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LUCKNOW, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 22, 2020; PAGES 16 ₹3



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## No going back on CAA: Shah

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Union Home Minister Amit Shah challenged opposition leaders for a debate on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on any public platform, stating categorically that the new citizenship law would never be rolled back.

Addressing a pro-CAA rally in Lucknow on Tuesday, Shah said: "Mein danke ki chot par kehna hoon ki CAA wapas nahi hoga. Modiji CAA lekar aaye, aur CAA ke khilaf, yeh Rahul Baba and company, Mamata, Akhileshji, Behen Mayawati, saari ki saari brigade kau-kau karne lage." (I declare that the CAA will never be rolled back. When Modiji brought CAA, Rahul and company, Mamata, Akhilesh, Mayawati, the entire brigade started making noise without ascertaining facts).

"I piloted the Citizenship Bill in Parliament. I challenge anyone who wants to debate with me on the CAA but this law will not be withdrawn at any cost," Shah said.

The Home Minister added: "Narendra Modi was voted back to office only eight months back. There is no reason for us to go to the people again as there is no election round the corner. We were forced to launch the awareness campaign to counter the malicious campaign by opposition parties over CAA aimed at breaking India."

"The opposition parties are trying to confuse Muslims

in the name of CAA even when the new act is only to provide citizenship and not divest them of it," Shah said.

Referring to Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Shah said: "He is only making statements by readings others, and has no independent understanding of the issue. He should first study and then speak."

Speaking on Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Shah said: "The TMC leader raised the issue of giving citizenship to Dalit Hindu refugees from Bangladesh staying in West Bengal. But now she is opposing it just for political reasons."

"During Rajasthan Assembly polls, Congress had also stressed on providing citizenship to only Hindu refugees from Pakistan, but now they are opposing it," he said.

"Congress was responsible for country's partition on religion lines in 1947. Now when we are trying to rectify their mistakes, they are opposing it. Even Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi had said that minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh should be given Indian citizenship. But now, this party is opposing the CAA which is unfortunate and it shows their double standard," Shah said.

Listing the series of Congress, TMC and other opposition leaders' statements, Shah exclaimed: "How come Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan and Rahul Gandhi speak the same language and idioms about Kashmir and the CAA."



Home Minister Amit Shah, and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath being garlanded by supporters during a rally in support of new citizenship law in Lucknow on Tuesday. State BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh is seen to their left.

"Opposition leaders are questioning us on the abrogation of Article 370 from Kashmir which gives equal rights to people. These leaders never feel anything about Kashmiri Pandits who are now refugees in their own country. They never uttered a word when Taliban destroyed ancient Buddha statue at Bamijan Valley in Afghanistan," he alleged.

"I want to ask people protesting the CAA as to where are minorities disappearing in Pakistan? Why the population of minorities dwindled to three per cent now from 25 per cent in 1947. Thousands of Hindus and Sikhs were kidnapped, converted and so many women were raped. Hundreds of temples and gurudwaras were destroyed, who will help the persecuted minorities?," Shah

asked. Targeting Congress and other parties for supporting "anti-national" slogans in JNU and other institutions, Shah asserted: "We will not tolerate this. We are ready to be abused but will not spare anyone who insults Bharat Mata."

On the occasion, Shah asked people to dial a pro-CAA toll free number 8866288662 to support the act.

### 'Cong derailed Ram temple's construction'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Blaming the Congress for derailing the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Tuesday that it would commence within three months.

"Till the time there was a Congress government at the Centre, it did everything to delay the construction of the temple. Congress MP and senior Supreme Court advocate Kapil Sibal opposed the hearing on Ayodhya issue in apex court and did his best to stall the issue. Apart from Congress, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party also opposed Ram temple's construction at Ayodhya," Shah alleged.

"Despite the obstruction by Congress, the Supreme Court gave its ruling and now a grand Ram temple will be constructed there," he said. During the rally, Shah chanted the slogan 'Jai Shree Ram', which was repeated by the huge crowd.

On November 9, 2019, the Supreme Court gave its verdict in favour of Ram temple's construction at Ayodhya and asked the government to set up a Trust for the purpose. The government is yet to notify the Trust.

## 'Oppn speaking Pak language, backing protests'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath accused the Congress, Samajwadi Party and other opposition parties of speaking in the language and idiom of Pakistan.

"Opposition parties were behind the violence and protest demonstrations to disturb peace aimed at destroying the social fabric of the nation. The government cannot remain mute spectator of attempts by opposition parties to create anarchy," Yogi asserted.

Addressing a gathering in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in a pro-CAA rally in Lucknow on Tuesday, Yogi drew analogy from the epic Mahabharata and said: "When Draupadi was disrobed, she had asked Bhishm Pitamah as to who was responsible for the sin. Then Vidur had said all those who were silent on the ghastly act were responsible. Congress is committing the same crime as Dushashan in Mahabharata. But we cannot remain silent to crimes committed in the name of opposing CAA. We cannot be silent to the disrobing of Bharat Mata. We will go meet people everywhere and expose the nefarious games of Congress and other parties," Yogi said.

"The CAA should have been brought 70 years ago soon after Independence, but the Congress had no such ideas as its sole intention was to use the issue for narrow political ends and votebank politics. But our PM and Home Minister had the courage to bring this law to give citizenship to persecuted minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan," he said.

Yogi further alleged that opposition parties were distributing money to organise dharnas against CAA in the state but people of the country were supporting the PM on this issue and any conspiracy against 'Ek Bharat-Shreshth Bharat' would be dealt with sternly.

The CM also appealed to the people to be aware of the opposition's conspiracy in misleading a particular community by making them feel that the CAA was against them.

"The CAA is only to give citizenship to minority refugees from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and not to snatch anyone's citizenship," he clarified. Large number of refugees, including Kashmiri Pandits, were present at the rally as were UP BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh, and Deputy CMs Keshav Prasad Maurya & Dinesh Sharma.

## Review disqualification power: SC

Parliament nudged to rethink absolute authority of presiding officers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court wants Parliament to put a full stop to the unbridled power enjoyed by presiding officers of legislatures in deciding disqualification pleas against lawmakers.

The SC on Tuesday observed that a Speaker also belongs to a political party and asked Parliament to think over setting up some sort of permanent body or independent mechanism to decide disqualification petitions. The Bench pointed out recent cases where Assembly Speakers came under scanner for their handling of disqualification petitions and said that MPs or MLAs should not be allowed to continue even for a day if they have incurred disqualification for issues like anti-defection.

In its Tuesday judgment in a case related to the role of the Manipur Assembly Speaker in not taking decision on disqualification pleas against a State Minister, the SC held that the Speaker can't sit on a disqualification petition indefinitely and he must act within a reasonable time.

UNBRIDLED DISCRETION!

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- Last year's Karnataka political crisis was a case in point. The Assembly Speaker took weeks in deciding over the disqualification plea despite direction from courts

The court's suggestion came in the wake of several cases where the Speakers were accused of deciding the disqualification pleas to suit their political preferences, disregarding norms and conventions, and using such pleas as a tool to arm-twist the lawmakers to protect or destabilise State Governments.

Last year's Karnataka political crisis was a case in point. The Assembly Speaker took weeks in deciding over the disqualification plea despite direction from courts. The Speaker's refusal to act on the disqualification pleas against the rebel Congress and JD(S) MLAs created such a standoff that the Karnataka

High Court in April 2018 issued a direction to the Speaker and fixed a deadline for deciding a plea. The Speaker took his own time and then matter went to the SC. More often than not, the Speaker "sit over" such pleas, which remain pending for months — in some cases for years — even after

MLAs/MLAs have clearly violated the provision of anti-defection law. By not acting on such pleas, Speakers allow MLAs to retain their voting power despite switching side. This mostly helps the ruling party in a State.

Such arbitrariness by the Speakers often facilitated midnight political coup in North-East States.

Suggesting for an independent mechanism to deal with disqualification pleas against lawmakers, the SC asked the Manipur Assembly Speaker to decide within four weeks the plea of a Congress leader seeking disqualification of BJP lawmaker and Manipur Forest Minister Th Shyamkumar.

A Bench headed by Justice RF Nariman had granted liberty to Congress MLA Fajur Rahim and K Meghachandra to approach it again if the Assembly Speaker fails to take a decision within four weeks.

The BJP Minister had won the Assembly election on a Congress ticket and later joined the BJP. This led to filing of the disqualification plea.

## E-ticket racket linked to terror financing busted

### RPF nabs man from Jharkhand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In one of its biggest crackdowns on illegal ticketing in the railways, the RPF has arrested a madrassa-educated, self-taught software developer from Jharkhand in a racket which has links to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Dubai with suspected involvement in terror financing, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Ghulam Mustafa (28), who was arrested from Bhubaneswar, has a team of programmers working for him. He started his career in 2015 touting counter tickets in Bengaluru and then graduated to e-tickets and illegal software, the RPF official said.

"For the last 10 days, the IB, Special Bureau, ED, NIA, Karnataka Police have interrogated Mustafa.

"Dimensions of money laundering and terror financing are suspected," Railway Protection Force (RPF)

Director General Arun Kumar said at a press briefing.

Kumar said Mustafa has 563 personal IRCTC user IDs, and a list of 2,400 SBI branches and 600 regional rural banks where he is suspected to have accounts.

He also said Mustafa used software to access darknet, and Linux-based hacking systems were found on his laptop.

An Indian software company with branches across the country and abroad has also come under the scanner for having links to the racket, Kumar said, refusing to name it. He, however, said the company has been involved in a case of money laundering in Singapore.

"Analysis of Mustafa's laptops, which were highly encrypted. His phone has many Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Middle-Eastern, Indonesian,

Nepali numbers as well as six virtual numbers. There was also an application to create



fake Aadhaar cards," Kumar said.

The DG said Mustafa has revealed that he is a follower of a Pakistan-based religious group. Mustafa's digital footprints were found on Government websites, he said.

The RPF chief named Hamid Ashraf as the mastermind of the racket which is suspected to generate revenue of ₹10-15 crore per month.

Ashraf, who is also a software developer, was involved in the bombing of a school in Uttar Pradesh's Gonda district in 2019 and is now suspected to have fled to Dubai, Kumar said.

Continued on Page 4

## 8 tourists from Kerala choke to death in gas leak at Nepal resort

PNS ■ KATHMANDU/ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/KOZHIKKODE

Tragedy struck a group of 15 Kerala tourists in Nepal when eight of them, including four children, died after they fell unconscious probably due to a gas leak from a heater in their room at a mountainous resort in Pokhara, amid cold wave in the Himalayan region.

The tourists were airlifted to HAMS hospital in Kathmandu where they were pronounced dead on arrival, Superintendent of Police Sushil Singh Rathaur said.

Postmortem will be conducted on Wednesday and bodies will be taken to Kerala

by Air India on Thursday.

"All eight were airlifted and brought to hospital in Kathmandu. A doctor from the Indian mission was also immediately sent to the hospital to check on welfare of patients and to provide necessary assistance," said officials of Indian Embassy in Kathmandu.

The victims were identified as Praveen Nair and his wife Saranya and their kids Sreebhadra, Aarcha and Abhinav Saranya. Other three victims are Ranjith Kumar and his wife Indu Lakshmi and their younger son Vyshnav. Their elder son Madhav, who was in other room, survived. It

Continued on Page 4

## UP cabinet nod to new excise policy

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday gave its nod to the state's 2020-21 excise policy, under which the licence fee for country-made liquor has been increased by 10 per cent, for beer by 15 per cent and for foreign liquor by 20 per cent.

"The government has made a simple and transparent excise policy. Renewal of licences will be done through e-lottery. Under the new policy, one person will be allowed to have only two shops in the state," Principal Secretary, Excise, Sanjay Bhoosreddy said while briefing reporters at a press conference here after the Cabinet meeting.

The beer shops will now be able to sell wines. ■ Details of Cabinet decisions on Page 2

## Crash barriers planned to slash NH fatalities

### Road Min plans to make it must for all highways

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

In a major step to prevent road accidents, the Centre is considering to install crash barriers along its existing NHs and make it mandatory for all future highway projects.

A week after Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said highway accidents lead to loss of 3 per cent of GDP annually, the Ministry is exploring ways to bring down highway crashes and fatalities. Installing crash barrier is one of the steps in that direction.

Crash barriers are designed to withstand the impact of even high speed vehicles. They

are expected to slide and roll guide vehicles back on the road while keeping the level of damage to vehicle as well as to the barriers within acceptable limits. It has been found that less than five per cent of the total network of about 1.50 lakh km of National Highways has crash barriers installed.

"Ideally a crash barrier should present a continuous smooth face to an impacting vehicle so that the vehicle is redirected, without overturning, to a course that is nearly parallel to the barrier face and with a lateral deceleration, which is tolerable to motorists. To achieve these aims, the vehicle must be redirected without rotation about both its horizontal or vertical axis (without 'spinning out') and the rate of lateral deceleration must be such as to cause the minimum risk of injury to the passengers," explained a senior



NHAI official.

"We are preparing specifications to install crash barriers. Different type of crash barriers have to be installed, depending on the lanes of the highways," said an official.

The Ministry has also taken immediate measures to identify faulty engineering and road designs across the country and has sought help from all

stakeholders, including the States.

The Road Ministry is also identifying accident-prone spots. It has set up district-level committees to examine and suggest immediate repair and attention. The Ministry has also formed four separate working groups based on the principle of 4 Es Road Safety — Education, Enforcement,

Engineering (roads as well as vehicles) and Emergency care. These groups would submit their recommendations on short-term and long-term measures for immediate implementation so as to curb road accidents in the country.

At the National Road Safety Council and 39th Meeting of Transport Development Council last week, it was pointed out that more people in India die annually in road accidents than those killed in militant strikes.

Gadkari had asked the States to prepare a roadmap to develop and reorient road infrastructure within their administrative limits to cut down fatalities on road.

A new format on 'Environment and Emergency' care of road accident victims with tie up with several NGOs, hospitals and stakeholders is also to be worked on.

# Govt hikes licence fee for liquor vend

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Tipplers will have to shell out more from April 1 as the state government has increased the licence fee for liquor vend for all categories of potable alcohol - country liquor, India-made foreign liquor (IMFL), beer and wine. The UP government on Tuesday announced the excise policy for the next fiscal 2020-21 commencing from April 1, making it more rational, transparent and simplified.



Excise department. "Under the ease of doing business, now after going in affidavit of the leftover liquor and beer on March 31, 2020, a shop-owner, in case of renewal, can sell the stock after paying a nominal duty to the government. Earlier, there were problems which led to less storage by outlets in February and March every year," he pointed out.

The new policy proposes 10-20 per cent hike in licence fee of liquor outlets. The Excise department, however, claimed that there would be only marginal hike in the price of liquor, which is likely to be not more than Rs 5 per bottle. The new policy was approved in the Cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday.

The licence fee for country liquor shop has been hiked by 10 per cent; IMFL, model shop, and bar by 20 per cent, and beer shop by 15 per cent. Beer bars will also be allowed to sell wine.

Principal Secretary (Excise) Sanjay Bhosreddy said that in the new policy, measures have been taken to make it more transparent where only online applications will be accepted and vend allotted through e-lottery

across the state in a single day. From the next fiscal, all shops will be asked to enforce track-and-trade system through QR code to ensure that customers can get quality liquor. The system was enforced from liquor companies to retail outlets. It has now been extended to customers.

Bhosreddy said that in the new policy, a vendor will not be allowed to take more than two liquor vend in the state, which was earlier restricted to a district. "A country liquor shop will get automatic renewal, if it lifts 20 per cent excess liquor from the target this fiscal," he said.

He said that online application and e-tendering has also been introduced for allotment of bhag shops. From the next fiscal, there will be several new rules introduced for transparency and rationality of the

For promotion of tourism, the government has also allowed the sale of IMFL and beer in special trains, cruise and airport lounge. The licence for serving liquor on trains, cruise and airport lounge will be issued for a fee. Earlier, there was no fee on the licence for airport lounge. The government has also relaxed norms so that a retailer can purchase all brands from one warehouse. Now, liquor label and brand will be approved in one stage rather than two.

"If nothing is changed in the brand, it gets approved automatically. But if there is any change, they will have to register their trade mark," the official said.

Meanwhile, the revenue collection on excise is targeted at around Rs 31,600 crore this fiscal which has been increased to Rs 35,000 crore for next fiscal 2020-21. In 2018-19, the total excise collection was around Rs 27,000 crore.

# New accidental insurance scheme for farmers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday announced a new accidental insurance scheme for farmers in the state where in case of death, the family will get Rs 5 lakh as compensation. The new insurance scheme will benefit around 2.38 crore farmer families. The scheme called 'Mukhyamantri Krishak Durghatna Jivan Bima Yojana' was approved by the state Cabinet on Tuesday.

UP government spokesperson Shrikant Sharma said that a farmer disabled in any accident would get Rs 2 lakh for over 60 per cent disability. The scheme will be enforced with retrospective effect from September 14, 2019 and will be applicable to farmers, their family members and 'bataidars' (sharecroppers).

Sharma said that in the last fiscal, the government spent Rs 675 crore as premium for farmers' insurance but the insurance companies paid claims of only Rs 200 crore, which forced the government to re-introduce this

scheme with a new name and modifications.

In other decisions, the government approved a new policy and forensic university in Lucknow and also approved letter of comfort to two mega industrial units - PepsiCo in Mathura and Triveni Engineering in Bulandshahr. Both the units will invest Rs 679 crore.

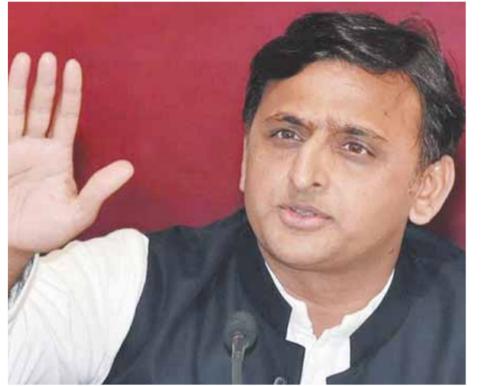
The government also approved a 10-metre service lane along with 'parikrama marg' of Giriraj in Mathura. A sum of Rs 177 crore will be spent on 14.427-km road. The government also approved a proposal to change the allotment of Patanjali Ayurveda to Patanjali Food and Herbal Park Pvt Ltd.

The government approved expenditure of Rs 50 lakh for developing basic infrastructure in every district for tourism purpose. Besides, the government also approved construction of Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi with the cost coming down marginally from Rs 343.27 crore to Rs 339 crore.

# Akhilesh hits back at Amit Shah

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav lashed out at Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his statement that the CAA would not be withdrawn at any cost. Slamming the BJP chief, the former Chief Minister said that the saffron party was making 'intolerance' its identity and hence losing its popularity due to its 'anti-people policies'.



Attacking opposition parties for 'misleading' people on the CAA, Shah said the new law would not be scrapped despite protests, at a Lucknow rally on Tuesday.

"Shah's statement only reflected intolerance as the BJP wants to crush people with a road-roller due to its brute majority in Parliament. Playing with basic principles of democracy, the ruling party is making intolerance its identity," Akhilesh said in a statement issued in Lucknow on Tuesday.

"Protests are going on across the country against the CAA and NRC due to which the BJP had to plan 'Jan Jagran' rallies and such programmes," he said.

The SP chief said that Shah's address in Lucknow showed his frustration over the growing dissent and his

party would not let the BJP-RSS agenda run in the country. He alleged that BJP leaders ignored the people's interest and aspirations due to their "false ego and pride".

Citing a report, Akhilesh said that 16 lakh jobs in the country were lost in 2016 and as per the National Crime Records Bureau, 35 unemployed and 36 self-employed persons committed suicide everyday in 2018.

"In both categories, 26,085 people lost their lives. In the country, 1.34 lakh persons ended their lives, including 10,346 from farming sector," he claimed.

Akhilesh further alleged that the BJP does not have any intention to solve the problems of people and that is why it has brought the CAA to divert public attention.

# Protest against CAA in Lko continues

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On Tuesday, social worker Sandeep Pandey reached the protest venue at Clock Tower in Thakurganj in support of the anti-CAA stir and sat on a mat in a corner where he put a spinning wheel. He told reporters that there was a need to save the constitution and that was why he chose the Gandhain way to register his protest.

In the evening, hundreds of women advocates reached the protest site. They were accompanied by some male counterparts. The group of advocates later pledged to save the Constitution. On the fifth day of the protest, women continued to pour in at the venue to support those observing protest against CAA.



People protesting against CAA by holding kites in Lucknow

In view of security, the city witnessed a heavy police deployment on Tuesday as cops stood guard at each and every corner around the Clock Tower. At the protest site, the number of women cops was more than it was on Monday. Sources said the police had apprehensions that the protesters might march towards Parivartan Chowk or Hazratganj Crossing like they did in the past. "In view of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's rally in support of CAA, the police were apprehensive," they said.

Meanwhile, the police said they were identifying the unidentified persons who were involved in breaching the provisions of section 144 of CrPc during the last three days. The police had registered three FIRs against above 120 persons including daughters of famous poet Munnawar Rana for allegedly violating prohibitory orders by blocking the main road near Clock Tower and by assembling unlawfully at the site.

Earlier, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav's daughter Tina joined the agitation for some time on Sunday evening. A photo viral on social media showed Tina with her friend at the Clock Tower.

# Migrants hail CAA

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

A group of migrants from East Pakistan—now Bangladesh—sat in the front row, carrying placards, as Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed a rally here in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Raising slogans of "Jai Shri Ram", "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and "Vande Mataram", they hailed the amended citizenship law, saying now they will have access to all necessary facilities.

"There were 200 families who came to India in 1952. We were given five acres, a one-room house and a pair of bulls," claimed Anukul Chandra Das from Ramia Behad block in Kheri.

He said in 1964, the land grant was reduced to 3.5 acres from five acres.

He said the new law will help them get their rights.

According to the CAA, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 to escape religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship. It does not include Muslims.

Those opposing the CAA have contended that it discriminates on the basis of religion and violates the Constitution. They also allege that the CAA along with the NRC is intended to target the Muslim community in India. However, the central government has dismissed the allegations, maintaining that the law is intended to give citizenship to the persecuted people from the three neighbouring countries and not to take away citizenship from anyone.

opposition parties were conspiring to destabilise the country by supporting illegal protest against the CAA.

"Why is the opposition seeking to hide behind Muslim women and not coming to the fore. If they are opposing CAA, they should have the courage to tell people why," he stated.

"The opposition is claiming that it is a protest by common people but it has been established that the Congress and SP are behind this," he claimed.

The protests also reached other

parts of Lucknow and around 15 women sat on a dharna near a 'dargah' in Ujariaon in Gomti Nagar police station area on Monday night. However, a police team rushed to the venue and asked the women to leave, informing them about Section 144 being in force.

The protest at Clock Tower that started on Friday evening, continued on Tuesday morning with the crowd swelled despite cold weather. A Child Rights panel is also monitoring the protest amid reports of children being

involved in it. Member of the Child Rights Commission Shuchita Chaturvedi said: "There were several reports of children being present at the protest site and women bringing along kids. Many reports also suggested that children were made to chant slogans against CAA and NRC, which is a violation of Juvenile Justice Act."

Anti-CAA and anti-NRC protests also continued for the eighth day at Mansoor Ali Park in Roshan Bagh area of Prayagraj.

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I Mohammad Yusuf Mustafa S/o M. Ismail Faruqi R/O 386/103 Dargah Road Saadatganj Lucknow here by inform that I am changing my name from Yusuf Mustafa Faruqi to Mohammad Yusuf Mustafa for all purposes.

# HC: No religion prescribes use of loudspeakers for worship

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

While observing that no religion prescribed use of loudspeakers for worship, Allahabad High Court declined to quash order of Jaunpur district administration by which it had denied use of loudspeaker for purpose of 'azan' in two mosques of Baddopur village, Shahganj, of Jaunpur district. Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice VC Dixit dismissed a petition filed by Masroor Ahmad of Jaunpur.

In March petitioner had moved an application seeking permission to use loudspeakers on two mosques and on March 7, 2019, Circle Officer, Shahganj did a spot inspection and stated in its report that in the area of both the mosques, there was a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims and if any party is allowed to use sound amplifiers tension between the two groups would escalate disturbing the peace in the area. On June 12, 2019, sub-divisional magistrate

(SDM) Shahganj of Jaunpur denied permission/renewal of the license to use amplifiers and loudspeakers on two mosques on the ground that such use of sound equipment is likely to cause animosity between the two religious groups of the village creating law and order situation as the area had mixed population. The bench after going through the order of SDM observed, "it becomes quite evident that the petitioners have been refused permission to use

sound amplifying system at the mosque not only for the inherent reason of noise pollution but in order to maintain peace and tranquillity in the area."

Court also raised the issue of noise pollution and ignorance of the general public in this regard and observed, "People in India do not realise that noise in itself is a sort of pollution. They are not even fully conscious about its ill effect on health, though some concern is being shown to it in recent past."

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FI.No. 1-6/2017-18/NIUM/B'lore/Estt. /VI

**TENDER NOTICE**

NIUM invites sealed tenders from registered and reputed firms/establishments for **Security, Housekeeping, Manpower(Outsource), Garden and Canteen Services for the year 2020-21.**

For details and tender form, please log on to [www.nium.in](http://www.nium.in)  
Last date for submission of tenders: 10.02.2020 (3:00 PM)

Davp 17201/11/0035/1920

Sd/  
Director

**RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION, LUCKNOW**

**OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE**

No.RE-Ten-Civ-LKO-G-283-FSC-05 Date. 20.01.2020

Dy.Chief Engineer, Railway Electrification, Lucknow acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tender for the works mentioned below.

Sr. Name of work - Fabrication and fixing of assembly of G-3/L Type Glued No. insulated Rail Joint in situ/On cess/running tracks for broad gauge 60 kg/52kg with all contractors material as per RDSO specification in connection with Railway Electrification of Group No. 280, 281, 283, 284, 243, 302 & 305 etc. under Railway Electrification Lucknow Unit.

1. Tender No.	RE-Ten-Civ-LKO-G-283-FSC-05
2. Tender Type	Open
3. Period of Completion	12 Months
4. Advertised Value (₹)	8915590.00
5. Earnest Money (₹)	178300.00
6. Tender Closing Date Time	12/02/2020 15:00 hrs
7. Validity of Offer (Days)	45
8. Bidding System	Single Packet System
9. Date & Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender	Tender may be uploaded upto 15:00 hrs on 12.02.2020 on IREPS web site <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> . The bidder can participate in the E-tender, the tender will be opened after 15:00 hrs on 12.02.2020.
10. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document	The detailed e-tender notice and tender document is available on <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> wef. 21.01.2020 till 12.02.2020 at 15:00 hrs. Above tender document will be available for submission of offer on IREPS web site i.e. <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> from 29.01.2020 to 12.02.2020. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document.

(V.K.Gupta)  
Dy.Chief Engineer, Railway Electrification, Lucknow  
PR/186/2020 Adk For & On behalf of President of India  
"Serving Customers with a Smile"

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR**  
**COLLEGE OF NURSING**

LAJPAT NAGAR IV, NEAR MOOLCHAND METRO STATION, NEW DELHI - 110024, Tel. Nos. 011-2643 6788, 2643 5270, E-Mail-PRINCIPAL@RAKCON.COM

**ADMISSION NOTICE**  
**B.Sc. (H) NURSING COURSE 2020-2021**  
Affiliated by University of Delhi

Applications are invited for admission to B.Sc. (Hons.) Nursing Course (4 Years) commencing from 20th July 2020. Prescribed application forms with prospectus for the session 2020-21 can be downloaded from college website [www.rakon.com](http://www.rakon.com) from 05/03/2020 to 17/04/2020 and should be submitted (by hand or by post) in the college till 17/04/2020 on payment of Rs. 550/- by Demand Draft in favour of **Principal, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur College of Nursing** payable at New Delhi. In case of non-payment of demand draft along with the downloaded application form, the application form will be summarily rejected and no request will be entertained in this regard. The date of demand draft should be from 05/03/2020 to 17/04/2020. Students should strictly apply on the application form issued by the College for the session 2020-21. APPLICATION FORMS OF PREVIOUS YEARS WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED. Last date for submission of application is 17th April 2020 till 5:00 P.M.

**ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Senior School Certificate Examination or Indian School Certificate Examination (12 Years Course) or an Examination recognized as equivalent thereto with 50% or more marks in the aggregate of 4 subjects including English Core / Elective, Physics, Chemistry and Biology provided the student has passed in each subject separately. Those who have appeared in S.S.C. or Equivalent examination with Physics, Chemistry, Biology and English in 2020 are also eligible for applying for admission to Selection Test. Minimum age requirement is 17 years by 1st October, 2020. **Only women candidates are eligible. Admission will be made on the basis of merit based on Selection Test to be held on 14th June, (Sunday), 2020 at 10:00 A.M.** at the venue mentioned in the Admission Ticket. Names of the selected candidates will be put on the College Notice Board and web site [www.rakon.com](http://www.rakon.com) on the dates as declared in the Prospectus. No Correspondence / Telephonic information in this connection will be entertained. Counseling will be done for final admission.

**NOTE: THE TIMINGS FOR SUBMISSION OF FORMS WILL BE FROM 2.00 P.M. TO 5.00 P.M. ON ALL WORKING DAYS I.e. MONDAY TO FRIDAY EXCEPT GAZETTED HOLIDAYS.**

davp 17149 / 11 / 0002 / 1920

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# Lko 14th among most polluted cities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow ranks 14th among 287 cities of the country in terms of air pollution levels due to PM10 levels, as per the report released by Greenpeace organisation on Tuesday. The data which was analysed was that taken by the CPCB for the year 2018. The report shows that the air quality in Lucknow, Varanasi, Khurja, Gorakhpur, Agra, Meerut and Saharanpur is 3-5 times higher than NAAQS and 8-10 times higher than WHO standards.

The report has identified 231 Indian cities out of 287 with more than 52 monitoring days data in 2018 under National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP), where air pollution levels exceeded the 60 µg/m3 limits for PM10 as prescribed under National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). According to the report, 16 cities of Uttar Pradesh have been identified as non-attainment cities. Noida and Ghaziabad are the most polluted ones in terms of PM10 and air quality is around four times the NAAQS and 12-16 times the 20 µg/m3 WHO prescribed limits.

Similarly, air quality levels in Bareilly, Allahabad, Moradabad, Firozabad, Gajraula, Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Khurja, Kanpur, Agra, Varanasi, Anpara, Saharanpur and Meerut are 3-5 times higher than NAAQS and 8-10 times higher than WHO-specified standards.

