

OPINION 8
IN PURSUIT OF
GENDER EQUALITY**WORLD 12**
TRUMP FACES RAFT OF FOREIGN
POLICY CHALLENGES IN NEW YEAR**SPORT 15**
BLUNDELL'S TON IN VAIN
AS AUS CLINCH SERIES

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NEW FOR ME:
VIJAY VARMA
13 VIVACITY

Opp flexes muscles in Ranchi

Hemant Soren's swearing-in turned into a show of unity by Opp leaders



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren is flanked by his father Sibhu Soren, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot, DMK leader MK Stalin, CPI leader D Raja, LJD's Sharad Yadav, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav at Morhabadi Ground in Ranchi on Sunday

PNS ■ RANCHI

The swearing-in ceremony of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) working president Hemant Soren as the 11th Chief Minister of Jharkhand turned into a big display of Opposition unity in Ranchi on Sunday. A galaxy of leaders from Opposition parties was present at the historic Morhabadi Ground where Governor Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office and secrecy to Soren around 2.18 pm.

Congress Legislative Party

leader Alamgir Alam, JPCC president Rameshwar Oraon and RJD leader Satyanand Bhokta also were sworn in as State cabinet ministers at the event attended by several leaders of prominent national and regional parties, corporate heads and over 15,000 people from across the State.

To lend credence to the growing unity among Opposition leaders, particularly against the background of the NRC-NPR-CAA, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee,

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, DMK leaders MK Stalin and Kanimozhi, CPI(M) chief Sitaram Yechuri, CPI's D Raja and Atul Anjan, AAP's Sanjay Yadav, HAM leader Jitan Ram Manjhi, eminent socialist leader Sharad Yadav, and senior leader Saryu Roy attended the swearing-in ceremony.

The leaders shook hands and displayed bonhomie at event that heralded the advent of a JMM-Congress-RJD Government in Jharkhand,

snatching away yet another State from the BJP. Decimating BJP's "Mission 65 plus" dream, the grand alliance secured 47 seats in the Assembly polls.

Notably, in his first Cabinet meeting soon after the swearing-in, Chief Minister Soren decided to withdraw cases registered against people of the State who took part in the Pathalgadi movement and protested against the amendment to the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act and Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act in the last few years.

On the issue of implemen-

tation of NRC in the State, the CM said that he would study the documents related to NRC and then will take any decision. Earlier before taking oath on Sunday, Hemant had tweeted, "I don't think NRC is feasible or implementable. The entire country is against the CAA. This is happening while our country is going through an economic crisis. We can't make people stand in queue again like the way it happened during demonetisation. Many people lost their lives. What's the need of such acts? Who will take responsibility for the lives lost? Even in these protests, the Government is quelling dissent through police force. This is not democracy, it's something else."

Sources said that five other legislators from the JMM and three from the Congress will take oath as Ministers later in the New Year. The State has a quota of 12 Cabinet ministers in the 81 member Assembly.

Soon after the swearing-in, Soren went to pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi's statue at Morhabadi Ground. In the evening, he paid homage to Jharkhand's freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda at Birsa Chowk in Ranchi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Odisha CM Navin Patnaik, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, former PM HD Deve Gowda, former President Pranab Mukherjee congratulated Soren for becoming the Chief Minister of Jharkhand.

Relief from cold wave in 48 hrs, rain on Jan 1

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhiites and North Indians can now expect some relief from biting cold wave.

With the change of wind direction from northwesterly to easterly, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday predicted that both the minimum and maximum temperatures are likely to rise during the next 48 hours. The wind speed is expected to increase from December 31 evening under the influence of western disturbances and easterly winds in lower level.

According to IMD scientist Dr Kuldeep Srivastava, the maximum temperature recorded an increase of 2-3 degree Celsius on Sunday over many locations in Delhi and the whole western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab due to change in the wind direction from northwesterly to easterly. Delhi and NCR region is reeling under severe cold day's condition for the continuous 16 day since December 14 surpassing the 22 years record.

According to the IMD, Delhi and NCR is likely to witness light rain between January 1 and 3 and hail storm is expected on January 2. After 1997, December is all set to be second coldest month since 1901 as the mean average temperature is recorded 19.07.

The minimum temperature in various parts of Delhi



An infant monkey sits on the arms of his master, as people warm themselves around a bonfire on a cold winter morning in New Delhi on Sunday

PTI

varied with 2.5 degrees Celsius being recorded at Ayanagar, 2.8 degrees Celsius at Lodhi Road, 3.2 degrees Celsius at Palam and 3.6 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung.

The average maximum temperature was recorded in the evening at 15.8 degrees Celsius, five notches below what is considered normal for the season. The maximum temperature in various parts of Delhi varied with 14.8 degrees Celsius at Ayanagar, 15.6 degrees Celsius at Lodhi Road, 13.5 degrees Celsius at Palam and 15.8 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung. For Monday, the weatherman has predicted dense fog in the morning with cold day at a few places in Delhi-NCR.

The IMD had issued a red-colour warning for Punjab,

Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and amber-colour warning for Madhya Pradesh for Sunday. A red-coded warning is given for extreme weather events. The cold wave is not expected to relent until the New Year.

The minimum temperature across the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh Union Territory stayed several degrees below the freezing point, intensifying the cold wave in some areas in the region. In Haryana, all schools have been closed on December 30-31 due to the severe cold wave for the past few days. In Rajasthan, Jaipur's minimum temperature is settling at 1.4 degree Celsius — the lowest since December 13, 1964 when the minimum temperature had settled at zero degrees Celsius.

CAPSULE

MAJOR TERROR STRIKE AVERTED, IED FOUND

Jammu: A major terror strike was averted on Sunday with timely detection of a powerful Improvised Explosive Device (IED) along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district of Jammu & Kashmir.

GZB MAN KILLS YOUTH FOR NOT GIVING WAY

Ghaziabad: A 24-year-old man was shot dead here allegedly after he did not give way to a car, police said on Sunday. The car driver has been arrested and the pistol used in the commission of the crime

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CDS can hold post till 65 yrs as Govt amends Army Rules

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the expected announcement of the name of the first ever Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the Government has amended rules putting the maximum age limit of 65 years for the CDS to serve in the post. At present, the Services chiefs retire at the age of 62 or a tenure of three years whichever is earlier.

Since the CDS will be senior most four-star general and above the three Chiefs, the Government can give him an extension up to the age of 65 years, an official gazette on Sunday said. It also said the step was taken after amending the Army Rules 1954.

The gazette notification said, "Provided that the Central Government may, if considered necessary, in public interest, so to do, give extension of service to the Chief of Defence Staff for such period or periods as it may deem necessary subject to the maximum age of 65 years." Moreover, the same rule of three years or age of 65 years will be applicable to the CDS as in the case of the Services Chiefs.



Incidentally, the Cabinet Secretary, who is the senior most bureaucrat in the Central Government, also retires at the age of 62. The Government has the right to give him or extension of service.

The Government is likely to name the new CDS on Monday or Tuesday. Army Chief General Bipin Rawat, who retires on December 31, is the frontrunner for the new post.

If he is selected for the top job, he will get more years as the CDS since he is retiring after completing three years but is yet to attain the age of 62.

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday had approved the landmark reform in defence by clearing the creation of the post of CDS. The CDS, a long pending need to keep pace with modern day warfare world over, will act as single-point military adviser to the Government in higher defence management besides ensuring synergy amongst the three Services in terms of operations and optimum utilisation of resources.

Army Chief General Bipin Rawat, who retires on December 31, is the frontrunner as the first ever CDS. He is the senior most chief amongst the three Chiefs. The CDS will function as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister and also as the Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC).

First among equals among service chiefs, the CDS will be responsible for rationalising weapons procurement procedures besides integrating the operation of the armed forces. However, he will not exercise any military command over the three Chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force.



President Ram Nath Kovind presents the Dada Saheb Phalke Award for the year 2018 to veteran Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on Sunday

PTI

Udupi math Swamiji who hosted iftar passes away

PTI ■ UDUPI/ BENGALURU

Pejawar Math head Sri Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji, one of the prominent religious leaders of south India and a prominent face of the VHP's Ram janmabhoomi movement, breathed his last at the Pejawar math in Udupi on Sunday after a brief illness.

Swamiji was strongly rooted in Hindu causes, yet he projected himself as a liberal face and boldly organised Iftar for the Muslims during Ramzan on the ancient Sri Krishna math complex in Udupi.

A host of State Ministers and senior BJP and Sangh Parivar leaders were among thousands who offered floral tributes to Swamiji.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior BJP leader LK Advani and Yediyurappa condoled the death of the seer, who was the 33rd swamiji in the lineage of the Pejawar Math heads.

The Karnataka Government has announced a three-day state mourning.

NRC India's internal affair: Border Guards B'desh DG

Says cooperation between 2 border guarding forces is very good

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is completely an "internal affair" of India and the cooperation between the border guarding forces of the two countries is very good, the visiting chief of Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) said here on Sunday.

Director General (DG) Maj Gen Shafeenul Islam told reporters that the BGB will continue to do its work of preventing illegal border crossings as per its mandate.

A BGB delegation, led by Islam, is on a bilateral visit to India to hold DG-level border talks with its counterparts, the Border Security Force (BSF).

The biannual talks took place from December 26-29, during which a host of issues related to cross-border smuggling and activities of criminals and others along the 4,096-



Director General (DG) Major Gen Shafeenul Islam with Union Home Minister Amit Shah

File photo

km-long frontier were discussed, a senior BSF officer said.

"This is completely an internal affair of the Indian Government," the BGB DG said when asked to comment on the NRC issue.

Asked about the provisions of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that seeks to grant Indian citizenship to persecuted non-Muslims from three neighbouring countries including Bangladesh, Islam refused to comment saying, "I would say the cooperation and relation-

Priyanka hitches ride sans helmet in Lucknow, man challaned ₹6,300

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A fine of ₹6,300 has been slapped on the owner of the two-wheeler on which Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra travelled to reach retired IPS officer SR Darapuri's residence in Lucknow.

Priyanka and the driver rode the vehicle without helmet, sources said on Sunday.

"In photographs we got from social media, two persons could be seen riding a two-wheeler without helmet.

It was verified the two-wheeler was driven by Dheeraj Gurjar. Based on the details obtained from M-Parivahan, a challan was issued," SP (Traffic) Poornendu Singh said.

AAP, BJP spar over regularisation of colonies

BJP takes credit, woos residents; AAP alleges Centre misleading people

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the Delhi Assembly elections inching closer, the war of words between the ruling AAP and its main rival BJP has intensified over the regularisation of unauthorised colonies in the Capital.

The BJP launched its campaign to garner support from an estimated 40 lakh residents of the 1,731 unauthorised colonies after the Union Cabinet gave its nod for the regularisation of the colonies. Many hoardings with the photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have already been put up in some areas, including Sangam Vihar and Burari.

Accusing the BJP of misleading the people on regularisation of colonies, Chief



Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Health Minister Satyendra Kumar Jain during a Press conference in New Delhi on Sunday

Ranjan Dimri Pioneer

Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted: "DDA website says that Centre's scheme will neither regularise unauthorised colonies nor their houses. Really shocking. Can't believe that BJP spoke such a blatant

lie to the people and has put up so many hoardings. Thanks @HardeepSPuri ji for telling truth to people through DDA website." Addressing a Press conference on Sunday, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia

alleged the BJP is lying on the regularisation of colonies.

DDA colonies Cell portal was launched by the BJP Government on December 16 purportedly to register residents of unauthorised colonies to apply for ownership rights. The AAP has claimed the BJP has put up hoardings across the city claiming that the 1,731 unauthorised colonies are now authorised.

"The BJP misled the people by placing hoarding-banners that claim 1,731 colonies have been regularised, whereas the truth is that no such thing has been done as admitted on the DDA's own website.

This is a fraud on the 40 lakh people living in Delhi's unauthorised colonies. The BJP must apologise to the people for this huge betrayal," said Sisodia.

Guest column

BY
Neeraj Kumar Pande



Once again it is the juncture in time when the world marches towards another year. However, it does so with a belly bloated with several complex yet undigested environmental, economic, political and social challenges. Most of these challenges remain unresolved and have enough potential to overshadow all achievements and success spells which could have otherwise been boasted of.

This has resulted in a palpable sense of weariness with which we welcome the year to come. Surface level problems such as public grievances against various governmental moves and a wavering economic growth in the concluding quarters of the year 2019 have caught public attention the most.

However, the fact that India is an inseparable part of a complex global conundrum of environmental problems, water and food paucity can not be understated. The most critical and vicious predicaments which demanded a lion's share of world's resources throughout this year were air pollution, forest fires, refugee settlement and burgeoning waste problems. At the bedrock of all civil unrest, income inequality and degrading ecology is a global culture plagued by avid consumerism.

With every unit of energy, mineral or any resource used, there is a certain amount of waste which is generated. Environmental pollution, particularly of the land resources, is the ultimate outcome of this.

It has become axiomatic that with this mind boggling pace of materialism and consumption driven social system, there is a commensurate decline in peace, natural resources and human health. As Mahatma Gandhi once opined, "there is enough on earth for everyone's need but not enough for everybody's greed".

That humans are a mere

evolved genre among other forms of animals inhabiting the planet is a fact which is most often forgotten easily. With such sophisticated mental and physiological abilities the social, technological and economic progress made by all human cultures, in varying degrees of course, is hardly a matter of surprise.

However what really is a matter of surprise and regret is the carelessness and apathy with which humans have treated their respective ecosystems. No wonder then that in contemporary times the most nature friendly and healthy communities are those which are relatively technologically lagged and least modernised. For instance despite opening up to industrialisation and outside trade right from 1970-80s, the economy of Bhutan has been very particular about ensuring a sustainable development.

Forests still cover about 60 per cent of the total land area and majority of the population is still economically dependent on traditional sectors. It is natural then that Bhutan remains not only the most green county in Asia but also statistically the happiest.

The Bhutanese government plays a rather patriarchal role when it comes to protecting the forest and water resources of the country. Paradoxically it is believed that the least developed societies should always take lessons in growth and infrastructural development from their first world counterparts.

Here however it is important that we ask ourselves that what exactly does development even mean? Does it mean a lopsided evolution where industrial growth and rising per capita incomes come at the cost of fast depleting and damaging natural resources? This almost amounts to injecting a botox of development to otherwise rapidly ossifying human civilisation.

The total percentage of forest cover in India as per the

official estimates of the Forest Survey Of India in 2018 is barely a 24 per cent. This abysmal figure is nerve wracking when we know that we are already drowning in a quicksand of waste and concrete.

The community and government measures to tackle rising air pollution, waste mismanagement and river contamination are essentially palliative in nature.

A realistic solution of all urban problems lies deep inside our own minds. The spirit of material acquisition arises out of a deep sense of insecurity which if analysed scientifically is natural to all living organisms. However to give in to all psychological insecurities without considering the ecological trauma it causes to society is totally sadistic. There is a reason why many cultures believe and adhere to a minimalist way of life.

This "new" minimalist lifestyle is a movement which is in opposition to the existing consumption-centric society. Capitalism has forever focused heavily upon consumerism for propagating itself. In a matter of a handful of decades post liberalisation Indian society became more and more like a mirror image of western societies. Today when the waste generated by the first and third world countries threatens the world alike, there are many people and communities even in the west who are adapting themselves to a minimalistic way of life.

Japanese society is known to be moving towards adopting simplicity and de-cluttering of their living spaces. Even most communities inhabiting the Scandinavian regions believe in purchasing things based on their functionality and not simply momentary pleasures or aesthetic appeal. It is also important to understand that minimalism is not just limited to art, food, literature or home interiors. Minimalism is about thinking twice before discarding possessions only

Adopting minimalism: Way forward to a better world



because of minor defect in them or sheer boredom. Restoration of things before simply throwing them is an important value to be inculcated in people. Even simple things like food leftovers, fabrics, papers and medicines can be recreated or recycled to make many other utilities of value. This is especially useful in developing countries where the income gaps are unimaginably huge.

A mindful redistribution, community sharing, preserving and recycling are productive processes which can not only reduce the output of waste but also prevent unnecessary buying and accumulating by people. There is a reason why Fumio Sasaki's work "Goodbye Things", a revelatory book on the importance of minimalism took US and other developed cultures

by storm to become a best seller immediately. In India most people are still caught up in a cyclonic wave of consumerism. The tremendous market for foreign goods which we have turned into is only a testimony to this. It is high time we pause for a while and re think about channelising our resources into appropriate usage. Rather than investing money, manpower and technology into tackling the waste menace which is incessantly increasing, we must consider shifting towards a zero waste policy.

While disposable money does differentiate between the haves and have nots but ecological crisis falls on everyone equally. Before packing our rejected items into black garbage bags, we must think of every possibility to translate them into resources. In most

countries, kitchen and gardening waste composes the biggest share of municipal solid waste. This type of waste, when segregated at source itself and then collected separately, can be turned into an energy source or fertiliser conveniently. A change in waste creation and management patterns of society needs awareness and action on part of all groups in society.

Even in the manufacturing industry beginning from product designing and packaging to choice of materials, the entire value chain should be redesigned from the perspective of waste prevention. Self restraint exercised today can go a long way in ensuring a greener and cleaner planet later. Waste can be a burden if managed inappropriately and can be a resource if dealt with systematically. Among all

At the bedrock of all civil unrest, income inequality and degrading ecology is a global culture plagued by avid consumerism. With every unit of energy, mineral or any resource used, there is a certain amount of waste which is generated. Environmental pollution, particularly of the land resources, is ultimate outcome of this. It has become axiomatic that with this mind boggling pace of materialism and consumption driven social system

other resolutions we adopt this new year, reducing the waste burden of our society by becoming minimalistic,

should be the cardinal one.

(The author is a retired civil servant)

UNKNOWN BODY FOUND; FOG, COLD PREVENT EXTRACTION

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The decomposed body of a female was spotted in a 200 metre deep gorge along the Nainital-Kilbury motor road on Sunday. Despite efforts, the police could not extract the body due to dense fog and severe cold conditions.

Attempts will be made to retrieve the body on Monday. According to sources, women living in the suburb had gone to the woods to collect fodder on Sunday when the spotted a body in the gorge. They

informed a forest department personnel who in turn informed the police. Police officers reached the site along with the department personnel. They attempted to climb down to the gorge where the body was spotted.

The fire brigade and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) were also informed. Joint efforts to retrieve the body did not succeed due to the fog, darkness and severe cold. The body of female is believed to be lying in the place for some days since it is decomposed.

Police nab duo with stolen goods worth lakhs

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Two persons accused of theft have been nabbed by the police in Haridwar while three other accused are absconding. The duo was caught with stolen goods reported to be worth Rs six lakh.

According to the information provided by official sources, on December 12, Maya Singh had filed a complaint in the Kankhal police station regarding the theft of 218 water pipes kept for work under AMRUT project at Bairagi



Camp in Kankhal by unknown persons. Another complaint had also been lodged with the Kotwali police regarding theft of 47 pipes on December 16 in Bhagirathnagar, Bhupatwala.

For the early disclosure of these theft cases, a joint police team of the city Kotwali and Kankhal police station was formed under the direction of Haridwar senior superintendent of police Senthil Avoodai Krishnaraj S. The police team started searching for the thieves through CCTV footage and surveillance. On Sunday, an

informant tipped off the police who arrested two accused with 116 pipes from the under construction building near Alaknanda.

Guest House.During interrogation, the two accused confessed to committing the theft at both the places.They said that some of the stolen pipes had been sold in Delhi and Ghaziabad. They were taking the remaining pipes for sale on Sunday.

The duo further informed the police about the persons they used to sell the stolen items to in Delhi and Ghaziabad. The

duo caught by the police have been identified as Uttar Pradesh natives Kamal Kishore and Inatullah. The SSP said that the accused Inatullah currently works as a scrap dealer.

On spotting heaps of electric wires and water pipes at construction sites, he used to inform Kamal Kishore and arrange for a vehicle. After this, fake documents of stolen goods were prepared before the items were sold. While Kamal Kishore had reportedly been jailed in the past for theft of pipes in Dehradun.

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Mrs. Sushma Singh W/o Shri Manjeet Singh and 2. Manjeet Singh S/o Shri Khem Singh R/o House no 94, Near Swati Clinic Daishwala Doiwala Dehradun 248001	A. 03-07-2019 B. (1) Rs. 19,66,167/- (Rupees Nineteen Lacs Sixty Six Thousand One Hundred Sixty Seven only) and interest and charges thereon from 01.07.2019 C. 24-12-2019	All that part and parcel of the residential property situated at Khata Khatauni no 00059 part of khasra no 124 and 125 having an area of 131.79 Sqm and out of which 82.85 Sqm is constructed area situated at Missarwala Doiwala Dehradun in the name of Mrs. Sushma Singh W/o Shri Manjeet Singh measuring 131.79 Sqm. Bounded by: East- Property of Mr. Chauhan, West- Property of Shri Abdul Mannan, North- 12 Ft. wide road, South- Property of Smt Anita Sharma.
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Folk singers Negi and Chauhan honoured for popularising folk culture

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Noted folk singers of the State, Narendra Singh Negi and Kalpana Chauhan were felicitated by the Shri Guru Ram Rai University in recognition of their contribution to publicising the folk culture of Uttarakhand in India and abroad.

The duo was felicitated during a cultural evening organised by the university on the weekend. The event Hamari Sanskriti, Hamari Virasat was inaugurated by Education secretary R Meenakshi Sundaram along with the folk singers Narendra Singh Negi and Kalapana Chauhan.

Cultural groups from Jaunsar, Chamoli, Almora and other areas of the state exhibited the rich cultural heritage of Uttarakhand through their

performances. The students of SGRR PG College performed a folk song on the occasion. The team of Jai Mahasu Bissu Kala Samiti, Chakrata presented Mahasu Vandana, Tharul Nritya, and Jaunsar's traditional dance along with Thali dance.

The troupe from Pindar valley- Bahuuddeshiya Vikas Evam Sanskritik Samiti, Chamoli performed the Pandav Nritya and Veer Nritya.

Hansa Nritya Natya Kala Vikas Society depicted the colourful culture of Uttarakhand with Thadiya, Chopala and Tandi dances. Adarsh Kala Samiti from Almora performed the Choliya dance. During the occasion, Sundaram presented the Uttarakhand Sanskriti Ratna Samman award to Negi and Chauhan.

Graffiti, Rap & Hip Hop arrive in Nainital

PNS ■ NAINITAL

A street art event is being conducted in Nainital city by the authorities in association with a team from Mumbai. The event which will continue till December 31 will include activities like spray painting, rap and hip hop dance.

Members of the group from Mumbai informed the media here that with the assistance of the district administration, they are focusing on graffiti art which is quite popular in western nations. It has also gain ground in Indian cities including Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad and Lucknow among others.

After reaching the lake city on Sunday, the 15-member team from Mumbai also started painting the wall at the municipal horse stand. Western pop music was being played as the team members painted



graffiti on the wall. An open workshop was also held to provide information about graffiti, hip hop and rap. Two participants from France will also be involved in the event which will include musical performance during the evening. The youth will also be given tips on making a career in these fields.

The Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN) man-

aging director Rohit Meena said that the group from Mumbai is working to beautify the walls in Nainital. They have painted two spots on the Mall Road. He further informed that this type of event will also be held in Haldwani, Ramnagar and Nainital during March 2020. Local artistes will also be included in the workshops, he added.

Weekend rallies create traffic travails for citizens in Doon



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

As witnessed during the Aanti—CAA protest rally taken out by the Congress on Saturday, the general public suffered due to traffic congestion caused by the pro-CAA rally taken out on Sunday.

The two large rallies against and in support of Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) on Saturday and Sunday respectively became a major spoiler for the local people as well the tourists on this weekend.

The district police however tried to ensure traffic management but the snail pace operation of traffic, congested roads with multiple blocks resulted in traffic jams lasting hours at several crucial points on various roads in the city.

Both political processions have been termed as show of power by political experts, which begs the question as to why district police allowed the processions to pass through main roads when Director of State Traffic Directorate Kewal Khurana had on multiple occasions explicitly directed against allowing this.

It is pertinent to mention

here that Khurana had on multiple times reiterated that religious, cultural, protest and political processions will not be allowed on the main roads during peak hours. As per the information provided by the office of Dehradun Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), six Circle Officers (CO), 13 Inspectors, 52 Sub-Inspectors, 291 police constables in which three QRT teams, four tear gas squads, one mounted police team, fire service teams and seven companies of Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) were deployed for the traffic and law and order management during the procession held by the Lok Adhikar Manch with the support of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday.

According to the police about eight to nine thousand people participated in the procession. District police also kept one drone camera on static mode and one actively moving over the procession to keep an eye on the entire rally.

However, all these measures did not prevent the major traffic jams experienced on various main roads in the core area of Dehradun city due to the rally.

Met dept warns of shallow fog in plains

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Meteorological Centre has issued an alert stating that shallow fog is likely to occur in plains especially in Haridwar and Udhm Singh Nagar districts of the state on Monday.

The centre also stated that frost is also likely to occur in mountainous regions at few places in Uttarakhand during the morning hours. Overall, mainly clear to partly cloudy sky is likely to be in Uttarakhand. Dry weather is likely to prevail in rest of the state. Shallow fog/mist is likely to occur in some parts of plains especially in Haridwar and Udhm Singh Nagar districts in

Uttarakhand. In the provisional capital of Uttarakhand, the sky will be mainly clear to partly cloudy sky on Monday. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be 21 degree Celsius and five degree Celsius respectively in Dehradun on Monday.

Meanwhile on Sunday, the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded at various places in the state were 21.4 degree Celsius and 3.9 degree Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 10 degree Celsius and 6.5 degree Celsius in Pantnagar, 12.6 degree Celsius and one degree Celsius in Mukteshwar, 15.2 degree Celsius and 3.6 degree Celsius respectively in New Tehri.

Thousands march in support of CAA in Doon

Rally taken out by Lok Adhikar Manch, supported by BJP

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A day after the Congress took out a rally to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) a larger number of people rallied in support of the Act here on Sunday. The rally, which was held under the banner of Lok Adhikar Manch was also supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party with the party's state president and MP Ajay Bhatt, Vidhan Sabha Speaker Prem Chand Agrawal, MLAs and party office bearers also participating in the rally.

