

Editorial

Saturday, December 30, 2017

Peoples' mandate: what next?

Finally, the dust have settled after an all-out battle for political supremacy in the country and the largest democracy in the world is slowly getting back to the normal hustle and bustle, but this time, there is a palpable sense of hope and positivity in the air, a fact driven home by the overwhelming response of the voters and the ensuing result. The yearning for change that has been quietly but consistently simmering amongst the public has been fulfilled, and yet, this is not the final victory, for the real test is yet to commence.

In all fairness, the outgoing Government initiated quite a lot of development schemes, even though these were portrayed as populist moves rather than schemes based on necessity, what with the names of the schemes glorifying a dynasty rather than indicating the purpose for the same. Also, one needs to get away from the euphoria and take a hard, cold look at the reality as well as the possible course of action the new Government might take and also the condition of the State Government in relation to the political scenario unfolding at the centre. Policies and programs are framed by the leaders who are chosen by the people through election who are made to make an informed judgment after making available all possible information about the candidates and their parties and the ideologies they represent. What is disconcerting at the state level is the thought of having to choose the lesser of the evils, as the leaders of almost all the political parties have been tried and tested by the public before, and were found wanting in various aspects of their performance as leaders.

These political turncoats are now in a rejuvenating mood mainly due to the change of guard at the centre, while the people of the state have all but given up hope of any positive change and progress as the tables have turned and the ruling government in the state have become the opposition of the party ruling the centre, and despite the unconvincing assurances by the state Government of furthering the various development projects being worked on at present, the public cannot help but feel the impending restrictions and revaluations of the works and schemes being implemented by the state Government which will eventually affect the already delayed development which is inching along even at present.

But more than the concerns regarding development, the one thing people in Manipur will be looking out for is the repeal of AFSPA as promised by the present Prime Minister at his campaign speech during his Manipur visit. The state unit of the ruling party should not sit back and bask in reflected glory, but should instead be proactive in working towards realizing the long cherished wish of the people of Manipur. The state Government, meanwhile, should make an earnest effort to streamline the operational aspects of the state security forces and also to raise their efficiency and most importantly to improve their people-skill, a concept which is evidently yet to be recognized as a vital component of people working in the public domain, and especially essential for those who regulates law and order.

The present political scenario presents a peculiar situation for the people of the state, and is a very good time, if there ever will be one, to ascertain the capabilities and limitations of the ruling opposition party and the opposition whose party is ruling at the centre.

BSF told to keep close vigil on Bangla border: Tripura CEO

PTI Agartala, Dec 30: The BSF has been told to keep a close vigil on the 856-km long Indo-Bangla border in Tripura, to prevent entry of unwanted elements into the state, where assembly elections are due early next year, an election official said. Tripura Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Sriram Taranikanti held a meeting with top Border Security Force (BSF) officials regarding the close vigil on the border. "A meeting was held with Inspector General (IG) of BSF couple of days back. All polling stations along the border were mapped using Global Positioning System (GPS). I hope close vigil will begin in the coming weeks", Taranikanti told reporters here last evening. The CEO said Central paramilitary forces would start arriving in the state soon and the Central government has agreed to send security forces as required by the Election Commission.

He said Indian voters, living in other side of the barbed wire fencing along the border would be able to exercise their franchise without any problem. The fencing was erected 150 yards away from the international zero line to adhere to Indira-Mujib pact, 1971 and border management agreement signed in 1975. In an effort to reduce distance and increase ease of voting, 44 more polling stations would be set up in the state for next year's assembly election. "We had 3,170 listed polling stations in Tripura. Our exercise revealed that their average distance from nearby habitations was often high, so we have decided to reorganise. "In total, 3,214 polling stations would be utilised in assembly polls this time", Taranikanti said. The CEO said, after reorganisation, all polling stations would be located within a range of 3.5 km from nearby habitations.

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National & International News

Delhi sees a cold, foggy morning; Leh coldest in J-K at -13.8 C

Agencies Srinagar, Dec. 30: Delhi woke up to a cold and foggy Saturday, with the minimum temperature recorded at 7.2 degrees Celsius, the season's average, the weather office said. At least 13 trains were cancelled, 36 delayed and two rescheduled due to fog in several parts of northern India. The humidity at 8.30 am was 100% and visibility stood at 400 metres. "The sky would remain clear in the day ahead," an official of the India Meteorological Department said. The maximum temperature was likely to hover around 25 degrees Celsius. Friday's minimum temperature recorded at 6.8 degrees Celsius while the maximum temperature settled at 25.3 degrees Celsius, five notches above the season's average. In Uttar Pradesh, heavy fog continued to disrupt air, rail and vehicular traffic in most parts for the second consecutive day, slowing down normal life as the cold wave intensified. Visibility dropped to one metre on many state and national highways, leading to several pile ups and accidents. Six persons of a family, including an infant, were killed on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway late on Friday when a speeding truck on the wrong side rammed into

