



KRISTEN STEWART JUST WORE A CHANEL NECKLACE INSTEAD OF A SHIRT...AND IT ACTUALLY WORKED

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THIS BANGLADESHI MAN'S STORY SHOWS WHY LINKING CLIMATE CHANGE WITH CONFLICT IS NO SIMPLE MATTER

04

J.J. ABRAMS SAYS THE RISE OF SKYWALKER WILL BE A 'PENDULUM SWING' FROM THE LAST JEDI

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Clinic hones skills of 19 football referees



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

A five-day football referee clinic is underway here at Paljor Stadium. 19 referees have been undergoing rigorous theory and practical sessions under instructor, Supriya Bhattacharya, who has been deputed by All India Football Federation to take the course.

The course, which is being organized by Sikkim Football Association, had begun on 10 December.

The theory classes are held at Football House in the mornings and practical sessions at Paljor Stadium.

The course has 17 participants from different parts of the State and one each from Kalimpong and Darjeeling.

Speaking to media

persons during a practical session at Paljor Stadium this afternoon, Mr Bhattacharya mentioned that the course has all aspiring referees who do not have any prior refereeing experiences.

He mentioned that the course has been imparting training on the proper officiating and positioning with the help of theory and practical sessions.

The last day of the course will have a fitness test for participants at Khel Gaon in Reshithang on Saturday morning, which will be followed by the final test on the laws of the game in the afternoon.

Upon completion of the course, Mr Bhattacharya will submit a report to the AIFF and accordingly the AIFF will include the selected referees in category-V, it is informed.

He mentioned that there were many footballers from the north eastern and hilly region but new referees have not been coming from this region expect for few from Manipur who are already serving in senior levels.

“We want to bring out good referees from this region as there is much potential in the region to give good referees to the country,” he said.

He stated that the ongoing referee clinic has many good participants who have good knowledge about the laws of the game and were very fit and can do better in refereeing.

The valedictory session of the referee clinic will be held tomorrow afternoon.

Temporary bailey bridge at Mantam opens for traffic Permanent bridge to be ready by 2020

WANGCHUK BHUTIA

MANGAN, 13 DEC:

The temporary bailey bridge at Mantam was opened for vehicular movement on Thursday evening.

During the opening, Dzongu MLA, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, requested the concerned department to expedite the construction of the permanent RCC bridge from Kayem to Sevim (Tingvong) and complete the work in the stipulated time frame.

The authorities have

assured that this permanent bridge will be completed by 2022.

The MLA further requested the public of Upper Dzongu and various departments, especially Food & Civil Supplies Department to keep a buffer stock of essential commodities as usual in these areas.

Present at the opening of the bridge were DC(N), Tenzing T. Koleon, RO(T) Dzongu, JE/Roads & Bridges, Netuk Lepcha and Panchayats of Upper Dzongu.



HSP and SSP come together against CAB

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Hamro Sikkim Party and Sikkim Sangram Parishad have come together to protest the Citizenship [Amendment] Bill in Sikkim. Both parties asserted that the CAB was not in the interest of the people of Sikkim and goes against provisions of Article 371F of the Constitution of India. Apart from jointly approaching Central leaders with the demand to exclude Sikkim from the purview of CAB, the two parties are also open to approaching the Courts to seek such an exclusion.

Addressing a joint press conference here today, HSP working president, Bhaichung Bhutia, mentioned that there was a lot of confusion among the people on Sikkim regarding CAB.

Holding up a copy of the CAB, he pointed out that there was nothing

written for Sikkim in the document even though exclusions are recorded for some Northeastern states.

“There is nothing in written that Sikkim has been excluded from CAB. Although the Union Home Minister has clarified things about Sikkim, we would like to question why this is not written into the Act,” he questioned.

Since it was not in written, the hint was that Sikkim has still been not excluded from CAB.

“It has been said that the State Assembly has the power but it cannot be denied that the State could also come into the power of the Centre in the future. So, the CAB is totally against the interests of the people of Sikkim and Article 371F and can affect the State in the long run,” he said.

Mr Bhutia stated that the CAB can open



the floodgates of influx in the future since it was surrounded by international borders.

“We cannot accept CAB at any cost in Sikkim as it may affect the State in the future,” he reiterated.

He asserted that influx was a serious issue for Sikkim as it can push the local Sikkimese into minority.

Likewise, SSP senior vice president, Kamal Rai, explained that the ideology of SSP and

HSP were in sync as far as CAB was concerned and the two parties had jointly resolved to thwart it in Sikkim.

“We have been working on the ideology of our leader, the late NB Bhandari, who always stood in the interest of Sikkim and its issues. We have been following SSP’s stand of ‘Son of the Soil’, so we will not make any compromises,” he asserted.

He mentioned that the CAB was totally

against the people of Sikkim so both parties will go to the Centre with this issue and even pursue legal options if required. Mr Rai also asserted that increasing influx in the State was a matter of concern at present and it needs to be taken seriously.

Responding to media queries, Mr Bhutia suggested that the State government introduce Inner Line Permit if it cannot secure special protection for Sikkim under Article 371F.

Protestors, police clash outside Meghalaya Raj Bhavan

SHILLONG, DEC 13 (PTI):

A rally on Friday demanding the Meghalaya governor’s nod to a proposed ordinance seeking mandatory registration of outsiders entering the state turned ugly as the agitators clashed with the police in front of the Raj Bhavan which left 25 injured.

The rally, sponsored by the Confederation of Meghalaya Social Organisations (COMSO), an umbrella organisation of student bodies, were also demanding that the Centre implement inner line permit regime in the state.

The demand for ILP has been growing in Meghalaya since the Centre announced it for Manipur during the debate on the Citizenship Amendment Bill when it was introduced in the Lok Sabha.

The Meghalaya cabinet had approved the amendment Meghalaya Residents, Safety and Security Act, 2016, which seeks mandatory registration of outsiders for entering the state after

the NRC in Assam.

During the clash, the police baton-charged the protestors and fired tear gas shells that left about 25 people injured, including two of its personnel.

The protestors, who turned up in thousands, also vandalised a fire brigade vehicle parked a few metres away from the main entrance to the Raj Bhavan main gate.

At least two police personnel and about 20 to 23 civilians, including women, were injured, East Khasi Hills district superintendent of police Claudia Lyngwa told PTI.

Lyngwa, however, denied that security of the Raj Bhavan was breached by the protestors.

Curfew in the town which was clamped after protests over Citizenship Amendment Bill was relaxed from 10 am till 10 pm today but markets and shops which had opened downed their shutters and the traffic on the road turned into a trickle as rumours spread that the rally had turned

violent.

Officials said that a number of tourists are stuck in Meghalaya in view of the protests in the state against the amended Citizenship Act. The state government has started helpline for those who are stranded in Shillong or any other part of the state.

The helpline numbers are 7640908749/ 9854028087/ 0364-222855, 0364-2227050 and 9774618462.

The officials said the helicopter service between Shillong and Guwahati has been increased to three sorties daily.

Regular flight services between Shillong and Kolkata will resume on Saturday and passengers who are stranded can avail them, according to a statement from the Chief Ministers Office.

The government has made adequate arrangements to provide relief materials in all districts of the state and the administration can be reached for assistance, it added.

There was no reason for them to enter a media office. We demand an unconditional apology from Assam police,” Bordoloi said.

An indefinite curfew was imposed in the city from 6.15 pm on Wednesday when protests against the Act turned violent and the Army was put on standby on Thursday.

Army also conducted flag marches in the city.

KUNAL DUTT

GUWAHATI, DEC 13

(PTI): Roads in Guwahati have virtually become impossible to navigate as street fires set up by people protesting against the contentious amended Citizenship Act turned the city’s sky red.

Normal life in the city has been paralysed to the core as protesters are defying curfew and venturing out on the streets.

This was the scene on Thursday and is unlikely to change as the protesters are not willing to relent. They are up in arms against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), which was passed by Rajya Sabha on Wednesday and got President Ram Nath Kovind’s seal of approval a day later.

From an otherwise

busy traffic intersection near Guwahati ISBT, to a public square on NH-37, Guwahati streets literally burned, the smoke adding a dramatic feel to the critical atmosphere in the city.

Passengers were left stranded at airports and bus terminals, with protesters refusing to allow even two-wheelers to pass through in a tense situation in the city even as the Army carried out flag matches and police and paramilitary forces kept a tight vigil.

“We don’t want CAB in Assam, it must go,” said an angry protester, who along with an army of fellow anti-CAB Assamese occupied a prominent square, surrounded by bonfire of tyres and strewn stones in the

streets.

The National Highway-37 literally, by parts had heaps of smouldering ashes or fire from burnt tyres, at some places, several bonfire, with flames reaching ominous heights presenting an intimidating sight to passers-by and wearied travellers.

Cries of ‘Joi Ai Axiom’ (glory to mother Assam) rent the air on highways and streets as many protesters stood huddled at prominent roads, torching even twigs and branches of trees into the bonfire on a cold December.

At least two persons died of bullet injuries on Thursday after police opened fire on protesters here, officials said.

Locals in Hatiga-

on area were seen tense-looking after reports of firing by security forces in the vicinity on Thursday, even as most locals preferred to stay indoors.

At a section of NH-37, a group of protesters, standing beside a row of bonfire, were seen forcing an Army car and civilian vehicles to turn around and take a detour through inner streets.

In Rani Rasta, young protesters squatted on the streets and refused to let go any vehicle past it, while near Deepor Beel lake, a graffiti on the street said: “Say no to CAB” in giant letters.

The intensified protests left passengers stranded at Guwahati airport and the ISBT. A rear windshield of a gov-

ernment bus was seen shattered at the bus facility while travellers eagerly waited to carry on with their journeys to outstation areas like Shillong and Dimapur.

“We are protesting because CAB is against our Constitution, and in future, its repercussions will be telling for Assamese people, and our culture and language might get seriously affected by influx of infiltrators,” said Jyotish Kumar who lives near Lakhara here.

Tapash Chandra Das said, “After Assam agitation and subsequent Assam Accord which talked about evicting illegal immigrants irrespective of their religion, we cannot afford to have this CAB.

DEAR READERS,

IF YOU ARE HAVING TROUBLE GETTING YOUR COPY OF THE SUMMIT TIMES IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, PLEASE MESSAGE OR WHATSAPP US YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AT 9832556698 AND WE WILL ENSURE THAT THE NEWSPAPER REACHES YOU.

Consumer Awareness at Duga School



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Consumer Club of Government Secondary School, Duga, East Sikkim organized a Consumer Awareness Programme at Government Junior High School, Cheuribotay, a press release informs.

On the occasion, drawing & painting competition, quiz competition and extempore competition were held. A skit was also presented by Consumer Club of

Duga School. The programme was attended by Ward Panchayat, Bharat Chettri as the chief guest along with the SMC members, public, students and teachers.

