

BRIEFLY

Winter break reduced for Delhi govt schools

*New Delhi:* The Delhi government Friday reduced the duration of the winter break for its schools, to make up for lost hours due to holidays owing to low air quality and heat wave. For classes VI to XII, the break will now begin on January 1 and continue till January 15. **PTI**

Girl dies after falling in sewage tank

*Noida:* A nine-year-old girl died after falling into an open sewage tank in Greater Noida's Surajpur Friday afternoon. The victim, Monica, was pulled out hours later and rushed to two hospitals before succumbing to injuries. "She had fallen into an open sewage tank. There was construction activity going on in the area because of which it is possible that the tank was open," said an officer from Surajpur police station.

Man held for murder

*New Delhi:* A businessman, who was absconding for over a year after allegedly killing another man over a property dispute, was arrested from Greater Noida.

Eight of family held for murder of 2

*Noida:* Eight members of a family were arrested for allegedly killing two brothers from a rival family in Rabupura Friday. **ENS**

ANTI-SMOG GUNS TO BE USED AS WELL

# Delhi needs 213 smog towers, will build 1 in CP on trial basis: Govt in SC

**PRITAMPAL SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 6

THE DELHI government is planning to install a smog tower at Central Park in Connaught Place, and will also issue directions to all construction agencies in the capital to use anti-smog guns.

The plan was submitted in an affidavit filed by the Delhi environment department in the Supreme Court Thursday. This comes after the SC directed authorities on November 25 to develop a roadmap on smog towers within 10 days, as Delhi is one of the country's most polluted cities.

The apex court also sought to know the steps taken by the government on the use and acquisition of anti-smog guns and the outcome of their experiment



The affidavit said anti-smog guns may also be considered on roofs of high-rise buildings. *Archive*

performed in December 2017. During the experiment on December 2, the government said there was measurable impact on the ambient air quality.

It added that use of "anti-smog guns may also be considered on roofs of high-rise buildings to

measures its effectiveness in trapping particulate matter during bad air quality days".

A smog tower is a large vertical structure designed as a large-scale air purifier to reduce air pollution. The anti-smog gun is a cannon-shaped device that sprays atom-

ised water droplets in the air. It is attached to a water tank built on a movable vehicle, which can be taken to various parts of the city.

Based on the estimation of agencies involved, the tower is expected to bring down particulate matter load by 50% in an area of 1 km in the direction of wind.

"The (Delhi government) committee is of the view these smog towers may not be useful for the whole city, but they can be useful in creating 'clean air area' zones in different parts of the city," the affidavit states.

Another expert panel, set up by the Centre's Department of Science and Technology, estimated that 213 towers may be required across Delhi. However, it said setting up multiple towers at this stage is premature and recommended a pilot project.

Both expert panels of the Centre and Delhi government observed that only one such tower is operating in China's Xi'an city and its effectiveness on the air quality is yet to be established. The tower in Delhi would use different technology than the one in China.

"It has been decided, keeping in mind recommendations of the high-level committee and expert panel, to start with one tower (not a prototype) at a central location in Delhi, Connaught Place. After substantiation of impact of the smog tower... decision on deployment of actual number of towers will be taken," the affidavit said.

It stated that on receiving the result, "directions will be given to all construction agencies engaged at large construction sites in Delhi to use anti-smog gun... so that dust... can be trapped".

## Students in Delhi govt schools will now study Ambedkar in classes VI to VIII

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 6

STUDENTS OF Delhi government schools will now be taught about the life, contribution and ideas of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar — from his experiences of casteism during his early years to his ideas on parliamentary democracy.

This was announced by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal at the launch of a booklet for the purpose on the occasion of Ambedkar's 63rd death anniversary.

The booklet was prepared by the government's social welfare department with the aid of three Delhi University academics — Mani Sagar, who teaches at Shaheed Bhagat Singh (Evening) College; Shashi Rani, a teacher at the department of social work; and N Sukumar, who teaches at



Kejriwal and Sisodia at the booklet launch, Friday. *Amit Mehra*

the political science department.

