

IN BRIEF



High legal costs cut access to justice: CJI

NAGPUR Chief Justice of India Sharad Bobde said on Saturday that high legal costs block access to justice, and added that lawyers might have to see their role as mediators and not only as "professional men paid to argue". He also stated that "we need to introduce pre-litigation mediation". PTI

Withdraw advisory to TV channels: Editors Guild

NEW DELHI The Editors Guild of India on Saturday sought the withdrawal of a recent advisory issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting asking all private television channels to desist from showing content that could incite violence or promote "anti-national attitudes". The Guild said it believes that the media's overall commitment to responsible coverage of developments in the country should not be questioned through such an advisory. PTI

Minor girl gang-raped, killed in Odisha

NABARANGPUR A 16-year-old girl was allegedly kidnapped, gang-raped and subsequently killed in Odisha's Nabarangpur district, the police said on Saturday. The incident happened at Gumandli village on Friday night. Local residents found the minor's body on a paddy field on Saturday morning.

JNU VC says students tried to attack him

NEW DELHI JNU Vice-Chancellor Mamidala Jagadeesh Kumar on Saturday claimed that a group of 15-20 students surrounded him "in a violent manner" on the campus and abused and tried to attack him but the university security staff and police personnel rescued him. The university has been seeing protests over hike in hostel fees. PTI

Three lakh rural habitations lack quality drinking water supply

Rajasthan, Bengal, Assam, TN, among worst affected

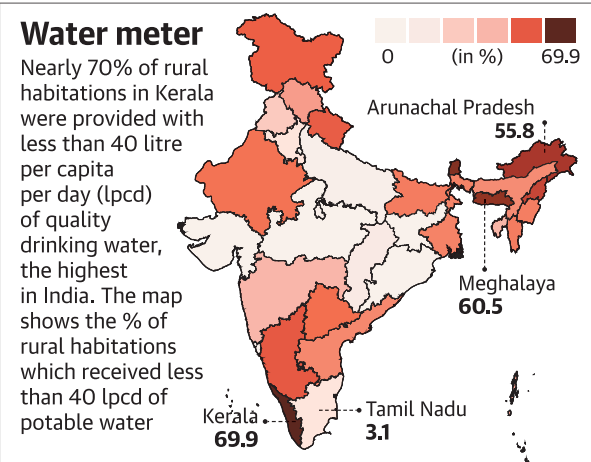
BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN NEW DELHI

Over three lakh rural habitations across the country continue to be deprived of the government's minimum prescribed provision of 40 litre per capita per day (lpcd) of potable drinking water with assured quality.

With the ambition to now achieve a service level of 55 lpcd by 2024, the data presented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in the Lok Sabha this past week notes that Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam top the list where the coverage is facing quality issues or seeing diminished supply.

Bihar, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand are the other States which are battling the problem.

The Ministry noted that the coverage was monitored in terms of habitations hav-



ing provision of a minimum 40 lpcd with sources at a reasonable distance.

"As reported by States/UTs till Dec., 2019, 81.27% rural habitations having 76.61% population have provision of minimum 40 lpcd of potable drinking water and 15.56% rural habitations having 19.69% population have service level of less than 40 lpcd, whereas 3.17% rural habitations having 3.69% population are with water

sources having quality issues," noted Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

Fund sharing

He explained that the fund-sharing pattern between the Centre and the States/UTs for the National Rural Drinking Water Programme, a Centrally sponsored programme, was 100% for the Union Territories, 90:10 for the Himalayan & the north-

NPPA hikes ceiling price of 12 essential medicines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has hiked the ceiling price of 12 essential first-line treatment drugs, crucial in the public health programme, by 50% to ensure availability of these drugs.

"Many companies have applied for discontinuation of the product on account of high cost of the raw material for these drugs. Access to these drugs cannot be jeopardised. Also, we did not want the public to be forced to switch to costly alternatives," the NPPA noted.

The NPPA invoked extraordinary powers under

para 19 of DPCO 2013 for upward revision of the low-priced drugs. "To address the situation arising due to repeated price control, one-time increase of 50% from the present ceiling price is being considered in public interest as an exceptional measure," noted an order issued on December 13.

