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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Assam burns over CAB, curfew in Guwahati

GUWAHATI/AGARTALA, DEC 11 (PTI):

Guwahati, the epicentre of anti-CAB protests, was placed under indefinite curfew while Army was asked to be on standby in Assam and Assam Rifles personnel were deployed in Tripura on Wednesday as the two northeastern states plunged into chaos over the hugely emotive Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, officials said. A Defence spokesman had earlier said in a statement in Shillong that two columns of the Army were deployed in Tripura.

In a late evening clarification, it said that troops of the Assam Rifles, a paramilitary force commanded by Army officials, were pressed into service in Tripura.

Internet services have been suspended in 10 districts of Assam, beginning 7 pm on Wednesday, as massive protests raged across cities, to prevent “misuse” of social media to disturb peace and tranquility and maintain law and order. Internet services have been suspended in Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Kamrup (Metro) and Kamrup, a notification issued by Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Political Department) Kumar Sanjay Krishna, said. Internet ser-



vices are already suspended in the entire state of Tripura for 48 hours from 2 pm on Tuesday to thwart attempts by mischief mongers to disturb peace. An order issued by the Tripura government also pro-

hibits SMSes on the networks of all mobile service providers.

As tens of thousands of anti-CAB protesters descended on the streets of Assam on Wednesday, clashing with police and

plunging the state into chaos of a magnitude unseen since the violent 6-year movement by students that ended with the signing of the Assam accord, Guwahati was placed under curfew. Initially,

Assam police chief Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta told PTI that the curfew, which began at 6:15 pm on Wednesday, will continue till 7 am on Thursday. However, he later informed that it has been extended

indefinitely. However, defying the curfew order protesters were still on the streets of Guwahati where most arterial roads were blocked.

The Congress party has, meanwhile, called a shutdown in Tripura on Thursday.

Though no party or student body had called a shutdown in Assam, protesters, a majority of them students, fought pitched battles with security forces, including in front of the secretariat, the seat of the BJP government.

Police fired tear gas shells and baton-charged protesters, who fought back. Assam smouldered with protests rocking several parts of the state on the day the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is being hotly debated in the Rajya Sabha after its passage by the Lok Sabha on Monday. Some student leaders, who went live on national TV, claimed many agitators were injured in police action in front of the secretariat.

According to unofficial accounts, hundreds of protesters have been detained in Guwahati and other places like Dibrugarh and Jorhat. Similar incidents were reported from Tripura capital Agartala.

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Rajya Sabha passes Citizenship Amendment Bill

NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI):

Rajya Sabha on Wednesday approved the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, completing the legislative procedure for giving Indian citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

Replying to a six-and-a-half-hour debate on the bill, Home Minister Amit Shah said the legislation seeks to provide citizenship to persecuted minorities in the three countries and not take away citizenship of anyone. He rejected the Opposition charge that the bill was against Muslims and said they have nothing to fear.

The Bill was passed with 125 votes in favour and 105 against it. Besides BJP, its allies such as JD-U and SAD, the legislation was supported by AIADMK, BJD, TDP and YSR-Congress.

Earlier the House rejected motions to send the bill to a select committee of the House with 124 members voting against it as compared to 99 in its favour.

The House also rejected several amendments moved by opposition members to the bill, most by voice vote.

The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on Monday. It will now go to the President for his assent.

On why persecuted minorities from countries such as Sri Lanka were not part of the legislation, Shah said Tamils from the island country had been given Indian citizenship in past and the present law is to tackle a specific problem. To repeated ques-

tions from opposition of Muslims being left out, he said Muslims from other countries have the right to apply for Indian citizenship as per existing rules. As many as 566 Muslims have been given citizenship, he said.

He attacked opposition the Congress saying statements by the party's leaders match those of Pakistani leaders on not just the citizenship bill but also on scrapping of Article 370.

Asserting that neither the citizenship bill, nor the previously passed legislation making practice of triple talaq punishable and the scrapping Article 370 are anti-Muslim, he said the present legislation is to give citizenship and does not to take away citizenship of anyone. Indian Muslims are citizens of the country and will remain so, he said. “Citizenship of Indian Muslims is not being taken away.”

“Citizenship bill is not to snatch anyone's Indian citizenship. Muslims have no need to fear or worry,” he said.

Shah said the bill seeks to correct the wrong done by the partition of the country on religious lines. He went on to attack the Congress for alleged double speak on the issue, saying the party had during its rule given Indian citizenship to 13,000 Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan without raising a word about the same for other communities.

He also said the bill does not violate Article 14 of the Constitution as it does not prohibit laws based on reasonable classification.

CM meets Denzong Charities, discusses setting up of Buddhist Univ



GANGTOK, 11 DEC (IPR):

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang met with the Trustees of Denzong Charities who have proposed to set up a unique, world-class professional development university rooted in Buddhist philosophy in Gangtok.

The University will have College of Buddhist Studies, College of Advanced Professional Development and College of Innovation in Education.

It will be developed in collaboration with renowned Buddhist and other academic institutions of the world.

The Chief Minister urged them to aspire for international standards and focus on making the youth of Sikkim ready for the world, while being enlightened in Buddhist philosophy.

He also said that establishing a Buddhist University was in the manifesto of SKM party.

Labour code on social security introduced in Lok Sabha

New Delhi, Dec 11 (PTI): Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar on Wednesday introduced in Lok Sabha a Bill to amend and consolidate nine laws relating to social security of employees. The Code on Social Security, 2019 seeks to enable the central government to fix provident fund contributions to be made by employees in different sectors and provides for payment of gratuity to fix-term employees.

It will also empower the central government to exempt certain establishments from all or any of the provisions of the proposed code.

The code makes Aadhaar mandatory for availing benefits under various social security

schemes. The code also empowers the central government to frame social security schemes and to create social security funds for unorganised workers.

It also provides for compensation for employees in case of accidents while commuting from residence to place of work and vice versa.

The Code on Social Security will subsume nine Central Labour Acts namely Employees' Compensation Act, 1923; Employees State Insurance Act, 1948, Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952; Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972; Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1981; Building and Other Construction Workers Cess

turn to pg 02

Projects worth Rs 103.31cr sanctioned in Sikkim under NESIDS

DELHI, 11 DEC (PIB): Under the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) against allocation of Rs 1,510 crore, so far 55 projects costing Rs. 1,765.12 crore have been sanctioned.

The excess is on account of adjustment for savings which accrued in the erstwhile scheme of Non- Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR), which has been restructured as NESIDS.

The sanctioning of the projects under NESIDS began in F.Y. 2018-19. Normally, the completion period of a project is 2-3 years from the date of sanction, however, it varies from project to project.

This information was provided by the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Ener-

State	No.	Cost (Rs. in crore)
Arunachal Pradesh	16	312.71
Assam	8	458.00
Manipur	8	191.74
Meghalaya	6	174.81
Mizoram	3	181.97
Nagaland	9	177.75
Sikkim	2	103.31
Tripura	3	164.83
Total	55	1765.12

gy and Space, Dr Jiten-dra Singh in written reply to a question in Lok Sabha today.

Gangtok Smart City Development Limited, Sokaythang, Gangtok, Sikkim – 737102

E Mail – gangtoksmartcity@gmail.com

CIN – U9309090WB2017SGC223807

295/SPV/GSCDL/2019-20

Dated: 04/12/2019

PUBLIC NOTICE

Gangtok Smart City Development Limited (GSCDL) is undertaking following projects in the city:

1. Improvement of Pedestrian Walkway/Footpath (12KM Approx from Vajra Cinema Hall, Baluwakhani to Ranipool, Gangtok).

2. Road and Junction Improvement.

These projects are aimed at easing the problem of vehicular as well as pedestrian traffic in Gangtok and it is anticipated that the general public may face inconvenience during the execution period of the projects. We request the citizensof Gangtok for their cooperation and to bear with us till the completion of the projects.

Sd/-

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
Gangtok Smart City Development Limited,
Sokaythang, Tadong, East Sikkim.

Chief Justice visits North District and Sessions Court



MANGAN, 11 DEC (IPR): Chief Justice of High Court of Sikkim, Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, who is on a two-day tour to North Sikkim visited the District and Sessions Court, Chief Judicial Magistrate-cum-Civil Judge, Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate of Mangan, North Sikkim today.

The Chief Justice was accompanied by Registrar General, Karma Wangchuk Bhutia, High Court of Sikkim, Additional Registrar Principal Private Secretary to Chief Justice, Prasanjit Manna.

Upon his arrival, Justice Arup Kumar Goswami was warmly received by the District and Session Judge, NG Sherpa, Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Jabyang Dorjee, District Magistrate, Tenzing T Kaleon, North and other officials and dignitaries along with guard by Sikkim Police.

Justice Arup Kumar Goswami visited the District and Session Court,

Chief Judicial Magistrate-cum-Civil Judge, Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Mangan. He interacted with the officials and staffs.

Apart from Justice Arup Kumar Goswami also inspected the ongoing construction of additional court building and has directed to DE/Building and contractor to expedite the work without compromising the quality of work as to submit utilization certificate on stipulated time. And he visited the newly constructed Chief Judicial Magistrate Bungalow.

The Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim along with his entourage will be visiting the Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Chungthang, Sub-division, North Sikkim on Thursday i.e. 12 December. On the same day he will also visit Yumthang Valley after which he will be proceeding to Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Mega Health check-up camp at Duga



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

Kins Diabetes Speciality Centre Siliguri in association with Lions Club of Rangpo and Aurora is going to organise a day long Mega Health Check-up camp at Duga Sunrise Academy under West Pandam Constituency in East Sikkim on 15 Dec, 2019, a press release informs.

Diabetes specialists along with Optometrist from Namchi, Pranita Chettri will attend to patients and provide eye glasses at subsidized rate.

Physiotherapist from Gangtok, Samjhana Tamang shall also provide services for free. The entire organising team has urged people to take advantage of this camp.

Labour code...

Act, 1996 and Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008 and Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act 1959.

Moving the bill, Gangwar said the code seeks to consolidate laws relating to social security of workers and subsume nine central laws.

He also told the House that the code is part of larger exercise of the government to codify 44 labour laws into four broad codes on wages, occupational safety, industrial relations and social security.

Last month, the Cabinet had approved Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019, which was later introduced in Lok Sabha.

The Code on Wage (first code) has already been approved by Parliament. The Code on occupational safety, health and working conditions has already been introduced in Lok Sabha and later sent to a standing committee for review.

The Code on Social Security states that the amalgamation of nine laws will facilitate implementation and remove the multiplicity of definitions and authorities without compromising the basic concepts of welfare and benefits to workers.

It also says that the code will facilitate the use of technology ensuring transparency and accountability leading to effective enforcement.

The bill provides that if the employer fails to register employee under Employees State Insurance (health insurance scheme) or does not pay contributions under the scheme then the benefit provided to the employee by the ESIC under the scheme would be recovered from the employer.

It will also provide for limitation period of five for instituting proceedings in respect of assessment and determination of money dues from employers under social security schemes. It would also allow funding under corporate social responsibility for various schemes for unorganised workers.

Workshop on formation of child parliament in North

MANGAN, 10 DEC (IPR): A one-day workshop on formation of child parliament was organized today by District Child Protection Unit North for Chairpersons of Block & Village level Child Protection Committees of North District.

