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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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THREE-MONTH EXERCISE FOR CENTRAL MOTOR VEHICLES ACT KICKS OFF

723 vehicles checked on first day of enforcement drive



ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 07 JAN:

The Transport Department in collaboration with Sikkim Police launched a three-month awareness cum enforcement drive on 06 Jan following the extension of the new Central Motor

Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019 in the State on 06 Dec last year.

Since the drive includes checking of documents, a large number of vehicles, especially taxis, have remained off the roads. Traffic on Gangtok's roads has

been sparse since the drive began.

"The main aim and objective of the three-month long awareness cum enforcement drive is to sensitize road users regarding various road safety measures and about the various rules

and regulations," said Secretary, Transport Department, Raju Basnett, today.

He further said that the awareness drive has been well received by road users and the general public. The department is receiving appreciation from all sections

of road users and there has been no objection made till date, he added.

However, the Transport Secretary claims that this drive is not regarding the enforcement of the new Central Motor Vehicles Act but seeks to sensitize people on various aspects of road safety.

A total of 723 vehicles where checked and verified on the first day of the drive out of which 70 vehicles were penalized for violating various rules and for not having necessary documents.

The enforcement agency has been penalizing road users with the new rate of fines.

The drive was launched simultaneously in all four districts of Sikkim with a total of 7 checking points in different places throughout the

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SC directs Centre to refund Rs 104 cr to RCom



NEW DELHI, JAN 7 (PTI):

Facing insolvency proceedings, embattled Reliance Communications (RCom) on Tuesday got some relief from the Supreme Court which directed the Centre to refund Rs 104 crore to the telecom firm.

The top court upheld TDSAT's December 21, 2018 order which directed the Department of Telecom (DoT) to refund Rs 104.34 crore.

It rejected the Centre's contention that RCom cannot be granted refund as it is under liquidation and continuously defaulting on spectrum deferred payments.

A bench of Justices R F Nariman and S Ravindra Bhat said, "On a recapitulation of all circumstances, and the various terms of NIA (Notice Inviting Application) 2013 and NIA 2015, this court is of the opinion that the order of the TDSAT does not call for any interference".

It said the Union government has nowhere disputed the RCom/Reliance Telecom Ltd (RTL) liability on deferred spectrum charges in May, 2018 was Rs 774.25 crores, and the

total amount realised upon encashment of the bank guarantees by the company was Rs 908.91 crore.

"There is consequently logic and merit in the contention of RCL/RTL (RCom) that the Union unreasonably refused to refund the excess amounts. The Union's argument that there were subsequent defaults or short payments in respect of liability towards later periods, or its objection that the impugned directions could not have been issued in execution proceedings, are insubstantial," the bench said.

In these circumstances, there is "no rationale" for the Union government to resist the demand for refund of excess amounts, it added.

"The TDSAT, in the opinion of this court, exercised its discretion, with respect, respectively, because the entire amount of 134.66 crores claimed in the application was not allowed; rather the direction issued was in respect of Rs 104.34 crore," it said, adding that TDSAT had noted that the existing charges of Rs 30.33 crore against

the company has already been adjusted out of the encashed amount of over Rs 908 crore.

It said, "In view of the foregoing discussion, it is held that there is no merit in the present appeal, which is dismissed without costs".

The government had contended that TDSAT's impugned order is contrary to clauses of NIA 2013 and NIA 2015 and others conditions of the license agreement.

It had also cited the default of Rs 21.53 crore with overdue interest amount working out to be Rs 27.63 crore as on March 3, 2019.

The government has further contended that the question of refund of excess amounts retained could not arise.

The telecom firm has on other hand contended that the government's refusal to refund the money amounts to its unjust enrichment at its cost and it has no right over the excess money directed to be refunded by the Tribunal.

RCom had submitted that despite the directions of the TDSAT, the government has refused to refund the money.

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CM'S GOLD CUP

Shillong trounces Sikkim Himalayan by 2-1



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JAN:

Shillong Football Club defeated Sikkim Himalayan Football Club by 2-1 goals today in the 9th All India Chief Minister's Gold Cup International Football Tournament 2020 underway at Jorethang, South Sikkim, a

press release informs.

Mebankhraw Wahlang [jersey no.48] and Donlad Diengdoh [jersey no.50] scored a goal each for Shillong FC while Dilliram Sanyasi [jersey no. 14] scored the lone goal for Sikkim Himalayan FC.

Donlad Diengdoh [jersey no.50] of Shillong

FC was declared "Hero of the Match" with cash prize of Rs 10,000.

Power Minister, MN Sherpa was the chief guest for the day. He was accompanied by guest of honor, Biren Chandra Rai and members of South District Football Association.

'Buxa Bird Festival' begins in West Bengal

JALPAIGURI (WB), JAN 7 (PTI): The fourth 'Buxa Bird Festival' has begun in Buxa National Park in West Bengal's Alipurdur district, officials said.

Over 50 birdwatchers from across the country and abroad have registered for the 2020 edition of the four-day festival that began on Monday, Ujjwal Ghosh, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), north Bengal said.

"More than 300 rare species including the

Great Hornbill, Sultan Tit and Greater Spotted Eagle visit the national park during this period," Ghosh said.

Bird enthusiasts watch and click photographs of the migratory birds that come from colder regions in the northern hemisphere.

"I am excited to watch and click photographs of rare avian species. Buxa is a heaven for bird enthusiasts," Debashish Halder, a birdwatcher from Hooghly district said.

HC asks NHRC to investigate police action at AMU

ALLAHABAD, JAN 7 (PTI): The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday asked the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to investigate the allegations of police brutality on students of Aligarh Muslim University during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by one Mohammed Aman Khan of Allahabad, a division bench of Chief Justice Govind Mathur and Justice Vivek Varma directed the Commission to complete the process of inquiry expeditiously within one month. While directing to list this PIL for further hearing on February 17, the bench also directed the NHRC to convey its findings and recommendations to the high court immediately after conclusion of the investigation.

"Looking to the powers of the Human Rights Commission, at this stage, we are not inclined to constitute any Special Investigating Team (SIT) but to get the entire matter inquired by the National Human Rights Commission," the bench said.

It said though an investigation could also be conducted by the Uttar Pradesh Human Rights Commission, the NHRC is already undertaking an inquiry relating to similar allegations by the students and some faculty members of the Jamia Milia Islamia University in Delhi. The court directed the NHRC to treat the memo of the PIL as a complaint submitted to it for the purpose of investigation.

The PIL, alleging police brutality upon the students of AMU, sought that the court pass several directions including setting up of a court-monitored committee for a judicial inquiry into the alleged acts of violence and arbitrary detention of students by the state police and para-military forces on campus from December 12, 2019 to December 15, 2019.

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4 convicts in Nirbhaya case to be hanged on Jan 22

NEW DELHI, JAN 7 (PTI): Four convicts in the sensational 2012 Nirbhaya Gang rape and murder case will be hanged on January 22 at 7 am in Tihar jail, a Delhi court said on Tuesday.

The order was pronounced by Additional Sessions Judge Satish Kumar Arora who issued the death warrants against the four death row convicts -- Mukesh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar Singh (31).

During the hearing, the prosecution said there was no application pending before any court or the President right now by any of the convicts and the review petition of all the convicts was dismissed by the Supreme Court.

While urging the court to issue the death warrants, the

prosecution said, "In between the issuance and the execution of death warrants, if the convicts want to file curative petitions, they can do so."

The counsel for two of the convicts - Mukesh and Vinay - said they were in the process of filing curative petition in the Supreme Court.

When the hearing commenced, advocate M L Sharma appeared before the court and said that he was representing Mukesh.

However, amicus curiae Vrinda Grover, who on the last date was appointed by the court to represent Mukesh, said Sharma had no authority to represent him.



The court heard the arguments from both of them and directed Sharma to produce Vakalatnama (document em-

powering lawyer) showing that Mukesh authorised him. After the court reserved the order for 3.30 pm on issuance of death warrants, Mukesh's mother entered the court room crying and urged the court to show mercy.

The court refused to entertain her.

Talking to media persons outside the courtroom, she said her son was framed because he was poor. The court interacted with all the convicts through video conferencing from Tihar jail.

The media was not allowed inside the video conferencing room.

After the court passed the order, the lawyers and family

members of the convicts came out and informed the media about court's order.

Victim's parents said they were satisfied with the order.

The trial court had earlier directed Tihar jail authorities to seek within a week response from the four death row convicts as to whether they were filing mercy pleas against their executions with the President of India. It was hearing the applications moved by Nirbhaya's parents and the prosecution (Delhi government) seeking issuance of death warrant against the convict.

The Supreme Court on December 18 had dismissed the plea of Akshay seeking review of its decision, saying review petition is not "re-hearing of appeal

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Goa ratifies bill to extend SC/ST quota in legislatures

PANAJI, JAN 7 (PTI): Goa Assembly on Tuesday ratified the constitutional amendment bill that extends reservations to Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies by another 10 years.

Speaker Rajesh Patnekar disallowed the adjournment notice submitted by the opposition parties on the Mahadayi water diversion issue, saying one-day session of the Assembly was called by the state governor for ratifying the bill for extending the SC/ST quota in legislatures.

Chief Minister tabled the constitutional amendment bill which was unanimously passed by the House.

Some of the MLAs, including state Tourism Minister Manohar Agarkar, wanted to discuss the bill in the House but the Speaker said the session was only for its ratification. "It is just a renewal and ratification, there is no need for discussion," he said.

He disallowed the adjournment notice submitted by the opposition on the Mahadayi diversion issue, saying, "Members can raise the issue and discuss on various parliamentary devices. The matter is urgent only if it is of very recent occurrence, this matter is not of recent occurrence."

"This is a special session called for a central government's amendment, so I disallow the adjournment notice," he said.

The opposition members, led by Leader of Opposition Digambar Kamat and Goa Forward Party (GFP) MLA Vijai Sardesai, then shouted slogans in the House demanding that the Mahadayi river be protected from being diverted by Karnataka.

Urging the speaker to take up the adjournment notice, Kamat said, "It is an important issue before the state which needs to be discussed in the House."

Recalling Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's statement that "Mahadayi is like a mother for me", Sardesai said, "We feel Goa has been cheated on the issue. The governor himself has made this statement. We want a discussion on the issue." Responding to it, Sawant reiterated that the Mahadayi river is "more than a mother" for him. "We are ready to do whatever that needs to be done for Mahadayi," he said.

Earlier addressing the House, Governor Satya Pal Malik said the Goa government has been making efforts to prevent diversion of the Mahadayi water outside the river basin. The state has also sought a clarification from the Inter-State Water Dispute tribunal over its order on the water diversion issue, he said. The government is conscious about the issue, which affects every Goan, he said.

"The dispute is about sharing water. Efforts of my government are to prevent water diversion outside the river basin. The tribunal gave its award. Goa has requested for a clarification from the tribunal," he said.

Final preparatory meeting held for Rimbi Maghey Mela

GYALSHING, 07 JAN [IPR]: The final preparatory meeting for Rimbi Maghey Mela 2020 was held at the conference hall of District Administrative Centre, Rabdentse, here today.

The meeting was presided over by Additional District Collector, West, Karma L Lepcha and Superintendent of Police, Tenzing L Lepcha, accompanied by ADC (Dev), Milan Subba, Zilla Panchayat Member (Melli), Tara Gurung and heads of various departments.

