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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Cartel of docs, pharma firms, labs fleecing patients: Madras HC

**CHENNAI, JAN 8 (PTI):** Asserting that a cartel of doctors, pharma firms and diagnostic labs are fleecing patients in the country, the Madras High court on Wednesday took notice of the practise of providing 'commissions' to doctors for promoting and prescribing their drugs.

The court directed the Union health ministry, chemical and fertilizers ministry, National pharmaceutical pricing authority and Medical Council of India to explain as to the action taken against doctors for violating the code of conduct and accepting gifts, hospitality, cash or monetary grant from pharmaceutical firms and allied health sector Industries in the past 5 years.

A division bench of Justices N Kirubakaran and P Velmurugan passed the order while expanding the scope of the plea moved by Fourrts (India) Labs Pvt Ltd a pharmaceutical company challenging its income tax assessment.

During the scrutiny of its assessment for 2012-13, the firm admitted to a total income of Rs 14.69 crore and claimed deductions for Rs 5.45 crore towards licenses and taxes and another Rs 42.81 lakh towards 'sales and promotion expenses' which includes payments made to doctors for promoting their drug.

Appalled over the submissions, the court said "It is clear that even though accepting such commissions is prohibited under law, pharmaceutical companies are still promoting their drugs by providing gifts, travel facilities, hospitality, cash or monetary grant to doctors.

It is also proved that drugs are overpriced illegally by the companies. It is shocking and surprising to note that the company claimed deduction from income tax for the amount spent towards sale promotion expenses as well as for licences and taxes." The bench then directed the authorities to answer a series of questions including the list of doctors who were paid by Fourrts, number of doctors prosecuted for violating the rule and accepting such gifts from 2009.

The court also wanted authorities to answer as to the number of pharmaceutical firms that have been prosecuted for regulation of the drug pricing authority, number of pharma companies who have claimed tax deductions under 'sale and promotions' head, complaints received on over pricing of drugs and amount recovered from pharma firms for over pricing. It has also directed the Union government to inform by January 20 as to when a separate ministry for pharma and medical devices would be established as stated by the ministry of chemicals in February 2018.

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## West Point SSS and North Sikkim Academy ace Zonal Level Band Competition in Guwahati

**GUWAHATI, 08 JAN [IPR]:** West Point Senior Secondary School and North Sikkim Academy won first places in Zonal Level Band Competition held in Guwahati today.

The girls of West Point SSS won this in the girls' category while the NSA boys aced their category.

The two teams were selected for the Zonal Level at the State Level Competition held on 15 November, 2019 in Gangtok. Both the teams bagged cash awards of Rs 10,000 each at the Zonal Level.

The two schools will now participate in the National Level Band Competition scheduled for 22 Jan at National Bal Bhawan, New Delhi.

Education Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha has congratulated the winning teams and has also



conveyed his best wishes for their success at the National Level.

Additional Chief Secretary, GP Upadhyaya, also congratulated the winning teams and mentioned that since the

competition started at the national Level, Sikkim stood second and first on two consecutive years in boys' category.

In a press statement, the State Project Director of Samagra Shiksha, Edu-

cation Department, Bhim Thatal, informs that the Band Competition is an annual feature under Samagra Shiksha and that this is the third consecutive year that it is being held.

He added that on the

first year in 2017, Sikkim won the second position in boys' category and first in the same category in 2018. This is the third consecutive year of such competitions and this time Sikkim has fielded both

boys' and girls' bands.

The competition is open to government and private schools as per the instructions of the MHRD. This is the first time that a private school is also representing Sikkim in this mega event.

## South to host Children's Film Festival

**NAMCHI, 08 JAN [IPR]:** A meeting in connection with Children's Film Festival to be organized in the South District was held at DC office today. Present amongst others were DC (South), Ragul K, ADC (South), Satyan Kr Pradhan, SDM (HQ), Chiran Rizal, Assistant Distribution Officer (Children's Film Society, India), Pramod Alphanso and other concerned officials.

Speaking during the meeting, Ragul K informed that this festival will be held all over the South District wherein students from both Government and Private Schools will actively take part. Additionally, a special show for the visually impaired children from Jawaharlal Nehru Institute for the visually



handicapped, Boomtar, will also be arranged.

Mr Ragul also said that this festival will be convened during the month of February at Imperial Talkies and children's movies will simultaneously be telecast in Schools located in rural and urban areas of the district.

Informing about Chil-

dren's Film Society, India (CFSI), Mr Pramod appraised that this is an autonomous body under Ministry of Information Broadcasting, Government of India, committed to producing, exhibiting and distributing children's films.

CFSI has a film library of 265 Children's Film in 23 languages and some of these films have won

various national and international awards. With the motto 'Promoting Every Child's Right to Entertainment' CFSI organizes children's film festival across India. Mr Pramod also highlighted that during this festival free thematic and education oriented films of CFSI are showcased.

## Inter-constituency tourney dribbles on



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 08 JAN:**

Eight matches were played on the third day of the ongoing Inter-Constituency Football Tournament 2019-20 at three venues in the State on Wednesday.

The tournament is being organized by the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs at Paljor Stadium, Singhithang Ground [Namchi] and Dentam Public Ground in West Sikkim.

At Paljor Stadium, Khamdong-Singtam defeated Kabi-Lungchok 5-3, while in another match Gangtok edged

past Namcheybong 3-2 and Lachen-Mangan outplayed Rhenock by a lone goal. In the last match of the day played under floodlights at Paljor Stadium, Upper Tadong defeated Chujachen 6-5.

At Dentam, Soreng-Chakung outplayed Daramdin 3-0 in the first match while Zoom-Salghari defeated Yuk-som-Tashiding 5-0 in another match.

At Singhithang Ground, Melli defeated Rangang-Yangang 2-1 in the first match, while Namthang-Rateypani went down to Barfung by a solitary goal.

## Franchise owners excited by JPBL's potential

**SAGAR CHETTRI**  
**GANGTOK, 08 JAN:**

Franchise owners of Jorethang Premier Badminton League [JPBL] have endorsed that an event like JPBL will encourage professionalism in sports in the State.

They are confident that JPBL will not only provide a good platform to talented shuttlers of the State, but also encourage them to pursue a career in sports. They also congratulated Badminton Association of Jorethang for taking such a unique initiative to inject professionalism into the sport in the State.

JPBL-2 is being organized by Badminton Association of Jorethang [BAJ] in association with Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's Sports wing & Labour front under the aegis of Badminton Association of Sikkim [BAS].

Six teams placed their bids from the top shuttlers of the State during the auction held on 05 December at Jorethang for 66 players.

The second edition of the league has Red Panda GMTS owned by former Minister GM Gurung and Tshering Sherpa, United Sikkim Shuttlers owned this year by Indian Olympian archer,



Tarundeep Rai and football icon, Bhairung Bhutia, The Poklok Warriors owned by RB Tamang, Dallam Express owned by Power Minister, MN Sherpa, David Warriors owned by Political Secretary to the CM, Jacob Khaling, and Chakung-Soreng MLA, Aditya Golay, and the home team, Salghari Zoom Blockers owned by area MLA, Sunita Gajmer.

Addressing a press conference here this evening, David Warriors' co-owner, Jacob Khaling, expressed happiness and excitement on being part of JPBL-2.

While congratulating the organizing committee, he said that JPBL will be a milestone for talented and budding players of the State to take up sports as a career.

He further expressed that such an event will create a healthy and competitive environment for sportspersons and promote professionalism in sports.

"We have taken personal interest in this event to encourage local players by creating a healthy platform for talented young players of the State and to bring

professionalism. We are here to win but we are more focused on opening doors for players to become professional sportspersons," Mr Khaling expressed.

David Warriors' co-owner, Aditya Golay, added, "We have many talented sportspersons in every corner of the State who need a good platform and support from all sides to excel in their respective sports. JPBL is a good platform for players here and we want to encourage professionalism."

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## Banking services impacted due to nationwide trade union strike

**NEW DELHI, JAN 8 (PTI):** Banking services were impacted on Wednesday as employees went on a nationwide strike called by 10 central trade unions to protest against the government's "anti-people" policies.

Branch activities including cash withdrawal deposit in public sector banks in many places across the country have been affected due to the strike.

Most of the lenders had informed their customers in advance about the strike call given by All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA), All India Bank Officers' Association (AIBOA), BEFI, INBEF, INBOC and Bank Karmachari Sena Mahasangh (BKSM), and its impact on banking ser-

vices. Bank employees have extended support to the nationwide strike call given by 10 central trade unions, AIBEA general Secretary C H Venkatachalam told PTI.

"We have been opposing government policies on bank merger, privatisation, fee hike and other wage-related issues," he said.

All India Reserve Bank Employees Association (AIRBEA) and All India Reserve Bank Workers Federation (AIRB-WF) and some insurance unions have also extended support to the strike.

Trade unions INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICCTU, LPE, UTUC along with various sectoral independent

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## Now no need to pay for using amenities at SAI Aurangabad centre

**AURANGABAD, JAN 8 (PTI):** Players and sports lovers will not have to pay for using the amenities at the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Aurangabad centre henceforth, a senior official said here on Wednesday.

The decision to this effect was taken by Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijju and it will be implemented in Aurangabad and Mumbai immediately, SAI's Regional Director Sushmita Jyotsi told reporters.

The facilities will now be made available free of cost for all between 10 am and 4 pm, but before and after that time will be reserved for players' practice only, she said.

"SAI centres used to take certain amount of fee for training or giving the centre on rent for organising sports events. Now, no charges will be taken from anyone", Jyotsi said.

Asked about moving the kabaddi and gymnastic training centre from Aurangabad, the official said, "There are no such orders, but the government is focusing on medal-oriented games."

Jyotsi also said that a new 300-bed hostel has been sanctioned for the SAI's Aurangabad centre.

"A 300-bed hostel has been approved for Aurangabad centre and for that purpose, Rs 30 crore have been sanctioned by the government," she said adding that Rs 62 lakh have also been sanctioned to improve other amenities.

"We have also received Rs 67 lakh funds for modernising amenities for the weightlifting game here," she added.

## Indian sports have come a long way:

### Mary Kom

**NEW DELHI, JAN 8 (PTI):** Six-time world champion boxer MC Mary Kom on Wednesday said that Indian sports have come a long way with many athletes getting the financial backing of sponsors these days.

"In my early days I would struggle to buy even a pair of gloves. It is heartening to see Indian sports have come a long way," said Mary Kom while sending off the athletes on a maiden SpiceJet flight for Khelo India Games beginning in Guwahati on Friday.

"It's really great and encouraging to see an amazing flying experience is being provided to these budding stars," said the 2012 Olympics bronze medalist.

In a bid to make Khelo India a world-class sporting experience for the budding athletes, Sports Authority of India (SAI) has come together with SpiceJet to help more than 1000 kids experience the joy of flying.

"Khelo India has been incredible at unearthing young talents who can be groomed to bring laurels for the country and its mission has been to introduce state-of-the-art facilities to athletes from the grassroots level.



## Oil India in quarter finals of CM's Gold Cup

**NAMCHI, 08 JAN (IPR):** Oil India FC registered a victory against Sikkim Police by scoring 3-1 goals to enter the quarter finals of the 9th All India Chief Minister's Gold Cup International Football Tournament. The pre-quarter fi-

nal match was played at Jorethang Playground today.

Agriculture Minister, Lok Nath Sharma was present as the chief guest in the special presence of MLA Salghari Zoom constituency, Sunita

Gazmer and other dignitaries.

Jayanta Basumataray (16), Rahul Das (7) and Greemsha Basumataray (10) from Oil India FC scored one each goal in the second half to defeat Sikkim Police which had scored

one goal in the first half.