Gajraula, Gorakhpur, Saharanpur and Meerut are the new non-attainment cities, according to Greenpeace's analysis. These cities did not find any mention in NCAP. Senior campaigner, Greenpeace, Awinash Chanchal said 699 stations across 287 cities recorded data for 52 or more days in year 2018, 631 stations across 264 cities recorded data for more than 78 days, and 510 stations across 225 cities were able to record data for more than 93 days, and only 299 stations across 145 cities were able to record data for 104 or more days in 2018.

"Stations with minimum 50% data recorded compared to the stipulated 104 observations in a year is considered in the analysis



of prevailing pollution levels and ranking the cities for the current report," he added. Commenting on the worsening state of affairs, Chanchal said: "It's worrying to see that more than 80 per cent cities had PM10 levels exceeding the 60 µg/m3 limits for PM10 prescribed under NAAQS. If we want to make NCAP truly a national programme, we have to include all polluted cities into it and implement it with the addition of specific pollution and emission reduction targets in a time-bound manner."

He further stated that the city level action plans provided by the non-attainment cities under NCAP also lack regional and airshed level approach and are too city-centric, that is, of course, vehicular emissions within the city are a part of the problem but the major emitters in the nearby

regions should not be ignored.

"More emphasis needs to be laid on regional and air-shed approach for air quality control. What is the use of conducting 102 source apportionment studies for non-attainment cities if we are going to ignore regional sources of pollution and only quantify sources with the city's administrative boundaries and are not including the sectoral targets and policies for emission reductions," Chanchal added.

In January 2019, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), released the first-ever NCAP for India. Under the programme, the cities are expected to reduce air pollution levels by 20-30% by 2024 from 2017 levels. However, the Report highlights that CPCB has identified only 122 non-attainment cities and 102 of them included under NCAP till now. These 122 cities are spread across 28 states and nine union territories and is incomplete leaving 116 more cities which exceed 60 µg/m3 limit prescribed by NAAQS, according to 2018 annual data and should be included in the non-attainment category. Out of 287 cities, more than 80 per cent have limits for PM10 prescribed under NAAQS by CPCB, implying that all these cities and towns belong to the non-attainment list. This is more than double the original 102 non-attainment cities initially identified by MoEF&CC in 2015.

# Recommendations for govt, general public

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Greenpeace organisation, which released the report on air pollution due to PM10 levels, has also made certain recommendations for both the government and general public. Greenpeace senior campaigner Awinash Chanchal said that National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in its current form and ambition is only a good first step on a long journey.

"For the first step to be meaningful, it must be followed by other measures and several lacunae be addressed. NCAP is not notified under any Act (Environment Protection Act or Air Act) and is only being seen as a guiding document. To make the NCAP effective in achieving breathable air quality across the country, the air quality targets and specific measures identified in the document must be given a proper legal status," he said.

He further pointed out that currently the ambition levels under NCAP (20-30% air pollution reduction by 2024) will not lead to breathable air quality in the country, as the pollution levels across much of the country are so high that even a 30 per cent reduction will still leave levels above the NAAQS, not to mention the WHO standards.

"The NCAP, being a dynamic document, must set specific city-wise pollution reduction targets rather than just providing a tentative window of 20-30% reduction across the board by 2024. NCAP should also express the ambition to move to NAAQS in a time-bound manner first and then have a timeline to move towards the WHO guidelines. Tentative per cent reduction targets over the next five years are insufficient without a long-term timeline to achieve breathable air quality and attain the health benefits of reducing pollution

levels below NAAQS and WHO standards. Minor reductions from current hazardous levels may not be able to achieve great health benefits because concentrations even as low as 10 µg/m3 for PM10 and 6 µg/m3 for PM2.5 impacts human health," he said.

The report making more recommendations said that there should be interim milestones, targets for half-yearly and annual progress tracking so that we don't just take stock of the progress in 2024 and will not be in a position to do anything if air pollution levels are not falling as required. "To achieve the air quality goals, much stronger sectoral policies and targets will be needed on national and state level. Pollution across the country originates from the same key sectors - industry and power plants, household fuels, waste burning, crop burning and transport - with variance in proportions. Furthermore, much of the pollution levels in the identified non-attainment cities originates from outside the city limits. The obvious question which arises is that what is the use of conducting 102 source apportionment studies for non-attainment cities if there are no sectoral targets and policies for emission reductions," said Chanchal.

He said that the government must prioritise transparency, accountability and stringency in actions proposed under NCAP while strengthening it over the next few months. "Inclusion of legal provisions and sectoral targets is key to implementation and effectiveness of air pollution reduction plans. NCAP should be treated as a dynamic document that can be improved into a stronger instrument to achieve the dream of blue skies and clean air across India," he added. The report further points out that public participation is critical in the fight against air pollution.

# Girl reveals identity of attacker, hunt on

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A day after the murderous assault on a girl at her flat in Chinhat, police succeeded in identifying the accused after she regained consciousness and scribbled his name on a piece of paper, when asked by the police.

Giving the information, Chinhat SHO Sachin Kumar Singh said the accused was identified as Nandlal of Maharajganj, to which the victim also belongs. Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused was a frequent visitor to the girl's house and was in contact with her for a long time. Some time back, relations between them soured, after which the victim snapped ties with him. "Despite all this, the accused still used to visit her flat and she had rebuked him for this a couple of days back. She also asked the accused not to show her his face again," police sources said.

They said the accused was attracted towards the girl and was trying to

force her into submission. The SHO said victim's elder sister, who was out of city on the day of incident, came back and gave us more details about the accused and the incident. He added that the victim was not in a state to speak as of now and doctors also advised us not to speak to her as there were stitches around her throat.

"We are hunting for the accused but he is yet to be nabbed. A team raided his house on Monday night, but in vain. We have got some clues and hope to nab him anytime soon," he said. The SHO added that victim's elder sister was also staying in the same flat.

On Monday, the victim, who is preparing for competitive exams and also doing a part-time job in a private institute of the city, was found lying in a pool of blood at her flat in Chinhat on Monday morning. Neha, another girl who assists her in household chores, had informed the police about the incident and later lodged a case against the unidentified attacker.

SBC EXPORTS LIMITED				
CIN: U18100UP2019PLC043209				
Regd. Off.: House No.-20, Lohiya Talab, Choti Basahi P.O., Vindhyachal Mirzapur UP 231307 In				
Corp. Off.: 49/95 Site-IV Sahibabad Industrial Area Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh-201010				
Tel: 0120-2895246, Email: info@sbcexportslimited.com, Website: www.sbcexportslimited.com				
EXTRACT OF FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPT, 2019				
(Rs. in lacs except per share data)				
Sl. No.	Particulars	Half year ended	Half year ended	Year ended
		30/09/2019	30/09/2018	31/03/2019
1	Total income from operations	4979.84	3904.43	8041.48
2	Net Profit/(loss) for the period (before tax and exceptional items)	120.32	75.06	185.34
3	Net Profit/(loss) for the period before tax (after exceptional items)	120.32	75.06	185.34
4	Net Profit/(loss) for the period after tax	102.54	75.06	133.50
5	Total Comprehensive income for the period [comprising profit/(loss) for the period (after tax) and Other comprehensive income (after tax)]	102.54	75.06	133.50
6	Equity Share Capital (Paid Up)	1058.20	760.00	760.00
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of previous year)	980.46	595.14	520.08
8	Earnings Per Share (of Rs. 10/- each) (for continued and discontinued operations)			
	a) Basic :	1.13	24.62	3.44
	b) Diluted:	1.13	24.62	3.44

Note :  
1 The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Financial results filed with Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and other disclosure Requirements) Regulations 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Financial results are available on the Company's website and on the stock exchange website i.e. www.bseindia.com.

For SBC Exports Limited  
Sd/-  
Dheerendra Kumar Gupta  
(Managing Director)  
DIN- 03321016

Place: Sahibabad  
Date : 20th January, 2020



School students at 'Know Your Army Mela' at Race Course ground in Lucknow on Tuesday

# KNOW YOUR ARMY MELA

Lucknow (PNS): As part of Army Day celebrations, the two-day 'Know Your Army Mela' kicked off at Lucknow Race Course ground on Tuesday. The spectacular band and equipment display was followed by cultural events like 'Khukhri' and 'Gatka' dance, witnessed by school children and general public of Lucknow and adjoining areas. There were stalls put up by NCC Directorate, Recruiting Directorate and Medical Authorities. Food stalls were also put up to cater for snacks and refreshments for general public. The theme, 'Know Our Forces', was aimed at motivating youths of the country, deepening the sense of patriotism in the masses and increasing awareness about the Armed Forces.

**पावरग्रिड POWERGRID**

1. Approval under regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations'1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations'2019 for (i) Truing up of Transmission tariff for 2014-19 tariff block and (ii) Determination of Transmission tariff for 2019-24 tariff block for **Petition 1:** Asset-I: Singrauli Transmission System in Northern Region, **Petition 2:** Combined Asset-I: Northern Region System Strengthening Scheme- VIII' in Northern Region, **Petition 3:** Asset-I: Transmission system associated with URI Hydroelectric project (4\*120 MW) in Northern Region, **Petition 4:** Asset-I: Transmission system associated with Bairasuli in Northern Region,

2. The beneficiaries of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (1)Rajasthan Rajya Vidut Prasaran Nigam Limited, (2)Ajmer Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd, (3)Jaipur Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd, (4)Jodhpur Vidut Vitran Nigam Ltd, (5)Punjab State Electricity Board, (6)Haryana Power Purchase Centre, (7)Power Development Deptt, Govt. of Jammu&Kashmir, (8)Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd, (9)Delhi Transco Ltd, (10) BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, (11) BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd, (12) North Delhi Power Ltd, (13)Chandigarh Administration, (14)Uttaranchal Power Corporation Ltd, (15) North Central Railway, (16) New Delhi Municipal Council, (17)Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board.

3. Tariff details:

a) 2014-19 block Rs in Lakh

Petition No.	Asset no.	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Petition-1	Asset-I	5936.06	5202.10	5339.69	5475.92	5733.28
Petition-2	Asset-I	3,628.32	3,576.90	3,521.03	3,466.65	3,416.23
Petition-3	Asset-I	2897.90	2923.41	2939.98	2958.09	2981.78
Petition-4	Asset-I	195.18	199.44	191.91	196.08	200.75

b) 2019-24 Block Rs in Lakh

Petition No.	Asset no.	DOCO Effective	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Petition-1	Asset-I	1982-1986	5274.77	4332.19	4583.22	4842.44	5029.75
Petition-2	Asset-I	01.11.2009	3,189.28	3,212.84	2,635.27	2,631.65	2,627.43
Petition-3	Asset-I	01.04.1997	2849.76	2922.41	3004.10	3073.76	3091.32
Petition-4	Asset-I	18.05.1980	121.23	132.39	155.77	178.25	183.53

4. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at [www.powergridindia.com](http://www.powergridindia.com).

5. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application to be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3 & 4th floor, Chandrakul Building, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Sd/-  
A K Verma  
Dy. General Manager (Commercial)

**POWER GRID CORPORATION INDIA LIMITED**  
(A Government of India Enterprise)  
Corp. Office: Saudamini, Plot No.2, Sector-29, Gurgaon-122 001 (Haryana) Tel.: 0124-2571700-719  
Reg. Office: B-9, Qutab Institutional Area, Kalkaji Sara, New Delhi-110 016 Tel.: 011-26560112, 26560121  
[www.powergridindia.com](http://www.powergridindia.com) CIN : L40101DL1989QO3038121

**A Maharatna PSU**

# Gangrape victim attempts to immolate self, rescued

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Having failed to get justice, a victim of gangrape attempted to immolate herself at La Martiniere College crossing (close to the lane leading to Chief Minister's residence) in Gautampalli police station area on Tuesday afternoon. However, she was overpowered by cops present there and later taken to police station for quizzing. Senior officers were left red-faced after the incident came to light. According to the Gautampalli SHO, the woman reached La Martiniere College crossing and got herself drenched in kerosene.

"However, before she could set herself on fire, she was overpowered," he said, refuting reports that the woman managed to reach the CM residence. The SHO said the woman accused one Qamar Taskin of Saharanpur and two others of gangraping her. "She had a love marriage with Qamar in August 2018. Later, Qamar and two of his friends, one of whom she identified as Rehan of Saharanpur, raped her by holding her hostage at a house in Saharanpur. The Saharanpur police had registered a case of gangrape at Deoband police station and arrested Qamar," the SHO said. The woman alleged that the

police sat on the case after arresting Qamar and did not initiate any action against his aides. "I kept doing rounds of the offices of senior police officials and also sent several letters to senior officials in the government but failed to get justice," she said. She said she travelled to Lucknow from Saharanpur to immolate herself as she did not want to live longer.

# MYSTERY SHROUDS DEATH OF RETIRED RAILWAY EMPLOYEE

A retired railway employee died under mysterious circumstances in Alambagh on Monday evening. Police came to know about the incident when the staff of hospital, where he was declared brought dead, sent a memo to them on Tuesday. According to police spokesman, Sooraj Pal (65) of Rudauli in Ayodhya owned a house in Garhi Kanaura locality in Alambagh and had rented it out. On Monday, Pal reached the house to collect rent and fell down when he was climbing down the stairs. "He was rushed to Rani Laxmi Bai Hospital in Rajajipuram where he was declared brought dead," the police spokesman said. According to Alambagh SHO AK Sahi, residents of the locality and tenants said it was a mishap.

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# Trader shot at; cash, scooty looted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

In an open challenge to Lucknow police, three bike-borne unidentified persons shot at a trader and looted cash and scooty from him in Banthra late on Tuesday night. While initial reports said the miscreants looted Rs 60,000, police said they were collecting details. Lalit Narayan Shukla runs a grocery shop in the market area near Banthra police station. He was returning home when attacked. According to the victim, he was intercepted by bike-borne miscreants when he entered a lane behind Banthra police station. They shouted at him, asking him to stop. Shukla

tried to speed off but the miscreants hit his scooty from behind, causing him to fall down into a pit alongside the road. One of the miscreants got down from the bike and jacked up the scooty while the other looked on. As they started fleeing the scene with his scooty, Shukla cried for help and ran behind them. At this, the pillion-rider opened fire at Shukla hitting him in his leg. Shukla said he had Rs 60,000 and two mobile phones in the scooty boot. The police said Shukla sought help of some commuters who rushed him to a hospital. The police said Shukla was out of danger as his condition improved at the hospital.

# Sonia, Priyanka to visit Rae Bareli today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her daughter and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will be visiting Rae Bareli on Wednesday. Both the Congress leaders will address the training camp of district/city presidents of UP Congress at Bhue Mau guest house. They will also visit the residence of former party MLA Ajay Pal Singh to express condolence on the sudden demise of his son. Congress sources said on Tuesday that Sonia and Priyanka could have an overnight stay in Rae Bareli on Wednesday.

# Traffic snarls trouble commuters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Traffic snarls made life difficult for commuters near Ram Katha grounds where a 'Jan Sabha' was addressed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in support of the CAA on Tuesday. The major problem was faced by those living in colonies close to the rally venue and those going to places near the site. A commuter going towards the Telibagh area said the road leading to the Rae Bareli from Telibagh was chock-a-block with the vehicles. "I had to attend an important meeting but I got stuck in traffic snarls," he said. Officials said the problem was caused due to the volume of people moving towards the venue. "People walking towards the rally site spilled on to the service lanes, causing



Vehicles stuck in traffic jam at Shaheed Path on Tuesday

Pioneer

traffic jams. However, because of diversions, we were able to regulate the traffic," they said. They said people did not

park their cars in the designated areas. "There were places clear marked for the parking of vehicles and there was sufficient

space in the Eco Garden, yet many did not park their vehicles there," the traffic officials said.

# Select best sources, write better: LU VC to PhD scholars

Lucknow (PNS): Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University Alok Kumar Rai addressed a gathering of over 500 PhD scholars at Malviya Hall on Tuesday. Rai interacted with the students, took cognisance of their issues and spoke about his plans to make all processes associated with obtaining a PhD structured and streamlined.

Stressing the need to join hands for a brighter future of the Lucknow University, the Vice-Chancellor asked the scholars to equip themselves with better knowledge of the newest research tools, understanding of how to select the best sources and write better in order to get published in competitive and recognised journals. He insisted that a good research is one that publishes better.

In order to help students achieve their potential, the Vice-Chancellor said he plans to introduce a structured framework with proper IT networking for the best results and streamlined operation of the whole PhD process.

"This includes the proposal to cut down on all paper wastage and send e-thesis (PDF versions of a thesis) to examiners instead of hard-bound copies, procuring consent of examiners and experts via telephone or electronically, selection of experts from NIRF-ranked institutions only, limiting the amount of time for submission of evaluation reports by external peer reviewers as well as between submission and award of PhD, and even conducting vivas through Skype. He also spoke of a separate PhD cell that would look into any and all admission and submission related issues, a separate area in the central library dedicated to PhD scholars and researchers and the proposal to have a plagiarism checking facility in the library.

After his address, Rai invited questions from the students and assured them timely resolution of their problems.

# One drowns, 3 missing as boat capsizes

Lucknow (PNS): One person drowned while three others went missing after a boat carrying over 20 people capsized in Saryu river in Gonda on Tuesday. A government spokesman said on Tuesday that taking note of the tragedy, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed the DM and SP to visit the spot and take help of National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force to trace the missing persons. The CM also directed officials to provide all possible help to the victims.

On Tuesday morning, a boat with 24 people on board was on its way from Kaifighat in Ayodhya to Dohadan Purva in Gonda. As it neared Aili Parsoli village, the boat overturned after hitting a pontoon bridge and later capsized. While some of the passengers swam to the bank of the river, others were rescued by locals. However, a man drowned and three others were missing. The police said the body of school teacher Sandip Gupta (40) was fished out from the river and efforts were on to trace three others.

## CITY BRIEFS

### NABARD SANCTIONS ₹457.96 CR FOR UP PROJECTS

NABARD has sanctioned a sum of Rs 457.96 crore as support out of Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) for Uttar Pradesh for five flood protection projects, 17 road and 26 bridge projects. The five flood protection projects involving the total financial outlay of Rs 143.76 crore and RIDF support of Rs 101.09 crore have been sanctioned for three districts — Bahraich, Shravasti and Gonda. Officials said that the implementation of these projects will benefit a population of 27.56 lakh with an area of 39,928 hectares in 187 villages in these districts. They said that similarly, in order to increase the rural connectivity, 17 road projects have been sanctioned by NABARD with a total outlay of Rs 295.53 crore and RIDF support of Rs 218.88 crore. Implementation of these projects will benefit a population of 12.66 lakh in 289 villages in 13 districts of the state. "Further, 60 bridge projects have been sanctioned with a total outlay of Rs 184.68 crore and RIDF support of Rs 137.98 crore. A population of 17.50



The CMS team selected for award

lakh in 728 villages in 30 districts, including Jalaun and Lalitpur in Bundelkhand region, will benefit from these road projects with better road facilities and reduction of distances by 280 kms," a senior official said. He said that so far, NABARD has sanctioned Rs 508.78 crore under RIDF in the state during the financial year 2019-20. NABARD has released Rs 804 crore to UP during the current year against the ongoing projects sanctioned under RIDF earlier. Besides, NABARD has also released Rs 1436.50 crore to the state during the year under Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF) towards Saryu Nahar and Arjun Sahayak projects.

### CMS TEAM SELECTED FOR AWARD

A five-member team of City Montessori School (Kanpur Road Campus) students has been selected for the prestigious Wipro Earthian Award for excellent work on the sustainability aspects in their school and in surrounding areas. These students conducted research work under the guidance of their teacher Shikha Tripathi on sustainability and spread awareness in people for water conservation, biodiversity and waste management and motivated them to practise, recycle, reuse and reduce pollution. The winning team of CMS comprises Bhuvhi Bhatnagar, Advik

Tripathi, Kashvi Paul, Hansika Gautam and Aarna Bajpai. They will be felicitated at a glittering ceremony to be held in Bengaluru on February 8. CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi expressed happiness and pride at this accomplishment of students and congratulated them. He said credit for this feat goes to principal Vineeta Kamran and her teachers whose tireless efforts made the achievement possible. Gandhi said that during the 60 years of establishment of CMS, new milestones have been added every year creating a sense of pride, not only for the people of Lucknow but for UP and nation at large at national and international level.

# LDA VC takes stock of upcoming residential colonies' progress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Vice-Chairman of Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) SK Dwivedi on Tuesday inspected upcoming residential colonies across the city to know about their progress and what is required to provide quality shelters to buyers. He also directed the incharges to ensure that projects are completed without any compromise with quality.

Besides, he also inquired about the basic amenities to be provided to residents. The VC stressed on the need for complete change-over from conventional power to solar energy in the upcoming housing schemes or other projects.

He reminded engineers and staffers to work with team spirit with devotion and try their best to build quality shelters so that the state capital may attain smart city status.

The VC also expressed concern over the potable water problem in LDA's residential

colonies. He said efforts should be made to design water recycling plants in upcoming as well as existing colonies so that residents do not face crisis, especially in summers as it would help in reducing the dependency on government and other agencies.

He pulled up engineers and others engaged in construction of three mini-STPs on Sultanpur Road as the progress has been slow and the project is unlikely to be completed in time. The VC was not satisfied with the work regarding the laying of road in Gomti Nagar Extension. He also asked engineers about which technology is being used in road construction. The VC advised them to use environment-friendly technology to reduce pollution.

The LDA VC, along with chief engineers and a dozen officials, inspected Transport Nagar, Gomti Nagar Extension, Rajni Khand, Vrindavan and Sultanpur Road housing schemes.

# Man kills wife infatuated with Facebook

## Ahmed strangled Naina 'for staying busy with phone'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

Irrked over his wife's excessive use of Facebook, a 26-year-old man strangled his wife to

death and threw her body at an isolated place near Jaipur-Delhi National Highway. Police said the woman, identified as Naina Manglani (22), alias Reshma, had over 6,000 followers on her Facebook page and was very active. This did not go down well with her husband who resented the way she was constantly hooked on Facebook and ignoring the family.

The accused identified as Ayaz Ahmed Ansari, a resident of Kho Nagaurian area, who works in a finance company, was arrested for the murder by the Jaipur Police on Monday.

Ansari reportedly told police that Naina would stay busy with her phone all the time and he was suspicious that she might be having an extra-marital affair. The excessive use of FB by her led to marital discord and frequent quarrels. Their relationship had reached the breaking point as they had started living separately, said a police official privy to the probe, adding that Naina had even threatened Ayaz that she would seek divorce from him.

A senior police official said deeply upset, Ayaz hatched a plan to kill her



and asked Naina to come to Ramghar Mod on Sunday and convinced her that he wanted to sort out differences with her. Naina believed his words and



went to meet him at the designated place. "He made her consume beer and after that they went to Amer hills on a scooty. There he strangled her to death and

smashed her face and head with a stone. After committing the crime, Ayaz went to his uncle's house. The body of Naina was recovered on Monday and police arrested Ayaz within a few hours," said a senior police official.

"Naina and Ayaz had met two years ago and their friendship blossomed and it soon turned into an affair. Since both were from different religions, they solemnised their marriage twice as per Hindu and Muslim rituals. Their family members didn't give their consent to their relationship. They had eloped from their homes and tied the nuptial knot in Ghaziabad in October, 2017," said the police official, adding that the couple had a three-month-old son.

## FROM PAGE 1

### 8 TOURISTS FROM KERALA ...

is believed that leak of carbon monoxide from the heater led to the death of the eight members of the two families.

The group of 15 from two Kerala families were on their way back home and stayed at Everest Panorama Resort in Daman in Makawanpur district on Monday night.

According to the manager of the resort, the guests stayed in a room and turned on a gas heater to keep themselves warm. Although they had booked a total of four rooms, eight of them stayed in a room and remaining others in another room, the manager said, adding that all the windows and the door of the room were bolted from inside.

Praveen and Ranjit, both IT professionals, were engineering college classmates and the tour was arranged after a get-together with old friends in Delhi, a family member said. Praveen hails from Thiruvananthapuram, was an engineer in Dubai, while his wife, Saranya, was staying at Kochi along with 3 children and is a nursing student.

Ranjit from Kozhikode was working in an IT firm at Thiruvananthapuram, while his wife, Indu, was an accountant in a cooperative bank at Kozhikode, a family member said. Ranjit's elder son Madhav had a lucky escape as he was sleeping in another room.

"Deeply distressed by the tragic news of the passing away of eight

Indian tourists in Nepal," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar tweeted. He said the Indian embassy officials are stationed at the hospital and are providing necessary assistance. The Indian mission has assured all necessary assistance to the family members of the victims.

In Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan condoled the death of Malayali tourists in Nepal. On the directions of the Chief Minister, officials have taken steps to expedite procedures for the repatriation of the mortal remains of the victims, his office said.

Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said the Indian Embassy officials were taking steps to bring the bodies back to India as early as possible. Nepal witnesses cold wave condition between December and January-end. Daman, which sits at an altitude of nearly 2,500 metres above the sea level, is a famous hill station situated 70-km south of Kathmandu, where tourists visit for magnificent mountain view.

### E-TICKET RACKET LINKED TO ...

"The first aim of these organised rackets is to generate cash. Once that money is amassed, then they turn towards terror financing. All the information gathered from them has indicated a link to terror financing and money laundering," he said.

Describing the operation, the DG said Ashraf is suspected to have a technical team to maintain the cloud-hosted servers. He has 18-20 lead sellers or super admins in India

who handle the money and send to Hamid through various hawala accounts and crypto currency, Kumar said.

Then there are around 200-300 panel sellers who buy the software panel from lead developers and forward it to agents.

"One panel is a set of 20 IDs bought with Rs 28,000 per month. They forward the IDs and software to agents. Roughly 20,000 agents are there in India who use the illegal software for booking. About Rs 10-15 crore black money is generated per month in cash through this," he said.

The investigators are now trying to apprehend another person of interest who is called "Guruji" by the organisation who appears to be involved in the finance management of the gang. "He is higher up the pecking order of the gang and a technical expert. He will be picked up soon. He uses Yugoslavian number and VPN (virtual private network). He received around Rs 13 lakh from Mustafa recently through bank transfers involving 71 transactions," the RPF DG said.

Kumar said the illegal software, ANMS, bypasses IRCTC's login captcha, booking captcha and bank OTP to generate tickets.

For a genuine user, the booking process usually takes around 2.55 minutes, but for the software it takes around 1.48 minutes, thereby booking tickets much faster.

It also enables simultaneous login through several user IDs with pre-filled data, thus managing to corner most of the confirmed tickets.

# In queue behind 44 independents, Kejriwal files papers after 6 hrs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal filed his nomination from the New Delhi constituency on Tuesday after waiting for over six hours. AAP spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj said Kejriwal filed his nomination around 6.30 pm on Tuesday.

On the last day of filing nominations, Kejriwal was seen waiting and holding token number 45. "Waiting to file my nomination. My token no is 45. There are many people here to file nomination papers. Am so glad so many people participating in democracy," Kejriwal said.

Earlier, alleging a conspiracy, AAP senior leader Manish Sisodia accused the BJP of propping up 44 independent candidates ahead of Kejriwal to deny him nomination.

Sisodia said no matter how much the BJP conspires they will not be able to stop Kejriwal from filing his nomination. "The BJP, no matter how much you conspire, you will not be able to

stop Kejriwal from filing his nomination or from becoming the Chief Minister for the third time. Your conspiracies will not yield any result," he said.

Tagging tweets of Bhardwaj, who alleged 35 candidates were sitting at the office along with the CM without proper nomination papers or even 10 proposers.

"They (candidates) are insisting unless their papers are complete and they file their nominations, they won't allow the CM to file his nomination papers," he said.

"Doesn't matter. Many of them are filing for the first time. They are bound to make mistakes. We also made mistakes the first time. We should hand hold them. I am enjoying waiting with them. They are all part of my family," Kejriwal said in a tweet.

Delhi goes to polls on February 8 and counting will take place on February 11. The BJP has fielded Sunil Yadav against Kejriwal, while the Congress has fielded Romesh Sabharwal.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER  
RURAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT, PMGSY-GONDA  
ADDRESS ROOM NO. 118, VIKAS BHAWAN, GONDA**

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER (VERY SHORT TERM)  
IIIRD CALL**

L.N. 224 /RED/PMGSY/Tender/Maintenance/2019-20 Date : 15.01.20

The Executive Engineer, Rural Engineering Department, PIU- Gonda on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the Percentage rate bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana for each of the following works from the eligible and approved contractors registered with UP PWD/UP RED, in appropriate class (A, B, C or D as per limit) or equivalent category in CPWD/ MES/ P&T/Railways and other State Govt. and Central Govt. Departments. Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

Sl. No.	District	Package no.	Name of the Work	Total Cost (Rs. Lakh) excluding GST	Period of Completion	Cost Of Bid Document including all taxes	Bid Security (Rs. Lakh)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Gonda	UP3065M	Maintenance of CBN road to Amdahi Bandha Ch 0.00 to 6.00 km.	28.85	01 Month	Rs. 3500/-	Rs. 0.58

2. Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 22.01.2020  
3. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website www.pmgsytendersup.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA)  
4. Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering: 28.01.2020 up-to 12.00 Noon  
5. Date/ Time for opening of bids through e-tendering: 28.01.2020 at 01.00 PM  
For further details please log on to <http://pmgsytendersup.gov.in>  
U.P.: 147888, Date : 18.01.2020

Executive Engineer,  
Rural Engineering Department,  
PIU-Gonda

विज्ञापन वेबसाइट [www.up.gov.nic.in](http://www.up.gov.nic.in) पर उपलब्ध है।

**Notice Inviting e-Tender**

No.SSA/TT/Teacher ID Card/314/2019/314 Date: 21.01.2020

Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam (Samagra Shiksha) invites tender through e-Tendering process from experience organization in the field of manufacturing of PVC Identity Cards of Smart Cards for supply of Identity Cards.

To participate in this tender process through e-procurement document, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of class-11 (minimum) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions, from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque drawn in favour of Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhijan Mission, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam, from any nationalized/scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

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

# ₹45,000-cr submarine project goes to MDL, L&T

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, on Tuesday, approved private sector Larsen and Toubro and public sector Mazagon Docks Limited (MDL) for the Navy's project to manufacture six conventional submarines worth over ₹45,000 crores within the country.

Approved last year, the project known as P-75 I will be under the Strategic Partnership model with the Indian partners tying up with a foreign manufacturer. The DAC also approved the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) who are in the race for the project. They include Rosoboron Export (Russia), Daewoo (South Korea), Navantia (Spain), Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (Germany) and French Naval Group, sources said. The Larsen and Toubro and MDL will forge the strategic partnership with one of the selected OEMs after due tender process, they added.