Thousands of people including a number of people from the border areas of Dehradun district first congregated at the Parade Ground on Sunday morning. To the accompaniment of dhol-nagadas and loudspeakers, the rally got underway at about 12 PM from the ground.

The crowd rallied past the Astley Hall and Clock Tower before entering the Paltan Bazaar amidst heavy deployment of police personnel. From



the bazaar, the rally passed through Dispensary Road, Darshanlal Chowk and

Lansdowne Chowk to culminate at the Parade Ground. Raising slogans in support of the

CAA, the demonstrators also appealed to the public to desist from believing in rumours and

misinformation. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the BJP State president and MP Ajay

Bhatt said that opposition political parties were intentionally spreading misinformation among the masses regarding the CAA. Stressing that this Act will not affect the status of any Indian citizen, he said that some political parties are spreading rumours and misinforming the public in order to gain dubious political benefit. Alleging that those heading the protest against CAA were misleading the general public, he said that the people of India are wise and stand in support with the Government of India's decision regarding the CAA.

He said that the large number of people rallying in support of the Act was proof of this. The rally was not that of the BJP but also of the common citizens of India who had participated in large numbers in the demonstration, he added.

Meanwhile, while many people rallied carrying the national flag, a representation of the tri-colour about 72 feet in length was also carried by the demonstrators.

₹1,500-cr sewer lines to be laid in Haridwar, Rishikesh

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

The work of laying sewer lines in Rishikesh and Haridwar at a cost of Rs 1,500 crore will be started from 2021 onward. A memorandum of understanding regarding this has been signed between the Namami Gange Mission and the German bank KfW. Under this scheme, every colony and house in Rishikesh and Haridwar will be connected to the sewer line system.

According to sources, sewer lines will be laid in Rishikesh and Haridwar at a cost of Rs 1,500. This project will include laying of sewer

lines measuring 180 kilometres in length in the urban area and 30 kilometres in the rural areas of Rishikesh at a cost of Rs 350 crore. In addition to this, a two MLD capacity sewer treatment plant will also be built in Rishikesh.

At the same time, sewer line covering a length of 440 kilometre will be laid in Haridwar at a cost of Rs 1,150 crore. Work will begin after the Kumbh Mela slated to be held in Haridwar during 2021. This work will be done by the Government of India under the Namami Gange project.

General manager KK Rastogi informed that an MoU

had been signed between Namami Gange and the German bank for laying 750 kilometre long sewer line at a cost of Rs 1,500 crore in Rishikesh and Haridwar.

Under this scheme a 440 kilometre long sewer lines will be laid in Haridwar and 210 kilometre long sewer lines will be laid in Rishikesh.

He said that all the necessary paper work and tender process for this project will be completed by the department before the 2021 Kumbh Mela in Haridwar. Work on the project will be started as soon as the Kumbh Mela concludes, he added.

192 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES REGISTERED TILL NOV 30 IN DOON

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The district police have filed 192 cases till November 30 under the section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) this year. In the year 2018, total 214 cases were registered while in the year 2017, total 136 cases were registered under the same section.

It is pertinent to mention here that whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment under the section 498 A, of IPC for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine. Dehradun Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Arun Mohan Joshi said, "We immediately file cases which needs police assistance in domestic violence

cases. There are some cases in which there is room for counselling, in which case we forward those cases to women helpline."

A representative from Women Helpline said, "We take care of most women oriented cases. We also provided them assistance in case they want to file for maintenance or divorce through District Legal Service Authority (DLSA).

Most of the cases we get are either of physical or emotional violence. Recently we have been getting most cases from inside the city, but otherwise we get cases from outskirts of district like Vikasnagar, Harbartpur and Doiwala." It is pertinent to mention here that there are increasing numbers of cases also coming into light where the women are taking advantage of ABAP seeks land for Bhoo Samadhi before KumbhMela

Sheeshambada residents to go on hunger strike from today



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The local residents of Sheeshambada conducted a symbolic funeral procession of Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Sunday.

The people have been protesting against the Sheeshambada Solid Waste Management plant for some months now, stating that apart from the stench, the toxic liquid and smoke being discharged from this plant have become a major source of pollution in the area.

They also claimed that this pollution is becoming

hazardous for the health of local citizens there. The local residents of Sheeshambada had also declared that they will be going on an indefinite hunger strike from Monday onwards in demand for the solution of same problem.

It is important to mention here that the local residents of Sheeshambada submitted a written complaint letter in Selaqui police post against Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, Urban Development Minister Madan Kaushik, Tehri MP Rajya Lakshmi Shah, Sahaspur MLA Sehdev Pundir, Dehradun Mayor Sunil Uniyal 'Gama,

Municipal Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey, Ramky Company, Jal Sansthan, Uttarakhand Environment Protection and Pollution Control Board (UEPPCB) along with other unnamed departments and people concerned, in regards with the same issue.

On the follow up of the complaint, Selaqui police post in-charge, Narendra Puri said that he had forwarded the complaint to the sub-divisional Magistrate (SDM) concerned, as the nature of the complaint includes environmental issues which are out of their jurisdiction.

Alert worker spots broken track, averts possible mishap

PNS ■ HARDIWAR

An alert employee of the railway averted a mishap while patrolling the tracks on a cold Saturday night. According to information received from official sources, on Saturday night railway employee Narendra Tomar was patrolling and checking the track when he noticed that the plate on the track was broken at a railway crossing.

The Begumpura Express was expected to go by this track soon. He alerted the station



master on the phone. The

Begumpura Express was halted at the Dosni railway station while Tomar fixed the broken plate in up line 1549 crossing in about an hour. The Begumpura Express train stood at Dosni station during this time. Sources state that a train speeding on the broken track could have resulted in a mishap.

It is also pertinent to mention here that some days ago too a plate was found broken on the railway track. Then too Tomar had informed his seniors about it.

ABAP seeks land for Bhoo Samadhi before Kumbh Mela

To hold meeting on January 15 to discuss issues, including demand for extension of Mela area

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

The Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad (ABAP) has sought land in Haridwar for making samadhis of ascetics. The ABAP has demanded that the land be allocated before the Kumbh Mela to be held in Haridwar during 2021.

General Secretary of the ABAP, Mahant Hari Giri said that the Kumbh Mela administration and the government should provide space for building mausoleums of ascetics before the commencement of Kumbh Mela.

While talking to media persons, he said that Jal (water) samadhi is prevalent in Haridwar but in view of the pollution of the Ganga river this practice should be replaced by Bhoo Samadhi



(burial). The Kumbh Mela administration and State government should provide the

land required for this, he added. In case an ascetic expires, Jal Samadhi during the Kumbh

Mela in Haridwar will sent the wrong message compared to the efforts being undertaken by

the government and other organisations to ensure cleanliness of the Ganga river. The ABAP general secretary also reiterated the demand for expanding the Kumbh Mela area, adding that the basic facilities should be provided for in the expanded area too. He further informed that a meeting of the ABAP will be held on January 15.

Discussion will be held with the Kumbh Mela administration about the extension of the Kumbh Mela area and allotment of land for the Samadhi. The authorities concerned should expedite Kumbh Mela works and provide basic facilities to the people where the Mela area is to be expanded so that there is no inconvenience to those who come here very laws which have been made to empower them.



The famous winterline as seen from Mussoorie on the weekend

Pioneer photo

Extra duty hampers routine policing in Dehradun: officials

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Dehradun Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Arun Mohan Joshi who has recently been promoted to the rank of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) had made better traffic management in the district one of his top priorities soon after assuming office of the SSP in Dehradun.

Earlier during his statements he had said that they will be working on a new traffic management plan taking the existing infrastructure into consideration. However, even after about five

months of him serving as Dehradun SSP the traffic management issue in the city has still not been resolved. When asked about the issue he said, "We have taken certain steps after which we had also seen some results. Presently the force has been deployed in various programmes that are being organised as the New Year celebration is coming.

After that we will work on the traffic plan. It is still our priority and we plan to make it work in the most organised manner." Another senior district official on the condition of anonymity said, "We don't even have enough force

that we ought to have as per the requirement of the year 2000. If we start revising it as per the present date the number of required police force in the provisional state capital will be well above what we have now.

On top of that there are several other duties here including some administrative work as well that are not there in any other district. Half of our force stays buried under tonnes of paperwork. Others are either in VIP duty or any other programme." Another official said, "It is difficult to focus on routine policing when almost daily there

is some new programme here that requires police assistance. Unlike most other departments our priorities change almost instantly, which is one the reasons that we keep pushing our regular police duties back."

It is pertinent to mention here that DIG and Dehradun SSP Joshi, who was rumoured to be getting another post, will now be staying in Dehradun as SSP for at least next five months. SSP Joshi had earlier stated that if he stayed at his post here he would be working to better the traffic situation here before the summer season starts in June.

AAP's 10-week drive brings dengue cases down

Vector-borne diseases in Capital came down to 1,998 as compared to 2,798 cases in year 2018

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

The sustained campaign launched by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal against the spread of Dengue through its awareness campaign bore the impact as vector borne diseases in the national Capital came down to 1,998 as compared to 2,798 cases in the year 2018. According to the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), apart from 1,998 cases of dengue, there were 300 cases of chikungunya and 798 of malaria.

It may be recalled that in one of the worst outbreak of vector borne diseases, a total of 12,221 chikungunya cases were reported in Delhi in, 2016, out of which 9,749 were confirmed. This year the cases of chikungunya came down drastically owing to the focused campaign by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government to sensitise the people against the factors that caused this disease. Among the areas falling under the three municipal cor-

porations, cases of breeding were reported. As per the statistics North Delhi Municipal Corporation reported 74,820 cases, SDMC 64,703 cases and 40,449 cases were reported in East Delhi Municipal Corporation.

Meanwhile, mosquito-breeding has been reported at 17,997 households in the city. Delhi Government's initiative started in this year to check houses for stagnant water, had garnered a massive support from public and several other well-known personalities across the country, including cricketers, Bollywood actors and famous journalists.

The civic bodies also issued 14,297 legal notices to various people and establishments after mosquitogenic conditions were found in their houses or premises. During the corresponding period last year, notices were sent to 18,721 households. At least 17,718 prosecutions have also been launched after breeding were found, the municipal report for the 2019 stated. According to



municipal health officials, domestic breeding of mosquitoes is one of the main factors responsible for people contracting these vector-borne diseases.

"Water coolers, storage utensils, bird and dog-feeders left in the rain, are known to be typical places where Aedes mosquito breeds. Most of the breeding detected in these waste products left in open by our 'Dengue Breeding Checkers', the official said.

However, concerned over sporadic reports of dengue and chikungunya at the beginning of this year has prompted the civic bodies to issue an advisory on prevention and control of vector-borne diseases in Delhi and called for prevention of mosquito breeding by source and made it clear that the reduction is the only effective

tool for prevention and control of these diseases. Dengue and chikungunya are caused by the bite of Aedes aegypti mosquito, which breeds in clear water, while Anopheles mosquito, which causes malaria, can breed in both fresh and muddy water.

"We have been appealing to people through our campaign to not allow stagnation of water in coolers or dog-feeders, which become a hot breeding ground for Aedes mosquitoes. Our domestic breeding checkers (DBC), who go to inspect houses, are often denied entry by people, so we are unable to check the growth of vectors inside houses," said a senior corporation official. Besides, all the three corporations have also taken a number of measures to prevent mosquito breeding, including creating

awareness by using various media, deploying more dengue breeding checkers, and desilting of drains, the official said. The south body has decided to spray insecticide named 'Alpha Cyper Methrin' which remains effective for three months from the date of spraying, an SDMC official said.

A senior SDMC official said the spraying of insecticides he has regularly been done throughout the year. "The spray will be especially concentrated in JJ and rehabilitation colonies as these areas are very suitable for breeding," he said. With the move, the SDMC officials believe that the approaching menace of vector-borne diseases can be checked as the mosquitoes will be paralysed after coming in contact with such insecticide.

CM felicitates ex-servicemen, families of martyred soldiers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday felicitated the ex-servicemen and families of the martyred soldiers in a programme held at the Constitution Club.

He also said that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) would have never been a successful without the support of ex-servicemen. We have recruited a lot of ex-servicemen in the enforcement wing of the transport department.

We have recruited 13,000 marshals on the buses. We wrote to the State Sainik Board and the Central Government, and have given jobs to all those ex-servicemen who applied. We want to work closely with ex-servicemen. We are very proud of the nation's Army."

"We cannot put a price to the lives of martyred soldiers, but we have tried to honour them.

Our Government has worked to provide financial assistance of ₹1 crore to the family of martyred soldiers living in Delhi and job to one family member.

In the last five years, our Government has recruited ex-servicemen on a large scale in several departments and utilised their abilities. This is



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses ex-servicemen in the city on Sunday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

the reason why education and security arrangements have been improved in Delhi today," said Keriwal while addressing honouring the ex-servicemen.

He said, "We never able to realize how their families, several thousand kilometers away, wait when our soldiers protect us on the border and when they find out that he was martyred and his body comes home, what they will have to suffer and how they will bear it. Our soldiers have shown amazing valor and courage for Mother India whenever needed."

Adding on, Kejriwal said, "We had not yet utilised this

quality to its full potential. So, our Government recruited ex-servicemen in many positions in the last five years. Education and administrative work was the responsibility of the principal in schools.

We distributed the workload of the principals and appointed ex-servicemen as estate managers in all schools.

The estate manager looks after the administrative work and the principal, the academic work. Today, education, cleanliness, and security arrangements have improved with the support of the ex-servicemen," he said.

Punjab CM nails Sukhbir's 'lies' on GGI report

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A day after SAD questions Punjab's 'low' ranking in governance, the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Sunday took on Akali president Sukhbir Badal for deceiving the people with his "blatant misinformation" on the recently released Good Governance Index (GGI) report, which was actually a reflection of the poor governance under the erstwhile SAD-BJP regime.

The Chief Minister took on the SAD chief over his total ignorance about the State, which his party, in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), had misruled for a decade, to pull it down on every index of progress.

Referring to the GGI report released by the Central Government on December 25, 2019, Capt Amarinder pointed out that the data used to prepare the index dated back to the financial year 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17, when Punjab was under the regime of the Akalis and the BJP.

Capt Amarinder further pointed out that anyone involved in serious and responsible governance would know that indices of progress are developed over a time and any development process translates into visible outcomes only in subsequent reports. "But Sukhbir would not know that, considering that he never knew the meaning of responsible and good governance," quipped Capt Amarinder.

Rubbishing Sukhbir's claims as "lies" on the growth of industry and ease of doing business in the State, the Chief Minister noted that the report was based on the data from



2014-15. "The ease of doing business was also observed in 2017 when transformations of the sector under the newly elected government are still in process," he added. "In his tearing haste to condemn the current government, Sukhbir has clearly not bothered to check out even the basic facts before coming out with his statement," said Capt Amarinder, adding that the former Deputy Chief Minister had evidently chosen to live in a state of constant delusion, which was far removed from the ground reality, with not even a remote connection with facts and figures.

"For 10 years, their (SAD-BJP) government messed up with Punjab on every count, destroying every sector and pulling the State down to the pits with respect to its social, economic and other key aspects of growth. No wonder the people threw them out in 2017, and in every election thereafter," said Capt Amarinder.

"Yet, Sukhbir and his associates had clearly not learnt any lessons from their mistakes,

and continued to believe that their deceptions and falsehoods would eventually succeed in befooling the people of Punjab once. But, that is not going to happen, as the people are much more knowledgeable and intelligent than Sukhbir believed them to be. They (the people) want progress and development, not chicanery and falsehoods," he added.

Pointing to the Economic Governance indicator data used in the report, the Chief Minister said that it related to 2016-17, thus reflecting the progress in the sector under the previous government. Even the data under Social welfare and development, sex ratio at birth, health insurance coverage and empowerment of minorities dated back to the previous government's time, he further noted.

As far as agriculture and allied sector was concerned, data for all indicators other than one with a low weightage of 0.1, has been taken from 2015-16 and 2016-17 - when the Congress government was not in power, said the Chief Minister. Under public health, where Punjab could have done better, data on maternal mortality ratio (MMR), infant mortality ratio (IMR) and immunization achievement are all from the period between 2014-2017.

In cases where the data has been taken from the period relevant to the current dispensation, the indices either reflect progress made on key parameters or are expected to reflect excellent turnaround in the subsequent report since this government has actively put into place measures to improve on these concerns and the

Cong to hold protest march against CAA at Ludhiana today

The entire country is united to oppose CAA

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

When the entire nation is opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) holding protests and dharnas, Punjab Congress would hold a protest march against the amended act in

Ludhiana on December 30, Monday.

The march will be attended by Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, Punjab party affairs' in-charge Asha Kumari, besides the state Cabinet Ministers and state Congress leaders, said Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC) president Sunil Jakhar on Sunday while inviting the Punjabis to join this march.

The entire country is united to oppose the Citizenship Amendment Act, he said. At

the same time, Jakhar lambasted the Uttar Pradesh Government for indecent behaviour with Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi saying that it reflected the low-ebb thinking of BJP led Central Government for women in the country which worships women as goddess.

"The incident reflects hatred approach and dirty politics of the saffron party that sounds bugle of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao loudly. It is sham that all this happened

under the rule of same BJP," he said. "Modi Government was afraid of Priyanka Gandhi as she leads the nationwide campaign against the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) passed by the NDA Government to harm the spirit of our Constitution," he added.

Jakhar also questioned the leaders of the state unit of the BJP to tell how many jobs have been provided to youth of Punjab by the Central Government or what other

projects and schemes they have been brought to Punjab from Union Government.

"The Congress Government is fulfilling the promises made to the people in accordance to its election manifesto.

On the other hand, the Modi Government at the Center is hiding its failures by raising emotional issues rather than solving people's day-to-day issues, like employment, inflation, farming etc," said Jakhar.

Delhi Govt makes night shelters cosy for homeless

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has come up with a range of facilities including blanket, TV sets, geyser, mattress, pillow, tea and snacks to attract homeless in the national Capital to spend their nights in shelters instead of footpaths, people who were forced to sleep under sky in the chilling winter, have reasons to smile as the move has ensured a great relief to them.

The shelters built by Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) are equipped with the facilities like LED, geyser, and tiles flooring rooms and cleaned blanket and well-maintained washrooms. Besides, tea and breakfast are also being served to them.

"We are running 55 such shelters spread across Delhi. Four winter rescue team are deployed to rescue homeless. They are rescued by NGOs and bring to the shelter," he said, adding that 30 to 40 people rescued every night," said Anil Verma, field coordinator of SPYM NGO.

Nitesh Kumar, project Coordinator of SYPM said that



DUSIB has launched night shelter App. "Any one can capture homeless sleeping on footpaths and upload the pictures on the App. This information will automatically forwarded to field coordinator and rescue operation begin soon after getting information," he said.

One of the care takers of a night shelter at Kashmiri gate said that homeless are being

served morning tea and rusk. "A team of doctors has also been there to visit the night shelters. He further said that regular inspections are also being done by the officials of these shelters and senior members of the NGO, which runs the shelter.

Mangu Thakur, a labourer from Aligarh while watching news on television at a night

shelter at Delhi Gate, said he never thought to have all the facilities without spending even a single penny.

"All the required facilities like blankets, bed, tea and snacks are being provided here free of cost. Now I can live here happily, he said, adding that he had to spend ₹50 to 70 for tea and food but now he can save it for his family.

Hira Pawan, who hails from Bihar and earns his livelihood by working in a factory, said that he came in Delhi for earning his livelihood a month ago.

"I still do not have any job but I can spend my nights in succour. I search for jobs in day and return back to shelter at night. This is great move and I am thankful towards authorities. I spent many nights on the pavement and rescued by a team and brought back at shelter at Kashmiri Gate," he added.

"We are given facilities like clean bathrooms and even staffs here are very cooperative. We all are being treated with dignity," he said.

A senior DUSIB official said that at present, many shelters have been equipped with geysers and 24*7 electricity. Besides TV sets has also been installed in shelters for the entertainment of the residents.

"There are 193 night shelter currently being operated. Out of which, 78 are functioning in permanent buildings and 115 from porta cabins. Besides, 45 tents has also been installed to cater the need of homeless," he added.

Tourism activities to get boost in Himachal

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Being the backbone of state's economy, Himachal Pradesh Government is laying special impetus on strengthening tourism industry in the state. In fact, to boost the state's tourism sector, the Government had signed as many 225 MoUs worth Rs 16,000 crore during the recently held Global Investors' Meet and work on almost 15 percent projects has already been started.

Groundbreaking ceremony of 81 projects with an investment of Rs 3,322 crore in Tourism sector was performed on completion of two years tenure of the State Government, said the government spokesperson. Spokesperson said that the efforts are being made to make tourism sector employment-oriented for local residents, under which, 2000 homestays



and 3600 hotels have been registered in the state, against the previous year's figure of just 476 new homestay units. To provide employment to the unemployed youth, the State Government has provided training to 939 people in various tourism industries such as tourist guide, taxi driver, porter, dhaba owners, food and bev-

erage services, trekking guide, basic course of tourism, skiing course by HIMCON, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Mountaineering Institute Manali, Nature and Life Association, Mountaineering center Bharmaur and HPTDC.

A provision of Rs 50 crore has been made under 'Nai Rahein Nai Manzilein' scheme,

to develop the virgin lands of the State. In the first phase of the scheme, development of Janjheli in Mandi district, Chanshal in Shimla district, Bir-Biling in Kangra district, water sport activities in Largi and Pong area will be done.

To strengthen the tourism sector, Asian Development Bank has approved project

worth Rs 656.00 crore, which will be completed in two phases or tranches. Another ADB aided scheme with an outlay of Rs 1,892.00 crore has also been approved for the State which includes a special package of community development, under which people of rural areas would be encouraged to set up activities related to tourism.

State Government is constructing ropeways as an alternate transport arrangement for facilitating tourists, including Dharamshala-Mcleodganj ropeway by 2020, Sri Anandpur-Naina Devi in Bilaspur district, Aadi-Himani Chamunda in Kangra district, Palchan-Rohtang and Bijli Mahadev in Kullu district, Maa Shikari Devi in Mandi district, Shahtalai-Dayotisidh in Bilaspur-Hamirpur district and Narkanda-Hatu ropeway in Shimla district.

Haryana CM inaugurates bronze statue of Vajpayee

Lays foundation of developmental works worth ₹14.87 crore

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Sunday inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of developmental works worth Rs 14.87 crore in Karnal, besides inaugurating the 14-feet tall bronze statue of former Prime Minister (late) Atal Bihari Vajpayee which has been built at the plush Atal Park in the city.

The Chief Minister inaugurated the newly-built BDPO office building of Kunjipura at



a cost of Rs 1,98,80,000.

He unveiled the bronze statue of former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna (late) Atal Bihari Vajpayee which was built at a cost of Rs 56 lakhs.

Among other projects was the construction work of Western Yamuna Canal Bridge on Karnal-Kaithal Road at a cost of Rs 7,9,28,000.

The strengthening of roads from Dachar to Ichhanpur at a cost of Rs 3.13 crore was launched.

The Chief Minister also inaugurated the Urban Primary Health Center constructed in Ram Nagar area at a cost of Rs 44 lakh, in addition, the foundation stone of road to be built at a cost of Rs 55.39 lakh from Indri Road to Karna in the State was also laid.

MANNKI BAAT

Youth hate disorder, anarchy, says Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid massive protest by students in several universities across the country against citizenship amendment act, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the youth for believing in the system and questioning it when it didn't respond properly.

Addressing his last 'Mann ki Baat' of 2019, Modi said the youth hate anarchy and disorder and dislike casteism, nepotism and favouritism, remarks that come in the backdrop of recent violent protests on various university campuses over the Citizenship Amendment Act and proposed NRC.

"According to me, they appreciate the system. Not just that, they prefer to follow the system. And in the event of the system not responding properly, they get restless and even courageously question the system itself! I consider this attribute as a virtue.

"One can even say with certitude here, that the country's youth detests anarchy of any sort. They despise any element of lack of governance and instability; abhorring any shades of nepotism, casteism, favouritism or gender discrimination," he said.

He hoped the young India will play a key role in building modern India in the coming decade and cited Swami Vivekananda, who had said that young people who are full of energy and dynamism, possess the power to usher in change.

"I am of the firm belief that for India, this decade will be, not only about development and progress of the youth; it will also prove to be about the country's progress, harnessing their collective might. This



They appreciate the system. Not just that, they prefer to follow the system. And in the event of the system not responding properly, they get restless and even courageously question the system itself! I consider this attribute as a virtue.

generation will play a major role in modernising India; I feel it beyond any doubt," he said.

Modi exhorted youth to give a thought to this responsibility and take on this resolve on Vivekananda's birth anniversary on January 12. He also cited cases when youth vociferously react whenever an incident of disorder takes place and make a video of it to make the culprit realise the consequence.

"Thus, our new generation is an embodiment, a reflection of a new system, a new order, a new age, a new thought. Today, India eagerly awaits this generation expectantly. These are the very people who have to elevate the country to greater heights," he said.

Modi also urged youth to visit the Rock memorial in Kanyakumari, where Swami Vivekanand entered into the meditative State, to get inspiration and urge to serve the poorest of the poor in the country.

The Prime Minister also exhorted the youth about the importance of Alumni meets in

colleges and universities, and said some such meets have contributed something for society.

He cited the case of the Bhairavganj Health Centre in West Champaran district of Bihar, where thousands turned up for a health check-up camp and started an Alumni Meet of the local KR High School and a slipper manufacturing unit started by Pulpur women, with the help of 'Gramin Ajivika Mission.

The prime minister also urged people to promote local products in their purchases to promote 'Swadeshi'. He also lauded Parliamentarians for making the Parliament session productive and breaking records of the last 60 years.

In his final address of 2019, PM Modi said the New Year and new decade brings new resolutions, new energy, new enthusiasm and new zeal.

"We have to walk far, we have to achieve a lot, we have to take our country to new heights. Let's show immense faith in the pursuits (actions), the abilities and the resolve of 130 crore countrymen," he said.

