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Ayodhya: SC dismisses review pleas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THE SUPREME Court on Thursday dismissed a clutch of petitions seeking review of its December 9 judgment in the Ayodhya case, which cleared the way for construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site.

A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde, which took up the petitions for consideration inchamber, said it did "not find any ground... to entertain" them.

"Applications for listing of review petitions in open court are dismissed. The review petitions are dismissed. Pending applications stand disposed of... We have CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 21 INJURED, TWO RAILWAY STATIONS VANDALISED, INTERNET BAN IN SHILLONG TOO

Two killed as wave of anti-CAB violence sweeps across Assam, CM calls for talks

President gives assent to Bill; Assam MLAs' houses attacked

ABHISHEK SAHA GUWAHATI. DECEMBER 12

TWO PERSONS were killed in alleged police firing, two railway stations and a government office vandalised, the houses of two BJP MLAs attacked, and street clashes between protesters and security forces reported from across Assam Thursday as violent protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill spilled over to a second day.

Late Thursday, the Union Law Ministry issued an official notification stating that President Ram Nath Kovind has given his assent to the Bill, which seeks to grant citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains and Parsis — it leaves out Muslims — who entered the country from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan until December 31, 2014.

Earlier, Guwahati Police sources identified those "killed in clashes" in the city as Dipanjal Das (21) and Sam Stafford (32). They said that 21 others were injured in the violence, including nine admitted to the Guwahati Medical College – one of them is battling for life in the ICU. Relatives of Das, from Kamrup district, told *The Indian* Express that he was an employee at the Sainik Bhavan canteen in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Protesters clash with security personnel in Guwahati on Thursday. PTI

After Mamata, Vijayan & Amarinder hit out: No CAB in Kerala, Punjab

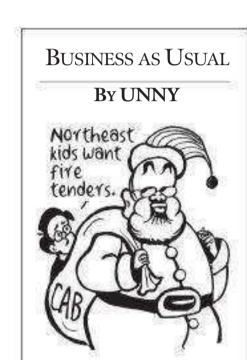
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, CHANDIGARH, NEW DELHI RAIPUR, DECEMBER 12

AFTER WEST Bengal, Kerala and Punjab have emerged at the forefront of a pushback by Opposition governments against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill passed in Parliament this week, with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan saying Thursday that "an anti-Constitutional law

will have no place" in his state.

"The Supreme Court had made it clear on several occasions that the basic structure of the Constitution cannot be undermined. So, it is clear that this law will not stand legal scrutiny. When that is evident, there are heinous political aims behind passing anti-Constitutional laws using the arrogance of power...Kerala will not implement it. Discrimination based on religion will not be allowed," he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



CAB: IUML MOVES SUPREME COURT FULL COVERAGE, PAGE 6

PM: Cong, allies fanning flames in North-East

ABHISHEK ANGAD RANCHI. DECEMBER 12

IN HIS first public comments on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill after it was passed in Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached out to Assam, where violent protests against the Bill entered the second day Thursday, assuring people that their identity and culture would be protected. He also accused the Congress and its allies of spreading confusion over the Bill's provisions and fanning the



PM Modi at a poll rally in **Dhanbad on Thursday.** ANI

flames in the North-East. Taking to Twitter, Modi posted: "I want to assure my **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Bangladesh ministers cancel visit to India

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

A DAY after Parliament passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, two senior Bangladesh ministers — Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan on Thursday cancelled their visits to India.

Momen, who had said on Wednesday that CAB could weaken India's character as a secular nation and rejected allegations that minorities were



A K Abdul Momen Asaduzzaman Khan

facing religious persecution in Bangladesh, was scheduled to visit India for the 6th Indian Ocean Dialogue from December 12 to 14.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Food inflation in double digits after six years

HARISH DAMODARAN NEW DELHI. DECEMBER 12

CONSUMER FOOD price inflation has touched 10.01 per cent year-on-year in November, the first time it has crossed single digits since December 2013.

What is striking is how quickly it has risen — from just 2.99 per cent in August to 5.11 per cent in September, 7.89 per cent in October to 10.01 per cent last month. Equally significant is that the increase is not due to monsoon failure or drought, but crop damage from excess and unseasonal rains.

The Narendra Modi government's tenure has been marked by benign food prices. Annual consumer food inflation during its first term from June 2014 to May 2019 averaged 3.26 per cent below the corresponding 4.31 per cent general retail inflation during the period. Moreover, there was an extended 36month period between **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Transient, not generalised



is transient in nature, as eralised is minimal. The RBI did not reduce key policy rates in its review this month, even though it retained its accommodative stance. It is waiting for more clarity pending the Budget to see if interest rates could be cut to boost growth.

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ANTI-CAB PROTESTS INTENSIFY IN ASSAM

While most Northeastern states are exempt from the Citizenship Amendment Bill due to the Inner Line Permit System and/or the sixth Schedule of the Constitution, Assam is protected by neither.

VIDEO OF THE DAY

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Maoist leader Ramanna dies in Bastar after illness

DIPANKAR GHOSE RAIPUR, DECEMBER 12

IN A significant blow to Maoists, CPI (Maoist) Central Committee member Ravalu Srinivas, popularly known as Ramanna, has died in the forests of Bastar earlier this week after an illness. While reports of his death had been doing the rounds for the past few days, police and intelligence agencies struggled to corroborate the news. On Thursday, Vikalp,

spokesperson for the CPI (Maoist)'s Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee, called up journalists in Bastar and confirmed the development. Besides being a member of the Central Committee, the apex body in CPI (Maoist), Ramanna was a member of the Central Regional Bureau and secretary of Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee, which handles Maoist activities in Bastar.

said Ramanna was ailing for a while and died at 10 pm on December 7 in the forests near Chhattisgarh-Telangana border. Bastar range IGPP Sundar Raj said, "Maoists have confirmed Ramanna's death in the phone call placed to journalists."

In his call to journalists, Vikalp

Four days ago, security agencies in Bastar picked up wireless chatter from intercepts which suggested the death of Ramanna. However, confirmation was difficult to come by. Senior police officers said, "With the phone call from Vikalp today, that has been confirmed. It is a huge blow to them," a senior officer said.

Ramanna, 59, was born at Warangal in Telangana. He joined the Maoists in 1982 and came to Dandakaranya in 1988. He began as a member of the Bhadrachalam Dalam but became commander



Ravalu Srinivas was popularly known as Ramanna

of the Sukma Konta Dalam in 1988. He rose through the ranks rapidly, becoming secretary of the south Bastar zonal committee in 1998, secretary of the Dandakaranya Special Zone committee in 2011 and a member of the Central Committee of CPI (Maoist) in 2013.

P Sundar Raj told The Indian Express, "He was a massive figure for them. He had rewards on him across five states and 32 FIRs against his name. He was the man who controlled the organisation in Bastar.' Ramanna had a cumulative

country of Rs 1.5 crore on his head across the states of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

According to senior police officers, Ramanna masterminded the most serious attacks on security personnel in Chhattisgarh, including the 2010 Tadmetla attack which left 76 CRPF personnel dead, the Ranibodli attack and the Jhiram Ghati attack that left 28 dead, including top state Congress leaders, in 2013.

Ramanna married a fellow Maoist cadre in 1994, Sodi Hidme. also known as Savitri, who is now secretary of the Kistaram Area Committee. They have a son, Ranjit, who is also an active Maoist. A senior police officer said "It will be interesting who they replace Ramanna with. For the Maoists, this is a major blow that will hit their morale," a senior of-

Cong MP questions conditions of detention centres in Assam

ficer said.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI. DECEMBER 12

IN THE wake of the announcement of a nationwide National Register for Citizens, Congress MP Rajeev Gowda on Thursday drew attention to the conditions in detention centres in Assam.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, Gowda said, "While officials claim that the camps will be better than prisons, media reports and past history depict a different picture. As per the latest reports, the death toll in detention centres has reached 28. The reasons range from consumption of unfit food, insanitary conditions to suicide."

Gowda asked the government to be more transparent about the facilities in the proposed detention centres and the future of detainees, as it is a humanitarian issue. Earlier, the Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha, Thaawar Chand Gehlot, had said he would

speak to his cabinet colleague Piyush Goyal to find a solution to the problems faced by visuallychallenged candidates selected for a job in the Railways.

Chand's assurance came after BSP MP Satish Chandra Misra raised the issue and said these candidates have not been appointed to their roles despite being selected. He added that candidates have been protesting against the mattter in New Delhi from the last two weeks.

"They are not beggars. They were fighting for own rights, statutory rights, constitutional rights," the BSP MP said.

To this Chand said he had already spoken to Goyal but the inter-ministry discussion remained inconclusive. "I will again request the Railways Minister to resolve the matter at the earliest," he said

During the proceedings, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sanjay Singh called for the execution of the verdict given in the December 2016 gang rape case.

Jaishankar to meet Maldives counterpart today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

INDIA AND Maldives will attempt to chart a new course of deeper cooperation in ties at a high-level meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Shahid on Friday.

A range of issues will be discussed at the 6th Joint Commission Meeting (JCM), which is taking place after a gap of over four years, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said. Shahid arrived here late Tuesday on a fourday visit.

"The JCM, which is taking place after a gap of over four years, will oversee and review the entire gamut of our vast and expanding bilateral relationship with Maldives and chart a way forward for further deepening our engagement," Kumar said.

Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale held "productive discussions" with Shahid on Wednesday, focusing on further

deepening bilateral ties. Shahid is leading a 31-member delegation comprising senior officials of all major ministries and departments of the

FROM PAGE ONE

Ayodhya verdict

carefully gone through the review petitions and the connected papers filed therewith. We do not find any ground, whatsoever, to entertain the same," the bench, also comprising Justices D Y Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan, S Abdul Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna, said in its order. Bringing to an end a seven-

decade legal battle over the title to the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya, the Supreme Court, in its unanimous November 9 verdict, had ruled that the entire disputed land be handed over to a trust to be constituted for construction of a Ram temple, and that the Muslim side be given 5 acres at "a suitable prominent place in Ayodhya" for building a mosque. The Supreme Court had over-

turned the September 30, 2010 judgment of the Allahabad High Court, which had ordered threeway division of the disputed 2.77 acres between the deity Ramlalla Virajman, Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Wagf Board, and Nirmohi Akhara sect.

The review petitions had been filed by Maulana Syed Ashhad Rashidi, who is the legal heir of original litigant M Siddiq and the Uttar Pradesh president of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind; five petitioners "supported" by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB); the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha; and Nirmohi Akhara among others.

In his plea, Rashidi contended that the November 9 judgment amounted to "rewarding" the crimes committed by "Hindu parties". He said "complete justice... can only be done by directing" the Centre and Uttar Pradesh to carry out "the reconstruction of Babri Masjid".

He said the Supreme Court has "acknowledged few of the several illegalities committed by the Hindu parties, particularly in 1934 (damaging the domes of the Babri Masjid), 1949 (desecrating the Babri Masjid), and 1992 (demolition of the Babri Masjid), but this Hon'ble Court has proceeded to condone the said illegal acts and has awarded the disputed site to the very party which based its claims on nothing but a series of illegal acts".

The review petitions "supported" by the AIMPLB also cited similar concerns, and said the judgement "condones serious illegalities of destruction, criminal trespass and violation of rule of law, including damaging the mosque and eventually destroying it".

The Hindu Mahasabha questioned the court's decision to grant 5 acres to the Muslim side.

There was also a petition by 40 "concerned citizens" who were not party to the original litigation, including economist Prabhat Patnaik, historian Irfan Habib and activist Harsh Mander, Dismissing the pleas of those who were not party to the case, the court said: "Applications for permission to file review petitions are dismissed. In view of the denial of permission to file review petitions, applications for listing of review petitions in open court as well as review petitions are re-

PM reaches out

brothers and sisters of Assam that they have nothing to worry after the passing of #CAB. I want to assure them — no one can take away your rights, unique identity and beautiful culture. It will continue to flourish and grow."

In another tweet, he referred to a provision in the Assam Accord 1985: "The Central Government and I are totally committed to constitutionally safeguard the political, linguistic, cultural and land rights of the Assamese people as per the spirit

of Clause 6." Later, speaking at an election Two killed in anti-CAB protests Guwahati and son of a rick-

Governor Jagdish Mukhi and Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal issued separate appeals for peace. Sonowal requested protesters to not take the path of violence and asked leaders of the agitation to engage in dialogue with him.

shaw puller.

But in Dibrugarh's Chabua, the home town of Sonowal, officials said protesters vandalised the Circle office and the railway station. With protesters also targeting another station in Panitola, the Centre suspended rail services in Assam and Tripura, halted long-distance trains to the region in Guwahati, and deployed 12 companies of the Railway Protection Special Force.

The Union Home Ministry. meanwhile, directed the Central Armed Police Forces to keep around 20 companies around 2,000 personnel – ready to move to Assam Friday. And state officials extended the ban on mobile internet in ten districts by 48 hours while Guwahati remained under indefinite curfew. A senior official told The Indian Express that non-BSNL broadband

services have also been suspended.

Caught unawares Wednesday as the protests escalated sharply, the state government Thursday shunted out top police officers, including the Additional Director General (Law and Order) and Police Guwahati Commissioner.

Sources said police in Jorhat have arrested Akhil Gogoi, who heads the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), which is one of the organisations involved in the protests. However, speaking to *The*

Indian Express, a top police officer in the state said the situation on the ground continued to be "grim". Another senior officer said the "situation is under control but clashes are happening all over the state".

"Wherever there have been reports of vandalism, we are focusing on those areas. We are trying to get the crowds to disperse," said a senior police officer. An officer at the Guwahati airport said many commuters were stranded as protesters prevented vehicles from entering the area before the government deployed buses to transIn Dibrugarh, protesters at-

tempted arson at the residences of MP and Union MoS Rameshwar Teli and two BJP MLAs, Prasanta Phukan and Binod Hazarika, while police fired in the air and used tear gas in various other locations of the district. A few motorcycles in front

of an office in Dibrugarh, said to belong to the RSS, were burnt, officials said. Prasanta Phukan, the BJP

MLA whose house was attacked, said: "A few glass windows were broken and the screen of a car was shattered. The movement has gone to the hands of miscreants, no one knows who is doing what." A police officer in Dibrugarh city confirmed that till late evening intense clashes were going on.

Speaker of the Assam Assembly, Hitendra Nath Goswami, who is a BIP legislator from Jorhat constituency, said: "The CAB will cause hatred between different communities of the state. I have been saying this from long be-In Guwahati, thousands de-

fied curfew to gather at the

intellectuals and senior editors stressed on continuing a "peaceful and democratic protest movement". Samujjal Bhattacharyya, an

Latasil ground where student

leaders, activists, cultural icons,

advisor to the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), and one of the main organisers of the gathering, said: "The MPs passed this Bill through votes. Today, the people rejected this vote by people's votes. They violated the curfew and came to say 'No to CAB'. The future course will be a non-violent and disciplined movement. At the same time, we are discussing with our lawyers and as per their advice we will move the courts."

In neighbouring Meghalava's capital Shillong. the district administration ordered curfew in two police station areas of Lumdiengiri and Sadar from 10 pm Thursday till further orders. Mobile internet and SMS services were blocked in the state from 5pm Thursday for 48 hours.

(TORA AGARWALA IN **GUWAHATI, DEEPTIMAN** TIWARY & AVISHEK G DASTIDAR IN DELHI)

this, I will," she said. Food inflation September 2016 and August 2019, when retail food inflation ruled

attacked the BJP and said: "In your (BJP) manifesto, instead of devel-

opment issues, you have put in a

promise to divide the country.

Why will citizenship be on the ba-

sis of religion? I will not accept

this. We dare you. Be it Muslims,

Hindus, Sikhs and Christians, give

citizenship to all and we will hit

Sabha and Rajya Sabha forcefully

because you have the numbers.

But we will not let you divide the

country. If everyone keeps shut, I

tell vou, even if I have to die for

"You can pass laws in Lok

the streets and support you."

sumer price index (CPI) inflation, averaging a mere 1.38 per cent. That has, however,

consistently below overall con-

now reversed. The 10.01 per cent food inflation rate for November not only

exceeded the general CPI inflation of 5.54 per cent, but was also the highest since the 13.16 per cent recorded way back in December 2013. For the government and the

Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the surge in food inflation presents a dilemma. The 10.01 per cent number comes on the same day the National Statistical Office released data showing industrial production falling 3.84 per cent year-on-year in October, making it a third consecutive month of negative growth. With most other indicators - from electricity demand to car and two-wheeler sales also pointing to a protracted economic slowdown, there is an obvious case for further interest rate cuts and monetary loosening by the RBI.

But this is not easy for two reasons

First, food and non-alcoholic beverages have a combined 45.86 per cent weight in the overall CPI. Secondly, food prices play a major role in inflationary expectations of Indian households. The RBI's own November survey showed these to have increased by 1.20 percentage points over a three-month ahead horizon, and by 1.80 percentage points over a one-year ahead horizon, as households "adapted to the spike in food prices in recent months' While there's little that the RBI can do to control onion or dal prices - these are influenced more by supply-side factors, whereas repo rate and other monetary policy actions primarily address demand - it cannot simply "look through" food infla-

whether the current food price pressures - the main contributors to inflation in November are vegetables (35.99 per cent) and pulses (13.94 per cent) - are transient. The immediate cause of rising prices has been the setback to kharif production from an unusual combination of delayed onset of the southwest monsoon (leading to reduced sowings) and prolonged unseasonal rains in October-November (damaging the standing crop at the time of harvesting). On the positive side, though,

A key source of uncertainty is

the surplus monsoon and postmonsoon rainfall has helped substantially recharge groundwater aquifers, apart from filling the country's 120 major dams to 83.76 per cent of their aggregate reservoir capacity as on December 12. Last year, these reservoirs were only 57.39 per cent full at this time, while the last 10-years-average for the same date was 61.29 per cent. The prospect of a bumper rabi

production, thanks to the vastly improved soil moisture conditions, offers some hope that food inflation will ease in the coming months. But that will be known only when the crop gets harvested after April.

Bangladesh ministers cancel visit to India He cancelled his visit hours cancelled, events at home," said a those people who came at that

before he was scheduled to arrive, citing "pressing national events" — the Martyred Intellectuals Day on December 14 and Victory Day on December 16. While these are scheduled events on Bangladesh's national calendar, Momen would have been back in his country for Victory

Khan was scheduled to travel to Meghalaya on Friday, at the invitation of Chief Minister Conrad Sangma. "The visit has been postponed. The minister will visit Meghalaya at a convenient time later, which may be in January-February," said Sharif Mahmdud, Bangladesh Home Ministry spokesperson, according to Dhaka Tribune.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said linking the cancellation of Momen's visit with CAB was "unwarranted". Just over an hour after the visit

"Congress aur unke saathi

North-East mein aag lagane ki

koshish kar rahe hai... bhram

phailaya jaa raha hai ki Bangladesh

se bahut sankhya mein log aa

jayenge... kanoon pehle se hi Bharat

aa chuke sharanarthiyon ke liye hai

aur December 31, 2014 iss

vyavastha mein rakha gaya hai

(The Congress and its allies are at-

tempting to fan the flames in the

North-East, create confusion that

a large number of people will

come from Bangladesh. The law

is for refugees who are already in

India, and the cut-off date in

December 31, 2014, is for that pur-

North-East are out of the CAB, but

even then the Congress and its al-

lies, whose politics are run with

the support of infiltrators, are try-

ing to create confusion," he said.

that no one can take away the

rights of people of the North-East.

"North-East ke parampara, bhasa,

sanskruti, kisi par aanch nahi

doonga... Bharat sarkar kandhe se

kandha milakar unke saath kaam

karega (We will not let the culture,

The Prime Minister also said

"Most of the states in the

pose)," he said.

the North-East.

spokesperson Raveesh Kumar clarified that there was no religious persecution under the "present government" of Bangladesh led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and it had happened under the "previous government" and "military rule".

Sources said the back-pedalling by MEA came after Indian diplomats in Dhaka reported that the Hasina government was not happy with the underlying assumption behind

Bangladesh officials told The Indian Express that Momen, in his message to Indian diplomats, said his state minister was in Madrid for the COP25 meeting while the Foreign Secretary was at the Hague for the ICI hearing on the Rohingya situation. "The Foreign Minister said he had to cancel the trip due to some sudden pressing national

Bangladesh diplomat. To assuage Dhaka's concerns, the MEA spokesperson

said Home Minister Amit Shah, in his speech in Parliament, had mentioned the positive action by the Hasina govern-He quoted Shah, who had said, "As long as Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman was leading Bangladesh, everything worked very well. But once his government went, minorities began to be oppressed. I can tell you that a large number of Bangladeshi Hindus had to come here to seek refuge... the current government Bangladesh is also taking care of religious minorities. It is making arrangements for religious minorities, but there has been a long period in the past in between, during which people came to India on account of religious persecution. This Bill is only to give citizenship to

India and Bangladesh have

"very strong" and "very healthy" relations, said the MEA spokesperson, and both leaders have said this is the "shonali adhyay (golden era)" between the two countries. Meanwhile, slamming the

passage of CAB, Bangladesh's leading English newspaper, The Daily Star, said in an editorial on Thursday: "Coming on the heels of the controversial National Register of Citizens (NRC) policy in Assam, does the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), one wonders, herald the end of a pluralistic and secular India, and the fulfilment of the dream of the RSS and its founders like Savarkar? ... (the Bill) will strike at the very fundamental principles and ethos on which the country's founding fathers had established it. And it will validate communal politics in India..."

will work with them shoulder to Prime Minister reiterated his commitment to protect the "culshoulder)." ture, language and tradition" of

Asserting that the CAB will have no impact on India's citizens, Modi said that those saying otherwise are "lying to mislead common people".

"When Taliban attacks were on the rise in Afghanistan, dozens of Christian families came to India, fearing for their lives. But the Congress government did not support them. Today, when the BJP is trying to bring a law to grant citizenship to millions of such oppressed and exploited Dalit, Sikh, Christian families, the Congress is opposing the move," he said.

Kerala, Punjab The CAB seeks to provide

Indian citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains and Parsis — it leaves out Muslims — who entered the country from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan until December 31. 2014.

Describing CAB as a direct assault on India's secular character, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said, his government will not let the legislation be implemented in Punjab. "We have a majority in the Assembly, and will block the Bill. We will not let it rip apart the secular fabric of the

diversity," he said. "It is the duty of an elected

government to safeguard the cherished values ingrained in the Constitution and not destroy them. How can you leave out a large section of the Indian population from the protection they have been getting since we declared India a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, assuring its citizens justice, equality and liberty," Singh said.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said the CAB was unconstitutional. "Whatever decision is made at the Congress party forum on the Bill, will be applied in Chhattisgarh." His Rajasthan counterpart Ashok Gehlot the CAB was yet another attempt by the BJP to advance its agenda of Hindu rashtra. "We will go through the Bill first and wait for the verdict of the Supreme court. Their intention is not right... they are playing a dangerous game... their intentions are dangerous," he said. Stating that the Bill has "de-

meaned india before the world", Vijayan said this would only help push India to share the fate of riotridden countries and destroy its reputation as a place where people belonging to different religions live peacefully. "What is be-

destroy democracy and equality, and establish autocracy and divide the country on the basis of religion. The Union government is trying to realise the dream of (Veer) Savarkar and (M S) Golwalkar with the amendment... It is the offspring of a concerted attempt to sabotage equality and secularism, the basis tenets of the Constitution," he said. Vijayan said the CPM-led Left

government in Kerala will "question the legality of this black law at all possible venues". "The Supreme Court had made it clear that secularism is the foundation of the Constitution. With the amended Citizenship Act, the Union government is creating a division based on religion alone," he said. Echoing Mamata, Vijayan al-

leged that the Bill was a move by "communal forces" to divert attention from the "poor state" of the economy. "This strategy had been successfully experimented by British imperialism in India and Hitler in Germany. History had shown that such plans are short lived. The protests emanating from various parts of the country against the amendment of the citizenship law indicates that," he said.

Addressing an event in

language, tradition of the Northing staged was a conspiracy to rally in Jharkhand's Dhanbad, the East be affected... The government country, whose strength lies in its Kolkata on December 6, Banerjee Maldivian government. mess.com

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019 HE (ITY













IN LETTER TO TRANSPORT DEPT

Tweaking bus routes may hurt Metro, DMRC warns

SOURAV ROY BARMAN NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

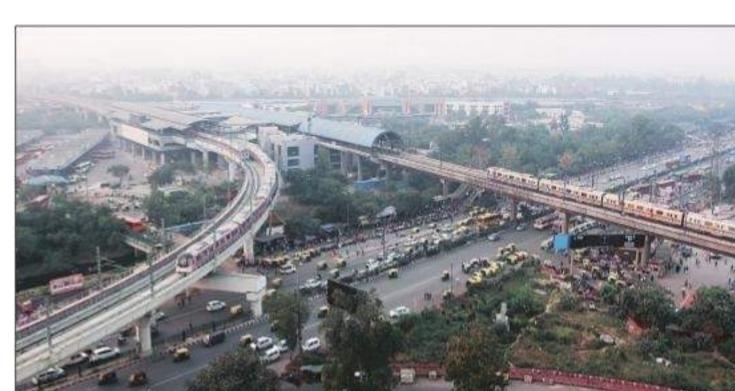
A PROPOSAL, currently under the Delhi government's consideration, to augment bus services in 74 routes will hit Metro ridership and cause "under-utilisation" of existing public transport facilities, the DMRC has written to the city's Transport Department.

It also urged the government to modify the proposal so that the routes "do not run parallel" to the Metro network. After Metro had raised its fares in 2017, the network had lost a chunk of commuters to DTC and cluster buses, according to official records.

The ridership in DTC buses rose from 27 lakh passengers daily to around 32 lakh within a year, even as the Metro's ridership reduced to a daily average of 24 lakh. In the subsequent months, launch of newer corridors helped DMRC recover some ground.

The DMRC (Delhi Metro Rail Corporation) made the observations while responding to the government's route-rationalisation proposal, which was undertaken by the Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System (DIMTS) at a cost of around Rs 2.97 crore.

The DIMTS submitted its fi-



DMRC said Metro, bus routes should not run parallel. Archive

year. The government has so far implemented only a pilot rationalisation scheme in the Najafgarh area, with the Transport Department yet to finalise the complete suggestions.

"It has been observed that there are 74 routes which are either parallel to Metro network or existing Metro feeder routes. Operation of such parallel services will not only hamper the ridership of Metro network but it would render under-utilisation of public transport as well as government resources. Therefore, it nal draft report in February this is requested that such routes

which are parallel to the Metro network may be modified in such a manner that they are not operated parallel to the Metro network," the DMRC wrote.

Metro has further proposed that in cases where the routes of Metro feeder buses and routes proposed by the DIMTS overlap at any stretch measuring over 3 kilometres, schedules for both should be in sync in such a way to avoid bunching of the services.

"Therefore, it will be appropriate if a timetable of such routes is prepared by taking into account all the buses of the Metro feeder services and number of buses proposed by DIMTS on such routes, so that the buses are available to the commuters at desired frequency," it wrote.

The route rationalisation plan essentially seeks to make optimum use of available public buses in the city through realignment and merger of routes, so as to achieve the ambitious goal of ensuring availability of buses within 500 metres of every neighbourhood in the city at a frequency of not more than 15 minutes.

Mocked by chemist, gym trainer shoots him

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

A 50-YEAR-OLD chemist was shot dead in South West Delhi's Palam village, allegedly after he made fun of a gym trainer who had come to purchase viagra. According to police, the 30-yearold accused used a pistol he had legally procured last month after an IPS officer gave his reference to the licencing unit. According to police, the accused is the IPS offiThe accused had procured his licenced pistol using an IPS officer's reference

cer's gym trainer.

DCP (South West) Devender Arya said the accused, Neeraj Gupta, is a resident of Dabri and works at a gym in Chanakyapuri. He was apprehended from the Pankha Road flyover by police.

"The incident took place on December 7 at a medical store near Mahaveer Enclave in Palam village, when Gupta had gone to buy viagra from Sanjeev Kumar's shop. Kumar allegedly mocked Gupta, who then took out his pistol and shot him. He then fled while Kumar was rushed to a hospital. He died during treatment on December 8," an officer said.

A case of murder was registered and four teams were constituted under the supervision of ACP (Delhi Cantt) Manish Jorwal

to arrest the accused. "He was identified through CCTV footage. Around 7 pm Monday, police received a tip-off that Kumar was planning to leave Delhi and go to Raipur in Chhattisgarh at his inlaws' place. A trap was laid and after a brief chase, he was nabbed from Pankha Road. The pistol has been seized along with 10 live cartridges," Arya said.

During questioning, the accused told police he had purchased medicines from the victim's shop earlier as well.



Vehicles stuck on the DND Thursday night. *Express*

Heavy rain brings traffic to a standstill

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

HEAVY RAIN, thunder and strong winds lashed Delhi and NCR Thursday evening, bringing traffic to a standstill in many parts.

Weather experts attributed the rainfall to an active Western Disturbance, which has brought snow to Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The showers also significantly improved Delhi's air quality. The 24-hour AQI average of the city calculated at 4 pm was 'severe' but the particulate matter concentration dipped consid-

erably after the rain. Officials at SAFAR said Friday will see a significant dip in AQI as wind speed will pick up starting Thursday night. "Air quality will improve rapidly and significantly by tonight (Thursday) and the impact will be seen by

tomorrow (Friday) with AQI falling from 'severe' to 'poor' category. Western Disturbance has started to influence the region with an induced cyclonic circula-

tion over North West Raiasthan.

An increase in surface winds and

scattered rainfall is expected late

Thursday. Further improvement

in AQI is forecast Saturday," a

statement issued by SAFAR said. Meanwhile, Saturday is also expected to bring the first dense fog day. "A significant improvement in AQI through increased ventilation and washout due to rainfall is expected by Friday but an increase in moisture in the air will lead to foggy conditions between Saturday and Tuesday. The AQI is likely to deteriorate again because of this as it will lead to formation of secondary particulate matter," SAFAR officials said.

The maximum temperature was 21.5°C Thursday, two degrees below normal.

ANAJ MANDI BLAZE THAT KILLED 43

For Rs 2,000, factory employed minors

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THE SPECIAL investigation unit (SIU) of the Crime Branch, which is probing the fire at the fivestorey Anaj Mandi building where 43 people died Sunday, has recorded the statement of three minors, who said they had been working on the second and third floors for the last six-eight months. Police have accordingly added sections of the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act in the existing FIR, and are likely to arrest contractors who got the minors jobs at the manufacturing units.

During investigation, officers found that five minors died in the incident, while seven survived. Police suspect the list of dead could include two more minors, and have asked their families for documents as proof of age.