The purpose of the workshop was to enable the Committees to facilitate the formation of Child Parliaments for children of their community.

Sr SP North, Sonam Gyatso Bhutia who attended the programme as the chief guest also met all the Committee Chairpersons and asked them to work towards protection of the children and to be vigilant as most of the times the perpetrator



is someone known and trusted in the community/by the family.

DCPO North, Wendy Iepcha, highlighted on the child protection mechanism existent in the State under Child Protection Scheme of Social Justice & Welfare department. She also requested all the committee Chairpersons to help facilitate the formation of

Child Parliament In each GPU as children need to be empowered by giving them a forum to voice their issues.

Resource Person, Tej Kr Thapa, Zonal Coordinator for Child Parliament, shared the process of forming the parliament, roles of each member of the Parliament, role of Village & Block level Child Protection

Committees in assisting the children in forming the Parliament.

The program ended with a Pledge by the Committees to be the channel for children of their community to attain a forum where they would be able to raise their concerns, work for change and be involved in achieving the Sustainable development Goals.

Aadhaar enrollment center set up at Rangpo



GANGTOK, 11 DEC (IPR): With an aim to provide Aadhaar related services like new Aadhaar enrollment, child enrollment, enrollment of students and Aadhaar updation services to the public of West Pandam Constituency, permanent Aadhaar enrollment center was established by DESM&E at Rangpo Sub-Divisional Magistrate office complex on 10 Dec, 2019.

The Aadhaar enrollment center was inaugurated by Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, LB Das, in the presence of Additional Director DESM&E, SK Pradhan, Additional Director Education Department, HP Dhakal, Project Manager UID, Thupten Geleg, SDM Rangpo, BDO Duga, MEO Singtam and Panchayats and Councillors of West Pandam Constituency.

The enrollment center was established by DESM&E in collaboration with Education Department and Rangpo Sub-Divisional Magistrate office. With the establishment of this Aadhaar center, the public of West Pandam, Central Pandam, Duga, Singtam and Rangpo Nagar Panchayat can now easily avail Aadhaar services for which they had to earlier go to DESM&E (HQ) Gangtok.

The Speaker, in his address, thanked DESM&E- the UID Nodal Department-cum-Registrar and Education Department for providing the necessary enrolment kits for the center. He also stressed on the need to boost the child enrollment below the age of fifteen years and directed the local administration to undertake special drive to enroll students during the winter vacation.

The Speaker hoped that the center will now provide relief to the public who otherwise had to go to Gangtok for the enrolment and stated that the opening of UID center in Rangpo is a policy of the present Government to make vital services easily accessible to the rural people.

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Mock drill exercise on earthquake at Pakyong

PAKYONG, 10 DEC (IPR): A mega mock drill exercise on earthquake was conducted at Pakyong Sub Division under East District covering SDM office, Pakyong Bazaar, New Market, Pakyong Airport, Old Puspanjali School area, Pakyong Primary Health Centre, Community Hall

and St Xaviers school playground. The drill was held under the supervision of District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) in co-ordination with State Disaster Management Department, Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department (SSDMA, LR&DMD).

Amoeba-attacking 'giant viruses' found in Mumbai's lakes

MUMBAI, DEC 11 (PTI): A study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (Bombay) has found presence of 'giant viruses' belonging to five families in samples collected from water bodies in Mumbai.

Findings of the study, published in the journal 'Scientific Reports', is the first report about numerous giant viruses from India, claimed a release issued by IIT (B) on Wednesday. The study was conducted by a team led by Professor Kiran Kondabgil.

Typically, genome sizes of viruses range from a few thousands to about 2,00,000 base pairs. However, giant viruses have a genome size as massive as a few million base pairs.

"It found viruses belonging to the families Pandoraviridae, Phycodnaviridae, Mimiviridae, Iridoviridae and Megaviridae. Five families of giant viruses were found in these samples, all of which infect amoeba,"

the study said. The researchers sequenced the genome of four giant viruses belonging to the families Mimiviridae, Megaviridae and Marcelliviridae.

"Interestingly, some genes of the giant viruses from Mumbai were similar to those of giant viruses discovered in other continents. This might indicate that such genes play important roles in these viruses," the authors said.

The researchers also studied the role of protein known as gp577, synthesised by a giant virus named Acanthamoeba polyphaga mimivirus, belonging to the family Mimiviridae.

Identified as PrimPol a type of protein involved in DNA repair, it has the ability to play multiple roles in almost all the steps beginning from making of DNA and RNA to their final processing.

"This is the first time such an enzyme is identified in any giant virus," the authors of the study said.

CM visits truck parking and common graveyard



NAMCHI, 11 DEC (IPR): Chief Minister, PS Tamang (Golay) visited the proposed site for truck parking and common graveyard near slaughter house area, 12th mile under Nandugaon Revenue Circle, Poklok GPU today.

During his visit, the Chief Minister examined the site following which he was appraised by the officials regarding the current

status of the proposed site. Additionally, the CM instructed the concerned officials to demarcate the site systematically.

Also present were Adhakshya (South), Tshering Dem Bhutia, DC (South), Ragul K, SP (South), Prawin Gurung, DFO (T), Peggyla Venchunga and other officials from various line departments.

Assam burns...

Police opened fire in Assam capital Dispur to quell a protest by the agitators after water cannons, baton-charge and tear gas failed to rein them in. A large number of agitated students blocked the road near the secretariat complex and pulled down the barricade erected on the arterial G S Road, provoking police action. Police burst teargas shells and baton-charged the protesters, who were seen lobbing back the shells at men in uniform.

They also damaged a stage erected on the road for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed summit meeting with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe on Sunday. The agitators pulled down hoardings and banners advertising the government's welfare schemes and made a bonfire of those before the secretariat, in scenes reminiscent of the 6-year movement by students against illegal settlers that ended with the signing of the Assam accord in 1985.

In a rare show of solidarity with the protesters, government employees at the secretariat wore 'gamosa', the state's symbol of honour, and stood behind the gates and chanted slogans against the CAB. The Assam Secretariat Employees' Association also issued a statement supporting the protests and opposing the CAB.

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal was reported to have been stranded for some time at the Guwahati airport on his return from Tezpur because of the agitation. Protesters blocked almost every road in Guwahati and state capital Dispur by placing burning discarded tyres, leaving officegoers stranded.

Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) of Akhil Gogoi has called a 'hartal' to protest against the controversial bill until it is withdrawn. Life virtually came to a grinding halt in Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Jorhat, Sivasagar, parts of Guwahati and in some districts of Lower Assam. Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities have postponed all examinations scheduled till December 14.

Classes in most universities and colleges were not held as students joined the protests. Schools were open but there were hardly any children as buses they were travelling on were stranded. Anti-CAB agitators also clashed with police in Dibrugarh where rubber bullets and tear gas shells were fired to break up protests. A journalist was reported injured in a stone throwing incident in Dibrugarh.

In view of the protests, the Northeast Frontier Railway has cancelled many trains and rescheduled some that originate from the state. At least 14 trains have either been cancelled, short terminated or diverted anticipating "disruptions in train movement," NF Railway Chief Public Relations Officer Subhanan Chanda said in a statement.

Farewell & felicitation of teachers at Duga



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

Farewell program for retired teachers and felicitation of teacher awardees under BAC Duga in East Sikkim was organised at Rangpo today. The program was organised by Heads of Institutions, Teachers & BAC Duga, Education department, a press release informs.

Political Secretary to the Chief Minister, Jacob Khaling was present as the chief guest. Fourteen retired teachers were felicitated and bid farewell while 13 teachers of the same BAC were also felicitated.

School Head of Syapley Sardar Senior Secondary School,

Pardeep Lamsal addressing the program, mentioned that this concept was started in 2014 and 80 retired teachers have been felicitated so far.

From this year, awardee teachers of different government and non-government organisations are also going to be felicitated.

Retired Teachers, JN Nirola, Dev Kumari Pradhan, Anjana Lama, SK Lama, Bishnu Maya Singh, Kamal Kumar Cinturi, Bholanath Dahal, Parasmani Dahal, Chandra Bahadur Chettri, Sashikala Gurung, Mitralal Khatiwada, Karan Singh, Meena Devi Chettri and Radha Khatiwada were felicitated with

shawl, certificate and khadas.

Thirteen teachers namely Dr Hanna Yonzon (Principle Government Senior Secondary School), Indira Dahal (Sajong JHS), Dilliram Biwakarma (Sakhukhani PS), Dup Tshring Lepcha (Okharbhotey PS), Kumar Chettri (Kameray JHS), Sudarshan Khatiwada (Pachak SS), Padam Kishore Dhungel (Okharbhotey PS), BR Subba (Sawney PS), Padam Bahadur Gautam (Singleyong JHS), Roshan Adhikari (Rangpo SSS), Lalita Chettri (Rangpo SS), Pramod Dhakal (Pachak JHS) and Sagar Tamrakar (Rangpo SSS) were awarded tokens of appreciation.

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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

Mapping of Tribal Sports Talent program launched

GANGTOK, 11 DEC (IPR): Inaugural programme of "Mapping of Tribal Sports Talent" organised by Tribal Research Institute, SJ&WD, Government of Sikkim in collaboration with Sports & Youth Affairs Department, and funded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India was declared open by the RMDD Minister, Sonam Lama at Phodong, North Sikkim on 11 Dec, 2019.

The primary objective of the program is to spot talent among tribal children. The organising department, with an aim to strengthen, preserve and revive the sport of Archery, conducted an archery event for students of Phodong Monastic School where the children gleefully participated in the event.

Mapping of Tribal



Sports Talents will subsequently be held in all the four districts of Sikkim. Tribal children in the age group of 11-14 years will be encouraged to participate in various disciplines of sports.

The chief guest of the programme, RMDD

Minister, Mr Lama appreciated the initiatives made by Tribal Research Institute, GoS and Sports and Youth Affairs Department, GoS.

Secretary to Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Kuber Bhandari, assured to include stu-

dents from the Monastic School in interschool games competition from the coming academic year.

Similarly, he committed to extend all possible help to "Mapping of Tribal Sports Talents".

The programme also

had the presence of Project Director cum Special Secretary, Anand Pradhan, SJ & WD, Senior Officers from Sports and Youth Affairs Department (Mangan and Gangtok), Officers from TRI, GOS and the local public of the area.

Teyongsi Sirijunga greetings from Governor

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

On the occasion of Teyongsi Sirijunga Sawan Tongnam, Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad has extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim, a Raj Bhavan release informs.

In his message the Governor has said, "The day falling on full moon day in the harvesting month of 'Mangsir' com-

memorates the birth anniversary of Teyongsi Sirijunga Singthebe, reverentially called Mahatma Sirijunga by our Limbo brethren. He is remembered as great social awakener who had disseminated the teachings of Yumaism (Yuma Samyo).

May the teachings of Mahatma Sirijunga continue to show us the way of peaceful co-existence in harmony with nature."

CM's Teyongsi Sirijunga greetings

GANGTOK, 11 DEC (IPR): On the occasion of Teyongsi Sirijunga Sawan Tongnam, the Chief Minister of Sikkim, PS Tamang has extended his warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim, particularly the Limboo community.

