

City shivers at 4.2° C; air very poor

Thunderstorm likely on New Year's eve

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi braved another severe cold day on Friday with minimum temperature recorded 4.2 degree Celsius, lowest of the season, the Regional Weather Forecast Unit for (RWFU) Delhi stated on Friday.

Dr Rajender Jenamani, MeT Scientist, Palam Observatory, said that Delhi will witness cold day to severe cold day in next two days.

"Dense fog in isolated pockets very likely in night and morning hours," he added. Notably the mercury may dip further on the weekend, RWFU for Delhi said.

According to MeT, the maximum temperature will fluctuate between 14-15 degree Celsius and minimum temperature will oscillate between 4 and 5 degree Celsius. MeT has also predicted heavy rain and thunderstorm activities on the New Year eve.

Meanwhile, Delhi which has been witnessing the longest December cold spell since 1997, recorded a high of 13.4 degrees Celsius, which was



A woman wearing warm clothes walks on a road during a cold wintry morning in New Delhi on Friday PTI

seven notches below normal.

The air quality was recorded in the very poor category (373) at 4 pm, primarily due to low wind speed, high humidity and cold weather.

The Meteorological Department on Thursday said the Delhi-NCR region is expected to record its second-coldest December since 1901.

"The mean maximum temperature for December was less than 20 degrees Celsius only in 1919, 1929, 1961 and 1997," an IMD official said.

In December this year, the mean maximum temperature (MMT) till Thursday was 19.85 degrees Celsius. It is expected to dip to 19.15 degrees Celsius by December 31, he said.

"If it happens, it will be the second-coldest December since 1901. December 1997 recorded the lowest MMT of 17.3 degrees Celsius," the official said.

Since December 14, most parts of the city have witnessed 14 consecutive "cold days" or a 14-day "cold spell". December 1997 saw a 13-day cold spell.

After 1992, Delhi has had cold spells only in four years - 1997, 1998, 2003 and 2014.

"Severe cold day and cold day" conditions are predicted till December 29. A relief is expected next week due to a change in the wind direction.

According to the IMD, a cold day is when the maximum temperature is at least 4.5 notches below normal. A severe cold day is when the maximum temperature is at least 6.5 degrees Celsius below normal.

Operation Prahar: 12 kg drugs, 14,530 liquor bottles seized in 2 weeks in G'gram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

In its effort to make Gurugram drug-free, the district police has launched a sustained campaign against drug peddlers and criminals to curb the illegal consumption and supply of drugs across the district.

Under this programme, which has been christened 'Operation Prahar', the Gurugram police have confiscated more than 12 kilograms (kgs) of drugs and 14,530 bottles of illicit liquor between November 20 and December 4 across the district.

Director General of Police (DGP), Manoj Yadava, Haryana had recently kicked-off 'Operation Prahar' to fight organized crime and growing drug menace in the state.

The Police have arrested several persons across the district and have recovered more than Rs 3.70 lakh from their possession.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police (crime) Rajiv Deshwal said: "DGP, Haryana Manoj Yadava had instructed the Police Department to eliminate the organised criminals, drug ped-



dlers and other offenders from the state."

In the two-week operation, the police had nabbed 179 people who have been accused of drug peddling and 124 cases have been registered against them. The DGP Haryana also warned the organized gangs and those involved in peddling drugs either join the mainstream or else leave the state.

"A good job was done by all crime branch units and the intelligence wing in Gurugram during this special operation. Due to which, with the seizure of illegal liquor and drugs, the gamblers were also cracked," Deshwal said.

He further said that the department is making an effort to connect all backward and forward links to unearth the entire chain of supply and mode of trafficking, end-users and source of origin of drugs.

2 juveniles nabbed in over 8 cases of theft, snatching

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Friday nabbed two juveniles who were involved in more than eight cases of theft and snatching registered at various police stations of South Delhi. Police said that they have also recovered eight robbed mobile phones and a scooty from the duo.

According to Atul Kumar Thakur, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, on December 26, specific inputs were received that two delin-

quents would come near Bus Stop Peepal Chowk, MB Road to sell stolen and snatched mobile phones.

"Acting on the inputs a trap was laid and duo was apprehended by police team. On cursory check, police also recovered eight mobiles phones from the possession of the duo," said the DCP.

"Police have also solved nine cases of theft and snatching registered across the South district police stations. Further investigation of the case is under process," the DCP added.

Police reunite 4 kids with parents

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Police Control Room (PCR) unit of the Delhi Police had reunited four missing children with their parents in West Delhi area.

According to Sharat Kumar Sinha, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), PCR, on Thursday night the police team posted on Mobile Patrol Vehicle (MPV) received a call that four children age about three-four year old were sitting at a Gurudwara in Vikaspuri area.

"Acting on the call the police team rushed to the spot and enquired their names and whereabouts but they could not tell anything except their names. After which the police team started a search for their parents in nearby area, announced about the children through public address (PA) system and enquired from locals," said the DCP.

"In the meantime one of



the children was identified their father. The other children also immediately identified him. The children along with their father were handed over to local police of Vikaspuri police station for further legal procedure," the DCP added.

Form No. INC-25A Before the Regional Director, Ministry of Corporate Affairs Northern Region, Delhi
In the matter of the Companies Act, 2013, Section 14 of Companies Act, 2013 and rule 41 of the Companies (Incorporation) Fourth Amendment Rules, 2018

AND
In the matter of M/s Asian Townsville Farms Limited (CIN: U01111DL1986PLC02443) having its registered office at F-42/A, Saidulajab, Mehrauli New Delhi 110030 Applicant

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the general public that the company is intending to make an application to the Central Government under Section 14 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with aforesaid rules and is desirous of converting into a Private Limited Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on 26th day of December, 2019 to enable the company to give effect for such conversion.

Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the status of the company from Public to Private Limited Company may deliver or cause to be delivered or send by registered post his objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his interest and grounds of opposition to the concerned Regional Director, Northern Region, Delhi at B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003 within 14 (fourteen) days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company at its registered office at the address mentioned above:
For and on behalf of the Applicant

Asian Townsville Farms Limited
Sd/-
CHANDRA MOHAN BHANDAR
Managing Director
DIN: 00315427
C-15, JVTS Garden,
Chattarpur Extn.
New Delhi 110074
Date: 28.12.2019
Place: New Delhi

IIT-D beats last year record, files 150 patents

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi has filed 150 IPs (patents, designs) beating the last year 2018's record this year with a 20 per cent increase. Both national and international patents have been filed by Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT), an industry-interface organisation at IIT Delhi.

"IIT Delhi has filed 150 IPs in 2019 - a 20% increase over 2018 figures. Also, com-



pared to last year, we have seen a four-fold increase in revenue from our IP licensing activities. We hope to maintain the momentum and set benchmarks in the country. At the Institute, we have also initiated programmes to foster increased student and faculty participation in deep technology start-

ups that are backed by strong IP," said Professor and Director of IIT-D Ramgopal Rao while applauding the FITT team on this achievement.

Among the 150 IPS (patents and design) filed this year 2019- A novel wearable device to measure pulse pressure, bullet-proof clothing that enables transmission and reception of electronic signals, water based method to produce warfarin an anti-coagulant agent, Process to produce fuel from e-waste, redesigned elbow implant that reduces bone loss during implantation, produc-

tion of liquid hydrocarbons from plastic waste, method to improve shelf-life of raw milk, method to improve (up-link time synchronization and data rate) 5G wireless communication and a device to mitigate indoor air-pollution are some inventions to name a few.

"FITT's mission is to be an effective outreach and interface platform to, inter alia, enable innovations, promote commercialization of science and technology and encourage research spin-offs," said Dr Anil Wali, Managing Director, FITT.

DMRC marks 11th anniversary of metro museum

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) celebrated the 11th anniversary of its Metro Museum with awareness campaign #Nevergiveup to prevent suicide. Further, an exhibition on suicide prevention was also organized on Friday. This #Nevergiveup campaign is an initiative launched by

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation to spread awareness on suicide prevention.

The museum was set up in the year 2008 and after which it received a special attraction for visitors and commuters of Delhi Metro over the past decade. The event was inaugurated by the chief guest of the ceremony, Veerabala.

"With the passing time, the Museum has also been the venue for various events and



Children at DMRC museum

Pioneer photo

initiatives taken up for children by the Corporate Communication Department of DMRC.

On the occasion of its 11th anniversary, the Delhi Metro

Museum conducted a series of activities at the Metro Museum located at Patel Chowk Metro Station. More than 30 girl children from a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) - Sarthak Prayas were

invited to visit Metro Museum and take part in the 11th anniversary celebrations.

"The children visited the Metro Museum and were informed of the history of Delhi Metro. A Nukkad Natak

by professional artists was also organised for the children. Following this, the children performed cultural activities.

The chief guest also administered a pledge to the children to stay positive and help those in distress. To spread the message, takeaway cards with positive messages were kept at the exhibition, which can be collected by the visitors of Metro Museum.

Marking the 11th anniversary, DMRC also launched the new souvenir items of Metro Museum. Following this, the new edition of 'Metro Museum Digest' was presented to the chief guest and other guests by Anuj Dayal, Metro Museum Administrator and Executive Director, Corporate Communications, DMRC.

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MCD survey to fix street vendors' spot

CM interacts with TVC, street vendors

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In his first interaction with Town Vending Committees (TVC) and street vendors at Delhi secretariat, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Friday has urged members and MCD officials to start survey as soon as possible to resolve the issue of displacement of street vendors by the authorities across the city.

"Delhi Government will bear the cost of survey, which is to be conducted by Municipal Corporation of Delhi," "Powerful businesses are against the poor, I will not let any injustice against the poor prevail," said Kejriwal.