The first DAC meeting of this year and after the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) also cleared proposals



worth over ₹5,100 crores from local industry to promote indigenisation. General Bipin Rawat, the first CDS, attended the meeting along with other top functionaries of the defence ministry. As regards the submarine project, sources said the DAC approved short-listing of the Larsen and Toubro and MDL as the Indian strategic partners (SP) and the potential Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) that would collaborate with SPs to construct six conventional submarines in India. The MDL is already constructing Scorpene submarines in collaboration with the French. The DAC nod to the short

listing came days after the Congress last week claimed the NDA Government of 'favouring' the Adani group in the submarine project alleging it was promoting its "crony capitalists".

Addressing a Press conference, Congress communication chief Randeep Surjewala and party spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill had charged the Government of violating the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) of 2016 as well as overruling the recommendations of the 'Empowered Committee' of the Indian Navy that had been set up for the project.

The Congress claimed that two key parameters set by the DPP were that the shortlisted company to manufacture the six submarines in the deal should be of Credit 'A' rating and the Ministry of Defence should approve the 'Special Purpose Vehicle' (SPV) set up for the project before applying for "request for expression of interest".

The Empowered Committee of the Navy, claimed the Congress, shortlisted the public sector unit, Mazagon Docks Shipbuilders Limited, and Larsen and Toubro from the private sector.

The main Opposition party alleged that the Government is all set to violate the Committee's recommendations by allowing the private entity which neither has any experience in submarine manufacturing nor the required credit rating.

Strategic partner is expected to play a transformational role in building an eco-system in the country, comprising development entities, specialised vendors and suppliers; especially those from the medium and small scale sector.

The new model also aims at promoting India as a manufacturing hub for defence equip-

ment, in addition to establishing an industrial and research and development eco-system capable of meeting the future requirements of the armed forces besides giving boost to exports.

Meanwhile, the ₹5,100 crore proposals approved include sophisticated Electronic Warfare Systems for the Army designed by Defence Research and

Development Organisation (DRDO) and manufactured locally by the Indian industry. These systems will be used in deserts and plains and will provide comprehensive Electronic Support and Counter Measure capabilities to the field formations in both communication and other aspects of Electronic Warfare.

The DAC also approved prototype testing of trawl assemblies designed by the DRDO for T-72 and T-90 tanks providing an important indigenous demining capability to the Army. The DAC also accorded approval for inclusion of Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) in Defence Procurement Procedure.

## INSHORT

### SC TO HEAR OVER 140 PLEAS ON CAA TODAY

New Delhi: The Supreme Court will on Wednesday hear over 140 petitions challenging or supporting the CAA. A Bench of CJI SA Bobde, Justice S Abdul Nazeer and Justice Sanjiv Khanna will hear the pleas as also the Centre's request seeking transfer of petitions pending before HC relating to the issue, to SC.

### JITENDRA SINGH PITCHES FOR INDUSTRY'S ROLE

New Delhi: Union Minister of State for Atomic Energy and Space, Jitendra Singh on Tuesday pitched for the industry's role in the space technology to address the issues related to lack of resources. He was addressing the gathering at India's first global Mega Science Exhibition "Vigyan Samagam" at National Science Centre here.

### MHA SANCTIONS 2,000 POSTS IN CISF

New Delhi: The Union Home Ministry has approved creation of 2,000 posts, from constables to the inspector level, in the CISF to augment its strength to effectively guard vital installations, including airports, atomic installations, metro networks. The CISF guards about 60 civil airports in the country and has an elite VIP security wing under its command called the Special Security Group (SSG).

### SC SEEKS TN REPLY ON MERCY PLEA IN RAJIV CASE

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Tamil Nadu Government to inform whether a decision has been taken by it on a mercy petition of a convict, 46-year-old A G Peraravanan in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

### BRAZILIAN PREZ TO BEGIN 4-DAY INDIA VISIT

New Delhi: Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro will on Friday begin a four-day visit to India, primarily as chief guest on Republic Day and also to explore ways to boost trade ties at a time both the large economies are hit by slowdowns. On his first visit to India after assuming power, Bolsonaro will be accompanied by seven ministers, top officials and a large business delegation.

### MEPSC CONFERRED WITH TWO SKOCH AWARDS

New Delhi: Management & Entrepreneurship and Professional Skills Council (MEPSC) has been conferred with two Skoch Awards - First is Skoch Order of Merit and Skoch Silver Award under Innovation in Skilling Category.

### VARUN, SHRADDHA VISIT AMITY UNIVERSITY

New Delhi: Bollywood actors Varun Dhawan and Shraddha Kapoor on Tuesday visited Amity University for the curtain raiser of Amity Youth Fest - a knowledge and entertainment extravaganza. The duo was also seen promoting their upcoming movie "Street Dancer 3D" along with other cast members of the film. The star cast was welcomed by Pooja Chauhan, Chairperson, Amity School of Film and Drama.

### DIPPING EMPLOYMENT: YECHURY SLAMS GOVT

New Delhi: Slamming the Government over dipping employment rates, CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury on Tuesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should conduct a "Naukri Par Charcha" to listen to the "mann ki baat" of millions of jobless.

## CBI books Frost International, its directors in ₹3,592-cr fraud case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI carried out searches at 13 locations on Tuesday including the premises of the present and former directors of Mumbai-based private firm Frost International which has been booked by the agency for allegedly cheating a consortium of 14 banks to the tune of Rs 3,592.48 crore minus interests accrued on the defaulted amount.

The FIR comes following a complaint from the Kanpur Zonal office of Bank of India, which alleged that the directors had worked under the guise of undertaking merchanting trade without genuine business.

This is understood to be the biggest default reported by public sector banks to the CBI after January 2018, when disgraced diamond traders Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi fled the nation causing a loss of over Rs 13,000 crore to the Punjab National Bank.

The Bank of India in its complaint, which is now part of the CBI FIR, stated that Frost

International's account had started showing signs of stress from January, 2018 and later became a non-performing asset.

The probe agency carried out searches at 13 locations including the premises of the company, its directors Uday Desai and Sujay Desai and other former and present directors and

## CBI books former DGFT officer, others in ₹20 crore duty fraud

New Delhi: The CBI has booked a former Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Joint Director along with directors of an Ahmedabad-based private company in a case of corruption and cheating the exchequer of over ₹20.26 crore through fraudulent claim of terminal excise duty in 2014-15.

According to the FIR registered on January 18, action has been taken against A K Singh, the former DGFT Joint Director, Ahmedabad and Mohit Kumar Goel, Ankur Aggarwal and Nand Kishore

Aggarwal -- all directors of Ahmedabad-based Crystal Crop Protection Pvt. Ltd.

As per the requirements of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the CBI had sought sanction from the Commerce Ministry before proceeding against the officer. The sanction was granted by the Ministry on July 15, 2019.

Besides slapping the Prevention of Corruption Act, the agency has also charged them under the Indian Penal Code Sections relating to cheating and criminal conspiracy.

## Human activity puts small predators' life at risk: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Every time, a natural habitat is converted into a land for agricultural or residential purposes, it is the small predators, especially small invertebrates like spiders and ladybirds, which lose their homes as well as lives, as per a first of its kind global study on the impacts of human land-use on different groups of animals.

The findings published in the journal, Functional Ecology, also found that small ectotherms--cold blooded animals such as invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians, large endotherms like mammals and birds and fungivores ie animals that eat fungi were also disproportionately affected.

But, the loss of large herbivores will also likely to have important effects on ecosystem functioning, for example increasing the risk of rodent borne human disease, warn the researchers who had analysed over one million records of animal abundance at sites ranging from primary forest to intensively managed farmland and cities.

The data represented over 25,000 species across 80 countries. Species were grouped by size, whether they were warm or cold blooded and by what they eat. Species ranged from the oribatid mite weighing only 2x10-6g, to an African elephant weighing 3,825kg.

"Normally, when we think of predators, we think of big animals like lions or tigers. These large predators did not decline as much as we expected with habitat loss, which we think may be because they have already declined because of human actions in the past (such as hunting). We find

small predators - such as spiders and ladybirds - to show the biggest declines," said Dr Tim Newbold from University College London and lead author of the research.

The results indicate that the world's ecosystems are being restructured with disproportionate losses at the highest trophic levels (top of the food chain).

"We know that different types of animals play important roles within the environment - for example, predators control populations of other animals. If some types of animals decline a lot when we lose natural habitats, then they will no longer fulfil these important roles," said Dr Tim Newbold.

The conversion of land to human use is associated with the removal of large amounts of natural plant biomass, usually to give space for livestock and crops. As you go up the trophic levels (food chain), resource limitations are compounded through a process known as bottom-up resource

limitation, said the study which is part of the PREDICTS project exploring how biodiversity responds to human pressures.

The researchers analysed 1,184,543 records of animal abundance in the PREDICTS database, gathered from 460 published scientific studies. This database included all major terrestrial vertebrate taxa and many invertebrate taxa (25,166 species, 1.8% of described animals).

Species were sorted into functional groups defined by their size, trophic level (what they consumed) and thermal regulation strategy (warm or cold blooded). The type of land-use at each of the 13,676 sample sites was classified from the description of the habitat in the source publication.

The six broad categories were primary vegetation, secondary vegetation, plantation forest, cropland, pasture and urban. Three levels of human use intensity were also recorded: minimal, light and intense.



The Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Panama, Arturo Luis Fabrega Alvarez, presents his credentials to President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Tuesday

## Congress sets up 11-member coordination committee in Punjab, Asha made chairperson

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi set up an 11-member committee for ensuring better coordination between the party and the government in Punjab, with AICC in-charge for Punjab Asha Kumari as its chairperson.

The moves come after she dissolved the Office Bearers and Executive Committee of Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) and District Congress Committees (DCCs) of Punjab with immediate effect. Its State unit president, however, remained unchanged.

The coordination committee will have Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and PCC president Sunil Jakhar as its members, besides AICC general secretary Ambika Soni. It will also have Punjab ministers Charanjit Singh Channi, Sunder Sham Arora, Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, Vijay Inder Singla, besides PCC general secretary Sandeep Singh Sandhu and AICC secretaries Kuljit Nagra and Gurkirat Kotli as its members.

The committee was announced after Sonia cleared the names following deliberations with Amarinder Singh and senior party leaders on Monday. It comes a day after the party announced similar committees for Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry which are all under Congress rule.



Union Minister for Law & Justice, Communications and Electronics & Information Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad lights the lamp at the inauguration of the 'NIC Tech Conclave 2020' with the theme - Technologies for NextGen Governance, in New Delhi on Tuesday

## Modi, Nepal's Oli unveil border check-post



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli jointly inaugurate the integrated check post, at Jogbani-Biratnagar through video conference, in New Delhi on Tuesday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Reiterating, India's historic ties with Nepal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said New Delhi is committed to simplifying traffic with all friendly countries in the neighbourhood and to further facilitate contacts in areas like business.

He said this after jointly inaugurating with his Nepalese counterpart K P Sharma Oli the second integrated check post at Jogbani-Biratnagar along the border.

Built with Indian assistance, the integrated check post is spread over 260 acres and is capable of handling 500

trucks on a daily basis. The Rs 140 crore project will improve trade and people-to-people contact.

The project was launched jointly by the two leaders via a video link. The first ICP was built in Raxaul-Birgunj in 2018.

After inaugurating the ICP, Modi said India is committed to simplifying and smoothening traffic with all friendly countries in the neighbourhood, and to "further facilitate contacts between us in areas such as business, culture and education".

He also said India and Nepal are working on several cross-border connectivity projects such as road, rail and transmission lines.

"Integrated check posts at major places of border between our countries are greatly facilitating mutual trade and movement," he said.

At the event, both prime ministers also witnessed the progress in Indian-assisted post-2015 earthquake housing reconstruction projects in Nepal.

Out of India's commitment to build 50,000 houses in Gorkha and Nuwakot districts, 45,000 have already been completed.

"The 2015 earthquake was a painful accident. Natural calamities like earthquakes test man's tenacity and determination. Every Indian is proud that our Nepali brothers and sisters

faced the sad consequences of this tragedy with courage," Modi said.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that 45,000 out of 50,000 houses have been constructed under Indo-Nepal cooperation, he said.

"We hope that the construction of the remaining houses will also be completed soon. And these houses will soon be dedicated to Nepali brothers and sisters," the prime minister noted.

Addressing the event via video, Oli invited Modi to visit Nepal.

Prime Minister Modi said he looks forward to a visit to the neighbouring country this year.

## KERALITES DEATH AT NEPAL RESORT

# Will take all steps to bring back bodies, says Vijayan

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday said his Government will take all steps to ensure that the mortal remains of eight tourists from the State who died at a resort in Nepal are brought back at the earliest.

The bodies are expected to be brought to the State on Wednesday, a statement from the Chief Minister's Office said. Union Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said he has asked the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to make all arrangements to bring back the bodies.

The tourists, including four minors, died after they fell unconscious probably due to a gas leak from a heater in their room at a mountainous resort, police said. The Indian nationals were

airlifted to HAMS hospital in Kathmandu where they were pronounced dead on arrival, they said.

Vijayan expressed "deep grief" over the incident, the statement said. According to the chief minister's directions, officials of Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) have gotten in touch with the Indian Embassy in Nepal, it said.

The bodies are expected to be brought to the State on Wednesday after post-mortem, it added.

Makwanpur police said the victims, who were a part of a group of 15 tourists, might have fallen unconscious due to asphyxiation. Muraleedharan told PTI that he has asked the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to make all arrangements to bring back the bodies.

He said he has also deputed a doctor from the Indian Embassy to coordinate the medico-legal procedures.

A doctor from the Indian Embassy also went to the hospital where the bodies have been kept to examine the cause of the deaths, he added.

"We are in regular touch with the Indian embassy in Kathmandu", Muraleedharan, who is also a Rajya Sabha member from Kerala, said. Transport for the remaining tourists of the group is also being arranged, he said.

The victims were identified as Praveen Krishnan Nair, Saranya Sasi, Sreebhadr Praveen, Aarcha Praveen, Abhinav Saranya Nair, Ranjith Kumar Adatholath Punathil, Indu Lakshmi Peethambaran Ragalatha and Vyshnav Ranjith. **PTI**

## Pavan confronts Nitish on JD(U)-BJP alliance in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**A**head of the Delhi Assembly elections, senior Janata Dal(United) leader Pavan K Verma has confronted Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar over the party's alliance with the BJP in two seats—Burari and Sangam Vihar—for the February 8 election despite having expressed apprehensions 'in private' about the BJP-RSS leading the nation into a 'dangerous space'.

This is for the first time that the JD(U) headed by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is having a tie-up with the BJP outside Bihar. In a strongly worded two-page letter to Nitish, Verma said he is 'deeply perplexed' by the development amid the citizenship law protests and is looking to him for "ideological clarity".

Verma, who shared screenshots of the missive on his official twitter handle and Facebook profile, said he was 'perplexed' by the party's tie-up with the BJP for the Delhi Assembly polls, accusing the saffron party of having "embarked on a massive, socially divisive agenda." "On more



than one occasion, you have expressed your grave apprehensions about the BJP-RSS combine," Pavan Verma said in the letter on Tuesday.

The BJP had announced on Monday that it will spare two seats for the JD(U) in Delhi and one for another NDA partner—the LJP headed by Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Both the JD(U) and the LJP had ploughed the lonely furrow in the recent assembly polls in Jharkhand, where the saffron party lost power to the JMM-Congress-RJD alliance.

"If these are your real views, I fail to understand how the JD(U) is now extending its alliance with the BJP beyond Bihar, when even long standing

allies of the BJP, like the Akali Dal, have refused to do so," he wrote. "This is especially so at a time when the BJP, through the CAA-NPR-NRC combine, has embarked on a massive social divisive agenda aimed at mutilating the peace, harmony and stability of the country," Verma said.

"In my first meeting with you in Patna in August 2012, even before I had resigned from the IFS, you had spoken to me at length and with conviction on why Narendra Modi and his policies are inimical for the country," Verma, one of the most articulate spokespersons of a political party, said.

"When you were leading the Mahagathbandhan (a grand

alliance which also had the RJD and the Congress as partners), you had openly made a call for RSS-Mukt Bharat. These views, articulated for a sustained period, are a matter of public record," Verma wrote.

In comments that may embarrass Kumar, Verma claimed that the JD(U) leader, even after aligning with the BJP again in 2017, had confessed to him 'in private' how the current saffron party leadership had 'humiliated' him. "You mentioned on more than one occasion that the BJP was leading India into a dangerous space. It was your personal view, as conveyed to me, that the BJP is destroying institutions and that there is a need for democratic and socialist forces within the country to regroup, a task for which you actually assigned a senior party official," Verma added, without disclosing who the JD(U) leader was.

JD(U) national vice president Prashant Kishor also had come out strongly against the party's support to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill when it was tabled in Parliament last year.

## Students must use time judiciously, says Assam CM

**Guwahati:** Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday urged youths to realise their potential and commit themselves to the development of society.

Value-based services are of utmost importance in today's world and working for only individual success does not give much satisfaction, Sonowal said at the concluding ceremony of the three-day Chief Minister's Youth Conclave.

"Youths must strive to equip themselves with required skills, knowledge through education and hardwork to achieve excellence. Students should judiciously utilise time and not get distracted in pursuit of a successful life," he said.

The State Government is committed to making north-east the new engine of growth for the country and capture the market in Southeast Asian countries through the Act East Policy, he added. **PTI**

## Rajinikanth opens new political narrative in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

**R**ajinikanth, Tamil film's superstar, has put both the AIADMK and the DMK in a fix with his statement about EV Ramasamy Naicker, founder of the Dravida movement in Tamil Nadu.

While addressing the Golden Jubilee meeting of Tamil magazine Tuglaq launched by late Cho Ramaswamy, Rajinikanth who is certain to launch his political outfit anytime from now, had said that Naicker with his followers had taken out a procession in Salem in 1971 with nude pictures of Lord Rama and his consort Sita 'decorated' with footwear. The rallyists had raised derogatory slogans against the revered couple, Rajinikanth had said. "While all newspapers and mag-

azines had blacked out the incident, it was Tuglaq which carried the report in detail with the picture of the rallyists. The then Karunanidhi Government had tried its best to prevent the magazine copies from reaching the hands of the readers. But Cho printed additional copies and saw to it that the magazine copies reached its readers," Rajinikanth said in his reminiscences.

Rajinikanth's declaration from the venue of Tuglaq's function that it was the intelligentsia who read Tuglaq while DMK activists carry Murasoli (mouthpiece of the DMK) has upset the DMK leadership.

The DMK came out with a front page article stating that the readers of Murasoli were Dravida youths with self respect and courage. "Our readers are people who care about the

suppressed and depressed people in the society and they are not slaves to any ideology," the Murasoli stated in an indirect reply to Rajinikanth's declaration that those who read Tuglaq were intelligentsia while the readers of Murasoli were cadre of Dravisan party.

"Rajinikanth has succeeded in opening a new battlefield as well as political narrative in the State politics," said Kolahala Srenivaas, political commentator.

Nehrudoss, a DK leader, has approached Coimbatore Police with a plea to file a complaint against the actor for spreading hatred against people. Nehrudoss alleged that Rajinikanth was peddling lies.

But Tuglaq Ramesh, lead writer of the magazine who has worked with Cho Ramaswamy from the day the

Tuglaq was launched said there was no lies in the speech by Rajinikanth though there was a factual error. "Naicker and his associates had indirect nude pictures of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu to denigrate the birth of Lord Ayyappa. The big size photograph was adorned with footwear and we have preserved the copies in our office. What Rajinikanth told is correct though the characters differed," Ramesh told The Pioneer.

He said the action of Naicker and his associates were nothing surprising as they had hatred for Hindu gods whom they disgraced and insulted at all available opportunities.

Though he was present during the 75th anniversary of Murasoli in 2018, the superstar did not make any speeches despite the pleas by Stalin.



Women take part in a rally during 4th All India Womens Conference, in Kolkata on Tuesday

PTI

## Coronavirus: Screening of passengers flying from China at seven airports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**A**s advised by the Union Health Ministry, the Union Civil Aviation Ministry has directed seven airports—Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Cochin, Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata to make arrangements for screening of passengers arriving from China in the wake of outbreak of an infection caused by a new strain of virus there.

The Union Health Ministry has also sought from the Ministry of External Affairs details of those who have applied for Indian visa since December 31 so that they can be counselled.

Airlines flying from any airport in China including Hong Kong have been asked to make in-flight announcements requesting

passengers with history of fever and cough and travel to Wuhan city in the past 14 days to self-declare at the port of arrival in order to facilitate early isolation, according to an official statement on Tuesday.

This is in continuation to the travel advisory issued by the Union Health Ministry regarding threat of novel coronavirus in Wuhan, Hubei province of China asking citizens to follow certain precautionary measures while visiting the country.

The action-plan includes thermal screening of passengers to be undertaken, it said. Thermal cameras will be installed at the pre-immigration area of the seven identified airports and airlines staff will bring the passengers to the health counters before the

immigration check.

The coronavirus (CoV) is a large family of viruses that causes illnesses ranging from the common cold to acute respiratory syndromes, but the virus that has killed four people in China is a novel strain not seen before.

Also, if an ill passenger or crew member is confirmed as a probable case of nCoV, public health authorities should be notified about the contacts using the passenger locator form, the statement said.

All travellers who have visited China, particularly through Wuhan during the past 14 days and show symptoms of acute onset of fever, cough, shortness of breath have been asked to report to the airport health unit.

## Birth certificates say 2 UP kids are over 100 years old, court orders action

**Bareilly (UP):** Two-year-old Sanket may not look it but he is 102-year-old, according to his birth certificate. Shubb (4) is 104.

A Bareilly court recently ordered police to lodge a case against a village development officer and a village head who allegedly issued wrong documents after the children's family refused to give them a bribe.

Pawan Kumar of Bela village under the Khutar police station of Shahjahanpur had moved court alleging that birth certificates of his nephews Shubb (4) and Sanket (2) were issued with wrong years of birth, SHO Tejpal Singh said.

Pawan had alleged that Village Development Officer Sushil Chand Agnihotri and head Pravin Misra had demanded ₹ 500 for each birth certificate for which he had applied online two months ago, the SHO said. When he refused to give bribe, the year of birth was mentioned in the certificate as June 13, 1916 and Jan 6, 1918, instead of June 13, 2016 and Jan 6 2018. Pawan had stated in the court. **PTI**

## IMF lowering of growth: Cong targets Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**F**ollowing the IMF's lowering of India's economic growth estimate, the Congress on Tuesday targeted the BJP Government with its senior leaders and former Union Ministers P Chidambaram and Kapil Sibal taking a dig saying the IMF and its chief should be ready for being attacked by the BJP.

While Sibal launched a personal attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah saying they were a "drag on Indian democracy", Chidambaram who served as Finance Minister in Manmohan Singh Government, said that the NDA regime will now prove the IMF wrong and entire team NDA

will foul mouth the world body and its chief economist, Gita Gopinath.

"IMF lowers India's GDP for 2019 to 4.8%. Calls it a drag on the world economy," Sibal said at AICC Press conference. "Protests of people, young and old, across India (who can't be recognised by the clothes they wear) Reflect that the duo Modi and Amit Shah are a drag on Indian Democracy," the Congress leader added.

Sibal said the nationwide protests against the amended citizenship law reflected that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were a "drag on Indian democracy".

Ahead of the start of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual summit in Davos, Switzerland, Gopinath

had said growth in the country slowed sharply owing to stress in the non-bank financial sector and weak rural income growth. Chidambaram claimed an attack on the world body and its chief economist Gita Gopinath by government ministers was imminent. He also alleged that the growth figure of 4.8 per cent given by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is after some "window dressing" and he won't be surprised if it goes even lower.

"Reality check from IMF. Growth in 2019-20 will be BELOW 5 per cent at 4.8 per cent," Chidambaram said in a series of tweets.

"Even the 4.8 per cent is after some window dressing. I will not be surprised if it goes even lower," the former finance minister said.

## Sabarimala temple closes after a peaceful pilgrimage season

**Sabarimala(Ker):** After a peaceful Mandalam-Makaravilakku pilgrimage season of over two-months, the portals of the Lord Ayyappa Temple here were closed after performing customary rituals and pujas on Tuesday.

Though the annual Makaravilakku was held here on January 15, the hill top temple, nestled in a reserve forest in the Western Ghats, was open for devotees to offer worship till Monday evening.

Even the last day of the pilgrimage witnessed heavy rush of devotees, including those

from neighbouring States, at the Sannidhanam (temple complex), sources at the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), the apex temple body, which manages the shrine, said.

Customary rites like "aash-tadravya mahaganapathi homam", abhishekam and 'usha nivedyam', were performed under the aegis of tantri (head priest) Mahesh Mohanaru in the early hours of Tuesday. In accordance with the tradition, the royal designate of the Pandalam Palace, where according to legend Lord Ayyappa had spent his child-

hood, offered prayers before the sanctum sanctorum. He later led the procession carrying the sacred jewels 'thiruvabharanam', brought here to be adorned on Lord Ayyappa on the day of Makaravilakku, back to the Palace.

Melsanthi (chief priest), A K Sudheer Namboothiri performed the 'bhasmabhishekam', the offering of holy ash, on the idol of the Lord Ayyappa and closed the doors of the sanctum sanctorum singing 'harivarasanam', the sacred lullaby, marking the culmination of over 60-day pilgrimage season. **PTI**

## RAJASTHAN Polling for 2nd phase of panchayat polls today



**Jaipur:** The second phase of polling in 2,312 village panchayats of Rajasthan will be held on Wednesday and all preparations have been made for conducting free, fair and peaceful elections, officials said on Tuesday.

Polling in 15,127 wards of 2,312 village panchayats of 74 Panchayat Samitis will be held between 8 am and 5 pm, State Election Commissioner PS Mehra said.

A total of 77,56,416 people are eligible to exercise their franchise. Counting for sarpanch posts will be done on Wednesday itself.

In the second phase, 21 sarpanches and 7,466 panches have been elected unopposed in 25 districts. Apart from these, 15,334 candidates are in the fray for sarpanch posts and 43,376 candidates for panch posts. **PTI**

## 23-year-old man held for minor girl's rape in Fatehpur

**Banda (UP):** A minor girl was allegedly raped by a 23-year-old man in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Fatehpur district who was later arrested, police said on Tuesday.

The girl was alone when Jaswant Lodhi, a resident of the same village, apparently lured her to his house promising to give her sweets where he raped her on Sunday, the incharge of the police station in the area said.

The girl's parents, who returned later in the night, found her in grave condition and admitted her to a government hospital where she is undergoing treatment, the policeman said.

They lodged a complaint against the accused on Monday who confessed to the crime upon being arrested, the officer added. **PTI**

## Kota: Man gets life for raping 5-yr-old

**Kota:** A POCSO court here on Tuesday sentenced a 24-year-old man to life imprisonment for raping a minor girl in 2017.

The court also imposed a fine of ₹ 60,000 on the convict, a public prosecutor said.

Anil Sahariya (24) took the girl, then five-year-old, to his room on the pretext of showing her a cartoon movie and raped her.

A case was registered against Sahariya at the Anantpura police station on the complaint of the victim's father.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act court special judge Ajay Kumar Sharma held Sahariya guilty of raping the minor girl under sections of the IPC and the POCSO Act and sentenced him to life imprisonment, the public prosecutor said.

He said statements of 16 witnesses were recorded during the trial of the case and 20 documents were produced before the court. **PTI**

## Thane man arrested for raping 5-yr-old neighbour

**Thane:** A 24-year-old man was arrested on Tuesday for allegedly raping his five-year-old neighbour in Maharashtra's Thane city, police said. The accused, Deepesh Sutar, an employee of a courier company, lived in the same chawl as the victim at Lokmanya Nagar Pada no. 2, senior inspector SB Gaikwad of Vartak Nagar police station said. The incident took place at around 6 pm on Sunday, when Sutar lured the victim to his house and sexually abused her when no one was

around, he said. The child, who was in extreme pain, rushed home and confided in her mother, who lodged a complaint with the police, the official said.

The minor was sent for a medical check-up, after which the police confirmed the rape and arrested the accused, he added. A case has been registered against Sutar under section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code and provisions of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, the official said. **PTI**

## Woman whose family alleged rape died from multiple fractures post-accident: Police

**Noida (UP):** The post-mortem report of the 20-year-old girl whose family alleged rape and assault by two men has confirmed that she died from multiple fractures and a shock due to an injury to kidney after an accident on the Yamuna Expressway, police said on Tuesday.

However, a report of medical diagnostics involving the vaginal swab of the deceased is yet to be out and that will confirm if she was raped or not, police said.

"The autopsy has re-confirmed the observations of a femur bone fracture of the private hospital in Jewar where she was first treated before being referred to Delhi," DCP (I) Sankalp Sharma told PTI.

"The report stated that she died as a result of shock due to injury to kidney and multiple fractures produced by blunt force impact, which generally happens in cases of road accident," he added.

"So far there is no evidence of rape. However, the vaginal swab of the deceased has been taken for observation and we would get its report in about a week," Sharma said.

The woman had died at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital in Delhi on Sunday where she was brought on Friday night after preliminary medication at a private hospital in Gautam Buddha Nagar's Jewar area, according to police. **PTI**



Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi flies a kite with portraits of PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, during the International Kite Festival in Hubballi district on Tuesday

PTI

# Census data confidential, says Registrar-General

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing row over the NPR exercise, the government on Tuesday asserted that census data is confidential and guaranteed under the law and those violating it will be punished.

In a series of tweets, the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (RGI) also said the 2021 would be the first ever census to be conducted with a mixed mode approach — a mobile app (created in-house by RGI office).

"While confidentiality about your data is guaranteed by Census Act, 1948; the same law specifies penalty for BOTH public AND census officials for non-compliance or violation of any provision of the Act," the RGI said.

The National Population Register (NPR) exercise will

be carried out along with the house listing phase of the census.

During the census exercise, there will be facility for online self enumeration for the public during population enumeration phase.

"The Indian census is the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world, with more than 30 lakh functionaries, and at the cost of about 8700 crore rupees," another tweet by RGI said.

The house listing phase of the Census 2021 will be carried out from April 1 to September 30, 2020.

The census will have its reference date as March 1, 2021, but for snow-bound Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand it will be October 1, 2020.

A few state governments have declared that they will

not participate in the NPR exercise now alleging it is a prelude to a countrywide National Register of Citizens.

Assemblies of Kerala and Punjab have adopted resolutions announcing their opposition to the exercise.

Last week, at a meeting convened by the Union Home Ministry to discuss the modalities to be adopted during the house listing phase of the Census 2021 and the NPR, a few non-BJP-ruled states raised objections over the new methodology to be adopted in the NPR exercise.

However, the central government defended the steps saying certain responses to be given by people are not mandatory but voluntary.