'Smart fence' along riverine Indo-B'desh border in Assam by July, says BSF chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A project to plug border gaps and deploy a "smart fence" along the riverine Indo-Bangladesh frontier in Assam is expected to be completed by July next year, BSF Director General VK Johri said on Sunday.

The project got delayed by about six months as the region received heavy rains, resulting in floods, this year. The earlier deadline was December, 2019, Johri said.

The Border Security Force (BSF) chief was speaking on the sidelines of a Press conference with his Bangladeshi counterpart, Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) DG Maj. Gen. Shafeenul Islam. "The work is in the stage of execution and it should be completed by July, 2020," Johri said.

The BSF has been working to deploy a "smart fence", powered by technical surveillance and alarm systems, at the 55-km-long stretch in Dhubri, across the Brahmaputra river in Assam.

This border area is highly prone to illegal migration and cattle smuggling due to the changing course of the mighty river.

A similar fence has been deployed by the BSF in the Jammu region, along the Pakistan border, as part of its Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS).

The BSF is mandated as the primary force to guard the 4,096-km-long International Boundary (IB) with Bangladesh besides the frontier with Pakistan.

Committed to take care of Jawans' kin while they guard nation: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the Modi Government is committed to take care of the families of Central security forces' personnel while they guard the nation.

Addressing CRPF personnel while laying the foundation stone of the paramilitary's new headquarters building here, Shah said the government is working to ensure that every force personnel gets to spend at least 100 days with their family.

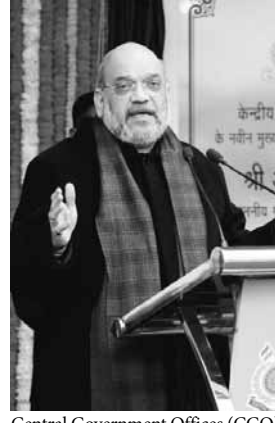
Health card facility will be provided to families of paramilitary jawans, Shah said.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) with a strength of over 3-lakh personnel is lead internal security force of the country dealing with anti-terrorist and counter Naxal operations across the country.

The new CCRPF headquarters will come up on a 2.23 acre land adjacent to the CBI head office at Lodhi Road at an estimated cost of Rs 277 crore.

The CPWD has been entrusted with the task of completing the construction of the new building by March 2022.

The current headquarters of the CRPF is located at Block No 1 in the



Central Government Offices (CGO) complex on Lodhi Road but a number of its offices like that of the RAE, CoBRA, medical, training, communications, and works and recruitment are located at different locations in the national capital owing to lack of space in the head office building.

The plan of the new facility is to have ground plus 11 floors with three basements will have a total built up area 45,675 square metre. Besides adequate office space, the state-of-the-art building will have

an auditorium, conference hall, barracks for subordinate staff, central police canteen, gymnasium, guest room, kitchen and dining room and mechanical parking for 520 cars and 15 buses.

Skywalks would be created at the 6th and 7th floor connecting the office blocks with cafeteria.

The 'Green' building is proposed to have a number of environment friendly features like terrace lawn, water and sewage treatment plant, rain water harvesting system and an indigenous ventilation system and reduction of heat and access to daylight through fenestration. The complex will also have a green area of 2,264 square metre.

Shah also unveiled a new insignia for the CRPF's VIP security wing that secures 59 high-risk personalities, including the Home Minister himself and members of the Congress President Sonia Gandhi and her family besides and a host of Union ministers.

The logo — with a "Garuda", sword and shield — will give a distinct identity to the unit, Shah said.

The VIP security wing of the CRPF comprises about 4,000 personnel. The insignia will bear the motto of the force — "Always, Aware, Alert".

Ministry modifies TOD policy to check congestion, pollution

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After laying foundation stone of the country's very first transit oriented development (TOD) project in Delhi under which a state-of-the-art infrastructure zone will be constructed, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has modified the TOD policy to encourage development around transit nodes and encourage the use of public transport.

TOD will also allow the city to capitalise on the large-scale investments being made into public transit infrastructure — Metro Rail, Regional

Rapid Transit System (RRTS) by facilitating the improvement of old housing stock in addition to creation of new housing stock and economic centres around strategically located transit nodes and opening up opportunities for value capture. The TOD policy will also unlock the latent economic potential and land values in the city.

TOD policy will help in bringing people and jobs closer to mass transit and lead to much needed integration of land use and transport in the city. It incorporates a variety of high-density, mixed-use,

mixed-income buildings within a short distance of a rapid public transport network. It will result in compact, walkable, mixed-use developments within influence zones of transit stations.

To provide housing for all sections of the society, projects along the influential zones would provide a variety of options and promote community living by offering shared spaces and amenities.

To promote a healthy living, the policy directs 20 per cent of the area under a project to be developed as a green space that will be enjoyed by

everyone; while 10 per cent of this could be for exclusive use. A developer constructing a green building on a plot of 5,000 sq mt and above will be allowed an additional FAR.

Development of car-sale showrooms, automobile repair & servicing shops, banquet halls, LPG godowns, electric substation, bus depot, crematorium ground, standalone multi-level parking without on-site mixed use and open ground parking will not be permitted.

As per guidelines, the TOD scheme will cover a minimum one hectare and maximum eight hectare of area fulfilling

all eligibility criteria's.

For developing areas along the Mass Rapid Transit System - 500 metres of area on both sides, will be known as influential zones. Influence zone is either established at a transit stations or along the transit corridors. It is generally up to a radius of nearly 500-800m of the transit station. Where the distance between the transit stations is less than 1 km and there is overlap in the influence area, it can be identified as a delineated zone (around 500m) on either side of the transit corridor within 10 - 12 minutes walking distance.

14 Indian fishermen held by Lankan Navy

Colombo: Sri Lankan Navy has arrested at least 14 Indian fishermen and seized their 3 trawlers for allegedly poaching in the country's territorial waters.

The arrests were made on Saturday in the seas north of the Delft island, the Navy said in a statement on Sunday.

"Sri Lanka Navy apprehended 14 Indian fishermen along with 3 fishing trawlers for poaching in Sri Lankan territorial waters on December 28," the statement said.

The fishermen are expected to be handed over to the assistant director of fisheries in Jaffna after a medical examination for further action.

The Navy said that due to extensive patrols, the number

The fishermen are expected to be handed over to the assistant director of fisheries in Jaffna after a medical examination for further action

of Indian fishing trawlers entering Sri Lankan waters have been significantly reduced.

In January 2018, Sri Lanka increased by over 100 times the fine on foreign vessels to deter them from fishing in its waters, amid the dispute over the frequent entry of Indian fishing trawlers into the country's maritime territory.

PTI



President Ram Nath Kovind pose a group photo at the presentation of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award to Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan, conferred for his contribution to the Indian film industry, at Rashtrapati Bhawan, in New Delhi on Sunday

PTI

Mega reforms in medical edu, e-cigarettes ban highlights of health ministry in 2019

New Delhi: The enactment of two key legislations, one aimed at ushering in mega reforms in the medical education sector and the other banning e-cigarettes were the major highlights of the Health Ministry in the outgoing year.

In a huge step towards boosting the availability of human resources for the health sector, the ministry in 2019 initiated the process of converting 75 district hospitals into medical colleges by 2021-22 in under-served districts of the country that do not have any medical colleges.

Once completed, it would lead to the creation 15,700 more MBBS seats in India.

The National Medical Commission Act substituted the nearly 63-year-old Indian Medical Council Act to replace the existing scam-tainted apex medical education regulator Medical Council of India (MCI) with a new body to bring in probity, quality education and bring down costs of medical education. It received the assent of the President on August 8 and was published the same day.

Once the NMC comes into being, the Medical Council of India will automatically get abolished. The President dissolved the MCI in 2018 and a Board of Governors was appointed to perform its functions.

The Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019 was notified on December 6 making the production, import, export, transport, sale or advertisements of such "alternative" smoking

devices a cognisable offence attracting jail term and fine.

On the flip side, the ministry could not bring in the much-sought central legislation to check assault on doctors and other medical professionals with the home ministry opposing it holding there cannot be a separate law to protect members of a particular profession.

However, the health ministry decided to pursue the proposed legislation in the backdrop of rising instances of attacks on medics.

The year also saw the ministry launching the 'Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0' in October with a special focus on improving coverage in areas with "low" immunisation.

Also, the Rotavirus vaccine (RVV) introduced in India in March 2016 in 11 states (Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam, Tripura, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh), to reduce mortality and morbidity caused by Rotavirus diarrhoea was expanded to the remaining states and union territories, thus covering the entire nation.

The report of Sample Registration System (SRS) released in November by the Registrar General of India (RGI) showed that Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of India declined from 130 in SRS 2014-16 to 122 per 100,000 live births in 2015-17.

Another highlight was the launch of the Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) initiative on October 10. It is

a comprehensive multi-pronged and coordinated policy approach with an aim to assured, dignified, respectful and quality healthcare at no cost and zero tolerance for denial of services for every women and newborn visiting public health facilities in order to end all preventable maternal and newborn deaths and morbidities and provide positive birthing experience.

In a major step towards providing affordable healthcare in India, the ministry in 2018 launched the Ayushman Bharat programme. Till December 18, more than 69 lakh people have availed treatment across India under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (AB-PMJAY) that aims to cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage up to =Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalisation.

Also, under the Ayushman Bharat programme, nearly 1.5 lakh sub-centres and primary health centres will be transformed as health and wellness centres by 2022 to provide comprehensive and quality primary care close to the community while ensuring the principles of equity, affordability and universality.

Approvals for more than 60,000 Ayushman Bharat health and wellness centres have been accorded to the states/UTs (except Delhi) and 26,743 such centres are in operation till December 23.

PTI

Ireland PM Varadkar visits his ancestral village in Konkan

Mumbai: Ireland Prime Minister Leo Varadkar on Sunday visited his ancestral village alongwith his family members in the coastal Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra, calling it "a very special moment".

It was his first visit to the village of Varad in Malvan tehsil, around 500 km from Mumbai, after he became prime minister in June 2017.

Varadkar's father Ashok Varadkar, a doctor, hailed from Varad. He moved to the United Kingdom in the 1960s.

The visit was a "special moment" as three generations of his family had gathered, the Ireland prime minister said after the villagers felicitated him.

He also visited temple of the village deity.

"I am here with my parents, my sisters and their husbands, my partner and some grandchildren are here...So it is a big family visit," the Ireland PM said.

It was "very special moment" for them as three generations of his family were visiting "a place of my grandfather", he said.

"I am on private visit here as of now, but I would like to visit this place again in the official capacity," Varadkar added.

PTI

MCI received 6 complaints of ragging in medical colleges in 2019-20

New Delhi: The Medical Council of India (MCI) has received six complaints of ragging by seniors in medical colleges, which include suicide by a student due to extreme harassment in Mumbai, so far in 2019-20, according to official data.

The apex medical education regulatory body had received 13 such complaints in 2018-19 and 25 complaints which included three suicide cases in 2017-18.

The government is aware about the problem of ragging in medical colleges and several measures to control and check such instances have been initiated by the MCI, Minister of State for Health Ashwini Choubey told Lok Sabha during the recent winter session.

Before starting of fresh batch of admissions, circular is issued to all medical colleges to provide information on Anti-Ragging Committee composition in the college with the name of members along with their telephone numbers and e-mail IDs and incidence of ragging reported and action taken in hard/soft copy, if any, the minister said.

They are also asked to sub-



mit details on the number of FIRs lodged, if any, punishment awarded, inclusion of specific information on Anti-Ragging in admission brochures/prospectus/booklets, installation of CCTV cameras in all the vulnerable places of college, hospital and hostels.

The steps also include ensuring submission of online undertaking by each students and every parent. Medical colleges also have to get NAAC accreditation and place anti-ragging posters and hoardings in different parts of medical college/hostel.

Besides, the MCI has provided a link on its website regarding four short films and a documentary film for information and counselling of stu-

dents on the ill effects of ragging, Choubey said.

Also, all the universities and institutions as asked by the MCI show these films regularly to the students during orientation and other programmes, he said.

The MCI has amended the Medical Council of India (Prevention and prohibition of Ragging in Medical Colleges/Institutions) Regulations 2009 to root out ragging in all its forms from medical colleges/institutions in the country.

For the convenience of students and parents, a separate page on anti-ragging information with details of nodal officer has been uploaded on the website of the MCI. PTI

Maya suspends MLA for supporting CAA

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday suspended party MLA Rama Bai for supporting the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Mayawati has been strongly criticising the new law, which seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslim refugees who came to India before December 31, 2014, to escape religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Rama Bai, who represents Patheriya Assembly seat in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district, on Saturday evening supported the Citizenship (Amendment) Act at a function held in her constituency where Union minister Prahlad Patel was present.

Taking strong note of it, Mayawati, in a tweet on Sunday said, "The BSP is a disciplined party and it takes prompt action against its MP and MLAs who break discipline."

"Taking this into account, the party suspends Madhya Pradesh's Patheriya MLA Rama Bai Parihar for supporting



CAA. She has been banned from taking part in the party functions," the BSP supremo tweeted in Hindi.

The MLA could not be contacted for her comments. After Rama Bai supported the new law during a function in Patheriya on Saturday evening, Union minister Prahlad Patel, who was present at the event, lauded her.

The BSP earlier dubbed the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act as "unconstitutional" and voted against it in Parliament.

Sushil Modi blames Opp for not opposing NPR during UPA rule

Patna: Slamming the Congress, RJD and other Opposition parties for "deliberately" creating a controversy over NPR, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi on Sunday wondered why was the data collection exercise not opposed by RJD chief Lalu Prasad, when it was initiated during the Congress-led UPA rule.

The deputy Chief Minister was speaking at a function organised by Rashtrawadi Kushwaha Parishad to commemorate the first death anniversary of BJP MLC Suraj Nandan Kushwaha here. "The process of preparing NPR began in 2010 during UPA regime... Now, it (NPR) has to be updated before the 2021 census.

"The Congress, RJD and

other Opposition parties are deliberately trying to create controversy over NPR when all State Governments have issued gazette notification," Modi, who is also the State Finance Minister, said.

Asserting that the NPR should not be linked with the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the BJP leader asked with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah making it clear that the NPR has nothing to do with NRC, why are Congress leaders, Prasad and leaders of other opposition parties trying to mislead a particular community?

How can preparing NPR be wrong during NDA regime when the same exercise was considered to be correct during UPA rule? he asked. **PTI**

NPR, NRC against poor, minorities: Akhilesh Yadav

Lucknow: SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) were against the poor people and minorities of the country, while asserting that he will not fill up the NPR form.

Addressing a press conference at the Samajwadi Party (SP) headquarters here, he said, "Be it the NPR or the NRC, these are against the poor people, minorities and Muslims of the country."

"The question is whether we want the NRC or employment? If the need arises, I will be the first person not to fill up any form. Will you support me or not? If we do not fill up the form, we will be thrown out. I will not fill it up, you say whether you will fill it up or not?," Yadav asked young SP leaders.

"I would like to tell the policemen, who are wielding lathis on people, that the certificates of their mothers and fathers will also be sought," he said.



All Indians should come forward to save the country from those violating the Constitution, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said.

He alleged that this (CAA and NRC) was being done so that the public did not raise any questions about the poor state of the economy and basic problems.

"During demonetisation, the Government had said corruption will end, but that proved to be untrue. Due to demonetisation, a number of banks closed down, while the GST (Goods and Services Tax) ruined businesses. The condition is such that the

country's economy has come out of the ICU and gone to the ICCU," Yadav said.

"During the days of the SP government (in Uttar Pradesh), youngsters got laptops, while the BJP is taking them towards toilets. Understand the difference," he added.

Reacting to the SP chief's remarks, state Law Minister Brajesh Pathak said, "The SP and other like-minded parties are trying to spread animosity among the people of the state over the amended Citizenship Act."

Yadav also charged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with doing injustice to Muslims in the garb of the action taken against anti-CAA protestors "to save his chair".

"Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath knows that 200 BJP MLAs had staged a 'dharna' (sit-in) against him inside the state Assembly. To save his chair, he is doing injustice to Muslims," he said. **PTI**

AMU students to continue peaceful anti-CAA agitation on campus

Aligarh (UP): Students of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on Sunday said that they would continue holding peaceful anti-CAA agitation on the campus.

This was decided at a meeting of the general body of the students on Saturday evening and a "coordination committee" was formed to decide the future course of the ongoing stir against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

In a statement, a coordination committee spokesperson said that from Monday students would hold a dharna near Bab-e-Syed gate everyday between 10 am and 4 pm.

The AMU was one of the sites of protests against the amended citizenship law and alleged police action on students of Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia. At least 19 people were killed in widespread clashes during the protests across the state.

Meanwhile, the Aligarh Police has asked the university to take action against those protesters who are not students but are still active in the ongoing protest.

The letter said that these people, dubbed as "brains



behind the December 15 protest which led to violence", should not be allowed entry into the campus.

The AMU is scheduled to reopen after the winter vacation on January 6.

The AMU Teachers' Association (AMUTA) has expressed concern over the decision of the Rapid Action Force (RAF) to "belatedly" file a first information report (FIR) on December 23 against 1,000 unidentified AMU students for the violent protest.

In a press release, the AMUTA said the move appeared to be "malafide and motivated" and was in contrast to Aligarh SSP Akash Kulahari's efforts to restore

confidence by building bridges with all sections.

RAF commandant Piyush Kumar Kuldhar, however, told mediapersons, "The purpose behind the FIR is not to harass students. As a matter of routine, whenever any personnel is injured or if any ammunition is used, we file such reports with the police station concerned. This is mandatory."

In a related development, the AMU on Sunday officially denied that Vice Chancellor Tariq Mansoor had refused to meet Harsh Mander and 13 other activists who were part of a fact-finding team when they had visited the campus last week. **PTI**

Anti-CAA joint protests to be held in Kerala

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A meeting of various political parties and socio-religious outfits, convened by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan here, on Sunday decided to hold joint protests against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

The over three-hour-long meeting, attended by MLAs, MPs, major Front leaders and representatives of various outfits, entrusted the Chief Minister and the Opposition leader in the State Assembly, Ramesh Chennithala, to hold discussions and decide upon further course of action in this regard.

Among the recommendations that emerged at the meeting were that the Government should move the court and convene a special assembly session, Vijayan said.

"This matter is under the government's consideration", Chief Minister told the meeting. To protect the Constitution and secularism, there is a need to put up a united fight at this juncture, a release quoting him

said. "While taking out protests jointly, we will get strength more than we can imagine. The country itself will accept it as a model", he said, adding that the action to divide the people on religious lines will not be accepted in Kerala.

No rule was above the Constitution, he said. The Chief Minister cautioned that many protests, including by communal and extremist elements, were being held in many places and it was necessary to keep them at bay. Stringent action would be taken against protests by such elements if they cross the limits, he said adding that the intervention of such forces was not good for society's healthy growth.

The Government would not intervene in the protests being held for just causes, he added. When religion becomes the basis of citizenship, the Constitution will be undermined and from secular nation, India will become a religious country, he added.



People take part in rally against CAA-NRC-NPR at Utsav Chowk, in Navi Mumbai on Sunday

PTI

PM should intervene, find way out of vitiating atmosphere: Gehlot

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should intervene to find a way out of the vitiating atmosphere that has developed in the country.

He opined that the situation may worsen in the backdrop of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

"I believe the Government has no inkling or information about the image of the country which is being maligned in the world. Today, 53 countries have advised their citizens that they should not visit India," Gehlot said in a tweet in Hindi.

With the vital tourism sector being a key driver of the economy in Rajasthan, Gehlot said occupancy in hotels has dropped this season as many tourists have cancelled their visit to India.

Hotels do not even have 40 per cent occupancy due to the atmosphere that has been created as a deliberate attempt to polarise politics, the senior Congress leader claimed.

The Chief Minister said the Bharatiya Janata Party's attempt to polarise politics cannot be termed as "suitable" in a democracy in any way.

NCP MLA: NRC to affect 98% SC/STs in Maha

PTI ■ THANE

NCP leader Jitendra Awhad on Sunday said there would be stiff resistance if the National Register of Citizens exercise is carried out in Maharashtra, claiming almost 98 per cent of people from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities do not have documents for it.

Addressing a press conference, the Kalwa-Mumbra MLA quoted from a Government-appointed committee to claim "98 per cent of SC and ST population in Maharashtra had no documents" and hence would fall foul of the citizenship provisions of the NRC.

Incidentally, while some BJP leaders have spoken about implementing the NRC exercise nationwide earlier, after the one in Assam, of late the party has gone soft on it.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing a rally in Delhi on December 22, had said, "Since my Government first came to power in 2014, I want to tell 130 crore countrymen, there has never been a discussion on this NRC," adding that it was done only in Assam due to a Supreme Court order.

Speaking here, Awhad said 48 SC/ST organisations had recently met him and had resolved for a joint fight against NRC and the Citizenship Amendment Act.

"With no documents, how do you expect two crore people from the SC/ST communities (in Maharashtra) to prove they are citizens of the country? In the coming days, stiff resistance is definite against the NRC and CAA," he warned.

Representatives from some of these 48 organisations mentioned by Awhad were present at the press conference.



West Bengal Youth Congress activists take part in a rally against NRC, CAA in Kolkata on Sunday

PTI

Kolkata: Youth Congress, Chhatra Parishad activists protest against NRC, CAA

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Activists of the youth wing of the Congress on Sunday staged a protest march against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) here.

Hundreds of activists of the Youth Congress and the 'Chhatra Parishad', students' wing of the grand old party, holding anti-CAA and anti-NRC placards, started their march from Esplanade area of the city planning to go to the state BJP office on Central Avenue.

However, they were stopped near Central Metro station by police personnel who formed a three-tier human chain. The arterial road was also barricaded by placing guard rails.

Congress leader Abdul Mannan, who was leading the march, told reporters that the protest was against the amended Citizenship Act and the NRC which the Central Government "intends to implement across the country". The Centre should immediately withdraw the two "anti-people" moves which would divide the country on the basis of religion, he said.

Later, the protestors sat on the road raising slogans while some of them made a failed attempt to break the human chain.

Mamata pens poem on CAA, NRC Didi CAA verse slams 'selfish giants' for slicing India

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Mamata Banerjee has written a poem laying into the Narendra Modi Government — which she calls a 'selfish giant' — for bringing the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register for Citizens in a bid to turn a united India into a land of discrimination.

Titled 'Adhikar' or Right the poem asks the power that be as to who has given them the right to trample upon the rights of the people.

The poem which the Bengal Chief Minister has posted on the Facebook opens with the words saying "I cannot identify with this country. This is not the place of my birth. I was born in Bharatvarsh



(India), which never taught us to discriminate (among people) ... My right belongs to me ... why shall someone trample on it ... I condemn you ... shame on you."

Expressing the current state of affairs in the country and calling the controversial decisions taken by the government as "instrument of hate" Banerjee adds "those who disseminate hate will now only cry. Your speeches are laced with poison ... you are snatching man's right."

The Chief Minister who had earlier written a poem titled Nagorik (Citizen) on a similar issue also goes on to write that "we want unity, not hate. This is our pledge. We are all citizens. Our address is 'Right'.

In an apparent reminder of the demonetization days when the people had to stand in long rows Banerjee writes that the CAA and NRC too are selfish giants that will make the people stand in queues.

"NRC, CAA are selfish giants ... We won't prove us (identities) in queues ... poor will stand in queue and you'll hoodwink them," she pens on adding "we'll never allow division of our country. Let India remain united ... down with divisive forces. We are all citizens won't take CAA, NRC," she writes.

A strong critic of the Modi Government the Chief Minister has been leading long rallies on streets for the past one week, mobilising lakhs of TMC supporters.

Drawing instant criticism from State Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar for publicly defying a Central Act while sitting on a constitutional post, Banerjee has already gone on record that she would not allow CAA or NRC in Bengal. Earlier she told in a rally that "till I am alive, till I am there at the helm there will be no CAA, no NRC in Bengal."

Banerjee on Sunday led similar anti-CAA rallies in Purulia district before proceeding to neighbouring Jharkhand where she attended the swearing-in ceremony of incumbent Chief Minister Hemant Soren.



Protesters participate in a rally against a new citizenship law, in Pune on Sunday

PTI

UP Govt crossed all limits: Priyanka on Zafar's arrest

BJP says theatrics won't fetch votes

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Taking on the Adityanath Government over handling of protests against the amended Citizenship Act, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday said it has "crossed all limits of inhumanity" and claimed party worker Sadaf Zafar was arrested on "baseless" charges.

"This insensitive Government has separated children from their mother and the older generation from their children," the Congress general secretary said a day after she had accused the UP Police of manhandling her when she resisted their attempts to stop her from visiting the residence of retired IPS officer SR Darapuri, who was also arrested in connection with the recent anti-CAA protests.

Zafar was arrested here on December 19 while she was live on Facebook from the spot where protests against the amended citizenship law had gone violent. Police had said she was arrested for her involvement in clashes. At least 19 people were killed and hundreds of others injured in the violence in the State.

After visiting Darapuri's family, "Priyanka Gandhi met the



family members of Sadaf on Saturday night at her (Priyanka's) Lucknow residence, and told them that the Congress stands firmly with them," UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu told PTI.

"Uttar Pradesh Government has crossed all limits of inhumanity. Congress worker Sadaf Zafar in a video can be clearly seen telling policemen to arrest those indulging in violence. The police has levelled baseless allegations on Sadaf and put her in jail," Priyanka Gandhi tweeted in Hindi.

The Congress general secretary said Zafar's children were eagerly waiting for her release.

She had on Saturday alleged that she was manhandled by police personnel who grabbed her by the throat and pushed her when she was on her way to the residence of Darapuri.

Hitting back at the Congress

leader, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said that such 'nautanki' (theatrics) will not fetch votes for the Congress and what's left of the party will also be finished.

In a Hindi tweet late on Saturday night, Maurya said that it seemed by Priyanka Gandhi's behaviour that her party has become a 'danga karao party' and it cannot tolerate the peaceful atmosphere and development in Uttar Pradesh.

He said the State was a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity and added that the Congress and the Samajwadi Party were getting disturbed, seeing their dark political future.

"Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi does not want the welfare of the people of Lucknow. 'Nautanki' (dramatics) will not fetch votes for the Congress, and what's remaining of the party will also be finished."

