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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Anti-CAA protests continue in Assam

GUWAHATI, DEC 29 (PTI): Thousands of people hit the streets of Assam on Sunday decrying the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and vowing to continue with the protests till the law is withdrawn.

The opposition Congress, which kicked off a 800-km 'Padyatra' from Sadiya to Dhubri on December 22, reached Golaghat with thousands of people participating in it.

One of the largest anti-CAA gatherings took place in Nalbari where popular singer Zubeen Garg hinted at forming a new regional political party to contest state elections in 2021.

"The Congress, AGP and the BJP all betrayed us. We have to think of something new. If necessary, we will have our own party and contest elections," he added.

People in large numbers were also seen taking part in a protest march at Samaguri in Nagaon.

Protests against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 were also held in Guwahati, Baksa, Dhekiajuli, Goalpara, Karbi Anglong, Bokajan, Howraghat, Naharkatiya, Tingkhong, Amguri, Doom Dooma, Kampur, Rangia, Bapeta and Bokakhat.

The agitators at all the anti-CAA gatherings demanded immediate release of peasant leader Akhil Gogoi, who was arrested during the stir.

The state had witnessed violent agitations after the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed in both Houses of Parliament.

Five persons were killed and several public properties gutted during the stir.

Curfew was imposed in several cities and towns of the state including Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Tezpur and Dhekiajuli.

Night curfew was also imposed in Jorhat, Golaghat, Tinsukia and Charaideo districts.

However, the curfew was lifted after normalcy returned to these places.

Namprikdang preps for its mega event - Namsoong

**SUMMIT REPORT
NAMPRIKDANG, 29 DEC:**

Namprikdang is gearing up for Namsoong celebrations, the biggest event it hosts every year, delivering more than just a celebration but also creating an event which brings the Lepcha community together to share new ideas on how to take the community forward. This year, the Namprikdang Namsoong Festival is being hosted on the theme, "Confluence of Stories," slated to be held from 02 to 04 January at Namprikdang Ground, Dzongu.

The approach to the celebration is reflected in the make-up of the organising committee which comprises of people from all ages and has representations from both upper and lower Dzongu.

Some of main attractions are the football tournament, a mini marathon, cultural performances, traditional foods & beverages, traditional games, quizzes, fashion show, DJ performances, experience sharing by personalities from different fields. College students are playing a pivotal role in organizing the event.

Space has also been provided to SHGs from Dzongu to showcase their arts and crafts for sale.

International artists have also been invited to perform alongside celebrated musical exports from Dzongu like Sofiyum and Lasomongkup.

The committee has also decided to use bamboo mugs this year to reduce plastic use during the festival in collaboration with Blooming Sikkim, informs Chewang Rinchen Lepcha, an animation film designer based in Gangtok and also a part of the Namprikdang celebration organizing committee.

Each day will have a special guests with Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] scheduled to attend as chief guest on 04 Jan, 2020.

For the organizers, Namsoon at Namprikdang is as much a celebration of the community as an opportunity for other communities to learn more about Lepchas and are hoping that the attendance reflects this as well.

They are also hoping that the event grows into an international tribal festival in the future.

Interacting with media-persons at Namprikdang today, Chewang Rinchen Lepcha stressed that he has always seen Namsoong at Namprikdang as an opportunity for the community to come together and this coming together is being explored further this



year to share ideas and stories and make new stories.

"Namprikdang for me has the potential to showcase everything about the Lepchas in one venue in a short time. It can be a teaser which can be explored further into who the Lepchas are. A lot of the younger Lepchas are trying to reconnect with their roots and Namprikdang serves an important role in pushing us towards that goal. I feel Namprikdang has the potential to be a very authentic international Tribal festival in the years to come," he details.



CM meets old settlers, assures to resolve their "pertinent" pending demands

GANGTOK, 28 DEC [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] chaired a meeting on Saturday with the representatives of the old settlers, business community of Sikkim and the president, Chamber of Commerce, Sikkim.

During the meeting, the old settlers and business community of Sikkim requested the Chief Minister to look into their pertinent pending demands.

After a patient hearing, the Chief Minister assured them that unlike the previous government where their demands were kept languishing, the present SKM Government will lend all support and cooperation and their issues will be solved



soon one by one without any further delay.

The Chief Minister also added that in the month of January, a high level delegation consisting of his Cabinet Ministers and representatives of the old settlers will visit New Delhi where

they will be meet the Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and the Finance Minister to discuss and resolve the pertinent demands of the old settlers and the business community of Sikkim.

The representatives of the old settlers during

the meeting also expressed their heartfelt gratitude towards the Chief Minister for his co-operation and support.

The meeting also saw the presence of Minister Tourism BS Panth and Secretary to Chief Minister SD Dhakal.

Protests outside Shaheen Bagh police station in Delhi

NEW DELHI, DEC 29 (PTI): A group of people staged a protest outside the Shaheen Bagh police station in Delhi on Sunday afternoon against the contentious citizenship law and the NRC, police said. Thirty-two protesters,

who are residents of Jamia Nagar and Shaheen Bagh, raised slogans against the central government and demanded withdrawal of the proposed NRC and the amended Citizenship Act.

8 detained for 'rangoli' protest against CAA



CHENNAI, DEC 29 (PTI): Eight people, including five women, were detained briefly on Sunday when they staged an anti-CAA protest here by drawing 'kolams' (rangoli), police said.

They were picked up for holding the protest without permission and causing inconvenience to others, a senior police official said adding they

were later let off.

Protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act are continuing in several parts of Tamil Nadu by political parties and civil society groups for the past several days.

On Sunday, the group of eight held the protest in the Besant Nagar locality in South Chennai.

They used the 'kolams' to express opposi-

tion to the CAA and National Register of Citizens and National Population Register and raised slogans "No to NRC" and "No to NPR" before police took them into custody.

"We warned them and later let them off," the police official added.

Those detained alleged they were manhandled and their phones snatched by police.

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Citizenship Bill, Article 370 flavoured up social media platforms this year

STUTI ROY & MOUMITA BAKSHI CHATTERJEE

NEW DELHI, DEC 29 (PTI):

The town squares of Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp were buzzing this year with people debating issues like Citizenship Amendment Act and scrapping of Article 370 with memes going viral, even as these companies battled the menace of fake news, data breaches and attempts by the government to frame rules to make social media platforms more accountable.

With over 451 million Internet users (at the end of March 2019), India is second only to China in terms of monthly active internet users, as per estimates of industry body Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI).

Interestingly, about 66 million of these are children aged between 5-11 years, who access internet on devices of their family members, constituting about 15 per cent of India's active Internet userbase.

Indians are creating and consuming content on their mobile phones -- right from TikTok videos and Netflix shows to news reports shared by friends and family members on various WhatsApp groups.



A large number of users are now joining the Internet bandwagon and conversing in their local languages. This has spurred the availability of vernacular language content online.

According to ShareChat co-founder and CEO Ankush Sachdeva, more than 90 per cent of the next 500-600 million Internet users are expected to come from a non-English background.

"Going forward, user generated content will enjoy a better time share from non-English speaking users in comparison to professionally generated content. Video is also emerging as a significant contributor in the years to come. We have also

seen a spike in both creation and consumption of video content on ShareChat, and it contributes more than 30 per cent of the entire content creation on the platform," he added.

TikTok, the short video app that is popular among youngsters, was banned for a couple of days in April following a Madras High Court order. While the app was later restored on app stores, TikTok again faced regulatory trouble when the government sent it a notice along with a set of questions regarding the alleged misuse of the platform for "anti-national activities" in India. The company had responded to the notice.

Year 2019 was also critical for social media platforms given that the Lok Sabha polls were held. In the past, Facebook had faced allegations of its platform being misused to influence the elections in the US. The Indian government minced no words and had warned social media companies of strict action against such abuse.

Digital platforms like Google and Facebook vowed that they will offer details of political advertisements on their platform to bring in transparency, and took a slew of measures to strengthen efforts around election integrity.

With technologies like artificial intelligence and Big

Data analytics, the massive amount of user data from these social media platforms is available for marketers to design newer and more targeted campaigns.

To ensure that user data is not misused, the government had last year sought to amend the IT rules for social media platforms and messaging apps -- or intermediaries as the legal term goes -- which would be required to deploy tools to "identify" and curb unlawful content as well as follow stricter due diligence practices.

Udbhav Tiwari, Policy Advisor at Mozilla (the not-for-profit entity behind Firefox web browser), rued that there was significant push back from industry and civil society to these rules during the public consultation, but no new draft has been made available in the public domain despite their enactment being imminent.

Another piece of legislation that has the industry and civil society concerned is the Personal Data Protection Bill. Some of the proposals will give investigating agencies unbridled powers to carry out surveillance on private data that has spooked companies and experts who argue that such overarching access is against established principles and is a dramatic

step backwards.

While the industry may cry foul at these attempts, these steps were probably not without a reason. After the 2018 debacle where data of about 87 million Facebook users globally and 5.6 lakh in India was compromised, 2019 saw a similar event unfolding at its group company WhatsApp.

In October, WhatsApp sued Israeli surveillance firm NSO Group, accusing it of helping those buying its spyware Pegasus break into the phones of roughly 1,400 users across four continents. The targets of the hacking included diplomats, political dissidents, journalists, along with military and government officials.

In India, 121 users are believed to have been targeted. India is home to 400 million WhatsApp users and more than 328 million Facebook users.

