



NEARBY



Apex court dismisses 19 Ayodhya review pleas

NEW DELHI
A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, on Thursday dismissed 19 petitions seeking a review of the court's November 9 verdict permitting the construction of a temple on the land in Ayodhya where Babri Masjid stood before it was razed on December 6, 1992.

NEWS ► PAGE 12

JNU students boycott exams over fee hike

NEW DELHI
Jawaharlal Nehru University students from various departments, including the School of Social Sciences, School of International Studies and others, boycotted examinations on Thursday over the hostel fee hike issue. The JNUSU said that by boycotting examinations, students had shown "exemplary unity" in the face of violence and a barrage of threats issued by the administration.

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FRIDAY REVIEW ► 4 PAGES

Anti-CAB protests rage through Assam, 2 killed in police firing

Mobs attack houses of MLAs and Ministers; offices of BJP and AGP vandalised

**RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI**

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill got the assent of President Ram Nath Kovind, a late night notification said on Thursday, even as violent protests against it continued in several districts in the Brahmaputra Valley. An indefinite curfew was imposed in Guwahati, Dibrugarh and Tezpur.

Two persons were killed in firing by security forces in Guwahati. Incidents of police firing were reported from several areas of the State capital, including Hatigaon, Lachitnagar, Bashishta, and Lalungao. Sources at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital said 11 people were brought with gunshot injuries.

The government extended by 48 hours the suspension of mobile Internet and data services in the affected districts. As thousands of protesters took to the streets, crowds attacked the offices of the BJP, the RSS and the AGP, and the houses of MLAs belonging to the ruling coalition. BJP legislator Binod Hazarika's house in Dibrugarh district was set on fire and Batadraba MLA Angoorlata Deka's house in Morigaon district was damaged in stone-throwing.



No let-up in violence: People staging a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Guwahati. • RITU RAJ KONWAR

Five persons, including a police officer, sustained bullet wounds when a mob attacked the house of Adivasi BJP leader and Union Minister Rameshwar Teli in Duliajan late on Wednesday. Educational institutions in the affected districts have been

closed till December 22. As the protests spiralled, the Centre repatriated senior IPS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre G.P. Singh, posted at the National Investigation Agency. The orders from Home Minister Amit Shah came after his meeting with Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday night. Air, train and bus services were cancelled.

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Scrap Bill, IUML tells SC

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) on Thursday moved the Supreme Court against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, saying the law violated the fundamental value of the Constitution that "all should be treated equally". It said the law should be struck down for violating the fundamental right to equality. ► PAGE 13

'Govt. following Kashmir model'

Opposition leaders condemned the deployment of forces and the suspension of Internet to tackle violence in Assam and Tripura, and said the Kashmir model was being imposed on the northeastern region. Gaurav Gogoi, Congress MP, said the region had again been pushed into turmoil because of the BJP's greed. ► PAGE 13

Snow world



Freeze frame: Locals walking down a road at Kufri in Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh on Thursday. The cold wave conditions have intensified in the State, with rainfall and snow in several places. The temperature in Kufri fell below freezing point. ► PTI

Oppn. objects to advisory for TV channels

**SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI**

An advisory issued by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to television channels on Wednesday, asking them to ensure that nothing that incites violence is telecast, has been objected to by the Opposition.

The advisory, coming in the wake of the violence in Assam against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, does not refer to it or to the protests. Signed by Ministry Director Amit Katoch, it states that from time to time, the Ministry had issued advisories asking the channels to adhere to the Programme and Advertising Codes as prescribed in the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.

It asks channels to be cautious about any content which "is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promotes anti-national attitudes or contains anything affecting the integrity of the nation".

Trinamool Congress leader in the Rajya Sabha Derek O' Brien equated it with the 1975 Emergency.

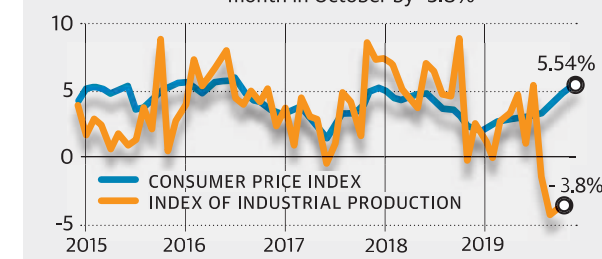
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IIP shrinks again, inflation accelerates

Food inflation is at a 40-month high

Worrying numbers

Retail inflation rose to 5.54% in November while industrial activity contracted for the third consecutive month in October by -3.8%



**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

Industrial activity contracted for the third consecutive month in October by 3.8%, driven by a fall in activity across sectors, according to official data released on Thursday.

