

Indians in space: 12 of 60 IAF test pilots in shortlist, many out due to dental defects

Gaganyaan probables undergoing training at Yuri Gagarin cosmonaut centre in Russia's Star City

JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 15

BAD TEETH are not good for astronauts. This is one of the key lessons that experts from IAF's Institute of Aerospace Medicine (IAM) learnt over the last three months during the recruitment of 12 air force test pilots as Gaganyaan or Gaganaut candidates for Gaganyaan, India's first human space mission.

The pilots, who were selected from a field of 60 with the help of Russian experts, have undergone generic training as astronauts at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in

Russia's Star City over the last 45 days — seven have completed the stint so far.

The group is set to return to India for strenuous training and tests, including mission-specific training, that will lead to the final selection of three astronauts for the proposed launch by 2022.

One of the primary physical and medical conditions that ruled out a majority of candidates during the first level of screening in July and August was dental problems, IAM experts said this week at the annual conference of the Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine fraternity.

The IAM is finding its way back to the rigour of selecting



An IAF test pilot undergoes a medical test as part of the cosmonaut-selection process. *Indian Air Force*

candidates for space missions after over three decades, following the selection of cosmonauts Rakesh Sharma and Ravish Malhotra in 1982 for the 1984 Russian Soyuz T-11 mission.

The IAM team initially short-listed a group of 16 from 24 test pilots sent by the IAF for selection, ignoring minor physical conditions. But, a Russian team of experts, including a cosmonaut with aerospace medicine expertise and 560 days in space under his belt, cracked down on candidates with even dental problems, experts said.

"We prepared 16 dossiers and presented them to a visiting **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

SEEKS TO AMEND 1955 LAW House heat for winter session: Enter citizenship amendment Bill

Barring Muslims, it will allow people of six religions from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan to apply

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY & LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

THE CITIZENSHIP Amendment Bill, a contentious legislation that seeks to amend a 1955 law to allow Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan apply for Indian citizenship while keeping out Muslims, is all set to be tabled in the winter session of Parliament starting Monday.

On the priority list of the BJP which has also been speaking of replicating the Assam exercise of the National Register of Citizens across the country, the Citizenship Amendment Bill of 2016 lapsed because it could not clear Rajya Sabha before the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha. Sources said the Bill will be re-introduced in the winter session for passage in both Houses.

In the list of business for the upcoming session, the Bill is listed: "To amend the definition of illegal migrant, reduction in the number of years of residency period to obtain Indian Citizenship through naturalization and to empower Central Govt. to cancel the registration of Overseas Citizen of India card in case of any violations."

The 2016 Bill sought to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 to allow Hindus, Sikhs,

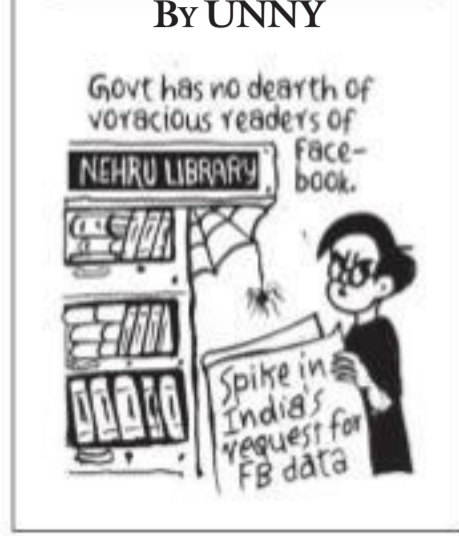
EXPLAINED
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For Hindus out of NRC, Bill key

THE CITIZENSHIP Amendment Bill is a promise the BJP made in its election manifesto. The renewed push comes in the backdrop of over 19 lakh people not making it to the final NRC list. The Bill has raised eyebrows as it is being seen as a bid to accommodate Hindus excluded from the NRC. It provides no relief to Muslims left out of the NRC list.

Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan apply for Indian citizenship. But it kept out Muslims. The existing Act allows an immigrant to apply for citizenship if s/he has lived in India for 12 months immediately before the application, and for 11 of the last 14 years.