The drugs consist of 21 formulations of varying doses - BCG vaccine, Benzathine Benzylpenicillin, Benzylpenicillin, Chloroquine, Dapsone, Furosemide, Metronidazole, Ascorbic Acid or Vitamin C tablets, Co-trimoxazole, Pheniramine, Prednisolone and Clofazamine.

JACOB KOSHY NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the first meeting of the National Ganga Council in Kanpur on Saturday. The council was constituted in 2016 to oversee the cleaning of the Ganga and is supposed to meet at least once a year with the Prime Minister chairing the session.

"Somehow this couldn't be done so far," an official told The Hindu, "but one of the points taken up was about having this meeting more regularly."

The meeting was also attended by Uttar Pradesh

eastern States and 50:50 for other States. The Ministry noted that in the past five years ₹31,569.77 crore had been made available to States and since 2014, to improve piped water supply in low income States, namely Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, ₹1,185.23 crore had been released with the assistance of the World Bank.

Also to provide safe drinking water to 27,544 identified arsenic and fluoride affected rural habitations, the National Water Quality Sub-Mission was launched and so far ₹3,690.34 crore had been released. "To meet the domestic needs of every rural household, the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) has been launched in August, 2019 which aims at providing potable water through Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) at service level of 55 lpcd by 2024 with an outlay of ₹3.60 lakh crore, in partnerships with States," said the Minister in his reply.

25% FASTag lanes to accept all forms of payment for a month

Hybrid lanes to ease traffic and avoid hardships to public: govt.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

To avert inconvenience to citizens, the government said on Saturday that up to 25% of FASTag lanes at the National Highway toll plazas would be treated as hybrid lanes for a month.

The hybrid lane will accept FASTag and other modes of payment. The government had earlier announced rollout of mandatory FASTag for electronic toll collection from December 1, which was later extended to December 15, 2019.

"Considering the request of the NHAI and further that citizens are not put to inconvenience... it is decided that depending on the traffic pile-up at high traffic volume fee plazas, not more than 25% of the FASTag lanes may be temporarily converted to hybrid lanes," the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said.

This should be considered on a case-to-case ba-



No waiting: The government had earlier extended the date to December 15 for making FASTag mandatory. *S. SIVA SARAVANAN

sis, the Ministry added. "A daily evaluation of such cases should be made to take necessary corrective action," it said. It should be ensured that at least 75% lanes of every fee plaza remain operational as FASTag lanes, it added.

Temporary measure

The Ministry clarified that it is a temporary measure to be adopted for 30 days only to facilitate smooth flow of traffic.

The National Electronic

Toll Collection programme, the flagship initiative of the Ministry, has been implemented on a pan-India basis in order to remove bottlenecks and ensure seamless movement of traffic and collection of user fee, using passive radio frequency identification (RFID) technology.

A customer may dial the helpline number '1033' for any assistance related to FASTags, the Ministry had said, and added that they could also reach out to banks to obtain FASTags.

Modi chairs first meeting of Ganga council

Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and several Union Ministers attend



Thorough appraisal: Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviews the Namami Gange project in Kanpur on Saturday. *PTI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath; Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat; Union Ministers Prakash Javadekar, Gajendra

Singh Shekhawat, Harsh Vardhan, R.K. Singh, Prahlad Patel, Mansukh Mandavia and Hardeep Singh Puri. Several officials from Bihar, Ut-

tar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal - all Ganga basin States - were also present.

The full quorum of the Council - with the Prime Minister in attendance - is largely ceremonial. The work of coordinating, supervising and deliberating on funding Namami Ganga projects is carried out by an executive committee of the National Mission for Clean Ganga that meets every month. The latest meeting was on December 3.

Mr. Modi also took a boat ride from Atal Ghat to Sisamau drain outfall point. The Sisamau drain was one of

Asia largest drains that emptied nearly 140 million litres of untreated sewage into the Ganga and was a symbol of pollution in the river. It no longer empties sewage into the Ganga but the river continues to be unfit for bathing or use as a drinking water source, The Hindu reported in July.

On his return, Mr. Modi stumbled and fell on the steps of the Atal Ghat. The official cited earlier said he was in the vicinity and the Prime Minister appeared unhurt. One of the steps was uneven and probably may have caused Mr. Modi to stumble, the official said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 16.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorms likely in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Cold wave conditions very likely in isolated pockets over Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Dense fog likely in pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh

Table with 4 columns: CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN. Lists weather data for various cities including Agartala, Ahmedabad, Aizawl, Allahabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Dehradun, Gangtok, Goa, Guwahati, Hubballi, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jaipur, Kochi, Kohima, and Kolkata.