At the outset, the ADC (West) briefed the house about the preparations and requested all the departmental heads to extend active participation.

He also briefed the meeting about the formation of committees and sub-committees, drawing of raffle and installation of departmental stalls.

He assured to extend



every possible help from the district administration and directed all departments to participate with full enthusiasm and support to make this event a grant success.

He further informed that the Chief Minister has agreed to visit the Rimbi Maghey Mela.

Zilla Panchayat Member (Melli) apprised the house that Police Depart-

ment should deploy IRBN personnel since huge public gathering was expected; Concession of rates for sale of liquor; Active participation of Government Departments with setting up of their respective stalls; PHED for water connectivity; BAC Yuksam for providing polypipes; Horticulture department to provide water reserva-

tion tanks to be returned after the event.

The meeting also included an interactive session in which SP (W) requested Power department to install lights in and around the venue.

He also requested the Health department to set up a first aid stall.

ADC (Dev), in turn informed that the open marathon for boys and

girls and veterans' marathon (above 40 yrs) will be organized on 13 Jan.

The heads of the offices are requested to submit the raffle stubs and the collected amount before 10 Jan, 2020.

Later the ADC West along with the officials of DAC visited the mela site to oversee preparations and took stock of the progress.

Special session of Assam assembly on Jan 13

GUWAHATI, JAN 7 (PTI): A one-day special session of the Assam assembly will be held on January 13.

The session will begin with the governor's address and would be followed by motion of thanks on the address, according to the session's calendar issued by the assembly principal secretary.

The speaker will then announce the report of the Business Advisory Committee, settling the business for the day-long session.

It would be followed by a government resolution and obituary references and 5 pm onwards there will be debate on the motion of thanks on the governor's address, followed by adjournment-sine-die, an official

statement said.

The opposition Congress said it will move a resolution during the session to ensure that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is not implemented in the state.

The resolution to be adopted should ensure that the Assam Accord is not violated or diluted in any way by the CAA, former chief minister Tarun Gogoi recently said.

The session will be held for ratification of the extension of reservations for Scheduled Tribes and Castes, Congress sources said but there was no official confirmation.

"If the ruling BJP brings the resolution against the implementation of CAA, we will support it but if they do not, then we will place it in the house," Gogoi said.

ABVP board blackened in Pune



PUNE, JAN 7 (PTI): The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on Tuesday staged a protest outside the Garware College in Maharashtra's Pune against the "attack" on their members in the JNU by "Left outfits".

In a separate incident, members of the student wing of the ruling Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) defaced the board of the ABVP outside its office in Sadashiv Peth area in the city.

"The attack on common students and ABVP workers in the Jawaharlal Nehru University was a handiwork of Left outfits.

They carried out co-ordinated attacks in a pre-planned way and later put the blame on us," alleged Dayanand Shinde, an ABVP activist.

He demanded stringent punishment for those who had attacked students associated with the ABVP in JNU. "We are planning to stage similar protests outside colleges in Pune," he said.

Meanwhile, members of the NCP's student wing barged in the building housing the ABVP office in Sadashiv Peth around noon, and blackened its board to express solidarity with the students who were injured in violence on JNU campus on Sunday. "Members of the NCP's student wing barged in the building housing the ABVP office and blackened the board of the outfit to protest the attack on JNU students," said Vishal More who claimed to be a member of the NCP's student wing.

ABVP functionary Anil Thombre said they will file a complaint with the police over the incident. On Sunday night, masked men armed with sticks and rods ran riot on the JNU campus and attacked students and teachers.

Nearly 34 people were injured in the violence. The incident evoked angry protests, mainly from the student community, across the country.

Sikkim & WB IHRC raise concern over vehicle checking along NH10



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JAN:

International Human Rights Council chapters of Sikkim, Kalimpong and Siliguri have raised concern over the harassment caused by checking of vehicles commuting along National Highway 10, a press release informs.

IHRC of Sikkim, Kalimpong and Siliguri held a meeting on 10 Dec 2019 in Kalimpong to discuss the matter and decided to meet senior Police officers to

resolve the issue.

Accordingly an IHRC team visited the spots where checking was going on and interacted with the police on duty. They have submitted a memorandum to the IG [North Bengal] regarding this matter.

The release states that checking at four or five places on a single day is harassment for passengers and drivers so they have requested the police to issue a checked sticker for vehicles which have been checked so

that they do not have to undergo another round of checking.

The team has also met with Traffic IC, Bhaktinagar, Subir Dutta. He listened to the problem and has assured to take the issue positively.

Meanwhile, the IHRC Team also met the management of Chennai Nursing Home and Maharaja Agrasen Hospital Siliguri. The team has requested the management to take special care of patients from the hills and guide them.

AMU to reopen in phases after winter break: Official

ALIGARH (UP), JAN 7 (PTI): The AMU, which had been closed for the winter vacation before time after the December 15 violence on the campus during an anti-CAA protest by students, will open in phases beginning from January 13, a varsity statement said on Tuesday.

The opening of the varsity was earlier scheduled for January 6, but it was postponed owing to persisting tension over the changes in the citizenship law.

A decision to open the varsity after the winter vacation in phases was taken on Tuesday after a consultative meeting of the top University officials under the chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor, it said.

In the first phase, the faculties of Medicine, Unani Medicine, Management Studies and Zakir Husain College of Engineering and Technology will open on January 13 and the suspended examinations of these

faculties will commence from January 16, the statement said.

The faculties of Commerce, Science, Life Science and Agricultural Sciences will open on January 20 in the second phase, it added.

In the third phase, the faculties of Arts, Social Sciences, International Studies, Theology, Polytechnics and the Community College will resume functioning on January 24.

The University schools from class one to eight will reopen on January 9, said the statement, adding classes 10 and 12 will begin from January 13 and classes nine and eleven will commence from January 17.

According to the AMU release, a detailed examination schedule for various courses is being uploaded on the varsity website.

AMU spokesman Shafey Kidwai told PTI that the above schedule for reopening of the varsity after its winter

break will also apply to all off-campus centres of the university.

Kidwai said the hostel facilities will be available to all students one day before the commencement of their classes in different faculties.

He said the entry to hostels would be given on the basis of the students' identity cards and no one else would be permitted to gain entry into different hostels.

The university had declared winter vacations on December 15 after violent protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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723 vehicles...

state, with Gangtok having one checking point on the first day and two in the second day, i.e today, at Convo Ground, Tadong and Zero Point Gangtok.

The Department has incorporated e-Challan app powered by NIC on mobile phones while stickers are being issued to vehicles that have been checked so that the same vehicle is not stopped again.

Stickers will also be issued from Motor Vehicle Offices to those vehicle owners who come and get their documents verified so that they don't get stopped on the road. However, those found violating rules like overloading, drunken or drugged driving will be stopped.

During the drive, the Transport department also intends to check all government vehicles including those of the enforcement agencies.

The drive will end on 31 March, 2020.

SC directs...

The telecom company stated that government has already filed its claim before the resolution professional for the said deferred spectrum instalments for the year 2019.

The top court noted that telecom companies as a class faced financial constraint, which had triggered the Union government to revisit its policy and ultimately modify the terms of payment of deferred payment charges in 2018.

4 convicts...

over and over again" and it had already considered the mitigating and aggravating circumstances while upholding the death penalty.

The 23-year-old paramedic student, referred to as Nirbhaya, was gang raped and brutally assaulted on the intervening night of December 16-17, 2012 inside a moving bus in south Delhi by six persons before being thrown out on the road.

She died on December 29, 2012 at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore.

On July 9 last year, the apex court had dismissed the review pleas filed by the other three convicts in the case, saying no grounds have been made out by them for review of the 2017 verdict.

One of the six accused in the case, Ram Singh, allegedly committed suicide in the Tihar Jail here.

A juvenile, who was among the accused, was convicted by a juvenile justice board and was released from a reformation home after serving a three-year term.

The top court in its 2017 verdict had upheld the capital punishment awarded to them by the Delhi High Court and the trial court.

HC asks NHRC...

The petition alleged that on December 15, 2019 para-military forces and the state police, for no just and valid reason, lathi-charged the students along with firing massive amount of tear gas, rubber bullets and pellets.

The plea stated that AMU students had been peacefully protesting against the CAA.

"However, on December 15, students gathered at Maulana Azad Library and marched up to the university gate. On reaching the gate, the police deployed there started provoking the students but they did not respond. After sometime, police started firing tear gas shells on the students and also cane charged in which around 100 students were injured," it alleged.

On January 2, the Additional Advocate General appearing for the state government had filed a reply in the case and defended the police action.

The AAG had argued that the university gate was broken by the students and police entered campus on the request of the university administration to control the students, who had indulged in violence, and that no excessive force was used by police during the exercise.

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An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact:

78640-04501,62970-03235, 98320-48410

Mini Mathematics Training held for Undergraduate students



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 JAN:
One week mini Mathematics Training and Talent Search program (MTTS) for Undergraduate students was successfully organised by SMIT, Majhitar and MTTS

Trust from 1-6 Jan, 2020, a press release informs. The objective of the program was to train undergraduate students on basics of mathematics in core areas like Real Analysis, Linear Algebra and foundations. The participating students were from NBBDC, Tadong, NGC, Kamrang, West Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. Prof B. K. Sharma, IIT Guwahati, Prof Arindam

Singh, IIT Madras and Dr Biswajit Deb, SMIT were the resource persons while Kshittiz Chettri, NBBDC Tadong and David Raj, SMIT was present as the tutors. This program is one of the most consistent training programs for budding mathematicians running continuously since 1993, the release mentions. The certificates were handed over by Director, Prof Dr Ashis Sharma, and SMIT.

Young Amarjit eying national team comeback via ISL

NEW DELHI, JAN 7 (PTI): Having recovered from an injury to his forearm, young midfielder Amarjit Singh is aiming to get back into the national team setup via the Indian Super League. The India U-17 World Cup captain, who was undergoing rehabilitation after an injury to his forearm, started training with his club Jamshedpur FC and was even on the bench in their last Hero Indian Super League match.



“My sole resolution at the moment is to get back into my club team, and then the national team. I was on the bench in our last Hero Indian Super League match but I am still awaiting a chance,” Amarjit said. The 19-year-old added, “And it’s not just about the chance, it’s about me proving to my coaches that I am good enough and better than others. “If they get the confidence that I can make an impact on the field, it’s only then I will get my chance.” When asked if has been in touch with national team coach Igor Stimac, Amarjit responded in the positive.

“Coach keeps a constant tab on what I am doing. He regularly takes updates. In addition, professor (Luka Radman) has been advising me on the workouts, constantly checking on my status.” Amarjit, who started training around last December, considers former India goalkeeper Subrata Pal as his mentor. “Having him around itself brings in positive vibes. He has been constantly motivating me, reminding me of the path ahead, and the hard work that I need to put in.” Asked about the time

when he was out of action with an injury, he said, “In such a phase, I needed to stay mentally strong. Otherwise, during those moments when self-doubts creep in, you would struggle. “I am extremely grateful to the mental support and guidance from the medical staff, both at the national team setup, and at my club. “My parents and well-wishers have been with me all throughout. I owe a bit to Paul da as well (Subrata Paul). He has been special to me,” he added.