The Nodal Officer of Consumer Club, Duga

SS, KR Sharma highlighted the various rights and duties of a consumer during the programme. In his speech, the Nodal Officer, thanked the Government and the officers of the Consumer

Forum, Gangtok for formation of Consumer Clubs in schools.

The programme ended with presentation of awards to the winners of the competitions and vote of thanks by PRT of Duga SS, IB Chettri.

Training programme by ATMA at Ranka

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA), Agriculture Department, Ranka Block, East Sikkim conducted a training programme on Integrated Organic Farming System and Demonstration on preparation and application of Bio-pesticide and Bio-fertilizers at Rey Mindu Model Village on 11 Dec, 2019. Around 65 farmers were benefitted by the training, a press release informs.

The programme was attended by Zilla Panchayat as the chief guest along with Ward Panchayat and officials of the entire line department.

ATMA Deputy Director highlighted the importance of the training



and demonstration related to Integrated Organic Farming System. She encouraged the farmers to use bio-pesticide and bio-fertilizers in their field. She also talked on the importance and benefits of the model village. IPM Joint Director

emphasized on integrated pest management, the importance of the use of Trichoderma and its preparation. She also actively interacted with the farmers, furthermore she gave explanation on various pest and disease control.

AE Engineering cell explained the benefits which would be provided through their department to the farmers.

Moreover, the IPL Service provider gave a thorough demonstration on preparation and application of bio-pesticide

and bio-fertilizers.

The chief guest thanked the ATMA, Agriculture Department for conducting such a valuable and informative programme. He also encouraged the farmers to take the benefits provided by the various departments.

Bring ILP to counter CAB, says SRP

SAGAR CHETTRI GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Sikkim Republican Party [SRP] has said that if the State government has the political will then it can provide protection to the people of Sikkim by bringing in the Inner Line Permit system to the State.

Addressing a press conference here today, SRP president, KB Rai said that the bill has been passed by both houses of the Parliament and with

the President's assent, the Citizenship [Amendment] Bill is now an Act and will be implemented throughout the country.

The state government cannot stop its implementation but it can provide protection to the people of Sikkim by bringing in ILP in the State, he stated.

Mr Rai added that the people of Sikkim can be protected if the left-out communities of the State are provided

ed tribal status. He further suggested that using the clause (f) of Article 371F, protection can be provided to Sikkimese people.

He stated that it was high time to restore this clause once again in the State by requesting the Centre.

The government should take these steps if it wants to save Sikkimese people from influx that CAB would trigger, he added.

Football tourney at Gor School kicks off



SUMMIT REPORT DZONGU, 13 DEC:

Open Men's Football Tournament at Gor Secondary School in Dzongu kicked off today. The first match was played between Sangtok JHS and Dikchu Sr Sec School wherein the latter won the match in a penalty shootout.

The inaugural function was attended by Sikkim Krantikari Morcha In-charge Dzongu Constituency, Chungkipo

Lepcha, as chief guest.

The function started with the welcome speech delivered by Tseten Lhamu Lepcha. The chief guest, in her speech, appreciated the initiative undertaken by the school as part of curricular activities.

A total of 24 teams from across the state have are participating in the tournament. The final match of the tournament will be held on 23 December.

The winner of the tournament will be awarded with cash prize of Rs. 30,000 along with trophy and Rs 20,000 will be awarded to the runner-up team.

Likewise, the match today was attended by Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, AE Power Department as the chief guest.

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

Hamro Swastha Hamro Zimmawari launched

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

"Hamro Swastha Hamro Zimmawari" initiated by RKS (Rogi Kalyan Samiti) was introduced at Sombaria Auditorium hall today, a press release informs.

The programme was initiated in collaboration with Daramdin BAC and supported by MLA Daramdin cum Minister, MN Sherpa. The programme was attended by Power Minister, MN Sherpa was the chief guest of the day.

The main aim of the programme "Hamro Swastha Hamro Zimmawari" is to promote

Rural Health Care System, the release mentions. Due to lack of proper facilities, the meeting was conducted at Sombaria Auditorium Hall.

MOI/C Dr Nava Raj Rizal discussed different issues like conversion from PHC to CHC in due course of time with up-gradation of building, construction of separate toilet & bathroom for Male & Female, up-gradation of equipments like ECG Machine, Cardiac Monitor, Auto Clave, X-Ray Machine & Room Latest Lab Machines at the same time

BDO Daramdin, Ranjan Rai gave a motivating speech.

Avinash Roka (BPAM) briefed on the process of Committee Formation and finally, the House decided to form Committee Governing Body and Monitoring Body.

Addressing the ceremony, the chief guest highlighted methods for promoting health care delivery services in a rural community.

Also present were Zilla Adhayksha (w), Devika Subba, BDO, Ranjan Rai, Dr (Major Retd) Nava Raj Rizal, Civil Societies, NGOs, Panchayats.

50 Jamia students detained after clash with cops during CAB protest

NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI):

The Jamia Millia Islamia University turned into a battlefield on Friday after police and students, who wanted to march to Parliament House to protest the Citizenship Amendment Act, clashed with each other prompting AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan to reach the spot to take stock of the situation.

Fifty students were detained following a clash between police and students after the protestors were stopped at the varsity gate and prevented from carrying out their march.

The students, who were baton-charged by police personnel, alleged that the police also used tear gas to

quell their march. The students also resorted to stone-pelting. However, the protestors alleged that police resorted to stone-pelting first and students threw stones in response to the attack.

Videos circulated by students on social media showed police caning the protestors.

The police had cordoned off the road and protestors were seen climbing onto barricades. The University's gate was later closed.

"We were marching peacefully and police stopped us from marching. First, they lathicharged us asking us to move backwards. Then they pelted stones in response to which students picked up stones too,"

Onaiha, a law student at Jamia, said.

Another student alleged that police resorted to pelting stones and then used tear gas that resulted in many students being injured.

Police, however, denied the allegations.

"Students started their march. We had placed barricades which they broke and tried to jump over them. Then they threw stones at us forcing us to use teargas shells. The students have been detained and taken to Badarpur police station," a senior police official present at the spot said.

Area MLA Amanatullah Khan from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) rushed to the spot to take stock of the situation.

Rongi Chu becoming garbage dump



YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 13 DEC:

Rongi Chu (Singtam khola) has now become a convenient spot to dump

garbage. Waster from nearby households and construction sites find their way to the riverside despite prohibition by the Municipality.

Assam, NE to face fuel supply problems if citizenship agitation continues

NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI):

Assam and other North Eastern states may face fuel supply issues if the agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act continues for another week, as it has already led to the shutdown of refineries and oil-producing facilities in the region.

Indian Oil Corp (IOC) has been forced to shut down its Digboi refinery in Assam and is operating Guwahati unit at minimal throughput, while Oil India Ltd has been forced to shut LPG production and its crude oil production has dropped by 15-20 per cent, multiple sources at the state-owned companies said.

Sources said the agitation has blocked the movement of tankers and trucks, which are mostly used to supply petrol, diesel and LPG from the refineries to different parts of the North East.

With limited storage capacity, the companies have been

forced to curtail production in absence of products being evacuated, they said.

Oil India Ltd has shut LPG production for the same reason, they said, adding the agitation has also limited movement of employees and officers who work at the refineries and oil installations.

"No employee could reach OIL facilities on Thursday," a source said, adding things improved a bit on Friday but attendance was low.

Protesters pulled out employees from IOC refineries in Guwahati and Digboi, forcing curtailment of operations.

Sources said if the agitation were to continue for another 7-10 days, the region may face fuel supply issues as in the absence of fresh replenishment the current stocks will exhaust and supply dry up.

Bongaigaon, the third refinery in Assam, was already under

maintenance shutdown when the agitation broke out.

Two people were killed and 11 injured in police firing on protestors who have taken to streets since the Parliament approved the Citizenship Amendment Bill that would convert thousands of illegal immigrants into legal residents.

Sources said OIL suspended LPG as IOC was not able to lift the cooking fuel due to protests. OIL has also stopped all drilling operations as the staff was not able to reach work. OIL supplies crude mainly to IOC's Digboi refinery and BPCL's Numaligarh unit.

The firm has also stopped production from several gas wells, curtailing supplies to tea gardens and power and fertilizer plants. However, operations at Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) fields have been largely unaffected even though employees could not reach plants at some places, they said.

ANTHESTHI KRIYA



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

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

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

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

For details contact: 9083826462

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

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

For more details: 9083826462 /9832556698

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

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

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

Residential refresher training for vets

GANGTOK, 13 DEC (IPR): Five-day Residential Refresher Training for Para-vets/Field Functionaries on "Clinical Treatment and Recently Reported Disease in Sikkim" was held at training centre, Sokeythang, Gangtok.

Principal Director of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department, Dr NT Bhutia was the chief guest along with Director of AH&VD, Dr DK Pradhan who was present as guest of honour.

Dr NT Bhutia acknowledged the role of veterinarians in the prevention and control of the reported diseases in the State. He shared his



views in exploring potential of native breeds, the need of future surveillance and monitoring associated with economic aspect of disease control.

He said that the five-day training session helped update all the concerned veterinarians on the latest techniques involved. He suggested

that the centre's surroundings should be beautified and also took note of the feedback from the trainees.

Dr DK Pradhan urged

all the trainees to follow professional ethics and moral values in the profession to serve with competence and commitment.

Earlier there was a brief presentation by the trainees followed by distribution of certificates by the chief guest to the first batch of trainees.

The programme was organised by the Department of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Service under National Livestock Mission (NLM).

Also present were Directors in charge, twenty members of trainees paravets/field functionaries, officials and staff of AH&VD were present.

Financial literacy program by Animal Husbandry Dept



GYALSHING, 13 DEC (IPR):

Chief Minister, PS Tamang (Golay) inaugurated a one-day program on 'Development through Credit and Financial Literacy' was organized by the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services, Agriculture and Horticulture Department, Government of Sikkim in collaboration with SISCO Bank, Central Bank of India and SBI at the Community Recreational Center on Thursday.

Minister-cum-Area MLA, Lok Nath Sharma attended the event as chief guest. He welcomed all bank authorities and dignitaries from other departments.

Mr Sharma distributed 30 loans to the beneficiaries and houses under the CMRHM Scheme to

20 beneficiaries.

In his address, he stressed on the importance of the white revolution and mentioned that the price of milk will see a rise in upcoming days which will give the farmers more support financially.

He thanked the CM for his declaration at Mahatma Srijunga's Birth Anniversary regarding farmers, in which every cattle farmer who can produce 10 liters of milk per day will be provided with incentives.

The Minister also mentioned that there is no alternative to hard work and that the Government is will to reward anyone who will work for the betterment of the State through their hardships.

He also highlighted many ongoing programs

regarding water channel to some remote areas of Gyalshing Bermiok, as well as better transportation mediums from Bermiok to Gyalshing.

During the program different banks authorities presented their benefits of the schemes and assured to work for the welfare of the people.