"Everyone in UP knows that the Congress only has members who are interested in getting their photos clicked. By misleading the country on the issue of CAA, the Congress has become a villain in the eyes of the public," Maurya said.

Infant deaths in Kota hospital: Birla urges State Govt to act sensitively

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday expressed concern over the death of infants at a Government hospital in Rajasthan's Kota district and urged the State Government to act with sensitivity.

Birla, representing the Kota parliamentary constituency, visited JK Lone Maternal and Child Hospital to take stock of the situation where 77 infants have reportedly died in the last 24 days. He also directed the officials to make adequate arrangement to ensure such incidents do not occur in future.

"The untimely death of 77 infants in 24 days in the largest hospital in Kota-Bundi parliamentary constituency is a matter of serious concern. The state government should act with sensitivity so that such incidents do not occur in future," Birla tweeted

in Hindi.

"The untimely death of any infant due to lack of medical equipment and resources is worrying. According to the advice of doctors, the availability of necessary life-saving equipment and resources will be ensured in the next 15 days by public support," he said in another tweet.

During the visit to the hospital, Birla termed the death of newborns tragic and painful while instructing officials to make adequate medical arrangements.

On Saturday, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had held a high-level review meeting on the infants' deaths at the hospital in Kota.

The Chief Minister instructed health department officials to take proper care of newborns in all hospitals in the state and do intensive monitoring.

Arunachal Pradesh Cong slams UP Govt over 'manhandling' of Priyanka

Itanagar: The Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) on Sunday condemned the Uttar Pradesh Government over police 'manhandling' party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in Lucknow.

Congress' State unit general secretary Mina Toko alleged that the "attack on Gandhi" exposed the "autocratic and assaultive nature" of the Yogi Adityanath Government in Uttar Pradesh.

"He is using repression and violence to suppress the voice of women leaders of the country. Violence against women in politics has become rampant under the BJP regime," Toko said in a statement.

A high-voltage drama unfolded in Lucknow on Saturday evening as Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi alleged she was manhandled by police personnel who grabbed her by the throat and pushed her when she resisted their attempts to stop her from visiting the residence of retired IPS officer SR Darapuri, arrested in connection with the recent protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act. The Uttar Pradesh police said the allegations were false. "In UP, women are not only victim of rape and acid attacks but encounter hostility and violence," Toko said.

PTI

Thousands pay last respects to Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman joined a sea of mourners at the National College grounds here in paying their last respects to Pejavar Math head Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji, who passed away on Sunday.

The Finance Minister is a Rajya Sabha member from Karnataka. Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, former Chief minister Siddaramaiah, deputy chief minister Govind Karjol and Karnataka revenue minister R Ashoka also paid their homage.

The body of the 88-year-old seer, who passed away at Udipi earlier in the day, was flown to Bengaluru in a special Indian Air Force helicopter.

The body was then taken to the National College Ground, the same venue where the seer had addressed gatherings on several occasions in the past, in a flower bedecked vehicle.

A stage was set up under the marquee, where the body of the seer, decked in a saffron cloth with golden border, was placed in a Padmasana posture inside a basket like palanquin.

Seers of various prominent Maths in the state, Shivaratri Deshikendra Swamiji of Suttur Math, Charukeerthi Bhattacharya Swamiji of Sravana Belagola Jain Math were among those who paid their last respects. The last rites will be performed at Poorna Prajna Vidyapeetha, which the seer had established. Elaborate security arrangements were made at the National College to manage the crowds.



Devotees and followers carry the mortal remains of Pejavar Mutt seer Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji, who passed away on Sunday morning in Bengaluru

PTI

PM leads nation in paying tributes to Pejavar seer

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A host of leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, condoled the death of Pejavar math head Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji on Sunday, recalling his service to society and hailing him as an epitome of humanity and kindness.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa were among the other prominent leaders who mourned the demise of the 88-year old seer who died in Udipi after a brief illness.

The Prime Minister said Sri Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji would remain in the hearts and minds of lakhs of people for whom he was always a guiding light.

"A powerhouse of service and spirituality, he continuously worked for a more just and compassionate society. Om Shanti," he said in tweets.

Recalling his close association with the seer, Modi said: "I consider myself blessed to have got many opportunities to learn from Sri Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji. Our recent meeting, on the pious day of Guru Purnima was also a memorable one. His impeccable knowledge always stood out. My thoughts are with his countless followers."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi too condoled the death of the seer.

He tweeted, "Im sorry to hear of the passing of Sri Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji of Pejawara Matha, Udipi. My condolences to all his followers around the world. Om Shanti." In his message, Yediyurappa said: "The ancient Indian culture has suffered an irreparable loss in the passing away of Udipi Pejavar Math seer Sri Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji."

His life and his contribution to our society will remain

etched in memory forever. May Lord Sri Krishna give strength to the lakhs of his followers to bear the loss."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah too mourned the demise of Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji.

"Deeply pained to learn about the demise of Sri Sri Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji of the Pejavar mutt, Udipi. He was an epitome of humanity, kindness and knowledge. His selfless contribution towards the welfare of people and society has no parallels," Shah tweeted.

Sharing a photograph of him with the seer on Twitter, Shah said: "Sri Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji was an endless source of positivity. His teachings and thoughts will always continue to guide us. I was fortunate to have received his blessings. His passing away is an irreparable loss to the spiritual world. Condolences to his followers. Om Shanti."

Thorat says loyalty to Congress never wavered

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat on Sunday said there was no need to pay heed to BJP leader Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil's comments that he contemplated joining the saffron party a few years back.

Vikhe Patil himself quit the Congress before the Assembly elections in the

state this year and joined the BJP.

Both he and Thorat hail from Ahmednagar district, and are known to be bitter rivals.

Reacting to the BJP leader's claim, Thorat, who is a minister in the current Maharashtra Government, said, "I never compromised on my principles and commitment towards the Congress. There is no need to

give any importance to his comments."

He also took a swipe at Vikhe Patil's performance when he was leader of opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly from 2014 to 2019.

"The entire state knows what kind of work he did for the growth of the Congress as leader of the Opposition. However, I have always stayed with the Congress

even in difficult times," Thorat said.

"He (Vikhe Patil) is in the opposition now, hence free to comment on any issue without any responsibility," the Congress leader quipped.

Talking to reporters in Shirdi on Saturday, Vikhe Patil said, "Thorat was thinking of joining the BJP some three years ago. What he has got today (a Cabinet post) is by accident.

He could not campaign outside his constituency during the Assembly polls."

Thorat is currently revenue minister in the Shiv Sena-led State Government.

The Shiv Sena forged an alliance with the NCP and Congress to form Government after parting ways with pre-poll ally BJP over the issue of sharing the chief ministerial post.

Maha Cabinet expansion today

□Ajit pawar set to return as Deputy CM □Uddhav to induct 36 new Ministers

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Little over a month after he assumed the office, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will on Monday undertake the first expansion of his Cabinet, an exercise in which he is expected to induct at least 36 new ministers into his team.

While former senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar will in likelihood be sworn in as the deputy chief minister, as many as 35 ministers will be sworn into the office at a swearing-in ceremony to be held on the Vidhan Bhavan premises at 1 pm on Monday.

"Unless there is a last minute change in the plan, 36 ministers, including 26 of the Cabinet rank, will be sworn into office at one go tomorrow," a senior minister in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government said here on Sunday evening.

Of the 36 ministers to be sworn in, 13 ministers each will be from the Shiv Sena and NCP (10 each of Cabinet rank and three ministers of State each from the two parties), while 10 ministers will be from the Congress (8 of Cabinet rank and three ministers of state).

With Monday's expansion, the number of ministers in the Uddhav Thackeray Cabinet will go up to 43, including that of the chief minister.

When he formed the Government on November 28, Uddhav had inducted six MVA ministers – Eknath Shinde, Subhash Desai (both from the Shiv Sena), Jayant Patil, Chhagan Bhujbal (both from the NCP), Balasaheb Thorat and Nitin Raut (both



from the Congress).

Ajit Pawar's induction into the State Cabinet will mark his return to the Maharashtra government in the same post after gap of one month.

It may be recalled that Ajitdada – as Ajit Pawar is known in the state political circles – had resigned as the deputy chief minister in the BJP-led government on November 26, leading to the resignation of then chief minister Devendra Fadnis and subsequent collapse of the government in a brief span of 80 hours.

When he is sworn in as the deputy chief minister in the Uddhav Thackeray Cabinet, Ajitdada will be holding the number two post in the State Cabinet for the fourth time. He was the deputy chief minister between from November 10, 2010 to September 25, 2012, from October 25, 2012 to September 26, 2014 and from November 23 2019 to November 26 2019.

It may be recalled Ajitdada had resigned from the deputy chief minister's post on September 25, 2012, following media reports on the alleged irregularities in the awarding of 38 irrigation con-

tracts worth Rs 20,000 crore in Vidarbha region during 2009. He returned as the deputy chief minister a month later.

Ajitdada's possible induction as the deputy chief minister comes in the wake of a second "clean chit" he received late last week from the State Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) in the much-discussed Rs 70,000 crore irrigation scam.

In an affidavit filed before the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court on December 19, 2019, State Director-General of Police (ACB) Parambir Singh, alluded to Ajit Pawar's role in the case and said:

"No criminal liability is disclosed during the course of inquiry/investigations by the Special Investigation Team". Earlier on November 27 – a day before the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was sworn into office, another ACB official – had filed an affidavit before the Nagpur bench of the high court, giving a "clean chit" to Ajit Pawar.

In Monday's expansion, Uddhav is likely to induct into his Cabinet the following MLAs from the Shiv Sena: Anil Parab, Ravindra Waikar, Sunil Prabhu, Sunil Raut (all

from Mumbai), Uday Samant, Bhaskar Jadhav, Vaibhav Naik, Pratap Saranik (all from Konkan region) Shamburaje Desai, Prakash Amberkar (both from Western Maharashtra), Sanjay Shirsat, Abdul Sattar, Tanaji Sawant (all from Marathwada), Ashish Jaiswal, Sanjay Raimulkar, Bacchu Kadu, Sanjay Rathod (all from Vidarbha), Gulabrao Patil, Dada Bhuse, Suhas Khande (all from north Maharashtra).

From the NCP side, those who will make it to the Uddhav Thackeray Cabinet will include: Ajit Pawar, Dilip Walse-Patil, Hasan Mushrif, Bala saheb Patil, Datta Bharrane (western Maharashtra), Dhananjay Munde, Rajesh Tope, Dr Rajesh Shingane (Marathwada), Nawab Malik (Mumbai), Jitendra Awhad (Thane), Hasan Mushrif, Anil Deshmukh

(Vidarbha) Aditi Tatkare (Konkan region) and Dr Kiran Lahamate (north Maharashtra).

It remains to be seen if both senior Congress leaders and former chief ministers Chavan and Ashok Chavan or one of the two Chavans will be inducted into the State Cabinet in Monday's expansion.

The other Congress MLAs who are expected to find a place in the State Cabinet in the expansion will include: former leader of the Opposition Vijay Wadettiwar (Vidarbha), Amit Deshmukh (Marathwada) Varsha Gaikwad, (Mumbai), Sunil Kedar, Satej Patil, Vishwajit Kadam (both from western Maharashtra) K C Padvi (North Maharashtra) and Sunil Kedar.

Tamil Nadu tops list of States with Good Governance Index but DMK says it is flawed

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Even good news is bad news in Tamil Nadu, a State vertically divided between the AIADMK and the DMK as the two poles of the political spectrum.

So, the recent announcement by the Union Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension that Tamil Nadu has topped the Good Governance Index among 18 big States in the country, a commendable achievement by any standard, not only failed to cheer up the Opposition DMK but even earned the wrath of the Leader of the Opposition MK Stalin who described the ranking flawed.

"This is a feat which has to be appreciated as Tamil Nadu has done reasonably well in some of the crucial parameters while it has averaged in certain sectors," said T Ramakrishnan, author and chronicler of the State's political history. He said this was the first achievement of its kind by Tamil Nadu in recent past.

The rankings in Good Governance Index is determined by the overall performance of the States in ten crucial sectors over a period of time. "This is not an yearly ritual but an ongoing exercise where the achievements and performances are ranked based on development and shortcomings," explained Dr C Murukadas, author and senior professor of economics, Madras University.

According to the union ministry, Tamil Nadu has topped five out of the six parameters which helped it to walk away with the honors. The State leads others in public

infrastructure, judicial and public security, and public health among others. But the State could finish only in the 14th position in crucial areas like commerce and industries.

The ministry zeroed in on Tamil Nadu based on its performance in ten sectors. "Agriculture and allied, commerce and industries, human resources development, public health and public infrastructure and utilities, economic governance, social welfare and development, judicial and public security, environment and citizen centric governance are the areas in which Tamil Nadu scored over others," said Ramakrishnan.

The ministry said that top ranking in judicial and public security was due to the conviction rate and availability of women police personnel and disposal of court cases.

Prof Murukadas, whose assessments on economy is widely regarded as sharp and objective, felt that the governance by Edappadi Palaniswamy was in the right direction and the State has witnessed good progress. "You have to take into account the tenure of former chief minister J Jayalalithaa who facilitated high speed social and economic progress," he said.

But Stalin is not amused by the feat achieved by Tamil Nadu and this has surprised many including some of the DMK leaders. The DMK chief described the GGI awarded to Tamil Nadu as a ploy by the BJP to ensue that the State does not make any progress. "We all know that the BJP has no base in Tamil Nadu and they do not want the State to

prosper. There is also a close relation between the BJP and the AIADMK. Hence one may have to doubt this honor as a strategy by the BJP to prop up the AIADMK Government in the State. A thorough probe should be ordered into the rankings as Tamil Nadu has done well only in two out of the nine parameters," said Stalin in a release.

Prof Murukadas said that top position is arrived on the basis of average overall performance. "Stalin may not be aware of the methodology to arrive at the top position. It is indisputable that in many fields Tamil Nadu during EPS as chief minister has performed notably," he said.

The AAIADMK on its part chose to react cautiously to the feat. "It is a New Year Gift, no doubt," said D Jayakumar, Tamil Nadu minister for fisheries who is also the official spokesman of the Government. He said the top priority of the Government was to make up for the shortcomings if any in the commerce and industries sectors where the State's performance was not as impressive as expected.

NCP in 2019: Pawar's party makes unexpected comeback

Mumbai: It's never over until it is over. This would be the takeaway from year 2019 for the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party.

If anyone thought that a regional party with an aging patriarch and eroding base did not have much of a future in the face of BJP juggernaut, Lok Sabha polls proved them right, but Maharashtra Assembly elections was a different story.

The NCP continued its alliance with the Congress for the Lok Sabha, but both the parties fared badly.

The Pawar-led party only retained its 2014 tally of five seats, four of which came from Maharashtra. The Congress was reduced to a single seat in the state.

As Assembly elections drew near, the NCP was beset by desertions. The party, made up mainly of leaders who rule over individual pocket-boroughs across the sugar-belt of western Maharashtra, saw several of them jumping the ship.

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Date of opening of bid: 04-01-2020 (11:00 Hrs.)
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Man vs Superman

2019 was about the heroism of the regular Indian, who doesn't want to escape reality but has come to terms with it

LOOK BACK 2019 Films have been the bard of our times, recording our nation's story, sweeping the arc of fantastic idealism to nudging realism, customising offerings to the many genres in between. But for years, the mainstream genre of the entertainment media in this country has been about wish fulfilment and the heroism to redefine the state of the nation, the common man losing himself in the maze of the establishment. In that sense, 2019 will be a milestone year when man became superman. When the star was deconstructed and shorn of mystery, and judged purely on the worth of talent. The successful run of Ayushmann Khurrana showed how a regular Indian man, with no remarkable looks or capability, could hold his own and seek his own happiness on his terms no matter what the societal gaze. The common man shed his inhibitions and stood up to be counted, his various avatars touching the chord of the masses like never before and giving them reason to hope simply because there was no dream. But there was a reality that could be crafted for one's own ambitions. Be it as the crooked schemer in *Andhadhun* or the jobless young man who turned phone sex operator, a much derided profession but one which gave him dignity of sustenance, Khurrana helped us readjust to a new world. A little balding didn't matter, nor a little impotence. Even enough to take on a system where honesty is seen as casualty (*Article 15*). Frailty doesn't need to depend then on borrowed security but has learnt to live with it, even overcome it. Films have also been about the reclamation of identities, be it of the minorities or women. Murad of *Gully Boy* is not rebellious or nihilistic or ghettoised, but in a precursor to tricolour-wielding Muslim protesters in the country, reclaims his space legitimately through heartfelt protest poetry about a classist social order. And he doesn't want to forget where he comes from. In the same vein, two women battle stigmas of all kinds by becoming champion shooters in *Saand Ki Aankh*. Consider the women of *Mission Mangal*, based on India's Mars odyssey, who lent an air of everydayness to space age dreams, making them gettable. Both seize destiny with their hands rather than reconciling themselves. Perhaps the macho status quo of *Kabir Singh* reasserted itself with greater vigour faced with such counter currents, just like the toxic masculinity that refuses to give up, so used it is to its privileged existence. The sub-servience here is commanded through fear.

The politics of society and power games played out in equal measure. The majoritarian discourse saw pop nationalism peddled through *Uri: The Surgical Strike*, *Kesari* and even *Manikamika: The Queen of Jhansi*. The propaganda of anti-Congressism was manifested through the *The Accidental Prime Minister* or *The Tashkent Files*. Propaganda has always been couched in films as a tacit acknowledgment of the establishment of the day. The parallel film movement once grew out of this subversion of free expression with politically correct messaging. And while the lines were blurring for the sake of cinema as art for art's sake, propagandist cinema is returning with brute force, even advertising the Government's schemes. Whether this cooption is a desperate bid to rein in a "liberal, intellectual, free-thinking" fraternity, many of whom have just about begun to make their political preferences known and are standing up for their beliefs, is not too clear yet. But for the first time, the politics of polarisation is trying to make its way into the industry with a steroid-spree on historicals, attempting a restorative lesson on Hindu warriors. Had these been done dispassionately, nobody would have a problem with it but when it is agenda-driven and confines itself to denouncing Mughal history, then it is not art.

If Bollywood has become a soft diplomacy tool, it is because of its all-pervasive appeal and inclusive mantras. And it has the money power to decide where it wants to go, use its power for firing hope and idealism as it did before or proclaim its cosiness with powers that be through groupies, courtesy calls and brand ambassadorships. Artists should not genuflect before authority. And in an India which needs sanity, it is time its popular icons stop hyperventilating on their loved-up private lives and speak a little for the sake of their many fans. The total dismissal of dissent has meant that it has shifted wholeheartedly to the flat digital plane, where the fears of a dystopia are real in series like *Leila* and *Ghoul*. Or where humour has mutated to trenchant satire and comics. But the digital explosion is good news, where content is finding newer streams of expression. Except that it is still a boutique enterprise, the kind that creative freedom has become.

Deal with anger

CBSE wants schools to introduce anger-free zones. This is welcome but education should be a priority



The Central Board of School Education's (CBSE) latest directive to schools is an intriguing one. It has asked schools to become anger-free zones. To this end, educators and school administrators have been asked to curb displays of anger inside school premises. The aim, board officials say, is to eliminate emotions such as "disrespect", "fear", "hurt" and "humiliation", which are the by-products of anger, among students. Maybe someone at the CBSE is a *Star Wars* fan and took the words of the Jedi sage Yoda,

who in a movie says, "Fear is the path to the dark. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering." As such, the CBSE's move is welcome for schools but it would be prudent to remember that one cannot curtail anger from a child's life completely. There will still be anger inside many homes. Other sources of anger, some coming from the competitive spirit on the playground, will continue to linger on. And tackling anger is not just something that should be done inside the school premises but everywhere.

As such, this is a good initiative. A cursory glance on social media will show that there is a lot of pent-up rage among India's youth. A lot of this has come about, thanks to a culture of hate that modern society has bred. Tackling this problem is an urgent need but schools should also invest in emotional counselling of children to tackle these problems. They can also possibly look at creating spaces and activities where children and even administrators can channelise their anger towards more productive causes such as sports or even video games. Anger is not just a problem among children but it is there among teachers and the communities surrounding schools. Also, in the culture of schools, which infects children. The CBSE must not forget that the primary purpose of schools is to educate children and educate them well. Anger management will make for a more rounded education. At the end of the day, schools and administrators will be judged by results, not necessarily only academic.

opinion 08

In pursuit of gender equality

Without policy and legislative changes along with the refusal to alter conventional mindsets, India's female population is unlikely to emerge from the morass of poor economic performance



ANUPMA MEHTA

As another year draws to a close, it is pertinent to ruminate Janus-like, once again, over past and future gender parity trends both in India and abroad. And the picture is not a pleasant one. In fact, the year is ending on a grim note for women all over the world, with the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 predicting that as things stand currently, overall, gender parity will not be attained for another 99.5 years. The report, which is being prepared by the World Economic Forum (WEF) since the last 14 years, examines gender parity in 153 nations on the basis of four dimensions: Economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.

Despite its gloomy forecast, this year's report offers a mixed bag. While flagging greater political participation of women across countries, it asserts that gender parity has, in fact, been achieved in 40 of the 153 countries it surveyed. And the best performers, as usual, are the Scandinavian countries, with Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden leading the pack. Nicaragua, New Zealand, Ireland, Spain, Rwanda and Germany followed close behind to line up the top 10. As many as 101 countries succeeded in improving their scores over the 2019 rankings, even as nations like Albania, Ethiopia, Mali and Mexico rose above their economic challenges to grant consistent greater economic empowerment to their women.

But where does India figure in this count? In the bottom 50, coming in at rank 108 out of 153. This poor showing by an ostensibly rapidly growing economy is largely the result of a gender pay gap emerging from Indian women's decision to stay out of the workforce or drop out of it due to various factors. Pointing out that India ranked lower on all the four segments being assessed, the WEF highlighted the need for India to "make improvements across the board" — from women's participation to getting more women into senior and professional roles." The report goes on to say that the economic gender gap runs particularly deep in our country and has gotten significantly wider since 2006, with the country also being the only one among the 153 countries studied where the economic gender gap is larger than the political gender gap.

This curious decline in women's economic participation despite a rise in their education levels has also been documented by the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), a nationally representative multi-topic panel survey of 41,554 households, conducted in two waves in 2004-05 and 2011-12 by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in collabora-



tion with the University of Maryland. The IHDS not only covered a wide range of topics concerning health, education, employment, economic status, marriage and fertility but also canvassed an exclusive module administered to 33,510 ever-married women aged 15-49 years during the survey. According to IHDS data, many nations have experienced a U-shaped relationship between economic development, growth and women's workforce participation. However, in India, unlike other South Asian countries, women have failed to rise above the bottom of the U-curve for several decades, irrespective of consistent economic growth, perhaps because the country's formal economy has grown without offering any specific or substantial opportunities to women through feminisation of the labour force.

According to IHDS, women's Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) fell alarmingly from 31.12 per cent in 2005 to 24.77 per cent in 2012. The IHDS findings have also been endorsed by the 68th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation (2011-12), which, in turn, records a corresponding fall in the female LFPR, from 28.7 per cent to 22.5

per cent since the previous NSSO survey. Concomitantly, the WEF report also lowered India's gender ranking for economic opportunities from 139 in 2017 to 142 in 2018.

Another observation peculiar to India is the paradox of a decreasing Child Sex Ratio (CSR) or the ratio of girls to boys, which in 2016 was reportedly at the lowest level since 1951, notwithstanding progressively higher educational attainment among girls. Thus, even though more parents across States and communities have started sending their daughters to school and college, they still express a preference for sons for a variety of reasons, ranging from the prevalence of dowry, the burden of ensuring safety of girls and the support provided by sons in old age. As Carol Vlassof, Professor at the University of Ottawa and long-time researcher on gender issues in India, avers, "The bias against daughters can end only if women's education is accompanied by social and economic empowerment."

Even worse is India's gender-based performance in the domain of health and survival. The WEF report ranks the country third lowest for this

parameter, just above Armenia and China, categorising it as the "least improved country" on this sub-index over the past decade. This result comes as no surprise, considering the fact that by and large, Indian women have little autonomy in decision-making even in matters of personal health.

Here, too, the IHDS report in 2005, which had surveyed over 74 per cent of the women, stated that they needed permission just to visit a health centre, let alone exercise control over their bodies and health-related issues. And this figure had gone up to 80 per cent when IHDS revisited its sample households in 2012.

Interestingly, among the women reporting the lack of agency in health matters, 80 per cent affirmed that they had to seek permission from their husbands, 79.89 per cent from a senior family member and even more significantly, 79.94 per cent revealed that they had to consult a senior female family member for such permission. The implication inherent in this finding — that women in dominant family roles tend to exercise stringent control over their less assertive female counterparts

in the family — also has serious implications for female sorority and mutual support.

It is obvious that without policy and legislative changes and in view of persistent refusal to alter conventional mindsets that perpetually relegate women to household and care duties, India's female population is unlikely to emerge from the morass of poor economic performance, coupled with low health outcomes and unequal access to opportunities.

Coming back to the 2020 Gender Gap Report, India would do well to heed the advice of the WEF Founder and Executive Chairman, Klaus Schwab that "only countries that are able to harness all their available talent, (both male and female), will succeed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Proactive measures that support gender parity and social inclusion and address historical imbalances are, therefore, essential for the health of the global economy as well as for the good of society as a whole." Is India listening? Or does it want to retain its dismal position on the Gender Index next year, too?

(The writer is Consultant Editor at the National Council of Applied Economic Research. Views expressed are personal)

SOUNDBITE

Now, the basic sentiment is to save the Constitution of this country...To do this, there is a great need for us to connect with the youth.



Rajasthan DY CM — Sachin Pilot

Work-wise this year has been good. 2020 looks very exciting, starting with *Chhalaang* with Hansal (Mehta) sir. Can't wait for everyone to watch these exciting films.



Actor — Rajkumar Rao

If she (Nikhat Zareen) wants others to respect her, then she should first respect others. I don't like people with such nature. Just prove your point inside the ring, not outside.