Protesters call off stir after eviction from Gateway of India

MUMBAI, JAN 7 (PTI): Protest against the JNU violence was called off here on Tuesday after the demonstrators were shifted from the Gateway of India to Azad Maidan, police said. In the morning, several protesters, including students and women, were taken in police vans from the iconic Gateway of India in south Mumbai as roads were getting blocked and people, including tourists, were facing problems, a police official said. Police had appealed to protesters to shift but when they didn’t listen, they were “relocated” to Azad Maidan near the

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone 1) Sangramsingh Nishandar said. “After the protesters were relocated, they called off their demonstration,” he said. Since the demonstration was posing problems for tourists and in traffic movement, the protesters were requested to move to the Azad Maidan, he added. While most of the students who were part of the protest left the Azad Maidan after the demonstration was called off, some people, including women, were still at the ground, another police

official said. Earlier, hundreds of people, including students, women and senior citizens - who assembled at the iconic Gateway of India since Sunday midnight - demanded action against those behind the JNU violence and resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Violence broke out in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi on Sunday night as masked men armed with sticks and rods attacked students and teachers and damaged property on the campus. Nearly 34 people were injured in the violence.

Six Professors awarded USD 100K Infosys science prize

SHAKOOR RATHER BENGALURU, JAN 7 (PTI): Six eminent professors, including two women scientists, were on Tuesday awarded the Infosys Prize 2019 worth 100,000 USD for their excellent work across different categories of science and research. The annual award includes a pure gold medal, a citation, and a prize purse worth USD 100,000 or its equivalent in the Indian rupees, the Infosys Science Foundation (ISF) said. The winners of the Infosys Prize 2019 were announced across six categories -- Engineering and Computer Sciences, Humanities, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences. A panel of accomplished jurors comprising renowned scholars and professors short-listed the winners from nearly 200 nominations. The winners were felicitated here by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, Professor of Economics and Philosophy, Harvard University, US during a ceremony.

The event was attended by distinguished scientists and academicians from India and abroad, business leaders, young researchers and students. “There are deep links between friendship and knowledge. Our intellectual horizons expand when we learn from each other,” Sen said in his speech as a Chief Guest. “We can give to the world much more than what we get from it. For example, the mathemat-

ical revolution in India from the fifth century onwards, led particularly by Aryabhata, was influenced by intellectual developments in Greece, Babylon and Rome, but Aryabhatian mathematics, in turn, took gigantic leaps in India, and then spread abroad, with transformational impact on China, on the Arab world, and eventually on Europe,” he said. “The constructive role of friendship applies not only across the national borders, but also within. Divisions between groups and sects not only damage our social lives, but they can also work as barriers to intellectual progress within and across the nations. Friendship is, in fact, central to the development of knowledge, said Sen. “The winners of the Infosys Prize this year have continued the tradition of those awarded over the last decade,” said S. D. Shibulal, Co-founder, Infosys Limited and President of the ISF. “Their work shapes the path of research and progress in their respective fields, often significantly impacting other disciplines too, enabling innovation at the boundaries,” he said.

The Infosys Prize 2019 for Engineering and Computer Science was awarded to Sunita Sarawagi from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay for her research in databases, data mining, machine learning, and natural language processing, and for important applications of these research techniques.

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NOTICE

This is to inform all that the nine days theater workshop cum acting course is going to be held at Gram Prashasan Kendra for age between 08-18 years old under CHILD FRIENDLY GPU from 4th to 12th January 2020.

Interested participants may apply for registration.

Inter-Constituency Football Tournament 2019-20

| Results of matches held on 07 Jan 2020 | | | |
|--|--|-------|---------------------------------|
| Venues | Matches between | Score | Result |
| Paljor Stadium | 1 st Match- Upper Burtuk Vrs. Upper Tadong | 3-2 | Match won by Upper Tadong |
| | 2 nd Match- Namcheybong Vrs. Arithang | 1-0 | Match won by Namcheybong |
| | 3 rd Match-Syari Vrs. Kabi Lunchuk | 3-1 | Match won by Kabi Lunchuk |
| | 4 th Match- Rhenock Vrs. Martam Rumtek | 4-3 | Match won by Rhenock |
| Dentam | 1 st Match- Maneybong Dentam Vrs. Soreng Chakung | 2-0 | Match won by Soreng Chakung |
| | 2 nd Match- Yuksam Tashiding Vrs. Yangthang | 4-2 | Match won by Yuksam Tashiding |
| Namchi Singhi-thang | 1 st Match- Namchi Singhithang Vrs. Rangang Yangang | 2-1 | Match won by Rangang Yangang |
| | 2 nd Match- Namthang Rateypani Vrs. Poklok Kamrang | 2-1 | Match won by Namthang Rateypani |

CORRIGENDUM

Ref to tender no: - 09/NSCL/WORKS/2018, Dated 05/12/2018, the following tenders have been cancelled-
1. Construction of pedestrian walkway from Namchi Bazar to Entry Gate (Job-A1, Job A2, Job B, Job C) vide file no- 03/NSCL/WORKS/2019/60/1,03/NSCL/WORKS/2019/60/03/NSCL/WORKS/2019/60,03/NSCL/WORKS/2019/62

The respective contractors are hereby directed to be present in the office of undersigned within 1(one) month from the publication of this corrigendum.

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FIRST ROUND OF THE TOURNAMENT (SOUTH- WEST)

VENUES: NAMCHI SINGITHANG PLAYGROUND AND DENTAM PUBLIC PLAYGROUND

FIXTURE-II

Venue: Namchi Singithang Playground (South District Constituencies)

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| Tumin Lingee | 6/1/2020; 1:30 PM | E | Burfung | 6/1/2020; 11:30 AM | F |
| Melli | 8/1/2020; 11:30 AM | | Temi Namping | 8/1/2020; 1:30 PM | |
| Namchi Singithang | 7/1/2020; 11:30 AM | | Namthang Rateypani | 7/1/2020; 1:30 PM | |
| Rangang Yangang | | | Poklok Kamrang | | |

Venue: Dentam Public Playground (West District Constituencies)

| | | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------|--------------------|---|
| Rinchenpong | 6/1/2020; 11:30 AM | G | Gyalshing Bernyak | 6/1/2020; 1:30 PM | H |
| Salghari Zoom | 8/1/2020; 1:30 PM | | Daramdin | 8/1/2020 11:30 AM | |
| Yuksam Tashiding | 7/1/2020; 1:30 PM | | Maneybong Dentam | 7/1/2020; 11:30 AM | |
| Yangthang | | | Soreng Chakung | | |

Note:

- The first round matches will be played at Namchi Singithang and Dentam Public ground for South & West constituencies respectively.
- The duration of the matches will be 35-10-35 minutes
- Matches will be played as per FIFA Rules
- Organizing committee reserve the right to reschedule the fixture (if required)
- Every player should show their Voter ID Card at the time of Technical check up (if player is under 18 years than Aadhar Card)
- Each Team should submit one constituency flag (6x4 feet) during registration.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|
| CONTACT SUMMIT TIMES | 9775736596 | 9832612485/ | 9832082664, |
| REPORTERS | SINGTAM | 9434011213 | 9832424750, |
| NAMCHI | 7699771651 | GANGTOK | 8768664251 |
| 9832048410, | MANGAN/ DIKCHU | 8016270440, | 9832470000 |

Silver Lining

Reap the whirlwind now that you have sown the wind

Even the semblance of a fig leaf, that pretention that the government and its agencies are in place for public service has been dropped. The continuing disregard for people's apprehensions, their right to disagree and express their displeasure has brought home the dangers of governments which pursue political ideologies instead of governing. When an ideology gains primacy, and don't for a moment fool yourself into believing that the current dispensation at the Centre has nation-building as its ideology, and when bhakts roam as citizens, the greater common good gets scuttled and coercion becomes the preferred tool of governance. Everything that makes a democracy stronger gets rejected as a liability, every protest gets shouted down as the cribbing of anti-nationals, the young get ignored and infantilized as being ignorant and misled, the intellectuals cast away as urban-naxals and the civil society mocked for being agents of appeasement politics. The problem with this mindset is that it cannot engage and does not believe in consensus-building, it can only dictate, allege and dismiss. This is the reason why such politics was limited to the fringes where they could find democratic release for their frustrations and stay away from the anarchy which is the only way their spite can be forced on the people. Such groups have traditionally invoked identity and nationalism to sell their hate, and because they are so convinced of their truths, stay the course long and experiment continuously until their rabid positions get mainstreamed. And they succeed when the institutions of democracy and the other players fail because of their compromises and incompetence. And then they go about demolishing everything that had kept them sidelined – from hollowing out constitutional provisions to destroying institutions of higher learning, co-opting the media, infiltrating the judiciary, celebrating martial pretenders to centralizing all power on itself through its indoctrinated appointees tasked to undercut democratically elected governments.

The latest horror at JNU, which has been on the saffron scope for some years now, would not have been possible either without an enormously ineffectual police or a dangerously partisan force. Given the state violence targeted at lay citizens in BJP-governed states, it is the latter which appears to be the case. And this is why this piece began with the observation that even the fig leaf has been discarded. The Gujarat model, under which institutions were made leader-serving instead of remaining public servants and the preparation with which even sudden provocations were met with cold-hearted bloodlust, is being grafted into nationwide responses should give everyone pause. The efficiency with which UP police, the same khaki which dropped rioting and attempt to murder charges against a Yogi when he was elevated to the chief minister's post, is serving out notices to even dead people for damage caused to public property cannot be explained away to the randomness of an effective administration but to the groundwork laid out by Machiavellian planning based of government statistics which have not been updated. The JNU incident required the police to facilitate the goons and the university administration to encourage every attempt to slap down free voice on campus.

Thankfully, the idea of India survives in its young who make up with their spontaneous empathy what they might lack by way or organization or clear leadership. And this scares the autocrats because it challenges the authoritarian regime that is every despots wet dream. When the young challenge, they deflate egos and reduce leaders to caricatures, and mock them into irrelevance. 65% of India is under 35 years of age. Like someone pointed out, this is the most educated and the most informed that the young have ever been in the country. And now, they also care. They are the whirlwind that the divisive instinct of the Centre has sown. They are the silver lining the nation deserves.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence.

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Why is Modi Attacking Student Protesters?

CHANDRIMA CHAKRABORTY
theconversation.com

This weekend, news and social media reports circulated videos from India of masked attackers beating up students in the dorms of New Delhi's prestigious public university, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). One JNU teacher told the Times of India "For one and half hour the police did not do anything ..." News reports say the violence lasted close to three hours.

This attack by thugs follows years of unrelenting attacks by the Modi government and its allies on JNU, and a month of police violence at Jamia and Aligarh Muslim universities.

For Prime Minister Narendra Modi, dissent is the enemy of democracy.

Public universities encourage critical thinking and cultivate politically informed citizens. And university students as political interlocutors have repeatedly borne the wrath of his government.

Modi's antidemocratic attitudes have been cultivated through his training. He rose through the ranks of the male-only Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the parent organization of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The RSS was founded in 1925 and is a prominent proponent of "Hindutva — Hindu-ness and the idea that India should be a 'Hindu nation.'"

UNPRECEDENTED STATE VIOLENCE AGAINST STUDENTS

Last month, police unleashed violence on Jamia Millia Islamia University and Aligarh Muslim University students. Students were protesting the exclusion of Muslims from the scope of the recently passed Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) as discriminatory and unconstitutional.

The CAA grants fast-tracked citizenship to members of religious minorities, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, who have fled from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

For striving to play an active role in shaping democracy, students were beaten, tear gassed, detained, arrested and denied medical attention.