Echoing the rights of street vendors, Kejriwal said, "I am happy as survey has been initiated. We often hear about incidents where street vendors are removed from their places by the authorities." "In countries other than India, street vendors are encouraged because it is a source of employment for the people living there. Governments should work towards providing employment rather than



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during his interaction with people on Friday

Pioneer photo

detracting it. Vendors, here in India are considered encroachers and a major cause of traffic jams whereas in other countries they are backed by legal support by the respective of Government," Kejriwal added.

Assuring the allotment of permanent space after survey work gets completed, Kejriwal said, "The survey will also observe places other than the street markets across the city, which will help generate employment on a large scale. The whole administrative system covering street vendors is rotten which is causing major difficulties for the vendors."

"No authority will remove vendors then, adding, "I want to request the MCD officials present amongst us to call a meeting for the TVCs by Tuesday. The TVC meetings will decide and finalise the agencies which will carry out the survey."

I was notified by the MCD officials that they do not have the required funds to carry out the TVC surveys. I told them that the Delhi Government will provide funds for the survey," Kejriwal said.

Delhi PWD Minister Satyendra Jain said, "Vendors are often troubled by authori-

ties for setting up shops on the streets, and corrupt officials often extort money from them. To eradicate all these issues, a legal survey will be conducted initially."

"A certificate will be issued to the street vendors based on the survey with vendors' details. Details of their families will also be included in the same. The survey will be completed within the next three to four months and the vending spaces will be fixed thereafter," Jain added.

"This will help in fixing the vending spaces as well as the vending zones across the city.

Our motive is to promote vending on a large scale. Delhi has around 3-4 lakh vendors, and the actual numbers will be revealed after the survey. By fixing the vending spaces, we will be supporting 15-20 lakh people," the AAP Minister said.

According to Delhi Government a committee will be formed to decide the vending spaces and zones. "After clearance from the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the government will give licenses to the street vendors. The certificate will also contain information about the goods in which they deal.

At the same time, there will be details about the zone and location. It will also contain full information including the name, address, name of the family members of the operator," a Delhi Government official said.

"Through survey we will obtain information about which area in Delhi has the maximum number of street vendors, detailed information of all street vendors, the kind of shops operated by street vendors, number of customers who visit the shop, number of shops required in different areas and locations across Delhi and Locations where street vending zones are required," the officials said further.

CM addresses town hall meet, says unclogging roads will be key agenda

WILL PROVIDE 24X7 DRINKING WATER: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor has said that decongesting roads from heavy traffic jams will be one of the main agendas among others in the next five years, if it will manage to regain the power for the next term. The Chief Minister was addressing the second town hall meeting on Friday.

Replying to a question asked by a resident of Pitampura on traffic congestion in the national Capital, he said, "We have designated a consultant to create a list of the locations in Delhi where there are daily traffic jams. The designated consultant will provide us with a roadmap or a report within 9-10 months on how to solve the problem of traffic congestion in these locations. We will start working on resolving congestion issues on each road mentioned in the list,

and we will be able to do it at the earliest. Just as we have worked on addressing issues in the fields of education, health, power, water, sewer, and drainage, etc in the last five years, we will work on resolving traffic congestion issues in the next five years."

Kejriwal during his address in Pitampura area said that his party will release the AAP manifesto in mid January which will carry all the issues and problems which will be solved in the next term.

AAP Chief further said, "after the election the key focus of the Government will be at making Delhi traffic-free and providing 24*7 drinking water from the tap."

The Town Hall Meeting is part of AAP election campaign for the upcoming Vidhan Sabha polls. During the interaction, the CM informed the people that the AAP will make the Manifesto for the 2020 election after the consultations with the people through these meetings. The meeting aimed to discuss 'AAP ka Report Card' which was launched by Kejriwal on 24th December.

During the event, the CM interacted with the public

answered questions and presented the Report Card featuring the top 10 achievements of the Delhi Government in the past 5 years.

When the public discussed the issue of water in the area with the CM, he drank a glass of water from a nearby located tap in front of the people to describe how the AAP Government has worked to develop the water infrastructure of Delhi.

"When our Government was formed five years back, around 2,300 areas in Delhi received contaminated water. We created a list of all such locations as well as causes of the contamination and deployed various resources for the resolution of the issue in each of those areas. Now, only 150 areas in Delhi receive contaminated water, and we are working on providing clean water to these areas as well. When our Government was formed, only 58% of colonies in Delhi received tap water, and the rest of the colonies received water from water tankers. Now, 93% of Delhi receives tap water. Our next step is to provide a 24-hour water supply to the people of Delhi," said Kejriwal.

KVs performed better than city Govt schools: BJP Manifesto will be released in mid-January: Kejriwal



Member of Parliament Vinay Sahasrabudhe, along with sitting MPs, releases a report on Delhi Government schools in Delhi

Pioneer photo

UNFAIR TO COMPARE DELHI GOVT SCHOOLS WITH CENTRE-RUN SCHOOLS, SAYS AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

While ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi has claimed delivery of quality education with world class infrastructure in Delhi Government schools, top leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday released a report that claimed Central Government schools performed better than Delhi Government schools.

However, refuting BJP's claim, Delhi Government said that it is unfair to compare Delhi Government schools with Centre-run Kendriya Vidyalayas that admit students through entrance tests.

Public Policy Research Centre (PPRC), BJP think tank has prepared the report on the state of education in Delhi based on around 1,000 RTI replies received from the AAP Government in last three months.

It claimed Class 10 pass

percentage in Delhi Government schools came down from 95.81 per cent in 2015 to 71.58 per cent in 2019, while that of Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) improved from 99.59 per cent to 99.79 per cent in the same period.

This year, 28.42 per cent students failed in Class 10 in Delhi Government schools. Only 0.21 per cent failed in Class 10 in Kendriya Vidyalayas, it said.

"Less than 1 per cent of Class 12 students in Delhi Government schools are eligible to apply for admission in Delhi University. More than 50 per cent of the posts for permanent teachers in Delhi Government schools remain vacant. This has a direct bearing on the quality of education and also the effectiveness of teaching quality," the report claimed.

PPRC director and Member of Parliament (MP) Vinay Sahasrabudhe said the

Delhi Government indulged in propaganda and published full-page advertisements but did nothing on the ground.

"Though the AAP Government claimed the expenditure on education increased in the last five years, no improvement could be seen in infrastructure. They only

Fairer comparison of KVs could be made with Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya: AAP adviser

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government responded to the BJP leaders' report card. Shailendra Sharma, the 'adviser' to the Delhi Government's education department, said students are admitted to KVs through entrance tests, unlike Delhi Government schools.

"As a result, while in Delhi Government schools more than 1.6 lakh students appeared in Class 10 board exam in 2019, the number in KVs of Delhi was just

appointed their workers as consultants and advisors," Sahasrabudhe, a BJP member of Rajya Sabha, claimed.

He also said the RTI replies show that almost all Delhi Government schools do not have any smart classes.

Meanwhile Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari alleged corrup-

7,800," he said.

A fairer comparison of KVs could be made with Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya of the Delhi Government, which also admit students through entrance exams and had a pass percentage of 99.06 in 2019, he said.

"Anyone who clears the Class 12 exam can apply for a graduate course in DU. "However, due to high cut-offs in regular undergraduate courses, mere passing is not enough," Sharma added.

tion in construction of new classrooms in Delhi Government schools and said it will be exposed soon.

BJP national vice-president Shyam Jaju and MPs Gautam Gambhir, Parvish Verma and Meenakshi Lekhi were present at the event during which the report was released.

Verma added the AAP Government did not build a single new school but announced the formation of two universities in the last three months.

Addressing a town hall meeting in North West Delhi's Pitampura, he said the document will be prepared in consultation with people and ideas on making the city clean and tackling the problem of traffic congestion would find prominent place in the manifesto.

It will be released between January 15 and 20, and would include issues raised by the people during their interactions with the party," he said. Delhi

assembly polls are likely to be held early next year.

"The issues that we will have in our next manifesto will be discussed and deliberated upon with the people. We are creating a list in consultation with the people. For instance, we discussed the issue of cleanliness and sanitation in Delhi at a public meeting on Thursday, and we believe it is a very important issue for the people," he said.

Cong's postmortem report on AAP's report card

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With Delhi Vidhan Sabha elections round the corner, the Delhi Congress on Friday termed the 10-point report card released by the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as a 'bundle of lies' and subsequently released a 'post-mortem report' on the Kejriwal's report card.

Delhi Congress president, Subhash Chopra also released a factual report card of the Congress. Senior Congress leaders Jai Prakash Agarwal, Krishna Tirath, Sandeep Dikshit, Ramesh Kumar, Mahabal Mishra, Mukesh Sharma, Kirti Azad, Devender Yadav and Rajesh Lilothai were also present.

Chopra said that the Kejriwal Government has been surviving on the strength of lies and falsehood, and misleading advertisements. He said that to bail out his government, Kejriwal has been spreading utter lies.



Chopra said that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, which was in a deep slumber in the past four and a half years, is now telling many lies to cover up one lie to save its skin, as it has woken up to the reality of the welfare of the people only in the last three months of his Government's tenure.

Chopra said that AAP, which came to power on the issue of Lok Pal and Swaraj, was now running away from both

these issues. He said that the Lokayukt, established by the Congress Government, has been made ineffective by the AAP Government.

He said that the Kejriwal Government was only providing dirty water and polluted air to the people of Delhi. He said that the entire Delhi was suffering from acute cough and respiratory ailments except Kejriwal, who seems to have now become immune to

coughs.