"Police recorded the statement of six children; one of them managed to escape from the hospital after treatment. One of the survivors, in his statement, told police he hails from Bihar and came to Delhi with the help of a relative who was already working at another unit in Anaj



Three minors told police they had been employed on the second and third floors at manufacturing units in the building for the last six-eight months. Praveen Khanna

Mandi. He worked in a room on the second floor, manufacturing plastic mirror frames. He was paid Rs 2,000 a month, and would be provided food by the contractor," a senior officer said.

In the FIR, inspector Vijay Kumar, posted at Sadar Bazar, stated that during a visit to the spot, the mobile crime team found cardboard sheets on the ground floor. "On the first floor, there were plastic mirror frames; the second floor had mirror frames as well; the third floor had sewing machines along with garments: and the fourth floor had a rexine bag unit," the FIR states.

In his statement to police, another minor levelled similar allegations. "Another 15-year-old boy claimed he was working on the third floor and getting Rs 8,000 a month. The salary range for minors seems to be Rs 2,000-8,000," an officer said.

While some of the minors were working at the building, others had come to visit their relatives and ended up spending the night there. "A 16-yearold boy informed police his elder brother was working in the building and he had come to visit him before heading back to his village in Bihar," an officer said.

HC notice to Centre, Delhi & Bihar govts over children deaths

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THE DELHI High Court Thursday issued notice to the Centre and the state governments of Bihar and Delhi on a petition alleging that the death of child labourers in the Anaj Mandi fire took place due to the "lackadaisical and apathetic" approach of the authorities concerned.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shankar also sought the stand of the Centre, Delhi government, its labour department, Delhi Police and the state of Bihar on the plea seeking direction to enquire into the number of children who were employed at manufacturing units in the building. The petition further sought direction to provide police protection to children injured in the incident who are admitted in hospitals.

The court listed the matter for further hearing on March 31, before which authorities have to respond to the notices. Forty-three people were killed after a fire broke out at the five-storey residential building with illegal manufacturing units at North Delhi's Anaj Mandi early Sunday.

The High Court was hearing a PIL filed by Bachpan Bachao

Andolan (BBA), through its counsel Prabhsahay Kaur, claiming that several minors were among the people reported dead, injured or missing in the incident.

"There is a complete lack of commitment on the part of the government to implement the Delhi Action Plan for total abolition of child labour...," said Kaur, who also sought an enquiry into trafficking and child labour. The BBA also asked authori-

ties to "rehabilitate, compensate and recover minimum wages of the child labour at Anaj Mandi establishments" and to seal establishments, units or factories where child labour is found. The PIL alleged that one of the

injured minors has disappeared from the burns ward of Lok Nayak Hospital and claimed that it indicates involvement of child traffickers. It sought directions to the police to trace the missing child. As per the petition, most of the

minors hail from Bihar, from where they are brought by traffickers to work in factories. "The question that begs consideration is how the State agencies could have turned a blind eye to apparent and visible manufacturing units being run from Anaj Mandi, especially in light of clear and mandatory directions of this court on child labour," the plea said.

BRIEFLY

Mobile drive on child safety launched

New Delhi: A mobile campaign advocating child safety will be travelling through the capital over the next six months to spread awareness about child trafficking and labour. The Mukti Caravan, organised by the Satyarthi's Kailash Children's Foundation, was launched Thursday, in collaboration with the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

PSO of BJP **MP** shoots himself

Gurgaon: On the first day of his posting, the Personal Security Officer of BJP MP Braj Bhushan Sharan Singh allegedly shot himself with his service pistol at the official residence of the MP.

BJP leader receives death threats

New Delhi: A case has

been registered at North Avenue police station on a complaint by BJP leader Vinay Katiyar, after he alleged he received death threat on his personal mobile phone from an unknown caller.

2 held for job fraud

New Delhi: Two men were arrested for allegedly duping people by promising them jobs in the Indian Railways. **ENS**

SDMC schools await money for sweaters

ABHINAV RAJPUT NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

WINTER HAS arrived but around 2.5 lakh kids in South Delhi Municipal Corporation schools are yet to get Rs 1,100 for purchasing uniforms and sweaters. The North and East civic bodies, which are financially weaker than SDMC, have meanwhile either transferred the money to students or initiated the process.

South MCD Mayor Sunita Kangra claimed the file seeking her permission for the disbursal of funds arrived late and blamed the transfer of senior education department officials for it. She said the money will be transferred within the next 10 days.

While the North body has 765 schools, East runs 365 and South 581. This year, 22,000 new students joined South MCD schools. A senior official from the East

ANANYA TIWARI &

NEW DELHI. DECEMBER 12

HUNDREDS OF men and

women protested near Raighat

in support of Delhi Commission

for Women chairperson Swati

Maliwal Thursday, demanding

stringent laws to punish violence

against women and death

penalty for the four men con-

victed of gangraping a 23-year-

old woman on December 16,

2012. Maliwal has been on a

hunger strike for the past 10 days

who came from Greater Noida

for the protest, said, "More than

Natasha Shukla, a student

Note: Figures may not total 100 due to rounding.

SHAARDHOOL

SHREENATH

at Rajghat.

At protest, a demand



sweaters purchased by a teacher in Madanpur Khadar

civic body said ideally the money should have been disbursed when the academic session starts in April, and that corporations should at least ensure it is given before winter.

A South body official said this is the third consecutive year that payment has been delayed. Meanwhile, a teacher from a South MCD school in Madanpur Khadar purchased sweaters from her salary and distributed it Wednesday.

for stricter rape laws capital punishment, we need proper implementation of laws

and awareness programmes."

The protesters demanded fast-track courts, more police personnel, and a more stringent law within six months to deal with violence against women.

Ritu Tiwari, a worker from the Delhi Mahila Aayog, said, "Maliwal is asking for justice for girls who haven't got justice. Rapists must get death penalty.'

Sathyadev Maji (70) a tea stall owner from Jaipur who came to Delhi for the protest, said: "Women are being burnt alive, killed and raped, but lawmakers are not talking about it. That needs to change."

(Shaardhool Shreenath is an intern with The Indian Express) **HOSTEL FEE HIKE PROTEST**

JNU students boycott exams amid deadlock

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

END-SEMESTER EXAMINA-TIONS were boycotted by students in almost all Schools and Centres of Jawaharlal Nehru University Thursday, except in the departments of Sanskrit, Engineering and Management. It is the first time in recent history that exams were boycotted.

Students had parked themselves at the Schools and Centres since Wednesday night to ensure boycott. Most exams were to begin at 10 am, and a few were supposed to be held in the second half.

The JNU Teachers' Association had also come out in support of the call for boycott given by the JNU Students' Union, saying that the administration's "attempts to forcefully conduct" end-semester examinations "must be put an end to" since it "did not help in fostering a settlement through dialogue". After more than 45 days of

strike called by INUSU over revision of the hostel manual, which included hostel fee hike, the Vice-Chancellor also met the hostel presidents for the first time Thursday. However, instead of meeting the JNUSU officebearers, the Registrar in a notice asked "all the candidates who contested for the post of position of president of JNUSU in 2019" to attend the meeting.

The Delhi High Court had Wednesday asked the administration and agitating students to sit together and resolve the issue.

Both meetings failed, with hostel presidents and INUSU 2019 presidential candidates alleging that the V-C was not inter-



Students picket outside an exam centre Thursday. Express

ested in finding solutions.

All 18 hostel presidents who attended the meeting with the V-C, Dean of Students (DoS), Registrar and Rectors in a statement said the V-C "concluded the meeting and ran away" when "tough questions" were asked.

"First they tried to convince us how the service and utility charges are justified. Then the hostel presidents demanded complete roll back of new hostel manual and a fresh IHA meeting to be held in a democratic manner... The V-C justified the October 28 IHA meeting and said that the meeting was legitimate," they said.

"Umesh Kadam (DoS) was adamant that he will not notify the JNUSU. The V-C wanted the Yamuna hostel (fully privatised) model in all hostels. We rejected such proposals. They even justified the 10% annual hike," the hostel presidents claimed.

A day earlier, the Ministry of **Human Resource Development** (MHRD) had said that the administration had agreed that service and utility charges would

be paid by the UGC and that the "administration and students would follow orders of High Court for notification of JNUSU".

JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh said the talks remained "inconclusive". "The V-C was not interested in a dialogue and was only talking about our protest. I told him that discussions about hostel issues should be held in IHA meetings alone," she said.

ABVP's presidential candidate was the only one absent from the meeting on account of being out of town.

The V-C, Registrar, DoS and Rector did not respond to calls and texts, but in two separate statements, Registrar Pramod Kumar said both meetings were "a significant step towards normalising the situation in the university through deeper dialogue".

He said the meeting with the presidential candidates ended with the V-C making an appeal to call off the strike. "He requested the student leaders to talk to their fellow students so that normal academic activities...are resumed...," he said.

From Bihar to Tihar: 10 hanging ropes, made with soft cotton

SANTOSH SINGH PATNA, DECEMBER 12

A HANGING rope from Bihar's Buxar jail is made of several braids, containing a total of 7,200 threads. The 16-feet rope is made of cotton, and has just enough moisture to keep it soft. At the moment, 10 such ropes have been readied to be supplied to the capital's Tihar Jail.

This comes against the backdrop of the Union Home Ministry sending the Delhi government's recommendation to reject the mercy plea of one of the four convicts in the December 16, 2012 gangrape case to President Ram Nath Kovind. Tihar has also approached UP for a hangman.

Buxar jail was last asked for a rope for the hanging of Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru in 2013.

"We just got verbal instructions from prison headquarters in Patna to ready a set of hanging ropes. They are ready," said Buxar jail superintendent Vijay Arora. A hanging rope, weighing 1.5 kg, costs Rs 2,120, he said.

Buxar jail has made hanging ropes since before the Partition. The area was developed as an industrial hub, as the land was suitable for cotton cultivation. As the town is situated on the banks of the Ganga, its cotton quality was known to contain the moisture required for making such ropes.

The jail superintendent said: "Buxar's ropes are preferred possibly because of its long tradition of making good hanging ropes. They are prepared by a group of 10 trained convicts serving jail terms, who then train another group of convicts. Even though the demand for hanging rope comes at long intervals because of very few executions, we maintain our factory unit, which manufactures other cloth items."

With little availability of local cotton now, Buxar jail procures J34 variety of raw cotton from government suppliers. The J34 variety is grown mostly in North India and has a strength of 4.5 micronaire (a measurement of the thickness of the cell walls of a cotton fibre) and length of 29 mm. "Four braids of 1,800 threads each make a hanging rope, which is 16 ft long. It is designed to take the load of a person weighing 150 kg," Arora said

Before Independence, Manila rope was also used because of its softness. "Earlier, Ganga water was used in boilers to render raw cotton's softness... Now, J34 serves the purpose," said Arora.

"It is a specialised art, but cannot be a profit-making venture. Buxar rope is in demand more because of repute than anything else," he added.

As part of CAB push, Delhi BJP leaders head to Majnu ka Tilla

SHIVNARAYAN RAJPUROHIT

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

A DAY after the Rajya Sabha passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill, BJP leaders, including Delhi unit president Manoj Tiwari, made a beeline to North Delhi's Majnu ka Tilla to "congratulate" Hindu refugees from Pakistan's Sindh province.

With around 130 households, the camp has 700-odd refugees who fled Pakistan starting 2010 due to "religious persecution" and came to India on tourist and pilgrimage visas.

Addressing a gathering at the camp, Tiwari said, "Now you are true Indian, and India welcomes

you with open arms. You can restart your life here and embark on the path of prosperity."

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi told me he was aware of your persecution," Tiwari said amid chants of "Iai Shri Ram" and "Modi, Modi".

Also present were Rajva Sabha MP Vijay Goel, North Delhi mayor Avtar Singh and other party leaders.

In the crowd was Lakshmi (75), who was among the first batch of refugees who came India in 2010. "We could not flee Pakistan during Partition because of violence. Today, I can proudly say that I am an Indian citizen," she said.

Most refugees work as farm labourers, vegetable sellers, or hawkers selling items such as phone covers. In Pakistan, they were mostly farmers. The houses at the camp are semi-pucca, with shades propped up by bamboo poles. The Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board built public toilets in the area in 2015.

Another refugee, Gurumukh (32) said he now hoped to buy land for agriculture. "We used to grow vegetables and fruits in Pakistan," said Gurumukh, who sells mobile covers. His family came to India in 2011 on a pilgrimage visa. His relative Heera Lal (22) said

he was relieved his family will not have to visit Foreigners Regional Registration Office for visa renewals anymore. "This will save a few thousands too," he said.

1: HIGH SUPPORT FOR FREE TRAVEL FOR WOMEN IN BUSES

QUESTION ASKED: Do you support or oppose the government's decision to make DTC bus travel free for women passengers? (And to what extent)

	Strongly support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly Oppose	No response
Overall	69%	14%	5%	11%	1%
Men	62%	16%	7%	14%	1%
Women	76%	12%	3%	7%	2%

2: PROPOSAL TO MAKE DELHI METRO RIDES FREE FOR WOMEN ALSO RECEIVED SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT

QUESTION ASKED: Do you support or oppose the proposal/idea of making Delhi Metro rides free for women commuters? (And to what extent)

	support	Support Support	oppose	Oppose Strongly	No response
Overall	57%	18%	6%	16%	3%
Men	49%	20%	7%	21%	3%
Women	67%	16%	4%	11%	3%

3: HOW DELHI TRAVELS, NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2019

QUESTION ASKED: How often do you use the following modes of transport to travel from one point to another point within Delhi — daily, few times a week, once or twice a week, once a month, rarely or never?

	Use Daily	Use few times a week	Use once or twice a week	Use once a month	Use rarely	Never use/ no response
Bus	22%	16%	13%	13%	20%	16%
Metro	11%	16%	16%	16%	25%	16%
Cycle rickshaw/ e-rickshaw	13%	18%	17%	11%	22%	19%
Autorickshaw	5%	13%	18%	14%	29%	21%
Uber/Ola/Cab	2%	4%	8%	14%	29%	43%
Personal vehicle	29%	13%	8%	7%	14%	29%
Bicycle	5%	2%	3%	2%	12%	76%
3.7 . 37	1 400 1					

Note: Figures may not total 100 due to rounding

4: MOST METRO USERS FIND THE CURRENT METRO FARES TO BE HIGH

OUESTION ASKED: Do you find the current Metro fares to be low, high or appropriate?

COLSTION ABRED. Do you find the current wetro lares to be low, fingh of appropriate:						
	Existing Metro fares are high	Existing Metro fares are appropriate	Existing Metro fares are low	Can't say		
Overall	54%	31%	4%	10%		
Regular Metro users	57%	37%	5%	1%		
Rare Metro users	60%	30%	3%	7%		
Don't use Metro for travel	32%	21%	3%	44%		

Commuters as voters

More support for free bus rides for women than for free Metro rides, dissatisfaction with Metro fares, endorsement of higher traffic challans findings of a survey of 2,298 Delhi voters conducted by Lokniti-CSDS

SHREYAS SARDESAI& **BISWAJIT MOHANTY**

EIGHTY-EIGHT per cent of women and 78% of men back the Delhi government's decision to make bus travel free for women, an opinion survey among 2,298 Delhi voters by the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) has revealed.

To assess what people thought of the scheme, rolled out by the Aam Aadmi Party government on October 29, voters spread across all parliamentary seats of the capital were posed a neutrally worded question: "Do you support or oppose the government's decision to make DTC bus travel free for women and to what extent?" Eighty-three per cent expressed their support, with 69% endorsing it strongly (table 1). And while the degree of support among men and women differed, a majority of men were also found to be in favour of the scheme.

In the survey, 84% of all respondents said they use the bus, of which 51% use it regularly, that is, either daily or weekly (table 3). Among women, the proportion of regular bus users was found to be 49%.

Based on these findings, it could be argued that the initial apprehension that men would not take kindly to a scheme may have been unfounded.

Support for the free bus travel scheme differed according to the economic status of the respondent — women belonging to households with higher income levels were found to be a good 15 percentage points less likely to favour the scheme than those from low income households. In terms of age too, differences were noticed, as women from the youngest age bracket (18-25 years) were found to favour free bus travel five percentage points more than senior citizens. This is most probably because the survey also found young women to be travelling by buses far more (65%) than middle aged (47%) and elderly women (37%).

Respondents were also asked their opinion about the AAP government's proposal to make travel free for women in the Delhi Metro, an idea that has been criticised by the Supreme Court as being economically impractical. On

5: EVEN THOUGH MOST SAID THAT METRO FARES ARE HIGH, MOST ALSO SAID THAT METRO SERVICES HAVE IMPROVED

QUESTIONS ASKED:

(If bus user) Based on your experience of travelling by buses, can you tell me whether bus services in Delhi have improved or deteriorated compared to previous years? (If Metro user) Based on your experience of travelling by Metro, can you tell me whether Metro services in Delhi have improved or deteriorated compared to previous years?

Regular bus users' opinion about bus services			
74%		9%	9% 7% 1%
Rare bus users' opinion about bus services			
64%	7%	10%	7% 11%
Regular Metro users'opinion about Metro services			3%
71%		19%	6%
Rare Metro users' opinion about Metro services			
65%		19%	5% 3% 8%
■ Improved ■ As good ■ Deteriorated ■ As bad ■ No opin	ion		

this too, most respondents expressed approval, though not to the same extent as their support for free travel in buses. As many as 75% were in favour of making Metro travel free for women, with women once again expressing more support than men — the difference between them being 14 percentage points (table 2). Once again, there was hardly any difference between Metro users and non-users when it came to supporting the idea. The survey also tried to gauge public

opinion on Delhi Metro fares that had been hiked in 2017. Respondents were asked whether they considered the Metro fares low, high or appropriate. Only a little over one-third (35%) described the fares as being either appropriate or low (table 4). Over half (54%) felt they were high, while the rest did not offer an opinion.On the other hand, the percentage of those who thought that the existing bus fares are high was only 5%. What's more, even among respondents from high income households, a majority felt that the Metro fares were high.

The survey also found a decrease/stagnation in the popularity of the Metro as the most preferred mode of transport, and a simultaneous rise in bus usage as compared to the past. When voters were asked an open-ended

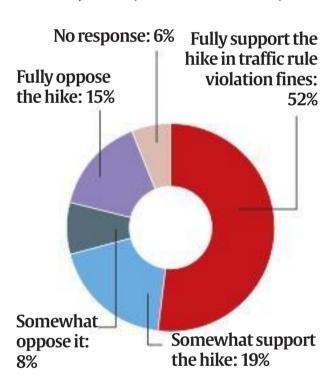
question as to which mode of transport they use the most to travel in Delhi from one point to another, 17% said it was the Delhi Metro (table 7). Nearly five years ago in February 2015, when Lokniti had asked the same question (before the fare hike), the figure had been slightly higher at 19%. In contrast, the proportion of respondents saying that bus is their most used mode of transport has risen from 31% in 2015 to 36% now. Moreover, daily usage of buses was found to be twice as high as the daily usage of the Metro -22% to 11%.

That said, respondents made a clear distinction between their perception of Metro fares and that of Metro services. While they considered fares to be high, they were also highly satisfied with Metro services. Nearly nine of every ten Metro users said services had either improved during the past few years or were as good as before (table 5). Bus services were also seen as having improved, but to a slightly lesser extent.

(Shreyas Sardesai is Research Associate at Lokniti-CSDS. Biswajit Mohanty is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the Deshbandhu College, University of Delhi. He is also the State

6: OVER HALF OF RESPONDENTS **FULLY SUPPORT THE RECENT INCREASE IN TRAFFIC RULE VIOLATION FINES**

QUESTION ASKED: Do you support or oppose the recent increase in traffic challans/fines? (and to what extent)



7: MODE OF TRANSPORT DELHI'S ADULTS USE THE MOST FOR TRAVELLING - NO INCREASE IN METRO POPULARITY AS THE PREFERRED/MOST USED MODE

QUESTION ASKED: Normally which mode of transport do you use the most for travelling in Delhi?

| 2013 | 2015 | 2019

Walking	7%	10%	2%	
Bicycle	5%	3%	1%	
Cycle rickshaw/ e-rickshaw/Sarathi	2%	2%	6%	
Autorickshaw	2%	5%	4%	
Cab/Uber/Ola/Taxi	<1%	<1%	1%	
Bus/Gramin Seva	39%	31%	36%	
Own car	13%	13%	9%	
Scooter/bike	16%	15%	19%	
Metro	10%	19%	17%	
Ring rail	1%	<1%	<1%	
Other	1%	1%	<1%	
Can't say	4%	2%	4%	
Note: Question was open ended as no options were offered. All answers were spontaneous.				

TOMORROW THE POLITICAL MOOD

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

THE FINDINGS presented here are from a survey conducted in Delhi by the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). The survey was conducted from November 22 through December 3, 2019 among 2,298 voters in 115 locations (polling stations) spread across 23 Assembly Constituencies of the capital. The sampling design adopted was multi-stage random sampling. The Assembly Constituencies were randomly selected using the probability proportional to size method.

Thereafter, five polling stations within each of the sampled constituencies were selected using the systematic random sampling method. Nearly 50 trained field investigators conducted face-to-face interviews of the respondents in Hindi asking them a set of standardised questions on mostly governancerelated matters. The interviews were conducted at every fifth house of a polling station in order to ensure randomness. The interview duration was about 30 minutes on average. In order to ensure

representativeness and correct for underrepresentation of key demographics, the achieved raw sample has been weighted by Gender, Religion, and Caste group based on Census 2011 data. All analysis here has been presented on the weighted data set. The survey was designed, supervised and analysed by a team of researchers associated with Lokniti. They include Shreyas Sardesai, Biswajit Mohanty, Himanshu Bhattarcharya, Manjesh Rana, Dhananjay Kumar Singh, Vibha Attri, Jyoti Mishra,

Sakshi Khemani, Aditya Pandey, Neel Madhav, Fakru Zzaman, Deepti Mary Minj, Muzamil Yaqoob and Jagannath Kashyap. Prof. Suhas Palshikar and Prof. Sandeep Shastri guided the research team in analysing the data and with the write-ups. The survey was directed by Prof. Sanjay Kumar of CSDS. Lokniti would like to acknowledge the support of Durba Chattaraj of Ashoka University who partially supported this survey with the Franklin Research Grant of the American Philosophical Society.

SAMPLE PROFILE: RAW AND WEIGHTED

Coordinator of Lokniti-CSDS in Delhi.)

	PROPORTION IN RAW SAMPLE	PROPORTION IN WEIGHTED SAMPLE*
Scheduled Castes	16.40%	16.80%
Muslims	14.10%	12.90%
Sikhs	3.00%	3.40%
Women	37.90%	46.50%
Note: Weighted by Census 2011 data		

CAB PROTESTS

MEANWHILE

MEA: No update on India-Japan summit



New Delhi: The government Thursday said there was no update to share on the proposed India-Japan annual summit in Guwahati, for which Japan's

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is likely to visit from December 15 to 17.

"We don't have any update to share," the Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said when asked about the summit. Although the government has not announced the venue for the summit, preparations were underway to host it in Guwahati.

Asked whether the government is contemplating shifting the venue, Kumar said, "I am not in a position to clarify on it. I have no updates to offer."

Train services in Assam, Tripura hit

New Delhi: All train services in Assam and Tripura have been suspended and long distance trains to the region short-terminated to Guwahati following violence over CAB, a Railways spokesperson said. The decision was taken on Thursday night, Northeast Frontier Railway spokesperson Subhanan Chanda said, adding that many passengers are stranded in Kamakhya and Guwahati. A station in Dibrugarh's Chabua, hometown of the Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal, was set on fire by protesters Thursday night and Panitola railway station in Tinsukia district was also torched.



Students protest against the Bill at India Gate Thursday. Amit Mehra

Protest in Capital

New Delhi: More than 100 students gathered at India Gate on Thursday to protest against the CAB. The protest was called by Left-affiliated All India Students Association and included students from Delhi University and Jamia Millia Islamia. The organisations that participated included Students Federation of India and ANHAD.

Additional DCP-1 (New Delhi) said, "Around 5.45 pm today, AISA members protested at India Gate. They were joined by more people and the protest went on till 7 pm. Around 150 people were there. There was no law and order problem."



Security personnel clear the GS Road after a protest in Guwahati on Thursday. The city is under curfew. Dasarath Deka

As protests flare, murmurs in govt over 'error of judgement'

LIZ MATHEW & DEEPTIMAN TIWARY NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

ON A day when violent protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill spread to more areas in Assam and Tripura, government and political functionaries in the national capital pointed to "unpreparedness, poor communication and error of judgment" by the Centre and the state governments over reactions on the street to the legislation.

A source in the government admitted that there could have been an error of judgment in weighing in the possibilities of violent protests on the streets against the Bill. "There could have been an error of judgment (about the responses). We must have made a mistake in assessing the situation. Or there could be communication gap," said a source.

Another party source said, "This scale of violent response was not anticipated."

However, the government source said, "Things will be under control soon. Normalcy will return in 24-48 hours."

The Bill was passed by Rajya Sabha on Wednesday and has got Presidential nod.

The Assam government on Thursday shunted out Additional DGP of Assam Mukesh Aggarwal and replaced him with G P Singh, an officer of the Assam cadre on central deputation. An IG with the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Singh was repatriated to his parent cadre overnight and rushed to Guwahati by a 2 am flight on Thursday to take charge of the situation.

"Singh has handled such situations when he was earlier posted there and so the Assam government has called him back," an MHA official said, adding that the ministry was constantly monitoring the situation and was in touch with the administration there.

Notably, the government had similar ap-



Silchar MP Raideep Roy blamed miscreants and the Congress for the violence

prehensions in Kashmir when the special status under Article 370 was scrapped, but with preparations in advance and a complete shutdown ahead of the announcement, it had managed to ensure there was little violence.

"The two situations can't be compared. Assam does not have the kind of militancy and external interference that Kashmir has. The steps taken in Kashmir were drastic. The same cannot be replicated in Assam. There was intelligence of unrest and based on information provided by the Intelligence Bureau, Internet had been suspended on Wednesday. There was no plan of shutdown in the first place," the official said.

Sources said due to anticipation of violence, 50 companies of Central Armed Police Forces were withdrawn from Jammu and Kashmir and stationed in Assam a week ago. Two columns of the Army, too, reached Guwahati on Wednesday. "Eventually the state police which has to manage the situation as the forces are at their command. We hope the situation will normalise in a couple of days," the official said.

Meanwhile, Rajdeep Roy, BJP MP from Silchar, blamed "miscreant elements and the opposition Congress" for the violence on the ground. According to him, neither the party nor the governments expected "these ele-

ments could create such trouble" in the state. "These people are trying to catch fish in the muddy waters. The Congress does not have a space as an opposition or in the minds of people and now they are trying to get entry through backdoor," Roy told The Indian Express.

Pointing out that the Home Minister held dialogue with around 160 organisations, 600-700 people for almost 120 hours before introducing the Bill, Roy said, "We never expected the miscreants would join the protests. People from outside would join..."

"We expected some kind of protests, that's why our Home Minister did that humongous effort of consulting people. Despite all that, we never expected this would go like this," Roy said.

Asked if more forces and timely preparation could have avoided the situation, the MP said, "I cannot comment on it, because I am not on the ground. I am still in Delhi... But it will be under control soon."

Shah meets Tripura delegations

New Delhi: Amid protests in Tripura over the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday met various delegations from the state, including one from Joint Movement Against Citizenship Amendment Bill, which is spearheading the protests in the state. A Home Ministry spokesperson said the minister assured them their concerns would be addressed. "After his assurance, they have called off their strike," the spokesperson said. The Home Minister is expected to visit Shillong on December 15 for an event at the North East Police Academy.

Shah tweeted, "Met with delegations of IPFT and Joint Movement Against CAB from Tripura and discussed their concerns over CAB. Modi government will try to solve their issues in a positive way. I thank them for their appeal to maintain peace and call off the strike." Shah also met a delegation of Indigenous People's Front of Tripura and Tripura royal scion and former state Congress chief Kirit Pradyot Deb Barman.

Sonowal appeals for calm, says he is open to dialogue

ABHISHEK SAHA

GUWAHATI. DECEMBER 12

AS VIOLENCE rocked Assam, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Thursday appealed to protesters for maintaining peace and said that he was open to dialogue with the leaders of the agitation.

"Peaceful and democratic protest is an integral part of a democratic society but when somebody resorts to violence, it is in no way helpful. Hence my sensible appeal to the people involved in the protests is to maintain peace and tranquility in the state. It is highly essential to ensure protection of life and property," Sonowal said during an interaction with journalists at his official residence in Guwahati.

"I am ready to have a dialogue with the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and other organisations. We are always open from our side. Through discussion any confusion can be solved," he said.

The BJP leader said that "misinformation" about CAB has aggravated the situation. "Real facts are not disclosed. People are just quoting whatever number they want — 10 million or 15 million. But that is not true. I appeal to the leaders of the protest to please stick to the principles of non-violence and we can work together," Sonowal said.

The Chief Minister said that the government will soon implement provisions of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord to protect the interests of the indigenous people of Assam. "The Prime Minister and Home Minister have both



Sarbananda

ests of the indigenous people of Assam, the Clause 6 of the Assam Accord will be implemented in letter and spirit," he said. According to Clause 6, "constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may

categorically stated that to protect the inter-

preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese "A committee of the highest level is preparing its report which will recommend the sug-

be appropriate, shall be provided to protect

gestions for implementation of Clause 6 and how the constitutional safeguards — including that of political, cultural, linguistic and also land rights of the indigenous people of Assam — can be guaranteed," Sonowal said. The Chief Minister said the committee has

been told to submit its report as soon as possible and "the government will take it up immediately after it is submitted".

"People of Assam are expressing their resentment but need not worry since this is for the first time that constitutional safeguards will be given to people. Although it was agreed upon in the Assam Accord in 1985, no Prime Minister has addressed it. Only Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken it up now," Sonowal said.

IUML moves Supreme Court against legislation long to a certain religion, in this case Hindus,

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THE INDIAN Union Muslim League (IUML) on Thursday moved the Supreme Court challenging the amendments to the Citizenship Act, saying the changes "breach the core tenants of secularism and violate basic structure of the Constitution" by "discriminating among persons on the basis of their faith and religion".

The petitioners, including Lok Sabha MPs P K Kunhalikutty, ET Mohammed Basheer and K Navas Kani and Rajya Sabha MP Abdul Wahab, claimed that "imperative historical factual aspects have been overlooked to suit the political ideology of the ruling party".

The plea, filed through advocates Haris Beeran and Pallavi Pratap, said that the petitioners "do not have any grievances in granting citizenship to migrants but the petitioners' grievance is directed against discrimination and unreasonable classification based on religion". "Illegal migrants are class by itself and

therefore any law which is applicable to them should be irrespective of any religion, caste or nationality basis," it said.

