

**OPINION 8**  
DANGERS OF A DIGITAL WORLD

**WORLD 12**  
'WE DON'T RETREAT IN FACE OF AMERICA': HASSAN ROUHANI

**SPORT 15**  
MANCHESTER CITY BEAT UNITED 3-1 IN LEAGUE CUP

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## Iran missiles hit US bases in Iraq

Trump says no American lives lost, Iran standing down after attacks

AFP/PTI ■ TEHRAN/BAGHDAD/WASHINGTON

As Iran fired 22 missiles at Iraqi bases housing US and other coalition troops in Iraq on Wednesday, US President Donald Trump claimed that no Americans were harmed in the attacks as he offered to embrace peace along with the Iranian leadership, in a significant move to de-escalate the tensions in West Asia.

Trump also vowed that he will never allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon. "We suffered no casualties. All of our soldiers are safe and only minimal damage was sustained at our military bases," Trump said in an address to the nation from the White House Grand Foyer. His remarks came hours after Iran launched missiles targeting at least two bases where US military and coalition forces are stationed in Iraq, which Tehran said was a "slap in the face" of America.

"All is well!" US President Trump tweeted earlier. "Assessment of casualties & damages taking place now. So far, so good!", he added. According to Iranian state TV, the attacks were in revenge for the killing of the commander of Iran's powerful

Revolutionary Guards, General Qasem Soleimani, in a US drone strike on Friday, which was ordered by Trump. The Iranian state television claimed that "at least 80 terrorist US soldiers" were killed in the strikes. Some 5,000 US soldiers are in Iraq as part of the international coalition against the IS terror group.

In a direct message to the Iranian leaders and the people, Trump said the United States is "ready to embrace peace with all who seek it." "To the people and leaders of Iran, we want you to have a future and a great future, one that you deserve," Trump said.

However the US President vowed "as long as I'm President of the United States, Iran will never be allowed to have a nuclear weapon." Earlier, Iraq's Prime Minister's office said it had received "an official verbal message" from Iran informing it that a missile attack on US forces stationed on Iraqi soil was imminent.

However, hours later, Iraq's President Barham Saleh condemned Iran's missile strikes on Iraqi bases where US and other foreign troops are based, saying he feared "dangerous developments" in the region.

"We denounce the Iranian missile bombing that hit mili-

tary installations on Iraqi territory and renew our rejection of the repeated violation of state sovereignty and the transformation of Iraq into a battlefield for warring sides," his office said in a statement.

"We received an official verbal message from the Islamic Republic of Iran that the Iranian response to the assassination of Qasem Soleimani had begun or would begin shortly, and that the strike would be limited to where the US military was located in Iraq without specifying the locations," said Iraq PM's office.

The Iraq Prime Minister's office said it was simultaneously contacted by the US, as the missiles slammed into the Ain al-Asad base in western Iraq and Harir further north.

Western powers have condemned Iran's missile attack on the US bases in Iraq. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said, "I condemn the Iranian missile attacks on US and coalition forces in Iraq. NATO calls on Iran to refrain from violence."

Meanwhile, Kuwait on Wednesday denied reports that the US had decided to withdraw its troops from the Gulf state, saying the Twitter account of its official news agency had been hacked.



This satellite image provided on Wednesday by Middlebury Institute of International Studies and Planet Labs Inc shows the damage caused from an Iranian missile strike at the Ain al-Asad air base in Iraq

## India issues travel advisory against Iraq, reroutes flights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Given the simmering tension between Iran and the US, India on Wednesday took a series of measures including issuing an advisory to its citizens to avoid non-essential travel to Iraq until further notification.

The Indian Navy is also on standby to evacuate Indians from the Middle-East in case of any exigency and a warship is

already deployed in the Gulf of Oman. Issuing the travel advisory, the Ministry of External Affairs said, "In view of the prevailing situation in Iraq, Indian nationals are advised to avoid all non-essential travel to Iraq until further notification."

It also said Indian nationals residing in Iraq are advised to be alert and may avoid travel within Iraq. "Our Embassy in Baghdad and Consulate in Erbil will continue to function normally to provide all services to Indians residing in Iraq," the

Ministry said. This came after tension increased between Iran and US following the killing of top Iranian commander General Qasem Soleimani and Iran launching missile strikes against two US military bases in Iraq on Wednesday.

The Directorate of Civil Aviation (DGCA), meanwhile, asked the Indian airline companies to remain vigilant and take all precautions in airspace over Iran, Iraq, Gulf of Oman and waters of Persian Gulf, hours after a Ukrainian

## 176 killed as Ukrainian plane crashes in Tehran



Debris is seen from an Ukrainian plane which crashed as authorities work at the scene in Shahedshahr, southwest of Tehran, Iran, on Wednesday

AFP ■ TEHRAN

A Ukrainian airliner crashed in Tehran on Wednesday, killing all 176 people on board, mainly Iranians and Canadians.

Search-and-rescue teams were combing through the smoking wreckage of the Boeing 737 flight from Tehran to Kiev but officials said there was no hope of finding anyone alive.

The vast majority of the passengers on the Ukraine International Airlines flight were non-Ukrainians, including 82 Iranians and 63 Canadians, officials said. The crash occurred with tensions high in West Asia and shortly after Tehran launched missiles at bases in Iraq housing US troops. But there was no immediate indication of foul play and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned against "speculating" on cause of disaster. Meanwhile, Iran's aviation authority said it would

not hand over to Americans the recovered black boxes of the crashed aircraft. "We will not give the black boxes to the manufacturer (Boeing) and the Americans," Iran Civil Aviation Organisation head Ali Abedzadeh said, quoted by Mehr news agency. "It's not yet clear which country black box will go to for the investigation," he added.

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# HC to Patanjali College: Refund hiked fee in 8 wks

Chairman and MD of Devbhoomi College ordered to appear in court

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The High Court of Uttarakhand has ordered the Patanjali Ayurved College, Haridwar, to return the increased fee amount charged from its students within eight weeks. The single bench of justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari issued this order while hearing on a contempt petition filed by students against the college for not observing the earlier orders of the court.

In another contempt petition, the high court has directed the chairman and managing director of the Devbhoomi Medical College of Ayurveda and hospital in Dehradun to appear in the court on February 19.

In the first case, student of BMS in the Patanjali Ayurved College, Shubham Pant and 23 others had filed the contempt petition in the high court stat-



ing that the court had earlier ordered the college to return the increased amount of fees charged from the students. However, the institution had not returned the said amount. The petitioners had stated that as per the rules, the college should have charged ₹80,000 fee but the amount charged was ₹2.15 lakh.

After the students challenged this in the high court, the court had directed the college to return the additional amount. However, the institute had not followed the order of the court, due to which the students had filed a contempt petition. In the second case, BMS student in Devbhoomi

medical college, Prakhari Mishra and others had filed a contempt petition in the high court. They had also pointed out that the college had charged ₹2.15 lakh fee instead of ₹80,000. The court had in July 2018 ordered the refund of the increased amount to the students. However, the college had not refunded the increased amount and was seeking hiked fees from the students, the petitioners stated. Considering this, the single bench of justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari has directed the chairman and managing director of the college to appear personally in the court on February 19.

# Various trade unions participate in strike against Govt policies

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Various trade unions under-taken part in the nationwide strike held on Wednesday. A number of union members participated in the protest demonstration despite the rain in Dehradun.

State working president of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Samar Bhandari said, "Everyone from the public to the private sector including banks, defence, transport, oil, coal have come together in opposition of the anti-worker policies of the current Government which makes it easy to deduce the damage done by the Government across the country."

Besides, the laws and orders which were approved after considerable struggle in the past for labourers and employees have been shamelessly transformed," he alleged.

Power engineers association general secretary Mukesh Kumar said that the Government claims that all of its policies and decisions are for the public, but everyone knows privatisation of the PSUs is not for public welfare.

In fact, the whole point of privatising some PSUs is to benefit certain powerful people who in turn help Government during elections,



he alleged. He further said, "The strike is just a representation of people's anger and disappointment with Government policies. If the Government ignores our voices, the next time our protest will be more firm and stronger." Members of the Left parties also participated in the strike and the protest against the Government.

"All these years, the Government has been disappointing the people of working class from all sectors. Moreover, the Government has failed to do anything pro-filic and functional for the youth.

If truth be told, the Modi Government has made the situation worse. The increasing rate of unemployment and uncontrolled inflation in prices of every item are the best examples of the proper func-

tioning of the Government" said Pranjal Mishra, a member of Communist Party of India (Marxist). Apart from trade unions, some college students participated in the strike too. "We are here to show our disappointment towards the Government. Under the supervision of current ministers, to get an education has been made impossible for economically backward students," said Abhishek Gusain, a DAV College student.

Giving his own example, he explains, "Our examination fee in the college has hiked almost three-fold from ₹700. I belong to a lower middle-class family and students like me cannot afford to pay such a hefty amount during every examination session. The Government should at least spare education and poor students."

# Strike in banks affects cheque transactions worth ₹300 crore

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Cheque transactions amounting to about ₹300 crore were affected in the state due to employees of various nationalised banks participating in the strike called by trade unions on Wednesday.

According to assistant general secretary of Uttaranchal Bank Employees Union (UBEU), Vinay Kumar Sharma, "All nationalised banks like Punjab National Bank (PNB), Allahabad Bank, Union Bank, Central Bank of India, and Nainital Bank participated in the strike except State Bank of India (SBI) and no work was carried out in any of the branches.

Cheque transactions worth about ₹300 crore were affected and almost no cash transactions were done. If we look at the bigger scenario of



the strike, it must have affected transactions amounting to ₹3,000 crore across the country," he opined. Besides other trade unions, members of the UBEU staged protest against the anti-labour policies, inadequate hiring of new employees and unwanted merger of banks.

# Women should develop leadership by engaging in social service: Guv



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Governor Baby Rani Maurya said that women should develop their leadership capacity by engaging themselves in social services. Women should support and help each other.

She said this while interacting with 33 women faculty members of University of

Petroleum and Energy Studies who met her at the Raj Bhawan on Wednesday. The women faculty members of UPES called on the governor as part of the Shakti programme of the university aimed at imparting training in leadership capacity building for women.

Maurya said that women should make their own way with their will power and val-

ues. They should create a good balance between family and career. Being a woman is matter of pride in itself. Women should move forward in life with self-confidence and hard work, said the governor. HERS chairman Sharad Mehra, UPES senior director Arun Dhand, HR director Monika Jain and others were also present on the occasion.

# Police nab 3 for murder of Gram Pradhan outside court Alam was shot dead in retribution due to old family feud

3 hired shooters allegedly carried out murder for an offer of ₹10L

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

The police have arrested three persons allegedly involved in shooting dead the Pradhan of Nagla Kubra, Qamar Alam at Ramnagar in Roorkee on December 20 last year.

The three hired shooters allegedly carried out the murder for an offer of Rs 10 lakh given to shoot Alam by Abid who shared an old rivalry with the victim. The police arrested Naeem and Salman for the murder and Dilshad for being involved in the crime.

Alam was shot dead by bike borne assailants outside the court in Ramnagar,

Roorkee on the evening of December 20. Addressing the media, the superintendent of police (rural) Swapn Kishore Singh said that police investigation focused on the old animosity Alam had with Kamelpur resident Abid.

Alam's brother Muzammil was murdered in 2010 allegedly by Abid and his family members. After this, in 2012, Alam had allegedly murdered Abid's brother Farooq. The investigation after Alam's murder revealed the involvement of Abid and his elder brother Ashiq in the murder.

Abid had offered to pay Rs 10 lakh to Muzaffarnagar resident Wasim for killing Alam. Abid met Wasim while in jail in the Muzammil murder case. There are more than 30 cases against Wasim in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Wasim sent his brothers Naeem and Salman to assassinate Alam.

Abid's relative Farhan helped the duo identify their target who was shot on December 20. The SP further



informed that Abid had planned the murder while in jail. He asked notorious criminal Wasim, a native of Muzaffarnagar, to conduct the murder while the duo was in

Roorkee jail. Later, Abid started living at Dharmshala in Himachal Pradesh. About 10 minutes after Alam's murder Abid made a video showing himself to be in Dharmshala

and called the local police informing them about the murder in Roorkee in which the Haridwar police could implicate him though he was in Himachal Pradesh.

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# More rain & snow in store, some relief in Doon today



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Caption- Water collects on a deserted DSA ground on a rainy Wednesday in Nainital. Pioneer photo

Consistent rainfall throughout most part of Wednesday in Dehradun sharpened the cold in the provisional state capital. While various mountainous regions also experienced rain and snowfall, the weather in the State on Thursday is forecast to be partly to generally cloudy.

According to the state meteorological centre, very light to light rainfall/snowfall is likely to occur at isolated places in the mountains especially in Kumaon region while dry weather likely to prevail in rest of the state. Snowfall is likely to occur at places located at 2000 metres altitude and

above. Further, hail is likely to occur at isolated places especially in Dehradun, Haridwar, Udhampur and Udhampur Singh Nagar districts on Thursday.

Dense to very dense fog is likely to occur in plains during morning hours especially in Haridwar and Udhampur Singh Nagar districts on Thursday. However, people in Dehradun may experience some relief from the rain as the sky here is forecast to be main-

ly clear to partly cloudy on Thursday with the maximum and minimum temperatures likely to be around 15 degrees Celsius and six degrees Celsius respectively.

On Wednesday, the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in various places were 10.8 degrees Celsius and 10 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 15.8 degrees Celsius and 11 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 1.8 degrees Celsius and -0.8 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 2.8 degrees Celsius and two degrees Celsius respectively in New Tehri.

# U'khand Jameeyat Ulema chief meets Mahant Dass Two religious leaders discuss CAA, emphasise on need to raise awareness



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Chief Imam of Uttarakhand Raees Ahmed met the Mahant Devendra Das at Darbar Sahib on Wednesday. They two religious leaders held elaborate discussion on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The chief Imam is also the Sadar of Jameeyat Ulema-a-Hind and Manager Madarsa Jamiatulslam Al Islamiya. A communiqué from the Darbar Sahib said that the Mahant Devendra Das and Chief Imam expressed their opinions over myths and misconceptions among the common people about the CAA. Besides this, they had discussions about improving the condition of Madarsas and Waqf board.

In the meeting, Raees Ahmed said that the government should appoint senior representatives who can explain the CAA in easy and common words to the general public. "Such direct dialogue between the government and the public will melt away the myths and misconceptions about the Act to a lot extent," he said.

Mahant Devendra Das said that the myths and misconceptions among the common people about this Act can be sorted out by convincing the people.

# Big step in e-governance: First e-Cabinet meet held in U'khand

## Six decisions taken; college principals authorised to appoint guest faculty on vacant posts

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In the first e-cabinet of Uttarakhand held at secretariat on Wednesday, the state government authorised the college principals to appoint guest faculties on the vacant posts of teachers. Informing about the decisions of state cabinet, the government spokesperson, Madan Kaushik said that a total of six issues were brought before the cabinet on the day.

He said that to fill vacant posts of assistant professors in the Government colleges, the Principals have been authorised to appoint eligible candidates as guest faculty for a period of 11 months. There



are 2137 posts of teachers in government colleges of the state out of which 1176 posts are filled by permanent faculty members. The process of appointments of assistant pro-

fessors from public service commission is also underway. Since it would take time, the Government has decided to appoint guest faculties. The cabinet also gave its approval

for the minimum support price of sugarcane. The MSP for early variety has been fixed at ₹327 per quintal while the MSP of late variety would be ₹317 per quintal. The cabinet

also gave its approval for prorogation of assembly session. Kaushik added that cabinet decided that the members of corporative societies would be given grant under 'Ganga Gai Dairy scheme'. In the grant the women members would be given priority.

In another decision, the cabinet decided that the state government would construct new buildings in place of acquired buildings under Kedarpuri Master plan.

As of now new buildings are being constructed only under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of companies.

The cabinet gave its nod to double the grant for Kailash

## E-Cabinet to promote paperless culture in governance: CM Rawat

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat formally initiated the e-cabinet at state secretariat on Wednesday.

The objective of the e-cabinet is to promote the culture of paperless work in offices and develop institutional memory. The CM said that the new system would not only reduce the use of paper but also

help in easily getting the decisions of cabinet taken earlier. He said that e-cabinet is an important decision in the direction of e-governance and transparency.

It is worth mentioning here that in the e-cabinet system, on line proposals would be sent to the cabinet ministers for approval. The Gopan department of state government has set up a portal for e-

cabinet. The users would be provided an e-account and the online ID of all cabinet ministers is prepared by the department. The information about cabinet meetings would be provided by sms and e-mail.

The minutes of the meetings and decisions would be uploaded online on the portal. The departments concerned would get digital approvals of the cabinet decisions.

Mansarovar Yatra. The pilgrims would now get an amount of ₹50000 instead of ₹25000.

## Opposing CAA is anti-Dalit, says Sanjay Nirmal



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

About 80 per cent of those who came to India to escape religious persecution in Bangladesh and Pakistan are either members of the scheduled caste or Dalits. Opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act which is in their favour, amounts to opposing the welfare of the Dalits. The Bharatiya Janata Party Anusuchit Jati Morcha national office bearer Sanjay Nirmal said this while addressing the media here on Wednesday.

He said that SC and Dalit community members have been persecuted the most in Pakistan and Bangladesh. "They are not allowed to undergo education or have the right to equality in society there. They are there only to do menial jobs. They are also forced to convert with the

Dalit community facing religious persecution the most. Minorities in Pakistan had dwindled from 23 per cent to three per cent.

They have either been forcibly converted or been killed. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act is in their favour but the Congress and other opposition parties are opposing the Act," said Nirmal. He thanked the prime minister Narendra Modi and Union Home minister Amit Shah for the CAA, stating that the scheduled and Dalit communities are grateful for this.

The public awareness campaign will be stepped up further to inform the members of the scheduled caste and Dalit communities about the CAA and to expose the lies being spread about this Act by the opposition, he said.

## Cong delegation meets Governor on various issues

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A delegation of Uttarakhand unit of Congress party led by Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president, Pritam Singh met the Governor Baby Rani Maurya at Raj Bhawan on Wednesday and drew her attention on many issues. The delegation handed over a memorandum to the Governor on the occasion. In the memorandum, the Congress said that the general public is reeling under price rise.

The Congress leaders said that the BJP Government had promised that it would control prices within 100 days of assuming office but the increasing prices have hit the people hard. The regular increase in prices of diesel and petrol has fueled the prices and the common man has to toil hard for securing two square meals.

In the memorandum, the Congress leaders said that the state government has failed in fulfilling its promise of waiving off the loans of farmers and clearing the dues of Sugarcane farmers.

In last few months, 13 farmers have committed suicide. The Congress also took the government to task for failing to provide employment and increasing cases of corruption.

The congress claimed that the Government that boasted off about zero tolerance on corruption is dithering to take action on NH 74 compensation scam. The memorandum mentioned the NHM scam, scholarship scam, SIIDCUL scam and scam in transfers. It

also said that the state Government's promise to bring Lokayukt within 100 days of assuming office has remained unfulfilled. In the memorandum the Congress party also took the State Government to the task for constituting district development authorities in all the districts.

The party claimed that the people in all parts of the state are very agitated as they are facing problems due to these authorities. In the memorandum the Congress party accused the Government for failing miserably on law and order front. It said that in last three years the incidents of murder, dacoity, theft and rape have increased many folds. The crime against women has also increased.

The party also blamed the Government for selling profit earning THDC. The party also raised the issues of recent land ordinance which has paved the way for purchase of land in mountainous areas by land mafias and industrialists.

The Congress party also registered its protest on shifting of National Cadet Corps (NCC) academy from Devprayag to Pauri. The Congress leaders urged the Governor to take cognizance of the issues of public interest and direct the State Government to appropriate action.

The delegation included Leader of Opposition (LoP) Indira Hridayesh, deputy leader in state assembly Karan Mahra, MLAs Furkan Ahmed, Mamta Rakesh, Adesh Chauhan, former MLAs Anusuya Prasad Maikhuri and Rajkumar were present on the occasion.




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## Masked JNU goons identified, will crack case soon: Police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police is closing on the masked miscreants involved in the Sunday violence which resulted in injury of 36 Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) students. Well placed sources said on Sunday that they have identified the face behind those masks and are on the verge of cracking the case.

Meanwhile, protests continued for the third consecutive day in JNU campus. Police though is yet to make any arrest till now but senior officials tasked with the probe said they have got several vital leads on the identities of the masked miscreants who wreaked havoc on the unarmed students and vandalised the campus.

Police teams are tracing the mobile phones which were active inside the JNU campus and its adjoining areas before and after the violence. "Police teams are also scanning the phone numbers who were talking to each other before and



after the violence broke out inside Periyar and Sabarmati hostels," said a senior police official.

Also, police on Wednesday put posters appealing students to share videos and photos of the incident that were doing rounds on the social media platforms. Police wants original footages not the edited ones.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) has also received several videos and information from the students and independent sources on Wednesday.

## No proof of children's murder at Muzaffarpur shelter home, says CBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is no evidence of murder of children in Bihar's Muzaffarpur shelter home, the CBI on Wednesday told the Supreme Court. The probe agency told the apex court that two skeletons recovered from the premises were found to be of a woman and a man in forensic examination. A Bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde accepted the status report of the CBI and allowed two officers to be relieved from the investigation team.

Representing the CBI, Attorney General KK Venugopal told a Bench, also comprising Justice B R Gavai and Justice Surya Kant, that inmates had given statements that murder of children had taken place and bodies were buried. "When the probe agency went to the spot where the alleged bodies were buried, two skeleton parts were recovered. On forensic investigation of the skeleton parts it



was found to be of a woman and a man and the possibility of murder of minor was ruled out," Venugopal told the apex court. The Attorney General said when experts of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) again spoke to the girls who had given the statement, the allegation of murder of minors was found to be false.

Venugopal said the CBI traced the 35 girls who were alleged to be murdered and found them alive.

## BJP routed in Maharashtra rural polls

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Close on the heels of it losing power in Maharashtra, the BJP on Wednesday suffered a humiliating defeat in local body elections in the State, as the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) captured power in five out of six Zilla Parishads and walked away with majority Panchayat Samiti seats in five out of six districts where the polls were held.

It what came as personal setback for former Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnis as the Amit Shah-led party lost power in the Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samitis in his home district of Nagpur.

The MVA, comprising the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress captured power in the Zilla Parishads of Nagpur, Washim, Akola (all three in Vidarbha region), Nandurbar (in north Maharashtra) and Palghar (in coastal Konkan region), while the BJP managed to come to power in Dhule ZP in north Maharashtra.

## Anti-CAA protests force Modi to skip Khelo India launch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/ GUWAHATI

In the backdrop of protests on Citizenship and NRC related issues, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not be visiting Guwahati to inaugurate the Khelo India Youth Games 2020 on Friday. For the past few days, many organisations including AASU had threatened to stage demonstration against the Prime Minister if he visited Assam to inaugurate the games.

Assam BJP spokesman Dewan Dhruva Jyoti Maral first told media that the Prime Minister has cancelled the visit to the State. In the evening, the Sport Ministry officials confirmed that the Khelo India will be inaugurated jointly by Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijju and Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

An invitation was sent to the PMO to invite Modi to inaugurate the Khelo India Youth Games but no confir-



mation on it has been received, BJP State unit spokesman Rupam Goswami told PTI on Wednesday.

"There is no talk about the Prime Minister coming to Guwahati to inaugurate Khelo India. Sending an invitation to the PM is a formality. We have not received any confirmation from the PMO to our invitation," he said when asked whether Modi has cancelled his visit to Assam, which is witnessing protests against the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act.

## CAPSULE

**MAMATA SLAMS LEFT, CONGRESS FOR BANDH Sagar Islands:** Hitting out at the Left and the Congress, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Wednesday that those who don't have any political existence in the state are trying to ruin its economy by pursuing "cheap politics" of strikes.

**RAIN LASHES DELHI-NCR, TRIGGERS TRAFFIC JAM**  
New Delhi: Rain lashed parts of Delhi-NCR on Wednesday morning, bringing the mercury down and causing traffic snarls at multiple intersections, particularly in the Capital. The minimum temperature was recorded at 9.3 degrees Celsius, three notches above normal," a Met official said.

**QUOTA FOR CHRISTIANS: SC TO EXAMINE PLEA**  
New Delhi: The SC on Wednesday agreed to look into a plea seeking directions to Centre to allocate benefits given to Scheduled Castes to Christians having a Scheduled Caste origin. A bench issued notice to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, the National Commission for Minorities and the Registrar General of India in this regard.

## Safest JNU now scariest, rue students

GAYATHRI MANI ■ NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus and the hostel premises were one of the safest places in the country for us even than our home but now it has become the scariest place for all the students, said Pushpa, a PhD scholar in Russian language.

She has been distraught ever since the violence took place inside university hostels. Students, especially women, dread going out alone and have started walking in groups to have some security around them.

"Now we are going out in groups or pairs from one centre to another because we never know what will happen next. When the incident took place even the common innocent students who were not part



of it were caught into the vortex of violence and brutally beaten by the goons. Every student of this university knows who are the people behind this violence. I am studying in this university since 2010 and protests were held before but this will be the first time that such incident has taken place and the Vice Chancellor is just

idle and doing nothing to instill confidence amongst students," said Pushpa.

The Pioneer visited the JNU campus on Tuesday and Wednesday to feel the atmosphere there and how students were coping after watching the battered and blood soaked images of their colleagues.

Days after the violent

attack, when a group of over 50 masked men and women allegedly belonging to Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarti Parishad (ABVP) and Bajrang Dal entered the campus and Periyar Hostel and beat students to pulp and damaged properties. A group of students Pawan Parag, Amit, Nivedita and Ravi Yadav from the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies (SLL&CS) said the students have been protesting for more than 70 days against the fee hike as that militates against the very ethos and culture of the JNU.

"Our parents are scared but being a citizen of this country and a student of this university, it is my right to raise an issue, be it fee hike or Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

## Twitterati Chhapaak Deepika

As netizens call for film boycott after her JNU visit, Govt denounces act

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bollywood diva Deepika Padukone's presence in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) to support student protest against violence on the campus close to the release of her film 'Chhapaak' on Wednesday polarised a range of people as she received brickbats and bouquets for her 'gesture' in social media.