The Chief Minister has stated, "The birth anniversary of Teyongsi Sirijunga, whom we reverently called Mahatma Sirijunga is an occasion for all of us to remember his teachings and ideals in our quest to live in harmony with nature, fellow beings and preserving our culture.

Observed by the Limboo Community in Sikkim, Teyongsi Sirijunga Sawan Tongnam, marks the birth anniversary of the famous 18th-century scholar Teyongsi Sirijunga, who is greatly

remembered for his legendary role as a revivalist of the Limboo's age-old traditional legacy in the state.

In the present-day, Mahatma Sirijunga's ethnic movement can be said to be one of Limboo empowerment through education. His writings and teachings through the Limboo alphabet and literary texts that he collected led to the start of an ethnic awakening. Sirijunga was able to establish centers of Limboo cultural and religious learning in many places throughout the eastern Himalayan hills."

On this occasion, the Chief Minister has appealed to the people of Sikkim to draw inspiration from the life and teachings of Mahatma Sirijunga and try to replicate it in their lives.

CM attends pre-Christmas celebration

GANGTOK, 11 DEC (IPR): Chief Minister, PS Tamang attended the Candle Light Service, a pre-Christmas celebration held at EPCS Church in Daragaon, ICAR Complex, Tadong, this evening.

Mr Tamang thanked the organisers for inviting him and mentioned that after forming government, SKM has created a secular environment where people are free to follow any faith.

Further, he informed that the government has

also provided various grants and support to different churches in the state after the formation of SKM government.

He also assured all possible support for the development of Upper Tadong constituency.

The function also saw the presence of the area MLA, G.T Dhungel, MLA, Bishnu Kumar Khatiwada, MLA, Em Prasad Sharma, Political Secretary to the Chief Minister, Jacob Khaling and the Confidential Secretary to Chief Minister, Bikash Basnett.

National Handloom Expo 2019-2020 gets underway



GANGTOK, 11DEC (IPR): The National Handloom Expo 2019-2020 under National Handloom Development Programme kicked off at the premises of Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom, Zero Point, here today.

The mega exhibition, which will be held from 11-24 Dec, is being organised by the Sikkim Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd, an apex body under Directorate of Handlooms and Handicrafts and is being sponsored by the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handloom), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

Chief guest, Dr Thom-

as Chandu, Additional Chief Secretary, Commerce and Industries Department inaugurated the Expo. Dr Chandu visited each stall and interacted with the participants.

The National Handloom Expo is a pan India programme and 60 stalls have been allotted to various weavers and SHGs from seven different states viz, Assam, Bihar, J&K, West Bengal, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and the host state Sikkim.

A wide variety of sarees, bed sheets, dress materials, household items, bed-covers, bed-sheets, and fabrics from various parts of the country are available for sale at an affordable price.

The Expo is being organised to provide a platform for the artisans, weavers, sellers and buyers to converge and create awareness vis-a-vis the handloom sector as an employment and income generating industry.

Further, the Expo also offers an opportunity for creating sustainable cottage industry in every home and village as envisioned by the State Government.

Also present were Director, Binita Thapa, DHH, Ram Debnath, representative of Weavers Service Centre (WSC), Kolkata, Senior Officers of DHH, press personnel, staff and trainees of DHH and local gentry.

Selection trials for Dr T Ao Football Championship

GANGTOK, 11 DEC (IPR): The Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, Government of Sikkim, is conducting Selection Trials for State Football Team for Dr T Ao North East Football Champi-

onship 2020 to be held at Kohima from 18 to 28 Jan, 2020.

Selection Trials will be held on 16 Dec, 2019 at Paljor Stadium from 10.00am onwards. All interested football players are

requested to attend the Selection Trial on above mentioned date and venue.

For more information contact: Dy Director, Milan Singh Rahapal: 87689-21711, Arjun Rai: 94341-17465

Training for rural women at Sikkim University



GANGTOK, 11 DEC (PIB): Department of Horticulture of Sikkim University is organizing a training programme for rural women on "Processing and Value Addition of Local Crop Germplasms from 11 to 13 Dec, 2019.

The inaugural session of the training programme was held on 11 Dec at the Conference Hall, Barad Sadan. Dean, Prof Jyoti Prakash Tamang, School of Life Sciences presided over the

function.

In organic farming system, local crops are important owing to their tolerance to pests and diseases, adaptive to local conditions and also perform well in low input conditions.

Keeping in view the importance of organic farming, the training programme is focused on conservation, promotion and intensification of the local crop production. Usually, farmers get the

surplus product and are not able to sell them. To avoid such surplus conditions, value addition and processing of these crops is of utmost importance for additional income and livelihood, particularly for rural women.

Thirty-five women from selected villages of Sikkim and a few students from the University are participating in the training programme and would benefit from them immensely.

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No. SGS/H 52/IPR/Adm/19/376

Dated: 09.12.2019

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All Izz Well

With a Department like this, no wonder Sikkim's roads and bridges are how they are

The condition of the State roads has been so poor for so long that people do not even joke about it anymore, they just suffer the bumps and risk the poor engineering and even poorer construction and curse as they drive along. This is inexcusable given that the Roads & Bridges Department lacks neither funds nor resources nor personnel, and still, all that it can serve up is a muddle of delayed projects, unfruitful expenditure and slack administration.

The Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended March 2018 reveals that the experiment of giving preference to district-based entrepreneurs while awarding contract works was a humungous failure. Enacted by the State Government in July 2008, the "Sikkim District Based Entrepreneurs and Professionals Incentive, Development and Promotional Act" was embraced by the Roads & Bridges Department in principle but appears to have put it in practice only when rules could be officially bypassed. In July 2015, a full seven years after the Act was passed, the Department notified that "developmental and welfare oriented" projects of up to Rs 2 crore could be awarded to cooperative societies within the territorial jurisdiction of gram panchayats and urban local bodies without calling tenders. CAG auditors discovered that 15 such works awarded to 15 such cooperative societies between March 2011 and March 2013 and which should have been completed latest by March 2015 remained incomplete even in March 2018. Of these, three cooperative societies surrendered the works without execution and the remaining 12 remained stalled. The Department made a show of serving notices to three cooperative societies but took action against none. It is no surprise that the cooperative societies lacked expertise, but what is worrying is that the Department made no attempt to assess the technical competence of the cooperative societies to begin with. Cost escalation and lost finances are only part of the loss, the bigger damage was to the connectivity requirements of villages for whom these projects had been sanctioned.

And before one jumps to conclusions and blames the cooperative societies alone for the situation, one needs to consider the fact that real problem lies in how the Department is administered. Take the instance of grand-sounding Gurassey Road from the "Biodiversity Park" at Temi to five interior villages. Pretentiously tagged as "Economic Importance Scheme," this seven kilometer road was sanctioned for Rs 22.67 cr in November 2005. The work was awarded in Feb 2005, comfortably 32 per cent higher than the estimated cost and was to be completed within 18 months. But the deadline - August 2009 - came and went without the road in place and remained incomplete even as of March 2018 by when Rs 11.32 crore had already been paid to the contractor. The Department, which failed to monitor the progress, was very accommodating in granting the contractor extensions and even acquiesced to the request that the contract be rescinded without penalizing him. To complete the project now would require an additional Rs 13.11 cr. The CAG auditors traditionally write in dry bureaucratese, but in this instance put on record that the "Department has miserably failed" and recommends that responsibility be fixed on the Executive Engineer and Superintendent/ Chief Engineer for failing to monitor the progress of work or exercise due diligence. The auditors also recommend that responsibility also be fixed on the Executive Engineer for having released the contractor's security deposit of Rs 35.91 lakh despite the work not having been completed. The Department also decided to settle the contractor's final bill of Rs 25.27 lakh despite him having dropped the project. This, despite the agreement which instead stipulated that the contractor would have to bear the cost of completion of work in case he withdrew midway. This contractor was clearly not among the multitudes with payments stuck in otherwise miserly departments.

Readers who have made it this far but still need convincing that RBD is incompetent would do well to consider the fact that 54.62 metric tonnes of steel bars purchased by the Department for the forementioned project were never put to any use. They remain unutilized at the Department's Sirwani store and now sit deteriorated beyond recovery. The basic precautions for storing such bars, recorded in the Sikkim Public Works Manual, were lost on the Department. In July 2018, engineers at the Department told CAG auditors that they will use these steel bars in some future work. Even a non-engineer will point out that steel bars kept in the open without even a tarpaulin thrown over them would have become useless for any safe use in the seven years that have remained so exposed. One hopes that diligent engineers did not actually use these bars for any work anywhere.

There are many lessons to be drawn from the examples cited and the only that appears to have been taken up is ending the system of awarding contract works to cooperative societies. Yes, the cooperative societies were incompetent and ineffectual by and large, but they are only part of the problem and could have been turned around, if the Department which has been more consistently incompetent, irresponsible and inept and no one appears to be doing anything about that.

Ayodhya land ruling has thrust history into the centre of Indian politics – what this means for the future

ISHA DUEBY
theconversation.com

The recent anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Mosque in the Indian city of Ayodhya in December 1992 played out under a heavy security deployment and high alert. The mosque, which was built by the Mughal emperor Babur in the 16th century, was manually demolished by activists, supporters and volunteers of the Hindu nationalist organisation Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP).

Their claim was that the same land was the birthplace of the Hindu deity Lord Ram and that the mosque was built after the destruction of a temple which originally stood on that spot. The demolition led to an outburst of communal violence and rioting across India, most notably in Mumbai, then Bombay.

In the past, the day has been marked by contrasting commemorations by different communities. Hindu nationalist organisations celebrated it as "Shaurya divas" (day of bravery), while Muslims observed as "Black Day".

This year, even though the anniversary passed peacefully, it assumed an added aura of tension. It came on the heels of a landmark decision in early November by the Supreme Court of India on the protracted and contentious land dispute in Ayodhya. At the core of the case was the question of the contested ownership of the piece of land where the Babri mosque once stood.

Nearly 30 years after the demolition of the mosque, the legacy of the event continues to influence India's secular fabric and the politics around communal identity. The court's ruling also has implications for the "idea of India" in the future. This occupation with the fashioning of national history and national memory in India and the ways in which they are contested is something that I'm focusing on in my ongoing research on memory politics in South Asia.

COMPETING VERSIONS OF HISTORY

The recent judgment sought to settle the dispute in a fair and reasonable manner acceptable to all the parties concerned. The court ruled that a temple for Lord Ram shall be built on the location of the demolished mosque and that a separate five acres of land at another prominent location in the city shall be provided to Muslims for the construction of a mosque.

The ruling received a mixed response from the Muslim community, ranging from welcome acceptance, tired resignation to angry rejection. And the

December anniversary of the mosque demolition was met with the filing of six petitions with the Supreme Court to review the decision.

At the centre of the dispute and the years of litigation surrounding it is history itself and how it is used in seeking legitimacy for contested and competing versions of the past. History also becomes a means for communities to write themselves into the nation's collective memory, passed on from one generation to next.