Separate data showed that retail inflation has surged to a 40-month high of 5.54% in November, driven by rising food inflation. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) had contracted by 4.3% in September and 1.1% in August.

Growth in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) accelerated in November for the fourth consecutive month. It stood at 4.62% in October.

This combination of contraction in industrial activity and rising inflation has led experts to fear that India

is entering a phase of stagflation (a situation in which there is persistent high inflation combined with stagnant or declining demand).

"The momentum of IIP remaining in the negative zone has continued while CPI inflation, led by food and vegetable inflation, has crossed 5.5%," D.K. Srivastava, chief policy adviser at EY India, said. "This is developing into a classic situation of stagflation."

Within the IIP, the mining sector shrank by 8% in October compared with a contraction of 8.5% in the previous month. The manufacturing sector contracted for the third consecutive month in October, by 2.1%, compared with a contraction of 3.9% in September.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Bangladesh Ministers call off trips

Dhaka hasn't spelt out reasons, but MEA says 'domestic issues'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

Bangladesh on Thursday cancelled the scheduled India visits by its Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momin and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, diplomatic sources said.

Dhaka has not yet given a reason, but it is understood that it is a sign of its displeasure over repeated reference by the Indian political leadership to alleged minority persecution in Bangladesh.

Mr. Momin was supposed land on Thursday on a three-day visit from December 12 to 14. He was one of the first foreign leaders to respond to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's reference to "atrocities" against Hindu women in Bangladesh, while introducing the Bill in the Lok Sabha.

"There are very few countries where communal harmony is as good as in Bangladesh. If he [Amit Shah] stayed in Bangladesh for a



Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momin

few months, he would see exemplary communal harmony," Mr. Momin said.

'No persecution'

He told the Bengali service of BBC that religious persecution did not exist in Bangladesh. "We believe that religion is a personal affair, but festivals belong to all."

Mr. Momin, who should have been the keynote speaker at Friday's combined session of Delhi Dialogue XI and Indian Ocean Dialogue VI, said: "We can say that the

condition of the minority communities in Bangladesh is very good now. Those who went abroad earlier are now returning home."

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar maintained that Dhaka had conveyed that its Ministers cancelled their India visit because of "domestic issues pertaining to the commemoration of the 'Victory Day' in Bangladesh on December 16".

Mr. Asaduzzaman Khan was expected to attend an event in Shillong on Friday to pay tribute to the sacrifice of the guerrillas of Mukti Bahini who assisted India in the war against Pakistan in 1971.

It is learnt that Dhaka was concerned about the law and order situation in Meghalaya, where protests were reported following the passing of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, in Parliament.

Punjab, Kerala CMs vow not to implement Bill

Left parties to stage protest on Dec. 19

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH**

Terming the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill a direct assault on India's secular character, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said on Thursday that his government would not allow the legislation to be implemented in the State.

Asserting his commitment to protect constitutional ethos, Capt. Amarinder said the Congress government would not let the legislation passed by the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday "rip apart the secular fabric of the country whose strength lies in its diversity".

Parliament has "no authority to pass a law that defiles the Constitution and violates its basic principles and fundamental rights of the people," said the Chief Minister.

"What if other countries where Indians are settled and have acquired citizenship decide to bring similar legislations? What will happen to them if the countries decide to withdraw their citizenship on account of their religious beliefs?" he said.

Pinarayi's promise

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said the State would not implement the patently unconstitutional CAB.

Throwing the weight of his office behind the growing resistance to the contentious Act, Mr. Vijayan told presspersons here that the communally polarising law that discriminated against Islam as a religion had no place in Kerala. Five Left parties announced a nationwide joint protest against the Act on December 19.

Braving winter storms, Britons vote in divisive 'Brexit election'

Polls show Conservatives leading by a narrow margin

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON**

Britain voted on Thursday in a deeply divisive election that posed a historic choice between an imminent split from the European Union (EU) or another referendum that could scrap the entire Brexit project.

A decisive victory for Prime Minister Boris Johnson in the third poll in less than five years would almost certainly end Britain's 46-year involvement in the European project at the end of next month.

