

OPINION 8
WHY WE
NEED DATA

WORLD 12
CHINA CONVICTS 3 RESEARCHERS
INVOLVED IN GENE-EDITED BABIES

SPORT 15
CITY EASE PAST
BLADES TEST

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NOT AFRAID
OF FAILURES:
JOHN ABRAHAM
14 VIVACITY

THE COLDEST DAY

119-year record broken, Delhi's max temp dips to 9.4° C

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi is experiencing the coldest winter in over a century. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) declared Monday as a coldest day in the national Capital in 119 years with maximum temperature dipping to 9.4 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung (official) observatory. The Regional Weather Forecast Centre (RWFC) has predicted no relief from cold wave on Tuesday.

Sixteen flights were diverted and four cancelled at the Delhi airport on Monday due to heavy fog, an official said. Many trains were running late.

Citing 24 hours temperature trend, the IMD said the Aya Nagar observatory recorded day temperature at 7.8 degrees Celsius, followed by Ridge 8.4 degrees Celsius, Palam 9 and Lodi Road 9.2 degrees Celsius.

Forecasting weekly weather for the national Capital, the RWFC has predicted rain on January 1, 2 and 3 while December 31 is still tagged as "cold wave" day. There will be no respite before January 3 as minimum temperature will fluctuate around 3-4 degrees Celsius, while maximum temperature will be around 16



People walk on a road amid early morning dense fog in New Delhi on Monday

Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

degrees Celsius January 1 onwards.

Low visibility in Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) delayed thirty trains. Kuldeep Srivastava, head RWFC, said the day temperature was almost half of what is considered nor-

mal for this day of the year. "Today was the coldest day recorded for the December," Kuldeep said.

Around 3.30 pm, the IMD announced that Delhi is likely to break previous records of cold as maximum temperature

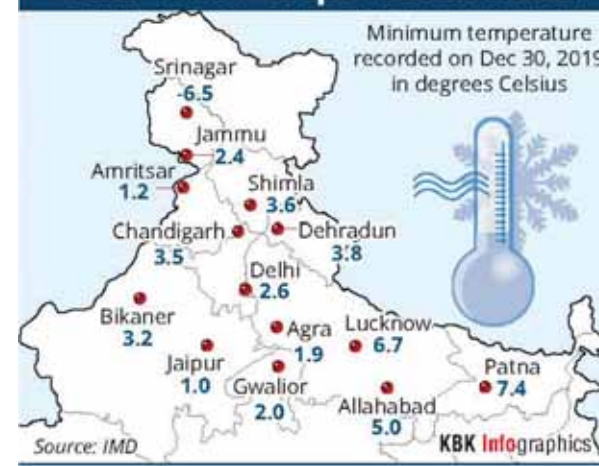
was recorded 9.4 degrees Celsius. "Delhi is likely to record the coldest day today in last 119 years for December month as day temperature till 14.30 IST of today has been unusually following a coldest trend with Safdarjung record-

ing 9.4 degrees Celsius and Palam 9.0 degrees Celsius," IMD tweeted.

On Monday, a thick blanket of fog engulfed Delhi and the minimum temperature settled at 2.6 degrees Celsius.

Continued on Page 4

Cold Wave Grips North India



Car plunges into G Noida canal as fog blocks visibility, 6 killed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

around 11.30 pm on Sunday.

The deceased have been identified as Mahesh (35), Kishan Lal (50), Neeresh (17), Ram Khiladi (75), Mallu (12) and Netrapal (40), all residents of Sambhal district in Uttar Pradesh. Police said there was one more car accompanying them and they all were going to Delhi when the unfortunate incident occurred.

Continued on Page 4

Aditya makes it to dad's Cabinet, Ajit is Dy CM

Sanjay Raut's brother misses berth as Maha Cabinet size full

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday sprang a surprise by including his son Aditya Thackeray in his team and carried out his first full-fledged expansion of his Ministry by inducting Ajit Pawar as Deputy Chief Minister and 35 new Ministers in his Cabinet.

With the expansion, the Cabinet size has gone up to 43, the maximum for 288-member Maharashtra Assembly.

Ajit Pawar, who returned as the Deputy Chief Minister of the State for a record fourth time, and 35 other Ministers, including Aditya Thackeray and former Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, were sworn into office by Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari at an oath-taking ceremony held on the Vidhan Bhavan premises in south



Shiv Sena leader Aditya Thackeray greets his father and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray after taking oath as a Minister during the swearing-in ceremony for State Cabinet expansion at Vidhan Bhavan in Mumbai on Monday

Mumbai.

Of the Ministers who were administered oath by the Governor, 25 are of the Cabinet rank, while the remaining 10 are Ministers of State.

With the induction of 36 new Ministers, including the Deputy Chief Minister, the

number of Ministers in the Uddhav Thackeray Cabinet has risen to 43, including that of the Chief Minister.

Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut's MLA-brother Sunil Raut couldn't find a place in the Cabinet expansion.

Continued on Page 4

Priyanka communalising CAA protests: UP Dy CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma countered Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on her remarks against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday and accused her of denigrating Hinduism.

Addressing a Press conference barely two hours after the Congress general secretary made certain remarks against Adityanath, before returning to New Delhi after winding up a four-day visit to the State capital, Sharma said, "Priyanka Gandhi stands with those who indulged in (anti-CAA) violence." Priyanka hit out at Chief Minister on Monday, saying there was no place for violence or "revenge" in the country.

In a jibe at Adityanath days after he said those who damaged public property during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the ensuing violence would be made to pay, the Congress general secretary said saffron denotes Hinduism, a religion that does not advocate violence or "revenge".

Hitting back at Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi, Sharma said the clash of religions should not be started for the sake of politics.

"The Congress general secretary has accused the saffron along with the Chief Minister,"



Sharma alleged. "Yogi ji ne dharam ko dhaaran kiya hai (Yogiji has imbibed a religion). The Hindu religion never teaches to do any harm to anyone. Hindu religion does not speak about insulting any other religion. Hindu religion is very huge and you are saying that a person (imbibing Hindu religion) is doing such a thing," he said.

"You have started a clash of religions for your politics. Please do not do this. This is not the question of Hindu and Muslims. It is the question of India's future and national unity," he added.

Sharma said no one would leave saffron for the fear of expletives. "The more you hurl abuses, the more our self-confidence will increase," he added.

To a question, Sharma clarified that Adityanath had used the word 'badla' (revenge) to convey that vandals will have to pay for the damage caused to public property during protests against the amended citizenship law.

No place for violence, revenge in country: PGV

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra lashed out at the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh over police "atrocities" on innocents during protests against Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC), saying that the action was "illegal" and had no legal basis.

"I think it is happening for the first time that a chief minister has made a statement like 'badla liya jayega' (we will take revenge). And this is what is happening in the state," Priyanka said while addressing media persons in Lucknow on Monday.

Elaborating further, the Congress general secretary said that innocent protesters were being targeted by the UP police and administration.

"When a chief minister warns of taking revenge from the people, then what do you expect from the state machinery. To follow the dictates of the chief minister, the administration will violate all norms by confiscating properties and



harassing people," she said.

"A saffron clad chief minister warning of revenge is very unfortunate. In Gita too, Lord Krishna has talked about 'karuna' (sympathy), not of revenge. Lord Ram too is a symbol of 'karuna' and in Shiva's 'baraat', every community danced. Saffron is a symbol of country's tradition and Hinduism promotes 'karuna', but the chief minister, by warning of revenge, had violated all traditions of the country. This country's soul has no place for violence. Krishna and Rama

preached kindness. The chief minister (Yogi Adityanath) wears saffron robe, he should follow Hindu religion," she said.

Priyanka demanded that a sitting or retired judge of the High Court should probe every case of violence before the government and police moved ahead for prosecuting those arrested or confiscating their properties. She said that all legal process should be completed before confiscating property of persons accused in the violence.

"I went to meet a family in Bijnor. Their 21-year-old son, Suleman, who had come home on vacation, had gone to the local mosque for namaz. Suddenly, the news came that he had been hit by a police bullet," Priyanka said. Suleman was killed during protests against the amended citizenship law on December 20 and his family claimed that he was shot by the police during protests. They later filed an FIR against six policemen on Sunday.

She also claimed that more than 5,000 people had been detained across the state and many others clandestinely held.

Idyllic Kolams speak their minds on CAA

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Agitations by political parties usually bring anxious moments in the minds of ordinary people for fear of violence. The opposition against the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 drawing thousands of people to rallies across Tamil Nadu is no exception as there is apprehension that the law and order may go haywire.

But the last two days saw the anti-CAA demonstrations in Tamil Nadu taking a new turn. There are no rallies holding up traffic or throwing normal life out of gear. The agitation has women as protagonists and they are using an age-old Tamil custom to give vent to their resentment against the new legislation. Kolams or Rangolis

are the new tools employed by the anti-CAA demonstrators. A day in the life of an ordinary Hindu family begins in Tamil Nadu with the lady of the house cleaning the courtyard or the entrance and decorating the area with Kolams made of white rice powder.

They draw Kolams in different sizes, shapes and models. "It is a way to welcome gods, prosperity and happiness. The expertise with which the Kolams are drawn is a measure of the devotion and dedication the lady has for gods as well as her house," said Vijayashree Ramesh, advocate and social activist.

However, many houses in Mylapore, Adyar and even in Boat Club Roads spotted pro-CAA Kolams making it a



Kolams drawn in front of the bungalows of Stalin and Kanimozhi in Chennai on Monday morning

Kolam war in Tamil Nadu. The season being Margazhi (the period from December 15 to January 15), extra care is

taken to make big and beautiful Kolams. There is no need to mention that this is a practice being followed only by believers in Sanatana Dharma. Since the law enforcing agencies got tough with the anti-CAA rallyists, the latter devised an ingenious style of protest to express their resentment.

Women activists belonging to the DMK and the CPI(M) assembled at Besant Nagar, a high-end residential area and started drawing Kolams with anti-CAA messages and slogans inscribed in them. Taken aback by the intruders who drew a kind of "surrealistic" Kolams in front of their houses, the residents opposed the art work because the contents were not in tune with tradition.

Following objections raised by the residents, the activists moved over to the public road where they started drawing Kolams with anti-CAA mes-

sages. But the police detained them under the charges of disturbing public order and they withdrew for the day.

MK Stalin, DMK president, condemned the police action on the rallyists and termed it as authoritarianism of the despicable AIADMK Government.

By Monday morning, the anti-CAA groups were back, with energy and vigour. They were inspired by the Kolams drawn in front of the residences of Stalin's palatial residence and step-sister Kanimozhi's bungalow. Both the imposing buildings spotted for the first time Kolams condemning the CAA. Kolams were a taboo in the Karunanidhi household till Monday.

Agitations too could be entertaining!

Navy bans smart phone, FB on job

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Close on the heels of an espionage racket busted within its ranks and the arrest of seven sailors, the Indian Navy has banned the use of smart phones and Facebook by its personnel within naval establishments and on warships. The arrested sailors were honey-trapped and allegedly blackmailed through social media to pass on sensitive information.

"Directive on use of smart phones and social media for naval personnel were always there. The new instructions on smart phones are that these cannot be used within naval establishments and naval plat-

forms. Social media, use of Facebook, is banned for all naval personnel," Navy sources said here on Monday. For messaging apps, instructions are expected to be issued shortly, they added.

The latest orders are in line with ensuring the security of information, officials said stating the recent incident involving the seven sailors in Visakhapatnam has also been taken into consideration while arriving at this decision. "We do understand that this may come at the cost of some discomfort, however, the decision is in the larger national interest, they added.

The latest order comes

Continued on Page 4

Ansari urges PM, CM to expedite Ram temple construction

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prominent Muslim litigant in the Babri Masjid case, Iqbal Ansari, appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to expedite the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"When the court has given its verdict in favour of Ram temple, then there should not be any delay in the construction of a grand temple," Ansari told media persons in Ayodhya on Monday.

Further urging people of all communities to support the construction of Ram temple, he said that facilities in Ayodhya like wide roads, good guest houses for pilgrims and other things be enhanced so that people from all over the world could come here to have a glimpse of the Ram temple.

Ansari also demanded that the temple be constructed in such a way that devotees could see the Saryu river from it.

"Besides, Ayodhya railway station should be a replica of the Ram temple," he suggested.

Iqbal Ansari had refused to go for a review of the November 9 Supreme Court judgement on Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case and has been repeatedly supporting construction of Ram temple.

The apex court has asked the government to set up a trust within three months of the decision, that will be responsible for the construction of Ram temple while Muslims would be given five acres of land in Ayodhya for construction of a mosque.

Disability not a hindrance to a person's progress: CM Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that disability never hindered a person's progress and his/her talent only needed an opportunity and an able teacher to conquer the world.

"Every such person has some special skills. But one must find a qualified teacher who can recognise the skill and then the individual is sure to succeed. There are many such examples. Eminent scientist Stephen Hawking, who uncovered the mystery of universe, is a great example of this," Yogi said.

The chief minister said that the state government would extend all possible support to Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Divyang University to establish it as an example in the country.

"Those educational institutions that do good work never face any hindrance. They will continue to get full support of the government for improvement in their work," he said.

Yogi said that Chitrakoot, that gave refuge to Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram in times of crisis, has been the carrier of India's spiritual and cultural tradition since time immemorial.

He said that had the educational institutes of the country adopted the gurukul tradition of Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Divyang University, they would not have become the centre of anarchy.

"Rambhadracharya engaged in several public welfare activities and is the ideal for the country and the world. The Jagadguru started the process of building personal-



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at the convocation of Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Divyang University in Chitrakoot on Monday

JAGADGURU RAMBHADRACHARYA STARTED THE PROCESS OF BUILDING PERSONALITY AND TRANSFORMED 'NAR' INTO 'NARAYAN'

ity and transformed 'Nar' into 'Narayan'. This divyang university has done a great work of attaching importance to neglected people of society," the chief minister said.

Yogi further said that the concept of not deviating from truth and religion and considering parents as deities, the concept of acharya and 'atithi devo bhava' were followed in gurukuls. "This teaching should be imparted in educational institutions and colleges. Other institutions should learn from this university," Yogi said. The chief minister said that the Jagadguru always kept asking him about Ram Janmabhoomi.

"We always talked about building the temple. Now the court's verdict has paved way for construction of Ram temple," he said.

Yogi said that the state government had made arrangements of ramps and equipment in the buildings for the use of persons with disabilities.

"The state government has made arrangements for representation of persons with disabilities in government service of the state. Besides, arrangements have been made to increase the pension of PwDs (people with disabilities)," he said.

Spl UP assembly session today to ratify SC/ST quota on LS seats

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day-long special session of Uttar Pradesh legislature has been convened on Tuesday to ratify the Constitution (126th) Amendment Bill to extend reservations for SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and state assemblies for another 10 years.

The bill was passed by Lok Sabha on December 10 and by Rajya Sabha on December 13. Reservation for SCs/STs given for the past 70 years in Lok Sabha and state assemblies, is due to end on January 25, 2020.

Meanwhile, reservation for Anglo-Indians in the form of 'nomination' to assemblies is set to expire on January 25, as the bill does not extend the reservation to the community.

The bill has to be ratified by 50 per cent of assemblies before it comes into force.

Official sources said on Monday that the special session would be brief and there would be no debate on the bill as both Houses of Parliament had passed it and UP legislature could not amend it.

The Business Advisory Committee of UP Assembly met on Monday to fix the agenda for the special session. It decided that there would be no Question Hour.

Sambhal deputy collector sacked for irregularities

Lucknow (PNS): Deputy collector of Sambhal, Omvir Singh Yaduvanshi, was dismissed from service on charges of corruption by the state government for which a notice was issued on Monday. Yaduvanshi was promoted to UP State Civil Services from the post of tehsildar. While posted as tehsildar in Kol tehsil of Aligarh, he had transferred title ownership of government land worth ₹5 crore to a private person in a fraudulent manner.

In November, the state government had sacked ADM Ashok Kumar Shukla posted in Hathras for putting up a post on social media against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in 2018 and for illegally allocating government land to a resident of Hardoi when he was posted as SDM in 2016. Action was also taken against another PCS officer, Ashok Kumar Lal, who was sacked after charges of corruption against him were found to be true. Four more allegations against Lal are under investigation.

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE	
Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecommunication)/Northern Railway/Lucknow division/Lucknow, for and on behalf of President of India invites E-tenders in Single packet system from the experienced & established contractors satisfying minimum eligibility criteria for the under noted work:	
Tender No.	1. 200/S&T/2019-20 (2 nd Call) 2. 192/S&T/2019-20 (2 nd Call)
Name of work	1. 200/S&T/2019-20 (2 nd Call) "Hiring of multi utility road vehicles (Non AC-Tavera/Scorpio/Safari/Innova or similar) on monthly basis for two years for the use of ADSTE/RBL, ADSTE/FO, ADSTE/SLN, ADSTE/BSB & ADSTE/PRG in Lucknow Division. 2. 192/S&T/2019-20 (2 nd Call) "Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of Electronic Interlocking Systems (Model MEI633) of Medha make at AJGAIN, AMAUSI, HARAJUNI, HARAJUNI & KANPUR BRIDGE Station over Lucknow division for two years."
Approximate Cost	1. ₹30,00,935.70 2. ₹61,01,240.58
Cost of Tender Form	1. ₹3,000.00 2. ₹5,000.00
Earnest Money	1. ₹60,000.00 2. ₹1,22,000.00
Completion period	1. Two Year 2. Two Year
Last date and time of submission of tender document 28.01.2020 (15:00 hrs.)	
Website particulars and notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in Office of the Sr. DSTE, DRM office Complex/Northern Railway, Lucknow
*The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. * For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. * No Manual offers are acceptable. Cost of tender document and Earnest Money will be acceptable online through net banking or payment gateway only.	
T. Notice No.	713-Sig/TN-2002(2 nd Call) & 192/S&T/2019-20 (2 nd Call)/S&T/19-20
Dated :	27.12.2019 4154/19
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Branch Office: 6th Floor, Synergy Tower, A-131, Block-A, Sector-62, Noida 201301 Registered Office: - Reliance Centre, 6th Floor, South Wing, Near Prabhat Colony, Santacruz (East), Mumbai - 400055						
DEMAND NOTICE						
Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from Reliance Home Finance Ltd. We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non Performing Asset on the respective dates mentioned hereunder, in the books of RHF in accordance with the directives relating to asset classification issued by the National Housing Bank, consequent to the Authorized Officer of Reliance Home Finance Ltd. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices on respective dates mentioned herein below under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 calling upon the following borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices.						
The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice same.						
Name of the borrower / address	Co-Borrower And Guarantor Name	NPA Date	Date of Demand Notice	Outstanding Amount	Loan Amount	Property Address of Secured Assets
Deshraj singh yadav House no 655/a/2/1440(16) Adil nagar lucknow Uttar pradesh - 226021	Amit Singh Yadav, Rama Devi Yadav	13th-December-2019	24 th -December-2019	Rs.14,75,764/- As on 24th-December-2019 (against Loan Account No. RHAHLKN00062681) And Rs.10,05,530/- As on 24th-December-2019 (against Loan Account No. RHAHLKN00062684)	Rs. 14,50,000/- And Rs. 9,70,000/-	All that part and parcel of property bearing House No.-16, Adil Nagar, Near Bhuiyan Devi Mandir, Kalyanpur West, Lucknow-226021(U.P)
Vikas singh 582/114 kanpur road bagh no 2 satyaklok colony manas Nagar LKO lucknow Uttar Pradesh industrial area Lucknow-226023	Rama Singh	13th-December-2019	24 th -December-2019	Rs. 12,58,121/- As on 24th-December-2019 (against Loan Account No. RHAHLKN00063974)	Rs. 12,05,000/-	All that part and parcel of property bearing plot no. - 16 a/2, khasara no. 526 rahimabad, (trimurti nagar), Sarojni Nagar, Lucknow- 226012
the circumstances as aforesaid, the notice is hereby given to the above borrowers, co-borrowers and/or their guarantors (where ever applicable) to pay the outstanding dues as mentioned above along with future interest and applicable charges within 60 days from the date of the publication of this notice failing which further steps will be taken after the expiry of 60 days of the date of this notice against the secured assets including taking possession of the secured assets of the borrowers and the mortgagors under Section 13(4) of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and the applicable rules thereunder. Please note that under Section 13 (13) of the said Act, no Borrower shall, transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise any of his secured assets referred to in the notice, without prior written consent of the secured creditor.						
Place: Lucknow, Date: 31-12-2019						
Sd/-, Authorized Officer, Reliance Home Finance Limited						

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I Gracias Alvicias Fernandes S/o Aloy Sius Joseph Fernandes R/o 202, Tulip Apartment, Ashok Marg, Lucknow has changed my name to Gracias Alvi Sius Fernandes in all purposes and this is my correct name.

NOTICE

I Manju Srivastava has lost/misplaced original free hold deed doc. No. 11830 dated 22.10.08 and will deed doc. no. 177 dated 30.04.05 and mutation letter of property house no. 60 sector I, Aliganj Lucknow. Pls inform Mob. 8874612000 in case anyone found.

NOTICE

I, Seema Bano W/o Ziaur Rahman Ansari, R/o 100/5, Game Wali Gali, Aminabad, Lucknow-226018, informs that I have changed my name from Sameena to Seema Bano, So in future I will be identified my correct name Seema Bano in all future purpose.

NOTICE

Army no 15439371Y Rank NK Jayprakash Bind Unit HQ Camp AMC C&C Lucknow here by declared that in my Army service record my wife name wrongly mentioned Ruchi Bhadri his actual & correct name is Ruchi Bind for all future purposes.

LOST & FOUND

This is to inform that 14 nos forms 31/38 of Commercial Tax Department bearing serial nos 2345771, 1385117, 1385118, 1385119, 1073026, 1073028, 0796294, 0583601, 2144107, 1134826, 0242689, 0242692, 0242693 and 2382387 have been misplaced somewhere near Hazratganj. Finders are requested to inform Mr. Sunil Kumar Nigam, Sr. Manager (Accts.), UPTEC Computer Consultancy Ltd., 16, Rana Pratap Marg, Hazratganj, Lucknow-226001 Tel. 0522-4003304, 4067554

Anti-CAA protests

UPCC demands judicial probe

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Congress has demanded a judicial inquiry into the "unlawful conduct" of UP police during violent protests against Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

A delegation of Congress leaders led by UPCC chief Ajay Kumar Lallu met Governor Anandiben Patel and submitted a memorandum in this regard on Monday.

The 14-page memorandum said that the police was for maintaining law and order and preservation of peace but during anti-CAA and anti-NRC protests, the conduct of UP Police had been observed and reported to be "patently unlawful, destructive of the rule of law and repressive of honest citizens".

It said that Congress leader Sadaf Jafar was arrested by the police while she was making a video during protests in Lucknow on December 19. It also said that 48 other people were arrested in the vicinity the same day and charged with the same offence.

The memorandum also mentioned violent incidents in Kanpur, Firozabad, Bulandshahr and Aligarh Muslim University, Bijnor and Meerut.

Further, it stated that since Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's shocking "revenge against the protesters" remark, the administration failed in its basic responsibility to ensure the rule of law due to which 23 deaths took place across the state due to police excesses and brutality against protesters.

The memorandum demanded a judicial probe into each and every incident of violence to ascertain the culpability of the administration and police and to provide justice to the families of the deceased.

The Congress also demanded that notices for confiscation of property, their sealing and other similar punitive actions be suspended till an inquiry by competent authorities was completed.

The memorandum was signed by Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and UPCC chief Ajay Kumar Lallu.

Congress to extend legal assistance to those arrested

Lucknow (PNS): The Congress has decided to extend legal assistance to all those arrested by the police during protests against Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in Uttar Pradesh.

This was decided in a meeting of the legal cell of UP Congress that was chaired by party's national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and senior lawyer Salman Khurshid in Lucknow on Monday.

Later, talking to media persons, Khurshid said that the party had decided to fight for the cause of youths and others who were implicated by the police in stringent cases.

"We have collected details and other evidences and will soon approach the Allahabad High Court to place our views on the PILs (public interest litigation) already filed in the court," he said.

Claiming that the UP Police filed several FIRs naming unidentified people involved in violence, Khurshid said that it could not be ruled out that even now several people would be put in jail by putting their names in the place of unknown people.

The Congress leader said that the meeting also stressed that the court should ask the police to probe and then charge the people of their offence rather than doing vice versa.

Khurshid alleged that everywhere, people were holding peaceful protests against the CAA but it was the police which engaged criminals to vandalise government and private properties.

No breach in Priyanka's security: IG

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amid the raging debate over the breach of security of Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra while she was heading to the Indira Nagar residence of arrested social worker and former IPS officer SR Darapuri on Saturday,

IG (Intelligence) PK Singh dismissed the claims, saying that there was no breach in the VIP's security.

Earlier, Priyanka had accused Lucknow Police officials and personnel of manhandling and stopping her from visiting Darapuri's house in Indira Nagar locality of the state capital,

In a press release, the IG (Intelligence) said that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had Z plus category by ASL (Advanced Security Liaison) manned by CRPF personnel.

"Her visit schedule was communicated to the state authorities and the only programme indicated was visit to PCC office for attending Congress Foundation Day function for which ASL was conducted," the release said.

It was further stated that CO (Hazratganj) Abhay Mishra visited the PCC office around 8 am to enquire about the Congress leader's programme details for the day but it was not communicated by her personal staff.

"In the sequence of events on December 28, the security violation occurred by unscheduled movement of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra without intimidation as ASL could not be conducted. Vadra used non-BR civil vehicle without any PSO during travelling and took a lift in a scooter as pillion rider," read the release.

Singh said that despite security constraints, appropriate security cover was provided by CRPF during Vadra's visit.

"Priyanka had been communicated about the security lapses and advised for ensuring proper security arrangements," Singh said.

On December 28, Priyanka

Gandhi Vadra left the PCC office and reached Lohia Path when her fleet was stopped by Lucknow police. She later rode pillion of a scooter being driven by a Congress leader to reach the house of Darapuri, where she had to meet the family of jailed social activist for protesting against CAA.

On Sunday, Lucknow Traffic police slapped a fine on the scooter owner and Priyanka for violation of traffic norms on five counts, including violating signal, not wearing helmet etc.

After the news of Priyanka's face-off with the police went viral on social media, Congress workers highlighted the breach of her security.

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Write creatively on burning topics: Yogi

CM confers awards on litterateurs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Stressing on the prevalent challenging times, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that litterateurs should write on burning topics creatively which can inspire people to serve the country in a dedicated manner. He said literature was the mirror of the society and it gives direction to the society.

The Chief Minister was speaking at the felicitation ceremony organised at Hindi Sansthan on Monday on the occasion of Sansthan's 37th foundation day. Yogi felicitated Usha Kiran Khan with Bharat Bharti Samman, Manmohan Sehgal with Lohia Sahitya Samman, Badri Nath Kapoor with Hindi Gaurav Samman, Shri Bhagwan Singh with Mahatma Gandhi Sahitya Samman and Om Prakash Pandey with Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Sahitya Samman. Other awards given away on the occasion included Sahitya Bhusan Samman, Lok Bhusan Samman, Sohardra Samman, and Kala Bhusan Samman. A total of 137 litterateurs were felicitated on the occasion.

Addressing the large gathering of litterateurs, he told them not to refrain from groupism as dividing themselves on the basis of caste, creed and religion by adopting a narrow way of thinking can cause irreparable harm to the country and society.

He said it was a challenging period for the litterateurs because some people have made camps amongst writers to misguide the youth.

"It is the responsibility of litterateurs to ensure that such kind of situation is not created and through their writings on human values, they can instill



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurating the felicitation programme organised by Hindi Sansthan as UP Assembly Speaker looks on

in the people the feeling to dedicate themselves to the country and society. The litterateurs who fulfilled their responsibilities in their era are read even today and give new direction to people even in the current times. This *mardgasha* is not for any one person but for the entire society and what they write will be accepted across all sections of society," he added.