Such unprecedented state violence against student protesters provoked a pan-Indian solidarity of students and galvanized widescale resistance to the CAA.

'UNCRITICAL OBEDIENCE'

Modi joined the RSS in his teens and then worked as a RSS pracharak (leader) for 15 years. A

pracharak is a full-time worker dedicated to disseminating RSS ideology. As a pracharak, Modi dedicated his life educating Indian youth in RSS culture, which expects obedience and reverence of authority.

The RSS recruits schoolboys and college youth for its local branches (sakhās). They train youth to dedicate themselves towards establishing a Hindu nation through physical activities and spiritual lessons.

For their book Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags, scholars Tapan Basu, Tanika Sarkar and Sumit Sarkar interviewed RSS members to understand the hierarchical, deferential structure of the RSS local branches (sakhās). They explain how young boys receive lessons in scriptures and mythology to inculcate values of "absolute loyalty" to the leader and to the organization.

This results in an uncritical obedience to the leader.

Modi has hailed M.S. Golwalkar (1906-73), a spiritual founder of the RSS, as his "ideological mentor." In Golwalkar's 1966 book, Bunch of Thoughts the chapter "Internal Threats" has three subheadings: "The Muslims," "The Christians" and "The Communists." Muslims and Christians were considered to be threats because of their religion, that is, for not being Hindus. Dissenters were branded as "Communists" for questioning the Hindu Right's attempts to Hinduize the nation.

PUNISHING 'ANTI-NATIONALS'

University students are just the latest entry in Modi government's list of potential anti-nationals.

To justify the use of state violence against students, the Modi government has routinely represented them as discontent and violent. Section 144 of the Indian Criminal Procedure Code prohibits the assembly of four or more people in an area. This colonial-era regulation has been used to criminalize student dissent and to delegitimize student protesters as "anti-nationals."

The violence unleashed on university campuses and against civilians protesting the CAA over the past month is an attempt by the Modi government to discipline both Hindus and non-Hindus. The intent is to create fear to thwart, control and surveil protests.

BRITISH COLONIALISM AND HINDU NATIONALISM

On Dec. 29, 2019 a street play called Jamiawala Bagh was performed outside Jamia university campus. The play highlighted the parallels between

British colonial violence and current Hindu Right violence in India.

It drew on the story of British colonial violence against a public gathering in 1919, in Amritsar, Punjab. At a public park, the Jallianwala Bagh, a British general ordered his troops to gun down unarmed civilians. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre was a critical turning point in India's independence movement. After the massacre, Mohandas K. Gandhi (popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi) rejected British justice, and launched the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920.

Gandhi called for an abandonment of government educational institutions, government service and foreign goods, and for resistance to colonial laws. In his arrest and trial for the leadership of the movement, Gandhi explained that he believed dissent would ensure the colonial state responded to the demands of the Indian people for independence from foreign rule.

DISSENT AND DEMOCRACY

At great personal risk, the students today are also resisting Hindu Right violence and demanding a democratic public culture. They are publicly registering their dissent hoping to prompt the government to listen to its citizens.

Universities can equip students with the knowledge to talk back to power rather than become docile subjects of the state. The anti-CAA protests that have spread across India are at least in part initiated by university students.

This suggests that Indian universities have done well in educating youth of their civic obligations and social responsibilities and have enabled them to exercise leadership.

This is contrary to notions of obedient citizenship ingrained in the RSS pracharak. At the helm of the world's largest democracy, Modi is not interested in cultivating thinking youth or engaging in dialogue with them. He considers thinking and questioning youth a threat to his government. The threat is to be controlled through the use of brute force.

The Modi government seems to have successfully tutored the police and its supporters to loathe university student protestors. This is turning India's public universities into spaces to display Hindu Right vigilantism.

[the writer is University Scholar and Professor of English and Cultural Studies, McMaster University]

I'm a novelist – and this is why I choose middle-aged women as the heroes of my crime thrillers

EMILY BERNHARD JACKSON
theconversation.com

Mystery is the bestselling genre in literature. Crime/mystery fiction, to give the genre its full title, beats inspirational, science fiction, horror and apparently even romance to take the top spot.

And why not? There's someone for everyone in crime/mystery – elderly lady sleuths, amateur Palestinian sleuths, professional Belgian sleuths, thoughtful Scottish police officers, embittered Scottish police officers, damaged Irish police officers, weary Scandinavian police officers, former army officer detectives, amateur girl detectives, sad drunk amateur girl detectives. There's even a detective who partners up with a skeleton.

What there doesn't seem to be much of in mystery fiction, however, is female detectives who begin detecting in middle age (two cases in point: Sara Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski was 32 when we began to follow her adventures, while Patricia Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta was 36). Women in the 40-to-60 range don't get much of a showing as main characters in literature generally, so maybe it's no surprise that they don't show up as headliners in the mystery genre.

But it's a surprise if you're a woman in your 40s who is beginning to write mystery novels – which not so long ago I was. And while it's a cliché

that people write what they know, when I decided to write a mystery I entered into that cliché wholeheartedly. I started writing mysteries in my 40s – and I made my detectives two women in their 40s.

But while I designed my detectives in part to mirror myself, I also chose their age for entirely different reasons. For all its advances and improvements, contemporary culture remains uncomfortable, not just with middle-aged women, but to an even greater degree with contentedly single middle-aged women – and to an even greater degree than that with childless women who are childless by choice. I wanted to confront this odd aversion head on, so I made sure that between them my detectives fill all these categories.

This decision is a small one, but for me it engaged with a question I've long struggled with, the question of what, intellectually, literature is supposed to do. Should it report on the world as it is, or should it model the world as it might – could, should, would – be?

ANGRY WOMEN

Recent fiction may not have been filled with middle-aged women, but it has been filled with angry ones. It's jam packed with dystopian models of female repression and with women and men implacably set against one other: look at Naomi Alderman's The Power, Leni Zumas's Red Clocks, Mar-

garet Atwood's The Testaments. As I began to create my fictional world, I was troubled by the question of whether these outpourings of rage, all justified, all earned, are enough.

In one way this literature is unquestionably good: female rage is something else culture has assiduously avoided considering for centuries, and during those centuries women have been subjugated, silenced, used and abused in ways that deserve outpourings of anger.

Nor is this landscape of female repression changing quickly, and there is value in forcing it before readers' eyes. In a recent article for The Guardian about the Staunch Prize, the new award for the best crime/mystery novel that does not feature violence against women, the novelist Kaite Welsh wrote that she wouldn't "sanitise my writing in service of some fictional, feminist utopia ... my work lies in marrying my imagination with the ugly truth". This is an important argument.

MODELING THE FUTURE

But while I don't care about the absence of feminist utopias, I do care about the absence of writing that models the future we want. What will it be like, the world we're striving for where the playing field is level and men and women are just people being people together? I believe that we can only imagine based on what we've seen, and that it's part of literature's job to help us see what doesn't

yet exist but could.

For this reason, although I grounded my novels firmly in the present (well, Death in Paris is set in 2014 and The Books of the Dead in 2016), I made some specific choices about that present. In my books, every person in a powerful position is a woman. Department heads and doctors, sources of knowledge and implacable foes: all are female.

More importantly, as far as I was concerned, no one draws attention to that. It's so normal as to be unworthy of note. Nor does anyone comment on the fact that both my detectives are childless, and one remains happily unmarried in her mid-40s. Both of these detectives are heterosexual, but I made that decision so I could give each a husband or boyfriend who sees them as an intellectual and emotional equal, and for whom that equality is also the norm. The women in my books have and enjoy good sex, and they have and enjoy good conversations – almost none of them about men.

My books are full of oversights and omissions, and I'm far from satisfied with them. But what I aimed to do, and am still trying to do, is to augment the justifiable depictions of anger, the honest depictions of ongoing brutality and violence against women, with a small model that allows for a morsel of hope.

[the writer is Lecturer in English, University of Exeter]

Over 11 lakh migratory birds visit Odisha's Chilika lake

BERHAMPUR (ODISHA), JAN 7 (PTI): The number of migratory birds visiting the famous Chilika lake has increased to 11,05,040 this winter, at least 57,000 more than the previous year, according to the latest bird census in the lagoon.

Apart from sighting of the new species, more number of feathered guests have visited the vast lake this winter compared to the previous winters, said Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Chilika wildlife division, Alok Ranjan Hota.

He said the annual bird count, conducted over 1,100 square kilometre of the lake area found 11,05,040 birds of 184 different species. These included 10,71,477 waterfowls of 109 species and 33,563 of 75 species of wetland dependants, Hota said.

Increase in number of migratory birds in the lake is attributed due to the safety measures taken by the wildlife authorities and improvement of the habitat in the lake, said the DFO.

Ornithologists said the huge arrival of migratory birds indi-



cates that cyclone Fani, which battered the lake at Puri in May this year had no impact on the winged visitors.

Bird watchers are excited over the re-sighting of a number of birds after around five years in the Chilika lake, the biggest waterfowl habitat in the country, this winter.

"At least two number of Great Knot, a medium-size shore-bird were found in the Chilika during the annual survey of the birds in the lake on Sunday," the DFO

said, adding that this species of bird, scientifically known as *Calidris tenuirostris*, which is found in the Central Asia, had visited the lake in 2015.

After a five year, this species along with others visited the blue-lagoon this time, the DFO said.

In the last winter, as many as 10,47,868 birds of 161 different species had taken shelter in the lake. It included 10,21,563 waterfowls and 26,405 water-dependent birds, sources said.

Out of total birds found in Chilika lake this year, 4,06,308 of 102 species have been located in the Nalabana island of the blue lagoon. The 15.59 sqkm Nalabana Island inside the lake was declared as the bird sanctuary.

After Nalabana, the migratory birds second choice site was Mangalajodi, where as many as 2,42,660 different species of them have descended, sources said.

Among the different species the highest

number was that of Gadwall (2,05,883) followed by Northern Pintail (1,82,177) and Eurasian bill (1,43,418) visited the lake, sources said.

Winged guests from far off places including Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal, remote parts of Russia, Central and South East Asia, Ladakh and Himalayas come to the Chilika lake in every winter for feeding and roosting. They start their homeward journey with the onset of summer, the official said.

Meghalaya home minister confronts journalist

SHILLONG, JAN 6 (PTI): Meghalaya Home Minister James K Sangma on Monday confronted a journalist of a leading daily when the latter was waiting in front of his room at the state secretariat in Shillong.

The incident occurred around 5.30 pm when the minister, who is also the spokesperson of the ruling National Peoples Party, came out of his room and accused the journalist of blocking his way.

Accompanied by two of his security personnel, James, who acted in a hurry, walked down the stairs at first, but later climbed back and confronted the journalist.

The journalist, E M Jose, is a news editor at The Shillong Times, a leading English daily

in the state. There were words of condemnation after a purported video of the incident went viral on social media.

Eight journalists were waiting to have a word with the minister on issues concerning the state and the departments he holds charge. The journalists had also sent a requisition slip seeking for an official appointment with the home minister, who also holds the charge of power and district council affairs.

When he stormed out of his office, the journalists greeted New Year wishes to the minister, who reciprocated and then tried to walk ahead without responding to further questions.

He accused the journalists of blocking his way and allegedly pushed

the journalist. "What the hell are you doing? Why are you blocking my way like that?" the minister shouted.