Also present were Additional Director (AH&VS), Narad Cintury; BDO Bermiok-Martam, Pratiba Tamang; Asst General Manager, YIT Namchu, RBI; SISCO (Assistant General Manager Gyalshing), Anuja Pradhan; Bank Consultant of Sikkim, Pradeep Bhandari; DDM-NAB-ARD, Rupen Lamichaney; Branch Managers of different local banks, Panchayats and other dignitaries.

Two-day meeting on ICMR Projects concludes at SRM

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Shri Ramasamy Memorial University Sikkim organised a two-day All India Taskforce meeting on a project titled "Descriptive Epidemiology of Unintentional Childhood Injuries in India-An ICMR Task Force Multisite Study". SRM University Sikkim was also one of the participants for this project for Sikkim region, a press release informs.

Team Sikkim of SRM included Vice Chancellor, Prof Ch Satish Kumar as the Principal Investigator and Assistant Professor, Ojaswini Dubey, School of IT; HOD, Dr Praveen Rizal, Dept of Economics and Assistant Professor, Bhawana Regmi, School of Public Health as the members. The Vice Chancellor extended his warm welcome to all the digni-



taries and expressed his happiness to be a part of the learned gathering.

The chief guest for the event was Health Secretary, Srinivasulu. In his address to the gathering, he mentioned about the improvement in the facilities and availability of health assistance in Sikkim for the past five years.

He appreciated the endeavour of ICMR and the entire team who worked hard to come out with significant findings through this project.

The programme included the talk on importance of multicentric study on generation of population data by ICMR coordinator Scientist E, Dr

Anju Sinha, Division of RBMH & CH, ICMR. Dr Shalini CN from Ramaiah Medical College Bangalore, who is also the national project coordinator, talked about the progress of the project and the interim summary. She also threw some light on the multicentric challenges during data collection.

Apart from these

dignitaries 11 principal investigators presented each of their site's results and the various challenges they had faced during 11 months of data collection. Dr Kiran Agarwal, ICMR Expert was also present for the meeting.

The team of this project is now proceeding for data analysis and report submission.

Nepal pop artist on Sikkim tour



NITESH R PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Nepali pop artists, Jack Rai, Aizen, J Arthur and KoKo Myan are on a Sikkim tour; a first for them. They are slated to perform at K2 Club, Nam Nang, on Saturday evening.

Some of the popular songs of these artists include "Time Chaina" and "Bindass" which have firmly cemented a place for them as emerging artists of the Nepali music industry.

Speaking to media-persons here today, they expressed happiness on being in Sikkim for the first time.

They also appreciated the beauty of Sikkim and its people, thanking fans and admirers for bringing them on their first ever tour of India. They are based in the UK and have been producing music for the past many years.

"We didn't know which song would work. Ultimately, you have to be true to yourself as an artist and the rest will follow," says J Arthur.

They also appreciated the artists here for having "a sound of their own" and have asked artists here to continue making original music.

Mantra, Nomads and

Bipul Chettri are some of the artists from India on whom they showered rich appreciation.

After Gangtok they will be touring Hyderabad, Pune and Guwahati.

They have been brought to Sikkim by K Stars Event Management.



Mangan Nagar Panchayat Mangan, North Sikkim

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

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

**Sd/-
Municipal Executive Officer
Mangan Nagar Panchayat**



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READING CORNER/LIBRARY**

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**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
HEALTH CARE HUMAN SERVICE & FAMILY
WELFARE DEPARTMENT
NAMCHI, SOUTH SIKKIM**

No. 683/ACC/H&FW

DATED 11.12.2019

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

1. Sealed tender in two Bid System i.e. Technical and Financial Bid are invited from reputed and authorized dealers of Generic Medicines, Allopathic Medicines, Medical consumables, Toiletry items and miscellaneous items for running the medicine shop/ pharmacy measuring a floor area of 123.5 sq.ft or rent located at Namchi Hospital District Hospital for a period of 2 (two) years (w.e.f 1st Feb 2020 to 31st Jan 2022).
2. The tenderers should hold valid trade license issued by the authorized Government agencies and should have qualified Pharmacists possessing necessary Certificate in Pharmacy from reputed and recognized Institute to run the shop.
3. The tender forms, tender envelopes and other details like eligibility criteria, Terms & Conditions of Lease etc., can be obtained from the Office of Accounts Officer-cum-D&DO, HC,HS & FW Dept., Namchi, South District on any working days w.e.f 17.12.2019 to 24.12.2019 on production of Challan for Rs.2000/-only duly credited to Revenue Head- 0210-800-Other Receipts (Sale of tender form for Pharmacy).
4. Duly filled up Sealed Tender forms accompanied by TDR (refundable) for Rs.1.0 Lakhs(Rupees One lakh) only drawn in favour of AO-cum-D&DO, HC,HS & FW Department from any branch of State Bank of Sikkim should reach the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, Namchi within 12.00 pm of 06.01.2020(Friday) and the same will be opened at 12.30 pm sharp in the O/o Chief Medical Officer in the presence of Interested tenderers/ authorized representatives.
5. Minimum Offset rate for the above premises as described above is Rs.50000/- (Fifty thousand) per month.
6. Tender in which any of the prescribed conditions are not fulfilled or incomplete in any way will be rejected.
7. The Department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

**Sd/-
Chief Medical Officer
Health Care, Human Service & Family Welfare Department
Namchi, South District.**

R.O. No. 300/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20

Date 13.12.2019



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

No.Exam/2019-20/44

Dated 12th December, 2019

NOTIFICATION

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

**Director-Examination
Education Department**

Never Forget Nirbhaya

She was without fear, while we appear to be without conviction or shame

The Delhi gang-rape of ‘Nirbhaya’ around this time of the year in 2012 had left the entire nation shocked and disturbed.

The incident had triggered spontaneous protests on the streets of Delhi and expressions of support across the country as the repressed anger of a large section of the nation’s population spilled out and expressed itself with staggering forthrightness. The anger among the protestors was genuine, and the establishment’s response to the situation, both the rape and the protests, was typically nonchalant and ignorant, at least initially. The gang-rape, disturbing and heinous as it was, provided the trigger to unleash pent-up frustrations of the people. The insecurity that Delhi infects women living there with and the disinterest with which those responsible to keep citizens safe deliver on their responsibilities, manifested in the near anarchic string of protests there. One will recall that the protests continued even after all the accused were behind bars and the victim [who passed away later], was receiving the best medical attention possible. That was clearly because as much as the protest was about that one incident of a brutal gang-rape, it was also against the society’s general ambivalence when it comes to violence against women – physical, mental and through denial of opportunities – which allows such perversions as the Delhi Shame which had the entire nation in a roil.

What the thousands who stared down water cannons on the streets of Delhi wanted was not just justice for Nirbhaya, but an assurance that public spaces will be made safer for women and the law & order personnel and institutions so sensitized that they not only bring perpetrators of violence against women to book, but also, through quicker response and better policing, prevent such crimes from transpiring.

Effective punishment for violence against women should already have been in place and by now, the State machinery should have earned the trust of the people when it comes to ensuring justice for victims. Because the State has failed on both counts, the people are left with no recourse but to take to the streets so often.

The establishment lumbers towards reforms and will hopefully come up eventually with a plan which will not only reduce the number of rapes in the country, but also improve the conviction rate beyond the present dismal statistic of 24%. It is already seven years since the incident, and yet there is not much to show by way of improvement. Be that as it may, even as the administration and the policy makers get around to recognizing women’s issues, the women found new resolve in the wake of the Nirbhaya shocker. It goes without saying that they are now expressing their protests and disdains with more determination and less unencumbered by the inhibitions which held many of them back. Rape incidents used to occasionally bring women to the streets in solidarity earlier, but over the past few years, one has noticed many more expressions of individual and organizational protests. Women in India no longer appear inclined to ignore what would have earlier been considered ‘minor’ transgressions. And when it comes to more serious offences, the clamour is even louder. And that has been one of the positive course corrections that the Nirbhaya incident triggered in the country. Unfortunately, while the women are finding the resolve to express themselves more strongly, the establishment continues to remain regressively patriarchal. The manner in which we responded to the documentary film, “India’s Daughter”, and hounded it off the air and the disturbing reality of violence against women remaining as rampant as it always was, expose our disinterest and entrenched gender insensitivity.

The policy announcements made in the wake of the Nirbhaya episode remain only partially implemented and are still to progress beyond the tokenism which is the standard follow-up to most people-driven course-corrections. What is required is for the issue of rape and other forms of violence against women to be kept constantly in conversation so that the pressure never wanes and improvements never stop. And while we dragged our feet, the MeToo movement was upon us to hold up the mirror again. And we still refuse to look. What we notice though is a “Rape in India” comment and make that into an issue in a disturbing attempt to distract from the rapes happening in India.

This Bangladeshi man’s story shows why linking climate change with conflict is no simple matter

SONJA AYEK-KARLSSON

THECONVERSATION.COM

From Sudan to Syria to Bangladesh, climate change is often presented as a powerful and simple root cause of violent conflict and mass migration.

These narratives can be dangerous. Directly linking climate change with aggression and mass migration risks dehumanising those vulnerable to environmental stresses, and casts their attempts to escape a problem caused by mainly rich nations as a security threat. It promotes fear and isolation, rather than compassion and assistance. It also frames conflicts as “natural”, ignoring myriad preventable causes.

The truth is more complicated than a hotter planet inevitably meaning more violence, war and chaos. Research uncovering the individual life experiences of vulnerable people on the ground show that the link between climate and conflict is not simple, nor linear. A destabilising climate merely adds extra pressure to a great many pre-existing difficulties.

My research in Bangladesh, and the story of one man in particular – 55-year-old Muzaffar from Babupur in the north-east of the country – perfectly illustrates this complexity. In order to truly defend his future, and that of countless others in similar positions, we must understand and tackle structural and social causes of conflict.

Muzaffar’s story begins like so many others here: with a difficult past. Poverty forced Muzaffar to work as a child and he never had a chance to attend school. The day he got a family of his own, his main concern was putting food on the table.

At the time, food in the area was scarce due to the lack of rain and, as the local climate became less stable, his village struggled increasingly with drought. It was difficult to make money in the village, so Muzaffar decided to leave his wife and eight children behind and migrated to the capital, Dhaka.

Here, he worked as a day labourer in the harbour, carrying sand and stones on his head. Unable to afford a house, he lived in a shared dormitory shed made of tin, and full of mosquito and ants.

“I suffered a lot. We were about 50-60 people stuck in there ... As I was not educated I could not really change my profession or build up a career. I just made sure to care for my family. That was all that kept me going.”

