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SAMRASTRA AWARD**

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Summit **T**IMES

2020
HAPPY NEW YEAR

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Elections aside, Year 2019 was also about...

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 31 DEC:**

As we enter a new decade, let's take a look at the highlights of 2019. The elections of course made the biggest news this year with the ouster of the 25-year-old SDF government, but let's also not forget other important happenings of the past year.

MULTISPECIALTY STNM HOSPITAL INAUGURATED

18 years since its construction had started, the 1000-bed multispecialty hospital at Sochaygang, Sichey was finally inaugurated on 14 Jan this year. Spread over a 15 acre plot, the hospital was constructed at a total cost of Rs 1,281 crores in two phases.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES GET FIVE-DAY WEEK

One of the first decisions that the new SKM government took was to declare Saturdays as



a government holiday through a notification issued on 28 May, 2019. This, the government said was in order to provide 'care and cure' to government employees.

PAKYONG AIRPORT SUSPENDS FLIGHTS

Spicejet, the only airline servicing Sikkim, suspended all its flights to and from Pakyong Airport from 01 June earlier this year citing poor visibility and lack of proper landing equipments. The airport had

begun operations in September 2018.

RETURN OF FIRE CRACKERS

The State Government on 25 Oct 2019 partially relaxed the ban on fire crackers, allowing the use of 'green fire crackers' from 7pm to 9pm during various festivals. For all practical purposes though, the two-hour stipulation was meant only for the official notifications and neither was it observed nor implemented.

Gen Mukund Naravane takes charge as new Army chief

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 (PTI): Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane on Tuesday took charge as the Chief of Army Staff, succeeding Gen Bipin Rawat.

Gen Naravane served as vice chief of the Army before taking charge of the 1.3 million strong Army.

In his 37 years of service, Gen Naravane served in numerous command and staff appointments in peace, field and highly active counter-insurgency environments in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast.

He also commanded a Rashtriya Rifles battalion in Jammu and Kashmir and an infantry brigade on the eastern front.

Before appointed as vice chief of the Army, Gen Naravane was heading the Army's Eastern Command that takes care of India's nearly 4,000-km border with China.

Golay's New Year Resolution – Wealthy and Strong Sikkim

GANGTOK, 31 DEC: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] has extended warm and heartiest New Year greetings to the people of Sikkim.

The Chief Minister, in his message, expresses the significance of 2019 as the year when the Government was formed with the mandate of the Sikkimese people. He conveyed his gratitude to the community for the same.

He stated that the Government has been functioning with utmost dedication and determination and has been implementing various welfare measures for the people. The Chief Minister has implored the people of Sikkim to make this new year pledge to create a wealthy and strong Sikkim and take the state towards the path of prosperity.

The Chief Minister has also appealed to the people of Sikkim to make the use of various schemes implemented by the Government and said everyone should unite and work for the welfare of the State. He has wished and expected that the people of Sikkim to experience unprecedented happiness and joy.

He has intended that the dawn of New Year 2020 usher in development and prosperity in the lives of all Sikkimese people. He wished that this upcoming year shower all the happiness and success to each and everyone and hoped that all of us will resolve to work together in the spirit of harmony and friendship.

Kerala Assembly passes resolution against CAA

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC 31 (PTI): The Kerala Assembly on Tuesday passed a resolution demanding scrapping of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), becoming the first state in the country to do so.

While Chief Ministers of non-BJP ruled states like Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal have announced that they would not implement CAA, CPI(M)-ruled Kerala was the first to take the legislature route to register its opposition to the law.

Setting aside their political differences, the ruling CPI(M)-led LDF and Opposition Congress headed UDF, once again came together to launch a joint fight against the Centre on the CAA, which has seen unprecedented protests all over the country.

While all the members of two fronts unanimously supported the resolution at the special session and vehemently criticised the central government, the lone BJP MLA in the 140-member house opposed the resolution, terming it as "illegal and unconstitutional."

Vijayan, who moved the resolution and Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala, who seconded it, alleged that CAA was an attempt to make India a religious nation, which Rajagopal rejected saying the Act was being "misinterpreted" and lies were being spread by the fronts for narrow political gains.

The Chief Minister said the implementation of the controversial act will lead to religion-based discrimination in granting citizenship, which was against the secular values enshrined in the Constitution.

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SAMVAAD TV

Gangtok ends year with launch of new channel

SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 31 DEC:

A new media house, Samvaad Television, was launched here on Tuesday. Sikkim Akademi president, SR Subba, officially launched the channel with the release of its logo at a function held here at Nepali Sahitya Parishad Bhawan.

Samvaad Television founders informed that media house has been established to cater to the daily craving for news and updates among Hatway Cable subscribers in Gangtok.

The core team has sprouted from Nayuma Television which shut down recently.

Samvaad Television Chief Administrator, KK Chettri, explained that when Nayuma Television decided to shut it down, its staff came together to work with a new idea, format and concept through Samvaad TV.

He thanked the management of Nayuma Television for allowing them to take over as Samvaad Television.

Samvaad TV, he said, is intended to provide the latest news from every sphere of Sikkim and the neighbouring region and is committed to provide a platform to creative and talented artists.

The launch ceremony concluded with Samvaad TV GM, Neelam



Neopaney, proposing the vote of thanks.

The function has also featured performances

by local artists Timothy Rai and Deepak Dhakal and singers Nikita Cintury and Srijana Shilal.

Samvaad TV was scheduled to go on air on Saturday evening on Hatway Cable and begin its

PNG School martial artists call on Governor

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 DEC:

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad granted audience to 27 members of MSD Dozang Club of Palzor Namgyal Girls Senior Secondary School at Raj Bhavan on 30 Dec, a press release informs.

It was a courtesy call by the members of Dozang comprising of instructors and players who have recently participated in National Open Taekwondo Championship held in Kolkata.

It may be mentioned that the Sikkim team had won 15 Gold, 11 Silver and 9 Bronze Medals in the Championship.

The Governor hailed the natural talent in Sikkimese students



and youth in sports including martial arts and blessed the members of the Dozang for their future endeavours.

He underlined the need to groom the tal-

ent which is in abundance in Sikkim and provide them with required exposure and platform to continue bringing laurels from national and international championships.

He also appreciated the hard work and dedication of young kids towards their preferred sports and stated that sports should be the medium to achieve physical and mental

wellbeing besides establishing goodwill in society.

He further urged the children to remain consistent in their effort to serve society for a better tomorrow.

CAA binding on all, says Union law minister

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC 31 (PTI): Hours after the Kerala Assembly passed a resolution demanding scrapping of the Citizenship Amendment Act, Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad asserted that the law was binding on the entire country and was "perfectly legal" and "constitutional".

He said only Parliament has exclusive powers to pass any law with regard to subjects under the seventh schedule and not any assembly.

"It is only Parliament which has got the powers to pass any law with regard to citizenship; not any assembly, including the Kerala Assembly," he told reporters here.

On the assembly resolution, Prasad hit out at the state government, saying that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan should seek better legal advice.

"This law is binding on the entire country. CAA is not related to any Indian Muslim, much

less to any Indian citizen.

It only relates to six persecuted communities of three countries--Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan and who are being singled out due to their faith".

Due to their religious faith, there has been a long history of persecution, the minister said.

Recalling that late Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi had provided citizenship to minorities from Uganda and Sri Lankan Tamils, respectively, he wondered why was it ok if Congress did so and "it is a problem" when Prime Minister Narendra Modi or Home Minister Amit Shah did the same.

"When the Congress does, it is ok. When Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi did it, it was Ok. But when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah does it, it is a problem", he said, adding this was the "double standards of the worst order".

turn page 3

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Overview:

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Cybersecurity is the next big thing...

A watershed year for BJP but new challenges emerge

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 (PTI): The year 2019 will go down as a watershed in the BJP's journey as the party not only achieved its highest ever tally in Lok Sabha but also realised its decades-long ideological planks with the Modi government pushing the saffron agenda with renewed vigour in its second term.

However, it was not altogether a smooth run for the BJP as regional satraps in alliance with the Congress succeeded in dethroning it in Maharashtra and Jharkhand while nationwide protests against the citizenship law and the concept of National Register for Citizens pushed it on the defensive.

The scale of protests prompted its top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president Amit Shah, to decouple the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) with the NRC, and it remains uncertain as to how the saffron party will push on with its ideological agenda in the face of mounting challenges.

All debated and done, party leaders are likely to look back at 2019 with more than a touch of satisfaction as the year saw nullification of Article 370, criminalisation of triple talaq, enactment of CAA and a Supreme Court order paving the way for Ram temple construction in Ayodhya, issues which have agitated Hindutva cadres for decades.

If the results of the April-May general elec-

tion underscored the BJP's preeminence in national politics with the party winning 303 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha, its footprint in state governments was reduced to a mere 35 per cent of the country's landmass from the peak of 71 per cent in 2017.

If the outgoing year again highlighted the appeal of 'brand Modi', it also brought to light the BJP's vulnerability in state elections when the prime minister and national issues are not driving factors for the common voter's choice.

The massive mandate of 303 seats in the general elections, however, set off its own unintended consequences for the party, which managed to ruffle feathers of quite a few allies with its "big brotherly" airs.

The BJP lost its Hindutva ally Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the JD(U), which is now its biggest partner, is yet to get over the slight of being offered merely one cabinet berth in the Modi government as a "symbolic representation", as Bihar party leaders recalled disdainfully. JD(U) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar summarily rejected the proposal.

The year also saw the rise and rise of Shah as he after being inducted as the home minister in the second Modi government was the face of the central dispensation in pushing its major decisions with distinct ideological hues.

Whether it was the



nullification of Article 370, bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories, strengthening of anti-terror laws or the passage of the amended citizenship bill, Shah spearheaded the government's agenda and took on the opposition with his usual mix of combative articulation and ideological clarity.

Even when he focussed his energies on leading the party during the first term of the Modi government, there was never a doubt on who is the real number two in the organisation after Modi.

And it was no coincidence that Shah was at the helm of the government's drive to carry out the BJP's central Hindutva planks in the second stint of the government.

A Supreme Court in the favour of building a Ram temple in Ayodhya has come as a boost to the party.

The BJP organisation is expected to undergo a shake-up in the new year as Shah is likely to make way for its working president J P Nadda at the

top.

When the ongoing organisational elections end, expected in January, the party may have some new faces in its structure but is unlikely to change its course much from the path laid down by Shah in more than five and an half years of his term.

In terms of the upcoming electoral challenges, the new year is likely to pose some tough question to the saffron war machine as it prepares for the assembly polls in Delhi and Bihar.

Arvind Kejriwal-led Aap Aadmi Party had defied the pro-BJP sentiments in the 2015 polls and handed the main rival its worst drubbing in the national capital by winning 67 seats in the 70-member assembly and reducing it to three.

BJP leadership has been working overtime to come back to power in the city which handed it all seven Lok Sabha seats in the general election, as was the case in the 2014 polls too, but is hamstrung by the lack of a face to take on Kejriwal, who is backing on his populist schemes to re-

tain power.

The Election Commission is likely to announce the dates for Delhi polls soon.

In Bihar, many observers believe the BJP in the alliance with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) and Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP is better placed against the rival RJD-Congress combine after winning all but one of its 40 Lok Sabha seats.

However, there is also a view that the chemistry between Kumar and the BJP is far from perfect and differences may crop up between them over sharing of seats in the assembly elections.

JD(U) leaders have indicated that they want their party to fight on more seats than the BJP in the politically crucial state.

Amid rancour in their ties after some BJP leaders sniped at Kumar, Shah had walked the extra mile earlier to bring the alliance back on track by asserting that the JD(U) president will again lead the NDA in the state assembly polls, which are due later this year.