The Babri mosque had been a place of worship



where the city's Muslims had offered their prayers in continuity since medieval times until late December 1949, when idols of Lord Ram were stealthily placed inside its premises. However, the narrative of the mosque's significance goes beyond just that of a Mughal emperor constructing a mosque. For the Muslim community, it represents a symbol of Indo-Islamic heritage and their long presence in the everyday life and landscape of the city.

At the same time, for a section of the Hindu community and those claiming to represent them, the mosque represented a reminder of Muslim conquest and cultural subjugation and the act of its demolition was a way to reclaim history.

A QUEST FOR 'TRUTH'

The recent judgment on the Ayodhya case recognised how central history is to the dispute. By upholding the claim of the Hindus over the disputed land, the verdict ultimately favoured one quest for truth over the other. It is also the version of truth that is most agreeable with the vision of the party in power in India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of the prime minister, Narendra Modi.

The promise of the construction of the Ram temple has consistently featured in the BJP's manifesto since 1996.

The verdict acknowledged that the litigants representing the deity Lord Ram were able to better establish a chain of unbroken Hindu possession of the inner courtyard of the mosque than their Muslim counterparts. The evidence of this continuous possession does not conclusively determine the land as the actual place of birth of Lord Ram, but according to the judgment, it does establish an unbroken Hindu belief that it was. At the same time

the verdict also firmly states that the act of demolition of the Babri mosque was a violation of law.

The immediate responses to the ruling across the political spectrum in India in November were largely ones of acceptance, along with calls from leaders for the maintenance of communal peace and harmony. While such a display of bipartisan consensus over a contentious issue is rare in India and therefore heartening, it also draws attention to the potentially troubling state of political discourse in India. It begs the question of what is the scope for opposition, dissent and debate in the country.

Much as there exists a sense of exhaustion with the Ayodhya dispute and a desire for some much-needed closure, the verdict raises questions about the meaning the case holds for the future. Is this a judgment that rises above a politics of division embedded in the past or one that uses a certain reading of the past to further and favour the politics of the present? Once again, history shall be the judge of that.

[the writer is Post-doctoral Fellow, Lund University]



Greenland has lost 3.8 trillion tonnes of ice since 1992

INÈS OTOSAKA & ANDREW SHEPHERD
theconversation.com

Greenland has lost 3.8 trillion tonnes of ice since 1992, according to our latest research. It can be hard to imagine a number that big: 3.8 trillion tonnes is 3,800 billion tonnes or even 3.8 million billion kilograms. If you put all that ice into a single cube it would be 16 kilometres along each side and twice the height of Mount Everest.

But what's really important here is the impact this has globally. All that ice making its way into the ocean has already caused the sea level to rise by more than a centimetre, and future sea level rise will mean lots more coastal flooding.

For example, a rise of 60cm by the year 2100, as predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), would put 200 million people at risk of permanent inundation and 360 million people at risk of annual flooding. And 60cm is only the IPCC's "central estimate" – in that period the sea could rise by as little as 28cm or as much as 98cm.

By far the largest uncertainty in

sea-level projections concerns the ice stored in Antarctica and Greenland, both of which have complex interactions with the climate system and are difficult to model. Greenland alone holds enough frozen water to raise the sea by 7.4 metres were it to melt. Therefore, finding out how much ice it has lost so far is hugely important for us scientists who are trying to determine how much it will contribute to sea level rise in future.

THE RATE OF ICE LOSS IS INCREASING

This is why we used satellites to measure Greenland's ice loss between 1992 and 2018. Our assessment, now published in the journal *Nature*, is produced by an international team of scientists who combined the results of 26 different surveys as part of a programme known as the ice sheet mass balance inter-comparison exercise (IMBIE). In all, measurements from 11 different satellite missions launched by the European Space Agency and NASA were used to track changes in the ice sheet's volume, speed and gravity.

We found that the Greenland ice sheet lost around 3,800 billion tons

of ice in that 26-year period. This is enough water to cause the sea level to rise by around 10.6mm.

Although Greenland has been losing ice since the early 1990s, the rate has increased dramatically over time and peaked at 335 billion tons per year in 2011 towards the end of a period of intense surface melting. In fact, almost half of the ice loss occurred between 2006 and 2012 and, although cooler atmospheric conditions – associated with a shift of the North Atlantic Oscillation – followed, the rate of ice loss has remained high since then.

SNOWFALL CAN'T KEEP UP WITH MELTING

How does an ice sheet actually "lose ice"? In Antarctica, almost all the losses come from glaciers being warmed to the point where they slide slightly faster into the ocean and "calve" into icebergs. This happens in Greenland too. But Greenland also has much warmer summers than Antarctica, and this means around half of its ice is also lost through summer melting exceeding winter snowfall.

Periods of extreme melting have

become more frequent in Greenland, with record air temperatures being repeatedly broken. In summer 2019, unusually warm air caused widespread melting across the entire ice sheet. Satellites revealed new ponds of surface meltwater and bridges collapsed after the intense runoff swelled proglacial rivers. If glacier speeds remain high, 2019 could be a record year for total ice loss from Greenland.

In its fifth assessment report, the IPCC included a range of projections for Greenland ice sheet losses. Our study shows that the ice sheet has been tracking the upper range of these projections – the worst case scenarios – which predicts an additional 10cm of global sea level rise by 2100 over and above the central estimate. This would place a further 60 million people at risk of annual coastal flooding and suggests that a reassessment of the impacts of climate warming is urgently needed.

[Inès Otosaka is PhD Researcher, Climate Science, University of Leeds; Andrew Shepherd is Professor of Earth Observation, University of Leeds]

We don't divide people in Bengal:

Mamata DIGHA (WB), DEC 11 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said unity in diversity is the ethos of the state and people here are not divided on the basis of caste, creed and religion.

Her statement came when the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is being debated in Rajya Sabha. The contentious Bill that seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslim refugees coming from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan after facing religious persecution there, was passed in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

"Unity in diversity is the soul of the state and we don't divide people on the basis of caste, creed and religion.

We believe in staying together. We are one family and no one staying here can say that he is deprived," Banerjee said at the Bengal Business Conclave held in this coastal town.

The conclave is being attended by delegates from 28 countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, the UK, Poland, the US, Australia, Thailand, Russia, Italy and China.

Industrialists like Harsh Neotia, YK Modi, Rudra Chatterjee, Mayank Jalan, Sanjay Budhia and others are attending the conclave.

Banerjee said West Bengal is better placed than many other states in many macro-economic parameters like GDP growth, unemployment rate, industry growth and poverty alleviation.

She said the state has land use policy, land bank, tourism policy, IT policy and tea tourism policy.

Banerjee urged the investors to come to the state and treat it as "their sweet home" and the government will give full assistance within its limitations.

The chief minister said West Bengal is in proximity to major international destinations like Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Singapore.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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CAB protests: NFR cancels, reschedules several trains



GUWAHATI, DEC 11 (PTI): In view of the massive protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Assam, the North-east Frontier Railway on Wednesday cancelled many trains and rescheduled a few that originate from the state.

At least 14 trains have either been cancelled, short terminated or diverted anticipating "disruptions in train movement," NF Railway Chief

Public Relations Officer Subhanan Chanda said in a statement.

Out of these, eight trains have been "completely" cancelled, while the rest have been short terminated, the statement said.

The Avadh Assam Express is rescheduled to originate from New Tinsukia and will remain cancelled between

Dibrugarh and New Tinsukia. The LedoGuwahati Intercity Express, Dibrugarh FurketingGuwahati Intercity Express, NaharlagunTinsukia Intercity Express and DekargaonDibrugarh Intercity Express have been fully cancelled.

Protests erupted across the state since early morning against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill which was passed by the Lok Sabha

on Monday and will be tabled in the Upper House on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, normal life across Assam came to a standstill due to an 11-hour North East bandh called by the North East Students' Organisation (NESO), an umbrella body of all the student bodies of the northeast, and a 12-hour Assam bandh by the Left-Democratic organisations.

Assam turns into battleground amid anti-CAB protests

GUWAHATI, DEC 11 (PTI): Tens of thousands of protesters against CAB descended on the streets of Assam on Wednesday, clashing with police and plunging the state into chaos of a magnitude unseen since the violent 6-year movement by students that ended with the signing of the Assam accord.

Though no party or student body has called a shutdown, protesters, a majority of them students, fought pitched battles with security forces in the restive state, including in front of the secretariat, the seat of the BJP government.

Police fired tear gas shells and baton-charged protesters, who fought back. Assam smouldered with protests rocking several parts of the state on the day the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is being hotly debated in the Rajya Sabha after its passage by the Lok Sabha.

According to student leaders who went live on national TV, many agitators were injured in police action in front of the secretariat.

All senior civil and police officials were in-

communicado but, according to unofficial accounts, hundreds of protesters have been detained in Guwahati and other places like Dibrugarh and Jorhat.

A large number of agitated students blocked the road near the secretariat complex and pulled down the barricade erected on the arterial G S Road, provoking police action.

Police burst teargas shells and baton-charged the protesters, who were seen lobbing back the shells at men in uniform.

They also damaged a stage erected on the road for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed summit meeting with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe on Sunday.

They also pulled down hoardings and banners advertising the government's welfare schemes and made a bonfire of those before the secretariat.

"This is a barbaric government led by Sarbananda Sonowal. We will not succumb to any pressure till the CAB is repealed," a student leader said.

Anti-CAB agitators also clashed with police

in Dibrugarh where rubber bullets and tear gas shells were fired to break up protests. A journalist was reported injured in an stone throwing incident in Dibrugarh.

Police chased away agitators who blocked road and rail traffic near Chaulkhowa in Dibrugarh district.

Security personnel also fired rubber bullets and baton-charged the protesters at Moran in Dibrugarh district.

Notwithstanding that no organisation has called any bandh or agitation, spontaneous protests were witnessed in Jorhat, Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sivasagar, Bongaigaon, Nagaon, Sonitpur and many other districts since morning.

A motorcycle rally was organised against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal's hometown Chabua.

Gauhati University, Cotton University and Dibrugarh University postponed examinations scheduled for Wednesday. Their campuses were deserted with hardly any student around.

The students of Cotton University are con-

tinuing their indefinite sit-in since Monday night in the state capital.

Students of Assam Engineering College also came out to protest since Wednesday morning.

Discarded tyres and wooden logs were set on fire as chaos prevailed on highways, disrupting vehicular movement.

In Jorhat and Dibrugarh cities, all shops are closed and vehicles off the roads. People have blocked roads and rail tracks at various places in the two districts.

In Lakwa town of Sivasagar, a huge motorcycle rally was brought out. Some protesters tried to enter areas where oil wells are located in Lakwa, but their attempts were foiled by police, officials said.

In view of the protests, the Northeast Frontier Railway has cancelled many trains and rescheduled some that originate from the state.

At least 14 trains have either been cancelled, short terminated or diverted anticipating "disruptions in train movement," NF Railway Chief Public Relations Officer Subhanan Chanda said in a statement.

Nagaland brings Dimapur under Inner Line Permit regime

KOIHMA, DEC 11 (PTI): The Nagaland government has extended the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime to the Dimapur district, according to an official notification.