After deciding to return home, Muzaffar settled down close to a pond on government-owned land. The local government reassured him that he could stay there. However, powerful men, who had already filed a claim to the land in the local court, showed up one day planting trees next to his house – a common land-grabbing strategy in the area. Muzaffar described their encounter:

“I told the man ... If you win, you will get the land, but for now I will not allow you to plant trees on my land. You can plant [your trees] in the open land instead ... They did not want to listen and kept on planting trees. So after a while I went over there to reason with him and pulled away his hand to stop him. He stood up abruptly, and hit me



with his spade. I tried to protect myself with my hand, but it cut straight through my hand into my face, here, right next to my eye.”

Muzaffar fainted as soon as the spade hit his head. His landless indigenous neighbours tried to help him and put him into a taxi to the hospital but his attackers tried to stop him from getting into the vehicle. They would not allow the taxi to leave until Muzaffar’s uncle screamed: “If you want him dead, you better kill him now!”

The police came to the village to investigate what had happened, but Muzaffar could not afford the payment or bribe commonly required for their service. Unable to pay the police, the case is still running in the regional high court, decades later. In the words of Muzaffar, “he who is poor cannot afford to pay the price for justice”.

Thankfully, Muzaffar’s life took a positive change. He did not get justice in court, but a few years ago a local NGO gave him a few goats and a sheep, and Bangladesh’s largest NGO gave him a cow. Muzaffar decided to sell his animals, using the money to get a loan, buy a harvester machine, and start a small business.

These days he keeps livestock, harvests other people’s land, rents out his machine, and does share cropping – a collective form of agriculture in which a landowner allows people to farm their land in return for a share of the crops. He has already started to pay back his loans. His eyes were filled with pride during my last visit as he shared the news that his youngest daughter had just finished her bachelor’s degree.

Others, of course, are not so lucky. Some are unable to pay their loans, some are forced to sell their land and assets to pay them off – and some lose their livelihoods or end up in jail.

COMPLEX CAUSES

The loss of natural resources in the area due to

climatic stress played a role in the conflict Muzaffar faced. However, so did land politics and power dynamics, social stigmatisation, discrimination, and the legacy of colonialism.

Muzaffar was poor. He was landless. He was not protected by the law. The justice system made it easy for those with more power to take his land. The men who attacked him had powerful connections in the village.

Many of these power relations, both in Bangladesh and elsewhere, owe their existence to decisions made during colonial rule. For example, while colonial laws governing the division of land no longer apply, they entrenched inequality in access to resources and influence that still persists today, giving rise to conflict that may never have occurred had countries developed autonomously.

Muzaffar is a man of working age, but many in similar positions suffer added structural barriers. Women, the elderly, and children suffer more from the impacts of both conflict and climate change. Unless we address the social power structures responsible for these inequalities, they will continue to be disproportionately affected.

We have surprisingly little empirical evidence of how social, psychological, financial, geographical, and political factors contribute to conflict, and how climate change interacts with them. We need much more diverse and interdisciplinary research to better understand how to protect vulnerable people from both conflict and climate change.

Arenas such as COP25, the latest iteration of the UN’s annual climate change summit, have the capacity to advance these research efforts. Our children recognise the urgency and are demanding that we look at the science. It is time to listen.

[the writer is Senior Researcher, Institute for Environment and Human Security, United Nations University]

Myths around mental illness cause high rates of unemployment

BANDY X. LEE

theconversation.com

Even though mental illness affects one in five adults – and depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide – secrecy and stigma around the issue continue.

The problem is especially acute in the workplace. While individuals with mental illness often wish to work and are able to, their unemployment rates remain three to four times those of individuals without mental illness.

I’m an expert on mental health, and I have found that to dispel stigmas surrounding mental health in the workplace, researchers like me need first to tackle several myths.

1. EVERYONE HAS DIFFERENT ABILITIES

Let us examine the first myth: that mental illness makes one less able to do a job.

Mental disorder does not interfere with all capacities, and can sometimes improve others. One study shows that almost half of U.S. presidents suffered from some kind of mental disorder. Some have performed the most challenging tasks in history.

For example, Abraham Lincoln’s severe depression is said to have made him more compassionate, while Theodore Roosevelt’s hypomanic moods made him an exuberant and influential personality.

There is plenty of evidence that, given the right supports, people with mental illness can be successful at work. Conversely, individuals do not have to have a mental illness to lack the mental capacity to do a job.

2. MENTAL VERSUS PHYSICAL ILLNESS

The second myth is that mental illness is associated with moral failing, unlike physical illness.

In our own lifetimes, we may remember the stigma and secrecy that surrounded cancer and AIDS. Scientific research and education helped these prejudices give way to understanding.

The more we know, the more we understand that mental disorders are not moral failings or subjective complaints that people can simply “snap out” of, but are serious, debilitating and deadly medical conditions like any other.

Within medicine, psychiatric diagnoses are some of the most reliable. And while there are no blood tests, there are standardized scales that can be just as dependable for diagnosing and monitoring prognosis.

3. MENTAL ILLNESS DOES NOT EQUAL VIOLENCE

The third myth is that those who have mental illness are dangerous.

Media and public perception continue to perpetuate this myth, even though large-scale studies have shown no difference in levels of violence from the general population. People with mental illness are actually more often victims of violent crimes than perpetrators.

In 2017, after a mass shooting in Texas, President Donald Trump stated that “mental health is your problem here ... this isn’t a guns situation.” He reissued similar statements after other mass shootings in Parkland, Florida; in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; in Thousand Oaks, California; in El Paso, Texas; and in Dayton, Ohio.

This increases the victimization of mentally ill people, as it augments the suffering of those already afflict-

ed by stigma.

4. CHALLENGING STIGMAS

Finally and sometimes fatally, the myth persists that speaking about mental illness increases stigma.

Erving Goffman gives a compelling description of how stigma stereotypes a person as abnormal, deformed and dangerous. Stigma, hence, is a form of violence. It originates from ignorance or misunderstanding and harms those suffering from mental illness by depriving them of their humanity.

Stigma creates for people with mental illness conditions for social exclusion, employment discrimination, victimhood to violent crime and increased suffering, which can lead to self-stigma, poor self-care and greater depression and suicide.

For example, Trump recently accused Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff of being a “a maniac ... a deranged human being” and “a very sick man,” but he is not the only politician to do so. Invoking mental health as an insult further stigmatizes those already suffering in harmful ways.

Speaking about mental illness helps educate and dispel myths. Demythifying mental illness and distinguishing it from the person and a person’s abilities is critical to diminishing stigma and improving the lives of those already burdened with mental illness.

WHY PEOPLE WORK

Work is more than a means for material support. It is also a major way individuals stay mentally healthy and socially integrated.

Especially for those dealing with a serious mental illness, employment is important for daily structure and routine, a sense of self, meaningful goals and opportunities for friend-

ships and social support.

The workplace is therefore an important setting for speaking about mental health and illness. Breaking the silence can be beneficial for removing barriers to seeking treatment, staying well and staying employed.

Employers already bear much of the burden of mental illness. As 85% of employees’ mental health conditions go undiagnosed or untreated as of 2017, employers subsume more than US\$100 billion in lost revenue and 217 million lost workdays each year. Prejudicial attitudes also exclude needed talent in the workforce.

Fear of discrimination leads many not to seek care, despite the availability of successful treatments.

Exclusion from the workforce can result in material deprivation, loss of self-confidence and self-identity, and isolation and marginalization that are key risk factors in mental health. High lifetime unemployment even lowers life expectancy, presumably as a combined result of stress, depression, reduced health care and loss of social networks.

Workplace interventions to interrupt the secrecy and stigma surrounding mental illness can be effective. Some programs might involve psychoeducation, increasing mental health literacy, workshops, online courses that target prejudicial attitudes and behavior, and crisis intervention training.

Awareness of inequalities with respect to race, gender, age, sexuality, class and other related factors, as well as the benefits of diversity, have grown recently, but society has a long way to go with mental illness.

[the writer is Assistant Clinical Professor, Yale School of Medicine, Yale University]

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AASU has filed petition challenging amended Citizenship

GUWAHATI, DEC 13 (PTI): All Assam Students Union(AASU) has on Friday filed a petition in Supreme Court challenging the amended Citizenship Act, its chief adviser Samujjal Bhattacharya said.

Bhattacharya, who was addressing a meeting here amidst the indefinite curfew, hit out at the BJP top leadership for “betraying” the people of Assam.

He also criticised President Ram Nath Kovind for his assent to the Citizenship Amendment Bill on Thursday night within days of the passage of the controversial legislation in Parliament.

“This is very unfortunate,” Bhattacharya said.

“I am happy to tell



you that Supreme Court today registered our case. Now our legal battle will start.

Simultaneously, our peaceful democratic protest will continue till the Act is repealed,” he said.

He said the people

of Assam does not trust Prime Minister Narendra Modi anymore as he had betrayed them by welcoming illegal Bangladeshis.

“Modi had promised to deport all illegal immigrants after May 16, 2014. He did not send

back a single illegal Bangladeshi, instead he is now welcoming them,” Bhattacharya, who also the adviser to North East Students Organistaion, said.

The Assam Accord is a “national commitment” and it was discussed

in Parliament before getting constitutional validity. “How can you (BJP) dismiss it by bringing in CAB? After the Accord was signed, BJP leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L K Advani had welcome it,” he said.

Amit Shah’s visit to Meghalaya, Arunachal cancelled

NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI): Union Home Minister Amit Shah has cancelled his visit to two Northeastern states -- Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh -- scheduled on Sunday and Monday, officials said on Friday.

The cancellation comes amidst widespread protests in Assam and Meghalaya against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

The home minister’s visit to the Northeast has been cancelled, a ministry official said, without citing any reason.

Shah was supposed to take part in the passing out parade at the North Eastern Police

Academy near Shillong on Sunday and a festival in Tawang the next day.

At least two people were killed in police firing in Assam following widespread protests against the contentious act which was approved by the Parliament on Wednesday and given the presidential assent Thursday night.

Curfew has been imposed at several places in Assam, while Army has carried out flag marches in many districts to control protests and violence.

Protesters torched several vehicles and shops in Shillong in last two days.

Assam is considered to be the gateway for all Northeastern states.



According to the Act, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and

Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 due to religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants and given Indian citizenship.

The act says the refugees of the six communities will be given Indian citizenship after residing in India for five years, instead of 11 years earlier.

Awaiting Bengal CM’s response to my call for talks: Guv

KOLKATA, DEC 13 (PTI): A week after announcing that he was ready to sit for talks with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to resolve differences, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday said he was yet to receive any response from her on the matter.

Taking to Twitter, Dhankhar insisted that dialogue was the only way forward in a democracy

“@MamataOfficial.@derekobrienmp. Awaiting still response

of Hon’ble Chief Minister for dialogue (sic),” Dhankhar tweeted.

He stressed that it was necessary to “adhere to constitutional obligations”.

“In a democracy, dialogue is the only way to resolve issues, reach acceptable decisions. We need to adhere to constitutional obligations as disregard either side cannot be countenanced.”