Hopefuls in sulk over non-induction into Maha cabinet

MUMBAI, DEC 31 (PTI): A day after expansion of Maharashtra cabinet, voices of resentment resonated in the camps of the ruling Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress criticising the choice of new faces by the leadership of respected parties.

On Tuesday evening, supporters of Bhor Congress MLA Sangram Thopte attacked the party office in Pune to protest against his non-induction into the state ministry.

While a section of Congress leaders is upset over non-induction of the party loyalists into the new council of ministers, leaders of the Sena have expressed disapproval over party seniors and former ministers not finding place.

On Monday, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray inducted a total of 36 ministers in his one-month-old coalition government comprising the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress.

Among the 36, 14 ministers (ten Cabinet and four MoS) belonged to the NCP, 12 to the Sena (eight Cabinet and four MoS), and 10 to Congress (eight Cabinet and two MoS).

Hours after the cabinet expansion on Monday night, NCP MLA from Beed district Prakash Solanke had announced that he will resign on Tuesday, saying he was "unworthy to do politics".

However, on Tuesday, NCP leadership succeeded in making him change his mind.

Reports of some Sena leaders being unhappy after not being inducted into the new cabinet are also doing rounds.

Thackeray has dropped several ministers, including seniors like Ramdas Kadam, Diwakar Raote and Ravindra Waikar who were part of the previous BJP-led government, in the new government.

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Bengaluru, Dec 31 (PTI): Two people were injured after a car in Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa's convoy rammed into a truck before hitting an auto rickshaw on Tuesday at Yashwantpur here, police said.

The chief minister was heading towards Tumakuru on Tuesday morning when the incident occurred, they said.

Behind him in the convoy was the car allotted to Yediyurappa's secretary S Selva Kumar.

Kumar was in the Chief Minister's car when the accident took place.

The driver of the car lost control of the vehicle and crashed against the road divider before colliding with a truck and an auto rickshaw, they added.

"No casualties, but the auto driver and car driver sustained injuries. The car is mangled," said a police officer.

Despite Sena leaders' appeal to their workers to maintain discipline, a Solapur district functionary of the party, Shaila Godse, resigned over non-induction of former minister from the region, Tanaji Sawant.

Meanwhile, Solapur district Youth Congress president Nitin Nagne on Tuesday wrote a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi in his blood over non-induction of three-time MLA Praniti Shinde, daughter of Congress veteran Sushilkumar Shinde, into the new council of ministers.

A Congress corporator resigned from the Solapur Municipal Corporation as well as a party member in support of Praniti Shinde.

Shinde said, "I accept the decision of the party leadership. Since this is a three-party government, everybody cannot be accommodated, I will request party workers to exercise restraint".

Venting his anger, a senior Congress leader from Mumbai questioned the integrity of MLAs Aslam Sheikh and Vishwajit Kadam who were inducted into the new Cabinet. While Sheikh took oath as Cabinet minister, Kadam as Minister of State (MOS).

"Both Sheikh and Kadam were reportedly keen to join the BJP ahead of the Assembly polls held in October this year.

They had even met with the then chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. Sheikh was even assured a ticket by the BJP, but it didn't materialise which forced Sheikh to stay back in the Congress," the party leader told PTI.

Induction of Kadam, who is one of the five working presidents of the state Congress, has also ruffled feathers of some leaders who believe that the MLA from western Maharashtra was chosen over party loyalist Sangram Tho-

pte, a three time MLA from Pune district.

Kadam had first won the bypoll to Palus Kadegaon seat in Sangli district after the death of his father and former Congress minister Patangrao Kadam. He was re-elected from the seat in the October 2019 assembly elections.

"Why was Sangram Thopte being sidelined when the fact is that he is senior to Kadam?" the leader asked.

He said the Thoptes have been traditional loyalists of Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

"Sonia Gandhi's first rally in Maharashtra's Nandurbar after she became the party chief was organised by Sangram's father Anantrao Thopte," the leader recalled.

When contacted, Sangram Thopte refused to comment.

Similarly, the Congress picked Satej Patil, an MLC from Kolhapur district, despite the party having four MLAs in the region.

Former minister and senior Congress leader Naseem Khan admitted of resentment.

"It is true that there is unrest in the party rank and file over choice of ministers from the Congress quota (in the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government). There is a feeling that loyalists have been sidelined. I hope the party's central leadership will take note of the issue," he said. Earlier in the day, senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said the party had to accommodate allies who supported the Thackeray-led party after the state Assembly poll results were announced on October 24. "We had to give a chance to new faces as well," he said.

In the 288-member House, the Sena has 56 MLAs, NCP 54 and Congress 44. The opposition BJP has 105 MLAs.

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370, criminalisation of triple talaq, enactment of CAA and a Supreme Court order paving the way for Ram temple construction in Ayodhya, issues which have agitated Hindutva cadres for decades.

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the BJP's central Hindutva planks in the second stint of the government.

A Supreme Court in the favour of building a Ram temple in Ayodhya has come as a boost to the party. The BJP organisation is expected to undergo a shake-up in the new year as Shah is likely to make way for its working president J P Nadda at the top. When the ongoing organisational elections end, expected in January, the party may have some new faces in its structure but is unlikely to change its course much from the path laid down by Shah in more than five and an half years of his term.

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ASSCWA president conferred Indo Nepal Samrastra Award

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 DEC:

All Sikkim Scheduled Caste Welfare Association [ASSCWA] president, Shekhar Sewa was conferred with the prestigious Indo Nepal Samrastra Award on 29 December at Kathmandu in Nepal. He has been awarded for his outstanding contribution in the field of social service.

The award function had Minister, Urban Development, Government of Nepal, Rambeer Manandar and other dignitaries from Nepal and India.



Sadhbhawna Sammelan concludes in Salugara



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 DEC:

The two-day Sadhbhawna Sammelan at Manav Dharma Ashram, Salugara in Siliguri, concluded on Tuesday.

The Sammelan, or-

ganized by Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti Uttar [MUSS] Purvanchal Kshetra, was chaired by MUSS founder, Satpalji Maharaj.

On the last day of the Sammelan today, Satpal-

ji Maharaj spoke about Nepali language and its importance in the world.

He also shared that Manav Dharma, which was started in the 70's, was marking its golden

jubilee year in the hills.

The event was attended by people from different parts of Sikkim and the neighbouring hills. The last day of the event has also included cultural performances.

Governor's New Year greetings

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 DEC:

On the joyous occasion of New Year 2020, Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad has extended warm greetings and good wishes to the people of Sikkim, a Raj Bhavan release informs.

In his message, the Governor

has said, "New Year marks a new beginning, new people to meet, new adventures to enjoy and new memories to create. It is an occasion for all of us to reflect on our achievement and also on the opportunities that lie ahead. As we approach new year with new hopes and aspirations, let us not

forget to assimilate the lessons learnt from our troubled and difficult times in the past.

May this New Year give all of us the courage to triumph over our vicissitudes and embrace the virtues. May the occasion bring with it new dawn of prosperity, happiness and wellbeing to my fellow Sikkimese."

NCP MLA decides not to quit after seniors pacify him

MUMBAI, DEC 31 (PTI):

NCP MLA Prakash Solanke, who was miffed at not being inducted into the Maharashtra council of ministers, on Tuesday said he would not resign from the party.

Solanke, who represents Majalgaon seat in Beed district, on Monday said would resign as member of the state Legislative Assembly as he is "unworthy to do politics".

The four-term MLA met NCP state chief Jayant Patil, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and senior party leader

Dhananjay Munde at the NCP office here on Tuesday.

He later told reporters that since he was a four-term legislator, he expected "justice" during the expansion of the Uddhav Thackeray-led ministry on Monday.

"I was unhappy at being sidelined and wanted to quit as MLA and politics. But, my party workers (in Majalgaon) told me not to take a decision in haste," Solanke said.

The lawmaker said he will not quit his Assembly membership

and the party.

"I held talks with NCP leaders and spoke to party supremo Sharad Pawar over phone. I am satisfied with the outcome of our deliberations," he said.

Asked what assurances he got from NCP leaders, Solanke said, "I just want to work for the party with respect."

Meanwhile, Jayant Patil said NCP is "like a family" and the party wants to ensure respect to all its members.

Ajit Pawar said ev-

ery party member will have expectations and there is nothing wrong in it.

"But, Solanke is satisfied with the discussions and he will not quit," he added.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray expanded his council of ministers on Monday by inducting 36 ministers, including NCP leader Ajit Pawar who was sworn in as deputy CM.

In the 288-member Assembly, the NCP has 54 MLAs after the Shiv Sena which has 56 members.

Over 1.5 million fitness assessment conducted via Khelo India Mobile App

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 (PTI):

Fitness assessment of school children through the Khelo India mobile app has crossed 1.5 million in less than a year, since its launch by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 27.

This is the first of its kind pan-India initiative

which envisages the fitness assessment of all school-going children across India.

Over 8500 schools, mostly belonging to the CBSE board, have registered over 24 lakh students out of which over 15 lakh have been assessed so far.

The students are being assessed through a battery of tests designed to target two age groups.

Firstly, for those between the ages of 5 and 8, the assessment is conducted for height and weight (BMI), static balance (flamingo test) and coordination (plate tap test).

Secondly, the assess-

ment for the age group of 9 to 18 takes place for speed (50 m standing start), endurance (600 m run or walk), flexibility (sit and reach test), core (partial curl up 30 seconds) and muscular endurance (pushups for boys and modified pushups for girls) in addition to height and weight.

Centre mulls making process of granting citizenship under CAA online to bypass states

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 (PTI):

The Centre is likely to make the entire process of granting citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act online to bypass states, some of which are dead set against the new legislation, officials said on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is mulling the option of doing away with the present procedure of routing applications for citizenship through the district magistrate in view of the strong opposition expressed by several states, including Kerala which on Tuesday passed a resolution in the Assembly demanding scrapping of the controversial Act.

"We are thinking of designating a new authority instead of the district magistrate and make the entire process of application, examination of documents and granting Indian citizenship online," a Home Ministry official said.

If the process becomes completely online, there will be no intervention from a state government at any level.

Besides, the home ministry officials are of the opinion that the state governments have no power to reject the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act as the legislation was enacted under the Union List of the 7th Schedule of the Constitution.

"The states have no power to deny implementation of a central law which is in the Union List," the top official from the Home Ministry said.

There are 97 items which are under the Union List that include Defence, External Affairs, Railways, Citizenship and Naturalisation.

According to the amended Citizenship Act, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pa-

kistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 and facing religious persecution there will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

The Act says refugees of the six communities will be given Indian citizenship after residing in India for five years, instead of 11 years earlier.

The act also proposes to give immunity to such refugees facing legal cases after being found as illegal migrants.

The Kerala Assembly had on Tuesday passed a resolution demanding scrapping of the controversial Act, amid raging countrywide protests against the legislation.

The ruling CPI(M)-led LDF and the opposition Congress-led UDF supported the resolution while the BJP's lone MLA and former Union minister O Rajagopal's was the only dissenting voice in the one-day special session.

The house adopted

the resolution moved by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Vijayan had said that "an anti-constitutional law will have no place" in his state.

A number of chief ministers, including those of West Bengal, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, had already announced that the law is "unconstitutional" and has no place in their respective state.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had said, "In your

(BJP) manifesto, instead of development issues, you have put in promise to divide the country. Why will citizenship be on the basis of religion? I will not accept this. We dare you..." "You can pass laws in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha forcefully because you have the number. But we will not let you divide the country," she said.

Describing the Act as a direct assault on India's secular charac-

ter, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had said his government would not let the legislation to be implemented in his state.

"We have a majority in the assembly and will block the bill," Singh said.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel had said the Act was clearly unconstitutional. "Whatever decision is made at the Congress party forum on the bill, will be applied in Chhattisgarh," he said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath had said, "Whatever stand the Congress party has taken on Citizenship Amendment Act, we will follow that. Do we want to be a part of a process that sows seeds of divisiveness?". Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram had also said the bill was a "brazen assault" on the fundamental ideas enshrined in the Constitution and the fate of the law will be decided in the Supreme Court.

