

India's poor, on the frontlines of India's polarizing pollution war

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 2

Air purifiers for the affluent, masks for the not so rich and inhaling polluted air all day — without literally a breather — for those who can't afford a roof over their heads. It's maximum exposure for millions of people who are bearing the brunt of hazardous air quality, say experts. As the air quality index (AQI) hovers between "very poor" and "severe", slipping into "poor" on better days, the toxic air and hazy skies over the Delhi-NCR region and other parts of India are driving one more wedge between the haves and the have-nots, leaving those forced to live and work in the outdoors vulnerable to pulmonary and other diseases. "The class bias is evident when the

pollution level peaks," said Sunita Narain, who heads the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and is a member of the Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control). "We can fight pollution only when authorities think about both rich and poor and both join hands in this fight to protect the environment, otherwise the rich can roam in diesel vehicles and use purifiers to protect themselves but the poor face more exposure and do not even have money for treatment," Narain told Agency. Rickshaw pullers and construction workers are the worst hit. And 19-year-old Shyam, who recently moved from Darbhanga in Bihar to Delhi to become a rickshaw puller, is proof that pollution hits us all, but some more than others. "I am saving money for a computer course but my

health has been poor for the last one month," said the youngster, adding that he had spent all his savings in getting treatment for a recent respiratory infection. "We can't afford the hi-fi masks that we often see our passengers wear," Shyam said with a wry laugh. These days, he said, he feels he pedals with a weight on his chest. The rickshaw is home for Shyam. Rupa, who came to Delhi from Rourkela 30 years ago, escapes into his humble home in east Delhi's Trilokpuri area at night but his fragile health is evidence of the long hours spent outdoors. The 49-year-old boasts that he could not so long ago ride his rickshaw faster than most autos. But it is that time of the year when he slows down, not because of his age but because of the alarming pollution.

ITNL manages to rescue 2 of 7 Indian employees held hostage in Ethiopia by angry locals

Agency
Mumbai, Dec. 2

Two of IL&FS's seven employees held hostage by locals in Ethiopia have been allowed to move out of the camp and are now in Addis Ababa, a press release from the company late on Saturday evening said. For the past week, seven Indian employees at 3 project camp sites of Elsames SA, a subsidiary of IL&FS Transportation Networks Limited (ITNL), have not been allowed to leave their respective camp sites by the local community on account of unpaid dues by the project company. The press release said that ITNL had sought approval on November 16, 2018, through its authorized dealer bank, to remit funds overseas and that these approvals are awaited. In an email to Mint, meanwhile, Neeraj Raghuvanshi, one of the seven employees, said that on Thursday, the local police in Woliso, 190 km from Addis Ababa, issued summons to 4 of the employees. He said that the employees had given an undertaking to all local government agencies (that they would pay dues) and also sought a moratorium to pay taxes within 90 days. The letter mentions that the Indian embassy in Ethiopia is also working with the stranded employees but the workers are afraid

that a court summons will be issued against them. According to an email from Raghuvanshi to C Chandra Sekhar, Country Co-ordinator, ITNL Elsames JV, the October and November salaries of local staff are still unpaid while the Indian workers have not been paid since July. Raghuvanshi said in an earlier complaint that ITNL Elsames, a road-building JV between ITNL and Spain's Elsames SA, have defaulted on payments of payroll tax, local employee pension and withheld tax payments for as long as 9 months. The JV also imported close to 400M ETB (Ethiopian Birr) worth of plant and equipment into Ethiopia to execute the road projects on temporary importation. "But the projects are on the verge of termination and we will incur large amounts of import duty should management not export the machinery out of the country. "We are worried of the fact that taxes and revenue offences are subject of criminal prosecution and our colleagues will be held by Ethiopian authorities for the misdeeds and negligence of our management," the letter said. The email ended hinting that Raghuvanshi had been told by ITNL management to recall the undertaking promising

payment to locals, which Raghuvanshi had been unable to recall. He said that the request for the recall was "giving us a hint that our management does not want to admit or undertake to pay taxes and they just want to abandon the Ethiopian projects, offices including the fate of expatriate employees. We are losing trust in our management day after day." A response to that email from Sekhar said: "I have written to management to understand the seriousness of the situation and I sincerely hope we will get a positive resolution. Let's work as a team. Please be patient and focused." Mint has reviewed copies of these emails between the stranded Indian employees and ITNL management. The press release from IL&FS on Saturday said that "We continue to work towards resolving the situation and have been in touch with our employees in Ethiopia." The central government took over control of bankrupt infrastructure financier IL&FS when it defaulted on several debt payments. The new company is currently overseen by a new board of directors led by banker Uday Kotak. IL&FS owes Rs 91,000 crore in debt and a risk of its default has sent ripples through the Indian financial system.

