbians!"

Full disclosure: As the self-identified Overlord of Lesbian Twitter, I may have a skewed vantage point here. It's difficult for me to distinguish if lesbian culture is mainstream, and that's why sapphic memes go viral these days, or if there are just a rising number of queer-identifying people who are in on the joke, being loudly lesbian. Based on my very real research (aka Twitter), which was done with the use of science (aka bottomless scrolling), I'd hypothesize that it's a combination of the two. Regardless, in the last year, it's felt like queer women's cultural moments have found popularity far and wide.

The kickoff of 2019's mainstreaming of lesbian culture happened on January 7, when Twitter user @chastaen tweeted a compilation video of Rachel Weisz "giving gays their rights." In 2018, Weisz, thanks in part to her roles in Disobedience and The Favourite, emerged as the straight-identifying lesbian icon, engendering a torrent of women asking the actress to "top" them. Soon after, in February, a fan—now a local legend/hero—attended the BAFTA red carpet and asked Weisz to say "gay rights" on-camera. That—plus her Favourite co-star Olivia Colman echoing the same sentiment—became the year's first major viral lesbian moment. The trend of celebrities saying "gay rights" on red carpets continued, but the inaugural one mattered; it was a joke for queer women that became a part of the internet's vernacular. The floodgates were open.

Queer women's love stories went viral, too. US soccer star Megan Rapinoe and her girlfriend Sue Bird became one of the internet's beloved couples. The duo covered ESPN's body issue this year, the first out queer couple to do so, and Bird's essay, "So the President F\*cking Hates My Girlfriend," about Rapinoe being dissed by Donald Trump, was shared far and wide. Rapinoe herself was hailed as an American hero, not just for help-

ing the US Women's National Soccer Team nab the FIFA Women's World Cup, but for her sick burn of Trump in her now-infamous "I'm not going to the fucking White House" interview. By the end of 2019, Twitter had deemed her the most-tweeted-about female athlete of the year.

Rapinoe wasn't the only member of the USWNT to enjoy the adoration of the internet either. Defender Kelley O'Hara's sideline kiss with her girlfriend was shared 'round the world, a bit of visibility that felt like part of one of the strongest pushes to elevate queer female athletes in modern history. Queer stars

ing Samantha Ronson a "lezbot" or "Sa-MANtha." Most of the media attention that queer women received back then was speculative and invasive, painting pairs like Ronson and Lindsay Lohan as mentally unstable, or reducing Ruby Rose and Jess Origliasso to sexual deviants or wild childs. Having lived through that, and then watching young, queer stars like Delevingne and Benson be widely applauded during Sex Benchgate is proof of evolution.

Now, everyone seems to want to be "topped." Maybe it was Rachel Weisz's impact. Maybe it was because of this Captain Marvel moment. Maybe it was



were extolled elsewhere, too. Like Hunter Schafer from Euphoria, a trans girl who sparked a makeup revolution, and did an official tutorial for Cosmopolitan.

Even lesbian drama went viral. NASA investigated whether one of its astronauts committed the first-ever crime in space by accessing her estranged wife's bank account from the International Space Station. (I tweeted "LESBIAN SPACE CRIME"—simple—and it swept.) Miley Cyrus and Kaitlynn Carter's relationship became the only thing pop culture fans had to live for, for like a week. Everyone became personally invested in a—and we can't stress this enough—rumored love triangle between Tessa Thompson, Janelle Monáe, and Lupita Nyong'o, because we're only human, and who wouldn't be obsessed with that? Likely the most standout moment of the year came in May when Cara Delevingne and Ashley Benson were papped carrying a sex bench, which sent the internet into an irreversible horny tizzy. What mattered about 2019 wasn't just the content of these alleged sapphic moments or the way the internet devoured them, but also how they were received and discussed in the media. That has changed, even nearly 180-ed, in the last decade.

Most of us are old enough to remember the malicious tabloid culture of the late aughts and early 2010s, when bloggers like Perez Hilton couldn't write a headline about a rumored lesbian couple (or out lesbian couple) without call-

because of this Captain Marvel moment. Maybe it was just Rachel Mad-dow. Or maybe it was the effect of any given day on Twitter Dot Com when an actress wore a suit and lesbians reacted appropriately.

Lesbian lingo, memes, and moments mattered this year. Queer TikTok teens went viral. Gay aunt memes were celebrated without being facetious. We needed Taylor Swift to be bisexual more than we needed air. (OK, maybe this was mostly, admittedly, me.)

Lesbian culture became decorated too. Olivia Colman won the Oscar for her sapphic role in The Favourite. Jodie Comer took home the Emmy for her role as Villanelle in Killing Eve. Butch lewks were all over Hollywood, from Kristen Stewart in Charlie's Angels to absolute unit Mackenzie Davis in Terminator: Dark Fate to this W Magazine cover with Bombshell star Charlize Theron, which I consider to be both a) its own movie and b) lesbian canon.

Frankly, by now, these things should be given. Trans girls should have been given the chance to do makeup tutorials decades ago. The Academy doesn't deserve a cookie for giving an Oscar to someone in a lesbian role. Yet moments like these are aiding in the mainstreaming of lesbian culture. That's how I'll remember 2019—as the year a memed video of Kathryn Hahn lusting after Rachel Weisz went viral, for the advancement of lesbiankind.