Dimapur, the commercial hub of the state, was the only district that was not under the ILP regime unlike the rest of Nagaland, which came into being in 1963.

"In exercise of the powers conferred under Section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, and in the interest of the public, the Governor of Nagaland is pleased to extend the Inner Line to cover the entire District of Dimapur with immediate effect," said a notification dated December 9, issued by chief secretary Temjen Toy.

The state Cabinet had approved on February 15 the proposal to extend the ILP to Dimapur.

All non-indigenous people who have entered the district after November 21, 1979, will have to obtain ILP within 90 days from December 9, according to the notification.

It said that those who have settled or have entered before November 21, 1979, and have been staying continuously, will be exempted from the ILP

regime "along with his/her direct descendants".

However, it said that non-indigenous persons living in Dimapur prior to November 21, 1979, will have to produce documents to the deputy commissioner for exemption.

Any non-indigenous person passing through the district as a transit passenger and having a valid ticket will not be required to obtain Inner Line Permit, the notification said.

The ILP regime was also extended to neighbouring Manipur on Wednesday with President Ram Nath Kovind signing the order in this effect.

To visit the ILP-regime states, outsiders, including people from other states of the country, need to take permission. There are also protections for the locals with regards to lands, jobs and other facilities.

Besides Nagaland and Manipur, the ILP regime is also applicable to Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

The ILP regime is applicable under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873. In terms of Section 2 of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873, citizens of other states require ILP for visiting these states.

The main objective of the ILP system is to protect the settlement of other Indian nationals in these states to protect the indigenous population.

There have been widespread protests in the Northeast against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, following which Union Home Minister Amit Shah had announced that the proposed law will not be applicable to ILP regime states and areas governed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, autonomous councils and districts were created in certain tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura. The autonomous councils and districts enjoy certain executive and legislative powers.

No major protests or demonstrations have been held in Nagaland in the past few days.

According to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities, who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, till December 31, 2014, facing religious persecution there, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

Army to shut down Officers Training Academy in Gaya



NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI): The Army will shut down its Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Gaya, Bihar, as it has become unviable and is being used below its capacity, sources said on Wednesday.

An Army official said a proposal was sent to the Defence Ministry that the OTA should be shut as it is "not serving the purpose the way it was

planned". The ministry has approved the proposal, the official added.

The institute has been training technical entry scheme and special commissioned officers since 2011. These officer cadets will now be trained at the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun.

The OTA in Gaya, the third pre-commission training academy for the

Army after OTA Chennai, and IMA Dehradun, was commissioned in 2011.

Nearly 250 cadets are currently undergoing training at the institute, against its capacity of 750.

BJP MP from Aurangabad in Bihar, had raised the issue in Parliament during the last Budget Session, stating that the move will hurt the local economy.

Stories of Resilience - The Book of Encouragement & Hope

BHUBANESWAR, DEC 11 (PTI): Children wounded by violence and sexual assault can overcome all forms of trauma and transform into resilient beings when nurtured with love, education and creative leadership pedagogies, a new book says.

The book titled Stories of Resilience, brings to life, stories of badly wounded world of children, who ultimately offer an incredible message of encouragement and hope to all readers.

Authored by award winning writer Ramendra Kumar, the book has been launched by Protsahan India Foundation, a non profit organisation working for child rights in India.

Tales of children who have healed themselves and one another from the deepest personal injuries of violence, child marriage, intergenerational

poverty, sexual violence and patriarchy, have been presented in the book, the Foundation said in a statement.

This book is not only a compilation of real life stories of how Protsahan made an impact in the lives of the girls through an integrated arts based leadership training programme that was based in trauma informed compassionate care, it also stands out as a documented narrative of how broken childhoods can transform into resilient childhoods, it said.

Ramendra Kumar, who happens to be the Chief of Communications (CoC) at Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) of SAIL, said the book retells many of these stories, framing them in ways that will challenge and richly instruct those who would help heal such trauma. Director and

founder of Protsahan India Foundation, Sonal Kapoor said she has seen firsthand how victims of inhumanity have found the inner strength to overcome life altering trauma with renewed faith and have even regained humour and optimism at the foundation.

Kapoor said the author over long interview based research with the Protsahan team, has beautifully, subtly and intricately described self-healing in children in an ambience of love and through trauma informed compassionate care model.

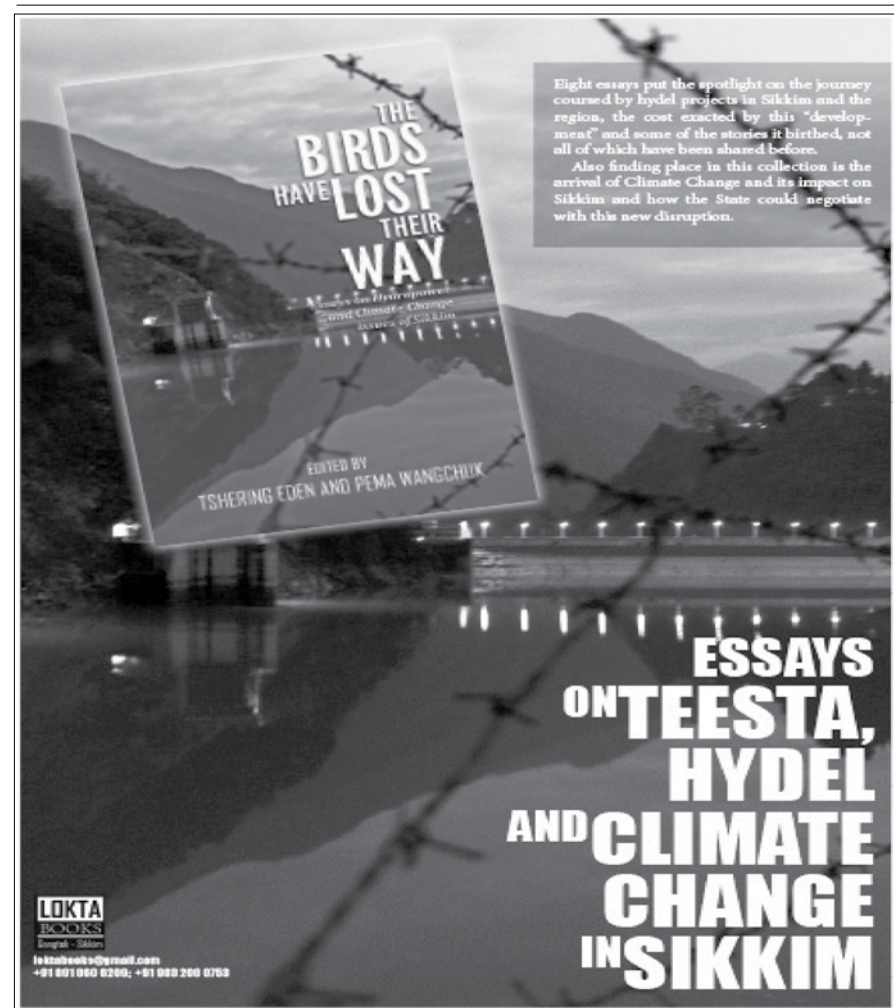
Narrating stories of child survivors, the book tells that we all have the capacity to heal and lead truly meaningful lives.

"His empowering message is that the invisible wounds left by violence are not intractable, that people can and will persevere,

and he offers a handful of real life stories that transformed forever through Protsahans deep work with children within Indias slums," the statement said.

Recommended for academic and specialised collections in mental health and counseling, this book shares real stories of children who have mastered themselves in the face of extreme violence and adversity, and became tiny incredible leaders of the world around them, it said.

Stating that many children experience traumatic life events, it said the organisation works with children facing the trauma of sexual violence, lack of education, lack of compassion, lack of resources to even have two square meals a day, leave alone resources that are needed for a child to thrive.



Jürgen Klopp salutes ‘sensational’ Salah finish after Liverpool battle through

ANDY HUNTER
SALZBURG, 11 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Jürgen Klopp said Mohamed Salah's self-belief was instrumental in Liverpool reaching the knockout stage of the Champions League as he became only the second player in the club's history to score 20 goals in the competition.

Salah missed a host of excellent chances against Salzburg before scoring an outstanding goal, Liverpool's second of the night, to follow Steven Gerrard in reaching the 20-goal mark in the Champions League or European Cup. Klopp said the Egypt international's refusal to lose focus after the misses was a major factor in Liverpool's highly impressive victory.

"Thank God I don't have to [explain the finish], it was for sure the most difficult situation he had tonight," said Klopp. "He played really well but didn't score in the situations we expect him to score, staying on track and making such a decisive but difficult finish says probably much



more about him than all the other goals he scored. He stayed concentrated, believed in the next moment and it was a very, very good goal. A sensational finish."

Liverpool qualified top of their group, with Napoli finishing second, and Klopp cited his players' respect for the Austrian champions as another impressive hallmark of their performance. He added: "I couldn't have more re-

spect for what Salzburg are doing. I know how people see it, you think about being best in Austria is OK but some people don't respect that. You see how good they are, how good they were in the first game, how good they were against Napoli.

"We came here as current Champions League winners and I would really love it if my team is so smart that they listen and put a shift in like

that. Salzburg were unbelievably strong, especially in the first half, but we were as well and were ready for the fight. We should have scored in the first half and then in the second half, it's not easy to keep that intensity. We scored the goals and could have scored more, but I have really massive respect for Salzburg."

Jesse Marsch, the Salzburg coach, said his confident team were ultimately undone by Liv-

erpool's European pedigree. "In the end they showed their quality," he said. "Salah's goal was unbelievable. It was like a heavy-weight fight. We punched them but then they punched us twice more."

Dejan Lovren was forced off with an injury in the second half but Klopp claimed it was not serious and hopefully a repeat of the minor problem the defender suffered in the win at Bournemouth on Saturday.

Arsenal, Rangers chart safe passage in Europa League



PARIS, DEC 11 (AFP): Last season's runners-up Arsenal and Steven Gerrard's Rangers have their sights fixed on the Europa League knockout phase Thursday with 19 clubs competing for the final 11 places.

Interim Arsenal boss Freddie Ljungberg will look to lead the Gunners into the last 32 after Unai Emery was sacked following last month's 2-1 home loss to Eintracht Frankfurt.

Monday's 3-1 victory at West Ham ended the club's worst winless run since 1977 and Arsenal just require a point at Standard Liege in Belgium to progress from Group F.

Rangers missed out on their first major silverware in almost a decade at the weekend following an agonising 1-0 defeat by Celtic in the Scottish League Cup final.

Gerrard's side dominated large parts of the game but were unable to find a way past an inspired Fraser Forster, who saved a second-half penalty from Alfredo Morelos.

Rangers are top of Group G and will advance if they avoid a second defeat of the competition to Swiss champions Young Boys.

"We've got a huge game on Thursday and

there's no better game to bounce back," Gerrard said.

"We have to soak it up, remember it and be ready to go and give ourselves another opportunity. That type of performance will get us where we want to get to.

"It's raw right now but this is football at the top. We'll suffer and then we'll bounce back"

Unbeaten Celtic have wrapped up top spot in Group E ahead of their trip to Romania's CFR Cluj, who are second in the section.

Manchester United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjær could well stick with a similar side to the one that lost 2-1 in Astana with qualification already assured.