They said the new law "seeks to segregate persons on the basis of their religion and grant them the benefit of naturalization, if they beSikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, who are from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh", adding that "this religious segregation without any reasonable differentiation, not only violates Article 14, but is also blatantly opposed to the... very idea of India as a country which treats people of all faiths equally".

The petitioners said that the "Statement of Objects and Reasons" for the amendments said that India has had migration of people from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, "and these countries were a part of undivided India' whereas "Afghanistan was never a part of undivided India" and "therefore the reason of its inclusion is still unclear".

They pointed out that it is being said that these three countries are included as they have a state religion, which countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan also had but they have been excluded from the ambit of the amendment.

The amended provisions also "excluded minorities such as the Ahmadiyyas, Shias and the Hazaras who have a long history of persecution in Afghanistan and Pakistan and still continue being persecuted", it said. The petition also referred to the alleged persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and Tamil Hindus in Lanka and wondered why they had not been included in CAB.

AMU calm, but students say movement still on

SHIVAM PATEL ALIGARH. DECEMBER 12

which has been witnessing protests against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, remained calm on Thursday, the conversations on the campus centred around two words — Constitution and secularism. Student groups and the teachers' union termed the Bill "unconstitutional" and damaging to the secular fabric of the nation.

WHILE Aligarh Muslim University (AMU),

"Between yesterday and today, Hindustan has changed," Yogendra Yadav, president of Swaraj India, told a gathering at the university's main entrance on Thursday. "Until the Rajya Sabha had not passed the Bill, we could say that we live in a secular nation... Now, I don't understand how I can say that I am proud of this

democracy," Yadav added as personnel of Rapid Action Force and Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel deployed at the gates of the university looked on. "The real reason behind this (Bill) is the upcoming elections in Assam and West Bengal. People who talk about vote bank politics, their big vote bank in Assam. In 2021, West Bengal will go to polls and the BJP

Former students' union president Maskoor Bill," Usmani said.

wants to win that in any way possible," he said.

Ahmad Usmani said that they were demanding the scrapping of the Bill and their protests would continue indefinitely and may also reach Delhi. "We are trying to convey the message to the majority population and not only minority communities to oppose this Bill... We are opposing it because it is an attack on our Constitution and it is completely a communal



At the protest at AMU on Thursday. Gajendra Yadav

Two Urdu writers to return awards in protest of Bill passage

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

URDU WRITERS Shireen Dalvi and Yaqoob Yawar on Thursday announced that they will return their awards to register their protest over the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. Dalvi, the 47-year-old Mumbaibased Urdu journalist and former editor (Mumbai edition) of the now closed Lucknowbased Urdu daily Awadhnama, had received the award from Maharashtra Sahitya Akademi

in 2011 for her journalistic and literary works. Writer and translator Yawar, 67, former head of the Urdu department at Banaras Hindu University, had received the UP Urdu

Academy's Lifetime Achievement award for translation in 2018.

"It's an attack on the fundamental rights of the people of India," Dalvi told *The Indian Exp*ress, terming CAB "inhuman" and "unconstitutional". She stated she was "returning the award to join the voices of my community" and others fighting for secularism and democracy.

In an article in The Wire Urdu published on Thursday, Dalvi wrote that the Bill discriminated against a section of people on the basis of religion, which goes against the Constitution. "As citizens of India, we are all entitled to equal rights," she told The Indian Express over phone. The decision to return the award was her *chhota sa ehtejaj* (little act of protest), she said.

Papon cancels Delhi concert

SUANSHU KHURANA NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

PLAYBACK SINGER Angaraag Papon Mahanta, popularly known as Papon, on Thursday cancelled his concert, tweeting that his home state of "Assam is burning, crying and under curfew" and that he would not be able to entertain the audiences in his present state of mind.

The performance was scheduled to take place at Imperfecto Shor Cafe & Club in Delhi's Aerocity. Since the tickets had already been sold for the gig, Papon reassured his fans that the organisers would take care of the refunds.

Papon told The Indian Express, "I am not at peace. This Bill will apply to people seeking refuge in India for persecution done to them in neighbouring countries. On humanitarian



"Assam is burning, crying and under curfew," he tweeted

grounds, there is no problem with that. But it so happens that Assam is the corridor for refugees coming from Bangladesh. With its delicately balanced, complex cultural fabric, it's a threat to the language and culture of the indigenous mix if such 'large numbers' of people come and settle in the limited area with limited resources.'

He added that Assam had been facing this for decades. "So maybe Assam can be exempted from the CAB like other North-Eastern states and India can share these refugees and distribute them all across," said Papon.

Can't absolve Pak of persecution of minorities: India on Imran's remark

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI. DECEMBER 12

INDIA ON Thursday hit back at Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan for slamming the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, saying such "unwarranted" criticism cannot absolve Islamabad of the "blatant persecution" of religious minorities in the neighbouring country

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan flows from the country's Constitution and its "draconian" blasphemy laws. On Tuesday, Khan had said that India's cit-

izenship Bill "violates all norms of international human rights law and bilateral agreements with Pakistan" and that "it is part of the RSS Hindu Rashtra design of expansionism." On Thursday, Kumar said, "I am not going

to respond to every unwarranted and gratuitous comments made by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on our internal affairs." "Such comments cannot absolve Pakistan

of the blatant persecution of the religious minorities which flows, including from the discrimination imbibed in its Constitution, the draconian blasphemy laws and the apathy of state institutions in protecting girls belonging to the minority community from rape, abduction, forced conversion and marriages," Kumar said.

He said Pakistan needs to look inward and ensure protection and promotion of the rights of its minorities rather than "compulsively" commenting on the internal affairs of other countries, which is a breach of internationallyrecognised norms.

As govt reaches out to US Congress to share views, its member slams Bill

SHUBHAJIT ROY NEW DELHI. DECEMBER 12

AS THE government said it has reached out to members of the US Congress and other stakeholders to share its perspective on Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, US Congressman André Carson slammed the legislation and said the move is yet another attempt to "effectively reduce Muslims in India to second-class citizens'

The US House Foreign Affairs Committee had voiced concerns over the Bill, noting that any religious test for citizenship undermines pluralism, which is one of the core shared values for both India and the US.

Asked about the panel's observation, Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said the government of India's views on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill has already been articulated in Parliament

"We have reached out to the members of the US Congress, we have reached out to other stakeholders to share our perspective on the Bill," he said. "We feel that given our strong engagement with the Congress and other stakeholders in the US on matters of mutual interest, we expect that the members of the US Congress will take into account our views before drawing a conclusion on the Bill."

US Congressman Carson, one of three Muslim members currently serving in Congress, said in a statement on Thursday, "...this action is not unexpected, considering the history of Mr. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and its connections to strident communalism This move is yet another attempt to effectively reduce Muslims in India to secondclass citizens."

US reprimanded Pakistan for misusing F-16s, says report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 12

THE US reprimanded Pakistan's air force chief in August for misusing F-16 fighter jets by undermining their shared security platforms and infrastructure, a media report here has said, months after the Indian Air Force said it shot down an F-16 jet of the Pakistan Air Force during aerial combat.

Andrea Thompson, the then-Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs, wrote to Pakistan Air Force Chief Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan in August regarding the matter, *US News* reported on Wednesday.

While the letter did not directly mention the incidents in the immediate aftermath of the February 26 Balakot airstrikes, US News quoted a source saying that the communication served as a direct response to America's concerns about the F-16 use over

"While we understand from you that these aircraft movements were done in support of national defense objectives, the US government considers the relocation of aircraft to non-US government authorised bases concerning and inconsistent with the F-16 Letter of Offer and Acceptance,"

Thompson said in her letter.
A suicide bomber of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror group killed 40 CRPF personnel in J&K's Pulwama district on February 14. In response, India launched an operation against a JeM training camp in Balakot on February 26. The next day, Pakistan Air Force retaliated. The IAF had said that during the aerial engagement on February 27, one of its MiG-21s shot down a F-16.

The State Department and the Embassy of Pakistan refused to comment on the letter.

According to *US News*, Thompson also raised concerns about American access to bases and US-made equipment there.

AFTER 53 TRANSFERS, KHEMKA WRITES TO KHATTAR

'Governance no longer service, it's a business'

VARINDER BHATIA CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 12

TRANSFERRED 53 times in 29 years of service, IAS officer Ashok Khemka has lashed out at the Haryana government saying that "governance is no longer a service, it is a business", and sought Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's permission to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi

to "brief" him "in public interest".

Khemka, principal secretary of the Science and Technology Department, was transferred to the Archives Department by the Haryana government in the last week of November. He was transferred last in March from the Sports and Youth Affairs Department, where he had spent 15 months.

In a Demi-Official (DO) letter to Khattar, Khemka has vociferously objected to his last transfer. The Chief Minister's office has received Khemka's letter, but Khattar is yet to react to it.

This is the first time Khemka has objected to his transfers and written to the CM raising objec-



Khemka seeks Haryana CM's nod to meet PM Modi

tions. "Small minds tend to humiliate and cause fear to detract from doing one's duty honestly and effectively. Governance is no longer a service, it is a business. Only a few fools like me will think and act like trustees of the public faith. Hoping against hope that you will not throw the letter into the dustbin. I also request you to please accord me permission to write and seek audience from the Prime Minister on the issues highlighted in this letter in public interest," Khemka's letter to Khattar read. He called most of his transfers a "violation" of the IAS

(Cadre) Rules. In his letter, Khemka also re-

called his October 2012 order in which he had cancelled the mutation between Robert Vadraowned M/s Skylight Hospitality Ltd and real-estate giant DLF. "The most prominent scam highlighted by your party was the DLF-Skylight Hospitality license black-marketing. Instead of action, those who licensed Skylight, facilitated black-marketing to DLF, allowed benami license renewal, favoured DLF with sweetheart deals like the Rapid Metro passing through their prime properties or the managed auction of Wazirabad forests became Chief Secretary, Secretary to GOI and even managed post-retirement lucrative sinecures... The promise made to the nation at the time of the 2014 elections is now forgotten," Khemka wrote.

Reacting to his last transfer on November 27, Khemka said, "I request you to consider the file carefully at your level, which point to financial corruption in the award of GIS related tenders in some departments like GIS-based property survey in Urban Local Bodies..."

Lotus printed on new passports as part of security features: MEA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

A DAY after Opposition members in the Lok Sabha raised the issue of lotus being printed on new passports, the Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday said it was part of enhanced security features to identify fake passports and involves using other national symbols as well on rotation.

Raising the issue of lotus being printed on new passports

brought for distribution in Kozhikode in Kerala during Zero Hour, M K Raghavan of the Congress said the matter was highlighted by a newspaper and alleged that this was "further saffronisation" of the government establishment with the lotus being the election symbol of the BJP.

Asked about the issue, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, "This symbol is our national flower and is part of the enhanced security features to identify fake passports." These security features have been introduced as part of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) guidelines, he said.

"Apart from the lotus, other national symbols will be used on rotation. Right now it is lotus, then next month there will be something else. These are symbols connected with India such as the national flower or national animal," he said.

IN PARLIAMENT WINTER SESSION

From The Gallery

FROM THE CHAIR **RAJYA SABHA**

"Keep the time in mind and then make your submissions; whatever you want."

M VENKAIAH NAIDU,

Chairman, while initiating discussion on the Constitution (126th amendment) Bill

LOK SABHA

"I would request all the new members to look at the senior members. When the papers are laid, no one stands up and engages in debates. Does any senior

OM BIRLA, Speaker, as MPs tried to raise issues while the papers were laid on table of the House

member stand up?"

RS passes SC/ST quota Bill after brief walkout by Cong MPs

ABANTIKA GHOSH NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

RAJYA SABHA on Thursday unanimously passed the Constitution (126th amendment) Bill, 2019, preceded by a brief walkout by Congress MPs and an outburst from Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad about how Opposition members, while respecting the chair, did not want to be "treated as students".

The Bill extends for another 10 years the reservation for SC/STs in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, and does away with the provision for nomination of Anglo-Indians to the Lok Sabha and 14 state Assemblies. The latter clause came in for criticism from almost all MPs who spoke on the Bill except for those from the treasury benches.

Replying to the concerns of members, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad recounted the decades of oppression of SC/STs and said the government would "look into" the concerns about nomination of Anglo-Indians. He said the 10-year renewals give the government an opportunity to assess the condition of SC/STs.



Rajya Sabha chairman M Venkaiah Naidu

However, it was his repeated references to the past, including the Shah Bano case, the "long wait" for Bharat Ratna for leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and B R Ambedkar and the Congress stance on the triple talag Bill and the Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu's refusal to let Congress MPs respond immediately that caused disgruntlement in the principal opposition party, which chose to

walk out. A constitutional amendment needs to be passed by no less than two-third majority with no less than 50% of the members of the House present and voting. The Congress has 46 members in the House and the Bill was finally passed with 163 "Ayes" in a House

of 240. This means that had the Congress not been present, the Bill could not have been passed.

As Congress MPs returned to the House, Azad said: "We have respect for the chair... But chair also should show some respect. We are all senior people here, CMs, Union ministers for decades. We do not want to be treated like students. The government too should have the heart to listen to criticism, the Opposition can only talk. You have the power. You cannot compete with the Opposition..."

SP's Ramgopal Yadav urged the government to restore the system of nomination of Anglo-Indian legislators.

Earlier, in an impassioned plea, Trinamool MP Derek O'Brien, who is from the Anglo-Indian community, said, "In 72 years, just one person from the community has been elected to Parliament, that's me. The government can take away the nomination but you cannot take the Indian out of the Anglo-Indian." CPM MP K K Ragesh disputed the government figure of there being just 296 Anglo-Indians in the country, saying that in Kerala alone there are 80,000 people from the community.

Insolvency Bill introduced in RS, Oppn says rushed

LIZ MATHEW NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

AMID AN Opposition outcry over government taking Parliament "for a ride" by doing away with the two-day mandatory notice to MPs for a Bill to be taken up, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday introduced a Bill to streamline the corporate insolvency resolution process so successful bidders can be ring-fenced from risk of criminal proceedings for offences committed by previous promoters.

Sitharaman argued that amendments to the Bill were necessary to protect industry. But the Congress, DMK and TMC protested the "way Bills are rushed through..."

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill was distributed among MPs on Thursday, the Opposition said. They wanted the Bill to be sent to a standing committee. Responding, Sitharaman said, "...This government is responding speedily, and I do not want the Opposition to appear as though they do not want the government to function. Please do help us function."

Data Bill: RS picks 10 members for joint panel

KARISHMA MEHROTRA NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

A RESOLUTION to refer the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, to a Joint Select Committee was passed by voice vote in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, a day after it was approved by the Lok Sabha.

The decision to sidestep the IT **Parliamentary** Standing Committee and send the Bill to a JSC had triggered significant backlash from Opposition members on Wednesday.

The Standing Committee, headed by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, was scheduled to hear from key witnesses on the WhatsApp-Pegasus breach on Wednesday but the meeting was postponed to Friday. According to Tharoor, the Speaker had asked him to do so considering a whip issued by the BJP to Rajya Sabha MPs. However, the Lok Sabha decided to send the Bill to a JSC on Wednesday.

The first meeting of the Standing Committee November had seen a political stalemate with BIP members obiecting to the committee having jurisdiction over the topic, citing parliamentary procedure rules. It is learnt that 12 non-BJP members, including from BIP-allied parties, voted to discuss the matter, while 12 BIP members voted



Prasad: It needs to be further examined

against it. The committee's chairman, Tharoor, broke the tie with his second vote in favour of discussion. All BJP members of the committee had argued against discussing data security and the WhatsApp-Pegasus breach.

The ISC, headed by a senior BIP member, will now examine the Bill further.

The panel will have 20 members from Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha. The 10 members were nominated on Thursday.

Introducing the motion in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Union Electronics & Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said he intends to table the Bill in the Budget session in January. "We have come with a very robust mechanism that if the data of the data principal is taken without consent, then serious penalties will occur. And, if it is used beyond the permissible limits of consent, then severe penalties. India wants to become a big centre of data processing, anonymised data processing, and also to promote the cause of the digital economy. But we are

equally keen that, this being a very seminal bill, it needs to be further examined."

The minister said the Justice B N Srikrishna committee that drafted the Bill received 8.000 comments from 134 entities, besides feedback from 500 representatives of companies and civil society and 600 organisations from across the world.

In a letter on Wednesday, Tharoor had urged the Lok Sabha Speaker to "caution this government against such wilful exercise of undermining the House". "In brazen disregard for the Committee, and by extension, the parliamentary convention relating to Standing Committees, this government has chosen to establish Joint Select Committee, presumably in order to extend its control by a Chairman from the ruling party."

Incidentally, the IT Parliamentary Committee's meeting scheduled for Wednesday was postponed to Friday. According to Tharoor, the Speaker had asked him to do so considering a whip issued by the BJP to Rajya Sabha MPs. Two other people who were scheduled to speak in front of the Committee also said that they received a call from the Cabinet Secretariat's office saying that the Speaker had directed that the meeting should be cancelled.

CONG, DMK, TMC WALK OUT OF LS

Cong claims N-E being made another Kashmir, govt says party instigating violence

LIZ MATHEW

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THE CONGRESS-LED Opposition on Thursday accused the government of making the Northeast "another Kashmir" with people protesting on the streets against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, and a communication blockade in parts of the region. But the treasury benches countered saying the Opposition was "instigating violence" there.

"The entire northeastern region, barring a few places, is in flames... It has become another Kashmir," Congress Leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said. "Internet services have been discontinued. We are witnessing that the Kashmir phenomenon has been replicated in the Northeast," he said.

Chowdhury, along with his party colleagues Gaurav Gogoi and Manickam Tagore, gave an adjournment notice regarding the "highly volatile situation in North East India" while the party's chief

whip, Suresh Kodikunnil, gave a notice on "protest against CAB throughout the country". The notices were rejected by Speaker Om Birla. During Zero Hour, Chowdhury said the area is of strategic importance. "The government should take the deteriorating situation seriously," he said.

Chowdhury's remarks triggered protests from the treasury benches. "They are instigating violence in the Northeast," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi then gestured to her party members to stage a walkout. Congress and DMK MPs then walked out. The TMC remained seated but party MP Saugata Roy raised the matter of the protests in Tripura and Assam. "...Army is being deployed there. How can Japanese PM visit there?" Roy asked, referring to Shinzo Abe's proposed visit to Guwahati. Roy demanded a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah on the issue. The TMC then staged a walkout.

Speaking Sanskrit keeps diseases at bay: BJP MP

New Delhi: Participating in a debate on the The Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019, in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, BJP MP Ganesh Singh said, "According to an American University, speaking in Sanskrit language keeps diseases such as diabetes, cholestero and blood pressure at bay." He did not quote the source of the study or the university's name.

Later, the House passed the Bill, which is aimed at giving three deemed Sanskrit universities the

status of Central Universities. Earlier, HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said if there is any language that is scientific, it's Sanskrit. This prompted DMK MP Kanimozhi to question his claim "Hon. Minister, are you a linguist? How can you say that Sanskrit is the greatest language? Who are you to say this?" she asked. **ENS**

Tomar: Shortfall in produce led to onion price hike

New Delhi: Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Thursday a shortfall in production has led to spike in onion price and the Union government has taken corrective measures.

States had given an estimate of production of over 69.9 lakh tonnes of onion by November 30 this season but the actual production is likely to be 53.67 lakh tonnes, Tomar told the Lok Sabha. Replying to a discussion on

crop loss and its impact on farmers, he said there is shortage of onion and the government has taken measures.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said, "The Union government has contracted an additional 12,660 MT of onions which shall begin arriving from 27th December, 2019 onwards..." ENS



EXTRA TIME

BEING THE lone Lok Sabha member from Lakshadweep, NCP's PPMohammed Faizal usually gets a chance to raise his issues during the Zero Hour. On Thursday, when he was trying to raise an issue about the administration in the island, he was allowed to speak for more than two minutes whereas an MP usually gets a minute to speak during Zero Hour. Speaker Om Birla, who listened to him carefully without reminding him about the time, said Faizal could be the one who got the highest number of chances to speak in the 17th Lok Sabha. "I am grateful to you, sir. I am the only representative for them. The people of Lakshadweep are also thankful to you," he said. Hearing this, BJP's Nishikant Dubey suggested that Faizal invite the Speaker to Lakshadweep and felicitate him.

SOUTHERN CORNER

THE BJP may not be so popular in the southern states, but one corner of the BJP office in Parliament building is always flooded with people from the south, especially from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The corner office, where the party's parliamentary secretary Balasubrahmanyam Kamarsu sits, is known as "mini-Andhra" among the MPs. Balasubrahmanyam being an old RSS hand, people from that organisation also make it a point to visit him if they come to the capital, and he never sends back anyone without offering them tea or coffee in summers and soup and papad in winters.

DEFIANT NOTE

BJP LEADER and Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy was invited to speak during a panel discussion at the Pan IIM Conference on Thursday. Congress MP Jairam Ramesh and BJP MPs Suresh Prabhu, Vinay Sahasrabuddhe and Satya Pal Singh were also meant to participate in the discussion, but couldn't make it because of the ongoing Parliament session. Swamy told his audience that he chose to attend the conference despite the party whip, even though such defiance could cost an MP his seat. However, if anyone in the BJP would try to do that to him, he would sue them, Swamy added.

PM to chair first meet of Ganga Council in 3 yrs

HARIKISHAN SHARMA NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will chair the first meeting of National Ganga Council on Saturday, more than three years after it was constituted under his chairmanship.

The council, which comprises chief ministers of 5 states Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Iharkhand — nine Union minis-

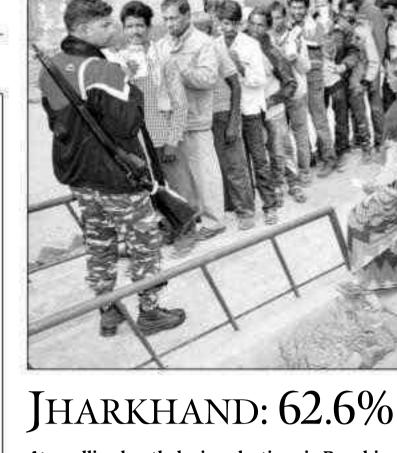
Crack down on mafia: Nath to police,

MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, DECEMBER 12

IN THE backdrop of the MP government's action against businessman and editor Jeetu Soni, Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Thursday said a free hand has been given to the police and administration to crack down on the mafia and announced that his government would come out with a law against organised crime.

Speaking at a meeting of senior bureaucrats and police officers from Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior, Nath said he had received many complaints against the entrenched mafia in the state. "... Just crack down on the mafia," Nath said, according to officials.

Suggesting that the action against Soni was not a fallout of Sanjha Lokswami's coverage of the honey trap case, the CM said that he had received many complaints against the controversial businessman more than a month ago that he was blackmailing people.



JHARKHAND: 62.6% VOTE IN PHASE III

At a polling booth during elections in Ranchi on Thursday. The third phase of Jharkhand Assembly polls, which took place in 17 constituencies spanning eight districts, saw an estimated voter turnout of 62.6%. Ranchi seat saw the least with 49.16% turnout, while Silli constituency saw the maximum turnout at 76.98%. PTI

Yediyurappa may induct two more deputy CMs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU, DECEMBER 12

KARNATAKA CHIEF Minister B S Yediyurappa, whose government now has a clear majority in the Assembly, is considering induction of two more deputy chief ministers to go with the three existing ones or doing away with the post of deputy CMs, sources in the government indicated.

Yediyurappa is expected to travel to New Delhi to meet BIP president Amit Shah next week after the Jharkhand polls to discuss expansion of his cabinet, which now has only 17 ministers for 34 available posts.

The CM is looking at inducting 11 rebel MLAs from Opposition parties — who are among 12 BJP winners of the December 5 bypolls for 15 seats — into his cabinet as well as two rebels who lost the polls (by making them MLCs) to keep promises made to 17 rebels when they defected from the Congress and JDS to help the BJP come to power.

"There is a proposal to induct two more deputy CMs," sources in the government said. Yediyurappa in recent media comments, however, claimed that the matter had not been discussed yet.

"I will not be going to Delhi immediately, but whenever the national president calls me I will go. I will discuss with him and decide on the cabinet expansion. He is now busy with Parliament and elections," the CM said on Thursday.



Karnataka CMBS Yediyurappa

Bill to include certain tribal communities gets RS nod

New Delhi: A Bill to include

certain tribal communities in Karnataka into ST category was passed in Rajya Sabha on Thursday. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed with voice vote. The Bill seeks to include Parivara and Talawara tribal communities in ST category to ensure they get benefits. **ENS**

Among Yediyurappa's key considerations is inducting two senior leaders including a new entrant like Ramesh Jarkiholi as deputy CM to add to the deputy CM posts given to Lakshman Savadi, Govind Karjol and C N Ashwathnarayan.

"Why are deputy CMs being appointed when there is no recognition for that post under the Constitution?" BJP MLA Basavaraj Patil Yatnal said.

Second 2+2 **India-US** dialogue on December 18

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI. DECEMBER 12

THE SECOND two-plus-two dialogue between India and the US will take place on December 18 in Washington during which the two sides will make a comprehensive review of cross-cutting foreign policy and defence and security issues in bilateral ties.

The Indian side will be represented by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, MEA's official spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said.

They will meet their US counterparts — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defence Secretary Mark Esper — and take stock of the growing bilateral relations and provide strategic guidance for their further development.

They will hold a "comprehensive review of cross-cutting foreign policy and defence and security issues in our relations", Kumar said.

Both sides will also exchange views on salient regional and global issues. "The India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue was initiated in September 2018 in order to provide a positive, forwardlooking vision for the India-US strategic partnership and to promote synergy in our diplomatic and security efforts," Kumar said.

Since the inaugural edition of this Dialogue in September 2018, relations between India and the US have further expanded, he said.

MAHARASHTRA PORTFOLIOS DISTRIBUTED

Sena gets home, NCP finance, Cong revenue

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, DECEMBER 12

TWO WEEKS after the oath of office was administered to the Maharashtra chief minister and six other ministers, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government on Thursday finally announced distribution of Cabinet portfolios, ahead of the Winter Session of the state legislature, scheduled to start on Monday.

Sources in the government said that the six ministers (two each from Sena, NCP and Congress) will handle all portfolios for now. A Cabinet expansion is likely after the Assembly session.

While Uddhav has not kept any portfolio with himself, Shiv Sena's Eknath Shinde was named the new home minister. Apart from home, Shinde will also handle urban development, environment, forests, water supply and sanitation, tourism, MSRDC and parliamentary affairs. Subhash Desai, the other Sena minster, will handle industries, agriculture, higher and technical education along with other departments.

NCP's Jayant Patil will handle finance and planning along with housing, public health, cooperation, food and civil supplies, labour and minority affairs. On the other hand, the other NCP minister, Chhagan Bhujbal, will handle portfolios of rural devel-



NCP leaders with party chief Sharad Pawar as he celebrated his birthday in Mumbai on Thursday. Ganesh Shirsekar



THE SHIV Sena's decision to wrest the home ministry is a major setback to the NCP, which always held the portfolio when the party was part of a coalition government with the Congress in the state during 1999-2014. However, the NCP getting the irrigation and cooperatives departments is being seen as significant in the wake of allegations against party leaders in the irrigation scam and alleged irregularities in Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank.

opment, irrigation, social justice, excise, skill development and food and drug administration. Congress's Balasaheb Thorat and fisheries.

education, animal husbandry

will handle revenue, energy,

school education and medical

Pankaja Munde, Eknath Khadse unite to speak out against Fadnavis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAL DECEMBER 12

KNIVES WERE out against former CM Devendra Fadnavis as rebels within the BJP used the birth anniversary of late Gopinath Munde to assert themselves within the organisation on Thursday.

At a public rally held at Gopinath Gad in Beed district's Parli in Marathwada, former minister Pankaja Munde raised the banner of revolt against Fadnavis in the presence of state BJP president Chandrakant Patil, who spoke at the event and assured that all voices in the party would be heard. Senior leader and party rebel Eknath Khadse too invoked Munde senior to point out that he had changed the upper caste-Brahmin image



Pankaja **Munde says** won't quit BJP, plans statewide tour from January 26

of the party in Maharashtra and given it wider appeal. Like Pankaja, he, too, did not mention the former chief minister, who is a Brahmin, by name.

The BJP's lotus symbol and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pictures were missing from

event banners at the venue. Declaring that she would begin working from her father's former office in Mumbai, Pankaja announced that she

would begin a statewide tour

fast on January 27 at Aurangabad – the headquarters of Marathwada region — "to highlight the drought" situation. She also made it clear she

from January 26, and hold a day's

would not quit BJP. "This is my father's party, I will not leave. Let the party leave me, if there are problems," she said, amid thunderous applause from the crowd at regular intervals. "Yes, my father built the party, it is my father's party," she stressed.

Khadse, who has openly rebelled against the party, also directed his attack against Fadnavis without naming him.

"... Gopinath Munde, who made the party a mass-based organisation giving it a new identity from 'shetji bhatji" (upper caste Brahmin), was subjected to a lot of hardships," he added.

Andhra Assembly passes Bill to regulate education sector bureaucrats

SREENIVAS JANYALA HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 12

ters, and NITI Aayog vice-chair-

man as its members, will meet

in Kanpur, a Jal Shakti Ministry

council will deliberate on a 14-

point agenda. It may give in-princi-

pal approval to the continuation of

Namami Gange programme be-

yond 2020. It may direct the

Ministry of Agriculture and

Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Ayush

and the Ganga Basin states to pro-

mote organic farming in a 5 km

stretch on both sides of the Ganga.

According to the sources, the

official said on Thursday.

THE ANDHRA Pradesh Assembly on Thursday passed a Bill that aims to control commercialisation of the education sector, regulate fee structures in private educational institutions, and reserves 25 per cent seats for economicallydisadvantaged students.

Tabling the The Andhra Pradesh School Education Regulatory and Monitoring Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2019, Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh said it aims at regulating the standards, fee structures in private junior colleges and implementing reservation for poorer sections while also bringing junior colleges into the ambit of the Monitoring Commission, which will be headed by a retired High Court judge.

"The Bill became necessary to check the commercialisation of the education sector in the state, where private and corporate educational institutions have been charging huge

amounts as fee in the name of coaching for EAMCET, IIT, NEET and other competitive exams, along with the regular course in junior colleges, which is adversely affecting government schools and colleges," Suresh told The Indian Express.

"The most important part of this law is that it will check indiscriminate increase of fee in schools and colleges. Parents protest when private educational institutions randomly increase fees, often a steep hike, but they can do nothing about it except protest. This new law will keep private educational institutions under control," Suresh said.

The Bill also specifies that 25 per cent seats should be reserved for poor students under the Right to Education Act, which will be checked by the Monitoring Commission. Violations of this clause will attract punitive action, he said.

The Commission will also be responsible for taking punitive measures against defaulting junior colleges.