Attention readers

Imphal Times is looking for a desk editor and two reporters, who are well experience in the field of print media and who can write English and can read Manipuri. We are also looking for distributors on paid basis. Working hour for distributors will be from 4 to 7 pm, while working hour for Desk editor will be 12 pm to 4 pm. For reporter deadline for submitting story is 2.30 pm. Interested candidates can contact the Editor , Imphal Times during office hour or email their application along with their bio-data at imphaltimes@gmail.com . One good news - Imphal Times is resuming 4 pages . Besides, Imphal Times is also opening coaching for students wanted to choose the profession earliest by December 2018. Limited seats – first come first candidate will be given opportunity .

Sd/-
Manager

Assam government employee shot at in Haflong

Agency
Haflong, Dec 2

An Assam government employee was shot at by an unidentified gunman here in Dima Hasao district, police said on Sunday. The incident happened on Saturday at official's workplace, the police said, adding, the government employee is an inspector in the food and civil supply department. According to a police officer, the gunman entered the food and civil supply office at Haflong

Government College Road, and fired two rounds of bullets at Inspector Donald Dibragade from a close range. The assailant then fled the scene, the police officer said. Dibragade was immediately taken to Haflong Civil Hospital, the police officer said, adding, he is still undergoing treatment at the hospital. An investigation has been initiated and a search operation has been launched to nab the culprit, the police officer said.

BJP not doing issue based politics: Gehlot

Agency
Bikaner, Dec 2

Senior Congress leader Ashok Gehlot Sunday accused BJP of mixing politics with caste and other issues. "There is huge resentment among people against Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. Asking about mother and father of anyone can be an issue of criticism, but it cannot be an issue of doing politics," Gehlot told reporters here. "BJP is not doing politics based on issues. It has mixed other issues including castes," he said. Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gehlot alleged he was the first prime minister who is not doing politics on the issues maintaining the dignity of his post. "He should do politics on national and international issues", the Chief Minister said. He said that elections are like festivals and should be

celebrated with brotherhood and good feeling. Gehlot said Congress president Rahul Gandhi has also said that the party doesn't have fight with anyone, but it is a fight of ideology, policies and programmes. "They talk about Rahul Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, but Prime Minister Modi and Vasundhara will have to take 100 births to become Nehru," he said. On demonetisation, Gehlot said it was a black chapter and prime minister "shattered" the country's economy. He also accused Vasundhara Raje government of closing down various public welfare schemes of the previous Congress government. The Congress government had not closed down public welfare schemes of Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Vasundhara Raje governments, he said.

70-year-old woman dies in high-rise fire in south Mumbai

Agency
Mumbai, Dec 2

A 70-year-old woman died and at least 19 were hospitalised, two of them critical, after a fire broke out Sunday in a high-rise building near Mahalaxmi Racecourse in south Mumbai, police said. The blaze occurred in the early hours Sunday on the third floor of the 18-storey Samrat Ashoka building located on Keshavrao Khade Marg, an official said. He said the fire possibly started in the electrical wiring inside a duct on the third floor and then spread

to the wiring right up till the top floor. "At least 96 residents were stranded in their flats due to the fire and smoke. A rescue operation was launched by the Fire Brigade at 3am and 50 people from the upper floors were brought down using the staircase. Four others were saved using special devices," the official informed. Those rescued were rushed to a nearby hospital as they had inhaled smoke, he said. Among them, Laxmibai Koli (70) died during treatment. He added. The official said 77 residents were discharged after treatment while 19 are still admitted. The condition of two people, admitted in Bhatia Hospital, is critical, the official said. The blaze was brought under control at 6am and a probe team is ascertaining its cause though initial suspicion is that it started due to a short circuit, the official said.