Jose clarified that he did not block the way, but retorted by asking the minister who he think he is. "Who the hell you think of yourself. Who are you?" the journalist asked.

James, who was five-six stairs down, returned to repeatedly ask: "What is your problem?"

At this time, the minister's personal assistant stood in between even as security guards were also present at the scene.

Jose said his intention was to ask questions the minister ought to answer for the people and that he was not interested in blocking the minister.

Odisha has begun process to update NPR: Official



BHUBANESWAR, JAN 7 (PTI): Amid a country-wide brouhaha over the implementation of the amended citizenship law, the Odisha government has initiated the process to update the National Population Register (NPR), with the launch of a pilot survey, an official said.

A door-to-door survey would be conducted soon as part of the process, he said.

"As per instructions of the Registrar General of India, the NPR exercise has begun. A pilot survey has been carried out in parts of the state, while door-to-door survey and house-listing will be taken up mid-April," he added.

Amid fears that the exercise could be a pre-

cursor to NRC implementation, the Union Cabinet had last month given its go-ahead for Census 2021 and NPR updation, while making it clear that the apprehensions were unfounded.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her Kerala counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan, however, insisted that it was the "first step" towards NRC implementation.

Explaining the format, the official said the number of fields on the registration form had been increased and several questions rephrased. Unlike 2010, when the NPR was last updated, every applicant, this time, would have to furnish Aadhaar number, mobile number, voter ID

and driving license.

"In 2010, people were asked by NPR enumerators to provide names of father, mother and spouse, while also stating if they were alive. This time, people will have to provide date, place of birth of parents, mother tongue and other relevant details if born outside country," the official said.

Sources said 'master trainers' have been given necessary lessons for undertaking the exercise.

Iterating that NPR and NRC were not connected, state BJP leader Samir Mohanty on Tuesday said it was necessary to update the population register for proper distribution of welfare scheme benefits.

Bengal gov slams Mamata for "selective approach" in condemning JNU violence

KOLKATA, JAN 7 (PTI): West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar Tuesday accused Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of a "selective approach" in condemning the assault on JNU students and said the silence of authorities over what happened at Jadavpur University is "painfully worrisome".

Dhankhar, who has been at loggerheads with the TMC government in the state over a range of issues, said there is need for soul searching.

His comments followed Banerjee's condemnation of the attack on JNU students and teachers as a "fascist surgical strike" by the BJP.

"Acts of violence, anarchy in educational institutions is worrisome and should not be toler-

ated. Silence of those in authority (who severely condemned JNU violence) over what happened at Jadavpur University a fortnight ago is painfully worrisome," Dhankhar said in a tweet this morning.

Recounting the incident at Jadavpur University in December where his entry was blocked by protestors during the annual convocation, Dhankhar said his position as the varsity's chancellor "was compromised by omission and inaction of state and university authorities".

"Why this selective approach to violence and disruption on JU campus! Fire at home ought to be first priority. Am sure there will be soul searching," he said.

Man stripped, thrashed for stealing garlic at MP market

MANDSAUR (MP), JAN 7 (PTI): A man was stripped naked and thrashed for allegedly stealing a sack of garlic at a wholesale market in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur city, police said on Tuesday.

The matter came to light after a purported video of the incident surfaced on local WhatsApp groups, an official said.

The incident reportedly took place on Monday when farmers

reached the market to sell their produce and caught a man stealing a sack of garlic, Y D Nagar police station in-charge S L Baurasi said.

"We have started probing the matter. People involved in the incident will be identified from the video and action will be initiated against them," he said.

The police have not received any complaint of stealing or assault as yet, he added. The sec-

retary of the market J K Chaudhary said the incident had taken place on Monday morning when farmers reached the wholesale market to sell their produce.

A resident of Bugladi village was caught stealing a sack of garlic kept for the auction and thrashed by some farmers, he said, adding that the man had fled the scene by the time market employees reached there.

Fringe Hindu group claims responsibility for JNU attack



NEW DELHI, JAN 7 (PTI): A fringe right-wing group, Hindu Raksha Dal, has purportedly taken responsibility for the attack on JNU students in a video posted on social media.

The video, which was posted on social media on Monday and has gone viral since, shows a man identifying himself as Pinki Chaudhary saying that those who resort to "anti-national activities" will be treated in the same way that JNU students and faculty were.

He later told news channels that others in-

volved in "anti-national activities" will face similar attacks. There was no immediate reaction from the police on Chaudhary's claims.

"For several years, JNU has been a bastion of communists and we will not tolerate it. Hindu Raksha Dal, Bhupendra Tomar, Pinki Chaudhary take the responsibility of what has happened in JNU...all of them were our volunteers. Those who cannot do such work for Mother India don't have the right to live in this country," Chaudhary was seen as saying in the vid-

eo. "We are always ready to sacrifice our lives for Mother India. We will not tolerate anyone who speaks against the religion," he added.

Efforts to reach out to Chaudhary were unsuccessful with his phone switched off.

More than 35 students were injured on Sunday when a masked mob went on the rampage, attacking students and professors and vandalising property.

The JNUSU has accused the RSS-affiliated ABVP volunteers of attacking the students.

Bengal govt to operate more buses during Left bandh

KOLKATA, JAN 7 (PTI): The West Bengal government will operate "22 per cent" more buses that what plies on a normal day during a bandh called by Left parties on Wednesday, Transport Minister Suvendu Adhikari said.

The West Bengal Transport Corporation will operate 1,150 buses compared to a daily average of 900, while South Bengal State Transport Corporation will run 826 buses as against a normal of 692, Adhikari said on Tuesday.

The North Bengal State Transport Corporation will run 655 buses compared to a daily average of 605 buses, he said.

The minister said all vehicles registered in

West Bengal will be covered by an insurance of up to Rs 6 lakh if damaged during the strike.

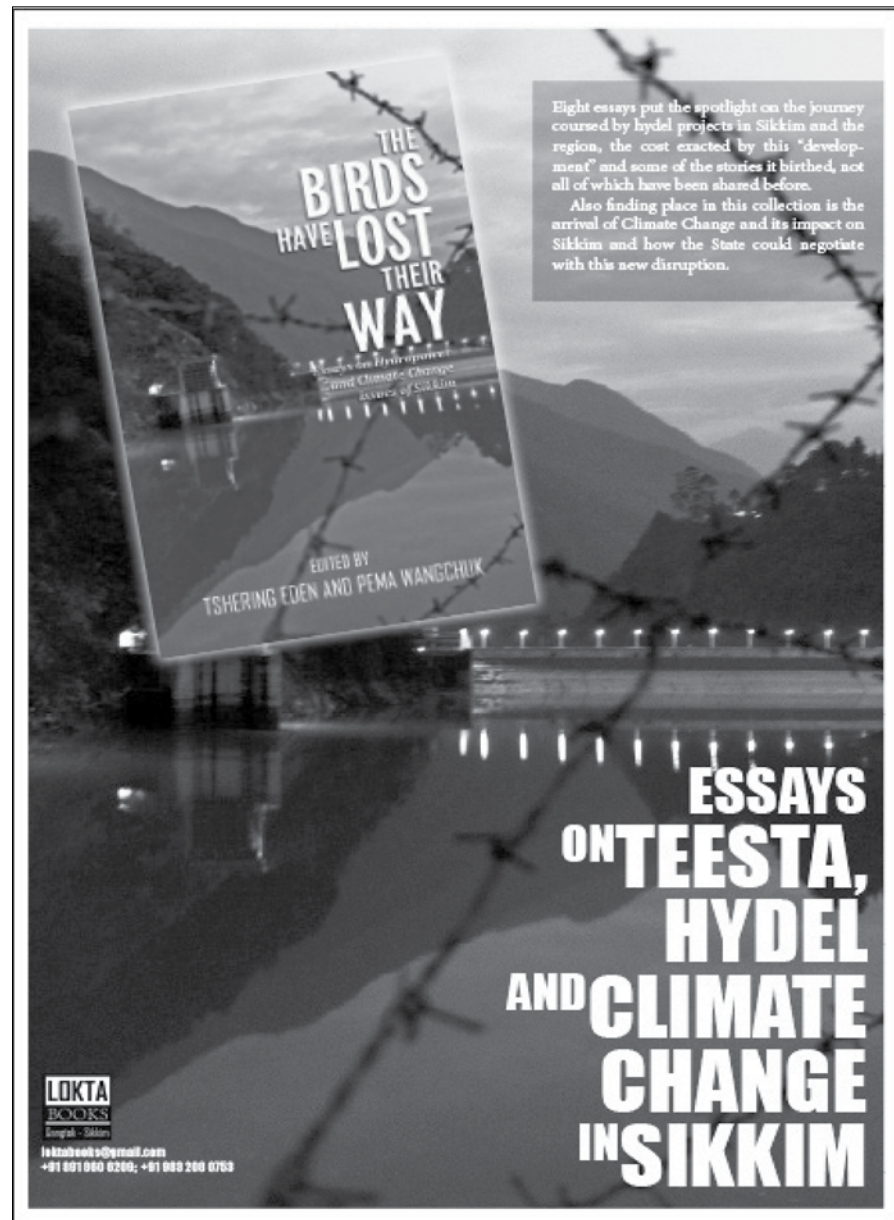
He said FIRs must be registered within 24 hours of any incident of damaging vehicles during the bandh.

Adhikari said associations and unions of private bus, taxi and app cab operators have committed to ensuring normal services across the state following meetings with transport department officials.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said though she backs protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, she will not support any bandh for the cause.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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History repeats itself for Balotelli and Inter at the start of 2020 in Serie A

NICKY BANDINI
theGuardian

For Italian football, the decade began with a little bit of history repeating. It was Mario Balotelli who scored the first Serie A goal of the 2010s, and on Sunday he delivered the opening strike of the 2020s as well: spinning away from his marker in the 18th minute of Brescia's game at home to Lazio, before dispatching Stefano Sabelli's long pass with a first-time finish off his left boot.

Why always him? In truth, the slogan no longer feels apt. Balotelli has dazzled us only intermittently, the highs of a Premier League win and European Championship final in 2012 obscured by too many nondescript seasons since.

There have been positive stretches – at Milan and Nice, most notably – but nothing close to what was imagined for him on 6 January 2010. Still a teenager, he had already played more than 50 senior games for Inter before he opened the year by scoring the only goal in a win over Chievo. He finished that season as a treble-winner.

The context is very different for Balotelli today. Brescia, his hometown club, would be delighted simply to avoid relegation. And yet, some aspects of playing in Italy remain grimly familiar. Balotelli claimed he was racially abused during that Inter-Chievo game, and suffered abuse by Lazio supporters on Sunday.

At least this time the issue was acknowledged – both by the match official, who suspended the game for a short time after a warning from the stadium PA went unheeded, and Lazio, who issued a statement threatening legal action against fans who “betray their sporting passion and cause great



damage to the image of the club”. In 2010, the Chievo president Luca Campedelli had flatly rejected the accusations of racism, saying that: “Balotelli must not dare to insult the people of Verona.”

Still, this was a grim note on which to start the new year. The game itself had been compelling, Lazio coming back to win in second-half injury time. Ciro Immobile scored both goals for the visitors, taking his tally to 19 already in a league campaign that has not reached its halfway stage. Born in the same year as Balotelli, he has had his share of lost seasons, too, but there is no question whose star is shining brighter as they approach their 30th birthdays.