Kerala Assembly passes...

The legislation, which contradicts the basic values and principles of the Constitution, was a cause of concern for the Non Resident Indians also, he said and wanted the Centre to take steps to drop CAA and uphold the secular credentials of the Constitution.

The southern state has already put on hold all activities in connection with the National Population Register (NPR) considering the "apprehensions" of the public that it would lead to National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Noting that the Act had triggered widespread protests among various strata of society, the Chief Minister said it had dented India's image in front of the international community.

Vijayan also made it clear that there would be no detention centres set up to house illegal immigrants in the state.

Just because both houses of Parliament has passed the CAA, it cannot be implemented as it was against constitutional values, he said.

Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala also criticised the CAA and came down on the state governor Arif Mohammed Khan for supporting the Act.

"The governor should be above politics," Chennithala said adding he should understand the feelings of the people of the state.

Chennithala claimed that the controversial Act virtually rejects the equality guaranteed by the Constitution and violates the fundamental rights of the citizens.

The CAA cannot be viewed as an isolated move but it should be seen along with the NRC and NPR, he added.

The Opposition Congress-led UDF had wanted the Left government to convene a special session and pass a resolution against the CAA during an all-party meeting convened by the Chief Minister on December 29 to discuss the issue.

The two fronts had recently held a joint protest here against the CAA in which Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan and Opposition leader, Ramesh Chennithala had participated with scores of leaders from different parties.

The resolution was passed at the special session convened to ratify the extension by another 10 years the reservation for SC and ST community in the state assemblies and Parliament.

The house also passed another resolution criticising the removal of the Anglo Indian community from the reservation in the state assemblies and Parliament.

CAA binding on all..

"This is double standards and hypocrisy of the worst order," he said strongly defending the CAA which has triggered protests across the country in the past weeks.

The CAA "does not relate to any Indian citizen or create or take away citizenship from any Indian. It is only applicable to persecuted minorities (from the three countries) he said.

CAA was perfectly Constitutional and legal, he said and charged the opposition with unleashing a "deliberate misinformation campaign".

The Congress, the minister said, had administered many of these laws, yet it has become part of the disinformation campaign

On the National Population Register (NPR), which has also come in for opposition from several quarters, including Kerala government, Prasad said it is a census governed by the Census Act and is a register of usual Indian citizens.

The population data becomes the basis for policy making for central and state governments, he added.

Referring to the National Register of Citizens (NRC), he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had clearly stated that nothing had been decided on NRC, while in Assam it was done as mandated by the Supreme Court order.

This whole "disinformation campaign" was also leading to "unprovoked and unbridled" violence, the minister said.

"We respect democracy and respect the right to dissent.

Everyone has the right to criticise the Prime Minister or Home Minister.

But if the tukde tukde gang wants to break India, we cannot allow", he said.

Condemning the "misbehaviour" towards Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, against whom protests were raised in the Indian History Congress at Kannur recently, he said the so called eminent people were seen pushing him (governor) on the stage.

This behaviour cannot be justified, he said.

Asked if the government was prepared to call for an all party meeting on CAA, he said there was a debate for an entire in both houses of Parliament on it.

"What more clarification has to be given?", he asked.

Govt has started on wrong foot on CDS appointment: Cong

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 (PTI):

The Congress on Tuesday raised several questions over the appointment of Gen Bipin Rawat as the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), saying the government has started on a "wrong foot" on the issue.

The party also asked whether the country was headed on a portentous path.

Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari said the government has started on a wrong foot on the appointment and only time will unfortunately reveal the implications.

"With great regret and fullest of responsibility may I say that the Govt has started on a very wrong foot with regard to CDS. Time alone unfortunately will reveal the implications of this decision," he said on Twitter.

He also asked why the appointment of a CDS is fraught with difficulties and ambiguities.

"What implications does nomenclature Principal Military Advisor to Defense Minister have in relation to the three service chiefs in terms of Military advise tendered to the govern-

ment? Will the advise of the CDS override the advise of the respective Service Chiefs," he asked.

Tewari wondered if the CDS as Permanent Chairperson of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee outrank the three service Chiefs.

"Would the three Chiefs report to Defense Minister through Defense Secretary or through CDS now," he asked.

"What will be the position of CDS qua Defense Secretary? Would the Defense Secretary in terms of Rule 11 of

Transaction of Business Rules continue to be the administrative head of the Defense Ministry? What is the remit/mandate of the proposed Department of Military Affairs?

"Would the CDS override the Service Chiefs with regard to tri Service agencies and organisations. What are the implications of the appointment of a CDS on Civil Military Relations- the equilibrium of which has been India's singular Success since 1947? Are we down a portentous path," he questioned.

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The Mountains Are Sweating

And more Sikkimese need to take a keener interest in issues like climate change

The current spate of biting cold might not lend itself too well to talk of global warming, but that is also the kind of only-on-occasion nature of interest that we need to get over when it comes to addressing issues of climate change. Moscow, which should be recording perpetually below freezing temperatures this deep into December is seeing the Mercury climb up to 6 degrees Celsius and stay there, Delhi is huddled under the coldest December in 118 years and heat and drought fanned forest fires are coursing through Australia. About time that the world accepted that these are Climate Crisis times and today let's talk about the health of Sikkim's ice-caps. It is bad enough that very few Sikkimese actually get to visit the glacial areas of the State, national security keeping the areas out of bounds for the real stakeholders. This is important because to make awareness about warming limited to visuals of shrinking arctic ice creates a distancing which make genuine interest difficult to establish.

Not just experts, even lay people and mass media are now noticing the change in weather patterns all over the world. The mountains are getting warmer, the plains colder and weather hitting extremes at other times. All these are symptomatic of global warming, a fact that cannot be denied anymore. Even as the debate continues over the developed world's attempts at browbeating the third world nations to sacrifice more to manage the planet's environment, regions close to ice need to get more concerned and start undertaking studies and working solutions on their own. Ice caps – the polar regions and the glacier fields – feel the impact of global warming first. North and west Sikkim are crisscrossed by many glaciers which are the frozen fountains of life for the State. The cultivation, the rivers and their hydel potential are all sourced from these glaciers, and now that hydro-power is still being pursued as the economic deliverer for the State, it becomes imperative that the source of this potential is better studied and understood. Himalayan glaciers are reported to be receding at the rate of 10 to 15 metres on an average every year. The largest glacier in the Eastern Himalaya – the 10 mile long Zemu Glacier in north Sikkim is believed by many to be receding the fastest. It also sits in the vicinity of many minor glaciers, several of which have visibly retreated from the valleys and now hang higher on the mountains, leaving behind a litter of dangerous moraines. Zemu also feeds the Teesta on which many hydel projects have been planned. When glaciers recede, there is more water in the rivers, that is simple enough to understand, but someone has to study the glaciers better to be able to calculate how long the source will keep feeding the rivers. Some recent studies have been undertaken, and a closer watch is now being kept on some glacial lakes, but very little of these findings have made way into the public domain with any coherent analysis.

Given the fact that 70 percent of the world's fresh water is frozen in glaciers, it is surprising that not more is being done to save them and contain their recession. This is probably because the scientists and decision makers prefer the plains and share their data only among their clique and have seldom made their findings simple enough for the stakeholders to understand. But the problem is already too clear and present to waste time pointing fingers. Sikkim might be too small to make a difference to the handling of Himalayan glaciers, but it can at least take care of its own "water towers." Maybe with its initiative, it could also trigger a more genuine concern elsewhere.

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Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

The Millennials at 31: Welcome to the Age of Misery

BRIDIE JABOUR
THEGUARDIAN

I usually avoid assigning characteristics to entire groups of people.

I think it is odd to say all millennials and boomers are a certain way, that people of a particular nationality are rude, that a gender is clueless, when really you are usually just talking about a small number of middle class people, or more embarrassingly, nobody at all.

There are so many factors, so much nuance lost, when glazing over someone's race, class, sexuality, childhood experience, family dynamic.

But, every 31-year-old I know is miserable.

I recently went to a girls' night with a group of women I loosely know through university, and halfway through noticed how unhappy everyone at the table was. There was a divorcee, a newlywed, someone who was casually dating and another parent. But none of that seemed to matter to their generally miserable dispositions.

Thinking more about it, I realised that whether they are my close friends, acquaintances, live in this hemisphere or have never left my state, every 31-year-old seems to be in a state of ennui.

Something about the age has woken these people up to the world. I think for the first time they are thinking, ahem, we are thinking: "Am I running out of time?"

They are beginning to look around at the shape of their lives and realise, well, this is the shape of their lives. It isn't just women either. Most of the men I know have entered the malaise as well.

Everyone seemed to sail through 30, but 31 has been the mental block. Maybe we won't be rich. Maybe we won't be famous. Maybe this job is the "career" we thought was waiting for us around the corner. Is a big love coming? Are our parents really going to die? We already know a few that



have.

Does it finally matter that you spent the entire weekend sinking prosecco and tins of beer? Is it just me or does the skin on my chest feel ever so slightly ... looser? Is it all catching up with me? Have all the small and big decisions I have made over the past 31 years meant that this is where I have landed?

Well, yes.

Then of course there is the big decision – the one where if you do nothing, it really matters, and if you do something, it really matters.

Seemingly, the day after turning 31 is all about waking up sweating and asking "should I have a baby"? The next question is sometimes "and who with?", but I have many married friends deciding whether they will be child-free or not. It's not just a freak out for the single person.

Sometimes the decision is agonising, and sometimes, much worse, the decision is not actually theirs.

The baby question is just one part of the early-30s milieu. There is a distinct loss of ambition. People who have spent years striving and hustling are suddenly questioning it all. If they are not happy being defined by their job, then what do they want to be defined by?

Friends? Family? Apartment? Character? A job seems the easiest

when you really start grappling with it. You don't have to like the person you are if you are defined by your job.

When talking to a friend about this she responded grimly: "I plan to have my freak out when I am Carrie Bradshaw's age."

I write this almost as if I am a passive observer, but of course I am part of it. I am 31. I am suddenly consumed by whether I am living in the suburb where I could be happiest, whether I should have another baby (the eternal question), what I am supposed to be doing with my career, whether I really care about all of the listed above or not.

I think there is more of a nihilistic edge to millennials than any previous generation – not to sound twee but it's hard to daydream about the future when I have been choking on bushfire smoke for weeks and rainforests are disappearing at a rate of 30 football fields a minute.

I don't think millennials are a particularly spoiled generation, but because of a lot of economic and social factors they have had a lot longer to think about themselves than anyone else before them. Previous generations probably had their "I'm not actually that special" realisation in their early 20s when working full-time, buying property and having kids.