Greemsha Basumataray from Oil India FC was adjudged the Hero of the Match and was presented cash award of Rs 10,000 and a trophy by the chief guest.

## 300 vehicles checked in Namchi



**BIKASH CHETTRI**

**NAMCHI, 08 JAN:**

More than 300 vehicles have been checked and around 20 vehicles fined in Namchi during the road safety awareness and enforcement drive being conducted by the Transport Department in collaboration with Sikkim Police.

The drive is led by DRT0, Ram Hang Subba along with ART0, Krish-

na Lamichaney, AMVI, TB Mukhia and other officers of the department.

ART0, Krishna Lamichaney, informed that around 300 vehicles have been checked from Kitam road Bhangyang road and Assangthang road since the launch of the drive on 06 Jan. He added that 20 vehicles have been fined.

DRT0, Ram Hang Subba said that there

has been an increase in road accidents across the state and implementation of the MV Act 2019 will help in curbing road accidents, over speeding, overloading, rash driving and others.

He urged all to support this drive and bring awareness among the people. He also appealed to stakeholders to keep their documents up-to-date to avoid fines.

## HRD Ministry officials advise JNU VC to communicate more with students, take faculty into confidence

**NEW DELHI, JAN 8 (PTI):** HRD Ministry officials on Wednesday "advised" JNU Vice-Chancellor M Jagadesh Kumar to increase communication with students, take the faculty into confidence and facilitate the semester registration process, days after violence ran amok on the university campus.

The VC, who has been severely criticised by students and faculty members for not taking immediate measures when they were brutally attacked on campus by a masked mob, told the officials that efforts were being made to facilitate semester registration for "willing" students.

"Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare and G C Hosur had a meeting with JNU VC at the Ministry today about the efforts being made to restore normalcy on campus. He (the VC) informed the officials about efforts being made for facilitating semester registration for willing students and a conducive environment for their academic pursuits," a senior ministry official said.

The VC was advised to communicate more with students and take faculty members into confidence, the official added. "Communication gaps create unnecessary doubt. There should be less pressure to hurry up registration but facilitate smooth process for all.

JNU is a premiere university with international repute and it should remain that way."

After the nearly two-hour meeting, Kumar tweeted that he briefed HRD officials on the steps being taken to bring normalcy. JNU Rector Satish Chandra Garkoti also attended the meeting.

The meeting came two days after Jawaharlal Nehru University Registrar Pramod Kumar and other officials visited the HRD Ministry and submitted a detailed report on the sequence of events that triggered the violence on the university campus on Sunday. Kumar did not attend that meeting.

"The last date for registration for the winter semester without fine has been extended up to January 12. As part of this registration process about 3,300 students have since deposited fee for online registration. University administration has appealed to all the stakeholders to maintain peace in the campus and not to get provoked by any misinformation," the VC told the officials.

Kumar also informed the HRD officials that the Communication and Information System (CIS), which was damaged last week allegedly by students opposing the registration process, has been repaired and is now functional. He was assured the funding for utility

and service charges will be borne by the UGC as decided previously, officials said.

On Tuesday, two days after masked people armed with sticks attacked students and teachers and damaged property on the campus, Kumar urged students to "put the past behind" and return to studies.

"Our heart goes out to all the injured students. The incident (violence) is unfortunate. I would like to tell students that JNU campus is a secure place. I urge all students to come back to the campus. Let us put the past behind," the vice chancellor had said.

At least 35 people, including JNU Students' Union president Aishe Ghosh, were injured in the violence. They were admitted to AIIMS Trauma Centre and discharged on Monday.

The Left-controlled JNUSU and the ABVP blamed each other for the violence that continued for nearly two hours. That night, the HRD Ministry sought a report immediately from the registrar.

Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', who was in Bhubaneswar a day after the incident, said educational institutions cannot be allowed to become "political adda". He vowed "strong action" against the perpetrators of the violence at JNU.

## Should Deepika visit Nagpur if not JNU: Cong

**NEW DELHI, JAN 8 (PTI):** The Congress on Wednesday took a swipe at the BJP, asking if Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone should visit the RSS headquarters in Nagpur instead of JNU.

The opposition party's reaction came amid calls, including from some BJP functionaries, to boycott Padukone's upcoming movie 'Chhapaak' for her visit to the Jawaharlal Nehru University on Tuesday to express solidarity with the students who were attacked by a mob.

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

government is filing FIRs against students and youth instead of hearing them out.

"If someone is showing concern to the protesting youth, you raise questions on him/her," he said, alleging the ruling BJP claims it is the world's largest party but it has a "small heart".

"If there is unrest across universities, we expect the Prime Minister to go there, we expect the Home Minister, the senior leader of the BJP to go and listen to the youth of this country, whichever campus we are talking about," he said in reference to protests by youth and students on various campuses. On Padukone's visit to the JNU and the BJP's criticism of it, Khara alleged the ruling party sees "bad intent" everywhere.

He alleged that the prime minister, home minister and other BJP leaders have never heard or answered the youth on their problems.

## QR code facility for voters to be in 11 assembly constituencies

New Delhi, Jan 8 (PTI): Electors can carry smartphones at polling stations in 11 assembly constituencies for accessing QR codes from the voters' helpline app if they forget to get voters' slip to the booth.

Delhi has 70 Assembly constituencies and one constituency in each of the 11 districts will have this tech-driven facility.

"In polling stations in these 11 constituencies, voters who have not been able to bring voters' slip but have a phone, can download the QR code from the voters' helpline app. And that can then be used to scan before allowing them to proceed toward the polling compartment. Phones will be kept outside the compartment," Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ranbir Singh told reporters on Tuesday.

If there is some issue in downloading the QR code or there is network issue, then the phone would not be allowed, but would have to be deposited at a locker kept at a little before the polling compartment area, Singh said.

There are 13,750 polling booths located at 2,689 locations across Delhi.

Over 1.46 crore voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in the February 8 election, according to the final electoral roll published.

There are a total of 1,46,92,136 voters -- 80,55,686 males, 66,35,635 females and 815 belonging to third gender -- in the final voters' list.

As compared to the final voters list in 2019, the number of voters in Delhi has increased by 9.96 lakh in the final roll of 2020 (up to January 1), he said.

The number of voters in various categories include overseas voters (489), service voters (11,556), voters in age group 18-19 years (2,08,883) and aged above 80 years (2,05,035).

The number of differently-abled voters are 55,823 and all facilities will be given to them like the 2019 Lok Sabha election, Singh said.

The number of vulnerable polling stations are 72, number of critical polling stations stand at 3,209, officials said.

Postal ballot facility will be provided to 'absentee voters' -- senior citizens aged above 80 and with disability -- at their homes, officials said.

### Franchise owners...

He stressed the need for such initiatives to be replicated in every sport in the State to encourage local players.

United Sikkim Shuttlers co-owner, Bhaichung Bhutia, also congratulated the organizers for promoting professional sports in the State.

He also shared his interest and national participation in badminton during his school days. He said that JPBL was a good start to provide a better platform and exposure to talented shuttlers of the State and added that JPBL was a great concept to build professionalism in sports in Sikkim.

He also reiterated the need to inculcate this concept in other sports as well.

"We want to win the championship title of the JPBL 2 to give this gift to Tarundeep Rai before his participation in the upcoming Olympics," Mr Bhutia added.

Red Panda GMTS co-owner, Tshering Sherpa, in turn, stressed the need of support from all sides for local players to take them to the higher levels.

"We have lots of talented badminton players and they need support and encouragement from all sides to take them to a higher level. JPBL will definitely motivate players to perform better," he said.

A player-cum-member of Salghari-Zoom Blockers, Alphonso Gajmer, conveyed his best wishes to all participating teams in JPBL-2. He also expressed that such a concept was much-needed in all other sports in the State to promote professionalism.

He stated that Salghari-Zoom area MLA, Sunita Gajmer, has been working to promote sportspersons from her constituency at the state and national level.

Rinzing Wangyal Chopel from SKM sports wing expressed his happiness on the party's association with the event.

He said that the event should serve as an eye-opener for other sports associations of the State to promote professionalism and encourage local sportspersons.

BAJ president, Jigmey Namgyal, who is also the head of the organizing committee, said that the organizing committee has been trying to bring Indian badminton icon, Gopichand, to JPBL-2 to further promote the league at the international level. JPBL will be played on 15 and 16 February at Jorethang.

Responding to media queries, Political Secretary to the CM, Mr Khaling stated that the sports was a priority sector of the State government. He added that many long-delayed sports infrastructures were now on the verge of completion and added that the government has revived rural sports and other competitions to provide more platforms to local sportspersons.

He further assured to support and promote the JPBL format in other sports in the State.

Likewise, Chakung-Soreng MLA, Mr Golay added that the State government and the CM have been supporting and encouraging local sportspersons and urged individuals and organisations to support local talent with their presence and encouragement during the event.

### Banking services...

federations and associations had adopted a declaration in September last year to go on the nationwide strike on January 8.

The trade unions have claimed around 25 crore people are participating in the strike to protest against the government's "anti-people" policies.

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# Tribal forum holds protest against CAA in Tripura

**AGARTALA, JAN 7 (PTI):** Hundreds of tribal people under the banner of Joint Movement against CAA (JMACAA) on Tuesday protested here against implementation of amended Citizenship Act (CAA).

JMACAA is a joint forum of three tribal political parties National Council of Tripura (NCT), Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT), Tipraland State Party (TSP) and several other social organizations like Borok People Human Rights Organisation (BPHRO) and Tribal Student Federation (TSF).

The forum had earlier observed Tripura Bandh from December 9 last year against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. They had later met Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on the issue. JMACAA convener and human rights activist Anthony Debbarma said they are against implementation of CAA in Tripura since the state has already sheltered thousands of refugees from the then East Pakistan after the partition of the country in 1947.

The princely Tripu-



ra joined Indian Union in 1949 after signing a merger agreement.

“Union Home Minister Amit Shah ji had categorically stated that that we would be called for a second round of dialogue again after 10-15 days. A month has already passed and we did not receive any indication that he would call us again.

“He said the ways to protect the interests of the tribals would be found. If the central government can't keep it's promises, how can we remain silent. Today's

protest is just a token and we shall resume our movement with more intensity”, Anthony told the gathering.

Animesh Debbarma, leader of National Conference of Tripura (NCT), a tribal party and member of JMACAA, said, “We are not against Bengali community or any religious community, but we want to protect and safeguard the interests of our community”.

The Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT), an ally of the ruling BJP in the state on

Monday launched an indefinite sit-in against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) near the headquarters of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, about 25 km from here.

The party also pressed for a separate Tipraland by carving out of the tribal council from the state which constitutes two third of the state territory.

IPFT spokesperson Mangal Debbarma said, “the demonstration will continue till the Centre takes positive step. We

want either the scrapping of the act or exempting entire Tripura from its purview”.

IPFT general secretary Mevar Kumar Jamatia said “though our alliance partner, the BJP does not agree with our stand we will continue our agitation unless an amicable solution is achieved.

“We feel achieving the separate Tipraland is the ultimate solution to end the tribal angst in the state”, Jamatia, who is also the Tripura tribal affairs minister said.

## Trade unions' strike hits postal services in Nagaland

**KOHIMA, JAN 8 (PTI):** Postal services were affected in Nagaland due to the strike called by trade unions, even as it didn't have any impact on normal life with vehicles plying and markets remaining open.

Under the banner of All India Postal Employees Union (AIPEU), the staff demonstrated outside post offices across the state, including the head post office in state

capital, demanding scrapping of the New Pension Scheme and raising a host of other issues.