North Minor girl raped by four in Haryana: Police

Chandigarh: A 12-year-old girl has alleged that she was raped repeatedly by four persons, including a minor, on several occasions in Haryana's Karnal district, police said on Thursday. "We received a complaint from the victim, who approached us with her parents on Tuesday

and on the same day we registered the case under relevant provisions of law including under the POCSO Act,"said the SHO of the police station where the case was registered. The girl has alleged that she was raped by the accused over a period in September, he said.



Members of Irish rock band U2 arrive in Mumbai on Thursday ahead of their first concert in India on **December 15.** Amit Chakravarty

EAST

Deocha-Pachami coal block will be ready in 24 months: CM

Digha (WB): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said her government will aim to make the Deocha-Pachami coal block in Birbhum district operational within 24 months. The block — the world's second largest — has an estimated coal reserve of 2.1 billion tonnes. "We are very eager to start work on

the project. But, some areas are faced with eviction issues. However, in the portion of land that belongs to us, we will start work in the next seven days, and within 24 months the coal block will be operational," Banerjee said at an event. West Bengal Power **Development Corporation** Ltd has been allotted the Deocha-Pachami block. PTI

WEST

Stepfather rapes 15-yr-old girl for two years, arrested

Mumbai: A 25-year-old man was arrested on Tuesday for allegedly raping his minor step daughter for two years, police said. The incident came to light when the victim fled her home on Sunday and was found by a commuter at a railway station. She was brought to the police station, where her statement was recorded and later she was sent for a

medical examination, which revealed that she was nineweeks pregnant, said an officer. The victim said in her statement that the stepfather was sexually assaulting her for two years and that whenever she opposed it, he would tell her that she was his wife in the past life and even applied sindoor on her forehead, said police.

South

Two foreign nationals held for smuggling gold in Hyderabad

Hvderabad: A South Korean and a Chinese national were arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad on Thursday for trying to smuggle in Rs 5.5 crore worth of gold. Based on a tip-off, DRI officials searched the area around seat numbers 31A and 32A of Air India flight AI

952 that arrived in Dubai in the wee hours. They found seven long pipes hidden under both seats. The pipes were wrapped in black adhesive tape and concealed inside was the gold. The two foreign nationals had deboarded leaving the gold behind. When they were detained and questioned, they confessed, officials said, ENS

How was Nithyananda Cold Wave Grips North India allowed to leave India, HC asks Karnataka

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU. DECEMBER 12

THE KARNATAKA High Court on Thursday questioned the state government how self-styled godman Nithyananda alias Rajashekharan (44) was allowed to leave the country when he is an accused in a rape case in which a trial is on.

A single judge of the high court raised the question while hearing a plea by Lenin Karuppan, an aide-turned- adversary of Nithyananda, who is seeking the quashing of a notice issued to him by the trial court, and transfer of the trial from a court in Ramanagara district to the city

of Bengaluru. High Court judge Justice G Narendar directed the court registrar general to obtain records of the trial of the rape case after it was informed by Karnataka

Court over a warrant issued by the trial court, Lenin Karuppan, Nithyananda's former driver, who levelled the first sexual misconduct allegations against the self-styled godman in March 2010, has questioned the permanent exemption granted by the trial court.

Baghpat rape victim gets threat of 'Unnao-like' fate

Before hearing, threatening pamphlet pasted outside home

AMIT SHARMA MEERUT, DECEMBER 12

TWO DAYS before a 25-year old alleged rape victim was to appear in a New Delhi fast track court for a hearing on Friday, the main accused and some others pasted a pamphlet outside her Baghpat residence threatening her family of a "bigger incident than Unnao" if she made it to the court.

"Agar xxx (name withheld) nay 13 tareekh ko court mein gawahi dee toh uska anjaam bahut hee bura hoga. Uska anjaam Unnao say bhi bhayankar ho sakta hai (If she testifies in the court on 13th, then the consequences will be bad. It will be worse than what happened in Unnao)," the pamphlet pasted her residence Wednesday morning read.

In Unnao, a rape victim was set afire her way going to the court last Thursday by a gang of men. She succumbed within 48 hours of being admitted to a Dehli hospital.

The Baghpat woman's grand father lodged a complaint with the Kotwali police station in Baghpat rural.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

A 22-YEAR-OLD daily wage

labourer, accused of raping a 19-

year-old deaf and mute girl, was

shot at by police in Kanpur early

identified as Sanjay Gautam, suf-

fered a gunshot injury in his leg

and was given medical treat-

ment before he was produced

before a court, which sent him

were checking Bithoor area, we

saw a man moving in a suspi-

cious manner. We tried to stop

and question him but he opened

fire at the police team. In retalia-

tory fire, he suffered a gunshot

injury below his right knee. He

was arrested and sent to

Kalyanpur CHC for treatment.

After being presented before a

magistrate, he was sent to the

district jail," said Station House

Officer (SHO) of Bithoor Police

Station Vinod Kumar Singh,

adding that the accused was try-

"Late in the night when we

Police said that the accused,

Thursday morning.

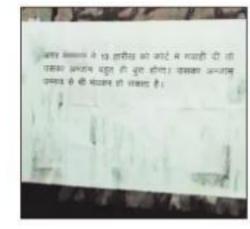
to judicial custody.

LUCKNOW. DECEMBER 12

Man accused of raping

deaf-mute girl shot at

by police in Kanpur



Based on the FIR, the accused was arrested on Tuesday night.

"Based on the FIR, we have arrested the accused Sohran, 28, late last night under IPC section 506 (criminal intimidation) and also seized the pamphlet. We have provided security to the family," said Pratap Gopendra Yadav, SP, Baghpat.

Upon being informed about the incident by Delhi police Thursday, the court issued a warrant and asked the police to produce him Friday morning. A police team from Delhi has

left for Baghpat to take him into custody. The victim and the accused

are from the same village and

ing to find a place to hide to avoid

arrest. "It is clear that we do not

need to show any humanity to

these people. He had sexually as-

saulted a deaf and mute girl 24

Senior Superintendent of Police (Kanpur) Anant Deo said that po-

lice recovered a .315 bore coun-

try-made pistol from the accused.

He, however, has no previous

The accused has been

criminal record, the SSP added.

booked under IPC section 376

(rape), attempt to murder and

under sections of the Arms Act.

the police on Tuesday night that

a 19-year-old deaf and mute girl

was abducted from her house

while she was asleep and taken

to a secluded place nearby and

raped. Police said that the ac-

cused had stuffed the victim's

mouth with a shawl while rap-

tim has confirmed rape, police

said, adding that a sign language

expert will be called to commu-

The medical test on the vic-

ing her.

nicate with her.

A complaint was lodged with

Confirming the police action,

hours ago," the SHO added.

belong to a similar caste. The woman, who stayed with her driver father in Delhi, was preparing for the Short Service Commission examination.

"In July 2018, accused Sohran called her over to his rented apartment in Delhi's Mookherjee Nagar on the pretext of helping her out with studies. He gave her a cold drink allegedly laced with sedatives and raped her. His friends video recorded the act," the police said. It could, however, not find any evidence against his friends.

"My daughter was threatened the video would be leaked in social media if she spoke out, and she was raped again. When she told me about the incident, we immediately lodged an FIR at the Mookherjee Nagar police station on July 9, 2018," said the woman's father.

Following the FIR, Sohran was arrested last July but released on bail this January. He returned to Baghpat while the victim and her father stayed on in New Delhi. "Now that the police have taken action, we will go to the court on Friday to ensure he gets the most severe punishment," said the father.

Priest announces Rs 1 lakh reward for killing rape accused in UP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 12

A PRIEST of Avodhva's Hanuman Gari Temple, Raju Das, has announced a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh to anyone who kills a rape accused. He also said that if a policeman kills a rape accused, then he will extend help to the his family members.

While speaking to *The Indian* Express on Wednesday, Das said the motive behind the appeal is to spread awareness among people that those guilty of such crimes should not be spared.

"Often incidents of crime against women are taking place and those committing them are people among us. It is all about the mindset. Similar crimes are also being committed on children..." Das said. He added, "Jab tak is par samaj sajag nahi hoga, tab take ispe ban nahi lagega (Till our society doesn't become sensitive, such crimes will not stop)," said Das.

Ayodhya Circle Officer Amar Singh said, "We are unaware of any such statement. If it has been made on a public forum or site, we will verify it and take cognisance."

HYDERABAD RAPE-MURDER

SC orders inquiry by 3-member panel into encounter

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THE SUPREME Court on Thursday ordered an inquiry by a threemember commission headed by its former judge Justice V S Sirpurkar "into circumstances in which" four men accused of raping and killing a veterinarian on the outskirts of Hyderabad were killed in an encounter with the police on December 6.

The bench headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde appointed former Bombay High Court judge Justice Rekha S Baldota and former CBI Director D R Karthikeyan as other members.

The court said the commission must submit its report within six months from the date on which it begins the inquiry. "We are of the considered view that there should be an inquiry into facts. Let there be an impartial inquiry. There are aspects of your version that needs probing...We don't want to assume facts...This is a question of credibility...We are not saying you are guilty. We are not saying you are wrong. At this stage we don't know anything," the CJI told Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi, who appeared for the Telangana government. The bench, also comprising

Justices S Abdul Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna, was hearing a petition by lawyers G S Mani, Pradeep Kumar Yadav and M L Sharma seeking a probe into the encounter. The court also directed that

while the Commission is running its inquiry, no other court or authority shall conduct a parallel in-

It also declined to entertain a petition to order Rs 50 lakh compensation for the deceased and said "we are not going to close our eyes to what these boys have done. Nothing has come on record so far as to show that any extraordinary treatment is necessary".

During the hearing, Rohatgi said a Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by a Commissioner of Police, had already been set up to investigate the encounter and that if another inquiry is ordered, it will be against the law, as there cannot be parallel inquiries.

Speaking of the encounter. Rohatgi said two of the men had snatched pistols from the police team and fired at them, which led the police team to retaliate. He added that an FIR had been filed in connection with the accused men firing at the police personnel. However, the submission did not go down well with the court which said, "the accused in that case are not living", and added "we do not see how the possibility of such a trial can uncover the truth relating to the incidents...".

Later, advocate Sharma told the court that the media should be barred from reporting on the process of the inquiry commission as it would affect the case. To which Rohatgi said that even the court gets to know of sev-

eral matters after they have been reported by the media. The CJI said the question was only on reporting facts which may affect the trial. Rohatgi said the court should

first hear the news organisations before taking any decision. Agreeing, the court issued notice to PTI and the Press Council of India



Ravi Shankar Prasad

Rape trials must be complete in 6 months: Prasad to CMs, CJs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

UNION MINISTER for Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday reminded all chief ministers and chief justices of high courts that trials in rape cases have to be completed within six months under law.

"We owe it to our daughters and sisters and their families who are unfortunate victims of these heinous crimes, a fair and prompt trial," Prasad wrote in separate letters to them. As per the Criminal Law

Amendment Act, 2018, the trial in such cases has to be completed in two months and appeals in higher courts within six months. Stating that the Union gov-

ernment is committed to enhancing safety of women and children, the minister said that after investigation, the cases will have to be assigned to prosecutors who are competent and sensitive to victims.

To ensure targeted disposal of cases, the law ministry has launched a scheme "for setting up Fast Track Special Courts for **Expeditious Disposal of Rape** and POCSO Act Cases". Under the scheme, 1,023 dedicated fast track courts are proposed to be set up in the country.

Andhra Cabinet clears law to deal with crime against women Also, under the new law, ac-

SREENIVAS JANYALA HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 12

THE ANDHRA Pradesh Disha Act and the Andhra Pradesh Special Court for Specific Offences against Women and Children Act 2019 were cleared by the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet on Wednesday and the Bills are scheduled to be taken up for discussion in the Legislative Assembly this week.

As per these new laws, if there is conclusive evidence to prove crimes committed against women, the police can wrap up investigation in a week and file the charge sheet within 14 days. The judicial process of awarding punishment would be concluded within 21 days.

In cases of heinous crimes like rape, the death sentence would be awarded under the new law. According to an official of the

will reduce the investigation period from four months to 21 days. Also, special courts will be set up to try cases of crimes against women and children in the state.

state's Home Department, the Bill

According to officials, the process started on Thursday. The Disha Act also empowers the police and courts to take action under Indian Penal Code section 354(E) against those who upload posts on social media that degrade women or damage their reputation. First time offenders

would be sentenced to prison for

two years, second time offenders

would get four years in jail.

tion would be taken under IPC section 354(F) on those involved in sexual assault on children. Offenders in such cases will be sentenced to 10-14 years in prison and depending on the severity of the crime, the punishment would

be extended to life imprisonment

On Wednesday, the Cabinet also decided to extend the imprisonment for crimes under the POCSO Act. The Act also makes it compulsory for police to register a "Zero FIR", which means that police have to register a case anywhere, irrespective of jurisdiction.

The rape and murder of a 50year-old widow in East Godavari district on December 2 may be the first case to be tried under the new laws.

Snowfall at Kufri near Shimla on Thursday. The cold wave intensified in north India with snowfall in higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand, while light rain in the national capital also caused chill in the air. Pradeep Kumar

SC: Will consider plea on larger bench after hearing all parties

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THE SUPREME Court on Thursday assured petitioners who have challenged the changes to Article 370 of the Constitution and the reorganisation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories that it will consider the prayer to refer the matter to a larger bench only after hearing all the parties.

"We will hear all and only then decide," a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Justice N V Ramana, which is hearing the petitions, observed.

SC assured petitioners who have challenged the changes to Article 370 and bifurcation of J&K

The remarks came after Senior Advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for one of the petitioners, objected to the court giving a hearing to Senior Advocate Dinesh Dwivedi on his contention that the matter deserved to be referred to a seven-judge bench as there were two conflicting decisions of 1959 and 1970 by five-judge benches of the court on the subject.

Dwivedi, appearing for petitioner Prem Shankar Jha, contended that while the first recognised the temporary nature of Article 370, the latter "reverses the life and scope of Article 370 as a transitory provision and recognises its permanence giving perennial source of power to the Union/President to regulate the governing relationship between the Union and the State.'

"This judgment," he added "completely omits to notice both earlier Constitution bench as well as the debates," the senior counsel said, adding that "there is a direct conflict".

His arguments remained incomplete.

Govt inches closer to leasing out 100 train routes to pvt players

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR NEW DELHI. DECEMBER 12

THE GOVERNMENT has inched closer to inviting investments worth about Rs 22,500 crore in rolling stock as part of its plan to lease out at least 100 train routes to private players to run 150 passenger trains. The proposal is set to be taken up at this month's sitting of the government's Public Private Partnership Appraisal Committee

(PPPAC) scheduled next week. After the intervention of the Empowered Group of Secretaries headed by NITI CEO Amitabh Kant, the Railway Board was able to finalise the proposal after processing multiple views on how to bring in private investment in

passenger operations. Sources said the biggest point of contention is the amount

Railways would charge private operators as "haulage charge" or track-access charge. While one section of policymakers is learnt to have favoured keeping the haulage charge low in order to make the business model attractive, another section has internally expressed that this might not be in the best interests of Railways financially. Though India's first "private

train", the IRCTC-run Tejas Express, enjoys certain concessions, this is because it is a government enterprise and part of trial for a new business model, a section of policymakers has said in internal deliberations. Officials warning of Railway finances say the same arrangement cannot be offered to private players. Since Railways maintains its books through what is known as the fully-distributed cost acEXPLAINED

A natural policy shift

JUST LIKE sectors like aviation and telecom, the entry of private players in passenger train operations was inevitable. This government has finally taken up the project with seriousness. Once Dedicated Freight Corridors become operational in 2021, around 70 per cent of the freight traffic would shift, freeing up capacity in the conventional rail network. With the government looking at private capital to supplement its long-term infrastructure building exercise, bringing in private companies for future demand and modernisation is seen as a natural policy shift.

counting system, getting an exact cost of running trains is problematic, sources said.

The private companies will bid based on their Gross Revenue Share (fare and non-fare) — or the amount of revenue they will share with the Railways — over and above the haulage charges they pay.

As per the current proposal, the haulage charges will include the cost of using railway terminals, the traction cost (electric-

ity), physical transportation of the train, track maintenance, signalling and overheads at the rate of about 25 per cent. Sources said there have been deliberations on whether this rate is appropriate from a business model point of view. The private players would be able to transport parcels as well on their trains and decide their own fares and stoppages.

The plan envisages that train routes would be given out for about 35 years to the qualifying players, each of whom has to have net worth of at least Rs 450 crore and business or investments in railway infrastructure worth around Rs 2,700 crore in the past five years. In terms of the number of rakes, 150 trains represent just about 5 per cent of total Railway

passenger operation capacity. The Railways is expecting the bidders to include tour opera-

tors, companies working in the rail sector, travel firms, rolling stock companies as well as airline operators. Each will be allowed to bid for at least 12 trains and a maximum of 30, so as to ensure competition. Each private train is to be made of at least 16 world-class standard coaches The firms could lease the rolling stock if they don't own it. The figure of Rs 22,500 crore

for investment has been extrapolated from the tentative cost of high-end coaches globally. The Railways is calculating that

once Dedicated Freight Corridors become operational in 2021 around 70 per cent of the freight traffic would shift, freeing up a lot of capacity in the conventional rail network, and that private players will bring in the investment to introduce trains with higher speeds to cater to the demand.

government that the "godman"

Nithyananda

is accused of

rape

had been granted permanent

exemption from attending pro-

ceedings in the trial court at

being pursued if A1 has left the

country," the court asked the

government counsel. "How was

In the petition in the High

he allowed to leave?"

"To what end is prosecution

Ramanagara.

12 THE WORLD



SPAIN MIGRANT HAILED FOR SAVING MAN FROM FIRE

Spanish authorities said on Wednesday they are considering giving residency to an undocumented migrant from Senegal after he rescued a wheelchair-bound man from a burning, secondstory apartment. Street vendor Gorgui Lamine Sow scaled a balcony from which black smoke was pouring out and hoisted the resident over his shoulders and carried him down a ladder.

TOPOFTHE WORLD



The Whakaari, also known as White Island **volcano.** Reuters

NEW ZEALAND Volcano toll rises to 16; bodies to be recovered today

Whakatane: Police in New Zealand are planning a mission to volcanic White Island on Friday to retrieve bodies of people killed in this week's eruption, while the known death toll from the disaster climbed to eight, with two people dying in hospital. Eight more people are missing and presumed dead, buried under ash and debris from Monday's eruption. More than 20 people are in hospital, many with severe burns, while seven others were transferred to Australia. "I can now confirm that we are finalising a plan to recover the bodies from Whakaari/ White Island tomorrow morning," police deputy commissioner John Tims said.

RUSSIA

Russia's only aircraft carrier on fire in port

Moscow: A fire broke out Thursday on Russia's only aircraft carrier as it underwent repairs in an Artic shipyard, Russian news agencies said, with at least one worker reported missing. The Admiral Kuznetsov has been undergoing repairs for more than two years in Murmansk and suffered previous damage in October 2018 when a crane crashed onto its deck. State news agency RIA Novosti quoted a source in the Zvezdochka shipyard as saying the fire broke out during welding operations. More than 400 people were on board.

BANGLADESH

Top court rejects Khaleda Zia's bail petition

Dhaka: Bangladesh Supreme Court on Thursday rejected BNP chief Khaleda Zia's bail petition in a corruption case, delaying the release of the ailing former prime minister from the jail. A six-member bench of the Appellate Division of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud rejected 74year-old Zia's appeal against a High Court order that turned down her bail plea in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption "Dismissed." the bench ruled after hearing the arguments from both sides. The court, however, ordered authorities to swiftly take measures to ensure that Zia gets 'advanced treatment' in line with the recommendations of a medical board.

Britain votes in elections to decide fate of its exit from EU

Major opinion polls point to victory for PM Johnson's Conservatives over Corbyn's Labour Party

GUY FAULCONBRIDGE & ELIZABETH PIPER

LONDON, DECEMBER 12

VOTERS WENT to the polls on Thursday in an election that will pave the way for Brexit under Prime Minister Boris Johnson or propel Britain towards another referendum that could ultimately reverse the decision to leave the European Union.

After failing to deliver Brexit by an October 31 deadline, Johnson called the election to break what he cast as political paralysis that had thwarted Britain's departure and sapped confidence in the economy.

The face of the "Leave" campaign in the 2016 referendum, 55-year-old Johnson fought the election under the slogan of "Get Brexit Done", promising to end the deadlock and spend more on health, education and the police.

His main opponent, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, 70, promised higher public spending, nationalisation of key services, taxes on the wealthy and another referendum on Brexit.

All major opinion polls suggest Johnson will win, though pollsters got the 2016 referendum wrong and their models predict outcomes ranging from a hung parliament to the biggest Conservative landslide since the era of Margaret Thatcher.

Seven eve-of-election opinion polls published on Wednesday showed the Conservatives ahead



UK PM Boris Johnson and opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn at polling stations in London. Reuters

You can vote for despair and

this government, or you can

vote for the dishonesty of

vote Labour and get a

We could have a We could have Conservative majority government which will get Brexit done and unleash Britain's potential."

- BORIS JOHNSON UK PM & CONSERVATIVES' LEADER

of Labour by an average of nearly 10 points although Labour nar-

rowed the gap in four of them. "We could have a Conservative majority government which will get Brexit done and unleash Britain's potential," Johnson told campaigners. "This election is our chance to end the gridlock but the result is on a knife-edge."

said Corbyn Conservatives were the party of "billionaires" while Labour represented the many.

government that can bring hope to the future." - JEREMY CORBYN LABOUR PARTY LEADER

vote for the dishonesty of this government, or you can vote Labour and get a government that can bring hope to the future," he said. Polls opened at 0700 GMT

"You can vote for despair and

and will close at 2200 GMT when an exit poll will give the first indications of the result. Official results from the bulk of the United Kingdom's 650 constituencies begin to come in from 2300 GMT to 0500 GMT. While Brexit framed the

IF LABOUR WINS: The opposition Labour Party has promised to negotiate a new the next three months and then allow the British public

IF NO CLEAR WINNER: If

do that by the end of 2020.

United Kingdom's first December election since 1923, the tortuous exit from the EU has variously fatigued, enthused and enraged voters while eroding loyalties to the two major parties. A majority would allow

Johnson to lead the country out

of the club it joined in 1973, but

Brexit would be far from over. He

must negotiate a trade agree-

ment with the EU in a self-imposed deadline of 11 months. After January 31, Britain would enter a transition period during which it would negotiate a new relationship with the 27 EU members. He has pledged to

Sterling markets are pricing in a Johnson win and the pound was up against the dollar and the euro in early trading on Thursday. **REUTERS**

What this election means for Brexit

IF CONSERVATIVES WIN:

The ruling Conservatives are seeking enough seats to push a Brexit deal, which PM Johnson negotiated with the EU, through Parliament. They have campaigned on a promise to "Get Brexit Done" by the January 31 deadline.

Brexit deal with the EU within to vote on whether they want to leave the EU with that deal or cancel Brexit entirely.

neither major party gets a majority, smaller parties like

the Liberal Democrats and the Brexit Party will seek to influence Brexit policy. The Lib Dems, a pro-EU party, could use their leverage to push to remain in the EU or at least to maintain close ties to Europe. The Brexit Party wants a clean break from the EU and could back Johnson's Conservatives.

House panel battles over impeachment articles against Trump

SUSAN CORNWELL & RICHARD COWAN WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 12

US LAWMAKERS moved closer on Thursday to impeaching Republican President Donald Trump, as members of a House of Representatives committee debated formal charges that are likely to be sent to the full House for a final vote next week. The House Judiciary

Committee is expected to approve two articles of impeachment later on Thursday, setting up a vote by the Democraticcontrolled House next week that is expected to make Trump the third president in US history to be impeached. If the House impeaches

Trump, who is charged with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, he would then go on trial in the Senate. The Republican-led chamber is unlikely to vote to find the president guilty and remove him from office.

In the first hours of what could be a long day of partisan wrangling, Republicans on the Iudiciary panel repeatedly complained about the procedures followed by Democrats in the impeachment inquiry.

Republicans requested an-

other hearing and said their rights had been trampled in the inquiry, but were voted down by the panel's Democratic majority. Republicans also moved to strike the first charge of abuse of power but the committee rejected it on a party line vote. Democrats accuse Trump of

abusing his power by trying to force Ukraine to investigate political rival Ioe Biden and of obstruct-



Trump at the UN in Sept

TRUMP LASHES OUT AT THUNBERG AFTER **TIME HONOUR**

Washington: US President Donald Trump lashed out at 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg on Thursday, a day after she was named by Time as its Person of the Year, calling her selection "ridiculous". The Swedish teenager has become a symbol of a growing movement of young climate activists. In a tweet on Thursday morning, Trump said, "Greta must work on her Anger Management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend!" He added: "Chill Greta, Chill!" Thunberg responded by changing her Twitter profile bio to read: "A teenager working on her anger management problem. Currently chilling and watching a good old fashioned movie with a friend." AP

ing Congress when lawmakers tried to look into the matter. Former Vice President Biden is a leading contender for the Democratic nomination to run against Trump in 2020. **REUTERS**

Pak high court disposes of petition of Hafiz Saeed, 67 others

MZULQERNAIN LAHORE, DECEMBER 12

A PAKISTANI court has disposed of the petition of Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed and 67 other leaders of the outlawed Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) and its so-called charity wing Falah-i-Insaniat(FIF) seeking cancellation of 23 FIRs registered against them on charges of using different properties for terror financing.

On Wednesday, a two-judge Bench of the Lahore High Court, headed by Justice Mohammad Qasim Khan, while disposing of the petition observed that the petitioner's counsel could file separate petitions against each FIR.

Saeed's counsel AK Dogar argued the properties in question had never been used for terror financing and that there was no tangible evidence on record to support such "bald allegations".

He said describing Saeed and other JuD leaders as being leaders of Lashkar-e-Taiba was "factually and legally incorrect".

Dogar further said a full bench of the High Court in a case against detention of JuD leaders had already declared in its 2009 judgment that Saeed and others were not members of LeT.

A law officer argued about the involvement of Saeed and others in terror financing in the light of the Counter Terrorism Department's evidence.

After hearing both sides, the court disposed of the petition by Saeed and the 67 others. PTI

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT ALLEGATIONS

Weinstein, his accusers reach tentative \$25 mn settlement

Deal does not require him to admit to any wrongdoing

MEGANTWOHEY & JODI KANTOR DECEMBER 12

AFTER TWO years of legal wrangling, Harvey Weinstein and the board of his bankrupt film studio have reached a tentative \$25 million settlement agreement with dozens of his alleged sexual misconduct victims, a deal that would not require the Hollywood producer to admit wrongdoing or pay anything to his accusers himself, according to lawyers in-

volved in the negotiations. The proposed global legal settlement has gotten preliminary approval from all the major parties involved, according to several of the lawyers. More



Harvey Weinstein arrives for a hearing in New York. AP

than 30 actresses and former Weinstein employees, who in lawsuits have accused Weinstein of offences ranging from sexual harassment to rape, would share in the payout

 along with potential claimants who could join in coming months. The deal would bring to an end nearly every such lawsuit against him and his former company.

The settlement would require court approval and a final signoff by all parties. It would be paid by insurance companies representing the producer's former studio, the Weinstein Company. Because the business is in bankruptcy proceedings, the women have had to make their claims along with its creditors. The payout to the accusers would be part of an overall \$47 million settlement intended to close out the company's obligations, according to a half-dozen lawyers, some of whom spoke on condition of anonymity. NYT

13 killed in fire at plastic factory in Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA DHAKA, DECEMBER 12

The fire swept through the Prime Patent Plastic Limited on Wednesday afternoon at Keranigani, on the outskirts of Dhaka, police was quoted as saying by the bdnews24.com.

Of the injured, 13 workers died and 21 others were being treated for injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Thursday, the report said.

AT LEAST 13 people were killed and 21 others critically injured in a devastating fire that ripped through an illegal plastic factory in Bangladesh, police said Thursday.

The blaze at the factory was brought under control around 5.45 pm on Wednesday after it originated around 4.30 pm, authorities said. The cause of the fire could not be immediately determined, the added.

ROHINGYA HEARINGS: FINAL DAY

Suu Kyi asks ICJ to drop genocide case

REUTERS THE HAGUE, DECEMBER 12

MYANMAR LEADER Aung San Suu Kyi on Thursday said her country's military justice system needed to be given the chance to work and asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to drop the genocide case against it.

"Myanmar requests the court to remove the case from its list", Suu Kyi said on the third and final day of hearings in The Hague.

The ICJ said it would render an order "as soon as possible", but gave no specific date.

Earlier, a lawyer presenting the genocide case against Myanmar said the country could not be trusted to hold its soldiers accountable for the alleged atrocities against the Rohingya, and urged that measures to stop the violence



Aung San Suu Kyi leaves the **ICJ in The Hague.** Reuters

needed to be taken immediately. Arguing the case brought by Gambia, the country's lead lawyer repeated its demand for "provisional measures" to restrain the Myanmar military until the case is heard in full. Paul Reichler said Myanmar had not even tried during the hearings to deny most of the accusations of violence made against its military nor of the mass deportation of Rohingya follow-

ing a 2017 crackdown.

As climate talks wind down, pre-2020 targets take centre stage



AMITABH SINHA

DECEMBER 12

AS THE Madrid climate talks neared its end, negotiators stepped up efforts to prepare compromise texts that would help the countries keep the discussions going on the contentious issues into the next year.

There was also an indication that the final outcome from Madrid would have some sort of acknowledgment of the fact that the developed countries had not done enough to deliver on their pre-2020 promises.

Pre-2020 targets, a reference to the emission reduction cuts mandated by the Kvoto Protocol

on developed countries, and also other commitments like finance and technology transfer, has been repeatedly raised at this meeting by India and other developing countries, which have said the failure of the developed countries to fulfil their earlier promises was the primary reason for the deep-

ening of the climate crisis. At a meeting on Wednesday night, Carolina Schmidt, a Chilean negotiator who is presiding over the Madrid talks, acknowledged that fulfilment of pre-2020 promises was a matter of injecting "trust" into the climate talks, and that decisive action was needed to address the gaps that emerged as a result of those actions not being taken in time. India and others are demanding a "work programme" to assess these gaps.

On Thursday, Spain's minister for ecological transition, Teresa Ribera, said the concerns of countries like India were "important and legitimate" but added it was also important that they do not delay action on the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the successor to the Kvoto Protocol that expires next year.

India's lead negotiator Ravi Shankar Prasad raised the matter again in a meetings where some countries, mainly small island nations, called for an enhancement of climate action in view of reports that not enough was being done to prevent extreme impacts of climate change. "We have been hearing lots of words on (raising of climate action) ambition, but not seen the same kind of zeal as

far as implementation is concerned. Some countries have not been on track on their Kyoto commitments, and are not on track to fulfill their targets under the Paris Agreement as well. This is a cause of concern. If you seriously want to address the climate crisis, we need to start implementing what we have already promised. India believes that the climate crisis can be effectively addressed if countries are honest, take proper decisions and then implement those decisions effectively," Prasad said.