Legendary boxer — MC Mary Kom

Today, there are such powers in the Government with whom we had a historical clash. We are fighting an ideology against which we fought during the freedom struggle.



Congress leader — Priyanka Gandhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tribute to Vajpayee

Sir — Kudos to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Government for dedicating two public welfare and utility schemes to Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary. The projects — one about groundwater management and the other on easing transportation, enhancing tourism and national security — are milestones in our nation's progress. The Atal Bhujal Yojana will help in supplying water to every household. The Prime Minister also named the Rohtang passageway as the Atal Tunnel. The decision to construct a strategic tunnel below the Rohtang Pass was taken in June 2000 when Vajpayee was the Prime Minister.

M Pradyu
Kannur

Taking for granted

Sir — The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) holds the mirror to today's India. The Act goes against the principle of "equality" as affirmed in the Constitution. Phrases such as "reasonable" and "intelligible differentia" cannot

rationalise a blatantly discriminatory law that seeks to shake the foundation of the country. People of all castes and communities have lived here for generations here. Why are our leaders trying to divide India on

the basis of religion? The BJP is trying to divide the country on communal grounds, causing confusion in the minds of people.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

Politicising matters

Sir — This refers to the unnecessary criticism by Opposition parties on Army Chief General Bipin



gising international policies and establishing linkage between external finance and climate action. Instead, it degenerated into an unproductive wrangle over establishing a market system to trade in carbon credits earned through reductions in emissions, with some nations eager to cash in on poorly audited emissions savings from the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol that preceded the Paris pact. That the "developed" world wasted yet another opportunity to answer the questions that have been raised over the UNFCCC's processes and chose to show its back to what is arguably the most important issue facing humanity is condemnable.

Shreyans Jain
Delhi

Rawat's statement, wherein he questioned the violence in university campuses during protests. There is no politics in his statement, which is based on practical aspects. At times, the Army has to be called to control escalated situations. The Army Chief, like all other citizens, is pained due to large-scale damage incurred during incidents of violence.

SC Agrawal
Delhi

Declining fortunes

Sir — The BJP's loss in the just-concluded Assembly elections in Jharkhand indicates that the Modi wave is limited to the General Election. When it comes to State affairs, the common man prefers bread and butter issues over others like the abrogation of Article 370 and the Ram temple. The party must not take its thumping mandate in the Lok Sabha elections for granted. Rather, it must adopt a federal approach to social development.

Srishti
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Way forward for FMCG

Changing market dynamics bring with it an array of products that compete for customer loyalty and attention. Let's look at market trends for 2020



AMRINDER SINGH

India's Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector has seen remarkable transformation over the last two decades. This was facilitated by rising income levels, urbanisation and a change in consumer behaviour. In general, industry sentiment has been positive and optimistic, post demonetisation and the roll out of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). Rural consumption has superseded industry expectation with modern retail estimated to grow three times in the next five years. A significant change in lifestyle choices as well as substantial increase in disposable income has fuelled this growth. Nonetheless, changing market dynamics bring with it an array of products that compete for customer loyalty and call for attention. Here is a look at the trends for the FMCG market:

Digitisation: Increase penetration of smartphones and internet will lead to people, especially in the rural areas, gaining easy access to daily needs via e-commerce websites. Availability of easy mobile payment options has led to an increase in the number of orders from Tier-II and Tier-III cities, which enables people to get timely delivery of goods at their doorstep.

Multiple channels of trade: This helps users make purchases through social media platforms on which they spend a lot of time like Facebook, Youtube and Instagram. This has led to people experiencing an interactive form of shopping experience. Customers get the best of both, entertainment and shopping. Other than traditional portals like Flipkart and Amazon, supermarket apps like Grofers and Big Basket, too, have become popular.

D2C model: This is a popular business model that allows buyers to get goods directly from the seller/manufacturers, eliminating the need of any middlemen. Several e-commerce websites have been set for this purpose. Buyers save money as well as time.

Brand community: Users these days can interact with other people, who have bought the same product and talk at length and seek reviews about them. A lot of brands are devising marketing strategies to build brand community, where they target people who are interested in their products and have similar social, political and cultural factors. This makes interaction a bit more personal than is the case with customer care representatives.

Foreign brands: International brands have left no stone unturned to enter the Indian market for the demand their products have generated. This has forced local as well as domestic manufacturers to up their game and provide cheaper alternatives while not compromising on quality to offer the same sense of pride that a foreign product provides.

Consumer behaviour: This is something that cannot be cast in a permanent pattern. However, there are a few patterns that have been present for a long time, diverting our attention to the ways consumers spend their money. After analysing past and present data, one will come across trends of consumer behaviour, which will be prevalent throughout 2020. One of them is consumers buying family packs and combo offers as it saves them an extra trip to the grocery store. Other common instances of consumer behaviour are: High demand of ready-to-eat snacks, wellness products, mostly organic and premium quality ones. In order to keep up with these trends, firms must be pro-active in taking steps that can ensure brand-building and longevity in the market.

Build strategy around consumer preference: It is important to devise brand strategy around consumer preference as today's buyers are very informed and patient when it comes to product decision-making. Users these days check the ingredients of the product, its carbon footprint and health benefits, too.

Attractive merchandising: This is important when it comes to the sale and purchase of products. In this highly visual world, consumers purchase products that catches their eye. And if they like it, they will go for it again. So, FMCG companies must make sure that the packaging on display is impeccable.

Optimise marketing efforts: A digital strategy is needed to target customers, who have performed a search for products offered by the brand. With so much data available, it is imperative to hire a team to analyse current market demand for products and then generate authentic leads to convert them into sales.

Market intelligence and consumer insights: Any brand or company cannot stay in the market for long if it has not done a thorough research. A company, which is aware of the prevalent pattern, will mostly make decision to its benefit than otherwise. This will save them a lot of money as they will be able to get the right number of products out in the market for direct consumption, especially if the shelf-life of their products is not long. Organising consumer insights into data points helps companies predict the future consumer pattern and soar above their competitors.

(The writer is director of a food company)

LEADERS EMERGE FROM CROWDS BUT THEY ARE NOT THOSE WHO LEAD PEOPLE IN INAPPROPRIATE DIRECTIONS.

—ARMY CHIEF
GENERAL BIPIN RAWAT

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



IT'S NOT THE BUSINESS OF THE ARMY TO TELL POLITICIANS WHAT WE SHOULD DO, JUST AS IT'S NOT OUR BUSINESS TO TELL YOU HOW TO FIGHT A WAR.

—CONGRESS LEADER
P CHIDAMBARAM

Blueprint for national security

With immediate neighbours possessing significant capabilities and militaries that are modernising rapidly, India needs to beef up its national security apparatus



ANIL GUPTA

From election to election, year to year, we Indians have got used to living with hopes for the better. Every new year begins with a lot of expectations but usually ends in dismay. However, of late, there has been a change in this trend. We have a Government in place, which not only believes in flagging issues of national importance but also walks the talk by attempting a closure of issues, no matter how controversial. It doesn't want to "sleep over the problem." Another year is on the horizon and people expect changes that would not only make their lives better but take our nation to greater heights so that it can occupy its just place among the comity of nations. A secure India, both at the borders and in the hinterland, is the desire of many Indians because only a safe and secure nation can concentrate on development that is needed to make a quality difference.

India has embarked on the path of becoming a superpower. This is why it needs to tread the path of strategic alliances carefully, keeping in mind the nation's interests. We have succeeded in unifying the world to fight the menace of global terrorism but are yet to see a world that is free of it. To my mind, the fight against terrorism must continue in 2020, both at home and abroad. For us to be taken seriously worldwide, we need to establish India as a military power from a military force. We need to prepare ourselves to meet the twin threats emanating from China and Pakistan, through capability and capacity-building. Terror threat in our immediate neighbourhood as also back home must continue to be our main focus area in the immediate future.

In order to negate Pakistan's nuclear blackmail, there is a need to regain the conventional edge over its armed forces through modernisation of our own. Development *versus* security is a dilemma faced by every developing nation but the ones, which have not compromised on security, have emerged stronger in the given time space. The success story of modernisation of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its unparalleled economic growth is a classic example. We need to spend at least 2.5 to three per cent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) consecutively for a decade to modernise our armed forces.

Without a strong military, no nation can claim to be a formidable power. The existing deficiencies and future requirements to cater to newer conventional and non-conventional threats need to be beefed up. Procurement procedures need to be made efficient and accountable. We also have to be prepared to meet the challenges from the neighbourhood. Any instability in the neighbourhood will effect India as well. We need to develop capability for regional intervention as well as for regional and maritime projection. India, being an emerging power, needs to cater to multiple contingencies and, hence, have multiple options. Adequate deterrence capabilities across all spectrums — from sub-conventional to nuclear — will make us a perfect military power.

Pakistan, with its failing economy and China being cautious of its international image, will increasingly resort to hybrid warfare, which emphasises on tactical level and grey-zone conflicts and incorporates a long-term strategic

“ TO STAKE OUR CLAIM AS A FORMIDABLE POWER, WE HAVE TO ENSURE THAT WE HAVE ENOUGH MEANS MILITARILY AND, OTHERWISE, TO ENSURE PROTECTION OF OUR VITAL NATIONAL INTERESTS AND SECURITY OBJECTIVES. THERE IS A NEED TO IDENTIFY WEAKNESSES AND GAPS IN OUR SECURITY STRUCTURE AND TAKE MEASURES TO PLUG THEM ”



dimension in international disputes. Such type of operations occasionally pass the threshold of war. Response to this type of a warfare is not purely military but collective, including political and economic. Thus, there is a need to be prepared across different spectrums and spheres to meet growing challenges. Hybrid warfare and grey-zone conflicts are usually considered to be synonymous but they are not. On the one hand, India has to ward off China's "unrestricted warfare" threat, particularly in the North-east and in our neighbourhood. On the other hand, we face hybrid threat based on unconventional means and employment of non-state actors, particularly in our northern and western borders.

While the former closely approximates the grey-zone conflict with strategic intent, the latter resembles the hybrid warfare based on tactical and operational level acts, basically aimed at fragmenting our country. Thus, in 2020, the Government must concentrate on formulating protocols and procedures to meet the challenges posed by these twin threats.

A beginning has been made with the much-anticipated appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). Not only the selection but even the concept of CDS is nascent and would need time to stabilise. "Purplisation" of the Indian armed forces would not be that easy. The Government needs to be complimented for taking the bold decision and setting the process in motion. The much-needed reforms in the Defence Ministry to curb the widening gulf between the bureaucrat-led Ministry and the armed forces, whose professional advice is generally overruled by generalist bureaucrats, is the next bold step the Government needs to take.

Perfect harmony and professional respect will be needed between the three service heads and the CDS for the idea of "first among the equals" to succeed. Also, a clear line will have to be drawn between the charters of CDS and the National Security Advisor (NSA). The idea to succeed would need unbridled support from the political hierarchy, which so far needs to be more inclined towards the bureaucracy.

To stake our claim as a formidable power, we have to ensure that we have enough means militarily, and otherwise, to ensure protection of our vital national interests and security objectives. There is a need to identify weaknesses and gaps in our security structure and take measures to plug them. For this, the need is to formulate a national security doctrine, which is long overdue. In the absence of a doctrine, various organs of the Government and other stakeholders are unable to prepare a coordinated response to meet threats and challenges to our national security. From the doctrine will flow the national security strategy, which will enable different stakeholders in the Government to carry out an "ends *versus* means" analysis and prepare the perspective plans for their respective Ministries. 2020 is the year when the much-awaited national security doctrine may see the light of the day.

Internal security situation in the country appears to be moving towards normalcy. Certain peripheral militant groups are trying to raise their ugly heads to undermine peace, tranquillity and communal harmony. Popular Front of India (PFI) is developing into a potent threat and its political wing, Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), has a significant following in the Southern States and is spreading its

wings in the Eastern States, too. Growing links between the PFI and various illegal immigrant organisations is another cause of concern. PFI also has a big hand in growing radicalisation in South India.

As far as Jammu & Kashmir is concerned, Pakistan will continue to be an irritant till it is forced to give up the policy of State-sponsored terrorism. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, while addressing the passing out parade of Gentlemen Cadets at Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, comprehensively summed up the deep State of Pakistan, "Besides following terrorism as State policy, several non-State actors have become much powerful in that country and State actors have been reduced to mere puppets."

While Pakistan would continue to foment trouble, the Over Ground Workers (OGW) network, which is deep-rooted in the State, will have to be brought under control in order to root terrorism/militancy. The entire ecosystem in Kashmir is very badly subverted. OGWs are a major part of this system but very difficult to identify and segregate. They have infiltrated every organ of the State. Most of them have a dual face. They are hardcore nationalists when in a gathering that demands so, and are die-hard sympathisers of *jihadis* when away from that environment. They are the masters of the art of "biting the hand that feeds them." The present relative calm prevailing in Kashmir cannot be taken at its face value. A crackdown on the OGWs in 2020 is mandatory for lasting peace, the ultimate aim, for which Article 370 has been abrogated.

(The author is a Jammu-based veteran, political commentator, political analyst, security and strategic analyst)

India must get to the rightful place

While the COP25 climate talks ended in a deadlock, all is not lost. India must ensure that during the next COP, it is hailed as a nation that has led by example



KOTA SRIRAJ

The just-concluded 25th UN conference on climate change held in Madrid was a massive climate congregation comprising 25,000 participants from across the world, including Greta Thunberg, the teenage Swedish activist. Although unrest caused the original venue, Santiago, Chile, to be changed to Madrid at the last minute, the fervor remained unchanged in the form of all-night climate debates between delegates and Ministers. In the opening address, UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, underlined the need to have an environmental course correction and stressed on the importance of increased ambition and commitment towards nature conservation.

Outcomes: A positive mood was set in motion with "ambition", "action" and "commitment" being highlighted as the key driving forces for this year's COP. The hashtag #TimeforAction was the official tag for the conference with stress being laid on "climate ambition alliance" to accelerate progress

towards the Paris goals. But this enthusiasm fizzled out as the conference struggled to make progress on almost all fronts.

The COP25 was meant to finalise the rule book for the Paris Agreement and specific policies were to be discussed to mitigate loss and damage. It deals with unavoidable and irreversible impacts of climate change, where mitigation has failed, and adaptation is not possible. But none of them could materialise. However, COP25 sent a strong message to the participants to be well prepared as 2020 would be most critical — it marks the deadline for the carbon emission reduction targets set by participating nations. It also marks the deadline for the \$100 billion in finance to be provided to the developing countries, a commitment made by the developed countries in Paris.

Barring the tepid proceedings of COP25, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) proved to be an exception. Participating Governments adopted a new five-year GAP that progressively builds upon the first one and enables gender-just climate solutions. The GAP not only aims to provide gender equality in the UNFCCC processes but also takes into account human rights and challenges faced by indigenous people in ensuring climate justice and community protection.

The conference also saw vociferous representation and arguments by nations belong-

ing to the Like Minded Developing Countries Group (LMDC), including India, in favour of an expedited climate finance corpus that could be set up by the developed nations to help the developing ones build capacity and meet climate commitments. India also raised the important issue at COP25 of whether the developed nations were actually doing enough to cut down emissions.

A lost opportunity: The dismay due to lack of meaningful progress at the COP25 was writ large. It was summed by Guterres when he expressed his personal disappointment on the outcome of COP25. Even though the conference overshot its scheduled end by over 44 hours, this year's COP was conspicuous for its inability to reach consensus in many important areas, thanks to charged up debates that yielded no concrete decisions. As a result, pertinent matters got pushed into the next year's conference. The discussions getting bogged down in technical debates concerning carbon market mechanisms and other issues ensured that swift conference progress became a casualty.

Moreover, year after year, what has been seen is a triangular disconnect between the UNFCCC procedures, the aspirations of the participants and the demands of the environmental protests world over. This year's COP was no different. The UNEP Emissions Gap Report released on the sidelines of the COP

admitted the widening chasm between set goals and required action. According to the UNEP report, even if Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are met, the emissions in 2030 will still be 38 per cent higher than what is required to meet that target. Unless the UN procedures become agile and cater to the rising expectations of the global community, there's a risk that subsequent climate conferences, too, may end up in a limbo. This can have a severe impact on the credibility of the annual COP event.

Takeaways for India: The COP25 may not have ended in taking remarkable decisions but the outcomes brought clarity to bring global green house gas emissions down to 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030. This was accompanied by the urgent need to limit rising global temperatures to 1.5°C. These measures will be instrumental in achieving global carbon neutrality by 2050. For India, it is critical to integrate these goals and ensure concrete progress in environmental conservation. This is possible only through a participative civil society led by a strong and committed Government.

The adoption of GAP is crucial for India, where gender-related complexities are aplenty in all spheres, including the fight against climate change. For example, the women population in the country stands at 48 per cent whereas their representation in the legisla-

ture is only 12 per cent. This watered-down representation translates into an insipid role of women in fighting climate action, justice and conservation. This skewed imbalance has become the unfortunate norm and must be challenged. The integration of GAP into Government policies can do just that and lead to equal representation of women.

During the adoption of GAP at COP25, it was specifically highlighted that proper and successful implementation by participating nations will ensure overall global success of the initiative. To make this a reality and derive equal participation of women in climate initiatives, the Government of India must focus on capacity-building and enhance implementation of gender responsive climate action at all levels in the form of gender responsive technology solutions. These measures will help secure the rightful place of women and ensure gender equality. If the Government is able to expedite GAP implementation by executing relevant policies and engaging the civil society adequately, India can proudly show the progress it has made at the next COP26 in Glasgow, the UK.

During the course of the conference, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) charged India, Brazil and China for blocking ambitious outcomes in Article 6 discussions pertaining to carbon markets. This negative comment on our nation was both

embarrassing and avoidable. But parallelly, India, along with China, the US and the EU, accounted for almost 60 per cent of the carbon dioxide emissions in 2017. So, it is essential for India to get its act together and bring down the fossil fuel combustion levels drastically by the end of 2020 so that enough progress is visible. The fast-tracking of renewable power generation and creation of additional carbon sink for CO2 can help achieve that.

Looking ahead: A lot of expectations are now attached with COP26. Chief concern remains the loss and damage, carbon markets, transparency and, crucially, the rulebook for the Paris Agreement. Most importantly, member nations will have to boost their carbon cuts if the world is to achieve the target of limiting of global temperatures to under 1.5°C. Similarly, the developed nations will have to show intent by achieving NDCs and also extending a helping hand to the developing nations in achieving their goals as well as by providing the promised \$100 billion climate finance support. Of late, COP events have become sites of protests, loophole negotiations and blame-games. This has to stop. The world must sit down as a family and discuss the imminent common threat of climate change and take sincere action.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

'India may become 4th-largest economy in 2026'

India also set to reach a GDP of \$5 trillion by 2026, two years later than Govt's target: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is expected to overtake Germany to become fourth-largest economy in 2026 and Japan to become third largest in 2034, according to a recent report by the UK-based Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR).

It further said India is also set to reach a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$5 trillion by 2026, 2 years later than the Government's target.

"India has decisively overtaken both France and the UK to become the world's fifth-largest economy in 2019. It is expected to overtake Germany to become fourth largest in 2026 and Japan to become the third largest in 2034," the report, titled 'World Economic League Table 2020', said.

Japan, Germany and India will battle for third position over the next 15 years, according to the CEBR.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's target of taking the economy to \$5 trillion by 2024, it said, "India is also set to reach a GDP of \$5 trillion by 2026 — 2 years later than the current government target."

But, dark clouds gathering all over the economy are leading many to question the maintainability of the target.

Recently, former Reserve Bank governor C Rangarajan, said that at the current growth rate, reaching the \$5-trillion GDP target by 2024-25 is "simply out of question".

Noting that Indian data revisions mean that 2019 was



the year when the country's economy finally overtook the UK and France, the report said, "But, slow growth during

the year has increased pressure for more radical economic reforms."

Despite the rapid ascent of

countries such as India and Indonesia, it is striking how little an impact this will have on the US and China's dominant

roles in the global economy, said Pablo Shah, senior economist at Cebtr.

India, which till recently was hailed as the world's fastest-growing major economy, has seen growth rate decline to a six-year low of 4.5 per cent in the September quarter of 2019-20.

This has largely been attributed to the slowdown in investment that has now broadened into consumption, driven by financial stress among rural households and weak job creation.

The World Economic League Table is an annual calculation by Cebtr jointly published by Cebtr and Global Construction Perspectives. The base data for 2019 is taken from the IMF World Economic Outlook.

Indian economy likely to rebound in 2020, says CII

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy is expected to rebound in 2020 on the back of measures taken by the government and the RBI coupled with easing of global trade tensions, industry body CII said on Sunday.

The chamber also suggested a flexible fiscal policy that will set a central government's target for the deficit in the range of around 0.5 to 0.75 per cent, and said it is likely to have a significant multiplier effect on the economy.

It said that as we are set to enter the new year, there are nascent signs that the economy is on a better footing than what it was in the year gone by. "With the proactive measures taken by the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), industry believes that the slowdown will be overcome, and a gradual recovery will soon be in place."

"Nascent signs of recovery are noted in the form of improved PMIs (Purchasing Managers' Index) of manufacturing and services, jump in passenger air traffic, sharp moderation in the decline in sales of passenger cars, among others," said CII President Vikram Kirloskar.

He added that though the economy may continue to see a subdued GDP print in the third quarter as well, the quarters thereafter are likely to see a rebound.

According to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), with the initial difficulties associated with the goods and services tax (GST) and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) getting gradually ironed out, the industry is hopeful of substantial benefits for the economy. It said that while 2019 will be remembered as one where the systemic clean-up of the financial sector picked up pace, which might have resulted in "short-term pain", this

tidying up will have extensive positive ramifications for the economy in the short-to-medium term.

"On balance, all these factors will have a significant bearing on growth in the next fiscal. Add to this, the easing of global trade tensions along with lagged impact of monetary easing coupled with improved transmission, and we are in for a gradual recovery getting firmly entrenched by the next fiscal," Kirloskar said.

CII believes that with the sharp moderation in growth, the time has come to adopt an expansionary fiscal policy.

"Just like our medium-term inflation target range, we can have a flexible fiscal policy target which will set a central target for the fiscal deficit with a range of around 0.5 to 0.75 per cent. The additional availability of funds may be spent on key infrastructure projects which can be implemented quickly. This is likely to have a significant multiplier effect on the economy," said CII President-Designate Uday Kotak.

In the subsequent years, there can be a glide path to converge to the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management trajectory over a 2-3-year time frame, he added.

Besides, the chamber suggested that in order to increase the tax base and ensure higher compliance, it is necessary to simplify and reduce the number of GST rates and increase its coverage.

Once it is converged, the practice of reviewing rates at every meeting of the GST Council must be discontinued. Similarly, a rational structure of customs duty needs to be in place. The principle of higher customs duty on final products with lower duty on intermediate goods and the lowest on raw materials needs to be followed, without exception, said CII.

China to issue GDP figures under new mechanism from 2020

PTI ■ BEIJING

China will revise its historical regional GDP data under a unified accounting mechanism from early next year, the National Bureau of Statistics said, amidst the continued slowdown of the world's second largest economy.

The Chinese economy grew at an annual pace of 6.0 per cent in the July-September quarter, the slowest growth since 1992. The slowdown is exasperated by the ongoing trade war between the US and China. In November this year, China revised its 2018 GDP, saying the economy was 2.1 per cent bigger than earlier estimated, revising the gross domestic product (GDP) for 2018 to 91.93 trillion yuan (\$13.1 trillion) from \$12.8 trillion.

A new GDP data under a unified accounting mechanism to be introduced early next year, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted the National Bureau of Statistic (NBS) as reporting on Friday.

The new mechanism will unify the standards and procedures for calculating national and local GDP numbers which had been calculated



under different accounting methods adopted by local and national statistics authorities since 1985, the bureau said.

The reform is expected to close the current discrepancy between national and regional figures, improving data quality while enhancing the credibility of the government statistics, it said.

To ensure data comparability, the country will also revise historical local GDP figures and publish them in 2020, the bureau said.

As the economic activities of some government institutions are only reflected in the national GDP, the combined

regional number will be slightly lower than the national amount, it said.

China and the US have been locked in a longstanding trade war that has threatened to roll the global economy.

The US, the world's biggest economy, has imposed tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese goods, having accused the country of unfair trade practices. Beijing hit back with duties on \$110 billion of US goods, blaming the US for starting "the largest trade war in economic history".

The IMF has warned that a full-blown trade war would weaken the global economy.

Airtel raises minimum recharge for prepaid users

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Sunday hiked its mandatory minimum recharge for pre-paid customers to ₹45 from ₹23. "...It will be mandatory to recharge with a voucher of ₹45 or above, every 28 days to avail services," the company said in a public notice. The new minimum recharge plan will come into effect from Sunday. The announcement pertained to prepaid subscribers of Bharti Airtel and Bharti Hexacom in all service areas, it added.

"In case of non recharge with a voucher of ₹45 or above at the end of tariff validity period, Airtel reserves the right to provide the plan benefits in a curtailed manner at its own discretion during the grace period of up to 15 days.

"In case of non recharge with voucher of ₹45 of above, all services will be suspended post the grace period," the company said.

Amid a turbulence in the debt laden sector, Bharti Airtel chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal had recently said a combination of rock-bottom tariffs and high consumption is killing the telecom industry and sector regu-



lator Trai needs to urgently intervene to strike a balance between the needs for protecting investments and consumer interest.

"We are unnecessarily killing this industry in a manner and way that is not conducive for our industry, and that's why we need Trai intervention," Mittal had said.

The comments of the Airtel chief had come just days after the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) initiated talks to prescribe floor price for call and data, and also deferred by one year the scrapping of the charge paid by mobile phone users for calls made to rival networks.

The two moves came as a big boost to old operators like Airtel and Vodafone Idea that are staring at a liability of thousands of crores in unpaid past statutory dues following a

Supreme Court ruling.

Through their association, the operators had been pitching to policy makers for fixing a floor rate for calls and data.

The telecom call and data rates are at present under forbearance or not regulated.

But, Trai has now released a consultation paper to fix minimum or floor rates for mobile phone calls and data — a move that will effectively end the regime of free calling and dirt cheap data.