The Indian government, on its part, had said it wants to conduct an audit of WhatsApp's security systems. It also wants it to allow tracability of messages in the wake of circulation of fake news -- a request that the company has declined arguing that such a move would undermine the end-to-end encryption and the private nature of the platform, cre-

ating potential for serious misuse.

The role that traditional media like newspapers played in the yesteryears of coalescing people is now being taken over by social media. Whether it is protests in Chile or New Delhi (against the amended Citizenship Act), it has played an important role in providing a platform to people to air their views.

However, it seemed that the government felt blocking Internet was a solution to curb the dissenting voices. According to reports, Internet has been shut down 95 times in India this year, right from Kashmir to Assam and even the capital. This led to more fury as many millennials believe that Internet is part of their basic rights.

Year 2020 will be important for many reasons. There is no doubt that these platforms will continue to be under scrutiny by the government for a variety of reasons -- be it safety of user data or providing a medium to speak up against the regime. What needs to be seen is whether they can continue to be independent in the years to come.

NCP in 2019: Pawar's party makes unexpected come-back

EKNATH MAKNE

MUMBAI, DEC 29 (PTI): It's never over until it is over.

This would be the take-away from year 2019 for the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party.

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

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

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

As Assembly elec-



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

Prominent among them was Satara MP

Udayanraje Bhosale, a descendant of King Shivaji, who joined the ruling BJP.

"At that juncture it seemed it was a difficult task to retain even 41 seats won in 2014, our worst-ever performance," said an NCP leader, requesting anonymity.

But an aggressive campaign by chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and BJP chief Amit Shah had an unintended effect, he said.

"Fadnavis' comment that Pawar's brand of break-and- make parties was now over stoked the fire in the belly of our

workers," the leader said.

Weeks before the polls, the Enforcement Directorate named 78-year-old Pawar in a money-laundering case.

The wily politician swiftly turned the tables on the BJP by announcing that he would visit the ED office in Mumbai on his own and offer full cooperation in the probe.

He dropped the plan at the last minute at the request of city police who feared a law-and-order disruption.

But for the ruling party, the damage was already done, as the NCP chief had garnered sympathy.

"Pawar's decision to visit the ED was a brilliant move. It charged up our rank and file," said the NCP leader.

As the campaign began, Shah and Fadnavis trained their guns on

Pawar, realising that he was the de-facto leader of the opposition camp.

Then came the defining moment of the campaign: Pawar delivering a fiery speech in Satara, where Lok Sabha by-election was being held simultaneously, in pouring rain.

Pictures of a soaked-to-the-bone NCP chief went viral.

"His announcement of ED visit and the speech in Satara reversed the tide in our favour," the NCP leader said.

The party won 54 seats in the Assembly, 13 more than its 2014 tally, and its candidate, Pawar's old friend Srinivas Patil, defeated Bhosale in the Lok Sabha by-election.

The BJP-Sena combine crossed the majority mark comfortably. But the simmering tension

in the saffron alliance boiled over with the Sena seeking the chief minister's post.

In the weeks that followed the October 24 election results, the unthinkable unfolded in Maharashtra politics. The Sena burnt the bridges with the BJP and joined hands with the NCP and Congress, ignoring niggles of ideological incompatibility.

During the tortuous alliance talks between the three parties, Pawar's nephew and the party's legislature wing leader Ajit Pawar made a dramatic move to join

hands with the BJP and was sworn in as deputy chief minister on November 23.

However, his uncle managed to keep the flock together, and the few NCP MLAs who were with Ajit returned one by one.

Realising that he had no support, Ajit resigned and returned to the party fold, paving the way for the Sena-NCP- Congress combine to come to power.

The challenge for the NCP chief in the new year would be to ensure that this unlikeliest of coalitions endures.

Joint protests to be held in Kerala against CAA

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

DEC 29 (PTI): A meeting of various political parties and socio-religious outfits, convened by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan here, on Sunday decided to hold joint protests against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

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

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

"This matter is under the government's consid-

eration", Chief Minister told the meeting.

To protect the Constitution and secularism, there is a need to put up a united fight at this juncture, a release quoting him said.

"While taking out protests jointly, we will get strength more than we can imagine.

The country itself will accept it as a model", he said, adding that the action to divide the people on religious lines will not be accepted in Kerala.

No rule was above the Constitution, he said.

The Chief Minister cautioned that many protests, including by communal and extremist elements, were being held in many places and it was necessary to keep them at bay.

Stringent action would be taken against protests by such elements if they cross the limits, he said adding

that the intervention of such forces was not good for society's healthy growth.

The government would not intervene in the protests being held for just causes, he added.

When religion becomes the basis of citizenship, the Constitution will be undermined and from secular nation, India will become a religious country, he added.

Two BJP leaders, who took part in the meeting, boycotted the session after the Chief Minister's speech, alleging that the meeting was "unconstitutional".

A joint protest gathering, held by the ruling CPI(M)-led LDF and opposition Congress-headed UDF, against the Act held on December 16 had drawn national attention as the arch political rivals shed their ideological differences and joined hands for a common cause.

After the meeting, Chen-

nithala told reporters that different kinds of joint protests would be held in the state against the CAA.

"Our major demand at the meeting was to convene a special assembly session to express the state's concern over CAA.

We also wanted to send an all-party delegation to meet the President and appraise the concerns," he said, divulging details of the discussions.

The opposition wanted the state government not to slap cases against those protesting against the controversial Act, he said, adding that action should be taken to ensure that the draconian laws like UAPA were not being charged against them.

"We wanted to know whether the government has got any directive to set up detention centres in the state and the action they have taken in this regard.

Special Session of Kerala Assembly to extend SC/ ST quota in LS and State Assemblies

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC 29 (PTI):

A special session of the Kerala assembly will be convened on December 31 to ratify the Constitution (126th) Amendment bill, which proposes to extend quota to SC/STs in Lok Sabha and state assemblies by another 10 years.

A decision in this connection was taken at the cabinet meeting here on Sunday, a Chief Minister's Office press release said.

The cabinet also decided to recommend to the Governor to convene the special session.

The Constitution Amendment bill, which has been passed by Parliament earlier this month, has to be ratified by at least 50 per cent of the assemblies before it is brought into force.

The Reservation for members of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), given for the past 70 years in Lok Sabha and state assemblies, is due to end on January 25, 2020.

DOCUMENTS LOST:

I, Sumana Lepcha D/o Laku Tsh Lepcha r/o Pabong Namphing, South Sikkim have lost my CBSE Class XII Pass Certificate bearing Roll No. 3639812 while travelling from Singtam to Pabong. My G.D. is 158/B.O.P dt. 17.12.2019 at Bermoik Potpost, PS Temi, South Sikkim. If found contact: 8116649154.

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Snowfall strands tourists returning from Nathula

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 29 DEC:

Between 1,500 to 1,700 tourists were stranded due to heavy snowfall between 13th Mile and Nathula on 27 Dec. These tourists, traveling in around 300 taxis, were returning from sight-seeing trips to Nathula and Tsomgo on Friday evening when heavy snowfall clocked JN Marg.

structure and manpower in the area, the force swung into action and initiated a massive rescue and evacuation operations despite poor visibility and inclement weather. And the army played a good host. The stranded tourists were provided food, shelter, warm clothing and medicines. The Army also provided earth movers to clear the snow and restore connectivity at the earliest.



Man duped of Rs 13 lakh on pretext of KYC update

THANE, DEC 29 (PTI): A top executive of a company based at Ambarnath in Thane district of Maharashtra was allegedly duped of Rs 13 lakh on the pretext of updating his Know Your Customer (KYC) information on an e-commerce payment system, police said on Sunday.

The 60-year-old victim, who resides at Vartak Nagar here, has lodged a complaint with the police, based on which a case was registered against two persons, identified as Rahul Sharma and Rohit Sharma, an official said.

“The victim is a managing director of a machinery manufacturing company. A few days back, he got a call on his mobile and the callers (Sharmas) told him that they need some information as the KYC of his Paytm account needs to be updated. Believing them, he provided the information to them,” the official of Vartak Nagar police station said.

“They also asked him to make a token transaction of Re one from his Paytm account for verification. He did so. However, on December 24- he received a series of messages on his phone informing him that Rs 13,09,911 had been deducted from his two bank accounts linked to Paytm,” he said.

Maximum age limit for Chief of Defence Staff put at 65

NEW DELHI, DEC 29 (PTI): The government has amended rules putting the maximum age limit of 65 years for the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to serve in the post. The changes have been made in the Army Rules, 1954, according to a notification by the defence ministry.

In a landmark decision, the Cabinet Committee on Security on Tuesday approved the creation of the CDS who will act as the principal military adviser to the defence minister on all matters relating to tri-services. According to rules, the service chiefs can serve for a maximum period of three years or till attaining the age of 62, whichever is early.

Kejriwal felicitates ex-servicemen

NEW DELHI, DEC 29 (PTI): Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday felicitated a group of ex-servicemen and the families of slain soldiers, according to a statement. Speaking at an event, the chief minister said that the AAP government has never neglected the ex-servicemen. “We cannot put a price to the lives of martyred soldiers, but we have tried to honour them. Soon after the formation of the (AAP) government, our government has worked to provide financial assistance of Rs 1 crore to the family of martyred soldiers living in Delhi and job to one family member,” Kejriwal was quoted as saying in the statement.

Tamu Lochar greetings from Governor

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 29 DEC:

On the occasion of Tamu Lochar, Governor Ganga Prasad has extended warm greetings and good wishes to the people of Sikkim.