Kevilekho Angami, the postmaster at the head post office, maintained that the demands of the union are genuine.

Led by assistant divisional secretary L Imtikumjuk, the postal staff demanded that the Centre should stop privatisation of government departments and public

sector undertakings.

They also demanded withdrawal of “anti-worker” labour codes and labour reforms.

Meanwhile, commercial establishments, including markets, shops, and other government offices operated as usual.

The banking sector also did not have much impact, but employees of the Central Bank of India at its Kohima and Dimapur branches joined the strike.

## CJI headed 9-judge SC bench to hear issue of women's entry in Sabarimala temple

**NEW DELHI, JAN 7 (PTI):** The Supreme Court on Tuesday formed a nine-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde to hear from January 13 the issue of allowing women and girls of all ages to enter Kerala's Sabarimala temple, along with the other contentious issues of alleged discrimination against Muslim and Parsi women.

The other judges on the bench are Justices R Banumathi, Ashok Bhushan, L Nageswara Rao, M M Shantanagoudar, S A Nazeer, R Subhash Reddy, B R Gava and Surya Kant.

The nine-judge bench has been set up after a five-judge bench headed by then CJI Ranjan Gogoi, by a 3:2 majority verdict, referred the matter to a seven-judge bench while examining the review petition filed against the historic September 28, 2018 judgement which had allowed women of all ages to enter Sabarimala temple.

Besides Justice Gogoi, Justices A M Khanwilkar and Indu Malhotra (the lone woman judge on the bench) were in majority while Justices R F Nariman and D Y Chand-

rachud had penned a minority verdict on November 14, 2019.

On the nine-judge bench, which will hear the matter from January 13, there are no judges from the previous benches.

The top court had on Monday issued a notice informing about listing of the petition filed by Indian Young Lawyers Association seeking review of the 2018 judgement.

However, the names of the judges were announced today.

While referring the matter to a larger bench, the five-judge bench had however said that the debate about the constitutional validity of religious practices like bar on entry of women and girls into a place of worship was not limited to the Sabarimala case.

The top court said such restrictions are there with regard to entry of Muslim women into mosques and 'dargahs' and Parsi women, married to non-Parsi men, being barred from the holy fire place of an Agyari.

It said it was time for the apex court to evolve a judicial policy to do “substantial and complete justice”.



## CM extends New Year greetings to Governor

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 08 JAN:**

Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang called on Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad at Raj Bhavan and extended New Year 2020 greetings today, a Raj Bhavan

release informs.

The Governor reciprocated the greetings and wished the Chief Minister happiness and well-being. Governor also urged to work earnestly for happiness and prosperity of the people of Sikkim, the release mentions.

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### Inter-Constituency Football Tournament 2019-20

Results of matches held on 07 Jan 2020			
Venues	Matches between	Score	Result
Peljor Stadium	1 <sup>st</sup> Match- Upper Barak Vrs. Upper Tadong	3-2	Match won by Upper Tadong
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Match- Namcheybong Vrs. Aritlang	1-0	Match won by Namcheybong
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Match- Syani Vrs. Kabi Lunchuk	3-1	Match won by Kabi Lunchuk
	4 <sup>th</sup> Match- Ribenock Vrs. Maritan Rumtek	4-3	Match won by Ribenock
Dentam	1 <sup>st</sup> Match- Maneybong Dentam Vrs. Soreng Chakung	2-0	Match won by Soreng Chakung
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Match- Yulsam Tashiding Vrs. Yangthang	4-2	Match won by Yulsam Tashiding
Namchi Singithang	1 <sup>st</sup> Match- Namchi Singithang Vrs. Rangang Yangang	2-1	Match won by Rangang Yangang
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Match- Namthang Rateypami Vrs. Poklok Kamrang	2-1	Match won by Namthang Rateypami

## India to be guest of honour at Paris Book Fair

**NEW DELHI, JAN 8 (PTI):** India will be the guest of honour at the Paris Book Fair 2020 to be held in March this year, organisers announced on Tuesday.

This will be the third time that India would be the guest country at the fair after 2002 and 2007.

As part of Indian participation, the fair will see representation by 30 Indian authors from various linguistic regions of the country, alongside 15 Indian publishers. It will explore themes like the 'India of tomorrow', 'writing and rewriting India's history', among others.

“The Paris Book Fair

is more than just a book fair. It is a meeting of minds. It is Europe's most important literary and publishing appointment, where India can showcase, not just in France, but in Europe, new authors and recent works and get a great platform for its large publishing industry, its vibrant and innovative projects.

“France is keen to engage with India in the publishing sector in all its diversity, through translations, through publishing incentives, through literary exchanges and more,” said Bertrand de Hartingh, Counsellor for Education, Science

and Culture, Embassy of France, and Director of the French Institute in India.

According to the organisers, around 20 new Indian titles and 15 books will be translated into French and get into reprint, respectively.

They added that the aim was to create a special “Indian moment” in France with cultural programmes in libraries, bookshops and landmarks in Paris and other cities in the European country.

To continue the cultural exchange, France is expected to be the guest of honour at the New Delhi World Book Fair 2022.

### Dual citizenship for Tamil refugees is possible: TN govt

**CHENNAI, JAN 8 (PTI):** The Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday told the Assembly that dual citizenship to Sri Lankan Tamil refugees was “possible” and wanted the Centre to ink a pact with the island nation to facilitate it.

Raising the issue, Leader of Opposition, M K Stalin said the government has been harping on giving dual citizenship to Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu and wanted to know if consultations were made with legal experts on its feasibility.

Participating in the debate on the motion of thanks to the Governor's Address, he said the an-

nual policy document too stated that the government will strive for getting them dual citizenship.

An expert had opined that Indian citizenship was the right course for Tamil refugees since Indian laws do not recognise dual citizenship, Stalin said adding Sri Lankan laws too were on the same lines.

Minister for Tamil Official Language and Culture K Pandiarajan said the Indian government has treaties related to citizenship with France, UK, America and Germany.

“There are over one lakh Indians with dual citizenship,” he said.

To facilitate dual cit-

izenship for Tamil refugees from the island nation, the Central government should go in for a treaty with Sri Lanka, he said.

As regards the Tamil refugees, they intend going to Sri Lanka and have properties like houses there and if they got only the Indian citizenship, “who will take care of their properties there?” he asked.

Considering such factors, late Chief Minister J Jayalalitha came up with the dual citizenship demand and it is the only way out, he said.

“Dual citizenship for Tamil refugees is possible,” he said and repeated the word possible.

## HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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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 4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

Interested participants may apply for registration.

**DATE: 03-01-2020**

**FIRST ROUND OF THE TOURNAMENT (SOUTH- WEST)**

**VENUES: NAMCHI SINGITHANG PLAYGROUND AND DENTAM PUBLIC PLAYGROUND**

**FIXTURE-II**

**Venue: Namchi Singithang Playground (South District Constituencies)**

<p>Tumin Lingee</p> <p>6/1/2020; 1:30 PM</p> <p>Melli</p> <p>8/1/2020; 11:30 AM</p> <p>Namchi Singithang</p> <p>7/1/2020; 11:30 AM</p> <p>Rangang Yangang</p>	<p>Burfung</p> <p>6/1/2020; 11:30 AM</p> <p>Temi Namping</p> <p>8/1/2020; 1:30 PM</p> <p>Namthang Rateypami</p> <p>7/1/2020; 1:30 PM</p> <p>Poklok Kamrang</p>
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**Venue: Dentam Public Playground (West District Constituencies)**

<p>Rinchenpong</p> <p>6/1/2020; 11:30 AM</p> <p>Salghari Zoom</p> <p>8/1/2020; 1:30 PM</p> <p>Yoksam Tashiding</p> <p>7/1/2020; 1:30 PM</p> <p>Yangthang</p>	<p>Gyalshing Bernyak</p> <p>6/1/2020; 1:30 PM</p> <p>Daramdin</p> <p>8/1/2020 11:30 AM</p> <p>Maneybong Dentam</p> <p>7/1/2020; 11:30 AM</p> <p>Soreng Chakung</p>
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**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.



## The Inequality Index

*Realities behind the smokescreen of surgical strikes and destruction on black money*

While the nation was being distracted with pride over surgical strikes [the movie now] and spite vide tasteless references to power-cuts during Diwali, an economic miracle was underway. Yes, in a year during which the aftershocks of demonetization and the below-the-belt sucker punch of GST ensured that most of the country was so broken that onions were taken off the dining tables because the garnishing had become more expensive than the main course. And to think that less than two years back, wholesale price of onions could not even cover the storage costs billed to farmers. Then, as now, a privileged very few laughed their way to the bank, their accounts secure in establishments which the monitoring agencies will not touch even as they take the wrecking ball to cooperative banks and anything else the underprivileged use. In a vulgar reiteration of how far we have veered from the pretext of being a socialist state, arrived information that India's richest 1% mopped up 73% of the total wealth generated in the country in 2017. According to this new survey by international rights group Oxfam, the rich, who have always had it good in the easily co-opted governments of the past and through the years of liberalization, are clearly having even giddier days of profiteering in the current times of uber-nationalism and in-your-face majoritarianism.

Titled 'Indian income inequality, 1922-2014: from British Raj to Billionaire Raj?', a research paper by the two economists showed that income inequality in India was at its highest in 2014 since 1922, the year the country passed the Income Tax Act. The paper's findings are now in a full-fledged report, the World Inequality Report, published by the World Inequality Lab. According to it, 10% of Indians garnered 56% of the national income in 2014. To get some perspective, sample this - the top 1% of earners captured less than 21% of total income in the late 1930s, before dropping to 6% in the early 1980s and rising to 22% in 2014, the report reveals. In 2017, the richest 1% rolled up 73% of all earnings in 2017!

And here is some more context- the Oxfam report underlines that 67 crore Indians, comprising the population's poorest half, saw their wealth rise by just 1% in 2017. Our nationalist economists will see no problems in this figure and will point out that in comparison, globally, 3.7 billion people that account for the poorest half of population saw no increase in their wealth and that 82% of the wealth generated last year worldwide went to the top 1%.

But that can be no consolation, right?

And in case you are veering towards that conclusion, last year's survey had showed that India's richest 1% held a huge 58% of the country's total wealth - higher than the global figure of about 50%. In 2017, the wealth of India's richest 1% increased by over Rs 20.9 lakh crore during 2017 - an amount equivalent to total budget of the central government in 2017-18! Here is some more context - In India, it will take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what the top paid executive at a leading Indian garment firm earns in a year!!

Clearly, for inclusive growth, the nation needs labour-intensive sectors to be supported so that more jobs are created; agriculture needs to be incentivized so that existing strength and wider sections of the population benefit and social protection schemes need to be reinforced so that more people feel more confident to take risks. Take a look at the major policy interventions imposed on the country in the last three years and the maliciousness with which they undercut all the sectors mentioned in the previous sentence becomes apparent. Could this bloodletting in the unorganized sector and agriculture and suspension of subsidies have contributed to the windfall pouring into the income accounts of the nation's richest? Why did no one notice this earlier? Was the dazzle of nationalist posturing so dazzling that it blinded all realities away? It clearly did, but we are still not taking note.

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# China can still salvage 'one country, two systems' in Hong Kong - here's how

DAVID SKIDMORE  
*theconversation.com*

Authorities in Hong Kong may have hoped to start 2020 by putting a turbulent period of sustained, often violent protests behind them.

Instead hundreds of thousands of protesters ushered in the new year by taking to the streets. Around 400 were arrested as protesters continued their push for political reform on the densely populated island.

The clash between the government and demonstrators is now seven months long and has served to further erode Hong Kongers' trust in China's commitment to the "one country, two systems" formula.

