

IN BRIEF



**Lata Mangeshkar's health improving**

MUMBAI  
Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, who was admitted to the ICU of a hospital earlier this week, is still on ventilator and is "critical but improving", said hospital sources. PTI

**Man who slapped Sharad Pawar in 2011 arrested**

NEW DELHI  
Arvinder Singh, the 36-year-old man who had allegedly slapped Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar at a public function in 2011 and disappeared during the course of the trial has been arrested again, officials said on Wednesday. PTI

**CBI gets 2 more weeks to respond to Michel's plea**

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday granted the CBI two weeks' time till November 29 to submit its response to the bail plea of alleged middleman Christian Michel James, an accused in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam case.

**Karabi Gogoi appointed Moscow defence attache**

NEW DELHI  
Lieutenant Commander Karabi Gogoi, a naval engineer, will become the first woman officer from the Navy to be posted as a defence attache at an Indian mission abroad. She has been posted as the assistant Naval attache at the Indian embassy in Moscow and is likely to take up the post in December.

**Govt. allows migrants to change Aadhaar address**

NEW DELHI  
The government has allowed migrants to change their address on Aadhaar by giving self-declaration — a move aimed at helping them open bank accounts and promoting their financial inclusion. The changes were made by amending the Prevention of Money-laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules. PTI

*They save people from cyclones, but who is saving the Sunderbans mangroves?*

Environmental experts point at constant degradation of forests

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

On November 9, 2019, when the very severe cyclone Bulbul made landfall at Sagar island in the Indian Sunderbans, a group of tourists found themselves stranded near the Kalash island in the violently inclement weather. They got out of their boat and took shelter in mangrove creeks, and escaped unhurt. The cyclone was so powerful that it overturned a large fishing trawler near Sagar; people in that vessel are still missing.

From environmental experts to the State's Chief Minister, everyone has said that

the mangroves had saved the Sunderbans from the gusty winds blowing at between 110 kmph to 135 kmph. "It would have been a disaster if the mangroves had not been there," said Kalyan Rudra, chairperson of the West Bengal Pollution Control Board and a river expert. In fact, CM Mamata Banerjee, while touring the affected regions, noted that the State will plant more mangroves.

**Inhabited areas at risk**  
Despite this, scientists, wildlife experts and local NGOs have been highlighting the constant degradation of the mangrove forest in the Sun-



**Fast disappearing:** Mangroves have been cut not only for aquaculture, but also for building embankments and for human settlements. •AP

derbans, particularly in areas that are inhabited. The Indian Sunderbans, considered to be an area south of the Dampier Hodges line, is spread over 9,630 sq. km., of which the mangrove forests are spread over 4,263 sq. km. The latest example of an

assault on mangrove forests came to light in an order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) dated September 23, when it directed a committee to inspect allegations levelled by environmental activist Subhas Datta that the State had allocated houses

under the 'Banglar Abas' scheme by clearing acres of mangrove forest on Sagar island.

"The committee inspected and found the allegations to be true. For years, the State government has been felling mangrove trees in the

name of development," Mr. Datta said, highlighting how Ms. Banerjee invited industrialists to the Sunderbans a few years ago and urged them to invest in eco-tourism.

**Rapid destruction**

When Mr. Datta moved the NGT in 2014, a satellite image from the Indian Space Research Organisation pointed to a loss of 3.71% mangrove and non-mangrove forest cover along with massive erosion of the archipelago's landmass. The analysis, based on satellite data of February 2003 and February 2014, shows that while a 9,990-hectare landmass has been eroded, there has been an accretion of 216-hectare landmass in the Sunderbans

during the period.

Tuhin Ghosh, Professor, School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University, said that mangroves have been cut not only for aquaculture, but also for building embankments and for human settlements. He explained that due to dense foliage and the close proximity of trees, the mangrove roots hold soil and the vegetation becomes a shield to protect from cyclones.

Pranabesh Maity, a resident of Sagar who planted over 30,000 mangrove saplings this year, said that there have been numerous instances in which mangroves have been cut for making roads, building embankments, and for fisheries.

**Altitude no bar for ITBP winter suits**

15,000 more jawans now eligible

VIJAYA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

More than 15,000 personnel of the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force deployed along the China border are set to benefit from a policy decision on altitude specifications that makes them eligible to get special cold climate clothing.

Earlier, only those ITBP men deployed at an altitude of upto 12,000 feet from the sea level were entitled for special protective clothing. However, last year, the guidelines were revised and personnel deployed at 9,000 feet also became eligible to get the special clothing, a senior government official said.