The Norwegian fielded a starting team in Kazakhstan with an average age of 22 years and 26 days -- United's youngest ever in major European competition.

They lead AZ Alkmaar, who host leaders Ajax in the Dutch league this weekend, by a point in Group L going into their showdown at Old Trafford.

Twice former European champions Porto as well as Italian duo Lazio and Roma and Bundesliga leaders Borussia Mönchengladbach are also still bidding to nail down a qualifying spot.

Fit Johnson 'ready' for full part in Presidents Cup after surgery

MELBOURNE, DEC 11 (AFP): Former world number one Dustin Johnson has fully recovered from left knee surgery and declared Wednesday he was fit and "ready to play" a full role for the US team in this week's Presidents Cup.

Johnson has not played since the Tour Championship in August and had arthroscopic surgery to repair cartilage damage in September.

He pulled out of captain Tiger Woods' Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas last week sparking concerns for his fitness for this week's matchplay showdown

against the Internationals in Melbourne. But the big-hitting 2016 US Open champion told reporters on the eve of the opening day's action: "I'll play as many (times) as Tiger wants me to play. I wouldn't be here if I wasn't ready to play.

"I was always planning on playing. The game is in good enough form." Johnson said he had suffered no problems since the surgery, but it had just taken time to make sure he recovered fully.

"I was chipping and putting, three, four weeks after, but I didn't start hitting probably until six to eight weeks,

like wedges and just kind of built up from there," he said. "Everything was right on schedule. If anything, ahead of schedule. The only thing that took longer was with the driver."

Vice-captain Steve Stricker said he had no concerns as to Johnson's ability to play up to five times in four days after his long layoff. "Not at all," Stricker. "He looks great out there. "He's hitting it a long way as he normally does. His knee is not an issue at all.

He's feeling good and hitting it well." Fellow vice-captain Zach Johnson said his namesake took a few holes to shake off the rust.

Chelsea slow up against Lille after Tammy Abraham sets last-16 pace

JACOB TEINBERG

STAMFORD, 11 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: For Chelsea it was a useful reminder about the danger of lowering their guard at this level. With 78 minutes gone nobody inside Stamford Bridge was fretting about what was happening between Ajax and Valencia in Amsterdam.

Chelsea were enjoying the rarity of a European night totally devoid of anything resembling dramatic tension and Lille, who had treated the game as if it was a glorified training exercise, looked content merely to leave London with their dignity intact.

Yet Frank Lampard's side are not in the habit of doing things the easy way. Dips in concentration remain a problem, especially at the back, and it beggared belief that Chelsea spent the closing stages knowing that one slip would plunge them into the Europa League. Stamford Bridge was an anxious place after Loïc Rémy halved the deficit deep into a sleepy second half and, while Chelsea held on, there will have to be greater ruthlessness if their chaotic Champions League adventure is not to end in the last 16.

It was, of course, a night for Chelsea to celebrate making it out of a tough group. Finishing above Ajax, who fell into the Europa League after losing 1-0 at home to Valencia, is a fine achievement. Yet it is Valencia who topped Group H thanks to a superior head-to-head record against Chelsea, who will land one from Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Juventus, Paris Saint-Germain and Red Bull Leipzig when the draw is made on Monday.

The focus will linger on whether this team has the smarts to make an impact



against Europe's best and the doubters will point to how Chelsea almost blew it here. They remain inconsistent, incomplete, and their loss of composure after Rémy's goal has given Lampard another reason to dip into his £150m budget next month now the club's transfer ban has been halved.

It should not have been so nervy. Chelsea were in control for long spells, dominating from the start and seizing the initiative thanks to Tammy Abraham's poaching instincts and an excellent display from Christian Pulisic, who is starting to shoulder the burden of that £58m price tag with increasing nonchalance.

Lampard was full of nervous energy at the start, rushing to gather the ball after it went out for a Lille throw, and it was clear that he wanted his team to work up an early frenzy. This was as much a test of Chelsea's mental strength as it was of their technical ability and Lampard had challenged his players be-

David Schumacher to race in MRF Challenge

SAKHIR (BAHRAIN), DEC 11 (PTI): David Schumacher, Harrison Newey, son of Formula One driver Ralf, will race at the MRF Challenge, India's only FIA-approved international series, at the Bahrain International Circuit here on December 13 and 14.

The MRF Challenge will witness a total of four races spread over two days.

The 18-year old David has been in tremendous form in the past year, having emerged Rookie Champion with eight wins in his category while finishing ninth overall in the 2018 Formula 4 ADAC Championship, followed by fourth overall with four wins in the 2019 Formula 3 Regional European Championship.

David is the latest among high-profile drivers, who have utilised the MRF Challenge, organised by the Madras Motor Sports Club, as a stepping stone to further

their racing careers. Mick Schumacher, Harrison Newey, son of Formula 1 ace designer Adrian Newey, Formula 1 test driver with Alfa Romeo Racing Tatiana Calderon and last season's winner Jamie Chadwick, who is also the champion of the inaugural W Series this year, are some of the big names to have participated in the MRF Challenge.

"I am really excited to race with the MRF Challenge in Bahrain. The series is a good platform to race in the winter break. I am looking forward to get the chance to do my first race in Bahrain and to prepare for the season 2020," David said.

Looking ahead to Round 2 of the series, Arun Mammen, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, MRF Ltd, said: "At the outset, we would like to welcome David Schumacher to MRF Challenge. He follows his cousin, Mick, son of multiple F1 champion

Michael Schumacher, and who participated in the championship couple of seasons ago and is now looking to break into F1.

"David joins other teenagers from Europe and the United States who showcased their talent in the first round at Dubai last month with some very competitive racing."

The first round of the MRF Challenge last month in Dubai, comprising five races, saw Belgian teenager Michelangelo Amendola dominating with three wins, besides topping the qualifying session and posting three fastest laps to pocket 119 points.

The other two races were won by veteran Australian Dylan Young and 16-year old Indian-American Yuven Sundaramoorthy.

Trailing Amendola on the points table is British teenager Joshua Mason (77), ahead of Young (65).

José Mourinho forbids Tottenham's players from watching 7-2 Bayern thrashing

DAVID HYNTER

MUNICH, 11 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: José Mourinho says he has banned his Tottenham players from watching the video nasty of their 7-2 Champions League home defeat by Bayern Munich in October, which represented one of the final cuts for his managerial predecessor, Mauricio Pochettino.

Mourinho is in Munich for Wednesday night's return Group B fixture, although there is not the same degree of jeopardy given that both clubs have already qualified for the knockout rounds. Bayern have suffered back-to-back Bundesliga defeats and are in turmoil as they lag seventh in their domestic division but, to Mourinho, the recent past was not a principal concern.

"I forbid any image of it [the 7-2]," Mourinho

said. "I watched it a couple of times: me, my staff and analysts try to go through every single aspect of that but not one single image for the boys. No. Not at all. We're going to focus more on us than on Bayern.

"We're going to try to develop our model of play, with different bodies, different phases, different players. But there is a certain way that we try to play football and try to develop our principles of play. And we're totally focused on us."

Mourinho has left 10 players in London, resting Serge Aurier, Jan Vertonghen, Dele Alli and Harry Kane. In addition Hugo Lloris, Michel Vorm, Ben Davies, Harry Winks, Tanguy Ndombele and Érik Lamela are injured. He is set to start with the youngsters Kyle Walker-Peters, Juan Foyth and Ryan Sessegnon. The line-up will still feature

established quality and he expects his defence to be given an exacting test by the prolific Bayern striker, Robert Lewandowski. "You think our team is the same without Harry Kane?" Mourinho said. "It's not the same. And, of course, Bayern depend a little on Lewandowski. Their coach thinks differently to me. I left Harry Kane at home, and I expect Lewandowski to play. But maybe he gets injured [on Wednesday night] and doesn't play at the weekend – so it's better he thinks twice and doesn't play Lewandowski!

"I arrive in mid-season, without four, five, six weeks to work and know the players – so we have to do everything while we are running. It's very important to me that the players are coachable and open. I think the boys need me and my job is to help them."

start and excitement built when he set off on another speedy run in the 19th minute. The ball was shuffled on to Wilian, who tore clear on the right, and the Brazilian's low cross was back-heeled home by Abraham from close range.

A sense of contentment fell over Stamford Bridge. Lille were already out and their priorities lay elsewhere. They made seven changes to the side that beat Brest 1-0 last Friday and left their leading scorer, Victor Osimhen, on the bench. Antonio Rüdiger could not have asked for a gentler workout on his return from injury, so much so that the centre-back took it upon himself to inject some intensity into proceedings at one point, crunching into a thunderous challenge on Rémy on the edge of the area.

Lille's second string were not up to much and Chelsea moved clear with a straightforward goal 10 minutes before the interval. Emerson whipped in a corner from the right and César Azpilicueta headed past Mike Maignan at the near post.

Lampard had gone with experience, replacing Mason Mount and Reece James with Jorginho and Emerson, but Chelsea dozed off in the second half. Lille pulled a goal back out of nothing when Jonathan Bamba, on as a substitute, laid the ball back for Rémy to crash an emphatic finish in off the bar.

The mood changed as Lille chased the goal that would have knocked Chelsea out. Yusuf Yazici drilled a shot wide from the edge of the area and Rémy did his old side a favour in injury time, rolling a tame finish straight at Kepa Arrizabalaga after bursting clear on the left. Lampard was angry. He knows his team's development has a long way to go.

Trump meets Russia's Sergey Lavrov, warns against attempt to interfere in 2020 elections: WH

BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, DEC 11 (PTI): US President Donald Trump has warned Russia against any attempt to interfere in the 2020 presidential polls and also urged Moscow to resolve its conflict with Ukraine, the White House has said.

The warning by Trump, who met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at his Oval office on Tuesday, came a day after the Justice Department's watchdog said the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was justified in opening its investigation into ties between the Trump presidential campaign and Russia.

Trump has long slammed the investigation as a witch hunt and says the FBI never should have started it.

"President Trump 'warned Russia against any attempts to interfere in the US elections and urged Russia to resolve the conflict with Ukraine," the WH said in a statement after the meeting between the two leaders.

However, Lavrov said that they did not discuss the US elections during the meeting.

This was the second meeting between Trump and Lavrov.

Lavrov last visited the US in May 2017 when Trump had just fired the then Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director James Comey, who was probing Russia's meddling in the US polls at the time.

During the meeting, Trump also emphasised his support for an effective global arms control treaty that includes not only Russia but also China. He welcomed the continued engagement to address the areas of mutual concern, including how the US and Russia can take positive steps with respect to the detained citizens.

Trump urged Russia to support his administration's efforts to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons and ensure the denuclearisation of North Korea, the WH said.

"Trump and Lavrov also reviewed the state of relations with China. Trump reiterated the need for fair and reciprocal trade with China," the WH said.

President Trump noted that a better relationship with Russia would allow increased trade between the two countries, the WH said.

Earlier in the day, Lavrov met the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, which the two diplomats said were aimed at improving bilateral ties.

