



Chilean tourist Paula Aedo wears novelty headwear to usher in 2017 as she arrives to watch New Year's fireworks in Sydney—REUTERS

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AT A GLANCE

BJP should not get a single vote in UP: Mamata

KOLKATA, DEC 31 /-- West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee today declined to comment on the internal squabbles of the Samajwadi Party, but said whoever wins the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, BJP should not get a single vote. "It is SP's internal matter. I do not want to say anything on it," she told a press conference at the state secretariat when asked to comment on the developments in that party. "But whoever wins, be it BSP or SP, BJP should not get a single vote. They (Modi government) are threatening Mayawati. They are threatening those who have opposed their (demonetisation) decision. They are only spreading lies and canards. They believe in the theory of Goebbels," she added. Banerjee had addressed a public meeting against demonetisation in Lucknow last month which had been attended by Uttar Pradesh ministers. "The BJP are committing mistakes everyday. They had committed a mistake in Bihar where Lalu (Prasad) and Nitish (Kumar) won the election," she said. Continuing with her attack on the saffron party, Banerjee said, "Within seven days of Jayalithaa's demise, they had conducted a raid (on the Tamil Nadu chief secretary). If Chandrababu Naidu raises his voice, they will conduct a raid on him as well." PTI

Jharkhand coal minetragedy toll rises to 13

RANCHI: The number of dead in Thursday's Jharkhand coal mine cave-in has reached thirteen with the recovery of two more bodies on Saturday, police said. "Two more bodies have been recovered on Saturday. The rescue operation is going on. There are chances of some more people still trapped in the debris," said a police spokesperson to newsmen. The tragedy occurred at the Rajmahal Open cast Project of Eastern Coal fields Limited (ECL) around 7.30 pm on Thursday. The relatives of those killed took the visiting ECL officials hostage on Saturday morning at the accident site. Police, however, managed to rescue them after three hours. Rescue operations were being carried out by the National Disaster Response Force with assistance from the ECL, Bharat Cooking Coal Limited (BCL), the state government and experts.

People throng hotels, pubs, hangouts to celebrate New Year

KOLKATA, DEC 31 /-- With DJ nights, cultural programmes and exotic cuisine, New Year's Eve revellers thronged hotels, pubs and hangout joints since evening to be a part of the midnight celebrations and welcome 2017 in style. All major clubs and hotels in the city were geared up with special parties offering a heady cocktail of dance, music, DJs, food and wine to bid farewell to the old year and ring in 2017. Park Street, the city's dining district, wore a festive look with balloons, twinklers and scintillating lights adorning the street for crowds. Most five star hotels of Kolkata are having poolside parties and buffet dinners with champagne and premium scotch. The police made elaborate security arrangements and posted extra forces for a tighter vigil. The state police also geared up security mechanism in the districts to prevent any untoward incident. Five star hotels, fine dining restaurants and cafes in the city, known to be food lover's paradise, are planning



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the nation

PM announces slew of sops, warns of tough action against dishonest

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /-- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today set out a stern warning of tough action against the "dishonest" people even as he announced a slew of sops for senior citizens, farmers, rural housing, women and small entrepreneurs to soften the blow of demonetisation. Modi also assuaged the honest people that the government will act as a friend to them so that their difficulties are eased. Among the sops announced in his address to the nation at the end of 50-day demonetisation period, the Prime Minister said senior citizens will get 8 per cent interest on deposits of up to Rs 7.5 lakh for 10 years and deposit of Rs 6000 into accounts of pregnant and lactating women in rural areas to meet medical expenses. For farmers, he announced that banks will not charge interest for 60 days on loans taken from district cooperative central bank and primary societies for rabi crop.