In his message, the Governor conveys, “The annual occasion falling in the month of Pausa, is also a festival of harvest and is primarily celebrated by our Gurung brethren. It marks the arrival of New Year symbolising new hope and aspiration of our nature loving agrarian populace. It also reflects our commitment

of peaceful co-existence and celebration of vibrant and rich culture, the true character of Sikkimese society. May this joyous occasion re-strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, love and harmony among all sections of our society.”

CM greets Sikkim on Tamu Lochar

GANGTOK, 29 DEC [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] has extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim and especially the Gurung community on the occasion of Tamu Lochar.

In his message, the Chief Minister has expressed that this auspicious occasion will reinforce the bond of brotherhood, love and harmony among all sections of our society. “Tamu Lochar which

marks the arrival of New Year for the nature loving and agrarian populace is also an occasion which further strengthens our commitment of peaceful co-existence and celebrates the vibrancy of our rich culture,” he adds.

CPI opposes govt move to introduce casinos & lotteries in Puducherry

PUDUCHERRY, DEC 29 (PTI): The CPI, a constituent of the Congress headed Secular Democratic Alliance in Puducherry, on Sunday opposed the government’s move to set up casinos and lotteries “in the garb of promoting tourism”.

A resolution registering the party’s strong protest against this move was passed at the CPI’s state council meet on Saturday, te party’s local unit Secretary A M Saleem said.

The resolution felt that promoting casinos would strike at the socio economic and cultural features of Puducherry. Saleem said the party also felt that Chief Minister V Narayanasamy’s contention that casinos would be a source to mop up revenue to buttress the fiscal health of the Union Territory was “not acceptable and untenable”.

Already, the sale of liquor, extensive availability of ganja and tobacco products and flesh trade had been holding the Union Territory to ransom, he alleged. “Nothing injurious to the cultural aspect of people should be promoted in the name of tourism,” the resolution said. The weekend flow of tourists into Puducherry had been on the increase as evidenced by records maintained by the police. The resolution also noted with concern the activities of anti-social elements like alleged extortion of money from businessmen and several other crimes. Setting up casinos

would only aggravate the scenario and the government should immediately give up its move to have the casino and lottery scheme here as they would hit the cultural and ethical life of people, the resolution said. The government should instead concentrate on encouraging small and medium enterprises to generate employment, it said. Another resolution urged the territorial government to expedite collection of sales tax arrears due from merchants so that the fiscal position would improve fast. The party also insisted that only rice be distributed under the free rice scheme, instead of adopting payment of cash through DBT as was being done now.

Vishwesha Theertha swami a liberal seer who hosted Iftar

BENGALURU, DEC 29 (PTI): Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji of Pejawar mutt was a Hindu pontiff who projected himself as a liberal face despite his strict Brahmanical priesthood as he dedicated his entire life for the propagation of Hindu dharma. He was strongly rooted in Hindu causes such as protection of cow and played an active role in the Ram-janmabhoomi movement. Yet, he boldly organised Iftar for the Muslims during Ramzan at the ancient Sri Krishna math complex in Udupi.

Vishwesha Theertha, who died aged 88 in Udupi after a brief illness on Sunday, was socially active and had reached out to Dalits with his visits to their colonies even as he carried on his spiritual activities with equal vigour and endeared thousands of devotees with his inclusive approach during his eight decades of sainthood. Besides being closely associated with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, he was highly regarded by top BJP leadership including late A B Vajpayee, L K Advani and Prime Minister Narendra Modi among others. Though he had several politicians as his disciples and followers, the swamiji was opposed to spiritual leaders taking the plunge into electoral politics, saying it would tantamount to compromising their loftiness. The most senior pontiff of the Ashta (eight) math in Udupi established by Dvaita philosopher Sri Madhwacharya

800 years ago and the 33rd swamiji in the lineage of the Pejawar math, the octogenarian swamiji was a fragile man yet with remarkable alarcity and an extraordinary scholar in Nyaya, Vedanta, Shashtra and other branches of philosophy. Credited with the rare honour of being only the second seer to complete five Paryayas (exclusive rights of worshipping the presiding deity at the ancient Lord Krishna temple in Udupi and management of the Sri Krishna Math) in its history, he was soft spoken and not afraid of taking path breaking initiatives. Born on April 27, 1931 as the second child of Narayanacharya and Kamamma from Ramakunja with the name Venkataramana, he was initiated into asceticism by the then head of the Pejawar Math Vishva Manya Theertha Swamiji at the tender age of eight at Chakratheertha near Hampi. He had written a Sanskrit poem called Samba Vijaya, and at the age of 25 he became the President of the Agamatraya Conference, organised by the Maharaja of Mysore, in Nanjanagud. The swamiji has ascended the ‘Paryaya Sarvajna Peetha’ for a record five times in 1952, 1968, 1984, 2000 and 2016. The Paryaya system denotes transfer of power of exclusive rights of worshipping the presiding deity at the Lord Krishna temple and management of the Sri Krishna Mutt from one seer to another of the eight mutts once in two years by turns at a

biennial event. It was said Vishwesha Theertha Swamiji did not want to ascend the Paryaya Sarvajna Peetha for fifth time considering his age (85 then) and wanted his junior Vishwaprasanna Teertha to take the honour. However, the latter managed to persuade his guru to accept it. Vishwaprasanna Teertha, the present junior swamiji, is likely to be his successor. Vishwesha Teertha Swamiji in 1956 established the Purnaprajna Vidyapeetha, a kind of Gurukula in Bengaluru with an aim to preserve the ancient culture and to propagate the philosophy of Madhvacharya. In a gesture of communal amity, the seer had hosted an Iftar get-together and Namaz by Muslims at a dining hall just outside the Udupi Sri Krishna math during the holy month of Ramzan in 2017, but the move drew protests from Hindu outfits. Defending the move, the Swamiji, who had personally served dates to Muslims during the Iftar, had urged people to make the region an example of peace and harmony for the country. He had also faced criticism from some quarters for his association with the VHP and over his statement against eating meat in the past. Asserting that Dalits were integral part of Hindu society, the pontiff took several social initiatives, including visits to Dalit colonies.



138 child labourers rescued from Surat by Raj-Guj teams

SURAT, DEC 29 (PTI): A team of the Rajasthan and Gujarat child rights commissions, the former’s anti-human trafficking unit and an NGO jointly rescued 138 children in the 10-16 age group from Surat on Sunday, officials said. These children were brought from Rajasthan to work in the city’s textile sector, hotels and as domestic workers, they said. The children were rescued after these teams, along with that of Nobel Laureate Kailash

Satyarthi’s NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan, raided an apartment in Puna locality here, an official said. Twelve people were held in the raid and have been handed over to Surat police, he said. “Of the 138 children rescued, 128 are from Rajasthan, the rest from Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Twelve people have been detained and handed over to police, though the kingpin is missing,” Shailendra Pandya, Rajasthan State Commission for Protec-

tion of Child Rights member said. “They were kept in inhuman conditions and were made to work in the textile sector, hotels and as domestic workers. Most of the children are from tribal areas of Rajasthan and were trafficked to Surat to provide cheap labour,” Pandya said. He said further action would include counseling of children to help them overcome the distress of being child labourers, and lodging of case in Rajasthan.

Care for the Children

Yes, they continue to be employed even before they are 14

It is now 13 years since a ban was imposed in October 2006 [under Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986] against employment of under-14 year olds in “any” kind of work. At that time, spirits were high as one expected the prohibition of employing u-14’s in “any” work would clear out the grey areas under which we had continued to put children at risk. Unfortunately, we also underestimated the wickedness of our society, because thirty years since we sought to save children from laboring, and a full 12 since we clarified that they could not even be engaged as domestic servants, we continue to bond them into labour.

The Act had already been in place for 20 years before employment of minors even as domestic servants or helpers in restaurants and tea shops was banned. Ideally, expanding the definition of work and widening the net to include more “employers” into the criminal bracket if they continue to engage child labour should have come after the original act had delivered exceptional results and the safety nets had been reinforced to catch the newly liberated. These had to be backed with the right legislations and trainings to enforce this important law. Thirty years on, it is with a heavy heart that one highlights that none of these happened. Yes, under-14-year-olds are occasionally rescued from hazardous places of work, but those rescues were taking place earlier as well and even before child labour was “prohibited and regulated”. How many private citizens has one heard of getting hauled to court for having employed minors at home?

The Act was never implemented in earnest in any of its forms and protection hence remains only on paper. While most of the focus on child labour, in Sikkim at least, has revolved around their employment as domestic servants, albeit without any real effect or even embarrassment, fact remains that many minors continue to work hazardous and much more strenuous occupations as well. Children who do not look more than 12 years old, and many, who appear to be borderline 14 year olds, can be seen employed at work sites, some even government sanctioned projects, and recently, some were even rescued from some shops in Singtam. The bonded-labour tendencies of the employers or their selfish intent to maximise profits by employing minors [since they can be paid less and fired at will], are not the only reasons why child labour continues to confront Sikkim at home and outside; a larger share of the blame lies with whichever authority it is that is shouldered with the responsibility to inform the people and enforce the ban.