Rajasthan Chief Secretary D B Gupta had said he and the representatives of a few other states raised objections to a few questions to be asked by enumerators to people

during the NPR exercise.

"We said certain questions in NPR are impractical, like those related to the birth-place of parents. There are many people in the country who don't know their birth place. I don't know what is the purpose of such questions and we have told the meeting to remove such questions," Gupta had said.

The notification for the house listing census and NPR exercise came recently amid furore over the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The home ministry officials said most of the states have notified provisions related to the NPR.

The NPR is a register of usual residents of the country. It is being prepared at the local (village/sub-town), sub-district, district, state and national levels under provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Citizenship

(Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.

The rules have a provision for fine of up to ₹ 1,000 on those violating it.

The data for NPR was last collected in 2010 along with the house listing phase of the Census 2011. Updating of this data was done during 2015 by conducting door to door survey.

While updating the register in 2015, the government had asked details like Aadhaar and their mobile number.

This time, the information related to their driving licence and voter ID card may also be gathered, the officials said, adding that PAN card details will not be collected as part of this exercise.

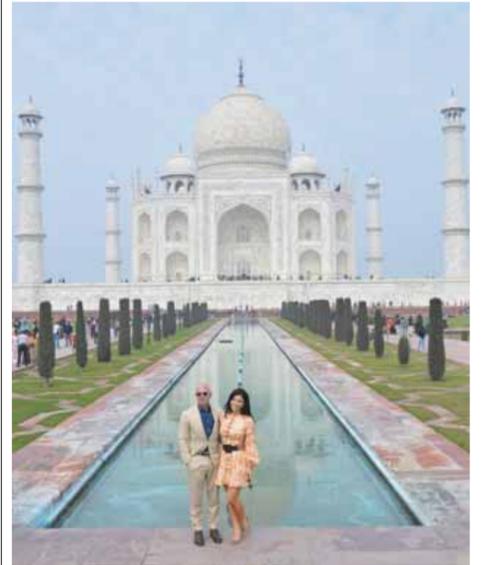
For the purposes of the NPR, a usual resident is defined as a person who has resided in a local area for the past six months or more, or a

person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months. The law compulsorily seeks to register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card.

Assam has been excluded because the National Register of Citizens exercise has already been conducted in the state.

The demographic details of every individual are required for every usual resident: name, relationship to head of household, father's name, mother's name, spouse's name (if married), sex, date of birth, marital status, place of birth, nationality (as declared), present address of usual residence, duration of stay at present address, permanent residential address, occupation, educational qualification.

The Union Cabinet has approved ₹ 3,941.35 crore for the NPR exercise.



Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos and his partner Lauren Sanchez stands for photographs in front of the Taj Mahal in Agra on Tuesday. AP

# Bengal to table motion against CAA on Jan 27

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Mamata Banerjee Government will call a special session of the State Assembly on January 27 to table a resolution rejecting the Citizenship Amendment Act. The date was given by State Parliamentary Affairs Minister and Trinamool Congress general secretary Partho Chatterjee.

The formal announcement came a day after Banerjee declared that she would soon get a resolution against CAA passed in the State Assembly.

The development also comes as an aftermath of members of the minority community openly questioning the TMC Ministers — Jyotipriya Mullick and Bratya Basu at various organisational forums as to why the Bengal Government was not following in the footsteps of Kerala and Punjab which had earlier passed resolutions against the controversial Act.

"I don't have to say anything about who said what. But I can only say that our Chief Minister has decided to call a special session of the Assembly to pass a resolution against the CAA," Chatterjee said adding the State Government's credentials could not be questioned as it had already passed similar resolutions against National Register for Citizens and National Population Register.

"I have personally spoken to opposition leader Abdul Mannan (Congress) and would also speak to CPI(M) Legislator Party Leader Sujana Chakrabarty seeking their support for the resolution which will be tabled on January 27," Chatterjee said.

The decision which the Government had taken on Tuesday should have been taken earlier Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Chowdhury said reacting to the Tuesday's announcement adding "the Congress and the Left had moved a similar resolution earlier in the Assembly but the TMC refused to take it up for discussion now for some unknown reasons they have agreed to pass the resolution only after Kerala and Punjab Governments have done it... it is better late than never."

Chakrabarty wondered "why they rejected our move when we wanted to table a similar resolution a few days in the Assembly denouncing CAA. It seems that only after getting the green signal from her BJP friends in Delhi that the Chief Minister has now decided to table the resolution. In any case we have no problem in supporting it."

He added how the TMC Government had grudgingly passed a resolution against NRC and NPR tabled by the opposition "but only after tabling it in their party's name."

Chatterjee would not dwell much on the issue but said "We have already submitted the resolution to the Speaker on January 20."

He also would not comment on why the TMC was moving the Supreme Court challenging the CAA a la Kerala and Punjab. "I am in State politics and will not be in a position to take questions on things at national level. Please ask the questions to Derek O' Brien who will be the appropriate person to take the question."

On whether the Chief Minister would take up Home Minister Amit Shah's challenge to debate the CAA at national forum, the senior Bengal Minister said "we will take it up for discussion in the party forum before coming back to you."

However, another Minister and senior party leader Tapas Roy said there is no problem for any debate because it is Mamata Banerjee who had for the first time given an open challenge for a debate on NRC, and CAB (before it became an Act).

Meanwhile, after the lawyers, students and civil society it was the turn of the doctors to descend on the streets against the CAA with hundreds of medicos from NRS Medical College and Hospital on Tuesday taking out processions condemning the controversial Act.

# Chants of 'CAA se azaadi' as hundreds of students march in protest on AMU

**Aligarh:** Hundreds of students took out a protest march against the amended citizenship act on the Aligarh Muslim University campus here on Tuesday raising slogans of "CAA se azaadi" and vowing to boycott classes until their demands are met.

The protesters including girls and schoolchildren, belonging to the schools within the campus, began their march from the Purani Chungi and culminated it at the Babey Sir Syed gate of the university.

They also raised slogans in support of Delhi's Shaheen Bagh protesters and the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

"Shaheen Bagh Zindabad (Long live Shaheen Bagh)" and "JNU tum sangharsh Karo hum tumahre saath hain (keep fighting JNU, we are with you)" rent the air along with the chants of "CAA se azaadi" (freedom from CAA) and "BJP se azaadi" (freedom from BJP). The university was closed early for winter vacations from December 16, a day after students clashed with police during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) on campus. It was to reopen on January 6 but the vacation was extended owing to persisting tension over the changes in the citizenship law.

It is reopening in phases from Monday. But after the university reopened on January 13, agitation against the law has been going on and students have devised innovative ways to protest peacefully. PTI

# Permission denied for Muslim organisations to take out rally

**Coimbatore:** Police have denied permission to various Muslim organisations to carry out a procession in the city on February 2 against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Representatives of Federation of Islamic Organisation and the District All Kamath had submitted a petition to the office of police commissioner on January 17

seeking permission to take out a 7 km "unity procession".

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and order) L Balaji Saravabnan had convened a meeting on Monday with representatives of SDPI, TMMK, PFI, Manithaneya Makkal Katchi and Jamaath, a release from police department said on Tuesday. They were informed that the procession would paralyse movement of vehicles

besides affecting people as it was being taken out through a national highway and arterial road. Besides, almost 16 organisations had already conducted nearly 50 rallies, protest meetings, human chain, closure of shops and other mode of agitations on the issue.

Against this background, an order denying permission for the procession was issued, the release said. PTI



People hold a huge tri-colour during a protest against CAA, NRC and NPR at Shivajinagar in Bengaluru on Tuesday. PTI

# J&K: Army jawan, SPO killed in Awantipora encounter

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

An Army jawan and a special police officer (SPO) of J&K police on Tuesday sacrificed their lives during a fierce gunfight with terrorists in snow clad Khrew area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district.

Till the time of filing the report, the security forces had not confirmed whether any terrorists were neutralised or they managed to give a slip to the security forces during the encounter.

Soon after the operation was launched, after receiving a tip off about the presence of three terrorists in the area, joint teams of security forces had cordoned off Zand village of Tral.

While searches were going on in the area, first contact was established with the terrorists. To avoid any collateral damage the security forces even escorted children and others from the area.

In the initial exchange of



the martyred soldier who sacrificed his life in the Pulwama encounter on Tuesday.

"Lt- Gen Ranbir Singh, Army Cdr NC and all ranks salute the supreme sacrifice of Sepoy Rahul Rainswal; offer deepest condolences to the family", tweeted Northern Command.

This is the second major encounter which took place in Kashmir valley ahead of Republic day celebrations in the last 48 hours.

On Monday, joint teams of security forces killed three terrorists including top commander of Hizbul Mujahideen Waseem Ahmad Wani along with Adil Bashir Sheikh in Shopian.

According to police records, Waseem was involved in the killing of eight people, including four security men in the Valley while Adil had decamped with 7 AK 47 rifles and a pistol from the residence of former PDP MLA from Wachi Assembly segment.

again, amid the ongoing campaigning the Delhi Assembly polls.

The spoof video, posted on the twitter handle named 'political kida' has drawn comparisons between the battle of Sinhagad Fort with the upcoming Delhi elections and the website has said: "Jo Dilli Jeet Gaya, Samjho Dil Jeet Gaya". Interestingly, the twitter page containing the spoof video went missing later in the evening.

Reacting to the spoof video, BJP's Rajya Sabha member and the 13th direct descendant of Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji and great grandson of Chhatrapati Shahu of Kolhapur Sambhaji Chhatrapati tweeted: "After the book (likening Shivaji to Modi), we now have video that indecent, intolerable and condemnable. The parties concerned should express its stand over the video. The Centre should order an inquiry into the video and initiate action against those behind it"

"For us Shiv baktsh Shivaji Maharaj is everything. The video has hurt the Shiva baktshs. It is the responsibility of the Government to take cognisance of the sentiments of the Shiv baktshs and take steps to ensure against recurrence of such things in future. My request to all political parties not to misuse the image of great Maratha warrior for their cheap politics," Sambhaji Chhatrapati tweeted.

Responding to the objectionable video, Shiv Sena MP and spokesperson Sanjay Raut said: "I have sent the video to controversial Hindutva leader Sambhaji Bhide and various BJP leaders. I am waiting for their response."

Alluding to the recent demand by Sambhaji Bhide that action be taken against him for his disparaging remarks against the descendants of Chhatrapati Shivaji, Raut said: "I want to see the reaction of those who have called for a bandh at Satara and Sangli against the Shiv Sena. Not even a single person whom I have sent the video to has replied so far."

# Delhi polls: Tanhaji video morphed with Modi, Shah goes viral

SHIVAJI DESCENDANT CONDEMNS IT, DEMANDS PROBE

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A spoof video made from the scenes of latest Bollywood blockbuster 'Tanhaji — The Unsung Warrior', in which the faces of Chhatrapati Shivaji and his trusted commander Tanaji Malusare have been morphed with those of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah went viral in the social media on Tuesday.

Fresh from the controversy over a Hindi book 'Aaj ke Shivaji: Narendra Mod', likening the current Prime Minister to Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the latest video — in which Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has been projected as Udaybhan Singh Rathore — has turned the spotlight on the BJP once

Meanwhile, the Maharashtra BJP has disassociated itself from the spoof video put out on the twitter handle of "political kida". "The BJP has nothing to do with this video. The BJP is not using the video in its campaign for the Delhi 91 Assembly polls. We condemn this video. It is wrong to elicit the BJP's reaction on this video. Chhatrapati Shivaji cannot be compared with anyone," Maharashtra BJP president Chandrakant Patil said.

"There is no restriction on any one making anything of video, putting it on social media and letting it go viral. There is a clear cut attempt to defame the BJP by making such a controversial video," Patil said.

Hitting out indirectly at Raut, Patil said: "The people who are demanding evidence from the descendants of Chhatrapati Shivaji have no mortal right left to talk about the Maratha warrior. The BJP's stand is that there was only unique king (Shivaji) and we do

not get to see such a king against. It was because of this king that Hindu Swaraj was established. No one can be compared chhatrapati shivaji".

Last week, under severe flak from various political quarters, an embarrassed BJP had distanced itself from a controversial book "Aaj ke Shivaji: Narendra Modi", penned by the party's Jai Bhagwan Goyal, likening the current Prime Minister with Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

BJP's National Media co-head Sanjay Mayukh had said through a video statement: "Whatever that been written in the book is the author's personal point of view. It is neither our party publication nor are we connected with it in any manner"

"The writer has clarified that it is his personal writing. He has also said that if the book has hurt anybody's emotions, he is withdrawing the book. We would like to clarify again that it is not a party publication," Mayukh had said.

# CENTRE'S J&K OUTREACH PROGRAMME

Want to get firsthand account of problems people face: Naqvi

**Srinagar:** The purpose of the Centre's outreach programme in Jammu & Kashmir is to get a firsthand account of the problems faced by the people and address their concerns, Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Tuesday.

"The objective of this dialogue is to go close to people, listen to their problems and needs and also find solutions to their problems," Naqvi told reporters here.

Naqvi, who laid the foundation stone for a development project at Harwan on the outskirts of the city, was the first minister to visit Kashmir as

part of the Centre's outreach programme.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is keen to ensure that benefits of the changes initiated by the Central government should reach all the people of the union territory.

"The aspirations and expectations of the people were not upheld (earlier) and corruption had eaten into Jammu and Kashmir... Some people had benefited themselves but we want prosperity for all people here," Naqvi said.

Asked why only five ministers were visiting Kashmir against 31 going to Jammu, he

said the present outreach programme was just the beginning of the Centre's efforts to reach out to the people of the Valley.

"This is not the last programme. This initiative will continue," he said. Naqvi refused to comment on criticism from some quarters about the Ministers not including seven districts of Kashmir in their outreach programme.

Addressing a gathering earlier, Naqvi said the Central Government wants "a new dawn" of development and accountability in the functioning of the Government machinery in Jammu & Kashmir. PTI

# Mins' visit only to highlight BJP agenda at expense of public exchequer: Cong

**Jammu:** The Jammu & Kashmir unit of the Congress on Tuesday attacked the BJP-led central Government over its ongoing public outreach programme in the Union Territory and alleged that the visit of the Ministers is only to highlight the agenda of the party at the expense of the public exchequer.

It also alleged that the visit is aimed at diverting the attention of the people from real issues of unemployment, price rise and "worst ever" economic slowdown besides the social and political upheavals being witnessed in the country, affecting the political prospects of the BJP in Delhi and West Bengal.

In the aftermath of the abrogation of Article 370 provisions and bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two UTs in August last year, the Centre launched a major week-long public outreach programme on January 18 to aware people about the benefits of the move and to disseminate

information about the implementation of its policies and programmes for the overall development of Jammu & Kashmir. So far about 24 ministers visited different parts of Jammu.

"The visit of Ministers' brigade is only to highlight the agenda of the party at the expense of public exchequer by use of entire official machinery, after feedback to the BJP Government at the centre that people even in Jammu region are fed up with the neglect, especially the treatment meted out to the erstwhile state depriving it of the identity and rights of the locals," Pradesh Congress Committee chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said.

"The BJP should answer why only five ministers, out of 36, are going to Kashmir to attend eight programmes against 51 programmes in the Jammu region to explain the benefits of abrogation of special status under Article 370 and disbanding of the erstwhile state," he said. PTI

# Airports may incur ₹650cr/yr loss if duty-free liquor restricted: APAO

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian airports are likely to incur a revenue loss of ₹650 crore per annum and could potentially turn defaulters if the commerce ministry's proposals on the sale of liquor and cigarette at duty-free shops are accepted, an industry body warned on Tuesday.

The Association of Private Airport Operators (APAO) in a statement said that if non-aero revenues are restricted by an act of government, the new operators will find the airports unviable and may even renege on their contracts.

Flughafen Zurich AG, which is one of the largest European airport operators, has just re-entered the domestic airport space, bagging the contract for the greenfield Jewar Airport in UP while Adani group has been mandated to run six AAI-owned airports in the country.

The Commerce Ministry, as part of its proposals to the finance ministry ahead of the budget, has recommended restricting purchase of tax-free alcohol to one bottle against two at present and prohibiting completely the purchase of cigarette cartons, from one carton of 100 sticks now, at duty-free shops at the arrival area of the international airports in the country.

## Capital gain or loss?

Jagan Mohan Reddy may want to develop Andhra uniformly with 3 capitals but the human cost might impact his politics



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy should remember his father YSR Reddy's overarching nature of politics, one that was about social welfare and uplifting backwards and one that gave him a bankable legacy. So he should stop over-obsessing about setting up three capitals in a now truncated State, focus on its cash-strapped economy and optimise its resources rather than engaging in a competitive one-upmanship with his predecessor and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief Chandrababu Naidu.

True, the latter had built his persona by creating futuristic cities as a measure of good governance, be it by redeveloping Hyderabad and giving it a new moniker called Cyberabad or, after losing that to Telangana, attempting a Singapore-style new capital at Amaravati. But considering that much work had progressed on the new capital and was largely acceptable to the gentry for whom it wasn't too far out of Hyderabad, Reddy might have to pay a political price for stalling the project. For there is a constituency he cannot ignore, that of farmers. The Naidu Government had cracked a land deal with them, whereby they pooled 34,000 acres of farmland in return for stakeholderhood of developed land. Now with global investors out of the city, its status reduced to just a legislative capital and unfinished towers turning it into a ghost town, the human cost would bear heavy on Reddy. As it is the crashing prices have meant that farmers have lost out on the land value. They can't reclaim their old land which has become fallow ever since they were acquired in 2016. Promised doles like annuity for crop loss, they feel cheated although the Reddy Government has increased the pension amount from the existing ₹2,500 to ₹5,000. With protesters at his doorstep and his intransigence, Reddy has a man-made crisis that he can ill-afford. His plan of devolving power across the State by developing Amaravati as the legislative, Visakhapatnam as the executive and Kurnool as the judicial capitals may be well-intentioned and help him assuage all his constituencies, particularly catapulting the cosmopolitan Visakhapatnam as a top-tier city, but is ridden with challenges. With the functions of the executive, legislature and judiciary being interconnected, requiring swift approvals and quick transfer of files, governance is bound to suffer a time lag while efficiencies will be compromised. The exchequer, too, will be under additional fiscal stress owing to logistical expenses. The infrastructural costs of building new spaces will make a further dent in the State Budget, though Reddy insists that firming up Amaravati would have been much more expensive. Most importantly, the movement of staff for allied or overlapping issues could end up disturbing the bureaucracy. Then there is the larger issue of a loss of face among investors, both global and domestic. Allegations of malpractices that the Reddy regime has been levelling against Naidu's contracts have scared prospective investors. The repudiation of past contracts has raised doubts about their sanctity in the State, which would henceforth be dependent on regime change and new governance priorities. This has already spooked most business houses. At the moment, Andhra Pradesh has topped the official ease of doing business index, relegating Telangana to the second spot. But given the decentralisation move, it may not be able to hold on to this advantage for long.

Decentralising capitals, though new to India, has been experimented in 15 countries across the world. In South Africa, for example, Pretoria is the administrative capital, Cape Town is the legislative capital and Bloemfontein is the judicial capital. In Sri Lanka, too, while Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte is its official capital and seat of national legislature, Colombo is the de facto seat of national executive and judicial bodies. Moreover, India, too, is not alien to having twin capitals because of seasonal reasons in Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and the former State of Jammu & Kashmir. The constitutionality of having diversity of governance within the States through just distribution of powers, thus, stands the test. So long as it is kept within the realm of pragmatism than political sabre-rattling. Reddy's test will now be in the Upper House where his party does not have absolute majority and where the TDP is a thorn in the flesh. All the more reason for him to act in a prudent manner, so that his moniker of Bhramaravati (illusionary city) for Amaravati doesn't end up being used against him. The BJP with Pawan Kalyan, is waiting for him to make a mistake.

## Inequality rules

The way to grasp the current political climate is by understanding how inequity has grown over the decades



The British charity Oxfam has come out with another annual report at a time when the World Economic Forum (WEF) held at the Swiss resort town of Davos is under way. The report gains eyeballs, loaded as it is with some stunning statistics to highlight "inequality" across the world. This year's report has some stunning numbers — the top one per cent of India's billionaires owns four times as much wealth as the poorest 70 per cent. On the global front, the top 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the women

in Africa. The details are quite shocking. While the calculations of the report have been questioned in the past, make no mistakes about the message it sends out. The world is a deeply iniquitous place. The extremely rich are the ones who are exponentially richer than those at the bottom of the human pyramid. With or without a report, evidence is there that the world is becoming more unequal, the rich are getting richer and the poor, well, poorer.

And when someone needs to decipher why there has been such a rise in a nativist Right-wing polity across the world, particularly in democracies, it would be wise to understand that people feel like they have been left behind by globalisation. But they blame other social constructs, too, multi-culturalism for example. Ergo, the leaders they vote for are the ones "who say it like it is." Of course, many of these elected men, and they are almost always men, do not have the necessary talent to do much about it. They, thus, blame previous administrations and on that front, their point must be accepted. For years, peace dividend allowed sycophancy, nepotism and corruption to bloom and far from making the world a better place, inequality accelerated. The technology revolution has propped up many billionaires but it has also started treating human beings as mere data points — their information being bought and sold without their knowledge. But what can be done about this? The breakdown in trust is massive but other than motivated philanthropy schemes, it would be prudent for the very rich to actually start contributing more to society. Governments have to realise that unmitigated development is not always a good thing, even if some people can become very rich. The poor will be hurt due to the impacts of climate change much more; they will suffer from societal breakdowns far more. While clinking their champagne glasses at Davos later this week, leaders need to realise that they might soon lose control of the narrative.

RK PACHAURI

The Astana Club based in Kazakhstan has brought out a useful document which assesses the top 10 risks for Eurasia in 2020. There are contributions from researchers and thinkers from all over the world, which have been incorporated while carrying out this assessment. Although the risks identified are specific to Eurasia, in effect, one could identify these as being applicable to almost any other part of the world.

The foreword of this document identifies China emerging as a new potential superpower. It also draws attention to China's economic strength as signified through the Belt and Road mega initiative. Eurasia being in the vicinity of China sees the changes in the balance of power that are now developing. It also expresses the fact that Russia has finally recovered from the chaos and devastation of the 1990s despite several sanctions and restrictions. As a result of this phase of recovery, it is expanding its influence far beyond post-Soviet borders. Concurrently, leaders such as India, Japan, Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been identified as showing bold intentions to influence the international order. The document observes that no geo-political game can now play out without the participation of these new players.

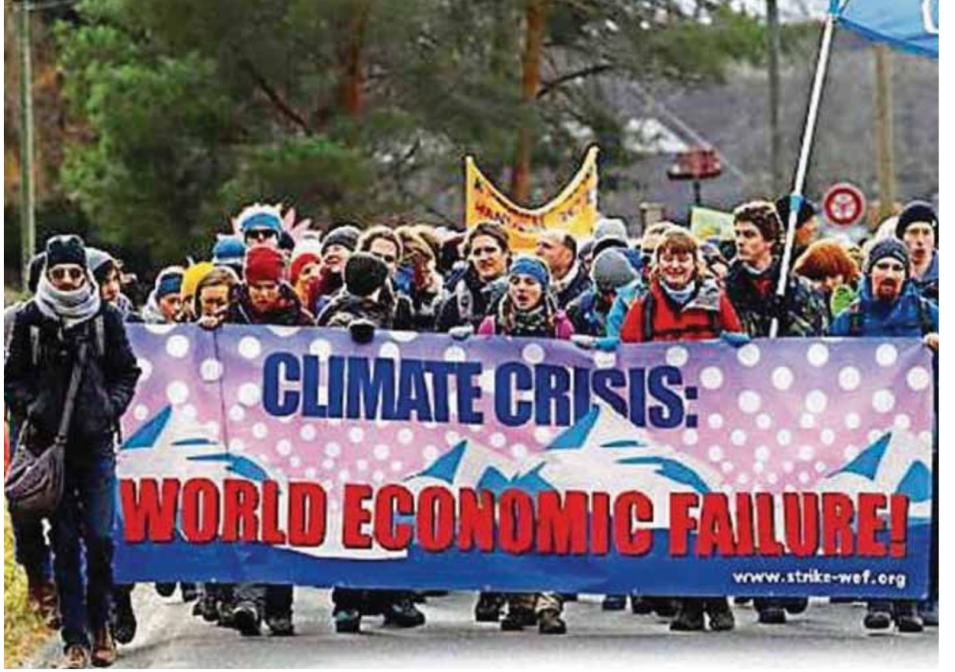
The first of the 10 risks, which is identified, deals with the aftershock of the US presidential campaign. It looks at developments within the US and the efforts of the current administration to move in the direction of nationalism with possible isolation from global affairs and developments. The prediction made is that in the coming year, there will be more apparent manifestations of the unilateral approach to foreign policy, which obviously will have erratic consequences in a negative sense. In effect, the assessment of this first risk can be seen as not entirely related to aftershocks of the US presidential campaign but possibly more in terms of leading up to the presidential election, which implies several risks during the campaign itself.

It is obvious that the current process of impeachment, which the US Senate will be pursuing, will have major implications for the presidential election in November, 2020, as well as some risks for candidates running for the US Senate. It is also obvious that global developments initiated by the White House would be targeted, keeping in view the 2020 elections. While this Astana Club assessment was produced before the killing of Iranian Major General Soleimani, it can be concluded that to some extent, this attack on a very popular and respected general in Iran was clearly a "macho" act, which was perhaps designed to blunt the impacts of the current impeachment process against US President Donald Trump.

This document also highlights the fact

# Preventable reality

The comprehensive listing of threats that can emerge this year, published by the Astana Club, is specific to Eurasian countries but has lessons for the entire world



“ WHILE THE BACKBONE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE (IS) HAS GENERALLY BEEN DECIMATED, IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT RE-GROUPING BY THIS TERRORIST ORGANISATION COULD LEAD TO SEVERAL DANGERS IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD. INDIA IS CONFRONTED BY STATE-SPONSORED TERRORISM IN OUR VICINITY AND THIS IS A SUBJECT THAT THE ENTIRE GLOBAL COMMUNITY AND INDIA WOULD NEED TO DEAL WITH ”

that as far as Iran is concerned, Trump will increase sanctions and the pressure that would be imposed on Tehran. On the other hand, the likelihood of a US-Iran military conflict, which posed certain danger in the summer of 2019, will decline this year. The opinion is also expressed that Trump is unlikely to initiate a military campaign against Iran, which could have uncontrollable consequences. There are other possible developments related to the Middle East, which could also constitute a risk politically to Eurasia. But, of course, there will be serious implications for other parts of the world, particularly for South Asia, with its proximity to both Eurasia and the countries of the Middle East.

The other risks identified in the study include the effects of global economic recession, escalation of the US-China confrontation, a new stage of the nuclear missile race, exacerbation of the battle for technological dominance, military escalation of the conflict around Iran, nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula, a new wave of terrorism, aggressive nationalism and populism as well as large-scale climate change problems.

The prospect of a global economic recession is very real and this, combined with an inward looking policy of nationalism such as in the case of the US, could cause economic complications worldwide.

Also, in the case of the US, there is the real prospect of a further division between the Democrats and the Republicans, those who are supporters of Trump and those who are strongly opposed to his continuation as President. In the case of the Middle East, it seems unfortunate that Iran and the US have been at loggerheads for over 40 years now, which is affecting all developments in the wake of the Iranian revolution. Developments in 2020 will continue to be affected by an obvious bias on the part of the US openly favouring some Middle Eastern nations.

The issue of terrorism is also alive. While the backbone of the Islamic State (IS) has generally been decimated, it is entirely possible that re-grouping by this terrorist organisation could lead to several dangers in different parts of the world. India is confronted by State-sponsored terrorism in its vicinity and this is a subject that the entire global community and it would need to deal with. The extent of this threat is likely to increase as a result of frustration within a country which is our neighbour. We have to be alive to this as well as other terrorist threats across the globe.

With respect to climate change, we need to come up with scenarios on how we may be able to bring about a transition from fossil fuels to low carbon sources of energy. Far

more immediate is the issue of impacts of climate change, which would pose increasing risks across the globe. Projections of extreme events, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had clearly brought out 11 years ago, is the increase in intensity and frequency of disasters and extreme events. A typical but unfortunate example of this is provided by the raging forest fires, which recently affected several parts of Australia, followed immediately by extreme precipitation events which led to flooding and excessive damage.

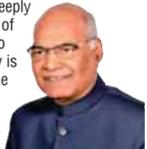
All in all, it is important that the Astana Club has come up with a comprehensive listing of threats, which can emerge during 2020 and, therefore, extending into this decade as a whole.

Kazakhstan and several Eurasian countries may lie beyond the Himalayan range but in terms of proximity, they are in some cases very close to us in terms of geographical distance. India should, perhaps, engage far more closely with countries of the region and exercise its soft power, including the flow of knowledge, education and research on issues that have a bearing on the region. The threats for Eurasia apply equally to India as well.

(The writer is former Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2002-15)

## SOUNDBITE

A democracy like ours deeply relies on the uncovering of facts and a willingness to debate them. Democracy is meaningful only when the citizen is well informed.



President —Ram Nath Kovind

There's right and there's wrong, and there's common sense and there's abuse of power and as a citizen I have every right to voice my opinion.



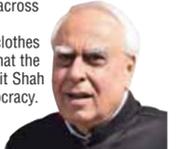
Hollywood veteran —Robert De Niro

People are more generally aware now. The climate and the environment is a hot topic. But from another perspective, pretty much nothing has been done.



Climate campaigner —Greta Thunberg

Protests of people across India (who can't be recognised by the clothes they wear) reflect that the duo Modi/Ji and Amit Shah are a drag on democracy.