Amid call of some BJP functionaries and netizens,



including Twitterati, for boycotting Padukone's film, the Government said anybody could go anywhere and express opinion in a democracy like India. Padukone got support from a section of Bollywood, including filmmakers Anurag

Kashyap, Nikkhil Advani, Hansal Mehta, Anubhav Sinha, actors Richa Chadha, Swara Bhaskar, who advised her for meeting the students at the university. "The female of the species is, and was, and will always be the strongest of the

two #DeepikaPadukone. Chhapaak first day all shows. Let's all those who stand against the violence go to @bookmyshow and show them. Make our silent statement which will be the loudest," Kashyap wrote on Twitter. Meanwhile, Deepika's upcoming film turned into a raging controversy after a magazine article claimed the name of the antagonist had been changed.

By 4 pm, the micro-blogging sites 'Nadeem Khan' had clocked close to 60,000 tweets and 'Rajesh' close behind with 50,000. The film is based on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal. In 2005, Laxmi was disfigured for life when a man called Nadeem and three others allegedly hurled acid at her in Delhi's upscale Khan Market.

## Min reviews preparations for Young Leader Conclave

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Uttarakhand would organise a two day youth leader conclave on January 11 and 12 in the provisional state capital. On Wednesday, the state minister for higher education, cooperatives and protocol, Dhan Singh Rawat took a meeting of the officials to discuss the preparation for the event.

In the meeting, Rawat directed that the information about the conclave should be provided by different mediums so that maximum number of youth are benefited by it. He said that the conclave would provide a platform to the youth from all parts of the



country and in depth deliber-

ations would be held to take

Uttarakhand in the direction

Rawat and experts of many

of achieving excellence. The minister directed the department of culture to ensure that the visiting delegates are informed about the culture of the state by the medium of folk dances on the day.

Chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat would inaugurate the two day conclave which would be organised at ONGC auditorium. The inaugural session would be addressed by CM

subjects. In the sessions to be held during the conclave, discussions on topics of human resource development, health and environment, Information Technology, infrastructure and industry and 'Ava Apnu Ghor' (come back home) would be held.

The meeting was attended by secretary higher education, Anand Bardhan, secretary Sowjanya, higher education additional secretary Iqbal Ahmed.

Information director general Meharban Singh Bisht, culture director Beena Bhatt, UTU registrar Anita Rawat, Information additional director Anil Chandra and others were present in the meeting.

## Congress memo against State Govt laughable, says BJP

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party has termed as laughable the Congress' submission of a memorandum to the governor against the state government. The BJP has opined that the Congress leaders are indulging in such 'drama' due to the infighting underway in the party. The BJP State media in-charge Devendra Bhasin said that the Congress is without any real issues and its state unit is afflicted by infighting. In this scenario, various factions in

the Congress are fighting for their existence and indulging in gimmicks. The memorandum submitted to the governor was also one such gimmick. "The process of appointments to government posts is underway in the state apart from employment in the private sector.

Effective steps are being taken to tackle migration, development work is being expedited in various sectors and strict action is being taken against corruption. In such a scenario, memorandum politics of the Congress is laughable.

## INBRIEF

### TECH SPECIALIST MITTAL RECEIVES RKGf

Dehradun: Born in Dehradun, technology and innovation specialist Vartul Mittal was recently conferred with the REX Karmaveer Global Fellowship (RKGf) and Karmaveer Chakra award, a global civilian honour, instituted by International-Confederation-Of-NGO-(ICONGO) in partnership with United Nations. He received the fellowship for his individual citizen social responsibility over the past several years and for educating masses on digital technology adoption for social and financial inclusion. Born in Dehradun, Mittal did his schooling from Marshall School and B.Tech in mechanical engineering from College of Engineering Roorkee.



## Officials discuss cable undergrounding project with traders

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

The undergrounding of power cables in Haridwar was discussed in a meeting of electricity department officials and the members of the Haridwar Vyapar Mandal here on Wednesday. Work on the undergrounding of cables has been undertaken in various parts of the city and is now about to be started at the Har ki Paldi and surrounding area.

City president of the Vyapar Mandal, Sanjeev Nayyar said that the meeting was held with the officials in view of the thousands of people who arrive in the area daily.

He said that the market area in the locality is small, so if the ground is dug up and left as in the other areas, it would create major inconvenience.

General secretary of the Vyapar Mandal, Pradeep Kalra said that officials of the electricity department should start the work when they have enough resources, otherwise the problem will increase for

both the traders and the electricity department. Executive engineer of the undergrounding project, Ankit Jain said that the survey for the work is going on in small market area. Since the road in the market is small, the sewer line and other facilities had been laid in a zig zag pattern which would make the undergrounding project a bit difficult.

If the department is convinced of the feasibility, the project will be executed in the market area but work in Har ki Paldi and upper road will begin soon.

It is pertinent to mention here that with the first week of January already passing, the advent of pilgrims in Haridwar is expected to pick up pace around the Shivratri fair in February.

Earlier, a few days ago the local traders at Ranipur Mod had staged a protest against the excavation for undergrounding project being left uncovered by the department. Following the protest, the department concerned filled up excavated sites.

## CM DIRECTS FOR RESTORATION OF SERVICES

## Roads blocked in Himachal due to heavy snow

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal officials on Wednesday advised people not to travel to popular tourist destinations Shimla and Manali as over 250 roads have been blocked in the State due to heavy snowfall even as Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur directed the officials to ensure that essential services are restored at the earliest.

In a message posted on its Facebook page, the Shimla Police said all the roads leading towards the city are blocked. It will be appropriate not to travel till the opening of the roads, Shimla SP Omapati Jamwal said.

Tourists have been stranded for several hours in Shimla because the roads are snow-bound. Similarly, the Kullu Police said the lower areas of Manali have been blocked due to heavy snowfall. The vehicles are not allowed beyond green tax barrier, Kullu SP Gaurav Singh said. The Kullu Police has requested the public not to take their vehicles towards Manali till further instructions.

According to the Meteorological (MeT) Department, Shimla received



20 cm snowfall between 5.30 pm on Tuesday and 8.30 am on Wednesday. Dalhousie in Chamba district received 35 cm snowfall, followed by Manali in Kullu district (22 cm), Kalpa in Kinnaur district (16 cm) and Lahaul-Spiti's administrative centre Keylong (8 cm), the department said.

Kharapather witnessed 60 cm snowfall, Khadralla (33 cm), Gondola (18.5 cm), Theog (12 cm), Jubbal (7.5 cm) and Pooh (5 cm) during the period. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur directed all the Deputy Commissioners and officers concerned to ensure

that all essential services are restored in the areas affected due to snowfall in the State, at the earliest. He also directed the officers of all line departments to work in co-ordination to ensure timely restoration of essential services.

Thakur directed the Public Works Department to ensure that all major roads closed due to snow are re-opened immediately so that the people do not face inconvenience. He said that preference must be given to clear those roads which lead to essential services such as hospitals so that patients does not face any hardship. The

Chief Minister also directed the officers of State Electricity Board to ensure restoration of power supply at the earliest. He said Irrigation and Public Health authorities must take steps to ensure uninterrupted water supply.

He said that all the Deputy Commissioners must issue advisory for tourists and general public for carefully playing their vehicles on snow covered roads. Thakur asked general public to be more alert and be precautionary during snowfall and cooperate with the Government and administration.

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JNU VIOLENCE

# Interact more, take students into confidence, V-C advised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The HRD Ministry on Wednesday made it clear to the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Vice-Chancellor M Jagadeesh Kumar that he should not only be more communicative with students but also take them into confidence.

Jagadeesh was summoned to HRD Ministry where he met HRD Secretary Amit Khare. Jagadeesh had "missed" important meetings at the HRD Ministry at the backdrop of violence in JNU.

Sources said that senior HRD Ministry officials questioned the V-C as to why he did not inform the police as soon as the scuffle between two

groups was brought to his notice. He was told that normalcy should be restored at the earliest since the prestigious university is being discussed across the world now as it has international students as well, the sources maintained.

"The V-C was taken aback by the tough stand by the HRD Ministry and took time to respond. In his reply he said that he did not presume that the clash between the two groups could turn out to be so violent that too soon. He committed for a safe university and a more responsive administration," sources said.

The JNU V-C, who has been severely criticised by students and faculty members for not doing enough when they were brutally attacked by a



Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) vice-chancellor M Jagadeesh Kumar after meeting HRD officials at Sashtri Bhavan in New Delhi on Wednesday

masked mob on the campus on Sunday evening, told the ministry officials that efforts were being made to facilitate the semester registration process for "willing" students.

"Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare and Joint Secretary GC Hosur had a meeting with JNU VC at the ministry on Wednesday about the efforts being made to restore normalcy on campus. He informed the officials about efforts being made for facilitating semester registration for willing students and a conducive environment for their academic pursuits," the min-

istry said in a press release.

The VC later took to Twitter to inform about the meeting at HRD Ministry. He clarified that university has not made any suggestions to temporarily shut the varsity and efforts are being made to restore normalcy.

On Monday, a day after the violence on JNU campus, JNU Registrar Pramod Kumar visited the ministry and updated the top brass about the situation besides submitting a detailed report on the sequence of events that led to the violence. The V-C did not attend the meeting. On Tuesday, he urged students to "put the past behind" and return to studies.

The Left, that controls JNUSU, and the ABVP have blamed each other for the vio-

lence that continued for two hours. That night, the HRD ministry sought an immediate report from the registrar. CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury said around 100 MPs will write a letter to President Ram Nath Kovind demanding sacking of

the JNU V-C. "Many MPs, around 100 of them, have been contacted and they have decided to write a letter to the President, who is the Visitor to the University, demanding sacking of the VC," Yechury said.

## Should Deepika visit RSS HQ in Nagpur if not JNU: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday took a swipe at the BJP asking if Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone should visit the RSS headquarters in Nagpur instead of JNU. The Opposition party's reaction came amid calls, including from some BJP



functionaries, to boycott Padukone's upcoming movie 'Chhapaak' for her visit to the Jawaharlal Nehru University on Tuesday to express solidarity with the students who were attacked by a mob.

"The ruling party has reduced (itself) to indulging in petty social media polls, fake videos. Should she (Deepika Padukone) go to Nagpur, the Sangh headquarters, to promote her movie? What do they want this country to be?" Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said, when asked about a strong reaction from a quarter of the BJP on the actor's visit to the university.

Khera said the government is filing FIRs against students and youth instead of hearing them out. "If someone is showing concern to the protesting youth, you raise questions on him/her," he said, alleging the ruling BJP claims it is the world's largest party but it has a "small heart."

# Welcome any peace initiative by India: Iranian envoy

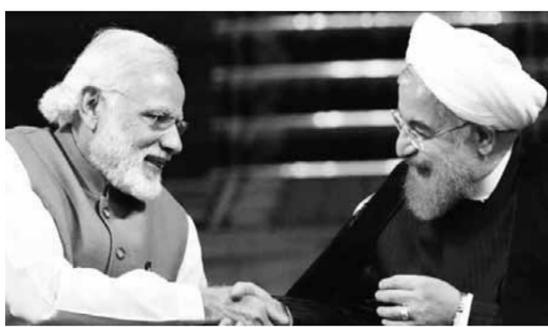
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Iran on Wednesday said it will welcome any peace initiative by India to de-escalate tensions with the US following the killing of Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani.

Stating this, Iran Ambassador to India Ali Chegeni also said here his country wants peace not war and hoped there will be no further escalation in hostilities between his country and the US.

Taking note of the prevailing situation in the Middle-East, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday had a conversation with his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, voicing India's concerns over the escalation of tensions. India has reached out to several stakeholders in the region over the security situation prevailing in the Middle East.

Jaishankar also separately spoke to Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf Alawi, UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as well his Jordanian and Qatari counterparts Ayman Safadi and



Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani respectively, on the tense situation in the region.

The Iranian ambassador's comments about India came hours after Iran launched over a dozen ballistic missiles targeting at least two bases where US military and coalition forces are stationed in Iraq. Tehran said it was a "slap in the face" of America.

"India usually plays a very good

role in (maintaining) peace in the world. India belongs to this region. We welcome all initiatives from all countries, especially India as a good friend for us, to not allow escalation (of tensions)," Chegeni told reporters after a condolence meeting for Soleimani at the Iranian Embassy here.

"We are not for war, we are looking for peace and prosperity for everybody in this region. We welcome any Indian initiative or any project that can help peace and prosperity in this world," he said.

Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite al-Quds force and architect of its regional security apparatus, was killed when a US drone fired missiles into a convoy that was leaving the Baghdad International Airport early on Friday. The strike also killed the deputy chief of Iraq's powerful Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary force.

Noting that India is a "good friend", Chegeni said, "My minister (Javad Zarif) talked to Dr Jaishankar, they had a very good discussion. Recently we had the joint economic commission in Tehran...We see a very good future for the relationship. We have no problem with India." He said Iran and India can jointly work for peace in the world.

Asked if Indian officials have reached out to the Embassy with a condolence message, the Iranian envoy said the embassy had opened a condolence book for two days and he expects Indian officials to come but it is "up to the Indian side."

"Usually we have good relations and sympathy between the two countries," he said. The Iran Embassy here has been seeing a steady stream of envoys coming and expressing condolences on the death of Soleimani.

Talking about the US drone strike that killed Soleimani, Chegeni said, "He was in a third country. So this is very important for the world to not allow such an inhuman, illegal act which is against international rights."

"He (Soleimani) was the one who removed the threat of ISIS from the world. Why you should kill him. That means you are supporting terrorists. If Gen Soleimani didn't act against ISIS, what would have happened to India, to Europe, and to all of the world because ISIS was really anti-human," he said.

The world owes a debt to "anti-terrorist hero" Soleimani, he said. "That is why my country today officially retaliated based on the legitimate rights we have...We are not for war. We are not for escalation, but defending is our right," Chegeni said.

On the Iranian attack on US targets in Iraq, Chegeni said his country retaliated under its right to defend.

INSHORT

### KIDS AREA IN PARKS: SC NOTICE TO AAP GOVT

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought response from the AAP Government and others on an appeal against a Delhi High Court order that had disposed a plea seeking a policy for sports activities for children in city parks. A bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices BR Gavai and Surya Kant issued notices to the Delhi Government, national and State commissions for protection of child rights and South Delhi Municipal Corporation seeking their replies in four weeks.

### CAA: GOVT REACHES OUT TO INTERFAITH DELEGATION

New Delhi: The Government on Wednesday apprised an interfaith delegation about various aspects of the new citizenship law CAA, which has been opposed by students of many universities and some sections of people, and conveyed that the legislation has nothing to do with any Indian.

### NAVY RESCUES VESSEL CARRYING 13 PEOPLE

New Delhi: An Indian Navy ship came to the rescue of a traditional vessel — 'Al Hamid', carrying 13 people from India, which had drifted near the coast of Somalia. INS Sumedha, presently on an anti-piracy patrol in Gulf of Aden, rescued the dhow, a traditional wooden vessel, on Monday.

### BLACK MONEY CASE: CBI RAIDS ACCUSED HOUSE

New Delhi: The CBI has searched two premises in Tamil Nadu belonging to one of the accused in a case of alleged black money remittances worth Rs 1,036 crore made to Hong Kong in 2014-15. They said the searches took place at the residential premises of Mohammed Ibrahim Johnney in Chennai and Sivaganga districts of the state from where incriminating material related to the case was recovered.

### 'CONFINEMENT' IN TIHAR: SHAHABUDDIN MOVES SC

New Delhi: Jailed gangster Mohammad Shahabuddin on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court alleging that he has been kept in complete isolation in Tihar prison and not been provided basic facilities including a place to offer prayers. A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to look into the grievances of Shahabuddin, serving life term in a 2004 double murder case, and posted the matter after two weeks.

## CRPF DIG charged with throwing hot water on jawan; probe ordered

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Having burnt his mouth upon drinking hot water served to him by a jawan, an enraged Deputy Inspector General of CRPF allegedly threw it on the subordinate's face. The paramilitary has since ordered an enquiry into the incident.

The purported incident took place on Tuesday at the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Recruit Training Centre (RTC) in Bihar's Rajgir district.

DIG D K Tripathi, who was staying at the officers' mess of the RTC for an official work, had ordered hot drinking water. Constable Amol Kharat was on duty at the facility and he served him the water in a thermos flask, officials said.

### The purported incident took place on Tuesday at the CRPF Recruit Training Centre (RTC) in Bihar's Rajgir district

The officer, posted at the CRPF group centre in Mokamaghat in Bihar, is said to have burnt his mouth upon drinking the hot water, following which he summoned Kharat. An altercation ensued between the two and the DIG "threw" hot water on the jawan's face. The injured jawan has been admitted to a local

hospital, they said. Officials said a preliminary enquiry by an Inspector General of the CRPF has been ordered. The enquiry report, along with specific recommendations, is expected by January 10 only after which the exact sequence of events and culpability could be established, they said.

An association of ex-paramilitary officials said the jawan "is being pressured to give statement that the burn injuries were due to spilling of boiled water from the flask". "The constable is not being allowed to speak to his family members and colleagues. His mobile phone has been snatched by senior officers," the confederation of ex-paramilitary forces personnel welfare association said.

## To mark 75th Independence anniv, 2022 Parl session to be held in new House: Birla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday said to mark the 75th anniversary of the country in 2022, the parliament session will be held in the new building. "To fulfil the dream of 'New India', Indian Parliament will hold its session in 2022, in new Parliament House to mark the 75th anniversary of its Independence," Birla said, speaking at the 25th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) in Ottawa in Canada.

Noting that the Parliament House Building has completed 92 glorious years after it was made functional in 1927, Birla said in a statement

issued by Lok Sabha Secretariat that there is an urgent need to provide sufficient space and facilities for the Members of Parliament and the staff in Parliament House to fulfil the dream of 'New India'.

The Speaker also made it clear that members and staff of parliament will be consulted before undertaking the renovation and reconstruction and that too, within the prescribed time limit with minimal capital and without any interference in the parliamentary work.

"Architecture of Parliament building symbolises the aspirations of the State and its people; it also epitomises the character of the State, its traditions and cultural heritage," Birla was quoted as saying in the statement.



## Ask lease holders to restore mined area by re-grassing: Apex court to Govt

New Delhi: Noting that mining results in complete elimination of grass, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Government to impose the condition on lease holders that they will have to restore the mined area by re-grassing it after ceasing operations.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde asked the Centre to devise appropriate methods to ensure compliance of this condition.

"We see no reason why the area which has been mined should not be restored so that grass and other vegetation including trees can grow in the mining area for the benefit of animals."

"We are of the view that this can be achieved by directing the Union of India to impose a condition in the mining lease and a similar condition in the environmental clearance and the mining plan to the effect that the mining lease holders shall, after ceasing mining operations, undertake re-grassing the mining area and any other area which may have been disturbed due to their mining activities and restore the land to a condition which is fit for growth of fodder, flora, fauna etc," the bench, also comprising Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant, said.

The court said this condition shall be in addition to those imposed for achieving the same purpose under the mine closure plan. "This condition shall not be imposed in derogation of any conditions which are already in force."

PTI

## SC seeks response from Centre on FIMI's challenge

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Centre on a plea challenging the constitutional validity of some provisions of the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act on payment of compensation to allottees post de-allocation of blocks in 2014.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant issued a notice to Ministry of Coal and Ministry of Law and Justice, seeking their response in four weeks.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by apex mineral body Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) challenging the constitutional validity of the provisions of the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015, and the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Rules, 2014, as they do not provide fair and equitable compensation in a time-bound manner



to the prior allottees of the coal blocks consequent to de-allocation in 2014.

"Issue directions that section 16 (1), 16 (2) of the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act 2015 are arbitrary, discriminatory, vague and unconstitutional to the extent they affect the rights of the prior allottees to get just, fair and adequate

compensation for the investments in their respective coal blocks in a time bound manner," the plea said.

The plea, filed through advocate V Shyamohan, said de-allocation of coal blocks was not the fault of prior allottees and "no criminality whatsoever" is alleged against the majority of the prior allottees. PTI

## Look into possibility of deploying CISF in courts to check unruly cases: SC to Centre

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to look into the possibility of deploying a separate cadre of CISF in certain courts to check unruly incidents of violence.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, perhaps referring to the recent Tis Hazari court complex violence, said "had there been deploy-

ment of CISF, the Delhi incident would not have taken place".

Lawyers and police personnel had clashed at the Tis Hazari Court complex here in November last year in which a few advocates sustained bullet injuries and several security personnel were injured.

The bench, also comprising justice B R Gavai and Surya

Kant, told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that there should be a separate cadre of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) which will provide security in certain courts after a decision by the Chief Justice.

The Chief Justice said he has written a letter to the government in this regard.

"There can be a separate wing of CISF for security at courts. There can be a separate cadre," the CJI told Mehta and asked him to file his reply on the issue.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing as amicus in the matter, said there may be problems for lawyers if the CISF personnel are deployed and it would be appropriate if the Bar Council of India's view is also taken in the matter.

The bench then issued notice to the BCI seeking its reply in two weeks.

The apex court was hearing a plea filed by one Pradyuman Bisht seeking audio and video recording of court proceedings in order to bring transparency. PTI

## WB madrasas move SC against verdict for appointment of teachers by commission

New Delhi: A madrasa managing committee of West Bengal on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court challenging its verdict upholding a law on the appointment of teachers by a commission for minority institutions.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde and also comprising Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant said it will hear the plea next week. Senior advocate Salman Khurshid, appearing for the managing committee -- Contai Rahamania High



Madrasah, told the court the case needs to be heard by a larger bench as the challenged verdict is in conflict with a similar judgment on minority rights given earlier by a three-judge bench of the top court. He told the apex

court that the petitioner was the same organisation on whose plea the judgement of January 6 was pronounced.

A two-judge bench had on January 6 upheld a law framed by the West Bengal government in 2008 to constitute the Madrasah Service Commission for appointment of teachers in madrasahs, saying the selection of teachers and their nomination by the panel was not violative of the rights of minority educational institutions. PTI

# Violence marks bandh in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Normal life was considerably hit in Bengal even as sporadic violence and arson marked Wednesday's general strike sponsored by Left and Congress trade unions prompting both Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the BJP to interpret the bandh as a desperate attempt by a moribund Left Front to catch limelight once again.

Reports of violence poured in from Barasat, in North 24 Parganas, Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, Burdwan, Malda, South Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and other places police said adding 170 strikers including CPI(M) Legislature Party leader Sujan Chakrabarty had been arrested.

Violence reached its crescendo at Sujapur in Malda district where police fought pitched battle with angry protesters opposing CAA and NRC. About eight vehicles including a few belonging to the police were torched allegedly by the protesters leading the cops to burst tear gas shells and fire rubber bullets injuring a number of them.

Though life reverted to near-normal by late noon the Left and the Congress took out

long processions in parts of Kolkata demanding immediate release of its leaders. At Park Circus Maidan (a minority dominated area) hundreds of Muslim women sat on indefinite dharna demanding withdrawal of the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register for Citizens.

The strikers who had initially targeted socio-economic issues as subject matter of the bandh in the final hours smartly included CAA and NRC to widen the scope of participation. The tactic seemed to partially pay off with the strike witnessing more than 50 percent success sources in the administration said adding however that the Government offices in the wake of a strong circular from the State secretariat witnessed near-99 percent attendance.

While air services remained normal train services were substantially affected authorities said adding about 127 suburban trains from SealDAH and 47 from Howrah had to be cancelled. This, in addition to about the route of a dozen express getting changed due to the impact of the strike.

Sources in the State electricity boards reported lesser



Members of AITUC and INTUC block a train during the trade unions' nationwide strike in West Midnapore district of West Bengal on Wednesday PTI

consumption of power indicating partial success of the bandh. Reports collected at 10 am showed the power consumption level at 4012 MW, 250 MW less than the normal, driving home the fact that strike had its impact despite contradictory claims made by the Government," said one of the striking leaders adding "the power department stopped releasing further reports for obvious reasons."

Even as the day peaked reports of violence came in from various parts of the State. At Hridaypur in North 24 Parganas crude bombs were recovered from underneath a local train. Buses and other vehicles were vandalised in

Burdwan, Durgapur, Howrah and Kolkata even as the drivers were seen driving their vehicles with helmets on.

Traffic was blockaded by the Left and Congress workers at Jadavpur and Rashbehari crossing with their supporters throwing burning tyres on the roads. The impact of the strike was near complete at Raiganj and Durgapur, the home town of JNSU president Aishi Ghosh where the protesters were seen attacking bikers.

All banks and post offices remained closed causing immense hardships to the people. Schools were however partially affected as the number of attendance was thin.

Meanwhile the Chief

Minister attacked the Left for sacrificing its ideology. "CPIM has no ideology. Planting bombs on railway tracks is nothing but 'gundagardi', she said. In the name of movement, commuters are being beaten up and stones are being pelted. This is 'dadagiri', not a movement. I condemn this. I will not allow such movements.

The Marxists are trying to get back their relevance but they will never be able to do that unless they change their style of functioning. I think the communists of Kerala are far better than those in Bengal. At least they have a policy and act according to ideology. In Bengal they are all ruffians."

Attacking the hoodlums BJP's Dilip Ghosh said "the Trinamool Congress has helped the Left Front to make violence a success because they want the Left to get some oxygen so as to divide the anti-TMC opposition in Bengal. But people have understood and will give Mamata Banerjee a befitting reply."

The Left leaders including politburo member Biman Bose congratulated the people for making the bandh a success "despite brutal attack by the police and the TMC goons on the bandh supporters."

## NATIONWIDE TRADE UNION STRIKE



Trade union workers take out a march during nationwide 24-hour general strike, in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday PTI

### Today's strike result of Centre not listening to anyone: Pilot

Jaipur: Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot said on Wednesday that the Centre should take cognisance of the nationwide strike called by labour unions, saying every section of the country was dissatisfied due to a communication gap.

"You (Centre) will not communicate, you will not explain, you will not try to understand people, then what is the meaning of democracy?" Pilot asked. "Winning an election does not mean that you have become supreme. We should keep our hearts, minds and ears open, and listen to people."

The State Congress president said the government should leave its "ego" behind and hold a dialogue.

"Whatever is going in the JNU, the police are going to different universities, people wearing uniforms are seen in colleges and universities — is not a good sign for any democracy for any country," Pilot told reporters in Jaipur.

According to Pilot, a shutdown occurs when all options fail and there was a lack of communication from the central government's end.

"Every class is unhappy today, be it government servants, middle class, poor or the students. The government should take cognisance of today's strike," Pilot said. PTI

### No effect of strike in Mumbai, most of Maha; transport normal

Mumbai: The nationwide strike seems to have failed to evoke much response in Maharashtra till Wednesday afternoon with transport and banking services remaining largely unaffected in many districts as well as in the country's financial Capital.