**Difficult terrain**

The ITBP is deployed along the Line of Actual Control with China, spanning 3,488 km of difficult terrain up to an altitude of 18,900 feet.

There are five pockets which are not defined and

their territories are claimed by both the countries. Three are in Ladakh and one each in Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh.

The ITBP force comprises 60,000 personnel now.

Of this, around 12,000 personnel deployed in Ladakh were entitled to snow clothing.

"The new policy ensures that even those deployed at an altitude of 9,000 feet, that includes the States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, would benefit. As many as 15,000 jawans will get the protective gear," the official said.

The personnel have also been provided with high-grade mountaineering equipment.

An official said that in the past five years, the ITBP had procured around 600 'Made in India' Ghatak 7.62 assault rifles, 55 high-powered vehicles and 126 SUVs for smooth travel in the rugged terrain in the Ladakh sector.

**Death in sewer: Chennai mall to pay ₹10 lakh fine**

Contractor held; management served show cause notice

R. SIVARAMAN  
CHENNAI

The Chennai police on Wednesday arrested the contractor who had engaged labourers, including 26-year-old Arul who asphyxiated while cleaning the sewage channel in the basement of the Express Avenue Mall in the city's Royapettah region, during the early hours of Tuesday.

**Supreme Court's order**

Meanwhile, the Chennai Corporation issued an order to the mall management, directing them to pay a compensation of ₹10 lakh to the victim's family, as per a recent order of the Supreme Court.

Arul, of Namachivayapuram near Ice House, died when he entered a channel to rescue his brother Ranjith, who was complaining of uneasiness while cleaning sewage at the mall's basement.

The contractor Dhandapani, 52, of Arokkonam area, had frequently engaged Arul and four others for the work.

Based on a complaint from Murthy, the victim's father, the Anna Salai police filed a First Information Report, naming the contractor and the management of the mall as accused.



Arul

The case was booked under Section 3(ii) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Section 9 of the Prohibition of Employment As Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (which stipulates penalty) and Section 304 II (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the IPC.

**Private employees**

On Wednesday, following interrogation, the police produced Dhandapani before a metropolitan magistrate court and remanded him in judicial custody.

On information from the police, the corporation's health officials inspected the

mall. According to a notice served by the Corporation's Nungambakkam zonal officer to the mall management, they found that the management had engaged a few private employees for cleaning a waste water tank, at B3 floor basement, during the early hours of Tuesday.

**No safety gears**

As safety gears were not provided and safety norms were not followed, a person, namely Arul, has died of suffocation with foul gas inside your premises, the Corporation's notice stated.

As engaging manual scavengers without protective gear is an offence under 5(i)b of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, the notice by the Corporation official said: "You are directed to show cause why legal action should not be taken against your establishment."

The Chennai Corporation also directed the mall management to give a compensation of ₹10 lakh to the legal heirs of the victim, as per a judgement of the Supreme court, within three days of receipt of the notice.

Failing this, further action would be initiated against the mall authorities as per rules in force.

**Sardar Sarovar-hit families battle food crisis**

'No plan to extend contract for food'

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOVAL

An unusual bustle takes over Hiralal Solanki's boxy shelter every morning. He has two assets that are scarce at the relief camp: a gas cylinder and a stove. With food supply cut, the Sardar Sarovar project-affected families fall back on munificent neighbours to help them tide over the shortage. The other option is to stock firewood and survive on PDS (public distribution system) rice cooked on earthen stoves.

**'Matter of survival'**

"If we don't help our brothers during times like this, when else will we? It's a matter of survival. Supporting each other is the need of the hour," said Mr. Solanki, 23, who lives with two younger brothers and a sister-in-law in a tin shed in Nisarapur in the Dhar district. At Kotda village, now under water, he left behind two shops and a hut.

With the cessation of food supply at 26 camps set up in Dhar, Barwani and Alirajpur districts on October 31, around 3,000 families, awaiting rehabilitation or settlement of claims, have been left to fend for themselves. As the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat filled over months to its brim of 138.68 metres on September 17, the swelling backwaters

of the Narmada submerged 178 villages in Madhya Pradesh.

"According to the work plan, the provision of food was only until October 31. Oustees are now going about their work and making their own food arrangements," said Pawan Kumar Sharma, Commissioner, the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA). "For now, there is no plan to extend the contract for the provision of food."

However, he added, provision of medical facilities, electricity and water would continue at the camps.