Chopra said that it was the responsibility of Delhi Congress to make people aware of the real issues and facts. He said that the Congress was releasing a 'real report card' on the state of affairs in Delhi. He said that people have to bribe even for daily wage earnings as all the departments of the Delhi Government have become dens of corruption.

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AIM TO WOO DELHI SLUM VOTERS

Centre plans 2L houses under PMAY(U)

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, the mantra for the Centre is slum-specific welfare measures for the national Capital. After its initiative to regularise 1,731 unauthorised colonies, the HUA Ministry has lined up a plan to build 2 lakh houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY-Urban) in the slums of Delhi in Kalkaji Extension, Dilshad Garden, Ashok Vihar, Kathputli Colony among others.

The move is targeted at 10 lakh beneficiaries from the slums, which are a major vote-bank for the AAP. The BJP-ruled Centre's focus is thus on such clusters both to make inroads into the ruling dispensation's stronghold as also to negate the impact of its various freebie schemes. The ministry also announced that the total number of houses being funded under the scheme to 1.3 crore under the housing for all scheme.

Addressing a press conference, Union Minister Hardeep

Singh Puri on Friday accused the AAP government of trying to create hurdles in implementation of the PMAY-Urban in Delhi and said its political approach is based on a "pack of lies". Puri's allegations came three days after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched the Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana (MMAY) for Jhugi Jhopri (JJ) Clusters and distributed ownership certificates to 65,000 families living in the city's slum areas. "If development is going to be based on the nomenclature of a scheme, you deprive your own people..." Puri said.

The Delhi Government has created hurdles in every project, be it the construction of Metro Phase-IV or the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS), he alleged. Whenever there was talk on the construction of Metro Phase-IV, the AAP Government tried to create hurdles, he said.

"In-situ rehabilitation of three JJ clusters at Kalkaji Extension, Kathputli Colony (Opposite Shadipur Depot) and Jailorwala Bagh (Ashok

Vihar) will be completed by June 2020. As many as 7,500 two room houses has been completed or at advance stage. The construction of 3,024 flats at Kalkaji Extension is likely to be completed by May-June, 2020 and the eligible beneficiaries will be handed over possession of these flats.

"Out of 2,800 EWS houses under construction for JJ dwellers of Kathputli Colony, construction of about 500 houses is expected to be completed by March, 2020, which would be handed over to the eligible beneficiaries of Kathputli Colony. Another 1,675 houses in Jailorwala Bagh (Ashok Vihar) are also likely to be completed by December, 2020 for allotment to the beneficiaries of JJ Dwellers of Jailorwala Bagh," the Ministry said.

As per the data, there are 685 JJ clusters surveyed by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) and 85 inlisted clusters in Delhi. Puri alleged that since the PMAY (Urban) was launched in June 2015, not a single proposal has been received from

the AAP Government. The Delhi Development Authority is the nodal agency for implementing in-situ slum rehabilitation of JJ Clusters residents on land owned by the DDA and the Centre, according to the Ministry.

With the approval of 6.5

lakh houses under PMAY (Urban), taking the total number of houses being funded under the scheme to over 1.3 crore. Puri said in the next three-four months, the Ministry will sanction all the 1.12 crore houses, a target set by the Government.

Who is Prashant Kishor? Puri asks on poll strategist being roped in by AAP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after the poll strategist's political consultancy firm I-PAC was roped in by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) ahead of the Delhi Assembly election, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday said, "Who is Prashant Kishor?" Replying to a question at a Press conference, Puri who is also the co-incharge of the BJP for the Delhi polls, said he did not know Kishor personally.

"Who is Prashant Kishor?" he asked, when a question was put to him about I-PAC being

roped in by the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP ahead of the Delhi polls, slated to be held early next year.

When reporters told the Minister that Kishor was a part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, he said, "I was not there during that time." "May be I should know, but I do not know him (Kishor)," Puri said on being told by reporters that he was also part of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) — the national vice-president of the Janata Dal (United).

Forces secular, respect rights laws: Gen Rawat



Army Chief Bipin Rawat addresses interns and senior officers of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the topic of Preserving Human Rights in Times of War and Prisoners of War at the Manav Adhikar Bhawan in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Army Chief General Bipin Rawat said here on Friday the Indian armed forces have utmost respect for human rights laws and are extremely secular and their driving ethos are "Insaniyat" (Humanity) and "Sharafat" (Decency).

Making these observations while addressing the officers of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the topic "Preserving Human Rights in times of War and Prisoners of War," he also said the armed forces are disciplined and not only ensure protection of human rights of our own people but also of adversaries and deal with the prisoners of war as per the Geneva Conventions.

Rawat had on Thursday found himself in the thick of a controversy after his remark on the arson and violence against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) invited criticism from political parties.

While stressing that the armed forces follow "Insaniyat" (Humanity) and "Sharafat" (Decency), he, however said the challenge is the changing war fare tactics with the advent of technology. Unlike the attack by any armed

forces, the terror attacks remain unaccountable in international law. Hence, the counter terrorism and anti insurgency operations have to be dealt in a manner of winning the hearts of the people by identifying and alienating the insurgents among them without collateral damage, which becomes very challenging and difficult.

General Rawat said that the Army Head Quarters had created a human rights cell in 1993, which now is being upgraded to the level of a Directorate to be headed by an Additional Director General. This will also have police personnel to address the complaints of human rights violations against the armed forces and facilitate related enquiries.

Moreover, a new initiative has been taken in October this year by recruiting women Jawans in Military Police Force. He said that the Army takes along with it several police personnel in search operations, but keeping in view the concerns of women during such operations, the army has now decided to deploy its lady Jawans of its Military Police Force also.

Rawat said keeping in view the provisions of human rights law and importance of the

protection of human rights, now a court of enquiry is being held after every anti-insurgency operation and all records are maintained related to such operations.

Referring to the Armed Force Special Powers Act (AFSPA), the Army Chief said that the Act gives almost the same powers to the Army, which are also exercised by Police and CRPF in connection with search and enquiry operations.

However, over the years the army itself has diluted its application in its own way under the ten commandments issued by the Chief of Army Staff, which are to be strictly adhered by every soldier, and particularly those deployed for operations in anti-insurgency areas.

The Supreme Court guidelines on this are also being strictly followed by soldiers, who are all given special training before their deployment in counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations.

Earlier, NHRC Member Justice PC Pant gave an insight into various laws protecting human rights. He also mentioned about some of the fundamental rights, which are not given to the armed forces in line of their duty.

NARCO-TERRORISM CASE

NIA files chargesheet against 11 accused, 4 companies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday chargesheeted 11 persons including six absconding accused and four companies in the case relating to seizure of 532 kg of banned drug heroin at Integrated Check Post at Attari in Punjab.

The accused persons and entities have been charged under IPC Section relating to criminal conspiracy besides relevant provisions of the Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and Unlawful

Activities (Prevention) Act.

The NIA filed the chargesheet before the NIA Special Court, Mohali, Punjab.

The charge-sheeted accused include Tariq Ahmad Lone, Jasbir Singh, Nirbhail Singh, Sandeep Kaur, Ajay Gupta, Ranjit Singh, Iqbal Singh, Farookh Lone, Sahil, Shoaib Noor and Amir Noor under Sections 120-B IPC, NDPS Act and UA(P) Act.

The charge-sheeted companies include Kanishk Enterprises Pvt. Ltd., Gupta Fast Forwarders Pvt. Ltd., Global Vision Impex and Aimex General Trading

Company.

The case relates to seizure of 532 Kg. of Heroin and 52 Kg. of mixed narcotics on June 29 this year at Attari ICP under provisions of Custom Act, 1962 and attendant sections of NDPS Act besides interception of two persons — Gurbinder Singh, an Amritsar based trader and Tariq Ahmed Lone from Handwara, Jammu & Kashmir.

"The involvement of an international drug racket based in Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan has come to light. This is a case of narco-terrorism, having national and inter-

national implications with evidence of generation of funds through the proceeds of sale of narcotics smuggled from across the international border," the NIA said in a statement.

Investigation has established that the above accused formed a terrorist gang to bring many consignments of narcotics to India, the agency said.

During the investigation searches were conducted at various places in Punjab and various incriminating documents including bank account details, electronic and digital

devices, ammunitions and details of Hawala transactions were seized.

The investigation has been able to establish an international conspiracy in which nationals of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indian nationals belonging to Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi has come to light so far. A vast network of Hawala and other informal channels has been used to smuggle narcotics into India through the legitimate trade route between India and Pakistan in the garb of import of rock salt, the agency added.

WHEN YOU LEARNT TO WALK, THEY HELD HAND
KEEP THEM ALWAYS CLOSE TO YOUR HEART

INAUGURATION OF MAHATMA JYOTIBA PHULE MEMORIAL OLD AGE HOME FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Saturday, 28th December, 2019 at 12 noon
Wazirpur, Ashok Vihar, New Delhi

Chief Guest

Arvind Kejriwal
Chief Minister, Delhi

Guest of Honour

Rajendra Pal Gautam
Social Welfare Minister, Delhi

Rajesh Gupta
MLA, Wazirpur A.C.



Guj HC upholds death penalty for man who raped, killed child

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court on Friday upheld capital punishment for a 22-year-old man convicted for rape and murder of a three-year-old girl in Surat in October 2018.



A division bench of Justices Bela Trivedi and A C Rao rejected the appeal filed by Anil Yadav against the death penalty awarded by a special Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act court in Surat in July.

Rajnath cancels Chennai visit over lyricist Vairamuthu row

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Following wide anger and resentment all over Tamil Nadu against conferring honorary doctorate to the tainted film lyricist Vairamuthu by a private university in Chennai, Rajnath Singh, Union Defense Minister, who was to be the chief guest for the function cancelled his trip itself to the city scheduled for Saturday.