## Liam Hemsworth 'happy to be moving on' with Gabriella Brooks

**LOS ANGELES, DEC 22 (PTI):** Actor Liam Hemsworth is "happy to be moving on" with model Gabriella Brooks amid his divorce from singer Miley Cyrus.

A source told US Weekly said the actor is enjoying spending time with 21-year-old Brooks, who

was spotted having lunch with Hemsworth, 29, and his parents in Byron Bay, Australia.

"Liam feels comfortable with Gabriella. His family approves of her and really likes her, which is very important to him," the insider added.

The pictures come two

months after Hemsworth was spotted with "Dynasty" star Maddison Brown in New York in October.

"Liam and Maddison weren't that serious and were mainly having fun together," the source added.

The actor split from Cyrus, 27, in August after

almost eight months of marriage. Hemsworth filed for divorce from Cyrus 11 days after she confirmed their breakup.

Cyrus was soon photographed with Brody Jenner's ex Kaitlyn Carter. Cyrus is now dating singer Cody Simpson.

**ARIES:** Your inner fire is burning brighter than ever before. You are beginning to get a sense of your path which is motivating you to take the required action. The resources required are within you. But moving forward is not the same as running like a marathoner. Take your time to put your plans into action. Tip: Act mindfully.

**TAURUS:** You've had your share of experimenting with new things and venturing into unknown territories in the past year. You've learned so much about yourself and your trade in the process. But as the year draws to an end, you want to go back to your safe space. You want to work with what you are best at. Continue to shine your light on the world, Taurus. Tip: Do what you love.

**GEMINI:** Gemini, it is time to get back to your book. Dig deep into your chosen field to understand the underlying mechanism that can support growth. Gain practical knowledge through as many experiences as you can. If you want to create a solid future in this field, you have to become the master of your trade. Leave

no stone unturned, as every win, and every defeat will have something new to teach.

Tip: You like big books and you cannot lie.

**CANCER:** Cancer, you possess the rare quality of being able to merge your personal goals with those of the collective, making it possible for everyone to work towards the same thing with equal enthusiasm. Continue to lead by example. There's so much your subordinates could learn by simply being around you. Some if you could find yourself providing emotional support to others as well. Tip: Continue to support others with your strength and wisdom.

**LEO:** Aren't you tired of making resolutions you're never going to keep up with? Surprise yourself, Leo. Get on board the fitness bandwagon starting today. Consider a yoga class in the neighborhood or renew your membership at the gym. Cliched as it is, health is wealth. Both money and happiness are dependent on how fit you are, how good you are feeling in your body, and your capacity to create a life that fulfills you in every way. Tip: Revisit your fitness goals.

**VIRGO:** This is just a minor setback, Virgo. When you are emotionally invested in a task or project, it is but natural to feel disappointed when things don't go as planned. Keep in mind that you are destined for bigger things and that there are many opportunities coming your way. Maybe failing at this one was part of the divine plan, one that is making you bulletproof for the future. Tip: Every failure is a lesson in disguise.

**LIBRA:** All of us, irrespective of our outer appearance, are an amalgam of both the masculine and feminine. While the former prides itself on raw and primal energy - our physical strength - the latter relies on a gentle, inner force to be seen and heard. Both of them are equally important and serve us in their own way. However, the situation at hand may or may not be solved by taking an aggressive stance. So, what aspect of yourself will you work with today? Tip: Your inner strength ensures a favourable outcome.

**SCORPIO:** Both success and stability are yours to keep, Scorpio, and the kind of wealth

that was once a distant dream. Use your power for the greater good. See how you can inspire change and motivate others to live their highest potential. Challenges, if any, will be navigational. Don't waste your breath worrying too much about them. Tip: Both success and stability are on the cards.

**SAGITTARIUS:** A lot of people are able to go further than they think only because someone else thought they could. Who is this person in your life, Sagittarius, who believes more in you than you do yourself? Reach out to a mentor or teacher today, somebody who has always had faith in your abilities and can remind you that you are made of stars. Tip: Get in touch with your spiritual guide or mentor.

**CAPRICORN:** Endings are followed by beginnings. The morning arrives after the dark night. Such is the cycle of life, Capricorn. Trust that this period is bringing with itself immense blessings. Blessings that will clear the path and help you move forward. Be cognisant of the financial opportunities as well that are showing up in your reality. Capitalising on them will help you expand your empire.

Tip: Trust the cycle of life.

**AQUARIUS:** "Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts." A Winston S. Churchill quote to motivate you as you write your success story. Aquarius, you have that rare quality that makes you shine. Trust that people will pay any price to be able to work with you if you deliver what you promise to. So continue to strive for excellence. Words of caution: do not overwork yourself to a point where your health begins to suffer. Tip: Strive for excellence.

**PISCES:** The magic you're looking for is in the work you are resisting. The cards are reminding of the importance of silence, solitude, and the simple act of coming home to yourself. Spend more time nurturing the inner temple this week. Go on a digital detox for a few hours every day. Telepathy is a perfectly effective form of communication! That feeling of disillusionment may continue to longer for a while. Step away from what you are creating. This will help you gain immense perspective. Tip: Embrace silence and solitude.