Table with 4 columns: CITY, SO2, NO2, CO, PM2.5, PM10, CODE. Lists air quality data for various cities including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Pune, and Visakhapatnam.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI) SO2: 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. NO2: 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. PM2.5 & PM10: 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

Snakebites claimed 3,000 lives between 2016 and 2018

The figure provided is not even the tip of the iceberg, says expert

SHIV SAHAY SINGH KOLKATA

More than 3,000 people died of snakebite between 2016 and 2018, data provided by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence to Parliament says.

The number of deaths in the past three years stood at 3,013 - 1,068 in 2016, 1,060 in 2017 and 885 in 2018. West Bengal with 609 deaths in the three years -138, 268 and 203 - alone accounted for 20% of the victims.

The data, tabled in the Lok Sabha on November 29 in response to a question by P.P. Chaudhary, also points to the high incidence of the cases - 1.78 lakh cases in 2016, 1.58 lakh in 2017 and 1.64 lakh in 2018. The other States with high number of deaths are Odisha with 365 (120, 147 and 98) and Madhya Pradesh 248 (113, 96 and 39). Andhra Pradesh recorded 230 deaths (28, 85 and 117) and Tamil Nadu 132 (44, 38 and 50).



A common krait.

The Ministry described snakebite as an "accidental/ occupational hazard in tropical and subtropical countries, where rural popula-

tions are mainly affected". Jose Louise, who works with the Wildlife Trust of India, has along with other experts developed a web application called SERPENTS providing real time help to victims, location of hospitals and related information. He said the figures provided "are not even a tip of the iceberg." "The actual number would be much higher. By collating newspaper reports of the past four months in certain States, I could find hundreds of deaths in only a few States," Mr. Louise said.

Referring to a 10-year-old girl in Kerala who died of a

10 Bhopal varsity students held for 'causing violence'

They were protesting against 'caste bias'

SIDHARTH YADAV BHOPAL

The police late on Friday arrested 10 students and removed several others from the premises of the Makhnall Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication here while they were staging a sit-in demanding the suspension of two adjunct professors, including Dilip Mandal, for alleged caste bias in classrooms, on Twitter and public fora. They were released on Saturday.

"A case has been registered against 10 students and unidentified persons for causing violence on the campus and preventing the staff from carrying out their duties," said the police.

Stating the protest was instigated by right-wing groups attempting to stall efforts at "desaffronising" the campus, Deepak Tiwari, the Vice-Chancellor, told The Hindu, "The university stands for freedom of expression and academics. It

functions on the principles of the Constitution and no other ideology. There will be no tolerance against violence." He added that the students had broken a gate outside his office.

The students said the protest was independent and not supported by any outside group. "We didn't cause any violence and whoever came to us from outside, we refused their support. This is not just a protest by general category students, there are those from backward communities too," said a first year student of media management, requesting anonymity.

"Mr. Mandal questioned students for wearing religious threads on their wrists and tilak on foreheads. Before speaking to anyone, he asked their surname first, attempting to divide students on caste lines. He is spreading viciousness against Brahmins on Twitter," said a student of electronic media.

THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY (A Central University established by an Act of Parliament) HYDERABAD - 500007, Telangana State. ADMISSION NOTIFICATION. Online applications are invited for admission to the following courses/programmes for the academic year: 2020-2021 at Hyderabad, Shillong and Lucknow.

Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) (Institution of National Importance by the Act of Parliament No.35/2012) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India Sriperumbudur-602 105, Tamil Nadu.

Recruitment of Non-Teaching Positions. Employment Notice No : RGNIYD/SO-LA/2019/002. Applications are invited (only through online mode) from Indian Nationals possessing excellent academic record and relevant work experience for Direct Recruitment to the following positions in RGNIYD Sriperumbudur.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES (Divyangjan) (NIEPMD) (Accredited by NAAC) (ISO 9001:2015). VACANCY NOTIFICATION (TEMPORARY) No.: 47/2019. The Director, NIEPMD invites applications from eligible Indian nationals for the Composite Regional Centres for Skill Development, Rehabilitation and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) (CRCs).

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