I used to feel my rage was righteous. But on its own, it can be toxic

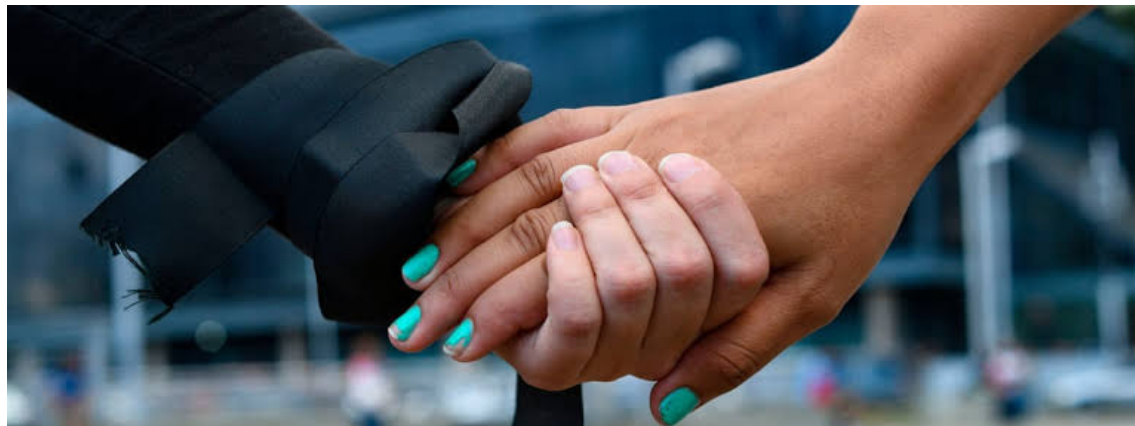
ELIF SHAFAK
THEGUARDIAN

I used to love my anger. When I was young, it was precious to me, this burning fire, this smouldering rage, which I would hold between my palms like a lantern, without realising that it was not much of a provider of either light or warmth, it burned my flesh instead. But at the time anger felt good. It felt right and righteous. It even made me love Aristotle. "For since nobody aims at what he thinks he cannot attain, the angry man is aiming at what he can attain, and the belief that you will attain your aim is pleasant." That sounded all right to me. I particularly agreed with the US philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. "A good indignation makes an excellent speech." Not only speech, I thought to myself. It could also make good books, especially novels. What better motivation could there be for a novelist than the right kind of anger?

I was born in 1971 in Strasbourg, France, in a neighbourhood full of immigrants and leftist students. Here, "revolution" was not just a noun. It was a verb, a way of life. After my parents separated, my mother and I moved to Ankara, Turkey. In striking contrast to my first home, this was a deeply conservative, patriarchal neighbourhood. From then on, I was raised by two women – my mother and my grandmother. For many reasons I did not fit in, and I always knew it. But I wasn't an angry teenager. If anything I was silent, observant, calm. A hopeless introvert.

When anger arrived, in my early 20s, I welcomed it with open arms. How fresh it felt, all that adrenaline. To that day I had barely seen my father. I didn't have a single childhood photo of me with him; I didn't know what his house looked like, even though he had returned to Turkey and lived not far from us. When I was at university he once visited me, and said he had deliberately waited to see me until I was old enough, so that we could have mature conversations about history, literature and philosophy.

As much as I loved history, literature, philosophy, those were the last things I wanted to talk to him about. I felt very angry that day. But it wasn't his neglect that infuriated me. It was the realisation that he was, essentially, a good man. A beloved academic, a decent dem-



ocrat and, as I would discover later on, a kind and loving father to his two other children who were born in his second marriage. Had he been a "bad person", I would have found the situation easier to understand. My confusion only fuelled my anger.

At the time I was mostly enraged at the system. Injustice. Inequality. Discrimination. Patriarchy made my blood boil. The fact that you couldn't walk along the street without being harassed, you couldn't take a bus without being molested. In those days, a horrific article in the Turkish penal code – article 438 – had started to provoke a massive backlash. It stipulated that punishment for rapists would be reduced if they proved that their victims were prostitutes and not "modest women". After all, the lawmakers argued, a prostitute would not be affected by rape – physically or psychologically – why would she? This was in 1990. We students were furious. Women of all backgrounds reacted strongly, supporting the rights of sex workers. Something that never happened again in my motherland. It was one of the last gains of the women's movement in Turkey.

Today, when progressive-minded people say we must make anger our primary motivation, I flinch a little. For in between times I have learned something precious: that while the beginning of anger might feel wonderful, the rest of it is, in fact, quite toxic, repetitive, shallow and backward.

Early this autumn I was at an event in a famous literary festival in Europe. The journalist who interviewed me, a feminist with whom I had a lot in common, got upset when I said

that patriarchy made women unhappy, but it also made many men unhappy, especially those who did not conform to conventional masculinity – and we should connect with those young men. Her response was full of anger: "I'm not allowing men into my movement. Let them deal with their own toxic masculinity."

"Female rage" is powerful and transformative. In a world where buses are hired by the far-right Vox movement in Spain with pictures of Hitler and the hashtag #Feminazi underneath, where extreme abortion bans are passed in the US that even threaten women who suffer miscarriages with prison, where Matteo Salvini and his like organise "family conferences" with money from evangelical organisations, or Viktor Orbán targets gender studies, or femicides continue to escalate in Turkey under Erdoğan's populist authoritarianism, or women are imprisoned in Iran for daring to take off their headscarves – or even in the seemingly advanced countries, where we are yet to achieve equal pay, of course we have a lot to be angry about.

But anger, when left alone for too long, is highly corrosive. And, most important, it is addictive. It must be diluted and counterbalanced with more powerful, positive feelings: empathy, compassion, kindness, sisterhood and love. I'm not suggesting that we should suppress female rage or be embarrassed by it, not at all, but if we make that our main guiding force, we will be lost in the maze of our own cultural ghettos, echo chambers, identity politics. And the only thing that will benefit from this will be patriarchy itself.

[the writer is a novelist and political scientist]

JNU admin to implement new hostel manual from Wednesday

NEW DELHI, DEC 30 (PTI): The Jawaharlal Nehru University on Monday said it will implement the new hostel manual from Wednesday, with its Vice-Chancellor appealing to the students to call off their strike.

After a meeting of all the three Rectors, the university's Registrar, the Deans of Schools and Chairpersons of the Special Centres, a circular was also issued urging the students, who have completed their "academic requirements of Monsoon semester 2019", to register for the new semester between Wednesday and January 5.

For those who have not completed the "academic requirements" provisional registration will be allowed during the same period, the varsity said.

It said the provisionally registered students are required to complete the "academic requirements" by January 20, 2020 to keep their registration valid.

The Deans and Chairpersons will ensure that evaluations, examinations and grading of all the provisionally regis-



tered students are completed on or before January 20, 2020, the varsity said.

For all the students, winter semester will start as per the academic calendar, it said.

According to a varsity official, the students who boycotted exams and did not take the tests even the question papers were sent to them through email and WhatsApp have been given another chance.

"They can provisionally register for the semester, take exams at their respective schools and the results will be declared by January 20," a varsity official said.

Saket Moon, the

vice-president of the JNU students' union, said the students had a meeting with the varsity Registrar and Rector where some issues were discussed.

He said the students' union will hold a meeting to decide whether they will take the exams or not.

The students of the university have been on a strike for over two months against the hostel manual as it has provisions for fee hike and levies service and utility charges.

However, a JNU official said the service and utility charges will be taken care of by the University Grants Commission

and will not be levied on the students.

The varsity's vice-chancellor, Mami-dala Jagadesh Kumar, wished the students well for the New Year and cited the varsity's achievements. He also expressed concerns saying, "certain recent incidents have deeply impeded the forward march of our university".

"It is difficult to fathom what prompted our students to take the path of confrontation and disruption affecting the teaching and research work towards the end of the Monsoon Semester 2019," he said.

Although the university administration and

the relevant bodies followed the statutory process for revising the room rent and hostel charges, a false impression was created as if the administration was bringing about these changes to harm the students, Kumar said.

He explained that the nominal increase in the hostel charges was necessitated owing to a mounting fiscal pressure on the University budget, and to maintain a comfortable and conducive hostel accommodation.

The administration made several attempts to establish meaningful dialogues with the agitating students to explain the rationale behind the new hostel charges, Kumar said.

The agitating students prevented the teachers and other students from entering few school buildings, he added.

"The university is giving yet another chance to the students to complete their academic requirements of Monsoon semester 2019. I appeal to the agitating students to call off their strike and lockdown of certain school buildings," Kumar said.

Buffalo theft for 'ransom' on rise in Morena

BHOPAL, DEC 31 (PTI): Madhya Pradesh's Morena district, which was once home to notorious dacoits and is now infamous illegal sand mining, has been witnessing a baffling trend- that of regular theft of buffaloes for 'ransom'.

This year, 23 cases of buffalo thefts for ransom, which in local dialect is called 'panhai', have come to light so far in the district, which comes under the Chambal division, a police official said.

The modus operandi of the thieves is to quietly untie the bovine from its owner's place and run away with it.

While escaping, the thieves spread a plastic sheet on the ground to prevent the animal from leaving hoof marks and getting traced by police.

The thieves then seek ransom, about 25 to 30 per cent of the cost of the animal, from its owner with the help of middlemen, sources said.



There have been complaints of buffalo theft from several villages in Morena in the recent past, a police official said.

"I have asked police to promptly register cases of buffalo theft and take immediate follow up action so that the middlemen don't get a chance to settle the thefts for cuts (ransom)," Superintendent of Police Asit Yadav told PTI.

Asked about the rise in such incidents in Morena, Yadav said, "No buffalo thief will be spared."

According to some locals, at times buffalo owners do not report the theft to police or anyone, fearing that if people

around come to know about it, their reputation may take a beating.

Morena-based social activist Ran Singh Parmar said unemployment was the major reason behind 'panhai'.

He said such incidents were not just confined to Morena, but prevalent in Bhind and Sheopur districts as well.

"A stretch of 200 to 300 km by the side of Chambal is affected by this menace," he claimed.

There is a need to generate employment for people of Chambal region, said Parmar, who has been working for the rights of poor and down-trodden since last four decades.

Congress in Telangana complains to Governor on cops 'high-handedness'

HYDERABAD, DEC 31 (PTI): Congress in Telangana on Tuesday complained to the state Governor Tamil-isai Soundararajan against alleged police high-handedness during events planned by the party on its 135th foundation day on December 28.

The party urged her to consider taking appropriate steps on the matter as the Governor is given special powers besides the normal powers with regard to law and order issues in Hyderabad.

The special powers were granted under the Andhra Pradesh Re-organisation Act for a period of 10 years from 2014.

We wish to bring to your notice the fact that the Telangana police, especially the Hyderabad police, have been acting in an arbitrary and high-handed manner and using illegal methods against

the public in general and Congress party cadre in particular, the Congress said in a memorandum to the Governor, which was released to the media.

State Congress president and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy led the party delegation to the Governor.

The memorandum said Congress had sought to take out a peaceful 'Save India, Save Constitution' rally in the city on December 28 and that the police refused permission for the event.

Congress had written to police seeking permission on any route, which did not receive any reply, the memorandum claimed.

On December 28, the party was informed that no permission was given for any rally on any route, it said.

Congress planned to organise a 'satyagraha' at its Telangana head-

quarters in the city to protest against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), it said.

What was shocking was that the police were arresting Congress leaders and workers coming to the party office to participate in 135th formation day flag-hoisting and other related celebrations," the memorandum said.

Was the Congress party a banned organisation or an illegal organisation that its members were being arrested en route to the party office to take part in activities relating to the foundation day," it said.

Telephonic queries to the police commissioner on the issue only elicited rude answers, it claimed.

Also, the Congress urged the Governor to consider an inquiry into the act and conduct of Shri Anjan Kumar (police commissioner).

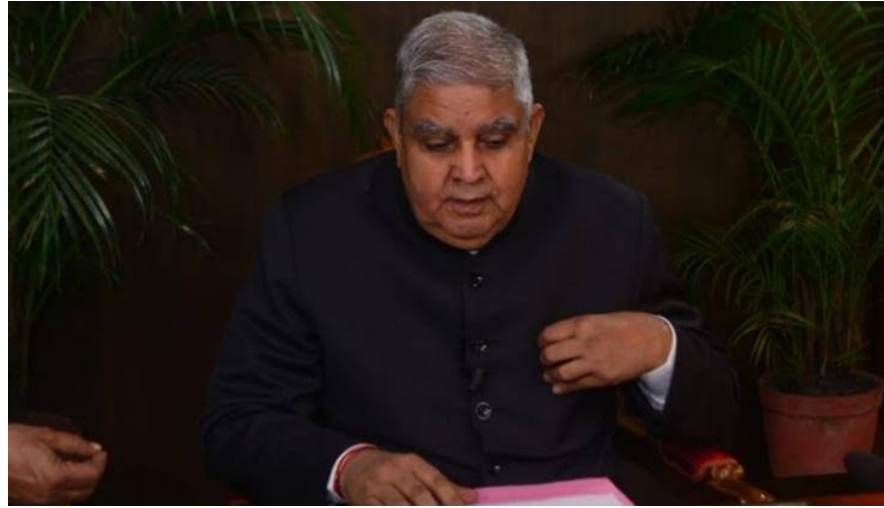
Governor Dhankar trolled for his tweet

KOLKATA, DEC 31 (PTI): Twitterati on Tuesday heavily trolled West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar as he took to the microblogging site to post his picture with a caption, in which he referred to a table apparently used by Lord Curzon to sign Partition papers as "iconic".