The Chief Minister said that a misguided society cannot ever achieve its aim. "Leadership can also be provided by working with responsibility in own areas of work and thereby guiding the society," he added.

Pointing out the efforts being made to bring Hindi as a subject to national level, Yogi said Purshottam Das Tandon, on whose name an award was

given away on the occasion, played a role in popularising Hindi and at the international level while former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee gave it new heights.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while delivering his speeches in Hindi internationally, draws the attention of the globe towards India's strengths," he further pointed out.

The Chief Minister said it is a proud moment for the city when litterateurs from all across the country are being felicitated. "Your *sahitya sadhana* or dedication towards literature is priceless and does not require any award and when a cultural platform such as Hindi Sansthan confers an award on you, it adds to the pride of the platform and provides inspiration to other such people," he added.

Usha second woman after Mahadevi Verma to get Bharat Bharti Samman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The litterateurs awarded at the felicitation ceremony organised at Hindi Sansthan in Lucknow on Monday were from all walks of life and despite their busy schedule, they took out time to contribute to the development of Hindi language. Usha Kiran Khan, who got 'Bharat Bharti Samman', expressed happiness over the fact that she was the second woman after Mahadevi Verma to have received the award.

She said there has not been essentially any change as far as people writing for literature is concerned. "The old people who have been regularly writing are continuing with the exercise while the new writers are also pitching in and writing about the contemporary period which, if it survives the test of time, will become literature," she said.

Coming from Bihar, Usha Kiran Khan has mostly focused on women issues in her novels and apart from Hindi, she has also written in Maithali.

Devendra Dev Mirzapuri, who was given away 'Tulsi award' is an advocate in Mirzapur and has been writing for the past ten years. He was conferred the award for having written a 'maha kavya' on Mangal Pandey from the first War of Independence. "It took me more than four months to write this epic which I have written in rhyming style," he pointed out.

Vijay Karan, who is a professor in Vidyant College, was felicitated for his contribution in the making of dictionaries, said he was given this responsibility because he was the member of a council which deals with such expertise.

On the administrative language being difficult and the



Chief Minister giving away 'Bharat Bharti Samman' to Usha Kiran Khan (top) and another litterateur (above)

need for simplification for the common man, he said one cannot simplify the language because technically there are several legal connotations.

Pratap Narain Singh from Ghaziabad, who was given away 'Jai Shankar Prasad Samman', said he had won the award on

his debut book which talks about Sita from Ramayana and how she must have suffered as a woman. Incidentally, Pratap is a civil engineer and is into real estate business.

"I put myself in the place of Sita and tried to imagine what she must have faced," he added.

Prahlad murder: SSP removes PGI SHO, Telibagh incharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Taking a strong note of the murder of a resident, Prahlad Patel, in police presence in PGI police station area, SSP Kalanidhi Naithani on Monday sent PGI SHO Ashok Kumar Saroj and Telibagh incharge Ashutosh to Reserve Police Lines for laxity in responding to a distress call. An inquiry has also been set up in the case.

The SSP said both the police officers were found guilty of not addressing a complaint. "Addressing grievances of the public is of utmost importance for Lucknow police and no laxity will be tolerated," he said. He added that five new sub-inspectors were posted at the PGI police station to improve policing in the area. On the other hand, inspector Anjani Kumar Pandey was given the charge of PGI police station. Police spokesman AK Dwivedi said, "Inspector Anjani Pandey was posted in view of Defense Expo-2020 which is scheduled to be held in February."

He added that the SSP posted the sub-inspectors attached with RPL for a long time to police stations like PGI, Sarojini Nagar, Gomti Nagar, Naka, Para, Indira Nagar, Madaon, Hasanganj, Gudamba and Gautampalli. "Besides, 11 policemen were given postings on the occasion of New Year and

were asked to work with dedication keeping public interest in mind," Dwivedi said.

Meanwhile, the murder of Prahlad Patel took a new twist after his family members claimed that he was opposing the sale of drugs and psychotropic substances in the city and had demanded security cover days before he was shot dead in police presence.

They said Prahlad had been getting threat calls from unidentified persons and he feared for his life. "Six days back, he, along with his wife, had gone to the police station to complain about the threats that he was getting for highlighting the sale of drugs in locality and assemblage of unscrupulous elements in Awadh Vihar Colony where he resided. The police had shooed him away and later lodged a non-cognisable report after Prahlad petitioned his case to some senior officers," his family members claimed.

They said Prahlad was saving the security guard who was being thrashed by the accused — Guddu, Adarsh and Satyam — on Saturday night. "Guddu and his aides were not pleased with Prahlad's proactive approach in complaining about the assembly of anti-social elements in the colony and they killed him over the issue," they alleged. The police spokesman said he had no information about the claims made by Prahlad's family.

New Year: City soaked in festive spirit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The city is all set to ring in the New Year on Tuesday. City residents have made multifarious plans of celebrations at homes & hotels and get-together with their families. Even though the first day of 2020 is a working day, it has not dampened the enthusiasm of people to ring in the new year. The biting cold weather also has little effect on the festive spirit.

Hotels across the city are ready to host people who like to enjoy with the family with good music and food along with the right kind of ambience. Chefs have planned elaborate menus keeping the festivity in mind. The hotels have also planned kids' buffet with international cuisines. For those who want a spiritual touch, the temples have planned 'bhajan sandhyas'.

Shabhat Husain, media spokesperson of the Taj Mahal Hotel, said bookings were full and they were now refusing queries. He said they have an elaborate menu in the dinner which will be served on the New Year's eve at the Sahib Café and restaurants in the hotel. "The main course will be diversified as cuisines across the globe, including 'Thai green chicken curry', 'lamb bouguignon', 'murg do

Traffic movement to remain restricted

pyaza' and 'crusted fish'. The starters will include items like 'chicken burrito', 'vegetable enchiladas', and 'crumb-fried mushrooms'. Salads will be of a big variety, including items like squids, prawns and fish," he added.

Yashi Mishra, media spokesperson of another hotel, said they have planned an elaborate buffet with space for dancing. "People love to enjoy with their families. We would be having live counters such as 'steaming kettle stations' keeping in view the cold weather conditions. "Oven bread section will have all kinds of breads such as pita bread, puff roles, soft rolls and hard rolls along with all kinds of flavoured butter," she said.

Mishra said they will also be serving hunger stimulants like paneer, Philadelphia cheese, mushrooms, canapes, cheese and salad counters, boiled prawns, duck and salmon, along with international cheese spread. "There will be chaat counters grill stations and barbecues as we are not leaving out anything," she added. Media spokesperson of the Khatu Shyam temple Sudhish Garg said for the entire day, there will be a bhajan programme. "The deity will be dressed in new clothes

and will be offered milkcake from Rajasthan. The evening will be called 'Ek Shaam Prabhu Ke Naam'," he added. Lucknow zoo will also remain open for the visitors on December 31.

Meanwhile, the traffic police have announced diversions for the New Year celebrations for Tuesday because of the various programmes to be organised in malls and restaurants. Traffic officials said the diversions will be implemented from 5 pm on December 31 to 1 pm on January 1. Vehicles will not be allowed to move from Sikanderbagh crossing towards Saharaganj and Hazratganj, and will be diverted from Sikanderbagh crossing towards Sapru Marg. From there, the vehicles will be diverted towards Saharaganj parking.

No vehicle will be allowed to move from Saharaganj tri-crossing towards Sapru Marg, and will be diverted towards Sikanderbagh crossing from where it will be diverted towards Sapru Marg. No traffic will be allowed to move from Sapru Marg towards St Francis College, and will be diverted towards Saharaganj tri-crossing. No traffic will be allowed to move Hazratganj

crossing towards Mayfair, and will be diverted towards Sapru Marg tri-crossing and Chiraiyya Jheel or forward from Sankalp Vatika.

Vehicles from Charbagh moving towards Parivartan Chowk via Hazratganj will be diverted from Hussainganj crossing towards Dr Souza road and Kaiserbagh. The traffic coming from Aliganj and Kaiserbagh will not be allowed to move beyond Hindi Sansthan towards Mayfair and Hazratganj, and will be diverted either towards Chiraiyya Jheel or Kaiserbagh.

Vehicles coming from Lalbagh will not be allowed to turn right from Valmiki crossing, and will be diverted right towards the DM residence and UP Press Club.

The traffic coming from Naval Kishore road will not be allowed to move towards Bank of India crossing, and will be diverted towards Income Tax office crossing from where it can follow the route. Vehicles will not be allowed to move from Park Road to Hazratganj and from Naval Kishore road to Bank of India. The vehicles must use multi-level parkings. No heavy vehicles will be allowed to enter the city from 2 pm on January 1.

Police to keep an eye on revellers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

With revellers raring to go for New Year celebrations, the Lucknow police will be keeping a hawk eye on the prominent locations in the city. SSP Kalanidhi Naithani said they had earmarked some places in the city as focal points. Police teams laced with breath analysers and loud hailer would be deployed at Hazratganj, 1090 Crossing, Gole Market, Bhoothnath, Fun Republic and different hostels/pubs/restaurants in Gomti Nagar and other localities.

"We have set up a control room at the 1090 office where cops will ensure close monitoring of distress calls and coordinate with the police team engaged in security arrangements," he said. The SSP said



SSP Kalanidhi Naithani during a visit to 1090 crossing on Monday

the police teams would also conduct breath analyser tests to check drunken driving. He advised the youth and partygoers to drive safe and celebrate the New Year without creating any nuisance. To give shape to the security plan, the SSP held a meeting with ASPs and COs and briefed them about the workplan for December 31. On Monday night, the SSP reached the control room set up at the 1090 office to oversee the arrangements. The cops also conducted a vehicle checking drive.

In Hazratganj, a team led by ASP (East) Suresh Chand Rawat and CO Abhay Mishra conducted a checking. The CO appealed to people to celebrate the occasion in a safe way. He also appealed the commuters to drive carefully.

एच1एन1 इनफ्लूएंजा

स्वाइन फ्लू से बचें

एच1 एन1 इनफ्लूएंजा (स्वाइन फ्लू) एक संक्रामक रोग है। प्रारम्भिक अवस्था में जाँच तथा उपचार से इस रोग के गंभीर परिणामों को रोका जा सकता है।

रोग फैलने के कारण

- संक्रमित व्यक्ति के सम्पर्क से
- खाँसी एवं छींक के साथ निकले संक्रामक कणों द्वारा साँस के माध्यम से
- हाथों तथा वस्तुओं पर उपस्थित संक्रामक कणों के संपर्क में आने से

रोग के लक्षण

- बुखार
- खाँसी
- गले में दर्द
- शरीर में दर्द
- साँस लेने में कठिनाई

बचाव एवं रोकथाम के उपाय

नाक और मुँह को ढक कर रखें।	साबुन से अपने हाथों को नियमित रूप से धोएं।	पर्याप्त मात्रा में तरल पदार्थ का सेवन करें।
रोग से संक्रमित मरीजों को स्वस्थ व्यक्तियों से अलग रखें।	आँख, नाक तथा मुँह को छूने से बचें।	चिकित्सक की सलाह के बिना औषधि का सेवन न करें।
रुमाल या टिश्यू पेपर का पुनः प्रयोग न करें।	भीड़-भाड़ वाले स्थानों पर जाने से बचें।	हाथ मिलाने से बचें।

एच1 एन1 इनफ्लूएंजा (स्वाइन फ्लू) का उपचार सभी जिला चिकित्सालयों में निःशुल्क उपलब्ध है।

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Chopper rides for Lko Mahotsav visitors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash said here on Monday that visitors to Lucknow Mahotsav can also hitch a helicopter ride.

attraction this time and at least 25 rides would be carried out from 1090 crossing. He said the Mahotsav venue would be divided on the basis of zones and each zone would be given names.

No let-up in biting cold conditions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknowites continued to reel under cold wave conditions as the maximum temperature plunged by 10 degrees to settle at 12.5 degree Celsius on Monday.



wearing several layers of woollens while stepping out. The sunshine made little difference to the biting cold. At several

places, people were seen sitting around bonfires to keep themselves warm. People who chose to remain indoors sat in front of blowers and heaters.

The forecast for Lucknow is shallow to moderate fog likely in the morning, followed by mainly clear skies thereafter.

The weather is most likely to be dry over the state. Shallow to moderate fog is likely to occur at few places over the state.

UPSRTC launches helpline for women passengers

Lucknow (PNS): Strengthening the concept of women safety, UPSRTC on Monday launched 'Daamini'



and will be exclusively handled by women officers at the UPSRTC HQ and also at regional levels," the managing director said.

After office hours, the women passengers can lodge their complaints and issues or to reach out to UPSRTC on general helpline (1800-180-2877).

उपग्रह पावर ट्रान्स्मिशन कार्पोरेशन लिमिटेड, ई-निविदा तिथि विस्तार सूचना इस कार्यालय की ई-निविदा संख्या 103-वि.पा. मंत्र.प्र.ल./2019-20 जो कि पूर्व निर्धारित दिनांक में किसी अपरिहार्य कारणों से परिवर्तित होने के कारण अब दिनांक 06.01.2020 को 16.00 बजे तक अपलोड की जायेगी एवं दिनांक 07.01.2020 को 13.30 बजे खोली जायेगी। ई-टेंडरिंग निविदा की अन्य नियम व शर्तें पूर्ववत् रहेंगी।

उपग्रह पावर ट्रान्स्मिशन कार्पोरेशन लिमिटेड, ई-निविदा संख्या 130 एवं 133 /वि.पा.मंत्र.प्र.ल./2019-20 के सम्बन्ध में निम्न शुद्धि पत्र जारी किया जाता है। निविदा संख्या 130 एवं 133 /वि.पा.मंत्र.प्र.ल./2019-20 के खुलने की तिथि विस्तारित कर दी गयी है, अब यह निविदाएं दिनांक 13.01.2020 को 14.00 बजे तक अपलोड एवं स्वीकार की जायेगी एवं दिनांक 13.01.2020 को 15.00 बजे सार्वजनिक रूप से खोली जायेगी।

U. P. Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited Obra Thermal Power Station, OBRA Sonebhadra, CORRIGENDUM Tender No. T-14/SE-IBTPS/TMD-I/2019-20 Tender ID 2019-RVUNL_404223_1 The opening dates of Part-I (Technical Bid) of online e-Tender No. T-14/SE-IBTPS/TMD-I/2019-20 for the Annual running maintenance of air washer system, cleaning of BFP lub/working oil cooler line of booster pump / drip pump & etc. work of unit No. 9, 10 & 11 of 3x200MW, BTPS, Obra is hereby extended and shall be opened on website : http://etender.up.nic.in as stated below :

U. P. Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited Obra Thermal Power Station, OBRA Sonebhadra, TIME EXTENSION Tender ID No. 2019-RVUNL_400897_1 The opening dates of e-tender No. 25/O&MM-C-V/TMD/BTPS/2019-20 of the work of Annual running maintenance of hydraulic coupling R-16K/R-17K of unit no. 12th & 13th i.e. Inspection / Replacement of bearing of hydraulic coupling, O/H of hydraulic coupling, alignment of hydraulic coupling with BFP motor and replacement of MOP & AOP BTPS Obra is hereby extended again as below :

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत परियोजना मण्डल गोरखपुर ई-टेंडरिंग निविदा सूचना अनुसूची फर्मों/टेकेंडरों से निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु सीलबन्ध निविदाये दो मांगों में दिनांक 13.01.2020 को 14.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती है। (1) ई-निविदा संख्या 137 / ईओपीओ(गोरखपुर) / 2019-20 : विद्युत परियोजना मण्डल, गोरखपुर के अन्तर्गत 220 केवीओ उपकेन्द्र बलरामपुर पर विद्युत निर्माणधीन परियोजना लाइनों के निर्माण हेतु भारतीय विमानपत्तन प्राधिकरण से अनुरोधित प्रमाण पत्र प्राप्त करने शुल्क सम्बन्धी कार्य।

Pregnant woman dies as husband refuses to bear medical expenses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A pregnant woman died due to lack of medical treatment as her husband and in-laws refused to bear the expenses following a discord over dowry in PGI police station area on Sunday night.

As per reports, Seema Pal (35) of Vrindavan Colony in PGI had married Anil Pal aka Bablu of Telibagh, also in PGI police station area, in May. Her mother Suman Pal told police that Seema was pregnant for eight months.

bury the body in a graveyard secretly," she said. She demanded an autopsy and a case against Anil and his parents. Deceased's sister Pooja Pal said, "We had made several rounds of the police out-post in Telibagh.

Anglo-Indians urge CM Yogi to extend representation of community in assembly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The All-India Anglo-Indian Association (AIAIA) has appealed to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to continue with the provision of nomination of a member of the community in the Assembly for another decade like Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes reservation.

Anglo-Indian community to assemblies. The letter sent by All-India Anglo-Indian Association president Barry O'Brien was released to the media on Monday. It said that the founding fathers of the Constitution under Dr BR Ambedkar included the provision for another decade of Anglo-Indians led by Frank Anthony, himself a member of the Constituent Assembly, chose to live in independent India and swore allegiance to the country of their birth.

said. O'Brien said that the Anglo-Indian community had been recognised for its integrity and contribution to the defence of the nation, particularly as officers in Indian Air Force, Navy and Army.

SCHOOLSCAN



CHILDREN'S CAMP INAUGURATED City Montessori School, was inaugurated at Kanpur Road auditorium on Monday amidst a scintillating educational-cultural programme. The chief guest on the occasion was Municipal Commissioner Indramani Tripathi, who ceremoniously inaugurated the camp by lighting the lamp of unity and peace.

Bank of Baroda inaugurated another dedicated start-up zone at Vibhuti Khand branch in Gomti Nagar on Monday. The zone was inaugurated by executive director VS Khichi. Through dedicated branches, the start-ups will be offered a bouquet of tailor-made banking products and services which have been designed keeping in mind the unique and specialised banking requirements of start-ups.



Bank of Baroda inaugurated another dedicated start-up zone at Vibhuti Khand branch in Gomti Nagar on Monday. The zone was inaugurated by executive director VS Khichi. Through dedicated branches, the start-ups will be offered a bouquet of tailor-made banking products and services which have been designed keeping in mind the unique and specialised banking requirements of start-ups.

U.P. POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LTD., E-TENDER NOTICE. Following E-Tenders are invited from the experienced/reputed contractors for the execution of following works: For more details login on website www.etender.up.nic.in. 1. E-Tender No. 114/AETC/2019-20: Annual maintenance of 400KV S/S Azamgarh under Eiecty. 400KV sub-station Division, Azamgarh. Earnest Money: Rs. 17000.00 (Rs. Seventeen Thousand) only.

THE COLDEST... The visibility recorded by Sadfardjung and Palam observatories stood at zero metres at 8.30 am. Skymet, an independent weather forecaster, said one of the reasons for this is the fact that Delhi has been reeling under both cold day and cold wave condition.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 NAVY BANS... days after the Andhra Pradesh Police along with the Navy intelligence unit and Central intelligence agencies arrested seven sailors, besides a hawala operator. The sailors were arrested from Visakhapatnam, Mumbai and Karwar naval establishments. They reported-passed on unauthorised information about movement of warships and other operational details through social media to a Pakistan handler. While Visakhapatnam has the Eastern Naval command headquarters besides the sensitive submarine building centre where the nuclear submarines Arihant are under construction, the Western Naval command is based in Mumbai. The lone aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya's base is in Karwar, Karnataka. The spy racket was busted on December 19 by the Andhra Pradesh Intelligence Department in a joint operation with the Navy code named "Dolphin's Nose."

#INDIASUPPORTSCAA

Modi tweets Sadhguru video, launches 10-day outreach drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday led the BJP's outreach campaign with the hashtag #IndiaSupportsCAA to gather support for the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which has sparked violent protests across India in recent weeks. Modi's official website tweeted that the CAA "is about giving citizenship to persecuted refugees and not about taking anyone's citizenship away".

Seeking to mobilise support for the amended citizenship law, other BJP leaders too launched the campaign on

social media to highlight its features with Modi posting a video of spiritual guru Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev backing the legislation.

Amid protests, including from Muslims in several parts of the country, the Prime Minister has asserted that the law is about giving citizenship to refugees from three countries and not about taking away anyone's citizenship. BJP has announced a 10-day campaign across the country to spread awareness about the CAA and taken on the Opposition for pushing "rumours and fears" around it.

"Do hear this lucid explanation of aspects relating to



CAA and more by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev. He provides

historical context, brilliantly highlights our culture of brotherhood. He also calls out the misinformation by vested

interest groups. #IndiaSupportsCAA," Modi tweeted.

The Twitter handle of Modi's personal website also had a message saying that the CAA is about giving citizenship to persecuted refugees and not about taking anyone's citizenship away. The message was posted with the hashtag "India Supports CAA".

It also asked people to share content, graphics and videos from the Prime Minister's NaMo app to show their support for the law, which has triggered protests in different parts of the country.

BJP president and Home Minister Amit Shah also posed

Sadhguru's video and said "stop believing lies and half truths on CAA". He urged everyone, especially the youth, to watch the video and get a "historical perspective on why we need CAA".

Joining the campaign, party's working president JP Nadda quoted from the spiritual leader's remarks to say that "in a very calibrated way somebody sent the message to the minorities that your citizenship is under threat which is an absolute lie".

Opposition and other critics slammed the CAA, saying it is against India's secular Constitution as it makes religion as a ground for citizenship.

The BJP has asserted that it is meant for minorities persecuted in three neighbouring countries due to their faith.

Union Minister Prakash Javadekar took on the critics, who have dubbed the law as discriminatory, and tweeted, "Spread Facts Not Myth: In the last 6 years, 2830 Pakistani, 912 Afghani & 172 Bangladeshi citizens have been given Indian citizenship. Many of them are from majority community of these countries."

He also posted several tweets, highlighting key aspects of the amended law and quoted Modi's comments that it will not adversely affect any Indian citizen.

INSHORT

TEAM FORMED TO PROBE NEWBORNS DEATH IN KOTA

New Delhi: BJP working president JP Nadda on Monday appointed a four-member delegation to investigate death of newborns at a hospital in Kota, Rajasthan. Delegation will visit Kota on Tuesday and review the situation. It has to submit report within three days of the visit.

CBI TAKES OVER IIT STUDENT'S DEATH CASE

New Delhi: The CBI has taken over the investigation in the case involving the death of Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) student Fathima Latheef. The Special Crime Branch of the agency's Chennai unit re-registered the FIR of the local police on December 27 and took over the investigation in the matter.

OVER 20 PARTIES DIDN'T FILE FISCAL REPORT: EC

New Delhi: In a reply to the Right to Information (RTI), the Election Commission (EC) said that more than 20 registered parties have not filed their annual reports to their receipts of financial donations. The national parties include National Conference (NC), People Democratic Party (PDP), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). The RTI was filed by a retired Navy Officer. The last date for filing annual reports was October 31, 2019.

RETIRED IAS OFFICER RE-EMPLOYED AS DY EC

New Delhi: Senior IAS officer Umesh Sinha has been reemployed in the Election Commission (EC) as the deputy election commissioner after his retirement on Tuesday. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the re-employment Sinha on a contract basis for one year with effect from January 1, 2020, and up to December 31, 2020, the DoPT order said. Sinha, a 1986 batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, was working as the secretary general in the EC. **New Delhi:** The CBI has carried out searches at eight locations, including the premises of two Income Tax officers based in Bengaluru, in connection with I-Monetary Advisory (IMA) ponzi scam, officials said Monday. The officers are then Deputy Commissioner, Income Tax (Investigation), Saurabh Nayak, and ACIT (Assessment) D Kumar, they said.

FAKE GUN-LICENSING RACKET

CBI raids 2 babus' premises, 17 locations in J&K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Monday conducted searches at 17 locations in Jammu & Kashmir at the premises of senior IAS officers Yasha Mudgal and Kumar Rajeev Ranjan besides the then District Collectors/District Magistrates of Kupwara, Baramulla, Udhampur, Kishtwar, Shopian, Rajouri, Doda and Pulwama in an alleged gun licensing racket busted by the Rajasthan police in 2017.

The move comes two years after the agency registered two cases on allegations issuance of around two lakh arms licences to non residents of the erstwhile State.

The CBI said incriminating documents recovered during searches are being scrutinised.

The agency had registered two cases in August last year on the consent of Jammu and Kashmir Government and further notification from the



Centre. After taking over the case in 2018, searches were also earlier conducted at 11 places including Srinagar, Udhampur and Jammu at the locations of private gun houses which led to recovery of incriminating documents including issue, renewal of arms licenses, blank application forms submitted by various licencees, money transactions of gun dealers with licencees, blank NOC purportedly issued by District Magistrates and other documents, the agency said in a statement.

"It was also alleged that the

then public servants in this conspiracy of issuance of licences to non-residents of J&K in violation of rules, allegedly received gratification," the agency said in a statement.

Several documents related to the cases, including bank statements, were recovered during the searches that were carried out at three places in Kashmir, 11 places in Jammu and one each in Gurugram (Haryana), Mohali (Punjab) and Noida (Uttar Pradesh), officials said.

Besides searching the premises of Mudgal, a 2007-batch IAS officer, and Ranjan, a 2010-batch IAS officer, houses of I Hussain, Mohammed Saleem, Mohammed Junaid Khan, F C Bhagat, Farooq Ahmed Khan and Jenhagir Ahmed Mir were searched, officials said.

Mudgal is at present CEO-and-Managing Director of Power

Corporation Jammu and Ranjan is CEO of Jammu Srinagar Metro Rail Corporation.

The case was handed over to the CBI on the basis of a recommendation from Rajasthan Director General of Police O P Galhotra after the anti-terror squad had busted a racket related to the matter. Following this, the two FIRs were lodged by the agency.

The CBI's Chandigarh unit had registered the FIRs for alleged criminal misconduct and criminal conspiracy under the Ranbir Penal Code and in violation of Section 3/25 of the Arms Act, besides provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

According to Rajasthan Police officials, the Jammu and Kashmir government was informed about the racket in 2017 and several letters addressed to then Chief Secretary B B Vyas remained unanswered.

Priyanka violated security protocol by riding pillion on scooter: CRPF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF on Monday said there was no breach in Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's security during her recent trip to Lucknow. The paramilitary blamed Vadra for "violations" by riding pillion on a scooter.

The force, which provides armed commandos under the "Z+" category of VIP security cover to her, said the Congress leader undertook "unscheduled movement without intimation".

Therefore, an advanced security liaison (ASL) could not be conducted, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) said in a statement issued here by Inspector General (Intelligence and VIP security) P K Singh.

Priyanka's office had written to Singh's office on December 28 with a complaint that a police circle officer (CO) in Lucknow had issued threats to her security personnel and warned of restricting her movements on the same day.

"There was no breach in security by the official" who happens to be the CO of Hazartganj, Abhay Mishra, reads the statement.

It said the "only programme" of Priyanka indicated to the CRPF team for that day was about her visit to the local Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) office for attending a party foundation day event.

The CRPF said it had "conducted" an ASL for this event and had intimated it to state authorities.

It alleged that the Congress leader's "personal staff did not communicate" the detailed programme of the day to the Uttar Pradesh Police CO when he came calling at Priyanka's place of stay in Lucknow at about 8 am.

The force said while there was no breach in Priyanka Gandhi's security, at least three "security violations" took place when she chose to ride a two-wheeler while on her way to visit retired IPS officer SR Darapuri.

"During travelling, the protectee used non-bullet resistant civil vehicle without a personal security officer. The protectee took a lift on Scooty as a pillion rider," it said, adding that as this movement was not planned, the CRPF team could not conduct an ASL which was a breach of security protocol mandated for Priyanka Gandhi.

"Despite the security constraints, appropriate security cover was provided by the CRPF during the visit," it said.

The force added that such security lapses are communicated to the protectee and "advised" for ensuring proper security arrangements.

Priyanka, also the Congress general secretary in-charge of UP (East), was in Lucknow on December 27 and December 28 as part of her first visit to the State capital after violent protests against the amended citizenship law and a proposed countrywide implementation of the National Register of Citizens.