"We should have a better relationship the United States and Russia than we've had in the last few years, and we've been working on that since that moment. Our bilateral ties are, of course, complicated. We cooperate in some areas; in other places, we compete," Pompeo told reporters at a joint news conference with Lavrov.

Eruption fears halt plans to get bodies off New Zealand volcano

Fears of another eruption at the New Zealand volcano believed to have killed 15 people made it too dangerous for emergency teams to recover bodies, police said Wednesday, as doctors fought to save survivors who suffered horrific burns.

The official death toll after Monday's explosion on White Island stands at six, with police listing another nine as missing, up from the previous figure of eight.

Their bodies are thought to be on the island, but it remains too hazardous for rescuers to travel there, and for forensic pathologists, odontologists and other victim identification experts to begin their work.

"Every day that passes with those bodies unrecovered is a day of anguish for their loved ones... but right now, the science tells us that the risk is just too high," Civil Defence emergency director Sarah Stuart-Black said.

Health officials said 22 survivors still being treated in hospital burns units around the country remained in a critical condition requiring airway support.

They said an extra 1.2 million square centimetres (1,300 square feet) of skin for grafts was being sent from Australia and the United States to treat burns victims.



When the volcano exploded it is believed to have sent superheated steam, ash and cannonball-like rocks hurtling from the caldera at supersonic speed.

Police Minister Stuart Nash said some injuries were so severe that victims could not identify themselves.

"There are a number of people in hospital who cannot communicate, they have significant burns not only to skin but internal organs," he told Radio New Zealand.

A total of 47 day-trippers and guides were on the island

when the blast occurred, hailing from Australia, the United States, Britain, China, Germany, Malaysia and New Zealand.

Nash said the survivors were receiving world-class treatment but warned "there are still some very, very seriously injured people in hospital".

- 'Grief and sorrow' - Australia says 13 of its citizens were being treated and 11 were unaccounted for.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said three military aircraft with specialist medical crews had been dispatched

to repatriate some of the survivors. "This is a time of immense grief and great sorrow for everyone involved," he said.

Two Britons have also been confirmed as injured and Malaysia's High Commission on Wednesday confirmed one of its nationals was critically injured, in addition to one previously announced death.

Police have been cautious about identifying victims but late Wednesday released a list of nine people who were missing, including seven Australians and two New Zea-

landers. A coronial process has begun to identify the six confirmed dead but police said it "can take some time".

Families of Australian victims expressed doubt they were made aware of the risks of visiting the island, where the volcano's threat level had been raised in the days before the eruption.

"I think if he knew there was a danger, he would haven't gone on it," said Brian Dallow, whose son Gavin was believed killed along with his 15-year-old stepdaughter Zoe Hosking. Seismologists

have predicted there is a 40-60 percent chance of another eruption on the island, which sits semi-submerged 50 kilometres (30 miles) out to sea.

Poisonous gases are still billowing from the volcanic vent and the island is blanketed in a thick layer of acidic ash.

"It would be madness for us to send men and women across to White Island in a situation that was not safe," Nash said.

With weather expected to deteriorate on Thursday, pressure is building to begin the recovery operation.

"We're assessing all factors every two or three hours to see if we can go," superintendent Bruce Bird told reporters.

Visitors at the time included a group of more than 30 from a Royal Caribbean cruise ship, the Ovation of the Seas, which left Sydney on a 12-day voyage last week with up to 4,000 passengers onboard.

The ship had delayed its departure from nearby Tauranga in the wake of the disaster but set off for Wellington early Wednesday morning, leaving a team to help those affected.

The island in the picturesque Bay of Plenty attracts more than 17,000 visitors every year and is marketed as an experience for the adventurous traveller.

Experts quit Hong Kong police probe, in blow to government

An international panel of experts hired to advise Hong Kong on the police response to huge pro-democracy protests announced Wednesday they were quitting, saying the watchdog was not fit for purpose "in a society that values freedoms and rights".

The group's damning conclusion is a blow to Hong Kong's government, which has insisted its Independent Police Complaints Commission is capable of holding the force to account over snowballing claims of brutality.

"We ultimately concluded that a crucial shortfall was evident in the powers, capacity and independent investigative capability of IPCC," the experts said.

Critics have long charged the body lacks adequate powers, is stacked with pro-establishment figures and has been toothless when it comes to keeping the police in line.

The watchdog can only handle complaints forwarded by the police themselves and it cannot subpoena documents or compel witnesses to testify.

Such limitations, the expert panel said, do not "begin to meet the standards citizens of Hong Kong would likely require of a police watchdog operating in a society that values freedoms and rights".

Protests have rocked Hong Kong for more than six months, with up to two million people taking to the streets, initially against

a now-shelved extradition bill. Lately, one of the core demands of protesters -- alongside fully free elections -- has been an inquiry into the police, who have been left to battle increasingly violent black-clad activists and are now loathed by significant chunks of the deeply polarised population.

But both chief executive Carrie Lam and the police have repeatedly rejected those calls.

Pro-democracy lawmaker Tan-ya Chan described the resignation of the expert group as a "vote of no confidence" in the IPCC and the interim report it is expected to produce next year.

Political scientist Ma Ngok said the panel's decision confirmed Hong Kong people's doubts on the IPCC's ability to find the truth.

"The government's strategy of making the report independent by having a panel of overseas experts has failed," Ngok told AFP.

- Public row - The panel was announced in September and was chaired by Sir Dennis O'Connor, who was tasked by the British government to write a report on the police after the 2011 London riots.

It included current or former police watchdog chiefs from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and a British specialist on crowd behaviour.

A month ago, a leaked statement from the group revealed they felt the police watchdog was not equipped to carry out a prop-

er investigation, and suggested a fully independent inquiry would be better suited. But their frank assessment was not welcomed by Anthony Neoh, the IPCC's head.

He gave an interview to a mainland Chinese media outlet rebuking the panel, saying they "do not understand Hong Kong's situation". On Sunday, an estimated 800,000 people marched peacefully through the city's streets in a movement that has become a popular revolt against Beijing's authoritarian rule.

The last three weeks have seen a rare lull in the violence and vandalism after pro-democracy parties won a landslide in local council elections.

"Do not waste time, and please grab this golden opportunity to persuade Beijing... to support an independent commission of inquiry," lawmaker Chan added.

An end to violence is something Lam has insisted must be a precursor to meaningful dialogue.

But she has shown no sign she is willing to budge, leading to fears clashes could resume.

In her weekly press conference on Tuesday she dismissed protesters' demands once more as she announced plans to go to Beijing this weekend where she is expected to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

China has publicly thrown its support behind both Lam and the city's police, even as their approval ratings take a hammering.

First commercial electric plane takes flight in Canada

VANCOUVER, DEC 11 (AFP):

The world's first fully electric commercial aircraft took its inaugural test flight on Tuesday, taking off from the Canadian city of Vancouver where tall mountain peaks edge the Pacific Ocean. "This proves that commercial aviation in all-electric form can work," said Roei Ganzarski, chief executive of Seattle-based engineering firm magniX.

The company designed the plane's motor and worked in partnership with Harbour Air, which ferries half a million passengers a year between Vancouver, Whistler ski resort and nearby islands and coastal communities.

Ganzarski said the technology would mean significant cost savings for airlines -- not to mention zero emissions. "This signifies the start of the electric aviation age," he told reporters.

Civil aviation is one of the fastest growing sources of carbon emissions as people increas-

ingly take to the skies and new technologies have been slow to get off the ground.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation has encouraged greater use of efficient bio-fuel engines and lighter aircraft materials, as well as route optimisation.

The e-plane -- a 62-year-old, six-passenger DHC-2 de Havilland Beaver seaplane retrofitted with an electric motor -- was piloted by Greg McDougall, founder and chief executive of Harbour Air.

"For me that flight was just like flying a Beaver, but it was a Beaver on electric steroids. I actually had to back off on the power," he said.

McDougall took the plane on a short loop along the Fraser River near Vancouver International Airport in front of around 100 onlookers soon after sunrise.

The flight lasted less than 15 minutes, according to an AFP journalist on the scene. "Our goal is to actually electrify

the entire fleet. There's no reason not to," said McDougall. On top of fuel efficiency, the company would save millions in maintenance costs, as electric motors require "drastically" less upkeep, McDougall said.

However, Harbour Air will have to wait at least two years before it can begin electrifying its fleet of more than 40 seaplanes. The e-plane has to be tested further to confirm it is reliable and safe. In addition, the electric motor must be approved and certified by regulators.

In Ottawa, Transport Minister Marc Garneau told reporters ahead of the maiden flight that he had his "fingers crossed that the electric plane will work well." If it does, he said, "it could set a trend for more environmentally friendly flying." Battery power is also a challenge.

An aircraft like the one flown on Tuesday could only fly about 100 miles on lithium battery power, said Ganzarski.

Pentagon suspends training of Saudis for security review

WASHINGTON, DEC 11 (AFP): THE Pentagon announced Tuesday it was temporarily suspending operational training for Saudi military students in the United States following a shooting rampage last week by a Saudi air force officer.

Saudi Arabian military students in the United States will continue classroom instruction but operational training is halted pending a security review, senior Defense Department officials said.

Mohammed Alshamrani, a 21-year-old lieutenant in the Saudi Royal Air Force, opened fire in a classroom at Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida on Friday, killing three American sailors and wounding eight other people before being shot dead by police.

Deputy Secretary of Defense David Norquist ordered a review to be completed, within 10 days, of policies for screening foreign students. The suspension of operational training applies to all mem-

bers of the Saudi military currently undergoing training in the United States. "The ones that are pilots will be grounded," an official said.

Pentagon officials said the security study was being done with the cooperation of the Saudi government. The policy review will apply to all international military students but the suspension of operational training only applies to Saudi students, they said.

Pentagon officials did not provide a figure for the number of Saudis currently undergoing military training in the US but they said the overall number of international military students is between 5,000 and 5,100.

Alshamrani, who was armed with a lawfully purchased Glock 9mm handgun, is reported to have posted a manifesto on Twitter before the shooting denouncing America as "a nation of evil."

The FBI said Tuesday that Alshamrani obtained the gun

through an authorised gun seller in Florida in July, through a loophole in federal gun laws that allows foreign nationals -- usually unable to purchase firearms -- to have a hunting license. White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien has said the FBI investigation was ongoing but "to me, it appears to be a terrorist attack."

The shooting struck a nerve in the United States with its echoes of the September 11, 2001 attacks, in which Saudi citizens accounted for 15 of the 19 hijackers that flew airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Saudi Arabia remains one of the closest US allies in the Middle East, and President Donald Trump has cultivated its controversial de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Saudi Arabia's King Salman denounced the shooting as a "heinous crime" and said the gunman "does not represent the Saudi people."

VIDEO NEWS SECTION

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RAINY DAY GLOW! The star, Victoria Justice doesn't let the grey skies prevent her smiles during a walk through Midtown, NYC.

'Alice' child star Philip McKeon dies at 55

LOS ANGELES, DEC 11 (PTI): Actor Philip McKeon, best known for playing the son of Linda Lavin's title character in the sitcom "Alice", has passed away. He was 55.

The actor died on Tuesday morning in Texas following a longtime illness, family spokesman Jeff Ballard confirmed to Variety.