No untoward incident was reported so far from any region of the state. Suburban trains, which are called as the "lifeline of Mumbai" with a ridership of more than 75 lakh commuters per day, public buses, taxis and autorickshaws are running normally in the island city and suburbs.

Similarly, Metro and Monorail services are running smoothly, officials said, adding that BEST-operated bus services are also running as per schedule.

Private transport services like taxis and autorickshaws are also plying normally in Mumbai. Film and TV shoots also remained unaffected. The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) said all its members were at work as usual and nothing was hampered because of the strike. In Pune, transport services remained unaffected.

"Buses operated by the Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Ltd (PMPML) are plying normally," said Shankar Pawar, Director, PMPML. Educational institutes and commercial establishments in the city remained opened as usual.

Trade union leader Ajit Abhyankar claimed that at least 15000 people affiliated to various Central trade unions, Bhartiya Kamgar Sena, posts, banks, and other government establishments participated in a public rally outside the district collectorate in Pune. PTI

### Centre does not provide funds for Gangasagar mela: Mamata

### Viral video shows cops torching vehicles in Malda

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday said the Central Government does not provide funds for the annual Gangasagar Mela, which is held in West Bengal, though it provides lots of assistance to Kumbh Mela.

"Gangasagar Mela is at par with the Kumbh Mela. The Centre provides funds for Kumbh Mela but does not extend financial assistance for Gangasagar," Banerjee said. PTI

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Much the way they did it in Uttar Pradesh — and only with greater visibility — a section of Bengal police men during the Wednesday's general strike were found vandalising vehicles and torching them including the police vans at Sujapur in Malda prompting Opposition Left Front and Congress to demand impartial investigation into the matter.

Visual footages that immediately went viral showing how the policemen were smashing the wind screens of cars parked in a big field with rifle butts, pouring fuel and then setting ablaze immediately drew large-

scale media attention. The incident took place within metres of a spot where pro-bandh agitators were barricading the high way.

"Such heinous plans to torch the vehicles and then hold the CPI(M) workers liable were fortunately shot by the locals... The incidents only make clear the real face of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Her police is no different from the police of Yogi Adityanath... They did it in Lucknow to frame the anti-CAA rallyists, the Bengal Police did it in Bengal," senior CPI(M) leader Md Salim said adding "in a State where not a leaf turns without the instruction of the

Chief Minister how could they torch so many vehicles. It must be probed."

President of the Pradesh Congress which also co-sponsored the general strike demanded an "impartial inquiry to get to the core of the conspiracy." Another Congress leader and former Minister Manoj Chakrabarty demanded "judicial probe into the incident so that things become clear."

Eye witnesses said how the police men were seen smashing the windscreens with rifle butts and stones. They were also seen carrying petrol cans to the vehicles, soaking them before setting them afire, sources said. While there was no word

from the Chief Minister her senior ministerial colleague Partho Chatterjee said the "culprits will be brought to book," adding it would be looked into details to figure out whether some Left miscreants were doing the mischief in the garb of police men or some cops were genuinely involved.

"No one will be spared by committing violence... this is the policy of our Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee," he said even as sources said the Malda Superintendent of Police had been asked to probe the matter. The SP however could not be contacted till late in the evening.

### Enemies looking to disrupt peace in J&K: DGP Dilbag Singh

### Kashmir remains freezing cold though sun shines after 3 days

Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir Police chief Dilbag Singh on Wednesday said enemies are looking to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere in the Union Territory and asked officers to remain vigilant.

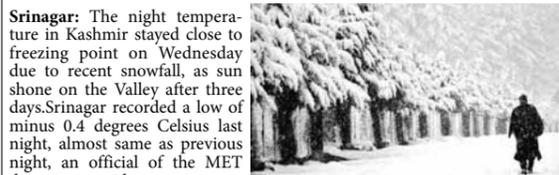
He said peace had been achieved in Jammu & Kashmir after a lot of hard work and sacrifices by police and security forces.

The director general of police (DGP) made the remarks at security review meetings during his visit to the twin south Kashmir districts of Shopian and Pulwama.

Accompanied by Inspector General of CRPF (Operations) Rajesh Kumar and Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, Singh took stock of the situation in the two districts.

"The safety and security of the people is our prime concern. The enemies of peace are looking for chances to disrupt the peace," Singh said.

He said the police, along with its sister agencies, have succeeded in creating a sense of security among the people. He directed the officers to be vigilant at all times and work dedicatedly for the welfare of the people while taking due care of their security. PTI



Srinagar: The night temperature in Kashmir stayed close to freezing point on Wednesday due to recent snowfall, as sun shone on the Valley after three days. Srinagar recorded a low of minus 0.4 degrees Celsius last night, almost same as previous night, an official of the MET department said.

The official said the ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir recorded the low of minus 7.6 degrees Celsius last night, 1.6 notches down from Tuesday.

The night temperature at Pahalgam resort, which also serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath yatra in south Kashmir, settled at a low of minus 2.0 degrees Celsius — nearly two notches up from minus 3.9 degrees Celsius Tuesday, he said.

The official said Qazigund — the gateway town to the Valley — in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 0.4 degree Celsius. Kokernag town, also in

south, recorded a low of minus 4.0 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara, in north, registering a minimum of minus 2.2 degree Celsius, the official said. Kashmir is currently under the grip of 'Chillai-Kalan' — the 40-day harshest period of winter when the chances of snowfall are most frequent and maximum and the temperature drops considerably.

'Chillai-Kalan' began on December 21 and ends on January 31, but the cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir. The 40-day period is followed by a 20-day long 'Chillai-Khurid' (small cold) and a 10-day long 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold). PTI

### Fear of coup prevented CDS appointment earlier: ex-Army chief

Kolkata: Terming the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as a welcome move, former Army chief General (retd) Shankar Roy Chowdhury on Wednesday said it had not been done earlier owing to the then political bosses' fear of a coup.

He said the appointment of a CDS was due for a long time and the services wanted it to be there in the country so that the

Army, Navy and Air Force come under one umbrella, "but the problem was political."

"The fear of a coup was ingrained among the earlier political bosses if all the three forces — Army, Navy and Air Force — were brought under one umbrella and that was the only reason that a post of CDS was not created," Roy Chowdhury told newsmen here.

General Bipin Rawat, who retired as the Army chief on December 31, has taken charge as India's first Chief of Defence Staff the next day with a mandate to bring in convergence in the functioning of the Army, Navy and the Indian Air Force and bolster the country's military prowess.

Gen (retd) Roy Chowdhury said the military is always subordinate to the civil

authorities in the country, but an "unsubstantiated" fear of a coup if the forces were brought under one head had prevented the then political establishment from taking a decision on it.

"This is the single reason why the country did not have a CDS so far," the former Army chief said. He said the post of CDS is important for the coordination of the three forces. PTI

### 21-yr-old UP gangrape victim commits suicide in Barabanki

### 5-year-old girl raped by relative in Bundi

Barabanki (UP): A 21-year-old law student, who was allegedly gang-raped about four months ago, has been found hanging at her house in a village here, with her mother claiming that she was under pressure from the two accused.

The body of the LLB student was found hanging from the roof of her room at the family's home in the Jahagirabad police station area here on Tuesday morning, police said.

The victim's mother has complained that she was under pressure from the two rape accused and committed suicide.

She alleged that Shivpalan and Shivkumar, of Semrava village under Kothi police station area, had raped the victim four months ago.

Since Shivkumar is a local heavyweight, the police initially did not lodge an FIR but later it was registered on the orders



of a court, the mother of the victim claimed, adding that no arrest has been made.

Superintendent of Police Akash Tomar said the father of the deceased had told the police in writing that his daughter committed suicide and he had no suspicion on anyone.

"It has come to light during investigations that the two

accused had lodged a case of fraud on the deceased and her mother for getting a vehicle financed and the mother framed them to avenge it. There are no evidence so far to prove the allegations of the mother. Action will be taken in case anything emerges in further inquiry," the SP added. PTI

Kota: A five-year-old girl child was raped by a relative in a village in Bundi district on Wednesday afternoon, police said.

The accused, aged around 20 years, fled the spot when the family members of the minor victim were alerted by her cries and rushed to rescue her, they said, adding that she was bleeding profusely when found.

A case of rape was registered against the accused, who is also a neighbour of the minor victim, under relevant sections of the IPC and the POSCO Act, SHO at Karwar police station Hariram Jajunda said.

The girl was playing outside her room and her family members were working at an adjacent farm in the afternoon when the incident took place, he said.

The victim was taken to the Bundi district hospital for a medical examination, the SHO said. PTI



A boatman rows his Shikara past migratory birds swimming across the Dal Lake after light rain and snowfall in Srinagar on Wednesday PTI

### Woman kidnapped from Patna mall, raped at gunpoint

Patna: A woman was allegedly raped at gunpoint after being kidnapped from the parking lot of a mall here on Monday, police officials said.

One person has been arrested out of four persons named in the FIR.

"We have identified the four accused persons who were the (rape) victim's acquaintances. One man raped the girl while others were part of the conspiracy," City Superintendent of Police (Central), Patna, Vinay Tiwary

told PTI.

Asked whether it is a case of gangrape, Tiwary said, "No, it is not gangrape. It is rape but others were part of the conspiracy."

One person has been arrested in connection with the case while raids are being conducted to nab other culprits, the City SP said.

The woman is around 20 years of age and is pursuing BBA through correspondence, he added. The victim's medical exam-

ination was conducted on Tuesday, police sources said.

While talking to reporters, the rape survivor, who had covered her face with a mask, said she was kidnapped by four men at gunpoint from GV Mall on the busy Boring road intersection around 7:30 pm on Monday while she was coming out of an eatery.

As she stepped out of the eatery, one of the four men, who raped her later, told her at gunpoint to sit in his car in the parking lot of the mall.

The four then allegedly took her to a flat located near P&M Mall in Pataliputra colony where one person raped her while three others stood with a pistol, the rape survivor said.

The woman said the four made a video of the incident and threatened to post it on social media.

The woman escaped from their clutches and narrated the incident to her room mate and brother over phone who informed the police. PTI

# 5 OUT OF 6 ZILLA PARISHADS TAKEN MVA sweeps Maha rural elections

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Close on the heels of its closing power in Maharashtra, the BJP on Wednesday suffered a humiliating defeat in local body elections in the State, as the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) captured power in five out of six Zilla Parishads and walked away with majority Panchayat Samiti seats in five out of six districts where the polls were held.

It was what came as personal setback for former Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, the Amit Shah-led party lost power in the Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti in his home district of Nagpur.

The MVA, comprising the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress, captured power in the Zilla Parishads of Nagpur, Washim, Akola (all three in Vidarbha region), Nandurbar (in north Maharashtra) and Palghar (in coastal Konkan region), while the BJP managed to come to power in Dhule ZP in north Maharashtra.



In a repeat performance in the Panchayat Samiti polls, the MVA won a maximum of 310 seats out of a total 552 seats in five districts — Nagpur, Washim, Akola, Nandurbar and Palghar, while the BJP managed to maximum of 70 out of 112 seats in Dhule district. In five districts, the BJP secured 124 seats, while the MVA bagged 32 seats in Dhule district.

The MVA put up an impressive performance in the Zilla Parishads of Nagpur, Washim, Akola, Nandurbar and Palghar, where it won as many as 165 seats out of total 276 seats, as against 67 seats won by the BJP. However, in

Dhule Zilla Parishad, the BJP emerged as the victor by winning 39 out of 56 seats.

The ZP and Panchayat Samiti poll outcome has eroded the stock of Fadnavis in Vidarbha region

where the BJP has lost power in all three Zilla Parishads — Nagpur, Washim and Akola — that went to polls. The BJP's defeat in Nagpur ZP polls has come as an embarrassment for Fadnavis, where the Congress — which is a constituent of the MVA — has by itself won a majority of 30 out of total 58 seats in the local body.

The poll outcome has come as a boost to State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh of the NCP who hails from Katol taluka in Nagpur, while senior Congress minister K C Padvi and BJP Girish Deshmukh share credit for the poll performances in Nandurbar and Dhule districts of north

Maharashtra.

While the MVA — of which the Congress is a part — has captured power in the Nandurbar Zilla Parishad, the BJP has come to power in Dhule ZP. The only regret for Padvi is that his wife Hemlata Padvi was defeated in the Nandurbar ZP polls by a candidate of the Shiv Sena, which is also a constituent of the MVA. There was no pre-poll between the MVA constituents in the ward where Hemlata Padvi contested.

The Opposition BJP may take a solace for its defeat in the fact that is for the first time that the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress have come together in the ZP and Panchayat Samiti polls and that too as a post-poll arrangement in a few of the Zilla Parishad.

But, the BJP will have to live with the home truth that as long as the MVA is power in the state, it will have to stay away from power in a maximum number of local bodies — including ZPs, Panchayat Samitis and municipal bodies — across the State

# Maha Legislature ratifies Bill to extend SC/ST quota

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In twin developments, the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on Wednesday ratified the Constitution (126th) Amendment Bill seeking extension of quota to SC/STs in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies by another 10 years and passed a unanimous resolution urging the Centre to undertake a caste-based census to ascertain the population of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) across the country.

At a special one-day session of the State Assembly, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray moved a resolution seeking ratification of the Constitution Amendment bill passed by Parliament on December 11. Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis supported the resolution. The House adopted the resolution unanimously.

The Assembly also unanimously adopted a resolution — moved suo moto by Speaker Nana Patole urging the Centre for a caste-based Census to find out the population of OBCs across the country.

Moving the resolution,

Speaker Patole said that there was a need for collating data on OBC population so that OBCs could be given benefits of development.

"The new Census will be taken up in 2021. There is need for the data of OBC population so that they can be given benefits of development. Many delegations of OBCs have met me seeking such an enumeration. The House can pass a resolution seeking caste-based Census to find out the OBC population," Patole said.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said the issue can be discussed in the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) first and then taken up in the Budget session beginning next month.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anil Parab also said that only the business finalised by the BAC for the day be taken up by the House.

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis of the BJP said the opposition would support such resolution whenever it was taken up.

At this point, Patole suggested that the caste-based Census issue be taken at Wednesday's one-day special

session itself as postponing the issue to the Budget Session would be too late.

Food and Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal of NCP agreed with the chair and said the demand for a

caste-based Census was long pending.

After the Speaker read out the resolution, the Assembly — which has total 288 members — adopted the resolution by a voice vote.

# Package for farmers with over ₹2L loan on anvil, says Guv

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari said on Wednesday that the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government was giving final touches to a relief package for farmers whose short-term crop loan arrears exceeding ₹ 2 lakh.

Addressing a joint session of the Maharashtra Assembly and Council, the Governor said that in an effort to encourage the farmers who were repaying their crop loans on time, the State Government would announce new measures shortly.

The Governor's statement came less than a month after Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced an unconditional waiver of loans up to ₹ 2 lakh each for farmers.

As per the "Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Farmer Loan Waiver Scheme" announced by the CM, farmers whose loan is up to Rs two lakh taken between April 1, 2015, and March 31, 2019, and which has not been repaid till September 30, 2019, will be eligible for the waiver.

Koshiyari said the loan waiver scheme covered the outstanding crop loan amount upto ₹ two lakh, which includes the principal amount and the interest, as on September 30, 2019.

"The scheme covers short-term crop loan and restructured short-term crop loan availed during the period from April, 2015 to March 31, 2019. My Government will implement this scheme in a time-bound manner," the Governor said.

The Government would also announce welfare schemes targeting rural as well as urban populations. "The people from various walks of life will be benefited," he said.

Alluding to safety of women, the Governor said that his Government was committed to implement various security measures for the protection of women.

"Prompt and stern action will be taken in respect of offences against women, and appropriate amendments will be made in the laws for that purpose," he said.

Paying homage to the martyrs of the 'Sanyukta (united) Maharashtra' movement, the governor underlined that the year 2020 marks 60 years of formation of Maharashtra State. "During the last 60 years, Maharashtra made a remarkable progress in the fields of agriculture, industry, information technology, arts, sports, music, education and other fields of life. The Government will organise various programmes to celebrate these achievements," the Governor said.



Devotees from Maharashtra and Karnataka take part in the Khandoba Yatra at Pal Village in Karad, Maharashtra on Wednesday

# Anything can happen in future: BJP leader on Fadnavis-Raj meet

Mumbai: A day after the meeting between BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis and MNS chief Raj Thackeray fuelled speculation of a tie-up in Maharashtra, a senior BJP leader on Wednesday said "anything can happen in the future".

Fadnavis, a former Maharashtra Chief Minister, and Raj Thackeray met in Prabhadevi here on Tuesday. The meeting lasted for nearly two hours, sources had said.

Asked about the Fadnavis-Raj Thackeray meet, which took place in the backdrop of political realignment in the state, Maharashtra BJP leader Sudhir Mungantiwar did not provide any details, but pointed out that nobody had expected that the Shiv Sena will join hands with the

Congress-NCP.

It was a courtesy meeting between the two leaders... there was nothing political, but anything can happen in the future.

"Nobody had predicted that the Shiv Sena would go with the Congress-NCP. People would term someone talking on these lines as crazy, but it happened, said the former State BJP president who was a member of the Fadnavis cabinet. The Shiv Sena, a long-time ally of the BJP, walked out of the saffron alliance in November last year and joined hands with the Congress-NCP combine to form the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in the State.

The Maharashtra Navnirman

Sena (MNS), founded by Raj Thackeray in 2006, fared poorly in the October assembly polls winning just one seat.

Raj Thackeray is expected to hold a public rally on January 23, where he might announce a 'key' decision, an MNS official had said on Tuesday. It is being widely speculated that Raj Thackeray, estranged cousin of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, may announce a shift to the right amid changed political scenario in the state.

Raj Thackeray had become a trenchant critic of the BJP prior to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and had held several rallies in the State where he criticised the Modi Government on a range of issues.

# Cong high command has to decide on RS seat, says Kharge

Bengaluru: Amid speculation that he will be considered for Rajya Sabha from Karnataka, veteran Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday said it will depend on what the Congress high command decides and he was a disciplined soldier of the party.

"Is it in my hands? It is in Congress party high command's hand. It will depend on what high command decides," Kharge said in response to a question.

Speaking to reporters here, he said "I have never asked for anything. I have been working as the disciplined soldier of the party."

Four Rajya Sabha seats from Karnataka represented by Rajeev Gowda and BK Hariprasad of the Congress, Prabhakar Kore of the BJP and D Kupendra Reddy of the JD(S) will fall vacant in June.

Kharge, who was popularly known as "solil-lada Saradara," (a leader without defeat), faced his first electoral loss in his political life spanning several decades, against BJP's Umesh Jadhav in Gulbarga by 95,452 votes during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

A nine-time MLA and two-term Lok Sabha member, Kharge had served as Congress' floor leader in the previous Lok Sabha.

Also, there are reports about JD(S) looking at sending its patriarch and former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda to the Upper House. The regional party will need Congress support for this. Gowda was defeated in Tumkur constituency by his BJP rival G S Basavaraj by over 13,000 votes.

As the joint candidate of the then ruling Congress-JDS coalition, Gowda had chosen to contest from Tumkur at the last minute, after vacating Hassan-his home turf, to grandson Prajwal Revanna (a current MP).

# Won't contest polls till J&K's special status restored: NC MP

Srinagar: National Conference MP Mohammad Akbar Lone on Wednesday said his party will not contest any election till the special status and statehood of Jammu & Kashmir is restored.

"The National Conference will not take part in any election till the pre-August 5 position of Jammu & Kashmir is restored," Lone told reporters after a party meeting here.

Lone said he was hopeful of a favourable verdict on the petition regarding the restoration of the special status in the Supreme Court.

Asked about the new political front led by former PDP leader Syed Altaf Bukhari, Lone said "such elements were used by Government of India from time to time since 1953 to undermine people's aspirations". "Many of those who are part of this front were the same people who brought down the Farooq Abdullah Government (in 1984) and formed a new Government. Everyone knows how long that Government lasted. They will be used and thrown away," the Lok Sabha member from Baramulla said.

He said the BJP might be able to take their agenda to people of Kashmir, the leaders who are part of the new front did not have any public standing. "They will be rejected by people," he added. In response to a question, Lone said the hype around the domicile law for Jammu and Kashmir was of no value.

"We will not even spit on such a law. Our agenda remains the same as that of (NC founder) Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah," he said. When asked why the NC members did not resign from the Lok Sabha, Lone shot back, "What are we going to achieve by that? Will they (government) release our leaders? Will they grant us what we have been demanding?"

# AIADMK, DMK in war of words over NEET in TN Assembly

Chennai: The ruling AIADMK and principal Opposition DMK on Wednesday accused each other over the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) in the Assembly and the Government said it has filed a fresh plea in the Supreme Court challenging the examination.

As soon as the question hour ended, Leader of Opposition M K Stalin said NEET went against the tenets of social justice and the interests of rural students and accused the ruling dispensation of "huge betrayal" on the issue.

He sought to know about the state filing a plea against the test in the Apex Court just two days before the last date (6 Jan, 2020) to apply for NEET ended.

Health Minister C Vijayabaskar retorted saying if at all it was a betrayal, the seeds for it were sowed by the DMK when it was part of the Congress-led Centre.

On 27 December 2010, the notification for the test was issued by the Union government, he said. Only after the notification, the national test took shape and the opposition to it also had to be fought in the Madras High Court and later it went as far as the Supreme Court, he noted.

Also, bills were passed by the Assembly seeking to exempt



Tamil Nadu from the test, he added.

The Minister said the government was taking legal steps and also handles the matter politically to oppose the test.

Asserting that the government continued to be firm in its policy of opposition to NEET, he said, "Now a petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging section 10 (d) of the Indian Medical Council Act. The main petition in the matter was still pending in the top court."

The NEET was behind conducted under section 10 (d) and this section was inserted through an amendment to the IMC Act. Tamil Nadu filed the fresh plea after the top court said during the case hearing last month that the State had the freedom to challenge this provision, the Minister pointed out. He also wanted the opposition to specify if this move of the government was "right or not." DMK deputy leader Duraimurugan countered asking what the government intended to achieve by filing the fresh plea.

# Jammu students protest against mob attack in JNU

Jammu: Students under the banner of the All India Students' Federation (AISF) on Wednesday staged a peaceful demonstration here against the recent attack on the students and professors at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi.

The protesters, who were also joined by some senior citizens, were carrying placards that read 'Danda Mat Chalao-Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Don't use batons, save and educate the daughter)', 'J&K in solidarity with JNU' and 'Remove JNU Vice Chancellor'. "We have assembled here

to register our protest against the vandalism unleashed on the students and faculty members in the JNU by the Government-supported goons," Jammu & Kashmir AISF president S Kotwal told reporters.

The protesters assembled at the Exhibition Ground and later dispersed off peacefully.

G M Sheikh, one of the senior citizens present at the protest, said people were concerned over the safety of their wards in the aftermath of the attack. "We are standing with the JNU students," the Kashmir resident said.

# SEARCH FOR MISSING FEMALE



General public is hereby informed that one girl namely: Sunita with daughter Disha age 2 years, W/o Joginder R/o H.No. G-80/3, Laxmi Park, Nihal Vihar, Delhi. Age: 28 years, Height: 5'5", Complexion: Fair, Face: Oval, Wearing: Pink colour Suit-Salwar and chappal in the area of PS. Nihal Vihar.

Feet. Has been missing / kidnapped since 17.11.2019 from the area of PS. Nihal Vihar. In this regard a DD No. 26-A dated 19.11.2019 has been registered at P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this female but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this female kindly inform to the following.

E-Mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) SHO P.S. Nihal Vihar, Delhi Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Ph. 011-25946700, 25946710 Ph: 011-24368639 Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/2914/OD/19

# SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one lady namely Vinita with daughter Aditi Age 1½ Years W/o Surender R/o H.No. B-1/16, Gali No. 9, Harphool Vihar, Baprola, Delhi, has been Missing/ kidnapped from the area of P.S. Ranhola, Delhi since 04.12.2019. In this regard, a case DD No. 18-A dated 07.12.2019 has been registered at P.S. Ranhola, Delhi. The description of the missing/kidnapped lady is as under.



Age: 25 Years, Complexion: Fair, Height: 5', Face: Round, ID Mark: Mentally Unsound. Wearing: Green colour saree mahroom shawl and chappal in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing lady then please inform P.S. Ranhola, Delhi at following Tel No. / e-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 Fax No. 011-24368639 Sd/- S.H.O. P.S. Ranhola, Delhi Ph: 011-28363001 DP/2988/OD/19

# Office of Project Manager, Construction Unit UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM, HALDWANI

Letter No. 46/ADHES - 4/6 Date: 08.01.2020

## E-TENDER NOTICE

The Project Manager Construction Unit Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam Haldwani (Nainital) 263139, on behalf of Chairman, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Dehradun, invites sealed item rate tender on e-Government Procurement System (e-GPS) portal i.e. <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>, for "Construction of Boundary Wall, Workshop Shed And Ground Leveling Work of Inter State Bus Terminus At Ramnagar (Nainital) Rs. 119.00 lacs. The tender form can be downloaded from <http://www.uktenders.gov.in> from 13.01.2020, 17:00 hrs. to 27.01.2020, 17:00 hrs. Other information can be seen in tender form or office notice board or from phone no. 9411107868 of office of tender inviting authority. Project Manager

जल संयंत्र - जीवन संयंत्र "कृपया जल स्रोतों को प्रदूषित होने से बचायें" वैधानिक चेतावनी - जल स्रोतों को प्रदूषित करना दण्डनीय अपराध है।

## राजस्थान राज्य होटल्स निगम लि. जयपुर

(राजस्थान सरकार का संस्थान) मुख्य कार्यालय, जयपुर (44-17, जयपुर रोड, विहारवाड़ी सिटी जयपुर, जयपुर-302001), फोन नंबर 0141-2375191-94, E-Mail: [rajhcl@gmail.com](mailto:rajhcl@gmail.com) क्रमांक: - प.2 (सेवा) /राजहोत/वि.ड./2019-2020/972 - 76 दिनांक: - 19 दिसम्बर, 2019 - सूचना आमंत्रण बोली :- राजस्थान राज्य होटल्स निगम लि. की इकाई होटल खासा कोठी, जयपुर एवं होटल जयपुर जयपुर में विभिन्न श्रेणी के मानव संसाधन की आपूर्ति के लिए पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों/अनुभवी फर्मों से ई-टेंडरिंग के माध्यम से ऑनलाइन बोलीया विधिक 15.01.2020 तक आमंत्रित की जाती है। आमंत्रित बोलीयों की सूचना की विस्तृत जानकारी एवं अन्य सेवा शर्तें ई-प्रोक्युरमेंट पोर्टल पर टेंडर सेलेशन की अधिकृत वेबसाइट <http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> पर उपलब्ध है। UBN No. - SHC1920A0006 रा.सं.बा.सं./सी/19/4514 कार्यकारी निदेशक (वि.सं.प्र.स.)

## DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL -II, DELHI

4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

OA NO 1313/18 Date: 29.11.2019

CANARA BANK VERSUS Mrs. Kanika Kapoor & Ors.

To, Defendant, RESPONDENT

3. M/s Amrapali Leisure Valley Pvt. Ltd. 307, 3rd Floor, Nipun Tower, Karkardooma Community Centre Delhi -92, Also at: C-56/40, Sect.-62 Noida UP

Whereas the above named applicant (s) has / have instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 11,51,960/- (Rs. Eleven Lakh Fifty One Thousand Nine Hundred And Sixty Only) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 27.01.2020 at 10.30 A.M. Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

By Order Of The Tribunal Section Officer, DRT-II, DELHI.

## NOTICE FOR EXTENSION OF BID

No. SSA/TT&P/Sc Activity Books/353/2019/76 Date: 06.01.2020 The notice inviting e-tender vide tender (i) No. SSA/TT&P/Sc Activity Books/353/2019/10684 Date: 17.12.2019 for printing and supply of Science Activity Book (ii) No. SSA/TT&P/Maths Activity Book/352/2019/10682 Date: 17.12.2019 for printing and supply of Maths Activity Book (iii) No. SSA/Esst/TT&P/C.P.R Card/2020/366/2019/10683 Date: 17.12.2019 for printing and supply of Pupils Comprehensive Progress Report Card is hereby extended up to 10.01.2020. The bid can be submitted through <https://assamstenders.gov.in> till 2.00 pm on 10.01.2020 and will be opened at 3.00 pm on 10.01.2020.

Sd/- Mission Director, SSA, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

## Slowing economy

This time Govt data pegs GDP growth at a dismal five per cent. The FM should work out a practical and honest Budget



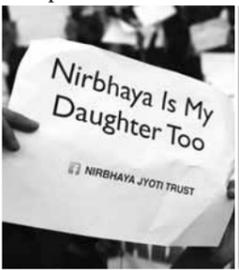
**G**loomy economic forecasts over the last quarter are not new and no matter what the source of research, they haven't been the least bit reassuring. And now the Government's own data has confirmed our worst fears of not just a slowdown but a guttural halt as India's GDP growth has dipped to an 11-year low of five per cent. This has been attributed to a poor showing by the manufacturing and construction sectors. Clearly, the stimulus package announced by Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the form of corporate tax rate cuts and boost to the realty sector has not been good enough. And just when fears fuelled by food and retail inflation are galloping, worryingly, the manufacturing sector growth has been projected to decelerate to two per cent in 2019-20, down from 6.9 per cent in the previous financial year. Likewise, the construction sector growth is estimated at 3.2 per cent as against 8.7 per cent in 2018-19. Consumption and demand are at their lowest and the financial sector stress, which spread from banks to non-banking financial companies, shows that we are yet to tame the effects of reckless lending of the first decade. The non-performing assets (NPAs) of public sector banks are projected to increase by September 2020 and this poses fresh concerns regarding their ability to take prudent lending decisions when liquidity is the need of the hour. For the Government, the rate cuts on corporate taxes and lower GST collections mean that its revenues have already taken a substantial hit.

Observers say while Sitharaman's packages have focussed too much on the supply side, there has hardly been any attempt made to prod demand. Besides, critics fear that the corporate tax cut has not percolated to spur growth in business and infrastructure. In fact, many suspect that most companies might have used the cuts to better their books instead of investing in new projects that could have generated jobs and production. Of course, the stressed Government cannot be ambitious enough about mega projects but at least needs to encourage smaller core sector activities that have a quicker turnaround time. In this respect, MSMEs still remain transformative. It needs to further boost liquidity in rural India and create demand. Clearly the Government can no longer live in denial that we are badly stuck in the trough of the "U" and need desperate measures to climb out of it. It has already delayed interventions, which were made in late August, and the full results are only expected to manifest themselves a few months down the line. Also, though the Government has been speeding up privatisation of state-run firms to boost investment and foster growth, the takers for debt-ridden enterprises are few and far between and as in the case of Air India, there are no suitors. India's problem is that no matter what its corrective push to attract investment, the global slowdown means that there isn't enough big-ticket interest. With a squeeze on domestic credit and weak corporate profits, leave alone recovery, signs of a pick-up look bleak. Our GDP needs to grow at around eight per cent annually to create jobs for the millions of our young people who join the labour force each year. Or else, we could become the worst victim of a demographic drag. The preparations for the Union Budget are on and Sitharaman would do well to present a realistic, honest estimate than give in to the politics of manoeuvring. Some talk is going around about the need to cut personal income tax rates to put more money in the hands of consumers but that, too, is a short-term solution. A practical and scalable reform process needs to get rolling. Remember, we do not know what kind of oil shocks we have to bear given the US-Iran tensions in the Middle East. That could throw all calculations awry.

## Finally, a closure

The verdict in the Nirbhaya case is out but unless judicial processes are time-bound, rape survivors are not safe



**W**hen a paramedical student was brutalised and gangraped on a bus in New Delhi on a cold December night in 2012, the savagery of it brought out the nation's guilt at not treating rape as the most heinous of all crimes. It brought about furious debates and discussions, even drove changes in the criminal justice system, led to the death penalty and a consciousness about the public safety of women. But rapes have not stopped in India, giving us the dubious distinction of being the most dangerous country for women anywhere in the world. And Nirbhaya's family had to suffer for seven long years before they got justice despite a systemic overhaul, new laws and her case being classified as the "rarest of rare." All her violators will now be hung to death. Yes, justice has been delayed inordinately. But the only satisfaction is that there will be closure after following due processes of law.

The Nirbhaya case will forever be our conscience call and hopefully the delayed verdict will now fast-track judicial processes and build in deterrence in our societal systems. Post Nirbhaya, the conviction rate of rapists has risen, though still at 32 per cent. There has also been an increase in reportage of crimes against women. But when the proportion of rape crimes is pitted against the suspects being convicted, the entire idea of progress comes under question. Also, the death penalty for heinous cases has emboldened predators on the prowl in public spaces, the recent rape and burning of a 26-year-old veterinarian in Hyderabad being a prime example. Only 20 per cent of the ₹3,200 crore Nirbhaya Fund, which was meant to strengthen safety of women in public spaces, ensure on-site rapid responses and quick rescues, has been utilised. Laws and funds alone cannot make a difference. One of the reasons why the Hyderabad police encounter of rapists got massive support was because the masses are fed up with the way our judicial processes work. In fact, for the criminal, there is no deterrent. But once he knows he can be hunted and chased to the corner of the earth, he will at least think twice. Or slow down. For that to happen, we need to fast-track procedures and at the same time ensure swift justice. This calls for certain institutional as well as behavioural reforms in society. At present, fast-track courts are no different from the usual courts in terms of case pile-ups and vacancies, taking up to eight months to settle complaints. The Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc) says rape trials should be completed in 60 days but that never happens. A quick and unbiased judicial set-up with requisite number of judges is a sine qua non. The inquiry process should factor in sensitivities of rape survivors while families and communities should be counselled to rise above stigmas. And the criminal concerned should not, under any circumstance, get bail pending full inquiry, lest he intimidate the survivor. At the time of writing, a rape survivor in Uttar Pradesh committed suicide as she was being bullied into withdrawing her complaint. Only a continuously responsive system can serve as an effective deterrent and inspire confidence in the community to pursue justice. The Hyderabad encounter case had itself led to the Andhra Pradesh Government introducing the Disha Bill, which mandates that cases involving crimes against women must be settled in 21 days through special courts. Let's talk less, implement more.

# Dangers of a digital world

With the number of active web users growing every day, piracy remains a big threat and needs to be addressed through multiple strategies targetting different areas



AISHWARYA GIRIDHAR

**T**he previous decade was noteworthy for a number of reasons, not least of which was the sharp rise in the number of Internet users — more than a billion people from across the world joined the new Internet bandwagon in the last six years alone. This has had massive cultural implications, requiring the revision of legal, economic and technological frameworks. Intellectual Property (IP) frameworks have received much importance in this era, especially because they can impact areas beyond IP. For instance, copyright laws can have implications beyond the digital content ecosystem and can extend to an array of areas such as free speech, the flow and availability of information and the manner in which cultural products such as art, music, film and the like are produced and exchanged.

Such cultural products in the creative industry play an important role in a country's economy. For instance, the Indian creative industry (largely comprising the media and entertainment industry) is poised to be worth \$31 billion by 2020 and is expected to create over a million jobs by 2022. However, this industry has repeatedly highlighted copyright piracy as a major issue that eats into its profits significantly. While this is an issue that has practically been around since the beginning of the copyright framework, technological advancements have meant that it is now possible to make perfect replicas at a scale almost instantaneously and with much easier access.

One of the first steps to tackle piracy is to understand its underpinnings and to assess the factors that contribute to it. A few studies in this regard have been there in India and they indicate that piracy is influenced by several factors — ranging from personality-based to social and cultural. However, the overall lack of information about various aspects of this issue is a problem. There is no recent academic literature on the drivers of piracy and more importantly, there is a lack of reliable data on the total size of the cultural economy in our country.

This lack of information complicates policy and law-making in this area. While the standard legislative response has been to use stringent penalties for copyright infringement without accounting for differences in the kinds of infringing and infringers, this approach has had limited success. Then there are also other challenges that relate to tackling digital piracy. We have an overburdened judicial system, disparate enforcement mechanisms, a fragmented supply chain and more generally, the absence of a widespread understanding of "copyright." Additionally, since "law and order" is a State subject under the Constitution, enforcement relies on respective police forces, making it difficult to implement centralised and uniform enforcement strategies.

Other measures that have been effective in controlling piracy include a reduction in



the "windowing period" between releases abroad and in India. This means lesser the time taken for a new release to be made accessible through legal platforms, the more likely is it that users will consume such content through legal means.

This can be effective when such content is easily available on various over-the-top (OTT) platforms for content that is highly anticipated. Another development that has been instrumental in reducing piracy rates has been the introduction of online streaming services, making legal content easily available at a reasonable price. However, the effect of the stark increase in the number of streaming services, all with their own catalogues and separate pricing plans, is yet to be seen.

Nevertheless, other technological measures can be useful in this regard. For instance, various forms of water-marking techniques have been used to identify the source of pirated content, fingerprinting and related technologies have been used by platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, which host user-generated content, to combat infringement by helping to identify and block the illegal use of copyrighted content.

More recently, blockchain technology is also beginning to be explored as a means to combat infringement, both as a way to establish a chain of contact for content and to expose piracy through the use of Bitcoin rewards to incentivise

“**WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT IN FRAMING RESPONSES TO PIRACY THAT ARE EFFECTIVE AND TIME-SENSITIVE, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ALSO HAVE IN PLACE JUDICIAL SAFEGUARDS TO ENSURE THAT ALL INTERVENTIONS ARE NARROWLY TAILORED AND AIMED ONLY AT ADDRESSING PIRACY**”

the detection of pirated content. While these methods have varying rates of success in combating infringement, upgrades and innovations in technology, especially those that combine various existing methods, can be expected to make them more viable in the future.

The use of soft-law approaches along with public-private partnerships have also been effective in targeting piracy, especially where they target revenue models of those indulging in large-scale piracy. For instance, infringing website lists, which identify websites that host pirated content, have been used to reduce advertising, thereby disrupting revenues. Such lists are usually prepared by law enforcement or other arms of the Government in partnership with the private sector. For instance, the UK's Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit partners with experts, companies and law enforcement agencies in other countries to counter crime on an international scale. It compiled an IWL as part of its "Operation Creative" initiative, which helped reduce advertising on illegal websites.

More localised and country-specific lists are also being used to target the revenue of websites hosting pirated content. In India, the Maharashtra Cyber Digital Crime Unit, which is a part of the State's cyber police force, works on a model that relies on collaboration with the private sector. It has taken down hundreds of websites that host pirat-

ed content and has sent notices to different brands and networks advertising on such websites.

Piracy is, therefore, a complex issue with numerous drivers and needs to be addressed through multiple strategies targetting different areas of the ecosystem. In this context, a report by the Esya Centre titled, *Trends in Copyright Infringement and Enforcement in India*, explores the issue of copyright piracy and the challenges in effectively countering it. It examines legislative, judicial, policy and technological best practices both from India and internationally to inform next steps in this regard.

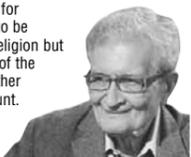
What is clear is that in framing responses to piracy that are effective and time-sensitive, it is essential to have in place judicial safeguards to ensure that all interventions are narrowly tailored and aimed only at addressing piracy. This because of the impact that these laws can have on issues of free speech and access and because it is important to also account for fair dealing exceptions provided for under copyright law. Ultimately, copyright forms a part of larger goals of increasing innovation, promoting research, progress in the arts and sciences and providing fair wages to creators of various kinds, among others. It is essential to situate copyright in that larger context and tailor remedies for infringement within those bounds.

(The writer is a junior fellow at the Esya Centre)

## SOUNDBITE

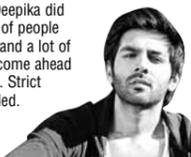
It (consideration for citizenship) has to be independent of religion but take cognisance of the sufferings and other issues into account.

Nobel laureate — Amartya Sen



I respect what Deepika did and I hope a lot of people would stand up and a lot of citizens should come ahead and talk about it. Strict actions are needed.

Actor — Kartik Aaryan



India usually plays a very good role in (maintaining) peace in the world. We welcome all initiatives, especially from India, to not allow escalation (of tensions).

Iran's Ambassador to India — Ali Chegeni



Those who don't have political existence in the State are trying to ruin its economy by pursuing cheap politics such as strikes. We will not let them impose a strike.

West Bengal CM — Mamata Banerjee



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Killing a General

Sir — Qassem Soleimani was reportedly Iran's second-most important man after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a larger motive behind his killing cannot be ruled out. It is an election year for US President Donald Trump and there are reports that he may have ordered the strike to boost his prospects. The Osama bin Laden operation by former US President Barack Obama could have been uppermost in his mind.

But Laden was a non-State actor, a terrorist, while Soleimani was a key ally in America's fight against the Islamic State (IS). The attack is also being called a diversionary play by Trump to drive the attention away from more pressing domestic issues like his impeachment. Global crude oil prices have already soared as a result of the ongoing turbulence in the region. The impact will be felt worldwide, including in India. Additionally, New Delhi has the bothersome task of adopting a "please all" attitude not only towards the US and Iran but also other key players.

Ganapathi Bhat Akola

### Stage is set for triangular contest in Delhi

This refers to the editorial, "All eyes on Delhi durbar" (January 8). A fresh Assembly election in Delhi is scheduled for February and outgoing Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is well-placed to win another five-year term. A combination of factors makes the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader a front-runner. Three political parties — the BJP, Congress and AAP — are in the fray and are gearing up for a fierce battle to prove their loyalty to the public. In the winter of 2015, the AAP faced twin problems in the run-up to the Assembly polls. The BJP was gearing up to capitalise on the 2014 Modi wave to return to power in the national capital after a long exile, which in this case had run for 14 years and more. To add to AAP's woes, Kejriwal's "common man" image was under constant attack by the Opposition. Mufflerman's smog-induced cough just wouldn't go and BJP leaders would daily mock AAP, asking how someone, who couldn't cure himself of common cold in three months, would administer Delhi.

Five years later, Kejriwal cannot claim to be the underdog and outsider. He needs a new narrative and a retaining wall to seek another term in office. He under-



stands that the biggest chink in the BJP's armour remains a leadership vacuum in the Delhi unit. The BJP retains its 30-plus per cent base but due to the complete collapse of the Congress, is in a direct contest against the street-smart AAP. It is at a disadvantage. Because the Assembly elections are fought on local issues, Modi, despite trying, does not always compensate for the shortcomings of the local party units, Jharkhand being the latest case in point.

J Akshay Bengaluru

### Reaching a new low

Sir — The Government has brought the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth to its slowest in 11 years. This is a result of its fixated politics and prescriptive economics. The Modi Government came to

power by building up suspicion over its predecessor's sphere of governance. Its demonetisation exercise was met with disapproval and in the process, it knocked down the cornerstone of our cash-centric economy. More than a flagging economy, it is the feckless efforts at its

repair that is of greater concern. The Government's apathy towards economists and disregard of the autonomy of pivotal planning and oversight institutions made things worse. Frenetic activities have been there but little progress was seen. Unsettled socio-political

environs, induced by energetic propagation of inconsequential themes, seem to have been the final nail in the coffin.

R Narayanan Navi Mumbai

### University politics

Sir — The imbroglio at the JNU is not merely a "law and order" problem. It is a pitched political and ideological battle. With claims and counter-claims flying thick and fast, every video accusing the ABVP is being countered with those incriminating Leftist opponents. But now reports say that one of the attackers claimed to be a Leftist goon actually belonged to the ABVP. The joint secretary of ABVP has admitted that two persons, seen with rods and sticks, belonged to it. The tit-for-tat response by the masked warriors has done the Modi-Shah duo no good. Meanwhile, we can only hope university campuses can remain places of learning.

KS Padmanabhan Chennai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

**FIRST COLUMN**

## A tale of three theocracies

More empathy and an outreach by those in power towards those who fear the introduction of the CAA are imperative



ISHAN JOSHI

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a well-drafted, welcome piece of legislation. It passes with flying colours the triple test of Aristotelian logic, the Indian Nyaya school and Confucian principles.

CAA seeks to provide both the physical and epistemological comforts of home in a land of refuge, India, to religiously persecuted minority communities of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. All three of these states are theocracies with Islam enshrined in their respective Constitutions as the state religion. I shall refer to them "Group I states" for the purpose of this article.

Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Nepal, also in the neighbourhood, are non-theocratic states with no state religion. These may be termed the "Group II states."

It follows, therefore, that what in legalese is termed "reasonable differentia" is clearly established in that distinction between these two groups of South Asian nation states. Which is also why the CAA cannot be extended to include minority communities claiming religious persecution in Group II states such as the Rohingya in Myanmar, Tamils in Sri Lanka and Ahmadiyya/Isma'ili/Shias in Pakistan.

Unless, that is, any of the Group II states decides in the years ahead to adopt a state religion and convert itself into a theocracy. And a political party in India included such a demand in its election manifesto, got democratically elected and followed through on bringing its promise to fruition with legislation to that effect.

Were this to come to pass, support for fast-tracking Indian citizenship eligibility for minority communities living in future theocracies within Group II states in the Indian sub-continent would be entirely valid. But only then, not before.

As for Group I states, their Muslim citizens are excluded from the ambit of the CAA because they cannot, by definition, be religiously persecuted in a theocratic country where the state religion is Islam.

This is not to say members of the majority community in Group I states are not persecuted; far from it.

Anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests our Muslim neighbours who have chosen to found and live in theocratic states in South Asia are discriminated against on a plethora of grounds including political, sectarian, factional, regional, economic, gender et al. by oppressive state apparatuses.

But, and without intending to make this sound like Philosophy 101, it is one thing to say all citizens of Group I states regardless of faith have a disability; it is quite another to assert that they all suffer from the same disability.

It stands to reason, thus, that the palliative for specific disabilities will differ depending on the particular disability one is aiming to ameliorate.

The CAA's architecture is designed to deal with a specific disability; that of the disappearance of minority communities from Group I states which were, till 1947, either directly or indirectly part of Britain's Indian empire. The Act does so in a humane, practicable and ethical manner. Some may disagree. But that's for lawyers to scrap over in court.

If the Supreme Court of India, which has admitted a bunch of petitions challenging the Constitutional validity of the Act, holds the amended citizenship law to be kosher, excellent. If it doesn't, then it will not be the law of the land.

Either way, as law-abiding citizens of the republic, it would behoove each one of us to accept with grace the verdict once appeals if any are disposed of or, if required, bring in a fresh law.

In any event, there can be no justification for anti-CAA protesters inciting anarchy via arson, destruction of public property, wanton violence and mindless lumpy behaviour.

Governments, for their part, both at the Centre and in the States, must ensure the might of the law is brought to bear upon rioters including punitive measures such as those initiated by the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Government in issuing notices under the law to confiscate the immovable assets of those charged with destroying public property as compensation.

Simultaneously, administrations must adopt a policy of zero-tolerance for the use of disproportionate force by police without neutering them or hampering their effectiveness.

It's tough, in Indian conditions, but that's Raj Dharma.

Making incendiary remarks targeting co-citizens, especially among the Indian Muslim community, is unacceptable. Doubtful so if they come from those in positions of responsibility. Whatever the provocation.

More empathy and an outreach by those in power towards those who fear the introduction of the CAA, however unjustified their apprehensions may be, are also a categorical imperative.

What is puzzling beyond all measure, though, is what the rationale behind opposing the CAA is by those who term themselves "secular." Is their collective self-loathing so acute?

Surely, they cannot stand in favour of oppressive theocracies and swear by secularism in the same breath.

On second thoughts, the history of the 20th century teaches us that perhaps they can — taking a line from their support for the Khilafat movement to the overturning of the Shah Bano verdict and opposition to a Uniform Civil Code for India.

The conviction grows that they are here to bury secularism, not to praise it. And when erstwhile mainstream political parties become its pall bearers, it is time to worry.

I do not propose to blame it all on Nehru & Co.

On the contrary, as a proud secularist albeit from an Indic tradition I am grateful that the founders of the Republic did not enshrine Sanatan Dharma as the national faith. It would not only have been oxymoronic but undermined the whole notion of an Indic exceptionalism.

But choosing to be Constitutionally faith-neutral if very different from trying to force Indic faiths into an Abrahamic mould and normalising the characterisation of Hinduism as a "religion."

Approximations just don't cut it.

These fine distinctions, however, would surely have gladly been forfeited by the ethnically-cleansed minority communities of Group I states if they had not been murdered, raped, humiliated, delegitimised and dehumanised for 72 years because of religious persecution. The CAA, read as it is, aims to redeem secular India's solemn pledge at the time of Partition.

If not wholly, then at least very substantially.

(The writer is a senior editor with Asia News Network. The views expressed are personal)

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

IT'S A SLAP IN THE FACE FOR THE US. BUT MILITARY ACTION IS NOT ALL. WHAT IS VITAL IS ENDING THE CORRUPTING PRESENCE OF USA IN THE REGION.

—IRANIAN SUPREME LEADER  
 AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI



ALL IS WELL! MISSILES LAUNCHED FROM IRAN AT TWO MILITARY BASES LOCATED IN IRAQ. ASSESSMENT OF CASUALTIES & DAMAGES TAKING PLACE NOW.

—US PRESIDENT  
 DONALD TRUMP

# Need for multilateralism

The Indo-Pacific region and the Indian Ocean in particular have become the epicentre of geopolitics and India has emerged as a key player



VIKAS KALYANI

In recent days, Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne announced efforts to strengthen Australia's involvement in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the importance of working with India in defence and other activities. Speaking at the 2019, Raisina Dialogue in Delhi — a geopolitical conference co-hosted by the India — Payne said: "Our respective futures are intertwined and heavily dependent on how well we cooperate on the challenges and opportunities in the Indian Ocean in the decades ahead."

In terms of global political significance, the Atlantic Ocean can be viewed as the ocean of our grandparents and parents; the Pacific Ocean as our ocean and that of our children; and the Indian Ocean as the ocean of our children and grandchildren. There is an obvious sense in which the region is the future. The average age of people in the region's countries is under 30, compared to 38 in the US and 46 in Japan. The countries bordering the Indian Ocean are home to 2.5 billion people, which is one-third of the world's population.

Having heard the Australian Minister and read a few expert comments from Australian scholars of international affairs, it becomes clear that Indo-Pacific in general and the Indian Ocean in particular is being viewed as the epicentre of geopolitics and India as the key player in this region. The need of economic partnership among the littorals is of utmost importance while having a collaborated approach to address geopolitical risks. India, being the largest country, has a logical role to play as a leader bringing the nations of IOR on multilateral platforms.

**Multi-nation platforms:** There are multi-nation platforms existing, which have mutual growth as their aim but their effectiveness is questionable when compared to other oceanic platforms. For example, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established by nations bordering the Bay of Bengal in 1997. In more than two decades, it is still gaining momentum but cannot be compared with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Australia, along with 21 other border states, is a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) which seeks to promote sustainable economic growth, trade liberalisation and security. Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper seeks to support IORA in areas such as maritime security and international law. It also aims at strengthening its ties in the region such as with India and Indonesia — and also build new connections, particularly in Africa.

It brings out the Australian perspective which is outreach and focusses on multilateral cooperation with the stakeholders. The Indian perspective becomes clear from the Foreign Secretary's words: "The challenges we all face today, and all of us know this, whether they be the traditional security issues such as nuclear proliferation, armed conflict and so on, or newer non-traditional issues such as terrorism, migration and refugee flows and environmental degradation — all of these, in our view, require more, and not less, multilateralism. India's vision of engagement in the Indo-Pacific region

“ SECURITY AND GROWTH FOR ALL THROUGH MULTILATERALISM IS THE ONLY VIABLE SOLUTION AGAINST PROBLEMS ARISING IN TODAY'S GEOSTRATEGIC SCENARIO BECAUSE OF UNILATERALISM AND TRADE WARS. INDIA'S ACTIVE AND FREQUENT FRIENDLY ENGAGEMENTS WITH IOR COUNTRIES' ARMED FORCES WILL BOOST THE CONFIDENCE OF ALL THE PARTICIPANTS AS WELL AS THE LITTORAL COUNTRIES AND WILL GIVE STABILITY TO THE MARITIME SECURITY OF THE IOR. THE IAF THUS CAN PROVE ITSELF TO BE AN IMPORTANT TOOL IN FURTHERING THE VISION OF SAGAR ”



will be based on the values of peace, stability and prosperity on a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific with the ASEAN regional bloc central to the concept, which serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large. Our Prime Minister's articulation of the vision of SAGAR — 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' will continue to provide the basis for our maritime engagement."