Under that principle, the region was granted a degree of autonomy over its own matters in 1997. But a perception that Beijing is increasingly imposing its authority has led not only to a more militant protest movement, but one that is eyeing separation from the mainland.

As a political scientist who has closely followed political developments in Hong Kong over the last decade, I have watched trust in Beijing ebb away during the sustained unrest.

If China wants to correct this course and convince Hong Kongers that their best hope lies in autonomy rather than independence, then I believe it must permit genuine democracy in the region.

### CYCLE OF UNREST

The people of Hong Kong have not had much of a say in their own destiny.

Not only did they lack political power as a colony of the British, but they also weren't consulted in the drafting of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration that set the terms for the 1997 handover of the territory from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, that agreement offered an implicit bargain to Hong Kongers: They would submit to Beijing's sovereignty in return for the promise of a "high degree of autonomy" on the basis of "one country, two systems."

Over the past two decades, major outbreaks of unrest in Hong Kong have followed attempts by Beijing to impose unwanted measures that violate this bargain. Large-scale protests beat back Beijing-directed legislative proposals dealing with sedition in 2003, national education in 2012 and extradition last year. The Umbrella Movement protests of 2014 succeeded in stymieing Beijing's proposed revisions to Hong Kong's system for selecting its chief executive, but protesters' demands for universal suffrage and an open nomination process were rejected.

Many Hong Kongers consider this interference a violation of the promised autonomy built into the terms of the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution. This interference reinforces fears that the city will lose its autonomy

entirely after 2047, the end point of commitments made under the Joint Declaration.

With only limited and inadequate democratic mechanisms at their disposal, Hong Kongers have developed a vibrant and increasingly militant protest culture as a primary means for exercising political influence.

### AUTONOMY OR INDEPENDENCE?

Efforts to steer Hong Kong toward greater integration with the mainland have backfired, undermining trust in Beijing's promise of a "high degree of autonomy."



The result is an ongoing cycle of radicalization. The focal point for many protesters has moved away from any one particular issue to focus on the fundamental status of Hong Kong's relationship to China.

Growing numbers of people are questioning why they should keep their side of the bargain - accepting Beijing's sovereignty over Hong Kong. According to a recent Reuters poll, 17% of Hong Kongers express outright support for independence from China, while another 20% express dissatisfaction with the "one country, two systems" model. Moreover, 59% of respondents said they supported the recent protests and over one-third had themselves attended a protest.

According to a separate survey, support for eventual independence among young people approaches 40%. Many young people have also come to reject any "Chinese" identity in favor of a "Hong Kong" identity.

The depth of discontent among Hong Kongers was reflected in the District Council elections held on Nov. 24. These low-level posts have traditionally been dominated by pro-Beijing political parties. The recent elections, however, brought a record turnout with pro-democratic parties winning close to 90% of contested positions.

### BEIJING'S MISCALCULATION

To blunt the growth of separatist sentiment in Hong Kong, Beijing must tackle what social scientists call a "commitment problem." In any negotiation, each side will cooperate only if they believe that the other side is both willing and able to carry out any commitments made as part of the bargain.

If either side believes the other side's commitments lack credibility, then cooperation fails.

What China needs to do now is show that it is committed to respecting the autonomy promises embodied in the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law.

I believe the best way to do that is for Beijing to stop manipulating governance of the city. As long as selection of the chief executive and a majority of the Legislative Council lies in Beijing's hands, it will be difficult for the mainland to resist meddling in Hong Kong's affairs and for Hong Kongers to feel that au-

tonomy offers them any real say over their fate.

In other words, Beijing could undercut calls for independence and interrupt the cycle of mass protests by offering Hong Kongers the ability to select their leaders through free and fair elections.

Beijing badly miscalculated in 2014 when it proposed electoral reforms that fell far short of the demands of Hong Kong's pan-democratic camp, a coalition of parties that advocate universal suffrage. As a consequence, older, mainstream leaders lost control of the protest movement to younger, more militant activists. By 2019, young radicals resorted to violent street actions coupled with harsh anti-Beijing rhetoric. Yet a move toward democracy could still calm the waters provided the process allowed for genuine and effective local participation.

This proposal may be far-fetched. Indeed, some accounts suggest that leaders in Beijing are laying plans to move in the opposite direction by taking more direct control over Hong Kong's political and legal institutions. Moreover, Beijing worries that full democracy in Hong Kong might lead to demands for the same elsewhere in China.

If a democratic solution to China's Hong Kong problem appears unattractive to Beijing, the alternatives may be worse. The current cycle of provocation, protest, radicalization and rising separatism can lead to only one eventual result: a violent crackdown that would damage China's reputation and leave it in costly occupation of a sullen and defiant population for a generation or more.

*[the writer is Professor of Political Science, Drake University]*

# Why media education in schools needs to be about much more than 'fake news'

FRANCES YEOMAN & KATE MORRIS  
*theconversation.com*

For UK, the 2019 general election is already being remembered as the one where misinformation went mainstream. It was, of course, already on the political agenda after the 2016 referendum and US election, with growing numbers of academics and parliament sounding the alarm over foreign actors using so-called "fake news" to disrupt the democratic processes.

But what was seen over the election period was not the work of fringe actors. Instead, major political parties appeared to adopt tactics previously associated with shady players operating at the edges of the information ecosystem. No major party was entirely innocent, as evidenced by First Draft's Cross Check project. But the Conservatives' campaign repeatedly adopted controversial tactics. Tactics such as having its press office pose as a fact-checking service and editing BBC news footage to imply that prominent journalists supported the party's line on Brexit.

Voters, the evidence suggests, were caught in a storm of misleading Facebook posts, memes and tweaked videos. This was a covert propaganda campaign and its impact has yet to be established.

Research from the Reuters Institute for News has shown for some time that growing numbers of people in the UK access their news online - 74% in 2018. Over a third (39%) get news via social media.

But recent reports have revealed that the situation is even more com-

plex, with work by the Guardian and Ofcom showing people over-reporting news consumption, skimming over headlines and consuming so-called news via user-generated memes, celebrity influencer posts and politicians on social media.

### INFORMATION CRISIS

There have been calls for urgent reform to the laws around political advertising to take account of this confusing digital landscape during elections. This is something that politicians must take seriously in the months that follow.

But there is also space for a bottom-up response to this information crisis. The future electorate must be taught how to navigate the modern news landscape. Young people also need to be helped to understand why - in this age of misinformation - public interest news is more important than ever.

Far from being "digital natives", evidence from the US points to a generation of young people who have no idea where their information online comes from, or why they are reading it. A report by the Stanford History Education Group evaluated the online reasoning skills of 3,446 high school students age 12 to 17 between June 2018 and May 2019. They described the results they found as "troubling".

There is no evidence to suggest young people in the UK are any better. In fact, the 2018 Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills found that only 2% of children have the critical literacy skills needed to identify a credible news story.

### NEWS LITERACY NEEDED

A growing number of educators, policy makers and third-sector groups are calling for news and critical digital literacy to be taught in schools, with over half of teachers reporting that the current national curriculum does not equip pupils with the literacy skills they need to tackle fake news.

In its final report on Fake News, published in February 2019, the UK parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee reiterated its calls for digital literacy to be the fourth pillar of education alongside reading, writing and maths. But thus far these calls have fallen on deaf ears.

In its response to the committee's report the government insisted there was no need, arguing students already study the core components of digital literacy in history, English and IT. There have also been suggestions that governmental action is not needed because others are active in this space.

There are indeed news organisations, charities and others running news literacy workshops in schools, covering topics such as how articles are put together, and why news matters. The government-commissioned Cairncross review into the future of journalism highlighted some of these and suggested that more collaboration between them could be encouraged as part of a governmental media literacy strategy.

These initiatives, such as News-Wise, a Google-funded partnership between the Guardian Foundation and the National Literacy Trust aimed at primary school children, do

valuable work. But many are limited in scope and scale, reliant on external funding and in most cases not subject to any independent evaluation or benchmarking.

And the numbers do not add up. There are close to nine million schoolchildren in England according to Department for Education figures from 2018-2019. But such initiatives are reaching no more than 10,000 children - and that is a generous estimate. This is insufficient to deal with the scale of the challenge.

### CHECK YOUR SOURCES

After he found himself at the centre of a "fake news" row about a genuine picture his newspaper published of a boy lying on the floor of Leeds General Infirmary during the final week of the election campaign, the editor of the Yorkshire Post urged readers not to trust a social media poster who "disappears into the night". Instead, he urged them to appreciate the difference between that and verified, independent and accountable journalism.

But this is easier said than done. News is no longer spoon-fed by a handful of gatekeeper media outlets. This is not a bad thing, but to enable tomorrow's votes to adopt a healthy news diet, schools must equip them with the skills to do this. And the government needs to act to make this happen sooner rather than later.

*[Frances Yeoman is Senior Lecturer in Journalism, Liverpool John Moores University; Kate Morris is Lecturer in Journalism, Goldsmiths, University of London]*



*No copyright on real-life events: HC on suit opposing 'Chhapaak'*

**MUMBAI, JAN 8 (PTI):** Paving the way for the release of Deepika Padukone-starrer "Chhapaak", the Bombay High Court on Wednesday said no one person can claim copyright on a story inspired by true events or incidents. A writer, Rakesh Bharti had filed a suit in the HC claiming that he had originally penned a story on the life of an acid attack survivor on which "Chhapaak", directed by Meghna Gulzar, is based.

Bharti in his suit sought for his name to be included in the credits as one of the creative writers and also sought a stay on the January 10, 2020, release of the movie.

After hearing brief arguments on the interim relief sought by Bharti, Justice S C Gupte made prima facie observations that copyright cannot be claimed over such stories.

"This is a real life event. When the source of the story is common then no one can claim copyright. Just because someone has or is writing a story on a real life event or incident does not mean nobody else cannot," Justice Gupte said.

"You (Bharti) are claiming monopoly on a real life incident. It is impossible to grant copyright on such stories," the judge said.

Bharti's counsels Girish Godbole and Ashok Sarogi then made a statement to the court that, as on today, they are not seeking interim relief by way of stay on the movie's release.

The lawyers said they would keep the arguments on copyright infringement open and would compare the scripts once "Chhapaak" is released.

The HC accepted the statement and posted the suit for further hearing after six weeks.

The movie is based on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal.

The suit filed by Bharti claimed that he had conceived an idea/script for a movie, tentatively titled 'Black Day', and got it registered with the Indian Motion Pictures Producers' Association (IMPPA) in February 2015.

Bharti said since then he has been working on the script and approaching several artists and producers, including Fox Star Studio, for narration.

# Violence, arson across Bengal as strikers try to enforce bandh; 55 arrested in Kolkata

**KOLKATA, JAN 8 (PTI):** Incidents of violence and arson were reported from various parts of West Bengal with buses, a police vehicle and government properties vandalised by strikers who tried to enforce the 24-hour bandh on Wednesday.

Protesters blocked a major road in Sujapur area of Malda district, set tyres on fire, ransacked government buses and torched several vehicles, including a police van.

When police tried to control the situation, they hurled stones and crude bombs.

The police then baton-charged the mob, lobbed teargas shells and fired rubber bullets, officials said.

In various parts of the state, railway tracks and roads were blocked, affecting normal life.

The protesters burnt tyres and blocked roads in various parts of the East Burdwan district, besides staging sit-in on railway tracks, affecting train services.

In East Midnapore district, stones were hurled at buses, following which the protesters clashed with police, leading to several arrests, officials said.

Several buses were also vandalised in Cooch Behar district by the protesters.