The governor had told reporters on December 6 that he was ready to discuss “all matters”



with Banerjee at any place of her choice, be it the state secretariat or the Raj Bhavan.

“It is not that I am

saying this for the first time. I had written to her in this regard. On Tuesday, I also spoke to her over phone,” he had said.

Dhankhar has been engaged in a face-off with Banerjee and her administration over a host of issues, since assuming charge as the governor of the state.

The already-frosty relationship between the TMC-led dispensation and the governor hit a new low recently, when Speaker Biman Banerjee adjourned the House for two days last week as bills slated to be placed in the Assembly were not cleared by Dhankhar.

Curfew imposed in parts of Shillong relaxed for 12 hrs, officials say situation peaceful

SHILLONG, DEC 13 (PTI): The curfew imposed in parts of Shillong following violent protests was relaxed on Friday for 12 hours, beginning 10 am, with no untoward incident being reported from the areas, officials said.

The curfew was imposed on Thursday night in areas under Sadar and Lumdingjri police station limits, which comprise at least 20 neighbourhoods of North Shillong and Mawprem.

“The curfew has

been relaxed from 10 am to 10 pm in the areas under Sadar and Lumdingjri police station limits,” East Khasi Hills district deputy commissioner M W Nongbri told PTI.

She said no untoward incident was reported during the curfew hours, which began at 9 pm on Thursday.

Mobile internet and messaging services, however, remained suspended.

The services were withdrawn at 5 pm on Thursday for 48 hours,



following massive protests over the amended Citizenship Act.

On Thursday, several vehicles and buildings were vandalised in the Meghalaya capital amid protests

against the new law.

According to the Act, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and

Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 and facing religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

India-Japan summit in Guwahati postponed: MEA

NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI): India announced on Friday that the annual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe, which was scheduled to be held in Guwahati, has been postponed.

Abe was scheduled to arrive in Guwahati on Sunday on a three-day India visit to hold sum-

mit talks with Modi.

“With reference to the proposed visit of Japanese PM @AbeShinzo to India, both sides have decided to defer the visit to a mutually convenient date in the near future,” Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs Raveesh Kumar tweeted.

Guwahati is witnessing massive protest over the new Citizenship law.



kar said.

The arrested accused did not have any valid documents for their stay in the country, he said.

A case under rele-

vant sections of the Indian Passport Act and Foreigners Act has been registered against the accused with the Arnala police station, he added.

HC shocked JNU knows nothing about agitating students



NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI): The Delhi High Court Friday described as “shocking” that the Jawaharlal Nehru University had no idea about the academic details of the students against whom it has filed a contempt petition for protesting within 100 metres of its administrative block.

Justice A K Chawla directed the university to file an affidavit giving details of the students named in the contempt petition, including their courses, its status and duration of stay in the campus.

The court listed the matter for hearing on next Friday.

“It is shocking you file a contempt and you don’t know anything about the students, one of whom was convicted for contempt last year also.

“You only know the room numbers (of the students),” the court said, after the Registrar of JNU and other officials, present in the hearing, were unable to give details about one of the nine students -- Geeta Kumari -- who according to the varsity was last year held guilty of contempt by the high court for protesting near the administrative block.

“How long she has been studying there? Shouldn’t the Registrar know? Is that not a basic thing? Do you know which course she or others are studying? No? Why not,” the court said. It asked about the

student’s details after central government standing counsel Monika Arora, appearing for JNU, said that Kumari was last year held guilty of contempt by the high court for being part of a agitating group that blocked access to the admin block.

Arora told the court that in August 2017, the high court had directed that students will not hold protests within 100 meters of the administrative block and will not block access to it.

The high court had also directed the police to intervene and provide assistance if and when protesting students block access to the block, she said and added that since October 28 this year, despite repeated requests by JNU, the police did not come to its aid.

Hence, both the agitating students and police have violated the high court’s August 9, 2017 order, she said.

“So one statutory authority not recognising request of another statutory authority and court’s intervention is required,” it observed.

JNU’s contentions were opposed by Delhi government standing counsel Ramesh Singh, who appeared for the police, saying the petition was an attempt to “browbeat” the agency.

“This is browbeating. Complete browbeating.

Man arrested in Bengal’s Purba Bardhaman for celebratory firing

PURBA BARDHAMAN, DEC 13 (PTI): A man was arrested in West Bengal’s Purba Bardhaman district for firing three rounds in the air during the wedding of his granddaughter, police said on Friday.

Police said they arrested Ramani Mondal after the incident happened on Thursday night in the district’s Katwa area.

They said Mondal fired in the air when the groom arrived at the venue, a lodge at the Telephone Maidan neighbourhood.

He was arrested after a video of the incident went viral on the

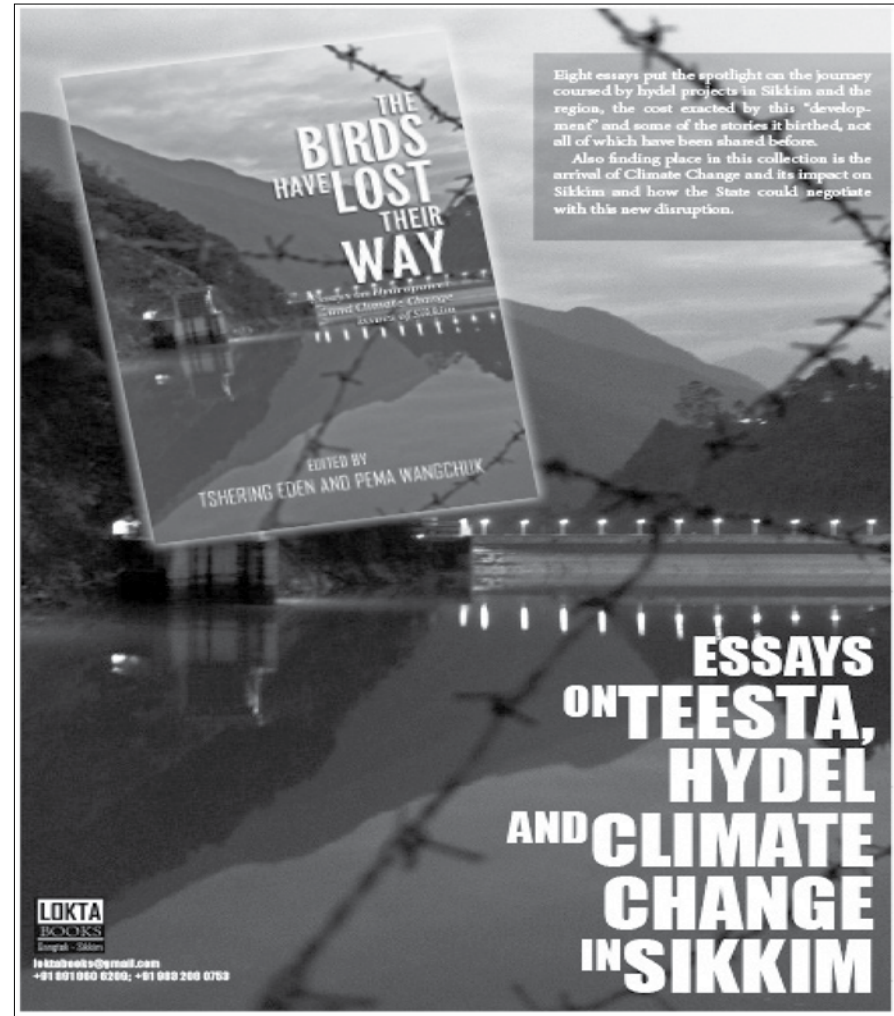
social media, police said.

Additional Superintendent of Police Dhruba Das said the weapon has been seized.

The weapon belonged to a relative of Mondal, who said that it has been a ritual of his family to fire in the air during weddings.

She said the students were cleared from within 100 meters of the block on December 11 only after the high court directed so on December 10 in another matter.

In the other matter, JNU had told the high court that it was unable to file an affidavit as protesting students have blocked access to the admin block. Subsequently, the high court had directed police to provide security to the JNU officials, including its Registrar and Vice Chancellor, to enter the admin block and to cordon off a 100 meter radius area from the building, so no protests are held there.



DMK protests against CAB, Udhayanidhi Stalin detained

Chennai, Dec 13 (PTI): DMK youth wing leader Udhayanidhi Stalin and scores of party workers were detained on Friday when they tried to stage a road blockade here while holding a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, police said.

Udhayanidhi, son of DMK president MK Stalin, led the protest at Saidapet.

Many activists were seen tearing copies of the Bill, which proposes citizenship to persecuted religious minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

The agitation affected vehicular movement in the area.

Later, speaking to reporters, Udhayanidhi, the DMK's youth wing secretary, said the CAB was "against minorities and Sri Lankan Tamils."

He warned that the protests will continue till the Bill was withdrawn.

According to the CAB, 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.

Both Houses of Parliament had passed the bill.

US calls on China not to interfere in Taiwan election

WASHINGTON, DEC 13 (AFP): The United States on Thursday urged China not to interfere in elections next month in Taiwan, where President Tsai Ing-wen, a critic of Beijing, is seeking a new term.

David Stilwell, the top US diplomat for Asia, said that tensions have historically risen whenever Taiwan goes to the polls.

"They should not," he said of the tensions.

"The concern always exists for somehow meddling -- interfering -- in internal affairs there."

Stilwell said that the United States, through its policy of providing arms to the self-ruling island while recognizing only Beijing, sought for differences between the two sides to be "resolved through dialogue and without violence or coercion or threats."

"So that's our expectation for this upcoming event as well," he said at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Tsai, who has emphasized Taiwan's separate identity and voiced solidarity with Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, on January 11 faced a challenger who favours warmer ties with Beijing. Beijing sees Taiwan -- where China's defeated nationalists fled in 1949 -- as part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary.

The top US diplomat in Taiwan, Brent Christensen, last month also voiced "concerns" that China would try to influence the vote.

Beijing said that its first domestically built aircraft carrier recently sailed through the Taiwan Strait, although it described the move as routine.

Messi doesn't need to win World Cup to be called great player: Crespo

KOLKATA, DEC 13 (PTI): Lionel Messi is in the same league as Pele or Diego Maradona and he doesn't need to win a World Cup to prove his greatness, feels iconic former Argentine striker Hernan Crespo.

Here in the city as the ambassador of TSK 25K run, the prolific Argentine said: "Messi doesn't need that (to win a World Cup to be great player). In the whole history, I can think of five players -- Pele, (Alfredo) di Stefano, (Johan) Cruyff, (Diego) Maradona and then there is Messi."

He however hoped that Messi gets to finally lift the World Cup in Qatar 2022 even though it will be incredibly tough.

"I hope (Messi wins the World Cup in 2022). It will be very hard. This is really our dream, I hope he tries again. The first one is Copa America which we are hosting and Colombia and we have a good chance to lift the Copa America."