Front leaders called off the proposed black flag demonstration.

Vairamuthu was in the news last year as many female film artistes came out in the open as part of the "Me Too" campaign against him for his overtures and attempts to sexually abuse them offering them chances in films. Though Vairamuthu had denied any such happenings, the number of allegations by artistes increased which put the national award winning song writer in an embarrassing situation.



The way he went on, they might as well add a doctorate for being a serial molester. Also well done, SRM. You couldn't have chosen a better example for your students on "Role Model", wrote the singer in her social media.

First phase of local body polls ends in TN

Chennai: The first phase of polls to elect councillors, panchayat union presidents and ward members for the local bodies concluded in Tamil Nadu on Friday with reports of stray incidents taking place in a few polling booths.

The second phase would be held on December 30. According to sources, there are nearly 1.30 crore voters to cast their vote in first phase while another 1.28 crore in the second phase. The polling which began at 7 am ended at 5 pm. The counting of votes would take place on January 2.

Constitution guarantees free speech, dissent isn't anti-national: Gehlot

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday said the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and dissent should not be seen as something anti-national.

"The country today needs to follow the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi. It should run as per the spirit of the Constitution so that everyone can get social and economic justice," Gehlot said at a programme here.

TN: Man sentenced to death for rape, murder of 7-year-old

Coimbatore: A 34-year old man was on Friday sentenced to death by a special court here for rape and murder of a seven-year old girl nine months ago on the city outskirts.



The victim's mother hailed the verdict, saying it should be a deterrent in future to "such beasts". Judge R Radhika of the special court for Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) cases held Santhoshkumar guilty under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the POCSO and awarded the capital punishment.

hospital here for medical check up after his arrest. The trial in the case was proceeding in the Mahila Court, which has now been designated the POCSO court, and 32 witnesses were examined.

Mandala puja held at Sabarimala temple

PTI ■ SABARIMALA

Thousands of devotees thronged the Lord Ayyappa temple here on Friday for the mandala puja which marked the culmination of the 41-day annual pilgrim season that was peaceful unlike protests over women's entry last year.

Mahadayi river dispute: Goa Shiv Sena chief praises Guv for support

Panaji: Goa Shiv Sena chief Jitesh Kamat on Friday expressed gratitude to Governor Satya Pal Malik for being sensitive towards Goans on the Mahadayi water diversion issue.

DIRECTORATE OF STATE TRANSPORT, HARYANA

2nd Floor, 30 Bays Building, Sector 17, Chandigarh. AUCTION NOTICE NO. 3. Public auction will be held on "As is where is basis" for condemned buses/vehicles / Motor parts/tires/tubes/batteries used oil, empty drums, aluminum and iron scrap etc.

Table with columns: Sr. No., Name of the Depots, 1st Auction, 2nd Auction. Lists various depots like Sirsa, Sonapat, Hisar, etc.

The Auction will be held at 11.00 AM in the depots. The details of terms & conditions/clarifications/physical inspection for items to be auctioned of the Haryana Roadways and other Department can be had from the respective office of General Manager of the depot and the same will also be announced at the time of auction.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Mukesh @ Gawdi S/o Lt. Sh. Hosiyar Singh R/o H. No. 273, Devli Village, New Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under FIR. No. 278/12 Date 05.10.2012 U/s 382/506/411 IPC. P.S. Neb Sarai, New Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Mukesh @ Gawdi can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Mukesh @ Gawdi has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a female (depicted in the photo), Namely : Sujata W/o Rajkumar R/o H.No. 7/33, Dakshinipuri, Delhi has been missing since 03.10.2019. In this regard a case vide DD No. 21 A dated 04.10.2019 has been lodged at P.S. Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi.

Don't agree with Bhagwat's 'everyone is Hindu' view: Athawale

Union Minister Ramdas Athawale said here on Friday that he disagreed with RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's assertion that all 130 crore people living in India are Hindus.

Speaking in Hyderabad on Thursday, Bhagwat had said that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh considers the entire population of India as Hindu society, irrespective of people's individual religions and culture.

Athawale, a Dalit leader who heads the Republican Party of India, a constituent of the NDA, told PTI that he did not agree with Bhagwat.

"If it is said that RSS considers everyone Indian (instead of Hindu) and we are all united, I can understand. Hindus are the majority community, but there are also Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Dalits, Backward Classes. All of us are one and united as Indians," he said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY MATERIALS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT VENDOR DEVELOPMENT MEET. Northern Railway is organizing a Vendor Meet on 08.01.2020 (Wednesday) at 11:00 AM onwards at National Rail Museum, Chanakyaपुरी, New Delhi.

कार्यालय नगर परिषद पलवल. नगर परिषद पलवल द्वारा रसूलपुर रोड स्थित स्टाटर हाऊस की मीट मार्किट की 19 दुकानों, सरायपुखटा स्थित नव निर्मित दुकान एवं मीनार गेट स्थित पार्किट स्थल को खुली बोली आधार पर दिनांक 06.01.2020 को सुबह 11:00 बजे कार्यालय नगर परिषद पलवल कार्यालय में छोड़ा जाना है।

Table with columns: दुकान स्थित, दुकान नं०, घोरेर रहित, न्यूनतम किराया, नव रिफ़्ट सिविलीटी. Lists property details for various locations.

WESTERN RAILWAY E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No. S/15/2019 Date 27/12/2019. Table with columns: S. N., Short Description of Item, Quantity, T.O.D.

DELHI JAL BOARD GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI OFFICE OF THE EX. ENGINEER (E&M) W&S (SOUTH-WEST) D BLOCK OHT OPP DESU COLONY JANAKPURI NEW DELHI. PREEs N.I.T. NO. 20 (2019-20).

GUJARAT STATE ROAD DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD (Government of Gujarat Undertaking) TENDER NOTICE No. 42/2019-20

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Consultancy services as Safety Consultant. Request for Proposal (RFP) is being invited from eligible Engineering Consultancy Firms/Companies for discharging of duties as Safety Consultant for following Projects

Table with columns: Sr. No, Name of Road, Project Length. Details for Bagodra Vasad Road.

The selected Projects are developed on DBFOMT- Modified Annuity model The interested consultancy Firms/Companies can download the RFP Documents form gsrdc.nprocure.com as below

Table with columns: (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii) detailing the schedule for the project, including Downloading Start Date/Time, Cost of EOI Document, Mode of Submission, etc.

General Manager (Projects) Gujarat State Road Development Corporation Ltd. Gr. Floor, Nirman Bhavan, Sec. 10-A, Gandhinagar - 382010, Gujarat.

Time for change

With no milestone achievements in ensuring gender parity, a radical shift in attitudes is needed

LOOK BACK 2019 Year 2019 was one of mixed fortunes in terms of gender equality and fluidity both for women and the LGBTQ community. While there were a few wins, there was hardly any forward movement towards parity because of the propensity of our policymakers to take one step forward and two steps back. But for judicial intervention, there is hardly any significant momentum for women in the country and the LGBTQ community. Both stand discriminated against and are on the fringes of society. The year saw the undoing of some major advances in LGBTQ rights, which took place in the last decade. In a major step towards gender equality, in 2014, the Supreme Court had recognised transgender people as a third gender and upheld their fundamental rights as guaranteed under the Constitution. It also gave them the right to self-identification of their gender as male, female or third-gender. In another landmark judgment in 2018, the top court decriminalised same-sex consensual relationships. Put together, both verdicts laid the foundations for expanding the citizenship rights of the LGBTQ community. However, this year, legislative reforms failed to keep pace with the path shown by the apex court. Though the passage of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, has been a big step forward, it remains ambiguous on many counts. For instance, while the Act gives every transgender person the right to self-perceived identity, it stipulates a lengthy bureaucratic process for the issuance of a certificate of identity that, too, through a District Magistrate. To be identified as a male or female, one will have to go through a hugely-expensive and painful surgery and then get the certificate revised. This, instead of providing the community with protection, leaves it at the mercy of corrupt, biased and insensitive doctors and District Magistrates. It is also unclear whether applying for such a certificate of identity is a must and will those, who already possess identity documents, have to apply for the certificate again? Also, the Act does not put in place any "clear" procedures in case of denial of the certificate, leaving the door open for costly and time-consuming litigations. Most people from the community can ill-afford this because our society, with its inherent biases, has denied them the dignity and opportunity of education and jobs. Without these two essential tools that will equip them for an economically independent life, there is hardly any hope for their emancipation and uplift. The Act also keeps mum on the vital issue of reservation in jobs and discrimination in the workplace and right of parenthood. The glaring deficiencies make the legislation counterproductive, unresponsive and incapable of meeting the needs of the marginalised community.

While economic opportunities for women are extremely limited at 35.4 per cent, with just 13.8 per cent being able to break the corporate glass ceiling and make their place on company boards, the pay packet taken home by them is just one-fifth of that of a man in a similar position. Economic independence for women is an ongoing battle as only one-quarter of women, compared with 82 per cent of men, engage actively in the labour market and constitute merely 30 per cent of professional and technical workers. Despite the Modi Government's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative, only two-thirds of women are literate as compared to 82 per cent men. Discrimination against the girl child begins from the womb itself as is evident by the dismal sex ratio with just 91 girls being born for every 100 male child. Access to nutrition and healthcare has also not been spared from the age-old biases. Men get a better deal in a country that believes in the concept of *shakti* and worships goddesses and puts Mother India on a pedestal. Ironically, in a country that was run by a woman for 20 years, today, political empowerment of women remains low with just 14.4 per cent representation in Parliament. In fact, the Women's Reservation Bill, that seeks to reserve 33.33 per cent seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women, is one of the country's longest pending legislations. As a nation we also failed to learn our lessons from the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape case. The ₹2,264-crore Nirbhaya Fund remains grossly underused at a dismal 11 per cent (₹252 crore). Poor spending of the fund reveals the lack of political will and the cavalier attitude of the men in power. Calls for criminalisation of marital rape also remained unheard in a male-dominated society. However, in a small step in the right direction, the Supreme Court in a recent judgment criminalised non-consensual sex with a wife between 15-18 years of age. One major achievement of the Modi Government in 2019 was the coming into effect of a new law, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, which criminalised triple talaq. But much more needs to be done to ensure gender equality. Let's hope for a better year ahead.

