THE ECHO OF INDIA•SILIGURI
Tuesday• December 26, 2017

# Kolkata turns into a drug hotspot during year-end parties: NCB

**KOLKATA, DEC 25 /--/** In the last couple of years, Kolkata has evolved as one of the hotspots for drug peddlers during the year-end celebrations, with a rising demand for narcotics among party animals. The city hosts numerous parties and events during Christmas and New Year revelries and drug peddlers throng the hotspots to cater to the demands of party-hoppers, sleuths from the Narcotic Control Bureau (NCB) said.

"It is only recently that Kolkata is emerging as one of the top cities in India where banned drugs like hashish, LSD are sold during this time of the year."The demand for drugs rises in this period and several peddlers are seen flocking the city to sell these narcotics," Dilip Kumar Srivastava, zonal director, NCB, Kolkata, told PTI. According to him, drugs are reaching Kolkata through various routes.

"Hashish which is also known as Malana charas is quite popular here because it is not that costly. While Hashish is coming mainly from Himachal Pradesh, drugs like LSD are supplied from Europe, the US and China," Srivastava said. It is also easy for drug peddlers to reach the metropolis due to its strategic location near Bangladesh and Nepal borders, another top officer of the NCB said.

Drug peddlers hand over consignments to middle men, who then strikes a deal with buyers, he said. College students are also roped in to sell drugs, the NCB zonal director said. "In some cases, peddlers use students to route drugs to the customers. Several students are also directly involved in selling the drugs to the purchasers," Srivastava said. Besides popular pubs, there are several bars in the city where drug peddlers have made a safe den for their business, another NCB official said. Incidentally, the NBC in Kolkata had arrested five persons, including a management student and a DJ with a popular pub in the city, earlier this month for their alleged involvement in a drug racket. Around six to seven top schools in the city have been asked to set up a mechanism by the NCB to keep a tab on students as drug smugglers often target vulnerable teenagers, Srivastava said.

Asked about the ways and means people use to contact the peddlers, the zonal director said social media and chatting apps are used for the purpose. Facebook, Whatsapp and other communicating sites are often used to contact the drug sellers and probable buyers, he explained. If you wish to procure it, you will manage anyway, he said.

The NCB will be on the look out for drug peddlers in the city this year and has alerted the Excise and the Kolkata Police in this connection. Last week, the Excise department with the help of the NCB had arrested two women from the city and seized consignments of Hashish from them. On enquiring about the actions initiated against drug peddlers, a senior officer of Kolkata Police said

*Mayor of Kolkata and minister of fire and engineering, housing and environment Sovan Chatterjee at a inaugural ceremony of a health centre at Thakurnagar on Sunday--------Pix Arijit Ganguly*

## Presidency Mentor Group to reach out to brilliant students

**KOLKATA, DEC 25/--/** Presidency Mentor Group chair professor Sugata Bose on Sunday said the group was exploring options to reach out to brilliant students in districts for bringing in the best brains to Presidency University. Bose, the gardiner professor of history at Harvard University, said they wanted to attract the best brains to Presidency University and the mentor group will intend to visit districts and reach out to meritorious students. "We must ensure the students come to know about the details regarding the subjects and courses on offer at Presidency. The modalities can be chalked out in due course," the Mentor Group Chair told reporters on the sidelines of the Convocation of Jadavpur University here. "We have to bring the talents," he said. Presidency Mentor Group had been set up by West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee to charter a roadmap for making Presidency University as a pre-eminent institution of learning in the world. Bose said the mentor group will make assessment on the overall situation in the university, how much progress had been made after 2011. "One thing I can say, there had been no political influence in any faculty recruitment since 2011-12 and everything had been done on purely academic merit," he commented.

Bose said while the best universities in the world are more flexible in allocating fund to retain the human resources, in India the varsities are bound by set rules by UGC. "While the Centre can allocate fund for brick and mortar, all professors and assistant professors are paid as per UGC directives," he said hinting the situation should change. Bose said at a recent Higher Education Consultative Committee meeting in Delhi he had pointed out that all central and state universities should be given autonomy to enable them to reach excellence.