On July 19, 2016, the government introduced the **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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133 UNITS, SWITCHING OFF

Low demand behind half of thermal power plants shutting down

ANIL SASI & PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

THE ELECTRICITY demand curve, a key indicator of industrial and domestic load trends, is on a downward spiral, with a mounting list of 133 thermal power units across the country reported as shut down due to lack of demand.

As on November 11, of the 262 coal, lignite and nuclear units reported to be out-of-service for a variety of reasons, nearly half — or 133 units — were shut as operators were faced with low demand or were unable to ink pacts with distribution utilities for sale of power.



Operators unable to ink pacts with distributors. *File*

Of the country's total installed generation capacity of 3,63,370 MW, the peak demand met was a little less than half at just around 1,88,072 MW on November 7, according to official data available with grid managers and analysed by *The Indian Express*.

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CHANGE OF GUARD

CJI-designate SA Bobde (L) greets Justice NV Ramana as CJ Ranjan Gogoi, who retires Sunday, looks on. *Neeraj Priyadarshi* **PAGE 7**

In Valley, buses start plying and shops stay open for longer hours

ADIL AKHZER
SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 15

AFTER MORE than 100 days of lockdown, markets in the Valley have gradually extended their business hours, and public transport is getting back on the roads. On Friday, in city centre Lal Chowk, unlike previous Fridays, shops and other business establishments remained open till afternoon.

A self-imposed shutdown had prevailed in Srinagar and other districts of the Valley even after the government lifted restrictions imposed following the revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and the August 5 decision to bifurcate it into two UTs. The two UTs came into being on October 31.

For the last many days, shops are open for longer hours compared with just a couple of hours in the morning. In most parts of

the Valley including Srinagar, shops now remain open till late afternoon.

"Businessmen have extended their working hours and public transport has started plying. The shutdown observed by people was a spontaneous reaction to the August 5 decision. If businessmen are opening their shops for longer than before, it is for survival. Everyone knows that after the clampdown, there was no **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

CBI searches Amnesty offices in two cities, rights body says it's harassment

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 15

THE CBI Friday searched offices of Amnesty India in Bengaluru and New Delhi, saying it was acting on an FIR registered after a complaint from the Ministry of Home Affairs about alleged violation of provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act and the Indian Penal Code by the rights body.

Confirming the searches, Amnesty India, in a press release, said: "Over the past year, a pattern of harassment has emerged every time Amnesty India stands up and speaks out against human rights violations in India. Amnesty India stands in full compliance with Indian and international law. Our work in India, as elsewhere, is to uphold and fight for universal human rights. These are the same values that are enshrined in the Indian Constitution and flow from a long and rich Indian tradition of pluralism, tolerance, and dissent." **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

SC clears way for ArcelorMittal to acquire Essar Steel

Upholds supremacy of Committee of Creditors, could speed up resolution of other insolvency cases

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

ASSERTING THAT there must be an absolute "judicial hands-off" in any interference with the commercial wisdom of the Committee of Creditors (CoC), the Supreme Court Friday gave the final nod to the Rs 42,000-crore resolution plan submitted by ArcelorMittal for Essar Steel.

The approval of ArcelorMittal's plan takes the corporate insolvency resolution process into the final lap for one of the biggest cases from among the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s first list of big defaulters. Essar Steel, which has a total debt of nearly 54,000 crore, was among the biggest defaulters along with Amtek Auto, Bhushan Steel, as well as Bhushan Power and Steel. The judgment by the apex court is significant in laying down clear guidelines for the

treatment of secured, unsecured financial creditors, and operational creditors in the corporate insolvency resolution process. The judgment, State Bank of India chairman Rajnish Kumar said, will lead to faster resolution of stressed assets with the CoC getting the "ultimate discretion" on distribution of funds.