Unfair selection

Former Indian star spinner Harbhajan Singh has stirred a hornet's nest by questioning team India selectors



When it comes to turban-wearing superstar spinners who played for India's cricket team making a fuss about the selection process, one usually thinks of former India captain and current *bête noire* of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Bishan Singh Bedi. So when one heard that it is the more contemporary Harbhajan Singh, who has raised his voice, questioning the Indian selectors, it came as a surprise. While Harbhajan Singh has never been shy of drawing attention to himself, his altercation with

Andrew Symonds during a Test match against Australia and with pacer S Sreesanth during an IPL match are notorious. But he has usually been supportive of the cricket establishment. His attack on the selectors came on behalf of Hyderabad batsman Suryakumar Yadav, who, as Harbhajan acknowledges, is having a great season with his State team and for the Indian developmental sides India A and India B. The spinner, whose post-cricket career as a commentator is not taking flight, asked why Yadav was ignored while a rather nebulous "others" are being given chance after chance.

Is there favoritism among the cricket selectors? This is rather an obvious question. Selectors have always tended to favour players whom they have known for years. The fact is that such favoritism has always existed and until the selection process is made transparent, nothing much will change. Very often with sportspeople, the rigours of the top level of the game are actually different from lower tiers. Many of the best domestic players in cricket have not made the transition to the international game. A lot depends on the mental state. Selectors need to have a "feel" for a player and often give chance to a player, who they believe, has a higher chance of success in the long run, a longer run at the game. They did just that with Virat Kohli almost a decade ago and one doubts any Indian cricket fan questions that decision today. Things will always seem unfair towards one player or another but as long as the Indian team keeps succeeding, questioning the selectors ought to be frowned upon. They will make mistakes now and again but on the whole, their overall success is what should be measured.

opinion

Halted at Madrid

COP25 once again highlights the dark future of the green planet. Given the attitudes of the Trump administration and Jair Bolsonaro, no significant progress is likely in the near future



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

The outcome of the United Nations' Climate Change Conference, also known as COP 25 (25th United Nations Climate Change Conference), held in Madrid from December 2 to 13, has disappointed many. It produced a bland, platitudinous statement re-emphasising with "serious concern the urgent need to address the significant gap between the aggregate effect of Parties' mitigation efforts in terms of global annual emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020." It simultaneously added that it "stresses the urgency of enhanced ambition in order to ensure the highest possible mitigation and adaptation efforts by all Parties."

COP 25's failures were primarily in two areas. One was its inability to frame rules governing the operations of carbon trading, which owes its origin to the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. Deferred to this year by the last year's conference, COP 24, it has been shelved for the next climate conference, COP 26, to be held in Glasgow in December next year. The second was its failure to make any progress towards achieving meaningful emission cuts.

One must first look at the carbon trading since deliberations over it were supposed to be a principal feature of the conference even before the latter began. It owes its origin to the Kyoto Protocol, which came into force in 2005. Dividing countries into developed and developing ones, and recognising that the former were responsible for the current level of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through more than 150 years of industrial activity, it mandated that the 37 industrialised nations plus the European Union cut their emission levels to targets for GHG emissions for the first compliance period from 2008 to 2012. Developing countries, numbering 100, and including India and China, were asked to contribute by investing in projects designed to lower emissions in their countries.

Developed, industrialised countries undertook to reduce their annual hydrocarbon emissions by an average of 5.2 per cent, representing 29 per cent of the world's GHG emissions, by 2012. All countries were required to draw up national emission reduction targets, called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which they had to submit regularly to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The protocol laid down that instead of reducing its own emissions, a polluting company or country could buy carbon credits from another that had reduced its carbon footprint. Industrialised countries could do so through the Emission Reduction Purchase Agreement, while a Clean Development Mechanism gave developing countries carbon credits in the form of Certified Emission Reduction Units, which were bought and sold in a sep-



arate market. Equally, instead of reducing emissions domestically, an industrialised country or a company could offset its high levels of GHG emissions by investing in green ventures through what the Protocol identified as Joint Implementation (JI) projects and, thereby, earn Emission Reduction Units from the latter.

The question arises: What is a carbon credit? It is a permit or a certificate, issued by a Government or a regulatory body, allowing a country or an organisation to burn a certain specified amount of hydrocarbon fuel over a specified period. Each carbon credit is valued against one tonne of hydrocarbon fuel.

As the commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ended in December 2012, parties to it met in Doha, Qatar, and amended it, fixing new emission reduction targets for the period 2013 to 2020. The Doha Amendment, as it was called, was, however, never ratified and was superseded by the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015. Article 6 of the Paris Climate Agreement provides for international cooperation and carbon trading.

Unfortunately, the issue of carbon trading has been cloud-

ed by allegations of corruption and the fundamental claim that it does not really help in reducing emission levels. Particularly under focus have been Joint Implementation Projects. The rules provide that an industrialised country must invest in a project, which would not otherwise have come about and not in ones that were to happen anyway. The allegation is that the latter has been the case in an alarming number of instances.

As early as August 24, 2015, a report in *The Guardian* by Arthur Neslen referred to the findings of the Stockholm Environment Institute that the Joint Implementation scheme was so open to abuse that three quarters of the allowances under it lacked environmental integrity. As a result, around 600m tonnes of carbon were wrongly emitted under the UNFCCC-administered Joint Implementation (JI) scheme. The institute's paper, which was corroborated by United Nations officials, and parts of which were published in *Nature Climate Change*, states that an estimated 80 per cent of JI projects were of low environmental quality. *The Guardian* dispatch quotes one of the authors of the report, Vladyslav Zhezherin, as saying, "Many of

them didn't observe the requirements of JI on 'additionality' as they would probably have happened anyway, and I would even doubt the physical existence of some of these projects." He was further quoted to have added, "I would say that many of them were fake."

According to *The Guardian* report, Russia and Ukraine were the two biggest beneficiaries of the JI system. Not surprisingly, JI markets in the two countries have received particular attention. *The Guardian* report quotes a source with regulatory experience in Ukraine's JI market as saying that as the 2000s dragged on, JIs increasingly came to be seen by market participants as "a corruption mechanism."

Clearly, the rules and regulations for carbon trading need to be reformed substantially to rule out corruption and ensure transparency in transactions. Matters have been further complicated by the issue of whether carbon credits earned before the Paris Climate Conference can be used in the period after it came into force. Not surprisingly, the rules continue to be subjects of discussion and, judging by the progress thus far and the interests involved, are unlikely to be

finalised in COP 26. Even if these are, the wider question of whether the carbon trading system actually helps in reducing emission levels remains, with the critics pointing out that it primarily helps the developing countries to maintain their high emission levels without making any significant contribution to reducing — or even containing — emission levels in the developing countries.

This once again underlines the fact that global warming can only be mitigated by implementing the Paris Climate Agreement's goal of keeping the global temperature rise this century to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C. It is also important to achieve the Agreement's goal of enhancing the ability of countries to deal with impacts of climate change. Unfortunately, no progress was made in these directions in Madrid and given the attitudes of the Trump administration and leaders like Jair Bolsonaro, the President of Brazil, no significant progress is likely in the near future.

(The writer is Consultant Editor, *The Pioneer*, and an author)

SOUND BITE

Without taking people from every religion, every caste, tribals, Dalits and backwards together, the economy of the country cannot be run.

Congress leader
—Rahul Gandhi



I don't like violence. Whether any side left side or right side, just don't do violence. Don't destroy property, don't do that, be away from violence.

Actor
—Akshay Kumar



As neighbour to both India and Pakistan, we call on both sides to exercise restraint and refrain from taking actions that will escalate tensions.

Chinese official
—Geng Shuang



They (TMC) will create trouble. We will create trouble. This is the character of Bengal's politics. You (journalists) also look for news. That's why we allow people to create trouble.

BJP leader
—Dilip Ghosh



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Defusing tensions

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Row over NPR" (December 27). The faux pas on the Assam National Register of Citizens (NRC) had the Government err in haste over its subsequent and contradictory narrative on the National Population Register (NPR)-NRC. It must be said that the Government counted on this miasma to look for electoral leverage in the upcoming Assam elections.

Assam, however, has long been vehement over the primacy of the Assamese ethos in any political prescription. The net result is a nationwide reaction, with each section interpreting the same page to its own understanding. The feverish attempts at translation by every stakeholder can be toned down, if not be subdued, only when the Supreme Court gives its ruling on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). We have seen how a simple referendum over Brexit has tied up a nation with four centuries of vintage democracy in knots for three long years.

R Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

Change is coming, slowly

The humiliating defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Jharkhand isn't surprising. The Prime Minister had held around 10 election campaigns in the State and Union Home Minister and BJP president Amit Shah had addressed the people on at least seven occasions. All the rhetoric concerning the abrogation of the special status of Jammu & Kashmir, the construction of the Ram temple, the criminalisation of instant triple talaq and the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was rejected by the people of the State. It is clear that these issues cannot overrule the local ones when it comes to the State polls. The results show yet again that the image of Narendra Modi as a BJP mascot has its limitations in spite of his popularity.