JNU mulls diploma course on Ambedkar

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 2

The Jawaharlal Nehru University is mulling an online diploma course on B R Ambedkar's principles and his contribution to socio-economic development of the country in collaboration with the Dr Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC), officials said. Vice Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, M Jagadeesh Kumar presented the proposal at the signing of an MoU between the university and the DAIC on Friday. The six-month online diploma course would be initiated through the recently set up special centre for e-learning, as a part of which the institute aims to offer certificate, and degree programmes in an online format on different subjects. The DAIC under the

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment Friday inked an agreement with the JNU to facilitate and enhance research activities and policy formulation aimed at socio-economic transformation and sustainable development. If the proposal gets a green light, it would be approved under MOU. "I have made the proposal to Union minister Thawarchand Gehlot and he is very positive about it," Kumar said. The aim is to take the ideas, thoughts of Ambedkar, on social equality, women empowerment to masses through a structured curriculum. The MoU was signed by JNU vice-chancellor and Director of DAIC Atul Dev Sarmah in the presence of Gehlot on Friday. The DAIC is a centrally located state-of-the-art

centre for quality research in socio-economic transformation and has been envisaged as a think-tank for preparing policy briefs. The MoU will facilitate and enhance research activities and policy formulation aimed at socio-economic transformation and sustainable development. The two organisations resolved to cooperate within the scope of their mandates and sphere of competence to work for these issues. "The parties recognised benefits to be derived from increased collaboration, cooperation and interaction for further promotion and understanding of high performance in research training and organizing various programmes including conferences, seminars, symposia and lecture series," the ministry had said in a statement.

Vijayan promises a 'women's wall' on Jan 1 after meeting community organisations on Sabarimala issue

Agency
Thiruvananthapuram, Dec. 2

Various community organisations in Kerala supporting the Left stand on Sabarimala will organise a women's wall on January 1, 2019. The decision was taken following a meeting of community organisations chaired by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Advertising The Chief Minister said most of the organisations backed the government's stand on the Sabarimala

issue following the Supreme Court verdict allowing entry of young women to the temple. As discrimination against women continues, there was a demand that women-oriented programmes be held and a women's wall from state capital Thiruvananthapuram (in the south) to Kasargod (in the north) be organised, the CM said. He added that all those who stand by the "renaissance values" should join the women's

wall. The government had invited 190 community organisations for the meeting held Saturday. However, representatives of 170 organisations participated. While backward Hindu outfit Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was a prominent participant, upper caste Hindu body Nair Service Society (NSS) remained absent. The NSS has been critical of the government's stand on Sabarimala issue.

BJP's Sabarimala Team Arrives As Kerala Announces "Million Women's Wall"

Agency
Kerala, Dec. 2

A four-member BJP team handpicked by party chief Amit Shah is in Kerala today to meet party workers in connection with the Sabarimala temple row. In Kochi, they will meet devotees and party workers to get a "first-hand account" of what the BJP called "atrocities being committed against the *satyagrahis*" at the Ayyappa temple. The four members comprising Saroj Pandey, Vinod Sonkar, Pralhad Joshi and Nalin Kumar Kateel will submit their report to Amit Shah within 15 days, the party said in a statement. The team also plans to meet the Pandalam royal family, which traditionally is said to have a strong bond with Lord Ayyappa. A large number of BJP and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) workers protested outside the residence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan last week against the detention of over 30

people at Sabarimala Temple. Protests were also held at various places across the state in Aranmula, Kochi, Kollam, Alappuzha, Ranni, Thodupuzha, Kadalai, Malappuram and Idukki. Taking a firm stand, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday said that Sabarimala "won't be allowed to become an Ayodhya." As the Kerala Assembly session started, legislators from the Congress-led opposition came with placards and banners demanding that the prohibitory orders in the temple town be lifted. During the entire question hour, the opposition shouted slogans and within 20 minutes the session had to be adjourned. "We are bound to adhere to the Supreme Court ruling even as the *Sangh parivar* with the support of the Congress is out to create trouble at Sabarimala," the Chief Minister said. Mr Vijayan, in an attempt

to garner support after the protests by right-wing groups over the entry of women of all ages to the Sabarimala shrine, said a "women wall" would be formed on January 1, from the northern district of Kasargode to the state capital, pledging support to the state government's stand. Thomas Isaac, the number two in the Kerala cabinet tweeted, "Great Wall of Kerala, to prevent the state from sliding back into medieval madness, is going to be raised by a million women from one end of Kerala to the other on New Years Day...Come join the Resistance..." "The hash tag of the 'women wall' would not be to turn Kerala into a lunatic asylum. At the meeting, organisations have pledged their support to the state government on the stand taken by us on the Sabarimala issue," said Mr Vijayan on Saturday, adding political parties can also send their women cadre.