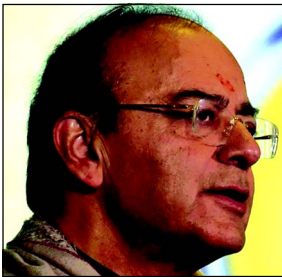


Wait for the 'jinx' effect: Akhilesh

LUCKNOW, JAN 7/-/ Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav today said the effect of the "Noida Jinx" would be seen in the coming years. Yadav was referring to the latest visit of the prime minister and UP chief minister to inaugurate a 12-km stretch of the Kalkaji Mandir- Botanical Garden segment of Delhi Metro's new Magenta Line. Addressing a press conference, Yadav said, "I believed in the jinx. It's good that both - the chief minister and the prime minister - visited there, now its impact is to be seen." The former chief minister said the impact of the jinx was "visible". "I saw in pictures that he (Yogi) could not flag off or press the button to start metro services," Yadav said. The "Noida jinx" took root after chief minister Veer Bahadur Singh had to step down in June 1988 a few days after he returned from Noida. (PTI)

Govt open to proposals to further cleanse political funding: Jaitley



The government is willing to consider all suggestions to further strengthen the cleansing of political funding in India. It has to be borne in mind that impractical suggestions will not improve the cash dominated system. They would only consolidate it

NEW DELHI, JAN 7/-/The electoral bonds mechanism is a substantial improvement in transparency over the present system and the government is open to suggestions to further cleanse political funding, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on Sunday. In a Facebook post, Jaitley said the conventional practice of funding the political system was to take donations as well as under-the-table expenditures in cash. The sources are anonymous or pseudonymous. The quantum of money was never disclosed and the system ensures unclean money coming from unidentifiable sources. "It is a wholly non-transparent system. Most political groups seem fairly satisfied with the present arrangement and would not mind this status-quo to

continue. The effort, therefore, is to run down any alternative system which is devised to cleanse up the political funding mechanism," Jaitley said. The finance minister had last week announced the contours of the electoral bonds, which will be sold by country's largest lender SBI and will have a tenure of just 15 days. The bonds are being pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties. Jaitley said the choice has now to be "consciously" made between the existing system of substantial cash donations involving unclean money and other transparent options like cheque, online transactions or electoral bonds. "While all three methods involve clean money, the first two are totally transparent and the electoral bonds scheme is a substantial im-

provement in transparency over the present system of no-transparency," he said. "The government is willing to consider all suggestions to further strengthen the cleansing of political funding in India. It has to be borne in mind that impractical suggestions will not improve the cash dominated system. They would only consolidate it," Jaitley wrote. He said India, despite being the largest democracy in the world, has not been able to evolve a transparent political funding system in the last seven decades. "The round the year functioning of the political parties involves a large expenditure... These expenses run into hundreds of crores. Yet there has not been a transparent funding mechanism of the political system," he said. (PTI)

Condition of injured OC critical



KOLKATA, JAN 7/-/The condition of the Officer-in-Charge of Shyampur police station who was seriously injured in a mob attack at a village in Howrah district yesterday, still continued to remain critical at a Bargachomukh Municipality hospital.

The 44-year-old OC, Suman Das, who went to a local hospital for check up, but admitted to private-run Belle Vue Clinic in Kolkata, 70 km from the village, with severe head injury. Condition of Das, the injured OC, is still critical. Das has brain haemorrhage. He has been kept under ventilator support. He needs to be kept under ventilator support for a few more days till there is improvement, the hospital sources told PTI. A sub-inspector Tarun Pramanik, who tried to rescue Das, was also injured along with a civic volunteer Prasentij Majhi in the incident. Pramanik was later admitted to Uluberia hospital. Sensing serious trouble, senior police officers rushed to the area immediately with reinforcement and arrested seven persons including the main accused Muni Matiar Rahman, an advocate in an Uluberia court. A strong police picket has been posted in the area to defuse tension, the police said. The police charged the arrested with rioting, attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy and offences under the Arms Act and yesterday produced them in a court in Uluberia, which remanded them to police custody for five days. Many people of the village were absconding to avoid arrest, the police said. (PTI)