The bandh supporters tried to break past barricades in Kolkata's Central Avenue area, provoking police to use force.

Several strikers were held, they said.

In Dum Dum and Lake Town, clashes broke out be-



tween Left activists and TMC members as rallies in favour of the strike and those against it crossed paths. A huge police contingent was rushed to the spot to control the situation, officials said.

Railway tracks were blocked at Jadavpur and vehicular movement was disrupted on nearby roads, following which police baton-charged strikers. CPI(M) legislature party leader Sujana Chakraborty was detained for allegedly instigating violence, officials said. Members of Jadavpur University students' union also joined the strikers and staged demonstration near their campus.

Country-made bombs were found on several roads

in Barasat area of the North 24 Parganas district. Crude bombs were also found on railway tracks at some places in the district, they said.

The strikers took out rallies in the industrial belt of the district, including Barrackpore and Sodepur, and blocked roads and railway tracks.

Daily commuters and office-goers across the state had a harrowing time as the number of vehicles plying on the roads was much less than other days.

At least 175 local trains were cancelled in the Seal-dah and Howrah divisions of the Eastern Railway owing to the blockades. In the Howrah-Kharagpur section of the

South Eastern Railway, there were blockades at some places for durations ranging from 10 minutes to half an hour, but no train was cancelled, officials said.

In Kolkata, government buses were plying normally but the number of private buses was fewer. Metro services were normal in the city and auto-rickshaws and taxis were also seen on the roads.

Heavy police deployment was seen in several areas, including in Tollygunge, Behala, Esplanade and Shyambazar.

Slamming the Left and the Congress for trying to enforce the bandh, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that those who do not have any political existence in the state are

trying to ruin its economy by pursuing "cheap politics" of strikes. She said police will take action as per law against the protesters.

Till noon, around 55 people were arrested from different parts of the city for allegedly trying to block vehicles, stall government buses or forcibly stop shopkeepers from opening their establishments, a senior officer of the Kolkata Police said.

Flight services were normal at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport but train services were partially affected.

The Trinamool Congress also took out rallies opposing the strike at some places in north Bengal and urged

people to maintain normalcy. Branches and ATMs of most of the banks in the state remained closed as employees stayed away. Contractual workers also joined the stir. According to the All India Bank Employees Association (AIBE), some 28 lakh cheques worth over Rs 21,000 crore could not be sent for clearing.

Staff of the Reserve Bank of India also joined the strike.

The All India Reserve Bank Employees Association (AIRBEA) general secretary Samir Ghosh said strike was successful.

Majority of the jute mills in the state also remained shut.

Life at Bengal's IT hub Sector V was near normal, although there was partial impact in attendance in the early hours due to disruptions in transport, NASSCOM sources said. The state government offices recorded around 95 attendance, a senior official claimed.

The government has announced that no casual leave for absence, either in the first-half of the day or in the second-half or for the whole day, nor any other leave shall be granted to any employee during the strike.

The strike has been called by trade unions INTUC, AI-TUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICTTU, LPE, UTUC, along with various sectoral independent federations and associations.

Their demands include a minimum pension of Rs 6,000 for everyone, minimum support price (MSP) for farmers and adequate supply of ration to people.

## Jammu students protest against mob attack in JNU



**JAMMU, JAN 8 (PTI):** Students under the banner of the All India Students' Federation (AISF) on Wednesday staged a peaceful demonstration here against the recent attack on the students and professors at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi.

The protesters, who were also joined by some senior citizens, were carrying placards that read 'Danda Mat Chalao- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Don't use batons,

save and educate the daughter)', 'J&K in solidarity with JNU' and 'Remove JNU Vice Chancellor'.

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

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

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

On Sunday, a masked mob armed with sticks and rods attacked students and teachers of JNU and damaged property on the campus, injuring at least 35 people, including its students' union president Aishe Ghosh.

## Maha: Chalcolithic site "destroyed" in highway work

**AURANGABAD, JAN 8 (PTI):** The Maharashtra archaeology department has alleged that a Chalcolithic site, which was to be excavated next month, has been destroyed during soil scooping work for a highway at Hatnur village in Aurangabad district.

The work was stopped after the department wrote to the revenue department, a state archaeology official said.

However, preliminary

reports show that 70 per cent of the prime site area has been destroyed, the official said.

A 3,500-4,000 years old Chalcolithic site was discovered in Hatnur village in Aurangabad in 2015.

"Such a site is rare in Marathwada, and it was supposed to be excavated in February by state archaeology department and Deccan College," curator of state archaeology department Mayur

Thakre told PTI.

However, when the department got to know that soil was being scooped out from site for the construction of a highway nearby, it wrote to the sub-division officer (SDO) to stop work, Thakre said.

Meanwhile, revenue department officials have not denied digging on the site, but when asked about who had given them permission, they went into "need to

check" mode.

Speaking about the issue, Collector Uday Choudhari said, "If our office has not received any information about the site from the concerned department, then it's not our fault. However, if permissions were given to dig the site despite getting an intimation from the archaeological department, then the concerned officials will have to face inquiry," Choudhari said.

## CAA violates constitutional provisions: Amartya Sen

**BENGALURU, JAN 7 (PTI):** Nobel laureate Amartya Sen on Tuesday claimed that the Citizenship Amendment Act violates Constitutional provisions.

"The CAA law that has been passed in my judgment should be turned down by the Supreme Court on the grounds of it being unconstitutional because you cannot have certain types of fundamental human rights linking citizenship with religious differences," he told reporters at the Infosys Science Foundation's Infosys Prize-2019 here.

The Nobel laureate said what really should matter for deciding cit-

izenship is the place a person is born, lived and so on. About the CAA, he said "My reading of the constitution is that it violates the provision of the constitution."

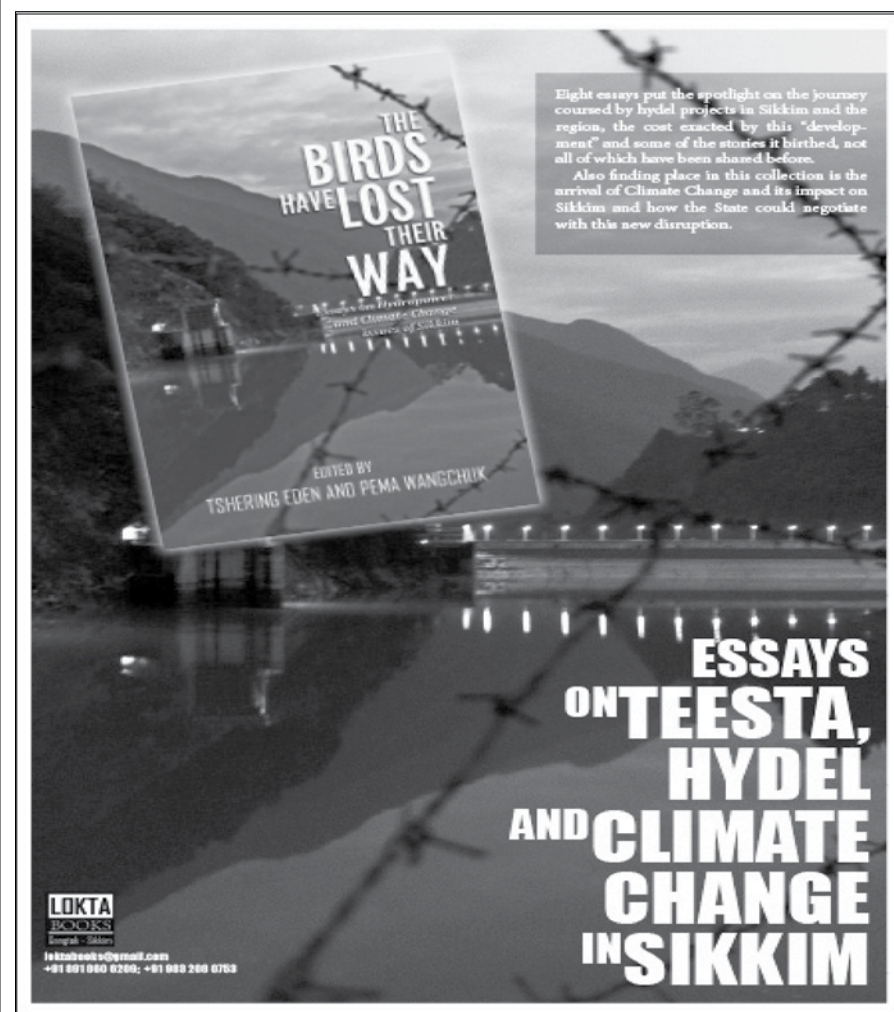
Explaining further, Sen said citizenship on the basis of religion has been a matter of discussion in the constituent assembly where it was decided that "using religion for the purpose of discrimination of this kind will not be acceptable."

Sen, however, agreed that a Hindu treated badly in a country outside India deserves sympathy and his case must be taken into account. "It (con-

sideration for citizenship) has to be independent, of religion but take cognisance of the sufferings and other issues into account," Sen said.

Speaking about the violence in the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Sen took note of the fact that the university administration could not prevent entry of outsiders coming on the premises and creating violence.

"The communication between the university administration and the police got delayed due to which ill treatment of students went on without being prevented by the law enforcement agencies," he added.



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## Mane crowned Africa's 2019 Player of the Year

**HURGHADA (EGYPT), JAN 8 (AFP):** Liverpool star Sadio Mane was crowned on Tuesday as Africa's 2019 Player of the Year for the first time at an awards gala in Egypt.

The 27-year old Senegalese striker was up against his Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah, the Egyptian who won the award the last two years, and Algerian Riyad Mahrez of Manchester City. "I am really happy and at the same time I am really proud to win this award," said Mane at the ceremony organised by the Confederation of African Football in the Egyptian Red Sea city of Hurghada.

"It's a big day for me."

Mane became the second star from Senegal to be named African Player of the Year after El Hadji Diouf, who was the continent's best player in 2001 and 2002. He scored 34 goals and produced 12 assists in 61 appearances in 2019, according to CAF statistics.

Salah's tally stood at 26 goals and 10 assists in 55 matches while Mahrez accounted for 14 goals and 18 assists in 48 games last year.

The key Senegalese player shared the 2018/19 Premier League Golden Boot award with Salah and Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang from Gabon.

"I would love to thank all the Senegalese people. They have been for me all the time, they push me," said Mane, extending sincere gratitude to people from his village Bambali. - AFRICA'S BEST IN 2019 -

FIFA president Gianni Infantino as well as former Argentinian player Juan Sebastian Veron and Brazil's Cafu attended Tuesday's event. Some of Africa's former star players including Senegal's Diouf, Egypt's Ahmed Hassan and Algeria's Rabah Madjer were also at the ceremony.

Neither Salah nor Mahrez, who was playing for Manchester City, were present on Tuesday. Mane, Salah and Mahrez played for their respective countries in the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations.

Salah's Egypt crashed out of the competition shortly after it kicked off but Mane and Mahrez faced off in the final.

Algeria claimed the title following a 1-0 victory over Senegal in Cairo. At the ceremony, other male awards went to Algerian coach Djamel Belmadi, Algerian Youcef Belaili for African Interclubs Player of the Year and Algeria's national team.

The award for the youth category was given to Morocco's Achraf Hakimi of Borussia Dortmund. Female awardees included Nigerian Asisat Oshoala, who won the African Women's Player of the Year prize for the fourth time.

South African national team boss Desiree Ellis was also voted top coach for the second consecutive year. Cameroon's women's team was selected as the continent's best after reaching the last 16 of the World Cup.

The Egyptian Football Association also won the Federation of the Year award.

