

IN BRIEF



Mulayam Singh discharged from hospital

MUMBAI
Samajwadi Party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav was discharged from a hospital in Mumbai on Sunday. The 80-year-old leader had complained of abdominal pain three days back, a close aide of his said. PTI

Students complain against drunk teachers

AURANGABAD
Students of a zilla parishad school in Aurangabad have complained that their teachers were drunk during a recent excursion and misbehaved with them, following which an inquiry was instituted. The students left for a trip to the Konkan region on December 21 and the alleged incidents happened on Christmas, said an official. PTI

IED detected along LoC in J&K's Rajouri

JAMMU
A major terror strike was averted on Sunday with the timely detection of a powerful Improvised Explosive Device (IED) along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said. He said the IED was found planted in Keri sector by an Army patrol team, which immediately cordoned off the area. PTI

Portal for swift grievance resolution likely

NEW DELHI
The Labour Ministry has chalked out a plan to launch a portal 'Santusht' next month for speedy redressal of worker as well as employer grievances and ensuring implementation of labour laws at the grassroot level, a source said. Initially, it would monitor all services provided by retirement fund body EPFO and health insurance and services provided ESIC. Later, the portal would cover other wings of the Ministry as well. PTI

3 years on, a mere 30% of Poshan Abhiyaan funds used

Barring three States, none of the governments used even half of the sum

JAGRITI CHANDRA SUMANT SEN
NEW DELHI

The State governments and the Union Territories utilised a mere 30% of the funds released under the Poshan Abhiyaan, or the National Nutrition Mission, since it was launched in 2017. Barring Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar, none of the governments used even half of the sum granted in the past three years, according to an analysis of the data shared in Parliament.

The Poshan Abhiyaan, the Centre's flagship programme, is aimed at improving nutritional outcomes among pregnant women, lactating mothers and chil-

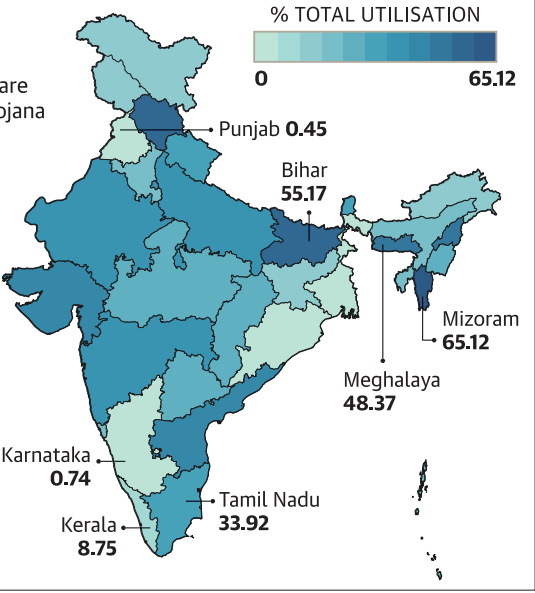
dren by reducing the level of stunting, underweight, anaemia and low birth weight by 2022. It is meant to benefit more than 10 crore people and was launched after a Cabinet decision on December 1, 2017, with a total budget of ₹9,046.17 crore for three years, 50% of which is through budgetary support, which is further divided into 60:40 between the Centre and the States, 90:10 for the north-eastern region and the Himalayan States and 100% for the Union Territories without legislature.

A grim picture
The remaining 50% is from the World Bank or other multilateral development banks. As a result, the Centre's total

Long road to health

Between 2018 and October 31, 2019, Mizoram has utilised the maximum share of funds released under the Poshan Yojana while Punjab has utilised the least

- The average utilisation in the country is 29.97%
- The three States which received the most funds between 2017 and October 31, 2019, are Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- 32 States and UTs have utilised less than half of the funds released between 2017 and October 21, 2019



share will be ₹2,849.54 crore. With the three-year period drawing to a close, an analysis of the funds utilised

paints a grim picture.

According to the information given by Minister for Women and Child Develop-

ment Smriti Irani in the recent session of Parliament, a total of ₹4,283 crore was disbursed by the Centre to diffe-

More work to do: Bachchan

Veteran actor presented with Dada Saheb Phalke Award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Dada Saheb Phalke Award recipient and megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Sunday said he was looking forward to doing more work.

The 77-year-old actor, who was presented the award by President Ram Nath Kovind here at Rashtrapati Bhawan in a special ceremony, quipped that initially when he was announced as the 2018 recipient, he wondered if it was an "indication" for him to hang up his boots.

"When this award was announced, a doubt arose in my mind: if this is an indication for me to sit at home and relax after working for so many years? There is some more work I have to finish and certain possibilities are coming up where I may get a chance to do some work. I just wanted some



In conversation: Union Minister Prakash Javadekar, left, with Jaya and Abhishek Bachchan. ■ ANI

clarification on this," Mr. Bachchan said on a lighter note.