**Cooperation is key to maritime security:** Maritime security is a major challenge for the poorer coastal and island countries of the IOR. In particular those that have large zones of maritime jurisdiction. There are 48 independent countries in the region, including hinterland and landlocked states of East Africa and South Asia. There are 18 in Africa, 11 in the Middle East, seven in South Asia, six in Southeast Asia, five island states and Australia. Managing maritime security is a challenging endeavour. It requires cooperation between regional countries and between those with a stake in regional security. Maritime security is no longer the sole prerogative of navies with more non-military agencies now involved.

Maritime security is a priority for the IORA, currently the main regional organisation for economic and security cooperation. It recently committed its members to working on increasing cooperation among navies and other maritime security forces in the region. The plan is to do this collaboratively with the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), a voluntary initiative by India to address shared maritime security challenges and threats.

However IONS' main focus has been on naval cooperation and it has

been successful in terms of bringing navies and coastal security forces together in the form of joint exercises. There is some scepticism about the symposium's ability to make a broader contribution to maritime security.

**Defence cooperation:** The Foreign Minister of Australia also pointed to increasing defence activities in the Indian Ocean, noting that in 2014, Australia and India had conducted 11 defence activities together, with the figure reaching 38 in 2018. This shows the positive approach from Australian counterparts to build a strong security-oriented partnership with India.

In 2018, the Indian Air Force (IAF), for the first time, participated with fighter aircraft in Exercise Pitch Black that was conducted in Australia. During the transit to Australia, the IAF contingent also had constructive engagement with Indonesian and Malaysian air forces. In recent times the IAF has shown its capabilities of reaching anywhere within the IOR at an unimaginable short notice and also has undertaken exercises across the bays around, so as to make itself familiar with the region. In its pan-India exercise Gagan Shakti-2018, special attention was given to maritime air operations. The operation was the largest-ever series of air exercises conducted by the IAF. It crucially demonstrated an air operational range with the help of air-to-air refuelling by the IL-78 Flight Refuelling Aircraft (FRA). The Su-30s, airborne from a base on the eastern coast, engaged multiple targets towards the western seaboard of India at distances beyond 2,500 km and landed at a southern base, thus covering a total distance of 4,000 km in a single mission, which is less than average distance between India and many IOR countries.

Among other defence cooperations, the air forces of two nations can work together by using the respective island territories as regular refuelling halts during ferries or conduct joint exercises with navies of friendly countries around. For example the Cocos Keeling Island and Christmas Island (Australian external territory) have 8,000 and 7,000 feet runways respectively which are fit for operations by all kind of aircraft.

They are located south of Indonesia and almost midway between India and Australia. The distance between Port Blair and these islands is 2,675 km and 2,833 km respectively. Similarly, Andaman and Nicobar Islands can be used by the Australian Air Force for the same purpose. With these kinds of practices of using island runways and conducting joint exercises, the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADRR) operations in actual contingencies will be conducted more efficiently when time is a critical factor and decision-making delays cannot be afforded. The same is applicable for any other contingency which imposes challenge to safety and security of IOR countries.

Security and growth for all through multilateralism is the only viable solution against problems arising in today's geostrategic scenario because of unilateralism and trade wars. India's active and frequent friendly engagements with IOR countries' armed forces will boost the confidence of all the participants as well as the littoral countries and will give stability to the maritime security of the IOR. The IAF thus can prove itself to be an important tool in furthering the vision of SAGAR.

(The writer is a senior research fellow at the India Foundation)

# Global forests and ecology in peril

As the going gets tough for the world's 'green assets', it is being predicted that the Amazon rain forests are now the most threatened with a projected loss of 48 million hectares by 2030



KOTA SRIRAJ

The ongoing bush and forest fires in Australia are presenting a daunting challenge to the authorities and are proving to be a painful and tragic end for the wildlife affected by the blaze. This country-wide catastrophe, mainly caused by drought and extreme heat, has so far claimed 24 lives, destroyed 18 million acres of forest and bushland and has also consumed 1,200 homes.

However, the brunt of the fires has been borne by the wildlife and approximately half a billion animal lives have been lost. Australia is not new to bush fires but this season's blaze has been anything but predictable and bearable, as the scale has hit astonishing levels.

The spectre of climate change in the form of global warming is transforming the definition of natural disasters as rising temperatures, droughts and strong winds become a lethal combination of fanning even the smallest of a bush fire into a country-wide inferno.

This is evident in Australia's case as well because this year saw the mid-December temperatures going as high as 42 degree Celsius in the midst of winds that were recording speeds of 120 kmph.

Yet another aspect, which precipitated this disaster in Australia was the fact that the country witnessed its driest spring season in the last 120 years and this rendered the bushland, forests and grasslands dry and fit for a blaze.

The 2019 Amazon forest fires, too, were an unfortunate occurrence as they saw over 906,000 hectares of prime forest land — that was rich in ecology and wildlife — being burnt to cinder.

Here, too, the role of man cannot be ruled out, as every year, the countries bordering the forest areas of the

Amazon rain forest illegally slash and burn the woodland to clear land for agriculture and habitation. These countries are unable to take strict action to stop this practice and as a result, sometimes this clearing process gets out of hand and unfortunately results in mega-disaster events.

Amazon forests, considered the world's largest terrestrial carbon sink, are now at peril, too, thanks to climate change and anthropogenic activities.

According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Global Land Outlook report, 70 per cent of the global forests are at peril thanks to deforestation and man-made disasters such as forest fires. The report states that tropical jungles are at the highest risk and to illustrate the point the report presents a staggering fact that nearly 5.5 million hectares of rich forestland disappeared annually between 2010-2015.

As the going gets tough for the world's 'green assets', it is being further predicted that the Amazon rain forests are now the most threatened with a projected loss of 48 million hectares by 2030. The inability of

mankind to take care of nature and safeguard the precious natural resources is very unsettling.

India, too, has good forest wealth but, some years ago, that also came under threat as hundreds of acres of valuable forests in Uttarakhand's Himalayan foothills became a casualty of tremendous fires.

The callous selfishness of human actions is leading to spiralling temperatures, which in turn are making the flora and fauna's survival difficult. Add to these woes are the afforestation efforts which are progressing at snail's pace. All this means that we are compromising those very carbon sinks that can have a major role in climate change mitigation.

In the wake of these global forest fire episodes, the world environmental community must introspect to find a lasting solution to safeguard nature's assets from these recurrent disasters.

In this regard, it becomes clear that the global community lost a great opportunity at the recently-concluded UN Climate Change Conference COP 25, to put in place systems and checks that can play a pivotal role in

preserving the global green canopy. The forests are the last remaining barriers between mankind and the consequences of climate change. They need to be treated as a national priority and be accorded sufficient protection. The strict and non-negotiable segregation of habited areas and forests is probably the first step towards forest conservation.

In addition to this, the forest protection laws that are currently lax and implemented even more poorly need to be overhauled so that woodland protection becomes a serious matter.

In India, too, the forest department is woefully understaffed and ill-trained to protect these precious resources. All these aspects must change if India and the world want to keep whatever forests are still left.

This must be done expeditiously before it is too late to undo the damage, else man will have to pay a heavy price for this indiscriminate and mindless pillage of natural wealth and future generations will pay for our crimes against nature.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

# Steel players hail Govt's decision to open coal sector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian steel industry on Wednesday welcomed the Government's decision to promulgate an ordinance to open up coal mining in the country to non-coal companies. In a statement, apex steel industry body Indian Steel Association (ISA) said it hails the decision of the Cabinet to amend MMDR Act 1957 and Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act 2015. "This is a huge reform announced by the Government on commercial mining in Coal. This change in Act will help the country to reduce its dependence on coal imports and help attract investments from Indian and Global corporates," it said. The amendment, ISA said, will remove the end-user restrictions besides allowing seamless transfer of environment and forest clearance in operational mines. The step taken today was a long pending reform which will make the domestic steel industry more competitive on a global level, the association

said. JSW Steel Chairman Sajjan Jindal said the move will go a long way in reducing the coal imports. "Huge reform announced by the Government on commercial mining in coal. This will go a long way in reducing the coal imports which is over USD 15 billion/year," he said. In today's time when the oil prices are very uncertain, Jindal said, the decision was path breaking in making India self-reliant. Continuity of all forest and environment clearances for iron-ore mines for a period of two years is another great reform, he added. "This was a long pending reform which will make the Indian Steel industry more aggressive and competitive on a global level," he said. JSPL Chairman VR Sharma termed the decision as a 'game changer' for the industry. India has reserves for another 300 years and the time is ripe to use it. If it is not utilised now, it won't be able to be utilised in future as developed countries are against coal usage.

"They are spreading on international platforms that using coal is damaging the environment, which is incorrect. Like we do at our Angul plant which is India's first and largest syngas-based DRI plant and coal gasification plant (CGP) for steel-making," he said. Coal can be converted into syngas which can be used for producing petrol, diesel and other petroleum products, which can reduce dependence on crude oil imports, he added. The Government on Wednesday approved an Ordinance to amend a law in order to ease rules for auctioning of coal mines and opening it for non-coal companies. The decision taken by the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will also do away with end-use restrictions of the mining blocks, Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi said. "The Cabinet has approved promulgation of Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2020," the minister said, addressing media after the Cabinet meeting.

# Economic situation "bad", 5% growth estimate 'imaginary':Sinha

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Union Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha on Wednesday questioned estimation that the economy will grow at 5 per cent in 2019-20, saying the figure is "imaginary" and raised doubt about the Modi Government's capability of tackling economic issues. Talking to reporters, Sinha also demurred Prime Minister Narendra Modi holding "pre-budget consultation", saying it is "unprecedented" and asked what the latter's Finance Minister is doing. India's GDP growth is seen dipping to an 11-year low of 5 per cent in the current fiscal, mainly due to poor showing by manufacturing and construction sectors, Government data showed on Tuesday. "Even this 5 per cent growth is imaginary. Because this does not include what has happened, the damage which was caused as a result of demonetisation and GST on the MSME and the informal sector," Sinha told reporters here. The former Union Finance Minister said several econo-

Several economists are suggesting that India is experiencing negative growth if factors caused by demonetisation & GST are to be kept in mind — Yashwant Sinha

anything much from the Government either before or after," he said. Sinha further said earlier budgets were worked out in the finance ministry and noted it was "unprecedented" for the prime minister to hold pre-budget consultations. "But where it (the budget) is being made today I don't know. But they have the mouthpiece who will read out the budget in the Lok Sabha," he said. Former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan, who accompanied Sinha, said the plunging economic numbers are a "matter of grave concern." He said former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian had last year talked about GDP growth rates being inflated by 2.5 per cent. "That is condition and it is not 5 per cent, it is 2.5 per cent," he said about the estimates. Chavan accused the Modi government of not consulting experts during crisis situation and said the issues of CAA and NRC are being raised to distract people's attention from economic woes. "But frankly, I don't expect

restrictions on imports of refined palm oil

# Government puts restrictions on import of refined palm oil

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday imposed restrictions on imports of refined palm oil, a move which could discourage the inbound shipment of the commodity from Malaysia. According to a notification of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), "import policy" is amended from "free to restricted" for refined bleached deodorised palm oil and refined bleached deodorised palmolein. Putting the commodity in restricted category means an importer will require licence or permission for the inbound shipment. India, the world's largest importer of vegetable oils, buys nearly 15 million tonne annually. Of this, palm oil comprises 9 million tonne and the rest 6 million tonne soybean and sunflower oil. Indonesia and Malaysia are the two countries which supply palm oil. Malaysia produces 19 mil-

lion tonne of palm oil in a year, while Indonesia produces 43 million tonne, the trade data showed. The move comes in the backdrop of remarks by Malaysia on the new citizenship law and Kashmir issue. On December 20 last year, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad had reportedly said, "I am sorry to see that India, which claims to be a secular state, is now taking action to deprive some Muslims of their citizenship." "If we do that here, you know what will happen. There will be chaos, there will be instability and everyone will suffer," he had said. Earlier, Mahathir had said in the UN General Assembly that India had "invaded and occupied" Kashmir. Further according to industry source, the government has advised importers not to buy palm oil from Malaysia. "We import 30 per cent of the palm oils from Malaysia, while 70 per cent from Indonesia. Malaysia produces 19 mil-

# NAREDCO seeks steps for rental housing in Budget 2021

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman prepares to present the Union Budget for the fiscal 2020-21 next month, the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) on Wednesday sought initiatives to incentivise rental housing in the country. NAREDCO in a statement said that rental housing will play a vital role in achieving the target of 'Housing for All' by 2022, and recommended grant of tax incentives to boost the segment. Speaking to the media here, NAREDCO President Niranjan Hiranandani referred to the concept of "notional income" from housing property held as stock-in-trade, which attracts tax on unsold property after a certain time period under Section 23(5) of the Income Tax Act. Section 23(5) of the IT Act provides that in respect of unsold property, held as stock-in-trade and not let out, the annual value of the property for the period up to two years from the end of the financial year in which completion certificate is received from competent authority, will be taken as nil. Thereafter, it will be assessable as income from house property on the basis of its notional



rent. "This is an extremely 'subjective' criteria, which will obviously be open for misuse," the NAREDCO statement said. "This provision is very harsh and is creating genuine hardship to real estate developers, who are already under pressure in the ongoing sluggish market," it said. "The real estate industry is already struggling with large unsold inventories. Taxing notional rent, after one year from the end of the financial year in which completion certificate is received from competent authority, will lead to severe financial implications for the developer/industry." The realtors' body also suggested to the government that no rent should be taxed for the period up to five years from the end of the financial year in which the certificate of completion of construction of the property is obtained from the competent authority. The self-regulatory body,

under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, has urged the Finance Minister to demand more measures to ease the liquidity situation in the long-subdued real estate segment, including the one-time roll-over of loans given to developers. "The industry has been demanding restructuring of loans or one time roll-over in case of the stressed assets at the options of banks. In such cases, the borrower will retain the asset classification of the restructured standard accounts as standard and the same will not be treated as NPA," it said. It also said that interest rates on home loans should be below 7 per cent per annum and suggested that the stamp duty rates should be reduced by 50 per cent for all the real estate transactions entered and agreements registered on or before March 31, 2020. The organisation also sought a relaxation in the definition of affordable housing. According to NAREDCO, the ₹45 lakh price cap for the classification of a property as affordable housing should be done away with as it keeps most of the projects in the National Capital Region (NCR) and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) out of the ambit of "affordable housing".

# Airlines advised precautionary measures over Iran airspace

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Civil aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation has asked Indian airlines to remain vigilant and take all precautionary measures when flying over Iranian and Iraqi airspace. The development comes after US-Iran geopolitical tensions in the region escalated on Wednesday. "A meeting was held with all concerned airlines which operate flights over these airspaces," a senior DGCA official told IANS. "We have sensitised them to remain vigilant and take all precautions." At present only Air India uses the Iran-Iraq airspace for operations to Europe and other destinations. Currently, no Indian airline flies directly to Iran, however, Air India flies to Najaf in Iraq. On its part, Air India decided to reroute flights over Iran. "In light of the tensions within the Iranian airspace a decision to temporarily reroute flights of Air India and Air India Express over flying Iran has been taken," a spokesperson for the airline said.

# Deep discounts given by e-commerce sites major area of concern: CCI study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Deep discounting on goods and services offered by large online retailers has emerged as a major area of concern in a study conducted by CCI, particularly in case of mobile phones, and the fair trade regulator will probe all cases of possible abuse of market dominance. Releasing the findings of the study and its own observations, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) said marketplace platforms need to adopt self-regulatory measures to address all areas of concern flagged in the study and also bring out clear and transparent policies on discounts. The study, Market Study on E-Commerce in India, was initiated by the regulator in April 2019 with a view to better understand the functioning of e-commerce in India and its implications for markets and competition. The study released on Wednesday found that issues like lack of platform neutrality, unfair platform-to-business contract terms, exclusive contracts between online marketplace platforms and sellers/service providers, platform price parity restrictions and deep discounts among others may directly or indirectly have a

bearing on competition. While highlighting competition issues, CCI said that the price points at which sellers sell the products on the marketplace platforms are in many instances lower than the cost price for the brick and mortar retailers. These retailers maintain that they either have to match the online discounts at a significant loss or the online market would be foreclosed for them. This was pointed out to be a particularly pressing concern in the case of mobile phones, where online markets constitute around 40 per cent of the total sales in the country. Making observation about the goods category, the regulator said the issue raised by the sellers relates to online discounts on major goods platforms purportedly pushing the prices below cost and impairing the offline small retailers' ability to compete in certain product categories. "The platforms denied any involvement in pricing," CCI said. It further added that "unfair pricing contravenes the competition law under Section 4(2) of the Act when indulged in by a dominant enterprise." Regarding services category, it said, "...Discounts are offered by even the pure inter-

mediary platforms following marketplace model with no control over the inventory sold through them." Discounts are purportedly funded by platforms for consumer on-boarding. It is causing the service providers, i.e. Hotels and restaurants to lose control over the price of their products sold/distributed through online platforms, which also affects price and sales through other channels. Discounting is a common business strategy but where the design of the discounting schemes is misaligned with the rational business practices of the service providers, the use of such discounts as a competitive strategy comes into question. CCI, with a view to reduce information asymmetry and promote competition on the merits, has urged e-commerce platforms to put in place certain transparency measures. It urged the platforms to bring out clear and transparent policies on discounts, including the basis of discount rates funded by platforms for different products and suppliers and the implications of participation and non-participation in discount schemes. Besides, it said the business users should be notified about any proposed changes in terms and conditions.

# Reliance Jio launches voice and video calling over Wi-Fi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio on Wednesday launched voice and video calling over Wi-Fi service that will allow customers to switch seamlessly from LTE to Wi-Fi-based calling when they are at home or office. The company said Jio Wi-Fi calling - which works on the largest ecosystem of handsets - will also allow users to make video calls over Wi-Fi. The service would be available for free. The announcement comes less than a month after rival Airtel launched a similar service in Delhi-NCR. Jio said it has been "testing this service over past few months to provide a robust experience to every customer at launch." Customers can use any Wi-Fi network for Jio Wi-Fi-calling, voice and video calls will seamlessly switch over between VoLTE and Wi-Fi to provide an enhanced voice/video-calling experience, it added. "At this juncture, when an average Jio consumer uses over 900 minutes of voice calls every month, and at a growing base of consumers, the launch of Jio Wi-Fi Calling will further enhance every Jio consumer's voice-calling experience.

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**  
(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)  
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Destiny Jack S/o Emmaunel R/o H. No. D-216/3, Krishna Park, Khanpur, New Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **F.I.R. No. 361/16 u/s 33 DE Act**, registered at P.S. Neb Sarai, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon that the said **Destiny Jack** could not be found and where it has been shown to my satisfaction that the accused **Destiny Jack** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Destiny Jack** is required to appear before the court to answer the said complaint on or before **10.02.2020**  
By Order  
**Sh. Anuj Kumar Singh**  
Metropolitan Magistrate-03  
Room No. 212, Saket Courts, New Delhi  
DP/5899/SD/2020 (Court Notice)

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**  
(See Section 82 Cr.P.C.)  
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Aman Rana S/o Ashok Rana, R/o Villa-D-200 Sushant Lok Gurugram, Haryana** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **E-FIR No. 039373/18 u/s 457/380/411/435/201/120(B)/34 IPC** has been registered at **P.S. Fatehpur Beri, New Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Aman Rana** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Aman Rana** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Aman Rana** accused of **E-FIR No. 039373/18 u/s 457/380/411/435/201/120(B)/34 IPC** has been registered at **P.S. Fatehpur Beri, New Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer said complaint on or before **17.03.2020**.  
By Order  
**Sh. Anurag Dass, Metropolitan Magistrate,**  
Saket Court Complex, New Delhi  
DP/5900/SD/2020-(Court Matter)

**Kerala CM to inaugurate GIM in Kochi**  
PTI ■ KOCHI  
Kerala is set to explore the prospects of a quantum jump in its economy as the State Government is hosting from Thursday a two-day global investors meet that will present 100 plus big-ticket projects with feasibility. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will inaugurate the ASCEND 2020 Global Investors Meet in this industrial city, where 2,000 delegates will converge with the aim of lending pace to the Ease of Doing Business in the State. Organised by the states Department of Industries, ASCEND 2020 at Lulu Bolgatty International Convention Centre will feature nine sessions including six panel discussions, organisers said. The 100-odd projects, ratified by KPMG as viable based on a study by the professional services MNC, covers sectors such as petrochemicals, agro & food-processing, defence, life sciences, aeropolis, tourism & hospitality, ports and harbour, fisheries, infrastructure, mobility development, logistics and electronic hardware. Of the projects, 18 (each with investment of above ₹100 crore) have been classified as mega. The other categories, in the descending order, are large, medium and small. The CM will declare the meet at session to be presided over by Industries Minister E P Jayarajan and the inaugural day will see two panel discussions led by top industrialists. Kerala Rail Development Corporation Ltd (KRDL) will showcase the Semi High Speed Rail (SHSR) corridor project before captains of industry and policy makers on the opening day of the meet. Billed as a game-changer in Kerala's infrastructure and economic development, the ₹66405-crore Thiruvananthapuram-Kasaragod rail corridor, named as Silver Line, will be one of the major projects to be showcased at the two-day meet. Silver Line is a project of K-Rail, a joint venture of Kerala Government and the Ministry of Railways. It has been cleared by the state Cabinet and also received in-principle approval of the Ministry of railways which enables pre-investment activities. Organisers of the investors meet said there are investment opportunities in Transit Orient developments, Engineering-Procurement-Construction contracts worth ₹38,000 crore for civil, electrical system works and supply and operation of rail coaches among others. Opportunity also exist for any investor to directly invest in the project SPV, they said.

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED**  
General Public is hereby informed that one boy **Namely: Aditya, S/o: Jagdev Prasad, R/o: H.No. A-31, Sec.2, JJ Colony, Rohini, Delhi**, has been missing/kidnapped since **17.12.2019** from the area of P.S. Budh Vihar, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **FIR/DD No. 9-A, dated 19.12.2019** has been registered at P.S. Budh Vihar, Delhi. The description of the missing/kidnapped boy is as under: **Age: 18 years, Height: 5'4", Face: Round, Complexion: Sallow, Wearing: Pink colour shirt and blue colour jeans and sport shoes.** Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the boy but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this boy kindly inform to the following.  
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>  
E-mail Id - [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax No. 011-24368639  
DP/3603/RD/2020  
**SHO P.S. Budh Vihar, Delhi**  
Ph.: 011-27571171, 27571162

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**  
General public is hereby informed that a lady **Namely Khushboo, W/o: Dinesh, R/o: N-77/284, Sawan Park Extn., Ashok Vihar, Delhi** has been reported missing since **30.11.2019**. In this regard **DD No. 22-A dated 18.12.2019** has been registered at P.S. Bharat Nagar, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing lady but no clue has come to light so far. The description of missing lady is as under:  
**Name: Khushboo, Age: 24 Years, Height: 5', Face: Round, Complexion: Sallow, Built: Medium, Wearing: Chocolate colour Saree.**  
If anyone have any information about this missing lady please inform P.S. Bharat Nagar, Delhi.  
Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, Email: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Ph.: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639  
DP/9650/NW/2020  
**SHO Police Station, Bharat Nagar, Delhi,**  
Ph: 011-27301200, 27301400

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL**  
General public is hereby informed that one girl **Namely Tanisha D/o Mukesh R/o House No. 5/16, Friends Enclave, Sultanpuri, Delhi** Age: 15 yrs, Height: 4'5", Fair complexion, oval face. Wearing a white suit salwar and black chappal in feet is missing/kidnapped since **25.12.2019** from the area of PS Raj Park, Delhi.  
In this regard a case **FIR No. 874/19 U/s 363 IPC Dated: 26.12.2019** has been registered at **PS Raj Park, Delhi**  
Any person having any information or clue about this missing/kidnapped girl may kindly inform to the following.  
E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Fax: 011-24368639  
Ph.: 011-24368638  
011-24368641  
DP/3027/IOD/20  
**S.H.O., P.S. Raj Park, Delhi**  
Ph.: 011-27910070, 27910071

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED**  
General public is hereby informed that one man **Namely Gulshan Nathani S/o Lt. Sh. Vishan Das Nathani R/o H.No. F-16/71, Sec. 15, Rohini, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped from the area of P.S. K.N.K Marg, Delhi since **23.12.2019**. In this regard, a case **DD No. 11-A dated 24.12.2019** has been registered at **P.S. K.N.K Marg, Delhi**. The description of the missing man is as under.  
**Age: 45 Years, Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5'10", Face: Long, Wearing: Dark Grey Colour pant White colour shirt with strips, light grey colour with strips sweater and Relaxo blue chappal.** Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out him but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing man then please inform P.S. K.N.K Marg, Delhi at following Tel No. / e-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>  
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax No. 011-24368639  
DP/3602/RD/2020  
**Sd/- S.H.O. P.S. K.N.K Marg, Delhi**  
Ph: 011- 27571171

# Markets wobble as Iran strikes US forces

## Telecom stocks spurt

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks clawed back most of their lost ground to end modestly lower on Wednesday as global markets were whiplashed by a fresh wave of volatility after Iran launched retaliatory strikes against US forces in Iraq.

After plunging nearly 400 points in early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex stabilised to finally settle 51.73 points, or 0.13 per cent, down at 40,817.74.

Similarly, the broader Nifty shed 27.60 points, or 0.23 per cent, to finish at 12,025.35.

World equities nosedived while gold and US Treasuries firmed up on safe-haven demand after Iran fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles at two Iraqi bases with US personnel in response to the killing of its top general Qasem Soleimani.

Brent crude oil futures rose nearly 0.62 per cent to USD 68.67 per barrel.

On the macroeconomic front, advance GDP estimates suggesting India's economic growth may drop to an 11-year low of 5 per cent in the current

fiscal, also kept investors cautious, traders said.

L&T was the top loser among Sensex constituents, shedding 2.19 per cent, followed by ONGC, Titan, Sun Pharma, Hero MotoCorp and Infosys.

On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, TCS, Ultratech Cement, Bajaj Finance and ICICI Bank spurted up to 2.74 per cent.

"Market is sensing some ease in tension with the view that there will be no effect on equities in the long-term. For the short term, market will adapt a careful tactic given limited room to grow due to premium valuation and slowdown in economy.

"As soon as the situation settles, the market will shift its focus on Q3 results and Budget," said said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services.

BSE capital goods, energy, industrials, oil and gas, metal and auto indices fell up to 1.42 per cent, while telecom, basic materials, teck and IT rose up to 2.43 per cent.

Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices bucked the weak market trend, rising up to 0.16 per cent.