Victory moved Lazio – who be-

gan the weekend with a game in hand – to within three points of Juventus and Inter at the top. Both responded with emphatic wins of their own. Cristiano Ronaldo decimated Cagliari with his first Serie A hat-trick, before Romelu Lukaku's brace inspired Inter to victory at Napoli.

Both players profited from the generosity of opponents. Cagliari had delivered an obstinate first-half performance at the Allianz Stadium, only for Ragnar Klavan to play a thoughtless pass across the edge of his own box at the start of the second. Ronaldo reacted faster than Sebastian Walukiewicz, the 19-year-old making his debut for the Sardinians at centre-half, seizing possession and rounding Robin

Olsen to score. Cagliari unravelled thereafter, but the champions were ruthless as well. Ronaldo looked as sharp as he has all season, supplementing his three strikes with an assist for Gonzalo Higuaín. This was the Portuguese player's fifth consecutive game with at least one goal, lending credence to Maurizio Sarri's claim that he is finally getting over his knee injury.

A win at home to Cagliari was expected, even in a season when Rolando Maran's team have punched far above their weight. For Inter to triumph in Naples was more significant. They had not taken three points from the Stadio San Paolo since 1997.

Napoli gave them plenty of assistance in ending that hex. Giovan-

ni Di Lorenzo lost his footing in the 14th minute – leaving space for Lukaku to intercept Mario Rui's pass before marauding 50 yards upfield and crashing a left-footed shot in off the post. Napoli's keeper, Alex Meret, then allowed a shot from the Belgian to go straight through him for Inter's second.

The hosts were not out of the game yet, and pulled a goal back through Arkadiusz Milik before the break. But a further misjudgement from Kostas Manolas finished them, his attempt to cut out a Matías Vecino cross instead ending with him sliding the ball straight into the path of Lautaro Martínez. The Argentinian buried it to seal a 3-1 win.

It was a game that encapsulated both teams in their present

state. Napoli are a side in transition – working to find a new identity after replacing Carlo Ancelotti with Gennaro Gattuso. The restoration of José Callejón to a more advanced role, on the right of a 4-3-3, was rewarded on their goal: the Spaniard providing the assist after being picked out on himself on a back-post run that called back to Sarri's time in charge.

Inter, meanwhile, are effective uneven: a stodgy midfield compensated for by the brilliance of those two centre-forwards. Lukaku and Lautaro have already scored 30 goals between them this season. With Stefano Sensi and Nicolò Barella both easing their way back from injury, and the club expected to make a move for Arturo Vidal imminently, there are reasons to believe they can play better, but they continue to win games in the meantime.

The challenge remains, as it ever was, to maintain this relentless pace through a full campaign. Inter were top of Serie A at the start of January 2016 under Roberto Mancini, and finished that season in fourth place. It was a similar story two seasons later under Luciano Spalletti, when the collapse started in mid-December.

Antonio Conte joked on Monday that he had been warned about a ‘Fantozzi cloud’ – a reference to the 1970s cult movie Fantozzi, in which the central character is followed around by his own personal rainstorm – which comes to drown Inter every winter. He then reiterated a line he has pushed all season, that he has “asked my team not to be crazy any more”.

History repeated for Balotelli this weekend. Conte is doing all that he can to prevent the striker's former club from heading down its own familiar path.

English strikers set pace in the race for the Premier League golden boot



MARTIN LAURENCE
theGuardian

There is a very noticeable trend in the race for the Premier League golden boot this season: a lot of strikers are scoring a lot of goals and a surprising number of them are English. Seven players scored more than 10 league goals before New Year's Day and all but one of them have been capped by England. As 2019 became 2020, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang sat in the top scorer chart alongside six England internationals: Jamie Vardy, Danny Ings, Tammy Abraham, Marcus Rashford, Harry Kane and Raheem Sterling.

Of course, top scorer Vardy – whose total of 17 goals puts him four clear of his closest challengers – has retired from international football, but Gareth Southgate has plenty of alternatives. The most surprising among them is undoubtedly Ings, who scored his 13th league goal of the season against Tottenham on New Year's Day, taking him two clear of Kane at the opposite end. Kane has been guaranteed a starting place in the England team for some time – he was made captain by Southgate before the World Cup in 2018 and repaid that faith by winning the golden boot – but he is now facing genuine competition.

Kane's annual mid-season injury struck on New Year's Day as he pulled up with a hamstring problem, giving the players above him in the scoring charts – Ings included – a chance to move further clear. Abraham and Rashford, both still just 22 years old, are tied on 12 league goals and offer hope of an exciting future. And Raheem Sterling is level with Kane on 11 goals.

Throw in Jadon Sancho (who has picked up nine goals and 10 assists in the Bundesliga so far this season), Dominic Calvert-Lewin (eight goals for Everton in the Premier League), as well as Dele Alli, James Maddison, Jack Grealish and Todd Cantwell (six league

goals apiece), and England's attacking options appear stronger than they have been for a very long time.

While Vardy boasts the best conversion rate of those mentioned at a remarkable 34.7%, Sancho (32.1%) and Ings (27.1%) are not too far behind. Kane, however, is some way back on 19.6%. He is still just 26, but could we be looking at a player who – like Michael Owen or even Wayne Rooney – has played so many games before his supposed “peak years” that he has in fact already peaked?

Kane remains an outstanding player and a very prolific striker, but his goal returns have waned in recent seasons. His tally of 17 league goals last season was his lowest since he became a first team regular at Tottenham in 2014. And his minutes-per-goal rate is going up. He scored a goal every 87.4 minutes in the 2016-17 season but that figure has now almost doubled to 161.8 minutes per goal. His form a few years ago was incredible and was always going to be difficult to sustain, but his strike rate has dropped year-on-year since. And it has done so as the competition for his place has become more fierce.

Fitting Sterling, Rashford, Sancho and Kane into the same starting XI is a near impossibility for Southgate, but could we soon see an equally improbable scenario whereby the captain is sacrificed? Crucially for Kane, he offers something completely different to the pacy trio who have served as his support cast in the Euro 2020 qualifying campaign, but Ings and Abraham are hoping to prove that they can do the same.

Ousting Kane will take some doing. He has scored 32 goals in 45 games for England and is on course to break Wayne Rooney's record as the country's all time top goalscorer. Nevertheless, Southgate has attacking options aplenty heading into the Euros and for that he will be extremely thankful.

Medvedev ends run of giant-killer Ruud

PERTH, JAN 7 (AFP): World number five Daniil Medvedev ended Casper Ruud's giant-killing spree with a 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) victory on Tuesday to seal Russia's place in the quarter-finals of the ATP Cup.

The US Open finalist continued his ominous form ahead of the Australian Open, hitting 34 winners and 13 aces in the one hour 33-minute contest.

Medvedev wrapped up the tie for unbeaten Russia ahead of the doubles after world number 17 Karen Khachanov easily beat Viktor Durasovic 6-2, 6-1.

“Maybe the score doesn't say everything about the match because it was really close and both of us could have won,” Medvedev said of his first-ever clash against Ruud.

The towering Russian was particularly impressive at the net, winning 14 of 19 points.

“Against Casper I knew I had to finish some



points at the net,” he said.

“I knew I had to be aggressive and I think it helped me a lot.” Group D winner Russia advanced to the knockout stages in Sydney, while Norway's surprising run, which started with a stunning upset of the United States, ended. Ruud,

whose father Christian is Norway's captain and his coach, upset Italian world number 12 Fabio Fognini on Sunday after beating American John Isner, ranked 19, two days earlier.

The 21-year-old is a product of Rafael Nadal's tennis academy in Mal-

lorca and has received high praise from the Spaniard, who dubbed him “amazing” on Monday. Ruud continued to impress but was no match for Medvedev, who has steadily built his form after victories over Fognini and Isner.

Both players slugged

relentlessly from the baseline in a high-quality contest, but Medvedev's consistency wore down the world number 53.

The Russian ripped several passing shots for winners and showcased his repertoire with deft drop shots as he dominated at the net.

Medvedev was under pressure in the second set and down an early break, but hit back on Ruud's serve in the fifth game before closing out the match in a tense tight break. In the earlier singles, Khachanov breezed past world number 329 Durasovic.

He broke twice in a lopsided first set and kept the foot on the gas to maintain his unbeaten start to the season.

“Happy to start like this and I think match by match I'm playing better,” said Khachanov, who defeated Italy's Stefano Travaglia and American Taylor Fritz earlier in the tournament.

Italy and the United States clash in the later Group D tie.

Serena powers past Giorgi for first win of 2020

AUCKLAND, JAN 7 (AFP): Serena Williams found her power game after a sluggish start as she overcame qualifier Camila Giorgi to open her 2020 season with a straight-sets victory at the Auckland WTA Classic on Tuesday.

With an eye on the Australian Open later in the month, the 38-year-old worked her way into a blistering performance that proved too much for the 1.7 metre (5ft 6in) Italian.

“I feel really good, it was fun to be out there,” Williams said after sealing her 6-3, 6-2 victory with her eighth ace against the 99th-ranked Giorgi. “It's really good that I still have some pow-ty's all time top goalscorer. Nevertheless, Southgate has attacking options aplenty heading into the Euros and for that he will be extremely thankful.”

Williams, originally drawn to play two-time Grand Slam winner Svetlana Kuznetsova before



the Russian pulled out due to a virus, said her preparation had been helped by playing doubles with Caroline Wozniacki the previous evening which allowed her to adapt to the blustery Auckland weather.

“I knew it was going to be really tough but I think the doubles really helped. I got to come out

here and play a little bit in these conditions and get used to them.”

In Williams' first match since losing the US Open final in September, she took time to settle and was forced to save an early break point with the first six games all going with serve. But at 3-3 in the first set, Williams found her range and from there

on the result was never in doubt.

Auckland is an important tournament for the veteran as she prepares for the Australian Open later in the month with her eyes firmly on a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam title.

While Williams is the undisputed face of American tennis, she has been joined in Auckland by the new wave of US tennis stars, headed by the tournament third seed Amanda Anisimova who did not disappoint.

The 18-year-old, who captured world attention reaching the semi-finals of the French Open last year where she lost in three sets to eventual champion Asleigh Barty, needed 78 minutes to dispose of Kateryna Kozlova of the Ukraine 6-3, 6-4.

French pension talks resume as govt seeks to end standoff

French officials prepared to restart talks with unions Tuesday over a pension overhaul that has sparked the country's longest transport strikes in decades, which labour leaders say could force millions of people to retire later than they thought.

Public support appears to be shifting in the government's favour, with just 44 percent backing the strike in an Ifop poll released Sunday, down seven points from the previous survey on December 19-20.

The reform would eliminate 42 separate pension schemes that offer early retirement and other advantages, mainly to public-sector workers, in favour of a single system.

It would also create a "pivot age" of 64 to benefit from a full pension, penalising those who stop working at the official retirement age of 62 -- one of the lowest in Europe.

The government insists the measure is necessary for ensuring sufficient financing for the deficit-plagued system.

Yet officials have seized on an offer by France's largest union, the moderate CFDT, to hold separate talks on how to finance the plan later, in order to end the impasse over the pivot age. "That's a very good



idea," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Monday. "Never has a compromise seemed so close."

But the hard-line CGT and Force Ouvriere unions have vowed to derail the plan, urging a new day of mass walk-outs against the reform on Thursday, which could see schools shut and public transport even more impacted than usual.