PAINTINGS DEPICTING HUMANOID FIGURES WITH ANIMAL-LIKE FEATURES FOUND TO BE AT LEAST 43,900 YEARS OLD

Indonesian cave's mythical beings may be oldest imaginative art by humans

BECKY FERREIRA DECEMBER 12

IN DECEMBER 2017, Hamrullah, an archaeologist on an Indonesian government survey, was exploring a cave system in Sulawesi, a large island in central Indonesia. He noticed a tantalising opening in the ceiling above him. A skilled spelunker, Hamrullah (who only uses one name, like many Indonesians) climbed through the gap into an uncharted chamber. There, he laid eyes on a painting

that is upending our understanding of prehistoric humans.

The dramatic panel of art, dating back at least 43,900 years, is "the oldest pictorial record of storytelling and the earliest figurative artwork in the world," a group of scientists said in a paper published Wednesday in Nature, although additional research will be needed to confirm the age of every character in the painting.

In the story told in the scene, eight figures approach wild pigs and anoas (dwarf buffaloes native to Sulawesi). For whomever

painted these figures, they represented much more than ordinary human hunters. One appears to have a large beak while another has an appendage resembling a tail. In the language of archaeology, these are therianthropes, or characters that embody a mix of human and animal characteristics.

Given that these extraordinary characters are wielding thin objects that might represent ropes or spears, the painting may be an artistic demonstration of a game drive, a hunting strategy



A painting of a hunting scene, thought to be at least 43,900 years old, in a cave in Indonesia's Sulawesi island. NYT

that involves guiding animals toward an ambush.

The otherworldly nature of the therianthropes also raises the possibility that they are mythical beings, or manifesta-

tions of "animal spirit helpers" that are common in shamanic beliefs, according to the study. "This scene may not be a depiction of an actual hunting scene but could be about animistic beliefs and the relationship between people and animals, or even a

shamanic ritual," said Sue

O'Connor, an archaeologist at

Australian National University who was not involved in the study.

These interpretations are speculative, however, and the original inspiration for the painting, as well as its significance to the humans who created it, is likely to remain a mystery.

The rock art predates the next oldest representation of a character with a mix of human and animal figures, found in a cave in Germany, by about 4,000 years. It is also more than 20,000 years older than a hunting scene on the walls of France's Lascaux Cave.

Adam Brumm, an archaeologist at Griffith University in Australia and one of the study's authors, said his team was "completely blown away" by the painting. "We had never seen anything even remotely like this before in the hundreds of cave art sites we'd documented" on this Indonesian island, Brumm said. "I immediately knew it was

special and that it would be a very important site to understand the cognitive evolution of our species," said Maxime Aubert, a co-author also at Griffith. **NYT**

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

THEY'RE ON THE MARCH... LONGING FOR AUTHORITY'S BLESSING, ITS VALIDATION OF THEIR

CHOSEN IDENTITIES. — IAN MCEWAN

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

REGION'S EDGE

Centre must urgently reach out to restive groups in Northeast, allay fears of demographic change

HE NORTHEAST, PARTICULARLY Assam, has reacted with agitation to the passage through Parliament of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, which makes illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan eligible for citizenship. The fear that the CAB will result in an influx of migrants from across the borders and alter the demography of Assam has provoked people to take to the streets. Many have defied the curfew to burn vehicles and target public buildings. Transport links to the region, and within it, have been disrupted and the government has shut down the internet. This situation threatens to undo the gains of the relative peace that the region has enjoyed in the past two decades. It could destabilise New Delhi's Act East policy. Political players in the region and at the Centre must urgently come together and work to allay public fears and ensure calm.

The CAB, and the National Register of Citizens process before it, have stoked tensions that had flared in the region, especially in Assam, in the 1970s and '80s. The fear of demographic change has been the trigger for subnationalist movements, including the Assam agitation, in the 1970s, as well as the insurgencies in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya. It stemmed from the colonial era settlement policies for exploitation of the region's resources and was sharpened by the fallout of Partition, which the region experienced twice, in 1947 and 1971, which saw an unsettling of populations, particularly in parts of Assam and Tripura. But these scars had started to heal over time, and a tenuous peace had set in. The NRC, which the BJP aggressively promoted in Assam, and now threatens to extend nation-wide, along with the CAB, have revived these fault lines. If the NRC process revived the "outsider" debate, the CAB pits Assamese against Bengali. Exemptions related to the Inner Line Permit (ILP) to allay the fears of Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, and the Schedule 6 areas, may have temporarily helped to avert a consolidated opposition to the CAB in the region. However, fears have been exacerbated in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys in Assam and Tripura that these places will have to bear the weight of the probable inward migration of Hindus from Bangladesh.

The onus is now on the Modi government to reach out to the restive groups and take the necessary steps to address and alleviate their fears. Electoral exigencies and ideological shibboleths cannot be the decisive factors in shaping the policy for the Northeast. Its repercussions will reflect in India's relations with its neighbours apart from shaping domestic politics.

OR ELSE, BLACKLISTING

Present troubles of Hafiz Saeed in Pakistan are due to FATF pressure. Anti-terror watchdog must stay the course

HE FRAMING OF charges against Hafiz Saeed by an anti-terrorism court in Lahore is the direct result of actions that the international anti-terror watchdog, the Financial Action Task Force, has taken and further threatens to take against Pakistan if it does not crack down on terror. Pakistan is on the FATF grey list", and even if it is never moved to the blacklist, the possibility is dire. A blacklisting by the FATF, an organisation de facto run by the US Treasury department, would be ruinous for Pakistan. This is why it is now seen to be taking action it previously dragged its feet on — acting against terrorist groups with an address in the country, including the head of the Lashkar-e-Toiba/Jamat ud Dawa, found responsible by that country's own investigators for planning and carrying out the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. The Pakistan military has used these groups as a hedge in the region. Neither the impact of the Mumbai attack, nor the UN designation of Hafiz Saeed, could convince the Pakistan security establishment to treat him accordingly. Instead, his public stock was allowed to grow to a point where, last year, he could float a political party and field candidates in the general election. The farthest Pakistan went on Hafiz Saeed's terrorist record before being hit by the FATF was to put him under house arrest every now and then, until the courts freed him.

Saeed's present troubles date back five months, to a time when the FATF was snapping at Pakistan's heels for compliance on its commitments made a year earlier. On July 3, Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Department booked Saeed and a dozen other leaders under terror financing and money-laundering clauses of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), 1997. The JuD was accused of financing terrorism through several of its non-profit organisations and trusts, including Al-Anfaal Trust, Dawatul Irshad Trust and Muaz Bin Jabal Trust. Saeed, now, has to appear at a trial that will be held everyday. Significantly, LeT also went quiet in the Kashmir Valley at about the same time.

It is important for India that the FATF stays the course with Pakistan because it is the only body that has had a demonstrable effect on the country's approach to terror groups based on its soil. Saeed or the LeT/JuD are not the only terrorist entities across the border that have India in their crosshairs. Eventually, the action Pakistan takes against these groups will be judged by the impact it has in the region.

A BOY CALLED YUSUF

What would Dilip Kumar, who turned 97 on Wednesday, say on the identity debate today?

NCE UPON A time, a boy born in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar, and raised in Nashik, Maharashtra, ran away from home, and eventually found work at Bombay Talkies for his proficiency in Urdu. On the advice of owner, Devika Rani, he adopted what was seen to be a more acceptable name, and went on to become one of Bollywood's biggest stars. He would act as Devdas, the eternal romantic, Salim, the rebellious prince, Ganga, the dacoit, and Shankar, the tongawallah, giving Bollywood a new, more intense language. He would hold on to his mother tongue, the dying Hindko dialect of Peshawar, while learning to speak fluently in Urdu, Hindi, Bhojpuri, English, Punjabi, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Pashto, Farsi, and Tamil. On December 11, as Parliament redrew the boundaries of what defined an Indian, he turned 97.

Pressed to put his identity down on paper in the post-Citizenship (Amendment) Bill India, the man who drew on words and poetry to sustain his art, drawing inspiration from both sides of the border, would struggle. Should he list himself as a Muslim, the religion he was born into, or a Hindu, the religion whose tag he embraced so easily? Under "home", should he list Peshawar's "Qissa Khwani Bazaar (the market of the storytellers)", which, to his regret, he couldn't visit in 1997, when he had received Pakistan's highest honour, due to uncontrollable crowds? But, how could it not be Mumbai, the city from whose stories he remains inseparable?

Whether he saw the proceedings in Parliament on Wednesday or not, where one side used Jinnah to defend the bill and the other side invoked Hitler to denounce it, he could have lent the debate the weight of nearly a century's history — strewn with names of big kings who fell and small heroes who rose. To those who come bearing their questions, "Tragedy King" Yusuf Khan alias Dilip Kumar would have stories from closer home with happy endings: About Prithviraj Kapoor from Peshawar who also made Mumbai his; and about another Khan from Peshawar, in another time, who also became the Badshah of Bollywood.

An encounter with injustice



We need to invest in four wings of criminal justice system — police, prosecution, judiciary, prisons

Meeran Chadha Borwankar

THE COUNTRY IS engaged in an intense debate on the heinous rapes and murders, the blatant use of force by criminals on bail and the sheer impunity with which they gangrape and then burn women. Shot at if they are too tired to dance and murdered if they want to live on their terms. One would have thought that the changes in the law and procedure post the December 2012 Delhi gangrape and murder case would curb the predators, but they do not seem to have any effect on them.

So shaken has the country been that rose petals were showered on the officers of the Telangana police that "encountered" the four alleged rapists of a doctor on the outskirts of Hyderabad. This has given rise to another debate about the actions of the police. While the woman on the street is happy that the "brutal rape" has been avenged and the parents of the deceased doctor and of the Delhi 2012 victim have expressed relief at the quick police operation, we must understand the full implications of the lure of "instant justice".

The clamour for quick action — "teaching a lesson", "on-the-spot justice" — stems from the fact that the criminal justice system has failed in the country. One main reason is the delay in trials. Even if a criminal is convicted, the appeals that follow lead to a further delay of more than five years. This has meant that citizens lose faith in the law and they hero-worship officers who "encounter" these criminals. They cite examples of the Delhi 2012 accused still in Tihar and Ajmal Kasab, who was hanged six years after the gruesome killing of innocent citizens in Mumbai. One taxi driver, while justifying the Telangana policeperson's action, questioned me as to why we spent so much money on Kasab's security. He also "informed" me that Kasab was served "mithai" in prison every day. He had no clue that I

There is a collective sense of resignation in the country. In this depressing scenario, we have a few shootouts by police, which are applauded because otherwise, nothing seems to be happening on the ground. This joyous reception of an 'encounter' and the 'police officers' involved only proves that people have lost faith India's criminal justice system. It also shows that the malady runs deep and recovery is so distant that shortcuts have become the preferred mode

of execution.

was chief of Maharashtra prisons at the time in question. This shows how rumours and misinformation further angers citizens who are already enraged at the late punishment to criminals.

And I understand their anguish. Last week, I received a summons from a special court in Mumbai seeking my presence at the trial of a criminal case. I had supervised its investigation as joint commissioner crime, Mumbai, in 2005. The case is still pending. The investigating officer informed me that he was now posted at a training institute and was not aware at what stage the trial was at nor was he aware that I had been summoned by the court. This is what is happening in most of the trials. They are so delayed that witnesses lose interest or do not attend hearings. Documents are lost, seized weapons are not traceable. The investigating officers get transferred and thus can not monitor trials. The complainant, after pursuing the case for some time, gives up.

There is a collective sense of resignation in the country. In this depressing scenario, we have a few shootouts by police, which are applauded because otherwise, nothing seems to be happening on the ground. This joyous reception of an "encounter" and the police officers involved only proves that people have lost faith India's criminal justice system. It also shows that the malady runs deep and recovery is so distant that shortcuts have become the preferred mode of execution.

Instead of succumbing to the band-aids, we have to use all our resources and energy in putting the system back on track. While police investigation and presentation by the prosecutors need to improve, it is the judiciary that must rise to the occasion. Session courts need to finish cases at one go, within a week or fortnight, and not hear them in the piecemeal manner they are doing cur-

rently. They need to clamp down heavily on adjournments. Similarly, higher courts must dispose of appeals within a fixed time frame. Expenses for more judicial officers and their staff should be met by the Centre and state governments jointly. If a rape accused is sentenced and his final appeal disposed of within a year, I see no scope for encounters or the public's agitation. It is because justice has become a rarity and criminals on bail are burning girls after raping them that citizens have lost their pa-

For police, medical officers, forensic experts, prosecutors and judicial officers to work together as a team, it is essential that formal interactive sessions between them are organised. Regular training workshops will lead to an exchange of information, knowledge-sharing and mutual trust among different wings of the criminal justice system. Today, each works in a silo with hardly any collaboration. The result is a very poor conviction rate that may not attract the immediate attention of citizens but reinforces a general feeling of lawlessness.

While the emotional response of a parent who has lost her daughter to rapists is totally understandable, as a nation, we have to invest in long term-solutions. That means investing in all four wings of the crumbling criminal justice system – police, prosecution, judiciary and prisons. That we are not doing so is amply proved by the need for officers to take up guns for causes they feel will not get justice. It is a sad commentary that we have acknowledged and, in fact, applauded that we are a "banana republic". India, after more than 70 years of Independence, needs to be the lighthouse for the rule of law. Let's make that happen together.

The writer, an IPS officer, retired as DG, Bureau of Police Research and Development

IN THE FARMER'S NAME

Farmer unions need to expand the scope of their advocacy

Ajay Vir Jakhar

EVERY DAY, A gold miner in Russia leaves a mine with a wheelbarrow full of sand. Every day, the guard thoroughly checks the sand. On his retirement day, the guard asks the worker, "I know you have been stealing something, but can't figure out what it is". The worker whispers back, "I wasn't hiding anything in the sand, I stole the wheelbarrows". A similar predicament of limited perspective afflicts India's farmer unions. The leadership of many unions, secure in their certainties, are oblivious to the larger picture. More likely, in order to hold on to their leadership role within the organisations they represent, they have simply confined themselves to issues that resonate with

The transformation of rural livelihoods across India based on minimum support prices, free electricity and cheap fertilisers is not sustainable. Advocating on limited issues for decades, farmer unions have been conceding the agriculture policy space to business-funded lobby groups. The likes of CII, FICCI, PHD Chamber of Commerce, AS-SOCHAM, and the Fertiliser Association of India are always furthering the vested agenda of their members. A few individuals in the guise of representing farmer organisations have muddied the waters by becoming lobbyists for the farm-input industry, just like the international consulting firms. Of late, international donors like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have shifted the nutrition policy to one of food fortification.

In order to make farmers' prosperity the fulcrum of the debate, the unions have to

Affiliation to political parties has been a poisonous pill for the unions. Their leaderships have often become family affairs, where affiliation is rewarded by plum positions when political mentors are in power. Adding to the morass are those who commit the sin of simony by seeking caste concessions, which has led to a loss of trust, diluted leadership authority and destroyed the unity of farmers.

expand their advocacy to include all the issues that have a strong bearing on the future of farmers' livelihoods. That should include the state of the national economy, governance issues, transparency, government revenue collections and allocation of resources. Equally critical are issues like the rupee exchange rate, relative inflation and improving nutrition by generating consumer demand for fruits, vegetables and proteins in India, which happens to be the amongst the lowest in the world.

I'm not a votary for reducing farm support, but for the inevitable repurposing of subsidies towards the farm eco-system services. This is going to be a very painful transition for farmers and a metamorphosis may be possible if farmer leaders reach out to them repeatedly to explain how the present structure of subsidies is not only self-defeating, but also shifts the costs to future generations. Only, and only then, will politicians conjure the political will and courage to initiate bold structural reforms.

Many organisations supportive of PM-Kisan or cash transfers as a solution don't realise that the changing narrative is paving the way for the government to slowly abdicate on its constitutional responsibilities of providing primary healthcare, quality rural education, sanitation, farm extension, veterinary services, and public transport.

In the recently concluded Food Systems Dialogues, the former head of RAW, Alok Joshi, observed that the protesting farmer unions are unprepared to negotiate settlements, and are thus unable to bridge the lacuna between demand and delivery. Karl Marx compared farmers to a "sack of potatoes", as they only organise in response to specific issues and then drift back to work on the farms. Farmers are incapable of forming a consistent common identity, and the identity, rather than being a source of profound change, more often falters as a reaction to circumstances.

Affiliation to political parties has been a poisonous pill for the unions. Their leaderships have often become family affairs, where affiliation is rewarded by plum positions when their political mentors are in power. Adding to the morass are those who commit the sin of simony by seeking caste concessions, which has led to a loss of trust diluted leadership authority and destroyed the unity of farmers. Having lost faith in the system and in farmer leaders, the momentary outpouring on localised issues will start to spiral into faceless protests and will manifest into widespread rural disobedience, whether fuelled by ethnic, migrant or caste conflicts, as in Haryana in 2016.

The BJP has gained politically by prioritising "food inflation mitigation measures", which have come at a high cost of deteriorating farmer livelihoods. Farmers and those representing them need to introspect Rather than continuously berate the government, they need to change tactics, stop behaving as losers and clearly understand that they are in a soup for no reason other than that they have developed a consistent tendency to vote on parameters other than their own stagnating economic condition.

The writer is chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj

INDIAN EXPRESS

DECEMBER 13, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CENTRE RULES ASSAM ASSAM. WHICH HAS been in the grip of continuous agitation for a few weeks, was placed under Central rule. The presidential proclamation to this effect was issued after an emergency meeting of the Union Cabinet. The state assembly has been kept in suspended animation. Fresh efforts will be made after some time to form another ministry. The Central intervention came in response to Governor L P Singh's recommendation. In his report, the governor had sought imposition of President's rule for a brief period following the breakdown of constitutional machinery and the deteriorating law and order situation. The governor had recalled the political developments in the state leading to the withdrawal of

support to the Hazarika ministry by the Congress, Janata and CPI. The ministry was thus reduced to a minority. The Union Cabinet met for half an hour to consider the governor's report in particular and the latest political and law and order situation in the state. The Cabinet endorsed the governor's plea for Central rule and recommended the same to the President.

AGAINST FOREIGNERS PRESIDENT N SANJEEVA Reddy has said that the problem of foreigners in Assam is a national issue as has been adequately made out by the people of the state. Reddy is understood to have told this to B K Basumatari, Plains Tribals Council of Assam acting gen-

eral secretary, when he called on him. He is

understood to have told Basumatari that foreigners, if any, would be identified and driven out. But the need of the hour was a government in Assam.

PHIZO'S RETURN

THE UNION GOVERNMENT is "not averse" to Naga leader A Z Phizo returning to India if it helps find a permanent political solution to the Naga problem, according the Z Ramyo, one of the signatories to the Shillong agreement. Ramyo, along with a five-member delegation, had separate meetings with Prime Minister Charan Singh, and Deputy PM Y B Chavan to explore the possibilities of reopening the peace efforts which had been bogged down after the former PM Morarji Desai's meeting with Phizo in London in 1977.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It is not enough to tackle Brexit. The next prime minister must tackle the causes of Brexit too — reaching out to the left-behind with plans for jobs and public services which show that the government will make a difference to their lives."

—THE GUARDIAN

TABLE 1: CHANGES IN MPCE (MRP) SINCE 1993-94, ALL INDIA (IN 1987-88 CONSTANT PRICES)

Year	Rural MPCE		Orban MPCE		
	In Rs.	Change in % compared to previous survey	In Rs.	Change in % compared to previous survey	
1993-94	162.56	-	268.38		
2004-05	181.56	11.7	326.80	21.8	
2009-10	192.93	6.2	368.99	12.9	
2011-12	221.93	15.0	413.53	12.1	
2017-18		-8.8*		2.0*	
* Rusiness Sta	andard Novemi	her 14 2019		E.	

`Business Stanaara, November 14, 2019 Source: NSS Report No. 555, Level and Pattern of Consumer Expenditure, 2011-12, released

in 2014. Note: 1999-2000 is not included due to comparison problems.

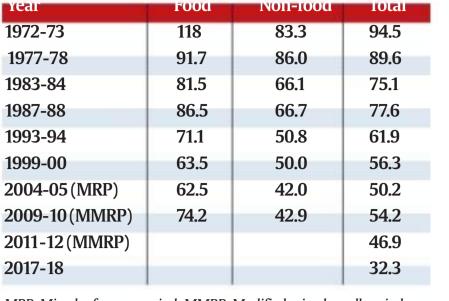
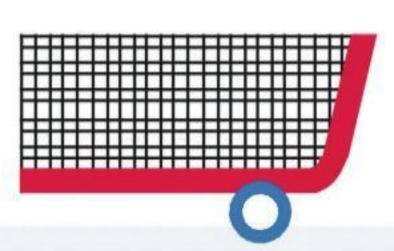


TABLE 2: PRIVATE CONSUMER EXPENDITURE OF

NSS AS % OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS STATISTICS

MRP: Mixed reference period; MMRP: Modified mixed recall period; *Source: Rangarajan Committee up to 2009-10; Estimated by the authors* for 2011-12 and 2017-18.



C R Sasikumar

Mind the statistics gap

Growing divergence between consumption expenditure estimates from NSO surveys and GDP data is too big to be pushed under the carpet



S Mahendra Dev

RECENTLY, WE HAD expressed concerns that with the GDP growth rate falling in the post 2011-12 period, the decline in the poverty ratio would be slow. During 2011-12 to 2018-19, both GDP and agriculture growth were lower than in the earlier period. The terms of trade were not in favour of agriculture and rural wage growth has declined. The economy has grown by 5 per cent and 4.5 per cent in the first and second quarters of FY20 respectively, and growth is expected to be around 5 per cent for this fiscal year. Thus, we have reasons to believe that the rate of decline in the poverty ratio will be low.

The leaked NSS consumer expenditure data for the year 2017-18, however, shows that the real monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) has actually fallen between 2011-12 and 2017-18. It shows that real MPCE declined from Rs 1,501 in 2011-12 to Rs 1,446 in 2017-18 — a fall of 3.7 per cent at the all-India level. In rural India, it declined by 8.8 per cent, while in urban India it increased by 2 per cent over the same period. These findings do raise some questions. Most importantly, can MPCE fall when the income growth rate has been positive, both in aggregate and in per capita terms? There is no corroborative evidence to support the decline of MPCE. Even the report of Oxford University on the Global multidimensional poverty index shows that the incidence of multidimensional poverty had

almost halved between 2005-06 and 2015-16, climbing down to 27.5 per cent. We have to note that the terminal year of this study was 2015-16.

Is there any period in the past where MPCE has actually fallen? Typically, in recent years, the consumption expenditure surveys have been conducted after a five-year gap. Table 1 gives the trends in MPCE since 1993-94. In every survey, it has risen over the previous survey. The only exception is 2017-18. Even in 2009-10, which was a drought year, MPCE went up.

In an article, S Subramanian has carried out a full analysis of the 2018 survey data. The survey shows that while real mean consumption declined for all the deciles between 2011-12 and 2017-18, for the bottom decile, it declined by 1.3 per cent, while for the top decile, it declined by 17.4 per cent. It is interesting to see that the decline in mean consumption was much higher for the top decile. This study estimates poverty ratios for 2011-12 and 2017-18 using the Rangarajan Committee's poverty line. The estimates show that the poverty head count ratio increased from 31.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 35.1 per cent in 2017-18. According to this study, inequality declined from 28.7 to 25.8 in the same period.

What is disturbing in the survey data for 2017-18 is the alarming difference between the aggregate private consumption expenditure given by it and the figure provided by the national accounts statistics (NAS). These two estimates of consumption (NSS and NAS) do not match in any country; India is no exception. What is perplexing is that the difference in India between the NSS and the NAS consumption has been widening over time. From a difference of less than 10 per cent in the late 1970s, it has widened to 68 per cent in 2017-18, that is, the survey estimate is only 32.3 per cent of NAS estimates (Table 2).

The expert group (led by C Rangarajan) had carried out an analysis of the possible reasons for the difference between the esti-

pert group, led by DT Lakdawala, and continued by the expert group led by S Tendulkar, of estimating poverty in India solely by reference to the size-distribution of private consumer expenditure based on the NSSO methodology. However, with the difference rising to 68 per cent, the time has come for a deeper analysis of the factors contributing to the difference.

According to NAS, private consumer expenditure increased from Rs 49,10,447 crore in 2011-12 to Rs 74,17,489 crore in 2017-18. This is an increase of 51 per cent. The per capita consumer expenditure increased by 41 per cent during this period. But, according to the survey, per capita consumption expenditure decreased by 3.7 per cent. The difference is too big to be pushed under the carpet. The NSSO Advisory Group or the National Statistical Commission must study the problem and come out with possible suggestions for improving the collection of data through both routes.

mates. It made some headway, but could not

fully explain the difference. Therefore, it con-

tinued with the practice, initiated by the ex-

It may be recalled that government had difficulties in accepting the 2009-10 consumer expenditure data put out by the NSSO because it was a drought year. The then government recommended carrying out another survey, and it was undertaken in 2011-12. We think that the present government should also release the report and the unit level data of the 2017-18 survey, which can be analysed by researchers. The National Statistical Office can also give a note on the limitations of data in the report. The government can order another survey after analysing the reasons for difference.

Rangarajan is former chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and former Governor, RBI. Dev is director and vice chancellor, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research

Who is a citizen?

Constituent Assembly debates dealt with that question, and came up with the widest possible humanist answer



BHATTACHARJEE

THE CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT Bill (CAB) was passed in the Lok Sabha on December 9 and in the Rajya Sabha December 11. It introduces special provisions for Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Jains and Buddhists fleeing persecution in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Amending the Citizenship Act of 1955, the CAB makes partial gestures of inclusivity, but within an exclusionary framework. The idea of citizenship has been broadened to include persecuted migrants seeking asylum. But the criterion includes minorities only from Muslim-majority countries, and persecuted Muslims have been kept out. By excluding Muslim refugees from the CAB, and including everyone except Muslim immigrants in the proposed National Register for Citizenship (NRC), the government has closed the doors to India's largest minority from both sides.

The US Commission for International Religious Freedom issued a statement, that the CAB, "runs counter to India's rich history of secular pluralism and the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law regardless of faith". The statement is a good reminder of how India is losing the promise of inclusivity.

In response to Algu Rai Shastri's question in the Constituent Assembly debates on January 8, 1949, who sought clarity on "who is a citizen of India and who is not", Jawaharlal Nehru, responded, "So far as the refugees are concerned... we accept as citizens anybody who calls himself a citizen of India". He based the idea of asylum on a combination of free will with affectivity. The decision to belong comes from the feeling to belong, and both deserve to be respected. This is perhaps the widest possible humanist consideration behind defining the citizen.

During the Debates, on August 12, 1949, Mahboob Ali Baig from Madras pondered why should any Indian (he did not specify religion) wanting to migrate from Pakistan "on account of civil disturbances" be put under question. Baig reminded the House that during the transfer of power, there was an agreement by both parties to protect and safeguard minorities. But, after the transfer, Baig said, "there was a holocaust. there were tragedies which compelled persons to migrate". Arguing against the logic of suspicion, Baig stated, "to say those people coming to India might become traitors and therefore, they should not be allowed to come back, that is no reason at all. With this temperament you will never become strong." Any nation based on paranoia cannot be strong.

Baig argued that people migrate out of "circumstances" where the mind is full of fear and doesn't work freely, or with clarity. It does not warrant any discrimination against those people based on their identity. There is no reason to deny them asylum.

Nehru voiced a similar opinion, regard-

ing "Nationalist Muslims. who were driven out by circumstances and who having gone to the other side saw that they had no place there at all". Considered "opponents and enemies", when their lives were made miserable in Pakistan, these Muslims expressed a desire to return, and some did. Pakistan considered these Muslims its enemy not based on religion, but nationality (even ethnicity). Be it religion or nation, suspicion is a territorial sentiment. Trust must die, for the enemy to be born. In Nehru's account, the sentiment of warmth cancels suspicion. He also draws a tacit distinction between the circumstantial and the filial: Those who return home can reclaim their belonging.

Tabling the Bill in the Lok Sabha, Amit Shah said, "The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill wouldn't have been needed if the Congress had not allowed partition on basis of religion". The logic of Partition is enhanced, not cured, by blaming the tragic event to justify a new law of segregation. It is a contradictory and self-serving logic, seeking to restore communal divisions by accusing others of it.

Bihar's Brajeshwar Prasad made the point during the debates that "the mischief of partition should not be allowed to spread beyond the legal fact of partition". The communal politics of Partition, Prasad felt, must end after Independence. But it was inevitable that the logic — or the law — of that politics would linger. Partition is not just a legal, but a historical fact, and it was survived by the politics that created it. On the question of migration, Prasad raised the interesting argument that everyone under the colonial territory deserved to find asylum in India. It was an anti-colonial idea of citizenship. He said, if people who have "always lived in the Punjab and on the frontier have come and become citizens of this State; why cannot a Muhammadan of the frontier be so when we have always said that we are one?"

In contrast, Amit Shah said in the Rajya Sabha, the government was interested in persecuted non-Muslims from the three Islamic states alone. He scoffed at the Opposition for limiting its secularism to Muslims. The obverse logic is chilling: To consider the rights of Muslims is no longer necessary for secularism.

BJP leaders have consistently blamed Nehruvian secularism for being a politics of "appeasement". Provoked by this accusation, Nehru had said during the debates: "Do the honourable Members who talk of appeasement think that some kind of rule should be applied when dealing with these people which has nothing to do with justice or equity?" The bogey of appeasement diverts attention from what minorities deserve. Nehru also defended the secular state by objecting to the impression that it is something "amazingly generous, given something out of our pocket". The argument in favour of the secular state was never to imply something extraordinary. It was meant to cure people's historical prejudices, and keep a nation-state from relapsing into majoritarianism. Both these possibilities have today regained their hold on the polity and the social sphere. We are poised to lose, not find, the ethical understanding of who ought to be a citizen of India.

Bhattacharjee is author of Looking For the Nation: Towards Another Idea of India



A constitutional obligation

of NAS estimates.

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Citizenship Bill makes distinctions that are reasonable, does not violate Article 14

THE JOYOUS BIRTH of the Indian nation-state in 1947 is co-terminus with the horrors of Partition. A natural consequence thereof was the influx of migrants. Many Indian states were affected by the immigration, which challenged their demographic dimensions. Conversely, many minorities found themselves at the mercy of nations which followed a state-religion. At the time, the population of both Pakistan and Bangladesh comprised several non-Muslim communities. However, unlike India which is a secular nation, both Pakistan and Bangladesh are Islamic states. Considering the ancestral and spiritual ties, it is nothing short of an obligation for the Indian nation-state to provide refuge to non-Muslim minorities who have been persecuted for their

This obligation is constitutional in nature and its genesis can even be found in the Constituent Assembly debates. In accordance with this constitutional obligation, the Union government tabled the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 in Parliament. Many doubts have been cast on the legality of the Bill. However, the Bill conforms to India's constitutional spirit. Here's how:

"otherness" in these countries.