their car. Despite police orders, heavy vehicles continued to ply on the expressway, endangering commuters lives. All schools upto Class 8 have been closed till January 4, following the state government's order. Timing of senior classes has also been changed to later in the day. The regional Met office has predicted foggy days to hold ground for the next few days. Vehicular traffic has been hit by the poor visibility and the rail traffic has been completely disrupted. More than 190 trains were running late on the Northern (NR), North Eastern (NER) and the North Central Railways (NCR) divisions. Major trains that were running behind schedule included Lucknow-Chandigarh Express, Vaisahali Superfast to New Delhi, Lucknow Mail, Padmawat Express, Sabarnati Express and Shatabdi Express between Lucknow and New Delhi. The humidity levels have been 100% in the past 24-hours in eastern and central parts of Uttar Pradesh while the western parts are going dry. The maximum temperature in major cities of the state was hovering around 18 degrees Celsius, adding to the winter bite. The cold wave was likely to

intensify in the coming days and relief in the form of sunny days would come only in the New Year, weatherman said. Even as the mercury continued its downward spiral in Kashmir valley and Ladakh region in Jammu and Kashmir, Leh experienced its coldest night this winter as the minimum temperature there settled nearly 14 degrees Celsius below the freezing point. Leh town, in the frontier Ladakh region, recorded a minimum night temperature of 13.8 degrees Celsius, against minus 11.4 degrees Celsius of the previous night, MeT officials said. It was the season's lowest night temperature in the town, which was the coldest recorded place in the state last night, they said. The official said the night temperature at the nearby Kargil town settled at a low of minus 11.2 degrees Celsius, a drop of two degrees from the previous night. Srinagar city, the summer capital of J-K, recorded a minimum temperature of minus 3.5 degrees Celsius, down from minus 2.8 degrees Celsius the previous night. The mercury in Qazigund in south Kashmir settled at a low of minus 3.0 degrees Celsius, down from minus 2.4 degrees Celsius the previous night. Kokernag town recorded a low of minus 0.4 degrees Celsius, the

weather department official said. Kupwara town in north Kashmir registered a low of minus 4.1 degrees Celsius last night, down from the previous night's minus 3.5 degrees Celsius, the official said. He said the mercury at the famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir settled at a low of minus 6.6 degrees Celsius, a degree colder than the previous night's minus 5.4 degrees Celsius. The night temperature in Pahalgam — the famous health resort which also serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra — recorded a low of minus 5.5 degrees Celsius — compared to yesterday's minus 5.4 degrees Celsius, the official said. Kashmir is currently under the grip of 'Chillai-Kalan' — the 40-day period of harshest winter when the chances of snowfall are most frequent and maximum and the temperature drops considerably. 'Chillai Kalan' ends on January 31, but the cold wave is likely to continue even after that in the valley, the MeT officials said. The 40-day period is followed by a 20-day long 'Chillai-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day long 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold). The weather office has forecast mainly dry weather in Kashmir over the next few days.

Donald Trump condemns arrest of protesters in Iran, tells Tehran 'the world is watching'

AFP Washington, Dec. 30: President Donald Trump on Friday condemned the arrest of protesters in Iran, telling Tehran that "the world is watching" as officials reported fresh demonstrations over the country's struggling economy. Fifty-two people were arrested in Iran's second city Mashhad on Thursday, the first day of the protests, which also took place in other areas and spread to the capital Tehran as well as Kermanshah the following day. "Some incidents in the country these days are on the pretext of economic problems, but it seems there is something else behind them," Jahangiri said in comments carried by state broadcaster IRIB. "They think by doing this they harm the government," he said, but "it will be others who ride the wave." **Unauthorised lending institutions** Tehran's deputy provincial governor Mohsen Hamedani said "less than 50 people" had gathered in one of the city's squares and several had been arrested after refusing to move on, according to the reformist newspaper *Etamad*. He said they were "under the

influence of propaganda" and were "unaware that the majority of these calls to protest come from abroad." The rally in Kermanshah appeared larger — with hundreds shown protesting in videos shared on social media — and was reportedly focused on those who lost money in the collapse of unauthorised lending institutions in recent years. "Protesters asked for clarifications on the fate of their accounts and police dealt with them with tolerance despite them having no permission to protest," the conservative *Tasnim* news agency reported. It came a day after 52 people were arrested in Mashhad, an important pilgrimage site, for protesting high prices and the poor state of the economy under President Hassan Rouhani. Videos published by reformist media group *Nazar* showed people chanting "Death to Rouhani," while others shouted "not Gaza, not Lebanon, my life for Iran," reflecting anger in some circles that the government is too focused on regional politics rather than tackling domestic problems.

One lawmaker said these protests were also rooted in the collapse of credit institutions and other financial scandals. Unauthorised lending institutions mushroomed under former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad due to weak regulation of the banking sector. An uncontrolled construction boom left many banks and credit companies stuck with toxic debts that, combined with soaring inflation and the chaos caused by international sanctions, pushed many to default on their debts. Since coming to power in 2013, Rouhani has shut down three of the biggest new credit institutions — Mizan, Fereshtegan and Samen al-Hojaj. He tasked the central bank with reimbursing lost deposits, but many are still waiting for compensation. Mashhad was among the areas hardest hit by the closure of Mizan, which had around one million accounts, according to the official *IRNA* news agency. Kermanshah was particularly affected by problems at another credit institution, Caspian, according to the *Tasnim* agency.

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