Congress leader —Kapil Sibal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Technological feat

Sir — An Australian developer has produced an app that allows people to upload a photo of someone else and match it with other photos of people and their location. Police in America have already tested and successfully used it to arrest one person. The introduction of cameras on mobile phones has led to millions of photos being taken and far too many being put online for us to ignore. The Instagrammers and influencers may not realise that by default, the location is embedded in their photos. The technology that allows facial recognition is under attack from privacy advocates, but why? If you have done nothing wrong, then you have nothing to hide. Although the reality is that some people err in their life choices. The concern of people being recognised in photos has gone too far with google maps and street view blurring number plates on cars and people's faces. People should be happy to be known and seen although not obsessively. Live a good life and be seen doing it.  
**Dennis Fitzgerald**  
 Melbourne

### Indian foreign policy takes a beating

None will dispute the fact that the foreign policy as pursued by the ruling dispensation has dented the good relationship India has been maintaining with other nations, particularly immediate neighbours. Maintaining cordial relations with other nations, even after effectively recording dissent on matters affecting us, requires a lot of suave diplomacy, which is lacking in present-day leaders. Though he is a career diplomat and has also served as the Foreign Secretary, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is found to be undiplomatic in his deliveries. He has also been more aggressive, muscular in his thoughts, words and deeds, particularly after sporting the BJP party cap.  
 At a time when the BJP Government is hell-bent on implementing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC), it has become inevitable on the part of the External Affairs Minister to play second fiddle and hardsell the schemes despite the damage such accusations of persecution of minorities are going to cause to our relationship with



Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It appears that Indian diplomacy has gone for a toss and has suffered an irreparable damage. Jaishankar has failed to handle the sensitive issue with utmost care. This is also evident from the strong statements made by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and former Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai against the CAA.  
**Tharicus S Fernando**  
 Chennai

### Challenges ahead

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "BJP's new chief" (January 21). Both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah wanted someone to take charge of the party who would be a non-challenger to them and JP Nadda was best suited for this. What, however, must be complimented is that Nadda is one leader who grew from the grassroots level to make his way to the top.  
 Nadda has taken charge amid protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). More importantly, will be able to stop the reverses the party has seen in States? Surely, the BJP is on a weaker footing and the winning the forthcoming elections in Delhi and West Bengal will be challenging. One thing that will come handy for him is that he has been part of the Modi Government and knows both the organisation and the Government well. Can be a good catalyst between the two?  
**Bal Govind**  
 Noida

### Recognising Nadkarni

Sir — Babu Nadkarni, who passed away recently, leaves behind an incredible legacy in bowling. In 1964, he bowled 131 consecutive balls without conceding any runs during a Test innings against England. He had similar

economical bowling averages in earlier matches against Pakistan in Kanpur and Delhi in the 1960-61 series. His economy rate across his first-class career was less than two.

He was one of the finest all-rounders of the time. His maiden over tally is difficult to match. It is unfortunate that the present

cricketers, who play at a time of immense money and fame in the sport, are honoured frequently while players of yesteryear are forgotten. It would be even better if a series of postage stamps of older cricketers with notable contributions could be issued.

**SC Agrawal**  
 Delhi

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

**FIRST COLUMN**

**The enigma named Putin**

What the Russian Premier needs is a position that gives him the final say when big changes loom but lets him abjure from daily exercise of power



GWYNNE DYER

Five years ago somebody posted photographs on the internet showing a man who looked a lot like Vladimir Putin in photographs from 1920 and 1941. In both shots he was in military uniform, defending the interests of the Russian people then as he still does today. But how can this be? He wasn't even born until 1952. So the wave of faux speculation starts that Putin is an immortal hero who returns at intervals to save Russia. Or maybe just that he's an immortal vampire. At any rate, he'll be around forever. It was nonsense then and it's nonsense now.

Last week the Russian President announced a wave of constitutional reforms and the vast majority of foreign observers, especially in the West, immediately jumped to the conclusion that Putin is changing the system so that he can stay in power forever. Twenty-five years in power (his current term as President expires in 2024) is not enough for Putin, the foreign pundits insist. He can't risk leaving power, they explain, or Russians would start asking where his vast illicit wealth came from. And then the pundits spin off into lengthy tirades about how he is Evil Incarnate, even comparing him to Joseph Stalin, who ruled the old Soviet Union from 1924 until his death in 1953. Stalin was a mass murderer without a conscience. Nobody was safe from his paranoia: He even killed most of the other heroes of the Bolshevik Revolution. He was probably responsible for the deaths of ten million Russians.

And Vladimir Putin? Here's the opinion of Simon Tisdall, columnist and former foreign editor of *The Guardian*: "Like Stalin, (Putin) has made many enemies and caused untold misery...cronyism and corruption on a vast scale...military aggression and disruption abroad....Again like Stalin, retirement is not a safe option for the ex-KGB spy who normalised assassination as a modern-day tool of state policy."

Where to start? Perhaps with the obvious point that Stalin killed tens of thousands for every death that can be attributed to Putin. Moreover, corruption in Putin's Russia is far less than it was in the 1990s under the first post-Communist President, the Western-backed Boris Yeltsin, a drunken puppet who made ordinary Russians cringe.

"Military aggression and disruption abroad?" Guilty as charged, in the illegal restoration of Crimea to Russian control (though most people in Crimea welcomed it) and in backing anti-Government rebels in two provinces of eastern Ukraine. But there is a litany of Western invasions and military interventions (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Serbia, Syria, Yemen) that didn't meet the highest legal standards either and had equally messy outcomes. Nor do Western Governments lag behind on the assassination front.

More importantly, Russia's western border is a 1,000 km east of where it was in 1914. It is a minimum of 300 km east of where it was as recently as 1991. Putin has not challenged that new frontier once (with the partial exception of Ukraine) in 21 years in office. You could have a much more frightening and disruptive person than Putin in the Kremlin.

The old KGB was a ruthless organisation but also a rational and realistic one. Putin is a man steeped in that tradition, not an adventurer or a fantasist, and we should probably be grateful for that. So what are the odds that he will still be running things after 2024? He will be 72 years old in 2024: Definitely time to start thinking about what happens after he's gone. And I'm going to make a bold assumption here: That he is a Russian patriot. Being Russian means that he fears disorder above all else: Russians sometimes call themselves "Italians of the North" and they don't mean it in a good way. So he wants a strong state, run with a firm hand, even after he has retired, which means that a clear and orderly succession is very important. However, living on under somebody else's firm hand is not an attractive prospect for Putin. He may or may not have fabulous sums of stolen money tucked away — the evidence for that is unclear — but you make a lot of enemies in a quarter-century in power and they could hurt you badly after you have relinquished it. So what Putin needs is a position that gives him the final constitutional say when big changes loom but lets him withdraw from the daily exercise of power. Something like the chairmanship of a strengthened State Council that can overrule both President and Prime Minister when necessary (but does so very rarely). And lo! That appears to be exactly what he has in mind. The details of his proposed reforms are not yet clear but a weaker President, a stronger Prime Minister and a State Council presiding serenely from afar are all part of the package. I'm not saying that's what will actually happen, but I think it's what he'd like to happen.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is *Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work*)

**POINTCOUNTERPOINT**

**THEY HAVE GONE TO THE SUPREME COURT (OVER THE CAA) WITHOUT INFORMING ME. THAT IS AN UNLAWFUL ACT. NOT LEGALLY CORRECT.**  
 —KERALA GOVERNOR  
**ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN**



**THE CHIEF MINISTER WAS NOT DUTY-BOUND TO HAVE INFORMED THE GOVERNOR BEFORE MOVING THE SUPREME COURT ON THE CAA.**  
 —FORMER KERALA GOVERNOR  
**P SATHASIVAM**

**Act, before it is too late**

Taking a 'fair' and 'realistic' view of all receipts and expenditure of the Govt, its fiscal deficit is turning out to be almost double the three per cent target sought by the NK Singh panel



UTTAM GUPTA

Having achieved the fiscal deficit (FD) target for three years in a row, the Narendra Modi Government missed it in 2017-18 and 2018-19. During 2017-18, the actual FD expressed as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 3.5 per cent against the target of 3.2 per cent. For 2018-19, the then Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley had set a target of 3.3 per cent as against three per cent sought by a committee under NK Singh, former Expenditure Secretary and current Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission.

The committee was set up in 2016 to review the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003, with a mandate to revamp it and recommend a path for the next six years. It advocated a FD target of 2.5 per cent, revenue deficit 0.8 per cent, combined Centre-State debt ceiling of 60 per cent and a Central debt ceiling of 40 per cent for 2022-23. It recommended three per cent FD for 2018-19. It also allowed the Government to breach the target in case of "far-reaching structural reforms with unanticipated fiscal implications."

Vide the Finance Bill, 2018-19 the Government amended the FRBM Act to allow it to achieve three per cent FD by 2020-21 instead of 2018-19 recommended by the committee. Further, it sought the debt limit of 40 per cent by the Centre (60 per cent for Centre and States) to be reached by 2024-25 instead of 2022-23 mandated by the committee.

During 2018-19, the Government posted 3.4 per cent (against the target of 3.3 per cent), that too by taking recourse to what is termed as "financial engineering." It paid ₹60,000 crore less to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) towards food subsidy as reimbursement of the excess of the cost of procurement, handling and distribution over the sale price to the beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). It paid ₹32,000 crore less to State-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) viz. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and so on, for selling LPG and kerosene at subsidised prices. Likewise, short payments to manufacturers for fertiliser subsidy were about ₹40,000 crore.

The above three so-called "deferred payments" add up to ₹1,32,000 crore. In addition, public undertakings like the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), National Housing Bank (NHB), Rural Electrification Corporation (REC), Power Finance Corporation (PFC), National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) borrowed on behalf of the Government to fund welfare schemes such as rural and urban affordable housing, sanitation and irrigation projects, rural electrification schemes (including free electricity connections to households) highways and railway projects. Termed Extra-Budgetary Resources (EBRs), these totalled ₹280,000 crore.

All put together, the money, a whopping ₹412,000 crore, should have been paid by the Government from its Budget. But it decided to make other entities pay for it or borrow on its behalf. This translates to about 2.3 per cent of the GDP.

**“**  
 IN THE BACKDROP OF THE SLOWDOWN IN GROWTH, EVEN AS COMMENTATORS ARE ADVOCATING SOME LENIENCY IN THE FISCAL CONSOLIDATION DRIVE, THE REALITY IS THAT ALREADY, THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL RELAXATION THROUGH IT IS GOING UNRECOGNISED. UNDER THE 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' SCENARIO, THE ECONOMY MAY FACE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD RECOGNISE THAT THE PROBLEM EXISTS AND STOP FUDGING ITS ACCOUNTS. BUT THIS BY ITSELF WON'T HELP  
**”**



Including this, the FD for 2018-19 would have been 5.7 per cent instead of 3.4 per cent reported in the Budget. During 2017-18 also, according to the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the FD was suppressed by 2.4 per cent, courtesy EBRs.

The current year for which the FD target is kept at 3.3 per cent (same as the target for 2018-19), will also end up with a repeat of the scenario in the previous two years.

Let us look at how slippage from the target is likely to pan out. First, at the time of the Budget presentation, the FD projection at 3.3 per cent or about ₹700,000 crore in value term was based on a nominal GDP growth of 12 per cent — from ₹188,00,000 crore during 2018-19 to ₹211,00,000 crore during 2019-20. Against this, the actual growth is estimated to be 7.5 per cent implying a GDP of about ₹202,00,000 crore during 2019-20. Even if the deficit were to be kept at ₹700,000 crore, as percentage of the lower than initially projected GDP or ₹202,00,000 crore (or "denominator" effect), this will be 3.46 per cent.

That apart, even in absolute terms, the deficit is expected to be much higher than ₹700,000 crore. First, given the slow pace of tax collection so far till November 2019 — both direct and indirect — and little prospect of any major recovery in the remaining four months, the collection during the year is expected to fall short of the Budget estimate by about ₹200,000 crore. Second, the proceeds of disinvestment are expected to miss the target by a whopping ₹80,000 crore (the Budget estimate of ₹1,05,000 crore was based largely on strategic sale of BPCL, Air India and so on which is unlikely to materialise before March 31, 2020).

So, the total shortfall in collection — on both these counts — adds up to ₹2,80,000 crore. Add to this, fertiliser subsidy arrears of about ₹60,000 crore (according to the industry body Fertiliser Association of India); unpaid food sub-

sidy bills of the FCI at ₹60,000 crore and about ₹30,000 crore as unpaid fuel subsidy bills to OMCs. That takes the grand total to ₹430,000 crore. This will push the actual deficit to ₹1,130,000 crore which translates to 5.6 per cent. This does not capture the EBRs used to fund the Government's welfare schemes. If, that is included then, the deficit would be even higher.

Taking a "fair" and "realistic" view of all receipts and expenditure of the Union Government, its fiscal deficit is thus turning out to be almost double the three per cent target handed out by the NK Singh Committee. Though, in the balance sheet, it may still show a figure close to the target and bandish that it is sticking to the fiscal consolidation glide path, that is made possible through an act of skulduggery. But, this is not a sustainable situation.

Apart from the spillover effect on PSUs, other agencies of the Government such as the FCI and others, through whom subsidy is administered (e.g. fertiliser manufacturers) who are made to bear the brunt by way of liquidity problems, interest cost, recurring losses and so on, the most serious damage is done due to the "complacency" this breeds with regard to fiscal management. When, the target is achieved without actually bringing about reduction in expenditure or boosting revenue or a combination of both, why would our planners and policymakers take credible measures in that direction?

For instance, a major reason for the ballooning subsidy on urea is its ridiculously low MRP (the current price is just 10 per cent higher than it was in 2002). This is despite the recommendation of the Expenditure Reforms Commission (ERC) in 2000 to increase steps to eliminate the gap between the cost and price over five years. No action on this front implies increasing subsidy in the face of ever-increasing cost. But, by rolling over payments year-after-year and showing less in the Budget, the man-

darins in the Finance Ministry skirt the real issue.

Likewise, by not releasing food subsidy dues to FCI and showing less expenditure in the Budget, they run away from dealing with the real factors viz. ridiculously low selling price of food grain, high inefficiency in handling operations by agencies and giving millions of non-deserving access to the food security system.

The same holds for oil subsidy (mainly LPG and kerosene).

In the backdrop of the slowdown in growth, even as commentators are advocating some leniency in the fiscal consolidation drive, the reality is that already, there is substantial relaxation though it is going unrecognised. Under the "business as usual" scenario, the economy may face catastrophic consequences. The Government should act before it is too late. For that, it should recognise that the problem exists and stop fudging its accounts. But, this by itself won't help.

This has to be followed up by some hardcore reforms such as removal of controls in key areas such as fertilisers, food, fuel and power, giving subsidy through direct benefit transfer (DBT), substantial pruning of the number of beneficiaries under welfare schemes and removing inefficiencies at various levels in the supply chain. This will require shedding populism and cracking down on vested interest (especially corrupt politicians and bureaucrats who are gaining a lot from the existing dispensation) with alacrity.

Modi should show the gumption to crack the whip. Having an absolute majority in the Parliament and four-and-a-half years to go, he can afford to do. Even so, time and again, he has reiterated his commitment to do things in the overall national interest even if it leads to a political backlash. Hence, he should go ahead.

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

**Unlock the Capital's economic potential**

Regularising unauthorised colonies is a long-standing issue that needs to be resolved soon because not only will it benefit the people living in these areas but will also add to the Government's coffers and provide an entry point for residents into the formal financial markets



PRERNA PRABHAKAR

Delhi's urban planning policies have been characterised by the inability of the agencies concerned to facilitate adequate supply of affordable, formal housing stock for its residents. As a result, informal housing has crept up across large parts of the national Capital. Unauthorised Colonies (UACs) are one form of such informal housing categories and have grown at an unprecedented rate — from 110 in 1961, to nearly 1,800 colonies today. These UACs cater largely to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Low Income Groups (LIG) that reside in the city.

While numerous efforts have been made to regularise these colonies to

address problems emanating from their informality, the situation has barely improved. This has been a result of institutional multiplicity coupled with the political motives of elected representatives at various levels.

Political establishments target the UAC population for garnering votes and make promises about regularisation and development. However, once elected, they fail to deliver on them.

In 2008, just before the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the then Central Government issued a notification to regularise UACs and invited applications from these colonies. However, the process went nowhere post applications.

This time, the Narendra Modi-led BJP Government at the Centre, close to the Delhi Assembly elections in February 8, has passed a Bill in the Parliament to confer ownership rights on 40 lakh people living in unauthorised colonies. In this regard, Prime Minister Modi addressed a rally in New Delhi and said, "We took the initiative to do the work which many previous Governments did not do."

As per the Bill, these rights will be conferred for built-up plots as well as

vacant plots on payment of nominal charges.

Subsequently, any owner of a 100 sq mt residential plot in an unauthorised colony will have to pay at least ₹19,980 (depending on the zone in which the colony falls) to acquire the ownership certificate. This addresses the affordability concern in case of the UAC population while attempting to recover the land cost from the residents of these colonies.

This measure can have positive benefits for the city's economy. Implementing this notification can provide an entry point for the residents into the formal financial markets. This affirmed ownership can enable property owners to seek collateral against their houses. Such a move is expected to add around 800,000 potential customers to the housing loans market, providing the necessary push to the national Capital's economy.

With the registration of UAC households, the decision is likely to boost further formal transactions, hence adding to the Government's stamp duty revenue.

However, the Bill does not offer any clarity on the status of transaction of a plot/house/property in the existing colony.

This clarity is important to solve the issue of creating a formal and affordable housing market in these colonies. In the absence of clear information, it may be assumed that with the conferment of the ownership rights to a UAC plot owner, the subsequent registration of sale deed will take place at the conventional circle rates of the colony.

In this case, the resident living in an UAC household acquires the ownership rights of a 100 sq mt plot for at least ₹19,980; however he/she would be selling the same property for ₹1.6 crore, based on conventional circle rates.

This begs the question — do properties in these localities really merit this price, given the inadequate infrastructure? In this regard, to maintain a balanced buyer-seller dynamics, policymakers should reconsider the transaction prices for these households. Without this necessary revision, it is possible that these prices create an excess supply condition and consequently distort the market.

Another route through which this Bill is likely to inflate the Government's revenue is through Property Tax obligation for the registered UAC households.

Although the notification is silent on the issue of Property Tax collection from these colonies, the forthcoming Bill is likely to offer clarity in this regard. With legal ownership, the UAC residents will be obliged to pay the annual property tax, which will be a significant contributor to its maintenance services.

To reap these possible economic gains from the Bill, it is vital that the implementation of the entire process is not complex. From the perspective of the applicants, the suggested process involves certain tools and techniques that are likely to be beyond their understanding, given their socio-economic profile. Thus, training and awareness would be required to make the programme successful and the Delhi Government must take the lead on it by substantiating the need for institutional coordination.

Discussions with a few residents of UACs in Delhi have brought out that given their past experience, residents are still apprehensive about the actual implementation of the Bill and have not gone ahead with the application process on the online portal. In some cases, people are not even aware of the procedural require-

ment. This is reflected by the fact that there are only a handful of applications on the DDA's portal — 166 out of around 800,000 households in the city. Against this pessimistic situation, it is imperative that for the desired success rate of this policy, volunteers are appointed to assist the UAC residents in the process. As of now, there are only 25 help desks and they are very unlikely to serve the purpose of efficiently facilitating the process.

Effective implementation of this proposed policy can unlock the substantial economic potential of the city's land and housing markets.

The issue of UACs in Delhi has gone on for far too long and it is high time that it gets resolved for better economic outcomes. Whether the vicious circle around policy implementation for unauthorised colonies — with vote bank politics being the central point — will be broken this time around is likely to get clear after the Delhi Assembly elections.

(The writer is an Associate Fellow at the National Council of Applied Economic Research. The views expressed in this article are personal)

# Passenger vehicle retail sales dip 9 pc in Dec

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile dealers' body FADA on Tuesday said retail sales of passenger vehicles in December 2019 declined 9 per cent to 2,15,716 units year-on-year, as even the best offers failed to lift weak consumer sentiments. According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), passenger vehicles (PV) sales stood at 2,36,586 units in December 2018.

Two-wheeler sales declined 16 per cent to 12,64,169 units last month as compared with 15,00,545 units in December 2018. Commercial vehicle sales declined 21 per cent to 67,793 units as compared to 85,833 units in December 2018.

Three-wheeler sales, however, rose one per cent to 58,324 units last month. Total sales across categories declined 15 per cent to 16,06,002 units in December 2019 as against 18,80,995 units in the year-ago month. FADA President Ashish Harsharaj Kale said December sales de-growth was not on expected lines as the inquiry levels all through the month were quite robust.

Consumer sentiment continues to be very weak as customers did not conclude on the purchase even after taking the benefit of inquiring and despite



the best offers being available, he added. "The sharp decline in growth has denied the dealer community an opportunity to reduce its BS-IV inventory making the transition to BS-VI trickier," Kale said.

With such weak consumer sentiment, FADA recommends a very cautious approach to its members with serious focus on BS-IV inventory liquidation, he added. "FADA will work towards seeking relief from the Honourable Supreme Court for the BS-IV inventory of its members as with such weak consumer demand the near term retail sales are unpredictable, making it extremely difficult for our members to continue the current business

and also ensure a nil BS-IV inventory on March 31," Kale noted. The commercial vehicle and two-wheeler inventory still remains a concern, he added. Besides, liquidity still remains a concern for the dealers' community as well as for the retail customer as banking industry continues to be in cautious mode, Kale said highlighting the challenges. "Equal importance needs to be given to availability of reasonably liberal credit, especially in a developing country like ours where the growth is driven by first time buyers or individuals and businesses looking to expand beyond their current capacity," he added.

# Sensex, Nifty tumble on tepid Q3 earnings, GDP growth concerns

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai (PTI): Market benchmark Sensex furthered losses for the second straight session on Tuesday as investors fretted over subdued corporate results and IMF revising downwards India's growth forecast. At the closing bell, the 30-share Sensex was down 205.10 points, or 0.49 per cent, at 41,323.81; while the NSE Nifty settled 54.70 points, or 0.45 per cent, lower at 12,169.85 — the third loss for the gauge in a row.

Indian bourses also remained under pressure tracking weaker global markets after the outbreak of a new deadly virus in China spooked investors. On the Sensex chart, Tata Steel was the top loser, shedding 3.01 per cent, followed by M&M, Maruti, Asian Paints, PowerGrid, ITC and Axis Bank. On the other hand, Ultratech Cement, Kotak Bank, Bharti Airtel, HDFC, IndusInd Bank and ONGC ended with gains. Sectorally, BSE power, realty, metal, auto, utilities, FMCG, bankex and finance indices ended up to 1.47 per cent. While telecom, tech and energy indices settled in the green. In the broader market, BSE midcap fell 0.21 per cent, while smallcap closed flat.

Besides rising concerns over growth in India, global investors turned risk-averse after confirmation of a deadly SARS-like virus in China. "Indian markets

continued to fall for third consecutive day on the back of weak Asian and European markets. Global agencies are slashing India's growth rates as domestic demand growth has slowed down more than anticipated earlier. Earnings season has started and the growth has not been very encouraging from the few Nifty companies that have declared their results so far," Hemang Kapasi, Portfolio Manager - Equity Investment Products, Sanctum Wealth Management, said.

All eyes are now on the budget and government initiatives to revive the lagging economy, he added. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday lowered growth estimate for India to 4.8 per cent for 2019, citing stress in the non-bank financial sector and weak rural income growth as the major factors for the downward revision. "Investors are profit booking in mid and small caps post the decent pre-budget rally. Some subdued results in Q3 compared to the solid expectation has triggered a consolidation in the market. We believe this is a rational reaction of the market which will hold in the short-term and can reverse as per the final outcome of Budget & Q3FY20 results," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services Ltd, said.

# Zomato acquires Uber Eats business in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Zomato on Tuesday said it has acquired the Indian business of Uber Eats in an all-stock deal that will give Uber 9.99 per cent stake in the Indian food delivery and restaurant discovery platform. Uber Eats app in India will discontinue operations and direct restaurants, delivery partners, and users of the Uber Eats apps to the Zomato platform, effective Tuesday, Zomato said in a statement.

The deal marks possible consolidation in the highly competitive and price-sensitive online food delivery market where most players are in the red. In a regulatory filing to the BSE, Info Edge (India) - a shareholder in Zomato - said its shareholding in Zomato will stand reduced to about 22.71 per cent on fully converted and diluted basis upon closing of the transaction. The deal comes days after Zomato had raised USD 150 million in funding from existing investor Ant Financial, an Alibaba affiliate, at a USD 3 billion valuation. Post money valuation of Zomato is USD 3.55 billion, sources in know of the matter told PTI, adding that this transaction will add to a total of over 50 million orders per month on its plat-



form, giving it around 55 per cent market share. "We are proud to have pioneered restaurant discovery and to have created a leading food delivery business across more than 500 cities in India. This acquisition significantly strengthens our position in the category," Zomato Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said.

Uber Eats, which entered India in 2017, has about 26,000 restaurants listed on its platform from 41 cities. On accessing Uber Eats app, users were shown a message saying they can still use Uber Eats if they are travelling outside India. Discussions between Zomato and Uber have been on for months. Facing stiff competition from Zomato and Swiggy, Uber Eats had been making losses. Uber had projected an operating loss of Rs 2,197 crore in its food delivery business for the five months through December 2019,

according to a valuation report prepared by a KPMG affiliate BSR and was part of regulatory filings. According to sources, Uber Eats India business contributed three per cent of the global gross bookings but accounted for over 25 per cent of adjusted EBITDA losses for the first three quarters of 2019. With sale of the food business in India, Uber can now focus on the rides business and driving it towards profitability, one of the sources said. They also said that 245 full time employees of Uber Eats will be affected and some of these people could be absorbed in other roles in Uber.

"India remains an exceptionally important market to Uber and we will continue to invest in growing our local rides business, which is already the clear category leader. We have been very impressed by Zomato's ability to grow rapidly in a capital-efficient manner and we wish them continued success," Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said in the statement. Zomato is a restaurant review, restaurant discovery, food delivery and dining out transactions platform, providing in-depth information for over 1.5 million restaurants across 24 countries.

## NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	12195.30	12230.05	12162.30	12169.85	-54.70
INFRATEL	224.40	243.55	224.40	241.00	19.15
ZEE	269.00	286.70	267.15	283.00	12.25
BPCL	457.60	466.50	455.05	463.50	6.35
COALINDIA	201.15	205.25	201.15	202.35	1.20
KOTAKBANK	1605.00	1610.00	1585.20	1627.35	9.45
HDFC	2443.00	2485.90	2432.00	2465.00	10.65
ULTRACEMCO	455.00	452.00	444.00	448.00	16.35
BRITANNIA	3100.00	3130.00	3077.25	3120.30	9.85
TECHM	777.25	783.40	775.00	779.50	1.30
RELIANCE	1528.60	1545.85	1522.00	1535.20	2.65
INDUSINDBK	1332.00	1350.00	1320.00	1334.05	2.10
TCS	2169.95	2186.55	2158.05	2172.35	2.00
BAJAJFINSV	9583.95	9625.00	9508.20	9572.45	-0.30
SBIN	313.80	316.95	312.00	313.90	-0.10
HINDUNILVR	2059.75	2075.00	2052.15	2062.00	-0.85
BHARTIARTL	510.00	515.00	504.00	508.35	-3.55
ONGC	123.05	124.50	122.40	122.80	-0.10
ADANIPORTS	378.80	382.00	375.30	379.70	-0.35
DREDDY	3055.55	3079.80	3035.85	3052.00	-7.60
SUNPHARMA	448.00	451.75	446.00	448.00	-1.45
BAJAJ-AUTO	3096.00	3119.00	3085.50	3093.00	-10.70
GRASIM	779.00	781.10	765.45	770.00	-2.80
BAFINANCE	4149.95	4186.10	4117.05	4135.00	-17.60
WIPRO	247.90	248.20	246.00	246.85	-1.15
GAIL	128.35	129.55	126.30	127.20	-0.60
BAJFINANCE	1134.75	1131.90	1136.45	1130.10	-7.50
NTPC	118.70	119.55	116.95	117.50	-0.75
ICICIBANK	532.95	540.25	530.20	531.15	-3.70
TITAN	1183.45	1183.90	1160.00	1179.15	-8.70
HEROMOTOCO	2410.00	2412.65	2375.00	2398.00	-17.60
YESBANK	38.60	39.20	38.10	38.50	-0.30
HDFCBANK	1250.00	1250.00	1238.40	1244.90	-10.00
INFY	768.45	770.50	767.15	761.15	-7.30
NESTLEIND	156.05	155.60	152.00	152.25	-14.00
HINDALCO	206.00	208.50	204.65	205.10	-2.20
HCLTECH	589.30	593.25	582.35	582.75	-6.50
UPL	582.80	582.80	572.20	578.00	-6.60
AXISBANK	726.35	729.60	716.05	717.45	-9.75
ITC	241.25	241.45	238.00	238.45	-3.45
CIPLA	478.95	479.95	472.20	473.00	-7.15
JSWSTEEL	270.00	270.00	264.35	266.80	-4.55
EIGHERMOT	21358.00	21425.00	20970.30	21005.00	-360.10
POWERGRID	203.65	204.30	199.00	201.05	-3.60
VEDL	157.00	158.40	153.55	154.05	-2.85
IOC	118.00	118.45	114.25	115.15	-2.35
MARUTI	7411.50	7434.65	7287.80	7297.90	-151.70
ASIANPAINT	1839.95	1842.55	1793.85	1809.00	-39.75
TATAMOTORS	195.50	196.40	190.20	190.25	-4.75
M&M	564.00	564.90	550.10	550.95	-16.25
TATASTEEL	487.80	487.80	473.50	474.50	-16.15

## NIFTY NEXT 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY NEXT 50	28699.10	28801.20	28583.85	28617.35	-137.10
IDEA	5.30	6.05	5.30	5.95	1.10
AUROPHARMA	481.00	495.40	472.00	494.50	11.55
IBULHSGFIN	292.80	305.80	291.55	300.90	6.50
ASHOKLEY	84.20	86.65	83.85	86.15	13.30
PEL	1574.95	1617.00	1560.00	1610.30	24.10
NIACL	157.00	168.35	156.10	160.40	2.05
SIRTRANSFIN	1071.00	1103.80	1062.85	1086.95	13.55
OFSS	2944.90	2974.90	2912.00	2990.00	30.80
LUPIN	733.00	744.25	727.25	739.00	7.10
HDFCLIFE	595.70	609.70	594.15	602.50	4.25
BIOCON	291.60	295.90	290.10	294.10	2.05
L&T	117.55	119.50	116.10	118.90	0.80
CADILAC	266.00	270.50	266.00	268.50	1.55
ICICIPRULI	488.15	497.00	478.20	490.45	2.15
AMBUJACEM	206.00	209.00	205.70	207.85	0.80
MCDOWELL-N	578.10	580.50	570.20	580.35	2.25
DABUR	485.40	483.85	480.45	487.50	1.45
MOTHERSUMI	136.40	139.45	134.00	138.05	0.35
CONCOR	550.50	554.25	550.00	552.15	1.20
ACC	1494.95	1509.40	1487.00	1500.00	2.45
BANKBARODA	94.70	95.70	94.10	94.80	0.10
HINDPETRO	248.85	251.85	248.00	249.00	0.25
BAJAJHLDNG	3383.00	3383.00	3362.00	3379.00	3.25
PETRONET	272.95	274.95	269.00	273.55	0.15
GICRE	254.50	258.00	251.50	254.80	0.05
BOSCHLTD	14929.95	15130.00	14890.00	14926.10	-44.25
PAGEIND	25377.85	25600.00	25160.00	25260.00	-117.85
PNB	61.55	62.30	61.25	61.30	-0.30
SIEMENS	1591.70	1611.00	1575.10	1578.25	-13.50
PGHIL	11222.05	11300.00	11200.00	11210.20	-98.30
SBILIFE	980.00	987.00	972.00	972.75	-8.75
COLPAL	1499.45	1499.45	1483.20	1486.80	-14.45
DIVS	258.00	258.25	255.00	256.10	-2.85
INFYLAB	1892.00	1900.90	1868.00	1868.00	-24.00
DMAT	1930.00	1959.55	1901.90	1912.00	-24.65
BANDHANBNK	481.00	483.90	476.00	477.00	-6.70
PIDILITIND	1439.25	1440.00	1412.50	1416.00	-24.40
ICICI	1357.65	1369.00	1323.00	1331.00	-23.75
HAVELLS	623.00	622.65	612.85	614.00	-11.30
HINDZINC	214.00	216.80	211.65	212.40	-3.95
HDFCAMC	3228.00	3240.00	3172.00	3178.00	-67.00
INDIGO	1460.00	1462.80	1426.10	1440.00	-32.35
GODREJCP	749.90	749.90	729.80	730.15	-18.35
UBL	1300.40	1305.30	1256.00	1271.35	-32.10
MARICO	344.00	345.00	336.00	336.50	-9.60
NMDC	138.00	138.40	133.80	134.30	-4.50
BERGEPAINT	56.80	56.80	54.70	54.90	-19.25
NHPC	26.80	26.80	25.65	26.00	-1.05
PEC	112.10	112.65	106.20	106.20	-6.15

## BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	POWERGRID	203.00	204.25	198.95	200.50	MINDTREE	893.00	906.45	886.65	896.85	LUXIND	1490.80	1537.00	1470.05	1511.15	GARFIBRES	1447.40	1447.40	1376.25	1376.25
SBIN	313.95	316.80	312.10	313.65	TATAELXSI	939.00	963.00	926.10	954.70	BAJAJ-AUTO	3087.60	3118.20	3087.60	3096.30	PGHIL	4302.10	4368.60	4274.00	4323.90	GDMCLTD	69.00	69.05	66.00	67.05
BHARTIARTL	509.10	515.00	504.40	511.35	MFL	520.00	527.00	510.30	524.40	HAL	800.80	885.00	800.75	874.20	IDFC	38.35	39.30	38.35	38.55	MINDACORP	105.10	108.40	103.95	104.20
HINDUNILVR	2063.00	2074.40	2052.15	2056.95	RALLIS	227.70	235.70	226.00	234.40	MARICO	346.00	346.00	336.15	336.90	CEATLTD	1003.95	1014.00	1000.00	1007.45	CENTURYPLY	169.45	171.10	166.10	169.55
RELIANCE	1529.70	1545.95	1523.00	1533.95	IDFCFIRSTB	43.15	43.85	42.95	43.20	ASHOKA	117.65	120.55	114.20	118.85	THERMAX	1063.25	1065.00	1045.85	1053					

# Historic Trump impeachment trial begins in Senate

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump's impeachment trial is set to unfold at the Capitol, a contentious proceeding over whether to remove him from office for pressuring Ukraine to investigate his Democratic rivals and obstructing Congress' ensuing investigation.