No genuine attempt has been made to educate and police against the continued abuse of the law. Had such an attempt been made, there would not have been such avoidable conundrums as figuring out how or which agency is supposed to establish the age of an illegally employed child. When it comes to children who choose a depressing workplace over school, it is too much to expect them to circulate their CVs with their birth certificates attached. It will also be impractical to expect employers to prove the lawful age of their workers. So who does it then? And how? One could theorise on this aspect here, but the best people to work out an implementable guideline would be those who have worked at enforcing the ban. Only they would know the limitations of the existing rules, provided of course, they have worked at implementing it. Children continue to fall through the gaps which can only get plugged once some hands-on experience is on call. There does not appear to be much of that available. Such a scenario thirty years since the Act was promulgated and a full decade since it was expanded is not how childhoods can be saved.

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Alcoholic? Me? How to tell if your holiday drinking is becoming a problem

SARA JO NIXON
theconversation.com

It’s the most wonderful time of the year, when holiday parties collide with collegiate and professional athletics events. What do they all have in common? Booze, lots of it, and often free. It’s no wonder the lead reindeer has a red nose.

Of course, drinking isn’t limited to a single season, but it holds a prominent place during the holidays. Across a few short weeks, consumption of spiked cider, boozy nog, wine, beer, cocktails and variations thereof may be higher than at any other point in the year. One industry study suggested that drinking doubles at this time of year. During this party time, we see up close the drinking habits of our partners, co-workers, relatives and, of course, ourselves.

This holiday season, you might take notice of just how much you drink. You may start to question your motivation for drinking. Or wonder about the long-term effects. While it might be tempting to dismiss these unsettling reflections, as director of the University of Florida Center for Addiction Research and Education, I encourage you not to.

HOW MANY IS TOO MANY?

About one in eight U.S. adults met criteria for an alcohol use disorder in 2013 – the most recent year for which we have data. Compare that to just over one in 12 in 2002. That’s a nearly 50% increase. Alcohol misuse can lead to interpersonal violence and physical injury and worsen medical and psychiatric conditions. Besides its impact on health and well-being, alcohol misuse costs the U.S. an estimated US\$224 billion a year in lost productivity, health care costs, criminal justice costs and others. More than 75% of those costs are associated with binge drinking.

But these statistics don’t answer the question I get most often from friends, family, casual acquaintances and even strangers at parties or on cross-country flights. What everyone wants to know is, “How much can I drink without being an alcoholic?” The answer is, “It depends.”

FOR STARTERS, STOP CALLING NAMES

To effectively address the question, we must rethink our use of the term “alcoholic.” People have disorders; they are not themselves these disorders. The distinction is not merely a matter of semantics. It is fundamental to eliminating the stigma of substance use disorders and other psychiatric conditions.

Still, the more appropriate question, “How much can I drink without developing an alcohol use disorder?” gets the same answer: It depends. The amount that a person drinks doesn’t directly determine an alcohol use disorder diagnosis. But how can a “drinking problem” not have a definitive cutoff?

That’s because two people could drink the same amount and experience completely different consequences. So, the diagnostic criteria for alcohol use disorder focus on those consequences, rather than number of drinks imbibed.

For example, inability to control your drinking, no matter how much you drink, is a red flag. Having cravings for alcohol is another one. Does drinking interfere with your work, school or home responsibilities? Do you drink in situations in which you know it’s risky to do so?

Of course, the more you drink, the more likely it is that you will experience negative consequences.



RISKY BUSINESS

Most drinkers do not develop a disorder. But that doesn’t mean you’re off the hook. Research shows that Americans are drinking more and for longer each time they drink than ever before. And, adults are continuing to drink into older ages than ever before.

Women, in particular, seem to drink more as they age. A significant percentage of drinkers over age 55 often exceed the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism’s suggested guidelines for moderate drinking without necessarily meeting criteria for an alcohol use disorder. Whether you have a diagnosable disorder or not, all this drinking can cause problems.

One of those problems is driving. People mistakenly think of this as a young person’s problem. But about one in four adults 45 to 64 and another one in 12 over age 65 report driving after drinking in the previous month.

At blood alcohol concentrations equivalent to one or two drinks, older adults show notable shifts in cognitive performance, neural activity and driving strategies compared to younger ones.

Putting all this in the context of the holidays,

it’s not just the pervasive presence of booze that makes us drink. It’s the party culture. If you’re seen without a drink, you are often encouraged to take one. If you lose track of your drink, you get another (full) one.

This excess may meet criteria for a binge drinking episode. For women, that’s four or more standard drinks in a single occasion. For men, it’s five or more. And, as for “standard” drinks, we all know that many of us are typically pouring ourselves two to three times the standard in every glass.

Binge drinking, too, is increasing in older adults. And that matters because it has an immediate impact on driving abilities, fall risk and prescription medications.

SHOULD I TAKE ACTION?

If your alcohol use is gnawing at your conscience, you have options. Talk candidly with a trained professional about your drinking. Access the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism website, where you can assess your drinking and seek help. If you believe a friend or relative has a problem, talk with someone who can help you identify next steps.

Here are some ways to be a safer drinker:

- Before that party, eat something, even if you have to eat it in the car.
- Make your first drink nonalcoholic. It keeps you from gulping down the first “real” drink and allows your “car snack” time to settle.
- Alternate alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks.
- Eat (actually, graze) throughout the evening. Assuage guilt about calories by prioritizing fitness.
- Disregard peer pressure. Susceptibility to it may lessen with age, but seldom vanishes. When you reach your limit, don’t be swayed.
- To escape from an awkward conversation, don’t make a beeline to the bar. Take an indirect route through the room, mingling, checking out decorations.
- Take a ride-share home or to and from a party.

If you think your holiday drinking could be a sign of a year-round issue, discuss it with a medical or behavioral health provider. There are a variety of options, including the support and help of Alcoholics Anonymous, which is free. Online AA meetings are also available. For more information, visit: <https://www.aa.org>.

[the writer is Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry, University of Florida]

How Sales Shopping is Killing the Planet

KOKHO JASON SIT
theconversation.com

Christmas has passed and New Year is just around the corner. And the sales continue. Things started six weeks before Christmas with Singles Day, which began in China and is now the world’s biggest shopping day. This was followed by Black Friday, Cyber Monday sale, the pre-Christmas sales and now the period of post-Christmas or New Year sales. Soon it will be time for Valentine’s Day sales, Easter sales and so on. The sale events don’t seem to pause but instead persevere throughout the year and in various forms.

For retailers, these sales are a great opportunity to liquidate unsold or off-season stock into cash, make room for new stock and cross-sell existing stock via impulse or unplanned buying. For consumers, sales provide one or more “legit reasons” for spending and gifting, either to oneself, others or a bit of both. Indulgent spending is expected and even encouraged when discounts or bargains are widely available to be snatched up.

Putting their benefits aside, sales also come with numerous costs. Emotionally, they may drive consumers to spend money they do not have and then feel regret or guilt afterwards. Financially, they may entrap shoppers into (more) financial debt because of the faux sense of “entitled” indulgence or spending when there is a sale on. Psychologically, it may exacerbate compulsive buying

disorder, also known as “oniomania”, by legitimising gifting and spending.

All this adds up to some serious environmental costs. Marketing academics like me often assess how people act through certain “behavioural lenses”, and I think there are two that are applicable here:

THROWAWAY CULTURE

The throwaway lens, particularly visible in fashion, suggests that the more we buy, the more we throw

away. While the correlation is yet to be established empirically, it is logical to think that sales promote more buying and in turn mean there is more to throw away.



This proposition can be supported by the phenomenon of dwindling living space. In the UK, bedrooms are shrinking and on average living rooms in new build homes are a third smaller than in the 1970s. But despite this, people are still buying a lot more stuff than in the 1970s.

To make room for acquired sales items, people are likely to get rid of “pre-loved” items and harm the environment. For example, a UK parliament report in early 2019 found that in the country “around 300,000 tonnes of textile waste ends up in household black bins every year”, which is about 5kg per person. This is then sent to landfill or incinerators. The report notes that “less than 1%” of the material used to produce clothing is recycled. Our throwaway behaviour costs the planet.

SALES MEAN MORE PRODUCTION

Our throwaway behaviour costs the planet. The product returns lens suggests a possible correlation between sales and the rate of product returns. Sales such as Black Friday have become digitally-oriented, with around three quarters of purchases being made online.

Online returns can involve a number of environmentally damaging activities. Consumers sending items back, and couriers collecting and redistributing them, all means extra driving and thus traffic congestion and carbon emissions. Cleaning, repairing and/or repackaging returned

PRODUCTS ARE RETURNED

Online returns can involve a number of environmentally damaging activities. Consumers sending items back, and couriers collecting and redistributing them, all means extra driving and thus traffic congestion and carbon emissions. Cleaning, repairing and/or repackaging returned

items mean consuming more natural resources and potentially using more materials that contain fossil fuels or palm oils. Processing, transporting and landfill of single-use or non-recyclable packaging used in returns mean more land use and a greater carbon footprint.

All of these activities are usually “invisible” to us, the consumer, and yet can have dire consequences for the environment. For instance, Vogue

Business reported that in the US returns alone produce around 2.27 million tonnes of landfill waste and 15 million tonnes of carbon emissions each year, “equivalent to the amount of trash generated by 5 million people in a year”.

I don’t want to undermine the commercial value of sales nor the consumption joy they can bring when done wisely. However I cannot help wondering whether these sales can strike a balance between commercial, consumption and green value.