DPS bus mishap fallout

INDORE, JAN 7/-/Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan today announced that 2,514 school buses that are over 15 years old would be phased out, two days after four Delhi Public School students were killed in a collision between their school bus and a truck here, Chouhan consoled the members of the deceased and visited the hospital where the injured students are undergoing treatment. "We won't allow buses more than 15 years old to ply at any cost. A directive will be issued to take these buses off roads within three months," the chief minister told reporters. He said that 2,514 out of the total 17,400 school buses, playing with the permission of the Transport Department, have been in operation for more than 15 years. "These old buses were taken off roads in a phased manner," he said. Chouhan also announced removal of Indore Regional Transport Officer (RTO) M P Singh after taking cognizance of a photograph published by some newspapers in which the officer was purportedly seen laughing while giving information about the accident to a senior police officer.

Mojo's Bistro owner sent to police custody

MUMBAI, JAN 7/-/A court here today remanded Yug Pathak, the son of a retired IPS officer and one of the owners of the Mojo's Bistro pub, to a five-day police custody in connection with the deadly fire at the Kamala Mills compound here on December 29, which had claimed 14 lives. Pathak, the son of retired director general of police and former Pune police commissioner K K Pathak, was arrested yesterday. On Friday, the Mumbai Fire Brigade, in its preliminary probe report on the fire, which had engulfed Mojo's Bistro and the adjacent 1 Above pub at the Kamala Mills compound in Lower Parel on December 29, had said the blaze possibly started at Mojo's Bistro due to the flying embers of a hookah.



A girl holds her brother as she sits next to a fire along a roadside on a cold winter morning in New Delhi — Reuters

Not curbing press freedom: UIDAI

NEW DELHI, JAN 7/-/Under fire for filing an FIR against a newspaper for a report highlighting alleged breach in Aadhaar database, UIDAI today said that it respects free speech, including freedom of press, and its police complaint should not be viewed as "shooting the messenger". Days after it filed an FIR against a prominent newspaper based out of Chandigarh, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) in a statement today said that such an act should not be viewed as one targeting media or whistle-blower. Justifying its stance, UIDAI said criminal proceedings have been initiated as it was an act of unauthorised access. "UIDAI respects Free Speech including the Freedom of Press and Media. However, UIDAI's act of filing an FIR with full details of the incident should not be viewed as UIDAI targeting the media or the whistle-blowers or 'shooting the messenger'," the Aadhaar-issuing body said in a statement. It maintained that there was no breach of Aadhaar biometric

database. Explaining the FIR that has been filed in the matter, UIDAI said complete details of the incident needs to be provided with the names of persons connected with case so that full and fair investigation can be undertaken and "culprits" be brought to justice. "It does not necessarily mean that everyone mentioned in the FIR is a culprit unless after a thorough and fair investigation, the person is charge-sheeted and proved to be guilty beyond doubt in the court of law. But all those who have been there in the chain of incident in which the crime has been committed, have to be mentioned, including unknowns in the FIR, so that police can make proper investigation in the interest of justice," the statement said. The statement came on the back of a news report last week, claiming that anonymous sources were offering instant and unrestricted access to Aadhaar details for

Rs 500 over WhatsApp. The UIDAI had dismissed the reports asserting that its system is "secure" and any misuse could be traced and action taken since it maintained complete log of various functions. The authority's statement today said that FIR has been registered in Cyber Cell of Delhi Police for violations under various sections of Aadhaar Act, Indian Penal Code and IT Act. Citing views of the Supreme Court in another matter, UIDAI said that the government had underlined basic principle that "a crime does not stand obliterated or extinguished merely because its commission is claimed to be in public interest."

"Therefore, UIDAI as a statutory authority is duty bound to place all the facts before the police in order for a fair and impartial investigation to take place to arrive at the truth," UIDAI release said. The authority reiterated that there has absolutely been no breach of Aadhaar biometric database "in any manner whatsoever". (PTI)