As the Senate reconvenes with Chief Justice John Roberts presiding, a first test will come midday Tuesday when the session gavel opens to vote on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's proposed rules for debate.

More than procedure is at stake: Trump's presidency is on the line, and the nation is deeply divided just weeks before the first Democratic primary presidential contests. To complicate matters, four presidential candidates are serving as jurors in the Senate trial, which will keep them off the campaign trail.

On the eve of the trial, the Republican leader offered a compressed calendar for opening statements, just two days for each side, as Trump's lawyers argued for swift rejection of the "flimsy" charges against the president and acquittal.

"All of this is a dangerous perversion of the Constitution that the Senate should swiftly and roundly condemn," the president's lawyers wrote in their first full filing Monday.

"The articles should be rejected and the president should immediately be acquitted."

Democrats — as the House prosecutors practiced opening arguments well into the night on the Senate floor — vowed to object to a speedy trial as they pressed for fresh witnesses and documents.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer warned of a "cover-up" with McConnell's plan that could lead to back-to-back 12-hour days.

"It's clear Sen. McConnell is hell-bent on making it much more difficult to get witnesses and documents and intent on rushing the trial through," Schumer said. He called the proposed rules a "national disgrace."

The first several days of the trial are expected to be tangled in procedural motions playing out on the Senate floor or, more likely, behind closed doors, since senators must refrain from speaking during the trial proceedings.

Senators are poised for only the third presidential impeachment trial in U.S. history, coming just weeks before the first primaries of the 2020 election, with four senators running for the Democratic nomination sidelined from campaigning.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, the Vermont independent, told supporters in Des Moines they're going to have to "carry

the ball" for him while he takes his seat in Washington. The Iowa caucuses are in less than two weeks.

Trump, meanwhile, is at a global conference in Davos, Switzerland. His White House said McConnell's proposed rules protect Trump's rights to a fair trial.

White House legislative affairs director Eric Ueland said the White House looks forward "to presenting a vigorous defense on the facts and the process as quickly as possible, and seeking an acquittal as swiftly as possible."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will also be away for the proceedings, leading a bipartisan congressional delegation to Poland and Israel to commemorate the 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz at the end of World War II.

She issued a statement Tuesday denouncing McConnell's proposed ground rules as a "sham" because of the compressed schedule and lack of guarantee that witnesses will be called or that evidence gathered by the House would be admitted in the Senate trial.

"The Senate GOP Leader has chosen a cover-up for the President, rather than honor his oath to the Constitution," Pelosi said.

House Democrats impeached the Republican president last month on two charges: abuse of power by withholding US military aid to

Ukraine as he pressed the country to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden, and obstruction of Congress by refusing to cooperate with their investigation.

The Constitution gives the House the sole power to impeach a president and the Senate the final verdict by convening as the impeachment court for a trial.

The president late Monday named eight House Republicans, some of his fiercest defenders, to a special team tasked with rallying support beyond the Senate chamber in the court of public opinion.

McConnell is angling for a quick trial and acquittal, and with Republicans holding the Senate majority, the trial proposal is likely to be approved by senators in the president's party.

The Republican leader had promised to set rules similar to the last trial, of President Bill Clinton in 1999, but his resolution diverged in key ways, which may leave some senators from both parties uneasy.

After the four days of opening arguments, senators will be allowed up to 16 hours for questions to the prosecution and defense, followed by four hours of debate. Only then will there be votes on whether or not to call other witnesses.

At the end of deliberations, the Senate would then vote on each impeachment article.

# China steps up efforts to control new coronavirus outbreak

AP ■ WUHAN (CHINA)

Heightened precautions were being taken in China and elsewhere Tuesday as governments strove to control the outbreak of a new coronavirus that threatens to spread further during the Lunar New Year travel rush.

Anxieties grew after Chinese government expert Zhong Nanshan revealed on state television late Monday that the virus can be spread from one person to another. The first cases late last month were connected to a seafood market, and transmission was suspected to be occurring from animal-to-human. Authorities previously had not confirmed human-to-human transmission.

Four people have died, and more than 200 have been infected, and most of the illnesses and all of the fatalities were in Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the seafood market is located.

In addition to 198 cases in Wuhan, more than 20 have been diagnosed in Beijing, Shanghai and southern Guangdong province, and four cases have been confirmed overseas among Chinese travelers in South Korea, Japan and Thailand.

Two cases in Guangdong were people who had not visited Wuhan but fell ill after family members returned from there. Zhong cited those as evidence the disease had spread between humans.

Concerned about a global outbreak similar to SARS, a different coronavirus that spread from China to more than a dozen countries in 2002-2003, numerous nations have adopted screening measures for travelers arriving from China, especially those from Wuhan.

Stock markets fell in much of Asia as investors worried about the potential impact on tourism and the economy.

"The outbreak of a SARS-like coronavirus in Wuhan is developing into a major potential economic risk to the Asia-Pacific region now that there is medical evidence of human-to-human transmission," wrote Rajiv Biswas, the Asia Pacific



A notice explaining precautions to be taken by people traveling to Wuhan is seen at a terminal of Rome's International Fiumicino airport on Tuesday. Heightened precautions are being taken worldwide as a new strain of coronavirus has been infecting hundreds of people across the central Chinese metropolis.

chief economist at IHS Markit, in an analysis.

He noted that the SARS crisis hurt the economies of China, several Southeast Asian nations and as far afield as Canada and Australia.

Australia, Japan and South Korea were among countries increasing airport screenings. Australia receives a significant number of travelers from China, including three direct flights a week from Wuhan into Sydney, and these flights will be met by border security and biosecurity staff for assessments, the nation's chief medical officer Brendan Murphy told reporters.

At least three US airports have started screening incoming airline passengers from central China.

"We need to step up our caution levels as the number of patients is continuing to rise in China," Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said at a meeting with the health minister and others from related ministries.

"Please take every possible precaution," Abe said.

The coronavirus family includes those that cause the common cold, but some found in bats, camels and other animals have evolved into more

severe illnesses. SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome, and MERS — Middle East respiratory syndrome — are in the coronavirus family.

The possibility the virus could be spread between people increases the chances it could spread faster and more widely. The Chinese government has estimated people will make around 3 billion trips during the Lunar New Year travel season, but some social media users have said they may stay home due to concern about the spread of the illness.

Zhong, who helped expose the scale of SARS, told state broadcaster CCTV that two people in Guangdong province caught the virus from family members.

Fifteen medical workers have also tested positive for the virus, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping instructed government departments to promptly release information on the virus and deepen international cooperation. His comments Monday were his first on the illness.

When SARS first infected people in southern China, the Chinese government initially tried to conceal the severity of

the epidemic, which ended up killing nearly 800 people. The cover-up was exposed by a high-ranking physician.

Gabriel Leung, dean of medicine at the University of Hong Kong, said Chinese authorities have responded much more quickly this time.

"Our underlying assumptions are, the force of infection is very different now... because so many public health measures have been undertaken and so many interventions have been executed," Leung told reporters at a briefing.

Leung, who was heavily involved in the response to SARS, said modeling shows that cases will multiply over the coming weeks but the outbreak will gradually lose momentum as precautions take effect.

Initial symptoms of the new coronavirus include fever, cough, tightness of the chest and shortness of breath.

Everyone entering Beijing United Family Hospital on Tuesday was required to have their temperature checked as soon as they entered the door. The hospital provided surgical masks to all patients, who were told they had to wear them. All nurses, doctors and cleaning staff were also wearing masks.

# UK to end early release of terror prisoners

AFP ■ LONDON

Britain on Tuesday unveiled plans to end the early release of terrorism prisoners and increase their sentences, following last year's London Bridge attack by convicted terrorist Usman Khan.

The government said it would launch a "major review" of how convicted terrorists are managed in response to the November 29 violence, which saw Khan kill two people before being shot dead by police.

The attack, which occurred during the general election campaign, immediately became highly politicised as Khan had

already served time for terror offences before being released early.

The reforms announced aim to ensure those convicted of serious offences, such as preparing acts of terrorism or directing a terrorist organisation, spend at least 14 years in prison.

They will also force such offenders to serve their whole sentence behind bars — rather than be eligible for early release — and overhaul the terrorist licensing rules.

"The senseless terror attack... in November confronted us with some hard truths about how we deal with terrorist offenders," Home

Secretary (interior minister) Priti Patel said in a statement.

"Today we are... giving police and probation officers the resources they need to investigate and track offenders, introducing tougher sentences, and launching major reviews into how offenders are managed after they are released."

Jonathan Hall, the government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, will oversee "a sweeping independent review" of the multi-agency system dealing with terrorism offenders, the statement added.

The proposed bill will double the number of probation officers specialising in terrorism prisoners and introduce

measures such as polygraph testing.

It will increase the number of places available in probation hostels so officials can keep closer tabs on terrorists in the weeks after their release from prison.

The government said it would also review the support available to victims of terrorism, pledging to invest 500,000 pounds (USD 650,000, 586,000 euros) "to ensure more victims get the support and advice they need, faster".

It will simultaneously increase the counter-terrorism police budget by 90 million pounds to 906 million pounds in the coming financial year.

# Iran confirms two missiles fired at Ukraine airliner

AFP ■ TEHRAN

Iran has confirmed two missiles were fired at a Ukrainian airliner brought down this month, in a catastrophic error that killed all 176 people on board and sparked angry protests.

The country's civil aviation authority said it has yet to receive a positive response after requesting technical assistance from France and the United States to decode black boxes from the downed airliner.

The Kiev-bound Ukraine International Airlines plane was accidentally shot down shortly after takeoff from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport on January 8.

Iran has come under mounting international pressure to carry out a full and transparent investigation into the air disaster.

"Investigators... discovered that two Tor-M1 missiles... were fired at the aircraft," Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation said in a preliminary report posted on its website late Monday.

It said an investigation was ongoing to assess the bearing their impact had on the accident.

The statement confirms a report in The New York Times which included video footage appearing to show two projectiles being fired at the airliner.

The Tor-M1 is a short-range surface-to-air missile developed by the former Soviet Union that is designed to tar-

get aircraft or cruise missiles. Iran had for days denied Western claims based on US intelligence reports that the Boeing 737 operating Flight PS752 had been shot down.

It came clean on January 11, with the Revolutionary Guards' aerospace commander Brigadier General Amirali Hajizadeh accepting full responsibility.

But he said the missile operator who opened fire had been acting independently.

The deadly blunder triggered days of student-led protests mainly in the Iranian capital.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Friday that the demonstrations were unrepresentative of the Iranian people and accused the coun-

try's enemies of exploiting the air disaster for propaganda purposes.

In its report, the Civil Aviation Organisation said it was "impossible" for it to read the flight data and cockpit voice recorders — commonly known as black boxes — because they are so advanced.

But it suggests Iran wants to keep them for the time being. "If devices are provided, the information (on the black boxes) can be restored and retrieved in a short period of time," it said.

The Civil Aviation Organisation said it had asked its French and US counterparts, the BEA and NTSB respectively, to provide a list of the equipment required to read the black boxes.

# China's former Interpol chief sentenced to 13 yrs in prison

AFP ■ BEIJING

Former Interpol chief Meng Hongwei, who was detained on a visit to China in 2018, was sentenced Tuesday to more than 13 years in prison for bribery in a case that shook the international police organisation.

Meng - a former vice minister of public security - is among a growing group of Communist Party cadres caught in President Xi Jinping's anti-graft campaign, which critics say has also served as a way to remove the leader's political enemies.

He vanished during a visit to China from France, where Interpol is based, and was later accused of accepting bribes and expelled from the

Communist Party. His wife was granted political asylum in France last year, after saying she was afraid she and her two children would be the targets of kidnapping attempts.

Meng was sentenced to 13 years and six months in prison and fined two million yuan RMB (USD 290,000), said the Tianjin First Intermediate People's Court on Tuesday.

At his trial last June, he pleaded guilty to accepting USD 2.1 million in bribes, after the court said he used his status and positions to "seek improper benefit" and accumulate bribes.

The court statement on Tuesday said Meng had "truthfully confessed to all the criminal facts" and would not appeal the decision.

# Eleven workers dead in Siberia fire: Official

AFP ■ MOSCOW

Eleven people including 10 Uzbek workers died when a fire ripped through a one-storey wooden shack in a remote village in the Siberian region of Tomsk, officials said on Tuesday.

"The bodies of 11 people have been found," Russia's emergencies ministry said in a statement.

Citing preliminary information, regional authorities said that ten of the victims were citizens of Uzbekistan.

The fire broke out on the territory of a private saw mill in the Prichulymsky settlement and the wooden shack was used to house workers despite its substandard conditions, authorities said.

The regional governor arrived at the scene of the tragedy and tasked officials with conducting a fire safety inspection in the entire region.

# Hong Kong's Lunar New Year fairs get a protest makeover

AFP ■ HONG KONG

Protest-themed Lunar New Year fairs have sprung up across Hong Kong to raise money and morale for the city's pro-democracy movement despite stiff resistance from local authorities and pro-Beijing politicians.

The fairs are an annual staple in the run-up to the new year, which begins on Saturday and will see millions around the world welcome the Year of the Rat. Usually the fairs stock flowers, fruits, dried goods and other traditional new year gifts.

In the past, political parties from across the spectrum set up stalls to raise money and awareness of their causes — often with satirical posters and products teasing their rivals.

But the government banned such stalls this year at the 15 official fairs after more than seven months of political unrest.

In response, nearly a dozen independent fairs have been set up across the city, selling merchandise laden with references to the pro-democracy protests.

At a fair on the steep slopes of the city's Sai Ying Pun district, hundreds of shoppers formed long queues. One stall was giving away cloth bags with Chinese calligraphy ambigrams that use the characters for both "Hong Kong" and "add oil", a popular phrase of encouragement.

At another, a vendor was selling traditional "fai chun" new year greetings that people hang on their doors, blending traditional auspicious wishes with protest slogans and demands.

Many of the shoppers and vendors criticised the government's decision to stop political parties setting up stalls at the official fairs.

"Cutting (them) seems to be one of the measures adopted by

the government to punish the non-violent supporters of the protests," said Tam Kwok-sun, 64, who was making fresh prints on T-shirts and bags at the fair on Centre Street.

Some of the independent fairs have met opposition, found it difficult to find venues and even had to cancel.

The fair in Sai Ying Pun had its length cut from 100 to 50 metres by local officials after pro-establishment politicians said it was unsafe.

"They rejected our application after the first meeting of the newly elected council," said Camille Yam, a member of the pro-democracy camp which swept to victory in municipal-level elections back in November.

A fair at a public housing complex in Kwan Chung district was cancelled entirely after the local Housing Authority revoked its approval three days before the

opening, co-organiser Janis Fan told AFP. The decision came after pro-Beijing councillors who lost their seats in November's local elections criticised the fair organisers for "instigating strong political ideologies within communities".

"One day after we were singled out and criticised, the authority revoked its approvals," Fan said.

One of the objections raised by the pro-establishment bloc was the presence of a "pig with political meaning" in posters advertising the fair — a reference to a cartoon pig that has been embraced by protesters as a symbol of their movement because 2019 was the Year of the Pig.

The pig began life as a meme on LHKKG, an online forum that serves as a virtual command centre for the protests, and now features heavily in protest merchandise.

# Anti-establishment Thai party survives first dissolution bid

AFP ■ BANGKOK

A stridently anti-military Thai party survived a first legal attempt to disband it Tuesday over alleged sedition — including links to the Illuminati, a secret group conspiracy theorists say is seeking global domination.

The Constitutional Court ruled Future Forward — a pro-democracy party which vehemently opposes the army-aligned establishment — had not shown any intent to overthrow the constitutional monarchy.

Dismissing the charge, a judge on the nine-member bench said there was no sign key executives and the party "had taken actions against the constitutional monarchy".

The ruling sparked jubilation at party headquarters, with supporters cheering "long live

democracy" and "hell to dictatorship". But FFP — Thailand's third largest party which draws on a deep well of youth support — still faces further threats of dissolution.

It is loathed by the pro-military establishment for its criticism of the army's role in politics and for pushing policies such as an end to conscription and a cut in defence spending.

The same court is still considering a second charge over alleged illegal loans by its charismatic billionaire founder Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, who also faces a barrage of cases against him.

"We believe those cases are politically motivated," Thanathorn said to cheers at a press conference after the ruling.

He vowed to push for amendments to the 2017 army-scripted constitution, which analysts say tilted last year's elec-

tion in the favour of military-backed parties.

Calling an end to the "legal war" against Future Forward, secretary general Pitabutr Saengkanokkul said dissolving parties was "not useful to Thailand's democracy".

Thailand's recent political history has been shaped by the courts, which routinely abolish parties and unseat premiers in what critics say are politically motivated cases. The kingdom has disbanded five parties since 2007 — a move that "kicks out political talent", analyst Thitinan Pongsudhirak of Chulalongkorn University told AFP.

The court considered allegations that speeches by senior FFP members were seditious, as well as a spurious claim the party was linked to the Illuminati, a secret society whose existence has never seri-

ously been proven. That part of the complaint centered on whether the party logo — an upside-down triangle — resembled the symbol of the alleged republican-leaning group traced back to 18th-century Europe.

Thailand's ultra-wealthy monarchy is at the apex of power and is buttressed by harsh royal defamation laws and the backing of the army.

The kingdom remains in a political quagmire with the country split over the arch-royalist government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, a former army chief who seized power in a 2014 coup.

Newly formed Future Forward only came onto Thailand's political scene in 2018, drawing the support of millions of mostly young Thais weary of pro-establishment forces in government.

# A lot has happened, but nothing has been done as yet: Thunberg

PTI ■ DAVOS

Young climate campaigner Greta Thunberg on Tuesday said a lot has happened since her campaign caught eyes of the world but "nothing has been done" actually to save the planet.

"In one aspect, lots has happened since last year. The mass mobilisation of young people around the world has put climate at the top of the agenda," the 17-year old campaigner from Sweden said here at the WEF Annual Meeting.

"People are more generally aware now. The climate and the environment is a hot topic. But — and it's a big but: From another perspective, pretty much nothing has been done,"

she said.

It is just the "very beginning" and a lot needs to be done given the ever increasing greenhouse gas emissions, she said.

Thunberg also said she can't complain about not being heard as she is a person who is being heard all the time, drawing applause from the audience.

Thunberg and a panel of other young activists were speaking at a session on "Forging a Sustainable Path towards a Common Future" about how their efforts to improve the world can achieve the desired results.

The participants included Salvador Gómez-Colón, who raised funds and awareness after Hurricane María devastat

ated his native Puerto Rico in 2017.

Natasha Mwansa, from Zambia who campaigns for girls' and women's rights, and Autumn Peltier, Chief Water Commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation of indigenous people in Canada, were also present.

In 2018, Thunberg began protesting outside the Swedish parliament during school hours with a sign painted with the words, "Skolstrejk for Klimatet" (School Strike for Climate). She has continued to strike every Friday, inspiring hundreds of thousands of children worldwide to follow her example.

"... why is it so important to

stay below 1.5 degrees celsius? Because even at 1 degree people are dying from climate change because that is what the united science calls for, to avoid destabilising the climate so that we have the best possible chance to avoid setting off irreversible chain reactions," she said. Thunberg stressed that every fraction of a degree matters.

Citing parts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that came out in 2018, she said that if we are to have a 67 per cent chance of limiting the global average temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees celsius, we had on January 1st, 2018, about 420 gigatons of CO2 left to emit in that budget.

"... of course, that number is much lower today, as we emit, about 42 gigatons of CO2 every year, including in land use. With today's emissions levels, that remaining budget is gone within less than eight years," she noted.

According to her, these numbers also don't include most feedback loops, non-linear tipping points nor additional warming hidden by toxic air pollution.

"Most models, however, assume that future generations will, however, somehow be able to suck hundreds of billions of tons of CO2 out of the air with technologies that do not exist today in the scale required — and perhaps never will," Thunberg noted.



Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg (centre) seen at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Tuesday. AP

# US seeing economic boom: Trump

PTI ■ DAVOS

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said the US is in the midst of an economic boom that has never been seen before anywhere in the world.

The American dream is back and it's better than ever and there is no one better than the American middle class today, Trump said.

In a special address at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual summit, he said since he last addressed Davos two years ago, the US has enjoyed the "great American comeback" that he had predicted.

"Today I am proud to declare that the United States is in the midst of an economic boom the like of which has never been seen before," he said.

According to him, 11 million jobs have been gained by America since his election and average unemployment rate is the lowest for the tenure of any US President in history.

He also noted that the new trade deal initiated with China is very important.

Earlier, Trump had tweet-

ed, "Heading to Davos, Switzerland, to meet with World and Business Leaders and bring Good Policy and additional Hundreds of Billions of Dollars back to the United States of America! We are now NUMBER ONE in the Universe, by FAR!!"

Two years ago here in Davos, Trump had said, "I will always put America First ... But America First does not mean America alone."

Trump on Tuesday said the second phase of negotiations for the US-China trade deal would begin soon and asserted that the two countries never had a better relationship despite the recent rough patch.

He also said he has a great relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"My relationship with Xi is extraordinary. He's for China, I'm for the US but other than that, we love each other," the American president said at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual summit here.

He also announced that the US will join the 1 trillion trees initiative being launched at WEF.

"This is a time for opti-



mism and not for pessimism. We must reject perennial prophets of doom who have been making alarmist predictions," Trump said.

Talking about reforms undertaken by his government, Trump said, "I know that if we unleashed the potential of our people, cut taxes, slashed regulation, fixed broken trade deals and fully tapped American energy, that prosperity would come thundering

back and that is exactly what happened."

"Years of economic stagnation have given way to a roaring geyser of opportunity," he added.

"We have launched a historic step of removing job killing regulations. We are removing all archaic laws. Today I urge the nations to follow our example and liberate their citizens from the shackles of bureaucracy and other archaic laws. There is no better place on the earth than the United States," he asserted.

Trump further said his administration is focussing on trade, which was neglected by his predecessors.

"We are also addressing chronic problems that undermined our trade. Our leaders earlier didn't do anything on this. The phase two negotiations for our China trade deal is going to start soon. Our relationship with China has never been better. We went through a rough patch, but things are good now. I've a great relationship with President Xi," Trump said.

"Our relationship with China right now has probably never been better. China has made on trade, particularly in intellectual property, ending forced technology transfers, lifting trade barriers on agricultural goods, opening up the financial sector and maintaining a stable currency," Trump said.

The first phase of the deal marks a de-escalation in the trade war pitting the two powerful economic giants against each other for nearly two years.

# France, US agree to extend digital tax row talks

AFP ■ PARIS

Presidents Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump have agreed to extend negotiations on a dispute over a French tax on digital giants to the end of the year, postponing Washington's threat of sanctions against Paris, a French diplomatic source has said.

The source said the French and US leaders, who spoke on Sunday, had agreed to give negotiations a chance to "find a solution in an international framework" and avoid "a trade war that will benefit no one".

Macron tweeted earlier Monday that he had had a "great discussion" with Trump on the issue. "We will work together on a good agreement to avoid tariff escalation," he said on Monday.

"Excellent!" replied Trump on Twitter.

The White House said the two men spoke and "agreed it is important to complete successful negotiations on the digital services tax, and they also

discussed other bilateral issues." The dispute began last year when Paris approved a levy on up to three percent of revenues earned by technology companies in France, as international efforts dragged on to find a new model for taxing revenues earned via online sales and advertising.

Tech companies often pay little tax in countries in which they are not physically present.

Washington said the tax singled out US companies such as Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Netflix, and threatened duties of up to 100 per cent of the value of French imports of such emblematic goods as Champagne and Camembert cheese.

On January 7, the two sides gave themselves 15 days to reach a deal to avert the US threat of duties on up to USD 2.4 billion of French goods.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, who has been conducting intensive negotiations for the last several weeks, was less sanguine than Macron, describing the talks as "very

difficult" earlier Monday.

Avoiding sanctions that could be announced as soon as Wednesday is "far from assured", he told French television LCI.

Le Maire is due to meet US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos on Wednesday.

They are expected to continue talks seeking a negotiated agreement in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

"France is pursuing its objective of fair taxation on digital companies and finding a compromise within the framework of the OECD," the French presidency said on Monday.

France has said it would drop its tax if an international agreement is reached.

After blocking the OECD talks for several years, Washington relaunched them last year only to make proposals in December which France rejected.

# Thousands of war missing persons dead: Lankan Prez

PTI ■ COLOMBO

For the first time, Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has admitted that thousands of people missing since the end of the brutal civil war between the government and the Tamil Tiger rebels over a decade ago are "dead".

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the former wartime defence secretary who played a key role in ending Sri Lanka's nearly 30-year civil war with the Tamil separatist rebels, told UN Resident Coordinator Hanaa Singer during their meeting last week that after the necessary investigations are completed steps would be taken to issue death certificates to these missing persons, the Colombo Gazette reported.

According to the government figures, over 20,000 people are missing due to various conflicts including the three-decade separatist war with Lankan Tamils in the north and

east which claimed at least 100,000 lives.

The Tamils alleged that thousands were massacred during the final stages of the war that ended in 2009 when the government forces killed Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) chief Velupillai Prabhakaran. The Sri Lankan Army denies the charge, claiming it as a humanitarian operation to rid the Tamils of LTTE's control.

International rights groups claim at least 40,000 ethnic Tamil civilians were killed in the final stages of the separatist war, but the government has disputed the figures.

The President's Office quoted Rajapaksa as saying that he outlined his plans to address the issue of missing persons.

"He explained that these missing persons are actually dead. Most of them had been taken by the LTTE or forcefully conscripted. The families of

the missing attest to it. However, they do not know what has become of them and so claim them to be missing," President Rajapaksa's office said.

The President said that after the necessary investigations are completed steps would be taken to issue a death certificate to these missing persons.

"Afterwards their families would be given the support they need to continue with their lives. Tamil politicians reject this solution as it would nullify their political agenda. However, this would help the affected families," he was quoted as saying.

Several mass graves containing skeletal remains have been found since, but only a handful have ever been identified.

The UN envoy and President Rajapaksa held talks on sustainable peace and harmony.

# Indian win luxury car, US \$ 54000 in Dubai raffle

PTI ■ DUBAI

An Indian storekeeper in the UAE has won a luxury car and a whopping 200,000 dirhams in a Dubai raffle, ending a decade-long wait to hit the jackpot, according to a media report on Tuesday.

Sreejith has been buying raffle tickets every year for the last 10 years, Khaleej Times reported.

The storekeeper claimed an Infiniti QX50 car as well as 200,000 dirhams (USD 54,448) cash prize in the Infiniti Mega Raffle, part of the 25th edition of Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), the report said.

Commenting on winning the jackpot, Sreejith said: "I couldn't believe my ears. I have diligently purchased a raffle ticket every year for the last 10 years, with the hopes to strike lucky one day. This win means so much to me and I now believe that dreams can come true. I have two boys and a third on the way and this money will ensure that my kids have a bright future ahead of them."

The Infiniti Mega Raffle offers DSF visitors the opportunity to drive away in an Infiniti QX50 car and 200,000 dirhams in cash every single day of the festival.

Participants have to buy a raffle ticket for 200 dirhams to stand a chance to win. In addition, one lucky DSF shopper will go home with a grand prize of 1 million dirhams in cash at the end of DSF.

# Weather changes poses new risks for fire-ravaged Australia

AFP ■ SYDNEY

A "merry-go-round" of extreme weather was hampering efforts by firefighters in Australia to tackle unprecedented bushfires that have killed at least 29 people and devastated vast swathes of the country.