Registry of illegal colonies' houses in Delhi to begin in 10 days: Puri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing the AAP of spreading "lies" and misleading people on the issue regularisation of unauthorised colonies, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday said registry for ownership rights in unauthorised colonies will start in the next 8-10 days.

Puri said that the Central Government will soon hand over registry to the residents. It is estimated that 40-50 lakh people living in 1731 unauthorised colonies play a vital role in deciding the fate of any political party in every election in the national capital. In 2015, people of unauthorised colonies voted to Arvind Kejriwal to bring changes in the national capital. In 2020, both BJP and AAP is eyeing on unauthorised colonies vote bank.

"They (AAP) are weaving nets of words while registry will

The Minister said that the DDA has completed the work on preparing maps of unauthorised colonies in just two months

start in next 8-10 days to give ownership rights to people. You keep telling lies, and we (Centre) will soon hand over documents of houses to the residents of these colonies. You cannot be an obstacle in the happiness of Delhiites," Puri tweeted in Hindi.

"The Aam Aadmi Party is misleading people but the BJP-led Centre has brought laws, he said in reference to the Parliament passing a bill to give ownership rights to the residents of unauthorised colonies.

"...Tell, has the law been enacted or not? has the process of giving ownership rights to people begun or not? Their (AAP's) strategy is not to benefit people, and mislead them instead," Puri said.

The minister said that the

Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has completed the work on preparing maps of unauthorised colonies in just two months while 35,000 people have registered themselves on its website and submitted documents.

In another tweet, the Union housing and urban affairs minister accused the Kejriwal government of failing to prepare maps of 1,731 colonies in the past five years and they moved a court seeking two-year-time for the same.

Earlier on Sunday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said at a press conference that political parties indulge in politics, but if government starts furnishing wrong information, it is saddening. Citing (FAQ) frequently asked questions from DDA website on unauthorised colonies, Kejriwal claimed that neither central government is giving ownership rights nor regularising them.

Flipkart to sell items made by women self-help groups

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on Monday signed a MoU with Flipkart in which products made by women self-help groups formed under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), will now be available on e-commerce platforms.

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said the government would also rope in Amazon to provide a platform for the online sale of SHGs' products.

Under the DAY -NULM, self-help groups consisting 44 lakh women have been working across the country, a move aimed at making women finan-



cially independent. According to the secretary, 12 lakh people have so far been trained in different skills in the last five years under the mission while around 5.06 lakh people were given funds by the government and they are currently self-employed.

"Today, we have signed an MoU with Flipkart. It aims to directly sell products made by self-help groups through e-commerce portals. We are also likely to ink a MoU with Amazon on January 7 for the same purpose," Mishra told reporters on the sidelines of an

event. According to the secretary, 12 lakh people have so far been trained in different skills in the last five years under the mission while around 5.06 lakh people were given funds by the government and they are currently self-employed.

Govt to create 1 lakh tonnes of onion buffer stock in 2020

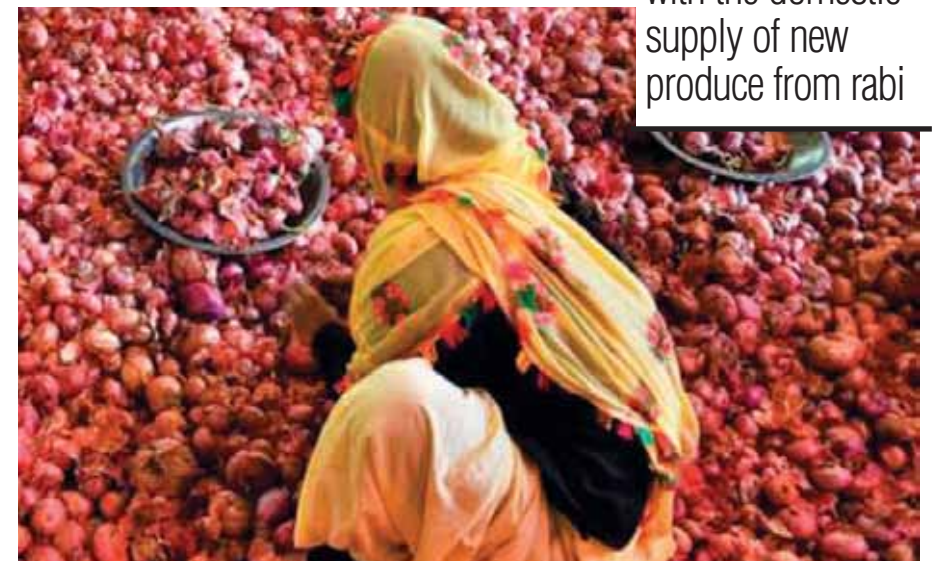
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To prevent the repeat of this year's onion crisis, the Centre has decided to create a buffer stock of 1 lakh tonnes of the key kitchen staple between March and July in 2020.

Top sources said that Cooperative Nafed, which had maintained the buffer stock of onion on behalf of the government, will continue to do so next year. It will source the rabi (winter) onion crop — which has higher shelf life— between March and July directly from farmers.

The Government had created a buffer stock of 56,000 tonnes for the current year but it was not sufficient to contain the prices which are still ruling above Rs 100 per kg in most cities across the country.

The prices are expected to cool down by end of January next year with the domestic supply of new produce from the rabi (winter) and late kharif (summer) seasons — thereby also giving rise to the possibility of a glut. Sources said the arrival of imported onions will coincide with the supply of late kharif onions from Maharashtra and Gujarat in the last week of December, as well as the early rabi produce from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and



Karnataka by late January. "The issue was discussed in detail in the recent meeting of the group of ministers (GoM), headed by Home Minister Amit Shah. It was decided that higher buffer stock of about 1 lakh tonne will be created for next year," sources said. This year, onion prices fell sharply due to 26 per cent fall in kharif and late kharif (summer) production due to late monsoon and later untimely rains in key growing states especially Maharashtra and Karnataka. To check rising prices, the

government took several measures to boost the domestic availability including ban on exports, stock limits on traders besides sale of onion at subsidised rates from its buffer stock and imports.

Already, the government has exhausted its buffer stock of onion which was disposed at a subsidised rate in the local market. Now, it is selling imported ones.

MMTC, which is importing on behalf of the government, has contracted about 45,000 tonnes of onion from Turkey, Afghanistan and Egypt.

Prices likely to cool down by Jan end with the domestic supply of new produce from rabi

The shipments are underway. The first batch of 790 metric tonnes of onion arrived from Turkey and Egypt and distributed to Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka and Telangana.

According to agriculture ministry's data, 0.98 lakh hectare area is covered under late kharif as against 1.22 lakh hectare in the corresponding period last year. The area under rabi onion crop, meanwhile, is 2.76 lakh hectare as against 2.31 lakh hectare in the corresponding period last year (until the first week of December this year).

NITI AAYOG'S SDG INDEX

Kerala on top, Bihar, Jharkhand, AP worst performers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Kerala and Chandigarh retained the top ranks among States and Union Territories even as Bihar turned out to be the worst performer in Niti Aayog's SDG India Index 2019 that evaluates progress on social, economic and environmental parameters.

According to 'SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) India Index 2019', released on Monday, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim have shown maximum improvement, but States like Gujarat have not shown any progress vis-a-vis the 2018 rankings.

"Kerala retained its rank as the top State with a score of 70. Chandigarh too maintained its top spot among the UTs with a score of 70. Himachal Pradesh took the second spot while Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana shared the third spot," the report said.



Bihar, Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh are the worst performing States in this year's Index for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "The United Nations' SDG target of 2030 can never be met without India... We are fully committed to achieving UN's SDG target," Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said at the launch of the report.

Speaking at the event, Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said southern states have done well in health. "West Bengal (rank 14) has also done well in Niti Aayog's SDG Index 2019, but given the education level (in the state), West Bengal should be in top 3 performing states," Kumar added.

The Niti Aayog vice chairman also said Modi government will not leave any stone unturned to make sure India achieves SDG Agenda 2030. According to the report, India's composite score improved from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019 with major success in water and sanitation, industry and innovation.

However, nutrition and gender continue to be problem areas for India, requiring more focussed approach from the government. The report said while three out of five states in the top spots perform equal to or better than the country average on 12 goals, the other two states do the same on 11 goals.

"Only three states were placed in the category of Front Runners (with a score in the range 65-99, including both) in 2018 - Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. In 2019, five more states joined this league - Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Sikkim and Goa, taking the total tally to eight," it noted.

With regard to poverty reduction, states which have done well include Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim. On 'zero hunger' parameters, Goa, Mizoram, Kerala, Nagaland and Manipur were the front runners, according to the report.

The SDG India Index, launched last year by Niti Aayog with the help of United Nations, took into account 16 out of 17 goals specified by the United Nations as SDGs. The Index this year ranked states based on 54 targets spread over 100 indicators out of 306 outlined by the UN.

The first report, which was launched in 2018 had 13 goals and 39 indicators. The year 2020 will be the fifth anniversary of the adoption of SDGs by 193 countries at the UN General Assembly.

The SDGs, constituted through an unprecedented consultative process, have 17 goals and 169 related targets to be achieved by 2030.

NORTH INDIA SHIVERS

Jammu records season's coldest night in over decade

PTI ■ SRINAGAR
The cold wave further tightened its grip across Jammu & Kashmir on Monday with the winter capital, Jammu, recording the season's coldest night in over a decade, while Srinagar shivering at minus 6.5 degrees Celsius.

There was no relief from the bone-chilling cold for the residents of the Union Territory. Jammu recorded the season's coldest night in over a decade as the mercury plummeted to 2.4 degrees Celsius, the meteorological department said.

It said the city had recorded the coldest night on December 28, 1998, when the mercury had went down to 0.9 degree Celsius followed by 2.3 degrees Celsius on December 31, 2007. Jammu had also recorded a low of 2.4 degrees Celsius on December 27 in 2014.

In Srinagar, the mercury continued its record-breaking spree as the city experienced the coldest night of the season so far at minus 6.5 degrees Celsius on Monday. Dense fog forced cancellation of all morning flights



SRINAGAR FREEZES AT -6.5°C
Monkeys huddle to keep themselves warm on a cold winter day in Jammu on Monday PTI

official of the Jammu Airport. An official of the Airport Authority of India said all the four morning flights scheduled to operate from the Jammu airport were cancelled due to poor visibility as dense fog engulfed the city.

"So far four flights to and from the Jammu airport were cancelled, while the afternoon flights are likely to get delayed," he said. The minimum temperature in Jammu marked a dip of 3.3 degrees compared to the previous night to settle at 2.4 degrees Celsius — five notches below normal during this part of the season, a MeT office official said.

This lead to the freezing of the fringes of the Dal Lake and other water bodies as well as water supply lines at several places. The night temperature in Srinagar, which has

been witnessing clear skies and some sunshine during the day, is over four degrees below the normal for this part of the season, the official said.

The ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir recorded the low of minus 7.8 degrees Celsius last night — down from the previous night's minus 6.6 degrees Celsius, he said. The night temperature at Pahalgam resort, which also serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath yatra in south Kashmir, settled at a low of minus 10.2 degrees Celsius as against minus 10.4 degrees Celsius on Sunday, the official said. Pahalgam, in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, was the coldest recorded place in the valley, he added. The official said Qazigund — the gateway town to the Valley - in

south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 9.3 degrees Celsius — slightly up from minus 9.5 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

Kokernag town, also in south, recorded a low of minus 7.3 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara, in north, registered the minimum of minus 5.6 degrees Celsius, the official said. He said Leh town, in the Ladakh Union territory, recorded a low of minus 20.1 degrees Celsius — down from the previous night's minus 19.0 degrees Celsius.

The nearby Drass town froze at a low of minus 28.8 degrees Celsius. Kashmir is currently under the grip of 'Chillai-Kalan' — the 40-day harshest period of winter when there are most chances of frequent and maximum snowfall and the temperature drops considerably.



A Kashmiri boatman row his boat as he breaks the frozen surface of water to make way through the Dal Lake in Srinagar on Monday AP



The roof of a car is seen covered in frost on a cold and foggy day in Ajmer on Monday PTI



A zoo-keeper installs a heater near a cage of a white tigress on a cold winter day in Guwahati on Monday PTI

कार्यालय मुख्य अभियन्ता, (परिषद् मध्य) उच्च पावर ट्रांसमिशन कारपोरेशन लि, पार्षद भवन, (फिक्ट मंत्री आवास), विपुल खण्ड-2, पोलीस नगर, लखनऊ। ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना अनुमती फर्म / ठेकेदारों / अधिकृत विक्रेताओं / निर्माताओं (जो जीएसटी में पंजीकृत हों), से निम्नलिखित सामग्रियों की आपूर्ति हेतु दो भागों में ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा के प्रथम भाग में धरोहर धनराशि तथा ई-निविदा प्रथम मूल्य अधिभारों अभियन्ता, विद्युत पार्षद खण्ड-द्वितीय, लखनऊ के खाता संख्या — 0758002100009361, IFSC : PUNB 0091100 पंजाब नेशनल बैंक में RTGS / NEFT के माध्यम से स्थानान्तरण कर यूटीआर संख्या तथा पे-स्लिप की प्रति निविदा प्रपत्रों के साथ स्व प्रामाणित, पैन एवं जीएसटी में पंजीकरण प्रमाणपत्र, समान प्रकृति के आपूर्ति / कार्य का अनुभव व तत्सम्बन्धी अनुभव की स्व प्रामाणित छायाप्रतियाँ अर्हकारी शर्तें एवं अन्य सम्बन्धी प्रपत्र तथा ई-निविदा के द्वितीय भाग में मूल्य / दरें, www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जानी है। ई-निविदा के प्रथम भाग के प्रपत्र निर्धारित तिथि पर निर्धारित समय अथवा उसके उपरान्त Down-Load की जायेगी। निविदाओं के प्रथम भाग के मूल्यांकन के बाद उपयुक्त पायी गई निविदाओं के ही द्वितीय भाग को Down-Load / खोला जायेगा। निविदा सम्बन्धी समस्त जानकारी, नियम व अर्हकारी शर्तें, निविदा प्रपत्र में अंकित है, जो www.etender.up.nic.in Down-Load कर अवलोकित की जा सकती है। निविदा खुलने की तिथि को अवकाश की स्थिति में निविदा अगले कार्य दिवस में निर्धारित समय पर ही Down-Load / खोली जायेगी। उपरोक्त सभी निविदाओं के निविदा मूल्य में 18 प्रतिशत जीएसटी सम्मिलित है। निविदा से सम्बन्धित कोई भी प्रपत्र, नौतिक रूप से कार्यालय में स्वीकार नहीं किया जायेगा। 1. ई-निविदा संख्या — 18-मुआ(आ/नो) / 2019-20; विद्युत पार्षद खण्ड-द्वितीय, लखनऊ के अधीन विभिन्न उपकेन्द्रों हेतु हाइड्रिक फिटिंग्स, बलैम एवं कनेक्टर की आपूर्ति — धरोहर धनराशि रु. 4,000.00 एवं ई-निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रु. 590.00 2. ई-निविदा संख्या — 19-मुआ(आ/नो) / 2019-20; 132 केभीओ सोहावल रामसनेहीघाट लाइन का 132 केभीओ उपकेन्द्र रुदौली पर लीला हेतु विभिन्न प्रकार की टावर / कम्पेक्टर / हाइड्रिक एवं अर्धवायव्य एक्सेसरीज की आपूर्ति। धरोहर धनराशि रु. 15,000.00, ई-निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रु. 1,770.00, उपरोक्त निविदाओं के प्रथम एवं द्वितीय भाग दिनांक 24.01.2020 को 16.00 बजे तक www.etender.up.nic.in अपलोड की जा सकती है। निविदा का प्रथम भाग दिनांक 25.01.2020 को 13.00 बजे के उपरान्त अनलान्ड Down-Load / खोली जायेगी। अर्थात्सहायों को बिना कारण बताये एक या समस्त निविदाओं को निरस्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। मुख्य अभियन्ता (पाण्डो), पत्रांक-2126, दिनांक-30.12.2019 "सुदृष्टित में बिजली बचाए"

Gujarat in 2019: BJP's sweep in LS poll, fire in Surat, floods

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

BJP's clean sweep in the Lok Sabha polls in Gujarat and the blaze in Surat in which 22 youngsters perished made news in the coastal state in 2019. The stellar performance of the BJP in this year's Lok Sabha polls in the state after facing a scare from Congress in the 2017 Assembly polls surprised many in political circles. The opposition Congress was hopeful of a robust performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls after it gave BJP a tough fight in the December 2017 state Assembly elections, where the ruling party could win only a wafer-thin majority.

The Congress inducted Patidar leader Hardik Patel, and was hoping that the resentment in this influential community, which agitated for a quota under Patel's leadership, would help it. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi delivered her first speech in Ahmedabad after officially joining politics, while Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi also campaigned in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state. But when the Lok Sabha poll results were announced on May 23, the BJP had swept all 26 seats. Following the drubbing, the Congress high command dissolved the entire state unit in October.

The highlight of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in the state was the entry of BJP president Amit Shah in the Lok Sabha from Gandhinagar. Shah replaced party veteran LK Advani who had won from the constituency six times. Shah went on to become Union home minister, confirming his position as No 2 in the BJP's pecking order. The young leaders who had emerged from the quota agitation wound up and joined political parties after the Union government, in January, gave reservations to the economically weaker section in the general category.

Hardik Patel joined the Congress but could

not contest elections as he was sentenced to two years' jail term in a rioting case. Alpesh Thakor, who emerged as a young leader opposing reservation for the Patidar community in the OBC category, quit the Congress to join the BJP in July. But he lost the subsequent by-poll from Radhanpur seat in October.

Bypolls to six Assembly seats provided some relief to the Congress, which retained three seats. Bureaucrat-turned-foreign minister S Jaishankar was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat in July. A fire broke out in a coaching class in the four-storeyed Takshshila Arcade in Surat on the May 24 evening. In scenes that would never be forgotten, students, mostly teenagers, jumped from the building in an attempt to save themselves. Twenty-two died, due to burns or injuries suffered in the fall. Nineteen others were severely injured. The report of the Nanavati Commission, set up to probe the post-Godhra violence, was made public in December, 17 years after the riots and five years after it was submitted to the Assembly. It gave a clean hit to then chief minister Narendra Modi and his administration, and attributed the intensity of the riots, in which over 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed, to deep-rooted animosity between the two communities. In September, the Gujarat High Court rejected over 120 petitions filed by farmers against land acquisition for Ahmedabad-Mumbai Bullet train, a pet project of prime minister Modi. Farmers have now approached the Supreme Court. For arid Gujarat, the monsoon this year was too wet.

Crops were damaged due to excess rains and floods hit many areas. Cyclones Vayu and Maha were predicted to batter Gujarat but ultimately steered clear of the state and fizzled out in the Arabian Sea. The government had made elaborate arrangements for the landfall of Vayu, evacuating three lakh people, but it spared the state.



A person warms himself near a fire sitting next to cows in Prayagraj on Monday AP

Himachal Pradesh: BJP's Lok Sabha sweep, bus tragedy, investors' meet make headlines

PTI ■ SHIMLA

A resounding victory for the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, the death of 44 people in a bus tragedy and efforts to attract investment made headlines in the hill state of Himachal Pradesh in 2019.

While the BJP bagged all four seats in the state in the General Election earlier in the year, MoUs worth around Rs 93,000 crore were signed during the two-day Himachal Rising Global Investors' Meet at Dharamshala in November. The state government was forced to take action against bus operators after an overloaded private bus fell into a deep gorge in Kullu district in June, claiming 44 lives. The Congress underwent a major revamp when the party high command dissolved its entire state unit and frontal organisations. In another major political development, senior state leader Jagat Prakash Nadda was given a prominent role at the national level when he was appointed the working president of the BJP.



Former chief minister Prem Kumar Dhumal's son Anurag Thakur too bagged a ministerial role at the Centre. The Lok Sabha elections were a setback for former Union minister Sukh Ram's family. While his son Anil Sharma had to resign in April as power minister from the Jai Ram Thakur-led BJP government, his grandson Aashray Sharma lost his maiden Lok Sabha election as a Congress candidate from Mandi.

Anil Sharma was under pressure from the BJP after his father Sukh Ram quit the saffron party and joined the Congress, along with Aashray Sharma. Anil Sharma had said that he would neither campaign for his son nor BJP candidate Ram Swaroop Sharma. The state government held an investors' meet in Dharamshala in November to attract investments to the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the inaugural function on November 7 and the state government signed 614 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) of nearly Rs 93,000 crore against the set target of attracting investments to the tune of Rs 85,000 crore. While the CM claimed that the MoUs would convert into actual investment, the opposition Congress termed the meet the biggest scam in the history of the state. During the winter session of the state assembly in Dharamshala in December, the HP Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Bill, 2019, was passed amid a walkout by the Congress. Aiming to attract investment, the legislation proposed to exempt any person bringing a micro, small and medium enterprise to the state from taking approvals from government departments for three years. Alleging efforts to dilute the Section 118 of the HP Tenancy and Land Reforms Act, which restricts the transfer of land to non-agriculturists, the Congress said the state government was trying to "sell" Himachal Pradesh by bringing the legislation. The Section 118 of the Act remained in focus after the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. Akali Dal president Sukhbir Badal and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi demanded the abolition of Section 118, terming it discriminatory in nature. However, the Himachal units of both the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress defended the law, saying it could not be compared with the special provision for J-K.

फैक्स नं० : -0522-2204163 दूरभाष (0522)-2207709

कार्यालय आयुक्त, गन्ना एवं चीनी, उत्तर प्रदेश
17, NEW BERI ROAD, DALIBAGH, LUCKNOW
ई मेल : adddicanecomm@gmail.com वेबसाइट : <http://upcane.gov.in>
पत्र संख्या-158/वाहन/ दिनांक 24/12/2019

SHORT-TERM E-TENDER NOTICE

ON LINE E-TENDERS ARE INVITED FOR HIRING OF VEHICLES ON MONTHLY/DAILY BASIS IN CANE & SUGAR DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, U. P. FOR CANE GROWING DISTRICTS IN UTTAR PRADESH & AT HEAD QUARTER.

Sl No	DESCRIPTION OF JOB WORK	Pre bid meeting date	Technical/Financial bid opening date at	E.M.D.
1	HIRING OF VEHICLES ON MONTHLY/ DAILY BASIS FOR ALL CANE GROWING DISTRICT'S OFFICES IN UTTAR PRADESH & AT HEAD QUARTER.	at 07/01/2020 AT 05:00 PM in the Cane Commissioner Office, 17 New Beri Road, Lko	at 10/01/2020 AT 11:30 PM at 10/01/2020 AT 03:30 PM	Rs. 18,500/-

The details of submission of e bids along with eligibility, date & time, opening of technical/financial bids, E.M.D, experience and other terms & conditions will be available on e-tender portal <https://etender.up.nic.in> and office website <http://upcane.gov.in> from dated 03/01/2020 at 6:55 P.M. from where tender documents may be downloaded by any bidder. The tender fee is Rs. 2,500.00+GST 18% (NON-REFUNDABLE) and required E.M.D which will be deposited in cane commissioner office, before opening of Technical bid. E-Tender without earnest money shall be liable to be rejected. The detailed terms and conditions are given in e-tender document. THE CANE COMMISSIONER, U.P. reserves the right to cancel any or all bids / annul e-bidding process without assigning any reason to bidders & decision of CANE COMMISSIONER, U.P. will be final & binding.

(PRAMOD KUMAR UPADHAYAY)
Addl. Cane Commissioner (administration)

UP 147069 Date 30.12.2019
विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.upgov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

Rise in betel leaf prices makes 'Calcutta paan' costlier in Maharashtra

PTI ■ AURANGABAD

Betel leaf used to make the popular 'Calcutta paan' has got costlier in Aurangabad in Maharashtra, leaving a bitter taste in the mouth of patrons.

These leaves come from Medinipur in West Bengal and rates have now touched ₹1,200 for a bundle of 100 against ₹500 till some days ago, paan merchant Mohammed Sharfuddin told PTI.

A tour of shops here showed prices of 'Calcutta paan' had gone up from ₹8 to anything between ₹12-20 depending on other ingredients.

"Paan prices had to be increased here because of the betel leaves getting costlier. We have been told cultivation of these leaves has decreased," Sharfuddin, who has been in the business for 54 years, added.

He said shops in Aurangabad sell some 20,000 paan a day and the rise in prices was making people move towards leaves coming in from Chennai.

POST-ART 370 NULLIFICATION

HC opens jobs for candidates from all over India

PTI ■ JAMMU

In a first step of its kind, opening the State employment in the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh for candidates from across the country after nullification of Article 370, the Jammu & Kashmir High Court has invited applications from eligible candidates from all over India to fill 33 vacancies with it.

The 33 vacant posts of non-gazetted officials include those of senior scale stenographer, junior scale stenographer, steno typist, compositor, electrician and driver.

The advertisement to fill the vacancies was issued by the

J&K High Court's Registrar General Sanjay Dhar on December 26 with the last date for submission of applications being January 31, 2020.

Following nullification of the Article 370 on August 5, there had been demands from various quarters, especially in the Jammu region and Union Territory of Ladakh, carved out of the erstwhile state of J&K after its bifurcation into two UTs, for a domicile certificate or some legal restrictions on the purchase of land by outsiders as well as their appointments in Government jobs.

"The application forms shall be received by the con-



cerned principal district judges of the UTs of J&K and Ladakh within whose jurisdiction the applicant resides against the

proper receipts duly stamped. "The applicants who do not belong to the UTs of J&K and Ladakh shall submit their application to the Registrar General, J&K High Court, Jammu," the advertisement read.

It said the principal district judges of Kashmir province, Bhandarwah, Kishtwar and Ladakh would make necessary arrangements for the receipt of application forms even during the ensuing winter vacation.

"All principal district judges of J&K and Ladakh shall submit the application forms along with the list of candidates to the office of the

Registrar General, J&K High Court, Jammu by or before February 7, 2020," the advertisement said.

It said the selection would be made as per J&K Reservation Rules 2005. "The candidates who are having age as on January 1, 2019 not below 18 years and not above 40 years in case of open merit, 43 years in case of SC/ST/RBA/ALC/OSCs, 42 years in case of physically challenged, 48 years in case of ex-servicemen and 40 years in case of candidates in Government service or contractual employees are eligible for participation in the selection process," the notice read.

Five Kashmiri political leaders released after 4 months of detention

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Five political leaders, who had been under preventive detention for the past 148 days, were released from the MLA hostel on Monday by the Union Territory administration of Jammu & Kashmir, officials said. The leaders belonging to the National Conference and the PDP were released after the authorities were satisfied that they would not be indulging in any agitation or call for any strike after their release, they said.

gap between the government and the people.

In a statement, party's provincial president Davinder Singh Rana expressed hope that other political detainees will also be released soon.

He said such moves will facilitate a conducive atmosphere for a genuine democratic political exercise.

Those released include Ishaq Jabbar and Ghulam Nabi Bhat (National Conference) and Bashir Mir, Zahoor Mir and Yasir Reshi (PDP), the officials said.

Reshi is considered as a rebel PDP leader who had openly revolted against then chief minister and PDP patron Mehbooba Mufti. He was subsequently removed as the district party chief.

On November 25, two political leaders — Dilawar Mir of the PDP and Ghulam Hassan Mir of the Democratic Party Nationalist — were released by the new Union Territory administration.

The National Conference welcomed the decision of the administration and said such moves will help in bridging the

"It will help in reaching out to the people at large and bridge the gap between the Government and people besides creating conditions for winning hearts and minds," he said. Many political leaders were picked up from their residences on August 5, the day when the Centre announced abrogation of provisions of Article 370 and bifurcation of the state into two union territories — Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir.