As we increasingly witness and experience the impacts of climate change, we do need to be (more) wary of our consumerist behaviours and subsequent environmental costs. A little thought for the environment might be just the way to enrich the shopping joy, or mitigate the spending guilt, experienced in sales events? Let’s spend (more) positively to protect our planet.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Marketing, University of Portsmouth]

Hemant Soren back as chief minister of Jharkhand

RANCHI, DEC 29 (PTI): JMM leader Hemant Soren took oath as Jharkhand chief minister for a second time on Sunday at a grand ceremony attended by a galaxy of opposition leaders and regional sa-traps, in a show of unity that could be a harbinger of a broad-based anti-BJP alliance amid the uproar over the new citizenship law.

Attired in white kurta-pyjama ensemble and a Nehru jacket, the 44-year-old tribal leader was sworn in as the 11th chief minister of the state by Governor Droupadi Murmu.

Among those in attendance were Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, TMC boss and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, her Rajas-



than and Chhattisgarh counterparts Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, DMK leader M K Stalin, his sister Kanimozhi, and RJD's Tejashwi Yadav.

They smiled broadly and shook hands at the bonhomie-filled event

that heralded the advent of a JMM-Congress-RJD government, after the opposition coalition snatched yet another state from the BJP, barely months after its remarkable performance in the Lok Sabha elections.

Former assembly speaker and Congress

leader Alamgir Alam, Jharkhand PCC president Rameshwar Oraon and RJD MLA Satyanand Bhokta were the other three ministers who took oath after Soren.

It is the second term for Soren, who had been a deputy chief minister and chief minister be-

tween 2009 and 2013.

Alam and Oraon are first-time ministers, while Bhokta had been the agriculture minister in the BJP-led NDA governments between 2000 and 2005, before joining the RJD.

In the just-conducted Assembly elections, the JMM- Congress-Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) alliance triumphed over the BJP, winning 47 seats in the 81-member House.

Four other MLAs - three from the Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajatantrik) and one from the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) have also extended support to the three-party coalition.



Philippines Christmas typhoon death toll climbs to 41

MANILA, DEC 29 (AFP): The number of deaths from a powerful storm that hit the Philippines on Christmas has climbed to 41, authorities said Sunday, with tens of thousands still in evacuation centres.

Typhoon Phanfone left the Philippines on Saturday after devastating several islands in the central Visayas, including popular tourist destinations, but the extent of the damage continued to grow as assessments came in.

The death toll of 41 -- up from 28 on Friday -- included three boat crew who died after their vessel capsized due to strong winds, a policeman electrocuted by a toppled post, and a man

struck by a felled tree.

"We're hoping that there will be no more fatalities," national disaster agency spokesman Mark Timbal told AFP, with authorities still searching for 12 people missing.

The latest agency report showed over 1.6 million people were affected by the typhoon, which damaged over 260,000 houses and forced almost a hundred thousand people to flee to emergency shelters.

Many of the affected residents in the predominantly Catholic nation celebrated Christmas in evacuation centres, where they may have to stay until the New Year given the scale of destruction.

The government esti-

mated that the storm has caused damage to agriculture and infrastructure worth 21 million.

Power lines and internet connections remain down in some areas after Phanfone's powerful wind gusts of up to 200 kilometres (124 miles) per hour toppled electric posts and trees.

Typhoon Phanfone, locally called Ursula, is the 21st cyclone to hit the storm-prone Philippines, which is the first major landmass facing the Pacific typhoon belt.

Many of the storms are deadly, and they typically wipe out harvests, homes and infrastructure, keeping millions of people perennially poor.

Indian-Americans hold protest rally against CAA

WASHINGTON, DEC 29 (PTI): A group of Indian-Americans gathered around the Mahatma Gandhi statue in front of the Indian Embassy here and held a peaceful protest against the recently amended Citizenship Act.

According to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 following religious persecution there will get Indian citizenship.

Displaying posters

like 'United Against Hate' and 'Stop Dividing India', the protestors, about 150 Indian-Americans from the Greater Washington Area, on Saturday alleged that India's secularism is under threat. They raised slogans against the BJP-led government and sang the national anthem.

The participants circled Gandhi's statue many times singing patriotic songs and pledged to carry on the struggle against making religion a factor in the grant of citizenship.

This is the third such protest rally at the Indian Embassy in the last nine days.



Day after being heckled, Kerala Governor summons CS

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC 29 (PTI): A day after facing protests at the Indian History Congress at Kannur University, Kerala Governor Arif Mohamed Khan on Sunday is learnt to have summoned state Chief Secretary Tom Jose to the Raj Bhavan.

The chief secretary met the Governor, Raj Bhavan sources said.

The Governor, who inaugurated the IHC, had faced protests from some delegates and students after he made a reference to the amended Citizenship Amendment Act.

Khan had also said that eminent historian



Irfan Habib had tried to disrupt his inaugural address at the History Congress and this "intolerance" towards different

opinion was "undemocratic".

Khan said he had only responded to points raised by previous speak-

ers as a person duty bound to defend and protect the Constitution.

The Governor had also said that the histo-

rian had pushed his ADC and Security Officer.

Meanwhile, Kannur University Vice Chancellor Dr Gopinath Ravindran admitted that there was a breach of protocol in the protests held against the Governor.

Historian Irfan Habib's name was not there is the list of speakers at the inaugural session, he told reporters here.

Habib denied any breach of protocol at the IHC and attacked the CPI(M) led LDF government for the police action against the delegates and students who protested.

NPR, NRC against poor, minorities: Akhilesh

LUCKNOW, DEC 29 (PTI): SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) were against the poor people and minorities of the country, while asserting that he will not fill up the NPR form.

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

"The question is whether we want the NRC or employment? If the need arises, I will be the first person not to fill up any form. Will you support me or not? If we

do not fill up the form, we will be thrown out. I will not fill it up, you say whether you will fill it up or not?," Yadav asked young SP leaders.

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

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

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

"During demonetisa-

tion, the government had said corruption will end, but that proved to be untrue. Due to demonetisation, a number of banks closed down, while the GST (Goods and Services Tax) ruined businesses. The condition is such that the country's economy has come out of the ICU and gone to the ICU," Yadav said.

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

Reacting to the SP chief's remarks, state Law Minister Brajesh Pathak said, "The SP and other like-minded parties are trying to spread animos-

ity among the people of the state over the amended Citizenship Act."

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

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

Yadav claimed that if the BJP MLAs were taken into confidence, it would emerge that 300 lawmakers of the state were angry with Adityanath.

"He is afraid of this

and getting injustice done by the police to save his chair," he said.

A number of BJP MLAs had staged a "dharna" against their own government in Uttar Pradesh during the recent sitting of the state Assembly, after a ruling party lawmaker accused the present regime of harassing him.

Yadav also said if a probe by a retired high court or Supreme Court judge was conducted into the anti-CAA protests and the ensuing violence in Uttar Pradesh, the truth would come out.

At least 19 people were killed in widespread clashes during protests against the amended citizenship law across the state.

NRC an internal affair of Indian govt: BGB DG

NEW DELHI, DEC 29 (PTI): The process of creation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) is completely an "internal affair" of the Indian government and the cooperation between the border guarding forces of the two countries is very good, the chief of

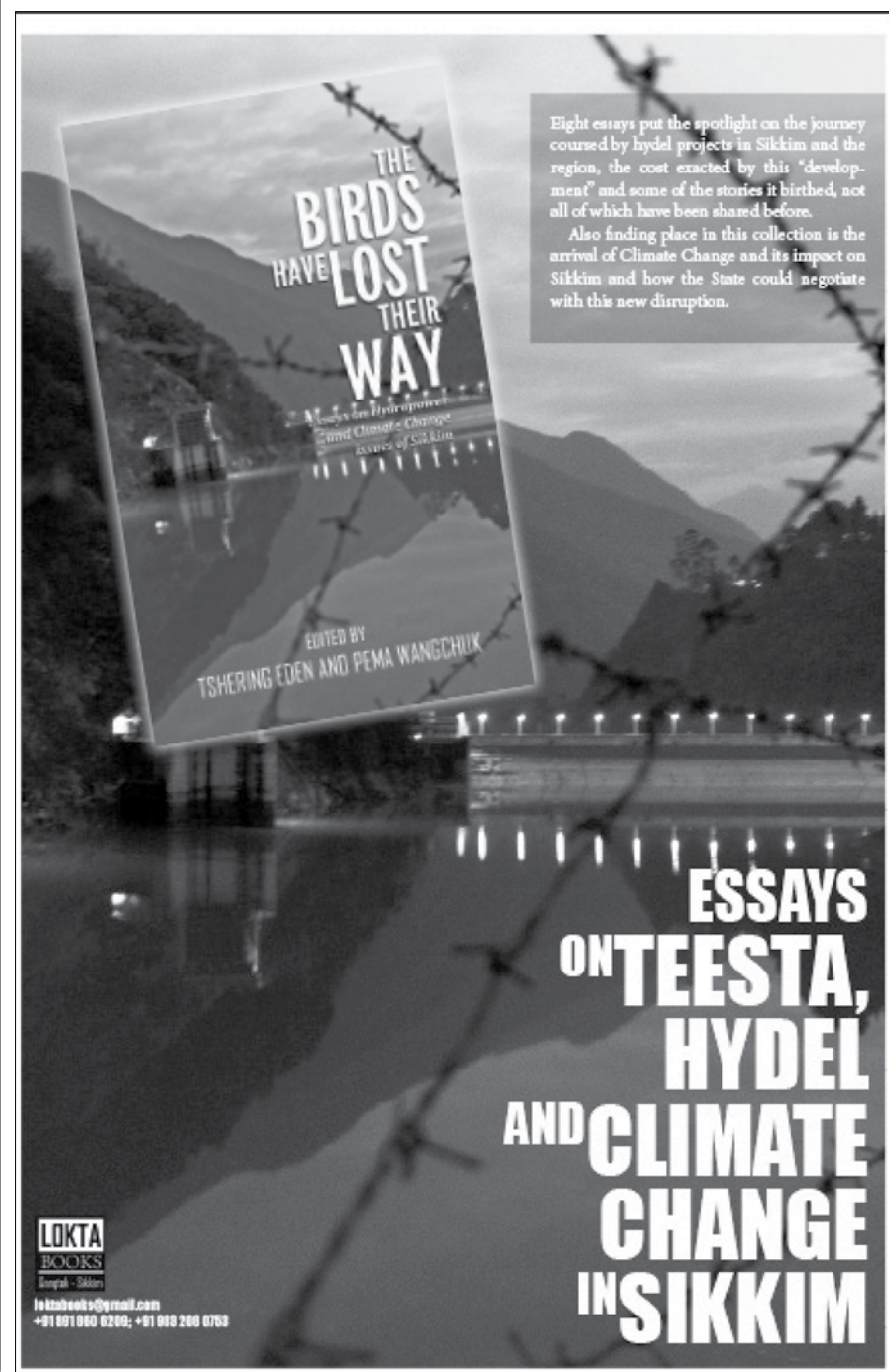
Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) said here on Sunday.