Parts of the country welcomed heavy rainfall overnight, but authorities warned Tuesday that storms were bringing added complications, and the fire-danger risk could be elevated in the coming days.

"It has been a merry-go-round of weather over the last few days," the Bureau of Meteorology's Kevin Parkin said.

"We have gone from fires and storms and floods, and giant hail — the size of limes... producing widespread damage — to fire danger escalating on our doorstep," the senior meteorologist

added.

The country has suffered a collision of extreme climate events in the past week, with storms, lightning, thunder and hail battering areas in the fire-hit east.

The bushfire season has been made worse by climate change, experts say.

Victoria state experienced bursts of intense rain over the past 48 hours that helped to contain long-running blazes in some areas, but landslides, fallen trees and lightning strikes have hampered recovery efforts.

The temperature in Victoria is set to climb into the mid-30 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) range on Wednesday amid fierce winds, prompting extreme weather warnings in the western parts of the state, where authorities say "new start" fires will be difficult to contain.

"New starts in unpre-

pared communities are the biggest risk," Victoria Country Fire Authority chief officer Steve Warrington told media.

"If communities are not prepared for fire — whether they live or die, whether their property is saved or not saved — is very much dependent on decisions people make right now."

A change is expected to bring more rain to the state late Wednesday.

Further north in New South Wales state, heavy rains have also been welcomed in some areas but in others it has left fire-ravaged areas too damp to undertake preventative controlled burns.

Authorities there are bracing for elevated fire danger on Thursday, when temperatures in parts of the state will tip above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

# World losing trust in climate science, Indians most-trusting: WEF survey

PTI ■ DAVOS

The global public overwhelmingly blames global warming on human activities with trust level declining in climate science, but Indians are the most trusting people in this regard, a new opinion poll showed on Tuesday.

Indians and Bangladeshis have topped the charts when it comes to trust in climate science as also for keeping themselves abreast about news and current affairs, while Russia and Ukraine are among the laggards on both counts.

The new public opinion poll published by the World Economic Forum here at its 50th annual meeting called for better climate education and urgent upskilling.

The global public overwhelmingly blames global warming on human activity, with some regions less trusting

of climate science in 2020, according to the survey.

The findings reinforce the urgent need for a collective approach from business, government and civil society to advance societal and environmental agendas, the WEF said.

The survey also found that majority of people in the world believe schools are under-preparing students for jobs. Outside of the Americas and South Asia, education is still viewed as a privilege for half of the population or less.

The WEF said the world urgently needs to start implementing policies and strategies that advance societal and environmental agendas — from reskilling the population for the future to ensuring strong education and leadership on climate change from all sectors.

The global public-opinion poll, prepared in collaboration with SAP and Qualtrics,

surveyed more than 10,500 people in 30 countries accounting for around 76 per cent of the global population.

The findings have been presented in two parts — Toward a More Sustainable World and Toward a More Cohesive World — which form the theme of this year's annual meeting. Toward a More Sustainable World survey found that while more than half of respondents reportedly trust climate science, those in India are the most trusting where 86 per cent said they trusted scientists "a great deal" or "a lot".

India was followed by Bangladesh (78 per cent) and Pakistan (70 per cent). China and Turkey (both 69 per cent) complete the top five.

By region, almost a fifth of North American adults expressed "little" (12 per cent) or "no" (6 per cent) trust in climate science, compared to

South Asia, expressing "little" trust (4 per cent), and "no" trust (2 per cent).

Respondents were also asked whether they believed global warming exists and what causes it. Overall, more than two-thirds of people agreed that it is caused mostly by human activity — In Latin America and the Caribbean (78 per cent) agreed.

"We look forward to the Annual Meeting 2020 being a breakthrough moment for climate change. Our participants making a commitment to help tackle this urgent issue is in line with the stakeholder imperative of the 2020 Davos Manifesto and the theme of the 50th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting: Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World," said Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum.

# Prince Harry leaves UK to start new life with Meghan, Archie in Canada

PTI ■ LONDON

Prince Harry has left the UK to reunite with his wife Meghan Markle and their eight-month-old son Archie in Canada where the family will start a new life after the couple's bombshell announcement to "step back" from Britain's royal frontlines and spend more time in North America.

The Duke of Sussex is understood to have left the UK for Canada on Monday evening following one of his final official engagements as a working royal, The Telegraph reported.

Harry, 35, was said to be desperate to be reunited with Archie, whom he had not seen for two weeks, and his 38-year-old American actress wife in Canada that the young family plans to make their home.

Queen Elizabeth II's grandson was whisked to Heathrow following a morning of bilater-

al meetings with African leaders at the first UK-Africa Investment Summit in Greenwich, south London. His flight to Vancouver Island via Montreal was delayed by 20 minutes as he checked in through the Windsor suite, the report said.

Harry left the UK after meeting Prime Minister Boris Johnson and world leaders at the UK-Africa Investment Summit in London, which is likely to be one of his few remaining official engagements before the Sussexes take a "leap of faith" and leave the monarchy in the spring, the Mirror said in a report.

Buckingham Palace, however, has refused to confirm the Duke had fled the UK, saying: "We don't comment or guide on private schedule."

Prince Harry gave an emotional speech on Sunday night, saying he had "no other option" but to give up his official royal

duties and forge a new life in Canada, even as he expressed "great sadness" after being stripped of their royal titles.

In his first statement after a formal split from the royal family was finalised by the 93-year-old Queen over the weekend, Harry said when he married Meghan, they were "excited" and "hopeful".

"The decision that I have made for my wife and I to step back, is not one I made lightly," the Prince said in a speech at a dinner event for charity Sentebale, co-founded by him in 2006 to support those affected by HIV in Lesotho and Botswana in southern Africa.

"It was so many months of talks after so many years of challenges. And I know I haven't always got it right, but as far as this goes, there really was no other option. What I want to make clear is we're not walking away, and we certainly aren't

walking away from you," he said.

The speech came a day after the Buckingham Palace announced that the couple will be forsaking their His and Her Royal Highness titles and no longer receive any share of the Sovereign Grant, or the UK taxpayer funding allocated to senior royals.

It followed weeks of talks after Harry and Meghan announced their plans earlier this month to "step back" from Britain's royal frontlines and spend more time in North America.

Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, is already in Vancouver Island in Canada with Archie.

Meanwhile, Harry will continue with his pending royal duties in the UK until the new agreement struck with the palace kicks in from spring towards the end of March and the couple begin their new financially independent roles.



# Be smarter than AI

AI is growing in every sector and creating fear for many job holders and seekers. However, there are programmers who can do what AI can't and may never be able to, says ANKIT DUDHWEWALA

In the early part of the last decade, the word outsourcing struck fear in the hearts of professionals in developed countries. White-collar workers feared their jobs would be outsourced to India, where someone would do them for a fraction of the salary than those expected in industrialised countries. Thankfully, outsourcing was a win-win for those in western countries and Indians because it created more jobs in developed countries than were offshored.

Today, there is fear that jobs of almost every kind will be automated. Physicians, lawyers, software architects, and others with highly-skilled, well-paying jobs never feared their jobs would be outsourced. Still, today they are concerned that Artificial Intelligence will become sophisticated enough to make them redundant. Software is becoming exceptionally advanced: What seemed impossible 10 years back, today seems just over the horizon. Self-driving vehicles are an example. Before 2008, few believed AI would be intel-

ligent ever to drive cars itself. Today while much needs to be done to improve AI, most believe it is only a matter of time before it replaces humans behind the wheel.

The prowess of AI behind the wheel is only one example of machines doing jobs that were believed only humans could. Artificial Intelligence is getting better every year at writing its own software code. But AI's growing prowess doesn't mean it is only a matter of time before programmers become obsolete. There are a lot of programmers that can do what AI cannot and may never be able to. Programmers and designers who have expertise in the following software can rest easy that their jobs are unlikely to be assigned to AI.

## AUTOCAD

Engineers, architects, and designers who know AutoCAD will remain in demand. The modelling capabilities of AutoCAD let virtually any form and its components be modelled. What will make knowledge of AutoCAD so

valuable to employers is that it requires users to have an imagination as well as technical skills. Artificial Intelligence may be able to replicate human actions and make accurate predictions using more data points than humans. Still, it cannot, and may never be able to imagine. The ability of humans to imagine is a reason professionals who know AutoCAD will always be in demand.

## SPARK

The economy of the future will be data-driven, so there will continue to be a massive demand for those who understand how to use data science tools. Spark is the most popular data science tool. Hence, professionals who know how to use it will have little difficulty working in well-paying jobs. Using Spark, they will be able to accurately model consumer behaviour and make predictions that result in higher sales. While AI's ability to make predictions is uncanny, employers need people who know how to extract compelling stories from data. A critical reason expertise

in Spark will be crucial for future success is it will remain the best data science tool for the foreseeable future.

## SELENIUM

Software testing is essential to roll out products that work as expected. Selenium is a vital software testing tool because much of it is automated. Software testers need to know how to use Selenium to put the software through the right tests. To do so, they must select the proper tests and author computerised tests. Knowing Selenium, they can do both.

The software is essential because it saves enormous time and effort in testing: Those with knowledge of the software will enjoy careers that are future proof.

## C# FOR UNITY

Creating games is challenging, fun, and can be extremely lucrative. Unity is one of the most popular game engines. Newbie game developers can bring their vision to life using C# for Unity. In addition to game developers, design-

ers can use C# for Unity to work inside Unity's Integrated Immersive Environment and create a virtual world. Because consumers have grown accustomed to outstanding visual experiences in games and also expect interactive virtual environments, knowing how to use C# in Unity is a hugely valuable asset. Those who know how to use C# in Unity will be prized resources for many organisations.

Depending on whose narrative is believed, automation is either a decimating job or is overhyped. The reality likely rests in the middle and should be cause for concern among professionals. Millions of developers are working to make AI smarter. AI is doing the same itself as well. While fear of outsourcing was overblown, AI's ability to replace humans is not. Gradually more jobs will be assigned to AI. Yet, engineers and designers with expertise in the mentioned software may remain immune to its encroachment for decades, if not longer.

The writer is Co-Founder, SoftwareSuggest

**FUTURE WILL BE DATA-DRIVEN, SO THERE WILL BE DEMAND FOR THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND HOW TO USE THE TOOLS LIKE SPARK, WHICH WILL GIVE PROFESSIONALS AN EDGE OVER AI**

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

**I tell students that the opportunities I had were a result of having a good educational background. Education is what allows you to stand out.**  
— Ellen Ochoa

## DIPLOMA COURSES

The Indian School of Hospitality in collaboration with At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy, Singapore, invites applications for admissions to its Diploma in Pastry & Bakery and Diploma in Culinary Arts.

**Duration:** One and a half year

**Eligibility:** Applicants who have completed Class XII or equivalent, Graduates, Professionals and PG students who are planning to change career or venture in the exciting world of bakery or culinary art are eligible to apply for this course.

Also, students with IELTS 5.5/TOEFL 46-59/WPLN Level 5 or at least 75 per cent in English in Class XII exams can apply.

**How to apply:** Log on to <http://ish.edu.in/how-to-apply.html>.

**Last date to apply:** January 31, 2020.

## PGDM PROGRAMME

The JK Business School (JKBS) invites applications for admissions to its AICTE approved PGDM programme.

**Duration:** Two years

**Eligibility:** Graduate in any discipline from a recognised university with minimum 50 per cent score is eligible to apply for the PGDM programme.

Selection is based on CAT/MAT/CMAT/other



national management entrance exams, JKBS written aptitude test, group discussion, personal interview, past academic record, extra-curricular activities and work experience.

**How to apply:** Log on to [www.jkbschool.org](http://www.jkbschool.org) or call at 18001020240.

**Last date to apply:** January 31, 2020.

## FINE ARTS

Delhi Collage of Art (DCA) invites applications for admission to its Fine Art (BFA) and Super Professional Diploma programme in Fine Art (DFA) courses.

**Duration:** Two years for BFA and four years for DFA.

**Eligibility:** Class XII pass from any stream who wants to work in Fine arts industry can apply.

**How to apply:** Log on to [www.delhicollageofart.co](http://www.delhicollageofart.co) or the Application forms & brochure may be obtained from admission office of Delhi Collage of Art.

**Last date to apply:** January 31, 2020.

## New president for ICSI

A fellow member of the institute CS Ashish Garg, has been elected as President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India for the year 2020 w.e.f. January 19, 2020. A nominated Director on the Board of ICSI Institute of Insolvency Professionals, he has also chaired several in-house Committees of the ICSI of the likes of Placement Committee, PMQ Committee and Direct Tax Code Committee.

CS Nagendra D Rao, a fellow member of the institute has been elected as the Vice-President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India for this year w.e.f. January 19, 2020.

He is a whole time Practising Company Secretary and is the Designated Partner and Founder of Nagendra D Rao & Associates LLP. He has been elected to the Central Council of Institute of Company Secretaries of India for the term 2019-2022. He was also the Chairman of Southern India Regional Council for the year 2015.

## 'Liberal Arts help prepare good leaders'

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with Elizabeth Bradley about what the approach is, its benefits and how it makes students future ready

### What is the liberal arts approach to education?

It is focused on providing students a world view, empowering them to approach complexity, change and diversity in a better manner, for example through the lens of science, culture and society.

A liberal arts education is needed to impart key communication skills (writing, speaking and negotiating); expose students to many disciplines like arts, humanities, and the social, natural and information sciences; and empower students to innovate, be creative and entrepreneurial, and chart their own paths in becoming engaged citizens and community role models.

### What are its benefits?

A liberal arts education teaches one how to learn, how to think creatively, and how to communicate effectively. These are critical skills for leadership in the 21st century.

### How does this approach help prepare students for all the challenges that lie ahead?

In a changing world, the most important skill is to be able to adapt, to take in new information and make sense of the situation. Learning how to learn is consistent with the liberal arts approach, where stu-

dents learn across many different styles, topics and paradigms.

The liberal arts and humanities are vital to our future, preparing students for the challenges they will confront in their professional, political, social and cultural lives.

### What should the Indian government do to promote liberal arts education?

The draft new education policy is a great step to recognise the importance of the liberal arts education.

Next will be needed resources devoted to infrastructure, increasing awareness about the benefits of such education, supporting faculty and students, and perhaps even supporting more international exchange programmes to learn from other countries as well.

### How does the approach help in getting better jobs?

If there is one thing common in every job, it is human interaction. The humanities — the academic fields that study the human condition, society and culture — prepare young adults for the most essential aspects of work: getting along with other people, understanding multiple points of view and coming to terms with one's place in the world.

As such, students of all majors need



Elizabeth Bradley  
President, Vassar College

exposure to the humanities to be adequately — and practically — prepared for the working world. The return on investment of a Vassar liberal arts education can be seen in our excellent outcomes, with 95 per cent of students being employed, in graduate school or on a competitive fellowship within six months of graduation.

### Partnership/collaborations that Vassar has entered into?

In the summer of 2019 Vassar partnered with the University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) in Rwanda, to teach classes in the humanities and sciences, helping shape the way medical education is delivered in Africa in the future; and forged a partnership with Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, enabling Vassar students to earn a master's degree in public health a year after they graduate from Vassar.

Vassar was also in China this summer, exploring opportunities to incorporate a liberal arts model in a local context with gifted high school students there. In partnership with the Diligence & Delight Learning Center in Beijing, we ran a three-week program taught by Vassar faculty, exposing students to a liberal arts classroom environment.

## Fight career barriers

### IT COUNTS



Every number in numerology indicates towards a certain career and the person should choose his career according to the number of his destiny/conductor number. Through numerology we also understand the relationship or affinity or enmity between various numbers. So, we should not select that career, which becomes a barrier towards our success.

Let us take a few examples. Suppose a person whose destiny number is two, ruled by Moon and which is soft, artistic, caring, has interest in music, singing, and in case if he chooses the career of marketing, architect, salesman, which are characteristics of number five, then he is bound to fail. So, in this way we can avoid misfortunes.

Similarly, a person having destiny number one, ruled by Sun always aspires for managerial positions, head of the company, bureaucrats, politicians and if they choose a career in media, film industry, cosmetics, which are characteristics of number six, they will never be successful and will have to leave the job.

A person having destiny number seven is inclined towards spiritualism, meditation, politics and now if they choose a career in salesmanship, job in defence forces like army and air force, which are characteristics of number nine, then they will not gel with the



JC CHAUDHRY

profile.

People having destiny number eight are good organisers, inclined towards justice, good in banking and commerce, if they choose the career of share market, gambling, entertainment, which are characteristics of number seven, then their chances of growth will become less.

Hence, if a person chooses a career matching with his destiny number then his/her chances of becoming successful increases.

The writer is a renowned entrepreneur, motivational speaker and numerologist

## Celebration time for FIITJEE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Testing Agency has declared the results of Joint Entrance Examination (JEE Main Jan 2020). The Joint Entrance (JEE Main) examinations were held in between January 6 and 9, 2020 in 233 cities across India.

With the JEE Main Jan 2020 results declared by NTA, FIITJEE has a reason to rejoice and celebrate its students' feat.

Nishant Agarwal, a student of FIITJEE South Delhi Centre has been declared Delhi (NCT) Topper by securing NTA score 100.000000 in JEE Main (Jan) 2020. He scored NTA score 100 in Physics, 100 in Chemistry and 99.9846935 in Maths respectively.

Nishant Agarwal is NTSE scholar in 2017 & KVPY fellow. He is also qualified National Standard Examination in Astronomy (NSEA) in 2018.

Another FIITJEE Student, Nisarg Chadha, three Year classroom programme student of FIITJEE Vadodara Centre has also scored perfect 100 percentile, thereby becoming a Gujarat State Topper.

Subsequently, in JEE Main 2020 (January), 12 FIITJEE Students have Topped their respective States- Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

A total number of 9,21,261 candidates had registered for Paper-I (BE/BTech) in the examination.

## Fellow programme in management

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The FORE School of Management, New Delhi offers a full-time fellow Programme in Management (FPM) approved by AICTE. The objective of this programme is to enhance the body of knowledge in the research domain and its dissemination.

It is aimed at admitting scholars with exceptional academic background, strong motivation, discipline and having a strong inclination towards good quality research.

Dr Hitesh Arora, Dean (Academic Services), FORE School of Management says: "The FPM at FORE is built on its strong foundation and long experience of eminent FORE Faculty members in creating industry-ready researchers and academicians. FORE scholars are exposed to a carefully designed curriculum that prepares them for the rigours of the research. Additionally, a full-time fellow programme in Management always gives an extra edge in knowledge creation and a strong inclination towards good quality research."

Specialisations offered are in the areas of economics and business policy, finance and accounting, information technology, international business, marketing, organisational behaviour & human resource, quantitative techniques and operations management, communication, strategy.

The highlights of the programme are that it provides financial assistance, support to attend international/national conferences/workshops and a contingency grant.

## IELTS prize for students

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The British Council, owners of IELTS, the global English Language proficiency test are offering ten prizes of up to £3,000 to help students who are studying in autumn/winter 2020, and early 2021.

On December 23, 2019, The British Council launched a campaign for students who are considering studying next year.

For filling in an online form with just 500 words, explaining why they deserve the money and where they

plan to go study, students could potentially win £3,000 toward their study fees. The only stipulation is that they must be studying in the next academic year and have taken an IELTS test between January 2019 and February 2020.

To be in with a chance of winning the IELTS prize, all students will need to submit their details into the application form and tell why they would like to win!

For more information log on to <https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/study-work-abroad/ielts-prize>.

# SHARAPOVA HITS ALL-TIME LOW

Maria fails to overcome first round hurdle in third consecutive Slam; Nadal launches record bid with easy win

AFP ■ MELBOURNE

Top seed Rafael Nadal turned on the style as he launched his bid for a record-equalling 20th Major title at the Australian Open on Tuesday, but falling star Maria Sharapova hit a career low. Australia's Nick Kyrgios also cantered into the second round, but fourth seed Daniil Medvedev had to fight his way past American Frances Tiafoe in four sets. Nadal, one shy of Roger Federer's Grand Slam mark, dropped only five games as he swatted aside Bolivia's Hugo Dellien 6-2, 6-3, 6-0 in just over two hours at a sunny Rod Laver Arena. "It was a positive start," said the reigning Roland Garros and US Open champion, wearing a bright pink singlet and matching trainers. "What you want in the first round is just to win, and it's better if it's in straight sets." He joins Federer and defending champion Novak Djokovic in



Spain's Rafael Nadal makes a backhand return to Bolivia's Hugo Dellien during their first round singles match at the Australian Open

round two as the Big Three look to tighten a stranglehold that has brought them all but one of the last 14 Australian Open titles. Nadal, the first player to be world number one in three different decades, is still thriving at 33 but it's a different story for five-time Grand Slam winner Sharapova. The 32-year-old, playing on a wildcard as she wrestles with a shoulder injury, lost 6-3, 6-4 to Croatian 19th seed Donna Vekic, making her an opening-round loser at three straight Grand Slams for the first time. The future looks uncertain for the former world number one, who won Wimbledon when she was just

17 but has not reached a Grand Slam final since she lifted the 2014 French Open trophy. "I can speak about my struggles and the things that I've gone through with my shoulder, but it's not really in my character to," Sharapova said. "I was there, I put myself out there (playing). As tough as it was,

I finished the match — it wasn't the way that I wanted." Britain's Johanna Konta, a two-time Slam semi-finalist, also fell at the first hurdle as she battles to overcome a knee problem, losing 4-6, 2-6 to unseeded Tunisian Ons Jabeur. **STORMY FOGNINI**

On a bumper day of 88 first-



Maria Sharapova makes a forehand return to Croatia's Donna Vekic

round matches, after rain wiped out half of Monday's schedule, former US Open champion Marin Cilic and Milos Raonic both moved safely through. Italy's Fabio Fognini, two sets down against America's Reilly Opelka when their match was suspended on Monday, returned to win it in five after a stormy encounter when both players argued furiously with the umpire. A new star emerged in 18-year-old Italian Jannik Sinner, last year's NextGen champion, who earned his first Grand Slam victory against Australia's Max Purcell. Australia's Kyrgios, who has spearheaded fundraising efforts for the country's deadly bushfire disaster, kept his notorious temper in check despite being taken to two tie-breaks in a 6-2, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7-1) win over Lorenzo Sonego of Italy. "I feel super-comfortable, you guys are the best. I feel the support.... I am ready to go again,"

Kyrgios told the crowd. Medvedev, the narrow loser to Nadal in September's US Open final, dropped the second set against Tiafoe before recovering to win 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2. Austria's Dominic Thiem, who has reached the last two French Open finals, went through in straight sets against Adrian Panatta, while 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka needed four to get past Damir Dzumhur. Seventh seed Alexander Zverev beat Marco Cecchinato in straight sets but there was disappointment for France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, the 2008 finalist, who retired with a back injury against Australia's Alexei Popyrin. Elsewhere, women's fourth seed Simona Halep survived some painful-looking falls to beat America's Jennifer Brady, and 2016 champion Angelique Kerber dropped only four games against Elisabetta Cocciaretto of Italy.

## Ankle tear rules Ishant out of NZ Test series



Samson replaces Dhawan for T20s; Shaw in ODIs

PTI ■ DELHI

Wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson and talented opener Prithvi Shaw replaced injured India opener Shikhar Dhawan for the upcoming T20 and ODI series against New Zealand respectively. Dhawan dislocated his shoulder while fielding in the third ODI against Australia in Bengaluru on Sunday. Shaw returns to the senior team after a gap of one year following an ankle injury and an eight-month doping ban. Samson, who played in the T20 series against Sri Lanka earlier this month, was back as a reserve opener cum keeper.

India's T20I squad: Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma (VC), Sanju Samson, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant (WK), Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Navdeep Saini, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur. India's ODI squad: Virat Kohli (C), Rohit Sharma (VC), Prithvi Shaw, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant (WK), Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravindra Jadeja, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur, Kedar Jadhav.

replace the 96-Test veteran in the Test squad.



Akash Singh in a file Photo

India outplay Japan by 10 wickets in mismatch

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

Defending champions India outclassed debutants Japan by 10 wickets in their second match to all but secure a spot in the quarterfinals of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Tuesday. Opting to field first, four-time champions India bowled out a hapless Japan for 41 runs in 22.5 overs with leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi taking four wickets. It was the joint second lowest total by a team in the Under-19 World Cup and joint third lowest in the under-19 cricket history. Pacers Kartik Tyagi and Akash Singh shared five wickets among themselves as none of the Japanese batsmen entered double digits. India needed just 4.5 overs to complete the formalities with Yashasvi Jaiswal and Kumar Kushagra remaining unbeaten on 29 and 13 respectively.

India captain Priyam Garg, however, said his fast bowlers could have done a better job. "Very happy with the performance. The spinners were good, but the lines and lengths could have been better from the pacers. There's no pressure as such. We want to do well, we take every game as it comes," said Garg. From 2002, when India played

## 'NZ need to win 2 out of 3 formats to get pass marks'

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand are up against a "powerhouse" in the visiting Indian cricket team, says former all-rounder Craig McMillan who feels the Black Caps will have to win in two out of three formats to be eligible for at least the "pass marks". New Zealand will host India for five Twenty20s, three ODIs and two Tests beginning here on January 24 and the hosts will be desperate to bounce back from the recent 0-3 Test drubbing at the hands of Australia. "It's big. This whole Indian tour is big after what happened in Australia," McMillan was quoted as saying by *Radio Sport Breakfast*. "This Indian side are a powerhouse. Doesn't matter if it's Tests, ODIs, T20s, they are the real deal so it's going to be a really intriguing tour. For New Zealand to get a pass mark for this tour they need to win two of the three series."

The series against India will start with the T20 rubber on Friday and McMillan feels with the ICC T20 World Cup scheduled to be held later this year, it is imperative for New Zealand to win this assignment. "Five Twenty20s to start and I know it's not everyone's favourite format of the game but we've got a T20 World Cup later in the year in October in Australia so straight away these five matches become important. Because of the performance in Australia we need to start winning again and get that support



Ross Taylor poses for a photo

back," he said. "They're still trying to find in T20 what our best side is. We've just seen the Super Smash and there's an opportunity for some young guys who performed in that to be given a chance," McMillan added.

## De Kock replaces Faf as ODI skipper

AFP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Quinton de Kock was on Tuesday named as South Africa's one-day international captain as part of a long term transition plan. His first assignment will be to lead the team in a three-match series against World Cup champions England, starting in Cape Town on February 4. Test and Twenty20 captain Faf du Plessis was not in a 15-man squad named by Cricket South Africa on Tuesday despite committing himself to the organisation until the World Cup T20 in October and November. Independent selector Linda Zondi said Du Plessis' omission did not signal the end of his ODI career. "We decided to rest Faf and Kagiso Rabada for this series because they have both played

a lot of cricket," said Zondi. "A different squad will be picked for a T20 series against England after the one-day games and after that there are still T20s and ODIs against Australia." Zondi said the appointment of De Kock was part of succession planning leading up to the 2023 Cricket World Cup. In his press conference after the third Test against England on Monday, Du Plessis said there was an opportunity to relieve some of the pressure on his captaincy. The squad includes new ODI caps in batsmen Janneman Malan and Kyle Verreynne, all-rounder Jon-Jon Smuts, fast bowlers Lutho Sipamla and Sisanda Magala and left-arm spinner Bjorn Fortuin. Of these Magala and Verreynne have yet to play at any international level.

## Character of pitches in NZ has changed: Tendulkar



Indian team celebrates after winning the match

The pitches in New Zealand have become a lot more batting-friendly over the years, says iconic former batsman Sachin Tendulkar, insisting that India have the "ammunition" to trouble the sprightly hosts during the upcoming series. Tendulkar, who has been on a record five New Zealand tours since 1990, feels that from seaming tracks during his early trips years, the tracks became high-scoring hard ones during his last tour back in 2009. "Of late, the Tests in New Zealand have been high scoring and surfaces have changed," Tendulkar told PTI during an exclusive interview. From 2002, when India played

ODIs and Tests on green tops, to 2009, when India won only their second Test series in 32 years, Tendulkar has seen it all in New Zealand. "I remember when we played in 2009, the Hamilton pitch was different compared to other pitches. Other pitches got harder (Wellington and Napier) but not Hamilton. It remained soft." "But Napier became hard with passage of time (where Gautam Gambhir scored an epic match-saving 12-hour hundred in 2009). So, from my first tour (in 1990 till 2009), I realised pitches got harder with passage of time," Tendulkar said. Tendulkar is confident that the

Indian bowling attack, spearheaded by Jasprit Bumrah, has the ammunition to put New Zealand in trouble. "We have a good bowling attack with quality fast bowlers as well as spinners. I believe we have the ammunition to compete in New Zealand." However, in Wellington, Tendulkar wants the team to be well-prepared to counter the breeze factor. "Wellington, I have played and it makes a huge difference if you are bowling with the wind or against the wind. The batsman needs to be judicious in the choice of which end he wants to attack, it is very important," he said.

## Sarfراز hits unbeaten ton as Mumbai fight back against UP

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Young Sarfraz Khan hit an unbeaten century as Mumbai fought back on the third day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group B game against Uttar Pradesh here on Tuesday. UP had posted a mammoth 625/8 declared in their first essay, courtesy Upendra Yadav's unbeaten double hundred (203 not out). Mumbai resumed the day on their overnight score of 20/2 and had a mountain to climb. Thanks to herculean effort by 'crisis man' Siddhesh Lad (98 off 174 balls; 10x4x1x6), who lived up to his billing and 22-year-old Sarfraz (132 not out off 160 balls; 14x4; 4x6), the duo gave Mumbai the confidence that UP's first-inning score could be overhauled. Overnight batsmen Bhupen Lalwani (43 off 80 balls; 5x4) and Hardik Tamore (51 off 94 balls; 10x4) had an uphill task on hand of surviving the morning session against the experienced Ankit Rajpoot and Yash

Dayal. They negated the challenge well and stitched a crucial 75-run stand for the third wicket. Pacer Wajid Ali gave the visitors the much needed break-through after he trapped Lalwani in front of the wicket as Mumbai lost their third wicket at 91. Tamore then notched up his maiden first-class fifty by driving Ali through the covers for a four, but could not convert it into a big score.

**BENGAL ROUT HYDERABAD IN 3 DAYS**  
Kalyani (WB): Rookie spin all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed shone with a first-innings hat-trick in a six-wicket match haul as Bengal thrashed a sloppy Hyderabad by an innings and 303 runs for their first win of the ongoing Ranji Trophy season, here on Tuesday. The 25-year-old, who was bought by Royal Challengers Bangalore for the 2020 edition of the IPL, claimed the feat in his seventh Ranji appearance.