The two Union Territories came into existence on October 31 this year. The political detainees had been kept at Centaur hotel and shifted to the MLA hostel in third week of November. As many as 34 political detainees were shifted to the hostel from the hotel, located on the banks of the Dal Lake, as Srinagar reeled under harsh winter conditions and the hotel lacked proper heating arrangement, the officials said.

With ministerial berth, Aditya is a man to watch

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray never fails to spring surprises. After permitting his son Aditya to contest and win the State Assembly polls from Worli in south-Central Mumbai, Uddhav bit the bullet and became the Chief Minister of the State. Now, he has chosen to induct his son Aditya into his Cabinet — unmindful of a possible criticism about the presence of father-son duo in the State Cabinet.

If anything, 29-year-old Aditya Thackeray has arrived on the State's political scene. Though there was speculation initially that the Shiv Sena might pitch him for the posts of either the Chief Minister or Deputy Chief Minister's post, Uddhav scotched the speculation a couple of months ago, by saying that he should learn the ropes before becoming either the Chief Minister or a Deputy Chief Minister.

late father as the Shiv Sena's national executive president way back in January 2002. He has never contested an election, even though he has established his firm hold over the party set-up during the past 17 years. Nor has his uncle and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray contested any election.

As much as his chief minister-father Uddhav, the man to be watched in the State politics in the coming days — in his new mantle as a Cabinet Minister — either holding the Education or Environment portfolio.

Aditya's rise in the Shiv Sena began nine years ago, when late Thackeray launched the Shiv Sena's youth wing "Yuva Sena" and anointed his grandson Aditya Thackeray as its head in October 2010, two years before he passed away on November 12, 2012.

Between 2010 and 2019, Aditya has not only established a following of his own among the youth in various parts of the state, but he has also learned the ropes of party politics by working in tandem with his father and party president Uddhav.

Aditya has lined up several plans for Mumbai. As a Yuv Sena leader, Aditya had during the previous BJP-Shiv Sena alliance Government, Aditya had mooted "Vibrant Nightlife" proposal for Mumbai.

Dy CM for 4th time: The return of Pawar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Monday marked the fourth time senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar was sworn in as Maharashtra's deputy chief minister, the previous stint on the post lasting barely three days. In an early morning ceremony on November 23, which caught many by surprise, Pawar was sworn in to the post after he rebelled against the NCP and joined hands with the BJP. He resigned on November 26, leading to collapse of the Devendra Fadnavis-led government.



the suddenness with which Ajit Pawar was sworn in along with Fadnavis looked like something straight from a Bollywood film.

Pawar was the deputy CM twice in the 15-year regime of Congress-NCP alliance in Maharashtra during 1999-2014. When Ajit Pawar decided to quit politics two months ago citing the Enforcement Directorate move against his uncle and NCP chief Sharad Pawar, some within his party said he may have been looking to get out of the veteran leader's shadow.

This theory was back in circulation last month as in a move few thought possible, the 60-year-old hitched his horse to a different wagon, in the process becoming the deputy chief minister of Maharashtra once more.

His father worked with film veteran V Shantaram and

His winning the October 21 Assembly election with the highest margin of 1.65 lakh votes only affirmed his iron grip on the constituency. Appointed as NCP's legislature party leader before joining hands with the BJP, he first became a minister of state in June 1991, when Sudhakarrao Naik helmed the state government. He has so far held portfolios like agriculture, water resources, rural soil conservation, irrigation and power and planning during his three-decade-old career.

The leader, who faced allegations in connection with the alleged irrigation scam and was also named in a money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate, became the state's deputy chief minister for the first time in November 2010. Born in a farmer family on July 22, 1959 in Ahmednagar district, Ajit is married to Sunetra, sister of former Maharashtra minister Padmasin Patil.

The couple has two sons Parth and Jay. Parth unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha election earlier this year from Maval seat in Pune district. Ajit Pawar's cousin Supriya Sule is Lok Sabha MP from Baramati and nephew Rohit is an MLA from Karjat-Jamkhed in Ahmednagar.

Coming from the family of Thackerays — four generations of whom have been in public life but had never contested an election till Aditya did so in the 2019 State Assembly polls, Uddhav — who will be contesting a State Assembly bypoll in the next couple of months — and junior Thackeray will soon be well-entrenched in electoral politics.

A Bachelor of Arts in History from Mumbai's elite St. Xavier's College, Aditya has come a long way since his college days. As a third-year Arts student, Aditya had hit headlines ahead of his appointment as the Yuv Sena chief in 2010, when he forced the Bombay University withdrawal Rohinton Mistry's novel Such A Long Journey, prescribed for the second year Bachelor of Arts (English) as an optional text book, from the syllabus. Aditya had opposed Mistry's book on the ground that it contained foul language and derogatory references to the Shiv Sena.

It may be recalled that within months after the Sena-headed Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) adopted a resolution seeking "Vibrant Nightlife" for Mumbai and sent off a proposal to the Maharashtra government suggesting necessary amendments to relevant laws, Aditya had in February 2015 met then chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and submitted a formal letter requesting the latter to put in place the laws that make Mumbai a "live 24/7" city.

In a series of tweets that he put out after he met Fadnavis to push his "vibrant Nightlife", Aditya had written: "Tweeps the GOOD News is CM has accepted my proposal of nightlife and assured me that necessary amendments to laws by March/August Session".

'JD(U) should fight more seats than BJP in '20 assembly polls'

PTI ■ PATNA

After having rankled the BJP with his continuous outbursts against the CAA and the NRC, JD(U) national vice president Prashant Kishor has contended that his party, being the senior partner in the NDA in Bihar, should contest more seats than the BJP in the assembly election next year. The two parties had contested equal number of seats in the Lok Sabha elections this year. "In my view, the Lok Sabha election formula cannot be repeated in the assembly polls," Kishor told newsmen here. "The BJP believes in maintaining decorum, discipline and not making any public statement which has only news value. All the decisions in NDA related to 2020 elections are a matter of discussion between our top leadership," state party spokesman Nikhil

Anand said. The JD(U) is a bigger party, has close to 70 MLAs while the BJP has just over 50, the JD(U) national vice president said. Moreover, the assembly elections are to be fought with Nitish Kumar as the NDA face, Kishor said. "If we look at the 2010 assembly polls, which the JD(U) and the BJP had last contested together, the ratio was 1:1.4. Even if there is a slight change this time, it cannot be that both parties fight an equal number of seats," he said. The poll strategist-turned-politician, who became a full-time member of the JD(U) just about a year ago, dismissed suggestions that his party chief Nitish Kumar might be expected to cede some ground to the BJP, a favour he had extended in the 2015 assembly polls for Lalu Prasad's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). "There can be no comparison between the two scenarios. In

2015, in the outgoing assembly, the JD(U) had about 120 MLAs while the RJD had only 20. But since the alliance was an entirely new experiment, many things were factored in. "Moreover, even if the 2015 assembly polls are taken as benchmark this time, it is undeniable that JD(U)'s tally was significantly higher than that of the BJP. So my contention of a 1:1.4 ratio holds ground. I am not talking about the number of seats that each party could contest. I am talking about the proportion," he said. He also asserted that the formula of Lok Sabha polls this year wherein JD(U) and BJP had both fought 17 seats each, leaving six for Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), which joined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 2014, a year after Kumar's exit, could not serve as the basis for the assembly polls.

Uddhav's great-grandfather Keshav Sitaram Thackeray — better known as Prabhakar Thackeray — was one of the key figures in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement who played a key role in the campaign for a linguistic State of Maharashtra, while most popular grandfather Bal Thackeray — a cartoonist-turned politician — founded Shiv Sena in 1966. He carved a place for himself in Maharashtra politics, but chose to remain a king-maker than a king.

A wildlife photographer-turned-politician — Uddhav himself was a reluctant beginner in public life. Uddhav was anointed by his

The year 2010 proved to be eventful for Aditya. It was in that year that the Yuv Sena for the first time swept the Mumbai University (MU) Senate polls from the Graduates' constituency. Eight years later — in March 2018, the Yuv Sena once again swept the MU senate by decimating the BJP's student outfit Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and Congress-backed NSUI and winning all the 10 seats.

There are pockets in nation where social evils persist: Naidu

SIANS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Monday pointed out that though India has made significant strides on the economic and technological fronts, there are pockets in the nation where social evils persist.

"We live in times of turbulence. Increasing cases of discrimination based on caste, community and gender are a cause for great concern.

"We must not doubt in our mind that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. The caste system in our country is a vicious cycle," said Naidu while inaugurating the 87th Sivagiri Pilgrimage Meet at the Sivagiri Mutt in Varkala near here.

Sivagiri Mutt is the abode of Sree Narayana Guru and

today it has become the supreme centre of worship for the followers of the Guru.

"It is time for us to retrospect and take pragmatic steps. We must end all discrimination, we should abolish the caste system. India of the future must be caste-less and classless. It cannot be made by mere Bills. We need political will and administrative skill for making that possible.

"The nation we aim to build must have a place for everyone to reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives by providing equal opportunities to one and all," added Naidu.

"The movement to dispel the caste system must come within the heart and mind of society. It must be an intellectual revolution, a compassionate revolution, a humanitarian revolution," the Vice President said.

Isolate BJP on CAA-NRC, says Mamata; BJP hits back

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ PURULIA

Mamata Banerjee on Monday called upon all the parties and the non-BJP Chief Ministers to isolate the BJP and unite against the "mischievous" Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register for Citizens (NRC) which have allegedly been designed to throw the non-BJP people out of India.

Leading a colourful protest rally at Purulia — backed by tribal dance and drum-beats — which has in the recent past emerged as stronghold of the saffron outfit Banerjee said, "I call upon every one... let us unite and discard CAA and NRC and isolate the BJP".

Alleging that the BJP leaders were making confusing statements on the CAA and the NRC she said that the party had a hidden agenda behind the enactment of the "mischievous citizenship law which is a prelude to invoking NRC in the country". She said India had a popu-

lation of 130 crore out of which the BJP Government wanted to throw out 30 crore by marking them as foreigners.

"They will give citizenship to only those people who follow their line and throw out those who reject it. India has a population of 130 crore. Out of this they will give citizenship to their own people and throw out the remaining ones. Where the remaining people will go? Will they it kela (banana)?" she thundered at the end of a rally at Purulia bordering Jharkhand.

"They think that after passing the law they will be able to pursue their hidden agenda. They think that India is their zamindari (fief) which in fact is not. I must remind them that the laws are made by the Centre but implemented by the States. As of now most State Governments are led not by the BJP but the other parties who are opposing the CAA and NRC.

"Most State Governments

have rejected this law and so from the beginning this law is a failure," Banerjee said, adding she would "not allow the mischievous law to be implemented in Bengal. In fact we have also stopped the work of NPR (National Population Register) which is as discriminatory as the CAA and NRC."

She added "this is a protest to protect a person's democracy (democratic rights)" reminding how she had descended on the streets from the very beginning.

Meanwhile, even as the Chief Minister staged her sixth protest rally in the State the BJP too embarked on staging counter-rallies backing the CAA.

The party staged rallies at Coochbehar in North Bengal where the large procession was led by senior leader Mukul Roy and Baruaipur in South 24 Parganas where State BJP president Dilip Ghosh addressed a massive rally but not before being black-flagged by a local TMC crowd.

Infant's death: Toll climbs to 91 at Kota hospital as 14 more children die, BJP to send Central panel

Kota: Fourteen more infants who died later, four succumbed to severe pneumonia, one to Congenital pneumonia, three to pneumonic septicemia, and one to respiratory disorder, he said.

Rajasthan Medical Education Secretary Vaibhav Galariya said a three-member team comprising Dr Amarjeet Mehta, Dr Rambabu Sharma and Dr Sunil Bhatnagar that is probing the infant deaths will submit its report in two days following which action will be taken.

The BJP, which has targeted the Congress Government in Rajasthan over the child deaths, said it has formed a committee comprising four MPs to look into the matter.

Out of the 14 infants who died later, four succumbed to severe pneumonia, one to Congenital pneumonia, three to pneumonic septicemia, and one to respiratory disorder, he said.

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NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, ALLAHABAD

NOTICE

This is to inform to Shri Arun Kumar Mishra, S/o Shri Ram Dulare Mishra Tech-III/S&T/HNG. Who is being absenting from duty since 09.02.2015, you must report to the office of Sr. Section Engineer/Tele/TDL within ten days from the date of publishing of this notice, otherwise it will be deemed that you are not at all interested to continue in railway service and the administration will be compelled to do ex-party decision against you.

Name- Arun Kumar Mishra, S/o Shri Ram Dulare Mishra
Village- Guru Ka Purwa
Post- Chaurai
District- Kanpur (U.P.)
Pin- 209214

1865/19 FA

North central railways @CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, ALLAHABAD

Notice Inviting Tender (E-Tendering)
 (EnHM wing DRM Office, Allahabad)

For & on behalf of President of India, Sr. DE/HM/ALD, Allahabad of North Central Railway, Allahabad invites Open E-Tender in prescribed forms from reputed contractors with adequate experience and financial capability for the under mentioned work up to 15.30 Hrs of Date of opening of tender.

Name of the work	Description of work	E-Tender Notice No.	Approximate Cost	Cost of Tender Documents	Earnest Money
1	2	3	4	5	6
Disposal of dry and wet waste at ALD & CNB stations by EnHM wing of Allahabad Division.	"Installation, operation & maintenance of plastic bottle baling and composting plants for recycling of waste material at ALD & CNB railway stations including segregation and disposal of dry & wet waste at ALD, CNB, MZP, FTP, PHD, ETW, TDL & ALJN railway stations of ALD division for 05 years."	EnHM-PBBC plant-ALD-19 dated-30.12.2019	₹ 49,89,669.60	₹ 3000.00	₹ 99,800.00

7. Validity of Contract: Five years (1825 days) from the actual date of Commencement of the work. 8. Validity of offer: 45 Calendar days. 9. E-Tender uploading on Website www.ireps.gov.in & availability: From 15.00 hrs. on 30.12.2019 and up to 15.30 hrs. of 22.01.2020. 10. Date & Time of closing of E-Tender: 22.01.2020 at 15.30 hrs. 11. Date & Time of tender opening: On or after 22.01.2020 at 15.30 hours. Note: 1. Tender offer shall be made online through single packet only. 2. The complete information along with sender document or booklet of above E-Tender will be available/uploaded since 30.12.2019 at 15.00 and shall be remained on Website www.ireps.gov.in up to 15.30 hrs on due date of 22.01.2020 of tender opening. 3. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against tender. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with digital signature certificate issued by the CCA under IT Act-2000. 4. Rates entered into financial rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered Rates and any other financial entry in any other form/letter head if attached by vendors shall be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. 5. Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. 6. This tender notice has also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. 7. Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Tender Document Cost (TDC) in respect of e-Tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. Any firm recognized by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) shall be exempted from payment of earnest money deposit detailed above Firm has to submit documentary proof in this records. 8. Online E-Tender can be submitted up to 15:30 Hrs on 22.01.2020. 9. Joint venture is not applicable as per GCC works matter 2019. 10. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached.

1870/19 FA

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in railway northcentral@CPRONCR

Sporting success

As the 2010s come to a close, we should celebrate a great decade for Indian sport and look forward to the 2020s



The 2010s began with a bang for Indian sport with its success at the 2011 Cricket World Cup, whose finals were held at the

Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. The 2012 Summer Olympics held in London also saw India's best-ever haul with six medals, albeit we finished without a Gold. Things have been a bit disappointing since then. While the Indian men's cricket team tops the world rankings in Test series, it has faltered at the semi-final stages of the subsequent One-Day International World Cups and has also failed to win a second T20 World Cup to follow up from the 2007 win. However, the seismic impact of the 2007 win was felt in the creation of the Indian Premier League (IPL), which in the past decade has cemented its position as the leading franchise-based T20 tournament in the world. The Indian women's team has also enjoyed great success over the past decade with their appearance in the finals of the International Cricket Council's women's World Cup. But while this decade has cemented the adage that "India is cricket and cricket is India", it has also seen the emergence of new professional leagues that have enjoyed success as well as the rise of new champions in other sports. The premier Kabaddi League is a genuine success story, particularly in a traditionally Indian sport. On the flip side though, India's failure to win both kabaddi Gold medals, particularly in the men's competition at the 2018 Asian Games, can be attributed in part to the arrogance of newly-rich professional players. On the other hand, the emergence of champions like PV Sindhu has been a singularly impressive achievement. Her standing as World Champion must go down as India's greatest sporting success in the past decade. Alongside Sindhu stands boxer Mary Kom, who despite age and motherhood, is still a champion though she ended the decade on a sour note. Dipa Karmakar's heroic feat at the Rio Olympics, too, is noteworthy as was Sushil Kumar's World Championship in 2010, which gave a filip to wrestling that has been taken forward by the Phogat sisters.

However, not everything was a success. The response to the Indian Super League in football and the Hockey India League was tepid at the very least and miserable at worst. India's reputation in certain sports, particularly weightlifting, has been tarnished, thanks to constant reports of serious doping. That said, drugs are an active problem throughout the world of sports. There have been serious issues with the Government's ambition to clean up Indian sports federations from its political patronage. Much still needs to be done on this front if India is to achieve its potential in the world of sports — football being a particular case in point. India enjoyed some success in the previous decade. After climbing inside the top 100 rankings in the sport, it has seemingly frittered away some of those gains in the last 24 months. Can India finally make a mark in football? The 2020s will show the way. It is likely that an Indian-born player may make it big for a major team in Europe, which could finally crack the market. At the same time, special mention should be given to the "Khelo India" programme and the games that have been ushered under the Narendra Modi administration. A focus on sports under capable Ministers has meant that India is looking forward to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics with a glimmer of hope previously unheard of. So much so that a double-digit haul is on the cards with Indian shooters, pugilists, wrestlers, badminton players and possible track and field athletes such as javelin ace Neeraj Chopra, all being in the race for medals. Expectations are that others will join Abhinav Bindra in the list of individual Indian Gold medalists. As for cricket, India has a packed year coming up. Will India finish the year as reigning ICC Test match champions? Can it make it count in the T20 World Cup to be held in Australia early next year? And where will the IPL and franchise cricket go in the coming months? Can other sports replicate the success of kabaddi? There are many questions that will be asked of Indian sports in the coming decade but we hope that whatever happens, it will only climb to heights never previously achieved.

No more welcome

Following internet shutdowns, the tourism sector is the latest victim of the Government's high-handedness



The Government may be consistently playing down the countrywide protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) as a conspiracy of intellectuals to jeopardise its legitimate existence. But with the protests showing no signs of abating — they have now turned into a people's movement over exclusionary and discriminatory policies that breed hatred and disunity — the clampdown on freedom of expression has been severe. So harsh that internet and mobile network shutdowns

have indefinitely become the order of the day. This has elicited strong admonitions and travel advisories against India, impacting our tourism business severely. For example, tour operators in Agra, the home of Taj Mahal, have unofficially reported a loss of about 50 per cent revenue during the holiday season. Nowhere has the clampdown been as draconian as it has been in Uttar Pradesh with over 19 people killed and more than 1,100 arrests. The visitors' count for December has been the most dismal. A paltry 4.5 lakh tourists arrived at Agra's Taj Mahal over the new year weekend, which is down from seven lakh the same month, last year. Tourists from the US, the UK, China, France and Japan are understandably cautious after reports emerged of foreign students being deported for extending moral support to protesters. Internet cafes, a favourite among young travellers to keep folks connected to them back home, are running dry.

As the tourists have been dissuaded from travelling to India — in part because the message from New Delhi has been that it will not buckle down and, instead, has sharpened its attack on anti-CAA protesters and tightened the noose of police action — their numbers fell well before November, when the crucial Ayodhya verdict was to be announced by the Supreme Court. The month, which saw a footfall of 6.7 lakh tourists last year, saw only 5.4 lakh tourists this year. Agra alone attracts over 6.5 million tourists every year, generating nearly \$14 million annually from entrance fees. Similar is the story elsewhere. Overall, the hospitality sector has been hit. Assam has already faced a loss of ₹400 crore. Mysuru saw a 20 per cent dip in tourism. Revenues for many hotels, tour operators and guides have plunged with many tourists, both domestic and foreign, either cancelling their trips or cutting them short. This is understandable. Protests are now dragging on into the second month and have shown little signs of abating even as the Government has issued "clarifications." There are plenty of signs of matters turning more violent as both police and marchers up the ante. The larger question, however, is whether the tourism sector will be able to absorb the damage once normalcy returns. For an industry, which the Government pegged as a growth driver even in a slowing economy, this is a bad sign. In this business, perception matters and the *atithi* is certainly not feeling welcome anymore.

Why we need data

Preparation of a NPR and decennial census is a legitimate activity of the Union Government and the data thrown up by these exercises form the basis for policy-making



A SURYA PRAKASH

The false propaganda unleashed by some political parties against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, has now got extended to the mandated programme to prepare the National Population Register (NPR) and the conduct of the decennial census, which are scheduled for 2020 and 2021. Several opponents of the current establishment in New Delhi have been spreading disinformation about the NPR and the decennial census, both of which are tools essential for governance.

The purpose of the CAA is to provide citizenship to persecuted religious minorities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who crossed the borders and came into India before December 31, 2014. This has nothing to do with any Indian citizen, whatever be his or her religion. Nor does it open the floodgates for migrants because of the deadline fixed in the Act. The NPR and the decennial census are meant to get demographic information and also inputs on the social and economic status of the population in different regions of the country. Neither of these exercises is aimed at disenfranchising anybody.

The NPR exercise was formulated and introduced by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in 2010, to collect demographic and biometric information about individuals. Here, enumerators go door-to-door and gather particulars about "usual residents" — individuals residing at a given place for the preceding six months. It is, therefore, strange to find that the Congress, the very initiator of this idea, is now opposing it and is doing so with such vehemence that it all looks like a theatrical act.

The census in India is primarily a head count and has been rightly described as the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world. Three million individuals will be deployed to collect the data and for the first time, the enumerators will be using a mobile app and other modern applications to collect and collate data from the field.

The decennial census is being conducted in India since 1892 without a break and this is an important exercise from a national point of view because it tells us about the demographic changes that have taken place at the national and local level in the preceding 10 years. Both these surveys provide policy-makers critical data that enables them to formulate national programmes, especially with regard to basic amenities to the less-advantaged sections of society.

As stated by the Government, the census is the biggest source of primary data at the village, town and ward level, providing micro-level data on various parameters, which includes housing, education, economic activity, literacy, migration, fertility, language, religion, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Preparation of a NPR and decennial census is a legitimate activity of the Union Government and the data thrown up by these exercises form the basis for policy-making not just at the federal level but at the State, district and *taluk* levels as well.



It was, therefore, shocking to see someone like Arundhati Roy exhort citizens to provide fake names and addresses to the enumerators so as to render the entire exercise infructuous. Media reports indicate that she even suggested that the people provide "7, Race Course Road" — the address of the Prime Minister at one time — as their residential address.

Even more preposterous was her suggestion that the Narendra Modi Government, which got a massive mandate from the people in May 2019 to govern till 2024, not be allowed to continue in office.

Her attempt to paralyse the working of the Union Government in regard to collection of population data and to curtail the tenure of a duly-elected Government constitutes subversion of the Constitution. Tolerance of such subversive activities is inimical to national unity and integrity and we should not allow a small minority of dissemblers to disrupt governance and democratic traditions in this manner.

Further, the propaganda that the enumeration undertaken for the NPR must be resisted because it is against the Muslim minority in India, is totally baseless. It appears as if some people are afraid of the truth.

Data is critical for a number of reasons. For example, the

AS STATED BY THE GOVERNMENT, THE CENSUS IS THE BIGGEST SOURCE OF PRIMARY DATA AT THE VILLAGE, TOWN AND WARD LEVEL, PROVIDING MICRO-LEVEL DATA ON VARIOUS PARAMETERS, INCLUDING HOUSING, EDUCATION, ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, LITERACY, MIGRATION, FERTILITY, LANGUAGE, RELIGION, SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

Union Government and many State Governments have formulated policies and welfare schemes especially to ameliorate the conditions of the religious and linguistic minorities. These schemes relate to education, employment, skilling and financial assistance for self employment. The scope and range of these schemes depend on demographics and a decadal head count is an absolute must. The census data is used not just by the Union Government but by Governments and institutions down below at the State, district and *taluk* levels.

Pseudo-secularists seem to believe that the Muslims are the only minority in India. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Hindus in India constitute just around 80 per cent of the population, which means in actual numbers, they would be about one billion of the 1.33 billion population. But the Hindus constitute a minority in six of the 28 States in the country and in a few Union Territories, as do the Christians (except in some States in the North-east), the Sikhs (except in Punjab), the Buddhists, the Jains and the Parsis. The Muslim population in India has risen from 35 million at the time of Independence to around 175 million at this point in time.

Further, we have the linguistic minorities, who are at par with religious minorities as per our Constitution. A reading of

Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution will make it clear that the intention of the founding fathers was to accord the same kind of protection to both religious and linguistic minorities and the State would be the unit to determine who is a minority.

A Kannadiga in Hindi-majority Haryana (as this writer is) gets as much protection as say, Mohammed Iqbal, in Hindu-majority Haryana as per these Constitutional provisions.

Therefore, if pseudo-secularists oppose population data collection and census, which is a legitimate Government activity in all nations across the world, the presumption will be that they are afraid of the numbers that will crop up. The steep rise in the Muslim population in India over the decades and the huge difference between the decadal growth rates of Muslims *vis-a-vis* the Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis, will nail the lie that Muslims are persecuted in India.

Indian citizens, who are adherents of Islam, must, therefore, guard against the false narrative of this minuscule minority of pseudo-secularists and should not allow themselves to be persuaded to oppose the NPR or the census. India will become ungovernable if such tendencies emerge.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. Views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

In my opinion, Citizenship Amendment Act is too little compassion, coming too late. This Bill is only focussed on religious persecution.

Spiritual leader
—Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev

I am thrilled with the kind of work that's coming my way. But I feel envious of the young girls, who are getting a chance to play varied parts so early on in their careers.

Actor
—Neena Gupta

The US has shown its support for terrorism by carrying out air strikes on forces in Iraq that have dealt blows against the Islamic State group.

Iranian official
—Abbas Mousavi

In 2015, people believed him (Kejriwal) to be a great revolutionary, as Fidel Castro or Che Guevara. But now they are fed up with (his) lies.

Union Minister
—Prakash Javadekar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Environment's cause

Sir — Air passengers have their ticket details verified by security personnel at the departure gates of the airport. Upon producing valid identification proof and an e-ticket, passengers can proceed to the check-in counters. Being allowed to produce e-tickets on electronic devices such as smartphones and tablets has helped save paper. Otherwise, tonnes of paper get wasted when people take printouts of tickets. However, owing to a lack of awareness, many passengers still rely on printouts instead of just producing soft copies.

To prevent unnecessary paper usage, airline carriers should provide incentives to passengers who use soft copies of tickets instead of paper-based ones. Organisations such as the Center for Asia Pacific Aviation, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the Airports Council International and the International Air Transport Association should extensively promote the use of paperless tickets for domestic travel. This will go a long way in protecting the environment.

Varun Dambal
Bengaluru

Government must shun authoritarian ways

The Modi Government has shown itself to be arrogant, arbitrary and adamant with its decision to update the National Population Register (NPR) in the teeth of sustained protests against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The tearing hurry with which the Government is pushing ahead with its agenda concerning citizenship casts suspicion on its motives. Nobody is so naive to believe that NPR is not a precursor to NRC. The fact that NPR will serve as the database for NRC is plain to see. The reason for gathering data on date and place of birth of parents and last place of residence from respondents in the proposed house-to-house enumeration is not far to seek or beyond comprehension. The UPA-era NPR, with its emphasis on "residency" and the present modified version of NPR with its emphasis on "citizenship", cannot be bracketed together. Needless to say "additions of three or four columns" can make all the difference.