To a question about education minister Partha Chatterjee comment that the heritage structure of Presidency was tinkered with during renovation work, Bose said, the mentor group will talk to the minister as well as Alumni Association and university authorities on the issue.(PTI)

*Christmas revellers in front of Victoria Memorial, Kolkata on Monday --Pix Arijit Ganguly*

## Christmas spills happiness amongst the young patients of Command Hospital, Kolkata

**KOLKATA, DEC 26 /--/** Bibha Krishna, regional president, Army Wives Welfare Association, today celebrated the joyous festival of Christmas with young patients admitted in the paediatric ward of Command Hospital, Kolkata. Speaking on the occasion, she urged the children never to lose faith in God and in their own selves. She said that faith in one's God was the biggest healer and improved the quality of life. She assured all kinds of assistance to the children of military personnel admitted to the hospital and encouraged them to always be cheerful.

A cultural programme was organised on the occasion by the Hospital. Others present on the occasion were Major General Atul Bajpai, Commandant of the Hospital an Sheelam Bajpai. EOIC)

## Assam CM urges students and youth to play an important role

**GUWAHATI, DEC 25 /--/** Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal urged the students and youth of the country on Sunday to play an important role in leveraging growth in India as they are the future of the nation. Sonowal made his call while taking part in the inaugural programme of 23rd All India Student and Youth Festival organised by Central Calcutta Science & Culture Organisation for Youth in cooperation with DONER Ministry in Guwahati.

"Students and the youth are the future of the nation. Their actions and thoughts give a new momentum to its progress. The youth must realise their power and devote in the nation building exercise with honesty and sincerity", Sonowal exhorted.

Stating that concerted effort by the youth of the 11 participating states would lead to better bonhomie amongst the people of these states, Sonowal appealed to them to stand up as a strong force against corruption and insurgency. "There is no short cut to success. You will be successful if you diligently follow the guidance of your parents, teachers and spiritual gurus. "This is the golden period of your life. Always try to maintain quality in your life and work", the chief minister advised the participants.

Sonowal also underscored the state government s initiatives for making Guwahati as the Sports Capital of the India. He informed that as a result of government endeavours, regular national and international sports events are presently being held in Assam. Sonowal also highlighted cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar s recent statement in which he lavished praise on North East' s sporting environment. (PTI)

## Nitish receives praise for grand hosting of Shukrana Samaroh

**PATNA, DEC 25 /--/** Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal with her husband and former Punjab deputy chief minister Sukhbir Singh Badal today met Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar and praised him for the grand arrangements for Shukrana Samaroh of 350th Prakash Parv of Guru Gobind Singh.

The couple, who met the chief minister at his official residence 1, Anney Marg, were here to take part in the Shukrana (thanksgiving) function of 350th Prakash Parv (birth anniversary) of Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Sikh Guru.

Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Union minister for food processing industries and former deputy chief minister Sukhbir Singh Badal hailed Kumar for the grand arrangements for Shukrana Samaroh (thanksgiving), an official release said.

Kumar welcomed them with a bouquet and presented them with a memento and Angvastra it added. They presented a Saropa to Kumar, the release said.

"This (Patna) is the birth place of 10th Sikh Guru Guru Gobind Singh jee Maharaj. It is a matter of pride for the people of Bihar. It is our duty and privilege to do whatever we can do to celebrate the 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh jee Maharaj," Kumar said on the occasion.

The state government had organised inaugural programme of the Prakash Parv on a grand scale in January this year to mark the 350th birth anniversary of the 10th Sikh guru and now the state government has organised Shukrana Samaroh (thanksgiving or closing ceremony) of the anniversary function which is a 351st Prakash Parv also, Kumar said. Sukhir Badal's father and former Punjab chief minister Prakash Singh Badal while sharing dias with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kumar at the inaugural function of 350th Prakash Parva in Patna in January this year had appreciated Kumar's hosting of the great sikh religious event in a well organised manner. Prominent among those who were present during today's meeting included- Delhi's Rajauri Garden MLA Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Bihar chief secretary Anjani Kumar Singh, former Bihar chief secretary G S Kang, chief minister's principal secretary Chanchal Kumar and others. (PTI)

# State Notes

## *One killed, 15 hurt*

**BHAWANIPATNA, DEC 25 /--/** One person was killed and 15 others were seriously injured when a tractor carrying picnickers fell into a gorge in Kalahandi district on Sunday, police said. The tractor carrying around 40 people, including women and children from Dasigaon village for a picnic, turned turtle after losing balance at a curve at Singarighat and fell into a gorge, they said. While a man, identified as Hemanta Majhi (26) of Dasigaon village, died in the mishap, at least 15 others sustained serious injuries, the police said. People from nearby Kalampur rescued the injured persons and shifted them to hospital. (PTI)