The outcome is likely to lead to further hike in mobile call and data cost as the industry wants average revenue per user to reach ₹300 per month from about ₹125 at present over a period of two years — better revenue realisation per user will offer a much-needed breather to the stressed telecom industry where debt levels have soared to ₹7.8 lakh crore.

MSMEs seek bigger slice of public procurement pie

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking a bigger slice of public procurement pie, the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector has proposed small-ticket tenders so that they could participate in the bidding.

In its Budget suggestions, Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME) has said that smaller firms are getting elbowed out from public procurement as orders are generally bundled up making their size very large.

Adding to the problems, government is increasingly getting projects executed on turn-key basis through large corporates which do not fall under public-private-partnership (PPP) for the MSMEs.

"These practices need to be checked and remedial steps taken," the industry body has written to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Public procurement as a percentage of GDP in the country is estimated at 20-22 per cent. Given the size of Indian economy (\$2.7 trillion), the public procurement amounts to nearly \$500 billion annually. Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) are a

major contributor to public procurement of works, goods and services.

As per the current policy, every central ministry, department and PSUs are required to mandatorily procure 25 per cent of their supplies annually from the MSME sector. But MSMEs have been complaining that many government entities do not adhere to the guideline.

The FISME has proposed generous payment terms from the government to encourage greater number of participants in the bidding process especially MSMEs.

It cited the example of South Korea where MSMEs could be given advance up to 70 per cent of the purchase price. Similarly, an SME network loan program enables SMEs to obtain bank loans for up to 80 per cent of the relevant contract price to cover the costs of contract execution.

South Korean government also gives special visibility to innovative products from SMEs by including them in a special procurement KONEPS catalogue. A similar initiative could be undertaken through GeM (Government E-marketplace) platform in India," the FISME has said.



Deposit Insurance Corporation sees ₹14,100 cr claims amid PMC crisis

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation has received a total claim of about ₹14,100 crore in case of defaulting co-operative banks amid massive scam at the now-crippled Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative Bank, according to the RBI.

However, the regulator, in the Financial Stability Report, added that all the claims may not materialise at the same time and some may even revive.

The extent of devolvement on the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) in the event of all the banks "under direction" or weak banks going into liquidation or ordered to be wound up, would be ₹14,098 crore as of September-end, said the RBI's Financial Stability Report

The scam came out in Sept after an insider whistleblower approached the RBI forcing it to supersede the bank's management and put it under an administrator released recently. Cooperative banks have been under stress for long and the ongoing PMC Bank crisis, which involves a scam of ₹6,500 crore that is 73 per cent of its total assets of around ₹9,000 crore, is related to a single entity, the bankrupt HDIL, which has been gaming the bank since 2008.

The scam came out in September after an insider whistleblower approached the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) forcing it to supersede the bank's management and put it under an administrator. "It needs to be noted that banks which are under direc-

tion/weak will go under liquidation over a period, not together at a particular point of time. Weak banks may also witness a revival," the RBI said in the report.

Since January this year, nearly 30 cooperative banks have been placed under RBI administrators. The break-up of the claim with DICGC shows ₹3,414 crore in the case of state cooperative banks and district central cooperative banks, and ₹10,684 crore in the case of urban cooperative banks, including PMC Bank, according to the RBI.

DICGC came into limelight since the RBI imposed deposit withdrawal restrictions on PMC Bank which has deposits of around ₹11,800 crore. As a percentage of the deposit insurance fund, these deposits are about 13.9 per cent, the RBI said.

Coal India chalks out strategy to meet 660 MT production Target for FY20

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Amid concerns that Coal India Ltd (CIL) may fall short of its 660 million tonne (MT) production target for the current fiscal, the miner has planned to ramp up daily output to meet the goal, officials said. Till December, the miner is expected to produce close to 390 MT of coal and will require another 270 MT in the last quarter of this fiscal to meet the annual production target.

Currently, Coal India produces 1.8 MT per day while the asking rate to achieve the target is 2.9 MT, they said.

Internally, Coal India has planned to raise its production to 3 MT per day at least in February and March next year to inch closer to the target, Coal India officials told PTI.

According to the provisional data, the miner produced 330.38 MT of coal during April-November in the 2019-20 fiscal, down by 7.8 per cent from 358.30 MT in the year-ago period. Unless the miner increases its daily production to 2.5 MT per day from January to March period, it will struggle to surpass the production figure of the last fiscal, company sources said.

In 2018-19, Coal India produced 606.89 MT while dispatch was at 608.14 MT.

Coal India's offtake at 363.63 MT during April-November period was down by 7.2 per cent from 392.02 MT supplied in the year-ago period. CIL officials said the coal offtake was at 410 MT till December 27, 2019 as against a target of 467 MT.

Pak-owned HBZ Bank sanctioned by South Africa's central bank

Johannesburg: South Africa's central bank has sanctioned Durban-headquartered HBZ Bank, with roots in Pakistan, for violating the country's Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Control Regulations.

The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) cautioned HBZ not to repeat the conduct which led to the non-compliance with "suspicious and unusual transaction" reporting requirements of the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Control Regulations and for the failure to comply with training requirements of the FIC Act.

HBZ escaped any financial penalties. It was one of the four smaller banks together with one of the big four banks — Standard Bank — which have come under the SARB scanner.

PTI

Firms will move from hiring to attracting in 2020: Study

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With the workforce transformed significantly over the last decade, a study has revealed that hiring is no more about recruitment but about attracting as there are increasing number of dropouts, and attrition rate has peaked beyond 22 per cent.

About 78 per cent of companies in a survey admit that hiring and retaining has become more difficult compared to the previous year, according to 'The 2020 Talent Technology Outlook' study by research-backed innovative talent solution provider SCIKEY.

Longer time to hire, increasing number of dropouts and attrition that has peaked beyond 22 per cent indicate that hiring has not just become



expensive and difficult, but also the inability to attract right talent is impacting the business, the study showed.

About 68 per cent of employees are partially or fully disengaged, leading to billions of dollars in productivity loss, it said.

The study also showed that organisations in 2020 will wake up to this reality and see technology going beyond people-

intensive hiring to a tech-driven and branding-focused initiative that will attract talent faster.

Companies will deploy branding and marketing experts to spruce up their image that would strike the right note with their prospective workforce. Social media will start playing even more meaningful role in HR marketing.

The study is an analysis of inputs from 100-plus C-suite and human capital leaders across four continents, including in India, by SCIKEY, through surveys, social media inputs, interviews and panel discussions.

Further, it showed that expensive workforce will drive companies to hire more contractual and gig workforce.

About 54 per cent of the respondents said they will use crowd resources in the next two years for some part of their business, it said.

Unpredictability with full-time work will move more people to contractual or gig economy and with the availability of talent marketplaces, 2020 will start seeing the shift of employee and employer's mindset, it added.

FPIs remain net buyers in Dec; invest over ₹2,600 cr

New Delhi: Foreign investors remained net buyers in December by investing ₹2,613 crore in the domestic markets, mainly due to expectation of a revival in corporate earnings, quantitative easing by US Fed and infusion of funds by central banks globally," said Himanshu Srivastava, senior research analyst, manager research at Morningstar.

Barring January, July and August, FPIs have been net buyers for rest of the months in 2019. This year, they have invested a net sum of ₹73,276.63 crore in the Indian markets (both equity and debt).

"In 2019, FPIs remained bullish on India on account of many factors including corporate tax rate cut, RERA, among others have helped in this regard.

PTI

Coffee Exports

Quantity (in tonnes)

	
340,272	341,555
Jan-Dec'18	Jan-Dec'19

Value (in ₹ Crores)

	
5.519	5.438
Jan-Dec'18	Jan-Dec'19

Country-wise Export

TOP 10	
Italy	71459
Germany	36147
Russian Fed.	27763
Belgium	19381
Poland	14838
Jordan	8932
Turkey	8390
USA	7357
Malaysia	7311
Libya	7275

Others 132,703

Grand Total 341,555

Sources: Coffee Board (Upto 19/12/2019)

PTI GRAPHICS

Trump faces raft of foreign policy challenges in new year

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump starts the new year knee-deep in daunting foreign policy challenges at the same time he'll have to deal with a likely impeachment trial in the Senate and the demands of a reelection campaign.

There's still no end in sight to America's longest war in Afghanistan. North Korea hasn't given up its nuclear weapons. Add to that simmering tensions with Iran, fallout from Trump's decision to pull troops from Syria, ongoing unease with Russia and Turkey, and erratic ties with European and other longtime Western allies.

Trump is not popular overseas, and being an impeached president who must simultaneously run for reelection could reduce the time, focus and political clout needed to resolve complex global issues like North Korea's nuclear provocations. Some foreign powers could decide to just hold off on finalizing any deals until they know whether Trump will be reelected.

Trump himself has acknowledged the challenge in his December 26 tweet: "Despite all of the great success that our Country has had over the last 3 years, it makes it much more difficult to deal with foreign leaders (and others) when I am having to constantly defend myself against the Do Nothing Democrats & their bogus Impeachment Scam. Bad for USA!"

At the same time, there is widespread expectation that

Trump never will be convicted by the Republican-controlled Senate, so 2020 could well bring more of the same from the president on foreign policy, said Ronald Neumann, president of the American Academy of Diplomacy.

"America still has an awful lot of power," said Neumann, a three-time ambassador and former deputy assistant secretary of state. "With a year to go, a president can still make a lot of waves, impeachment or not."

For Trump, 2019 was a year of two steps forward, one step back — sometimes vice versa — on international challenges. Despite claiming that "I know deals, I think, better than anybody knows deals," he's still trying to close a bunch.

Trump scored high marks for the US military raid in Syria that killed the leader of the Islamic State, but US military leaders worry about a resurgence. He is credited with coaxing NATO allies to commit to spend billions more on defense, but along the way has strained important relationships.

His agreement on a "Phase 1" trade deal with China has acknowledged the challenge in his December 26 tweet: "Despite all of the great success that our Country has had over the last 3 years, it makes it much more difficult to deal with foreign leaders (and others) when I am having to constantly defend myself against the Do Nothing Democrats & their bogus Impeachment Scam. Bad for USA!"

A deeper look at the state of play on three top foreign policy challenges on Trump's desk as 2020 begins:



US-NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS LOSE TRACTION

The US is watching North Korea closely for signs of a possible missile launch or nuclear test.

Pyeongyang had threatened to spring a "Christmas surprise" if the US failed to meet Kim Jong Un's year-end deadline for concessions to revive stalled nuclear talks. Trump speculated maybe he'd get a "beautiful vase" instead. Any test flight of an intercontinental ballistic missile or substantial nuclear test would further derail the diplomatic negotiations Trump opened with Kim in 2018.

Washington didn't accept Kim's end-of-year ultimatum, but Stephen Biegun, the top US envoy to North Korea, said the window for talks with the US remains open. "We are fully aware of the strong potential for North Korea to conduct a major provocation in the days ahead," Biegun, the new deputy

secretary of state, said recently. "To say the least, such an action will be most unhelpful in achieving lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula."

In recent months, North Korea has conducted a slew of short-range missile launches and other weapons tests.

In 2017, Trump and Kim traded threats of destruction as North Korea carried out tests aimed at acquiring the ability to launch nuclear strikes on the US mainland. Trump said he would rain "fire and fury" on North Korea and derided Kim as "little rocket man." Kim questioned Trump's sanity and said he would "tame the mentally deranged U.S. dotard with fire."

Then the two made up and met three times — in Singapore in 2018, in Vietnam last February and again in June when Trump became the first U.S. president to set foot into North Korea at the Demilitarised Zone.

While the get-togethers

have made for good photo-ops, they've been devoid of substantive progress in getting Kim to get rid of his nuclear weapons.

Trump has held out North Korea's self-imposed moratorium on conducting nuclear tests and trials of long-range intercontinental missiles as a major foreign policy achievement. "Deal will happen!" he tweeted. Trump's former national security adviser doesn't think so.

"The North Koreans are very happy to declare that they're going to give up their nuclear weapons program, particularly when it's in exchange for tangible economic benefits, but they never get around to doing it," John Bolton told National Public Radio.

US-IRAN TENSION ESCALATING

Tensions with Iran have been rising ever since Trump last year withdrew the US from the 2015 nuclear deal that Tehran had signed with the U.S. and five other nations. Trump said the deal was one-sided and gave Iran sanctions relief for rolling back, but not permanently dismantling, its nuclear programme.

After pulling out of the deal, Trump began a "maximum pressure" campaign, reinstating sanctions and adding more that have crippled Iran's economy. His aim is to force Iran to renegotiate a deal more favorable to the US and other nations that are still in the agreement.

In response, Iran has continued its efforts to destabilise the region, attacking targets in Saudi Arabia, interrupting

commercial shipping through the critical Strait of Hormuz, shooting down an unmanned U.S. aircraft and financing militant proxy groups. Since May, nearly 14,000 US military personnel have deployed to the region to deter Iran.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said his country's nuclear experts are testing a new type of advanced centrifuge. Iran recently started exceeding the stockpiles of uranium and heavy water allowed by the nuclear deal and is enriching uranium at a purity level beyond what is permitted. Tehran's violations, which it says are reversible, are an attempt to get France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia — the other nations that signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — to offer new economic incentives to offset the American sanctions.

The White House says its pressure campaign is working. The Iranian economy is collapsing, inflation is high. And crushing U.S. sanctions blocking Iran from selling its crude oil abroad have helped fuel nationwide protests.

Earlier this month, there was a rare diplomatic breakthrough when a Chinese-American Princeton scholar, Xiyue Wang, who has held in Iran for three years, was freed in exchange for a detained Iranian scientist in the US. Trump said the prisoner exchange could be a "precursor as to what can be done."

Iran says other prisoner swaps can be arranged, but

there will be no other negotiations between Tehran and the Trump administration.

AFGHANISTAN

When Trump made his first visit to Afghanistan on Thanksgiving Day, he announced that negotiations with the Taliban, which had fallen apart in September, were back on track. He claimed the militant group wanted to find a political resolution to the war, now more than 18 years old.

"We'll see if they want to make a deal," he told US troops at Bagram Air Base. "It's got to be a real deal, but we'll see. But they want to make a deal."

Less than two weeks later, talks were back on pause after an attack outside Bagram killed two Afghans and wounded 70 others, including members of the US-led coalition force. The Taliban later claimed responsibility for the attack, which also damaged the base.

It's no secret that Trump wants US engagement in Afghanistan to end, but critics worry that this will lead him to make too many concessions to the Taliban.

Despite progress in the negotiations, Trump abruptly canceled the talks in September when violence continued and a US service member was killed. This time around, the US is seeking a reduction in violence with the end goal of getting the Taliban to agree to a permanent ceasefire and start all-Afghan talks to find a peaceful future for the country.

Former Defence Secretary James Mattis, who resigned

from the Trump administration over his opposition to the president's decision to remove troops from Syria, said the Taliban have not proven trustworthy in the past so instead of "trust and verify," the US should "verify and then trust."

But he added, "I think the president was right to start the negotiations with the Taliban and I think he was right to call it off when the bombings occurred."

Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress this month that the Pentagon is considering several options to reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan. One option would mean shifting to a leaner counter-terrorism mission. That would leave only a minimal US footprint in Afghanistan to battle Islamic extremists.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who visited Kabul this month, said Trump might announce an American troop drawdown from Afghanistan before the year's end. He said that beginning next year, the president could reduce troop numbers to 8,600, down from the current estimate of 12,000.

Graham has opposed a withdrawal before, but says 8,600 US troops would be enough to make sure that Afghanistan doesn't become a launching pad for another 9/11-style attack on the US. The Taliban have said any peace agreement must include getting all American troops out of the country, where more than 2,400 American service members have been killed.

N Korea's Kim holds top party meeting ahead of US deadline

AFP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has convened a key meeting of top ruling party officials, state media said on Sunday, ahead of a year-end deadline for Washington to shift its stance on stalled nuclear talks.

The plenary session, which opened on Saturday, follows widespread speculation that Pyongyang is preparing to test an intercontinental ballistic missile — as a threatened "Christmas gift" for Washington.

Kim presided over the meeting which discussed a new "transparent, anti-imperialist independent stand", the official *Korean Central News Agency* (KCNA) reported. The ruling Workers' Party of Korea will also "discuss important matters arising... In the build-



ing of the state and national defence", KCNA added.

Talks on denuclearising the Korean peninsula have been largely deadlocked since the second summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump collapsed in Hanoi at the start of this year.

The opening of the plenary comes a week after Kim held a meeting of top defence officials and discussed boosting military capabilities. Pyongyang has carried out a series of static tests at its Sohae rocket facility this

month, after a number of weapons launches in recent weeks — some of them described as ballistic missiles by Japan and others.

North Korea is banned from carrying out such tests under UN sanctions. "We'll find out what the surprise is and we'll deal with it very successfully," Trump said when asked about the North Korean deadline. "Everybody's got surprises for me, but let's see what happens. I handle them as they come along."

Taliban council agrees to ceasefire in Afghanistan

AP ■ KABUL

The Taliban on Sunday said they have agreed to a temporary ceasefire nationwide. It provides a window during which a peace agreement with the US could be signed.

A peace deal would allow Washington to bring home its troops from Afghanistan and end its 18-year military engagement there, America's longest. The US wants any 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.

The Taliban chief must approve the agreement but that is expected. The duration of the cease-fire was not specified but it is being suggested it

would last for 10 days.

our members of the Taliban negotiating team met for a week with the ruling council before they agreed on the brief cease fire. The negotiating team returned on Sunday to Qatar where they maintain their political office.

The Taliban officials familiar with the negotiations spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media. A key pillar of the agreement, which the US and Taliban have been hammering out for more than a year, is direct negotiations between Afghans on both sides of the conflict. Those intra-Afghan negotiations are expected to be held within two weeks of the signing of a US-Taliban peace deal.

Saudi sentences Yemeni to death over Spanish theatre group stabbing

Riyadh: A Saudi court sentenced a Yemeni man to death Sunday for a knife attack on a Spanish theatre group, state television said, amid a controversial push to ease decades-old restrictions on entertainment.

Court also sentenced an accomplice to 12 and a half years in jail for the November 11 attack during a live performance in Riyadh, which state media linked to al-Qaeda, and which Madrid said left four performers wounded. "The criminal court issues a preliminary ruling handing the death sentence to the perpetrator of the terrorist attack... In Riyadh," the official Al-Ekhbariya television reported.

The assailant, identified by Saudi police as 33-year-old Yemeni, went on a stabbing spree during a musical in King Abdullah Park, one of the venues hosting "Riyadh Season" entertainment festival. **AFP**

Call to evacuate thousands in Australia over fires

Sydney: Australian authorities on Sunday asked thousands of tourists and residents to evacuate a popular natural area in the southeast of the country due to forest fires.

Victoria state fire chief Chris Hardman urged anyone in the East Gippsland forests to leave the area immediately in the face of the danger of fires amid high temperatures, reports *Efe* news.

"The message today if you are in Forests or Parks in East Gippsland time to Leave Now, the large fires in the landscapes will get much bigger tomorrow," he tweeted. "Leave Now, it will be very very dangerous be in the bush today or tomorrow. Leave Now!"

The fires have already burned around 100,000 of the more than 300,000 hectares of East Gippsland, a place popular with visitors in the summer month due to its natural wealth. **IANS**

3 Indians killed, 13 hurt in Egypt road accident

PTI ■ CAIRO

Three Indians were killed and 13 others injured when two buses carrying tourists crashed into a truck in Egypt's Suez governorate, the Indian embassy here said on Sunday.

The buses were heading to the beach-resort town of Hurgada on Saturday when they collided with the truck near Ain Sokhna town, about 120 kilometres east of Cairo.

"We regret to inform that 3 Indian citizens have lost their lives in the bus accident that occurred on 28 December near Ain Sokhna. Others who are injured are receiving medical treatment at various hospitals in Egypt," the Indian embassy in Egypt tweeted.

It said the relatives of the deceased and the injured have been contacted and all assistance is being provided to them. "Embassy officials are present at the hospitals and in touch with hospital authorities," the mission said.

The embassy said there were 16 Indian tourists on the buses. The injured Indians have been admitted to three hospitals.

Eight Indians are at Sheikh Zayed hospital in Giza, one at National Bank hospital in Maqqatim, Cairo and the remaining four are receiving treatment at Suez Health Insurance hospital in Suez governorate, the embassy said.

According to the local media, the deceased also include two Malaysians and three Egyptians. A total of 24 people were injured in the accident and have been admitted to hospitals.

Road accidents occur in Egypt mainly due to damaged roads and poor traffic regulations.

Island's democracy under threat from China: Taiwan Prez

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said on Sunday that the self-governing island's democracy remains under direct threat from rival China, underscoring her calls for closer ties with the US and other allies.

Tsai was speaking at a televised debate against Han Kuoyu of the main opposition Nationalist Party and veteran politician James Soong of the People's First Party. Elections for president and the legislature are set for January 11. Most polls show Tsai leading in her quest for a second four-year term.

Tsai said she would preserve Taiwan's freedoms and way of life, but would make no changes to the constitution or the island's official name, the Republic of China, which moved its seat of Government to Taipei, the island's capital, following the Communist Party's seizure of power on mainland China in 1949.

"Taiwan's most pressing challenge arises from China's expanding ambitions," Tsai said.

"The situation in our region is ever-more complex and Taiwan's sovereignty — its free, democratic way of life — is under threat of being stripped away and undermined."

"We need to deepen and strengthen our international relations, and at present we are doing so in terms of economics and across the board with many countries," she said.

5 stabbed at New York rabbi's home in 'terrorist' attack

AFP ■ MONSEY (US)

An intruder stabbed and wounded five people at a rabbi's house in a New York suburb late Saturday, in an incident the state governor said was "an act of terrorism" after a spate of attacks on Jewish targets.

Local media reported that a man with a machete entered the rabbi's property in Monsey, Rockland County, during celebrations for the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, knifing several people before fleeing.

Victims were rushed to nearby hospitals, with no official details on their injuries. Police said a suspect was later arrested. "This is an act of terrorism. I think these are domestic terrorists. They are trying to inflict fear," New York Governor Andrew Cuomo told reporters at the scene on Sunday.

"They're motivated by hate. They are doing mass attacks. These are terrorists in our country perpetrating terrorism on other Americans, and that's how we should treat it."

Last year a white supremacist

walked into a Pittsburgh synagogue and killed 11 people — the deadliest attack against the Jewish community in the United States.

Earlier this month six people, including two suspects, were killed in a Jersey City shooting at a kosher deli, which authorities said was fueled in part by anti-Semitism.

A report in April from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) stated that the number of anti-Semitic attacks in 2018 was close to the record of 2017, with 1,879 incidents.

Sydney New Year's fireworks to go ahead despite wildfires

AP ■ PERTH

Sydney's iconic New Year's Eve fireworks will go ahead despite the wildfire crisis to show the world Australia's resiliency, the Prime Minister said, while authorities on Sunday braced for conditions to deteriorate with high temperatures. Prime Minister Scott Morrison also announced financial support for some volunteer firefighters in New South Wales, the state worst hit by wildfires ravaging the nation.

"The world looks at Sydney every single year and they look



at our vibrancy, they look at our passion, they look at our success," he said. "In the midst of the challenges that we face, subject to the safety considerations, I can

think of no better time to express to the world just how optimistic and positive we are as a country."

The City of Sydney Council gave the green light although fire authorities warned that the fireworks could be canceled if catastrophic conditions are declared. Morrison said that eligible volunteer firefighters will receive 300 Australian dollars (\$209) a day, up to AU\$6,000 (\$4,190) in total, if called out to battle blazes for more than 10 days. The compensation focused on people who are self-employed or work for small and medium businesses.

A final fundraiser for man who boosted ice bucket challenge

AP ■ GLOUCESTER (US)

Hundreds of people plunged into the chilly ocean at a Massachusetts beach on Saturday to honor Peter Frates, the former college baseball player whose battle with Lou Gehrig's disease helped spread the ALS ice bucket challenge.

About 1,000 people showed up for the final "Plunge for Pete" at Good Harbor Beach in Gloucester, and more than half of those braved the frigid waters on what would have been Frates' 35th birthday.

The event, in its eighth year, raised money for the Pete Frates #3 Fund, which helped pay for Frates' medical bills. "He is laughing so hard right now at me getting into the ocean," said Frates' wife, Julie, who participated in the plunge for the first



time wearing the bikini she had on when she first met her husband. "This is the best birthday

party he could ask for and wherever he is, he is very grateful." The former Boston College

baseball player, who lived in Beverly, a suburb north of Boston, died December 9 after a seven-year battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

The family has accumulated roughly USD 500,000 in debt for their son's medical care, Pete's father, John Frates said, and the final fundraiser will hopefully help close the gap. The family will continue to raise money for the separate Peter Frates Family Foundation, which helps other ALS patients cover home health care costs, he said.

The number of people who signed up to take the actual plunge far exceeded the peak of 250 participants who participated in 2014, the year the ice bucket challenge went viral and raised more than \$200 million for ALS research worldwide.

The ice bucket challenge involved pouring a bucket of ice water over one's head and posting a video of it on social media, and then challenging others to do the same or make a donation to charity. Most people did both.

The challenge began in 2014 when pro golfer Chris Kennedy challenged his wife's cousin Jeanette Senerchia, whose husband has ALS. Patient Pat Quinn, of Yonkers, New York, picked up on it and started its spread, but when Frates and his family got involved, the phenomenon exploded on social media. ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that leads to paralysis because of the death of motor neurons in the spinal cord and brain. There is no known cure.



Ukrainian war prisoners escorted by armed Russia-backed separatist soldiers walk to buses to be exchanged near the checkpoint Horlivka, eastern Ukraine on Sunday. Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine have begun exchanging prisoners in a move aimed at ending their five-year-long war. The move is part of an agreement brokered earlier this month at a summit of the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France **AP**

Trend Slazer

Horror is new for me: Vijay

Gully Boy actor **VIJAY VARMA** will soon be seen in Zoya Akhtar's segment of the horror anthology *Ghost Stories*. He finds horror a new and interesting genre.

Talking about working on *Ghost Stories*, Vijay said, "Horror is a new and interesting genre for me; here you have to completely submit yourself to the part. While it was a different experience, working with this team was like going back home. It's deeply satisfying to be in the front of the camera."