Fears over the enumeration exercises are not unfounded. NRC or NPR, in conjunction with CAA, will lead to a humanitarian catastrophe of enormous proportions. If the Government is to convince people of its bona fide intentions and bridge the trust deficit, it has to amend

Identity at stake

Sir — Army chief Bipin Rawat's recent comments on anti-CAA protesters have rightly been seen by many military veterans and

security experts as "overtly political." Though such kind of remarks are common in Pakistan, it is almost unheard of in our country.

The political nature of the armed forces is indeed a neces-

sary safeguard against military coups. The Indian Army has always followed Article 21 of the Army Act, which says no person subject to the Act "shall publish in any form whatever or communicate directly or indirectly to the



CAA to treat Muslim refugees at par with refugees of other religious persuasions. Sad to say, the Government remains unmoved by the distress of a 14-month-old breastfed child separated from his parents jailed for taking part in the anti-CAA protests. The parents of the child exemplify true patriotism. "Civil disobedience with a smile" on Gandhian lines appears to be the only option now left for the people to bring the Government to its senses and persuade it to abandon its policy of divide and rule and pull the country back from the brink.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Press any matter in relation to a political question or on a service subject or containing any service information." The Army must preserve its identity.

Sujit De
Kolkata

Cheap tactics

Sir — It is unfortunate that the Uttar Pradesh police allegedly manhandled Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who was on her way to pay a visit to retired IPS officer SR Darapuri at his residence. As the police tried to stop her vehicle from moving further, Priyanka hoodwinked the police by riding pillion on a two-wheeler and reached her destination. While the police's act is condemnable, the traffic police issued the owner of the two-wheeler a challan of ₹6,000 because the two were riding without a helmet. This appears to be a revenge action by the police and is definitely in cheap taste.

Tharicus S Fernando
Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Handle sensitive issues carefully

The judiciary and the executive cannot be at loggerheads in a welfare State as it would make citizens jittery and lose faith in the system



ABHAY RAJ MISHRA

The kind of storm which the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 has kicked up is, perhaps, unprecedented as it deals with the subject of future citizenship and not the current. The matter is now resting the opinion of the Supreme Court (SC) for its constitutional validity, which will hear 59 petitions filed in opposition of the law on January 22, 2020. It would be interesting to note whether the views of the judiciary and the executive would converge on an issue as sensitive as this one. In the case of Ayodhya, the apex court's verdict has established well that law cannot be detached from the interests of the people it serves. There was a raging debate whether the Ayodhya verdict was based on credible and admissible evidence or was it influenced by the faith and belief of the majority? Irrespective, the verdict was peacefully accepted by all the factions, not necessarily for its veracity but for bringing to end a painful impasse. What is clearly visible and undebatable is that it brought peace finally.

There would be peace if two conditions are fulfilled. One, the interests of the larger sections of the people must be put above all else. To punish a few guilty, we cannot make the masses suffer along with them. Second, there cannot be a chasm between the views of the executive and the judiciary, which would otherwise make citizens jittery and lose faith in the system altogether. Imagine being brought up by two warring parents.

This ethos of acting in public interest and going along with the views of the executive must now be extended to end pain in other areas as well. Take livelihoods as an example, where the case of Goans has been hanging for far too long. Goa was the only State where mining rights were granted to its citizens by the Portuguese Government in perpetuity, but were eventually revoked by the Indian Government. Ever since the apex court abruptly cancelled 88 mining leases in the State on February 7, 2018, life has come to a grinding, tragic halt for mining dependents in the State. This is now no longer just an economic crisis — which is severely debilitating in its own right — but a grave human crisis as well. Such is the situation that the Goa Government has requested a review of the ban by the SC, which is also pending. Jobs and livelihoods disappearing overnight as a result of judicial intervention is painful, particularly at a time when India is going through the worst employment crisis in the last 40 years. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the country's employment reached the lowest rate in 2017-2018.

Earlier, in 2012, the SC cancelled 122 spectrum licences in response to a PIL filed by a host of activists and to answer the question whether the Government had a right to distribute natural resources in a manner that was not "fair and transparent." This affected 5.3 crore telephone connections. It was alleged that the exchequer lost ₹1.76 lakh crore in revenue and a few private telecom players were the beneficiaries. This case was highlighted as among the top 10 abuses of power by *Time* magazine. The verdict shook the country, changed the contours of a developing telecom industry, made new telecom operators wrap up their business and gave the reins of the sector into the hands of a few business groups.

In a reversal in 2017, a special court in New Delhi acquitted all the accused in the 2G spectrum case citing that the CBI could not find any evidence against the accused in seven years. As per the judgment, "Some people created a scam by artfully arranging a few selected facts and exaggerating things beyond recognition to astronomical levels." The matter now rests with the Delhi High Court on basis of appeals filed by the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate. The key question is as to why the case could not have been tried without cancelling the licences? The court should have allowed business to continue, while the case would have carried on. By invoking closure of business, the court caused collateral damage to the industry, the economy and most importantly to the livelihoods of people employed by the companies that had to close shop.

Studies have established that India's Maoist movement is deeply rooted in socio-economic conditions prevalent in parts of India with large tribal populations. It has mostly affected areas where there is a conflict between the State and the populace on the economic derivation of forest produce and mining such as in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and agriculture in parts of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Such aggressive posturing by citizens has huge direct and indirect costs. The purpose of the law is to create a conducive environment for the citizens of the State. However, sometimes, like in the Goa mining ban and the spectrum case, the law and its interpretation has spelled doom for citizens and businesses. This cannot become a precedent and must be addressed immediately. Situations like these need more complex solutions, just like the CAA. It is simplistic to penalise lakhs of people for the actions of the few with the stroke of a pen, and it is certainly not done.

(The writer is president, not-for-profit organisation PRAHAR)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THOSE DAMAGING PROPERTY HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN VIDEO AND CCTV FOOTAGE. WE WILL TAKE REVENGE FROM THEM BY SEIZING THEIR PROPERTY.

—UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER
 YOGI ADITYANATH



THIS IS PERHAPS THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY THAT A CHIEF MINISTER HAS STATED THIS. FOLLOW THE DHARMA SYMBOLISED BY YOUR SAFFRON ROBES.
 —CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY, EASTERN UP
 PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA

A defining year

In 2019, a reformist Government was brought back to power and that, too, with a huge majority. This shows how electoral preferences are maturing in the country



KARAN BHASIN

Since the early 1990s, there has been a sense of optimism with regards to India's economic progress. The process of liberalisation during 1991 brought with it a sense of hope regarding a dramatic turnaround in the country's economic fortunes. While the nation's growth did accelerate from the 1980s onwards, however, it wasn't comparable to other emerging economies, including China.

The first decade of the 21st century was believed to be India's time as it had a Government that was looking at the next generation of economic reforms. These transformations happened and the country witnessed the first serious privatisation of several public sector enterprises (PSEs) along with a drastic reduction in small savings rates. India's macroeconomic situation was stable and gradually growth started to increase along with its investment rates. This growth continued till 2007, after which it started to lose steam due to lack of economic reforms and then the 2008 crisis hit the country along with the rest of the world.

While many thought the impact of the 2008 crisis wasn't as much on India as elsewhere, the reasons behind this were the policy instruments which were deployed to address the risks that emerged. These instruments, combined with a lack of reforms and an entitlement-based regime brought a fresh macroeconomic challenge in the second decade of the 21st century.

Two decades have elapsed and India is yet to justify the sense of optimism that prevailed at the start of the century. But to be fair, the second decade wasn't that bad considering that India's growth in 2014, 2015 and 2016 was fairly decent even when one ignores the fact that it witnessed two successive droughts in 2014 and 2015. The country's macroeconomic situation has improved significantly since 2014 and the Government has undertaken several reforms that will have long-term growth implications such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA).

Despite these reforms, growth slowed towards the end of 2018 and throughout the first half of 2019. This has led people to question whether the third decade will be any different from the previous two decades. However, there are compelling reasons that point at how this time, it will be different. For starters, the current slowdown is not because of any inherent structural factors but is a direct outcome of the financial sector stress which spread over from banks to Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs). The reasons behind the build-up of this stress are more to do with reckless lending during the first decade of the century as the attempt to fix it started only post the introduction of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act.

As the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest Financial Stability Report suggests, the Public Sector Banks' (PSBs) Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) may increase by September 2020 and this poses fresh concerns regarding the ability of the PSBs to take prudent lending decisions. The recent spike in NPAs could also be because of the high cost of capital compared to the moderation in inflation, which has artificially kept the real

“ A LOT OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS WAS MADE IN 2019 AND SOME OF IT COULD BE BECAUSE OF THE SLOWDOWN. HOWEVER, 2019 WILL MARK A STRUCTURAL BREAK FOR INDIA AS WE ENTER INTO A DECADE WHICH WILL CERTAINLY BELONG TO THE COUNTRY'S ENTREPRENEURS AND ITS ECONOMIC AMBITIONS ”



rates at one of the highest levels in the world.

Clearly, India's got a problem on the monetary side, which needs to be rectified if it is aiming to grow at seven per cent or more. Some progress has been made on this by the RBI, however, it continues to be conservative and the longer it takes for it to recognise the extent of the problem, the more prolonged the bottom of the U.

Irrespective of these short-term challenges, the outlook for economic growth for the country in the medium-term is completely positive as some of the current supply-side issues will get resolved and India will witness a growth of 5.0-5.4 per cent in the third quarter (Q3) of the current Financial Year (FY) followed by a 6.2-6.6 per cent growth in the fourth quarter (Q4) of the current FY. India will end the decade with a modest growth rate; however, the country will begin it with a seven per cent or higher growth rate in the FY 2020-21.

The question is whether this rate will be sustained throughout the decade or not. There is a reasonable belief that India will sustain a seven per cent growth this decade and it may even attain an eight per cent or high growth rate towards the end of the decade as it witnesses a steady revival of investments as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This improvement will be a direct product of some of the painful reforms that were undertaken in the past, which will unleash the nation's productive potential. The recent corporate tax cut would result in steady improvements in corporate sector balance sheets, which will result in fresh investments from 2022 onwards. At the same time, implementation of the Direct Tax Code (DTC) will simplify taxation procedures, which

will further augment productivity.

There's also talk of a GST overhaul which may happen during the next couple of years. This, when combined with land, labour and agricultural reforms, will be critical to unlocking India's productive potential. Demographics, too, favour India as it has the world's largest workforce which will act as a check in wage costs, thereby giving it a competitive edge over other emerging market economies for the next two decades. All of this is essential to experience the kind of transformation that several of the country's peers experienced during the 1980s and 1990s.

Of course, fresh reforms will be required — but they are already on the agenda of the Government as the labour codes are coming into effect. Many of these reforms will be aided by the fact that there's a mandate of 303, which enables the Government to take decisions that would be extremely difficult to push for in a divided Parliament.

Global conditions, too, seem to be conducive for India as Boris Johnson's election in the United Kingdom (UK) will end uncertainty regarding Brexit. He has expressed his willingness to enter into a trade agreement with India and the nation should be closing trade deals with the UK, Europe and the US to further integrate itself into global trade.

Global economic growth is also likely to recover in 2020, which means that external factors will be conducive for India's growth, provided it can address some of its domestic constraints. The year 2019 goes down in Indian economic history for many reasons. For starters, it marks the first time in the history of India where a reformist Government was brought back into power and that, too, with a

huge majority. This shows how electoral preferences are maturing in India.

The outcome of the election made it possible to take three significant economic decisions. First was the merger of 10 PSBs into four. This is likely to consolidate the sector and improve its efficiency over a period. It also opens up interesting possibilities for future privatisation of some of these big four banks as there's no need for having four big PSBs, especially at a time when the nation has already pumped in ₹3 trillion into them without any positive outcome so far.

The second was to do with the corporate tax cut, which was promised in the previous tenure. Indeed, many consider it just a tax cut, however, it is a deep structural reform that will have long-term positive implications for financial stability and financing of investments. More importantly, it illustrates a shift in thinking of taxmen, who now recognise that tax revenues can increase at lower rates due to improvements in tax compliance.

The third decision was of privatisation of several firms, including BPCL. This is a bold move as it signals a staunch commitment to the phrase that "the Government has no business to be in business."

This move has signalled to the world that India is finally opening greater space for private players in its economy, which has hit all the right notes. Indeed, a lot of economic progress was made in 2019 and some of it could be because of the slowdown. However, 2019 will mark a structural break for India as we enter into a decade which will certainly belong to the country's entrepreneurs and its economic ambitions.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy researcher)

2020 must be about implementation

There should be a 20 per cent increase in funding for health by States, the Centre and Urban Local Bodies. Inter-departmental coordination is also needed for stronger implementation linkage between health, water and sanitation and nutrition-related initiatives



CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

Legislations or related deliberations were arguably the highlight for India's health sector in 2019. The Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019; the National Medical Commission (NMC) Act and the Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Act were passed by the Parliament. The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill is being considered by the select committee of the Rajya Sabha and a draft Bill to protect doctors and health care providers from assault is also under consideration.

The health sub-committee of the Fifteenth Finance Commission made recommendations to enact the right to health in India by 2022 and

to shift "health" into the concurrent list.

A few States, namely Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, deliberated about enacting the right to health legislation. During the year, public health experts argued that the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, announced in 2018, had put health higher on the political agenda and nearly six States started a variant of Mohalla Clinics (neighbourhood clinics) to increase the provision of free primary health care services.

There were a few negative developments as well. Violent attacks on doctors, health care providers and facilities were reported from different parts of the country, followed by protests and strikes by the medical fraternity.

In the summer of 2019, encephalitis deaths were reported from Muzaffarpur in Bihar. The experts were once again divided on the cause of this and consequently, the children of the nation are still waiting for scientific and long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies from recurring.

In the last quarter, poor air quality returned to affect the health of the people in many districts of north India and all policymakers did was to question the proven evidence on the impact of air pollution on people. Hence, it is clear that there are many issues that need to be addressed in this crucial sector.

Legislative approach in health works: The Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Act, which has hiked the penalties for traffic violations, has the potential to improve health, as nearly one in every 10 preventable deaths occurred due to road accidents. After the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017, mental health services in India received a boost at the implementation level as the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority directed companies to include mental health care services in their insurance package as one in every seven people have one or other mental health care needs.

Though the Bill to protect doctors and health care workers could not develop a consensus, it is also

true that preventing such attacks requires more than just a legislative approach. Improving the quality of health services, preventing commercialisation of health services and changing health-seeking behaviour to get early care is the need of the hour. A realistic expectation from health services needs to be developed and the "market-based belief" that every health condition is treatable, needs to be addressed. In health services, the outcomes are completely unpredictable and even the best of the treatment and advanced care may not save a person, while another person with a similar health condition may quickly recover with basic health interventions.

Kerala averted Nipah virus outbreaks: Learning from the experience of 2018, the Kerala Government acted swiftly when a new case of Nipah was reported in 2019. With effective surveillance, early identification, effective containment/isolation and case management, an epidemic was averted. This highlights the need for a

stronger and effective surveillance system across all Indian States to tackle emerging disease threats.

What to expect in 2020: In the last two years, India has seen a lot of focus on policy formulation, legislation and other broader health issues. However, in 2020, policymakers would do well to rapidly scale-up and allocate more resources for the health and wellness centres, a vital component of the Ayushman Bharat programme.

States must also give additional priority to adopting community clinics for urban settings. The country also needs to follow a focussed approach to integrate preventive and promotive health interventions with overall wellness initiatives and linkage with AYUSH.

The Government must shift focus from making isolated health facilities functional to a group of amenities in entire planning units, i.e. blocks in rural areas and entire corporation planning units, functional.

There should be at least a 20 per cent annual increase in Government

funding for health by States, the Centre as well as by Urban Local Bodies. Inter-departmental coordination is also needed for stronger implementation linkage between health, water and sanitation and nutrition-related initiatives.

Taxation on "demerit goods" such as tobacco products should be further increased to global recommendation of tax being 70 per cent of the product price.

Beverages sweetened with sugar, including fruit juices, must be taxed as demerit goods at higher rates. And last but not the least, healthy behaviour should be encouraged at all levels, especially in schools and colleges, with ban on sale of "junk food" near schools and colleges.

In short, for the health sector, 2020 should be a year of implementing policies, improving provision of a broad range of health services as per the needs of the people, State Governments taking the lead in health provision to make a healthy India.

(The writer is a Delhi-based senior public health specialist.)



TOO MUCH PATRONAGE

If Boris Johnson wants to break up the elites, he should reform the honours system. The 2004 select committee report contains a blueprint on honours which should be revived. Its ideas include simplification, clearer criteria, scrapping knighthoods and damehoods, no automatic awards and an end to the word "empire" in honours. Such a system would not preclude a knighthood for Iain Duncan Smith. But he would have to take his chances with the rest.

(The Guardian editorial)

HEALTH

ImageThis

Researchers have used ensemble methods based on deep learning 3D analysis networks to answer the global MRI prevision challenge for children. They made predictions for both the fluid intelligence level and the target variable independent from age, gender, brain size or MRI scanner used



<<2019-2020>>



Innovations like real-time diagnosis, remote patient monitoring and better availability of medical devices can help the country stay on top, says NIKHILESH TIWARI



Best & worst of it

Following a diet to lose weight is popular. 2019 saw some that worked and others that didn't. Here's a list



Mediterranean Diet

The World Report ranked the Mediterranean diet No 1 in overall diet in 2019. The diet is rich in whole vegetables, fresh fruits, whole grains, fatty fish, olive oil, nuts, legumes, and some red wine and dairy. The diet's focuses on choosing whole, plant-based foods over those you might find in a vending machine that may make you to stick with it.

Besides the benefit of weight loss, there are various other health benefits associated with opting Mediterranean diet. It also supports heart and brain health.

Intermittent fasting

This diet is a popular way to lose weight for those who want to shed kilos faster. It involves not eating for prolonged period. Some people fast for two days out of the week — 5:2, which involves eating very little on fast days, while others set themselves a specific eating time like 16 hours fasting and eight hours feeding.

There is evidence that this diet can help people lose weight however it is not for everyone.

One has to understand ones needs and schedule to know if what will work, since the eating pattern is puts restrictions on when you can eat and when you can't. There is tendency to overeat or binge eat.

While the above two diets found favour with many people abroad and in India, two diets while worked wonders found disfavour.

Keto Diet

This diet caught the attention of the Indian public with almost everyone wanting to lose weight swearing by this diet plan. However, there's a lack of research to prove that this diet is safe in the long run. The diet involves eating high-fat, moderate-protein, and low-carbs diet. This can be a challenge if one is following a diet without medical supervision. The downside is the minute you are off the diet, one is likely to gain back all the weight lost.

The health benefits of this diet for Type II Diabetes, certain types of cancer and Alzheimer's and its long-term effect is lacking. The diet restricts foods that help fight cancer and heart disease, like whole grains and legumes.

There are many in which one can follow this diet, however not all of them are healthy. For example if the diet involves eating a lot of spinach and kale, people generally eat bacon and eggs.

Atkins diet

This diet was popular among those wanting to lose weight a few decades back. It involved eating a low-carb diet. The original low-carb diet, made popular decades ago.

The diet involves eating high-fat, high-protein, with low-carb vegetables like leafy greens. This kick-starts the weight loss. Slowly one can add more nuts, low-carb vegetables and small amounts of fruit back to the diet.

Do not eat fruit, bread, pasta, grains, starchy vegetables, or dairy products other than cheese, cream or butter. And do not eat nuts or seeds in the first two weeks. Foods that combine protein and carbohydrates, such as chickpeas, kidney beans, and other legumes are also not permitted at this time.

TECH TO RESCUE

Medical devices and equipment form a significantly essential part of healthcare delivery. Constant innovation and technological advancement in the field of medical devices is crucial to ensure the goal of universal healthcare. Medical devices are essential for accurate and timely diagnosis, safe and effective prevention, quality treatment as well as rehabilitation. World Health Organisation recognises that the achievement of health-related development goals is dependent on proper manufacturing, regulation, planning, assessment, acquisition, management and use of quality medical devices.

The medical devices sector consist of a wide array of tools and equipment that help clinical practitioners deliver quality healthcare effectively and save crucial lives. Medical devices consists of diagnostics imaging, IV diagnostics, consumables, patient aids, equipments and instruments, ortho and prosthetics, dental products and other devices such as patient monitors, oxygenators and ECG.

Each of these categories is crucial to quality healthcare delivery. The Indian medical devices market is expected to grow to \$50 billion by 2025. India is currently the fourth largest medical devices market in Asia after Japan, China and South Korea.

MEDICAL DEVICES & ROLE
Constant improvement and technological advancement in the field of medical devices and equipment has helped doctors improve clinical outcomes and quality of healthcare delivery. Increase use of digital technology is driving a new revolution in the medical devices sector with greater focus on

improving delivery, user experience and bringing down healthcare costs. Here is a breakdown of areas where constant innovation in medical devices industry is helping India achieve better health outcomes:

DIAGNOSIS IN REAL TIME

Thanks to innovation and technological advancement, real time diagnostic tools have emerged as an important element in fighting infectious diseases. Classical detection methods such as culture and immunoassays offer accurate results but the time taken in obtaining results is often crucial time lost in treatment.

Rapid detection tools are expected to play a significant role in ensuring better treatment of communicable diseases such as TB.

Overall, improvement in technology has also improved the accuracy of screening. Portable/point-of-care devices are other important category that have made it possible to improve diagnostic mechanisms at primary healthcare level, provide care at home and resulted in improved health outcomes and patient satisfaction. Point-of-care testing allows the patient get his diagnoses in a doctor's clinic, at a health camp, an ambulance or event at home as these are portable devices that can be easily transported and offer a reliable alternative to laboratory testing in places where hospitals and labs are in short supply.

It also improves the access to quality healthcare in underserved and remote regions, while also making it possible for patients to avail treatment outside traditional healthcare facilities.

REDUCING HEALTHCARE COSTS

Technological advancements in the

While technological advancements in the devices sector are expected to play a critical role in improving healthcare outcomes, it is important that appropriate measures are initiated to ensure greater affordability and accessibility

devices and equipment sector also plays a significant role in reducing healthcare costs which is critical to make healthcare services more affordable to the masses in India.

Newage surgical equipment has enabled doctors to treat highly complex and critical cases, and reduce the length of extended hospital stays. For example, advancements in laproscopic surgery have increasingly made it possible to perform procedures such as angiography, stenting and spine surgery easily with improved outcomes and reduced length of hospital stays. This has tremendously helped in lowering costs of treatment.

Similarly, with the onset of the era of remote monitoring and devices to help better manage chronic diseases, the overall healthcare costs are bound to come down over a period of time.

REMOTE PATIENT MONITORING

Remote monitoring is the new buzzword in the medical devices sector. With rise in incidence of chronic diseases and an increasingly ageing population, there has been a rise in demand for medical devices and tools that can monitor patients continuously, more effectively and reduce the need to visit clinics and hospitals.

A growing interest in IoT-driven healthcare services and wearable medical devices is an emerging trend of our times. Using cloud based platforms these devices can alert doctors of important changes in vital signs in a patient. These advancements in health screening devices have enabled patients to monitor their health conditions at home, reducing the need for hospital visits and bringing down the pressure on the over-burdened healthcare centers.

BOOSTING LOCAL MANUFACTURING

While technological advancements in the devices sector are expected to play a critical role in improving healthcare outcomes, it is important that appropriate measures are initiated to ensure greater affordability and accessibility. In a nutshell, improving the ecosystem governing the sector is the need of the hour.

This includes improving regulatory mechanisms, quality testing as well as incentivising innovation in the sector. Also important is the need to create a more congenial tax environment. GST on medical devices currently stands at 12 per cent. On the other hand, customs duty is low. This tax policy negatively impacts indigenous production and supports imports, which is counter intuitive to the Make in India initiative. Notably, imports constitute 75 per cent of the industry sales of medical devices in the country while local manufacturers mostly produce products in the lower end of the value chain. The government must consider revising its tax policy for devices to lower the GST while increasing the customs duty to help local manufacturers gain a larger share of the market. This will also help them manufacture products at more affordable costs.

The Make in India initiative presents a platform for the sector to revisit the operating model, identify key imperatives for growth and explore possibilities for creating a step change in the medical devices sector. This in turn, allows Indian manufacturers to provide affordable options for crucial equipments such as CT scans, catheters, dialysis equipments and many more.

The writer is Founder & Director, ColMed

Mushrooms for memory

A team from the Department of Psychological Medicine and Department of Biochemistry at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at the National University of Singapore (NUS) has found that seniors who consume more than two standard portions of mushrooms weekly may have 50 per cent reduced odds of having mild cognitive impairment

(MCI). The six-year study, which was conducted from 2011 to 2017, collected data from more than 600 Chinese seniors over the age of 60 living in Singapore. The research was carried out with support from the Life Sciences Institute and the Mind Science Centre at NUS, as well as the Singapore Ministry of Health's National Medical Research Council. The results were published online in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease on March 12, 2019.



Did you know?

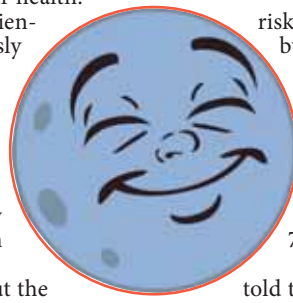


An international team led by Professor Jerome Estaqueur from Universite Laval's Faculty of Medicine and the CHU de Quebec-Universite Laval Research Centre may have discovered where in the body HIV takes refuge during antiretroviral treatment. Research conducted using an animal model indicates that the virus may hide in lymph nodes in the spleen and gut. The researchers believe those lymph nodes are the staging ground from which the virus prepares to relaunch the infection after treatment has stopped, according to the study published in Mucosal Immunology from publisher Nature Research.

- Nine out of ten people breathe polluted air every day. In 2019, air pollution is considered by WHO as the greatest environmental risk to health. Microscopic pollutants in the air can penetrate respiratory and circulatory systems, damaging the lungs, heart and brain, killing 7 million people prematurely every year from diseases such as cancer, stroke, heart and lung disease.
- Noncommunicable diseases, like Diabetes, cancer and heart disease, are collectively responsible for over 70 per cent of all deaths worldwide, or 41 million people. This includes 15 million people dying prematurely, aged between 30 and 69.
- The world will face another influenza pandemic — the only thing we don't know is when it will hit and how severe it will be.

If you love a midday snooze, then we have some great news as it turns out napping could actually be good for your health.

While scientists previously found that sleeping regularly could help improve productivity at work, now new research has found it could also cut the



Challenges 2019

- WHO is constantly monitoring the circulation of influenza viruses to detect potential pandemic strains: 153 institutions in 114 countries are involved in global surveillance and response.
- More than 1.6 billion people (22% of the global population) live in places where protracted crises (through a combination of challenges such as drought, famine, conflict) and weak health services leave them without access to basic care.
- Fragile settings exist in almost all regions of the world, and these are where half of the key targets in the sustainable

development goals, including on child and maternal health, remains unmet.

- The development of antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials are some of modern medicine's greatest successes. Now, time with these drugs is running out. Antimicrobial resistance — the ability of bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi to resist these medicines — threatens to send us back to a time when we were unable to easily treat infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and salmonellosis. The inability to prevent infections could seriously compromise surgery and procedures such as chemotherapy.

- Vaccine hesitancy — the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines — threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases. Vaccination is one of the most cost-effective ways of avoiding disease — it currently prevents two-three million deaths a year, and a further 1.5 million could be avoided if global coverage of vaccinations improved.
- Dengue, a mosquito-borne disease that causes flu-like symptoms and can be lethal and kill up to 20 per cent of those with severe dengue, has been a growing threat for decades.
- An estimated 40 per cent of the world is at risk of dengue fever, and there are around 390 million infections a year. WHO's Dengue control strategy aims to reduce deaths by 50 per cent by 2020.

Snooze time

risk of a heart attack by almost half. A study carried out in Switzerland used data for 3,462 people living in Lausanne, who were aged 35 to 75. The group were told to record how

often they took naps for five years, with their sleeping patterns and general health being tracked by researchers. The results — published in the journal Heart, found that those who napped once or twice a week were 48 per cent less likely to experience these health issues, even when other factors were taken into account.