An examination of the text of Article 11 of the Constitution reveals that Parliament is empowered to make any law related to the acquisition or termination of citizenship, and all other matters related to citizenship. Further, it was the intent of the framers of the

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to include those who, at the time of the Constitution coming into existence, were not included within the fold of the citizenship laws. It is, therefore, well within the right of Parliament to enact this Bill. A basic rule of interpretation is always

Constitution for Parliament to have the power

presumption in favour of the constitutionality of a statute. The burden is upon the individual who attacks it to show that there has been a clear transgression of constitutional principles. The presumption may be rebutted in certain cases by showing that with regards to the facts of the statute, there is no classification or difference peculiar to any individual or class, and yet the law hits only a particular individual or class. It ought to be assumed that the legislature correctly understands and appreciates the need of its own people, and that its discrimination is based on adequate grounds.

In order to sustain the presumption of constitutionality, the Court may take into consideration matters of common knowledge, various reports, the history of the times and other necessary facts which may exist at the time of legislation. Thus, the legislation is free to recognise degrees of harm and may confine its restriction to those cases where the need is deemed to be the clearest. While good faith and knowledge of the existing conditions on part of the legislature are to be presumed, if no legal hindrance or adverse circumstance is brought to the notice of the Court — on which the classification may reasonably be regarded as based — the presumption of constitutionality cannot be always carried to an extent that there must be some undisclosed and unknown reason for subjecting certain individuals or corporations to be hostile or discriminating legislation.

The Bill fulfils the challenge posed by Article 14. At the outset, Article 14 says that, "the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India..." This has both a positive and negative aspect. It provides for equal protection of the law in its positive aspect. In the negative aspect of "equality before law", what necessarily follows is that those in unequal positions ought not to be treated equally.

The exception to Article 14 is broadly the test of reasonable classification and intelligible differentia. The Bill stands the test of reasonable classification as propounded by the seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court in State of West Bengal vs Anwar Ali Sarkar. In this case, the apex court stated that "intelligible differentia" means that there ought to be a yardstick to differentiate between those included and those excluded from a group. In Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India, Justice Indu Malhotra further propounded the test of "intelligible differentia" to mean reasonable differentia. This means that even the yardstick for inclusion or exclusion ought to be reasonable in itself. The classification adopted in the Bill, is clear and substantial, and there are sufficient reasons for making the distinction.

In Parisons Agrotech (P) Ltd. v. Union of India, the apex court held that once it is found that there is sufficient material for taking a particular policy decision, bringing it within the four corners of Article 14 of the Constitution. the power of judicial review would not extend to determine the correctness of such a policy decision nor to explore whether there could be more appropriate alternatives. It was held that the equality clause "does not forbid geographical classification, provided the difference between the geographical units has a reasonable relation to the object sought to be achieved". So, merely because there is a distinction does not prima facie constitute a challenge to Article 14 of the Constitution.

The courts allow permissible classification, which includes selective application of a law according to exigencies wherever it is sanctioned. By introducing this Bill, the Indian state is enforcing positive discrimination which is necessary, expedient and legally-constitutionally permissible.

The writer is a senior lawyer based in Mumbai, managing partner at Parinam Law Associates and director, Bluekraft digital foundation. A longer version of this article can be found on indianexpress.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Monu Kumar, Patna

STRIKE IT DOWN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Brute majority' (IE, December 12). During the debate over Citizenship Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha, Home Minister Amit Shah said that "reasonable classification" is allowed under Article 14 of the Constitution. But perhaps he forgot that in Chitra Ghosh vs Union of India (1969), the Supreme Court said that any classification based on language, caste, religion or place of birth is not reasonable. Therefore, it is likely that the SC will strike down provisions that bring in a religious criterion for citizenship.

A BLIND PUBLIC

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The morning after CAB' (IE, December 12). It seems that the BIP has mastered the trick of manipulating the public sentiment. The CAB is its latest ruse. It will be difficult for the Supreme Court to respond in this case. First, because the government presents the majority sentiment as public sentiment and second, the law itself relies on facts and evidence, which in recent years have been shaped, created or manipulated by propaganda and by silencing dissent. Anurag Ekka, Ranchi

WOMEN'S HEALTH

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'More equal care', (IE, December 12). The out-ofpocket expenditure due to hospitalisation has been one of the factors that traditionally discouraged women from

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian **Express offers the Letter of** the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to

editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

BLACK SPOT ON BHU

seeking secondary and tertiary care.

Also, the burden of managing house-

hold chores and caregiving responsibil-

ities fall exclusively on the women.

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'BHU lets down BHU' (IE, December 12). Since Firoze Khan's appointment as an assistant professor of Sanskrit at Banaras Hindu University, there have been protests by students. Now he has had to take up an assignment in the arts faculty and students celebrated this development. Why were students allowed to hold the university to ransom? The narrow mindset on display does not augur well for the students or BHU.

Bal Govind, Noida

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How to rehabilitate a terrorist

AFTER THE FALL

Usman Khan, the London Bridge attacker, had been convicted before. Can jihadists be reformed?

WHEN A man ran amok with two knives on November 29th, many Londoners followed official advice to "run, hide and tell". But a few brave souls chased Usman Khan onto London Bridge, armed with a fire extinguisher and, of all things, a narwhal tusk, plucked from a display. The attacker took two lives before he was shot dead by police. The editors of Britain's tough-on-crime newspapers—three of whom could watch events from their corner offices across the bridge didn't know what to make of it. Not all of the terrorist's pursuers made for an easy moral. "One hero was a jailed murderer on day release," the Daily Mail acknowledged.

Mr Khan's biography poses a still trickier conundrum. It soon emerged that he had been convicted in 2012 of plotting a terrorist attack, and released early from jail last year, under supervision. He was allowed to come to central London that day to attend a conference on prison education; his victims, Jack Merritt and Saskia Jones, worked on the programme. Do these events amount to a case study in the impossibility of rehabilitating a terrorist?

The question is timely. As Islamic State's "caliphate" crumbled, hundreds of fighters and fellow-travellers returned to European countries, including Britain. Jails in England and Wales house a churning population of 700 or so terrorism offenders and other criminals suspected of terrorist affiliations.

Boris Johnson, the prime minister, offered a simple answer. If voters backed him in the imminent election, he declared, he would make sure that all terrorists were locked up for at least 14 years, without early release. Polls suggest more than four-fifths of Britons support him. Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour leader, was ridiculed for saying that such prisoners should "not necessarily" serve their full sentences.

Yet the case presents more of a dilemma than Mr Johnson acknowledges. Such offenders invite little sympathy even from liberals. Let them out too early and you risk them re-offending. About one in ten convicted terrorists in Britain goes on to commit another terrorism-related offence. This is lower than the overall re-offending rate— 29%—but highly concerning given that such offences can range from associating with terrorists and plotting attacks to mass murder.

Yet keeping terrorists behind bars too long carries its own risks. Draconian sentences can transform nobodies into martyrs and radicalise prisoners' relatives. Some experts point to Northern Ireland, where internment during the Troubles turned civilians against the state and hunger strikes created heroes out of inmates.

Perhaps surprisingly, the police do not always support longer sentences. Some differentiate between young men who might be caught browsing terrorist material online and hardened plotters, who have spent years immersed in extremist ideology. One senior police officer says prison is ineffective if inmates can smuggle phones inside and continue plotting their activities. Either way, inmates must be released eventually. If extra years behind bars are poorly funded and structured, they "risk making bad people worse", says Nick Hardwick, an ex-boss of the parole board.

Battlefields of the mind

Regardless of sentence length, most criminologists favour investment in de-radicalisation, which aims to strip terrorists of



Police officers near the site of the attack at London Bridge on November 29; (below) A video grav of police moving to apprehend the terrorist. Reuters/AP



their motivating ideology, or "disengagement", which has the more modest aim of dissuading convicts from future violence, even if they retain hardline views. John Horgan, an expert on extremism at Georgia State University, reckons there are 40-50

such schemes around the world.

Most involve counselling to get to the root causes of extremist sympathies. Britain already has two such schemes: one, in prison, is voluntary; another, on release, is mandatory. Measuring their success is hard.

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Security considerations mean governments are reluctant to allow academic evaluations. The small numbers and lack of an available control group would anyway make it tricky to draw quantitative conclusions. Even so, Mr Horgan says, "the emerging conclusion seems to be that rehabilitation can work," but only if prisoners are committed to changing their ways.

A qualitative assessment last year by academics judged Britain's in-prison scheme to be working well. Most lags said it helped them understand why they offended and gave them reasons to avoid doing so. Britain's policy of mixing jihadists with other criminals risks radicalising non-terrorists. But it also exposes terrorist convicts to alternative viewpoints. One jihadist prisoner told a researcher that "being forced to

mix for once" opened his eyes. More can be done. Hiring extra psychologists might help: Andrew Silke, a counterterrorism expert, says there is a waiting list for the in-prison course. And more work is needed on de-radicalisation. Prison governors struggle to divert inmates from violent ideology without promoting peaceful but similarly extreme views. "You have to get into the distorted ideology to tackle it," says an ex-prison boss, recalling debates about whether to quote statements by the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group.

What is clear is that Mr Khan deceived the authorities. He took part in rehabilitation in and out of prison. And he would have been allowed to take part in the conference only because his handlers believed him to be engaged, says Mr Hardwick. Yet Mr Merritt's father, Dave, urged politicians not to become more punitive. His son died offering prisoners the chance to redeem themselves. "What Jack would want from this is for all of us to walk through the door he has booted down," he wrote. "That door opens up a world where we do not lock up and throw away the key."

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FUMBLING THE CAPTURE

China tries, and fails, to influence the Czechs

But it still has a lot to learn

ON THE NIGHT before Christmas Eve last year Zhang Jianmin, China's ambassador to the Czech Republic, paid a visit to Andrej Babis, the prime minister, on the outskirts of the capital. The two men posed for a photograph by a Christmas tree, but it was not a social call. Mr Zhang objected to a security warning about Huawei and ZTE that had been issued by the country's cyber-security agency, and complained that Mr Babis had banned his staff from using products made by the two Chinese telecoms giants. Mr Zhang emerged claiming, in a statement posted on Facebook, that Mr Babis had assured him that the security warning had been "misleading" and the ban hastily decided. It seemed briefly like a Chinese diplomatic victory in Europe.

It was, instead, another in a series of bumbling missteps by China that have left it foundering diplomatically in the Czech Republic. Humiliated by the statement, Mr Babis publicly contradicted Mr Zhang, saying flatly, "I do not know what the ambassador is talking about." The limited Huawei ban, imposed by Mr Babis and some government ministries, stayed in place. A years-long effort to influence the political and business elite of the Czech Republic, and to turn the foreign policy of an EU member country, was unravelling.

Officials in Western democracies have grown anxious in recent years at China's increasing dexterity at exerting influence far from its shores. But China's experience in the heart of Europe suggests its diplomatic playbook is much trickier to execute in a democracy with a free press and fairly strong institutions—and perhaps especially one, like the Czech Republic, that has a historical sensitivity to being pushed around by an authoritarian great power. "It is a story of backlash," says Martin Hala of Sinopsis, which has monitored the rise and fall of Chinese influence in the country.

In its courtship of the Czech Republic, China has employed many of the same tactics it has honed elsewhere. It has courted public figures (including by putting some on the payroll), promised substantial invest-

In its courtship of the Czech Republic, China has employed many of the same tactics it has honed elsewhere. It has courted public figures, promised substantial investment and sponsored cultural programmes ment, sponsored cultural programmes and events, and applied diplomatic pressure when necessary. Analysts call the process

For a few years it appeared to be working. In 2013 Milos Zeman, a former prime minister, was elected president. Though the president does not set official Czech foreign policy, he pursued a friendly relationship with Xi Jinping. That same year Petr Kellner, a Czech billionaire oligarch and supporter of Mr Zeman's, won a coveted Chinese national licence for one of his companies, Home Credit, to make consumer loans. In 2014 Huawei entered into a five-year sponsorship contract with Prague Castle, the presidential residence, agreeing to supply Mr Zeman and his office with servers, phones and other equipment worth about \$20,000 annually.

In 2015 CEFC China Energy, an oil conglomerate, announced that it would invest billions of dollars in the Czech Republic. It snapped up stakes in a football club, a brewery and a hotel, and a few other businesses, including a little-watched TV station. In 2016 China's influence seemed to be reaching an apex, with a state visit by Mr Xi himself.

But then cracks started to appear. In 2018 Ye Jianming, the CEFC chairman, was detained in China on suspicion of corruption. Beyond the initial flurry of deals, CEFC's

largesse never materialised. A nastier side also began to show. In 2016, after the Czech culture minister met the Dalai Lama, a diplomatic no-no for China, Mr Zeman abruptly cancelled plans to award a medal to the minister's 88-year-old uncle, a Holocaust survivor. This year Chinese authorities tried to press the mayor of Prague, an outspoken critic of China's human-rights record, into adhering to the "one-China" principle that forbids diplomatic relations with both China and Taiwan. When he refused, Chinese authorities cancelled a long-



China's President Xi Jinping with Czech President Milos Zeman in Beijing. Reuters

planned tour of China by Prague's Philharmonic Orchestra.

Investigative journalists have caused more problems. In July Czech public radio reported that Huawei employees in Prague were supplying information about their clients to the Chinese embassy. In November Charles University closed its Czech-Chinese Centre, which had been hosting Chinafriendly conferences since its opening in 2016, after a news website reported that its executive secretary, and others, had taken payments from the Chinese embassy via a private company.

For now China's efforts at "elite capture" seem to have alienated the public. In a global survey conducted this year by the Pew Research Centre, 57% of Czechs viewed China unfavourably, compared with just 27% who viewed it favourably—the widest negative margin of any country surveyed in Europe

apart from Sweden. Huawei is still in business in Prague despite the warnings, and Mr Kellner has just bought a popular TV station, which critics fear may now tone down scrutiny of China (a spokesman for his company calls this "completely paranoid"). Observers in Prague reckon a battle over Chinese influence will continue for years. "I don't think it can be won, really," says Janek Kroupa, the journalist who reported the story on Huawei employees sharing information with the embassy. "It can only be fought."

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19 ECONOMY





₹70.83



NFRA finds gaps

in audit report of

Deloitte Haskins



\$64.43

SENSEX: 40,581.71 ▲ 169.14 NIFTY: 11,971.80 ▲ 61.65 NIKKEI: 23,424.81 ▲ 32.95 HANG SENG: 26,994.14 ▲ 348.71 FTSE: 7,259.49 ▲ 43.24 DAX: 13,166.16 ▲ 19.42

POLICY WATCH **TAXATION**

Likely GST hike, post corporate tax cut, signals govt's shift in stance

AANCHAL MAGAZINE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

WITH THE Centre setting the stage for a hike in goods and services tax (GST) levies, three months after corporate tax rates were sharply cut, the stage appears to be set for flipping a fundamental tenet of taxation — that of a direct tax, despite being a progressive levy, being cut even as an indirect tax, a regressive levy, now appears all set to be hiked.

This comes less than six months after former Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had, on the completion of two years of GST, asserted in a blogpost that "the direct tax is a progressive tax. The more you earn, the more you pay. An indirect tax is a regressive tax. In the pre-GST regime, the rich and the poor, on various commodities, paid the same tax..." The move to revise upwards the GST levies comes less than 12 months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had pointed to efforts by the NDA government to push items down GST rate slabs in order to make it "as simple and as convenient" as possible, with all things related to the common man being moved to "18 per cent or below".

At the December 18 meeting of the GST Council. the stage is being set for deliberations on hiking the compensation cess and rejigging tax slabs and rates on items to counter the flagging GST revenues. The Centre is already behind on its schedule of GST compensation cess payouts to states, an issue that has caused considerable friction between the two sides.

In October, Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey in an interview to *The Indian Express* said rate rationalisation can be done in many items, but rate stability is also important. "There are many items where certain rationalisation can be done. However, there is also a point that how frequently you should go and change the rates, some stability to settle down is also very-very important. Industry must be sure that this is the kind of a tax rate which should be there, and should prevail over a certain time, so that they can plan their business accordingly."

States have already raised concerns of any major tinkering of the slabs, especially the lower tax slab and exempted items, saying that revenue gain from any such rate hike has to be substantial and not cause inconvenience to the common man. Punjab's Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal told this newspaper that "knee-jerk reactions" such as a cut in GST rates before elections (Gujarat polls) and a hike in rates in times of revenue slowdown are both detrimental. Bihar's Finance Minister Sushil Kumar Modi told this newspaper that as of

6 KEY POINTS

The stage appears to **L**be set for flipping a fundamental tenet of taxation — that of a direct tax, despite being a progressive levy, being cut even as an indirect tax, a regressive levy, now appears all set to be hiked.

2This comes less than six months after former Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said in a blog post that "the direct tax is a progressive tax", while an "indirect tax is a regressive tax".

The government is **S**behind on its schedule of GST compensation cess payouts to states, an issue that has caused considerable friction between the two sides.

rates is very "limited". "This is a sensitive issue and all states need to be on board. It is to be seen what will help in raising revenues without hurting the sentiment of the common man," he said.

According to experts, rais-

ing the lower tax slab, while improving revenues, will hit sections of the society struggling with income stagnancy, especially at a time when there is a consumption slowdown. "Raising the lower tax slab will certainly raise revenues but will hit precisely those sections of the society whose incomes are not going up", Pronab Sen, country difor the India Programme of International Growth Centre and former Chief Statistician of India said. "The rate hikes will come but that should come later, this is not the right time. At this point of time, the focus should be on reviving the economy, a rate hike will simply push it downwards. You will be trying to fix your Budget at the expense of the economy," Sen said.

Former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian, who, in 2015, submitted the report on the 'Revenue Neutral Rate and Structure of Rates' for the GST, Wednesday said though there was a strong case for simplifying GST rate structure, this is "not the time" to raise taxes. "There is talk that at the next GST Council meeting of raising GST rates, I think that would be really the wrong time. There is a strong case for simplifying the GST rate structure... but this is not the time to raise taxes because we know when an economy is in a recession you don't want to aggravate it by tightening further...," he said, adding that a personal income tax cut will also be bad idea. now, the scope to increase

PRICE PRESSURE ON VEGETABLES, PULSES

Supply-driven surge in food prices pushes Nov inflation to 40-mth high

At negative 3.8%, factory output contracts for the 3rd consecutive month in Oct

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

RETAIL INFLATION measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) surged to a 40-month high of 5.54 per cent in November on account of surging food prices, primarily the supply-driven higher prices of vegetables and pulses.

Food inflation measured by the consumer food price index rose 10 per cent in November, coming a little over a week after the RBI paused its rate cutting action citing concerns on the food inflation front. October's headline inflation print is 130 bps (basis points or one-hundredth of a percentage point) higher than that of the RBI's medium-term target of 4 per cent, discounting the margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Economists said the unseasonal rain, leading to destruction of some crops especially onion, may have pushed up retail inflation, but it's also possibly reflecting the transitional impact of prices of pulses at wholesale level, which had begun to rise at the start of the year. "Signs of this though were not so visible in the retail inflation, but wholesale inflation was indicating this. For example, at retail level, pulses are showing doubleEXPLAINED Supply of new vegetables to ease food inflation

WHILE CORE inflation remained benign at under 3.5 per cent, a pointer to demand-led inflation staving low, analysts expect that over the next few weeks, the food inflation print could be favourably impacted as supply of new vegetables hits the market. October's headline inflation print is 130 bps higher than that of RBI's medium term target of 4 per cent, discounting the margin of 2 per cent on either side.

digit inflation only since October 2019, but wholesale inflation has been showing double digit inflation in pulses since the beginning of 2019. Although growth inflation mix at the current juncture warrants a further cut in the policy rate, the window available to RBI to do so is very limited with repo rate at 5.15 per cent," said Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist, India Ratings said.

While core inflation remained benign at under 3.5 per cent, a pointer to demand-led inflation staying low, analysts expect that over the next few weeks, the food inflation print could be favourably impacted as new supply of vegetables hits the market.

As per the official Index of Industrial Production data released Thursday, factory output continued to contract for the third consecutive month in October, although off the trough hit in the previous month. The slight improvement in factory output in October to a negative 3.8 per cent comes after the industrial output had slid 4.3 per cent in September. Factory output, as measured by the IIP, expanded 8.4 per cent in October 2018. In October, the output slid due to poor performance by the three key sectors — power, mining and manufacturing.

During April to October, the IIP growth remained almost flat at 0.5 per cent compared to 5.7 per

cent in same period previous fiscal. The manufacturing growth rate declined 2.1 per cent in October, compared to 8.2 per cent growth a year ago, while power generation growth slipped 12.2 per cent this October. Mining output, too, fell 8 per

cent in the month under review as against 7.3 per cent in the corresponding period last fiscal. Capital goods production — a barometer of investment sentiment — declined 21.9 per cent in October compared to 16.9 per cent rise in the year-ago month. The consumer durables and

consumer non-durables have recorded contractions of 18 per cent and 1.1 per cent, respectively. In terms of industry groups, 18 of the 23 industry groups in the manufacturing sector have shown negative growth in October 2019, compared to the year-ago month.

The industry group 'manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products' has shown the highest negative growth of (-) 31.3 per cent followed by (-) 27.9 per cent in 'manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers'.

On the other hand, the 'chemicals and its products' group has shown the highest positive growth of 31.8 per cent followed by 9.4 per cent in basic metals.

and Sells on IFIN **ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12 THE NATIONAL Financial

Reporting Authority (NFRA), constituted by the government, has highlighted several gaps in the audit report of IL&FS Financial Service (IFIN) prepared by Deloitte Haskins and Sells (DHS) for 2017-18 in its audit quality review report (AQR). Stating that the audit firm

failed to comply with the requirements of the Statutory Auditors, the NFRA said that it will examine whether "disciplinary proceedings" under Section 132(4) of the Companies Act, 2013 need to be initiated.

Highlighting the seriousness of flaws, the NFRA pointed out that the instances of failure of such significance indicate that DHS did not have adequate justification for issuing audit report asserting that the audit was conducted in accordance with the SAs.

independence of the auditor was compromised by the provision of non-audit services for substantial fees, which were clearly prohibited services in terms of Section 144 of the Companies Act, 2013.

In another instance, the AQR noted that "DHS accepted that stand of the management about not disclosing the fact that the net owned funds and the capital to risk assets ratio of IFIN as on March 31, 2018, were both negative, and that this situation would lead to cancellation of the NBFC license of the company. DHS certified the accounts showing positive NoF and CRAR, accepting the explanations of the management which were clearly contrary to law."

While NFRA will examine to initiate "disciplinary proceedings" under Section 132(4) of the Companies Act, 2013, the Section empowers the authority to impose penalty of up to ten times the fee received. The authority can also debar the member or the firm from engaging himself or itself from practice as member of the Institute of Chartered

The National Financial **Reporting Authority** said it will examine whether "disciplinary proceedings" need to be initiated

Accountants of India for a minimum period of six months or for such higher period not exceeding 10 years.

Apart from the auditors, the Reserve Bank had in a separate report on IL&FS found that the erstwhile Board of the company failed to exercise oversight. As per a March 22, 2019, RBI inspection report on IL&FS, the group did not declare bad loans in the four fiscals till March 31, 2018.

The RBI inspection report also found that that non-performing assets (NPAs) on IL&FS books were as high as 70 per cent of its total loans and ad-It further pointed out that the vances by March 31, 2018. It further said that "wide divergences were observed" between the reported and the assessed position of asset classifications and provisions at IL&FS.

> "The erstwhile Board failed to exercise oversight over the functions of the entity. They did not monitor the affairs of the downstream entities in which investments were made," RBI said in its report, adding that that serious deficiencies in credit appraisal and loans were given to unrated or poorly rated borrowers.

> Of the total debt of more than Rs 89,000 crore held by Indian entities of the IL&FS Group, as much as Rs 61,375.6 crore was held by 82 entities which were not able to meet payments to even senior secured financial creditors. The new board of IL&FS is now trying to deal with the mountain of NPAs that has gripped the financial sector through a series of defaults. The collapse of IL&FS engulfed the entire NBFC sector, leading to a broader slowdown in the economy and forcing the government to supersede its board.

'Growth to slide further, fall hasn't bottomed out'

India's economy is expected to grow at 4.3 per cent in December quarter this year amid concerns over crisis in the NBFC sector, according to Nomura

Q12020 will see a "weak" uptick in GDP growth at 4.7%

Domestic credit conditions: remain tight as market concerns in the shadow banking (NBFC banking) have persisted too

More downturn possible: Contrary to the market's current optimism that fall in growth has likely bottomed, Nomura believes it will slide further

Revising down estimates: It expects 4.9 per cent GDP growth in 2019, down from an earlier estimate of 5.3 per cent, and 5.5 per cent in 2020 against an earlier projection of 6.3 per cent. In 2021, it sees India's economic growth at 6.5%

Outlook On: financial year basis, Nomura expects GDP growth of 4.7 per cent in FY20, and 5.7 per cent in FY21, suggesting a delayed

Rate cut likely: The RBI is likely to slash key policy rates in Q22020. However, the burden of growth heavy lifting now seems to be shifting to fiscal policies, said a Nomura report Source: PTI

FM assures states on GST dues, Five months after names proposed, says 'no one should have doubt'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

WITH STATES not being paid com-

pensation for loss of revenue from implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) since August, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday assured that the Centre will honour its commitment but did not say by when the dues will be cleared.

During the debate in the Rajya Sabha on the Bill seeking Parliamentary nod for additional or supplementary spending in the current fiscal year, the Congress, the Left and the TMC raised the issue of non-payment of the GST compensation and sought to know when it will be paid.

The Finance Minister said the Centre was committed to discharging its obligation and asserted that "no one should have any doubt".

Sitharaman said all states and not just non-BIP ruled states have

FM clarifies on confusion over head of GoM

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday said her name was "inadvertently" mentioned as head of the GoM that has been set up to look into the issue of splitting of the Integrated goods and services tax between the Centre and states, and the confusion was cleared subsequently. **ENS**

not been paid compensation since August.

On the issue of states not getting their due share from Integrated GST, which is levied on the transfer of goods from one state to another, the minister said no state claimed IGST dues in 2017-18. but in the subsequent

recovery and below-

end 2020

potential growth through

Claims were subsequently made and a group of state ministers has been set up to look into divisibility of the IGST revenue for 2017-18 and the matter will be put up before the GST Council — the highest decision making body of the indirect tax regime — no sooner the report of the group is presented, she said.

After her reply, Rajya Sabha approved additional spending of over Rs 21,000 crore by voice vote. Lok Sabha had previously given its nod for such expenditure.

During the debate, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said states have not been paid their GST compensation for four months. This delay together with the economic slowdown is adversely impacting state finances, he noted.

Sitharaman, however, said there is no dispute between the Centre and the states over GST compensation payment as the Centre has not declined to recognise the share of the states.

no full-time CMDs for GIC Re & AIC **GEORGE MATHEW**

MUMBAI, DECEMBER 12

GENERAL INSURANCE Corporation(GICRe) and Agricultural **Insurance Corporation of India** (AIC) — two key public sector insurers in India — have been functioning without a full-time Chairman and Managing Director for nearly five months, with the government yet to clear the candidates selected for the post.

The government has now appointed Reena Bhatnagar and Deepak Prasad, both general managers, to jointly look after the financial administrative functions of GIC Re till a new CMD is appointed or till further orders. The CMD post has been vacant since Alice Vaidyan superannuated on July 31. Sashikala Muralidharan, GM, Whole-time Director and CFO, who was looking after the functions of the CMD, also superannuated on November 30.

In July, the Centre appointed

GOVT NAMES GMs AS CARETAKERS

■The government has now appointed Reena Bhatnagar and Deepak Prasad, both general managers, to jointly look after the financial administrative functions of GIC Re till a new CMD is appointed or till further orders

AIC's General Manager Rajeev Chaudhary as the officiating CMD, after T Alamelu joined the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (Irdai) as Whole-time Member (non-life).

In August, the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) proposed Devesh Srivastava and Malay Kumar Poddar for the post of CMD in GIC Re and AIC, respectively. "It has been almost four months since the BBB recommended the names for

the CMD post to the government Ideally, a CEO should be appointed on the same day of the superannuation of the person holding the post. These two are premier insurance companies which have monopoly in their segments," said a former Irdai official.

Srivastava is currently a general manager in GIC Re. Poddar is the general manager in AIC. The final decision on the appointment will be taken by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet. The BBB started selecting the heads of PSU insurance companies in 2019.

The board, which, so far, used to select top management of PSBs, selected the LIC Chairman for the first time earlier this year. The selection was earlier done by a panel constituted by the Finance Ministry. AIC commands around 50 per cent of the crop insurance market.

As the sole reinsurer in the domestic reinsurance market. GIC Re provides reinsurance to direct general insurance firms.

SEVENTH EXPRESS IT AWARDS

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It's all about smart solutions: Felicitating the best in India's IT in Mumbai today

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, DECEMBER 12

SUBRAMANIAM RAMADORAI, veteran of India's IT industry, will give away the awards at the Seventh Express IT Awards in Mumbai on Friday. The winners across a dozen categories – have been picked by a high-powered jury chaired by TV Mohandas Pai, investor and for-

mer Infosys CFO. The other members were Gopichand Katragadda, former CTO of the Tata Group and former head of GE's India Research,

Sharad Sharma, co-founder of iSPIRT, Professor S Sadagopan, IIIT director, and Sid Pai, technology consultant and investor.

In the individual category, Sanjeev Bikhchandani, who built Naukri.com, India's biggest employment site, will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award. Harsh Jain, founder of online gaming platform Dream11, will walk away with the Newsmaker of the Year Award.

Picking winners in a field that is as vibrant as technology is never easy given there's a fair bit of innovation taking place. The 300-odd entries had been as-



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grown and cater for India-spe-



Knowledge Partner

As the team at PWC, Pavan Kumar and Varun Sharma, who have been associated with the awards since the start in 2013, pointed out the quality of entries has improved over the years even as the number has stayed high.

gories, earlier it was more the traditional IT companies that participated in the competition," they said. Also, over the last two years, one can see many more home-

grown solutions which are on par with global standards.

This is something the jury appreciates. Indeed, while appraising a solution, members benchmark them to global standards. Kumar and Sharma added that many more small companies were coming up with promising solutions.