Train operator SNCF says it has lost more than 600 million euros (\$670 million) in ticket sales since the strike began on December 5, and Paris commutes have been headaches for millions who rely on the RATP's metro, bus and suburban rail lines.

- 'We have to hold out' -

The CGT has stepped up its protest with a four-day blockade of refineries and fuel depots starting Tuesday, raising the prospect of petrol shortages.

Nurses, physiotherapists and lawyers, among dozens of professions with their own advantageous pension regimes, have also voted for strike actions this week.

But the number of striking rail and metro workers tapered off over the holidays, and the lost pay could make it hard to keep up the protest.

"It's going to be hard but we have to hold out at least until Friday," Mounir, an RATP employee, said Monday as

drivers voted to prolong the strike.

Unions say they are relying on reserve funds and donations to limit the financial hit for strikers, in what has been France's longest continuous train strike since the national rail service was created in the 1930s.

President Emmanuel Macron made the pensions overhaul a key plank in his 2017 election campaign, saying a single points-based system would be fairer to women and low-earners in particular.

The government has already made a series of concessions to police and military personnel as well as SNCF workers, allowing them to continue retiring early or keep

their separate benefits for several years yet.

But most salaried workers born in 1975 or later would be impacted by the new system, in which people would earn points based on their lifetime earnings, which would be converted into pension payouts upon retirement.

Currently, most pensions are calculated from a worker's 25 best years of earnings -- public workers, however, get payouts based on their last six months of pay, a more favourable base.

An Elabe poll released Monday found that most French (54 percent) support the points-based plan, though two-thirds oppose the pivot age of 64.

Iranians mass for funeral in hometown of general killed by US

KERMAN, JAN 7 (AFP): Iranians gathered in Kerman for the burial Tuesday of top general Qasem Soleimani in the final stage of funeral processions after he was killed in a US strike in Iraq.

The massive number of mourners in the hometown of the slain commander of the Revolutionary Guards' foreign arm appeared to match the huge turnout seen in the cities of Tehran, Qom, Mashhad and Ahvaz.

They converged from afar on Azadi Square where two flag-draped coffins were on display, with the second one reportedly containing the remains of Soleimani's closest aide, Brigadier General Hossein Pourjafari.

"We're here today to pay respects to the great commander of the holy defence," said one of the mourners who came from the southern city of Shiraz to attend the funeral in Kerman.

"Haj Qasem was not only loved in Kerman, or Iran, but also the whole world," Hemmat Dehghan told AFP.

"The security of the whole world, Muslims, Shiites, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and especially Iran, all owe it to him," said the 56-year-old war veteran.

Soleimani was killed outside Baghdad airport Friday in a drone strike

ordered by US President Donald Trump, ratcheting up tensions with arch-enemy Iran which has vowed "severe revenge".

The assassination of the 62-year-old heightened international concern about a new war in the volatile, oil-rich Middle East and rattled financial markets.

Iraq's parliament has demanded the government expel the 5,200 American troops stationed in the country in response to the drone attack which also killed top Iraqi military figure Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg warned on Monday that Iran must avoid "further violence and provocations" after the alliance held emergency talks on the crisis.

The European Union, whose foreign ministers will hold emergency talks on the crisis Friday, said it was in both Iran and Iraq's interests to "take the path of sobriety and not the path of escalation".

Saudi Arabia -- an oil-rich US ally seen as vulnerable to Iranian counter strikes -- also appealed for calm after a "very dangerous" escalation.

Soleimani is expected to be buried at the martyrs' cemetery between 2:00 and 4:00 pm (1030 to 1230 GMT).

South Korea's Moon seeks Kim Jong Un visit to Seoul

South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Tuesday called for better relations with the North so leader Kim Jong Un can visit Seoul, despite Pyongyang's abandonment of its nuclear and missile test moratoriums.

Moon's appeal came after Kim threatened a demonstration of a "new strategic weapon" at a four-day ruling party meeting last week, where he never mentioned South Korea.

Since the breakdown of Kim's summit with US President Donald Trump in Hanoi last year -- which left nuclear negotiations largely deadlocked -- Pyongyang has repeatedly lashed out at the South, saying it has "nothing to talk" about any more with Seoul.

One senior official has gone as far as describing the South's presidency as a "shy dog barking more wildly".

But Moon, who has long favoured engagement with the nuclear-armed North, doubled down on his dovish approach.

"I hope South and North Korea can make efforts together so that the conditions for Chairman Kim Jong Un's reciprocal visit can be arranged at an early date," Moon said in his annual New Year address.

The invitation for Kim to visit Seoul dates from the two leaders' last summit, in Pyongyang in September 2018, when the peninsula was basking in a diplomatic rapprochement.

Analysts suggested

Moon's call was now unrealistic.

"I'm willing to meet repeatedly and talk ceaselessly" with the North, Moon said in his half-hour speech, which was broadcast live.

He also suggested Pyongyang and Seoul should consult on fielding a unified team at the Tokyo Olympics in July, which would march together at the opening ceremony.

The two Koreas' athletes took part together at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in the South two years ago, and subsequently formed a series of joint teams in other events.

A possible joint bid for Seoul and Pyongyang to co-host the 2032 Summer Games has even been mooted, with Moon on Tuesday calling the prospect "a golden opportunity for the South and North to show to the world that we are one people".

But the two capitals have held no discussions on the candidacy, and sporting ties have since entered a deep freeze -- North Korea gave up any prospect of its women's football team playing in Tokyo rather than take part in a qualifying competition in the South next month.

Pyongyang has also demanded the demolition of South Korean-built tourism facilities at Mount Kungang in the North, saying it will operate tours there itself, and rejected discussions with

Seoul on the issue.

But Moon said he would push for the resumption of South Korean visits to the peak, along with the re-opening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex where Southern firms employed Northern workers.

Both projects would currently violate the international sanctions imposed on Pyongyang over its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

- 'Ceaseless unrequited love' -

Cheong Seong-chang, director of the Center for North Korean Studies at the Sejong Institute in Seoul, said it was "highly unlikely" the North would respond to Moon's address. "There are some problems with the way the Seoul government perceives the current situation," he told AFP.

"There will be no political gain for Kim to visit Seoul at this point in time, given that the North has virtually stated it won't be talking to the US on nuclear issues."

Ahn Chan-il, a North Korean defector and researcher in Seoul, said the Moon administration had adopted an approach of "ceaseless unrequited love" to Pyongyang, but had been left with very few options.

"The way it has been dealing with the North -- in spite of Pyongyang's insults against the South -- has not been ideal," he said.

"There is virtually nothing the South can do as long as the UN sanctions remain on North Korea."

Power-starved Ethiopia rallies around Nile dam as Egypt dispute simmers

Cell phone batteries constantly dying, health centres bereft of modern equipment, a dependence on flashlights after sundown -- Kafule Yigzaw experienced all these struggles and more growing up without electricity in rural Ethiopia.

So five years ago, he leapt at the chance to work on a project designed to light up his country and the wider Horn of Africa region: the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, a 145-metre-high, 1.8-kilometre-long concrete colossus that is set to become the largest hydropower plant in Africa.

"Our country has a huge problem with electricity," Kafule, 22, told AFP recently while taking a break from reinforcing steel pipes that will funnel water from the Blue Nile River to one of the dam's 13 turbines.

"This is about the existence of our nation and, in my opinion, it will help us break free from the bondage of poverty."

The dam is expected to begin producing energy by the end of this year.

Across Ethiopia, poor farmers and rich businessmen eagerly await the more than 6,000 megawatts of electricity officials say it will ultimately provide. Yet as thousands of workers toil day and night to finish the project, Ethiopian negotiators remain locked in talks over how the dam will affect downstream neighbours, principally Egypt.

The next round of negotiations starts Thursday in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, and is likely to renew focus on Cairo's fears that the dam could bring water and food insecurity for millions of Egyptians.

Ethiopians at the dam site say they are doing their best to focus on the task at hand, though they bristle at suggestions that their country is overstepping in its bid to harness the Blue Nile for its development.

"When we do projects here it's not to harm the downstream countries," said deputy project manager Ephrem Woldekidan. "There is no reason that the downstream countries should complain (about) it because this is our resource also."

- Rising Nile tensions -

The Nile River's two main tributaries -- the Blue and White Niles -- converge in the Sudanese capital Khartoum before flowing north through Egypt toward the Mediterranean Sea.

Egypt depends on the Nile for about 90 percent of its irrigation and drinking water, and says it has "historic rights" to the river guaranteed by treaties from 1929 and 1959. Tensions have been high in the Nile basin ever since Ethiopia broke ground on the dam in 2011.

The International Crisis Group warned last March that the countries "could be drawn into conflict" given that Egypt sees potential water loss as "an existential threat".

In October, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, fresh from winning the Nobel Peace Prize, assured lawmakers that "no force can stop Ethiopia from building the dam" and said "millions" of troops could be mobilised to defend it if necessary.

The United States stepped in to jumpstart a tripartite dialogue with Sudan that is supposed to resolve the dispute by January 15.

The biggest initial hurdle is the filling of the dam's reservoir, which can hold 74 billion cubic metres of water. Egypt is worried Ethiopia will fill the reservoir too quickly, reducing water flow downstream.

After the latest round of talks in Sudan last month, Sudanese irrigation minister Yasser Abbas said there had been "progress" on the issue but no breakthrough.

Kevin Wheeler, an engineer at the University of Oxford who has studied the dam, said he was hopeful a deal on the filling period could be reached by January 15, but that additional issues would emerge down the line.

"Coordinated operations between the reservoirs along the Nile are likely to be an ongoing discussion that may continue for years, decades, and centuries to come, particularly as populations grow, development continues, and global climate patterns continue to change," Wheeler said.

-Ethiopia's push for power-

Thousands of farmers have allegedly been displaced since work on the dam began.

The US-based NGO

International Rivers has accused Ethiopia of disregarding the dam's environmental impacts, which remain understudied. The group has voiced concern about "great degradation" that, along with changing weather patterns due to climate change, could "result in irregular episodes of flooding, drought and mudslides".

Ethiopia has responded to such statements by noting that a study group including experts from Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan has been tasked with assessing social and environmental impacts.

Meanwhile, officials in Addis Ababa are focusing on the country's push for power.

Ethiopia is striving for universal electricity access by 2025, though currently more than half the population of 110 million lives without it.

Even in Addis, power is patchy, and the city suffered weeks of blackouts during the most recent period of electricity rationing in May and June 2019.

Dawit Moges, head of a medical laboratory, said the cuts drove up his generator costs and, because they were not predictable, led to delayed results and unreliable blood sample readings.

"You've collected specimens, you're processing the specimens and boom, there is no power. All those specimens, you may not be sure about the results," he said, adding that he hoped the dam would yield a steady power supply. "I want it to be completed as soon as possible and go into production."

The same is true for Harsh Kothari, head of Mohan Group, which runs five manufacturing units producing everything from shoes to electric cables and barbed wire.

Reliable electricity would make his business "a lot more competitive" and enable it to grow, Kothari said.

Back at the dam site, this kind of talk about how the project could fuel prosperity from farms to factories across Ethiopia is exactly what motivates Workey Tadele, a radio operator, to go to work every day.

"We're working here for the benefit of our country," she said. "If we have electricity, then we'll have a better future."