In rest of Asia, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul markets ended up to 1.57 per cent lower.

European bourses too start-

ed on a negative note.

## RUPEE RECOUPS, SETTLES 12 PAISE HIGHER

Meanwhile, the Indian rupee retrieved early losses to settle 12 paise higher at 71.70 against the US dollar, but overall forex market sentiments remained subdued amid further escalation in US-Iran tensions.

At the foreign bank exchange, the domestic unit opened significantly lower at 72.05 per dollar as against the previous day's close of 71.82. During the day, it traded in the range of 72.07 and 71.69 to the US currency.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.12 per cent to 97.12.

"Rupee traded in range of 71.87-72.11 a gap down opening on news of Iranian missile attacks on US base military bases in Iran/Iraq to take revenge on US was witnessed but it seemed short lived as rupee started trading stronger after gap down opening," Jateen Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst (Commodity & Currency) at LKP Securities, said.

Exporters seemed to participate in around the 72 levels and the levels of 72-72.25 will keep acting as a crucial barrier for USD/INR pair whereas 71.60-71.40 as supports, he said.

# Gold prices jump ₹485

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices on Wednesday climbed by ₹485 to ₹41,819 per 10 gram following rise of geo-political uncertainty and weaker rupee, according to HDFC Securities.

Similarly, silver also jumped by ₹855 to ₹49,530 per kg from ₹48,675 per kg on Tuesday.

The yellow metal had closed at ₹41,325 per 10 gram in the previous trade.

Gold rose following rise of geo-political uncertainty and weaker rupee, HDFC Securities head, advisory (PCG) Devarsh Vakil said.

"Higher international gold price and weaker rupee supported domestic gold prices to trade higher," he added.

In the international market, both gold and silver witnessed bullish trend and were trading with gains at USD 1,584 per ounce and USD 18.43 per ounce, respectively.

# Cabinet gives in-principle nod for strategic sale of Neelachal Ispat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday in-principle approved strategic sale of Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) by allowing six PSU shareholders to sell their stake in the steel company.

A decision in this regard was taken in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA),

headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters.

NINL is a joint venture company, in which four central PSUs — MMTC, National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC), Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) and MECON — and two Odisha government compa-

nies IPICOL and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) are shareholders.

MMTC holds 49.78 per cent share in NINL, followed by OMC (20.47 per cent), IPICOL (12 per cent), NMDC (10.10 per cent), while MECON and BHEL hold 0.68 per cent each.

The strategic buyer for NINL will be identified through a two-stage auction procedure, said an official statement.

# Mutual Funds' asset base slipped 2% in Dec on sell-off in debt schemes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The mutual fund industry saw its asset base slip by 2 per cent to ₹26.54 lakh crore at December-end, primarily on account of outflow from debt-oriented schemes, including liquid funds.

The 44-player industry logged an all-time high assets under management (AUM) of ₹27.04 lakh crore at November-end, as compared to ₹26.54 lakh crore by the end of last month, representing a decline of 2 per cent, according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

Mutual fund houses witnessed an overall outflow of ₹61,810 crore last month as compared to an inflow of

₹54,419 crore in November.

Fund managers attributed the drop in the asset base to outflow of ₹78,940 crore from debt-oriented schemes.

Among debt-oriented schemes, liquid funds, with investments in cash assets such as treasury bills, certificates of deposit and commercial paper for shorter horizon, witnessed a pull-out of over ₹71,000 crore, the highest among the fixed-income segment last month.

Besides, overnight funds, which invest in securities with a maturity of one day, saw outflows of over ₹8,800 crore. However, banking & PSU funds, which have a high allocation to highest rated bonds, received funds to the tune of ₹4,770 crore.

"Fixed income categories, especially those having modified duration or average maturity less than a year witnessed net outflows during the month. However, this is on expected lines as these categories typically witness net outflows during the quarter end months on account of advance tax payment obligation," said Himanshu Srivastava, senior analyst manager (research) at Morningstar Investment Adviser India.

Naveen Kukreja, CEO at Paisabazaar.com, attributed the decline in monthly asset base to sell-off in debt schemes.

Equity-oriented funds continued to attract investments tracking the surge in

domestic markets in December. Such funds saw a net infusion of ₹4,432 crore last month. In comparison, net flow of ₹933 crore was seen in November and ₹6,015 crore in October.

"The small cap and mid cap indices are underperforming currently. The industry has seen inflows in the large cap funds and it will continue to be the biggest attraction among equity funds," Kukreja added.

Further, collection through systematic investment plan (SIP) has surged to over ₹8,518 crore in December from ₹8,273 crore in the preceding month. The asset base of SIP rose to an all-time high of ₹3.17 lakh crore from ₹3.12 lakh crore reflect-

ing positive sentiment in equities.

Amfi chief executive NS Venkatesh said, "Retail investors continue to reposit trust in mutual funds as reflected by continued flows through SIPs, despite challenging domestic economic scenario and global trade issues and conflicts."

"Markets have rallied and indices scaled new peaks, which is reflective of resolution coming through structural policies like IBC and lowering of interest rates, as also, expectation from Budget," he added.

Besides, gold exchange-traded funds saw an inflow of ₹27 crore in December, while the same was over ₹7 crore in November.

## NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	11939.10	12044.95	12025.35	12025.35	-27.60
BHARTIARTL	442.60	460.75	440.35	458.90	13.80
YESBANK	46.25	47.20	45.30	46.05	1.00
TCS	2205.00	2260.00	2202.05	2253.35	47.50
ULTRATECH	4224.85	4332.00	4183.80	4308.60	65.90
BAIFINANCE	3950.00	4060.35	3950.00	4051.00	43.95
UPL	58.75	60.30	58.40	60.10	9.35
NESTLEIND	14191.60	14450.00	14120.35	14386.00	95.25
BAJAJ-AUTO	3000.00	3073.40	3000.00	3057.00	19.05
HINDUNILVR	1910.00	1936.05	1906.45	1932.00	11.30
VEDL	153.25	158.20	152.45	156.90	9.90
DRREDDY	2875.00	2905.00	2866.00	2900.00	15.80
ICICIBANK	516.00	527.35	515.00	525.80	2.90
BAJAJFINSV	8971.00	9166.85	8961.60	9144.00	48.30
ASIANPAINT	1696.00	1736.00	1695.00	1732.60	8.25
SBIN	312.10	321.50	311.00	319.35	0.95
BPCL	450.00	464.40	448.45	461.85	0.85
ADANIPOR	379.00	387.60	378.25	385.40	0.60
HCLTECH	583.00	598.00	578.00	585.00	0.75
TATASTEEL	471.65	478.15	467.00	476.50	0.40
GRASIM	735.40	749.90	733.60	742.70	0.40
INDUSINDBK	1441.00	1481.60	1439.05	1461.75	0.10
GAIL	123.10	124.50	122.75	124.20	-0.25
WIPRO	254.00	256.15	252.55	254.60	-0.20
AXISBANK	715.25	725.75	709.10	723.50	-2.25
HDFCBANK	1246.95	1262.15	1240.05	1256.60	-4.60
BRITANNIA	3020.00	3038.70	2995.00	3025.10	-11.60
ITC	234.00	235.80	232.25	234.40	-0.95
M&M	520.90	526.45	519.00	524.50	-2.15
NTPC	119.70	120.75	117.55	120.05	-0.50
MARUTI	7060.00	7116.65	6980.45	7035.00	-38.60
POWERGRID	190.30	190.95	188.85	190.60	-1.10
HDFC	2387.00	2413.00	2385.50	2400.00	-15.05
INFRADEL	238.05	238.50	232.20	236.60	-1.65
RELIANCE	1515.00	1534.45	1510.00	1514.00	-10.80
HINDALCO	206.00	208.65	204.50	207.00	-1.40
JSWSTEEL	261.40	264.50	257.00	262.70	-2.55
TATAMOTORS	180.20	184.20	180.20	182.75	-1.95
CIPLA	467.80	470.10	461.60	466.60	-5.00
ZEELE	264.00	266.20	260.75	264.80	-2.95
KOTAKBANK	1654.70	1661.45	1638.00	1651.65	-19.20
TECHM	770.70	784.90	767.10	768.10	-9.00
INFY	724.95	729.00	708.30	718.90	-9.00
HEROMOTOC	2322.00	2345.05	2310.55	2318.90	-29.15
TITAN	1145.00	1156.30	1138.00	1143.10	-16.85
SUNPHARMA	442.95	446.50	439.00	439.10	-7.30
ONGC	125.00	125.45	123.20	123.45	-2.30
IOC	123.05	123.90	121.50	122.45	-2.40
LT	1302.00	1308.70	1283.35	1291.50	-29.00
COALINDIA	203.00	204.55	198.20	200.50	-5.20
EICHERMOT	2070.00	2070.00	1980.10	1990.00	-90.80

## BSE 500

SCRIP	Open	High	Low	LTP
KOTAKBANK	1663.00	1668.65	1655.45	1655.45
HDFCBANK	1250.00	1261.30	1240.00	1257.05
AUBANK	792.95	845.95	792.95	835.25
UBL	1275.00	1275.00	1241.00	1248.15
HDFC	2399.00	2412.90	2384.75	2406.05
FORTIS	132.40	136.00	131.25	133.55
SBIN	312.70	321.40	311.00	319.85
RELIANCE	1508.00	1534.45	1508.00	1513.95
MARUTI	7073.85	7111.10	6986.15	7034.75
IBULHSGFIN	301.30	312.90	297.65	309.95
YESBANK	48.80	47.25	45.30	46.05
ICICIBANK	515.50	527.00	515.00	525.85
IDEA	5.95	6.58	5.75	6.51
JINDALSTEL	165.90	176.25	164.25	174.75
TRENT	526.30	535.00	525.85	531.65
TATASTEEL	471.50	477.95	467.00	475.55
INDUSINDBK	1441.00	1480.75	1439.40	1458.80
TCS	2200.00	2259.95	2200.00	2255.05
INFRADEL	238.20	238.20	233.55	236.50
RAMCOCEM	788.95	811.40	777.15	808.55
JUSTDIAL	548.00	574.80	543.30	568.05
INDIACEM	76.40	79.50	74.60	77.45
NAVINFLOOR	1045.00	1104.75	1033.95	1090.65
MINDTREE	847.25	856.20	840.00	851.40
RAJESHXPO	677.50	684.30	672.00	680.25
AVANTI	577.00	611.00	577.00	607.20
PNBHUSING	460.00	473.00	466.00	469.25
GRAPHITE	290.00	295.40	288.70	292.00
BHEL	42.60	43.35	42.45	43.15
JUBLANT	526.80	527.20	524.15	542.60
WIPRO	254.00	256.25	252.75	254.70
SPARC	161.95	173.80	161.95	168.70
PEL	1455.85	1484.75	1451.00	1473.55
UPL	585.50	603.00	584.60	600.80
ITI	100.00	103.75	99.00	100.65
TATAMTRDVR	74.95	75.75	73.95	74.90
RVNL	21.00	25.55	24.05	25.20
CAREERATING	599.40	606.30	588.35	592.70
ISEC	390.00	415.00	384.65	406.60
ASIANPAINT	1699.00	1737.30	1695.30	1730.85
BTTCL	1115.00	1144.80	1102.65	1109.05
NESTLEIND	14249.95	14415.95	14120.20	14388.25
FEDERALBNK	86.35	87.20	85.70	86.95
NBCC	34.65	34.85	34.05	34.40
MOTILALOFS	806.65	865.15	797.00	850.10
ORIENTCEM	75.25	87.50	74.95	82.60
TATAGLOBAL	314.50	317.20	311.40	316.45
SKTRANSFIN	1106.00	1132.25	1099.80	1130.20
STAR	372.65	382.00	369.20	381.05
GODREJIND	435.00	443.00	435.00	441.60
SCHNEIDER	69.95	82.00	69.60	82.00
LAKSHVILAS	16.20	16.20	15.75	15.95
WELBYENG	77.40	80.00	77.20	78.35
NTPC	120.40	120.80	117.65	119.95
IPCALB	1165.00	1207.35	1139.80	1197.85
GRASIM	740.95	749.90	734.00	742.55
HINDCOOPER	45.00	47.15	44.40	46.05
BANDHANBNK	490.10	493.35	483.50	485.10
HEG	1025.00	1039.00	1013.70	1022.50
STRTECH	119.50	121.60	118.20	119.90
MANAPPURAM	174.00	176.60	172.25	176.05

# 'We don't retreat in face of America': Hassan Rouhani

Tehran: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said the Islamic republic's response on Wednesday to a US strike that killed one of its generals shows "we don't retreat in the face of America".

"If America has committed a crime... It should know that it will receive a decisive response," Rouhani said in a televised address. "If they are wise, they won't take any other action at this juncture."

The remarks came hours after Iran fired a wave of missiles at Iraqi bases housing US troops in retaliation for the assassination of Qasem Soleimani.

But Rouhani said it would not be enough if Iran's armed forces hit back for any other action taken by the United States. "In my view, America must receive the main response from the nations of the region," he said.

The president was repeating a common refrain among



Iranian officials since the assassination that Soleimani's death will see US forces leave the region.

"They cut off the hand of our dear Soleimani. The revenge for him is to cut off America's feet from this region," Rouhani said.

"If America's feet is cut off from this region, and its hand of aggression is cut off for good, this is the real and final response of the nations of the region to America," he added.

Soleimani, the head of the Revolutionary Guards' foreign operations arm, the Quds Force, was killed last week in a US drone strike near Baghdad international airport. AFP

## Iraq President 'denounces' Iran missile strikes

Baghdad: Iraq's President Barham Saleh on Wednesday condemned Iran's missile strikes on Iraqi bases where US and other foreign troops are based, saying he feared "dangerous developments" in the region.

"We denounce the Iranian missile bombing that hit military installations on Iraqi territory and renew our rejection of the repeated violation of state sovereignty and the transformation of Iraq into a battlefield for warring sides," his office said in a statement.

Iran launched the missiles early Wednesday in response to the killing of senior Revolution Guards commander Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike in Iraq last week. AFP

## Iraq says Iran informed it of imminent missile attack on US forces

Baghdad: Iraq's Prime Minister's office said on Wednesday it had received "an official verbal message" from Iran informing it that a missile attack on US forces stationed on Iraqi soil was imminent.

Iran launched 22 missiles at Iraqi bases housing US and other coalition troops early Wednesday in response to the killing of senior Revolution Guards commander Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike in Baghdad last week.

In its first statement hours later, premier Adel Abdel Mahdi's office said it had been warned.

"We received an official verbal message from the Islamic Republic of Iran that the Iranian response to the assassination of



Qasem Soleimani had begun or would begin shortly, and that the strike would be limited to where the US military was located in Iraq without specifying the locations," it said.

The prime minister's office said it was simultaneously contacted by the US, as the missiles slammed into the Ain al-Asad base in western Iraq and Harir further north.

"We immediately warned

Iraqi military commanders to take the necessary precautions," it said, adding that no Iraqi forces had been hurt in the attack.

"Iraq rejects any violation of its sovereignty and attacks on its territory," the premier's office added, without specifically condemning the missile strikes.

It said Abdel Mahdi was in talks with domestic and foreign partners to prevent an "open war." Secretary of State Mike Pompeo earlier said he had spoken to Masrour Barzani, the prime minister of the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

But it remained unclear if there was any contact between Pompeo or any other top US official and Abdel Mahdi. AFP

## Kuwait denies US troop pullout, says news agency hacked

Kuwait City: Kuwait on Wednesday denied reports that the United States had decided to withdraw its troops from the Gulf state, saying the Twitter account of its official news agency had been hacked.

The state-run Kuwait News Agency tweeted that the Kuwaiti defence minister had been informed by the commander of US forces in the emirate of their intention to withdraw from the Arifjan base within three days.

The news, published in both Arabic and English, was deleted within minutes.

"The (Twitter) account of Kuwait News Agency was hacked... The report about the intention of the US troops to pull out is untrue," Government spokesman Tareq al-Mazrem said in a statement. KUNA also

said it had been hacked and noted that the report was not published on its general wire.

The United States said on Friday that it was deploying up to 3,500 more troops to the Middle East with reprisals expected after an American drone killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad.

The Kuwait incident comes after a US letter apparently signalling a pullout of forces from Iraq caused alarm, before the White House and the Pentagon said there were no such plans and that the letter was merely a draft. Kuwait's Arifjan base, which lies 70 kilometres south of the capital, is the main US base in Kuwait. It houses several thousand US troops and serves as a military transit point to Iraq and Afghanistan. AFP

## China urges restraint after Iran missile attacks

Beijing: China on Wednesday urged restraint from all sides after Iran launched missiles at Iraqi bases housing US and British troops, saying Beijing would play a "responsible role" in helping to defuse tensions Iran fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles overnight at Iraqi bases housing coalition forces, the first act of the Islamic republic's promised revenge for the US killing of top general Qasem Soleimani last week.

"It is not in the interest of any party that the situation in the Middle East worsens further," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular press briefing. "We call on the parties concerned to exercise restraint," he said.

Geng said China would "play a responsible role in promoting a de-escalation of the situation as soon as possible".

China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, is a key partner of Iran and a major buyer of the country's oil.

"China has always advocated that all parties concerned should properly resolve their conflicts through dialogue, negotiation and other peaceful means," Geng said. AFP

## Netanyahu warns of 'crushing blow' if Iran attacks Israel

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday warned arch-enemy Iran that his country would inflict a "crushing blow" on Tehran if it is attacked following the US killing of a top Iranian general.

Netanyahu's statement came as Iran launched over a dozen ballistic missiles targeting at least two bases in Iraq where the US military and coalition forces are stationed, in revenge for the killing of the commander of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards, General Qasem Soleimani, in a US drone strike on Friday, which was ordered by President Donald Trump.

"We're standing steadfast against those who seek to kill us. We're standing with determination and with force. Whoever tries to attack us will suffer a crushing blow in return," Netanyahu said at a conference in Jerusalem's The Begin Heritage Center.

Describing the assassinated Iranian commander,

Soleimani, as "terrorist in chief", the Israeli Prime Minister congratulated US President Donald Trump for eliminating him by "acting swiftly, boldly and resolutely".

"Qasem Soleimani was responsible for the death of countless innocent people. He destabilised many countries. For decades, he sowed fear and misery and anguish. And he was planning much worse," Netanyahu said.

"President Trump should be congratulated for acting swiftly, boldly and resolutely against this terrorist-in-chief, who was the architect and driver of Iran's campaign of carnage and terror throughout the Middle East and throughout the world," he added.

The Israeli leader also stressed that the region is split between radical Islamists and the moderate forces with the "State of Israel is the anchor of stability in these stormy waters".

"Many leaders in the Middle East agree with what I am saying," he emphasised. AFP

## Western powers condemn Iran attack targeting US troops

Paris: Western powers on Wednesday condemned Iran's missile attack on Iraqi bases housing US and other foreign troops, urging an end to the escalation.

Iran fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles in the early hours of Wednesday, officials in Washington and Tehran said.

Iran said it was responding to the US killing of top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani last week, warning it would hit back even harder if Washington responded. "All is well!" US President Donald Trump's tweet-

ed "Assessment of casualties & damages taking place now. So far, so good!" He would be making a statement on Wednesday morning, he added. "Refrain from further violence".

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said: "I condemn the Iranian missile attacks on US and coalition forces in Iraq. NATO calls on Iran to refrain from further violence." A NATO official said none of its troops in Iraq had been hurt in the strikes. UK's PM Johnson told parliament: "Iran

should not repeat these reckless and dangerous attacks but should instead pursue urgent de-escalation." Earlier, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab warned that another war in the Middle East would only benefit the Islamic State group "and other terrorist groups".

The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the attack was yet another example of "escalation and increased confrontation".

"It is in no-one's interest to turn up the spiral of violence even further," he added, warning that the crisis was hampering the fight against Islamic State.

EU Foreign Ministers will hold emergency talks on the Iran crisis Friday to discuss what the bloc can do to reduce tensions.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in a statement: "The priority is more than ever for a de-escalation."

"France remains determined to work to ease tensions and is in contact with all the parties to encourage restraint and responsibility." AFP

## Bolton would 'know nothing' of impeachment trial: Trump

Washington: US President Donald Trump claimed John Bolton would "know nothing" about the Senate impeachment trial, a day after the former national security advisor said he was ready to testify.

Trump has become the third president in US history to be impeached as the House of Representatives formally charged him with abuse of power and obstructing the Congress, setting up a Senate trial that will decide whether he remains in office after three tumultuous years.

"It'll be up to the Senate. He

(Bolton) would know nothing about what we're talking about because the Ukraine president has said no pressure whatsoever," Trump told reporters in response to a question.

He addressing reporters at the Oval Office during a joint media appearance with visiting Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

"Will you be OK if John Bolton testifies?" Trump was asked.

On Monday, Bolton had said that he had concluded that, if the Senate issues a subpoena for his testimony, he was pre-

pared to testify. "That's going to be up to the lawyers. It'll be up to the Senate, and we'll see how they feel."

"He (Bolton) would know nothing about what we're talking about, because as you know the Ukrainian government came out with a very strong statement no pressure on anything and this from the boss," he said.

"That's from the president of Ukraine. The foreign minister came out with a statement that was equally as strong," Trump said. PTI

## Indonesia deploys fighter jets, warships to disputed waters in China spat

Jakarta: Indonesia has deployed fighter jets and warships to patrol islands near the disputed South China Sea, the military said Wednesday, escalating tensions with Beijing after a diplomatic spat over "trespassing" Chinese vessels.

President Joko Widodo also headed Wednesday to the fishing-rich waters around the Natuna islands, which border the South China Sea, most of which is claimed by China despite competing claims from other Southeast Asian nations including Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia.

The Indonesian military said it had deployed eight warships and four jet fighters ahead of Widodo's visit in an apparent bid to assert its sovereignty over the region. AFP

## 2019 second hottest year on record: EU

Paris: 2019 was the second hottest year on record and ended the hottest decade in history, the European Union's climate monitoring service said Wednesday.

Data released by the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) showed that worldwide temperatures last year were second only to 2016, in which temperatures were boosted 0.12 degrees Celsius by an exceptionally strong El Nino natural weather event.

The average temperature in 2019 was only a few hundredths of a degree below the 2016 level.

The five last years have been the hottest on record, and the period of 2010-2019 was the hottest decade since records began, C3S said.

## Drought-stricken Australia: Snipers to cull up to 10K camels

Melbourne: About 10,000 camels are at risk of being shot and killed in a drought-ravaged region of Australia, after complaints that the thirsty animals are endangering local indigenous people as they desperately search for water.

The slaughter will take place in the area of Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) - a sparsely-populated part of South Australia which is home to a number of indigenous groups.

The cull will see be carried out by professional shooters in helicopters with Seven News reporting that 10,000 camels are at risk.

