

DECEMBER DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS - 1st December -2019

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1)Hyderabad horror prompts Delhi police to reinforce women's safety

Fresh instructions issued to respond at once to distress calls

The Hyderabad gang rape and murder incident has brought back chilling reminders of the Nirbhaya case not just for residents but also the Delhi Police, which has issued fresh instructions to all patrolling units to ensure safe transport facilities for women stranded at any location in the city during odd hours. **The advisory was first issued after the December 2012 incident and has been in practice since then.** The guidelines assume more importance in winter when the sun sets early, and the Hyderabad

incident has prompted the police to enforce them more vigorously now, said a senior police officer on Saturday. **DCP (PCR) Sharat Sinha said they keep sensitising the policemen deployed in PCRs about women's safety.** "PCR is the first responder to any distress call and we reach any location in the city within a few minutes. We also ensure the availability of women constables in PCRs operating during odd hours," said Mr. Sinha. Last week, the PCR vans responded to seven calls made by women commuters who either lost their way or

suffered a vehicle breakdown on the road during odd hours. **In all seven cases, the police personnel ensured that the women reached their homes safely. "We request all women who travel late at night from their workplaces to instal Delhi Police safety app 'Himmat Plus'," said a police officer.** Another officer said he had recently held a meeting with all SHOs and instructed them to sensitise autorickshaw drivers, erickshaw drivers and rickshaw pullers about women safety as they provide lastmile connectivity from any metro station.

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2) Pipeline work spells doom for moat at Golconda Fort

Efforts by the ASI to stop digging by Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation have gone in vain

A large part of **the 500yearold Golconda Fort's moat has been pulverised by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) for laying a pipeline**. The moat wall between Ahana Burj and Mamola Burj of the Naya Qila area of the fortress has been turned into rubble using drills and earthmovers. "The GHMC is again digging the moat. We have asked them to stop but the work is still on," said ASI's Superintending Archaeo

logist Milan Kumar Chauley. "Last year, we had written to the GHMC to stop the work after we noticed that a deep channel nearly 1020 feet below the fort wall was being dug to lay a pipeline. But this is a new development," Mr. Chauley said. The extent of destruction can be seen from a Google satellite image that shows an intact moat wall on April 2, 2018 with an earthmover in action and a June 9, 2019 image that shows a heap of rubble where the moat existed. As per the Ancient

Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 30C, officials can be punished with imprisonment and a fine for damage to protected monuments. The ASI had agreed to a GHMC proposal for draining excess water from the Shah Hatim Talab to **the Langar Houz lake using the moat's natural gradient as the water was affecting the fort wall**. "During monsoon, the Golconda gets flooded and the water can be harmful so we agreed to the proposal. But after seeing the destruction we stopped it," says Mr. Chauley. The ASI DirectorGeneral had written to the Chief Secretary on the damage. Water from the Shah Hatim Talab flows into the Naya Qila area before exiting to Langar Houz lake at present.



Under siege: A view of the damaged portion of the moat wall at the Golconda Fort in Hyderabad. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

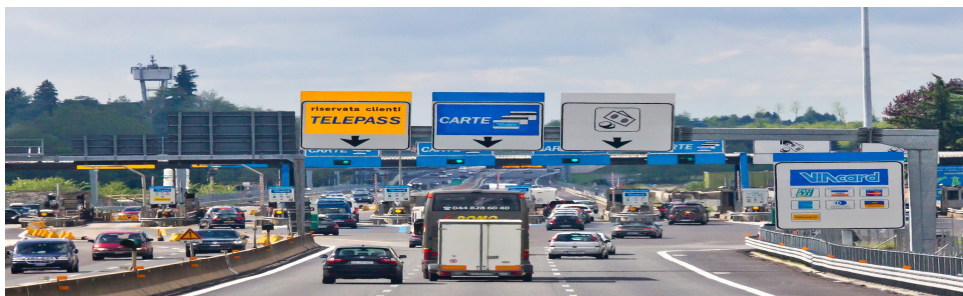
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3)e-Toll for the road

How will the FASTag toll collection programme help cut delays and losses on India's highways?

FASTag, a prepaid rechargeable tag for toll payments, on national highways will become mandatory for all vehicles. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways extended the earlier deadline of December 1 on Friday.