"Todav many more tech dis-Over the years, the Express IT ruptors are visible across cate-Awards have evolved to showcase solutions in new categories —Fintech for instance. Among the winners in this space include NPCI whose Bhim app revolutionised the payments space dominated by foreign credit card firms. The e-governance category has become increasingly popular with several state governments participating. While large companies such as TCS. Infosys and Tech Mahindra have been regular winners, a new category for start-ups was introduced to appreciate efforts of small entrepreneurs. **FE**

sessed and fact-checked by



cific problems. To be sure, the ideas needed to be scalable, the technology cutting edge. Among the areas which threw up solutions were cyber security, packsolutions which are homeaging, logistics and travel.

At first ECB meet, Lagarde maintains rates

Frankfurt: The European Central Bank(ECB) left policy unchanged at new ECB President Christine Lagarde's first meeting Thursday, keeping money taps wide open and further stimulus ready as the euro zone economy still suffers from broader global turmoil.

With Thursday's decision, the ECB's rate on bank overnight deposits remains at a record low of -0.50 per cent. **REUTERS**

Anti-profiteering body asks Nestle to deposit ₹73.15 cr

New Delhi: The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) has ordered FMCG major Nestle to deposit Rs 73.15 crore with Consumer Welfare Fund for not passing GST rate reduction benefit to consumers. The NAA rejected Nestle India's claims that it has passed on benefits of Rs 192 crore by reducing maximum retail price.

The NAA said "there is no evidence that the Respondent (Nestle) has reduced his prices

commensurate with the tax deductions" and has "even increased the same in respect of a number of products". Nestle India said in a regulatory filing that the information regarding passing of GST rate benefit together with substantiations has been provided to the authority. "However, we are disappointed that the NAA has not accepted the methodology adopted by us to pass on the GST rate reduction benefit," it said. PTI

Air traffic sees double-digit growth first time this year

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

AIR TRAFFIC growth rebounded to double digits in November, mainly due to start of the tourist season, according to data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Thursday.

Air passenger growth saw 11.2 per cent jump this November over the same month last year — the first time it grew in double digits during January-November period this calendar year. For the January-November period, the growth rate was 3.86 per cent. Passenger load factor is an indicator that measures the percentage of available seating capacity that is filled with passengers. For the January-November

period, 13.11 crore passengers were carried as opposed to 12.62 crore carried in the same period last year. During this year, April was the only month when passenger growth had fallen by 4.5 per cent while March was nearly flat in terms of growth. Shut down of Jet Airways was one of the main reasons for fall during April.

NOD FOR DISINVESTMENT GIVEN BY AISAM Govt to sell 100% stake in Air India, Puri tells LS

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

IN A move that could attract investors' interest in Air India, the government has decided to sell 100 per cent of its stake in the loss making state-owned carrier.

"After formation of new government, Air India Specific Alternative Mechanism (AISAM) has been reconstituted and the re-initiation of the strategic disinvestment of Air India has been approved. AISAM has approved the 100 per cent sale of Government of India stake in Air India for the re-initiated Strategic Disinvestment of Air India," Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri said in a written reply in Lok Sabha Thursday.

The cash-strapped carrier has been surviving on government support for many years. Last year, the government's attempt to sell 76 per cent of its equity in Air India did not attract investor interest as the Centre

NO TAKERS FOR 76% STAKE SALE LAST YEAR

■ Last year, the Centre's attempt to sell 76 per cent of its equity in Air India did not attract investor interest as the Centre retaining 24 per cent stake in the carrier was seen as dissuading private players

retaining 24 per cent stake in the carrier was seen as dissuading private players. Industry analysts note that the decision to sell 100 per cent stake in the airline, af-2018-19. The entire debt on the SPV is being serviced by the ter hiving off a major portion of Centre from FY20, for which it has the airline's debt, is expected to provided Rs 2,600 crore. attract investors.

Between fiscals 2015-16 and 2018-19, Air India suffered cumulative net loss of Rs 23,271 crore. Of Air India's total debt of Rs 58,282.92 crore as on March 31, the government has transferred debt of Rs 29,464 crore from Air India Limited to a special purpose vehicle (SPV) i.e. Air India Assets

Limited to a special purpose vehicle i.e Air India Assets **Holding Limited** Holding Limited (AIAHL). The Centre has provided Rs 1,300 crore to the SPV to meet the interest payments for October-March

■ Of Air India's total debt of

March 31, the government

has transferred debt of Rs

29,464 crore from Air India

Rs 58,282.92 crore as on

The government has also provided equity infusion for Air India of Rs 8,240 crore in last three years between 2016-17 and 2018-19. Other financial support include government providing guarantee of Rs 7,600 crore to Air India for raising new debt for payment of liability for FY19.

Citibank hikes interest rate on credit card outstandings

Mumbai: At a time when interest rates are going downhill following successive rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India, Citibank bank said in a communication to India has hiked the interest rate on credit card outstandings by up to 480 basis points from 37.2 per cent to 42 per cent per annum.

"We wanted to inform you that the interest rate on your Citi credit cards would change effective January 2020 statement and will be applicable on opening balance and further transactions including cash withdrawals," the its customers.

"As you know only if customers choose to pay less than the full amount of the monthly bill or does cash withdrawal transactions, interest rate for using the revolving facility applies," it said. **ENS**

LA-based law firm files class action lawsuit against Infosys

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

LOS ANGELES-BASED litigation firm Schall Law Firm has filed a class action lawsuit against Bengaluru-based Infosys ltd, accusing the IT major of making "false and misleading statements" to investors.

The law firm, in a filing to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, said that investors who purchased Infosys securities between July 7, 2018 and October 20, 2019, can participate in the lawsuit by December 23.

On December 11, Schall Law Firm had alleged that Infosys made false and misleading statements to the market. It said the company used "improper recognition of revenue" to boost shortterm profits.

Bharat Bond ETF opens for subscription

Mumbai: The Bharat Bond Exchange Traded Fund (ETF)—the country's first corporate bond ETF, which will be a basket of bonds issued by central public sector undertakings (CPSUs), central public sector enterprises (CPSEs). central public financial institutions (CPFIs) or any other government organisation bonds — was launched on Thursday.

Edelweiss Asset Management Company (AMC), which has the mandate to manage the ETF, indicated that the subscription will remain open till December 20. The anchor book of BharatBond ETF was subscribed 1.7 times amounting at Rs 2,980 crore. **FE**

Economy is resilient: Min in Rajya Sabha

New Delhi: The Indian economy is resilient and there's no cause for apprehension, Minister of State for Statistics and Programme Rao Inderjit Singh told Rajya Sabha Thursday. Singh pointed to precedents of growth rate lower than the current GDP of 4.5 per cent to make his case.

Responding to a supplementary question on GDP, he acknowledged that the framing sector was affected, but also drew the attention of the House to the International Monetary Fund's "positive outlook on Indian economy". In a written reply, Singh listed out the steps the Centre has been taking to boost GDP growth. **ENS**

BRIEFLY

Ujjivan SFB IPO makes debut

New Delhi: Ujjivan Small Finance Bank made a strong debut on stock exchanges on Thursday, listing with a hefty premium of over 57 per cent against issue price of Rs 37.

Sondhi is new **CEO of ALL**

Chennai: Hinduja Group flagship firm Ashok Leyland (ALL) Thursday announced the appointment of Vipin Sondhi as its new chief executive officer and managing director for a period of five years. Sondhi succeeds Vinodh K Dasari who had quit from the services of the commercial vehicle manufacturer last November. PTI

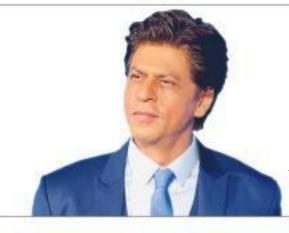
'Very close to China deal'

Washington: US President Donald Trump Thursday tweeted US is "very close" to a trade deal with China, days before new tariffs are set to take effect. "Getting VERY close to a BIG DEAL with China. They want it, and so do we!" he tweeted.

Aramcohits \$2-trillion goal

Riyadh/Dubai: Aramco hit the \$2-trillion target sought by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Thursday as its shares racked up a second day of gains, despite scepticism about the oil firm's value. **REUTERS**

21 TALK ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



GOING SOUTH

Shah Rukh Khan has been signed by Malayalam filmmaker Aashiq Abu for his next film. The yet untitled project will go on the floors by the end of 2020. While Abu has had hit films like 22 Female, Kottayam and Virus, Khan's last outing was Zero.

AROUND TOWN



Young Talent

THE SIX-day Sopan festival will focus on promoting young talent. It will take place at Rajiv Chowk, from December 13-18. The opening day will see a violin recital by G Raghavendra Prasad, and performances by kathak dancer Garima Arya and Bharatanatyam danseuse Ankita Kaushik (pictured). Day two will see a Pakhawaj presentation by Bhanu Sisodia. Entry is free.

Merry Season

THE ASIAN Heritage Foundation is holding a Christmas bazaar to showcase intelligent design. The bazaar will include



Celebrating Art

REMEMBER IMMINENT artist Haku Shah through "Iss ghat antar baag bagiche", an exhibition that pays homage to the late artist who passed away in 2014. A Gandhian, Shah is remembered not only for his own work but also his collection of vernacular art accumulated during his travels across India. At the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Saket.

textiles, Christmas decorations, home accessories and more. A coffee-reading session will also take place in the evenings. At Aam Bagh, Mehrauli, December 14-15.

One Meal at a Time

Chef Hawker Chan on his culinary journey and preparing the cheapest Michelin-starred meal

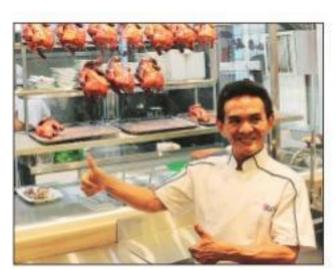
SURBHIGUPTA

WHILE GROWING up, life revolved around raising ducks and pigs and growing produce in the farm for Chan Hon Meng and his farmer parents at a kampong (village) in Ipoh, Malaysia. This was also when his culinary journey began. "I would prepare meals for my family, and grew up eating and cooking casual home-cooked dishes such as stir-fried chicken, fish and vegetables," he says. This early exposure to cooking developed his passion for it. "The foundation was based strongly on the belief that good food should be made simple and affordable. Whenever people eat the food that I serve, I feel a sense of satisfaction," says the chef, who is popularly called Hawker Chan.

In 2016, he won a Michelin star for his stall Liao Fan Soya Sauce Chicken Rice & Noodle at the Chinatown Complex Food Centre in Singapore. Long queues build up early in the morning, much before Chan opens the stall. Apart from locals, people from all over the world line up to experience what became 'The World's First Hawker Michelin-starred Meal' and 'The Cheapest Michelin-starred Meal in the World'. Chef Chan will be in Delhi this weekend to dish out his popular meals at the food festival, Zomaland, organised in collobaration with Singapore Tourism Board.

Chan was 15 when he left school and his hometown for Singapore. During the early years of his apprenticeship under a Hong Kong chef, he learnt and developed his signature recipe of soya sauce chicken, and opened his stall in 2009. "I gathered a lot of feedback from my customers, did a lot of research on my food to explore in depth and know what the preferred tastes are. Through continuous improv-

isation, I came up with my own recipe," he says. His day starts early in the morning, when



Chef Hawker Chan

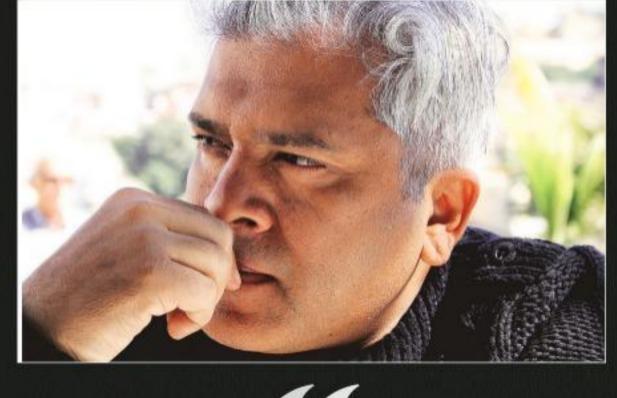
he prepares the sauce for marination. "To achieve the signature flavour and tenderness, hours of manual braising is required, and to perfect this dish, the key factor is a good control of the fire," he says, adding that the unique combination of soya sauce and various kinds of herbs make the dish stand out. "The Michelin Star has also played a role in my popularity," he says. When he was first invited for the gala night for the award, it took him by surprise. "I thought they were joking, why would Michelin come to my stall," he recalls.

But he points out that hawker culture is an integral part of the Singaporean way of life and offers numerous cuisines at affordable prices. "Running a stall gives me an opportunity to interact with people from all walks of life. But managing a hawker stall requires long hours of hard work to prepare dishes for so many people within a short period of time. I encourage people to explore the hawker stall business, as it helps preserve more unique food cultures," he says.

Zomaland will take place from Decemenber 13 to 15 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. Tickets on insider.in

Is Anybody Home?

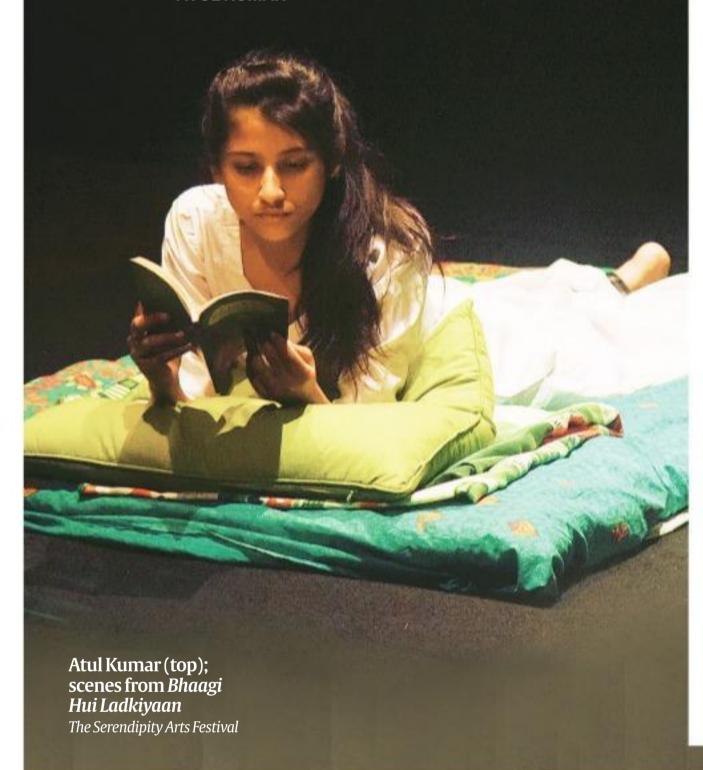
Theatre director Atul Kumar, a curator of the Serendipity Arts Festival, on its central idea and why less is more





I presume the time has come when we cannot anymore run away or turn our faces from the pressures of the state policy on our lives in all aspects — especially our freedom of speech, expression and control of our creative and critical thought

ATUL KUMAR



DIPANITA NATH

COME TO Goa, and build yourself a city. For tools, you will have cardboard modules of identical shape and size which, without the need for tape or glue, interlock to create the habitats you want. In Germany, France, Romania and Iran, the constructions have revealed local perspectives and contexts. Titled Shelter, the installation concept provides participants with an excuse to reflect on how people inhabit the world. It will be showcased in Goa as part of the Serendipity Arts Festival from December 16-22.

Shelter also fits into the theme of "home", which is the leitmotif of the performances and plays that have been curated by veteran theatre practitioners Arundhati Nag and Atul Kumar for the festival this year. Among the other plays are Boy with a *Suitcase*, an Indo-German production about migration and home, and Bhaagi Hui Ladkiyan, narrated and enacted by young residents of Nizamuddin Basti in Delhi, about their families, issues of trust and consent as well as personal space and gender dynamics. Kumar tells more about the curatorial ideas:

How did you define "home" as you curated the shows for Serendipity?

Home could be a physical or a psychological space that you would like to re-visit or look back at; something you might have lost or reconstructed or you might want to redefine for yourself today. Some of the performances that we have this year are either selected or commissioned around the idea of "Home". This helped us during discussions of great interest and value with some theatre directors.

What drew you to plays such as Bhaagi Hui Ladkiyan, Photo Copy, Sounding Vanya and Table Radica, which are widely different in aesthetics and storytelling?

It is, firstly, the directors of these plays and their past productions, their overall larger vision as well as these specific productions that I admire deeply. Bhaagi Hui Ladkiyaan, which developed from a smaller piece that I saw during the Gender Bender festival in Bangalore a few years back, morphed into a very emotional and simply performed skilled production enacted by young girls from Nizamuddin Basti in Delhi. Photocopy is a commissioned script about a family and their home in Delhi. It is directed by a very talented actor-writerdirector Niketan Sharma, who is an alumni of Drama School Mumbai. The script is an extremely comic yet gritty look at mundane aspects of familial life in a lower middle class family around the death of the patriarch. I found the script to be very well written and have full faith in the mis-enscene of Niketan, who showed much promise in his previous production Adrak as well. I have enjoyed and admired the work of Amitesh Grover, director of Table Radica, for a very long



time. His bending of the idiom of performance in so many new forms is challenging and inspiring to all audiences and practitioners. His works are political as well as inclusive and most times interactive, as they push the established formats in new directions. This immersive piece has been enjoyed by people whenever it has been performed in Delhi and it is an honour to introduce this kind of work into our festival.

Then, there are some directors whose works we could not include in the last festival and we really wanted to showcase in Goa. Rehaan Engineer (director of Sounding Vanya) is one of them. He was meant to direct a show last year, which was site-specific but we couldn't give him the space he desired. I have great respect for the fine aesthetics of Rehaan's theatrical works since the last five or six productions of his. I am really excited to see how he re-interprets a Russian classic with an all-women cast. There aren't many festivals in India that support such experiments.

One of the plays at the festival is Eidgah ke Jinnat, that unfolds amid the conflict of Kashmir where children get radicalised. Last year, Serendipity showcased a play, A Doubtful Gaze at Uber at Midnight, which satirised the Sardar Patel statue, among other nationalist icons. What drives you to include stories that comment on political powers?

I presume the time has come when we cannot anymore run away or turn our faces from the pressures of the state policy on our lives in all aspects – especially our freedom of speech, expression and control of our creative and critical thought. If all of us artists do not support and promote dissent through art practices, who else will? How many organised festivals around India can boast of taking that stand? Or at least allowing the voice of artists to reach audiences in spite of controversies attached.

How different is it to curate plays at an arts festival as opposed to an exclusively theatre event?

An arts festival is a huger entity and although Serendipity is really an open-minded and entirely curatorbased festival, its concerns and resources do get distributed over many different disciplines. But I see this more as an advantage since the same audiences get a taste of classical and contemporary art forms over various disciplines in the same festival over a week in hundreds of venues.

'A language has to reach people'

In its sixth edition, Jashn-e-Rekhta will celebrate the richness of Urdu

NAWAID ANJUM

JASHN-E-REKHTA, an exuberant celebration of Urdu and the composite culture, showcases the language's eclecticism as manifested in a smorgasbord of art forms – poetry, music and storytelling. The sixth edition of the three-day festival, organised by Rekhta Foundation, begins at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in Delhi on Friday. "Urdu lends itself to highest number of art forms than any language, not just in the subcontinent but around the world," says founder Sanjiv Saraf.

On Friday, the festival will be inaugurated by Congress veteran Karan Singh. It will be followed by soulful Sufi renditions by Harshdeep Kaur. The sessions on Saturday will start with performances by singers Pooja Gaitonde and Raman Kapoor, Sachin Pilgaonkar and Shekhar Suman will hold forth on the beauty of the language and how they have embraced it. In another session on Saturday, filmmaker Anubhav Sinha will talk about the liminal space between dream and reality. Popular poets Rahat Indori and Munawwar Rana will take part in a mushaira session. Urdu playwright and screenwriter Javed Siddiqi and filmmaker Muzaffar Ali will dwell on the inextricable link of literature with cinema in a session. In two separate sessions, eminent Urdu scholars Gopi Chand Narang and Shafey Kidwai will elaborate on the poetry of Mir Taqi Mir, while critic and dramatist Shamim Hanfi and author Anisur Rahman will give a glimpse into the unparalleled universe of Allama Iqbal's poetic landscape, laced with philosophy. The day will also see a session on Mahatma Gandhi with writer Ali Ahmad Fatmi, historian Sohail Hashmi and Gandhi's great-grandson, Tushar Gandhi. Fouzia





at the festival last year; (left) Sanjiv Saraf

The audience

Dastango will present Dastan-e-Mahabharat, a presentation of the epic in dastangoi form.

Sunday will see sessions on Mirza Ghalib (with Urdu doyen Shamsur Rahman Faruqi and author Pavan K Varma) and Guru Nanak (with academicians Akhtarul Wasey and Nashir Naqvi, and singer Jaspal Singh). In another session, poet and lyricist Piyush Mishra will talk about finding a voice and acquiring a style. There will be a session on tawaifs as repositories of art. Poet and lyricist Javed Akhtar will outline Sahir Ludhianvi's poetry in a session. Painter-author Abid Surti will discuss the truth and untruths of stories as part of a three-member panel. The day will also see

a performance by sitar maestro Shujaat Khan. Besides, there will be workshops on prose and poetry writing, calligraphy, baitbaazi competitions, masterclasses on pronunciation, performances by indie and fusion bands as well as open mics for budding poets spread over the two days.

Rekhta is working on a project to digitise the texts of Hindi literature. "There are many Indian languages in various stages of disrepair today. The attempts to preserve them have been fractured and nothing has been done to integrate it into a whole and create any ecosystem. That's where we can play a role," says Saraf, who is planning to take Jashn-e-Rekhta to other cities and countries. "A language has to reach people; it will die if you don't give it fresh air," says Saraf, 56, who will soon be out with English transcreations of 65 ghazals by 10 classical Urdu poets.

For the festival founder, Jashn-e-Rekhta is an add-on. "It's happenstance. Jashn comes and goes every year, but rekhta.org continues taking the project forward. It's a resource for posterity," he says.



Ut Raza Ali Khan will perform at Jashn-e-Rekhta on December 14

A Life in Music

Ut Raza Ali Khan, Ut Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's grandson, on representing a famed lineage

SUANSHU KHURANA

IN THE Pakistani province of Punjab, towards south of Lahore, is a small city named Kasur. While the Arabic word, which literally means forts, finds notable mention for being the burial place of the 17th-century Sufi-poet Bulle Shah, it has also been known for a significant musical family that lived there and later found patronage from the Maharaja of Patiala. The marquee thus became Kasur-Patiala gharana, and, interestingly, is likely to have found the largest representations on both sides of the border. While Pakistani ghazal maestros Farida Khanum and Ut Ghulam

Ali have always touched their earlobes (a mark of respect for a guru) while speaking of their Kasur-Patiala gurus, Begum Parveen Sultana, Pt Ajoy Chakrabarty and his daughter Kaushiki Chakrabarty have done the same on the other side of the frontier. But one of the most influential names to come from Kasur-Patiala remains Ut Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, who, at the sixth edition of Jashn-e-Rekhta, will be remembered by his grandson Ut Raza Ali Khan in a performance titled "Yaad piya ki aaye", the thumri that remains the leitmotif to Khan's mention. The status could have gone to *Ka karun sajni*, an astounding rendition by him. But the status remains with Yaad piya ki... due to its fluidity, simplicity and follow-up renditions by a slew of artistes.

"The voice culture in this gharana has a beautiful, emotive aspect, and you will see that in all the vocalists who sing this gayaki. You can hear elation, sorrow and mischief, among others, all in the voice. Also, the voice throw is so different here, the words that the vocalists of Kasur Patiala sing are clearer," says 57-year-old Raza Ali, whose concert will largely focus on ghazals, mostly by "Dilli ke shayar" such

as Mirza Ghalib, Mir, Daag and Momin. Raza Ali, who was born in Karachi, is the son of Ut Munnawar Ali Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali's son, and a vocalist par excellence. Raza Ali was about four when Bade Ghulam Ali started teaching him in return for sweetmeats and toys. "He'd say, Bhai miyan aye palta yaad karenga taan khilona miluga (if you remember this palta, you will get a toy). I would do as told and he'd keep his promise," recalls Raza Ali.

He was about six when Khan passed away. His teaching was then taken over by his father. But a visit from Ut Vilayat Khan to their Kolkata home, where the family settled post Partition, made matters complicated. Munnawar Ali was singing while Raza played the tabla. "Khan sahab told my father that I should be taught the tabla, and not trained in vocals as my rhythm sense and baaj is quite good," says Raza Ali, adding, "My father told me that a senior artiste like Vilayat Khan sahab would have seen something before saying that, but he'd like to have the next three years of my life to get me to sing at a standard that's needed from the family. I complied."

In Delhi, on December 14, he is likely to conclude the evening with his grandfather's famed thumri, Yaad piya ki aaye, in raag Bhinna Shadaja. The musician had written and composed it as an ode to his wife. "It's hard to ever leave without this one. Its glory is likely to follow the family for many years to come," he says.



SINDHU OUT

Defending champion P V Sindhu was knocked out of the year-ending BWF World Tour Final after losing 22-20, 16-21 and 12-21 to China's Chen Yufei.

Services, Assam confined to hotel, as Ranji match called off in Guwahati

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY KOLKATA, DECEMBER 12

"AS THINGS stand, we don't know when we can leave the city, because you see the situation here is pretty tense and an indefinite curfew has been imposed," a Services official told *The Indian Express* after their Ranji Trophy Elite Group C match against Assam at Guwahati was abandoned on Thursday.

With Assam burning over the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), match referee Valmik Buch called off the fourth day's play after receiving an email from the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) that expressed security concerns, while mentioning the grave law and order situation in Guwahati.

The Services team were due to fly back on Thursday evening, but their return has been postponed. "We have been confined to our hotel premises here since morning, as per the directives from the Assam Cricket Association (ACA). The Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) has provided us with the necessary security arrangements, so the players are absolutely safe," the official said, adding: "I'm told that the SSCB is in touch with the BCCI and arrangements will be made soon to get us out of Guwahati at the

"The team will take a flight back to Delhi on Friday," SSCB secretary Col Satyavrat Sheoran informed.

The Services team that play the Ranji Trophy under the auspices of the SSCB, rep-

resent the Indian Armed Forces. The ACA secretary Devajit Saikia confirmed that both teams and the match officials have been asked to stay put in their respective hotels because of security reasons. "They (Services) can't leave tonight. Their flight was at 7.20pm and for that they had to leave for the airport at around 4pm. But the police told us that it would be extremely dangerous to travel today, because the entire highway from their hotel to the airport; there were several picketings and a lot of vehicles were already burnt. A firing incident also took place on the highway. So the police advised that they have to postpone their departure at least till tomorrow," Saikia told this paper.

The Assam players and support staff, too, have been asked not to leave their hotel. With

regards to the match, the decision to call it off was taken after 11pm on Thursday, as the ACA secretary wrote to the match referee. "With regret I would like to inform you that due to some political development, the law and order situation in Guwahati has deteriorated since yesterday evening. Initially, the State Authorities had stopped the internet services in 10 districts of Assam including Guwahati, and later on from 7:00pm yesterday curfew has also been clamped down indefinitely in Guwahati. This morning the State Authorities have deployed Army in Guwahati and at present flag march is going on and people are advised not to venture out to the streets," Saikia wrote in his email.

He added: "Upon speaking to the Police Authorities at about 11:00am today, we are informed that there is no possibility of improvement or change in the situation during the course of next few hours. In view of above, it will be extremely difficult for Assam CA to make arrangement of transport from the hotels where the Assam Team, Services Team and the match officials are presently staying to the ACA Stadium, Barsapara, the venue of the match, ensuring full safe (safety) and security."

Match referee Buch accordingly discussed the matter with the BCCI general manager, cricket operations, Saba Karim, and called off the fourth day's play. As per the Ranji Trophy playing condi-

tions, Assam will get three points from the drawn encounter because they took the first innings lead.

"On the advisory of the host association,

the decision was taken to abandon the fourth day's play," Karim told The Indian Express, confirming that the match won't be replayed. "No, because we already have had a first innings lead. Playing conditions are very clear; the team that has taken the first innings lead will get three points and the other side gets one point."

Going into the final day, the match was intriguingly poised. Assam, on overnight 74/5 in their second innings, needed another 168 runs for victory, while Services needed five wickets. But as Karim said, the players' safety was paramount. "There's a curfew in force and they (players) are not supposed to step out of their rooms of their hotel. And this decision was taken in consultation with the host association."

Mumbai hit the road running

Thrash Baroda by 309 runs in their Ranji Trophy opener as batsmen find fine form from the word go

DEVENDRA PANDEY VADODARA, DECEMBER 12

MUMBAI COULDN'T have asked for a better start to their Ranji Trophy encounter. They crushed Baroda by 309 runs, their opener Prithvi Shaw got the third fastest Ranji double ton, the captain Suryakumar Yadav hit a breezy hundred, and importantly, with the spin department light on experience, the leftarm spinner Shams Mulani grabbed a 10wicket match haul.

What was missing in their disastrous last season – they finished at the bottom of the group – was stability in batting. Now, they have found their swag as the star-studded team got six points for their efforts.

On the final day, Baroda, resuming on 74 for 3 and already limping as the first-innings centurion Kedar Devdhar was ruled out of the game due to injury, couldn't do much. Devdhar was the last straw on the camel's back, as it were. As Baroda was already missing their three full-time seamers, still recuperating from injuries suffered in the Syed Mushtaq Ali tournament, and had to go into the game with an inexperienced bowling line-up.

And in Devdhar's absence on the last day, it wasn't a surprise when Mumbai just took little more than a session to complete the formalities. Baroda didn't lack intent but on the fourth-day wearing pitch, the Mumbai spinners found turn and bounce to harass the

Young Abhimanyu Rajput and Deepak Hooda did fight for a while, and even looked pretty solid as they reeled out a few boundaries. They added 81 runs and both were lucky to get a reprieve. Rajput was bowled by a no ball from medium-pacer Aakash Parkar while Hooda had hit straight back to Parkar, but the ball didn't stick to the pacer's hand.

Parkar who didn't get a chance to bowl in first innings, was keen to leave a mark. He had Rajput trapped in front before deceiving Krunal Pandya to rearrange his stumps.

Yusuf Pathan was unlucky to be given out as the bat brushed his thigh pad and popped to short leg. Bharghav Bhatt tried to slog but missed it completely to give Mulani his third wicket. After reaching his fifty, Hooda attempted a sweep, only to see it balloon up for a simple catch to Yadav. Mulani struck next to pick up his fourth wicket when he had Soyeb Sopariya stumped by Aditya Tare to restrict Baroda to 224 runs in second innings.

Though the bowlers hogged limelight on the final day, it must be said that the win was set up by Prithvi Shaw and Jay Bista's quick opening partnership in the second innings.



Prithvi Shaw at the end of the game.

That enabled Mumbai to set a target and give No one can argue with that.