Several socia media users lambasted the governor, claiming that he glorified Partition in his tweet.

Two eminent authors, who had witnessed and experienced the horrors of Bengal division in 1947, said the word "iconic" was wrongly used by Dhankhar.

The governor on



Tuesday tweeted, "Recording of New Year Message for the people of State of West Bengal in the historical Raj Bhawan Library while sitting on the iconic table from which Lord Curzon signed first

Partition of Bengal in 1905."

Shortly after he was trolled, Dhankhar posted another message, contending that he was a "humble servant" of people.

"The person sitting

on this table is humble servant of the people mandated to uphold and protect the Constitution and serve the people of State of West Bengal," he added.

Senior TMC leader and state panchayat min-

ister Subrata Mukherjee termed Tuesday's episode "unfortunate".

"We want to forget the episode of Partition of Bengal.

It (Dhankhar's tweet) is unfortunate," he said.

Author Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay said the word "iconic" should not have been used in the tweet.

"I think he misunderstood the entire thing. The word 'iconic' should not have been used. The governor has wrongly used the word," he stated.

Echoing his sentiments, litterateur Prafulla Roy said, "Partition was painful. The word wasn't used in the right context.

386 drug peddlers arrested in Manipur in 2019

IMPHAL, DEC 31 (PTI): A total of 386 drug peddlers, including 68 women, were arrested in the state in 2019, a report by the Narcotics and Affairs of Border (NAB) unit of the Manipur Police has revealed.

Among other narcotics, World is Yours (WY), which comes in unlabelled packets, seemed to be the most popular among the users, as 65,60,531 tablets of the methamphetamine-based drug was confiscated, it said.

In 2018, law enforcers had seized 12,15,273

WY pills.

The report also stated that 3,015 acres of poppy plantation and 19.51 acres of marijuana were destroyed during the year. One acre of poppy crop yields at least 10 kg opium.

W Basu Singh, the superintendent of police of NAB, said one of the major reasons why the menace in the state showed no signs of let up was the "financial prospects" involved in drug trafficking.

Despite awareness campaigns, farmers continue to cultivate poppy,



mostly in the hill districts of the state, due to lure of "quick money", he told PTI.

"As part of the state's 'War Against Drugs' cam-

paign, we thought it was best not to divulge the monetary value of the narcotics seized as several people take to drug trafficking to earn quick

money," Basu added.

Poppy cultivation is banned in Manipur under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

Tribals forced to carry man's body for autopsy, KSHRC registers case

KOCHI, DEC 31 (PTI): The Kerala State Human Rights Commission has sought a report from the state government over the incident where some tribals were forced to carry a man's body around three kms on foot through the forests in Ernakulam district for autopsy due to lack of proper roads to their hamlets.

Registering a case on its own over the incident based on the media reports, Kerala State Human Rights Commission Chairman Justice Antony



Dominic directed the Chief Secretary and Ernakulam district collector to file a report within three weeks.

Soman (37) allegedly committed suicide by hanging in his house in Kunjippara tribal colony in Ernakulam district last week.

After the inquest by

the police, his body was reportedly wrapped in a mat before carrying it on their shoulders to reach the nearest road.

They crossed a river and took the body in a jeep to the main road.

Later, the body was taken in an ambulance to Kothamangalam Taluk hospital for autopsy.

Tourism in Assam suffers Rs 1000 cr loss due to CAA

GUWAHATI, DEC 31 (PTI): Tourism in Assam suffered an estimated loss of Rs 1,000 crore due to violent protests against the amended Citizenship Act, a top official said on Tuesday.

The sector has been badly hit in December and will be in January too, Assam Tourism Development Corporation Chairman Jayanta Malla Baruah told a press conference here.

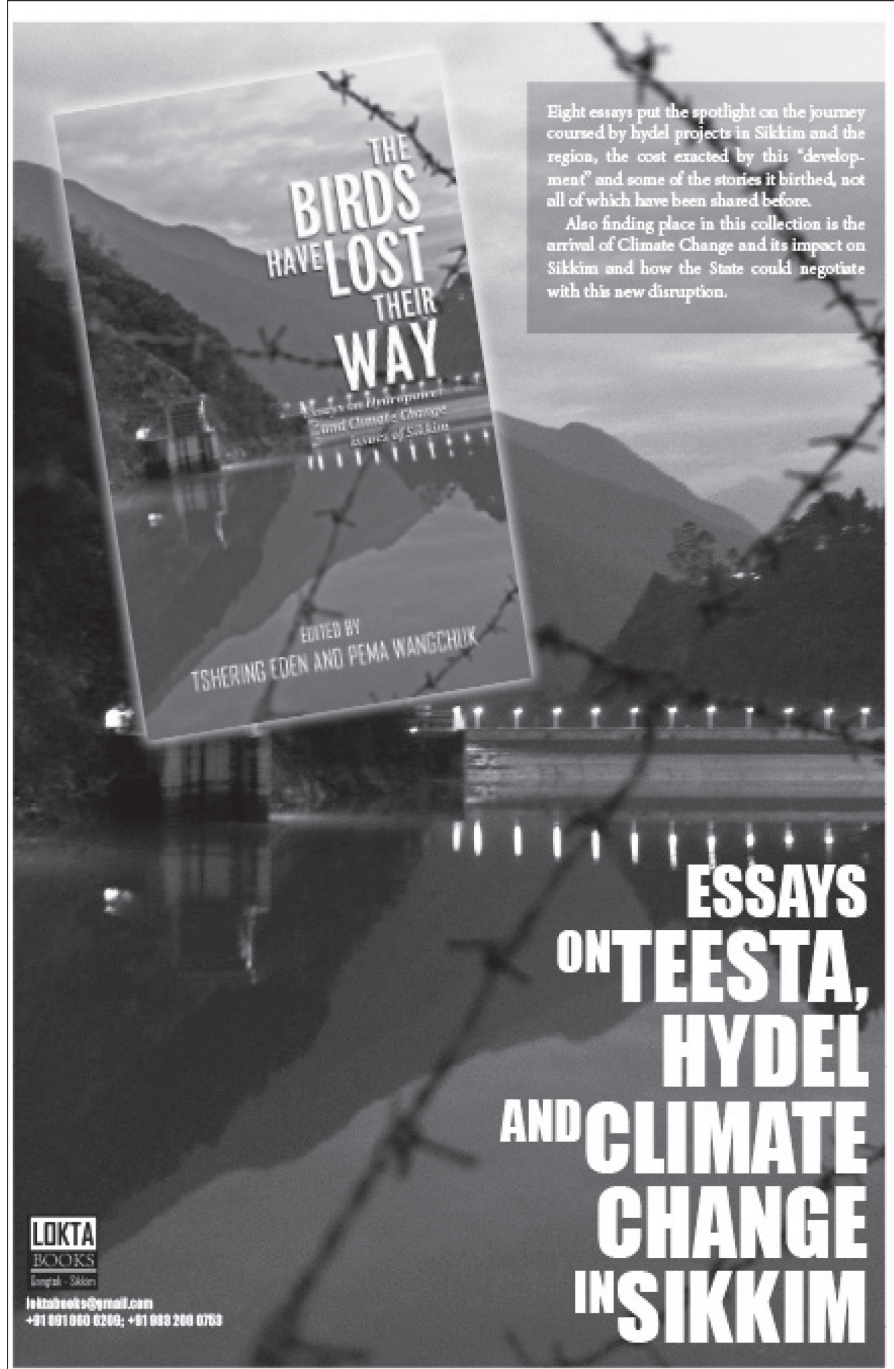
Along with domestic tourists, their flow from abroad too took a hit after a number of countries issued travel advisories

due to the ongoing protests, Baruah said.

"The peak season of tourism is from December to March.

Due to violence during the protests, the sector suffered badly. We estimate that the loss in December and January will be Rs 500 crore each," he said.

"Because of the impact on the peak season, we expect 30 per cent fall in tourist footfall in the overall 2019-20 financial year. We hope to slightly recover from this situation in February," he added.



Megan Rapinoe: ‘Everybody has a responsibility to make the world a better place’

SUZANNE WRACK
NEW YORK, 31 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: “It’s weird. It’s like it’s changed completely for ever but it’s also like my life’s sort of the same. I am comfortable. I’ve always sort of spoken fast and loose and I’ve always been a soccer player, so those things are normal. It’s just all ... amplified.”

Megan Rapinoe’s global exposure may have been lifted by a staggering trophy-laden year but it is the fact that, alongside an all-conquering World Cup, she used the spotlight to amplify the voices of others that has made her Guardian Footballer of the Year.

There is an irony to the manner in which the 34-year-old has divided opinion. Whereas her outspokenness and politics have gone from splitting the room to being somewhat unifying amid increasing polarisation, her football has done the opposite.

To some, winning the Golden Boot, the Golden Ball and the World Cup have not done enough to make up for only six domestic appearances with no goals and no assists, nor justify the Bal-lon d’Or and Fifa Best awards. Critics also point out three of Rapinoe’s six World Cup goals were penalties.

“I’m not out here being like: ‘I’m the best player,’” Rapinoe says. “I’m probably not even the best player on my team, much less best player in the world but we draw the penalties

and you have to score them.”

The forward, who be-comes the fourth Guard-ian Footballer of the Year following Fabio Pisacane, Juan Mata and Khadija Shaw, says it was thriving under pressure in France that set USA apart. “There is no more pressure that anyone else can put on us that we haven’t already put on ourselves. For us it is a catastrophe if we don’t win the World Cup. We feel it all the time.”

Rapinoe says indi-vidual awards are “an honour” but admits she feels uncomfortable with them. “It was such a mas-sive team effort. I’m not out here thinking I’m Lio-nel Messi, you know? I’m not at that level but to be able to couple everything together is the most im-portant thing; we are seeing the world change around us and we’re a big part of it. That feeling is almost addictive, and motivating.”

Sitting at breakfast in a New York hotel there is none of the arrogant air some misconstrue her confidence for. This is a more understated Rapi-noe. The bright pink hair is hidden beneath a white cap and the thoughtful, humble, reflective, but still confident, person fa-miliar to anyone who has spent any time with her is keen to philosophise about this new spotlight.

“Everybody has a per-sonal responsibility to do what they can to make the world a better place in the most impactful way that they can. This is it, this is the moment

and I’m so aware and understand that. I’m not just winning all these awards because I had a great year. It’s the culmi-nation of it all. And with that comes so many oth-er people: it comes with the team and what we’ve been able to do and the way we are organised and the way we fight together on and off the field; it comes from Colin Kaepernick, from MeToo; it comes from all of these other movements.

“It’s very clear I am a culminating moment of all of that’s happening right now. So for me to get on the stage and just thank family and friends would be so weird. It would seem inauthentic. It’s a privilege and an honour to sort of be the mouthpiece in this cul-minating moment. That’s crazy. It is a big respon-sibility and I do feel a re-sponsibility to take care of it and to give props and thanks and call out the people who could very well be in that posi-tion also.”