FILING AN FIR AGAINST NEWSPAPER

WB reels under cold spell

KOLKATA, JAN 7/-/Icy winds walloped most areas in West Bengal intensifying the prevailing cold conditions even as the Met office today forecast similar conditions for the next few days. While the western districts of the state experienced cold wave conditions, there was abnormal cold in the eastern districts in some sub-Himalayan districts. Srimketan in Birbhum district was the coldest in the plains with minimum temperature of 5.8 degrees Celsius at 5.30 am this morning. In the Met department said, in North Bengal, Jalpaiguri recorded the day's maximum temperature of 10.5 degrees Celsius, 10 notches below normal, while in Coochbehar the mercury rose to 10 degrees Celsius, eight notches below normal. Minimum temperatures dipped below 10 degrees mark in most places of the state, with Asansol recording a low of 7.4 degrees Celsius, followed by Coochbehar 7.6 degrees Celsius, Burdwan 7.6 degrees Celsius and Bankura 8.4 degrees Celsius. Kolkataans experienced a chilly Sunday with a minimum temperature of 10.6 degrees Celsius, which is three notches below normal, the Met department said. The weatherman has forecast cold spell to continue for the next few days and night temperatures are expected to fall further in some areas, both in Gangetic plains and sub-Himalayan parts of West Bengal. (PTI)

Four killed in MP mine collapse

BETUL (MP), JAN 7/-/An abandoned Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) mine caved-in in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district today, killing three women and an 11-year-old girl illegally working there, police said. Another woman was injured in the accident at the mine in Patharkhedha area, they said. "The incident occurred when the women were digging Satpura mine number 2, which was abandoned by the WCL, about 50 km from the district headquarters," said Superintendent of Police D R Taniwar. Sub-Divisional Magistrate S K Bhandari said the bodies were pulled out from under the debris and the rescue operation was over. The deceased have been identified as Nitu Chorse (41), Nana Bhorse (40), Nani Bai Patharkhedha (30) and Payal Deshmukh (11). The injured woman, Nandini Chorse (35), has been admitted to the district hospital, Bhandari said. All the victims hail from Tatta Colony, near the mine site, he added. (PTI)

This astrologer predicts overseas success for Kohli-led India

NEW DELHI, JAN 7/-/A la Paul the predicting octopus in football, he has an uncanny knack of correctly predicting the future of cricketers in the sport, and claims to have followers who will vouch for the accuracy of his prophecies. Narendra Bunde, a resident of Nagpur and a 'cricket astrologer' by profession, had "foretold" some months ago that Mahendra Singh Dhoni, now 36, would be playing in the 2019 World Cup in England, at a time when many questioned his place in the limited overs game. Having got his predictions right about Sachin Tendulkar's comeback from tennis elbow injury, his Bharat Ratna honour, Sourav Ganguly's comeback, India's World Cup triumph in 2011, Bunde says that time has come for Virat Kohli's team to taste success abroad. Besides, he says, with supreme confidence,



Kohli will soon strike an endorsement deal unheard of in the history of Indian sports. "I predicted about Dhoni when he was playing in the World Cup," Bunde tells PTI during a chat. Regarding the current India captain, he says, "What Kohli will soon be signed up for is like what (Mark) Mascrenhas did with Sachin (Tendulkar). In fact, it's going to be bigger than that in the past years. Kohli's Venus is very strong at the moment and that is why he will do well abroad." India are presently touring South Africa and will travel to England in the summer followed by a tour of Australia. "I mean it will be not as bad as in the past when the opposition would whitewash us. According to his

stars and planetary positions, there are chances of positive results in places like New Zealand and Australia." In the 1990s when Tendulkar was going great guns, Mascrenhas changed the game of celebrity management and turned the cricket icon into a multi-millionaire. Bunde, who turned to predicting the future of cricketers in 2006, has taken his advice from Ganguly, Murali Karthik, Sreesanth, Zaheer Khan, Gautam Gambhir and Suresh Raina. Even actress Preity Zinta had sought his guidance when her IPL franchise Kings XI Punjab was go-

ing through a torrid time. The Indian women's team reached the final of the ICC World Cup last year, and Bunde says skipper Mithali Raj, too, took tips from him. And so was Vidarbha captain Faiz Fazel, under whose leadership, Vidarbha won their first Ranji Trophy recently. "I spoke to Faiz Fazel and asked him to wear number 24 in the domestic one-day games. He did that. As for Mithali, I asked her to wear number 33 jersey and it eventually proved lucky for her." Bunde says the only time he went wrong was during the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies, where India were knocked out in the first round. While Bunde is fairly known among the Indian cricketers, Paul the octopus swept to international attention when it predicted all of Germany's World Cup matches in 2010. (PTI)