**'No evictions'**

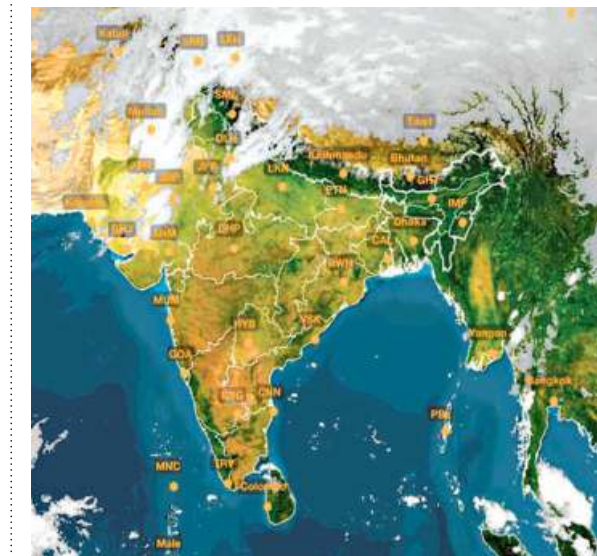
Dispelling fear among the families of eviction from the camps, set up in 2017 after a Supreme Court order, with a possible expiry of its contract too, Mr. Sharma said, "The camps are the property of the NVDA, so there is no question of a contract with a third party."

Moreover, the camps were temporary in nature and meant to facilitate only "transition" for the affected families' rehabilitation.

"We want to settle claims of each eligible family as early as possible. We have undertaken a survey of riverine patches cut-off from the mainland to assess the feasibility of sustaining settlements there versus resettlement," he said.

**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Thursday:** Heavy rain/snow very likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and hail very likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, west Rajasthan, Kerala and Mahe.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	00.0	19.0	30.0	Kozhikode	34.0	25.0	
Ahmedabad	39.0	21.0		Kurnool	32.0	21.0	
Aizawl	26.0	14.0		Lucknow	30.0	16.0	
Allahabad	30.0	15.0		Madurai	32.0	24.0	
Bengaluru	29.0	18.0		Mangaluru	35.0	24.0	
Bhopal	30.0	19.0		Mumbai	34.0	24.0	
Bhubaneswar	31.0	18.0		Mysuru	28.0	19.0	
Chandigarh	26.0	14.0		New Delhi	28.0	13.0	
Chennai	32.0	26.0		Patna	31.0	15.0	
Coimbatore	31.0	22.0		Port Blair	31.0	24.0	
Dehradun	29.0	12.0		Puducherry	33.0	22.0	
Gangtok	19.0	13.0		Pune	30.0	18.0	
Goa	33.0	23.0		Raipur	29.0	18.0	
Guwahati	30.0	19.0		Ranchi	27.0	13.0	
Hubballi	28.0	20.0		Shillong	21.0	12.0	
Hyderabad	31.0	18.0		Shimla	18.0	8.0	
Imphal	28.0	15.0		Srinagar	6.0	0.0	
Jaipur	30.0	21.0		Thiruvananthapuram	2.9	34.0	24.0
Kochi	31.0	24.0		Tiruchi	31.0	24.0	
Kohima	22.0	11.0		Vijayawada	32.0	23.0	
Kolkata	30.0	20.0		Visakhapatnam	31.0	25.0	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	249	62	175	160	132	400
Bengaluru	13	65	87	132	103	42
Chennai	9	13	12	66	103	42
Delhi	8	54	82	493	462	42
Hyderabad	12	40	28	167	140	42
Kolkata	11	78	42	280	220	42
Lucknow	9	25	65	422	104	42
Mumbai	22	70	18	177	140	42
Pune	78	11	62	137	104	42
Visakhapatnam	7	31	44	66	73	42

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO<sub>2</sub>**: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
**NO<sub>2</sub>**: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
**CO**: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.  
**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>**: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

**Punjab to compensate farmers**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government has decided to pay ₹2,500 per acre as compensation to small and marginal farmers who have not burnt their paddy straw.

State Agriculture Secretary Kahan Singh Pannu on Wednesday said that farmers cultivating non-basmati paddy and owning land up to five acres, would get ₹2,500 per acre compensation for not burning the residue.

"Firstly, the beneficiary of this compensation should be a farmer who owns up to five acres of land in his name, his wife and children under 18 years of age. Secondly, the affected farmer should cultivate non-basmati paddy in the above mentioned area and should also not have burnt paddy residue in any part of his field," he said.

While explaining the procedure for seeking compensation, Mr. Pannu said those farmers who fulfilled the above stated conditions, would have to submit the self-declaration form with the panchayat concerned by November 30.

**Five Punjab govt. officials dismissed**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Rural Development Minister Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa on Wednesday ordered immediate dismissal of five officials for their alleged role in the ₹2.59 crore MGNREGA embezzlement case besides directing the police to file a case against another employee.