

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 in-chamber, 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**



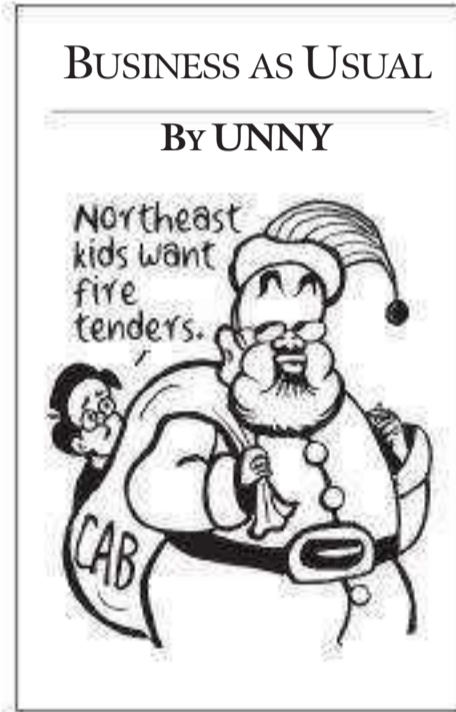
Protesters clash with security personnel in Guwahati on Thursday. PTI

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 36-month period between **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

EXPLAINED
E Transient, not generalised

IF THE rise in food prices is transient in nature, as is widely expected, then the risk of it getting generalised 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.



0-50 Good

ANAND VIHAR

Severe



51-100 Satisfactory

SIRIFORT

Severe



101-200 Moderate

SHADIPUR

Severe



201-300 Poor

DWARKA-SECTOR 8

Severe



401-500 Severe

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 final draft report in February this



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 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-year-old accused used a pistol he had legally procured last month after an IPS officer gave his reference to the licencing unit. According to

The 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 Chanakypuri. 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 in-laws' 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 considerably 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 circulation over North West Rajasthan. 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 five-storey 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-year-old 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 Prabhshay 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 authorities 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 Kailash Satyarthi's 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**

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 Kashmir in February.

"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 Vadra-owned 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 en-

hanced 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.

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 member stand up?”

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

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 talaq 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 the 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 in November had seen a political stalemate with BJP members objecting to the committee having jurisdiction over the topic, citing parliamentary procedure rules. It is learnt that 12 non-BJP members, including from BJP-allied parties, voted to discuss the matter, while 12 BJP 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 JSC, headed by a senior BJP 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, cholesterol 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**

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



EXTRA TIME

BEING THE lone Lok Sabha member from Lakshadweep, NCP's P P Mohammed 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 Sahasrabudde 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 Jharkhand — nine Union minis-

ters, and NITI Aayog vice-chairman as its members, will meet in Kanpur, a Jal Shakti Ministry official said on Thursday. According to the sources, the council will deliberate on a 14-point agenda. It may give in-principle approval to the continuation of Namami Gange programme beyond 2020. It may direct the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Ayush and the Ganga Basin states to promote organic farming in a 5 km stretch on both sides of the Ganga.

Crack down on mafia: Nath to police, bureaucrats

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.

Andhra Assembly passes Bill to regulate education sector

REENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 12

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 economically-disadvantaged 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



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.



Karnataka CMBS Yediyurappa

Yediyurappa is expected to travel to New Delhi to meet BJP 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 by-polls 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.

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, forward-looking 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 minister, 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

EXPLAINED NCP loses home, but gets irrigation

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 will handle revenue, energy, school education and medical education, animal husbandry and fisheries.

Pankaja Munde, Eknath Khadse unite to speak out against Fadnavis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, 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

from January 26, and hold a day's fast on January 27 at Aurangabad — the headquarters of Marathwada region — "to highlight the drought" situation.

She also made it clear she 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.

**The Indian EXPRESS**FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

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

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 of 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't 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 patience.

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

REGION'S EDGE

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

THE 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

THE 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?

ONCE 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 redraw 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.

**AJAY VIR JAKHAR**

IN THE FARMER'S NAME

Farmer unions need to expand the scope of their advocacy

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 farmers.

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, ASSOCHAM, 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

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



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 general 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 AZ Phizo returning to India if it helps find a permanent political solution to the Naga problem, according to the Z Ramo, one of the signatories to the Shillong agreement. Ramo, 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.

AFTER THE FALL

How to rehabilitate a terrorist

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.

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

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 counter-terrorism 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