The Bollywood veteran thanked the government, the I&B Ministry and the jury members of the National Film Awards for naming him the Dada Saheb Phalke Award recipient.

"God has been kind, there have been blessings of my parents ... but I'm most indebted to the love and con-

stant encouragement by the Indian audience. That's the reason I'm standing here," he added.

Mr. Bachchan was supposed to receive the honour at the National Film Awards ceremony last Monday, but was unable to attend the event due to ill health. He was accompanied by his wife and veteran actor-MP Jaya Bachchan and son and actor Abhishek.

CRPF jawans will get 100 days' leave: Shah

'Their families will get health cards'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the government would take care of the families of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel while they take care of the borders, adding that electronic health cards for their kin and at least 100 days off a year for the forces would be implemented by August-September 2020.

Speaking at the foundation laying ceremony of the CRPF's new headquarters in Delhi, Mr. Shah said the force had played a vital role in rooting out terrorism from Punjab and Tripura and in restoring peace in the States.

He said the CRPF jawans were always at the forefront, whether it was tackling Naxals or riots or providing security to Amarnath Yatra

pilgrims or Parliament House.

Medical facilities

He said various welfare schemes for paramilitary forces would be finalised by August-September 2020.

The Narendra Modi government has also decided to enhance housing satisfaction for jawans and officials of the central armed police forces, and steps will be taken in the upcoming Budget to allocate funds for this subject, said Mr. Shah.

The new headquarters of the force would be built at a cost of ₹280 crore by the Central Public Works Department.

The building will have a control and command system with modern training modules for the 3.5 lakh-strong CRPF force.

(With PTI inputs)

Sasikala prison 'letter' ground for I-T raids

It was allegedly addressed to a relative

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

The Income Tax Department has based its claim of V.K. Sasikala, a close aide of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, having purchased several properties using ₹1,674.50 crore in demonetised notes, not just on documents and statements of witnesses, but also on a 'letter' purportedly written by her.

According to the I-T sleuths, a search at the residence of Vivek Jayaraman, son of Sasikala's sister-in-law Ilavarasi, as part of a larger raid in November 2017, led to the recovery of a loose sheet. Penned in Tamil, the sheet supposedly contained details of the approximate amount paid towards the acquisition of various assets using the illegal tender in 2016.

The Centre had demonetised the old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes on November 8, 2016 but had permitted the holders of such currency notes to deposit them into their bank accounts before December 30, 2016. This window was reportedly used by many businesspeople to sell their high-value properties at attractive prices and deposit the money by faking their business transactions.

When the I-T officials confronted Mr. Jayaraman with the loose sheet, he was said



V.K. Sasikala

to have told them that it was inside a sealed cover, which an anonymous person had handed over to the security guard at his residence about two months ago.

'No knowledge'

Asked to name the security guard who gave the cover to him, Mr. Jayaraman had said: "Two security persons are working in my residence (in Chennai). I don't exactly remember who gave it to me.", adding that he does not remember the date and day on which it was handed over to him.

The letter was suspected to have been written from the Parappana Agrahara central prison in Bengaluru, where she had been lodged since February 2017 after being convicted in a disproportionate assets case.

In his statement to the I-T department, Sasikala's legal adviser S. Senthil confirmed her handwriting in the letter.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 16.30 HRS)
Forecast for Monday: Cold day conditions and fog likely in many pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and west Madhya Pradesh. Dense fog likely over some pockets in Assam, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...	25.0	11.0	Kozhikode	...	34.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	...	25.0	14.0	Kurnool	...	30.0	20.0
Aizawl	...	17.0	5.0	Lucknow	...	14.0	6.0
Allahabad	...	14.0	7.0	Madurai	...	31.0	23.0
Bengaluru	...	29.0	17.0	Mangaluru	26.2	34.0	23.0
Bhopal	...	23.0	7.0	Mumbai	...	32.0	22.0
Bhubaneswar	...	26.0	11.0	Mysuru	...	30.0	17.0
Chandigarh	...	11.0	3.0	New Delhi	...	16.0	3.0
Chennai	...	31.0	22.0	Patna	...	16.0	7.0
Coimbatore	...	30.0	20.0	Port Blair	...	30.0	24.0
Dehradun	...	20.0	4.0	Puducherry	...	30.0	20.0
Gangtok	...	14.0	5.0	Pune	...	29.0	15.0
Goa	...	34.0	24.0	Raipur	...	24.0	10.0
Guwahati	...	24.0	8.0	Ranchi	...	21.0	6.0
Hubballi	...	29.0	20.0	Shillong	...	15.0	3.0
Hyderabad	...	27.0	15.0	Shimla	...	14.0	3.0
Imphal	...	21.0	3.0	Srinagar	...	9.0	-6.0
Jaipur	...	20.0	2.0	Thiruvananthapuram	...	33.0	23.0
Kochi	...	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	...	30.0	21.0
Kohima	...	15.0	3.0	Vijayawada	...	30.0	20.0
Kolkata	...	22.0	11.0	Visakhapatnam	...	27.0	20.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing					Yesterday				
CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE			
Ahmedabad	57	53	36	...	76	...	77	...	...
Bengaluru	...	8	37	...	45	...	...	...	...
Chennai	16	41	57	...	152	...	...	...	...
Delhi	17	61	94	...	476	451	...	...	...
Hyderabad	24	43	47	...	239	...	...	...	...
Kolkata	20	75	29	...	292	194	...	...	...
Lucknow	41	24	29	...	396	...	...	...	...
Mumbai	13	44	47	...	190	159	...	...	...
Pune	81	32	81	...	142	112	...	...	...
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