For 44-year-old Crespo, Messi alongside Maradona belong to a "different planet" but when



it comes to goal poaching abilities, the best Argentina had is undoubtedly Gabriel Batistuta.

"Mario Kempes (1978 Golden Boot winner) was also special for us, then Batistuta. Lot of great strikers. Diego is from another planet. There will be Messi with Diego. Batistuta is the best striker ever in Argentina. Messi somewhere near."

Crespo scored nearly 250 goals in his senior

career (club and international) spanning over 19 years. At the international level, Crespo scored 35 goals and is fourth-highest in the list behind Sergio Agero, Batistuta and Lionel Messi.

For someone, who had his best days in Italy, Crespo never harboured ambitions of winning a Ballon d'Or - an award he considers as a "personal trophy".

"I grew up without thinking about Ballon

as the best among the leagues.

"In my heart, it's Serie A but at the same time now, EPL is the best. When I was in Italy, the name of the Serie A derived from "seven sisters" because the seven teams (AC Milan, Inter Milan, Fiorentina, Lazio, Juventus, Parma, Roma) were believed to be title contenders. Not anymore.

"The same with EPL now. Tottenham, Manchester, Arsenal and Chelsea (were giants). But now it's so competitive," the former Inter Milan forward said.

Talking about his own career, he spoke about how it was a dream to play against the legendary former Italian skipper Franco Baresi, who would turn up for AC Milan.

"For me, when I came to Italy, I was young and I played against Baresi. It was more than a dream to play in Italy and this achievement was very tough," said Crespo, who has played for Milan, Inter, Parma and Lazio in the Serie A.

I was mentally and physically ruined: Maxwell



NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI): Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell said being constantly on the road for the past "four to five years" had mentally and physically ruined him, forcing him to take a mental health break in October.

Maxwell had opted out of Australia's T20I series against Sri Lanka after playing the first two matches to address his mental health.

"I was pretty cooked when I decided to take the time off. Big reason why I did take that time away is I was pretty mentally and physically ruined," Maxwell was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"I think it was eight months on the road, living out of a suitcase and that probably had been going on for four or five years, just constantly on the road and it all just caught up with me at that time.

"I really want to thank Cricket Australia, Cricket Victoria and the Stars for giving me that space and allowing me to have that time away from the game and get myself right."

Maxwell said it was his girlfriend, who first noticed the change in him.

"It was actually my partner who suggested I speak to someone, she was the first one who noticed it, so I should probably thank her as well. Once I had that initial conversation it was a big weight off my shoulders," he said.

"My girlfriend was probably No. 1, it wasn't an easy job for her to deal with me going through my mood swings for the first few weeks, but Michael Lloyd was the guy I had the initial conversation with, he's been someone who I've confided in since back in the academy days, so I've known him for well over a decade now."

On a comeback trail now, the 31-year-old will make his domestic cricket return, captaining Melbourne

Stars in their opening Big Bash match later this month.

"It probably took a bit longer than I thought it was going to take, it was an interesting six weeks, away from the game and there was probably times I thought I was going to come back earlier," Maxwell said.

"I've been getting back in the swing of things for a while, I've been around the Vics change rooms for the last two or three weeks now, so I've sort of been floating around and watching a few of the one dayers and just trying to get back into the change room atmosphere again.

"Once I got back into club cricket, the cycle started to feel a bit more normal again and I feel like I'm back at home. Coming back here with the Stars feels like home again, a new coach, a bit of familiarity as an ex-player, but it's a great change room to be a part of, it's very welcoming."

Maxwell said he will try to manage his playing commitments better and also be more careful of his self-expectations in the remainder of his career.

"I did put a bit of pressure on myself to try and play as much as I could this year and, rightly or wrongly, I didn't come out of it the way I thought I was going to. I'll have a look at that next year," Maxwell said.

"A holiday was actually spending time at home. I spent as much time at home as I could with friends and family. I tried to stay fit, and I still watched a fair bit of cricket over that time, but pretty exciting to get going now.

"I look at it a little bit differently, a little bit more respect for taking care of myself in all aspects of the game and not losing sight of taking care of myself in those times where you're in a hotel room pretty constantly and being able to have that time to myself and refresh," he added.

Late fightback keeps Tiger Woods' US in hunt at Presidents Cup

MELBOURNE, DEC 13 (AFP): Tiger Woods' US team staged a stirring late comeback to stay in the hunt at the Presidents Cup on Friday after the tournament appeared to be slipping away.

The US went into the alternate shot or four-somes format on day two trailing 4-1, after Ernie Els' Internationals enjoyed their best start to the biennial matchplay event since 2005.

They ended it 6.5-3.5 behind after clawing their way back against from Els' young unit, who had looked to be closing on the Internationals' first victory since 1998.

At one point the Internationals were ahead in all five matches, but Justin Thomas and Patrick Cantlay both drilled huge putts on the 18th to clinch narrow victories for a US team that desperately needed points, with playing-captain Woods leading wild celebrations.

Els, who has been meticulous in his planning, played in the Internationals' lone triumph 21 years ago and showed his team video highlights to instill how much it means to win.

They again responded admirably, winning



two, losing two and halving one on a pulsating day.

With 30 points at stake over the week, they need another nine from Saturday's eight matches and the 12 singles on Sunday for a famous victory.

The omens looked good for the Internationals in a heavyweight opening clash that pitted the former world number one Dustin Johnson and Matt Kuchar against the experienced Louis Oosthuizen and Adam Scott.

They started well, clinching the opening hole with Johnson driving off the tee then draining a birdie putt.

Oosthuizen then missed a simple putt to hand the US a two-up

lead by the fifth, before the International pair began clicking to win the sixth and eighth.

They turned the screws as the crowd roared them on to win at the 11th, 13th and 14th and whip the dejected Americans 3 and 2.

- REED DIGS IN -
Behind them Canada's Adam Hadwin gave his team a lead on the first hole after a beautiful approach shot from young Chilean Joaquin Niemann against Xander Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay.

In a see-sawing tie, the advantage kept changing hands before Cantlay stepped up to sink a massive pressure putt on the last to get the US team on the score-

board.

Inspired, Woods and Justin Thomas, the only US pair to win on Thursday, matched the exploits.

Woods missed a birdie putt on the first but found his range and he and Thomas raced two-up through five against Hideki Matsuyama and An Byeong-hun, before the Internationals incredibly won three in a row to be one-up by the eighth.

In a close match, it went to the wire where Thomas held his nerve to drain a long and difficult putt to secure the match, with Woods fist-pumping and hugging his teammate.

Patrick Reed was

met with boos again on his opening hole after his penalty for improving his lie in the Bahamas last week.

He appeared unfazed, making a birdie on the first with partner Webb Simpson before Australia's Marc Leishman and impressive Mexican Abraham Ancer hit straight back on the second.

The Internationals then took control, hitting the lead at the fifth and never relinquishing it to win 3 and 2, with Reed finally responding to barracking from fans, cupping a hand to his ear and making a digging motion with his putter at the 11th.

Australian debutant Cameron Smith was rested on Thursday after calling Reed a cheat over the incident in the Bahamas, and he was greeted with cheers by the partisan crowd.

He sunk a monster birdie putt to put himself and partner Im Sung-jae one-up at the first against Gary Woodland and Rickie Fowler.

They also claimed the second hole and hung on until the 17th when the Americans levelled to claim a valuable half-point.

Neymar rounding into form as Marseille give chase

PARIS, DEC 13 (AFP): Neymar's steady return to form after an injury-plagued 2019 coincides with Paris Saint-Germain push to finish the year clear of old rivals Marseille, who are enjoying their best Ligue 1 run since 2014.

The Brazilian orchestrated a late comeback at Montpellier last weekend and then marked his first Champions League start in exactly 12 months with a goal and two assists in Wednesday's 5-0 demolition of Galatasaray.

Already assured of top spot in their group, PSG coach Thomas Tuchel opted to start

Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, along with Mauro Icardi, to give the planet's two most expensive players another chance to find their groove.

"We have to rest to get back on track in Ligue 1 but we can think about the Champions League, which is our ultimate goal," Neymar told RMC Sport after the game.

The 27-year-old has yet to fully placate the Parc des Princes faithful after a summer of uncertainty surrounding his future in the French capital.

A smattering of jeers greeted Neymar in PSG's last home league game against Nantes, but fur-

ther displays such as that in midweek should help erase any residual bitterness.

"I know I wasn't there last year in February. We're going to have to think of the supporters," Neymar said.

"What makes me happy is being able to play. As long as I have a ball, a nice pitch and teammates, I have everything I need."

PSG, who have a game in hand, travel to Saint-Etienne in Sunday's late kick-off, by which time Marseille could have slashed the gap at the top to just two points.

Andre Villas-Boas



has overseen a run of six straight wins at Marseille, a sequence that began following a 4-0 loss to PSG in late October.

OM will hope to recall leading scorer Dario Benedetto for Saturday's trip to Metz after the Argentine missed the 3-1 win over Bordeaux with a thigh complaint.

PLAYER TO WATCH: MARCELO

While Memphis Depay's late equaliser against RB Leipzig sent Lyon through to the Champions League last 16, celebrations were cut short by angry post-match clashes between fans and players.

Lyon captain Depay confronted a fan who brandished a flag depicting a donkey with a message telling Marcelo to

leave the club.

The 32-year-old Brazilian defender has had a strained relationship with Lyon 'ultras' since an altercation at Lisbon airport following the defeat by Benfica in October.

"Marcelo has a very strong character. He is very calm," the player's agent, Leonardo Scheinkman, told L'Equipe newspaper, contradicting reports he was looking to leave.

"I spoke to him and he is relaxed. It's up to the club to talk with the supporters, not him. He feels good at Lyon.

"It's difficult to part with a player like that.

He's expensive and it's tricky to replace him with a defender under 30 million euros."

KEY STATS
3 to 5 - the number of months Nice full-back Youcef Atal, an Africa Cup of Nations winner with Algeria, is expected to miss after damaging the meniscus in his right knee.
7 - the number of consecutive losses for Toulouse, who are bottom of the table behind Nimes on goal difference.
100 - the number of goals scored at club level by Mbappe. He has netted 73 times for PSG since leaving Monaco in 2017.

Traditional Thai massage get UNESCO heritage status

At Bangkok's Reclining Buddha temple, Krairath Chantarasri says he is a proud custodian of an ancient skill -- the body-folding, sharp-elbowed techniques of Thai massage, which was added Thursday to UNESCO's prestigious heritage list.

Originating in India and practiced in Thailand for centuries, the massage was popularized when a specialty school opened in the 1960s to train massage therapists from around the world.

Nuad Thai's addition to UNESCO's list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" practices "is historic," said the Thai delegate at the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization meeting in Bogota, Colombia.

"It helps promote the practice of Nuad Thai locally and internationally," he said.

From upscale Bangkok spas and Phuket beach fronts to modest street-side shophouses, "nuad Thai" is ubiquitous across the kingdom, where an hour of the back-straightening discipline can cost as little as \$5.