What we learnt

- A study from Tel Aviv University suggests that plants make ultrasonic screams when harmed. Their experiments involved microphones, chopping stems, and depriving tomatoes and tobacco of water.
- Forensic investigators from Nevada presented the case of a man whose sperm only contained DNA from his

bone marrow donor. While donor DNA is commonly found in the recipient's cheek, lip, and tongue cells, this is one of the first times where it may be passed on.



Market ends steady in see-saw trade Gold to retain its glitter in 2020

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices closed on a flat note after a topsy-turvy session on Monday, with participants fence-sitting in absence of further cues ahead of year-end holidays. At the closing bell, the BSE benchmark Sensex was 17.14 points, or 0.04 per cent, lower at 41,558. The 30-share gauge swung between a high of 41,714.73 and low of 41,453.38 in a highly volatile session. The broader NSE Nifty, however, closed 10.05 points, or 0.08 per cent, higher at 12,255.85. The 50-share index too faced bouts of volatility during the day. ICICI Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shed-

ding 0.99 per cent, followed by SBI, TCS, HUL, Asian Paints and Axis Bank. On the other hand, Nestle India, Hero MotoCorp, Mahindra and Mahindra, Bharti Airtel and Tata Steel were among the gainers. Sectorally, BSE IT, bank, finance, tech and oil and gas indices closed in the red. While, BSE auto, metal, telecom, industrial and basic materials were among the prominent gainers. In the broader market, BSE midcap and smallcap indices outperformed benchmarks, rallying up to 0.75 per cent. Market was range-bound, premium valuation and lack of fresh triggers influenced investors to take cautious approach on heavyweights. But

reasonable valuation of mid and small caps attracted inflows leading to outperformance in the broad market. We expect this polarised valuation not to sustain, there could be shift of money from the overvalued large caps to midcaps in 2020." Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said. Globally, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended higher, while those in Tokyo and Seoul settled in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe started on a negative note. There was hardly any significant news flow on the domestic front, however, in the coming days the focus will remain on monthly numbers from auto companies and on

the GDP numbers, analysts commented. On the currency front, the rupee was 4 paise higher at 71.34 against the US dollar. Brent futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced marginally to USD 66.94 per barrel. Subdued domestic equity markets and high crude oil prices restricted the gains in the rupee, analysts said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 71.36 against the US dollar. During the day, the domestic unit saw a high of 71.30 and a low of 71.39. The domestic unit finally settled at 71.31, higher by 4 paise over the previous closing price. On Friday the rupee had settled at 71.35 against the American currency.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Always a pricey possession, gold is set to remain more pricey in the New Year too as continuing geopolitical tremors, economic woes and rupee volatility are expected to push the yellow metal even to ₹ 45,000 for 10 gram. Thanks to various government policies and soaring stock market, gold witnessed periodic as well as steep price fluctuations in 2019, with bias towards the higher side in the second half of this year. Data from the World Gold Council shows that 14 central banks, including the RBI, have reportedly added more than one tonne to their reserve. "As we look to 2020, we believe investors will face

increasing geopolitical concerns, while many pre-existing ones will be pushed back rather than being resolved. "In addition, the low level of interest rates worldwide will keep stock prices high and valuations at extreme levels, on the verge of peaking out. Therefore, we believe there are reasons for higher levels of safe-haven assets like gold," Commtrendz Research Director Gnanasekar Thiagarajan told PTI. From US-China trade turmoil to conflicts in the Middle East, geopolitical issues are galore for the global markets which might also await cues from the US presidential polls towards end of 2020. The potential medium-term target lies at ₹ 41,000-

41,500 per 10 gram at MCX (USD 1,640-1,650). Further, the level could rise to ₹ 44,500-45,000 (USD 1,795-1,800) in case there are new developments on the global front that could dent risk appetite, Thiagarajan said. World Gold Council Managing Director (India) Somasundaram PR said local currency prices in almost all markets, including rupee, breached previous life time highs, leading to muted consumer demand across markets. "Indian demand also lost significant momentum in Q3, and though Q4 saw a revival with its traditional wedding and festival season, overall demand for the full year is expected to be at the lower end

of 700-750 tonne. ETF (Exchange Traded Fund) demand in the US and Europe, and central bank buying across nations, however, continue to be strong," he noted. According to him, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was one of the main buyers of gold in 2019, increasing its reserves by over 60 tonne. China and Russia have been the biggest buyers of gold till now. Besides, countries like India, Turkey, Poland and Kazakhstan have also joined the bandwagon in purchasing the yellow metal. In the first half of this year, gold was relatively more attractive for consumers as the price ruled at around ₹ 31,500-32,000 for every 10 gram.

Smartphone sales buck slowdown on strong urban, rural demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The economic slowdown may have clipped sales of cars and biscuits in 2019, but smartphones bucked the trend as urban and rural users continued to buy, and even upgrade to, expensive handsets - a trend likely to pick up pace in the coming year. The growth in smartphone adoption was further fuelled by the government's push to position the country as a global hub for manufacturing and coax Apple and other leading brands to pro-

duce and export more phones from India. Experts say that phone shipment is expected to see high single-digit to double-digit growth in India as smartphones aiding everything from shopping to banking to social media and, yes, perfect selfies! Counterpoint Research Associate Director Tarun Pathak expects India's smartphone market to grow by 9 per cent this year, and in double digits (by 12-14 per cent) in 2020. By 2022, over 700 million people are expected to have a

smartphone in India, and over a billion devices will be sold over the next four-five years, he said. A back of the envelope calculation shows that over 115 million units smartphones were shipped in India in the first three quarters of 2019 with Xiaomi, Samsung, vivo, Oppo and Realme making up the top five tally. Interestingly, there has been a significant rise in the average selling prices (ASP) of smartphones this year - rising from ₹ 5,000-10,000 to ₹ 10,000-15,000 now.

As per International Data Corporation (IDC), while more than 80 per cent of the market is sub-USD 200, the USD 300-500 category has witnessed multi-fold growth with flagship devices of players like Xiaomi, Oppo and OnePlus. According to IDC India Associate Research Manager (Client Devices) Upasana Joshi, this segment is essentially for the "upgraders" who aspire for flagship-like design and specifications at nominal prices. The government on its part brought a new electronics man-

ufacturing policy to woo global investors to target manufacturing of one billion mobile phones by 2025. It also relaxed foreign direct investment (FDI) for single brand retail - a move that made Apple announce willingness to open its maiden retail store in India. Also, corporate tax rate was reduced to 22 per cent and a lower 15 per cent rate offered to new manufacturing units. This massive outreach helped as Apple began making iPhone XR in India, while Salcom committed investments

to the tune of ₹ 2,000 crore. Salcom - which the world's largest manufacturer and a major supplier of chargers to Apple for iPhone - has inked an agreement to take over the facility of Nokia in a special economic zone (SEZ) near Chennai that was closed for nearly 10 years. The facility will be made operational from March 2020, and is expected to employ about 10,000 people. For consumers, 2019 saw smartphones sporting more cameras with powerful sensors, higher memory and even a folding form factor. Ending months of

wait, Samsung brought to India its 'Galaxy Fold' featuring a foldable display and priced at ₹ 1.65 lakh. Motorola has also introduced its foldable 'Moto Razr' though there is no clarity on its India availability. Another area of action for smartphone makers was the smart TV space. Players like OnePlus, Motorola and Nokia launched their smart TVs - and priced them aggressively - to compete with giants like Sony, LG and Samsung. Xiaomi India Head of Online Sales and Categories

Raghu Reddy said the smart TV accounted for 18 per cent of the total TV market in India in the first quarter of 2018, which expanded to 43 per cent a year later. Another area of ultrasonic growth was the wearables category. While previous years saw a number of fitness bands and smart watches making their way into the Indian market, 2019 was the year of 'hearables'. This category, according to Faisal Kawoosa (founder and Chief Analyst at techARC), will make up two-thirds of the wearables sales in 2020 by volume.

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	12274.90	12286.45	12213.80	12260.60	14.80
TATAMOTORS	177.20	184.35	176.30	183.75	7.60
EICHERMOT	22270.05	22876.60	22180.45	22799.00	576.65
UPL	582.95	592.00	578.45	590.80	10.55
NESTLEIND	14679.90	14900.00	14600.10	14882.10	217.95
VEDL	152.05	154.90	150.15	154.00	2.25
M&M	531.35	539.85	531.35	537.95	7.80
HEROMOTOCO	2446.00	2485.00	2411.00	2476.05	33.60
ZEEL	297.85	304.50	295.50	302.65	3.65
HINDALCO	216.30	219.00	211.15	217.80	2.35
COALINDIA	203.55	206.25	201.20	205.55	2.05
BHARTIARTL	460.00	464.70	455.10	459.60	4.50
TATASTEEL	470.10	476.30	465.10	474.10	4.60
MARUTI	7378.00	7431.95	7341.60	7415.00	70.10
SUNPHARMA	428.95	433.50	426.70	429.50	3.50
HDFCBANK	1268.00	1288.75	1274.05	1284.90	9.90
JSWSTEEL	289.50	293.50	286.60	290.70	1.80
ADANIPOR	371.00	371.00	363.75	366.00	2.30
ITC	238.00	240.00	237.50	238.30	1.40
BAJAJ-AUTO	3240.00	3260.00	3229.05	3258.00	16.05
INDUSINDBK	1524.90	1552.50	1518.05	1531.40	6.50
HCLTECH	567.00	577.50	564.25	569.80	2.25
POWERGRID	189.00	191.50	188.70	189.80	0.75
BPL	490.95	494.80	481.65	492.70	1.75
WIPRO	248.45	249.55	246.60	248.45	0.90
LI	1301.90	1307.20	1296.50	1303.40	3.80
RELIANCE	1545.95	1547.65	1528.05	1546.25	3.90
GAIL	118.55	120.45	118.35	118.75	0.20
TECHM	782.70	784.85	779.10	781.55	1.35
TITAN	1195.00	1198.00	1183.10	1193.00	1.55
BRITANNIA	3050.00	3065.00	3035.10	3045.85	3.75
INFRAEEL	255.45	258.70	255.10	256.00	0.30
KOTAKBANK	1690.00	1706.80	1685.50	1687.00	1.40
ULTRACEMCO	4073.90	4090.00	4043.55	4057.10	1.40
HDFC	2449.00	2450.00	2421.50	2440.00	-4.15
BAJAJFINSV	944.00	948.00	942.55	942.80	-19.35
CIPLA	481.10	487.00	478.25	480.00	-1.10
NTPC	116.85	117.65	116.35	116.45	-0.40
ONGC	128.40	129.25	127.10	127.95	-0.45
BAFINANCE	4274.85	4281.55	4230.00	4237.25	-15.40
GRASIM	742.30	745.90	732.80	736.35	-3.40
DREDDY	288.00	292.00	287.50	288.10	-15.50
AXISBANK	760.90	765.75	751.05	756.00	-4.15
HINDUNILVR	1949.90	1954.25	1927.50	1939.15	-10.75
ASIANPAINT	1810.00	1818.45	1798.70	1802.00	-10.25
INFY	736.10	737.95	727.25	732.50	-4.45
IOC	127.30	127.60	126.15	126.50	-0.80
TCS	2207.00	2225.00	2177.10	2183.35	-15.15
SBIN	337.35	337.85	332.50	334.45	-2.80
ICICIBANK	549.60	552.20	542.60	544.50	-4.90
YESBANK	47.90	48.95	46.65	47.45	-0.55

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
HDFCBANK	1280.00	1288.50	1274.80	1280.85
RELIANCE	1543.00	1547.00	1528.30	1542.20
INFY	736.00	737.70	727.45	732.80
IBULHSGFIN	302.95	309.00	300.30	306.75
YESBANK	47.60	48.95	46.70	47.35
TATAMOTORS	177.50	184.25	176.45	183.60
SPICEJET	103.80	119.20	103.80	110.45
SBIN	337.80	337.90	332.45	334.25
MARUTI	7362.20	7429.55	7345.00	7414.90
HDFC	2444.50	2449.25	2422.00	2437.50
TATASTEEL	470.90	476.00	465.05	474.70
ISEC	434.00	452.10	440.20	445.95
HINDALCO	216.95	219.15	211.25	218.05
JINDALSTEEL	161.70	168.00	160.50	167.40
ICICIBANK	549.40	552.40	542.80	543.95
IDEA	5.79	6.33	5.77	6.15
AXISBANK	760.00	765.60	751.20	754.20
RBLBANK	338.00	346.80	334.60	345.10
BHARTIARTL	457.30	464.75	455.30	460.50
BAJAJFINANCE	4280.00	4290.00	4227.90	4237.85
BPL	491.40	494.80	481.90	492.95
INDUSINDBK	1529.00	1552.30	1519.75	1530.60
HDFCLIFE	633.85	638.90	629.10	636.00
TCS	2202.00	2224.55	2176.50	2182.90
SUNPHARMA	430.50	434.45	426.80	429.90
ZEE	297.95	304.50	295.65	302.70
UPL	580.00	592.25	579.05	585.65
EICHERMOT	22240.00	22874.00	22222.95	22770.70
MISL	531.30	544.90	530.05	540.25
BANKBARODA	104.00	104.35	102.05	102.95
ITC	1303.80	1307.00	1297.00	1302.00
ADANIPOWER	370.15	370.45	364.00	365.70
JSWSTEEL	269.00	273.40	266.65	271.25
BEL	982.70	996.95	977.00	982.20
HCLTECH	566.00	576.80	564.15	570.05
ITC	237.60	241.00	237.40	238.15
KOTAKBANK	1724.00	1724.00	1685.00	1688.20
JUSTDIAL	573.15	583.45	570.95	580.60
TVSTMOTOR	461.90	481.55	461.65	478.80
AVC	1452.50	1474.20	1450.05	1452.10
M&M	532.90	538.80	531.65	536.50
BATAINDIA	1789.00	1789.00	1713.60	1761.60
POLYSAR	649.00	663.10	648.00	659.45
VOLTA	1621.15	1622.30	1575.00	1585.15
FORTIS	131.65	131.65	129.10	129.30
INDIGO	1338.00	1352.95	1330.50	1343.35
ICICI	1411.25	1434.60	1381.80	1387.05
WELCORP	132.95	141.30	126.15	142.45
NOCIL	100.00	102.60	99.55	101.35
CUMMINSIND	50.40	568.25	548.35	550.15
PHILIPCAR	114.00	119.00	113.00	119.20
GODREJAGRO	504.60	514.20	503.10	510.70
IGL	426.55	434.40	420.00	426.90
TATAPOWER	152.00	162.70	155.75	156.45

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
UJIVAN	350.00	351.35	344.10	350.00
HEG	1101.10	1109.85	1083.60	1088.00
DISHTV	13.39	13.54	13.15	13.45
INOXLEISUR	380.00	398.50	378.00	384.00
BALRAMCHIN	185.00	187.00	182.50	183.35
NESTLEIND	14652.20	14902.50	14620.00	14867.20
CIPLA	481.00	488.90	478.55	479.80
ULTRACEMCO	4072.00	4090.00	4045.00	4052.35
LUXIND	1280.30	1309.50	1280.30	1290.00
STAR	374.40	374.40	363.00	366.15
PILDITIND	1390.00	1409.00	1396.00	1406.75
BLISSGVS	149.95	151.25	149.10	150.00
ONGC	128.40	129.20	127.10	127.95
HINDPETRO	266.90	267.60	263.10	267.15
ADANIGAS	156.25	157.00	154.10	155.75
INFRAEEL	255.00	258.45	250.25	255.15
TATAELSI	88.00	83.20	82.45	83.60
PFIZER	4203.60	4275.25	4190.40	4201.90
WIPRO	55.55	55.55	54.45	55.05
ICICIRPLU	490.50	491.20	484.50	485.80
ABPL	43.30	43.50	42.65	42.85
DREDDY	2894.65	2928.00	2875.20	2891.00
IOC	127.20	127.25	126.15	126.50
GRASIM	741.20	746.40	732.75	736.35
ADANIGAS	449.00	451.		

Taliban attack Afghan forces in country's north, killing 14

AP ■ KABUL

The Taliban targeted a pro-government militia compound in northern Afghanistan before dawn on Monday, killing 14 members of the Afghan security forces, a local official. The Taliban quickly claimed responsibility for the attack.

The attack came even as Taliban officials told The Associated Press just hours earlier that a temporary, nationwide cease-fire has been agreed upon among their council leaders. It wasn't clear when the cease-fire would go into effect.

Of the 14 fatalities in the predawn attack in Jawzjan province, 13 were members of a pro-government militia and one was a policeman, said Abdul Maroof Azer, the gov-

ernor's spokesman.

Five other militiamen were wounded and two are missing, according to Azer. He said reinforcements later managed to reach the area and that the compound is now firmly back under government control.

Meanwhile, the US military in its daily report of overnight military operations with Afghan forces said that 30 Taliban fighters were killed across the country and several other insurgents detained. The Taliban have intensified their attacks in northern Afghanistan in recent days.

They targeted a local militiamen compound in northern Takhar province on Sunday, killing at least 17 Afghan militiamen. On Friday, at least 10 Afghan soldiers were killed in an attack on a checkpoint in

southern Helmand province.

Last Monday, an American soldier was killed in combat in northern Kunduz province. The Taliban claimed they were behind a fatal roadside bombing that targeted American and Afghan forces there.

Also last week, a Taliban attack on a checkpoint killed at least seven Afghan army soldiers in northern Balkh province. Another six Afghan troops were killed in the same province Thursday in an attack on an army base.

The Taliban today control or hold sway over half of the country and, along with IS, stage near-daily attacks targeting Afghan and U.S. forces and Afghan government officials. Scores of civilians die in the cross-fire. The insurgents are at their

strongest point in the 18-year war, America's longest conflict. A cease-fire had been demanded by Washington before any peace agreement could be signed. A peace deal would allow the US to bring home its troops from Afghanistan and end its 18-year military engagement there, America's longest.

The White House said it would have no comment on the cease-fire reports. The Taliban did not specify the duration of the cease-fire, though it was suggested the truce would last for 10 days.

The US wants any peace deal to include a promise from the Taliban that Afghanistan would not be used as a base by terrorist groups. The US currently has an estimated 12,000 troops in Afghanistan.

China convicts 3 researchers involved in gene-edited babies

AP ■ BEIJING

Three researchers involved in the births of genetically edited babies have been convicted and sentenced for practicing medicine illegally, Chinese state media said Monday.

The report by Xinhua news agency said lead researcher He Jiankui was sentenced to three years and fined 3 million yuan (\$430,000).

Two other people received lesser sentences and fines. Zhang Renli was sentenced to two years in prison and fined 1 million yuan. Qin Jinzhou received an 18-month sentence, but with a two-year reprieve, and a 500,000 yuan fine. He, the lead researcher, shocked the scientific world when he announced in November 2018 that he had helped make the world's first genetically edited babies, twin girls born in the same month. He discussed the work in exclusive interviews with the AP.

The announcement sparked a global debate over the ethics of gene editing. He said he had used a tool called CRISPR to alter a gene in embryos to try to help them resist infection with the AIDS virus.



In this file photo, Chinese scientist Qin Jinzhou works with embryos in a laboratory in Shenzhen in southern China's Guangdong Province. Three researchers involved in the births of genetically edited babies have been convicted and sentenced for practicing medicine illegally, Chinese state media said Monday. Qin received an 18-month sentence, but with a two-year reprieve, and a 500,000 yuan fine.

The Xinhua report, citing court documents, said the researchers were involved in the births of three gene-edited babies to two women, confirming reports of a third baby.

The court said the three researchers had not obtained qualification as doctors to practice medicine, pur-

sued fame and profits, deliberately violated Chinese regulations on scientific research and crossed an ethical line in both scientific research and medicine. It also said they had fabricated ethical review documents.

He studied in the US before setting up a lab at the Southern

University of Science and Technology of China in Shenzhen, a southern Chinese city that borders Hong Kong. The sentencing document accused him of colluding with Zhang and Qin, who worked at unnamed medical institutes in Guangdong province, where Shenzhen is located.

Taliban say have 'no truce plans' in Afghanistan

AFP ■ KABUL

The Taliban Monday denied agreeing to any ceasefire in Afghanistan after rumours swirled of a potential deal that would see a reduction in fighting after more than 18 years of war.

"In the past few days, some media have been releasing untrue reports about a ceasefire... The fact is that, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has no ceasefire plans," the Taliban said in a statement.

The statement from the insurgents comes as local and

international forces brace for another bloody winter amid US-Taliban talks to end the violence in Afghanistan.

Deadly bouts of fighting have continued even as Washington negotiates with the militants in a bid to reduce America's military footprint in the country, in return for the insurgents ensuring an improved security situation.

Afghanistan is also struggling with an ongoing political dispute after officials announced preliminary results in the latest presidential elections that put President Ashraf

Ghani on track to secure a second term.

Elections authorities have yet to declare the results as final after receiving more than 16,000 complaints about the polls, with the ultimate tally expected in the coming weeks.

The Taliban have long viewed Ghani as an American stooge and have refused to negotiate with his government, leading many to fear that fighting against Afghan forces will continue even if the US secures an eventual deal with the militants to withdraw.

Turkey arrests IS suspects

Istanbul (AFP): Turkey has arrested 100 suspected members of the Islamic State group (IS) in raids across the country, state news agency Anadolu reported on Monday.

More than 40 Iraqis, around 20 Syrians and a Moroccan were among those detained across six provinces in recent days, including Ankara, Bursa and Batman, Anadolu said. Turkey has stepped up raids on IS militants in recent months and pushed to repatriate them to their countries of origin. Turkey was accused of allowing foreign jihadists to pass easily across its border in the early years of the Syrian conflict.

Putin thanks Trump for helping foil terrorist acts

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with President Donald Trump on Sunday to thank him for information that Putin said helped Russia foil terrorist attacks over the New Year's holiday, the Kremlin said.

Putin thanked Trump "for information transmitted through the special services that helped prevent the completion of terrorist acts in Russia," the Kremlin said in a brief statement posted on its website. Based on the US information, the Russian security forces detained two Russians suspected of preparing to carry out terrorist acts in St. Petersburg during the upcoming holiday, state news agency Tass reported, citing the Federal Security Service.

The security service said it obtained the information from its "American partners." It said it seized material from the suspects that confirms they were preparing terrorist acts, with no further details. There was no immediate comment from the White House.

Two dead in Texas church shooting; shooter killed

PTI ■ HOUSTON

A gunman pulled out a shotgun and opened fire on worshippers at a church during Sunday service in Texas, killing two persons before being shot by an armed member of the congregation, the authorities said. The shooting took place at about 11:50 am (local time), during the morning service on Sunday. The service was being live-streamed on social media.

According to the authorities, the gunman pulled out a shotgun at the West Freeway Church of Christ in White Settlement, a suburb of Fort Worth, and begun firing.

The two churchgoers who were shot, died later in a hospital, police said.

Video footage showed the gunman stand up and speak to a man nearby, who gestured at another parishioner. The gunman then fired at the man he gestured toward.

The gunman fired again, at the man he had spoken to, before a member of the con-

gregation acting as a security guard returned fire with a shotgun, immediately felling the attacker.

Several other parishioners also produced handguns and trained them on the attacker.

Their actions, described as "heroic" by the Texas Department of Public Safety, brought a quick end to the attack that remained under investigation on Sunday night.

The authorities have not provided information about a possible motive.

"This team responded quickly and within six seconds, the shooting was over. Two of the parishioners who were volunteers of the security force drew their weapons and took out the killer immediately, saving untold number of lives," said Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick.

The security team at the church is made up of volunteers from the church's membership who are licensed to carry firearms.

"They saved a lot of lives today because this thing would

have been a massacre otherwise," witnesses said. Texas Governor Greg Abbott called the shooting "an evil act of violence."

"Places of worship are meant to be sacred, and I am grateful for the church members who acted quickly to take down the shooter and help prevent further loss of life," he said in a statement.

The shooting comes more than two years after a gunman opened fire at a church in Sutherland Springs — a community about 300 miles away from White Settlement — killing at least 26 people.

In September, a new law came into effect in Texas that allowed licensed handgun owners to carry weapons in places of worship.

The state has seen a number of deadly shootings this year. In August, 22 people died and 24 were wounded at a Walmart store in El Paso. The same month a gunman killed seven and wounded 20 at Odessa-Midland.



In this last Saturday photo, jailed Taliban are seen during an interview to The Associated Press inside the Pul-e-Charkhi jail in Kabul, Afghanistan. Thousands of Taliban prisoners jailed as insurgents see a peace deal being hammered out between the United States and the Taliban in Qatar as their ticket to freedom. They know prisoner release is a key pillar of any agreement that brings an end to Afghanistan's 18-year war and Washington's longest military engagement.

In Afghanistan, jailed Taliban await peace, their freedom

AP ■ PUL-E-CHARKHI (AFGHAN)

Thousands of Taliban prisoners jailed in Afghanistan as insurgents see a peace deal being hammered out between the United States and the Taliban as their ticket to freedom.

They know a prisoner release is a key pillar of any agreement that brings an end to Afghanistan's 18-year war, Washington's longest military engagement.

A list of about 5,000 Taliban prisoners has been given to the Americans and their release has been written into the agreement under discussion, said a Taliban official familiar with the on-again, off-again talks taking place in Qatar. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

The US and Afghan government officials have said a prisoner release is part of the negotiation.

But some analysts say freeing prisoners could undermine peace in Afghanistan. "There's a need for Afghan

and US officials to do their due diligence on any Taliban prisoners they're planning to release, in order to minimize the likelihood that they'll set free jihadists that can do destabilizing things and undercut a fledgling peace process," warned Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the US-based Wilson Center.

The Associated Press interviewed more than a dozen Taliban prisoners inside the notorious Pul-e-Charkhi jail on the eastern edge of the capital, Kabul. Several of them were nostalgic for the Taliban's Afghanistan, ruled by the mighty hand of their previous leader, the reclusive one-eyed Mullah Mohammed Omar, who died several years ago.

But they also insisted that they accept it would not be the same now and that, though they still wanted what they call Islamic rule, they no longer call for some of their strict edicts, like the ban on education and on girls and women working.

"We want women to be educated, become engineers, we want women to work in

every department," said one prisoner, Maulvi Niaz Mohammed, though he said the work must be "based on Islam." He said young Afghans should not fear the Taliban, "it is they who will build our country and develop it."

Taliban negotiators have taken a similar tone in the talks. But there is a deep distrust on both sides of the conflict and many in the public worry what will happen if the Taliban, who ruled for five years until they were toppled in the 2001 US-led invasion, regain authority.

On Sunday, the Taliban ruling council agreed to a temporary cease-fire in Afghanistan, providing a window in which a peace agreement with the US can be signed, Taliban officials said. They didn't say when it would begin.

The Taliban have well-organized communication networks inside Afghan prisons that record the latest arrests, province by province, as well as who is sick and who has died. It all gets delivered to a prisoners' commission, devoted to their release and headed by

Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, who during the Taliban rule served as justice minister and the "virtue and vice" minister in charge of religious police.

During that time, he was widely feared.

Turabi was known to personally enforce the movement's dictates, snatching music tapes from taxi drivers disobeying a ban on music and television, and stalking offices and businesses to search for violators who trimmed their beard or missed one of the five daily calls to prayer.

Once in 1996, just days after the Taliban took control of Kabul from warring mujahedeen groups, when the AP was interviewing a Taliban fighter, Turabi slapped the hulking, 6-foot-tall fighter in the face for talking with a foreign woman journalist.

Built in the 1970s to house 5,000 prisoners, Pul-e-Charkhi now has 10,500 prisoners, according to the warden, Akhtar Noorzoi. They are packed in 11 cell blocks surrounded by turrets, guard towers and walls topped with razor wire.

China jails pastor for 'inciting' subversion

AFP ■ BEIJING

China on Monday jailed the leader of an unofficial Protestant church for nine years for "incitement to subvert state power".