# Shape-shifting City almost disappear from sight as United grandees look on

**JONATHAN LIEWMANCHESTER, 08 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** You can't hit what you can't see. On a mild but riotous night at Old Trafford Manchester City served up a beating as swaggering and dominant as any they have managed at this ground. In front of the grandees of Red Manchester – Wayne Rooney, Sir Alex Ferguson, Ryan Giggs – City executed a coup de grâce born of pure disrespect, United taking the best part of an hour to work out just what, exactly, was going on out there.

What had happened was that City had simply disappeared from view, slipped into the cracks, eluded detection. Had Raheem Sterling been a little more clinical in front of goal, the scoreline might even have been embarrassing. United's Plan A, meanwhile, foundered against a fluid, kaleidoscopic City side who moved the ball forwards with seamless, almost ghostly speed. It's hard to play on the counter-attack, after all, if there's nothing to counter.

This was, in many ways, a derby played in the shadow of its predecessor, a month ago, when United conjured a stunning win at the Etihad Stadium by tear-



ing City apart again and again on the counter-attack. You could be sure that Pep Guardiola had spent plenty of time in the interim plotting a fix. Partly it's the problem-solving obsessive in him, but partly too it's the sense that Guardiola seems to detest getting countered more than most: he sees it not just as a tactical flaw but some deeper failing of imagination and ingenuity and basic manliness.

And so as the teams were revealed an hour before the game, a certain intrigue swirled around Old Trafford. No Sergio

Agüero. No Gabriel Jesus. Six midfielders, or seven if you included Fernando in central defence. There has always been a part of Guardiola that adores midfielders above all others, that longs one day to put 11 of them out on the pitch, merrily rondo-ing the ball into the net like some whirling, reeling ceilidh routine. So what was he up to here?

We didn't have to wait long to find out. It was, in effect, a 4-4-2 without either of City's two main strikers. Or, if you preferred, a 4-2-4 with Sterling and Riyad

Mahrez as the advanced wingers, or perhaps a Spanish-style 4-6-0, or even – if you squinted quite hard – a 4-3-3 with Kevin De Bruyne as the false nine. The point was that there was no point, no focus, no recognised axis of attack: just a series of multiple pivots all buffeting gently and randomly against each other like windchimes.

This was wilful shape-shifting, shadows of shadows, a trick of the light, smoke and Mahrez. Occasionally Ilkay Gündogan would be the farthest man forward. Occasionally it would be Kyle

Walker, as with City's first goal, when he surged deep into United territory before laying the ball off for Bernardo Silva's unstoppable finish. Occasionally he would be the deepest midfielder, picking the ball up from in between the centre-backs. Occasionally it would be Mahrez, whose role appeared to be as much precautionary as predatory: hanging back on the right wing (on Guardiola's frequent screamed instruction) to deter the quick out-ball to Brandon Williams.

The result was a first half of the most law-

less abandon, as United grasped with empty fists at a City side who may as well have been playing with a two-second head start. On the half-hour Mahrez broke United's lamentable attempt at an offside trap and doubled City's lead with Guardiola's favourite finish: the pass into an ungarded net. Six minutes later the match, if not the tie, was over, Andreas Pereira walking the ball into his own net after De Bruyne had not only turned the desperate Phil Jones but rifled through his pockets, deleted his Netflix watchlist and changed

the default language on his phone to Mandarin.

United were far from blameless, of course. Their retention of the ball was abysmal and their tactics, too, felt hopelessly naive: attempting to play an aggressive high line with Jones, Victor Lindelöf and David de Gea would have been ambitious enough against a regular-strength opposition, let alone City. And not until the introduction of Nemanja Matic and Angel Gomes in the second half did United manage to wrest back any sort of control of the game, pulling a goal back and looking briefly vertebrate.

Ahead of this fixture Guardiola urged United to keep faith in Ole Gunnar Solskjær. You can probably insert your own joke there. But he had a point: this game was a snapshot of two teams at very different stages in their cycles. It helps, of course, when you have a squad of City's quality and versatility to call on, drilled and grooved in the nuances of Pep-ball, able to change shape at a moment's notice.

This, ultimately, was the difference between them: a coach searching for fixes and a coach still striving to build something worthy of fixing.

## Amazing to see how India nurtures its young players: Mickey Arthur



**BHARAT SHARMA INDORE, JAN 8 (PTI):** Sri Lanka coach Mickey Arthur feels that international cricket teams can learn from India on how to nurture young players and empower them with responsibilities at critical junctures.

Be it in the bowling or batting department, cricketing powerhouse India has built a solid bench strength for all formats under Virat Kohli's leadership. And that has left Arthur impressed.

"It has been interesting watching them introduce young players and giving them responsibility at critical times, that has been so good. And seeing those young players respond has been amazing. I think India in cricket is in really, really good shape at the moment," said the 51-year-old Arthur responded to a PTI query after India beat Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the second T20 International.

"You look at someone like KL Rahul he hit some shots that were absolutely amazing. India along with probably Australia now I think Australia have found their

mojo again are certainly the flagbearers in world cricket," said Arthur.

Before Sri Lanka, Arthur coached South Africa (2005-10), Australia (2010-13) and Pakistan (2016-19). India are not as strong in the T20 format as they in the other two formats but Arthur can barely find any chink in their armoury.

"They are a great cricket team and there are no apparent weaknesses."

Arthur has taken over a Sri Lankan team in transition and know that it is very much a work in progress. On Tuesday, most of the Sri Lankan batsmen threw it away after getting starts and that did not go down well with the head coach. India chased down the 143-run target in 17.3 overs.

"We did not get enough runs. We lost one of our bowlers (Isuru Udana) unfortunately in the warm-up, but I think we were about 20-25 runs short of putting India under some pressure.

"You look at someone like KL Rahul he hit some shots that were absolutely amazing. India along with probably Australia now I think Australia have found their

us, and that is going to be the journey for us."

Arthur admitted that it would take some time for the young batting unit to gain some confidence.

"It is quite a young batting unit. For us as coaching staff and players, we have got some serious work to do in terms of gameplan, match awareness and playing the big moments. I think we had 49 dot balls tonight, which is too many, as the best teams in the world (would) have 25 dot balls."

The coach wants his players to rotate the strike more often than trying to hit every ball out of the park.

"That is something we need to keep working on. There are too many big shots without the ability to keep rotating the strike. If you cut those 49 (dot balls) by 24 then you have got another 24 to score off, and with strike rotation you put the bowlers off a little bit, you (may) get a bad ball, an extra boundary, and suddenly we are up to 170. And with that you can challenge the likes of a very good Indian team, added Arthur.

## Bengaluru face Jamshedpur challenge at home

**BENGALURU, JAN 8 (PTI):** Defending champions Bengaluru FC face an out-of-form Jamshedpur FC in an Indian Super League clash at the Sree Kanteerava stadium here on Thursday.

Bengaluru are coming into this tie on the back of a confidence-boosting 2-1 win over FC Goa and will fancy their chances against a Jamshedpur side who are winless in five matches.

Carles Cuadrat side, placed third on the table with 19 points from 11 matches, can consolidate their spot in the top four with a win on Thursday.

Jamshedpur, meanwhile, cannot afford to lose. Given that they are sixth with 13 points from 10 matches, a loss will see them fall further behind in the race for the top-four spots.

Captain Sunil Chhetri, who was instrumental in Bengaluru's win against FC Goa with two brilliant goals, will once again be the key man for the home side. Chhetri has scored seven goals already this season and

has been a saving grace for Bengaluru's attack which has scored just 13 goals so far.

Cuadrat will be worried with the poor run of form his wingers Udanta Singh and Ashique Kuruniyan are going through but will hope new recruit Deshorn Brown is able to make an immediate impact.

"Sunil Chhetri is our top scorer but we are creating chances, but other players should also score. All the attacking players are working hard to score. I am sure they will help us during the next matches. We play in a good way and we create a lot of chances," said Bengaluru goalkeeper coach Javier Pinillos.

Another factor going in favour of Bengaluru is their water-tight defence which has let in just seven goals this season. It will be a huge ask for Jamshedpur FC, who are without their star striker Sergio Castel, to breach the Blues' backline.

"Jamshedpur FC have shown this season that they play very good

football and that they are a very good side. We have to be careful of them and prepare well. We cannot be overconfident," said Pinillos.

Jamshedpur, who are desperate for a win, need to show a lot more application and resolve than what they have shown so far. Antonio Iriondo's side have missed Sergio Castel and Piti, without whom the team has looked different.

The form of Farukh Chowdhury and Aniket Jadhav has tapered off as well, all of which have led to a poor run of form for the 'Men of Steel' that has seen them pick only three points from the last five games.

"Every match is different, you have to create chances and then finish the chances. Without Sergio Castel, we are creating chances, but we are not able to finish those chances. Obviously, his absence is worrying. He is still not fit to play. Hopefully, he will be able to play from the next match," said Iriondo.

Defensive lapses have

not helped them either. They have conceded six goals in the last three games with individual errors at the back scuppering Iriondo's plans. They have to be vigilant throughout on Thursday, given Bengaluru often force the issue in the second half.

Iriondo will hope the return of Noe Acosta from injury will help his team.

"We are facing Bengaluru. I love to play against great teams. It is a very good chance for me to look at how the team has been improving. We have been improving in the game, but we are not getting the goals due to Sergio's injury," Iriondo said.

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## Boult, Latham doubtful starters for India series

**AUCKLAND, JAN 8 (PTI):** New Zealand pace spearhead Trent Boult and wicketkeeper batsman Tom Latham are doubtful starters for the home series against India after the duo suffered fractures in the recently-concluded Test series against Australia.

Boult was ruled out of the final Test between New Zealand and Australia after fracturing his right hand when he was struck on the gloves by a Mitchell Starc delivery and coach Gary Stead said the pacer was "touch-and-go to be available" for the Twenty20 series against India.

"Boult has been resting his broken right-hand and will return

to bowling later this week," Stead said in a statement on Wednesday.

"He'll be touch-and-go to be available for the Indian T20 series later this month and we'll continue to monitor him closely over the next few weeks," he added.

The 27-year-old Latham broke his right little finger while claiming the catch of Marnus Labuschagne on day four of the third and final Test between Australia and New Zealand in Sydney, ruling him out for days.

"An X-ray has confirmed a fractured finger for Tom Latham. He will require approximately four weeks of rehabilitation after the fracture to his right pinky fin-

ger," New Zealand Cricket said in a statement.

"The injury occurred on the fourth day of the Sydney Test when he claimed the final catch before the Australian declaration," it added.

After suffering an 0-3 Test series loss to Australia, New Zealand are set to host India this month.

The Blackcaps take on the Men in Blue for a five-match T20 series starting in Auckland on January 24 followed by three ODIs and two Tests.

Latham is the newest entrant to the Kiwi's worrisome injury list that includes speedsters Boult, Lockie Ferguson and Matt Henry.



# Four killed in car bombing near Somalia parliament

At least four people were killed, including a senior government official, and 10 wounded when a car bomb exploded close to a checkpoint near Somalia's parliament in the capital Mogadishu on Wednesday, police said.

A plume of thick black smoke was seen over the city and witnesses said a number of vehicles were on fire.

Islamist group Al-Shabaab claimed the attack, after a rise in activity in recent days by the Al-Qaeda linked group which has seen it inflict mass casualties in Somalia and attack a US military base in Kenya.

"Explosives were packed in a vehicle which the security forces think was trying to pass through the checkpoint, but because he could not do that, the suicide bomber detonated it," said police officer Adan Abdullahi. "Initial reports we have received indicate four people were killed and more than 10 others were wounded in the blast."