The BGB will continue to work to prevent illegal crossings into India, its Director General Maj Gen Shafeenul Islam said at a press conference here.

A BGB delegation, led by Islam, is on a bilater-

al visit to India to hold DG-level border talks with their counterparts, the Border Security Force (BSF) said.

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



Will anything now derail Liverpool’s bid for a first league title in 30 years?

JONATHAN WILSON
THEGUARDIAN

Leicester were second in the table and unbeaten at home, where they had conceded only five goals in nine previous games this season. On Boxing Day Liverpool destroyed them, beating them 4-0 with a performance of awesome authority. Their opening 18 games have brought 17 wins and a draw, a start matched in the entire history of the league only by Manchester City the season before last. Their lead over the champions is 14 points with a game in hand before they meet Wolves on Sunday. At the moment Liverpool are not merely Club World Cup winners, they are actually the best side in the world.

Is there, then, anything that could stop them winning the title for the first time since 1990?

The performance at Leicester and the way they controlled the second half against Salzburg in the Champions League answered a lot of questions, showing a capacity to manage games that had not always been in evidence this season, but through the late autumn there was a clear sense that Liverpool were not playing quite as well as results suggest.

Opta’s charts show that by the start of the Boxing Day programme they had scored 10.03 goals more than their xG (expected goals), a greater positive disparity than for any other side in the league – although, of course, that may mean nothing more than they have the most clinical forwards.

Less eye-catchingly Jürgen Klopp’s side had conceded 2.18



goals fewer than xG would expect, placing them ninth in that chart. Together that means their goal difference is 12.21 better than xG would anticipate; only Leicester outperform their expected goal difference by more.

There have been late winners against Leicester (at home), Aston Villa and Crystal Palace, and a late equaliser against Manchester United. There was a sense of, if not quite clinging on, then certainly being under serious pressure in the latter stages against Chelsea and Brighton.

How serious an issue that is considered to be depends on the extent to which one prioritises data and the underlying picture of

how the game is played as opposed to believing in more nebulous concepts such as character. That propensity to keep going, to keep believing and find late goals when required remains beyond the scope of algorithms but Liverpool have it in abundance.

Such patterns have a tendency to become self-fulfilling, as they did for Manchester United’s peak Fergie Time season of 1998-99, or Sunderland when they were promoted under Roy Keane in 2006-07: not only do the team seeking a goal come to believe it will come and so attack with more conviction and less sense of desperation, but the other side can come to believe that it will inevi-

tably concede and so drop deeper and deeper.

But still, while certain teams, and particularly those imbued with such a clear sense of mission as Liverpool have this season, do seem to have that gift, it is perhaps not to be relied on.

Then there is the constant worry of injuries. Virgil van Dijk is the biggest concern given the impact he has had over the past two years, and Liverpool without him would look a much more vulnerable side. But he is not the only player who would be extremely difficult to replace. James Milner and Joe Gomez offer cover in the full-back positions but both are very obviously filling in: the creative threat

offered by Trent Alexander-Arnold and Andy Robertson is not only hugely important to how Liverpool attack but unique in world football. Then there are the front three. Divock Origi, Adam Lallana and Xherdan Shaqiri can step up but, again, there is a clear drop-off in level when they play.

That is one of the unusual aspects of this Liverpool (and also true of this Manchester City): while there are a few options in midfield, they do essentially have a first team in a way that had largely gone out of fashion over the past couple of decades. There are clear advantages to that in terms of cohesiveness, both defensive and attacking, but it does make the potential impact of an injury greater.

That may in part explain why both Klopp and Pep Guardiola have been so vociferous in their complaints about the festive programme: the consequences of a key injury for them are probably greater than they have been for previous title challengers. Then again Fabinho seemed essential and Liverpool have actually improved defensively since Jordan Henderson dropped deeper.

But perhaps, if Liverpool’s form, which is surely unsustainable, does start to wobble and the gap does start to close, the pressure of those 30 years without a league title will start to be felt. At every turn players and fans will begin to glimpse the spirits of near-misses past – Steven Gerrard slipping, Rafa Benítez reading his list of facts, Gérard Houllier proclaiming his side “10 games from greatness”. Perhaps – although it does not seem very likely, such is

the sense of power and self-confidence this Liverpool project.

Besides, for Liverpool to come under pressure there needs also to be a credible threat. The recent defeats to Manchester City and Liverpool have proved that Leicester are not that. Manchester City, meanwhile, are not the relentless force of the past two seasons. They may still be capable of thrashing opponents, but their pressing is not quite right, rendering them susceptible to the counter. Wolves outplayed them on Friday. The return of Aymeric Laporte, scheduled for February, will improve them and should make them challengers for the Champions League but for now City do not look a side capable of reeling off the 10 or 12 straight wins that would be necessary to put Liverpool under pressure, as Guardiola as admitted.

Something remarkable will have to happen if this is not to be a procession. All kinds of records are possible. Is this how Liverpool would have wanted it? Would they have preferred the wait to end with something as cathartic as Michael Thomas’s goal for Arsenal at Anfield in 1989 or Sergio Agüero’s winner against QPR in 2012, or even Steve Bruce’s header against Sheffield Wednesday in 1993?

Or is there a self-indulgence in imagining not only victory but the circumstances of victory? Victory, though, this will surely be and, if the second half of the season is essentially a triumphal parade, Liverpool have earned it.

Australia crush New Zealand at MCG to secure trans-Tasman trophy

MELBOURNE, 29 DEC [AP]:

Australia are one win away from their first perfect Test summer in six years after wrapping up the trans-Tasman trophy with a 247-run flogging of New Zealand. Nathan Lyon bowled Australia to victory on Sunday’s fourth day of the second Test at the MCG, giving them an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

If they win at the SCG, it will mark the first time since the 2013-14 Ashes whitewash Australia have won all Tests in a home summer without a loss or a draw.

Opener Tom Blundell offered the only real resistance for New Zealand, batting superbly to hit his second century in just his third Test, out for 121 in his maiden first-class match as an opener. But it mattered little as the Black Caps finished on 9-240, chasing 488 for victory, with Trent Boult unable to bat because of a broken hand.

James Pattinson claimed 3-35 on Sunday to make it six wickets for the match in his first Test on Australian soil in



almost four years. The Victorian broke the Black Caps’ backs with the key scalps of skipper Kane Williamson and veteran Ross Taylor in one over just before lunch.

It reflected a miserable Test for the New Zealand captain, who won the toss and opted to bowl only to see

player-of-the-match Travis Head’s century help Australia to amass 467

first-innings runs. Williamson scored just nine in the first innings, and watched Australia hit 5-168 in their second innings before declaring midway through Sunday morning.

Lyon rolled through the touring middle order to finish with 4-81, his best moment coming when he deceived Henry Nicholls (33) with one that spun past his bat

to be stumped by Tim Paine. Lyon has taken 13 wickets in the final innings of matches this summer, reinforcing his status as one of the best finger spinners in the world.

Pat Cummins finished his dominant year wicketless in the fourth innings, but still played a key role in the victory with 5-28 in New Zealand’s first dig.

Defeat ends New Zealand’s unbeaten run in Test series, the Kiwis having either drawn or won their past seven going back to early 2017. They will also drop the out of the world’s top-two ranked teams, after struggling with the bat for a second-straight Test and lacking impetus with the ball.

Stepped in to stop religious discrimination against Kaneria by ‘one or two’ players: Akhtar

KARACHI, DEC 29 (PTI):

Former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar has said he stepped in to stop discrimination based on religion against Danish Kaneria, who was targeted by “one or two” team-mates because he is a Hindu.

Akhtar on Thursday had claimed that Kaneria faced discrimination at the hands of a few Pakistani players, who were reluctant to even eat with him.

Kaneria supported Akhtar’s claim, saying there were a “few players” who targeted him for being a Hindu during his time with the national team but never felt the urge or the pressure to change his religion.

“We, as a society, should realise that this should be nipped in the bud. I am a product of this society and I did that. I had told them (the players) I will throw you out if you talk like this (about Kaneria’s faith). Because this is not our culture,” Akhtar said in his Youtube channel on Saturday night.