What is FASTag? **It is a prepaid radiofrequency identification enabled tag that facilitates automatic deduction of toll charges.** The new system will now do away with a stopover of vehicles and cash transactions at toll plazas. Projected as the 'Aadhaar' card for vehicles, the FASTag electronic toll collection programme is being implemented by the Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IHMCL), a company incorporated by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), and the National Payments Corporation of India in coordination with Toll Plaza Concessionaires, tag issuing agencies and banks. Currently, **FASTag can be bought from 22 certified banks, through various online platforms, online applications and at select points of sale locations.** The tag, which can be recharged through cheque or online payments, is fixed on the windshield of a vehicle, ideally on the glass just behind the rearview mirror. **It is scanned by the tag reader and the toll amount is deducted when the vehicle approaches a toll plaza.** The user gets a short message service (SMS) alert on the registered mobile phone about all transactions and the available balance. Service providers have developed a **'My FASTag' mobile application to provide a onestop solution to users. An NHAI prepaid wallet has also been launched, giving users the option of not linking the tags to their bank accounts.** FASTag has a validity of five years. **Over 70 lakh FASTags had been issued till November 27.**



4) Why are there objections to the Transgender Persons Bill?

Parliament has made into law the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, which had been framed for the welfare of transgender persons. The Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on August 5 this year, a month after its introduction in the House, and the Rajya Sabha cleared it on November 26, with a last minute move to refer it to a Select Committee being defeated in a voice vote. The community had organised protests across the country, urging changes to the Bill, claiming that in the form in which the Central government had conceived it, it showed a poor understanding of gender and sexual identity. The Bill was meant to be a consequence of the directions of the Supreme Court of India in the National Legal Services Authority vs. Union of India case judgment, mandating the Central and State governments to ensure legal recognition of all transgender persons and proactive measures instituted for their welfare. Activists harked back to this judgment of April 2014, chastising the Union government for failing to live up to the opportunity to ensure that fundamental rights are guaranteed to all people regardless of their sex characteristics or gender identity. Rejecting 'Transgender' as the nomenclature, they suggested instead that the title should be a comprehensive "Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (Protection of Rights) Bill", and in definition, sought to introduce the distinction between transgenders and intersex persons upfront. Members of the community perceive transgender as different from intersex, and were insistent that the distinction be made in the Bill.

What is the historical context? In 2013, the government set up an expert committee to study the problems of transgenders and recommend solutions. The committee, comprising experts from various fields and members of the community, also looked at past experience as in the State of Tamil Nadu,

which had set up a welfare board for transgender persons, and made recommendations right from allowing a 'third gender' in official forms, to setting up of special toilets, and customising health interventions. In 2014, a private member Bill, The Rights of Transgendered Persons, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha by Tiruchi

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Siva, a Member of Parliament from Tamil Nadu, which looked at a range of entitlements of such persons, providing specifically for them in health, education sectors, skill development and employment opportunities, and protection from abuse and torture. It was passed in the Rajya Sabha.

Activists say the name 'Transgender' is restrictive, and shows a lack of understanding of the complexities in people who do not conform to the gender binary, male/female

What is the future? - While the community is miffed that the Bill has become an Act without any effort to make valid or relevant changes to its original composition, it worries about how implementation will address the pressing needs of the community.

5) Oxygen bars are surely not a solution for pollution

No medical community has come forward to spread awareness on this captivating yet unscientific business.



New trend: A user breathes in oxygen mixed with perfume at an oxygen bar in New Delhi. AP/REUTERS

The popularity of packaged air began around four years ago when a Canadian company launched 'canned air' for people in China when air pollution in many cities became alarmingly high. **The newer addition – oxygenbar – a recreational parlour or cafe which serves 'pure oxygen' is becoming a more attractive destination, particularly in cities with dangerous levels of air pollution.** At times, the oxygen comes in different scented flavours. In cities with highly polluted air, the business of **'canned oxygen' or 'oxygenbar' is flourishing.** The recent launch of such a recreational oxygen parlour in

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Delhi amidst the city's infamously bad air condition has caught significant media attention. But how safe are they and are any benefits at all? First, do we really need this extra oxygen? The simplest answer is no. Unlike conventional oxygen therapies used in respiratory conditions that is administered for a short or long period in hospital or at home, people take oxygen for an ultrashort period in these bars (**30 minutes or less**). As per the standard clinical procedure, oxygen supplementation can be administered only in case of hypoxemia (**lowering of oxygen saturation in the arterial blood below 95%**) and **it does not have any consistent beneficial effect on nonhypoxemic patients.**

Moreover, the aromatization of oxygen generates ultrafine droplets of essential oils which, when inhaled with oxygen, get deposited in the lungs and accumulate in the alveoli leading to a respiratory condition known as "**lipoid pneumonia**".

Captivating yet unscientific

It is unfortunate that no medical community has come forward to spread awareness among people for this increasingly captivating yet unscientific business with no known or established clinical benefit. It definitely calls for serious vigilance by the clinicians and policy makers to ensure the safety issues associated with recreational oxygen use, particularly flavoured oxygen in such bars, parlours and spas.