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LOOKING LOVELY! The actress, Vanessa Hudgens wears a berry colored ensemble while out filming for *The Princess Switch: Switched Again* in Edinburgh, Scotland.

I knew 'Fleabag' was going to be special: Andrew Scott



LOS ANGELES, JAN 7 (PTI): "Fleabag" star Andrew Scott says though he knew the dark comedy would turn out to be special, in no way anyone from the team could have imagined it to burst onto the scene.

The actor played the Hot Priest opposite Phoebe Waller-Bridge's titular character in the second season of the BBC-Amazon series.

"I knew it was going to be special, but I don't think we could ever sort of forecast the enormous success and the fact that it's got such a huge audience and people love it so much. That really is genuinely amazing," Scott told *Us Weekly*.

The actor, who was nominated for his first Golden Globe this year for his supporting

role in the show, compared himself to a "little Bambi" at the ceremony. "I need to find my feet. It was nuts," he added.

The "Sherlock" alum said attending the awards show was surreal.

"You're looking at your genuine heroes and you just feel frightened and intimidated, but also thrilled.. The craziest thing that's happened today is being here with all the screaming. It's all the good kind of screaming. We like good screaming, don't we? Inside and outside of the bedroom," he said.

"Fleabag" took home the golden gong for the best television series musical or comedy and the best actress for actor-creator Waller-Bridge.

Fleabag, Succession Are Top TV Winners

The television awards at the Golden Globes are often somewhat overlooked - after all, the industry handed out the Emmys just a few months ago. But at boozy Globes gala, the winners in the small screen categories - including the stars behind breakout British comedy *Fleabag* and the darkly humorous drama *Succession* - got some laughs and got political.

Phoebe Waller-Bridge accepted the trophy for best musical or comedy series for *Fleabag* - which follows the antics, sex life and tribulations of a dry-witted 30-something woman in London -- with a line of thanks for none other than Barack Obama for putting the show on his Best Of 2019 list.

"Personally, I would like to also thank Obama for putting us on his list - as some of you may know, he's always been on mine," she said, drawing peals of laughter for her reference to a scene in season one in which her character masturbates to the former US president giving a speech.

Waller-Bridge also snagged a Globe for best comedy actress, adding it to her collection of Emmys for the critically acclaimed BBC series, which has grown into a phenomenon in the US after being acquired by Amazon.

HBO's *Succession* - centered on a powerful media family's wrangling for control of its company - scored the award for best drama series.

It fended off Netflix's flagship *The Crown*, whose new cast is led by Oscar winner Olivia Colman. She won the night's Globe for best drama actress.

Succession star Brian Cox took home the best drama actor prize for his role as the family's husky, growling patriarch.

Chernobyl - about the catastrophic 1986 nuclear accident - went home with the award for or TV movie, and Stellan

portrayal of Fox News founder Roger Ailes in *The Loudest Voice* - but nevertheless urged action on climate change as his home country reels from devastating wildfires.

"Make no mistake, the tragedy un-



Skarsgard won for best supporting actor. Netflix had secured 17 nods in the television categories, where it led the pack, ahead of HBO which had 15. But HBO won four awards to Netflix's one.

POLITICAL BENT -

Michelle Williams accepted the award for best actress in a limited TV series or movie for her portrayal of Broadway legend Gwen Verdon in *Fosse/Verdon*. She made a moving call to women to vote "in your own self-interest," emphasizing support for a woman's right to choose.

Australian actor Russell Crowe was not present to accept his Globe for best limited series or TV movie actor for his

folding in Australia is climate change-based," he said in a letter read aloud at the gala. We need to act based on science, move our global workforce to renewable energy and respect our planet for the unique and amazing place it is."

Actor and comedian Ramy Youssef won for best musical or comedy actor for his series *Ramy*, in which he plays a version of himself, navigating life with immigrant parents and reconciling his Muslim faith with secular life.

Patricia Arquette meanwhile won her third Globe for her supporting role in *The Act* and urged Americans to vote in this year's presidential election in accepting the award.

Timothée Chalamet to play Bob Dylan in biopic from James Mangold

LOS ANGELES, JAN 7 (PTI): Actor Timothée Chalamet is set to play legendary musician Bob Dylan in an untitled musical biopic from director James Mangold.

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the film is based on the book "Dylan Goes Electric" by Elijah Wald.

The Fox Searchlight feature will chart the Nobel Prize winner's switch from folk to rock music. Dylan is also attached to executive produce the project with Mangold. Jay Cocks penned the screenplay. Fox has secured the music rights as well.

Dylan's longtime manager Jeff Rosen will produce with Mangold, Veritas Entertainment Group's Bob Book-

man, Alan Gasmer and Peter Jaysen, as well as Automatik's Fred Berger and The Picture Company's Alex Heineman. Brian Kavanaugh-Jones and Andrew Rona will exec produce. This will be another biopic for Mangold after racing drama "Ford v Ferrari".

Chalamet's latest release was Greta Gerwig's "Little Women". The actor will next be seen in Denis Villeneuve's "Dune" remake and "The French Dispatch", directed by Wes Anderson.

In 2007's "I'm Not There", six actors -- Christian Bale, Cate Blanchett, Marcus Carl Franklin, Richard Gere, Heath Ledger and Ben Whishaw -- famously depicted different facets of Dylan's public personas.

Christian Bale in talks to join 'Thor: Love and Thunder'

LOS ANGELES, JAN 7 (PTI): Hollywood star Christian Bale is in negotiations to join Marvel Cinematic Universe with a pivotal role in "Thor: Love and Thunder".

If the deal closes, the film will mark Bale's return to the superhero genre eight years after he concluded Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy with "The Dark Knight Rises".

It's unclear what role the 45-year-old actor would be play-

ing in the film, reported *Variety*. "Thor: Ragnarok" filmmaker Taika Waititi is directing the fourth movie in the franchise, with Chris Hemsworth reprising his titular superhero and Natalie Portman returning as Jane Foster. The film will also feature Tessa Thompson's Valkyrie.

Waititi revealed last week that the pre-production of the film will start in April and the team will start shooting from August in Australia.

Inside Natasha Lyonne's "Retro Barbie" Beauty Transformation for the 2020 Golden Globes



On and off screen, Natasha Lyonne gives good hair. Last February, her spiraled shag in Netflix's *Russian Doll* caused an Internet sensation, inspiring legions of curly-haired women to shear a fresh curtain of fringe. Then, at last night's 2020 Golden Globes, where she was nominated for Best Actress in a Musical or Comedy TV Series for her role in the dark and zany series, she served up another statement-making style to be coveted.

Before Lyonne slipped into her form-fitting black Moschino dress designed by Jeremy Scott, hairstylist Jillian Halouska curled the star's auburn lengths into a cascade of "ultra-sculpted"

side-swept pin curls, setting them into place with blasts of OGX's *Shea Slick Humidity Blocking Hairspray*. The inspiration? "Retro Barbie hair," says the pro. Furthering the vintage vibe, longtime friend and makeup artist Molly Stern nodded to "the bombshells of the 1960s" by giving Lyonne smoked lids, lush lashes, and a pale, pinky beige pout courtesy of Armani Beauty's *Lip Maestro Liquid Lipstick* in 100. From giving herself a facial massage clad in a RuPaul's *Drag Race* robe to snapping an #OKBoomer selfie en route to the red carpet, here Lyonne gives *Vogue* an inside look at her Golden Globes glam session.

ARIES: All relationships, romantic or otherwise, are based on a deep, mutual understanding. The more you get to know a person, the more you find your heart opening to them, ultimately forming the basis of a stronger bond. Today, you're being asked to express both affection and gratitude to all the people who have touched your life.

Tip: It is love that makes the world go around.

TAURUS: You are standing at a crossroads. The road ahead speaks of love and commitment, while the road you left behind smells of resentment and regret. Let go of the need to alter the past—you won't be able to no matter how hard you try. At the same time, let go of the need to assess the present through the lens of bygone events.

Tip: Let go of the past.

GEMINI: The energy you are emanating brings the example of Cleopatra, Queen of the Nile, to mind. She was known for her beauty and intellect, bold and unafraid to make tough decisions. Her confidence in her own abilities became the source of her power. Sounds familiar, Gemini? What the cards

are asking you to do: commit to making that self-love game stronger.

Tip: Self-acceptance and self-love are your strongest weapons.

CANCER: Hello and welcome to the age of complicated relationships! A time when turning base metal into gold is easier than finding true commitment. But is that what you want, Cancer? To meet (and mate) when it's convenient as you perfect the art keeping your feelings at home. Know that you're not doing any favours by being dishonest with yourself and the other(s).

Tip: Be honest with yourself and the other.

LEO: "A thousand half-loves have to be forsaken to take one whole heart home." Nobody understands the magic woven by Rumi's words like you do. The love you are experiencing right now and in this moment may not be perfect, but it's beautiful, and beautiful is better than perfect can ever be. Say a prayer of gratitude to mysterious forces above that are keeping you love drunk. A message for the lonely and the broken-hearted. Tip: Intoxicated by love.

VIRGO: The pain of losing something valuable can overshadow everything else. It's true that time might ease the loss, but healing can only happen when you are fully present to the pain. Virgo, give yourself the permission to mourn instead of repressing the wounds or waiting for them to go away. Tip: To feel is to heal.

LIBRA: There's something magical about bringing your true, most authentic self to the table. It helps you build a relationship on the basis of truth, honesty and integrity. Libra, you are making space for people who are jamming at a higher frequency. In the realm of romance, you and your beloved, like Cupid and Psyche, are awakening the hidden virtues of each other. If the sacred bond you share is supporting the process of metamorphosis, you may just have found the one. Tip: Staying true to who you are is the secret to attracting a healthy love.

SCORPIO: The lightning has already struck, Scorpio. While you can't control the ensuing chaos, you can decide how to deal with it. The first thing to remember is that

this turbulence is external and therefore, can only affect you if you allow it into your space. Staying centred will help you watch your triggers and act in a manner that is non-reactive.

Tip: Stay centred as you open yourself to help and support.

SAGITTARIUS: This is the love you've been hoping and praying for, Sagittarius. What's keeping you from opening your heart to 'the one'? The fear of being rejected once again? Or the fear of your love not being reciprocated? Either way, fears are just fears. There's no way to ascertain how things will turn out. But that shouldn't stop you from experiencing what life is offering you right now.

Tip: Let go of the barriers within to accept the love you deserve.

CAPRICORN: Capricorn, you're the one everybody turns to for wisdom and advice. The responsible member of the crew who drives them home after a particularly debauchorous night. But that doesn't there's only one side to you. Labels are just labels,

Capricorn. Free yourself from the idea of who you are supposed to be and allow yourself to embrace all aspects of your personality.

Tip: Let your hair down, lover.

AQUARIUS: While the need to protect yourself is strong, is it worth complicating matters? Life is as easy or difficult as we decide to make it, and frankly, you are choosing to make everything a whole lot tougher. If you want to be with somebody, be with them. Do not let the world, this society or your head, stop you from finding your happiness. On the other hand, if you have to force something, then maybe it wasn't yours to begin with.

Tip: Follow your heart, Aquarius.

PISCES: Repeat after me: "I am making space for healthy relationships that are in alignment with my highest good." Love does not equal pain, anxiety and heartbreak. A massive clean-up is due, Pisces, and you're going to have to learn to practice a certain degree of detachment. Spirit is supporting you to cut the cords that are draining you and find your freedom once again.

Tip: Find your freedom.