Navy plans 24 submarines to strengthen fleet

18 conventional and 6 nuclear attack submarines are on the cards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

To strengthen its underwater fleet, the Navy plans to build 24 submarines, including six nuclear attack submarines, a parliamentary panel was told.

The Navy also told the panel that Medium Refit Life Certification (MRLC) of submarine Sindhuraj was held up since the Russian side had not been able to submit bank guarantees and the integrity pact due to sanctions imposed by the U.S.

In its report tabled this month, the Navy said that there are presently 15 conventional submarines and

two nuclear submarines in its fleet. The Navy has two nuclear submarines INS Arihant and INS Chakra, with the latter being leased from Russia.

Over 25 years old

A majority of the conventional submarines are over 25 years old. Thirteen submarines age between 17 and 32 years, it said.

"Eighteen [conventional] + six SSN [nuclear attack submarines] are planned...", it stated.

The Indian Ocean Region, the area of operations of the Navy, has witnessed rising activities of the Chinese Na-

vy. On its part, the Indian Navy has been revamping its infrastructure, including procuring new ships.

Due to the delay in the submarine construction projects, including the Six Project 75 submarines at Mazgaon Docks, Mumbai, the Defence Ministry has approved Medium Refit cum Life Certification or MRLC of six older submarines, the report stated.

With regards to the MRLC of the first submarine, work has already commenced in Russia on July 16 and is on schedule.

"Contract conclusion for MRLC of second submarine,

Sindhuraj, is held up since the Russian side has not been able to submit requisite bank guarantees and integrity pact as a result of the sanctions imposed by the U.S. government on them," it said.

The U.S. has imposed sanctions on Moscow citing several reasons ranging from annexation of the Crimea region of Ukraine to Russia with the recent one being the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. "The Russian side indicated L&T as their preferred partner for undertaking MRLC of the third Submarine Sindhuratna in India," the Navy added.

Canine bravehearts keep vigil on LoC

Rain or shine, 'man's most loyal friend' is always there, says Lt. Gen. Dhillon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

Marching slowly along with his buddy on a thick sheet of snow in North Kashmir, 'Buzo', a double-coat German Shepherd, gets a hero's welcome after successfully pushing back infiltrators from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) recently.

"Buzo", a silent sentinel of the Army, is among the more than 150 expert dogs with the military that maintain a tight vigil along the Line of Control (LoC) as well as in the hinterland.

Special skills

The dogs are specialised in three wings – assault (who attack the enemy), tracker (who track movements of the enemy) and explosive detection (who sniff explosives).

The canines posted along the LoC in the heights of North Kashmir are generally 'double-coat German Shepherds' which are best suit-



Best friends: Army personnel with their dog 'Buzo' returning to the base camp in North Kashmir along the LoC, on December 23, 2019. ■ PTI

ed for the climate, while Labradorers are used in the hinterland.

Part of family

"Man's most loyal friend is always there with the soldiers during rain, snow or any weather ... they go for all operations with the troops like patrolling and ambush and are especially there during emergencies like avalanche rescue," said. Lt. Gen.

Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon.

Other Army officials recalled the work of 'Roma', a tracker dog, who alerted her companions and got a temporary camp evacuated earlier this year. An avalanche damaged the field within a few hours.

Earlier this year, 'Meena', a Labrador, had alerted the troops about a possible Improvised Explosive Device, planted on the national high-

way. The warning from the specialised 'explosive detection' dog helped defuse 25 kg of IEDs planted on the highway to target an Army patrol, preventing a Pulwama-like situation.

Another German Shepherd named "Devil", who has been trained as an assault dog, keeps "anti-national" elements on their heels. "He does not spare any of his enemies," says his handler.