Pastor Wang Yi, whose Early Rain Covenant Church was the target of a government crackdown last year, was also found guilty of "illegal business operation" by a court in southwest China's Chengdu, according to an announcement on an official court website. Wang was detained in December 2018 in a raid by authorities in which dozens of members of his "underground church" disappeared. China's officially atheist government is wary of any organised movements outside its own control, including religious ones.

Christians in the country are split between unofficial "house" or "underground" churches like the Early Rain Covenant Church, and state-sanctioned churches where Communist Party songs also feature in the order of service. Catholics are similarly divided between unofficial churches led by bishops recognised by the Vatican and those who follow official prelates.

Chengdu's official court system website said Wang had been convicted in an open trial by a court in the city, where Early Rain Covenant Church had been based.

India-Nepal ties continue to grow with high-level visits

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

India's relations with Nepal continued to grow in 2019 with high-level bilateral visits and increased energy collaboration, including the inauguration of the first-ever cross-border petroleum pipeline in South Asia, amidst China's heavy investments in the landlocked country.

Nepal enjoys a special significance in India's foreign policy due to its geographical, historical, cultural and economic linkages. The people of the two countries maintain close bonds through marriages and family ties, also known as 'Roti-Beti ka Rishita' (relation of food and family). The Himalayan nation, sandwiched between India and China, witnessed political instability for many years before the pro-China Left alliance came to power in the historic polls in December, 2017.

Though the year began with Nepal banning the use of Indian currency notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations — a move that had an impact on Indian tourists visiting the Himalayan nation where Indian currency is widely used — the bilateral relations remained firmly on track, notwithstanding the minor hiccups.

The bilateral engagements kicked off in February with Nepal-India Joint Secretary-level meeting in Pokhara during which the top officials from both the sides reviewed the bilateral trade and transit

treaty. Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale called on Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli in Kathmandu in March and held talks on a wide range of issues, including railways and waterway projects, with the top Nepali leadership.

The two sides also reviewed progress of post-earthquake reconstruction of projects in housing, education, health and cultural heritage sectors. India has pledged an assistance of USD 250 million to Nepal for the reconstruction projects.

India also donated Rs 1.6 billion to Nepal for the reconstruction of houses damaged in the quakes in Gorkha and Nuwakot districts. This was part of a total amount of Rs 450 billion donated by India for constructing 50,000 houses to Nepal following the 2015 earthquakes, partnering with the United Nations Development Programme.

Prime Minister Oli congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his re-election in the general elections in May and visited India to attend his swearing-in ceremony.

They underlined the importance of regular exchange of high-level visits between the two countries in order to further strengthen bilateral ties and advance cooperation in all possible areas for the mutual benefits of the two sides. Oli also invited Modi to visit the Himalayan country.

The two leaders also jointly inaugurated the 69-km long

Motihari-Amlekhjung oil pipeline through video conference in September. The pipeline was constructed with Indian assistance of Rs 324 crore. This was the first cross-border petroleum pipeline constructed in the South Asian region.

This year, Nepal issued three commemorative coins marking the 550th birth anniversary of founder of Sikhism Guru Nanak, who visited Kathmandu five hundred years ago. The country also paid rich tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, marking his 150th birth anniversary.

High-level engagements continued as External Affairs Minister S Jaishanker visited Nepal to attend the fifth meeting of Nepal-India Joint Commission which reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations with special focus on the areas of connectivity, economic partnership, trade, transit, power and water resources. Nepal stood with India in its fight against terrorism as it strongly condemned the February terrorist attack in Pulwama that killed 40 security personnel, saying such heinous acts of terrorism cannot be justified.

India issued travel advisory to Mansarovar pilgrims in April after some people died due to harsh weather conditions, poor tour management and lack of precautionary measures. Seventeen climbers, including eight Indian nationals, died in the Himalayan expedition this year.

Kim calls for measures to protect NKorea's security

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for his military and diplomats to prepare unspecified "offensive measures" to protect the country's security and sovereignty, the North's state media said on Monday, before his end-of-year deadline for the Trump administration to make major concessions to salvage a fragile nuclear diplomacy.

Kim during a ruling Workers' Party meeting Sunday also "comprehensively and anatomically analyzed" problems arising in efforts to rebuild the North's moribund economy and presented tasks for "urgently correcting the grave situation of the major industrial sectors," the Korean Central News Agency said.

The plenary meeting of the party's Central Committee, which began on Saturday, is being closely watched amid concerns that Kim could suspend his deadlocked nuclear negotiations with the United States and take a more confrontational approach by lifting a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests.

The North has said the

meeting, which will continue for at least another day, is intended for discussions on overcoming "manifold and harsh trials and difficulties." Kim, who has said the North would pursue a "new path" if Washington persists with sanctions and pressure, is expected to announce major policy changes during his New Year's address on Wednesday.

The KCNA report did not describe any decisions made at the meeting or mention any specific remarks by Kim about the United States.

The North's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper published photos of Kim, wearing a white dress shirt and horn-rimmed glasses, speaking from a podium as hundreds of government and military officials jotted down his comments.

"Emphasizing the need to take positive and offensive measures for fully ensuring the sovereignty and security of the country as required by the present situation, (Kim) indicated the duties of the fields of foreign affairs, munitions industry and armed forces of the DPRK," the agency said in its English report, referring to North Korea's formal name, the



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un speaks during a Workers' Party meeting in Pyongyang, North Korea. North Korea opened Saturday, a high-profile political conference to discuss how to overcome "harsh trials and difficulties," state media reported on Sunday, days before a year-end deadline set by Pyongyang for Washington to make concessions in nuclear negotiations. Independent journalists were not given access to cover the event depicted in this image distributed by the North Korean government. AP

Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

KCNA's Korean-language report said Kim called for

"active and offensive" measures.

Kim also "comprehensively and anatomically analyzed

the problems arising in the overall state building including the state management and economic construction in the present time," the agency said.

"He stressed the need to reasonably straighten the country's economic work system and order and establish a strong discipline and presented the tasks for urgently correcting the grave situation of the major industrial sectors of the national economy," the report said.

It added that Kim stressed the need for a "decisive" increase in agricultural production and gave out instructions for improving science, education and public health standards. Lee Sang-min, a spokesman of South Korea's Unification Ministry, said Seoul is closely watching the North Korean party meeting, but he didn't speculate on what Kim's call for active and offensive security measures would have meant.

Cheong Seong-Chang, a senior analyst at South Korea's private Sejong Institute, said it was the first time under Kim's rule that a plenary meeting of the party's Central Committee continued for more than a day.

Kim has an urgent need to make major policy changes in

the face of persistent U.S.-led sanctions and pressure, especially with a global crackdown on North Korean labor exports further straining his broken economy, Cheong said.

It's also likely that Kim during the party meeting reaffirmed a commitment to strengthen his nuclear and missile program, considering the commander of the North Korean army's strategic force was seen during Saturday's meeting, Cheong said.

Kim has met President Donald Trump three times in two years of high-stakes summits, but the diplomacy has progressed little beyond their vague aspirational goal of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. At their last meeting in June, they agreed to resume talks.

A working-level meeting in Sweden in October broke down with the North Koreans blaming their American counterparts for maintaining an "old stance and attitude."

The North said earlier this month it conducted two "crucial" tests at its long-range rocket launch facility, raising speculation it has been developing a new long-range missile or preparing a satellite launch.

Cyprus court finds British woman guilty of false rape claim

AFP ■ PARALIMNI

A court in Cyprus on Monday found a British woman guilty of falsely claiming she was gang-raped by a group of Israeli tourists in the holiday resort of Ayia Napa.

Sentencing was adjourned until January 7.

The woman, who was 19 at the time of the incident in July, had pleaded not guilty to the charge of "public mischief", which carries a sentence of up to one year in prison and a fine of around 1,700 euros.

"The statements you have given were false," the judge told the defendant in remarks translated by the court interpreter.

She appeared frustrated by the delay to the sentencing, telling her lawyer: "He already made his decision! I thought we were asking for a fine." More than a dozen women from an association for the protection of

women attended court wearing white scarves with an image of lips sewn shut printed on them.

The woman's lawyers had claimed she was pressured into signing a statement written by a detective.

The judge said during the trial that police had acted properly at all times, with no pressure exerted to change the woman's mind about her initial claim she was raped by 12 Israelis on July 17.

The Israelis, aged 15 to 18, were released without charge the same month after the woman was arrested on suspicion of making a false statement.

Rights groups argued the teenager has suffered humiliation and been mistreated by the police and media.

They have called for an investigation into police handling of the case and criticised the way rape cases and victims are treated in Cyprus.

US strikes in Somalia kill four militants

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

The United States military said it killed four "terrorists" in airstrikes against the Al-Shabaab militant group in Somalia on Sunday, a day after the country's deadliest attack in two years. US Africa Command (AFRICOM) conducted three airstrikes in two locations in the conflict-hit east African nation on Sunday targeting Al-Shabaab militants, it said in a statement.

"These precision airstrikes targeted Al-Shabaab militants responsible for terrorist acts against innocent Somali citizens and coordinating with Al-Qaeda," AFRICOM said.

"The US and the federal government of Somalia will continue to increase pressure on the terrorist organization in order to deny them the ability to plot terrorist attacks."

Sunday's strikes killed two militants and destroyed two vehicles in Qunyo Barrow

while a separate strike killed another two in Caliyow Barrow, according to AFRICOM, which regularly carries out airstrikes in Somalia.

They followed a massive car bomb explosion in a busy area of Mogadishu on Saturday that left at least 79 people dead and scores injured.

At least 16 of those killed were students from the capital's private Banadir University, who had been traveling on a bus when the car bomb detonated at a busy intersection southwest of the Somali capital.

Scores of wounded were carried on stretchers from the site, where the force of the explosion left the charred and twisted remains of vehicles.

Two Turkish nationals were also killed, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said.

The attack has not been claimed, but Mogadishu is regularly hit by car bombings and

attacks waged by the Al-Shabaab Islamist militants, who have fought for more than a decade to topple the Somali government.

The militant group emerged from the Islamic Courts Union, which once controlled central and southern Somalia, and is variously estimated to number between 5,000 and 9,000 men. In 2010, the Shabaab declared their allegiance to Al-Qaeda.

The following year, its fighters fled positions they once held in the capital Mogadishu, and have since lost many strongholds.

But they retain control of large rural swathes of the country and continue to wage a guerrilla war against the authorities, managing to inflict bloody death tolls in attacks at home and abroad.

"Since Al-Shabaab's first external attack in 2010, the group has ruthlessly killed hundreds," said US Army

Major General William Gayler, AFRICOM's director of operations.

"They have attacked and killed African partners, allies, and fellow Americans." Since 2015, there have been 13 attacks in Somalia with death tolls above 20. Eleven of these have been in Mogadishu, according to a tally of AFP figures. All of them involved car bombs.

The deadliest attack in the country's history was a truck bombing in October 2017 in Mogadishu which left 512 people dead and around 295 injured.

US strikes in Somalia surged after President Donald Trump declared the south of the country an "area of active hostilities." The rate of airstrikes has risen sharply this year, and in an April statement AFRICOM said it had killed more than 800 people in 110 strikes in Somalia since April 2017.

Thought it was 'a bad idea', Greta's father on her climate activism

PTI ■ LONDON

Greta Thunberg may have become the new global climate icon, but the 16-year-old Swedish teenager struggled with depression for three to four years and received no support from her father for skipping school for activism, a bold decision that has inspired millions to join her in raising awareness on environmental issues.

In an interview to the BBC, Greta's father Svante Thunberg said he thought it was "a bad idea" for his daughter to take to the "front line" of the battle against climate change.

Thunberg said he was "not supportive" of his daughter skipping school for the climate strike.

As part of the same broadcast, guest-edited by Greta for

Radio 4's Today programme, renowned naturalist and broadcaster David Attenborough told her she had "woken up the world" to climate change and "achieved things that many of us who have been working on the issue for 20 years have failed to do".

Greta was nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize, after spearheading a global movement demanding world leaders take action over climate change. It led to co-ordinated school strikes across the globe.

Thunberg said his daughter had struggled with depression for "three or four years" before she began her school strike.

"She stopped talking... she stopped going to school," he said, adding that it was the "ultimate nightmare for a parent" when Greta began refus-

ing to eat.

To help her get better, Thunberg spent more time with Greta and her younger sister, Beata, at their home in Sweden. Greta's mother, opera singer and former Eurovision Song Contest participant Malena Ernman, cancelled contracts so the whole family could be together.

Over the next few years they began discussing and researching climate change, with Greta becoming increasingly passionate about tackling the issue.

"I did all these things, I knew they were the right thing to do... but I didn't do it to save the climate, I did it to save my child," Thunberg told presenter Mishal Husain in Sweden.

He said Greta has "changed" and become "very happy" as a result of her

activism. "You think she's not ordinary now because she's special, and she's very famous, and all these things. But to me she's now an ordinary child - she can do all the things like other people can," he said.

"She dances around, she laughs a lot, we have a lot of fun - and she's in a very good place," he added.

Earlier this year, Greta was named the TIME magazine's 2019 Person of the Year.

However, since her school strike stunt went viral online, Thunberg said she has faced abuse from people who "don't want to change" their lifestyles in order to save the environment.

Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump took a dig at Greta, saying she should "work on her Anger Management problem".

Tourists, firefighters flee as new heatwave fans Australia blazes

AFP ■ SYDNEY

Tourists and firefighters were forced to flee vast fires burning in southeastern Australia on Monday, as a heatwave rekindled devastating bush blazes across the country.

Authorities said "quite a number" of the 30,000 tourists visiting the usually picturesque southeast tip of the continent had heeded calls to evacuate.

More than a dozen blazes are raging in the East Gippsland countryside, some so intensely that hundreds of firefighters were pulled back beyond a firefront estimated to stretch 1,000 kilometres (600 miles).

It was deemed "unsafe" for them to remain in bushland areas, Gippsland fire incident controller Ben Rankin said.

It is the latest emergency in Australia's devastating summer fire season, which has been turbocharged by a prolonged drought and climate change.

Ten people have been killed, more than 1,000 homes destroyed and more than three million hectares (7.4 million

acres) — an area bigger than Belgium — have been scorched.

Conditions worsened on Friday with high winds and temperatures soaring across the country — reaching 47 degrees Celsius (116 Fahrenheit) in Western Australia, but topping 40 degrees in every region — including the usually temperate island of Tasmania.

The situation was "very intense" said Rankin, warning that conditions would worsen later in the day before temperatures drop markedly overnight.

Authorities had warned tourists enjoying Australia's summer holidays in East Gippsland that the fires would cut off the last major road still open.

Victoria Emergency Management commissioner Andrew Crisp said residents and holidaymakers still in the area faced being stranded as it was now "too late to leave", with his agency warning it was "not possible" to provide aid to all visitors in the area.

Neighbouring South Australia is also experiencing "catastrophic" fire conditions.

The Country Fire Service's Brenton Eden said it would be a "very dangerous" day for people in the state, with "dry" thunderstorms — which produce thunder and lightning but no rain — already sparking a number of fires including an emergency-level blaze on Kangaroo Island.

"Winds are gusting and unfortunately this is a dry lightning front that is going to move rapidly across South Australia," he told national broadcaster ABC.

Conditions were also expected to deteriorate in worst-hit New South Wales, where 100 fires were burning Monday morning including more than 40 uncontained.

Sydney and other major cities have been shrouded in toxic bushfire smoke haze for weeks, forcing children to play indoors and causing professional sporting events to be cancelled.

The capital Canberra has cancelled its New Year's Eve fireworks display due to a total

fire ban in the Australia Capital Territory, while several regional towns have also followed suit.

A petition to cancel Sydney's famous New Year's Eve fireworks and use the money to fight bushfires ringing the city has topped 270,000 signatures, but officials say the show will go on.

Sydney has spent USD 4.5 million on this year's fireworks display — funds that the Change.org petition argues would be better spent on supporting volunteer firefighters and farmers suffering through a brutal drought.

The crisis has focused attention on climate change — which scientists say is creating a longer and more intense bushfire season — and sparked street protests calling for immediate action to tackle global warming.

While conservative Prime Minister Scott Morrison belatedly acknowledged a link between the fires and climate change, he has continued his staunch support of Australia's lucrative coal mining industry and ruled out further action to reduce emissions.

monitors and activists are not from "authentic machines".

"To say that Pakistan and Lahore are among the top polluted cities... this statement is not based on facts," he says, but concedes the country's air quality is largely unacceptable.

Public awareness about the issue is growing due to increased activism on social media about the dangers of pollution and the dire challenges climate change is bringing to Pakistan.

Yann Boquillon, who co-founded AirVisual, said subscribers to the site from Pakistan have increased tenfold this year.

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problem but no one knew about it. Pakistanis are (now) mobilising," Boquillon says.

With officials slow to act, ordinary Pakistanis have increasingly taken measures into their own hands.

In 2016, Abid Omar launched the website PakistanAirQuality (PAQ) dedicated to compiling data about air pollution in the country and publishing its findings.

According to PAQ, Lahore only experienced "10 hours" of good quality air based on WHO standards during the first eleven months of 2019.

Conversely, air quality in the city oscillated between "bad" and "hazardous" for a

total of 223 days so far this year.

The smog "has made our lives miserable," laments a pedestrian in Lahore buying a mask. Pressure on officials is building.

Ahmad Rafay Alam, one of the few environmental lawyers in Pakistan, filed a suit against the Punjab provincial government on behalf of his daughter and two other teenagers in November, saying officials have underreported the problem.

Outside of activism and lawsuits, others are trying to minimise their exposure to the harmful toxins in the air.

"Last year, it was just bizarre how everybody seemed not concerned," says Ayaza

Omar, director of interior-source.pk, a site offering high-quality face masks and other anti-smog products.

"This year, it has been crazy. We were sold out within the first two months," she adds, saying they sold thousands of masks this year compared to dozens last year.

In an attempt to improve the situation in Lahore, a group of environmentalists are planning to unveil an eight-metre-high air purifier in attempt to remove harmful particles from the air. Maryam Saeed, one of the designers, says of the device: "It will help to ease the problem, but it won't change the whole picture."

French tourist hurt in Seychelles shark attack

AFP ■ VICTORIA

A French tourist was seriously injured after being attacked by a shark while swimming in the Seychelles, a popular tourist destination, the French ambassador said Monday.

The attack on the 45-year-old woman took place Sunday night off the island of Praslin, the second-largest in the picturesque archipelago famed for its pristine beaches.

The victim was injured in one arm and was transported to a hospital.

"She underwent an operation last night and her life is not in danger," Ambassador Dominique Mas told AFP.

The attack comes during the highest tourist season for the Seychelles, an archipelago of 115 islands located off the coast of East Africa in the Indian Ocean.

Such incidents are rare in the Seychelles, though two tourists — one French and one British — were killed in shark attacks off Praslin in August 2011. Officials said Praslin's relatively cool waters could attract sharks during breeding.

Sudan sentences 27 to death for torturing, killing protester

AP ■ CAIRO

A court in Sudan on Monday sentenced 27 members of the country's security forces to death for torturing and killing a detained protester during the uprising against Sudan's longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir earlier this year.

The death of protester Ahmed al-Khair, a school teacher, while in detention in February was a key point — and a symbol — in the uprising that eventually led to the military's ouster of al-Bashir.

Monday's convictions and sentences, which can be appealed, were the first connected to the killings of protesters in the revolt.

Last December, the first rally was held in Sudan to protest the soaring cost of bread, marking the beginning of a pro-democracy movement that convulsed the large African country. That led, in April, to the toppling by the military of al-Bashir, and ultimately to the creation of a joint military-civilian Sovereign Council that has committed to rebuilding the country and

promises elections in three years.

The anniversary of that protest this month drew teeming crowds to the streets in several cities and towns across the country, with people singing, dancing and carrying flags. A train packed with exuberant demonstrators, clapping and chanting, arrived in the northern city of Atbara, the birthplace of the uprising, from the capital, Khartoum.

Monday's verdict in the trial of the security forces took place in a court in Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city, where dozens of protesters had gathered outside the courtroom, demanding justice for al-Khair.

Al-Khair was detained on Jan. 31 in the eastern province of Kassala and was reported dead two days later. His body was taken to a local hospital where his family said it was covered in bruises. At the time, police denied any police wrongdoing and blamed his death on an "illness," without providing any details.

The court, however, said on Monday that the teacher was beaten and tortured while in

detention. The 27 sentenced were policemen who were working in the jail where al-Khair was held or intelligence agents in the region.

Also this month, a court in Khartoum convicted al-Bashir of money laundering and corruption, sentencing him to two years in a minimum security lockup. The image of the former dictator in a defendant's cage sent a strong message, on live TV for all of Sudan.

The deposed ruler is under indictment by the International Criminal Court on far more serious charges of war crimes and genocide linked to his brutal suppression of the insurgency in the western province of Darfur in the early 2000s. The military has refused to extradite him to stand trial in The Hague. Amnesty International and other rights groups have called on the new government to hold security forces accountable for killing scores of people in their efforts to stifle protests against military rule, especially those behind a deadly crackdown on a huge sit-in outside the military headquarters in Khartoum last June.

With purifiers and lawsuits, Pakistanis fight back against smog

AFP ■ LAHORE

For the past few months Hasan Zaidi's phone has been ringing nonstop with calls from desperate residents in Pakistan hoping to get their hands on his newly invented air purifier as smog blankets the country. "Some days, I had so many calls that I couldn't answer," says Zaidi during a recent interview with AFP in his workshop.

Tired of choking on putrid air, Zaidi spent six months perfecting his homemade device as he looked for a low-cost solution to battle the increasingly toxic scourge overwhelming Pakistan.

During this winter alone the 31-year-old engineer has already sold some 500 units, which are priced at just 16,000 Pakistani rupees (USD 103), but admits to refusing hundreds of orders in recent weeks due to lack of manpower and resources.

In cash-strapped Pakistan Zaidi's "Indoor Forest" purifiers are cheaper than imported models, which typically cost about two to five times more.

"Now it is less of a luxury and more of a necessity," explains Sadia Khan, whose company Autosoft Dynamics recently acquired a dozen of Zaidi's purifiers so his 180 employees can "breathe safely".

In the past five years, air pollution has worsened in Pakistan, as a mixture of low-grade diesel fumes, smoke from seasonal crop burn off, and colder winter temperatures coalesce into stagnant clouds of smog. In 2015, 135,000 Pakistanis died due to poor air quality, according to a study published in the scientific journal The Lancet.

Pollution tends to be at its worst in the country's eastern province of Punjab during winter, particularly in the 12-million strong city of Lahore near the border with India.

In November schools were closed for several days across the province with the level of

PM2.5 — tiny particles that get into the bloodstream and vital organs — repeatedly exceeding 200 micrograms per cubic meter of air.

The World Health Organisation's recommended safe daily maximum is a measurement of 25.

Pakistan is ranked one of the worst countries in the world for air quality and Lahore consistently ranked in the top 10 most smog-hit cities, according to the pollution monitoring site AirVisual.

But Tanveer Waraich, director general of the Punjab's environmental agency, dismisses those figures, saying pollution readings cited by

monitors and activists are not from "authentic machines".

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Trend Slazer

Huma teaches Dave dance moves

Actor **HUMA QURESHI** has promised her *Army Of The Dead* co-star **Dave Bautista** to get him to India to do a film and taught him some Bollywood moves on superstar Shah Rukh Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan's song *Chammak Challo*.

"My brother used to try these deadly wrestling moves called chokeslams and Batista bombs on me. My co-star is a gentleman called Dave Bautista," Huma said.

She added, "When Saqib (Saleem) got to know, he wanted me to ask Bautista about his finishing move — the Batista Bomb and I did. Dave also mentioned that he loves Indian films and he wants to do a Hindi film. I promised him we will get him to India to do a film. I have even showed him some dancing videos and made him practice some Bollywood moves."



'I come from a very middle-class background and even today, I hold on to those values very strongly. My biggest advantage is that I'm not afraid of failure. And when you're not afraid of it, you can do whatever you want because you've seen failure and success in the same measure. So, failure really doesn't affect me.'

—John Abraham



VIRAT KOHLI and **ANUSHKA SHARMA** are in Switzerland these days to usher New Year and they spot **Varun Dhawan** and girlfriend **Natasha Dalal**.

A selfie of the two couples has been taking rounds on social media. Sharing the photo, Varun captioned, "Mountain ke dost."

Not just Virat and Anushka, Varun also bumped into Karisma and Kareena Kapoor in Switzerland recently.

Super in love: Meghan

Singer **MEGHAN TRAINOR** says she feels "super in love" with her husband **Daryl Sabara**.

She got married to Sabara on December 22 last year. "It's so good. It's very romantic right now, we're super in love," said Meghan about her married life.

She recently spent a lot of time in the UK, where she joined the judging panel of *The Voice*.

She also revealed that her mother and brother had accompanied Darryl to the UK.

Meghan said, "My mother is here. My dad didn't make this short trip because it's too hard on his body but he's waiting for us back at home. They're my everything. My older brother is my videographer. They all take care of me and it's great."



Fashion is not defined just by a one-off choice or what one wears to an event. It's more about the everyday sartorial choices that we make. This year, besides the sea of animal prints on everything from jackets to pants, tops, handbags and footwear, athleisure scored big. From Bolly and Hollywood stars sporting leggings and yoga pants to men giving a thumbs up to their Lululemon ABC pants, comfort ruled 2019. I have always been a believer in easy-wear clothes that are fuss-free and this trend signalled a relaxing in the otherwise almost-draconian dress codes dictated by top-drawer design houses.

For 2020, I'd personally root for fashion that is more environmentally conscious. Slow fashion, which is focussed on revisiting design, production, and consumption patterns, including recycling of clothes through the simple expedient of reusing and refashioning one's wardrobe, should become the norm, rather than the exception. Another reason that slow fashion gets my thumbs-up is that it follows the principles of fair treatment of producers, in this case, the weavers, as well as in causing the least damage to our planet.

With the advent of factory-based production post the industrial revolution, the concept of fast fashion was born. Production processes were speeded up, to churn out yardage after yardage of man-made, synthetic fabrics. Prices dropped, and consumption zoomed. Thus was born the "use-and-throw" concept. However, now that more and more people in the fashion world are cognisant of the fact that the garments industry is the second-highest environmental polluter, it is high time

With people becoming more cognisant of the fact that the garments' industry is the second-highest environmental polluter, 2020 will take us back to the pre-Industrial Revolution production and consumption patterns, says craft and textile revivalist **MADHU JAIN**

that we went back to the pre-industrial Revolution production and consumption patterns. Let us take inspiration from our 2,000 year old textiles tradition and legacy. What we urgently need to do is to go back to how our forefathers operated. At that time, mankind was in sync with nature and clothes were organic and plant-based. Each region had its own distinctive signature textile. Cotton, flax, hemp, jute, sheep wool and so on were the go-to choices. These textiles were derived from one's natural surroundings and suited the region's climate and aesthetics.

I'm happy to note that in recent years, sustainable fashion — where the entire production process, from sourcing natural yarns to manufacturing the end product — is gaining momentum.

My label was launched 33 years ago keeping the same values and principles in mind. Being ahead of the curve in environmental responsibility has been a hallmark of our textiles, notably our 100 per cent biodegradable bamboo clothing and, the first in the world, bamboo silk *ikkat* textile.

Additionally, it is important that companies in the clothing business close the loop between the production and recycling of clothes. In an ideal cir-



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cular economy, there is a conscious effort to reduce over production, on the one hand, and reuse materials in production processes, on the other, thus diverting tons of textile waste from landfills.

As for fashion choices of 2020, remember that Indian colours work well on our skin tones. So there will be more of burnt orange, fuchsia, indigo, ivory, vermilion red, *kesari* yellow, *rani* pink, and the eternal favourite, white. With winters having well and truly set in, layering will be back and will keep the people toasty. Classic Indian jackets have a tremendous potential as they can be worn short, mid-thigh or long to suit one's body type. *Chogas*, the long, loose garment of Turkish origin, if cut expertly, can be extremely slimming and can add height. In terms of motifs, if you like them bold, don't shy away from vibrant weaves that offer a high contrast. But if you prefer something more subdued, a white-on-white on weave can be equally eye catching. And finally, keep the stoles handy. It is one of the most versatile fashion accessories which will continue to flatter any outfit. Team it up with a small clutch or an Indian *potpie* or *batua*, jewelled sandals or embroidered *jutis*, and you will be good to go.