Krairath, who teaches at the Reclining Buddha School inside the famed Wat Pho temple, helps thousands of Thai and foreign students who flock to the centre each year.

The son of a masseuse, he takes great pride in his role sharing the ancient discipline at a temple whose certification is a proud banner for any massage shop.

"I'm a continuation of our collective knowledge," the 40-year-old told AFP.

At Wat Pho's complex, trainees run through a catalogue of moves targeting the body's acupressure points with thumbs, elbows, knees and feet while also incorporating deep stretches and contortions.

Doctors and monks were said to have

brought these methods 2,500 years ago to Thailand, passing its secrets from master to disciple in temples and later within families.

Under Thailand's King Rama III in the nineteenth century, scholars engraved their knowledge of the field onto the stones of Wat Pho.

The nuad Thai school, which has trained more than 200,000 massage therapists who practice in 145 countries, first opened in 1962.

- Turning the tables -

Massage employs tens of thousands of Thais.

The school's director Preeda Tangtrongchitr says they usually see an uptick in interest from Thais when the economy is bad.

"For many people who are disabled or in debt, this job is an opportunity because it requires no material -- only their hands and knowledge," he said.

Today, a therapist at a top-end spa can charge around \$100 an hour in Thailand, and two or three times more in London, New York or Hong Kong where the Thai massage brand is booming.

But the training is "demanding," says Chilean Sari, a professional masseuse who travelled to Bangkok to learn the discipline.

"The technique is very precise; there are so many things to be aware of," the 34-year-old told AFP, as she made rotations with her palm on a fellow student's skull.

The teachings focus on directing blood circulation around problem areas to solve muscle aches -- sometimes drawing wincing from clients unaccustomed to the force applied.

Studies have shown it can help relieve back pain, headaches, insomnia and even anxiety.

For Matthieu Rochefolle, a nurse from Lyon, France, adding Thai massage techniques to his repertoire of skills could help his elderly patients aching for relief.

"It could also allow me to earn a little more," he said.

NZ troops complete daring volcano mission to retrieve bodies

Elite soldiers retrieved six bodies from New Zealand's volatile White Island volcano on Friday, winning praise for a "courageous" mission carried out under the threat of another eruption.

At first light, two military helicopters set off from Whakatane airport for the offshore volcano, where an eruption Monday killed at least 16 people and severely injured dozens more.

The goal of the team from the bomb disposal squad was to recover the remains of eight people still on New Zealand's most active volcano, which sits semi-submerged 50 kilometres (30 miles) out to sea.

After a tense four-hour wait, while vulcanologists monitored live seismic feeds for signs of another explosion, police said the majority of the bodies had been safely airlifted to a naval frigate anchored off the coast.

"Those staff showed absolute courage in order to ensure those six people were returned to their loved ones," police commissioner Mike Bush told reporters, saying they were operating in an "unpredictable and

challenging" environment.

Bush said efforts to locate the two remaining bodies were ongoing, with divers searching nearby waters after a corpse was seen floating in choppy seas on Tuesday.

Helicopters were also searching over the Bay of Plenty and Bush did not rule out a return to the island when conditions were safer.

Drone flights helped locate the six bodies on the caldera before the operation began and the six-strong team laboured to reach them in heavy hazmat suits and breathing gear that restricted movement.

Special forces commander Rian McKinnis said he was "incredibly proud" of the team, who had to deal with heat stress as they prepared the bodies to be airlifted out.

"It was a unique operation, but unique operations are what organisations like the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron gets involved in," he said.

- 'Absolute desperation' - On the eve of the



operation, GeoNet vulcanologist Nico Fournier said the dangers facing recovery teams if an eruption occurred included magma, superheated steam, ash and cannonball-like rocks thrown from the caldera at supersonic speed.

As the military began their grim task, police took grieving families out near the volcano on a boat to perform a Maori blessing and locals chanted karakia, or prayers, on the shore as the island smouldered in the distance.

Despite the risk of an eruption inside 24 hours being put at 50-60 per cent, Prime Minister Ja-

cinda Ardern said those involved wanted to help grieving families.

"Today was all about reuniting them with their loved ones," she said, revealing she was on tenterhook for the four hours the military team was on the volcano.

"I felt the same anxiety that I imagine everyone did at that point," she told reporters.

Many tourists who died on the island were Australians and Canberra's Foreign Minister Marise Payne said they had been affected by a catastrophic event.

"This is a time of absolute desperation and

distress, and to every single one of those families and their friends and their loved ones, our hearts go out at this extraordinarily difficult time," she said.

The bodies on the island are thought to include New Zealand tour guide Hayden Marshall-Inman.

His brother Mark Inman had epitomised relatives' frustrations with stalled recovery efforts, criticising "red tape, bureaucracy" but on Friday he praised the daring recovery attempt.

"It's going to allow us to grieve and send our loved ones off in

the manner they deserve," he told the New Zealand Herald.

The recovery had been on hold for days as poisonous gases continued billowing from the volcanic vent and the island remained blanketed in a thick layer of acidic ash.

While troops were recovering the bodies, another 28 people -- mostly tourists who had been on a day trip to see the natural wonder -- were still being treated in hospitals across New Zealand and Australia, many in a critical condition suffering severe burns.

The survivors' injuries are so severe New Zealand doctors initially estimated they would need to import 1.2 million square centimetres (185,000 square inches) of skin for grafts.

A total of 47 people were on the island during the eruption, hailing from Australia, the United States, Britain, China, Germany, Malaysia and New Zealand.

A coronial process has begun to identify those confirmed dead but police have said it could "take some time".

Pound jumps as exit poll shows Conservative majority in British vote

NEW YORK, DEC 13 (AFP): The pound sterling leapt higher on Thursday after exit polls showed Prime Minister Boris Johnson's ruling Conservative Party on track to win a wide parliamentary majority, a result seen as hastening Brexit.

Meanwhile, global stock markets rallied with Wall Street in record territory following reports Washington and Beijing had at long last sealed a partial trade deal and agreed to de-escalate their tariff battles.

The British exit poll suggested the Conservatives would win 368 seats in the 650-seat parliament, with the main opposition Labour party trailing on 191.

Shortly after 2200

GMT, a pound rose about two per cent against the dollar USD 1.3416 and was up 1.6 per cent against the euro at 83.25 pence.

"It gives Johnson the mandate to push over the Brexit," said Shaun Osborne, chief currency strategist at Scotiabank.

"For the UK it provides some clarity for the economy."

Meanwhile in New York, stocks forged into record territory after media reports indicated President Donald Trump would call off steep tariffs planned for Sunday and slash duties already in place on Chinese goods.

The S&P 500 and Nasdaq both set new records.

"Getting VERY close to a BIG DEAL with Chi-



na. They want it, and so do we!" Trump tweeted early in the day, giving stocks a lift.

But Karl Haeling of LBBW told AFP the devil was in the details as negotiation breakthroughs had appeared to fall apart before.

"We've been down this road before," he

said.

The ECB, meanwhile, gave markets little to trade on as Christine Lagarde chaired her first monetary policy council meeting and held her news conference in her new post.

The bank left interest rates unchanged and a maintained its mas-

sive bond-buying program, as expected.

ECB economists also came up with figures suggesting both an uptick in inflation and "signs of stabilisation in the growth slowdown," which provided the euro with some tailwind.

Lagarde said she would develop her own

style and claimed to be neither dovish nor hawkish but aimed to be a "wise owl." Still, Lagarde "came off as slightly hawkish," OANDA analyst Edward Moya said.

"Lagarde seems poised to help take the eurozone out of negative rates."

Asian equity markets mostly closed higher after the Federal Reserve on Wednesday indicated it was unlikely to change US interest rates throughout next year.

The US central bank, which cut the key borrowing rate three times this year, said after a two-day meeting it would hold them for now and set its sights on low inflation and the global economy.

US-Taliban talks to take 'brief pause' after airbase attack

WASHINGTON, DEC 13 (AFP): The United States has announced a pause in talks with the Taliban after an attack near a US airbase in Afghanistan.

"When I met the Taliban today, I expressed outrage about yesterday's attack on Bagram, which recklessly killed two and wounded dozens of civilians," US special representative for Afghanistan peace talks Zalmay Khalilzad said on Twitter on Thursday.

"#Taliban must show they are willing & able to respond to Afghan desire for peace," he tweeted.

Wednesday's early morning assault, for which the Taliban have claimed responsibility, began when a suicide bomber detonated his explosive-packed vehicle outside a hospital building near Bagram military base in Parwan province, north of the capital Ka-



bul, according to local officials.

It came despite the resumption of talks between the US and the insurgent group just days before in Qatar, as the parties look for a path to reduce violence or even reach a cease-fire, allowing a gradual withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

Negotiations began earlier this year, though

US President Donald Trump unexpectedly suspended talks in September just as the parties were about to reach an agreement, citing a fatal attack in Kabul, in which an American soldier was killed.

He announced last month they would start up again, insisting on the need for a cease-fire.

Trump made a surprise visit to Bagram on

November 28 to celebrate Thanksgiving with his troops and meet with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

According to September's draft agreement, the Taliban would be required to commit to certain security measures, agree to talks with the Afghan government and promise a reduction of violence in exchange for US troop withdrawal.

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Kristen Stewart Just Wore a Chanel Necklace Instead of a Shirt...And It Actually Worked

There are few fashion designs that are more iconic than a Chanel skirt-suit. That is, until Kristen Stewart added a rather unexpected spin on the sartorial staple.

The 29-year-old Charlie's Angels star hit the red-carpet premiere of her new movie, *Seberg*, in Los Angeles earlier this week in a risqué take on classic Chanel. At first glance, it appeared Stewart was wearing a rather demure bubblegum pink set that included a round-neck jacket with silver bouclé trim and a matching thigh-length pleated skirt. Pretty standard right? It would be, if she hadn't swapped out a shirt for an ornate necklace.

Yes, K-Stew forwent a top and instead wore a tiered waist-length necklace from Chanel, bearing some under-boob and abs in the process. She toned the look down with opaque black tights and black pointed toe Chanel Mary Janes, and completed the ensemble with several Chanel bracelets.

Stewart brightened up her go-to smoky eye, instead opting for silver hues, fresh matte skin, pale natural lips and a bold brow. She wore her grown-out pixie cut in a tousled parted 'do and called it a day.

Although we might have thrown in a shirt for good measure, this has to be one of our favorite Stewart x Chanel outfits of all time. The *Twilight* alum has had a long-running relationship with the fashion house and almost always dons their designs when walking the red carpet.

Last year at Cannes she removed her heels and now this? Kristen Stewart is pushing all the red carpet boundaries (and we're totally cheering her on).