“There is unwritten contract that we got to respect every player no



matter what. But there was some hesitation shown by a few players but this is not our team’s code of conduct. This is just one-two players and these kinds of players are there all over the world who pass racist comments,” he added.

In the video, the 44-year-old former speedster said, “We, as a nation, did not let such discriminatory thoughts prevail. We stopped it there. We have improved a lot as a society in the last 10-15 years.

“I watched the mess that was made of my statement, which was taken completely out of context,” Akhtar wrote on his twitter handle, attaching the video of his

YouTube channel.

Kaneria played 61 Tests for Pakistan, claiming 261 wickets, and Akhtar heaped praise on the former leg-spinner.

“Danish has helped Pakistan win a lot of matches. Danish has played for Pakistan for 10 years. He was played over Mushtaq Ahmed. I still feel he should have been played two years earlier.”

The 39-year-old Kaneria is currently serving a life ban for spot-fixing alongside Mervyn Westfield while playing for English county Essex against Durham in 2009.

Kaneria, who had admitted to spot-fixing in 2018 after six years of denial, on Saturday alleged that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the government did not offer him any help after being banned from the sport.

“Danish Kaneria was never left out (of the team) by Pakistan. He was dropped because of the ECB. He had a match-fixing issue and the ECB penalised him for that. Pakistan did no wrong to him,” Akhtar said.

ISL reschedules six games in new year

New Delhi, Dec 29 (PTI): The Indian Super League has rescheduled six matches of the ongoing 2019-20 season.

According to a statement posted by ISL on its website, the game between NorthEast United FC and Chennaiyin FC, which was postponed

on December 12 due to CAA protests in Guwahati, will now be played on February 25 at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium.

One more game of NorthEast United has also been rescheduled as their engagement against Jamshedpur FC has been moved from January 2 to February

10 “due to non-availability of the stadium” because of Khelo India Youth Games, to be held at the venue from January 2 to 22.

The organisers have also swapped the games between Chennaiyin FC and Bengaluru FC (scheduled on February 7) and North East United FC vs

Kerala Blasters FC (scheduled on February 9).

The scheduled match between Hyderabad FC and Jamshedpur FC, on February 12, has been moved to February 13, while the February 13 match between FC Goa and Mumbai City FC has been moved to February 12.

Aishwary shoots gold at RR Lakshya Cup

New Panvel (MAHARASHTRA), DEC 29 (PTI): Eighteen-year-old Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar emerged victorious in the 10m senior category event of RR Lakshya Cup, an all-India invitation air-rifle tournament held here on Sunday.

The Madhya Pradesh shooter, who won the Olympic Quota place in 50m Rifle 3 Position ear-

lier in 2019, was trailing Yash Vardhan of Rajasthan in the first 10 shots.

However, consistent scores of 10.7, 10.8 and one 10.9 helped Tomar surge ahead to win with a final tally of 252.3.

Sixteen-year-old Vardhan finished second with 250.7 while Assam’s Hriday Hazarika, a Lakshya Shooting Club trainee, finished third and won the

bronze medal, a media release issued here said.

The tournament is organised by Lakshya Shooting Club, founding by Olympian Suma Shirur.

“The confidence after securing Olympic Quota Place has increased. To me, Lakshya Cup is a follow through match after the national championships. This helps me stay in the competitive atmosphere,” said

Tomar, who went home richer by Rs one lakh.

“I don’t go to any competition thinking of winning a medal. To me, it is about giving your best.”

Last year, Tomar had won silver in the junior category.

Last year’s winner in the senior category, Divyansh Singh Panwar, finished fifth in the final.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe to go on hunger strike for fellow detainee in Iran

PATRICK WINTOUR

LONDON, 29 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is to go on hunger strike in solidarity with another dual national being held in Iran.

Kylie Moore-Gilbert, a British-Australian academic, started an open-ended hunger strike six days ago in protest at being sentenced to 10 years on espionage charges. She wants at minimum to be moved from solitary confinement.

She has been held in solitary since October 2018. Just before Christmas she wrote to the Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, pleading for ministers to do more to secure her release.

A spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry, Abbas Mousavi, rejected the flurry of publicity over her case and said Iran would not submit to political games or propaganda.



The British-Iranian Zaghari-Ratcliffe and many other imprisoned dual nationals in Tehran believe they are being held as political hostages. Zaghari-Ratcliffe has already undertaken one hunger strike in solidarity with Moore-Gilbert and has said she will start another before New Year's Eve. Zaghari-Ratcliffe was jailed four years ago.

A third dual nation-

al, Fariba Adelkhah, a French-Iranian academic, is also on hunger strike. The French government has summoned the Iranian ambassador over her detention.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe's husband, Richard Ratcliffe, said of Moore-Gilbert's plight: "Five days on dry hunger strike is becoming critical, and our thoughts go out to Kylie and her family for

all this ordeal.

"She was already being taken to the health clinic after 48 hours. By now I would expect Kylie and Fariba to be there almost permanently. If it continues as planned they only have days.

"It gives some sense of just how desperate 16 months in solitary makes you. At some point you really feel you have nothing left to get noticed,

nothing left to lose.

"I hope the Australian and British governments also step up today and shake off the complacency of their holiday heads. It is one thing for the Iranian regime to hold innocent people hostage, it is quite another to let them die."

In her latest letter to the Australian government, Moore-Gilbert said: "Over the past nine months I have been completely banned from any contact with my family, with the exception of a three-minute phone call (all with my father), which was only granted after I took desperate measures which put my own life at risk.

"I have undertaken five hunger strikes as my only means to raise my voice, but to no avail. As predicted, I have now received a conviction of 10 years in prison, and my appeal court has failed."

She urged the Austra-

lian ministers to review what they had been doing to secure her release.

The Iranian government says both academics were found guilty of espionage and that any interference by foreign governments will not help their case.

Mousavi said: "The statement by France's foreign ministry regarding an Iranian national is an act of interference and we see their request to have no legal basis.

"The individual in question [Adelkhah] is an Iranian national and has been arrested over acts of espionage."

He said her lawyer had knowledge about the details of the case, which was being investigated.

Iran does not recognise dual nationality and has repeatedly rebuffed calls from foreign governments for consular access to those it has detained.



Seven bodies found on suspected North Korean fishing boat in Japan

TOKYO, 29 DEC [AP]: Seven badly decomposed bodies were found in a suspected North Korean fishing boat that washed up on a Japanese island, a coast guard official.

The remains were found on Saturday in a broken vessel on the shore of Sado Island, which lies around 900km from North Korea across the Sea of Japan.

"Five of the bodies were identified as men but the remaining two could not be identified," the official said.

"There have been similar cases but this was the first discovery of bodies in such a wrecked boat on this island this year."

Korean alphabet and numbers were painted on the wooden hull, which was broken in half, he said, adding that there was nothing to show their nationality.

Local media said the Japanese police and coast guard were investigating the case, suspecting the vessel departed from North Korea.

In 2019 at least 156 suspected North Korean fishing vessels have washed up on Japan's coast or been found drifting in Japanese waters, the Japanese newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun has reported.

Experts say some North Korean fishermen are travelling far out to sea in order to satisfy government mandates for bigger catches. But their old and poorly equipped vessels are prone to mechanical and other problems, including running out of fuel, and there are few ways for them to call for rescue.

Some of the boats wash up on Japanese shores with dead crews and are dubbed "ghost ships" by local media.

In 2018, 10 North Koreans rescued from a tiny wooden boat drifting off northern Japan were deported. In October around 60 members of a North Korean fishing boat were rescued in the Sea of Japan after it sank following a collision with a Japanese patrol vessel.

Saudi plans OIC foreign ministers' meeting on Kashmir

SAJJAD HUSSAIN

ISLAMABAD, DEC 29 (PTI): Saudi Arabia plans to convene a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation on Kashmir, in an apparent move by Riyadh to please Pakistan which skipped a recent summit of Muslim nations in Malaysia seen by Riyadh as an attempt to create a new bloc to replace the dysfunctional OIC led by it.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan conveyed this to his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi during a meeting with him at the Foreign Office on Thursday, Dawn reported, quoting a diplomatic source.

He was on a day-long visit to Islamabad to convey the Saudi leadership's gratitude to Pakistan for not participating in the recently held Kuala Lumpur summit of Muslim nations in view of the Gulf Kingdom's reservations, the paper reported.

Prime Minister Imran Khan had confirmed Pakistan's participation in the summit hosted by Malaysia, but skipped the event



at the eleventh hour due to pressure exerted by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - key financial backers of the cash-strapped country.

Qureshi briefed Prince Faisal on the situation in Kashmir in the aftermath of India's move to abrogate article 370 on August 5.

"The two Foreign Ministers discussed OIC's role in the advancement of the cause of Kashmir,"

the Foreign Office said in a statement.

He also "highlighted the Indian Government's actions with regard to CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act 2019) and NRC (National Register of Citizens) and the systematic targeting of minorities in India, particularly Muslims," it said.

The OIC is a 57-member grouping of Muslim majority nations, including Pakistan. The body

has usually been supportive of Pakistan and often sided with Islamabad on the Kashmir issue.

In a brief statement, the OIC last week said it was "closely following recent developments affecting Muslim minority in India."

Prince Faisal also called on Prime Minister Khan. The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Qureshi, Foreign Secretary Sohail

Mahmood, spy agency ISI chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed and other senior officials.