Rapinoe has no re-grets over the video that went viral during the World Cup but was filmed months earlier, in which she said “I’m not going to the fuck-ing White House” when asked what the team would do with an invite should they taste success in France. After Donald Trump responded Rapi-noe’s teammates, part-ner Sue Bird and family were supportive.

“My teammates were like: ‘This is LOL,” she says. “But they were also



definitely worried about me. They were like: ‘Are we good? Are you OK?’ And I was like: ‘Uh, yeah, I am, this is wild.’

“Allie Long was like: ‘Duuuuude, this is so crazy, you’re a G, you took down the president!’ The whole environment was: ‘We got you. This is our player and we just have to roll with it.’

“My mom, I mean bless her, she was like: ‘Can’t you just stop? Why are you taking all this on all the damn time?’ But this is what it is. It’s par for the course for me, I guess.”

Did she ever think of distancing herself from her words? “No, never. Because it was like: ‘I’m not going and I don’t want to go and these are the reasons why.’ I didn’t want to shy away from it and I don’t want to shy away from it. Ever. I think that would just give him power, give the proverbial him or they power.

“I just don’t com-partmentalise that way,” she continues, after the suggestion that she could ‘just stick to the football’ to quieten things. “It’s all part of the experience and life for me. Even on the field: I don’t go into a zone, I don’t shut out; I hear the fans, I see who’s in the stands, the energy is always flowing through me.”

She admits she can-not understand how footballers steer clear of having a say on politics and society. “You live in the world, in the city, you pay the taxes, you are affected by it all, so to think you can just be away from it is stupid,” she says.

In the end, her stance on Trump, and the team’s on equal pay, connected them to the fans in a way she could not have envisaged.

“I feel like this World Cup really touched peo-ple’s lives. There was this sense that we all

won, like it was some-thing bigger. People have these really emotional connections and expe-riences with the World Cup.

“So then, when they’re coming up to me, it’s not like: ‘Oh, high five, awesome soccer.’ It’s like: ‘Wow, your team changed the world or changed my life.’ It’s this emotional exchange, which is actu-ally amazing.”

Chants of “equal pay” echoing around the ground after the win against the Netherlands in the final in Lyon was the peak of that connec-tion. “What an amazing moment of collective conscience,” Rapinoe says. “What I love about football so much is every-one’s in it together.”

It is a chorus that has travelled, and the forward gets emotional talking about the impact back home, including at Burlington high school, where teenagers have raised tens of thousands of pounds from selling “equal pay” shirts and pledged to donate the profits to girls’ soccer programmes. “I didn’t even know what equal pay was, or how to say it, or what any of these things were at that age,” Rapinoe says. “So to be able to educate kids and arm kids with that at such a young age and to see the broader impact we’re having ... the re-ward coming back is 100 fold.”

Rapinoe was thrust into the role of ally in a big way when she took a knee in solidarity with

Kaepernick three years ago and the backlash was grim. “People were mad, big mad,” she says. Her waitress mother in the Republican, conser-vative Californian city of Redding bore some of the brunt. The photos of her daughter were re-moved from the walls of her workplace as people complained to manage-ment and were rude to her about her daughter. “It would have been bet-ter if I was there,” Rapi-noe says. “Then they could just direct it at me.”

Two years later Rapi-noe helped raise huge sums for those affected by the fire that ripped through the area. “All my family live there, I grew up there, I love it there. We obviously have differ-ent views but that’s OK. I don’t really care if you voted for Trump; if your house has burned down, you still need a place to live.”

Her clothing busi-ness with her twin sister struggled after she took a knee. Now, though, she feels there has been a shift in public perception of her decision to back Kaepernick. “People are starting to see it’s part of this bigger thing. It’s all the same thing. You can’t be cool and supportive of me being gay and not cool with the kneeling. Or cool with the equal pay but not with the law-suit or whatever.”

Having been named Glamour magazine’s woman of the year she used her speech to high-light the privilege she is afforded as a white wom-

an speaking out while Kaepernick remains un-signed.

“Being white is part of the reason why it’s cul-minating with me. The system is alive and well, so I think it’s important to just say that. It’s not my fault I’m benefiting but I am, so it’s my re-sponsibility to acknowl-edge that and to try to dismantle that system. I think it’s really import-ant to say those words, say ‘white privilege’, ac-knowledge the fact it’s happening.”

Talking politics comes naturally now but that was not always the case, even though Rapinoe was brought up to care for and stand up for people, and to use her voice. Football gave her opportunities that fed her social conscience and essentially saved her from treading a road sim-ilar to that of the brother she idolised and who in-troduced her to the game.

“My brother is a drug addict and has been in the criminal justice sys-tem since he was 15. He’s still in it, basically, at almost 40 years old. He’s out now but he’s still a part of the system and it was kind of real-ising he probably just needed drug treatment but instead got prison that showed me there’s greater consequences to everything.”

It is this compassion as well as her hope for a similar attitude from the rest of society that makes Rapinoe so worthy of her various crowns, includ-ing the Guardian’s.

US businessman Friedkin set to buy AS Roma - reports

MILAN, DEC 30 (AFP): US billionaire Dan Friedkin is poised to buy a major-ity stake in Italian club Roma in a deal worth up to 780 million euros (872 million), according to several reports in Italy.

The 54-year-old Tex-as-based businessman will imminently take over from a US consor-tium led by fellow Amer-ican James Pallotta, who bought two-thirds of Ro-ma’s shares in 2012.

Gazzetta Dello Sport and Sky Sports Italia reported that a prelimi-nary agreement has been

reached between both parties.

There was no official confirmation of the deal but Roma had in Novem-ber said the club was in “preliminary talks with potential investors”.

Friedkin is the chief executive of Friedkin Group, the owner of Gulf States Toyota, an inde-pendent vehicle distribu-tor in the US.

Friedkin’s son Ryan could move to the Ital-ian capital to manage the club, according to Italian news agency AGI.

Pallotta, chairman



of Boston-based hedge fund Raptor Capital Man-agement, may keep a mi-nority stake in the club, according to reports.

Three-time Italian league champions Roma,

who have not won Serie A since 2001, are cur-rently fourth in the Ital-ian league, just behind city rivals Lazio. Their last silverware was the Italian Cup in 2008.

not finished. We need to keep building, keep get-ting stronger, keep learn-ing. But now I look at this team and it is different from the one I inherited by a long way.”

Gerrard defended the actions of Michael Beale, his first-team coach, who was sent off in stoppage time after an altercation with the Celtic assistant manager, John Kennedy. “I think you have got to respect the position that we are in as well,” Ger-rard said.

“It is an emotional game; the referee ends up playing more than the four minutes that were on there. We get a red card [for Alfredo Morelos] and there is one [against Morelos] that was blatant. Understand being in our shoes, it is an emotional time. I am not going to make any apologies. This is new to some of us so we are not going to get everything perfect, not going to get everything right. My staff and my players have been fantastic and that is all I want to say.”

Victory at Celtic shows the progress made by Steven Gerrard’s Rangers

EWAN MURRAY
LONDON, 31 DEC [THE-GURADIAN]: The nature of Rangers’ success over Celtic continues to reso-nate more than the fact it transpired at all. Steven Gerrard’s team were comprehensive in their dismissal of Celtic – away from home, too – in an encounter which has fu-elled theories of Rangers claiming a first top-flight title since 2011.

For Gerrard this marked a significant moment, arriving a sea-son and a half into his management career. The former Liverpool cap-tain has revealed detail of the message delivered to his players at half-time at Celtic Park, with the game level at 1-1.

“I just said to them to go and play the second 45 minutes and reward yourself for the last six months of hard work,” Gerrard said. “Go back to the first day of pre-sea-son and how do you want to feel walking out of this stadium? Do you want to reward yourself for six months of real hard

graft and get a result that the majority of the first half deserved? And that the previous 90 minutes against this team de-served. I think they went out and delivered.”

Gerrard resisted calls to declare his team as potential champi-ons. Instead he insisted progressing to the next round of the Scottish Cup, which will be Rang-ers’ task after the winter break now under way, is a priority. The 39-year-old admits, though, that his team have progressed.

“The plan is to try and make it go the distance; that is the plan,” Gerrard said of the league. “But there is a lot of football to be played and a lot of challenges, big challeng-es, home and away. There are two other competi-tions in amongst that and that is for me to try and navigate through with the players and try and do the best we can. But the plan is to try and put in the best fight we can until the end.”

What Gerrard can-not affect, of course, is

Celtic’s response. Rang-ers are now two points behind their oldest foes with a game in hand. Celtic, though, are ex-pected to invest to a higher degree than their rivals during the transfer window.

“Listen, the fans are going to be the fans,” Ger-rard said. “I can only say that by no way, shape or form do we in that dress-ing room think that we have achieved anything [against Celtic] besides a big three points and a big win. We deserve credit for that and we will enjoy that, but that is all it is. We respect the challenge.

“I have got charac-ters. The team needed a spine, a lot of change, it needed big players who weren’t scared of the big occasion. It had some and it had a few that were coming to the end that I wished were 10 years younger, like Kenny Miller. But there were a lot of changes that need-ed to happen. We had to virtually wipe it clean over two or three trans-fer windows. We are still

2019: Guns of Glory, Panghal’s punch and “that run out”

POONAM MEHRA
NEW DELHI, DEC 31 (PTI): The revered crick-eters did most things right save for the World Cup heartbreak but 2019 became a ‘Year to Re-mem-ber’ in Indian sports for trailblazing perfor-mances in Olympic disci-plines, raising hopes that Tokyo 2020 might just make up for the disaster that was Rio 2016.

The shooters, who drew a blank in 2016 Olympics, were, to put it mildly, on fire this year. They strode away with 21 gold, six silver, and three bronze medals to take India to the top in the Rifle-Pistol World Cups and Finals. En route, they also sealed 15 Olympic quota places, the most that the country has ever achieved.

The stars of this per-formance were the young bunch of Manu Bhak-er, Saurabh Choudhary, Divyansh Singh Panwar and Elavenil Valarivan, who showed no fear even when faced with the best in the world.

The wrestlers and boxers too delivered un-precedented hauls at the World Championships and in the case of the former, there was the additional joy of secur-ing four Olympic quotas to go with one silver and four bronze medals.

Pint-sized dynamo Amit Panghal was the lord of the boxing ring as he picked up three gold and a silver medal inter-nationally. The silver was the biggest medal of the 23-year-old’s career as it came in the world cham-pionships, where India had never won more than a bronze.

More than a decade

older than Panghal but still among the most am-bitious athletes around, M C Mary Kom brought home a record-shatter-ing eighth world cham-pionship medal, which made her the most suc-cessful boxer in the histo-ry of the marquee event.

Then there was Pan-kaj Advani, redefining consistency with his 23rd world title in bil-liards.

The cricketers hogged the spotlight thanks to a stellar run spearhead-ed by the redoubtable Virat Kohli and his hun-gry-for-wickets pace at-tack. The highlight for the Men in Blue was their first-ever Test series vic-tory on the Australian soil, while the World Cup semifinal exit would defi-nitely count for the big-gest disappointment for a team that was per-haps the strongest per-tour-nament favourite.

That run out of Ma-hendra Singh Dhoni which Martin Gup-till effected with a super-human effort didn’t just end India’s World Cup in tears but also left a ques-tion hanging on what’s next for the man who was dismissed.

For a change, there were some positive devel-opments off the field with former captain Sourav Ganguly taking over the administrative reins. He made a ground-break-ing decision just a week into his stint by getting the team to embrace the Day/Night version of Test cricket.

On the badminton court, which has been India’s happy hunting ground for a few years, P V Sindhu became the country’s first world

champion in the sport. She, however, could not win anything else apart from that while Saina Ne-hwal was mostly laid low by injuries.

The world cham-pionship in Switzerland became a big one for India in more than one way when B Sai Praneeth em-ulated the iconic Prakash Padukone by bringing home a men’s singles bronze, ending a 36-year wait.