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) judgment on July 4 this year had advocated equal pay (at 60.7 per cent of their admitted claims) for all forms of creditors, whether secured or unsecured financial creditors or operational creditors. Setting this aside, the SC said that jurisdiction of the National Company Law Tribunal and NCLAT was "circumscribed" by provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which called upon the adjudicating authorities to only check if the resolution plan had been approved **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

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WITNESS SAYS FEEL THREATENED BY TRUMP, HE ATTACKS HER ON TWITTER

EVE OF LANKA POLLS: PROMISES NOT KEPT, SAY KEY MINORITY GROUPS **PAGE 16**

Kerala govt's flip-flop on Sabarimala: Won't take young women to shrine

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 15

A DAY after the Supreme Court kept review petitions on the entry of women of all ages in Sabarimala on hold and turned to a larger bench, the Kerala government pointed to "grey areas" in the judgment and indicated that it is "not going to take young women to the temple". The latest stand is in stark contrast to the CPM-led govern-



Temple not venue to exhibit activism: Minister. *File*

ment's position last year when the Supreme Court had lifted the traditional bar on women of menstruating age from entering the temple.

Last year, the government had pushed firmly to implement the court order, while equating the entry of young women to the Left's commitment on ensuring gender justice and protecting the renaissance traditions of the state. However, this move led to largescale protests that contributed to the Left alliance **CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

GOVT & POLITICS



POINTING TO PACKED TRAINS & WEDDINGS, MoS SAYS ECONOMY ON TRACK **PAGE 8**

JHARKHAND POLLS HERE, DRAFT FOREST LAW WITHDRAWN **PAGE 6**

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

Mystery illness at Rajasthan lake kills 8,000 birds, many migratory

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, NOVEMBER 15

ON THURSDAY, the toll neared 5,000. By Friday evening, over 8,000 had been buried.

The dead birds were first spotted five days ago by visitors at Rajasthan's Sambhar Lake, India's largest inland salt water lake, nearly 80 km southwest of Jaipur. Since then, state agencies have buried a total of 8,065 birds, from 25 different species including migratory, and rescued 165. Bird watchers fear the final toll may be much higher, considering the size of the lake.

But the big worry, say experts, is that they have still not been able to find the cause of these deaths.

So much so that Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has ordered a rescue centre to be set up at the site, Minister of State for Forests (Independent Charge) Sukhram Vishnoi has rushed to Sambhar, and the Rajasthan High Court has taken suo motu cognizance of the crisis.

On Friday, the government listed the possible reasons behind the deaths before a division bench headed by Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court, Indrajit Mahanty. On the list were viral

infection; toxicity, as a new area of the lake has filled up, leading to higher concentration of salts along the edges; bacteriological infection; and, stress caused by competition for resources that have grown scarce due to high temperature and water levels.

But officials admit there are no clear answers, yet.

Rajasthan's Animal Husbandry director Sailesh Sharma said the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal has ruled out bird flu after carrying out tests on samples. "Other labs will continue the investigation," Sharma said. Dr A K Kataria of the



Civic workers bury birds at Sambhar Lake. *PTI*

Rajasthan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (RAJUVAS), who reached the lake Thursday, pointed to botulism, a paralytic and often fatal disease caused by ingestion of toxins. According to officials at the site, the birds suffered from limb paralysis and diarrhoea.

Kataria also said that the carcasses need to be buried "immediately" to prevent the infection from spreading to other birds.

"Never have so many birds died at Sambhar," said Dr Joy Gardner, who heads the NGO Hope and Beyond that is working at the site. "Also, there are many areas where we haven't

reached yet. So the final toll may be much higher."

Experts from the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) are also at the site. WII's Dr Anju Baroth said the salinity in the water is high "but no other adulteration has been found".

Officials said the Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board and Sambhar Salts Ltd, a subsidiary of central PSU Hindustan Salts Ltd, have also collected water samples from the lake. Additional Advocate General Ganesh Parihar said the govern-

ment told the court that "samples from the site have been sent to multiple labs" and that "further preventive action is only possible after the receipt of medical reports".

The government also pointed to delay in collecting the carcasses because of mud, water, and the large area — "around 15-kilometre length out of which 12-kilometre area is where birds have died".

Meanwhile, the district collectors of Jaipur, Ajmer and Nagaur have received a grim directive: Take up the disposal of carcasses as a campaign and ensure appropriate disposal.