Bile Ismail, the manager of finances at the ministry for women and human rights, was among those killed, relatives and colleagues told AFP.

"We have indeed lost a brother and good friend in the blast this morning," Abdiqani Omar, the ministry's former direc-



tor general, told AFP.

"He was sitting in the car waiting in line at the checkpoint when the blast occurred and his body (was) badly burned inside the car," he added.

- "There was chaos" - Abdirahman Mohamed, who was at a nearby grocery store when the blast occurred, said he saw several corpses. "I saw the dead bodies of several people, some of them killed by shrapnel inside their vehicles. There was chaos... and ambulances reached the scene soon after the blast," he said.

Shamso Ali, another witness, described "smoke and chaos along

the road, the blast was very heavy". "Thanks to God I was a distance away but I saw the smoke and several vehicles caught on fire," he said.

Mogadishu is regularly hit by attacks by the Shabaab, which has fought for more than a decade to topple the Somali government.

The powerful blast comes after the Shabaab claimed a car bombing in Mogadishu on December 28 that killed 81 people.

That attack, which hit a busy checkpoint in the southwest of the city, was Somalia's deadliest assault in two years. Scores were wounded. The Shabaab has also

managed to expand its network in the region, especially in Kenya which has suffered several devastating attacks in retaliation for sending troops into Somalia in 2011.

On Sunday, three US citizens died and several aircraft and military vehicles were destroyed when the Shabaab stormed a military base in Kenya's coastal Lamu region.

Also Sunday, just hours after the attack, police arrested three men who tried to force their way into a British military training camp in the central Kenyan town of Nanyuki. The Al-Qaeda-linked group has

in the past carried out bloody sieges against civilians in Kenya, such as the upmarket Westgate Mall in 2013 and Garissa University in 2015.

The uptick in attacks comes almost a year since the January 15 siege on an upscale Nairobi hotel which left 21 people dead.

In recent statements, the Shabaab has referred to an increase in US military air strikes under President Donald Trump, accusing Washington of killing innocent civilians.

AFRICOM said in April it had killed more than 800 people in 110 strikes in Somalia since April 2017.

# Putin visits Turkey to talk Libya, Syria and gas

ISTANBUL, JAN 8 (AFP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will host Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Wednesday to inaugurate a new gas pipeline, with tensions in Libya and Syria also on the agenda.

Putin arrived late on Tuesday after paying a surprise visit to Syria -- his first to Damascus since the war began -- at a moment of acute uncertainty in the Middle East following the assassination of top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani by the United States.

Russia's leader will seek to boost his credentials as a regional powerbroker at the symbolic opening of the Turk-Stream pipeline, which brings Russian gas to Turkey and southern Europe via the Black Sea.

TurkStream and the Nord Stream pipelines under the Baltic allow Russia to increase gas supplies to Europe without having to rely on Ukraine.

But Moscow's increasing domination of European energy markets has worried the US, which last month sanctioned firms working on TurkStream and the almost completed Nord Stream 2.

The ceremony in Istanbul, due to start at 1200 GMT, reflects a dramatic improvement in

ties between Russia and Turkey -- two countries seemingly on the verge of war less than five years ago after Turkey shot down a Russian jet.

They remain on opposing sides in the Syria conflict and could be on a collision course in Libya.

Last week, Turkey sent its first troops to help defend the UN-backed Tripoli government, which is under siege from strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Erdogan says 2,500 Russian mercenaries are among those supporting Haftar -- claims denied by Moscow.

But Russia so far seems unfazed by the Turkish deployment in Libya, said Mariana Belenkaia, of the Carnegie Centre in Moscow.

"The two countries will likely be tempted to share the Libyan burden," she said.

Syria remains a potential powder-keg for Erdogan and Putin's relationship. Syrian government forces -- backed by Russia -- have ramped up bombardment of the last rebel strongholds in Idlib province in recent weeks, sending hundreds of thousands fleeing towards the Turkish border.

Erdogan has called for a truce in Idlib, following previous temporary halts to the fighting brokered with Russia in late 2018 and updated in

August last year.

"Russia's demands are very simple," said Yuri Barmine, of the Moscow Policy Group think tank, "Turkey must do more to eliminate terrorist cells in Idlib. The discussions will be around this idea."

Improved ties between the two countries have been facilitated by a number of major energy and defence deals -- Russia is building Turkey's first nuclear plant and provided a missile defence system.

Putin also earned goodwill in Turkey after his quick support for Erdogan following an attempted coup in July 2016.

The two men have developed a "strong personal relationship", according to Jana Jabbour of Sciences Po university in Paris, who adds that "their economic and energy plans are interdependent".

The TurkStream project, which was temporarily halted during a frosty patch in Russia-Turkey relations, includes two parallel pipelines of more than 900 kilometres (550 miles).

The pipeline links Anapa in Russia to Kiyikoy in northwestern Turkey and has already begun deliveries to Bulgaria. It is being extended towards Serbia, Hungary and Austria.

# Man pleads not guilty to murder of 19 at Japan care home

The man accused of murdering 19 disabled people at a Japanese care home in one of the country's worst mass killings pleaded not guilty Wednesday as his trial began.

Satoshi Uematsu, a former employee of the care centre outside Tokyo, did not dispute his involvement in the 2016 stabbing rampage during his first court appearance on charges including murder.

After prosecutors read out the details of the charges, the judge asked Uematsu "is there anything in the charges that differs from the facts?"

"No there isn't," Uematsu replied, dressed in a navy suit with a white shirt and tie, his long black hair tied back in a ponytail.

But despite admitting the horrifying attack, Uematsu's lawyers entered a plea of not guilty, saying their client was suffering a "mental disorder" linked to his use of marijuana.

"He abused marijuana and suffered from mental illness. He became a different person and as a result, this incident happened," his lawyer said.

"He was in a condition in which either he had no capacity to take responsibility or such a capacity was significantly weakened."

The session was disrupted shortly after it began when court security restrained Uematsu after he reportedly attempted to put something in his mouth.

The disturbance prompted the judge to call an unscheduled recess, and Uematsu was not in court when the session briefly resumed in the afternoon.

- 'I had to do it' -

Uematsu has reportedly said he wanted to eradicate all disabled people in the horrifying attack at the Tsukui Yamayuri-en centre in the town of Sagami-hara outside Tokyo, which also injured 26 people.

He turned himself in to po-



lice after the attack, carrying bloodied knives, and it later emerged that he had left his job at the home just months earlier and had been forcibly hospitalised after telling colleagues he intended to kill disabled people at the centre.

He had been discharged after 12 days when a doctor decided he was not a threat. He had also written a letter outlining plans to attack the home, claiming "disabled people only create unhappiness."

Prosecutors said they would prove he was capable of taking responsibility for the attack, adding the rampage was "inhuman" and left "no room for leniency."

Uematsu faces the death penalty if convicted on some of the six charges, including murder, with a verdict expected on March 16.

Since his arrest, he has shown no remorse, telling Japan's Mainichi Shimbun daily in an interview that people with mental disabilities "have no heart," and "there's no point in living" for them.

"I had to do it for the sake of

society," he said of the attack.

Uematsu's beliefs shocked Japan, with experts and activists raising questions about whether others might hold similar views.

Japan has been making efforts to increase accessibility -- particularly in Tokyo ahead of this year's Paralympic Games -- and activists hailed last year's election of two disabled lawmakers.

But some critics feel the country still falls short of fully integrating people with disabilities.

The case has attracted significant attention, with hundreds of people lining up in the rain for a chance to attend the first session.

"I want to know why he came to have such ideas about disabled people," Yuki Kuriyama, 41, who uses a wheelchair, told AFP.

"I am worried not only about a man who thinks that way but also about this entire society where there are some people who apparently agree with his ideas."

Many of the names of those killed in the rampage have been

withheld by family members fearful of similar attacks or discrimination. The relative of a 55-year-old man killed at the home told NHK that a long-time neighbour had remarked afterwards: "It's sad that it happened, but wasn't it good for you?"

Among the few victims to be identified publicly was a 19-year-old woman, Miho, whose mother told Japanese media she hoped the trial would start a conversation on "how we can build a society to prevent a recurrence of this sad incident".

"I want Miho to be remembered," she added. "She was a daughter we were very proud of."

After the hearing, Takashi Ono, whose adult son suffered severe wounds but survived Uematsu's knife attack, stressed the importance of building a society where all people can live with no prejudice.

"In this society, people have right to live with no fear and shame regardless of whatever disabilities you may have," he told a press conference.

"What he did cannot be forgiven. Absolutely not," he said.

# Ukraine passenger jet crashes in Iran killing all 176 on board

A Ukrainian airliner carrying 176 people from seven countries crashed shortly after takeoff from Tehran on Wednesday, killing all on board.

The vast majority of the passengers on the Boeing 737 flight from Tehran to Kiev were non-Ukrainians, including 82 Iranians and 63 Canadians, officials said.

The crash occurred with tensions high in the Middle East and shortly after Tehran launched missiles at bases in Iraq housing US troops. But there was no immediate indication of foul play and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned against "speculating" on the cause of the disaster.

The US aviation authority said it had banned US-registered carriers from flying over Iraq, Iran and the Gulf, and airlines including Lufthansa and Air France said they were suspending flights through Iraqi and Iranian airspace.

Footage released by Iranian state media showed a field on fire and the smoking wreckage of the crash. Rescue workers carried body bags and the passengers' personal items -- including cases, clothes, a Santa Claus doll and a boxing glove -- were lying amidst the debris.

Ukraine International Airlines (UIA), the ex-Soviet country's privately owned flagship carrier, said flight PS752 took off from Tehran airport at 6:10 am and disappeared from radars just two minutes later.

It slammed into farmland at Khalaj Abad, in

Shahriar county, about 45 kilometres (30 miles) northwest of the airport, according to reports on Iranian state media.

Officials in both Iran and Ukraine said there was no hope of anyone having survived.

- Children, students on board -

As well as the Iranians and Canadians, the passengers included 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans and three Britons, Ukraine's foreign minister said. Eleven Ukrainians -- including the nine crew -- were also on board.

Canada is home to a large Iranian diaspora community and UIA offers discount flights between Tehran and Toronto, with a transit in Kiev.

Officials in Tehran said 15 children were among the passengers. The semi-official news agency ISNA said 13 were students from Tehran's Sharif University, the most prestigious in the country. The airline -- which suspended its flights to Tehran after the crash -- said the Boeing 737 had been built in 2016 and checked only two days before the accident.

"The plane was in working order," UIA company president Yevgeniy Dykhne told a briefing in Kiev where he choked back tears. "It was one of our best planes with a wonderful crew."

Zelensky, who cut short a vacation to Oman to return to Kiev, ordered an investigation into the crash and a sweeping check of "all civilian aircraft" in the country.

"I ask everyone to keep from speculating

and putting forth unconfirmed theories about the crash," Zelensky wrote on Facebook.

Iranian state media reported that the plane caught fire after crashing, but a video aired by the state broadcaster appeared to show the plane already on fire as it fell from the night sky.

- 'Something catastrophic' -

Iran on Wednesday fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles at Iraqi bases housing the US military, in the first action of its promised revenge for the US killing of a top Iranian general. "There is a lot of speculation at the moment it has been shot down -- I think that is not going to be the case at all," said Stephen Wright, a professor of aircraft systems at Tampere University in Finland.

"The aircraft was climbing... it was going up in the right direction, which means that something catastrophic has happened."

"It could be a bomb or it could be some sort of catastrophic breakup of the aircraft." The aircraft was not one of the MAX models fitted with anti-stall systems that have been linked with two other recent crashes of Boeing 737s.