"We are all beyond heartbroken and devastated over Phil's passing. His wonderful sense of humour, kindness and loyalty will be remembered by all who crossed his path in life," said Ballard in a statement.

He is survived by his mother, Barbara and his sister, actor Nancy McKeon.

McKeon had spent the last several years hosting his own radio show in Wimberly, Texas. He moved from Los Angeles to the state to be closer to his family. He previously spent a decade working in the news department at LA's KFWB News 98.

McKeon played Tommy

Hyatt on the long-running classic CBS "Alice" from 1976 to 1985.

He also appeared in other TV shows including the NBC crime drama CHiPs, and Fantasy Island and The Love Boat", both set at ABC.



In films, McKeon was a familiar face in horror movies, such as Return to Horror High and Ghoules 4.

His most recent credit was as a co-producer on the 2005 psychological thriller feature The Jacket". It starred Adrien Brody and Keira Knightley, and had Hollywood heavyweights George Clooney, Peter Gu-

ber and Steven Soderbergh among its producers.

Actor Charlie Sheen, who starred with McKeon in an episode of the 1980s NBC anthology series Amazing Stories," took to social media to remember him.

"Shared some wonderful moments in the trenches' with Phil McKeon many moons ago. Over the past few decades, he was always a perfect gentleman and an ebullient spirit. And his goofy af smile, was pure gold. r.i.p. young man. Much much too soon, you cut out (sic)," Sheen tweeted with their photo from the episode.

Atlanta newspaper sues Clint Eastwood over film's portrayal of reporter

Atlanta-Journal Constitution hires powerful media lawyer in defamation case after film, Richard Jewell, shows reporter sleeping with FBI agent

Atlanta's leading newspaper has hired a powerful media lawyer, known for scaring off journalists for celebrity clients, to take on Clint Eastwood's latest film, Richard Jewell, in an argument about the on-screen portrayal of one its legendary reporters.

The paper says the depiction in the movie of now-deceased reporter Kathy Scruggs, played by Olivia Wilde, is "offensive" and "highly defamatory". It wants Hollywood executives to add a disclaimer in the film about the part.

Richard Jewell depicts Scruggs as sleeping with an FBI agent to draw out information from a source in the aftermath of the 1996 Olympic Bombing in Atlanta. The Atlanta-Journal Constitution has repeatedly, in recent weeks, denounced the movie's treatment of the veteran reporter, who broke the news that the FBI was focusing on Jewell in the investigation.

"Such a portrayal makes it appear that the AJC sexually exploited its staff and/or that it facilitated or condoned offering sexual gratification to sources in exchange for stories. That is entirely false and malicious, and it is extremely defamatory and dam-

aging," says the letter from lawyer Marty Singer on behalf of the paper, to Eastwood, screenwriter Billy Ray and Warner Brothers executives. The letter was obtained by Deadline.

Singer, who has defended and represented celebrities for decades, including the likes of Sylvester Stallone, Charlie Sheen and Jeremy Piven, has threatened

these times when the media is under almost constant attack, for a film that claims to be portraying a real situation to suggest that this is how journalists operate," Riley said to the Daily Beast.

A number of journalists have called the portrayal of Scruggs "boring" and "wrong", taking to social media to defend female journalists who are re-



Eastwood and other Hollywood executives with a defamation lawsuit on behalf of the AJC.

It's not how the AJC operates, said Kevin Riley, the paper's top editor, to the Daily Beast after Warner Brothers dismissed the paper's claims as "baseless".

"We find it extremely troubling in

peatedly portrayed by Hollywood in this sexist trope.

Wilde has said she did her research on Scruggs but the AJC followed up with close friends, family and former colleagues who say they never heard from Wilde, despite offering their assistance to writers.

Ranveer Singh in talks to play comicbook superhero 'Nagraj', Karan Johar to produce

BY MANISH SAIN

NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI): Actor Ranveer Singh is in negotiations to play the role of the iconic Indian superhero Nagraj in a big-screen adaptation of the comicbook series, Manoj Gupta, president of publisher Raj Comics, said on Wednesday.

The film will be produced by filmmaker Karan Johar, Gupta added.

"We are in talks with Ranveer Singh and Karan Johar for a live-action silver-screen adaptation of Nagraj. While nothing is inked so far, things are looking positive," Gupta told PTI.

Nagraj, which literally means 'Snake King', was created in the late 1980s by Sanjay Gupta and published by Raj Comics. The first story on the fictional superhero was penned by Prashuram Sharma and illustrations were done by Pratap Mullik. Later, it was drawn by Sanjay Ashtputre, Chandu and Anupam Sinha.

"When we created Nagraj we never imagined that it would attract such a wide fan following across India and we all are happy that finally a Nagraj movie is taking

shape," Gupta added.

A rich blend of mythology, fantasy, magic and science fiction, the story of Nagraj has gone on to earn a cult following over the years, with many fans believing that the comics have developed a mythology of their own, which is unique to the popular Indian beliefs about snakes.

Gupta said though the project is in initial stages of development, they are hoping for a 2022 release.

"Everyone is extremely enthusiastic about the idea of making a Nagraj feature film. While other superhero films have been made in Bollywood before, this will be the first live-action adaptation of an Indian comicbook superhero," he added.

Gupta previously had told PTI in September this year that the team is working towards adapting their comicbook characters for various mediums.

"We are in talks to create a Banke Lal animated show for kids with a leading animation studio and a high-end 3D Nagraj animated film. We are also discussing live action web-series with various producers," the director said.

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Dilip Kumar turns 97, says grateful for love and prayers



MUMBAI, DEC 11 (PTI): Legendary actor Dilip Kumar, who turned 97 on Wednesday, said all the love and affection he has received from fans fills him with gratitude and tears.

The actor uploaded a picture of himself on Twitter and wrote, "On this 97th birthday, calls and messages have been pouring in since last night-thank you!"

"Celebrations are not important- your boundless love,

affection and prayers have always brought tears of gratitude in my eyes." Last year, the actor was diagnosed with mild pneumonia. According to his wife Saira Banu, the actor's health is much better now.

"He is fine. He is much better. Everyone must pray for him," Saira told PTI.

Dilip Kumar, who made his big screen debut with 1944 film "Jwar Bhata", is one of the most celebrated stars of Hindi cinema.

Jim Carrey may return for 'Ace Ventura 3'

LONDON, DEC 11 (PTI): A third "Ace Ventura" film is reportedly in the works, with a possibility of veteran actor Jim Carrey's return as the iconic character.

A source told the website We Got This Covered that there are only talks to do a third film in the series and Carrey is said to be interested in the idea.

Production house Morgan Creek, which backed the first two films in the series, alluded to the confirmation of the news on Twitter. The banner

shared the link of the story on its official account, captioned as "#AceVentura3".

Carrey starred as the eccentric private detective specialising in the retrieval of missing animals in two films -- "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" (1994) and "Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls" (1995).

The actor is previously said to have turned down the idea of reprising the role of Ventura, his "When Nature Calls" co-star Tommy Davidson had said.

ARIES: If you expect the love of your life to show up at your doorstep while you bingeing on Netflix with your feline friend curled in your lap, news flash—that isn't going to happen. So here's the oldest advice in the book: put yourself out there. Instead of mourning your past break up and complaining about how men/women/people in general are swines, go to your favourite bar or cafe and find yourself one who isn't. Tip: Make space for love.

TAURUS: What you're experiencing right now is a classic case of the 'glass half empty' syndrome. But could you be missing out on the blessings in the bargain? Something to think about as you sip on your morning matcha. Things on the homefront may have been especially turbulent for some of you. Tip: The love you share is real.

GEMINI: If you think sex is a taboo topic, try talking about money, especially in the early stages of a relationship. This is something most couples shy away from. Don't let this be you, Gemini. When two people are unable to agree upon how to deal with

finances, it places a strain on the relationship and threatens the foundation on which they are building their life.

Tip: Talk about money where joint finances are involved.

CANCER: Truth bomb: your relationships will be tested, Cancer, whether it's with your partner, friends or family members. How do you feel about letting go? Does the idea of starting over bring panic or peace? Don't let old memories be the reason you hold on to toxic connections. Let the Universe intervene on your behalf and do away with all that has served its purpose.

Tip: Embrace the cosmic chaos.

LEO: Obstacles can only be overcome by determination and focus. Leo, you are ready to move forward and conquer the world. Continue to believe in those larger-than-life dreams. Ambition has always been one of your strongest suits. Some of you may be experiencing the magic of movement in your personal life too, whether it's from friends to lovers or from lovers to permanent roommates.

Tip: This is a time of forward movement.

VIRGO: There's a storm headed in your direction and we mean that in the best possible way. Given the changes are sudden, it might be difficult to find your footing initially. Make a conscious effort to stay grounded and let go of the topsy turvy emotions. When they say they want you, they are certainly not lying. Tip: They want all of you, Virgo.

LIBRA: If things have been lacklustre for a while, expect a big change, one that will change your romantic life for the better. For coupled Libras, this could translate into vava-voom, both in the bedroom and outside. Consider changing the setting up a bit. A cottage in the hills could be the missing link. Tip: There's a big change coming your way.

SCORPIO: While assertion has been a big theme for you this month, things may or may not have turned out the way you want them to. You have let your intentions be known, Scorpio. Now it's time for you to take a step back. Give the other person the time and space they need to process the given information.

Tip: Let things happen in their own time.

SAGITTARIUS: "I could easily forgive

his pride, if he had not mortified mine." Let Jane Austen's words remind you what happened when pride came between the cosmic lovers, Elizabeth and Darcy. Take a moment to understand where you are operating from. Could your own ego be the reason your relationship refuses to heal? Choosing to be the bigger person will benefit you in the long run. A good way to shift your focus is to remember that the love you share is real.

Tip: Let go of the ego.

CAPRICORN: Let lightning strike where it must. It is helping illuminate the so-called cracks in the foundation—cracks that could ultimately lead to destruction. A little bit of introspection will give you the strength you need to make drastic changes. Don't doubt yourself for a second, Capricorn. Some of you may be facing upheaval on the interpersonal front. Has a certain relationship run its course? Be the bigger person because you are. Forgive, forget and let go.

Tip: You are being guided to make drastic changes.

AQUARIUS: Words of wisdom by the lady

who revolutionised the little black dress, Audrey Hepburn: "I have to be alone very often. I'd be quite happy if I spent from Saturday night until Monday morning alone in my apartment. That's how I refuel." Brew a cup of sereni-tea and spend quality time with yourself. Eat, pray, love, dance and sing. Journal your thoughts and cook yourself a scrumptious meal. What you will discover in the process: happiness can only be found inside.

Tip: Spend quality time with yourself.

PISCES: Not good enough. Not pretty enough. Not skinny enough. Who wrote this narrative anyway? Stop assessing yourself by society's standards, Pisces. This week, you're being asked to accept yourself fully, despite the so-called flaws. Self-expression will become an important theme for you in the process. What's that one thing you've been yearning to experiment with? Whether you're thinking about dip dyeing your hair purple or draping a saree sans a blouse, let 'no holds barred' be your mantra. Remember, you are not doing the world a favour by being anybody but yourself. Tip: Baby, you were born this way.