"There is extreme pressure on remote Aboriginal communities in the APY lands and their pastoral (livestock) operations as the camels search for water," APY's general manager Richard King said in a statement. AFP

TENDER NOTICE						
SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	LUVAS HISAR	PURCHASE OF VARIOUS KINDS OF EQUIPMENTS/ INSTRUMENTS	07.01.2020 28.01.2020	94.65 LACS	www.luvas.hisar.nic.in https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01602-289547 STORE PURCHASE OFFICER
2	PANDEY LAKHMI CHAND STATE UNIVERSITY OF PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS, SECTOR-6, ROHTAK	SPECIAL REPAIR FOR PROVIDING GUINTING, PAINTING AND OTHER REPAIRS IN DESIGN BUILDING IN PUSCUPVA, ROHTAK	01.01.2020 28.01.2020	60 LACS	http://puscuvpa.ac.in/ TENDER NO - 2020_HRY_114299_1	9466628298 devedendraa918@gmail.com
3	PT. B.D. SHARMA PGIMS ROHTAK	PURCHASE OF FOREIGN AND INDIAN MEDICAL/DENTAL JOURNALS FOR THE YEAR 2020 (JAN. TO DEC.)	08.01.2020 29.03.2020	2.64 LACS	www.ajher.ac.in ajherpgims@rediffmail.com	9416383676 librarypgims@rediffmail.com
4	HAFED PANCHKULA	ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF COMPLETE FIRE DETECTION, PROTECTION CARBON-DIOXIDE AND WET-RISER SYSTEM INSTALLED AT HAFED CORPORATE OFFICE, SECTOR-5, PANCHKULA	10.01.2020 20.01.2020	21,300/-	www.hafed.gov.in	0172-2590520-26 hafed@hry.nic.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : [www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in](http://www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in) or [www.etenders.hry.nic.in](http://www.etenders.hry.nic.in) RO NO. 79618

TENDER NOTICE						
SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	HVPNL, KURUKSHETRA	RAISING THE HEIGHT OF 132KV S/C PEHOWA-MALLKPUR LINE IN THE AFFECTED PORTION OF TOWER LOCATION NO. 20821 TO ACHIEVE THE PROPER CLEARANCE AS THE SAME HAS BEEN AFFECTED/DIMINISHED DUE TO UP-GRADATION OF AMBALA-HISAR ROAD TO DHANIRAMPURA ROAD (ROAD ID-7865) NEAR TTT PEHOWA	CLOSING DATE 15.01.2020	11.75 LACS	https://www.hvnpn.org.in https://etenders.hry.nic.in TENDER NO - 37/E-70/2019-20 Dt. 06.01.2020	0172-2583789 prof@hvnpn.org.in
2	HVPNL KATHAL	REPAIRING OF 132KV BAY EQUIPMENTS, 5, 33KV BAY EQUIPMENTS ISOLATOR, ROOM BOX, YARD LIGHT BOX, PK'S, 132/33KV, 20/25MVA T/F 3 & 132/11KV, 10/16MVA T/F 1-2 AT 132KV S/STN. RAJOUND & 132/33KV, 20/25MVA T/F T-4, 33KV BAYS & 33/11KV CAPACITOR BAYS EQUIPMENTS AT 132KV S/STN. HVPNL PAI E.Y. 2019-20	CLOSING DATE 14.01.2020	3760 For Firm & 1880 For L&C Societies	https://www.hvnpn.org.in https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0172-2583789 prof@hvnpn.org.in
3	HVPNL PANCHKULA	SUPPLY AND STACKING OF GRAVEL/CRUSHED STONE AT 66 KV S/STN. HVPNL, LADWA	CLOSING DATE 28.01.2020	1.47 LACS	https://www.hvnpn.org.in https://etenders.hry.nic.in TENDER NO - 2020_HRC_114552_1	0172-2583789 prof@hvnpn.org.in
4	UHBVN PANCHKULA	ENGAGEMENT OF AN AGENCY FOR ONSITE SUPPORT AND COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE OF THE NON IT WORKS/ACTIVITIES AT THE DISASTER RECOVERY CENTER, PANCHKULA FOR FIVE (5) YEARS.	CLOSING DATE 28.01.2020	5 LACS	www.uhbvn.org.in	9317554907 seproject@uhbvn.org
5	UHBVN PANCHKULA	ONE NO. BOI FRO JEP IS REQUIRED ON HIRE BASIS FOR THE USE OF MODEL TOWN SUB DIVISION UHBVN PANIPAT	03.01.2020 20.01.2020	6000/-	www.uhbvn.org.in	0180-2652352
6	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MANDI DARWAL	REPLACEMENT OF STREET LIGHT (SODIUM LIGHT/TUBELIGHT/ CFL/ETC.) WITH LED LIGHT IN M.C. DARWAL + 1 OTHER WORK	08.01.2020 15.01.2020	4.10 CRORE	https://etenders.hry.nic.in TENDER NO - 2020_HRY_114605_1 + 1 OTHER	EXECUTIVE ENGINEER ven. ulbhry@gmail.com
7	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL BHIWANI	CONST. AND LAYING OF IPB STREET FROM TAYAGI GENERAL STORE TO NAFE SINGH, BHAGWATI MARG, VIDHYA NAGAR W/NO D1, + 3 WORKS	CLOSING DATE 21.01.2020	41760/-	https://etenders.hry.nic.in TENDER NO - 2019_HRY_114526_1 + 3 OTHER	9810869504 mc.mcbhiwan@gmail.com
8	MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE SADHAURA	CONSTRUCTION OF GARBAGE COLLECTION & SEGREGATION IN SADHAURA	07.01.2020 17.01.2020	27200/-	ulbharyana.gov.in	secy.mcsadhaura@gmail.com
9	HARYANA TOURISM CORPORATION LIMITED	HIRING AN AGENCY FOR PLANNING PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN IN PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA (INDOOR AND OUTDOOR) + 2 OTHER WORK	08.01.2020 16.01.2020	8MD 0.70 LACS	haryanaturism.gov.in	9814952725 haryanaturism@gmail.com
10	DHBN, BHIWANI	SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING & COMMISSIONING OF ELECTRIC LINES UP TO 11 KV VOLTAGE LEVEL ON TURNKEY BASIS BY EXECUTING THE WORK UNDER MCGS SCHEME ON RDS FEEDERS IN DISTRICT BHIWANI/CADRI. NIT NO-09/SE/07/ BWN /2019-20	08.01.2020 28.01.2020	19.78 CRORE	www.dhbn.org.in	01564-243491 sebhivani@dhbn.org.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : [www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in](http://www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in) or [www.etenders.hry.nic.in](http://www.etenders.hry.nic.in) RO NO. 79617

TENDER NOTICE						
SR. NO.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	NAME OF WORK/NOTICE/TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT/EMD (APPROX.) IN Rupees	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT	NODAL OFFICER
1	PWD B&R, NARNAL	CONSTRUCTION OF PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE WITH RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION AT VILLAGE DONGRA AHIR IN MOHINDERGARH DISTRICT + 1 OTHER WORK	CLOSING DATE 27.01.2020	696.9 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01292-251267 / pwd-eepd-narnal@hry.nic.in
2	PANCHAYATI RAJ PANIPAT	CONST. OF 18 NOS KNOWLEDGE CENTRE AND 4 NOS OTHER WORKS IN DISTRICT PANIPAT AT VILLAGES, PUTHAR, NAULIHA DUNGERAN, BUNANA LAKHU + OTHERS VILLAGES OF VARIOUS BLOCK.	10.01.2020 16.01.2020	486 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	8607926260
3	PANCHAYATI RAJ SONIPAT	1 COLLECTION OF WASTE WATER AT VILLAGE SAROHANA & 48 NOS OTHER WORKS DISTT:-SONIPAT (RE- TENDER)	10.01.2020 17.01.2020	1739.20 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	Executive Engineer
4	IRRIGATION AND WATER RESOURCES, FATEHABAD	DEPLOYING FIELD/OFFICE STAFF THROUGH OUTSOURCING POLICY ON D.C RATES FOR THE PERIOD 20.01.2020 TO 19.04.2020	CLOSING DATE 20.01.2020	4.36 LACS	hid.gov.in	xan-wb@ir@gov.in
5	IRRIGATION & W/ DEPTT. HARYANA, HISAR	DEWATERING & DIGGING THE VILLAGE POND IN VILLAGE SISWALA DISTRICT HISAR. + 3 OTHER WORKS	03.01.2020 20.01.2020	27.76 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01662-237870 xenwdrhisar@gmail.com yeh-wdrhisar@gov.in
6	IRRIGATION & W/ DEPTT. HARYANA, KURUKSHETRA	REPAIRING OF VALMIKI GHAT IN THE TEMPLE PREMISES AT SARASVATI TIRATH UNDER SARASVATI CIRCUIT AT PEHOWA (DEPOSIT WORK)	08.01.2020 13.01.2020	7.25 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01744-238590 xonsarasvatidrk@gmail.com
7	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPT. JAGADHRI	RENOVATION WORK OF AJAT ASHRAM AT VILLAGE BILASPUR (RE-ADVT.) + 7 OTHER WORK	06.01.2020 17.01.2020	EMD SOCIETY / AGENCY 53325/108650	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	xmj@rediffmail.com 01732-232022

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : [www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in](http://www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in) or [www.etenders.hry.nic.in](http://www.etenders.hry.nic.in) RO NO. 79616

**LOST & FOUND**  
We, M/s Presidency Kid Leather Pvt. Ltd., have lost of our following Equity shares certificates of M/s Nestle India Ltd - Folio No. Z69073 - Share Certificate Nos. 872939-43, Distinctive Nos 92957047-7233. Any one who finds the same may please inform our Registered Office, No.21, Spartan Nagar, 1st floor, Mogappair East, Chennai-60037. Contact M.8056281489.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
NOTICE is hereby given that the Certificate(s) for Folio No. 75844335 and certificate nos: 1382457 and distinctive numbers: 1399388903-1399389727, Equity Shares No. 825 of Larsen & Toubro Limited standing in the name(s) of Brij Jayaswal has/have been lost or mislaid and the undersigned has/have applied to the Company to issue duplicate(s) for the said shares. Any person who has any claim in respect of the said shares should write to our Registrar, M/s. KARVY FINTECH, Karvy Selenium Tower B, Plot 31-32, Gachibowli, Financial District, Hyderabad-500032 within one month from this date else the company will proceed to issue duplicate(s).  
Date: 09/01/2020 Name(s) of Shareholder(s) Brij Jayaswal  
Place: New Delhi Email: brijjayaswal@gmail.com

**Public Notice**  
It is for general information that I NITIN SHARMA s/o Jai Prakash Sharma residing at 1/2303, Gali No 6, Ram Nagar Mandoli Road Shancara Delhi 110032, declare that name of my minor daughter has been wrongly written as SHIVANYA in Bank A/c State Bank of India my minor daughter 3.5 Year the actual Name of my minor Daughter is Shivika Sharma respectively which may be amended accordingly. It is Certified that I have complied with other legal requirement in this connection

**MODIFICATION IN FORM G INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**  
Published in accordance with Regulation 36A(1) of Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Person) Regulation 2016. In modification to Form G published on December 23, 2019 in The Pioneer (English newspaper) and The Pioneer (Hindi newspaper): Delhi NRC edition, The Deshdoor Times, Covering Ahmednagar and Shirdi (English newspaper) and Pudhan (Marathi newspaper), Nashik Edition, Maharashtra Times (Marathi newspaper): Ahmednagar covering Shirdi and Free Press Journal (English newspaper) and Pudhan (Marathi newspaper): Mumbai Edition inviting Expression of Interest from Prospective Resolution applicant(s) w.r.t Kopaagon Ahmednagar Tollways (Phase I) Private Limited the following amendments may be noted:  
**RELEVANT PARTICULARS**  
10. Last date for receipt of expression of interest 16th January, 2020  
11. Date of issue of provisional list of prospective resolution applicants 25th January, 2020  
12. Last date for submission of objections to provisional list 30th January, 2020  
13. Date of issue of final list of prospective resolution applicants 30th February, 2020  
14. Date of issue of issue of memorandum, evaluation matrix and request for resolution plans to prospective resolution applicants 8th January, 2020  
15. Last date for submission of resolution plans 2nd March, 2020  
16. Date of publication of Form G 23rd December, 2019, Modified on 9th January, 2020  
**Note:**  
1. Detailed invitation for expression of interest specifying criteria, ineligibility norms under section 29A of Code etc. can be requested through email on katpl@sumedhamanagement.com  
**Sd/:** Udayraj Patwardhan Date : 08th December, 2019  
Resolution Professional of Kopaagon Ahmednagar Tollways (Phase I) Private Limited Place: Mumbai  
Registration No. -IBBI/PA-001/P-PO0024/2016-2017/10057  
Reg. Address with IBBI: Sumedha Management Solutions Private Limited, C-703, Marathia Innova, Off Ganapatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai City, Maharashtra, 400013.  
Process specific address for correspondence: Sumedha Management Solutions Private Limited, 809-810, 8th Floor, B-wing, Trade World, Kamala Mill Compound, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai -400013.  
Reg. Email ID with IBBI: udayraj\_patwardhan@sumedhamanagement.com  
Project specific email ID for correspondence: katpl@sumedhamanagement.com

**EASTERN COALFIELDS LIMITED**  
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)  
**E-TENDER NOTICE FOR ONLINE BIDDING**  
01) Name of Area: MATERIALS MANAGEMENT Dept./ECL Hqrs.  
02) Tender No. and date: ECL/Hq/Pur/O/51913010-RC/Transformer Oil/079, Date: 06.01.2020. 03) Name of Work: Domestic open e-tender for Conclusion of Rate Contract supply of New Insulating Oil (Transformer Oil) for 2 years. 04) Estimated tender value: Rs.1,21,77,600.00. 05) Document download start date: 15.01.2020 From 11.00 hrs IST. 06) Document download end date: 08.02.2020, 11.00 hrs IST. 07) Tender Opening date & time: 10.02.2020, 11.00 hrs IST. Note: Details of tenders can be seen in [www.easterncoal.gov.in](http://www.easterncoal.gov.in) or [http://ep](http://eprocure.gov.in)

Trend Slazer

'Chhapaak's spirit a slap on attackers'

Actor **KANGANA RANAUT** says the trailer of **Deepika Padukone**-starred *Chhapaak* reminded her of her sister **Rangoli Chandel's** similar experience and that the film's spirit is a slap on those who commit acid attacks.

Rangoli, who is an acid attack survivor, tweeted a video of Kangana thanking director Meghna Gulzar and Deepika for making a film like *Chhapaak*.

In the video, Kangana said, "After watching the trailer, I remembered the acid attack incident that took place with my sister Rangoli. The kind of courage my sister showed during and after the attack gave me the strength and inspires me to face every challenge that comes my way. Her smile gives me the courage to take *Panga* with every sadness."



**'For me, how I portray women in cinema matters a lot and this year, the audience will see me portray some really distinctive, independent and individualistic women. I think I will showcase the different shades of being a woman in 2020.'**  
—Bhumi Pednekar



Bollywood veteran actor **ZEENAT AMAN** will make a comeback to theatre after a 15-year hiatus with *Dearest Babu, Love Kasturba*, which will premiere in February.

The play will be part of the forthcoming *The Great Indian Theatre Festival (GITF)*. The fest will be home to over 50 plays that will be performed in over 25 cities all over India, starting from February 22.

The fest will launch with a grand premiere in Mumbai with Zeenat Aman's *Dearest Babu, Love Kasturba*, before moving to Hyderabad, Delhi, Bengaluru, Vadodra, Chennai and Kolkata.

Hans composes music for Bond

German composer **HANS ZIMMER** is composing the music for the forthcoming James Bond film *No Time To Die*.

The composer has started working on *No Time To Die*, the 25th film in the 007 franchise starring Daniel Craig.

Zimmer replaces Dan Romer, the Hollywood musician who had previously been announced as composer of the film.

"Creative differences" are said to have been the reason behind it.

A spokesperson for MGM, the studio that produces the Bond flicks, had no comment on the matter.

There was a buzz for weeks over the status of music for the film, which is now in post-production in London.

The film is slated to release in April.



Prosthetic limbs for humans are common. But have you heard the same for dogs? Well, a few grade X students of Shiv Nadar school have made innovative silicone-based prosthetic, ergonomically designed ones to comfortably fit the limbs of amputee dogs. The components of the prosthesis are plastazote, silicon, medipop bandage and rubber.

The innovation was done under *Colloquium*, an exhibition, where students follow a six-month long process to identify a probable real-world issue, strategise and then chart a tech-enabled solution for it. The students who made this project, Pawsitivity, are Arushi Shah, Navya Aggarwal, Navya Jain, Shreeya Mittal, Sprihha Singh and Utpal Chauhan.

They were spurred on by a news report which said that around 1,000 stray animals were injured in road accidents in four months. It also said that the animals lead miserable lives as they mostly lie at one place and struggle to walk. The stray dogs usually go unnoticed and even if people notice them they do not have the means to help them. In such a scenario, they realised that, a free of cost prosthetic limbs would help many dogs to live a normal life.

Ayushi Shah, a student of class 10 says, "When we were asked to identify a societal problem and solve it, we initially started researching about prosthetics for human disabilities. But soon we realised that while there are many solutions available for humans, there aren't many for animals. All our group members are dog lovers and we decided that we would take this up as our mission to make amputee dogs self-reliant."

It demanded a lot of research on part of the students. Another student, Shreeya Mittal says that initially they studied many solutions that were tried previously such as wheelchair for dogs and a fixed leg tied to the limbs. The stu-

Living free

Students of Shiv Nadar School have created innovative silicone-based prosthetic limbs for amputee dogs to help them walk again. By TEAM VIVA



dents visited Sophie Memorial Animal Relief Trust in Noida to understand the on ground challenges faced by the dogs and the NGOs trying to help them. "After studying, analysing and understanding the biology of front and hind limbs of seven to 10 different dogs we were able to define three categories: amputated paws, front limbs missing and hind limbs missing. Based on this we were able to design specific models that would help each of the target areas differently. The kind of materials, the shape and design of our model were the

had to be decided and researched upon. So spring motion was used as a replacement for the hop motion for the front limbs since many dogs rely on the joint closer to paws for movement. The kind of cladding and scaffolding needed depended on the type of loss and other issues specific to each dog," says she.

Through this, the students aim to make every dog in India self-reliant as this would meet their needs and restore the ability to not just walk but run and lead a healthy normal life again.

Both the girls said that they deeply



**'When we were asked to identify a societal problem and solve it, we initially started researching about prosthetics for human disabilities. But soon we realised that while there are many solutions available for humans, there aren't many for animals'**



believe that every member of our society wants to come forward and help in every possible way. We just need to provide them with a simple and easy-to-help mechanism. "We are currently working on 3D printing these legs by creating a model for it and using various cloning softwares. We are hopeful that we will be able to turn this around into a simple three step process where people will be able to help dogs and other such animals using their phones and our guidelines in the near future," they added.

RIGHTS WARRIOR

Actor-producer **AJAY DEVGN** tells **CHAHAK MITTAL** that the film *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior* is his attempt at bringing stories of unknown heroes to the forefront

He seems to be quite busy on his phone. Completely engrossed. As I break the silence and begin the conversation by congratulating actor-producer Ajay Devgn for his latest and 100th film, *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*, he interrupts me, "Actually, we never planned it to be my 100th. It just happened by chance. During the shoot, we realised that it's a century (laughs)."

Directed by Om Raut, the film is set in the 17th century and is based on the life of *Tanhaji Malusare*, the military leader of Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who took part in the plan to recapture Kondhna fort near Pune from the army of Mughals headed by UdayBhan.

Ajay took up this role as he was fascinated by *Tanhaji*. "He was not just a warrior, he was a son, a brother, a husband, a leader and a soldier who did for his land and his people what he felt was right. He fought against the enemy in one of the longest standing battles, the battle of *Sinhagad*," he says while elaborating on the reasons why he felt it was important to tell this story to people. Ajay points out that we have a history of such fighters whom we should feel proud of. "He was an important figure of our history but most Indians do not know about him, let alone the international audience. He is in textbooks but then who knows the real story?" he adds.

This is why, he says, he has conceptualised the idea of a franchise, *Unsung Warriors*, in which many such stories of courage will be told. "This film made me want to start a project like this where we could tell stories of those whose struggles and victories haven't been rightly praised. We are working on some scripts. We are meeting new people for the series. And they are not just kings, queens and rulers of the bygone era, they are common, everyday people, who are struggling hard to make a difference in society but their musings are unrecognised or unheard. And it could be anyone," says he.

Isn't the industry shirking its creative job by relying on too many biopics, most of them from history? Ajay asks a counter question, "When we are gifted with a rich history, then why not? Also, earlier, there weren't modern equipment or technology to support historical story scripts. Today, there is

that animation and enhancement technology which bring out such stories so beautifully. Period dramas like *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Lagaan* were always being made. It is the way of relating the story and shooting has changed today. Even *Tanhaji* has been given such amazing special effects which haven't been used in any other film before."

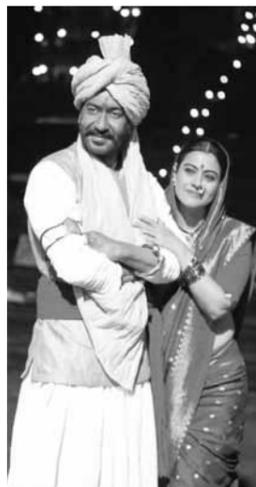
When working on a period film, one's background research has to be on point. All the facts and figures need a thorough check and accuracy in order to answer questions raised by experts.

Ajay says that their research began approximately "four years ago," where they not only dug out information but also spoke to scholars and researchers to get their facts right. "But yes, there's no personal research that I did for my character beyond what we, collectively, were doing," adds he.

However, even as one gives out the correct information and data, a film always needs to have an element of entertainment. So how did he strike this balance between fact and fiction in *Tanhaji*? "History has infinite possibilities of storytelling. And when you're telling the audience about a specific chapter of history, you cannot just flood them with information. There needs to be some comedy and things need to be dramatised for fun. Having said that, we also have to make sure the facts don't get lost amid an attempt to entertain. That's just how we have worked here," he says.

Ask Ajay, who is also producing the film, whether taking on the mantle of a producer adds to him as an artiste, he says, "I wouldn't say that it is adding because I look at it as a product. I am creating something for the audience and that's all that matters."

His recent roles in *Raid*, *Drishyam*, *Singham*, *Golmaal* and more are evidence that the actor has never shied away from embracing versatility or experimentation. So what makes him under-



stand such different characters in order to portray them better? Ajay doesn't follow method acting but his approach seems to be a little similar to that. "I don't try to 'understand' my character in any way. I just react to it in a way that my character would have in that particular situation. In this film, I did what *Tanhaji* would have done during that time. I am not Ajay Devgn at that moment. I am my character," he says, more through his eyes than words, reminding one of *Pyaar Toh Hona Hi Tha* (1998).

Well, many of such roles also shape or transform actors in a way since they, after all, put themselves in somebody else's shoes. Ajay somewhat agrees and says, "Yes, they do make you think at times and impact you in some ways. For instance, after playing *Singham*, I paid more attention to traffic rules and small details which we otherwise tend to ignore. Another instance would be of when I had played *Bhagat Singh*. I wondered what kind of people were they who existed in that era and fought for the nation so bravely. We cannot even imagine. His ideologies and sensibilities are very much relevant even today. So some roles can teach you things."

*De De Pyaar De*, Ajay's last, opposite *Rakul Preet Singh*, in a way rekindled the conversation about acceptance in the Indian society of a couple who have a wide age gap. The actor eagerly replies, "I think the film was very well received by the Indian audience which itself is an evidence of the evolving society. The change is very much here. We are following the West. Of course, not all things can be borrowed since our culture needs to be followed too."

(The film releases on January 10.) Photo: Pankaj Kumar



Hollywood's firefight  
Celebs donate millions to help Australia wildfire efforts

Elton John and Chris Hemsworth are among the celebrities donating big bucks for relief efforts as wildfires engulf Australia.

Hemsworth, the Australian actor who plays Thor in the *Marvel* film franchise, took to social media on Monday to share that he will donate \$1 million and asked his millions of followers to show support as well. He added that "every penny counts."

So far, the wildfires have scorched an area twice the size of the US state of Maryland. The blazes have killed 25 people and destroyed 2,000 homes. The fires, fueled by drought and the country's hottest and driest year on record, have been raging since September, months earlier than is typical for Australia's annual wildfire season.

John announced during his Farewell Yellow Brick Road concert in Sydney, Australia, that he will also donate \$1 million. The singer said he wanted to bring attention to the devastation that wildfires have caused, saying it has reached a "biblical scale."

Hemsworth and John join a growing list of celebrities who have pledged to donate toward relief efforts, including Nicole Kidman, Pink and Keith Urban.

"I am totally devastated watching what is happening in Australia right now with the horrific bushfires," Pink wrote in a recent social media post. "I am pledging a donation of \$500,000 directly to the local fire services that are battling so hard on the frontlines. My heart goes out to our friends and family in Oz," he added.

Metallica announced a donation on Tuesday night of \$750,000 to a firefighting agency and emergency services agency in Victoria.

An emotional Rose Byrne, who is Australian, spoke about the crisis and the relief efforts on Tuesday night at the New York premiere of her film *Like a Boss*.

"Really what people need is just donations because it's all volunteer based, the firefighters and all the rural services and the wildlife services trying to rescue the animals," she said.

She added: "It's devastating. It's such a beautiful country. There's always drought but this is the hottest year on record and they need rain but a lot of rain, not just a little bit which is what's happening now. They need like a downpour and it's just getting hotter and out of control. A climate crisis is what it is."

At the Golden Globes on Sunday, Phoebe Waller-Bridge said she would auction off her *Globe* outfit and have the proceeds go to firefighter relief.

Russell Crowe wasn't at the Globes to accept his trophy for best actor in a limited series or TV film for playing former Fox CEO Roger Ailes in the Showtime miniseries *The Loudest Voice*. Instead, the actor was in Australia trying to protect his home from the wildfires, sending a speech that Jennifer Aniston read.

"Make no mistake, the tragedy unfolding in Australia is climate change-based," Crowe's statement said. "We need to act based on science, move our global workforce to renewable energy and respect our planet for the unique and amazing place it is. That way, we all have a future."

SHOBHA MISHRA GHOSH, Assistant Secretary General of FICCI, addressed students at the fourth edition of Dr Paarivendhar Lecture Series at SRM Institute, Kattankulathur

# 'NO COUNTRY HAS DEVELOPED WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF

The future of jobs is the biggest challenge that we are facing today. And to overcome it, student-centric learning should be adopted, which includes teaching entrepreneurship. Professors should be mentors and they should also keep learning," said Shobha Mishra Ghosh, Assistant Secretary General, FICCI.

She spoke to the students of MBA, BBA, BCA, Science and Humanities, and Science and Technology at the fourth edition of Dr Paarivendhar Lecture Series held at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur. She addressed the students on the topic, "Future Jobs in India and the Role of Universities." Dr V Ponniah, Dean of SRM, said, "In future, it will get difficult to judge jobs and hence this lecture will throw some light on what to expect and how to cope up with the change."

In his presidential address, founder-chancellor of SRMIST, Dr TR Paarivendhar said, "The scope for the job in the future is going to change. Such lectures are useful than classroom teaching. Students must show more interest as it presents exposure and help to know what is happening around. It could also help in clearing campus interviews. We are trying to nurture you with lots of information so that you can face this world in several new ways. If you stop learning, you stop living."

Focussing on the purpose of education, Shobha said, "Apart from knowledge, employable skills, research and innovation, it is far more important to evolve and be an empathetic human being." She added that our education system should contribute towards making



students a good human being. This implies to thinkers and philosophers, entrepreneurs and professionals, scientists and researchers.

"Everyone is talking about innovation. We should also see if this innovation is solving issues that we are facing today," she questioned.

Talking about key global changes in the present scenario, she highlighted the impact of climate change, exponential technologies, urbanisation, demographic on the future jobs in India. We are now in the fourth industrial revolution and the change from the third to the fourth took place in a very short time. The transition to the fifth stage will be in less than three years, she emphasised.

"The effective working age of the population is reducing. The use of

robots and cobots is gaining more popularity thereby replacing people. Now in developed countries, people will spend more time on leisure activity. This is something that we need to pay attention to as a developing nation. Soon customers are going to play a vital role in the manufacturing sector. Hence having a set of skills and upskilling is the need of the hour," she said.

Speaking on how we are still lagging behind in our education system, Shobha said, "Our education still remains in the second revolution stage. Only a handful of countries have moved on to cater to the needs of the present time. Although India has advanced well in terms of rapid urbanisation, technology adaptation, we still need to harness our rural economy which contributes to

16 per cent of our GDP."

Highlighting the workforce matrix 2022, she elaborated that nine per cent would be deployed in new jobs that do not exist today, 37 per cent would be in jobs that have radically changed skill set and 54 per cent will fall under the unchanged job category. These changes will primarily be in IT/BPO, automobile, banking and insurance, textile and apparel, retail. Most jobs will end and give way to 55 unique jobs rolled across eight technologies such as VR, IoT, Big Data Analytics, AI, Robotic Process Automation, 3D Printing, cloud computing, social and mobile.

Talking about the new age pedagogy, she said, "The changing paradigm in our education has led to new age pedagogy. This leads to global classrooms, experiential learning and addressing diverse learners. Universities should teach students to think and be aware of what is happening around themselves. The learning in this 21st century is way different and the management must adopt them. Mentors should also take up different calibers of teaching. Many institutions are not adopting the latest technologies. Faculty should not shy away from learning from students. The creative economy has transcended into several sectors including IT, therefore our universities should also focus on liberal education."

Shobha concluded by saying, "Women's participation should increase. No country in this world has developed without the participation of women in the workforce."

## IN SHORT

Two books, *50 Great Freedom Fighters* and *Ek Bihariye Ki Japan Yatra* were released by General VK Singh, MoS for Road Transport and Highways in the presence of Dr Mangu Singh, MD, Delhi Metro.