The hockey teams also enjoyed a reason-ably successful year even though neither the men nor the women faced any major challengers. To their credit, both teams qualified for the Olym-pics by grabbing the chances they got.

The tennis circuit didn’t have much to offer in terms of performance, barring the one memora-ble set that Sumit Nagal took off the great Roger Federer in the US Open first round.

As has been the case for most years, more headline-grabbing de-velopments took place outside the court when the administrators and the players battled over a Davis Cup trip to Paki-stan despite seemingly being on the same side. The tie was eventually played at a neutral ven-ue but not before it cost Mahesh Bhupathi his job as India’s captain for re-fusing to travel to Islam-abad owing to security concerns, which were acknowledged by the In-ternational Tennis Fed-eration.

Bhupathi’s former partner and old warhorse Leander Paes logged his 44th doubles Davis Cup win during the tie and

weeks later announced that 2020 would be his last year in the profes-sional circuit, setting the stage for a long-drawn and emotional farewell to the sport he has domi-nated with his sheer per-severance.

Injuries to top stars such as javelin throw-er Neeraj Chopra and sprinter Hima Das en-sured that track-and-field didn’t have much to show this year. But what made it bad for the sport was doping and age-fraud controversies.

On a more positive note, the country booked Olympic berths in mixed 4x400m relay and men’s 3000m steeplechase event (Avinash Sable).

Football was disap-pointing save for the heroics of Sunil Chhetri, who remained ahead of Lionel Messi in the in-ternational goals count. But the team bowed out early from the World Cup as well as the Asian Cup qualifiers and ended the year with an 11-rung fall in its FIFA standings.

The archers were on target but their bungling administrators ensured they had no national flag to compete under even though a couple of Olym-pic quotas were secured.

The paddlers didn’t have a full-time coach for most of the year but that didn’t stop G Sathiyam be-coming the first Indian to break into the top-25 of the ITTF world rankings, rising to 24th in July.

It was also a year in which India’s pa-ra-athletes secured 22 quotas for the 2020 Paralympics, bettering Rio 2016, which fea-tured the largest-ever contingent of 19.

Australia Bushfires: Towns Devastated and Lives Lost as Blazes Turn the Sky Red

LUKE HENRIQUES-GOMES SYDNEY, 31 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Australia's bushfire crisis has claimed at least two more lives, authorities confirmed on Tuesday, as dozens of fires tore through several towns on the east coast and forced thousands of people to take shelter on beaches.

Two people – a father and son – died when fire hit the New South Wales town of Cobargo on Tuesday, while emergency services officials held grave fears for a third person, near Narooma, on the state's south coast.

In Victoria, where more than 200,000ha has burned in the state's east, at least four people were unaccounted for. The armed forces stand ready to evacuate those sheltering on the state's beaches if needed.

Eleven people have been confirmed dead across all states in this year's bushfire season so far.

The NSW Rural Fire Service commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons, said it was "absolutely" the state's worst bushfire season on record as he warned the reality of the damage would become clear only once the fires were under control.

"We need to brace ourselves for a considerable number of properties, a considerable number of homes that are likely to have been damaged and or destroyed right across these eight emergency warning fire areas, given the extraordinary nature of the fire behaviour and fire spread today," he said.

In his New Year's



message, the prime minister, Scott Morrison, said the fires were having a "devastating impact" and warned that the weeks and months ahead would "continue to be difficult".

"I wish we had better news on New Year's Eve but, one news we can always take comfort in is the amazing spirit of Australians," he said. "We have faced these disasters before and we have come through."

The fire crisis swept up the coast during the day, beginning with dramatic scenes in Mallacoota, in the far south-eastern corner of Victoria, where about 4,000 people fled their homes and took refuge on the beach and in boats as multiple fires surrounded the town, turning the sky black by 9am, and then a hazy red.

As the day progressed, similar scenes unfolded all the way up the NSW south coast, including large towns such as Batemans Bay and popular holiday destinations such as Bermagui in the south, all the way up to Jervis Bay, 250km further north.

Cobargo, a village a few kilometres inland from Bermagui, lost much of its main street as the fires swept through. Further north the town of Mogo suffered similar

devastation, although dozens of animals in its popular wildlife park were saved by staff.

Late on Tuesday evening, NSW police announced that all telecommunications would be lost for a 150km stretch of the coast between Nowra and Moruya.

More than 120 bushfires were still ablaze on Tuesday evening, including eight at emergency level, and crews were concerned some blazes in Victoria could jump the border into NSW fuelled by a southerly wind.

The defence minister, Linda Reynolds, announced that the Australian Defence Force would deploy helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft and naval vessels to assist in supplying and potentially evacuating people trapped by the Victorian fires, after a request from the state premier, Daniel Andrews.

Victorian authorities are yet to quantify the damage across East Gippsland, but said a "significant" number of homes had been lost and at least one primary school destroyed, while many livestock are also expected to have died.

Of the four people missing across East Gippsland, Andrews said: "We do have very

real fears for their safety. They have been in active fire environments."

On Tuesday afternoon, police in NSW confirmed that a father and son had been killed in fires at Cobargo. The two men were protecting their homes in the Bega Valley.

Another man was unaccounted for west of Narooma, on the NSW south coast. "Unfortunately we think the news in that house will not be good either," the NSW police deputy commissioner, Gary Worboys, said.

Pictures posted to social media from countless small communities up and down the coast and inland suggested a huge number of properties had been destroyed, adding to the 900 confirmed lost in New South Wales in this year's fire season until last week.

On Tuesday evening, large fires were still burning out of control including the 31,000ha Clyde Mountain fire near Batemans Bay, the 26,000ha Green Valley fire east of Albury and the 64,000-ha Countegany fire east of Cooma.

The opposition leader, Anthony Albanese, called for a meeting of federal, state and territory governments, noting fires were burning across multiple states. "I again

say to the prime minister that it isn't acceptable, in my view, to say [the council of state and federal governments] doesn't need to meet until March," he said.

Fire chiefs in NSW have said they expect the fires to continue to burn until the state receives sustained rainfall. Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia have also faced bushfires in recent days.

Albanese also described the City of Sydney's decision to go ahead with the New Year's Eve fireworks as "problematic".

Amid considerable debate in Sydney over the \$6m fireworks display, traditionally one of the largest in the world, authorities said the show could go ahead despite potentially dangerous conditions.

Some have said holding the display would be insensitive, but the NSW premier, Gladys Berejiklian, backed the move.

"I understand the decision to proceed and on balance I support that decision," she said. "It's not without acknowledging how there are mixed feelings in the community about it."

On Tuesday the NSW firefighter who died the previous day was named as Samuel McPaul, 28. McPaul was killed while fighting fires 70km east of Albury, near the Victorian border, when the 10-tonne truck he was in was overturned by a freak "fire tornado". McPaul's wife Megan is expecting the couple's first child in May.

Hong Kong braces for fresh protests during new year festivities

HONG KONG, 31 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Hong Kong will end 2019 with multiple protests planned for New Year's Eve and New Year's Day aimed at disrupting festivities and shopping in the Asian financial hub, which has seen a rise in clashes between police and protesters since Christmas.

Events dubbed "Suck the Eve" and "Shop with You" are set for New Year's Eve on Tuesday in areas including the party district of Lan Kwai Fong, the picturesque Victoria Harbour, and popular shopping malls, according to notices on social media.

A pro-democracy march on 1 January has been given police permission and will start from a large park in bustling Causeway Bay and end in the central business district.

The organisers, Civil Human Rights Front, were behind the peaceful million-plus marches in June and held a mass protest earlier in December, which they said about 800,000 people attended.

"On New Year's Day, we need to show our solidarity ... to resist the government. We hope Hong Kong people will come onto the streets for Hong Kong's future," said Jimmy Sham, a leader of the group.

The protests began in June in response

to a now-withdrawn bill that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China, where courts are controlled by the Communist party, and have evolved into a broader pro-democracy movement. Police said they would deploy crowd-control patrols on Tuesday and urged marchers on Wednesday to remain peaceful.

In a Facebook post, police commissioner Chris Tang thanked his frontline officers for guarding Hong Kong's "safety and stability", and issued a warning to protesters: "If you use violence, you will not get public support. We, police, will do all we can to arrest you."

The demonstrations planned over new year follow an increase in clashes since Christmas Eve, when riot police fired teargas at thousands of protesters following scuffles in shopping malls and in a prime tourist district.

While the protests – now in their seventh month – have lessened in intensity and size in recent weeks, marches or rallies continue to occur almost daily.

Hundreds of people gathered in the Central district on Monday night to remember people killed or injured during the protests.

More than 2,000 protesters have been injured since June.

While there is no official count of deaths, student Chow Tsz-lok died after a high fall during a pro-democracy rally in November. Multiple suicides have also been linked to the movement.

"For most Hong Kong people, Christmas and New Year's don't mean anything to us any more," said Roger Mak, a 35-year-old who attended Monday's rally.

"What we're fighting for is our future," he said, adding that he planned to attend both protests scheduled this week.

Police arrested 34 people over the weekend and used pepper spray to break up a gathering aimed at disrupting retail business near the border with mainland China.

More than 6,000 protesters have been arrested since challenges began to the extradition bill, seen as an example of meddling by Beijing in freedoms promised to the special administrative region when Britain returned Hong Kong to China in 1997.

China denies the claims, and says it is committed to the "one country, two systems" formula put in place at that time. Beijing blames foreign countries including Britain and the United States for inciting unrest.

The protests have battered Hong Kong's economy, already reeling from the fallout of the US-China trade war.

Polish PM furious at Putin rewriting history of second world war

SHAUN WALKER WARSAW, 31 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Poland's prime minister has launched a furious response to claims by Vladimir Putin that Poland was partially responsible for the outbreak of the second world war.

It is the latest episode in a bitter conflict over historical memory that is likely to intensify as the 75th anniversary of the victory over Nazism approaches next May.

Mateusz Morawiecki issued a four-page statement on Sunday accusing the Russian president of "repeated lies" over the history of the conflict. Earlier, the Polish foreign ministry said Putin's words resembled "propaganda from the time of Stalinist totalitarianism".

Morawiecki was responding to a speech by Putin at a summit of heads of former Soviet states in St Petersburg on 20 December. Putin gave the assembled leaders an hour-long history lecture, drawing on a sheaf of archival documents he had brought with him. The Russian president has also raised the issue at a number of other meetings in recent days, including a gathering of top army generals in which he called Poland's ambassador to Nazi Germany "a scumbag and an antisemitic pig".

Morawiecki said Pu-

tin was playing with history in order to distract from international pressure over issues such as sanctions and a doping ban for Russian athletes. "I consider president Putin's words as an attempt to cover up these problems. The Russian leader is well aware that his accusations have nothing to do with reality."

The Polish foreign ministry also summoned the Russian ambassador to complain to him about Putin's comments last week.

Putin is particularly angry about a recent European parliament resolution that said the Soviet Union bore responsibility for starting the second world war, alongside Nazi Germany. That, in turn, came after a concerted effort from the Russian foreign ministry earlier this year to rehabilitate the 1939 Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact, which 10 years ago Putin had called "pointless, harmful and dangerous". This year, Russia's culture minister called it "a triumph of Soviet diplomacy".

Putin, in his recent speech, insisted that the pact was born of Soviet defensive requirements and only came about after other western powers, including Poland, had signed their own agreements with the Nazis. Putin pointed to Neville Chamberlain's



1938 Munich agreement in particular, saying war became inevitable after this point.

The key difference, glossed over by Putin, is that the 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact had a secret protocol in which the two powers divided up territory. The Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east two weeks after the Germans attacked from the west.

"Without Stalin's complicity in the partition of Poland, and without the natural resources that Stalin supplied to Hitler, the Nazi German crime machine would not have taken control of Europe," wrote Morawiecki in his statement.