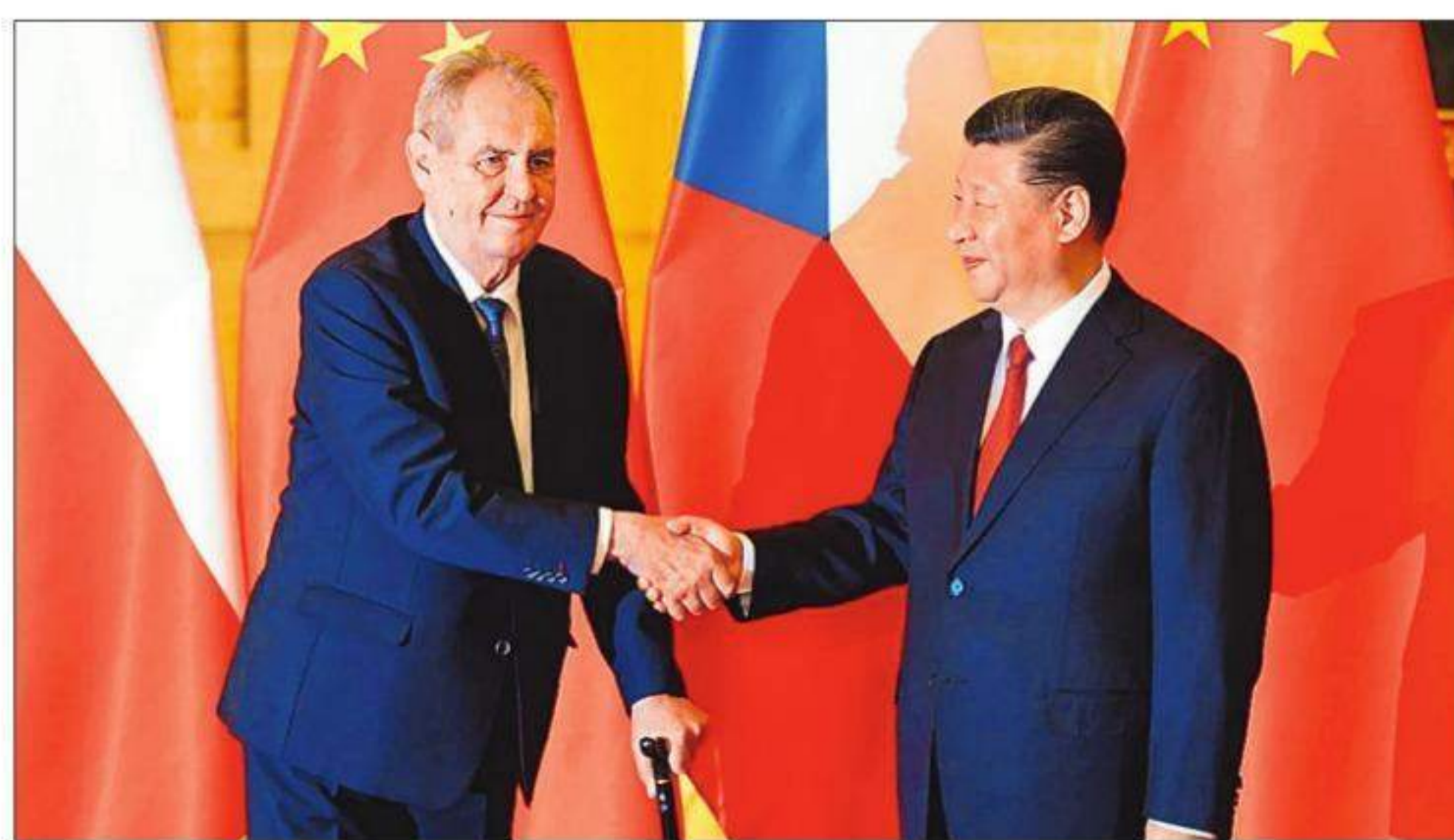
ment, sponsored cultural programmes and events, and applied diplomatic pressure when necessary. Analysts call the process "elite capture".

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, 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 China-friendly 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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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”.

3 KEY POINTS

- 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 said in a blog post that “the direct tax is a progressive tax”, while an “indirect tax is a regressive tax”.
- The government is 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, raising 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 director for the India Programme of the International Growth Centre and former Chief Economist 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.

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 double-

EXPLAINED

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 staying 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.

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.

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.



'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 long

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 recovery and below-potential growth through end 2020

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, says 'no one should have doubt'

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

WITH STATES not being paid compensation 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-BJP 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

year it was paid.

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.

Five months after names proposed, no full-time CMDs for GIC Re & AIC

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 12

GENERAL INSURANCE Corporation (GIC Re) 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.

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

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

ENSECONOMIC 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 former 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, IIT 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 assessed and fact-checked by

knowledge partner PwC to arrive at a short-list but the fastidious jury scrutinised every one of these painstakingly. While appraising the contenders, the jury members looked for innovative solutions which are home-

grown and cater for India-specific problems. To be sure, the ideas needed to be scalable, the technology cutting edge. Among the areas which threw up solutions were cyber security, packaging, logistics and travel.

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.

“Today many more tech disruptors are visible across categories, 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.

Over the years, the Express IT 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**

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

ENSECONOMIC 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

■ 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 i.e Air India Assets Holding Limited

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, after hiving off a major portion of the airline's debt, is expected to 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

Holding Limited (AIAHL). The Centre has provided Rs 1,300 crore to the SPV to meet the interest payments for October–March 2018–19. The entire debt on the SPV is being serviced by the Centre from FY20, for which it has provided Rs 2,600 crore.

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 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 bank said in a communication to 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

ENSECONOMIC 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 short-term 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.

Aramco hits \$2-trillion goal

Riyadh/Dubai: Saudi 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**

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 comeback 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 second-minute 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 centre-back Felipe volleyed home Kolke'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 injury-time 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.

Youssef 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 third-place 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

Atalanta 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 third-place 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.

Bergamo because their stadium does not meet UEFA's requirements.

A JOURNEYMAN LEADER

Atalanta 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