Boeing, which has been roiled by a nine-month crisis after 737 MAX was grounded, tweeted on Wednesday: "We are aware of the media reports out of Iran and we are gathering more information." UIA vice president Igor Sosnovskiy told reporters in Kiev that the airline doubted its crew was at fault.



## Night One Of The 'Jeopardy!' GOAT Tournament Came Down To A Dramatic Final Jeopardy

The Jeopardy! Greatest of All Time Tournament was everything the show's fans hoped it would be as the first day of competition kicked off on ABC on Tuesday. James Holzhauer, Ken Jennings, and Brad Rutter headed into the showdown with a chance to win \$1 million and call themselves the greatest player in the show's history, and all three proved worthy of the title in the hour-long first night of the event.

Host Alex Trebek laid out some rules to start the show: no money, just points. Each night would consist of two games, with the total scores from each added to award the highest total the win for the night. The first player to hit three wins would claim the prize and title, and though the three players would occupy the same spot on the stage for every match — James at left, Ken center and Brad on the right — each game would start with a random player picking first. The result was a nail-biter of a two-game match that showcased the strengths of each player in the group.

It was Jennings who won the first night, dominating with some uncharacteristically aggressive play on Daily Doubles to build a considerable lead in the first game and was able to hang on for a dramatic win. Jennings was great throughout the night, with few mistakes and a noticeable command of the signaling device that allowed him to ring in on a number of questions that other contestants clearly knew.

Perhaps shockingly, Holzhauer was unable to find a single Daily Double over the course of two games. Doubling his score on those proved such a pivotal part of his strategy through his record-breaking run of huge wins in 2019, and he was able to replicate that in November's Tournament of Champions as well. But he proved to be much more than a gambler in the first night of the GOAT tournament, matching Jennings throughout and clawing his way through the two games to get within 200 points of the winning score.

No one guessed wrong in the first round. Jennings got to play first, but Rutter answered the first question about Chariots of Fire. Holzhauer got the first sports question right, fittingly, then went on a bit of a tear as he searched for the game's first Daily Double in the

higher valued categories. It was Rutter, however, who found it, making it a true Daily Double and doubling his \$1800. The blistering regular round ended with Trebek remarking about how well everyone played, with Holzhauer leading with 7,800, Jennings just behind at 7,000 and Rutter with 4,000. Perhaps the best part of the first round, however, was Alex Trebek saying 'bitchin' in an 80s category.

inauguration, with Jennings finishing with a strong 45,000. Holzhauer had 33,200 at the end of the first game, with Rutter finishing with 10,400.

Rutter started the second game first, and again Holzhauer was foiled on finding the Daily Double. Jennings found it again and got a question about Time Travelers right, doubling to 4,800 right away while Rutter still had zero and Holzhauer had just 1,000. Even with



Rutter found the second Daily Double right away, mimicking Holzhauer's strategy of betting it all. But his 4,000 was lost on an incorrect answer about a czar, sending him back to zero for the first time on Tuesday. It was Jennings, however, to capitalize on the mistake. He found the second Daily Double and did the same thing: mimicking what made Jeopardy James so deadly in 2019 by making it a true Daily Double.

"This is not where I feel comfortable, but I'm gonna go all in," Jennings said, risking his entire 8,600 for the final Daily Double of the first game. He got it right and cruised through the second round from there, especially in the Before During and After category.

"I like those," Jennings said of Before, During, and After. Deciphering complex questions is a known strength of his, after all, and it was a boon that both he and Rutter took away what made Holzhauer such a formidable opponent in most of his other wins. The trio went into Final Jeopardy with Jennings in a commanding lead: 33,200 to Holzhauer's 16,600 and Rutter a distant 5,200. Final Jeopardy brought new music to the mix, and a question about Presidents and the Bible. All three players got the right response to the question about Calvin Coolidge's

the DD off the board, most contestants still went with a bottom-up strategy, but it was Holzhauer who excelled the rest of the round. There were few misses in the first round again, though Holzhauer actually taunted Rutter when he rang in first on a question about Philadelphia, which was hilarious.

Holzhauer ended the round in the lead with more than 8,000, while Jennings had 7,000 and Rutter kicked off Double Jeopardy with 3,800. Double Jeopardy followed a similar pattern as the other games of the night. Rutter right away found the second Daily Double of the game, wagering 3,800 but answering wrong to go back to zero. Seemingly cursed, he once again found the third and final Daily Double, wagered his entire 2,800 but got a question about philosophers wrong to go back down to zero.

Rutter did his best to mount a comeback, picking off a number of Double Jeopardy questions to climb back into contention of the third game. But Holzhauer held a narrow lead headed into Final Jeopardy, with 15,000, Jennings at 12,200 and Brad with 10,000. That still gave Jennings a lead headed into the final question, with Astronomers the category.

## Madame Tussauds' New Nicki Minaj Wax Figure Has People Baffled

Madame Tussauds is known to create wax figures of our favorite celebrities, but sometimes they miss the mark.

On Tuesday, the chain's Berlin location unveiled a new figure of Nicki Minaj, and while the museum outfitted it in clothes from Minaj's 2014 "Anaconda" video, the depiction bears little resemblance to the rapper. Many on Twitter were quick to point this out.

Madame Tussauds has come under fire for its awkward takes on celebrities in the past. In 2017, the museum received criticism for a wax figure tribute to Beyoncé that wasn't aesthetically pleasing. However, fans were quite pleased after seeing the

new figure of Queen B that was added to the flagship London location in September 2019. Drake also received the wax figure treatment



at the Las Vegas branch, as has Ariana Grande in the London museum, though, like Minaj, people also thought Grande's figure looked nothing like her.

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**PARTY GIRLS!** Celebs, Nicole Scherzinger and Eva Longoria rang in the New Year at the brand new Nobu Hotel Los Cabos in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

## Sarah Paulson comforts Amanda Peet as actress appears to be in distress amid tense phone call in Beverly Hills

Sarah Paulson on Tuesday comforted her longtime confidante Amanda Peet, who appeared to be in distress amid a tense phone call in Beverly Hills. The star of American Horror Story and American Crime Story, 45, embraced the Dirty John actress, 47, outside of the Meche Salon on the wintry day in Southern California.

Paulson was clad in a black robe during the outing at the hair salon, staying comfortable in black sweatpants and sneakers.

The pair have a longtime friendship that came into the public eye when they kissed at the Golden Globes in 2017. 'There was no thought process' leading to the kiss, Peet subsequently told People, as 'that is often the case with [her] relationship with Sarah.'

Peet described their relationship as 'complicated,' adding, 'It's very intense and visceral and really beautiful and we work hard at it.'

Peet, who's been seen in recent years on TV shows such as Brockmire, The Romanoffs and Togetherness, first worked with Paulson on the WB TV show Jack & Jill, which ran from 1999 to 2001 and co-starred Jaime Pressly and Simon Rex. They also worked on the 2006 Aaron Sorkin series Studio 60 On The Sunset Strip in an ensemble cast that included Matthew Perry, D.L. Hughley and Bradley Whitford.

The friends have often walked the red carpet at events over the years.

Paulson has dated girlfriend Holland Tay-

lor, 76, since 2016, while Peet is mother to three with husband David Benioff, 49: daughters Frances, 12, and Molly, nine, and son Henry, five. Paulson told Marie Claire in 2016



Peet is someone she admires for a plethora of reasons. 'She is an extraordinary mother, dedicated and present, with heavy doses of humor and a child's sense of play, while remaining my most loyal, supportive friend, as well as being the person I can always count on to tell me the truth.'

'Also, she has made me pee my pants from laughing.'

**ARIES:** Michael Curtiz once said, "The only things you regret are the ones you don't do." Your thoughts exactly, Aries. You may have a bad rep for being impulsive, but you learned early that nothing worth remembering is ever created within the comfort zone. So throw the shoulders and musts out of the window.

Tip: Throw the rulebook out of the window.

**TAURUS:** There's always more milestones to achieve, Taurus. But how much is too much? Where does one draw the line? Your inner temple is calling for your attention. Put that to-do list away for a second and introspect on what it is that your soul needs to heal from. For some of you, this may be a time of delving deeper into the divine art by yourself or under the guidance of a mentor. Tip: Prioritise healing.

**GEMINI:** Gratitude is the process of acknowledging all the good you have received, whether tangible or intangible. But is this just some kind of hippy-dippy practice or does it really have the power to change your reality? If the new-age gurus and the self-help books are to be believed, the practice boosts

positive emotions, improves health, empowers us to deal with adversity, and build stronger relationships. But there's nothing quite like direct experiences, is there?

Tip: Say a prayer of gratitude for a that you have and all that is yet to come.

**CANCER:** "The psyches and souls of women also have their own cycles and seasons of doing and solitude, running and staying, being involved and being removed, questing and resting, creating and incubating, being of the world and returning to the soul-place." A Clarissa Pinkola Estés to give you perspective on your journey. Tip: Retreat into your sacred space.

**LEO:** French essayist Joseph Joubert wrote, "A part of kindness consists of loving people more than they deserve." Everybody is perfectly imperfect. Embracing this truth will bring about a greater degree of acceptance and help you open that sacred space within your heart. Creative visualisation is a good way to boost the process. Envision your heart as a cup that is about to runneth over with love and take this feeling with you

as you go out into the world.

Tip: Love, kindness and compassion.

**VIRGO:** Some decisions cannot be made by tossing a coin. There is need for clarity before you take appropriate action. But before you clear the mental clutter, take a look at your physical space. Have you been glorifying the mess as 'beautiful' or resisting the process of organising your stuff? Stop using work and social obligations as a means to shun responsibility and take charge

Tip: Clearing the physical clutter could be the key to sudden revelations.

**LIBRA:** This is the true test of your ability, Libra. You have done so much self-work to reach a higher plane of existence. Giving up now will undo all the effort you have put in. The obstacle here is of your own creation and the only way out is through. Let this be a learn-by-doing situation.

Tip: Rise to the occasion with faith in yourself and the Universe.

**SCORPIO:** This day isn't so much about taking action as it is about restoring, refueling and receiving. Get into yin mode, Scor-

pio. Trust that the ideas you are seeking will come to you when you are replenishing your reserves. Connecting with your creative and spiritual side is another way to tap into your divine feminine.

Tip: Yin before you can yang.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Drama with a capital D! That's what you get for blurring the lines between personal and professional. If there's anything this phase of your life is teaching you, it's the importance of setting boundaries. Know where to place your trust, Sagittarius. Not everybody is playing for Team Nice. A good way to ground your energy is spending time outdoors. What are the activities that replenish you?

Tip: Know where to place your trust.

**CAPRICORN:** This is a time to regroup and reevaluate the game plan. Instead of playing blame, discover the blind spots and take corrective measures. You are the leader here, and only you can challenge the pessimism of your coworkers. When you act from a space of higher wisdom, they will be inspired to do the same. Some of you may

be stepping into bigger shoes, which can be exciting and intimidating all the same.

Tip: Act from a space of higher wisdom.

**AQUARIUS:** Sternnerg's triarchic theory talks about three types of intelligence: practical, creative, and analytical. What you're being asked to tap into is the first kind: the ability to deal with real world environments in a resourceful manner. Aquarius, you're known to be quite the hustler, so the challenges you're faced with shouldn't intimidate you at all. PS: We're counting on you. Tip: You are more resourceful than you give yourself credit for.

**PISCES:** Being at odds with the world just because things have not been so great personally will prove to be counterproductive, Pisces. Your power word for the day: reconciliation. Let bygones be bygones as you focus on building stronger and deeper connections with the crew. All of you want the same things, and as long as you focus on that, everything else will become background noise.

Tip: Focus on the highest goals.