Sergey Radchenko, professor of international relations at the University of Cardiff, said Putin's claims were highly selective and historically dubious in places, but he also criticised the European parliament resolution for equating Nazi and Soviet guilt for the outbreak of the war.

"History is a compli-

cated business, best left to professional historians. What we've seen in the last few months is not history, it's absurd political theatre," he said.

As the number of surviving veterans continues to shrink, the politicisation of the war's legacy is gathering speed across Europe. In Poland, the nationalist ruling Law and Justice party has also been accused of creating an overly simplistic and nationalist version of the country's history.

However, Donald Tusk, a former prime minister of Poland and a critic of the current government, who until recently was the president of the European council, said Poles should unite to rebut Putin's claims.

"In view of President Putin's brazen lies and Russian propaganda, a joint position of the Polish authorities and the opposition is needed. This is not the place and time for an internal dispute," Tusk wrote on Twitter.

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These Are The Richest K-Pop Groups Right Now

It's no secret that K-pop is one of the most lucrative industries in the world and has even been hailed as "South Korea's Greatest Export" by TIME magazine.

With billions of music views racked up on YouTube, the Big Four entertainment companies raking in almost US\$1 billion in combined earnings, and K-pop acts such as BTS being valued at more than US\$3.6 billion to the country's economy every year, it only shows the power and money-making ability of the industry. If you want a more thorough understanding of the K-pop industry, read here.

"We're at a really exciting turning point. A lot more American record labels and American brands and companies are looking to see how they can tap into these artists," music journalist and K-pop commentator Jeff Benjamin told Money magazine in an interview.

But every industry has its top earners, and K-pop definitely has its fair share. Money magazine recently compiled a list of the top earning groups in the K-pop industry and the results are surprising, to say the least.

Read on to find out the richest K-pop bands now.

1. BTS

At the top of the list is K-pop phenomenon BTS — the seven-member boy band consisting of Jin, Jimin, J-Hope, Jungkook, Suga, RM and V — who skyrocketed to fame on the back of their wildly popular songs like "Fake Love", "Idol" and most recently, "Boy With Luv". Their revenue comes in from album sales, concert tours, merchandise — their most recent album Map of the Soul: Persona sold 3,229,032 copies in its first month in South Korea, and with their expansion into mobile games, their revenue looks set to grow even more in the coming years. In terms of concert sales, their most recent Love Yourself World Tour brought in more than one million fans worldwide and generat-

ed more than US\$71.7 million in ticket sales. Is it any wonder they're the kings of K-pop?

2. TWICE

Formed by JYP Entertainment in 2015, the girl group earns second place on the list thanks to their many lucrative endorsement deals, on top of strong album and concert sales, reports Money. Their numerous endorsements deals include beauty brands such as Estée Lauder, beverages such as Pocari Sweat, and more than 30 other brands across clothing, online and mobile games, food and beverages, credit cards and more.

3. BLACKPINK

BLACKPINK is undisputedly one of the most recognisable names in K-pop right now — thanks to their ground-breaking inclusion at Coachella. Despite having only 15 songs and seven music videos under their belt, the girl group is a killer when it comes to album and concert sales. Their latest album, Kill This Love sold over 350,000 copies in China in the first week of its release and over 250,000 copies in South Korea in just eight days. Add to that their popularity in Japan and endorsement deals with brands such as Samsung, Louis Vuitton, Dior Beauty, and moonshot, and you'll get an idea of the earning power of this girl group.

4. TVXQ

Avid fans of K-pop will remember TVXQ, the boy band who skyrocketed to fame in the '00s. The group managed to sell over 10 million physical records in the first 10 years of their career, which continue to bring in revenue for them, and are also Japan's best-selling foreign artist in CD singles of all time. Although the group subsequently rebranded as a duo in 2011 with original members U-Know Yunho and Max Changmin, their popularity has not diminished — their Begin Again tour sold out three shows at the Nissan Stadium in Japan and sold one million tickets.

5. EXO

Dubbed the "Kings of K-pop" by the media, EXO has been a commercial and critical success since their debut. A snapshot of their successes: Their first album, XOXO, sold over one million copies, while their latest album, Don't Mess Up My Tempo, sold 1.1 million copies in pre-sales. That's not even mentioning their wildly popular concerts — in 2018, their encore concert, "ElyXiOn [dot]", had more than 1.15 million people queuing virtually to get tickets, koreaboo reported. Topping off their revenue list includes multiple brand endorsement deals with Samsung, Nature Republic, and even the Star Wars franchise!

6. Seventeen

13-member boy band Seventeen has been around since 2015, but they've definitely earned their spot on the list. Money magazine credits their commercial success to their savvy tie-up with beauty brand Saem, breaking into the all-important Japanese market, and extensive touring.

7. Wanna One

Although K-pop boy band Wanna One was only in existence for slightly more than a year, their earning power was boosted by their popularity on music reality TV show, Produce 101, where idol hopefuls battle it out for a place in a newly formed band. The boy band made the most of their time together, going on many profitable tours between 2017 and 2018, signing endorsement deals (16, according to the Kpop Herald), a best-selling album that sold 438,000 physical copies in first week, and multiple television programs.

8. Red Velvet

Money credits Red Velvet's earning power to the girl group "nailing it on the endorsement front", on top of the girl group's global concerts and international appeal. The girl group has also been recognised by South Korea's Ministry of Cul-



ture, Sports and Tourism, who awarded the group the 'Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism's Commendation' for their achievements. In 2018, the girl group became the seventh K-pop act to ever perform in North Korea — a true testament to the appeal of the girl group!

9. Got7

Last but definitely not least, boy band Got7 rounds up the list of top earners in the K-pop industry. According to Money, their multinational makeup helps to "explain the group's wide appeal across continents" and their many tours help to bring in revenue. Endorsements with brands such as Adidas, and beauty brands such as The Face Shop also add to their revenue.

Deepika Padukone's Wink Leaves Priya Prakash Varrier Overwhelmed

Deepika Padukone is busy promoting her upcoming film Chhapaak, which is based on the true story of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal. In the movie, Deepika portrays the role of Malti, an acid-attack survivor.

Adding another video to her 'DPisms' series, Deepika has posted a clip on Instagram that gives us a sneak peek to her first day on the sets of Chhapaak. She wrote, "Episode 3 of #dpisms !!! @priya.p.varrier #chhapaak #10thjanuary"

In the video, the actress is seen talking to Chhapak direc-

tor Meghna Gulzar before she surprises her fans with a Priya Prakash Varrier-like wink. Towards the end of the video, the following message appears, "Get that Priya Varrier"

Priya posted a story on Instagram to reveal her reaction, "Did the goddess herself wink????!! No better way to end 2019. Fallen." Last year, a clip from Priya Prakash's debut film, Oru Adaar Love went viral making her a social media sensation overnight. In the video, she was seen winking at her classmate.



PRIYANKA'S 'LIFE AS IT SHOULD BE': Snow-capped mountains - check, oceans - check. We wonder what Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas' next vacation stop would be. Just like most other star couples, Priyanka and Nick are also making the most of the holiday season by spending some quality time together. On Monday, the couple shared a lovely picture, in which they can be seen posing together next to what Nick described as an ocean in his caption. The couple did not reveal their holiday destination but we absolutely love the picture. "From the snow to the ocean. Life as it should be," Nick captioned the post. Priyanka also wrote "Life as it should be," in her post.



Dear Sikkimese,

Year 2019 was a glorious year for Democracy in Sikkim. A year when we won together!

Here's wishing that we continue to work together in the New Year and grow ever stronger as a people and take Sikkim to greater heights.

Wishing you a Happy & Prosperous New Year!



Indra Hang Subba
Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha
Sikkim

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ARIES: Truth doesn't have to hurt, Aries, as today's mashup of the emo moon and diplomatic Venus in your candid ninth house reminds you. While you definitely want to be honest and get an important point across, you can do that compassionately. Before you speak to this person, rehearse the words you plan to say in front of a mirror, and imagine someone else is saying that to YOU!

TAURUS: As a nurturing and peace-loving Taurus, it's easy for you to assume the persona that you think people want from you. And while that can be tempting bait, it doesn't make for deep and lasting interpersonal connections. Today, as the emo moon aligns with your ruler, enchanting Venus, in your soulful eighth house, drop the mask.

GEMINI: Careful what you wish for today, Gem! Your hopes and dreams can be easily manifested under an exact conjunction of the intuitive moon and nimble Venus in your partnership house. You'll be able to discuss emotional issues that have been hard to put into words, and, at the same time, you'll have the ability to listen without get-

ting defensive, thanks to Venus's analytical approach.

CANCER: Hardly a news flash, but the only real power you have is in the present! If you got sidetracked in the clouds daydreaming about the future—or lost in the weeds reflecting on things that are over—you can get back to the here and now with some purposeful movement. It doesn't matter whether you do yoga, go ice-skating, take a brisk hike or dance around your living room.

LEO: You can keep drama at bay today with one simple cue: being authentic. That shouldn't be all that hard, not with the emo moon in cahoots with diplomatic Venus in your fifth house of romance, theatrics and creativity. While your instinct may be to avoid arguments, there are times that you can't "pretend away" a conflict. No two people are going to agree on everything. The hallmark of a mature relationship is how calmly and dispassionately you can work it out.

VIRGO: You can bury the hatchet with a relative, roommate or someone in your inner circle today, Virgo—but only if you're truly

willing to forgive (if not forget). Extending an olive branch won't be that hard under the peace-seeking alignment of the moon and Venus, but you may struggle to fully release any residual resentment. The trick is to stop trying to change people.

LIBRA: If you're not 100 percent content with the communication channels in some of your key relationships, Libra, don't be too quick to blame others. Your romantic sign loves to be pursued, but when people get too close, your indecisive side may kick in and you can quickly become a ghost. Any meaningful connection requires care and feeding. Under today's mashup of the emo moon and your ruler, loving Venus, in your articulate third house, evaluate how effusive (or not) you've been.

SCORPIO: Today, you can move the needle on a frozen bottom line by doing something different—namely, shifting out of sleep mode and getting proactive. There are basically three ways to increase your wealth, Scorpio (excluding winning the Powerball): earn more, spend less and make your money work harder for you!

SAGITTARIUS: Do you feel stuck, Sagittarius, or like everyone else is getting ahead while you're locked in neutral? Part of that, no doubt, comes from your super-high expectations of yourself. But another reason might be that you're not as clear about where you want to go as you could be. You can't manifest something if you don't know exactly what you want. Under today's illuminating alignment of the intuitive moon and creatrix Venus, focus on your hopes and dreams and loftiest visions. Write down three concrete things you can do to get closer to them, and then take the first step before your head hits the pillow tonight!

CAPRICORN: You may be tempted to force a situation to resolution, but that would be like trying to push a baby bird to leave the nest and fly before it's ready. Don't mistake a shortage of action for a lack of interest. Movement is happening, but it may not be visible—yet. Under today's healing mashup of the intuitive moon and gentle Venus in your introspective twelfth house, do your best to accept things for what they are.

You'll know when you need to put the spurs to someone's side. Until then, let things develop organically.

AQUARIUS: Branch out, Aquarius! You love your go-to squad, but your circle of influence could also use some fresh blood. The best way to "force" yourself to meet new people or interact in a group is by not have a friend crutch to lean on. Today, as the intuitive moon syncs up with convivial Venus in your community-spirited eleventh house, you can widen your social horizons easily and comfortably.

PISCES: To the top! You won't need to plead your case with any junior execs today, Pisces—not with the moon and enchanting Venus linked up in your tenth house of career ambition and success. You'll have the ear of the higher-ups, so make sure your elevator pitch is polished and perfected. This is also a good day to peacefully talk through any issues you've been having with clients or colleagues. But don't air that laundry in public. Take it to someone's office or a conference room, and if you can't find one, go to a coffee shop.