J.J. Abrams says The Rise of Skywalker will be a 'pendulum swing' from The Last Jedi

While Star Wars fans weren't exactly split on the *The Last Jedi* and *The Force Awakens* (both entries into the newest trilogy made tons of money, were enjoyed by critics and audiences alike, and led to continued working relationships between their helmers and LucasFilm), the movies were very different takes on the galaxy far, far away. As *The Rise of Skywalker* quickly approaches, the writer/director of that film and *The Force Awakens* has explained that the tone of the trilogy will soon come full circle.

J.J. Abrams, in conversation with the *New York Times*, commented once again on the sole movie in the new trilogy that he didn't direct: *The Last Jedi*. After praising writer/director Rian Johnson's entry into the canon — saying the film was "full of surprises and subversion and all sorts of bold choices" — Abrams got into why his film will be different.

"[*The Last Jedi*]'s a bit of a meta approach to the story," Abrams said of Johnson's decision to do away with presumed plot points like Rey's lineage and the first Jedi temple. "I don't think that people go to Star Wars to be told, 'This doesn't matter.'"

Sure, there's a certain fun to theorizing and speculating, but Abrams notes that the choices Johnson made were still a necessary factor for *The Rise of Skywalker*. It's all groundwork for the up-



coming film, and something that needed a breath of fresh air to finish strong. It's "a story that I think needed a pendulum swing in one direction in order to swing in the other," Abrams said of *The Last Jedi* and *The Rise of Skywalker*'s relationship. While the approaches may be different, that back-and-forth is something that Abrams deemed important for the finale to really land.

And after it lands? Abrams spoke to *Variety* about where he wants to go from here — and how he planted those seeds in the *Skywalker* saga's final film. "I'd love to direct a play," the writer/director admitted when asked about the kinds of projects he seeks after closing this chapter, "I would love to do something that is a much more intimate film." That smaller, scaled down format is appealing to Abrams and something he wanted even his *Star Wars* film to include.

"People talking in rooms is the greatest," Abrams said. "In fact, on *Rise*

of *Skywalker*, the thing that I love about this movie — despite being really proud of some sequences that I think are visually pretty interesting — are the moments of characters talking, usually two people in a space, you know, confronting each other, challenging each other, revealing [things] to each other." While there's no way that *The Rise of Skywalker* won't be a visual spectacle, fans can expect some serious talking between some people with serious beef.

To see the cast in non-beef mode, fans have a chance for another (perhaps one last) video of behind-the-scenes footage. By searching the term #TheRiseofSkywalker over on Amazon's search bar, fans can get another taste of *The Rise of Skywalker* scenes that lean heavily on the VFX work (sorry, J.J., but your trailers have no conversations!) and a reminder of all that the film brings to an end.

The Rise of Skywalker hits theaters on Dec. 20.

Jeff Probst: Dan Spilo was 'not happy' to be removed from 'Survivor' after off-camera 'incident'

"SURVIVOR" has been on the air for nearly two decades and 600 episodes now, but something happened during Wednesday's episode that's never happened before: a player was ejected from the game. The contestant in question was Dan Spilo, a Los Angeles talent manager who was removed by producers because of an "incident" that happened off-camera. After the episode aired on December 11, host Jeff Probst told *Entertainment Weekly* Dan was "not happy" to be pulled from the game.

"We talked through everything for quite a while, and by the time he got on the boat to leave he had calmed down and was actually very respectful as he departed," Probst explained. Filming for this 39th season occurred on Mamanuca Islands, Fiji in April 2019. The four-time Emmy-winning host wouldn't give any

details about the specific incident, "out of respect for privacy and confidentiality."

Dan's inappropriate behavior was first mentioned in the season premiere, when Kellee Kim called him out for making him uncomfortable. Weeks later, Kellee compared stories at the merge with Missy Byrd and Elizabeth Beisel, who told her they also felt Dan was being too touchy-feely with the women of the game, though they admittedly exaggerated their own stories. "Survivor" producers at the time gave Dan a warning.

Probst admitted this season of "Survivor" was a challenging one with respect to so many cultural and social issues that made it on-camera. "We all worked diligently throughout the entire process to make the right decisions and portray an accurate depiction of what took place," he divulged. "We have learned a lot and it will

inform our process moving forward."

Since Dan was in an alliance with some of the remaining castaways, that made his ejection "a very complicated situation for the players," Probst noted. "They're on day 35 of 39. They're very close to the end. They're also in a state of 'eyes on the prize.' And because they did not receive more information for privacy reasons, they seemed to accept the news and moved on with the game."

The final five players in the running to win the \$1 million prize are Dean Kowalski, Lauren Beck, Janet Carbin, Noura Salman and Tommy Sheehan. It's quite likely Dan would have made it to the final three and been given the chance to convince the jury to award him the \$1 million prize, as he had a guys' alliance with Dean and Tommy as well as a close bond with Lauren and Janet.



SO CHIC! The singer, Alicia Keys looks super stylish as she speaks onstage at the Billboard x Amex Impact Brunch in West Hollywood.

Hugh Grant Says Iconic 'Love Actually' Dancing Scene Was 'Absolute Hell' (EXCLUSIVE)

It may be more than 15 years since "Love Actually" was released, but Hugh Grant, Colin Firth, and Richard Curtis have finally opened up about one of the film's defining moments even as the movie made surprise election-related headlines in the U.K. this week.

Grant, Firth and Curtis all feature in the career retrospective "Hugh Grant: A Life on Screen," which is part of the BBC's Christmas programming schedule. In a clip shared exclusively with *Variety*, Grant describes his famous prime ministerial dance as "absolute hell," and insists that the sequence was unrehearsed. But director Curtis begs to differ, saying jokingly that Grant had practiced and that, because of the actor's "dirty behavior in discos across London," he was "quite good at dancing."

Co-star Firth said Grant "made a terrible fuss" about the scene, and Grant himself confesses that he dreaded the shoot. "I thought, 'That's going to be excruciating, and it has the power to be the most excruciating scene ever committed to celluloid,'" he said. Instead, the sight of Grant strutting his stuff through 10 Downing Street to the Pointer Sisters' "Jump (For My Love)" became one of the film's most beloved moments.

And life wound up taking a cue from art this week, with Grant — who recently played disgraced member of Parliament Jeremy Thorpe in the BBC and Amazon miniseries "A

Very English Scandal" — becoming embroiled in real-life politics.

Ahead of election day Thursday in Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's ruling Conservative Party put out a video parodying the scene in "Love Actually" in which Andrew Lincoln's character knocks at Keira Knightley's door and silently flashes a series of cards bearing a message for her. In the Conservative Party's version, Johnson flashes messages related to matters of politics rather than the heart, and specifically addresses Brexit, which Johnson promises to deliver.

Grant took umbrage, noting in a radio interview that the sign in the movie that said "And at Christmas you tell the truth" was absent from the election video. "I just wonder if the spin doctors thought that card wouldn't look too great in Boris Johnson's hands," he said. Johnson is routinely accused by critics of lying.

Grant, an ardent advocate of Britain remaining in the European Union, has urged Brits to vote tactically to stop pro-Brexit Johnson from gaining a majority in Parliament. Grant told the BBC that the country was facing "a national emergency" and "staring into the abyss."

"Hugh Grant: A Life on Screen" airs Dec. 23 in the U.K. and will be repeated on Dec. 26. The documentary is produced by Whizz Kid Entertainment and BAFTA Productions for BBC Two.

Aries:

When you continue to stay in a place that makes you miserable, it is a conscious choice. This feeling of being trapped in a situation with no way out is just an illusion, a trick of your mind. It's time to change things up, Aries. Use that fire to burn away all these walls of paper that seem to be posing as bricks. Once the smoke clears, you will be able to see the world around you with more clarity.

Taurus:

The only time you run out of chances is when you stop taking them. Maybe you are not a team player. Maybe the thought of working with another individual who does not function the same way as you makes you uncomfortable. Or maybe you think this situation is worse than what it actually is. Remember, you can't move mountains alone. Be cognizant of the help you are receiving from different mediums. If you want to succeed, let this become a team effort.

Gemini:

Put your noise cancellation earphones on. People around you may or may not be oper-

ating from a place of higher wisdom. There is no reason for you to stoop down to their level. Instead, shine your light as a leader and changemaker.

Cancer:

What differentiates ordinary people from those who strive for greatness? Faith in their own abilities, the confidence to make empowered decisions, and a knack of turning wounds into wisdom. Keep vibrating higher, Cancer. Trust that you are taking your career to new heights. Some of you may be standing at a crossroads

Leo:

Mistake or an opportunity to learn? Understand what your circumstances are teaching you, Leo. You can't do everything on your own, even if you want to. Let delegation become your power word. The Universe is providing you with the opportunity to hone your leadership skills. This week, you're also being asked to honour your energy levels. Trying to push against the natural rhythm of your body will cause more harm than good.

Virgo:

Money, success, power, and recognition — this is a grand week for you, Virgo. Your bank account couldn't be more thrilled. There's no refuting your entrepreneurship skills, given what you have manifested for yourself. But you draw your satisfaction from knowing that you are simultaneously tapping into your creative reserves. Continue to fulfill your sacred purpose, and you will be blessed in more ways than one.

Libra:

Here's to breakdowns that lead to breakthroughs. This is a big moment for you, Libra, all the hard work you have put in is now bearing fruit. You have found a new ground to build and expand upon. The secret to success is laying down your roots. On the creative front, you could land yourself a brand new collaboration. Not everything is about putting money in the bank though. Let this one be a source of creative satisfaction.

Scorpio:

Words to live by courtesy Winston Chur-

chill, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." Scorpio, find a cause that resonates with you deeply and see how you can give back. What the Universe wants you to know when you feel bogged down by the tasks at hand: you are not alone. Your tribe wants to stand by you and support you in this venture. Let this become a team effort.

Sagittarius:

You have just unlocked the next level! It may feel like things are happening at a rapid pace. Take a moment to stand still and observe anyway. This will help you plan your next step with precision. With your ambitious side taking over, you are likely to adopt a no holds barred policy with your expansion plans. Is there a country that's calling out to you? Take concrete action, Sag.

Capricorn:

"Individually, we are a drop. Together, we are an ocean." Let these pearls of wisdom by Ryunosuke Satoru awaken a sense of unity within you. You are all working towards

a common goal. See how you can support each other in this mission rather than fighting against one another. What awaits you on the other side: both abundance and growth.

Aquarius:

Dwelling on the past takes away from both the present and the future. Let go of the 'could have', 'would have' and 'should have'. Focus on the opportunities standing before you now. This is the secret to moving forward with dignity and grace. Some of you may be reconnecting with a friend or colleague from your past, one who reminds you of what you are truly capable of.

Pisces:

If we didn't trip and fall every now and then, we wouldn't learn to put our big girl pants on and graduate to the next level. Don't let the failures keep you from believing in your dreams. You have so many mountains to climb, Pisces. If that feeling of stagnation is bringing you down, let innovation become your power word. Finding new ways to do the same old things could be the key to initiating monumental change.