Lessons from the booklet are to be taught to students of classes VI-VIII. Class VI students will learn about Ambedkar's early life and education, class VII students will learn about his ideas and contribution to social and gender justice, while those in class VIII will learn about his ideas and contri-

butions to parliamentary democracy and government.

At the launch, Kejriwal expressed hope that private schools will also include it in their curriculum.

"He was born in a village to a poor Dalit family, and faced untouchability and discrimination throughout his life. Back then, it

was very difficult for even children of rich families to complete their education. But Babasaheb Ambedkar attained two doctoral degrees, one from Columbia University and the other from London School of Economics. It would be an honour to teach our students about how he, despite many obstacles, climbed the ladder of success," he said.

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said, "A few days ago, we expressed our desire to inculcate patriotism in our students. I believe this booklet is the first step towards our effort. Babasaheb's efforts enabled Indians from different cultures, religions, and regions to be united as one nation tied to the fundamentals of our Constitution." He said the government will refine the content taught over the next few years through feedback to develop a new curriculum in their schools.

## Low temperature, calm winds lead to 1st 'severe' air day of Dec

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 6

CALM WINDS and low temperature pushed the city's average air quality into the 'severe' category for the first time this month, as experts forecast the weather conditions to stay the same until Tuesday.

As per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi's average air quality index (AQI) Friday was 404, up from 382 Thursday. Parts of NCR also recorded 'severe' air quality for the second day in a row. Noida's AQI Friday was 413, Ghaziabad's was 419, while Gurgaon was 'very poor' with a reading of 386.

A report by the Centre-run SAFAR said, "Under this low ventilation condition, AQI is forecast to stay at the border of 'very poor' to 'severe' category until December 7. AQI may marginally improve (on Sunday), but recovery from the 'very poor' condi-

tion is not expected."

An official from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said wind speed of around 8 km/hour was recorded in the city Friday, which was not enough to disperse pollutants. Delhi's minimum temperature was 8.4 degrees Celsius and a high cloud was recorded over the city.

These meteorological conditions, IMD officials said, have acted in reduction of the mixing layer height in the city, which is the vertical distance in the air in which pollutants are suspended.

Wind speed is expected to remain low until December 10, which would hinder dispersion of pollutants, coupled with minimum temperature of around 8-9 degrees Celsius forecast by the IMD. The IMD also forecast shallow to moderate fog in the morning hours until December 11, following which a passing Western Disturbance is expected to increase wind speed and possibly bring light rain on December 12.

## Thapar on Babri: Symbol of civilisation reduced to rubble

**TANUSHREE GHOSH**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 6

HISTORIAN AND professor Romila Thapar remembered meeting Mahatma Gandhi briefly at a prayer meeting in the early 1940s as a school student in Pune, seeking his autograph — looking at her silk *salwar-kameez*, he asked her to wear *khadi*. Her interest was immediately stoked.

Speaking on "Renunciation, Dissent and Satyagraha" at the 12th V M Tarkunde Memorial Lecture, at India International Centre Friday, Thapar dedicated her talk to the late judge and civil rights activist Tarkunde and in remembrance of "the ghastly act of December 6, 1992, when the Babri Masjid was wilfully torn down, stone by stone".

"Through this act, an important symbol of our civilisation was

reduced to rubble, and rubble remains as the reminder," she said.

Renunciation, she said, legitimised dissent and gave people freedom to choose who they wished to worship. This freedom imbued renouncers with a degree of moral authority: "In some situations, moral authority takes precedence over the political."

Former Supreme Court judge Justice Madan B Lokur, who presided over the talk, said, it was "moral authority" that made Tarkunde a great man.

"If we survive the present as a democracy, it will be because of people like him (Tarkunde) and the values he gave to us as a society," Thapar said.

"Secularism was ingrained in Tarkunde. We need more Tarkundes in our country at this stage," said former Attorney General of India Soli J Sorabjee, also on the panel.