For construction or expansion of a rural house, 3 per cent interest will be waived on loan of up to Rs 2 lakh. Announcing two new schemes under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, he said

4 per cent interest subvention on loans up to Rs 9 lakh and 3 per cent on loan up to Rs 12 lakh. "The law will take its course with full force. The government will help the honest and protect them and see their difficulties are eased. How honest will gain from the government. This government is a friend of good people and wants to build on the good environment for the people to return to goodness," he

said. Acknowledging that "serious offences" have been committed by some bank and government officials taking advantage of situation, he said "they will not be spared". Hailing the Prime Minister's address to the nation, BJP said the welfare measures announced by him were his way of thanking people for their untimely support to demonetisation and will help the poor and boost economy. "The Prime Minister has con-

gratulated people on having ensured that the world's largest drive against corruption and black money is a huge success. A series of welfare measures for women, senior citizens,

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Senior citizens to get 8% interest on deposits of up to Rs 7.5 lakh for 10 years.

Rs 6,000 to be deposited into accounts of pregnant and lactating women in rural areas to meet medical expenses.

Banks will not charge interest for 60 days on loans taken by farmers from district cooperative central bank and primary societies for rabi crop.

4% interest subvention on loans up to Rs 9 lakh and 3% on loan up to Rs 12 lakh to be allowed.

Mamata fumes



"Where are the figures of #DeMonetisation? How much of black money recovered? What did the nation gain after 50 days of excruciating pain? PM deviated from actual agenda of black money & #DeMonetisation PM just took over post of Finance Minister and made pre-Budget speech. So the FM was missing from this advance Budget Speech made by PM. Modi babu, empty vessels make the most noise"

MULAYAM BACK PEDALS

Revokes expulsion of Akhilesh, Ramgopal after CM musters huge supports of legislators

Conspiracy to break SP has failed, says Amar

LUCKNOW, DEC 31 /-- After a massive show of strength by Akhilesh Yadav, who was expelled from SP by father Mulayam Singh Yadav, the party supremo today backed down revoking with immediate effect the expulsion orders of his son and brother Ramgopal. After hectic confabulations involving Akhilesh's warring uncle Shyval Yadav, Mulayam and the chief minister, Shival tweeted that on the SP supremo's directive, expulsion of Akhilesh and Ramgopal Yadav from SP was being revoked with immediate effect. "I am coming back to the party," chief Mulayam Singh along with CM Akhilesh Yadav. Netaji has given the order that the suspension orders of Akhilesh and Ram Gopal are terminated with immediate effect," Shival said. "All of us together will fight common forces and we will once again form a SP government in UP with full majority. These are my orders. We will hold discussions within ourselves and decide, and prepare for the upcoming elections," he said. "All matters have been solved and we will fight the upcoming polls together. We will all sit to-

gether with Netaji and I am sure all problems will be resolved," he said. On a day of fast-paced developments, the UP chief minister earlier in the day convened a meeting of SP legislators where over 200 of the 229 party MLAs turned up expressing their loyalty to the chief minister, a day after he was expelled from the party for indulging in "indiscipline", pushing the ruling party to the precipice of a vertical split. Some SP MLAs and senior party functionaries loyal to Akhilesh also attended the meeting at the chief minister's official residence at 5-Kalidas Marg. Senior SP leader and UP cabinet minister Azam Khan then arrived at the CM's residence and after a brief stay, they drove to Mulayam's bungalow at a stone's throw distance. High drama was witnessed outside the chief minister's residence where young supporters of Akhilesh assembled in large numbers to vent their fury over his expulsion and that of his uncle Ramgopal Yadav. Akhilesh supporters tried to break the cordon outside the CM's residence and clashed with police. Some of his loyalists also exchanged blows with supporters of

Shyval Yadav outside the party headquarters in the high-security VIP enclave which looked like a battle zone with heavy police deployment. As the embattled Samajwadi Party faced its worst ever crisis, RJD supremo Lalu Prasad sought to bring the warring groups together by speaking to Mulayam to broker peace. Lalu telephoned Mulayam, who happens to be his relative too, to ensure that the feuding leaders buried the hatchet. The SP supremo had on Friday expelled his son Akhilesh and Ramgopal from SP for six years after they put up candidates against the official nominees and summoned a party meet on Sunday, pushing the ruling party to the precipice of a split just ahead of the Assembly elections likely to be announced soon. Mulayam had said he took action against Akhilesh and Ramgopal to save the party which he had built through hard work. "We have to save the party. The party comes first. That is why we are expelling both Akhilesh and Ramgopal," he said. He explained that the decision was taken after Ramgopal, in his capacity as general secretary, called an emergency meeting of the party on