"I like that my character is a mystery, so wait for the big reveal till next year," he added.

Zoya and fellow filmmakers Karan Johar, Anurag Kashyap and Dibakar Banerjee have come together to create the Netflix anthology, which stream on January 1.



'Kartik (Aaryan) isn't a contemporary. He is like a brother. So a comparison of any sort holds

no importance. We are in completely different spaces. I think I am my sole competition and see only myself in my league. For me, doing roles and having a constant connection with the audience is important. Our only common thread is that we started our journey together.' —Sunny Singh

Filmmaker **MEGHNA GULZAR**'s forthcoming film *Chhapaak*, starring **Deepika Padukone**, will also feature some real acid attack survivors.

She said, "The decision to cast them was fairly an organic one because we had the characters of Malti and Amol, who also run an NGO for the welfare of other survivors. We needed actors who could play survivors and I thought why not the actual ones. I'm grateful they agreed."

Sheroes and Chhanv Foundation's four acid attack survivors — Ritu, Bala, Jeetu and Kunti — have acted in the film.



Sara files for separation

Actor **SARA GILBERT** has filed for separation from musician **Linda Perry**, after being married for almost six years.

Gilbert has listed their date of separation as August 13, and cited irreconcilable differences as the reason for their split.

The former *The Talk* co-host has requested for no spousal support to be awarded to either Perry or herself.

The pair share four-year-old son Rhodes Emilio. Gilbert is also mother to Levi Hawk, 15, and Sawyer Jane, 12, from a previous relationship.

Gilbert and Perry walked down the aisle in March 2014 after they began dating in 2011.



SINGING ABOUT THE DARK TIMES

While the 60s and 70s was the golden period of protest poetry and songs, with demonstration having found a space in social life of the country, the genre has seen a revival of sorts, says **SAIMI SATTAR**

Jab taj uchale jaenge... Jab takht girae jaenge...

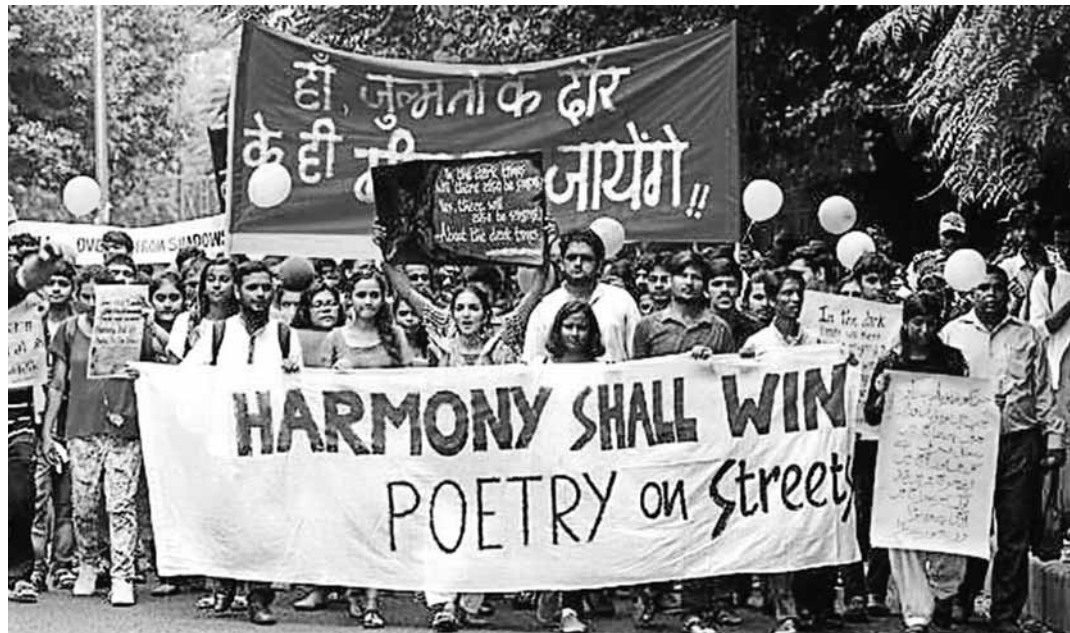
Iqbal Bano's sonorous voice spirals and echoes. The applause that follows is thunderous so the ghazal singer repeats the line from Faiz Ahmed Faiz's immortal *nazm*. Hearing the recording of public rendition of *Hum Dekhenge* which was sung in Lahore in 1986 to oppose Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorial regime is enough, even when we are 33 years removed from the actual performance, to give a person goosebumps. And for a long time, the subcontinent swore by this very poetic and, at the same time, public exhortation to the masses. However, of late, revolutionary poetry has seen a resurgence of sorts powered by rejection by students of many norms set by the generation that holds the reigns of power and, in effect, makes rules.

So while *Hum Dekhenge* continues to occupy a legendary status befitting its lyrics, Varun Grover's *Hum Kagaz Nahi Dikhayeenge* has spiralled up the popularity charts with three different renderings having a total of 2,77,000 views within six days of them being aired on YouTube. The poem which itself takes inspiration from Rahat Indori's *Sabhi ka khoon shaamil hai yahan ki mitti me*, which too has found its way in posters and slogans at different places, 30 years after it was penned. Of course set against the backdrop of the CAA-NRC protests that have rocked the capital and many other Indian cities, it was bound to gain traction.

Another old poem doing the rounds is Habib Jalib's *Dastur* rendered by Shashi Bhushan, a visually impaired student from Jawaharlal Nehru University. The song talks of dismissing established norms.

"Poetry, slogans and some sort of symbols are what make a strong imprint on people's mind," says Yashasvi Chawla, a part of a collective called Ankahi United consisting of about 10-15 people who engage in poetry, street theatre and videos and more on weekends.

He goes on to point out that songs are easier to put any message across. "We actually make the songs in a way so that people can join in. In the song, *Ki wo dono politician* the has a chorus which says '*Kaho galat kahi? Nahin sarkar*' which makes it engaging. We try to make them comical so that it sticks in the minds of the people," adds Yashasvi. Though the group does have some intense numbers like *Pinjra* which talks about internet shutdown in the country. "One out of a 1,000 speeches will stick



in your mind. You will throw away the pamphlet. But, a song, you will remember," he adds.

Harshveer, who runs the Instagram page Storysellercomics agrees, "A jingle gets more attention, is more sharable and engaging. It is wittier and thus makes more of an impact because it is more interesting. Even if someone does not know about an issue, if they hear a four line poem, just by virtue of it they will get interested in the issue."

Harshveer who writes all kinds of poetry, some of which is also socially relevant says that the internet and thus the availability of a number of channels have made the space for poetry more democratic. When we share it, it reaches out to at least 10 people who react and share their opinions and thoughts. Moreover, in a family of four, each receives information from different sources which is shared among family members, thus disseminating it further.

Another thing that he has

noticed is that women, who were earlier marginalised, have come out in large numbers to protest against the new Act. And this he believes has also to do with the fact that a lot of the art is driven by them in contemporary times.

Poet and singer Amir Aziz, who released his first protest song, *Ache Din Blues* on the eve of the 2019 General Elections says, "While I can't say where revolutionary poetry will go but there are two important things. These are historical documentations about what is going on in the times. So someone has to write it in a way that it can communicate the feeling of the day. It can also make people feel heartened, which is a positive thing."

However, having said that, Amir strikes a discordant about poetry holding out a beacon of hope. "Saying that poetry holds hope is a contradiction as we have seen so many failures during revolutions. We will have to accept that we have been mistaken and betrayed during revolutions so our poetry needs to

reflect that too unlike that from the 60s or the 70s. During the freedom struggle for instance, one could say '*Sarfaroshi ki tamanna*,' but no longer. We are still living in the nostalgia of that kind of poetry and drawing inspiration from it. I also do that when I look to John Lennon or Bob Dylan when writing my work," he says.

However, Ankahi United has another aim as well. Not just inspiration, the group which started out with Naveen Choure, Yashasvi Chawla, Gargi and Harsh Sharma, wants it to be a source of information as well. "In between performing two or three songs we also talk to people and tell them about the things that we know. So even if people are aware of an issue, they might have incomplete information. Our aim is that if they come with 40 per cent knowledge, they go back with about 70 per cent about what the whole point of the protest is," says Yashasvi.

Yashasvi emphasises that the group is against violence whether

inflicted by the protesters or the police and says, "I think protest and poetry are intertwined. If there are protests at a very large scale for a right reason and cross a certain scale where a lot many people are affected then poetry cannot be stopped from being linked with the protests because it is the best way to make the audience aware while ensuring that they do not lose focus of the issue," he says.

Yashasvi says that the aim of their performances is also to raise questions which are necessary especially the ones which weren't being raised or put out the opinions of those who can't voice them. "The answers are already there. All we need to do is make the people aware," he says. So during the current protests they highlight, how according to them, the CAA alone is wrong and when combined with NRC how it will affect the country, how it is not needed, especially the economy, is going south. "We should get away from CAA-NRC and also

highlight the things that we want which include getting the economy back on track, jobs, any other thing that is not right," he adds.

Amir has another interesting point to make in the context of the songs that he has written and especially about the current protests. "While writing, I am stuck in an identity even if I want to escape from it because the kind of society that we have built ensures that my name is enough to classify me as a Muslim. I am not trapped in this identity as I don't say the words through the lens of being a Muslim. But while documenting the times when one community has been singled out, I will have to name it. For instance while talking of Nazi Germany we can't just say that people were killed as that won't make sense. Jews were killed and that has to be documented. So even though it might appear that I am trying to assert the identity of a community, it is essentially humanitarian in nature. In the song *Strange Fruit*, Nina Simone refers to black bodies after all because that was the reality of that time."

Yashasvi points out that the protests are not powered by any political party. "Personally, as a group, we are not talking to any party or leader. We are doing it as per our own understanding of what is going on. People whom we have met during our group performances at Jantar Mantar and India Gate or at individual ones at Shaheen Bagh are pretty much aware of the issue and it is not as if someone is putting this thought in their mind or manipulating them. This is best illustrated by the instance that Priyanka Gandhi was told not to politicise the issue at India Gate by some of the protesters themselves," he says.

Amir who first started a YouTube Channel before performing on streets and has one more observation. "When I read out the poetry live, the enthusiasm is much lesser as compared to what it is on the internet. I can gauge if my performance is good or bad so that is not the reason for the somewhat less warm response. Maybe if reading out poetry continues, then people will start responding more," says the singer whose *Ballad of Pehlu Khan* documented the lynching of the dairy farmer from Alwar.

But at the end of the day, what all these groups and individuals are setting out to do is follow what German playwright Bertolt Brecht said,

*"In the dark times
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing.
About the dark times."*

TECH TALK

Space moments of 2019

From India's Chandrayaan 2 mission to the first all-women spacewalk and commercial crew milestones by US-based companies, 2019 offered several exciting moments for space enthusiasts.

India's ambitious and keenly watched lunar mission, Chandrayaan 2, was expected to make its soft landing on the surface of the Moon on September 7. While the whole nation waited with bated breath, Chandrayaan 2's lander Vikram lost communication with the ground stations. But the Orbiter component of Chandrayaan 2 spacecraft made it to the Moon without any glitch.

In a huge milestone for China, which is attempting to position itself as a leading space power, the country's Chang'e-4 lunar probe on January 3 became the first spacecraft to make a soft landing on the far side of the Moon. The probe, comprising a lander and a rover, touched down at the pre-selected landing area at 177.6 degrees east longitude and 45.5 degrees south latitude on the far side of the Moon. The programme Chang'e (named in honour of a goddess who, according to Chinese legend, lives on the Moon) intends to send a manned mission to the satellite in the long term and although no deadline has been set, some experts indicated it may be around 2036.

India also conducted its first anti-satellite missile test -



Mission Shakti in 2019. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 27 announced that the country's anti-satellite missile successfully targeted a live satellite on a low earth orbit in just three minutes. India is only the fourth country in the world to achieve this feat after the US, Russia and China.

In October, astronauts Jessica Meir and Christa Koch made history with the first all-female spacewalk during an excursion to repair a power unit on the International Space Station. The women spent seven hours and 17 minutes working outside the ISS as it circled the Earth at 27,600 km/h (17,100 mph), Efe news reported. Koch and Meir paused in their work for a few minutes to take a call from US President Donald Trump.

In a big leap for NASA's Commercial Crew



Programme, SpaceX and Boeing conducted the uncrewed flight test of their spacecraft to the International Space Station. The Elon Musk-owned SpaceX's Crew Dragon capsule completed its historic uncrewed flight test in March with a splashdown in the Atlantic Ocean right on time. Boeing's passenger spacecraft was launched on its first uncrewed flight test to the ISS atop a United Launch Alliance

(ULA) Atlas V rocket in December, but the Boeing Starliner spacecraft did not reach the planned orbit though it docked at the International Space Station. As planned, Boeing was able to complete a number of test objectives during the flight related to NASA's Commercial Crew Programme. The landing of the spacecraft in White Sands, New Mexico, was successful. —JANS

WEBBED

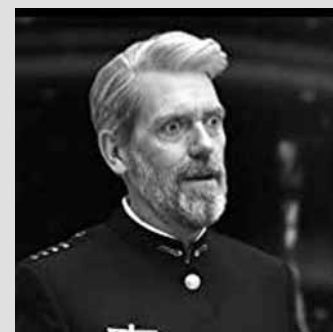
THE OUTSIDER

Based on Stephen King's bestselling eponymous novel, *The Outsider* is the story of a detective who is exploring the truth behind the mysterious circumstance surrounding a young boy's murder. Directed by Andrew Bernstein, Jason Bateman and Charlotte Brändström, it releases on January 13 on Hotstar.



AVENUE 5

A science-fiction comedy that's touted as *Veep* meets *Star Trek*, it sees space captain Ryan Clark (Hugh Laurie) trying to befriend new people in the space tourism industry. Directed by Armando Iannucci, it releases on January 20 on Hotstar.



9-1-1 LONE STAR

This series (pictured above) stars Rob Lowe as a New York firefighter who relocates to Austin, Texas with his son. There, he must learn to balance his personal and professional life as he starts life anew. Directed by Bradley Buecker, it releases on January 21 on Hotstar.



The ultimate struggle

Marine ecologists are trying to save seagrass from coastal pollution because they blunt the impact of ocean acidification, reduce erosion and keep the water clean by filtering out excessive nutrients

Peering over the side of his skiff anchored in the middle of New Hampshire's Great Bay, Fred Short liked what he saw. Just below the surface, the 69-year-old marine ecologist noticed beds of bright green seagrass swaying in the waist-deep water. It was the latest sign that these plants with ribbon-like strands, which had declined up to 80 per cent since the 1990s, were starting to bounce back with improved water quality. Seven rivers carry pollution from 52 communities in New Hampshire and Maine into the 1,020-square-mile (2,650-square-kilometer) watershed for the bay.

"It actually looks better than it did last year at this time and better than has in many years," said Short, a noted seagrass expert who coordinates the monitoring of 135 sites around the world from his University of New Hampshire lab. "You see here," he said, glancing into the water. "It's nearly 100 per cent cover. You look to the bottom. You can't see the mud. You just see eelgrass. That is as dense as it gets. That's a really good sign."

Seagrass beds in New Hampshire and along shorelines around the world are important because they have been found to provide food and shelter for fish, shellfish and sea turtles. They also blunt the impacts of ocean acidification, reduce coastal erosion and keep the water clean by filtering out excessive nutrients.

Their comeback in the Great Bay gives hope for recovery elsewhere. The more than 70 species of seagrasses are among the most poorly protected but widespread coastal habitats — more than 1,16,000 square miles (300,000 square kilometers) have been mapped, though there could be 10 times that.



They are found along coastlines around the world except Antarctica's. Seagrasses, which cover less than 0.2 per cent of the world's oceans, store twice as much carbon in a given area as temperate and tropical forests, a study by the United Nations-affiliated Blue Carbon Initiative found. But seagrass meadows in many places are imperiled by coastal development, overfishing, runoff from farm waste, and the growing threat from climate change. They have declined roughly seven per cent annually since the 1990s, a peer-reviewed study found. That is on par with the declines of tropical rain forests and coral reefs.

Some seagrass declines have occurred with stunning speed. Central California's scenic Morro Bay has lost more than 90 per cent of its eelgrass since 2007. "It's certainly not a pretty picture and may not get any prettier because of the climate change issues we are all dealing with," said Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Robert Orth, a professor who has studied seagrass for decades. "These plants are very sensitive to environmental characteristics — water quality, tempera-

In parts of the United States and other developed countries, there is growing recognition of the importance of seagrass and its sensitivity to nitrogen-rich runoff from sewage treatment plants and other sources. Too much nitrogen can spike algae growth, which clouds the water and blocks the sunlight seagrass needs to grow.

"We think this is a problem that has to be solved," said Ken Moraff, water division director for US Environmental Protection Agency's New England region. Communities around the Great Bay have spent



about \$200 million to upgrade wastewater treatment plants, resulting in some cutting nitrogen releases by up to 70 per cent, according to EPA and officials in several Great Bay communities. "We've seen other areas where reductions in nitrogen do result in the ecosystem starting to come back," Moraff said.

Studies have documented seagrass recovery in Boston, Tampa Bay and Long Island Sound. Boston Harbor was once known as the dirtiest harbor in America because most waste went into the waters untreated. Then the state invested \$3.8 billion in a treatment facility on Deer Island that was completed in 2001 and allowed wastewater to be piped almost 10 miles (16 kilometers) out into Massachusetts Bay. The state has documented an 80

per cent decline in nitrogen levels in the harbor.

Tay Evans, a seagrass specialist with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, said there has been a corresponding 50 per cent increase in eelgrass from 2006 to 2016. Now seagrass is growing in Governors Island Flats near Logan International Airport. "It was astounding me," Evans said. "I dove there and saw what we would call a moonscape that was just mud. You come back and it's a lush meadow and then you're going to see all the animals — the winter flounder swimming through there, lobster walking around."

In Tampa Bay, seagrass beds are reaching levels not seen since the 1950s. More than \$2.5 billion was spent on upgrades to sewage treatment

plants, measures to address stormwater runoff and curbs on nitrogen emissions from power plants. That resulted in two-thirds less nitrogen going into the bay compared to the 1970s, according to Ed Sherwood, executive director of the Tampa Bay Estuary Program.

Seagrass area nearly doubled to about 63 square miles (163 square kilometers). The water quality improvement along with a gill net ban has contributed to the recovery of several fish species including striped mullet, red drum and spotted sea trout. But such stories can't mask the challenges.

Some recoveries such as those in parts of the Boston Harbour and the Great Bay are at risk from dredging. In other places, such as Chesapeake Bay, a decline in nitrogen has benefited many underwater plants but not eelgrass, which has declined since the 1990s.

Brooke Landry, a Maryland Department of Natural Resources biologist who monitors the bay's underwater vegetation, said that eelgrass, a coldwater species, may be more susceptible to heat events as seen in 2005 and 2010 — or to overly cloudy waters in the bay.

Scientists are also struggling to understand why eelgrass hasn't come back in California's Morro Bay. "We have some theories," said Jennifer O'Leary, who studied the bay as a California Sea Grant researcher. She said the eelgrass decline has occurred in waters that are warmer, saltier, cloudier and less oxygenated than the bay's mouth, where eelgrass did well.

In New Hampshire, eelgrass has recovered about 20 per cent in parts of the Great Bay, though it hasn't returned to several areas. Some conservationists argue that bayside communities need to further reduce nitrogen releases through tens of millions of dollars in treatment plant improvements.

But several towns counter they have already made significant upgrades to their plants and that they should focus on cheaper options. "You want to put your money where it's going to do the most good," said Portsmouth Deputy City Attorney Suzanne Woodland.

The EPA is considering allowing communities to hold off on treatment plant upgrades while they try to reduce nitrogen from stormwater runoff and septic tanks. Some communities upgraded sewage treatment voluntarily while others made upgrades to settle EPA enforcement actions.

Walking to his lab with his latest seagrass samples, University of New Hampshire's Short says that approach allows communities to avoid the painful steps necessary to ensure full recovery. "It's easier to say no, no let the next guy pay for it," he said. "But now we are at the point where it's causing a huge issue. You don't have to believe the science. Go out there and look."

—AP



Discover the new you this New Year

Let's make a promise to reflect our best thoughts, words and actions because when we change, so will the world, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

As we enter another year, there's a lot of anticipation about what it holds for us. People celebrate the New Year with much fanfare as if everything in the world is going to change for the better the next day. With such high hopes and dreams, we exchange greetings, party hard and make resolutions hoping to bring about a positive change in our life. Interestingly, New Year resolutions also commonly include things like treating people better, making new friends and paying off debts. It's been the same since ages. The Babylonians would return borrowed objects, Jews seek and offer forgiveness. The Scots go 'first footing,' visiting neighbours to wish them well. How does all this social "resolving" connect to survival? Simple, we are social animals. We have evolved to depend on others, literally, for our health and safety. Hence, treating people well is a good way to be treated well.

Over the years, New Year celebrations have become more extravagant, unruly and louder. People spend a lot of money to participate in singing, dancing, wining and dining on its eve and often end up getting drunk and sick on the very first day of the year. Many miss their work because of the late night parties they attend. Often these parties make the inebriated youth indulge in misbehaviour, dangerous driving and even criminal activities. The media and the markets create a lot of hype and glamour around the turn of the calendar. There is a frenzy around selling and buying gifts and entertainment tickets. The news channels churn out yearly reviews and flashbacks while the soothsayers and fortune-tellers are in demand for doling out predictions for those that put a lot of stake in their stars. All in all, New Year means a lot of memories, dreams and business for different people in the world.

If we think about it deeply, does it really bring any newness in our lives? We all are very much aware that the world we live in has become old, dilapidated and vicious where we have so many big and small problems that seem to have no lasting solution despite all efforts by humans to create better means to improve their lives. But with so much violence going on in the world, do we really have any good reason to celebrate the onset of another year?

Practically speaking, only when we give up our old habits and behaviour and wear a new attitude of compassion, co-operation, harmony and respect, can we expect a new era to begin. Before that really happens, how can anything be celebrated as new in this old world? Does it really make sense? Not really. It is like selling old wine in a new bottle, because nothing in this world can be truly new as all human souls and elements of nature have become very old, impure, weak and destructive. On the contrary, everything in the forthcoming golden age will be brand new, wherein not only the *sanskars* or traits of human souls will be renewed but also the entire nature and its elements will be rejuvenated to its original pristine quality. There will be nothing of this old world in the golden age. Even the human bodies will be pure and pristine — free from any disease. Remember, the world becomes new only when human souls are completely pure in the present by eliminating the vices and sin within themselves. So in the coming New Year, let us all take a determined step forward to change our negative attitude and share only positive energy of peace, joy and love. Let each one of us make a promise to reflect our best thoughts, words and actions because when we change, so will the world.



If the holidays leave you more stressed than centred, some experts say daily meditation sessions can help. The only question: Who has time to meditate when it takes 20 minutes just to find parking at the mall? Perhaps a more practical approach is Immediate Gratification Meditation. Try these tongue-in-cheek chants to maintain your serenity — or at least your sanity — all season long.

MANTRA 1: "I see the best in all houseguests." When hosting overnight guests, you'll want to make them feel at home. And when they feel too much at home, you'll want to mutter this mantra under your breath. Chant it in the bathroom and relax as you remove wet houseguest towels from the floor, plunge a toilet clogged with foreign houseguest matter, and extract a clump of houseguest hair from the shower drain. Chant it in the kitchen while custom-cooking meals that conform to their many dietary restrictions, and washing an endless stream of dishes while they attend to urgent Facebook updates. Finally, chant this mantra in the living room, and welcome the feeling of calm that comes over

you as you figure out what they did to the remote control to make it stop working.

MANTRA 2: "I celebrate the unique gifts of others." Chant this mantra instead of chanting, "I can tell that you put zero thought into this present." Neutralise negativity as you unwrap an Amazon gift card from your spouse. Express gratitude for that re-gifted bottle of prosecco selected especially for you — by the person you gave it to last year, after someone gave it to you the year before. Float above mobs at the mall like a songbird, chirping this mantra as you try to return a sweater that is three sizes too small and did not come with a gift receipt. Remember, this mantra is easily recited in workplace settings as well. Try it during Secret Santa ceremonies where everyone is only allowed to spend 10 bucks. Before you know it, you'll find your Zen when Muriel in Accounting gives you another bar of soap/pair of wacky novelty socks/box of Tic Tacs from the checkout counter at CVS.

MANTRA 3: "I will be my best self once we're done celebrating." This all-purpose mantra is best

Chant or rant?

Experts suggest some tongue-in-cheek mantras to maintain one's serenity and sanity in today's fast-paced lifestyle



chanted when holiday traditions take their toll on your tranquility. Begin by whispering it when selecting and/or decorating a Christmas tree with the pathological perfectionist of your choice. Later, allow yourself to chant it in a louder, more expulsive-strewn manner when the tree topples to the floor, shattering each delicate ornament and strangling you with a string of twinkling lights. This versatile mantra may also be chanted while preparing traditional holiday treats such as the Hanukkah *latke*, which translates from ancient Hebrew to: "labour-intensive potato pancake that always comes out soggy than the frozen ones from Trader Joe's." And when it's finally time to gather together for your holiday feast, recite this mantra with a powerful aperitif. You will attain instant inner peace when your seating plan is ignored, and you'll marvel at the colourful conversation between Uncle Mo in the red MAGA cap and cousin Cathy the climate change researcher.

MANTRA 4: "Everything will be different next year." Chant this year, next year, and all subsequent years.

—AP

The mind is everything. What you think you become.
—Gautama Buddha

A THERAPY LOWERS SIDE EFFECTS OF CANCER

Proton therapy leads to significantly lower risk of side effects for cancer patients when compared with traditional radiation, researchers have found.



For the findings, published in the journal JAMA Oncology, researchers from University of Pennsylvania analysed if the cancer patients going through radiation therapy alongside chemotherapy faced severe side effects in a span of 90 days. They found proton therapy reduces the relative risk of these side effects by two-thirds.