Pathan livid at dismissal

Yusuf Pathan was so stunned at the wrong decision to give him out that he implored Ajinkya Rahane and other Mumbai players to intervene to have the decision reversed. Rahane and co. didn't relent, and a few words were exchanged before Pathan eventually walked back.

Pathan had leaned forward to defend Shashank Attarde but the ball spun sharply, missed his bat, hit the thigh pad, and popped to short leg fielder Jay Bista. And the umpire Virendra Sharma responded favourably to the appeal from the close-in fielders.

A stunned Pathan didn't budge, though, before he started to involve Rahane and Mumbai players , telling them that they should let the umpire know that there was no bat involved. Pathan urged Mumbai players to show some sportsman spirit and had a few words with Rahane. Pathan hung around for a while before he trudged back in utter disappointment. At lunch break, Rahane came over to have a chat with Pathan to clear the air but Pathan wasn't convinced with his arguments.

BRIEF SCORES: Mumbai 431 & 409/4 declared versus Baroda 307 & 224 (Deepak Hooda 61, Abhimanyu Singh Rajput 53; Shams Mulani 4-72). Mumbai won by 309 runs. **POINTS:** Mumbai 6, Baroda 0



themselves sufficient time to bowl out Baroda. "The way they Shaw and Bista batted was very crucial because we needed 400 runs to declare," the captain Suryakumar Yadav said. "If you win the first two games outright, it gives a big boost (to the Ranji campaign). The big plus point is beating Baroda at their home ground. Good momentum for us to go into our home game later in the month. The boys ticked all boxes in this game," Yadav said.

Work in Progress

The under-revamp Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad, the biggest cricket arena in the world that can seat 1.10 lakh spectators, will be inaugurated in March. Javed Raja

Pacer Mavi shows glimpses of his talent

VISHAL MENON

MEERUT, OCTOBER 12

SHIVAM MAVI hails from Mavana, a mofussil town situated in western Uttar Pradesh that's dotted with sugar mills. The only aspect that remotely connects it to cricket is its proxim-

ity to Meerut, which has in recent times hogged considerable print space in the sports pages of newspapers due to the presence of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Praveen Kumar. Both hail from Meerut's Victoria Park, the nursery for young and upcoming pacers. But Shivam has honed his craft at Noida's

Wanderers Academy, and unlike his illustrious seniors, he doesn't merely rely only on swing. Pace is Mavi's foremost ally, and he uses it to hustle batsmen. Upon his return to Victoria Park for Uttar Pradesh's Ranji Trophy season-opener against Railways, there were clear signs of how quickly he has grown in

stature to become the team's frontline bowler. Mavi finished with a match-haul of 6/83. But his stiff back prevented him from bowling more than eight overs in the second innings. Consequently, Railways rode on the home team's misfortune. Newbie Dinesh Mor struck a career-initiating century that propelled the visitors to a 348-run lead. It looked like a match-winning effort, but little play was possible on the final day due to fog and cloud cover. Overall, just 16.2 overs were bowled by Railways on Thursday, and even though they picked up two wickets that of openers Almas Shaukat (33) and Aryan Jurel (13) — it was a seemingly open and shut case. Uttar Pradesh finished at 62/2 when umpires called off play. By virtue of this stalemate, Railways walked away with

While lauding the efforts of Railways debutant wicket-keeper batsman Dinesh

three points, while the home team earned a

solitary point.

Mor for his exploits with the bat, Uttar Pradesh's newly-appointed captain Ankit Rajpoot insisted the match highlighted some of their glaring inadequacies in batting, which he hoped would get fixed in the subsequent matches. He also asserted that Mavi had recovered from the niggle. "Mavi is fine. He had suffered stiff back yesterday, which was why he didn't make it to the field."

In the first innings, the pacer bowled at furious pace, instilling dread and getting the Railways batsmen to hop around on the pitch. Infact, his barrage of bouncers had left bruises on Mor's stomach, and a deep gash on his right evebrow.

Figures of 2/64 from 20 overs don't quite tell you the way the batsmen were harassed. It was in the second essay that he looked like derailing the Railways. Once again, he never sacrificed on his pace.

If anything, he was a tad fuller and more accurate. This was instrumental in him getting four cheap wickets for just 19 runs in eight overs. Two bowled and two caught behinds were indicative of his decisiveness When Mavi was around, Uttar Pradesh looked potent. Without him, they looked directionless. Rajpoot looked a forlorn figure without his trusted lieutenant.

After featuring in Uttar Pradesh-Saurashtra Ranji Trophy quarter-final game in Lucknow in January, he has spent considerable time on the sidelines with a back injury. Consequently, Mavi would be seen more at Bangalore's National Cricket Academy, undergoing his rehab, than on the cricket field. Missing out on the showpiece IPL would probably be the biggest disappointment of the year.

BRIEF SCORES: At Meerut: Railways 253 and 270 versus Uttar Pradesh 175 and 62/2 (Almas Shaukat 33, Aryan Juyal 13; T Pradeep 1-15).

POINTS: Railways: 3 points, UP 1





If the previous edition of the Ranji Trophy was a revelation for off-spinning allrounder K Gowtham — his performances and skillset fetched him a fortune in the IPL auction too — he has started off another on a promising note. He picked 14 wickets for 170 runs, his 8 for 60 in the second innings fashioning a precious win for Karnataka against arch-rivals Tamil Nadu, who froze yet again at the sight of him. A week ago, he had bowled a terrific last over to help Karnataka clinch the Syed Mushtag Ali Trophy. In Dindigul, on a surface that abetted his variety of bowling, bit of spin and bounce, he ran through Karnataka, devouring the top six barring Murali Vijay, who was run out. That seven off his eight wickets were either lbw or bowled attests to his discipline and persistence. He doesn't turn the ball much but pegs batsmen down with these old-fashioned virtues.

This was after Ravi Ashwin had put Tamil Nadu back in the game with a fourwicket haul, bundling out their adversaries for 151. At one point, they cruising to what seemed like a famous win, but cometh Gowtham, cometh collapse.

BRIEF SCORES: Karnataka 336 & 151 in 65.4 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 39, BR Sharath 29; R Ashwin 4/46, K Vignesh 3/31) beat Tamil Nadu 307 and 154 in 63.3 overs (Abhinav Mukund 42, M Ashwin 23 not out; K Gowtham 8/60).

POINTS; Karnataka: 6 points, TN: 0

PANCHAL CAN BLAST TOO

Priyank Panchal, the doughty Gujarat batsman, can stonewall for hours on end. He once consumed 300 deliveries for a hundred, but in a precarious chase against Hydarabad, he cracked 90 off 80 balls to stitch an eight-wicket win for Gujarat, which seemed unlikely when Hyderabad set a target off 187 in just 37 overs. He almost dealt entirely in boundaries—14 fours and two sixes—as 76 off his 90 came this way.

BRIEF SCORES: Hyderabad 233 and 266 lost to Gujarat 313 and 187/2 in 36.4 overs (Priyank Panchal 90, Bhargav Merai 69) by eight wickets.

POINTS; Gujarat 6; Hyderabad 0.

RANA DOES REARGUARD Delhi batsman Nitish Rana is better reputed for his big-striking ways in the Indian Premier League. He's a thrilling batsman to watch, has a full range of attractive strokes. Often, one stroke too many has undone him in the past. But to save his team from an outright win against Kerala, he dug in and toiled away to post 114. His partnership with opener Kunal Chandela, who grafted a century himself, ensured that Delhi didn't lose, though they conceded points to Kerala on a surface that became progressively slow.

BRIEF SCORES: Delhi 142 and 395/4 (Kunal Chandela 125, Nitish Rana 114) drew with Kerala 525/9 declared. **POINTS:** Kerala 3; Delhi 1

BHARAT'S REMINDER

In the Bangladesh series, Andhra's wicketkeeper-batsman KS Bharat was summoned as cover for Wriddhiman Saha, indicating that he's among the contenders to replace Saha in the future. He did his reputation no harm with a trenchant 102 against defending champions Vidarbha, who had to be content with a draw and points from the first-innings lead. Bharat's keeping skills had always been raved about, but of late he has blossomed as a fine batsman too.

The hundred was another attestation, and it wouldn't be long before he starts snapping at Rishabh Pant's heels.

BRIEF SCORES: Andhra 211 & 314/3 in 103.4 overs (KS Bharat 102 not out, Ricky Bhui 100 not out) drew with Vidarbha 441. **POINTS:** Andhra: 1 point, Vidarbha 1

REVERSE SWING IN LALHI

The first three innings in Lahli, the most seamer-friendly surface in the country, saw relatively high-scoring totals. Haryana piled on 401, Maharashtra responded with 247 and it all seemed crawling to a draw before the surface suddenly changed colour. A hint

of rain spiced up the surface and it began to move around—the ground has a high water table and all it requires is a decent shower for the underlying moisture to surface—and seamers began to thrive. Newball bowlers Harshal Patel and Ashish Hooda shared nine wickets among themselves to shoot down the visitors for 86 runs. They required just 29 overs, less than a session, to bowl them out.

BRIEF SCORES: Haryana 401 beat Maharashtra 247 in 96 overs (Naushad Shaik 60, AN Kazi 36; Harshal Patel 4/70, Ashish Hooda 3/50, Tinu Kundu 3/52) and 86 in 29 overs (N Shaik 27; Harshal Patel 5/12, A Hooda 4/31) by an innings and 68 runs. **POINTS:** Haryana: 7 points, Maharashtra: 0

UNMUKT'S STUTTERING START

Joining Uttarakhand, Unmukt Chand said, was to restore his flailing career. With a few more experienced acquisitions, Uttarakhand, who had pulled above their weight, last season, seemed well-equipped to fare better. Only that they faltered against an under-strength Jammu and Kashmir (without their talisman Parvez Rasool), and surrendered by 253 runs at home. Personally too, he endured a terrible match,

scoring just 4 and 9. BRIEF SCORES: J&K 182 & 304 beat Uttarakhand 84 and 149 by 253 runs. **POINTS:** Jammu and Kashmir 7 points, Uttarakhand: 0.



MS Dhoni casts his vote at a polling station during the third phase of Jharkhand assembly elections, in Ranchi, on Thursday. PTI

Labuschagne scores ton as Aus grind to 248-4 vs NZ

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PERTH, DECEMBER 12

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE'S third consecutive century helped Australia grind out 248-4 against New Zealand on the opening day of the first cricket test under lights at Perth Stadium on Thursday.

Labuschagne and Travis Head were unbeaten on 110 and 20 runs respectively after the home side elected to bat first in 40-degree temperatures. "It's great to get us in a position where we can kick on," Labuschagne said.

Coming in at the fall of opener Joe Burns' wicket after about an hour, Labuschagne, the newest batting find during the Ashes in England and against Pakistan, batted with huge confidence against a disciplined New Zealand attack that was diminished from the second session by the loss of injured fast bowler Lockie Ferguson.

Labuschagne danced down the pitch and hoisted left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner over the long on boundary for six to bring up his third straight century in his 12th test. He scored 185 and 162 in the tests against Pakistan recently. Also in his innings, he reached 1,000 career test runs, and remained the most prolific run-scorer for Australia in 2019 with 939 runs (average 72.23) in nine tests.

Since being called up as a concussion substitute for Steve Smith during the Ashes, Labuschagne has grown in stature and matured into a fine right-hander occupying the pivotal No.3 spot.

"(Scoring three hundreds is) something I wanted to do and probably more of a dream," Labuschagne said. "For it to become a reality it's a different look. You don't want to take any runs for granted. When you get in you want to make a big score. I enjoy batting at No.3 (because) sitting and watching is draining."

He has batted for 318 minutes and faced 202 balls, and hit a six and 14 boundaries in his chanceless innings. Labuschagne and Steve Smith shared 132 runs for the third wicket to see Australia through a period of uncertainty as New Zealand made the hosts work hard for runs after lunch.

While Labuschagne was scoring at will, Smith was uncharacteristically restrained and at times struggled. He took a blow on his fingers as he fended a short delivery from Neil Wagner, and on 19 was dropped by second slip Tom Latham off debutant fast bowler Ferguson.

Ferguson left the field midway through the day for a scan on a strained right calf. Smith eventually fell for 43 when a Wagner short ball hurried on him and gloved an attempted pull to Tim Southee at leg slip _ a well set trap.

He faced 164 balls and hit four boundaries in his 188-minute innings. Australia is unbeaten in six day-night tests, having won against Pakistan last month.

BRIEF SCORES: Australia 248/4 in 90 overs (Labuschagne 110*, Warner 43, Smith 43, Wagner 2-52) v New Zealand.

Bad weather curtails Day 2 of Pak-SL Test

Rawalpindi: Bad weather spoiled the second day of Pakistan's first home cricket test in more than 10 years as only 18.2 overs could be bowled against Sri Lanka on Thursday. Resuming on 202-5, Sri Lanka reached 263-6 when play was called off at 3:30 p.m. local time due to bad light. Niroshan Dickwella on 33 was the only wicket to fall. Only about 2,000 spectators were drawn by free entry to the 17,000-seat Pindi Cricket Stadium.

Brief Scores: Sri Lanka 263/6 in 86.3 overs (Dhananjay de Silva 72 not out, Dimuth Karunaratne 59, Oshado Fernando 40; Shaheen Afridi 2/47, Naseem Shah 2/75) vs Pakistan AP



DRINK'S BREAK

A fan takes a drink to keep himself hydrated on a scorching day in Perth. The first Test between Australia and New Zealand got underway at the Optus Stadium in the Western Australian city with the temperature surpassing 40 degree Celcius. AP

Rahul, a true blue batsman

Test match struggles a thing of past as opener hits undroppable form in shorter version

SANDIPG

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THERE ARE perceptibly two KL Rahuls these days. The cluttered, tenuous man in the whites, dealing the red ball as if it's a hand-grenade about to explode. Then, there is the man in blue tees, sprightly and bouncy, flaying each delivery like it's a Santa's gift. Whereas he batted wretchedly out of the Test team, he has batted prolifically into an undroppable role in the limited-over versions.

Baffling then is the perception that he's a man in duress—the fortunes in different formats do often trespass. He clearly doesn't come across as one, if you'd been watching the T20Is against West Indies, or paying attention to his limited-over innings on the domestic circuit. His white-ball form has never looked a suspect. His penultimate innings in ODIs was a stroke-ful 111 against Sri Lanka in the World Cup. His T20I ledger is even more staggering the last four outings read 52 (35), 62 (40), 11 (11), 91 (91). His T20I average is 43.76, second only to Virat Kohli; his corresponding ODI figure is 39.11. At a lower rung, he's been bossing domestic sides in the interlude between his international fixtures. He smote 313 runs a strike rate of 155 and an average of 52 in eight innings, before amassing 598 at 66.44.

This means he is a man who is presently struggling with his longer-format form. Rahul admits, he was under pressure coming into the T20I series, despite his rich vein of form. "I won't say I don't feel it (pressure) at all. Obviously, going in and out of the team is never easy on any player, you take a little bit of time to get used to the international pressure and oppositions and there is no opposition where you can just walk in and score runs, so it's always difficult," he said after his 91, a knock laden with gorgeous strokes through both sides.

When his mind is clear—in Test cricket, he seemed preoccupied with too many thoughts manifesting in everything from a change of backlift to stance—his judgement, in turn, becomes more precise. He is seldom in two minds, he stops preempting, his head doesn't waver and the alignment syncs auto-



KL Rahul's last four outings in T20Is read 52 (35 balls), 62 (40), 11 (11), 91 (91). PTI

matically. Consequently, he's not rushed into the strokes. For instance, on Wednesday, he unfurled a couple of stunning uppercuts. Then those trademark cover-drives, the most aesthetic of his shots, the high-elbow, cloudwinking flourish of his follow-through. For the batting connoisseurs, it might have been an ethereal experience watching Rahul, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in full flow. Like a three-man orchestra hitting sonorous notes. There was a rhythm to his batting. He credits it to eliminating the self-doubts that had been tormenting him. The time away from international cricket was restorative—there wasn't the pressure of international cricket, but at the same time he could keep playing. He admitted as much. "It is important that we keep playing cricket and be in the middle, that's helped me and I have always felt that's what helps a batsman to stay in good rhythm,

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KL RAHUL

not putting hours in the net, I'd rather be in the middle playing games," he said.

Gradually, he rekindled his touch. "Life is (all about) what you put in your head. You can only complicate it (if) your thoughts are wrong, my thoughts are very simple. I prepare as hard as I can, put in the hours in the nets. This game is all about confidence and being in a good rhythm and good touch. I can't really sit outside and not prepare, all I can do is sit outside and prepare and try to create match feel for myself and I did play a lot of domestic cricket," he said.

He also stopped tearing his hair apart, wondering when his next international opportunity would wink. "For me what's in my control is to keep putting up these performances whenever I get the opportunity and I am not at that stage where I worry about whether I'll find myself playing the next tournament or anything (like that). Whenever I get the opportunity I want to win games for my team and be out there in the middle and enjoy my batting. That's the place that I get most happiness right now being in the middle and hitting the ball from the middle of the bat, so whenever that opportunity comes. I'll like to grab and enjoy it "be said."

comes, I'll like to grab and enjoy it," he said.
Had Shikhar Dhawan been fit, he could have been in the whites, away in Dindigul for Karnataka's Ranji opener against Tamil Nadu. But he was in the blue tees, dismantling bowlers. There's newfound freedom in his batting, a reflection undoubtedly of the lightness of his mind. With each passing innings, he seems to drift away from duress and move closer to blurring the two antithetical Rahuls.

For junior women, a step into the unknown

SHAHID JUDGEMUMBAI, DECEMBER 12

JUST OVER a month ago, the All India Football Association (AIFF) employed the services of Thomas Dennerby to coach the women's U-17 team. The Swedish coach, who in 2011 led his national team to a third-place finish at the Women's World Cup, has tried to spend as much time as he could to get to know his new charges that will become the first women's team from India to play at a football World Cup, at any level, when they enter the elite competition next year. The 60-year-old is in Mumbai, with his squad, ready to compete against an U-17 team from Sweden and Thailand, in a tri-nation tournament.

And on Friday, Dennerby, along with the rest of India, will watch its junior women's team compete against quality opposition for the first time. "It's a little bit hard to say (what I make of the team) now because this is our first tournament since I arrived," he says. "But hopefully we will have some good results. I promise everyone we have prepared well for a couple of weeks. The girls worked very hard in training. There are a lot of things that are going good for the moment and hopefully we can see that in the results in the tournament."

Ever since FIFA announced India as hosts for the 2020 women's U17 World Cup back in March this year, the AIFF had begun the progress of putting together a team. On the way, under the guidance of former Indian footballer Alex Ambrose, the team played four matches against clubs and the national team in Hong Kong, winning all four matches, and then continued that hot streak by winning all four matches at the SAFF Championship in October – beating Bangladesh on penalties in the final. But the quality of opposition they will face over the next week is nothing like they have faced before.

In Sweden, the Indians come up against a European team with a rich history in women's football, and in Thailand they have a team that has competed at the U16 AFC Women's Championships in September against the biggest teams in Asia.

Yet Dennerby remains optimistic about the set of 22 players he has with him in Mumbai. "They are really working hard. No complaints at all, even when we drill them really hard," Dennerby says. "They also adapt to what we are trying to learn more and more, every day we work. We have like 350 sessions to go before the World Cup starts. So we say to them, 'girl, don't rush, take it easy. If we learn one new thing every session until November next year, we will learn 350 new things, so don't rush'."

There's just 11 months left before India puts forward its second ever team to compete at a football World Cup – after the men's U17 team qualified for the 2017 edition as hosts – and Dennerby hopes to get to know much more about his team over the next week. Learn the strengths and weaknesses, and of course, his players as people.

"It's a new culture and I also have to understand about their feelings sometimes, and what they are trying to tell me," he says.

what they are trying to tell me," he says.
So far, he's been doing all the talking and teaching. On Friday, he'll see if anyone was

EB defender plays despite being diagnosed with chicken pox

PTI: Diagnosed with chicken pox, East Bengal's Mehtab Singh, instead of being quarantined by the club, played in an I-League match recently. Needless to say, his participation in the match put his opponents, teammates of the club and, above all, child mascots at risk of contracting the highly contagious disease. An East Bengal official said the player was diagnosed with the medical condition only after he returned to Kolkata a day after the game. The match against Punjab FC, held at Ludhiana's Guru Nanak Stadium on December 7, ended in a 1-1 stalemate with Mehtab featuring in it. Punjab FC owner Ranjit Bajaj slammed the player and his club for what he termed a "stupid and highly irresponsible" act.

Tokyo drift: In the zone, Panghal gears up for Olympic qualifiers

GAURAV BHATT NEW DELHI. DECEMBER 12

"IWOULD be lying if I say life hasn't changed after reaching World Championships final," Amit Panghal, who became India's only Worlds silver-medallist male boxer in September, says. "People stop me in the streets for photographs, they recognise me at the airports."

"The other day in Rohtak, I was having golgappe," says Panghal, quickly clarifying: "They're healthy. The spicy water is good for your digestion. It's something I've always enjoyed. But a person walked up to me, clicked a photo and asked, 'sir, aap bhi golgappe khaate ho? (You also eat golgappe?)" Kyun bhai, main insaan nahi hun kya? (I'm not human or what?)"

The straight-shooting flyweight, currently the top dog in Indian boxing, isn't particularly bashful about the attention — "I really enjoy it. It was a dream growing up that people will know me" — but says he ceases being 'Worlds finalist Amit Panghal' when in camp.

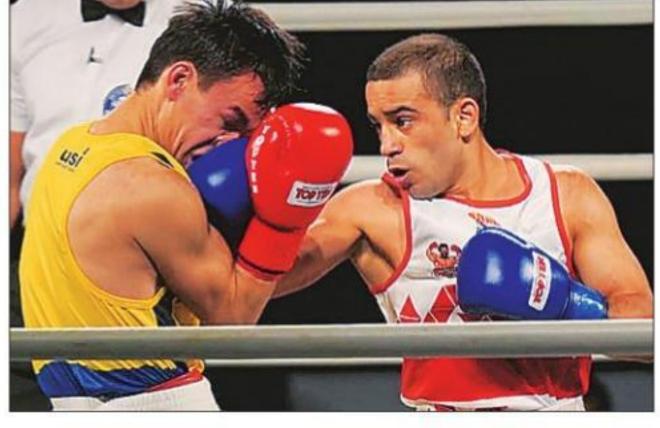
"It's history now. The medal hasn't added extra weight to my voice. Indian boxing is in a good place and a lot of us are actually at a similar level. So I don't feel I am necessarily better or have to give tips to others now," says the 24-year-old. "If I had qualified for the Olympics through that silver medal, it would be a different thing."

Panghal is currently in town for the ongoing Big Bout League. The long-planned league kicked off alongside the women's nationals and the South Asian Games and gets over on the 21st, leaving top boxers with a week to prepare for the trials for the Olympic qualifiers. There have been rumblings from some boxers of the league being a distraction and an injury-risk with crucial events approaching, but Panghal believes it is a perfect tune-up event.

"Sparring, training is one thing. But when you are actually competing, you are getting match practice and getting your body ready for the more important tournaments ahead," says Panghal, who has won three bouts for his table-topping team Gujarat Giants. "I fought an Uzbek in my first bout. Earlier, if you wanted foreign opponents, you'd have to go to an international meet. If you failed there, your morale would drop. Here, you are competing at home. This will help all of us peak at the right time."

Road to Tokyo

Panghal and Worlds bronze-medallist Manish Kaushik will have their first crack at



Worlds silver medallist Amit Panghal (R) will have his first crack at Tokyo at the Asian Olympic qualifier in Wuhan in February.

Tokyo at the Asian Olympic qualifier in Wuhan in February. Panghal was in the Chinese city in October for the World Military Games, where he uncharacteristically failed to win a medal.

"It was nothing. Just departmental games. I have defeated the Mongolian I lost the quarterfinal to before, and I know my level," says Panghal. "It's fine, every tournament should come with its lessons."

The speed bump notwithstanding, Panghal is feeling good about the road to Tokyo. For one, he feels the new scoring system, which allows judges to share the scoring publicly at the end of each round, suits his guarded, wait-and-watch style.

"I have already told you, that's what cost me the Worlds final. We all thought I had the first round in the bag. This league is also following the same scoring. It will make a lot of difference as I would know to switch gears. "More importantly, Panghal is feeling "invincible" and "in the zone." A handful of times during the conversation, Panghal alludes to how well the practice is going. "Really good, the best camp I've ever had."

Asked to elaborate, Panghal explains: "After the Worlds, my level dipped a bit. It's normal, your body has to recover. I took a break. But while previously I would practice for 5-6 rounds in the ring, now it's 8, 9 even 10 rounds. I've been working on my endurance. I feel tough, the best I've felt."

The move of the men's national camp from Patiala to warmer climes of Bellary, Karnataka also had something to do with it. Firstly, it allowed Panghal the buzz-cut he had long wanted. "This suits me well," Panghal rubs his shaven head. "The weather there is nicer. If we were in Patiala, our warmups would have started later because of the

cold. Here you wake up early, you feel fresh There are no delays to the daily routine."

A timely daily routine means some daily

downtime as well. For Panghal, it usually means a couple of rounds of PUBG. "PUBG... or TV. I watch cartoons," Panghal laughs. "Tom and Jerry, or other good cartoons. After hours of practice in the morning and evening, you just want to switch your brain off and watch something light."

Then there's the solitude of Bellary. "Ekaant. That's something every sportsperson needs. Training in Patiala or Rohtak brings distractions. There are people you know, you'd want to go out somewhere. At the weekend, you would leave for home on Saturday, come back late Sunday. You'll get tired unnecessarily," says Panghal. "Here there's a small market, sometimes we go there to hang out. But it's far from everybody's home, so nobody has time to get homesick."

Not even Panghal, who would bunk and skip and call in sick to run home any chance he got, according to tales made famous by chief coach CA Kuttappa? "Wo aadate toh kahan sudharti hain..." he laughs. "But if I do skip any day, I make up for it by training on the following Sunday too. Kuttappa sir will confirm this. He's the one in the ring with me."

Atalanta land a knockout punch

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE PARIS, DECEMBER 12

ATLETICO MADRID claimed the final spot in the Champions League last 16 with a 2-0 win over Lokomotiv Moscow, after Atalanta completed an impressive come-

back in Group C to qualify. Bayern Munich sealed consecutive victories over Tottenham with a 3-1 success at the Allianz Arena, while Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain and Juventus also finished their group campaigns on winning notes. Diego Simeone's Atletico went into their game knowing defeat, coupled with a Bayer Leverkusen win against Juve, would see them dumped out. Kieran Tripper had a secondminute penalty brilliantly saved by Lokomotiv goalkeeper Anton Kochenkov at the Wanda Metropolitano, but Joao Felix made no mistake from the spot a quarter of an hour later.

Atletico wasted a string of chances and Alvaro Morata had a goal ruled out by VAR for offside.

But their place in the knockout rounds was secured when centreback Felipe volleyed home Koke's cross after a short corner routine.

Cristiano Ronaldo scored his second Champions League goal of the season as Juve, who were already sure of top spot, saw off Leverkusen 2-0 in Germany in the other Group D game.

Substitute Paulo Dybala was the creator of the 75th-minute opener, crossing low for Ronaldo to tap in a record-extending 128th goal in the competition, before Gonzalo Higuain's injurytime clincher.

Champions League debutants Atalanta claimed a famous 3-0 triumph at Shakhtar Donetsk to qualify with Manchester City despite having lost their first three games. The Italian outfit, who finished third in Serie A last season, conceded 11 goals in their opening three matches, but drew with City at the San Siro before beating Dinamo Zagreb to keep their hopes alive. Timothy Castagne stabbed in the crucial first goal in the 66th minute, before Mario Pasalic found the net shortly after Shakhtar full-back Dodo was controversially sent off in Kharkiv.

Robin Gosens grabbed an injury-time third as Shakhtar tired, sparking wild Atalanta celebrations in front of the visiting fans.

Dinamo needed to beat



Atalanta celebrate their historic win against Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday. Reuters

English champions City to progress, but despite taking an early lead through Dani Olmo, were sent packing by a Gabriel Jesus hat-trick before teenage midfielder Phil Foden wrapped a 4-1 win for Pep Guardiola's side.

Jose Mourinho's Tottenham failed to exact revenge on

Bayern Munich for their 7-2 humbling in London in the reverse Group B fixture.

Kingsley Coman put Bayern ahead as they looked to bounce back from successive Bundesliga defeats, although Ryan Sessegnon marked his first Spurs start with a goal to equalise. But Thomas

Mueller, on as a substitute for the injured Coman, and Philippe Coutinho ensured the Bavarian giants became the first German side

to win all six group games. Youseff El Arabi's late penalty saw Olympiakos edge past Red Star Belgrade 1-0 and pip their opponents to a place in the

Atalanta are making their first appearance in European football's premier club competition thanks to a surprising thirdplace Serie A finish.

Europa League last 32.

PSG run riot

Neymar, Kylian Mbappe, Mauro Icardi and Edinson Cavani all scored as PSG thrashed Galatasaray 5-0 at the Parc des Princes.

Thomas Tuchel's French champions had already wrapped up top spot in Group A ahead of Real Madrid, but ran riot in the capital. Icardi and Pablo Sarabia put PSG in control at the break, before Neymar and Mbappe teed each other up for second-half strikes and Cavani came off the bench to score a penalty.

Real Madrid also rounded off the group stage in style by beating a spirited Club Brugge 3-1 with goals from Rodrygo, Vinicius Junior and Luka Modric.

Indomitable spirit

Atlanta is the first club in the history of the CL to reach the knockouts despite losing their first three group-stage games. Here are a few talking points on the 112-year-old Italian club.

DEFYING ODDS

Atalanta have been relegated thrice in the last 20 years (2003, 2005 and 2010). They still have managed to qualify for Europe's most elite competition with a thirdplace finish in the Serie A.

GOLDEN RUN

Between March and May this year, the Italian side hit a purple patch. The Gasperini-coached club had a run of 13 unbeaten matches. They also reached the Coppa Italia finals but were defeated 0-2 by Lazio.

INADEQUATE FACILITIES

The Italians are forced to play their home games at Milan's San Siro, 55km from

56 Number of years since Atalanta have a major trophy (Italian Cup). In 1963, Angelo Domenghini scored

a hat-trick in their 3-1 win against Torino.

stadium does not meet UEFA's requirements.

Bergamo because their

A JOURNEYMAN LEADER Atlanta is Gian Piero Gasperini's seventh club since starting his managerial career in 2003. Gasperini leads a team of several outcasts, namely former Middlesbrough midfielder De Roon and ex-Aston Villa 'keeper Gollini.

We believed at half-time because if there was a draw, a different result would prevent us from qualifying to the knockout stages. After that second draw in the game in Zagreb we started believing-GIAN PIERO GASPERINI, ATALANTA MANAGER