## *Jharkhand Cong to launch agitation*

**JAMSHEDPUR, DEC 25 /--/** The Congress on Sunday said it would launch an agitation to protest against the alleged deterioration in the law and order situation in Jharkhand. The agitation will either be launched in January or February next year, Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee (JPCC) president Dr Ajoy Kumar told reporters here. He alleged that lawlessness has been prevailing and corruption has been at its peak in the state under the Raghubar Das regime. The situation has reached to such an extent that people are not even safe in court premises, alleged former JPCC chief Sukhdeo Bhagat referring to the gunning down of a contractor-cum-JMM leader in the premises of a local court, in the chief minister's home town here, a few months ago. (PTI)

## *Six militants held in Manipur*

**IMPHAL, DEC 285 /--/** Six militants, including a woman, belonging to different underground outfits, were arrested by security forces from different places in Manipur, police said on Sunday. The police arrested two active members of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) from Heingang Bazaar area in Manipur's Imphal East district yesterday, a police statement said. Three other militants, including a woman, of the same outfit, were arrested after the two arrested militants disclosed their whereabouts during interrogation, the statement said. On Friday, the police had arrested an active member of the banned underground outfit KCP (People's War Group) while carrying out frisking and checking at Pishum Bridge in Imphal West district, the statement added. (PTI)

## *Naveen greets ex-PM Vajpayee*

**BHUBANESWAR, DEC 25 /--/** Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik greeted former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 93rd birthday. "Warm greetings to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji on his birthday I pray to God for his good health and long life," Patnaik tweeted. Patnaik, who entered politics after the death of his father Biju Patnaik in 1997, was a union minister in the NDA ministry headed by Vajpayee. It was under the gudiance of Vajpayee when Patnaik's regional outfit Biju Janata Dal (BJD) formed an alliance with BJP in Odisha. The BJD-BJP alliance ruled the state for about a decade from 2000 and broke just before 2009 general election. Despite the break of alliance with BJP, Patnaik is often known to visit Vajpayee and inquire about his health condition. (PTI)

## Church vandalised by two drunken youths

**SHILLONG, DEC 25 /--/** A church was vandalised on Christmas day today by two unidentified drunken youths in Tura town of Meghalaya, a senior police officer said. The incident was caught on CCTV camera of the Baptist Church at Hawakana area of the town and it had also gone viral on social media with people condemning the incident which took place hours after the midnight service.

"Two youths in inebriated condition were seen breaking the glass entrance of the Church premises. The incident took place at around 2.15 am," West Garo Hills, superintendent of police, R Kumar told PTI. He said the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) will inquire into the incident. The SP said the church authorities have submitted the CCTV footages available. Analysing the footages, the SP said the two youths were clearly in an inebriated condition. Terming it a drunken act, Kumar said it was unfortunate to have taken place on a Christmas day.

"It was not an act aimed at vandalising the property but a drunken act by two young people who were too drunk to handle themselves," the SP said. (PTI)

# Sale of woolen garments plummets at Wellington

*Sunil at his shop at Wellington— EOI pix*

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**KOLKATA, DEC 26 /--/** Lack of a cold spell and implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) have taken its toll on sale of woolen garments at the traditional winter garments fair held every year at Wellington Square in Kolkata.

While during the past years on an average a seller used to sell about 50 pieces of garments, this year the figure has come down to a paltry 20 and there is hardly any sign of sales picking up as cold breeze is yet lash the city giving cold comfort to the assembled peddlers who come mainly from north-eastern states.

Says Sunil from Arunachal Pradesh who has been coming to the market for the last 7 years to sell his garments. ``Cold winds still elude the city and that is why demand for warm clothes has not yet picked up. But still we hope the situation will improve if mercury drops further down.'' He says. What is on display at the pavement of the square is a plethora of garments that includes shawls, sweaters, blankets, mufflers, blazers, to name a few. People, chiefly from middle class families of the city and its suburbs throng the place and purchase garments that suit their pockets.

This year in addition to lack of a cold spell what added to the woes of the traders was the introduction of GST and that has made the wares costlier.