Happy 2020!



Entertainment of the year

Here's a look at the trends of how Indians had out-of-the-home experiences in 2019

As we bid adieu to 2019, we look at the trends in entertainment choices of Indians with BookMyShow introducing millions of its users to newer out-of-home experiences.

The online booking app hosted over 1,880 films across languages on its platform in 2019. The Marvel craze took over India as *Avengers: Endgame* broke all records to sell over 8.6 million tickets to become the highest-selling Hollywood film on our platform. This was followed by *Uri - The Surgical Strike*, with over 5.7 million tickets sold for the film.

FILM TRENDS

While the demand for Hindi films grew by 12 per cent from the last year, movie buffs booked an average of 2.6 tickets per transaction. The top-rated regional language films were in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Marathi, whereas the demand for English and Hindi films rose at 45 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Hindi versions of regional films like *Saaho*, *Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy* and *KGF* have matched up to the primary language's success at the box office. The uptake for English language films increased significantly by 56 per cent vis-à-vis last year. The *Avengers* series retained the top spot among English language films, wherein *Avengers: Infinity War* led the race in 2018, *Avengers: Endgame* shattered all ceilings in 2019.

Looking at the genres, about 30 per cent of the top 10 films (as per number of tickets sold on the app) were based on real-life stories and incidents. The trends also pointed towards an interest in Assamese films, which grew five times to match the increase in the number of users who chose the app to watch these films and rated them on the platform.

And action films witnessed a growth of 45 per cent, becoming the most preferred genre followed by drama and comedy.

While actors Hrithik Roshan and Ranveer Singh ruled the top 10 Hindi film bucket with two films each to their credit, Akshay Kumar with 9.2 million tickets and Ayushmann Khurrana with 6.3 million tickets overall had a great year with three films each.



SALE OF TICKETS

The year also saw an 89 per cent rise in the number of screens occupied by the widest circulated films as compared to the previous year. The advance ticket sales grew by 11 per cent on the app in 2019, which is just shy of 20 million tickets with 11 per cent of the tickets being booked before the release. Following this, over 45 films crossed the one million ticket sales mark on BookMyShow. Just three per cent of the total tickets were booked in the last 30 minutes before a film's show time.

TRENDS AS PER TIME AND LOCATION

While Sunday evening was the most preferred show time for movie-goers, Hyderabad was home to the maximum

number of film lovers, which was followed by Mumbai and Bengaluru. Hyderabad moved from fourth position in 2018 to outnumber its peers and lead the charts in 2019. Kochi also witnessed a 56 per cent increase in the number of people using the app to watch films as compared to 2018.

TOP 10 SOLD FILMS

- ★ *Avengers: Endgame*
- ★ *Uri - The Surgical Strike*
- ★ *Kabir Singh*
- ★ *Saaho*
- ★ *War*
- ★ *The Lion King*
- ★ *Mission Mangal*
- ★ *Simmba*
- ★ *Gully Boy*
- ★ *Chhichhore*



Lauv is warm and humble: Akasa

Singer Akasa Singh says American singer-songwriter Lauv is warm and humble beyond being talented.

Akasa, popular for singing foot-tapping numbers like *Kheech Meri Photo* and *Thug Ranjha*, got a chance to work with Lauv on song *Dil Na Jaaney* from film *Good Newwz*. Composed by Rochak Kohli and Lauv, the song is sung by Rochak, Lauv and Akasa. The lyrics are by Gurpreet Saini, Ari Leff and Michael Pollack and music is produced by Lauv, Johnny Simpson and Rochak.

"Rochak Kohli has always been one of the dream producers that I have wanted to work with because all his melodies are magical. Gurpreet called me to dub a song for Rochak, they played me the song and the first thing that came into my head was finally I get to sing a slow, romantic song," Akasa said.

"They hinted of the possibility of Lauv being a part of the song but nothing was confirmed. Coincidentally, I had met and interviewed Lauv early this year when he

had come to play in Mumbai for Fly Music Festival. I even went to the concert because I have always been a huge fan of his work and his talent. This collaboration with Rochak and Lauv was like a far-fetched dream for me but is one of the things ticked off my bucket list," she said.

Looking back at her experience of working on the song, Akasa said, "My aim was to just dub and do my best. After the dub there was no conversation about it and one day I just woke up to a post by Lauv and the rest is history! It's been a fantastic feeling. People have been texting me non-stop, appreciating this side of my voice in *Dil Na Jaaney* which is so different to *Naaagin* or *Aithey Aa*."

On working with Lauv, she said, "I think Lauv brings so much energy and passion to the song and he is in fact, one of the nicest people I have met from the global music industry till date. He is warm and humble beyond being very talented. I feel blessed to be ending 2019 on such a positive note."

—JANS

Red's 'brilliant' 2019 just a building block for Klopp

AFP ■ LONDON

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp insists the European champions must build on a "brilliant" 2019 to turn a 13-point lead at the top of the table into a first Premier League title in 30 years.

Klopp's men were not at their flowing best and needed the help of two VAR reviews to continue their relentless march towards the title with a 1-0 win over Wolves on Sunday.

Liverpool have now won 18 of their first 19 league games of the season and lost just once in the calendar year in the league, on top of winning the Champions League, Club World Cup and UEFA Super Cup.

"2019 was brilliant but it's not important because we count seasons, not years, so the 2019/20 season is not over," said Klopp.

"We are halfway there, we still have 19 games to play and probably 18 or 19 of them will be like this tonight, for different reasons.

"Who cares about points in December? We just created a basis which we will work with from now on, that's all."

FUMING AT VAR

Wolves were angry even before the VAR controversies as the Premier League Christmas scheduling meant they travelled to Anfield just 45 hours after a thrilling 3-2 win over Manchester City.

In the match they were left fuming at the two calls that went against them in quick succession towards the end of the first half.

Mane swept home his 14th goal of the season from Lallana's knockdown with his shoulder and referee Anthony Taylor's initial decision was overturned.

However, Wolves were unhappy that another claim for handball against Virgil van Dijk earlier in the move was not checked.



Liverpool's Sadio Mane, 2nd right, celebrates after scoring the opening goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Wolverhampton Wanderers at Anfield Stadium

Liverpool/Twitter

Wolves' frustration was compounded in first-half stoppage time when Pedro Neto's equaliser was ruled out.

Jonny was adjudged to be offside by the tiniest of margins in the build-up to add to a number of Premier League goals over the past two days ruled out for the most marginal of offside calls.

"Anfield is amazing but they were celebrating a non-goal. It doesn't make sense. The referee should sustain his decision," said Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo.

"The VAR referee is miles away taking decisions on a lot of things happening here. Who is inside the game? Who feels the intensity and the flow? The referee here."

Nuno was booked among the Wolves protestations, but the Portuguese coach's decision to start with top scorer Raul Jimenez and Adama Traore on the bench meant he had weapons up his sleeve come the second half.

Traore's pace was unleashed on the hour mark and Jimenez followed shortly after, but only after Diogo Jota's fierce strike forced Alisson Becker into a smart save.

The visitors had lost just once in their previous 14 league games to move into contention for a top-four finish and they did not go down without a fight in the final stages.

"If it would be easy to win that number of games a lot more teams would have done it," added Klopp.

"It is not easy and you have to fight with all you have. Sometimes we have more and sometimes less and the boys do that all the time, so I couldn't be more proud of what they did again. To get that result over the line is just impressive."

Jimenez had the best chance to claim an equaliser, but was denied by a block from Joe Gomez before Joao Moutinho, Romain Saiss, Ruben Vinagre and Traore all fired off target.

West Ham turn to Moyes for second time

AFP ■ LONDON

Struggling West Ham said they had appointed David Moyes as manager for the second time in a bid to safeguard their place in the Premier League.

Moyes, whose career has never recovered from a deeply unsuccessful spell as Manchester United boss in 2013-14, succeeds Manuel Pellegrini, who was sacked after a 2-1 defeat to Leicester on Saturday that left the Hammers just one point above the relegation zone.

The 56-year-old has been without a club since leaving West Ham after a six-month spell in the 2017-18 season.

Moyes guided West Ham to safety that season after Slaven Bilic was dismissed in early November and will be tasked with



West Ham's manager David Moyes shouts from the side line

doing the same for a second time.

"It's fabulous to be back," said Moyes in a club statement on Sunday.

"I'm feeling very proud that I'm back here at West Ham. But I think more importantly I'll be looking to see what I can do and what I can make improvements to.

"I do believe that the squad of players I've got here is a better squad of players than when I took over before, so I am looking forward to working with them."

The West Ham hierarchy were keen to make a swift appointment following Pellegrini's sacking ahead of Wednesday's crucial clash with fellow strugglers Bournemouth at the London Stadium.

"David proved in his short time with the club that he was capable of getting results and we believe that he will start moving the club in the right direction once again," said West Ham's co-chairman David Sullivan.

"We are delighted to welcome David back - he knows the club well and he built strong relationships during that time which will be crucial for the work that needs to be done going forward."

Moyes won nine and drew 10 of his 31 previous games in charge of the club. He made his name in 11 successful years at Everton, but was sacked after less than a year as Alex Ferguson's successor at Manchester United.

Moyes also struggled in short spells at Real Sociedad and Sunderland before taking the West Ham job first time round on a short-term contract.

He was not offered a new deal despite comfortably keeping the club up by finishing 13th.

However, West Ham's ambitious appointment of former Real Madrid and Manchester City boss Pellegrini did not pay off as the Chilean was let go on Saturday after a run of seven defeats in nine Premier League matches.

Vikas makes Indian squad for Olympic Qualifiers

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Accomplished comeback-man Vikas Krishan (69kg) claimed a slot in the Indian men's boxing squad for next year's Olympic qualifiers after winning his final trial bout along with two others here on Monday.

The former world championships and Asian Games medal-winner, who competed in the middleweight 75kg category for a long time, is back to the 69kg division after recovering from a back injury sustained during his short undefeated stint in the professional circuit.

The 26-year-old, already a two-time Olympian, out-punched national medalist Duryodhan Singh Negi in a unanimous decision in the trial finals.

Also making the squad for the Asia/Oceania zone qualifiers, scheduled from February 3 to 14 in China, were Commonwealth Games medal-winning duo of



Match referee raises Vikas's hand after he qualifies for Indian squad for Olympic Qualifiers

Gaurav Solanki (57kg) and Naman Tanwar (91kg).

While Solanki defeated Mohammed Hussamuddin, Tanwar edged past Naveen Kumar. Both the bouts were split verdicts.

On Sunday, Asian silver-medalist Ashish Kumar (75kg), veteran Satish Kumar (+91kg) and Sachin Kumar (81kg) booked their places in the squad. Ashish defeated reigning

national champion and South Asian Games Gold-medallist Ankit Khatana in a unanimous verdict.

Satish, a Commonwealth and Asian Games medallist, booked his berth with a split verdict triumph over Narender. Sachin claimed the 81kg spot with a victory over Brijesh Yadav.

Amit Panghal (52kg) and Manish Kaushik (63kg) have already claimed their place in the team after winning medals at the world championships in September.

While Panghal claimed a path-breaking silver, Kaushik brought home a Bronze, fulfilling the criteria for selection set by the Boxing Federation of India.

Indian squad for Asia-Oceania Olympic Qualifiers: Amit Panghal (52kg), Gaurav Solanki (57kg), Manish Kaushik (63 kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Kumar (75kg), Sachin Kumar (81kg), Naman Tanwar (91kg), Satish Kumar (+91kg).

CITY EASE PAST BLADES TEST

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Manchester City shrugged off a tight turnaround from defeat at Wolves to beat Sheffield United 2-0 on Sunday thanks to second-half strikes from Sergio Aguero and Kevin de Bruyne.

City boss Pep Guardiola had lambasted the scheduling that saw the English champions kick off less than 48 hours after playing the majority of Friday's 3-2 defeat at Molineux with 10 men.

Fatigue seemed to get the better of City in the first half as the Blades enjoyed the better of the chances and had a Lys Mousset goal ruled out after a VAR review for offside.

However, the greater individual quality at Guardiola's disposal decided the game as De Bruyne teed up Aguero to smash into the roof of the net seven minutes after the break.

De Bruyne then rounded off another excellent display by scoring the second himself with a fine finish eight minutes from time to inflict United's first defeat away from home for nearly a year and bring City back to within 14 points of runaway Premier League leaders Liverpool.

"Today I understood why Sheffield United are in the place they're in the table," said Guardiola.

"In the first half we had problems, we changed some things and the second half was much, much better."

Despite claiming that the crowded Christmas scheduling showed the Premier League and broadcasters "don't care" about player welfare, Guardiola made just three changes to the side that started against Wolves.

City's sluggish start should have punished by the visitors with Mousset particularly wasteful.

The Frenchman spurned a glorious early chance to put United ahead when he got on the end of a floated Callum Robinson cross but headed wide.

United thought they had claimed the lead on 29 minutes when Mousset raced onto a long ball from John Fleck and



Kevin De Bruyne celebrates after scoring his side's second goal

he added. Zareen had approached Rijiju with an open letter when the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) flip-flopped on a stated policy and announced direct selection of Mary Kom for the Olympic qualifiers.

Rijiju had steered clear of the matter at that time citing the Olympic charter. On Saturday, Mary Kom said she was upset about being dragged into the selection controversy as the call on selection was not hers to take.

The Manipuri icon defended her refusal to exchange post-bout pleasantries with Zareen, saying that the former junior world champion will get her respect only if she "herself shows respect to others".

The 23-year-old Zareen said she expected better from the senior boxer and felt hurt when her attempt at sharing a hug was rebuffed.

It will see 24 nations split into six groups, with eight teams emerging from the round-robin stage to compete in the knockout phase.

Sydney will host the finals, along with group games which will also be held in Brisbane and Perth.

Country proud of both Mary and Nikhat : Rijiju

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday said not much should be made of the "ugly spat" that marred the trial bout between M C Mary Kom and Nikhat Zareen and the country is proud of both the six-time world champion and her promising challenger.

Mary Kom defeated Zareen 9-1 in the trials held on Saturday to make the squad for Olympic Qualifiers in China in February. The bout was marred by acrimony as the two boxers didn't shake hands after the contest and Mary Kom ignored an attempted hug by Zareen.

"Mary Kom is a legend who has achieved what no other boxer has ever achieved in the World Amateur Boxing. Nikhat Zareen is an amazing boxer who has the potential to follow the footsteps of Mary Kom. India is proud of both of them.



Period," Rijiju tweeted. "...Passions & emotions are the souls of Sports! The only point to

bear in mind is, in professional sports, the players & money matter more whereas in amateur sports

it's the nation. The ugly spat (sic) shouldn't have adverse effects on players while representing India,"



japan's Nishikori plays a return shot

ATP/Twitter

Nishikori pulls out of new ATP Cup

AFP ■ PERTH

Japanese star Kei Nishikori pulled out of the inaugural ATP Cup Monday as he continues to struggle with an elbow injury that has kept him out since the US Open.

The former world number four, who has

slipped to 13, said he was disappointed not to be representing his country in Perth at the team event starting on January 3.

"Today, together with my team, we have made this decision as I am still not 100 percent ready to compete at the highest level," he said in

a statement. Nishikori's elbow needed surgery in October and it is unclear whether he will be fit for the Australian Open when the first Grand Slam of the year begins at Melbourne Park on January 20.

Yoshihito Nishioka will replace him as the top-ranked player in Japan's ATP Cup team.

Yasutaka Uchiyama also withdrew from the event earlier this week, with Toshihide Matsui taking his place.

Nishikori's absence is another blow for the event after Britain's Andy

Murray pulled out over the weekend with a pelvic injury and Roger Federer opted not to play.

The innovative team championship, from January 3-12, offers \$15 million in prize money and a maximum of 750 singles and 250 doubles ATP rankings points.



Indian captain Virat Kohli raises his bat after scoring hundred

BCCI/Twitter

Kohli maintains top spot in ICC Test ranking

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian captain Virat Kohli will end the year at the top of the ICC Test ranking chart for batsmen but five-day specialist Cheteshwar Pujara slipped a place to fifth. With 928 points, Kohli is way ahead of second-placed Australian maestro Steve Smith (911) and New Zealand's inspirational skipper Kane Williamson (822), while Australia's Marnus Labuschagne, who has amassed 1,085 runs in 11 Tests this year, improved a place to grab the fourth spot.

Pujara was placed fifth with 791 points, while Ajinkya Rahane was joint seventh with 759 points. With his enterprising 95 against England in the first Test, Quinton de Kock not only set up his team's win, but also shot into the top of the latest rankings release on Monday.

In bowling, India's lead pacer Jasprit Bumrah, returning from an injury layoff, remained static at sixth position with 794 points, while spinner Ravichandran Ashwin

Ponting picks Kohli as captain of his Test team

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting on Monday picked India skipper Virat Kohli to lead his all-star Test team of the decade, which featured four English players. Ponting's Test team of the 2010s doesn't feature any other Indian apart from Kohli, who is currently ranked No.1 in both ICC Test and ODI rankings for batsmen.

The Englishmen in his team include all-rounder Ben Stokes, batsman Alastair Cook, and the pace duo of Stuart Broad and James Anderson. Among the

Australians he has opted for Steve Smith and David Warner along with spinner Nathan Lyon.

"Everyone's picking teams of the decade so I thought I'd join in the fun," Ponting wrote on his twitter handle.

"This would be my Test team of the 2010s: David Warner, Alastair Cook, Kane Williamson, Steve Smith, Virat Kohli (c), Kumar Sangakkara (wk), Ben Stokes, Dale Steyn, Nathan Lyon, Stuart Broad, James Anderson."

Kohli was also named captain of the Test XI of the decade by Cricket Australia's official news website.

(772 points) and seamer Mohammed Shami (771) were ninth and tenth respectively in the order.

Australian pace spearhead

Pat Cummins was at the top of the standings with 902 points ahead of Neil Wagner (859) and South African paceman Kagiso Rabada (832).

Rahane, Shaw to play against Karnataka



Prithvi Shaw plays a shot in Vijay Hazare Domestic tournament

PTI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Test specialist Ajinkya Rahane and young prodigy Prithvi Shaw will turn up for Mumbai in their Ranji Trophy game against heavyweights Karnataka.

The two were named in the 15-member squad announced by the association on its website on Monday.

The game will be played at the Bandra Kurla Complex from January 3.

Both Shaw and Rahane played the previous games against Baroda and Railways.

Shaw had hit a blazing double hundred against Baroda in the lung-opener but faltered in both the essays against Railways at Wankhede Stadium.

Rahane also had a horrendous time with the bat against Railways. Mumbai had won the game against Baroda while lost to Railways by 10 wickets.

Rahane, who has played 63 Tests, will be playing consecutive Ranji games after a long time.

Shreyas Iyer and Shivam Dube, who were criticized heavily for not playing the last Ranji games, have been named in the squad as they are away on India duty.

Pacer Shardul Thakur, who is also away on India duty, has not named in the squad either.

Meanwhile, young batsman Sarfaraz Khan has been included in the squad.

This could possibly be the last game Shaw plays for the time being as he then heads to New Zealand with the India A squad.

Mumbai squad: Suryakumar Yadav (Captain) Aditya Tare (Vice Captain) Ajinkya Rahane, Prithvi Shaw, Sarfaraz Khan, Shubham Ranjane, Akash Parkar, Siddhesh Lad, Shams Mulani, Vinayak Bhoir, Shashank Attarde, Royston Dias, Tushar Deshpande, Deepak Shetty and Eknath Karkar.

Kohli, Bumrah in Wisden's T20I team of the decade

PTI ■ LONDON

India skipper Virat Kohli and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah were the only two Indians who found a place in Wisden's T20 International team of the decade, which didn't feature Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Australia's limited overs captain Aaron Finch was named captain of the team, which has two more Australian in Shane Watson and Glenn Maxwell, two England cricketers — Jos Buttler and David Willey, two Afghanistan all-rounders — Mohammad Nabi and Rashid Khan, and New Zealand's Colin Munro and Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga.

On Kohli, Wisden said: "While Kohli's record in domestic T20 cricket is patchy, the same cannot be said of T20Is. Kohli's average of 53 was the best in the decade, and while his consistency compromises his strike-rate slightly, he is still able to score at a good rate, even if not exceptional.

"Strong against pace and spin, and rapid between the wickets, Kohli is an ideal player at No.3, able to fight fires when an early wicket is lost and stabilise the innings, but also



Jasprit Bumrah during practice session

PTI

accelerate when a platform is set. Following a huge first-wicket partnership, Kohli will

slide down the order in this XI," it said on its website.

Kohli, who ranks third in

the list of leading run-scorers of all time with 21,444 runs, was also included in Wisden's Test and ODI teams of the decade, besides being named in Wisden's list of five cricketers of the decade which also features Steve Smith, Dale Steyn, AB de Villiers and Ellyse Perry.

While Kohli was picked in Wisden's T20I team of the decade to strengthen the batting order, Bumrah found a place in the bowling unit due to his superb economy rate and reputation for being a reliable death bowler.

"Bumrah's overall economy rate of 6.71 is the second best in the world among quick bowlers, behind Dale Steyn," Wisden said about Bumrah, who has overall taken 216 wickets, including 51 in T20Is, in his international career so far.

"This statistic is more impressive when you consider he did the majority of his bowling in the death overs, where his economy rate of 7.27 was the seventh best in the world, and comfortably the best by a quick bowler. Bumrah is likely bowl three overs at the death for this side."

Short replaces Abbott for ODIs against India

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia on Monday called up explosive all-rounder D'Arcy Short in place of injured pacer Sean Abbott in their ODI squad for the upcoming tour of India.

The tour begins on January 14 with the first One-day International in Mumbai.

The second and third ODIs will be held in Rajkot and Bengaluru on January 14 and January 19, respectively.

Short has been included in the squad after a side strain during a Big Bash League game ruled out Abbott for four weeks.

With fast bowlers Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Kane Richardson already in Australia's ODI squad, selectors have called in Short, a top-order batter who also bowls wrist spin, to replace pacer Abbott. "It is extremely unfortunate for Sean, who is very much a part of our white-ball squad plans leading into the ICC T20 World Cup and the World Cup," selection convener Trevor Hohns was quoted as saying by Cricket Australia.

"D'Arcy offers the squad another spinning all-rounder option along with Ashton Agar, which, along with the four world-class fast bowlers and Adam Zampa, balances the squad out nicely. His proven record and ability to bat anywhere in the order will also be a great asset to the squad."

Short has played four ODIs for Australia, hitting 83 runs at an average of 26.66. Unless there's an injury, he will likely bat in the middle order given Warner and Finch are going to open. David Warner and Steve Smith will also be touring India for the first time with the Australian team since the ball-tampering scandal, both expectedly figuring in the squad.



Australia all-rounder D'Arcy Short in action

cricket.com.au/Twitter

AUSTRALIA SQUAD

Aaron Finch (capt), D'Arcy Short, Ashton Agar, Alex Carey (wk), Pat Cummins, Peter Handscomb, Josh

Hazlewood, Marnus Labuschagne, Kane Richardson, Steven Smith, Mitchell Starc, Ashton Turner, David Warner, Adam Zampa.

Lyon shoots down Warne call to take a rest for Sydney



Mitch Swepson and Marnus Labuschagne in the MCG nets with Shane Warne

Cricket.com.au/Twitter

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Australia's Nathan Lyon on Monday shot down a suggestion from Shane Warne that he take a rest for the Sydney Test against New Zealand this week so leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson can make his debut.

Tim Paine's team have already won the three-match series against the Black Caps after crushing them by 247 runs in Melbourne on Sunday, follow-

ing their comprehensive win in Perth.

Cricket great Warne has championed Swepson and over the weekend flagged the idea of axing Lyon if selectors opt for one spinner in Sydney.

"Just giving Mitchell Swepson a taste of it, giving him a chance, I reckon it will pay dividends in the long run," Warne said.

But Lyon, who took four wickets on Sunday to wrap up late New Zealand second innings resistance, said there was no way he would be standing aside.

"Did Warnie ever want a rest and give Stuart MacGill a go?" he asked, noting the lack of opportunity given to Warne's leg-spin rival at the height of their careers.

"I won't be resting. I haven't met any Australian cricketers that would like to be rested.

"It's that hard playing Test cricket, but it's that rewarding as well so every opportunity you get to play cricket for Australia it means the world to us.

"So I can't imagine Mitch Starc, Pat (Cummins) or Patto (James Pattinson) putting his hand up to say I need a rest." Queensland's Swepson has been added to Australia's squad for Sydney, where conditions often assist slow bowlers, and was taking tips from Warne in Melbourne.

There is a chance that Australia will play two specialist spinners in the third Test, with the call to be made after Paine and selectors look at the pitch.

Swepson, who has taken 12 wickets from six Sheffield Shield games at 26.58, was a member of Australia's Test squad for tours of India and Bangladesh in 2017 but has yet to make his debut.

Lyon said if both of them played, he would be more than happy.

"Mitch has been bowling brilliantly for Queensland," he said. "He's a great fella to start off with, but he gives it a rip and that's what I really love to see. I'm a big fan of Mitch, it's great to see him in and around our squad so he gets his chance and fingers crossed we can have a great combination together."

If Australia go down that road, they would almost certainly retain Cummins, Starc and Pattinson, meaning a batsman would be axed with Matthew Wade the likely candidate after Travis Head scored a century in Melbourne.

Du Plessis criticises 'big three' move

AFP ■ CENTURION

South African cricket captain Faf du Plessis believes cricket needs more, not fewer, elite nations.

Speaking after South Africa's 107-run win in the first Test against England on Sunday, Du Plessis was asked his opinion about plans for an annual 'Super Series' of one-day games, involving the so-called 'Big Three' of India, Australia and England, with one other country to be invited on a revolving basis.

"The last year or so you can see what's going on in terms of the big three countries," he said. "There's a lot of movement going towards that, a lot more matches being played against the top three, or big three. It's probably better if you include more teams, the better to grow the game as much as you can."

Du Plessis pointed out that there was inequality of fixtures, especially in Test cricket, with new Test nations such as Ireland and Afghanistan struggling to get fixtures.

"There's a lot of smaller nations not playing a lot of Test cricket, they're actually playing less," he said.



Ailing NZ call up Somerville for third Test

AFP ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand have turned to Will Somerville for his experience of playing in Sydney as they look to avoid a whitewash in the third and final Test against Australia.

Off-spinner Somerville, who was raised in Australia and played Sheffield Shield for New South Wales, will replace injured pace bowler Trent Boult for the Test starting in Sydney on Friday.

Coach Gary Stead said the inclusion of the lanky 1.93 metre (6ft 4in) Somerville was a nod to the expected conditions at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

"There's no secret the SCG pitch is one of the more spin-friendly in Australia," Stead said.

"Will offers something different to our two other spinners in the squad with his right arm off-spin and height. The fact he's played a lot of cricket in Sydney during his career for New South Wales will also be helpful

as we prepare for this final Test."

Somerville, 35, has played three Tests, taking seven wickets on his debut against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi last year and a total of seven in two Tests away to Sri Lanka four months ago.

Boult is returning to New Zealand after suffering a fracture to his right hand in the second Test which Australia won comfortably by 247 runs on Sunday within four days in Melbourne.

Australia won the first Test by 296 runs, again wrapping up the match inside four days.

New Zealand already have Matt Henry and Kyle Jamieson in the squad to provide fast bowling cover while Somerville's height and local knowledge could see him overtake the incumbent spinners Mitchell Santner and Todd Astle.

Somerville was one of the leading bowlers in Australia's Sheffield Shield in 2016-17 season with 35 wickets at an average of 23.14.