Khan told the Saudi minister that alleged ceasefire violations by India along the Line of Control were "stoking ten-

sions and imperiling regional peace and security".

The Kuala Lumpur summit had found strong support in Pakistan because of Saudi's growing trade ties with India and the OIC's failure to take strong stance on Muslim issues.

The day-long visit of the Saudi minister came after criticism of the alleged pressure applied by the Gulf Kingdom on Pakistan to skip the Kuala Lumpur summit.

The Summit from December 19-21 was seen by Saudis as an attempt to create a new bloc in the Muslim world that could become an alternative to the dysfunctional OIC led by the Gulf Kingdom.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have extended financial support to the government of Prime Minister Khan to deal with the balance of payment crisis last year.

'Mass stabbing' at US rabbi's house

WASHINGTON, DEC 29 (AFP): Multiple people were stabbed at a Jewish place of worship in upstate New York late Saturday night, a public affairs group said.

"At 9:50 this eve, a call came in about a mass stabbing... It's the house of a Hasidic Rabbi. 5 patients with stab wounds, all Hasidic, were transported to local hospitals," the Orthodox Jewish Public Affairs Council (OJPAC) tweeted.

Two people were reportedly in critical condition, OJPAC added.

CBS New York reported that a man brandishing a machete went into the rabbi's property in Monsey, New York State,



an area with a large Jewish population, during a Hanukkah celebration and knifed at least three people before fleeing.

Yossi Gestetner, a co-founder of the OJPAC for the Hudson Valley region, told the New York

Times one of the victims was a son of the rabbi.

"The house had many dozens of people in there," Gestetner said. "It was a Hanukkah celebration."

Police in the US have been battling a rash of at-

tacks against Jewish targets in recent years.

Saturday's stabbing follows a shooting earlier this month at a kosher deli in a New York suburb that authorities said was fueled in part by anti-Semitism.

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VIDEO NEWS SECTION

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Biopic on Malala Yousafzai to hit the screens on January 31

MUMBAI, DEC 29 (PTI): “Gul Makai”, a biopic on Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, is slated to be released on January 31, 2020.

The film has been directed by HE Amjad Khan and produced by Sanjay Singla. It is presented by Jayantilal Gada and Tekno Films.

Actor Reem Shaikh will star as Malala. The movie also features Divya Dutta, Pankaj Tripathi, Atul Kulkarni and Mukesh Rishi in pivotal roles.

According to a press release issued by the makers,



“Gul Makai” charts “the courageous journey of Ziauddin Yousafzai family, when Swat

Valley in Pakistan was seized by Taliban gunmen in 2009 and Sharia law was imposed

upon its people.”

Malala, daughter of Ziauddin Yousafzai, spoke against the world most dangerous terrorist organisation through her blogs on the BBC Urdu website under the pseudonym Gul Makai, against the oppression faced by them in Swat Valley, Pakistan, it added.

Malala spoke for the right of girls, especially the right to receive a complete education, her courage and bravery gained worldwide recognition and support.

‘Deadpool 3’ in the works at Marvel, Ryan Reynolds confirms

Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds has confirmed that the third installment in his “Deadpool” franchise is in the development at Marvel Studios.

The 43-year-old actor made the revelation during an appearance on a holiday edition of “Live With Kelly and Ryan”.

“We’re working on it right now with the whole team. We’re over at Marvel, which is the big leagues all of a sudden. It’s kind of crazy,” Reynolds said.

The foul-mouthed superhero was one of the few Marvel comic characters not owned by Disney, but after Fox’s merger with the industry giant, Deadpool has become a Marvel Studios property.

According to Variety, Fox film’s former president of production, Emma Watts, who was part of the first two films, will no more oversee the franchise.



Kristen Bell tries not to laugh as hubby and daughter discuss swearing

Kristen Bell could barely keep a straight face as husband Dax Shepard and one of their two children calmly discussed the meaning of the middle finger gesture, giving fans an insight into their parenting techniques.

The 39-year-old Frozen II actress, who shares daughters Lincoln, 6, and Delta, 5, with the actor, posted on her Instagram Story on Friday videos showing her reactions to their conversation, which took place in a public area. The child tells her dad that one of her male classmates uses the middle finger constantly in school.

“He says this is ‘f-k,’” the little girl says. “He says that every time in school.”

“He does? He’s naughty,”



replies Shepard, 44.

“The teacher says that’s a bad word,” the girl says.

“Yeah, that’s not a nice word,” Shepard says. “You know, that that’s a naughty finger and I never see you do that. It makes me so proud

that you know that, yet you don’t do it. Well you did it a couple of times when you were young, before you knew it was a naughty word.”

He adds, “One time you couldn’t get a shirt on in your bedroom and you let it fly.

Then later that day, you were in the swimming pool and you let one fly. But since then you’ve really curbed it.”

“You guys didn’t tell me ‘f-k’ was a bad word when I was little,” the girl continues.

“You’re right, we just ignored it,” Shepard says. “We hoped that you didn’t say it a lot, which seemed to work.”

“I have been waiting for this conversation since the day I got pregnant,” Bell wrote. “The one where we talk about what fingers mean what when you hold em up. I [am] fidgeting because I am trying so hard not to laugh. It’s excruciating. @daxshepard you handled this brilliantly.”

Florence Pugh claps back over criticism in age difference with boyfriend

Florence Pugh wants people to mind their business.

On Friday, Dec. 27, the Little Women actress took to Instagram to share a picture of herself after a long flight, captioning it, “First pit-stop, Matzo Ball soup. #curingjetlag101.”

In the comments of her picture taken in front of Greenblatt’s Delicatessen Restaurant, boyfriend Zach Braff commented with a princess emoji and quickly, things went a little bit south.

One of the actresses followers replied to the former Scrubs star’s comment, writing, “you’re 44 years old.” The comment was made to point the age difference between Braff and Pugh, who is 23-years-old.

However, Pugh wasn’t here for it and clapped back at the comment, writing, “and



yet he got it.”

Twenty-one age gap or not, it looks like Pugh isn’t going to let the trolls get in between her and her relationship with the Golden State actor. The two were first spotted together earlier this year in April when

they both stepped out holding hands during an afternoon stroll in New York City.

While the two have yet to confirm their relationship status, it’s safe to say the two lovebirds have enjoyed each other’s company this year.

ARIES: This is a time of wish fulfillment. Get ready to receive exactly what you asked for, in the format you desire. Such is the power of manifestation. For some, this could be a time or completing a significant journey. Ready to share your masterpiece with the world? Remember, perfection is but an illusion.

Tip: This is a time of completion and fruition.

TAURUS: Putting food on the table is paramount. But do you really need to lose you mental peace and sanity to create a stable life? Beware, Taurus. You could be holding on to a false sense of security. Where does your true happiness lie?

Tip: The Universe is supplying all of your needs.

GEMINI: You are closer to your destination than you can imagine. Continue to wrap up your projects and meet

your deadlines. Spend some time at the end of the day to review your progress and adjust the sails. Clearly envision the port you want to dock and speed away. New possibilities are opening up right this minute.

Tip: Envision your destination and set sail.

CANCER: Even though the change seems frightening, you’re being asked to roll with it. Resisting it will feel a lot like rowing upstream without a paddle—impossible and exhausting all the same. You’ve survived a hundred per cent of your bad days.

Tip: Embrace the winds of change.

LEO: There is no harm in mixing business with pleasure, especially if it opens the doorway to more business and pleasure. Your wit and charm know no bounds today.

Tip: A successful partnership is on the cards for some.

VIRGO: The law of attraction works in mysterious ways, Virgo. Be cognisant of the signs and synchronicities, especially if you’ve been wanting to work in partnership with somebody. You will know if this association is worth your time and effort. On a side note, have you checked in with your body lately?

Tip: A blessed partnership is on the cards.

LIBRA: Oh, the perils of micromanaging. See how and where you need to detach. This will help you focus on what’s really important and put your best work out. Thinking about expanding the team to take the load off?

Tip: It’s to curate an A-team.

SCORPIO: Life is a giant ferris wheel and you’re on the top of it, Scorpio. Expect many breakthroughs today. The blocks that were standing

in your way will now get cleared up. Keep an eye out for signs and synchronicities as you go about your day.

Tip: The blocks are getting cleared.

SAGITTARIUS: Yes, you deserve to be where you are today. Kiss goodbye to the demons. Replace fear and self-doubt with love. Remember there is a reason you were chosen for this sacred mission. What you do need to be mindful of, however, is that there is a lot more to learn.

Tip: Put in the work.

CAPRICORN: This ie period of major movement, Capricorn. The blocks that previously held you back are now being cleared. Does that mean you will face no challenges whatsoever? No, it just means that your will to win is stronger. Remember, haters are going to hate, especially when they see you moving closer to the final destination.

Don’t let that be the reason you take your sparkle down a notch.

Tip: Let the will to win be strong.

AQUARIUS: Writer’s block, what? Here’s a simple exercise to get your creative juices flowing: take a piece of paper and start journaling the thoughts that come to you. No stopping. No editing. Revisit the copy with a fresh mind. You’ll find that some of the ideas you’ve channelled are pure gold.

Tip: Give free writing a thought.

PISCES: This is a time or movement and progression. Major news is on its way to you, and it could permanently change the game. Be sure to ground your energy, Pisces. This will help you stay focused despite the endless to-do list. For some, a major business trip may be on the cards. Put your best suit on as you board the flight.

Tip: Things are finally picking up pace.