The main reason for the BJP's recent defeats in several States seems to be the party's growing arrogance following its massive victory in the general elections. With the loss of Jharkhand, the BJP now governs only 35 per cent of India's landmass, whereas in 2017, its dominion extended to 71 per cent. It is time for the party to introspect. Instead of trying to belittle the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru or Pakistan all the time, the BJP should focus on delivering on its promises such as the creation of jobs and detecting black money. It is ironic that it was



the BJP, which introduced the dubious system of electoral bonds instead of wiping out corruption. It has failed at stopping poverty-stricken farmers from committing suicide. Moreover, the state of the economy is growing worse. The fact that the tribal voters have turned against the party in significant numbers is also telling. It is an opportune moment for the Opposition to unite against the Modi-Shah regime and form a people-friendly, corruption-free Government.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad

Police State

Sir — It is really disquieting that the Indian Government has shut down the internet in various parts of the country in order to

quell the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), with Uttar Pradesh topping the list.

This situation is eerily reminiscent of the blackouts carried out by the Chinese Government

during the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong earlier this year. That the current scenario is being equated with an authoritarian regime is not a healthy sign.

Adrian David
Chennai

Dhoni's comeback

Sir — It is heart-warming to know that former Indian cricket team skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has accomplished his glorious 15 years in international cricket. With an unconventional batting technique, new-fangled wicket-keeping expertise and fearless captaincy, Dhoni changed the face of Indian cricket and took the team to new heights in the international arena. He also became a role model for countless youngsters across the nation.

Dhoni has always been a strong pillar of the Indian cricket team. Despite being a small town boy, he made it evident that nothing can restrain an individual from achieving greatness in life if one has a genuine passion and a strong will to do so. Since he has not played for team India for the past six months, one hopes that he makes a sturdy comeback soon in international cricket.

Tushar Anand
Patna

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SHORT CIRCUITS

RANI MUKERJI

The script of *Mardaani 2* has resonated with youth because of the issue of juvenile crimes. It has connected with women because it shows the issue of gender inequality in the starkest manner and it has also connected with people who would purely love to watch good cinema. I'm proud of the film.



FARAH KHAN

I am extremely saddened that some sentiments have been inadvertently hurt by a recent episode of my show (*Backbenchers*). I respect all religions and it would never be my intention to disrespect any. On behalf of the entire team, Raveena Tandon, Bharti Singh and myself, we do sincerely apologise.



KARAN PATEL

Guess it's true when they say, 'the happiest faces hide the most saddened secrets.' Seeing your spirit and zest for life, never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that you (Kushal Punjabi) will bid your final goodbye to life in a way that will send a chill down our spines every time we think of you.



NEHA KAKKAR

I am the shortest actress in the industry till date who acts and sings at the same time. I am always the heroine of my own music videos. Playback singing for popular actors has its own charm. However, today, the audience loves single's music videos which helps me enjoy my space to the fullest.

JAMIE FOXX

It (*Just Mercy*) is an inspiring drama that brings an important story about how our judicial system can fail to the big screen. It is a story that the audience should see. It's my honour to receive the spotlight award at the Palm Springs Film Festival.



THE GRAPH ONLY RISES



Art curator and critic INA PURI hopes that art will go the egalitarian way in 2020 as more Indian artists and curators are expected to collaborate with prestigious galleries internationally and continue to host several interesting art events in the country



The setting was surreal and straight out of a Renaissance painting. The actors were influencers on the art scene, from the capital, each one a prominent member of the Indian art fraternity. We had all gathered on a chilly December evening to play a part in an elaborate project conceptualised by the acclaimed young art practitioner, Vibha Galhotra, for her forthcoming exhibition in February 2020 at the prestigious Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. If the present year was exceptional for Indian art and artists, 2020 promises even bigger things. Art collections will tend to acquire works from international auctions. Diverse media, mostly found objects (a natural or man-made object, or fragment of an object, that is found by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic interest the artist sees in it) will take up more space at exhibitions and galleries. Various art festivals and biennales will be offering more opportunities to artists from different worlds. I am especially excited to see Bapi Das showcasing alongside international artists at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, curated by Anita Dube. However, having said that, one must not overlook the major art events of 2019 that brought Indian artists back



firmly on the centrestage, internationally. The highlight at the Venice Biennale was, I would like to believe, the Indian Pavilion presented by Roobina Karode and the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA). At the biennale, the cavernous space allotted to India was brought alive by the brilliant works of M F Husain and Nandalal Bose, amid the other participants. Each of them contributed with an outstanding artwork that had viewers queuing up for hours yet patiently awaiting their turn. In my own case, I remember, it had been an exceptionally stormy day when I had visited the space at the Biennale, but to my pleasant surprise, it was crowded with art enthusiasts, both young and old, clearly enjoying the exhibition despite the terrible weather. It has been a significant year for Indian art in more ways than one. Earlier, the DAG had opened its beautifully appointed space in New York, showcasing the works of veteran artists Madhvi Parekh and Anupam Sud, among others. At the new Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), India was represented by the brilliant works of Mrinalini Mukherjee (who had just exhibited at the prestigious MET), Zarina Hashmi, Dayanita Singh and Sheila Gawda. Jayshree Chakravorty had opened to great acclaim at Museum D'Orsay and Ganesh Haloi had received similar glowing reviews in the shows across Europe with Akar Prakar. The year ended on a great note with the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa. I felt this year was especially exciting, given the participation of curators like Jyotindra Jain, Ravi Agarwal, Nancy Adajania, Rahab Allana, Pramod HG and Sudarshan Shetty, who were able to use the spaces given to them most effectively. As we step into the new year, we hear that DAG's Drishyakala is gearing up with new shows scheduled to open alongside the India Art Fair. Plans are afoot to open another museum space in Kolkata, in the heritage Currency Building. Against this background, there is a reason to be optimistic about the art scene in the coming year. While Amar Kanwar, K G Subramanyan, Nilima Sheikh and Nalini Malani have already shown at DOCUMENTA 13 and 14, we now have younger artists ready to participate. Among the shows lined up is one at the Nehru Centre curated by Bhavna Kakar, which will bring strong female voices from the chapters of history. Finally, of course, the most exciting art event of next year will be the new edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, curated by Shubigi Rao, opening in December. So, all things considered, there is much to look forward to in the coming year. Not only will Indian artists and curators be collaborating with prestigious galleries internationally but within the country too there will be a host of interesting art events. While the current favourites are MF Husain, FN Souza, SH Raza, VS Gaitonde and Manjit Bawa but 2020 is expected to make more favourites. And while RAQS Media has been making an impact internationally, it will continue to do so in the coming year. Also, there is hope that art will go the egalitarian way at last.

STUDIO CHAT 20 MINUTES

How would you describe *The Long Song*?

It is an adaptation of an Andrea Levy book, which centres on the pre-abolition Jamaica, which was quite a rebellious island, having two or three rebellion movements every year during slavery. It was a very pugnacious island. Andrea's book centres on a plantation called Amity, which is probably fictional, where the slaves are just catching on to the fact that there's freedom but in reality, there's just the whiff of it. Some of them are sceptical.

My character, Godfrey, is the head of slaves. He is sceptical because they've had trouble before and nothing has come of it. But this time, it might come to fruition. And Caroline Mortimer (played by Hayley Atwell), the lady of the house, is slightly incognisant of the fact that change is coming. She has adopted a girl called July, whom she clings on to as she is the only one who can help her communicate with the slaves.

Godfrey is very proud being the head of the slaves but then he sees that freedom is coming and he's on possibly the wrong side and he must take action.

What does this story mean to you?

My family is from Jamaica. Hence, I don't do 'who do you think you are' because all the two to three generations have been full of slavery. So it's in my family.

I did a documentary called *Caribbean Kid* recently, and we went back to my grandmother's house, which was at a plantation island. We went inside her house at the back and there were all these slave graves — small ones for babies, big ones for adults. That's how slaves were buried — on the property. So when I read *The Long Song*, I felt that it's an alternate slave narrative in which Andrea is saying that at some point, slaves would have utilised humour to just get through the day. And I really believe that. It wouldn't have been weeps every day. There would have been some moments where there was laughter.

REAL TO REEL

LENNY HENRY, who plays Godfrey in *The Long Song*, says that it shows how slaves of Jamaica utilised humour just to get through the day, which is what gives the audience an alternate side of looking at slavery. By TEAM VIVA

So Andrea has drawn a razor-thin line between the drama of it and where we are allowed to know that slaves had a sense of humour. In this drama, you'll see other sides of what slavery was like too. It's interesting, very much like the status quo. The given circumstances were that slavery existed, people had and were slaves, but they still had to behave as human beings throughout. There's no moustache twirling in it, which is what I like about it. Yes, some people were heavy-handed but there were people who were just human beings and were toxically affected by what they were doing to make their money.

You know about this world from your ancestry but do you think it's been represented on TV this way before?

I think it's the time to see it. We have seen a great change recently in terms of represented on screen and telling stories. So with the kind of good content coming up, people also want to watch and know about such chapters and people of history. We have heard a lot of stories about slavery like *Belle*, *12 Years a Slave*, *Django*, but this is important because it presents an alternate perspective on it. There's a zeitgeist in the air to tell stories about slavery but I think gatekeepers who are in charge of what we watch get a bit frightened, thinking 'is this fine?' But we say, show it, it's important for people to know.