``There has been a sharp increase in price because of introduction of 5 per cent GST for winter garments. I have been selling winter garments here for the last 25 years. Now sales have gone down as GST has been introduced making the garments costlier,''Md Nazir Hassan, a seller from Topsia, in eastern Kolkata told the Echo of India. Even customers vouch for the claims of the shopkeepers. ``I don't see much crowd this year,'' Sumita, a housewife from Park Circus who came there to buy sweater for her son,'' told Echo of India. Echoed Amit from Central Avenue, who bought two jackets from the market,' we get all types of garments in this market. This year price has gone up but we come here because we get all types of garments here."

# WB BJP leaders struggle to meet mass outreach target

**KOLKATA, DEC 25 /--/** BJP leaders in West Bengal are struggling to meet a mass outreach target set by party chief Amit Shah ahead of the panchayat elections even as the party grapples with infighting and lack of coordination among the state BJP members.

A section of the BJP's central leadership believes that the party is making steady inroads into the TMC-ruled Bengal, once a bastion of the Left Front, but owing to several reasons its state unit has not been able to capitalise on the wave fully.

The results of various elections that followed the 2016 assembly polls have shown a steep rise in party's vote share and paved way for its emergence as the prime challenger to the ruling TMC in Bengal.

Although the state BJP leadership received a pat on its back from none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday for a significant rise in ballot share with 18 per cent votes, a senior leader admitted that the party still has a long way to go to woo its voters.

"We are yet to reach out to all 77,000 booths in the state. Our party president Amit Shah, during his visit to Bengal earlier this year, had set a target for creation of booth committees by the end of 2017. But we have been able to meet just 65 to 70 per cent of the target," a senior central BJP leader told PTI on the condition of anonymity. Kailash Vijayvargiya, BJP national general secretary and the Bengal in-charge, however, said the work to constitute committees would most likely be over by next month. "We hope that the work will be completed (forming booth-level committees) by January 2018," he said.

The party's central leadership has also stressed on the need to rope in intellectuals who act as catalysts in creating public opinion. "Due to infighting among a section of leaders the overall growth of the party is getting hampered. A section of leaders is not happy with the present leadership's high-handedness and has become inactive," a senior state BJP leader said. West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh too agreed that the party is yet to reach out to all the booths of the state.

"It is true that we have not been able to reach out to all booths. There are reasons behind it. In minority-dominated districts of Malda, Murshidabad and Nadia, we have a support base, but no one is ready to man the booth committees fearing backlash by the TMC and a section of minorities," Ghosh said. Ghosh, however, rubbished allegations of high-handedness and said had it been so, the party would not have been able to increase its vote share in various elections.

**AFFIDAVIT**

I, Prashant Eknath Somavanshi, aged about 33 years, S/o. Late Eknath Samavanshi, Hindu by religion, Service by occupation, residing at\ Balad B.K, P.O. Balad B.K., Dist. Jalgaon, Maharashtra, Pin-424104, at present 121 Enggr Regt. C/o. 99 APO, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as follows:- That my son's actual name is PRANAV PRASHANT SOMAVANSHI. That in the Birth Certificate being Regn. No.3557/17, dated 5/May/2017 of my son, his name has been recorded as Pranav Somavanshi instead of Pranav Prashant Somavanshi. That my son Pranav Prashant Somavanshi instead of Pranav Prashant Somavanshi, That my son Pranav Prashant Somavanshi and Pranav Somvavnt is the same one and identical person. That I am swearing this affidavit in order to record my son actual/correct name as Pranav Prashant Somavanshi in place of Pranav Somavanshi in the aforesaid Birth Certificate from the competent authority. The contents of this affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**AFFIDAVIT**

I, SMT. LILA MAYA SHARMA, W/O - GHANSHYAM SHARMA, RESIDENT OF NAYA BUSTY, SIMULBARI TEA GARDEN, SUKNA, P.S-KURSEONG,DIST-DARJEELING, W.B DO HEREBY SOLEMNLY AFFIRM AND DECLARE THAT IN THE SERVICE RECORD OF MY SON NAMELY DHAN KUMAR SHARMA BEING ARMY SERVICE NO. 9428912W, WHEREAS MY NAME HAS BEEN RECORDED AS TILA MAYA SHARMA IN PLACE OF LILA MAYA SHARMA AFFIDAVIT AT SILIGURI COURT ON 23RD DAY OF DECEMBER, 2017.

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