Sarfraz Khan reacts during the third day of Ranji Trophy Match against Uttar Pradesh

Shahbaz (4/26) ran through the Hyderabad lower order to help his side bundle out the visitors for 171 in their first innings. Following on, Hyderabad were all out for 161 with Shahbaz (2/51) accounting for two batsmen. Shahbaz became the seventh player from Bengal, and first since India pacer Mohammed Shami, to claim a Ranji Trophy hat-trick. Shami had achieved the milestone against Madhya Pradesh in 2012-13. Rookie pacer Akash Deep (4/38) was the star in Hyderabad's second essay as Hyderabad were bundled out in 46.2 overs. Bengal had scored 635 for seven declared in their first innings after electing to bat. **J&K POSTS WIN OVER ODISHA**  
Cuttack: Jammu & Kashmir bounced back superbly after conceding first innings lead to pull off a four-wicket win over Odisha on the third day of the Ranji Trophy Group C match here on Tuesday.

## BCCI says 'no' to Saha's Ranji test

PTI ■ KALYANI (WB)

Indian wicketkeeper batsman Wriddhiman Saha, who is recovering from a finger surgery, has been asked to skip Bengal's next Ranji clash against Delhi to keep himself ready for the upcoming Test series in New Zealand. The 35-year-old sustained a fracture on the ring finger of his right hand during the historic

Day/Night Test Test against Bangladesh in Kolkata in November and consequently underwent a surgery in Mumbai. "Wriddhi will not be available for Delhi match (at Eden Gardens from Sunday). I think the Board (BCCI) has said no to him," Bengal coach Arun Lal said after they scripted an innings and 303 win over Hyderabad to brighten their qualifying hopes. Resuming its second innings at 136 for seven, Odisha could add only 30 runs as Umar Nazir picked up the last three wickets—Rajesh Mohanty, Suryakant Pradhan and Rajesh Dhuper. Chasing 204 for a win, J&K opener Suryansh Raina (69) and Shubam Pundir (45) added 79 runs for the third wicket to lay the platform for an easy win. Abdul Samad with a knock of 30 not out and the first-innings bowling hero Aquib Nabi (26 not out) too the side over the finish line. For the home team, Basant Mohanty bowled his heart out and picked up four wickets in the second innings but could not prevent J&K from romping home. In Delhi, Services pulled off an exciting one-wicket win over Haryana despite being shot out for 97 in the first innings.

# Reality check for Atalanta

Petagna inspires SPAL to 2-1 comeback win over his former club in Serie A clash

AFP ■ MILAN

Andrea Petagna ignited a come-from-behind victory for struggling SPAL to hand his former club Atalanta a shock 2-1 defeat in Serie A on Monday.

The Champions League-chasing side from Bergamo had won their last two home games against AC Milan and Parma with 5-0 scorelines each time.

But they slipped up against SPAL who snatched just their fourth win of the season to move off the bottom of the table.

Gian Piero Gasperini's team missed the chance to climb above Roma into the final Champions League place, and are now three points behind the side from the capital in fifth.

"Today more than a few players were not at their best," said Gasperini. "It was clear we were down a gear."

"But we will have to be ready to immediately redeem a bad performance, because the standings are very tight." Slovenian forward Josip Ilicic put Atalanta ahead after 16 minutes with a clever back-heel flick beating Etrit Berisha in the SPAL goal.

But Petagna pulled SPAL level after 54 minutes by scoring his fifth goal in four meetings against his former club.

Mattia Valoti snatched the winner six minutes later with new signing Bryan Dabo playing a role in the goal on his first start for SPAL.

"I left a piece of heart in



**Gian Piero Gasperini's team missed the chance to climb above Roma into the final Champions League place, and are now three points behind the side from the capital in fifth**

Bergamo because I started here," said Petagna. "But today we had to win, now we must continue like this if we want to save ourselves." Duvan Zapata missed chances to equalise for the hosts following a long injury layoff with fellow Colombian forward Luis Muriel coming on for the

final half an hour in place of defender Mattia Caldara, who started on his return on loan from AC Milan.

But despite laying siege to the SPAL goal the hosts fell to their fifth defeat of the season and fourth at home.

"You have to give credit to SPAL, despite being last in the standings, they tried to play a decent game," said Gasperini.

"Once in the lead, SPAL attacked with many men, but we weren't good at fighting them."

Gasperini's side have the best attack in the league with 50 goals scored in 20 games.

But he had conceded that his players were suffering from fatigue after their surprise elimination from the Italian Cup by Fiorentina.

Atalanta are playing their first season in the Champions League and host Valencia in the last 16, first leg at San Siro on February 19.

Champions Juventus beat Parma 2-1 to open up a four-point advantage on second-placed Inter Milan who were held 1-1 at promoted Lecce on Sunday.

Lazio are third, a further two points behind with a game in hand, after hammering Sampdoria 5-1 on Saturday.

# Mbappe dreams of CL, Euro and Olympic treble

AFP ■ BAGNOLET (FRANCE)

Kylian Mbappe says he is dreaming of helping Paris Saint-Germain win a first Champions League trophy this year, as well as leading France to the title at Euro 2020 and the Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The 21-year-old PSG and France star, a World Cup winner in 2018, was asked what was on his wish list for the new year while launching his charity in the Paris suburbs on Monday.

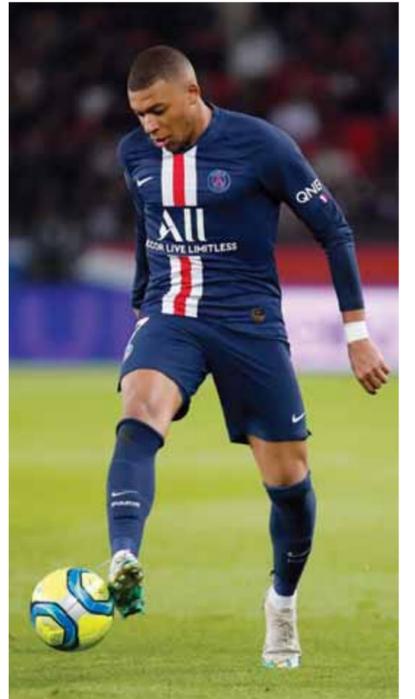
"It would be a treble of Champions League, European Championship and Olympic Games. That wouldn't be bad," said Mbappe, with a smile.

"That seems unattainable for the time being but I'm going to make sure I fulfil this dream. It would be a proud moment to be able win the first European title for PSG and for our country to keep winning"

Mbappe's charity, "Inspired by KM", was set up to help 98 children — a nod to his birth year — between the ages of nine and 16 from various social backgrounds to accomplish "their dreams".

Last month, Mbappe put himself forward for the French team at the Tokyo Olympics, while adding he would not want to fight his club over taking part in Japan.

"Playing in the Olympics, I don't control everything," he told France Football



Kylian Mbappe controls the ball during the French League AP

magazine. "Of course I want to go, but if my club, which is my employer, doesn't want me to go, I won't force a clash."

He said he would hold talks with PSG sporting director Leonardo, who is said to be hesitant to allow

Mbappe to play at the Olympics for fears over his fitness.

Euro 2020 will be held across 12 different cities over the continent from June 12 to July 12, with the men's Olympic football tournament scheduled for July 23 to August 8.



Indian Table tennis team poses for a photo Sarath Kamal/Twitter

## Paddlers primed to create history at Olympic qualifiers

PTI ■ GONDOMAR (PORTUGAL)

The Indian men's table tennis squad is well placed to create history at the Olympic qualifiers beginning here on Wednesday, the fifth seeds needing just a quarterfinal finish to ensure its maiden qualification as a team at the Summer Games.

Unless the team comprising G Sathiyam (world rank 30), veteran Sharath Kamal (WR 33) and Harmeet Desai (WR 86) play badly, India should not have a lot of difficulty in making the Olympic cut. The other members of the team are Anthony Amalraj and fast rising Manav Thakkar.

In the past games, Indian players have played only in individual events but now three of them being in top-100 shows the rapid strides India has taken at the highest level.

The men, who have been given a first-round bye in the draw of 64, take on Luxembourg in their opener. Sharath and Co effectively need to win two matches to qualify. Their round of 16 opponent will be 11th seed Slovenia or 20th seed Iran.

The women's unit, led by Manika Batra, has a much tougher task at hand as it runs into a much stronger Sweden in its opener.

Ahead of the tournament, the entire contingent had a camp in Chennai before it travelled to Germany to train with its national team.

**IN THE PAST GAMES, INDIAN PLAYERS HAVE PLAYED ONLY IN INDIVIDUAL EVENTS BUT NOW THREE OF THEM BEING IN TOP-100 SHOWS THE RAPID STRIDES INDIA HAS TAKEN AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL**

Despite the lack of a head coach since the 2019 Asian Games, Indian players have been producing impressive performances on the professional circuit. The men's team had ended a 60-year wait by winning a historic bronze at the Asian Games in Jakarta. The contingent's campaign got even better Sharath and Manika, who won four medals at the preceding Commonwealth Games, bagged a surprise bronze in the mixed doubles.

Nine qualifying spots are on offer at the ITTF organised event. A top-eight finish guarantees Olympic qualification while the last spot available will be fought among the teams that lose in the round of 16 with their eventual winner filling the slot.

Korea is the top seed in men's category, followed by Chinese Taipei, Sweden, France and India.

Hong Kong is the top seed in women's event, followed by Chinese Taipei, Singapore, Korea and Romania.

## Wounded Bengaluru FC host high-flying Odisha

PTI ■ BENGALURU

An intriguing duel is on the cards as Bengaluru FC face Odisha FC square off in a top of the table Indian Super League clash here on Wednesday.

Bengaluru FC, the defending champions, are coming off a 2-0 defeat against Mumbai City FC and will be eager to get back to winning ways. Odisha FC, on the other hand, are on a four-game winning streak which has established them firmly in the top four.

Interestingly, a win on Wednesday could see either side rise to the top of the table. Bengaluru, currently third on the table with 22 points, can leapfrog both FC Goa and ATK who have 24 points each, with a win. Odisha, who have 21, can go level with Goa and ATK.

Carles Cuadrat's side had a water-tight defence this



Bengaluru FC players during training session Bengaluru FC/Twitter

season, conceding just nine goals in 13 games.

But the Spanish coach would not be happy after two defensive errors helped Mumbai City beat them in the last game.

He will hope that was just an aberration. Moreover, at home, Bengaluru have conceded just four goals at home.

Another worry for Bengaluru will be their attack.

Apart from Sunil Chhetri, who has scored eight goals, none of the forwards have put in meaningful contributions.

Ashique Kuruniyan and Udanta Singh have struggled for form and consistency. Udanta's form, especially, has dropped when compared to last season with just one goal to his name. In fact, Cuadrat has even dropped Udanta from the starting XI in the recent matches.

Bengaluru will hope strikers Manuel Onwu and Deshorn Brown come to the party and provide some support to Chhetri.

Odisha FC will be looking to cash in on their terrific form. They have scored eight goals and conceded just two in their last four games. If they win in Bengaluru and make it 5 consecutive wins, they will overtake FC Goa and become the team with the most consecutive wins

in the ISL this season.

Aridane Santana and Xisco Hernandez have been key to Odisha's revival. Santana, specifically, has scored nine goals this season and has risen to the top of the scoring charts. In fact, five of his goals have come in the last four games.

Three of their four wins have come at home in Bhubaneswar.

Though their last win against Hyderabad came away from home, Josep Gombau will want his team to improve their away record. However, to beat Bengaluru in Bengaluru is a tough task, something only Mumbai City have been able to do this season.

Odisha do have a couple of concerns with Vinit Rai suspended and Nandhakumar Sekar injured but Gombau will hope the rest of the team step up against Bengaluru.

## Tai shines for Raptors



PNS ■ CHENNAI

World No. 2 Tai Tzu Ying of Bengaluru Raptors put up a masterclass on her return to the Star Sports Premier Badminton League 2020 as she coasted to an easy win over rising star Ashmita Chaliha of the North Eastern Warriors here in Chennai today. In a much-anticipated clash of youth and experience, the former World No. 1's brilliant anticipation skills and finesse were too much for the South Asian Games gold medalist to handle even though Chaliha did have her moments.

After trailing 0-4, the youngster rode on her aggression to bag some quickfire points and close the gap between them to two points at 4-6. It was, however, not enough to thwart PBL's joint-coolest player who soon doused the Chaliha fire to soar to a 15-7, 15-5 win.

Earlier, in an enthralling battle between two Olympic medallists, 2016 Rio Olympic silver medallist Chan Peng Soon beat 2008 Olympic champion Lee Yong Dae to give the defending champions a very good start. In partnership with multiple World Championship medallist Eom Hye Won, Soon put up a solid display against the Warriors pair of Lee Yong Dae and former World No. 1 Kim Ha Na.

In his fourth consecutive appearance at the league, Lee, who recently triumphed at the Malaysia Masters, could not find his champion form as the first match of the tie went in favour of the Raptors 15-8, 15-11.

Fresh from reaching the semi-finals of the Indonesia Masters, North Eastern Warriors' World No. 18 Lee Cheuk Yiu showed remarkable resolve to eke out a tight first game and then sailed through the second to register a 15-14, 15-9 win over World Championships bronze medalist Sai Praneeh. The two had met only once before with the match finishing in favour of the Hong Kong shuttler. This time too it was no different with Lee refusing to give the Indian any opening in a performance that showed his determination and steely nerves.

## Sky high expectations makes me work even harder: Sindhu



P.V. Sindhu plays a return shot PTI

PTI ■ CHENNAI

World champion P.V. Sindhu said sky-high expectation from her makes her work even harder as she aims at a second medal in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics in July-August. "From the Rio Olympics to now, my life has changed a lot. I won a lot and I lost some. I have been improving step by step. Not much was expected of me when I went to Rio but now people look for a gold medal from me," Sindhu, who is here to play for Hyderabad Hunters in the fifth edition of PBL, said. "I look at it in a posi-

itive way when everyone expects me to do well. I don't consider that as added pressure and that will only make me work even harder. It's not going to be easy but I'm prepared for the challenges awaiting me," she added. Being an Olympic year, the world No 6 said it was good to play the PBL because one got to play with top players which is helpful. "We get to play with top quality players in PBL like Tai Tzu Ying, which is helpful in an Olympic-year. We get to play for Hyderabad Hunters in the fifth edition of PBL, said. Even I get to improve

some aspects of my game by interacting with foreign talent. They offer useful tips that can help the growth of a player. "There is a lot more time before the Olympics. We have a couple of important events in the run-up to Olympics. For now, my focus is on helping my team in the PBL. I just want to play my game and enjoy," she added. The 24-year old shuttler, who has had an up-and-down run since winning the world title in Basel last year, said she was working on her mental fitness, adding it was important to be in a positive frame of mind and come back stronger.

## Saina, Srikanth hope to keep Olympic dream alive



Saina Nehwal in a file photo PTI

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Their Olympic berths still not secured, ace Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth will hope to put up a good show when they begin their campaign at the Thailand Masters Super 300 tournament here on Wednesday.

Owing to their inconsistent outings in 2019, Saina and Srikanth are placed at the 22nd and 23rd spots in BWF's Race to Tokyo rankings with April 26 being the cut off date for Olympic qualification.

According to the BWF Olympics qualification rules, only two players from each singles category can qualify if their ranking lies within the top-16 by April 26.

At this moment, world champion P.V. Sindhu (6th) and B Sai Praneeh (11th) and men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty (8th) have more or less assured their berths for the Tokyo Games. After a series of early exits

last year, which dented their chances, Saina and Srikanth pulled out of the Premier Badminton League to train and give themselves a better chance at the qualification.

But Srikanth didn't have a good start to the new year as he faltered in the first round in the first two tournaments — losing to Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen at Malaysia and local player Shesar Hiren Rhustavito at Indonesia.

Saina, a London Olympics Bronze medallist, made it to the quarters at Malaysia but she couldn't defend her title at Indonesia Masters, falling at the first round to Japan's Sayaka Takahashi.

With the Olympic qualification cut off date ending in April, there are only eight tournaments, including the Thailand Masters, left in the calendar and the Indian duo will have to produce consistent performances to earn a ticket to Tokyo.

Saina will begin her campaign here against Denmark's Line Hojmark Kjaersfeldt, an opponent against whom she has a 4-0 record. Srikanth, on the other hand, will face Shesar Hiren Rhustavito once again in the opening round and would hope to settle the score this time around.

Among other Indians, Sameer Verma, who also had a disappointing 2019 season, will take on Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia, seeded seventh, while H S Prannoy faces another Malaysian Liew Daren in the opening round.



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## Chinese New Year celebrated in new ways

January 24, 2020 is Spring Festival (Chinese New Year's eve). Chinese people around the world celebrate the common festival which is a time for family reunion.

Around the Spring Festival, China will see the world's largest population movement, with people from all over the country like migratory birds travel through more than half of China just to get to a place called home. It is estimated that, around the Spring Festival in 2020, China's transportation system would send 3 billion passengers, which is equivalent to every Chinese person traveling twice. In order to send such a large population home and back to their work after the holiday, China's public transport system welcomes the Spring Festival travel rush every year. With the development of China's transportation infrastructure, it is no longer common for people to queue up for train tickets overnight. Just before the Spring Festival on January 13, more than 600 poor migrant workers from Yunnan in Guangdong took a free ride on a special high-speed train operated jointly by Yunnan and Guangdong to return home.

Meanwhile, a growing number of Chinese people choose to travel the reverse directions of the Spring Festival travel rush flow, with many parents choosing to head to the big cities where their children work instead of their children returning their rural homelands. The reverse passenger flow of the Chinese Spring Festival has increased by about 9% for four consecutive years. Railway departments in some regions have offered concessionary fares on some lines with concentrated reverse passenger flow.

Spring Festival is also a time when



The Chinese character "Fu" is an ancient symbol of good luck. Photo by Xinhua

Chinese people are the most willing to spend money. According to tradition, Chinese people always purchase a large amount of "new year goods" such as food, gifts, New Year decorations and others before the festival. In addition to the bustling lively traditional New Year shopping streets in each place, major online shopping platforms have also launched the "New Year Shopping

Festival". On the first day of the Alibaba's "Tmall" 2020 New Year's Festival, the red Fuji apple with rock candy heart from Yuncheng, Shanxi Province in China was sold 1,000 tons. China is the world's largest food importer. According to Jingdong, a Chinese Internet shopping platform, in early January 2020, the consumption of imported fruit on the platform increased by 2.2 times, compared with the same

period in December last year. Banana, Chilean cherry and Longan are the best-selling imported fruits. According to the State Post Bureau of China, 1.61 billion packages were delivered during the 2019 Spring Festival, making it an increasingly common scene for people to wait for online deliveries at home.

In addition to these, many changes are taking place during the Spring Festival, a traditional festival with a history of thousands of years. More people choose not to make Chinese traditional Chinese New Year meals at home, but to get together in restaurants. A total of 1 trillion yuan (\$142.8 billion) was spent during the 2019 Spring Festival, according to statistics. Many people no longer stay at home and visit relatives in accordance with the tradition, but take advantage of the Spring Festival holiday to go out. According to statistics, about 7 million Chinese tourists travelled abroad during the Spring Festival in 2019, with Japan and Southeast Asia as their first choices.

The new Spring Festival reflects the changes in Chinese society: relatively smaller family structure, dynamic economy, greater selection of choices, faster pace of life and changed ideology. However, no matter how it changes, the warmth of the Spring Festival reunion and the people's longing for a better new year have never changed, and it has gradually become a global holiday. Here, the Editorial Department of China · Yunnan news pages wishes all readers happy holidays!

### XI'S REMARKS

"We are pledging to achieve the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects in the "milestone" year. We pledged to lift all rural residents living below the current poverty line out of poverty and eliminate poverty in all poor counties. The year of 2020 is crucial in winning the anti-poverty battle, the clarion has sounded. We must work together and work hard... to secure a victory in the battle against poverty."

—Excerpt from the New Year speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping on Dec. 31, 2019.

### POVERTY ALLEVIATION

## Targetted poverty alleviation leads to happiness

"Deng Xuesheng's eldest daughter studies economics at Sichuan University, the elder daughter studies Food Quality and Safety at Yunnan University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and the little one studies in a middle school in Dali. We are going to help his three daughters to finish their college educations." On November 5, 2019 in the small courtyard of Deng Xuesheng, a resident of Juxiang Village, Yongchun Township, Weixi Lisu Autonomous County, one of the hot topics was to avoid going back to poverty because of his kids' schooling.

In Juxiang, every family values education. Children, regardless of gender, are supported to go to school. Zhao Jianghong, village party secretary of Juxiang village, said, "The future is bright, but it is hard to support children to school."

"It is not that difficult with the care from our Party and Government," said Deng Xuesheng's wife, smiling. "Now, Deng Xuesheng works as a security guard at the county ethnic primary school, earning 1,500

yuan per month. I work in the village as a cleaner and an ecological forest ranger, earning 500 yuan and nearly 800 yuan a month respectively. We are thankful for all these with the support from our Party and Government."

Deng Xuesheng added, "On top of these, we got a subsidy of 20,000 yuan when we built our house back in 2017. And we apply for a loan of 8,000 yuan once a year to pay our children's tuition fee. Taking targeted measures to alleviate poverty, Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture has been implementing a new policy of compulsory education for 14 years. With the policy, children are tuition-free until they go to college."

"I came to work in Juxiang village in 2015, involved and witnessed the precise poverty alleviation," said Zhao Jianghong. Targetted poverty alleviation not only brought happiness to Deng Xuesheng's family, but also brought great changes to Juxiang village. Every family's sense of gain was very real.

(By Xiong Yan)

### COMMUNICATION

## Increasing understanding of Indian and Chinese youth

"Youth is the future of China-India relations, and we would contribute to the development and cooperation of our two countries". "As a young generation, we would pass on the friendship between our two countries". "We would work together to create a better future for China and India". At the second China-India Youth Dialogue held recently, the youth representatives of the two countries said so.

The Dialogue was co-sponsored by the Chinese Embassy in India and the Federation of Indian Young Leaders. Outstanding youth representatives from all over India and representatives of the All India Chinese Students Association attended the event. Representatives of the two countries discussed issues such as how to achieve win-win cooperation and how to strengthen bilateral people-to-people exchanges between China and India.

Sun Weidong, Chinese ambassador to India, said in his speech that when the youth prosper, the country prospers, and when the youth are strong, the country is strong. Sino-Indian relations are stable and

positive. The potential for cooperation between the two countries is huge. It provides a broader platform for youth exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. It is believed that the dialogue between the youth of the two countries will further enhance mutual understanding and contribute more intelligence and strength to the development of China-India relations.

Chairman of Indian Youth Leaders Federation, said that China has the world's largest population and India has the world's largest youth population. A friendly bilateral cooperation provides a solid foundation for youth exchange and cooperation. And he believes that the event is a good start of this year's "China-India Cultural Exchange Year."

"The future of the relationship between the two countries lies in the hands of young people. It is expected that the Indian and Chinese youths will continue to increase their understanding and deepen their friendship," said an Indian youth representative who visited Shenzhen. "I hope to have the opportunity to visit more places in China and learn more about China." (By People's Daily)

### BIODIVERSITY

## China unveils logo for 2020 UN biodiversity conference



China, the hosting country of the 15th meeting of the Conference on Biological Diversity (COP 15), and the convention's

secretariat on HIGH-TECH ECO January 9 jointly unveiled the logo for the United Nations gathering.

In the shape of a water droplet or a seed, the logo is inspired by the art of Chinese paper-cuttings and seals, and consists of elements with distinctive Chinese characteristics. Against the background of the oracle bone inscriptions, the "water droplet" contains a giant panda, a girl in an ethnic costume, a peacock, a butterfly, plum blossoms and sea waves that reflect biological and cultural diversity.

(By YDPG)

### Special Yunnan ways of celebrating New Year

#### Bathing Festival

From the first to the third day of the first lunar month every year, when Kapok flowers are in full bloom, Lisu people living in Nujiang Grand Canyon in Western Yunnan welcome an important ethnic event called Bathing Festival. People from all over directions come to the hot springs, men and women, young and old, to bathe together in the hot-spring water. In the open-air hot spring pool, people either

play at leisure or overlook the mountains in distance enjoying relaxation and joy. Lisu people believe that bathing in hot springs during the Spring Festival can wash away fatigue and troubles and welcome the New Year with a brand new attitude. The practice of Bath Festival has been passed down to this day and gradually evolved into a festival for tourists from all over the country and Lisu people in Nujiang Prefecture.

#### Ten thousand people dance together

In Jingpo language, "Munaozongge" means dance together. The local Jingpo people like to welcome the New Year with joyful songs and dances. "Tok Tok Tok", strong Jingpo men work hard to beat the wooden drums so that the sound of heavy drums fills the square to open the prelude of the Munaozongge festival. Two leading

dancers, armed with long knives and hornbill hats, lead the procession, looking solemn and serious. Behind them, the Jingpo people, dressed in festive costumes, come into the square one by one, holding hands, stepping in a neat pace, their bodies dancing naturally and gradually forming a chorus of tens of thousands of people.

#### Coming of age ceremony

The Spring Festival is particularly important for children of Pumi ethnic group who have reached the age of thirteen in the northwest plateau of Yunnan. On New Year's Eve, children who have reached the age of thirteen gather together according to their gender, have fun all night, and bid farewell to their happy childhood. They would return to their homes as soon as dawn comes. A girl's coming-of-age ceremony is called

the ceremony of wearing a skirt. A boy's coming-of-age ceremony is called the ceremony of putting on trousers and is presided over by his uncle. When the ceremony of wearing a skirt and trousers is held, the child's parents would hold a grand banquet to entertain their guests. They serve each of the guests a bowl of bone soup, a piece of meat and some pig's heart and liver, to show that everyone is closely connected like one person.

### CULTURE

## Poya song book of Zhuang: 81 symbols and 81 love songs



The Poya villagers at a music performance. Photo by YDPG

Poya Village is located in the deep mountains of Boyitown, Funing county, Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan province. The 55 Zhuang households in the village still retain a tradition of singing folk songs. The Poya Song Book is an ancient rune handed down from the village. On a white cloth a foot wide and two feet long, there are 81 symbols of objects such as moon, stars, trees, rice leaves, people,

horses, bird cages painted with red cactus juice, which represent names of 81 love songs. It records the love journey of a young man and a woman's meeting, getting to know each other, falling in love, and getting old. Nong Fengmei, the owner of the song book, can sing an entire song whenever she sees these pattern symbols. This method of recording folk songs is passed down from generation to generation with a long history. (XINHUA)

## "Dianxi Xiaoge" bringing the flavour of Yunnan to the world

A 90s Yunnan girl's video, "Dianxi Xiaoge", has achieved enormous popularity abroad. As of December 19, 2019, "Dianxi Xiaoge" had 3.24 million followers on Microblog, 3.57 million followers on YouTube, 380,000 Facebook users and 1.4 million fans on Douyin.

The "Dianxi Xiaoge" actually is a girl. "It is a playful and easy way to call myself a 'little brother', and Dianxi (west Yunnan) represents the geographical coordinates of my hometown Baoshan," she explained her online name. In the video, the Dianxi Xiaoge can chop down sugar cane and also get irritated with tears by

hot peppers. The Yunnan flavour presented in her video has become the most prominent label of her works that made countless netizens from knowing Yunnan cuisine to longing for Yunnan.

She made seasonal crops in Yunnan into delicious food never heard of by foreigners, liketa marind cake, Yunnan ham cake, bamboo-tube cooked rice, spicy sauce and others. Each episode of her video has about 3 million views. AWOL, an Australian media outlet, says the Dianxi Xiaoge channel has fascinated the world. (By YDPG)

### FOCUS

## Memorable things in Yunnan 2019

Editor's Note: In 2019, we witnessed an array of big and new things in Yunnan, such as the Pilot Free Trade Zone, digital Yunnan, tourism revolution, ecological protection and poverty alleviation. These have brought enormous changes to the province and left long-lasting memories on the people's minds.

#### Key term: Leading the pack

The National Bureau of Statistics of China recently published the economic growth data of 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions for the first three quarters of 2019.

During this period, Yunnan achieved a GDP of 1,297.185 billion RMB (US\$ 186.246 billion). This is a year-on-year increase of 8.8 per cent, 2.6 per cent higher than the national average of 6.2 per cent.

#### Key term: Tourism revolution

In Yunnan, tourism has long been a characteristic industry. However, it has gone through a period of unstable development. In 2019, the province launched a tourism revolution by regulating the market, to provide tourists with a better experience. It

introduced a hassle-free returns policy and developed smart tourism. Data shows that from January to October 2019, the province received 15 per cent fewer complaints on the 12301 national tourist complaint platform as compared to previous years.

#### Key term: Poverty alleviation

In 2019, tens of thousands of government officials, enterprise employees, teachers and volunteers went to poor areas and joined in the battle against poverty. Their goal was to lift all rural residents currently living below the poverty line out of poverty

by 2020, in line with the rest of the country. According to statistics, the number of poor people in Yunnan's deeply impoverished areas has decreased from 1.378 million in 2018 to 365,400 in late 2019. The poverty headcount ratio has dropped from 13.29 per cent to 3.52 per cent.

#### Key term: Digital Yunnan

In 2019, the Digital Yunnan programme focused on smart tourism, smart education, smart agriculture and smart industry. The online platform "Yunnan at Your Fingertips", which was launched in October 2018, has been developed further. It now integrates live streaming of scenic spots, tour guide services,

transport services, tourist complaint handling and other functions. The "Yunnan at Your Fingertips" platform has made an increasing number of government services available online. Furthermore, Yunnan took the lead in becoming the first province in the country to introduce facial recognition check-in services for passengers of all airlines.

#### Key term: EMU

In 2019, EMU's (Electric Multiple Units) came to Lijiang, Mengzi and Zhaotong and made these cities more accessible. The high-speed rail has shortened the distance between cities and brought people closer.

The high-speed railway lines have been woven into a network and changed

the lives of people. Last year, many people left the mountains for the first time, to embrace the outside world. Seeing the enormous potential for development, businesspeople came to the province with projects and funds. Opening up and convenient transport are making the province a better place to live in.

#### Key term: Pilot Free Trade Zone

On August 30, 2019, the China (Yunnan) Pilot Free Trade Zone (consisting of the Kunming, Honghe and Dehong areas) was established. On December 1, the China (Yunnan) Pilot Free Trade Zone rolled out the reform of separating permits and certificates for business licences, to further improve the business environment. The reforms mean that many

pre-registration approvals have been replaced by post-registration approvals, thus significantly reducing the time limit required for securing approvals. From August 30 to December 6, 2019, some 2,500 enterprises, encompassing processing and trade, big health, cross-border tourism and e-commerce, registered in the three areas of the China (Yunnan) Free Trade Pilot Zone.