"This is exciting because it shows that proton therapy offers a way for us to reduce the serious side effects of chemo-radiation and improve patient health and well-being without sacrificing the effectiveness of the therapy," said the study's lead author Brian Baumann from the University of Pennsylvania in the US.

HIGH SUGAR MAY AFFECT SPERM QUALITY

Men please take note. If you want to preserve the quality of your sperm make sure you don't regularly eat a diet rich in sugar, says a new research adding that sperm are influenced by diet and the effects arise rapidly.

The study, published in the journal PLOS Biology, gives new insight into the function of sperm and may, in the long term, contribute to new diagnostic methods to measure sperm quality. "We see that diet influences the motility of the sperm, and we can link the changes to specific molecules in them. Our study has revealed rapid effects that are noticeable after one to two weeks," said study lead author Anita Ost from the Linköping University in Sweden.

According to the researchers, sperm quality can be harmed by several environmental and lifestyle factors, of which obesity and related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, are well-known risk factors for poor sperm quality.



KETO TOPS 'WEIGHT LOSS DIET' IN INDIA

When it comes to diets for reducing weight, the two regimens that captured the imagination of Indians in 2019 were the high-fat, low-carbohydrate ketogenic diet and intermittent fasting diet, reveals a survey by domestic health and fitness app HealthifyMe.

Intermittent fasting diets fall generally into two categories: daily time-restricted feeding, which narrows eating times to six to eight hours per day, and so-called 5:2 intermittent fasting, in which people limit themselves to one moderate-sized meal two days each week. This diet is suitable for those looking for fat loss, especially when a person is involved in a consistent workout routine.

Ketogenic diet is primarily for people with epilepsy but is now being used for other conditions as well, including weight loss, polycystic ovarian disease (PCOD), acne, endurance athletes and also for other nervous disorders. It cannot be used as a long term diet for weight loss as it is very rigid.



HIGHER WEIGHT IMPROVES CANCER SURVIVAL

There is a good news for overweight people as researchers have found that higher weight or high body mass index (BMI) could increase the chance of beating certain cancers.

"This is an interesting outcome and it raises the potential to investigate further with other cancers and other anti-cancer drugs," said study lead investigator Ganessan Kichenadasse from the Flinders University in Australia.

"We need to do further studies into the possible link between BMI and related inflammation, which might help to understand the mechanisms behind paradoxical response to this form of cancer treatment," Kichenadasse said.

"Our study provides new evidence to support the hypothesis that high BMI and obesity may be associated with response to immunotherapy," he added.



PLANT EXTRACT, HEAT KILLS CANCER CELLS

Extract from a medicinal plant *Anthocephalus Cadamba* in combination with a dye exposed to near infra-red light can selectively kill cancer cells, found a multi-institutional study.

The synergistic activation of Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) mediated autophagy (natural process of removing damaged cells) by light triggered nanoliposomes can be a useful strategy for enhancing the anti-cancer potential of combinational therapies, says the study led by researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Hyderabad.

"We have taken organic solvent mediator extract from plant *Anthocephalus Cadamba* and then tested this extract on various cell lines, both normal healthy cell lines and cancer cell lines. We found that this extract from this plant is very selective in killing cancer cells," Aravind Kumar Rengan from the Department of Biomedical Engineering at IIT Hyderabad said.



BLUES FLY HIGH AT EMIRATES

Jorginho, Tammy star in Chelsea's 2-1 comeback win over Gunners

AFP ■ LONDON

Chelsea ruined Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta's home debut as Tammy Abraham's late strike sealed a dramatic 2-1 win after Bernd Leno's horrific blunder turned the tide in a thrilling London derby on Sunday.

Leading through Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's early goal at the Emirates Stadium, Arteta was just seven minutes away from securing his first victory in his second game in charge.

But Gunners goalkeeper Leno made a hash of coming to catch a free-kick and Jorginho tapped in to spark a Chelsea fightback that climaxed in Abraham firing home with three minutes left.

After dominating the first half, it was a shocking but familiar collapse from Arsenal, whose lack of steel was the key element in the downfall of Arteta's predecessor Unai Emery.

In their final game of the decade, Arsenal showed just how much work Arteta has to do to steer the Gunners back to respectability in his first managerial role.

After coming from behind to rescue a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth in his first match on Thursday, Arteta would have been encouraged by their bright start — but not the woe-ful meltdown that leaves Arsenal with only one win in their last 15 games in all competitions.

Arsenal, 12 points adrift of the top four, have lost four consecutive home fixtures in all competitions for the first time in 60 years.

They also suffered three successive top-flight home defeats for the first time since 1977.

While Arteta held his head in despair after Abraham's winner, Frank Lampard's wild celebration showed Chelsea's need for the win after a difficult period of their own.

Fourth placed Chelsea had lost five of their last seven league games, but a second successive away win — following their recent impressive success at Tottenham — moves them four points clear of fifth placed Manchester United.

There was no fanfare for Arteta before kick-off, the Spaniard quietly take his place on the bench to applause from Arsenal fans but without any elaborate introduction.

Chelsea went close early on when William's quick free-kick caught Arsenal flat-footed, allowing Mason Mount to drift into space for a fierce strike that stung Leno's palms.



ARSENAL COLLAPSE

But, initially vibrant in possession and tireless without the ball, Arsenal exposed Chelsea's own problems at the back to take the lead with a well-rehearsed set-piece routine in the 13th minute.

Calum Chambers was positioned perfectly to rise above Fikayo Tomori and glance Mesut Ozil's corner towards Aubameyang.

The Gabon striker, who also scored in Arteta's first game, applied the finishing touch, escaping Emerson's slack marking to guide a

diving header past Kepa Arrizabalaga for his 15th goal of the season.

Arteta didn't hide his delight, fist-pumping in celebration of the first home goal of his reign.

Aubameyang's goal meant Chelsea had kept just two clean sheets in their last 11 league fixtures and, with Arsenal well on top and threatening to score again, Lampard was forced to take drastic action.

In a bid to shake Chelsea out of their lethargy, Lampard hauled off Brazilian wing-back Emerson and

sent on Italy midfielder Jorginho as he ditched his 3-4-3 formation after just 33 minutes.

The switch proved an inspired move but not before Mount, N'Golo Kante and Antonio Rudiger were all booked in quick succession as Chelsea used brute blunt Arsenal's momentum.

Chelsea were on top in the second half and teenage debutant Tariq Lamptey led the charge when his surge ended with Abraham's shot being blocked by David Luiz.

Leno's game-changing 83rd

minute howler was truly farcical, the German lying with his head in his hands after his misjudgement of Mount's high free-kick allowed Jorginho to tap into the empty net.

Suddenly, Arsenal reverted to their nervous former selves and Chelsea took full advantage to complete a remarkable fightback four minutes later.

Willian broke into the Arsenal area and crossed to Abraham, who turned unchecked by the ponderous Shkodran Mustafi to fire a cool strike under Leno.



Dortmund sign teen striking prodigy Haaland

AFP ■ DORTMUND

Borussia Dortmund have signed teenage goalscoring sensation Erling Braut Haaland from RB Salzburg, the German Bundesliga outfit announced on Monday.

In a statement, Dortmund revealed that the 19-year-old, who scored eight times in the group stage of this season's Champions League, had signed a contract until 2024 but did not mention a fee.

Haaland has caught the eye of clubs around Europe after scoring 28 goals in 22 games in all competitions so far this campaign, with RB Leipzig coach Julian Nagelsmann admitting earlier this month that they were trying for the Norway striker's signature.

"From the beginning I had the feeling I definitely wanted to switch to this club, to walk this path," Haaland said.

In a video posted to the Dortmund website, he wished Dortmund fans a happy new year as he pored over a 2020 to-do list topped with "learn German".

Earlier in December, the forward had been spotted by local media landing in the west German city to meet with club representatives.

"Despite many offers from the very top clubs across Europe, Erling Haaland has chosen the sporting challenge at BVB (Dortmund)," chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke said in a statement.

"We can all look forward to an ambitious, athletic and

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physically strong centre forward... at 19, Erling is right at the start of what will hopefully be a great career."

Haaland became the third youngest player to score a Champions League hat-trick when he netted three times in a 6-2 victory over Genk in September.

Only Wayne Rooney, England's record goalscorer, and Spain great Raul managed the feat at a younger age.

Haaland, the son of former Manchester City midfielder Alf-Inge Haaland, scored in his first five Champions League matches.

Despite his impressive form Salzburg failed to reach the last 16 following a 2-0 loss to defending champions Liverpool in their final group game this month.

Dortmund, currently fourth in the Bundesliga, are looking for a new striker with Mario Goetze and Spain international Paco Alcacer struggling for consistency this season.



West Ham sack manager Pellegrini

IAN S ■ LONDON

English Premier League side West Ham on Sunday sacked their manager Manuel Pellegrini after the club lost 2-1 at home to Leicester City — their ninth loss in the past 12 games.

"It is with great disappointment that we've had to make this decision," joint-chairman David Sullivan was quoted as saying by BBC.

It has become clear that a change is required to get the club back on track in line with our ambitions this season.

"We felt it was necessary to act now in order to give the new manager as much time as possible to try and achieve that goal."

Pellegrini was with West Ham for 18 months having been appointed in May 2018 on a three-year deal.

West Ham midfielder Declan Rice, who skippered the outfit against Leicester, said the unit lacked confidence.

Panghal dominates ring in 2019

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

History-making performances, quite a bit of selection drama on the sidelines and some ignominy due to big-ticket dope fails — Indian boxing was all this and much more in an action-packed year dominated by pint-sized dynamo Amit Panghal.

To count the positives, the 23-year-old Panghal fetched India its first ever silver at the men's world championships, the redoubtable M C Mary Kom was mostly in top form and medals poured in internationally courtesy a deep talent pool.

In the professional circuit, Vijender Singh remained unbeaten, still looking for an opponent who can stand up to the raw power of his punches.

On the downside, a flip-flop selection policy led to six-time world champion Mary Kom being dragged into an unsavoury controversy, and the accomplished duo of Neeraj Phogat (women's camp) and Sumit Sangwan (men's camp)



flunked dope tests, sending down shockwaves within the fraternity.

For most part, Indian boxing had lots to celebrate and it started with the season-opening Strandja Memorial, one of Europe's oldest and most competitive tournaments.

Panghal's 2019 gold rush began in the tournament, which was also his last competition in the 49kg category.

Former junior world champion Nikhat Zareen and Meena Kumari Devi became the first set of Indian women boxers to finish on

top at the same event. Zareen later went on to hit the headlines by vociferously raising the demand for a trial against Mary Kom.

Panghal moved up to 52kg in March and though he sounded a bit nervous about the shift, the results told a different story. He grabbed a gold immediately, at the Asian Championships in April, to assert his supremacy in the new division.

Pooja Rani, a boxer who felt shy about wearing gloves at the start of her career, ensured that women too went home with a gold with her best ever performance at the event. Mary Kom gave it a miss to prepare herself for the world championships.

Then came the world championships in September and October, the blue-riband event which lost some of its sheen after being stripped of Olympic Qualifier status by the International Olympic Committee due to the alleged administrative mess and financial mismanagement in the International Boxing Association (AIBA).

My fight was against the system, not Mary : Nikhat

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Nikhat Zareen and Mary Kom exhibited emotions that were polar opposite of each other in the aftermath of the much-awaited bout between the two on Saturday at the women's trials for the Olympic qualifiers in New Delhi.

Mary was clearly charged up, yanking her hand away from Nikhat when the latter initiated a hug immediately after the bout and later lashed out at the 23-year-old and the media in her interaction with the reporters. Nikhat, on the other hand, was composed, applauding her opponent while the referee lifted Mary's hand and later tried to pacify her supporters, including her father, who were incensed by the result of the bout.

It was clear that Mary had taken everything that Nikhat had done over the past few months personally. She said on Saturday that she did not feel like reciprocating Nikhat when the latter came to shake hands and hug her after the bout because Mary felt that the younger pugilist had shown her no respect.

Nikhat, however, maintains that her fight was not against Mary but against a system that was not giving her a fair chance to prove herself in her weight category and go for the big competitions.

"Even I never imagined that all this will happen," Nikhat told IANS on Sunday. "It was very new for me. I never expected that she will get so angry on me for going on Twitter and writing a letter to the sports minister. If she is taking all that personally that's her choice, I can't comment on that. I was fighting for a fair trial. I was fighting against the system, not Mary Kom or the federation. I was saying that there should be a proper trial before every competition. That's it."



There were murmurs that the trials before the 2019 women's World Championships, which is where the saga between the two boxers had started, did not happen at Mary's behest. She has voiced her disdain at having to give trials in the months since. On Saturday, Mary said that High Performance Directors Santiago Nieve and Raffaele Bergamasco had said that selection would be done on the basis of performances in international competitions and she had asked for an exemption on that basis.

Nikhat however feels that Mary should be ready to go for trials so as to give the younger boxers a chance to get a measure of themselves, if not anything else.

"She is a legend so she shouldn't have anything to fear. We are all juniors in front of her. She should always be ready for the trials and be a good example for the youth. Now she has defeated me and gone for the Olympic qualifier and everyone is happy which would not have been the case if she had gone

directly without giving anyone else a chance to even assess themselves against her. Hume bhi pata chale hum kitne paani me hai (We should also know where we stand). We should know where we are lacking and for that I stood up and raised my voice. There should be a trial before every competition. I lost the bout but I won hearts on that day and I am happy," she said.

Nikhat's fight for a fair trial started with the events before the women's World Championships that took place in Russia in October. She had travelled from Hyderabad to New Delhi for the 51kg trials for the competition, only to learn that it had been called off and Mary had been selected in that weight category. It was then decided that those who win gold and silver at the worlds would get an automatic place in the Indian contingent that will travel to China for the Olympic qualifiers. Mary won bronze but then BFI president Ajay Singh stirred the pot by indicating that she may be allowed to go for the qualifiers anyway.

Murray out of Australian Open

AFP ■ LONDON

Andy Murray said he felt "gutted" to be missing next month's Australian Open due to injury after being ruled out of the first Grand Slam of the new year with a pelvic injury.

The 32-year-old Scot suffered the injury playing for Great Britain in the Davis Cup last month and Murray said Saturday: "I've worked so hard to get myself into a situation where I can play at the top level and I'm gutted I'm not going to be able to play in Australia in January."

"After the AO (Australian Open) this year, when I wasn't

sure whether I'd be able to play again, I was excited about coming back to Australia and giving my best, and that makes this even more disappointing for me.

"Unfortunately I've had a setback recently and as a precaution, need to work through that before I get back on court competing."

Murray had hoped to make his return to Grand Slam action in Melbourne following a hip operation in January.

But concerns over the fitness of Murray, five times a losing Australian Open finalist, were raised when he cancelled as scheduled block of training in Miami.



BLUNDELL'S TON IN VAIN AS AUS CLINCH SERIES



AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Nathan Lyon took four wickets as Australia thrashed New Zealand by 247 runs to win the second Test at Melbourne and the series Sunday with a battling century from opener Tom Blundell proving futile.

The Black Caps, chasing a massive 488 to win, were in serious trouble after a fiery James Pattinson ripped through the top

order to leave them reeling at 38 for three.

But some fighting partnerships spear-headed by Blundell delayed the inevitable until Lyon worked his magic as the pitch deteriorated.

Blundell was last man out for a swash-buckling 121 — his second Test century and his first for two years — as New Zealand were dismissed for 240 with Trent Boult not batting after fracturing his hand in the first innings.

It was the second heavy defeat for the Black Caps, who lost by 296 runs in Perth and will be playing for pride only in the final Test at Sydney later this week.

CREDIT TO AUSTRALIA

It was Head's first innings century and Paine's quick-fire 79 that took the Test out of New Zealand's reach after captain Kane Williamson's bold decision to bowl after winning the toss.

No team had ever chased down more than 418 in Test history, though the record was set against Australia by the West Indies in Antigua in 2003.

Pattinson, playing for the injured Josh Hazlewood, did the early damage. New Zealand had reached 32-0 when he snared the key wickets of Tom Latham, batting linchpin Williamson and the experienced Ross Taylor for three just runs.

Siddle announces int'l retirement

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Veteran Australian bowler Peter Siddle announced his international retirement Sunday after a 67-Test career, with national coach Justin Langer praising him as giving his "heart and soul" to the team.

The 35-year-old had been called up to the second Test squad in Melbourne but was not selected in the side to face New Zealand and decided to call it quits.

"Just being able to play, to walk out, wear the baggy green — I'd watched guys like Punter (Ricky Ponting), Steve Waugh, guys like that wear it, represent Australia," he said.

"Every time I stepped out was amazing, I don't think I could pick one special one. "At the end of the day, to play one is amazing, to end up playing what I did is truly special."

Siddle, who played a key role in helping Australia retain the Ashes in England earlier this year, went to the Australian dressing room at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to tell his teammates personally.

"The year after I retired from play-



ing, Matty Hayden and Ricky Ponting were raving about this guy called Peter Siddle," Langer said.

Latham, scorer of a dogged 50 in New Zealand's 148 first innings, fell for eight when he edged a thunderous delivery to the diving Paine.

Williamson soon followed without scoring, lbw after unsuccessfully reviewing the umpire's original decision.

Taylor didn't fare much better, dragging onto his middle stump to leave Pattinson with figures of 3-5 at lunch off two overs.

Henry Nicholls was the only wicket to fall between lunch and tea, cleverly stumped for 33 by Paine off Lyon just one ball after he smashed the spinner for six.

Blundell, in only his third Test, and BJ Watling put on 72 before Lyon finally

broke their dangerous partnership, tempting an outside edge from the New Zealand wicketkeeper that flew to David Warner at slip and he was gone for 22.

Lyon then mopped up Colin de Grandhomme and Mitchell Santner before Tim Southee was run out in a horror mix-up, with Blundell swinging his bat before he was caught by Lyon off Marnus Labuschagne.

Paine earlier declared Australia's second innings on 168 for five after Head was bowled by Neil Wagner for 28. Matthew Wade was unbeaten on 30 with Wagner taking 3-50.

They had resumed at 137 for four, building on their first innings 467.



Cannot put timeline when I will get fit: Bhuvneshwar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar is not sure when he will make a comeback to competitive cricket as it is yet to be ascertained whether a surgery is required to treat his sports hernia.

The senior seamer, who is expected to be out for an indefinite period of time, doesn't want to blame the National Cricket Academy for allegedly bungling his rehabilitation. He, though, is a bit surprised as to why his hernia couldn't be detected earlier.

"World T20 is still good nine months away. I am not thinking about that. First thing is getting fit and I don't know when I will get fit," Bhuvneshwar told PTI.

Asked about the NCA's role, the 29-year-old was predictably defensive and said it's best the BCCI brass deals with it.

"It's up to BCCI as to how they are going to take it. They must have had a chat with the NCA."

"NCA must have tried their best but I don't know what went wrong and why they couldn't diagnose. Still I am not the right person to comment on that as it might say something else and BCCI will come up with something else," said Bhuvneshwar.

Bhuvneshwar also offered a dead defence when asked if players are wary of going to the NCA.

"It's an individual's responsibility or wish whether he want to go to the NCA or not."

On his recovery process, he said that he is waiting for the doctor's appointment, after which a clearer picture could emerge on the need for a surgery.

"There is no surety of surgery, but generally, the standard procedure in case of sports hernia is surgery. But we still need to take an appointment and I am not sure where it's going to be. But we are trying to get it as soon as possible."

"Till I consult a doctor, can't say when will be the comeback as it will depend on the diagnosis and treatment plan."

Bhuvneshwar, after being out due to side strain post the tour of the West Indies, had made a comeback against the same side in the T20 series earlier this month before being sidelined again.

"Injuries can be frustrating at times but I am not at all heartbroken. It's part and parcel of our journey. I was in good rhythm against the West Indies."

"I want to be back at my best but as I said I don't know what will be the treatment like. So whatever the doctor says will go with that thing only," he said.

Cricket SA change in Eng Test victory: Du Plessis

AFP ■ CENTURION

Proteas captain Faf du Plessis gave a ringing endorsement of the changes in management in South African cricket after his side won the first Test against England by 107 runs at SuperSport Park on Sunday.

The win broke a five-Test losing sequence for the Proteas and gave them their first points in the World Test championship.

"We've got the right people in the right jobs at the top of Cricket South Africa," he said of the appointment of former captain Graeme Smith as director of cricket and Mark Boucher as head coach after a period of upheaval in the local game.

"Leadership always comes from the top and filters down," said Du Plessis.

"I feel it set the tone for the way that we are playing right now. That's a start for us as a team. Now you can trust the system a little bit more and just focus on playing cricket."

An enthralling Test was still in the balance at lunchtime on the fourth day. After a tense morning when England could score only 50 runs in 25 overs for the loss of overnight batsmen Rory Burns (84) and Joe



Denly (31), England were 205 runs short of their target of 376 but had their best batsmen, captain Joe Root and Ben Stokes at the crease.

Immediately after lunch, with 14 overs to be bowled before the second new ball was due, Root and Stokes upped the tempo, adding 30 runs in five overs. Thirteen of those runs came from one over from left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj but Du Plessis persevered with the spinner.

It was Maharaj who made the crucial breakthrough, bowling Stokes for 14 when the left-hander tried to play a cut shot against a ball which pitched in

a rough area and deflected off his glove onto the stumps.

"We had a lot of confidence in Kesh," said Du Plessis.

"We kept saying that we had a feeling that in the second innings he was going to get Ben Stokes out. He has got him out a few times and the way that Stokes plays he is going to take the game on. We had a gut feeling that it was going to happen. It was a massive wicket for us."

When the new ball was taken seven overs later the end came quickly as Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje blasted out the remaining batsmen.

Rabada took four for 103 and Nortje three for 56.

Kane urges more fighting spirit from NZ

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson said his team need to mirror the fighting spirit of century-maker Tom Blundell if they are to bounce back from their second-Test thrashing by Australia.

"Obviously it was hard work out there, the task was immense. But you look at some small positives... That was a truly fantastic innings," he said after the 247-run defeat — their second Test loss inside four days.

"He led the way and it is important that we all take something from that."

"The effort from the bowlers throughout was something that is inspiring to us as a team, that never-give-up attitude."

"But at the same time if we are looking for

areas to improve there are a few of them. We do need to try and put Australia under a bit more pressure before their first innings total gets past that point of control."

Australia took the game away from New Zealand on day one after Williamson won the toss and took a gamble by putting them in to bat.

It turned out to be a poor decision, but he insisted it was a reasonable one at the time.

"I felt like there was enough in the surface to bowl first and it was obviously very important for us to be on top of our game and the surface did offer some sideways movement and swing," he said.

"But credit to Australia for getting through that first session and put 400 on the board."



Paine hails Aussies teamwork

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Captain Tim Paine pointed to teamwork on Sunday as the crucial factor in Australia winning all four home Tests so far this summer — and all inside four days.

After crushing Pakistan twice, they have now done the same to New Zealand, wrapping up their three-Test series against the Black Caps with a 247-run thrashing in Melbourne.

A first-innings Travis Head century, 85 from Steve Smith and 79 by Paine took the game away from the visitors after Australia lost the toss and were put into bat.

Pat Cummins, James Pattinson and Nathan Lyon then led the attack in dismissing New Zealand twice.

Paine said it was all about players stepping up when others were having an off day.

"I think it shows that we're starting to spread the load," he said.

"When we work together as a team and build pressure — one day it's going to be Pat (Cummins), the next day it's going to be Nathan (Lyon), the next day it's going to be James Pattinson, another day it's going to be Mitchell Starc."

"We just keep driving that home to all our team," he added.

"If we keep building pressure as a team we've got some absolute firepower and we know that all of them are going to have their day in the sun."

Paine said the same applied to the batting, where some fired in Melbourne and others didn't.

"The same with the batting, trying to build partnerships, trying to take teams' bowlers really deep, make them bowl lots of overs," he said.

"At some stage we're all going to get a chance to score lots of runs as well."

Paine said he wanted the same intensity for that game, which meant muted celebrations in Melbourne with such a short turnaround.

"We want to win every Test match, there's no doubt about that," he said.

Rabada, Nortje plot England's downfall

South Africa see off stubborn England to claim 107-run victory

AFP ■ CENTURION

South Africa broke down stubborn England resistance to win the first Test of their World Test Championship series by 107 runs at SuperSport Park on Sunday.

England needed 376 to win but despite some committed batting were bowled out for 268 on the fourth day of the five-day encounter.

An enthralling contest swung South Africa's way when left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj bowled Ben Stokes to halt a brief flurry of strokes as Stokes and captain Joe Root tried to lift the scoring rate before the second new ball was due.

The new ball then had an immediate impact with Kagiso Rabada having Jonny Bairstow caught at gully before Anrich Nortje claimed the crucial wick-



et of Root, who made a fighting 48 before he was caught behind.

It was the second time in the day Nortje claimed a wicket with the second ball of a new spell after he made the first breakthrough of the day by dismissing top-scorer Rory Burns for 84.

The remaining wickets fell quickly, with Rabada finishing with four for 103 and fellow fast bowler Anrich Nortje claiming three for 56.

Maharaj, who broke England's first wicket stand of 92 on Saturday when he dismissed Dom Sibley, took two for 37.

South Africa produced a disciplined bowling performance, making scoring difficult on a pitch which always offered something to the bowlers with some sideways movement and uneven bounce.

England added only 50 runs in 25 overs while losing two wickets during the morning.

Rory Burns took his overnight score of 77 to 84 before mistiming a pull against Nortje to be caught at mid-on, while Joe

Denly was leg before wicket to Dwaine Pretorius for 31.

Burns and Denly saw off the threat of Vernon Philander and Rabada but found scoring difficult.

Philander conceded only one run in five overs. Rabada gave up 23 in six overs, which included two hooked sixes by Denly.

Burns, who faced most of Philander's bowling, adding only seven runs off 37 balls. The change to Nortje brought an immediate result for South Africa as Burns attempted to pull the fast bowler's second delivery and sent the ball looping to Rabada at mid-on.

Nortje made a second crucial breakthrough when South African captain Faf du Plessis made an inspired bowling change.

First innings destroyer Vernon Philander sent down three overs with the second new ball but was not making the batsmen play many deliveries, so Du Plessis called on Nortje with immediate success.