I wasn't taught this stuff at my school. So I think it's important for young people to know what had happened. If you don't know your history, you can't predict your future. People mustn't be allowed to



sweep these things under the carpet. These are the stories that must be told. After you've watched something like this, you won't be able to say you didn't know, anymore.

Can you tell us who you play and what your way into him was?

It's interesting being an actor now. I used to be a comedian and I

was only concerned if things were funny or not. Now being an actor, you're more concerned with if things were true or not. Depending on who's directing you, sometimes, it's heightened or more naturalistic, but generally, you're trying to represent something truthful.

My character, Godfrey, who is the head slave at the Amity planta-



tion in Jamaica, is described in the book as a man who's past the age of being strong, or maybe, 'a man' or a lion. But he's still a proud being. He runs things. It took me some time to get to where he's coming from. And I kept thinking about my father actually, who came to Britain in the 1950s and worked really hard. He wore his pyjamas under his clothes because it was too cold. Very austere person, he had a sense of humour but quite a lot of schadenfreude with it. He would laugh if something went wrong. For instance, someone slipping over in the snow might make him laugh but he wouldn't laugh at Frank Spencer on TV. He had this quite severe turn to his mouth. He would tease but you would barely know you were being teased until you saw a flicker of something in his eyes. So there's a lot of that in Godfrey. He's got a sense of humour but he keeps it very firmly entrenched. He challenges Caroline Mortimer and teases her but she doesn't know she's being teased. There's a fantastic turning point, which I won't reveal, because once he realises there's a possibility of freedom, he does realise that he's been slaving all these years and treating it as a career.

He has to make some decisions about what kind of a person he wants to be and I think that's a fantastic story arc. A character who is entrenched in slavery, has been strangely mind-warped into believ-

ing that this is a good thing to be doing — bossing the other slaves around, throwing his weight, thinking he's the boss — but not being paid for it properly (because he's got a wife and family to take care of), he is also a slave. Then suddenly, he realises there's only this whiff of freedom. 'What would I do if I got freedom? Would I stay at Amity? Would I leave? Would I continue this job? Is this a career or is this slavery? It's slavery!' It all unfolds for him later. He teaches July about surviving. Very subtly, but he's keeping an eye out for her as there's a fatherly aspect to his character. He has a very sly, deadpan wit.

Has there been a particular scene or a moment when filming that meant something to you or transported you back?

I think the scene when Caroline is making huge plans for a Christmas party and Godfrey is patiently trying to explain her that she doesn't have the money to afford all these grand plans and it all explodes. But there are a few moments when he is teasing her and all his colleagues can see that but she can't. Suddenly, it becomes very apparent and she explodes.

In that scene, you get a very strong sense of the line — Godfrey is behind the line — but there are moments when he creeps up to the line, having to hold in the laughter. And when he crosses it, there's an

explosion. I think in all areas — whether you're in jail, a concentration camp, in slavery — any of those restrictive and constraining places, there are those people who push it ahead. Godfrey does that too. He tries really hard. Well, it takes a lot of bravery and guts to be that person.

Did you meet Andrea?

I was very lucky to be allowed to be into Andrea's preparation when she was writing something as a part of another project that we were discussing together. It meant we got to speak a lot and we got to be friends. At the time, she told me to read *The Long Song* and I now see why she did because Godfrey was in there.

What is the appeal of *The Long Song*?

I'd say it's Andrea Levy. She should be like the British kitemark (a UK product and service quality trade mark) for standard. Fantastic writer of a fantastic story. And an alternate perspective to the slave experience that you perhaps haven't seen before. This is an iconic and fascinating story that utilises humour to say tough things. And I don't think that we have seen that before. I think we have only seen the very serious, dramatic and shocking experiences of those who lived the life of a slave. But we have never seen all that undercut by a sly sense of humour, with an unreliable narrator. We've never had that.

And I think Tamara does such a good job of playing July with a deftness of touch. There is no sledgehammer stuff going on here. It's rather very delicate and light. There's humour when there needs to be humour. There's silliness. But it doesn't flinch on the truth of what was going on. And I think that's why you should watch it because here, you will not only find something that you can watch and enjoy but you also say, 'Oh my god, that happened.'

(*The Long Song* airs every Monday at 10 pm on AXN.)



MAKE THE MOST OF IT

VISHAL SURI, managing director, SOTC Travel, suggests that 2020 will be the year when travellers will be experimenting with the unusual, including short hauls and spirituality

New age Indian travellers are moving away from the typical traditional holiday plans and are constantly on the lookout for distinctive and off-beat experiences such as cruise, adventure, solo, knowledge-driven, cultural, rural and religious tourism. Every year, different trends emerge in the travel and tourism industry, which cater to the desires of wanderers. Here are some trends that are set to revolutionise the tourism industry in 2020.

Technology in travel

Through smartphones and social media, a number of tools and technologies are influencing the way people travel and industry players operate worldwide. The travel sector has grown tremendously due to digital advancements like AI (Artificial Intelligence), voice-based applications, big data analytics, VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality). This will introduce a new segment of tourism in India — virtual tourism. If through smartphone technology, a traveller can have all the pertinent information s/he needs to have about the trip, through AR, a traveller will be able to teleport herself/himself to the farthest corner of the world. Indian travellers are largely looking for convenience while also increasingly becoming bolder in their pursuit for exploration. Hence, travellers, especially those belonging to the Gen Y and the Gen Z, will adapt to it enthusiastically.

Micro trips

Indians are increasingly showing an intensified appetite for mini escapes of three to five days to a fairly nearby destination, commonly known as



short hauls. With the increasing connectivity of flights, on-arrival visa facilities, on-demand car rentals, budget accommodation, increasing levels of disposable income, an irresistible appetite for exploring the world as well as current fast-paced lifestyles, these short hauls will be gaining more traction. They will become the 'most preferred type of holiday' among a large number of travellers. In 2020, more international destinations will become the favourites in the sphere of bite-sized travel.

Personalisation and customisation

Indian travellers are actively moving away from the



traditional and rigid travel itinerary structures and with the rising internet penetration, they are exposed to and are fervently seeking unique and novel experiences that they wish to explore. Tourists today don't just want to visit a new destination, they want to immerse themselves in the local culture, soaking in the atmosphere, cuisine and other ele-

ments that are unique to that region. Customising travel plans as per their own desires helps such tourists make instant and on-the-go decisions about the holi-

day, which include a variety of activities too. Personalisation and customisation of travel plans is thus a trend that is going to rule 2020.

Bleisure travel

Commonly known as bizcation, bleisure travel combines both travel for work or business and leisure, which is going to take the lead in 2020. Today, Indian travellers place greater emphasis on viewing the world and they don't want to let go of any opportunity for the same. With the newer generation of travellers stepping into the workplace and jet-setting off on work-related trips, they will be enterprising in their approach to make the most of their journey and tick off another destination on their bucket

list. Professionals will be increasingly adding weekends or even weeks to work trips, whether solo, with a partner or family.

Mini moon

With most of the newly-married populace leading busy lives, it's difficult for them to take off for a large chunk of time for their honeymoon. Thus 'mini-moon' travel will be a new and growing option for them as it offers a relaxed experience in a minimal amount of time. Through this, the couples can still have the best experience during a honeymoon right after their big day, followed by planning a long haul vacation later, in the future.

Adventure tourism

It has been observed that Indians have become bolder in their vacation choices with a large number of travellers actively opting for travel that ensures an adrenaline rush. Thus adventure tourism, which has been pick-

ing up steam during the last year, will reach new heights in 2020. With the spike in demand for this type of tourism, many destinations, both domestic and international, are making appropriate arrangements for thrill-seekers and are introducing newer adventure sports.

Spiritual travel

One of the biggest travel trends, which is expected to grow manifold in 2020, is spiritual travel. Leisure combined with spiritual journeys is witnessing an increased demand not just from the older generations but also from the younger travellers who are interested in seeking spiritual harmony. Travellers will want to incorporate spiritual places or healing retreats, both nationally or internationally in their trips in the coming year. India being an important centre of religious history has a number of destinations that will see a surge in interest from Indian and international tourists. More Indians will opt to travel to pilgrimages and popular religious cities.

Cruise travel

The sector has witnessed double-digit growth in the recent times. This is not limited to just families or new couples as even younger travellers are opting for cruise holidays over other traditional vacation spots. Given that cruises are becoming extremely stylised and offering multi-destination routes along with a range of amenities including adventure activities, entertainment shows, and authentic cuisines, they are sure to be included in more travel itineraries. More cruise companies will be offering affordable packages as there will be a surge in interest from varied segment of travellers who wish to experience this type of travel.



CONVERSATION 30 MINUTES

A conversation with Mo Rocca is akin to his *Mobituaries* podcasts and his new book of Rocca-style obituaries: A swooping exploration of people and things past, with the author playing connect-the-dots in entertaining and enlightening fashion.

For instance, he starts discussing parallels between US presidential brother Billy Carter and British royal sister Princess Margaret and the second-fiddle roles they played. Carter is in Rocca's book; assessing Margaret's similarities appeared to be a sudden fancy.

"My fantasy PSAT has a question, (Queen) Elizabeth is to Margaret as Jimmy Carter is to ...," said Rocca, a "CBS Sunday Morning" correspondent known for his droll humor.

Mobituaries: Great Lives Worth Reliving (Simon & Schuster) takes on obituaries of people, as is customary, but includes those whose exploits were ignored or who Rocca thinks deserve reappraisals. He also digs up background for products (there's a tribute to the "behemoth known as the station wagon," for one), fictional characters and historical milestones.

In an interview, he discussed how he approached the book (written with Jonathan Greenberg) and its browsing-friendly format that makes it a standout for bathroom reading (a compliment, which Rocca said he took as such) and the rare example that has footnotes. Quotes have been edited for clarity and length.