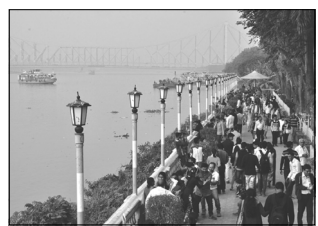
January 1 and Akhilesh "supported" it. Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh, who many including Akhilesh, blame for creating bad blood within Saifal's ruling Yadav clan, termed the crisis in the party as "unfortunate" and asked its members to support Mulayam in the family feud. "I appeal to the party members to stand with Netaji (Mulayam). Whatever is happening is very unfortunate," Singh, who recently made a comeback to the party after a long exile, said. However, as the squabbling first family of the Samajwadi Party appeared to have made peace, Singh quickly changed the tune saying, "Mulayam Singhji has done the right thing. He has given a message through his decision that he will not let either the Samajwadi Party or his family break till he is alive. Those people who wanted the party and the family to break, their conspiracy has failed." "Now we will get together and with each other's cooperation will ensure that the SP once again forms government with full majority in UP elections to fulfil Mulayam Singhji's dreams and expectations," he said.

Tapas denied bail, sent to 3-day CBI custody

BHUBANESWAR, DEC 31 /-- A special court here today rejected the bail plea of Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Tapas Pal, arrested for his alleged involvement in Rose Valley Chit Fund scam, and sent him to three-day CBI custody. Pal was produced in the court of Special C.J.M, CBI, P K Mishra. Against it plea for a five-day remand of Pal, the court allowed CBI to take him into custody for three days. The cine star-turned politician was one of the directors of the tainted chit fund group that allegedly duped investors in Odisha, West Bengal and some other states. Pal was also accused of promoting the company and "misleading" people to deposit money in the firm. He was also charged with giving senior posts to his family members in the company, a senior CBI official said. In its charge-sheet submitted in the court on January 7, CBI had accused the ponzi firm of duping investors of Rs 17,000 crore, of which Rs 450 crore is from Odisha alone. The company was active in Odisha and had 28 branches in the state. Pal was brought from Kolkata in the morning and taken to the CBI state headquarters. From there, he was sent to the Capital Hospital for medical examination before being produced in the court. CBI sources said a special investigation team led by DIG N K Singh, CBI Superintendent of Police, Bhubaneswar, Rajeev Ranjan and investigating officer will interrogate Pal.

Rahul asks PM to lift restrictions on cash withdrawals

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, DEC 31 /-- Congress vice president, a staunch critic of the Union government's decision to demonetise the notes, listed out his eight demands to Modi as the 50 days the prime minister had sought to normalise the situation expired yesterday and there still seem to have some issues with the availability of notes. He has dubbed the move the single most arbitrary decision in the history of the world affecting 1.5 billion people. Apart from asking the Prime Minister to "lift restriction on withdrawal of money with immediate effect", the Congress leader demanded him to deposit Rs 25,000 in the account of one woman in each Below Poverty Line (BPL) family. He advocated immediately abolishing charges on digital transactions and called for Income and Sales taxes rebate of 50 per cent to small scale shopkeepers and businesses. Rahul also demanded the Prime Minister to compensate all bank account holders with special interest rate of 18 per cent annum for the "time restrictions are in place". The Congress leader also urged doubling of number of guaranteed workdays and wage rate under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for a year and a special one-time bonus of 20 per cent over and above the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of all rabi crops. Questioning the restrictions imposed on cash withdrawal, chief minister Mamata Banerjee too today said the government cannot simply "snatch away" economic rights of the people. "Modi Babu, public are not beggars. Why are there still restriction on cash withdrawal?" Mamata raised question in a statement.



Visitors at the Millennium Park on New Year's eve