Both of them are written by travel writer and blogger Rishi Raj who is the senior DGM, operations in Delhi Metro. VK Singh appreciated the efforts of the writer and Dr Mangu praised the simple but appealing style of writing. Foreword of his book on Japan has been written by Dr Hardeep Singh Puri, MoS for Ministry of Housing Affairs and Civil Aviation.



Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs (I/C), gave away IBC awards for excellence in Built Environment 2017-19 to NBCC (India) Ltd, a Navratna CPSE, on Monday. PK Gupta, CMD, NBCC received the award at the function held at Vigyan Bhawan. The award was bestowed on NBCC for execution of the iconic project.

A *bhandara* was organised by AK Agarwal, the owner of Mangal Tire, in RDC Rajnagar. All the waste was dumped on the roads instead of utilising the dustbins. The Municipal Commissioner, Dinesh Chandra was passing by looking at all



the scrap that had been scattered. He stopped then and there to impose a fine of ₹25,000 and handed the notice to the Mangal Tire firm. AK Agarwal requested him to abolish the fine. After much debate, it was decided that the penalty

would be determined through lottery. The commissioner made two slips, one of ₹10,000 and another of ₹15,000. One of the slips was picked by AK Agarwal and the amount of ₹15,000 was found. He deposited the fine and said that in future, the mistake will not be repeated and he will be motivating himself as well as others to keep the city clean.

NMDC took a skill development initiative to be implemented through Santhigiri Institute of Paramedical Sciences, a Unit of Santhigiri Ashram, Thiruvananthapuram. The programme was inaugurated by Sumit Deb, director (personnel), NMDC and was presided by Swami Pranavashuddhan Jhana Thapaswi, In-charge (administration) of the institute. It was attended by the officials of NMDC and the prospective trainees.



During the event, the director (personnel) focussed upon the need to promote the traditional Indian systems of medicine and create an awareness among the public about its benefits. It should also stress on the employment opportunities in the medicine field. This initiative will impart training to 15 needy youths of surrounding communities around NMDC projects / units / establishments in the Panchakarma Therapy under the Ayurveda system of medicine. It also provides assured employment opportunities to them.



In his New Year address, SM Vaidya, Director (Refineries), IndianOil, urged IOCIans not to limit themselves to fuel product but to offer reliable energy solutions across the entire fuel spectrum in the country. He shared the recent IndianOil refineries division initiative of supplying special winter grade diesel with modified specifications for the residents

of Ladakh region. The special grade fuel does not freeze even in minus 30 degree centigrade conditions and has considerably eased the lives in the region during the harsh winter months. He also laid emphasis on ensuring pan-India availability of BS-VI grade auto fuels by April this year. He urged the employees to adopt digitalisation widely to optimise human and material resources. He also talked of nurturing creativity among the younger generation for bringing innovative energy solutions for the country.



Assam Rifles organised blood donation camp at Assam Rifles Multi-Specialty Hospital, Laitkor on Tuesday in association with NEIGRIHMS, Shillong. DG, staff officers and more than 100 personnel participated in the event and voluntarily donated blood for the noble cause. DG conveyed his compliments to the doctors of Assam Rifles and medical staff from NEIGRIHMS for their efforts in the conduct of the camp.



## Literature can bring a change: Rajat Kapoor

Human values are the essence of literature," opined the dignitaries at the 17th Kadambini Literature Festival and Patrika Hat. Gracing the occasion as a chief guest, former External Affairs Minister, Salman Khurshid, said, "Human values enjoy the uniformity across the religions. But it differs when presented in diverse languages."

"The inclination towards English has been soared to such a level, it is envisaged that not any of Indian languages will be able to upkeep its existence in the years to come," said guest of honour, Rahul Dev, an eminent journalist. In fact, India is a multi-lingual nation. "However, our excessive affinity towards English has thrown our own languages into jeopardy," added Garg.

He said, "There is a direct link between language and literature. Anybody can create potent creation through his/her own language and literature. Remarkably, advanced nations like China, Japan, Russia, Germany and South Korea are developing without the medium of English language. Their technology and science have been prepared in their respective languages. But it is surprising to observe that such trend is not followed in our nation. Though such exercises demand a little pain but we will fetch long term dividends in science and technology. In this context, the educational institutions have greater roles to play. They should encourage their pupils to carry forward research and create innovations in their own lan-

guages." Gracing the occasion, Mridula Garg said that literature is gradually losing it sheen, following the readers apathy. That's why the reader base is declining day by day. Now, there is a widespread difference observed between the ethical (moral) and corporal values in our nation. "While basic traits like compassion, kindness, humility and tolerance fall within the domain of moral values, only literature can uphold these. The rapid depreciation of human values are taking its toll on its very survival. In such circumstances, we have to sustain our literature in order to upkeep our moral values at any cost," added Garg.

Only literature can bring a change in the society, said Rajat Kapoor, renowned filmmaker, director and actor. Without money, a book can be created but not a film. On this occasion, the prestigious National level Nilmarani Sahitya Samman-2020 was conferred upon distinguished novelist Anuradha Ray. She was given ₹5 lakhs as cash award along with a silver medal.

Professor Shantanu Acharya said, "Literature is nothing but visiting one's inner self. It has no link with the society. As life is full of joy, therefore, it should be drafted into literature in various humorous forms."

On this occasion, the latest edition of Kadambini, Kunikatha and the English version of Iti Samanta's novel *Shankuntalara Jhia* (Shakuntala's Daughter) were unveiled by the guests.

## Adani-KISS inaugurates school

Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Odisha, inaugurated the Adani-KISS Tribal Residential School at Bankshole, Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha, yesterday.

Addressing the gathering, Patnaik said, "Education is empowerment and the real transformation can be possible only with the help of education." Patnaik thanked KISS authority and Adani Group for establishment of school.

Dr Priti Adani said, "Education is the most powerful tool for social transformation. Adani foundation is happy to strengthen the scenario in the far off tribal areas of Odisha by partnering with the prestigious Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)." In his welcome address,



Dr Achyuta Samanta said, "Almost 28 years back, KISS took initiatives to include tribal community in the mainstream. Now KISS is the largest tribal institution and the first tribal university in the world. More than 30,000 students are currently pursuing their education from KG to PG, while 20,000 students

completed their education successfully and are placed in different sectors. It is not important for KISS that 60,000 students are getting educated rather it is important that it has created awareness among more than 60 lakh tribal students of Odisha and other states of India."

Dr Samanta said, "Many tribal organisations and intellectuals requested many times to open a branch in Mayurbhanj district for under privileged children. Today their requests have been fulfilled. The poor tribal students of Mayurbhanj district will get quality education. It has been decided that only the candidates of Mayurbhanj will get employment in Adani-KISS. Adani-KISS is fully equipped with all modern facilities. It has been established on 50 acres of land with complete financial support of Adani foundation."

On this occasion, a 50-bed hospital in the campus was also inaugurated by Dr Priti G Adani. The hospital will serve the students, staff as well as the common people of Mayurbhanj district.

## CRPF tops with 54 medals

Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, has called upon the police forces to specialise in one sport each so as to take the country to new heights in the field of international games.

Gracing the closing ceremony of the 4th All India Police Judo Cluster Championship as the chief guest, Rijiju disclosed that India aims at being in the top 10 positions of the 2028 Olympic games in Los Angeles.

Rijiju, who is also the Minister of State for Minority Affairs, said, "Our government has been working towards making a vibrant sports culture in the country." Making a reference to the *Khele India* programme, Rijiju added that his ministry is trying to change the sporting mindset of the country by updating the status of sports and games



as an extra curricular activity. He revealed that the proposed new education policy will give centrestage to sports.

Speaking on the occasion, Surjit Singh Deswal, DG, CRPF, said that the police forces have a sizable contribution to the sports achievements of the country. Describing Rijiju as a fitness icon, Deswal added that he is an inspiration for the youths of our country.

The Judo Cluster games included — Judo, Taekwondo, Wushu and Gymnastics. While CRPF bagged gold medals in both Male and Female category in Judo and Taekwondo, it won gold in the Wushu (Male) and Gymnastics, too. The gold in Wushu (Female) category went to SSB. The other forces present in the medal tally included — BSF, CISE, ITBP, Assam Rifles, Punjab Police and Assam Police. CRPF topped the competition with 54 medals, which included 24 gold, 19 silver and 11 Bronze.

## ICAI organises global summit

The Institute of Cost Accountants of India organises a global summit on *Mission 5 Trillion - CMA as a Cryogenic Force*. The summit aligns with the national goal set by PM Narendra Modi to achieve USD 5 Trillion economy by 2024. It will be held from January nine to 11 at Ashok hotel.



Union Minister for Railways and Commerce & Industry will be the chief guest of the valedictory session.

The summit has one plenary session on Mission 5 Trillion - Strategies and six technical sessions on Mission 5 Trillion - Levers, driving SDG thru' CMA, driving value creation thru' govern-

ance, cost management strategies/ tools, designing cost effective sustainable products, global cost management practices, sector specific CMA cryogenic roles.

A cultural evening will also be held on the inauguration day at BR Ambedkar Auditorium. Eminent speakers like Alan Johnson, deputy

president, IFAC, Alan Hatfield, ACCA-UK, Graham Terry from South Africa, Prof Luckmika Perera from Australia, Paul Sharman from Canada and Daping Gao from China will be present. Apart from this many renowned speakers from India will address the delegates. The participants will include CMDs and director (finance) of PSUs, corporate heads, CFOs, management accountants, senior management executives, corporate stalwarts, professionals, practitioners and academicians from India and abroad.

It would discuss and churn the best CMA prac-

tices which have been successfully adopted and tested in large business conglomerates in different parts of world. Transnational sharing of knowledge and its practical application in given circumstances would certainly promote momentum required to propel the Indian economy to a high-gear path. More disruptive ideas and blue ocean business strategies coupled with IT driven tools, AI & analytical skills shall bring change in the current economic spectrum. The road map will also help various national missions of Make-in-India, Start-up India, etc.

## FOR THE LOVE OF NATION

On Monday, Rajesh Ranjan, DG, CISF addressed the force personnel of 340 units and formations (Sector/Zone/Group Headquarters/Regional Training Centres / Reserve Battalions). The objective of his webcast address was to reach out and connect with the last force personnel deployed in far-flung areas of the country all across.



In his address, he congratulated the force personnel for their selfless and dedicated service in securing the critical infrastructures and

sensitive establishments of our country. He also highlighted the achievements of the force during the last year. Today CISF is securing 347 units with two new inductions at Nayra Energy, Jamnagar & Indian

Museum, Kolkata and total number of fire wing units is 103 with two new units at NPGCL, Aurangabad (Bihar) & PVUNL, Patratu (Jharkhand). It has become a force of more than 1,62,000 personnel.

Through the webcast address, Ranjan emphasised that CISF would observe the year 2020 as the year of "mobility" to accomplish its objective of serving the nation with utmost dedication and professionalism.

He also urged the force personnel to continue focussing on WIT, that is, all measures for welfare of troops and their families, emphasis to create infrastructure and logistics, training with focus on physical fitness and sports, leveraging modern gadgetry and technology.

# Spain sweep into ATP Cup quarters



Rafael Nadal prepares to return against Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka during their ATP Cup match in Perth

AFP ■ PERTH/SYDNEY

World number one Rafael Nadal steered Spain into the ATP Cup quarter-finals on Wednesday despite an uncharacteristically error-ridden performance, with Argentina also powering through.

After six days of round robin play at the inaugural team event across Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, eight teams are left standing from the 24 that started.

Australia, Serbia, Russia and Britain booked their spots in the knockout phase on Tuesday, with Spain — who won the revamped Davis Cup in Madrid in November — and Argentina rounding out the six group winners.

Belgium and Canada joined them as the two best-placed runners-up.

All the quarter-finals are in Sydney with Australia facing Britain in the first encounter today, followed by Argentina against Russia.

Novak Djokovic's Serbia take on Canada tomorrow, while Spain are pitted against Belgium.

Nadal saw off the brave challenge of Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, but the 19-time Grand Slam winner made 36 unforced errors.

"It was important the first set, and then in the second I had some tough moments but at the same time I was able to manage well to have a break at the right moment, so happy for the victory," said Nadal, who is yet to drop a set.

He came on court after teammate and world number 10 Roberto Bautista Agut downed Go Soeda 6-2, 6-4 to secure the tie.

Djokovic was also a winner, continuing his unbeaten record at the tournament as he warms up for a crack at an eighth Australian Open crown.

The superstar eased past Chile's Cristian Garin 6-3, 6-3 as Serbia won their tie 2-1, with Dusan Lajovic also clinching his singles match.

"I really am really happy with the challenges that I've had in the last six, seven days here, and hopefully that can allow me to build my



Novak Djokovic of Serbia joins a game of football with his team in Brisbane

## Keys moves past Stosur

BRISBANE: Madison Keys beat Samantha Stosur 7-5, 6-3 on Wednesday to be among three Americans with second-round wins at Brisbane International.

"Sam obviously has a great serve and a great forehand and she's really tricky off her slice," Keys said. "So I've known that in the past; I just felt like in the past I wasn't doing a great job at handling my side of the court."

In earlier American victories, Alison Riske beat Barbora Strycova 6-3, 6-4 and Danielle Collins defeated Yulia Putintseva 6-1, 6-0.

Australian world No 1 Ashleigh Barty is just one win from the doubles final. She combined with Kiki Bertens to beat second-seeded Nicole Melichar and Yifan Xu 6-3, 6-2 in less than an hour on Wednesday.

Barty will play American Jennifer Brady in the second round in singles today. AFP



Roger Federer & Serena Williams

## Federer, Serena, Rafa headline charity match

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Superstars Roger Federer, Serena Williams and Rafael Nadal will headline an exhibition match ahead of the Australian Open to raise money for bush-fire relief, organisers said on Wednesday.

Tennis Australia last week announced a fundraising exhibition match at Melbourne's Rod Laver Arena — centre court at the Australian Open — for January 15, the week before the opening Grand Slam of the year.

The players were revealed on Wednesday with Naomi Osaka, Caroline Wozniacki, Nick Kyrgios and Stefanos Tsitsipas joining Federer, Williams and Nadal.

"For a period of about two-and-a-half hours we're going to be showcasing the game, but also coming together as a community to play our part in the relief effort," said Tennis Australia chief Craig Tiley.

The devastation has seen a host of sports stars pledge money, with more than Aus\$1.2 million (US\$820,000) raised so far from an initiative by tennis chiefs to donate Aus\$100 for each ace served during the Australian summer.

## Sharapova handed Aus Open wildcard



Maria Sharapova serves during match

MELBOURNE: Five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova said it was "very special" after being handed an Australian Open wildcard on Wednesday as she attempts to resurrect her career after an injury-plagued 2019.

The 32-year-old, who won the tournament in 2008, has slipped down the rankings to 147, outside automatic qualification.

But the Russian remains a big name and she will line up at Melbourne Park for a 16th time since her debut in 2003.

"To be in the draw of the Australian Open is incredible," Sharapova said.

"I've had wonderful experiences there, from holding the championship trophy to losing some very tough finals as well — there's been a lot of ups and downs in Australia.

"So to have another chance, another opportunity, to compete on all those courts is very special."

She reached the fourth last year, upsetting defending champion Caroline Wozniacki in an epic third round win. AFP



Caroline Wozniacki, right, and Serena Williams wait to enter onto Centre Court for their quarter-finals doubles match against Caroline Dolehide and Johanna Larsson at the ASB Classic in Auckland

## Serena, Wozniacki win again

AFP ■ AUCKLAND

Serena Williams and Caroline Wozniacki prolonged their one-time-only doubles partnership on Wednesday when they won through to the semifinals of the ASB Classic.

Playing in combination for the first time in their careers, Williams and Wozniacki beat top-seeded Johanna Larsson of Sweden and Caroline Dolehide of the United States 6-2, 6-1 after beating Nao Hibino and Makoto Ninomiya of Japan in their opening match.

Williams was a driving force in their win on Wednesday, dominating the court, though she paid trib-

ute to Wozniacki who, she said, "never missed." Wozniacki will play Lauren Davis in the second round of singles today while Williams will play fellow American Christina McHale.

Eugenie Bouchard came into the tournament as a wild-card entry after a difficult 2019 season and progressed to the quarterfinals with a 6-4, 6-4 win over eighth-seeded Caroline Garcia.

World No 15 Petra Marcic, the No 2 seed, lost 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 to France's Alize Cornet, who finished 2019 outside the top 50 for the first time in eight years. Cornet sealed the match after 2 hours, 16 minutes with three consecutive aces.

## Nadal insists Federer Slam record not on his mind

AFP ■ PERTH

World number one Rafael Nadal insisted Wednesday he isn't focused on matching Roger Federer's record Slam haul at the Australian Open this month.

The 33-year-old last year won the French and US Open titles to move within one of his Swiss rival's record tally of 20.

Federer has sat on top of the all-time list since 2009 when he passed Pete Sampras' benchmark of 14 after winning a five-set thriller over Andy Roddick at Wimbledon.

A Nadal triumph in Melbourne could set the stage for him to set a new landmark at Roland Garros, where he will start hot favourite to add to his 12 French Open titles.

But the Spaniard downplayed the potential historical implications after steering Spain into the ATP Cup quarter-finals.

"Honestly don't think much about Federer's record," Nadal said.

"My only goal is to keep playing good

tennis, keep enjoying this sport and being happy. And if that happens and I stay healthy then the goal is to keep producing chances in the events that I'm going to play."

Nadal's immediate focus is leading Spain's title charge at the inaugural ATP Cup.

Unbeaten Spain qualified for the knockout stages in Sydney after sweeping Japan in Group B in Perth with Nadal yet to drop a set from his three matches.

The 19-time Grand Slam winner, however, was pushed by in-form world number 72 Yoshihito Nishioka before prevailing 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 in two hours and seven minutes.

Nadal made 36 unforced errors and appeared weary at times in Spain's first day session tie in Perth's warm conditions.

"It was the first experience with the heat here in Australia, so we played under heavy conditions and it was tough," he said. "I played against a player who has started the season on fire, so it was an important victory for me and the team."

## Muguruza in Shenzhen last 8

AFP ■ SHENZHEN

Former world No 1 and two-time Grand Slam champion Garbine Muguruza had a 6-1, 7-6 (2) win over American Shelby Rogers to advance to the quarter-finals of Shenzhen Open on Wednesday.

Muguruza will play Zarina Diyas in the quarterfinals after the Kazakhstani player defeated Anna Blinkova 6-1, 6-7 (9), 6-4.

"My goal is to play as many matches as I can, so I'm looking forward to my next match and to keep advancing in the tournament," Muguruza said. "I've never played (Diyas) so I'm looking forward to facing a new opponent."

Wednesday's victory was the first time Muguruza has had consecutive wins at a WTA tournament since last year's French



Garbine Muguruza takes selfie after win

Open, where she advanced to the fourth round.

Fifth-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova extended her winning streak to seven matches when she defeated 2014 finalist Peng Shuai 7-6 (7), 6-1 in 83 minutes.

She will now meet fourth-seeded Qiang Wang in the quarterfinals after the Chinese player beat Aliaksandra Sasnovich 6-4, 0-6, 7-6 (5).

blew the chance, allowing Canada to go through instead.

David Goffin's Belgium, who were not playing on Wednesday, also crept into the knockouts at the

expense of France and South Africa.

Some US\$15 million in prize money and up to 750 singles and 250 doubles ATP rankings points are at stake.

## Fouaad proud to seal Olympic berth for India

NEW DELHI: It will be the first occasion in the last two decades when any rider from India will feature in the Equestrian event at the upcoming Tokyo Olympics as Fouaad Mirza, who had bagged a Silver in the last Asian Games, will participate in the showpiece event later this year. Fouaad is happy that he is the reason behind India getting a ticket to the Tokyo games in the discipline.

Fouaad's participation had been confirmed in November 2019, however, it was officially announced after the International Equestrian Federation announced its rankings on Tuesday. In the rankings, Fouaad emerged as the leading point scorer in the Asia-Oceania zone and eventually sealed a berth for India.

Speaking about his achievement Fouaad said: "I'm happy to fetch a quota for my nation in this discipline and I am ready to represent India there. It is a matter of great pride for me. Qualifying for the Olympics is a part of an entire process and so, many more things are left to be accomplished. Now, I have to participate in more qualification events and we will try to make sure that we reach Tokyo with full preparation."

Fouaad was under constant pressure to bag an Olympic quota after clinching a silver in the discipline at the

Asian Games after 36 long years. The 27-year-old expressed that he enjoys pressure situations and hardly cares for such things.

"Olympics is always a major tournament for any player irrespective of the sport he plays. Undoubtedly, there will be pressure but I feel it helps you get better and compels you to do better besides keeping you focused. Pressure is something which motivates me and as soon as I wake up, it pushes me to train hard. Whenever I feel down, it helps me coming out of negativity and so I like such situations," he expressed.

Fouaad added that from now on his preparations will be a bit different depending on the quality at the event, specially the horses he uses as in equestrian events it matters a lot.

"Yes, the preparations will be different for it (Olympics) as its standard is say two to three levels higher than the Asian Games. It is quite difficult and so the training with the horses will also be different. Currently, we are doing the normal winter practises and trying to keep the horses fit and focusing to improve their base fitness. We will train with new horses in the middle of the season after preparing the new schedule and will try to keep the horses in their best possible condition so that they can perform well," he concluded. IANS

## Mane crowned Africa's 2019 Player of the Year



Sadio Mane poses with trophy

AFP ■ CAIRO

Liverpool star Sadio Mane was crowned on Tuesday as Africa's 2019 Player of the Year for the first time at an awards gala in Egypt.

The 27-year-old Senegalese striker was up against his Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah, the Egyptian who won the award the last two years, and Algerian Riyad Mahrez of Manchester City.

"I am really happy and at the same time I am really proud to win this award," said Mane at the ceremony organised by the Confederation of African Football in the Egyptian Red Sea city of Hurgada.

"It's a big day for me."

Mane became the second star from Senegal to be named African Player of the Year after El Hadji Diouf, who was the continent's best player in 2001 and 2002.

He scored 34 goals and produced 12 assists in 61 appearances in 2019, according to CAF statistics.

Salah's tally stood at 26 goals and 10 assists in 55 matches while Mahrez accounted for 14 goals and 18 assists in 48 games last year.

The key Senegalese player shared the 2018/19 Premier League Golden Boot award with Salah and Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang from Gabon.

"I would love to thank all the Senegalese people. They have been for me all the time, they push me," said Mane, extending sincere gratitude to people from his village Bambali.

The award for the youth category was given to Morocco's Achraf Hakimi of Borussia Dortmund.

The CAF Team of the Year featured Salah, Mane and Aubameyang as well as Mahrez and Ajax duo Andre Onana and Hakim Ziyech.

## Job only half done for Pep

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Pep Guardiola warned Manchester City of Manchester United's powers of recovery after his side outclassed their city rivals 3-1 at Old Trafford to put one foot in the League Cup final.

The holders were rampant before the break as Bernardo Silva's wonder strike, Riyad Mahrez's cool finish and an own goal from Andreas Pereira put City well on course for a third straight final.

United's captain for the evening Marcus Rashford restored some pride for the hosts to reduce the deficit 20 minutes from time, but they face a huge task when the sides meet again for the semi-final, second leg on January 29.

However, Guardiola remains wary after Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men recovered from losing 2-0 at home to Paris Saint-Germain in last season's Champions League last 16 to progress.

"It's a good result, but it is not over because it is United," Guardiola told Sky Sports.

"Last season is a good example against PSG. Hopefully in front of our fans we can make a good game and reach the final."

United have shown their ability to win at the Etihad already this season as they tore City apart on the counter-attack to shock the Premier League champions on home soil just a month ago.

## Ole search for answers to save Red Devils season

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United's demoralising defeat against Manchester City in their League Cup semi-final laid bare their desperate need for reinforcements if they are to salvage anything from their stuttering season.

United conceded three first-half goals in a match at Old Trafford for the first time since May 1997 on Tuesday in their chastening 3-1 first-leg loss against Pep Guardiola's men.

Bernardo Silva's wonder strike, Riyad Mahrez's cool finish and an own goal from Andreas Pereira put City well on course for a third straight final before Marcus Rashford gave the hosts faint hope for the second leg on January 29.

The defeat was another stark reminder that United are light years behind the standards set by Premier League pacesetters Liverpool and defending champions City.

Manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said there would be no easy solutions as United attempt to claw their way back to the top of English football.

"I've said before it is not going to be a quick fix and the two teams you are talking about are probably two of the best teams in the world," he said. "That's the task we have ahead of us, it's something that we've started. You can see we are still a way off but we've started something that needed doing."

The problem is that the shoots of recovery are hard to decipher, with United short of technical quality and fight against City.

United have had some impressive performances this season — including a 2-1 victory at City in the league last month, wins against Chelsea and Spurs and a draw at home against Liverpool.

But they have stumbled badly against sides they would expect to beat, losing to Watford, Bournemouth, Newcastle and West Ham, and face a tough battle to qualify for next season's Champions League.

UNITED FLAWS

There are problems for Solskjaer to solve all over the pitch. Rashford's recent form has helped

paper over United's lack of depth up front after they opted not to replace Romelu Lukaku, who left for Inter Milan in August.

United's midfield looks desperately short of creativity in the absence of the injured Paul Pogba and with Jesse Lingard struggling to find his best form. Scott McTominay is also currently sidelined with a knee injury, depriving the side of steel.

And despite boosting their defence with the signings of Harry Maguire and Aaron Wan-Bissaka in the summer transfer window at considerable cost, United do not look like a cohesive unit at the back.

Maguire's arrival has not had the same galvanising impact that Virgil van Dijk's signing had at Liverpool, with United recording just three clean sheets in the Premier League this season. Only Norwich and Tottenham have had fewer.

Solskjaer did not sound over-confident that the January transfer window would yield obvious solutions.

"We are a young team and with the injuries we've had and illness it shows more and that's something we are looking at," he said.

"If there is something there for us I've got the backing to do something but if it is not the right thing we won't do anything."

Aston Villa midfielder Jack Grealish and Leicester midfielder James Maddison, as well as Dortmund's Jadon Sancho, have all seen their names linked with a move to Old Trafford.

The problem is that January is a notoriously difficult time to persuade clubs to part with their best players. Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers has said nobody he wants to keep will be leaving the King Power Stadium this month.

Alongside the constant speculation over Pogba's future, Solskjaer may have another headache, with reports that veteran defender Ashley Young has opened talks over a move to Inter Milan.

"We can't weaken ourselves. We've got to strengthen ourselves if any movement is going to happen," Solskjaer said.