Given your access to TV and podcast audiences, why write a book?

There are certain things that are easier to write about than to do an audio program about, things like the station wagon. And my head has long been stuffed with a lot of factoids and arca, and that's kind of fun on a page. The book has what I call 'graveyard.' After each essay, I wanted there to be a graveyard that would surprise you in its relationship to the essay that came before it. So, for instance, Sammy Davis Jr is followed by other famous one-eyed people, Thomas Paine is followed by other famous disembodied body parts. And I think that that looks nice on the page."

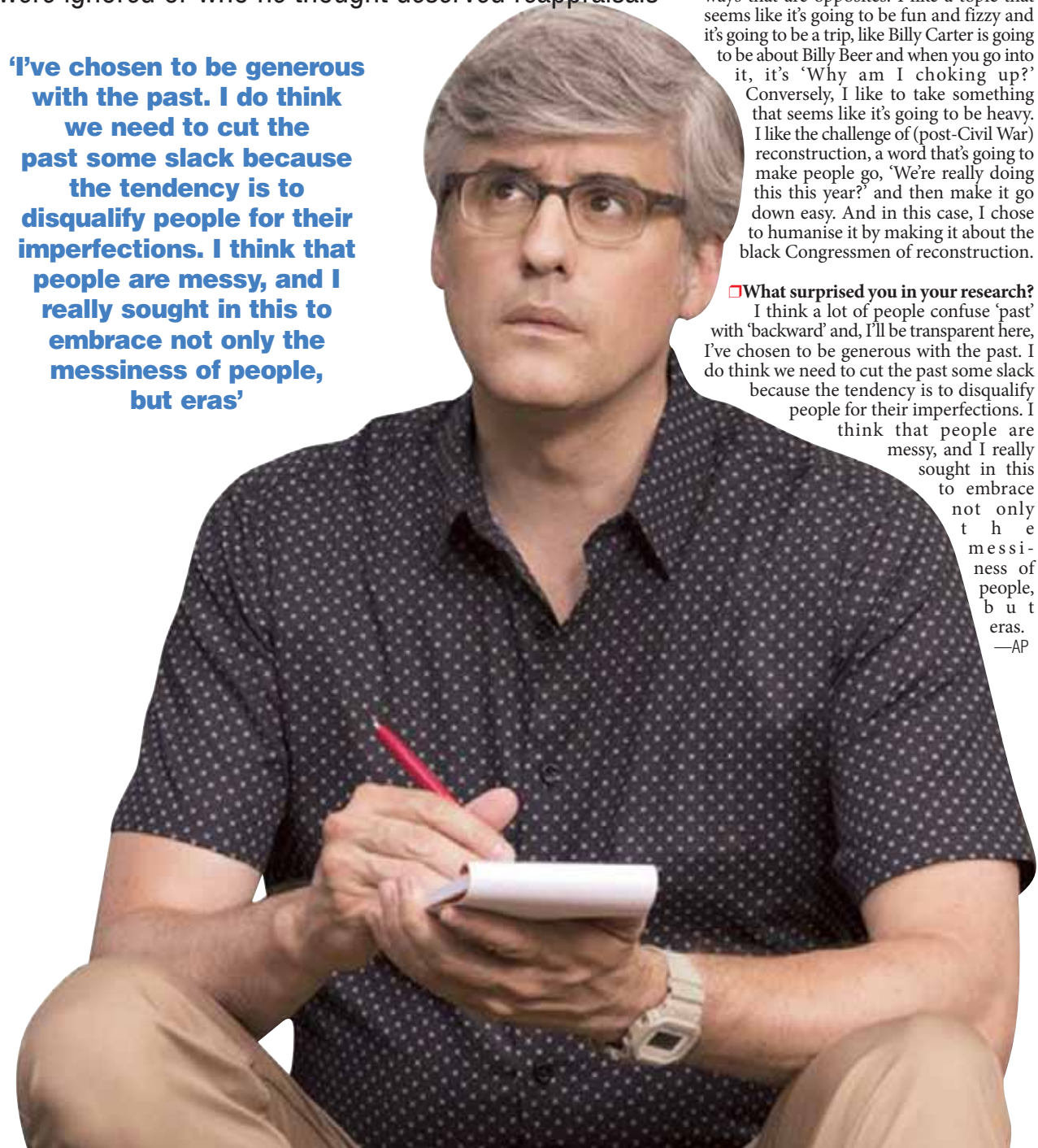
The book ranges so far afield with information on so many topics. Have you been gathering string for years?

I have gathered string for a long time, ideas that have been circulating. My colleague, the film critic David Edelstein, helped me with this one: I'm a big Streisand fan, as you can probably tell from the book, and drawn to the idea that the movie *Funny Girl*, when you watch it, you forget that it's the story of this person, Fanny Brice. You think you're watching the story of Barbra Streisand. At least I think that, and it's because the performance is so eclipsing and volcanic that it kind of displaces the person it's about. And this is the kind of book that had a place

A lively read

Humourist MO ROCCA's *Mobituaries* takes on obituaries of people, including those whose exploits were ignored or who he thought deserved reappraisals

'I've chosen to be generous with the past. I do think we need to cut the past some slack because the tendency is to disqualify people for their imperfections. I think that people are messy, and I really sought in this to embrace not only the messiness of people, but eras'



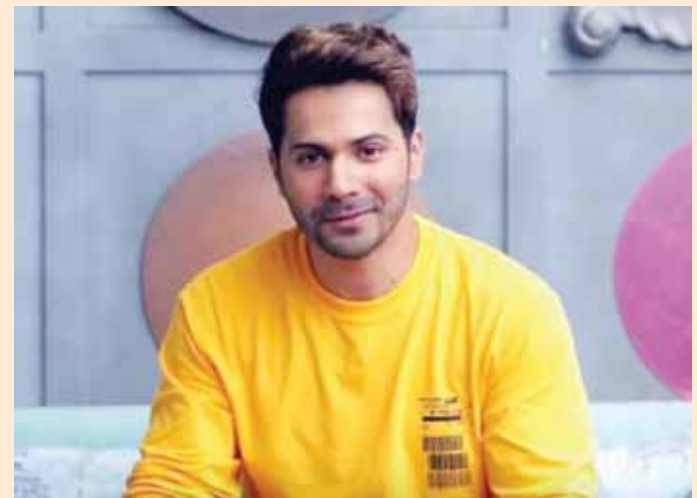
for that, and then the 'graveyard' has other people, historic figures, who were eclipsed by the people who played them.

As the footnotes demonstrate, the book was thoroughly researched. Is it important to you that readers understand it is fact-based history?

It is important to me. Look, I like to surprise the reader and there are two different ways that are opposites. I like a topic that seems like it's going to be fun and fizzy and it's going to be a trip, like Billy Carter is going to be about Billy Beer and when you go into it, it's 'Why am I choking up?' Conversely, I like to take something that seems like it's going to be heavy. I like the challenge of (post-Civil War) reconstruction, a word that's going to make people go, 'We're really doing this this year?' and then make it go down easy. And in this case, I chose to humanise it by making it about the black Congressmen of reconstruction.

What surprised you in your research?

I think a lot of people confuse 'past' with 'backward' and, I'll be transparent here, I've chosen to be generous with the past. I do think we need to cut the past some slack because the tendency is to disqualify people for their imperfections. I think that people are messy, and I really sought in this to embrace not only the messiness of people, but eras. —AP



SHAKE A LEG

Actor VARUN DHAWAN will next be seen in *Street Dancer 3D* and claims that over the next 10 years, India will take over the global dance scene

The kind of talent Indian dancers have, I can say proudly we are one of the best countries when it comes to dance. In the next 10 years, India is going to take over the dance scene. Dancers in our country struggle a lot because dance never used to be considered as a profession," said Varun, at the launch of the song *Garmi* from *Street Dancer 3D* in Mumbai. He was accompanied by co-actor Nora Fatehi, the film's director Remo D'Souza and producer Lizelle D'Souza.

He added: "I have spent so much time with dancers — and Remo sir is one of them — because he started as a background dancer. It gets really tough when parents of dancers or society don't look at dance as a career. They (Parents) feel that their kids are damaging their family's reputation by dancing because it is not work. I feel that it's work. They (dancers) travel to train in the morning and then reach their dancing venues. Sometimes they practice on the road, so this film is dedicated to all the dancers because if you can feel the music then anybody can dance."

Street Dancer 3D will clash with the Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari-directed *Panga*, starring Kangana Ranaut, on January 24, about which Varun said: "Ashwiny and (her husband and filmmaker) Nitesh sir are peo-

ple I have met on a few occasions. Kangana (Ranaut) is someone I have known for a lot of years and I admire her work. I feel both films are very different and we are in 2020, so I think we shouldn't think about box-office clash. I feel people should watch both the films. This film (*Street Dancer 3D*) genuinely marks my return to doing films for kids. For the longest time, I did not make a film for kids and when I say kids, there is a kid inside all of us so. So, this film is for all of you. I hope kids and parents will have a good time watching the film."

Street Dancer 3D highlights India-Pakistan issues through the scope of dance and music.

Talking about the film's message, Varun said: "Our characters in the film are dancing for India, and (they are) Pakistani immigrants. I think your motive behind being a dancer matters, and it drove me to do the film. Dance is not only for enjoyment but through the medium you can express a lot and you can change lives. In our country, when a kid is born or at birthday parties and at weddings, we dance a lot. I feel we are a very expressive dancing nation."

Street Dancer 3D stars Varun with Shraddha Kapoor, Nora Fatehi, and Prabhu Deva.