But a win for the Opposition could still reverse the Brexit process and give Britain its most leftist government in decades led by Jeremy Corbyn, a veteran



PM Boris Johnson leaving a polling station in London on Thursday. • REUTERS

socialist committed to renationalisation and massive public sector spending.

Britons braved winter storms and howling winds as they lined up to cast ballots in what Mr. Johnson and Mr. Corbyn have both described as the most important vote

in a generation. Opinion polls show Mr. Johnson's ruling Conservatives leading by a narrow margin. But they were almost unanimously wrong about the last general election in 2017 and Mr. Johnson said the outcome rested on a "knife edge".

"Just imagine how wonderful it will be to settle down to a turkey dinner this Christmas with Brexit decided," he said in a final message to voters.

Brussels has indicated that Mr. Johnson's plans to secure a comprehensive trade deal before a December 2020 deadline is unrealistic.

KINGMAKERS ► PAGE 14

Nirbhaya case convict's review plea hearing on December 17

Supreme Court lists matter before a three-judge Bench

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on December 17 a review petition filed by one of the four condemned men in the Nirbhaya gang rape-and-murder case.

A circular issued by the court on Thursday said the petition filed by Akshay Kumar Singh would be heard in the open at 2 p.m. The circular mention the names of the three judges who would be on the Bench.

Akshay has sought a review of the apex court's 2017 judgment confirming his death sentence. His petition said, "The state must not simply execute people to prove that it is attacking ter-

ror or violence against women. It must persistently work towards systematic reforms to bring about change. Executions only kill the criminal, not the crime..."

Earlier plea dismissed

The apex court had in July last year dismissed the review petition filed by the other three convicts - Mukesh (30), Pawan Gupta (23) and Vinay Sharma (24). They are now left with the extremely rare remedy of filing curative petitions in the Supreme Court. A juvenile convict in the case has been released from reformation home after serving a three-year term. One of the accused in the case, Ram Singh, died in the Tihar jail

in 2013, months after the brutal gang rape of a 23-year-old paramedical student in a moving bus on December 16, 2012.

Akshay opted to file his review petition now when the authorities are reportedly making preparations in Tihar jail for the execution of the four convicts. He contended in his plea that his conviction and sentence were due to public and political pressure.

"Death penalty is a premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the State in the name of justice... Death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights, goes against the principle of non-violence," he said in the review petition.

SC forms panel to probe Hyderabad 'encounter'

It will complete investigation in 6 months

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court on Thursday set up an inquiry commission led by its former judge, Justice V.S. Sirpurkar, to probe the circumstances of the police 'encounter' killing of four persons accused in the gang-rape and murder of a veterinarian in Hyderabad.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, asked the inquiry commission, which includes former Bombay High Court judge, Justice Rekha Baldota, and the former CBI Director, D.R. Karthikeyan, to complete its investigation in six months. Advocate K. Parameashwar was appointed the counsel for the Inquiry Commission. The commis-



Justice V.S. Sirpurkar (retd.)

mission will sit in Hyderabad. The apex court has, meanwhile, stayed the proceedings in the Telangana High Court and the NHRC into the incident.

"We are of the considered view that there should be some enquiry," CJI Bobde observed.

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IN BRIEF

L-G reviews status of filling up posts in DFS

NEW DELHI
Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal on Thursday reviewed the status of filling of vacancies in the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) and the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) as part of regular monitoring here. The meeting, chaired at Raj Niwas, was attended by Chief Secretary, Delhi; Secretary (Services); Director (FSL) and Director (DFS).

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	430	Gurgaon	395
Ghaziabad	467	Faridabad	410
Noida	434	Greater Noida	423
Good	0-50	Satisfactory	51-100
Moderate	101-200	Poor	201-300
Very poor	301-400	Severe	>401

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) | SOURCE: CPCB

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Lecture on "Mahatma Gandhi, Multilateralism and the United Nations" by Miloon Kothari, an independent expert on human rights and social policy. The lecture will explore the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders from India to the development of multilateralism as a defining and lasting, characteristic of the global work of the United Nations, at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), 3 p.m.

Talk: Discussion on the book "Categories, Creations and Cognition in Vaisesika Philosophy" authored by Shashi Prabha Kumar. Discussants: Prof. Uma C. Vaidya, former Vice Chancellor, KKSU, Ramtek, Nagpur; Prof. Ram Nath Jha, School of Sanskrit & Indic Studies, JNU; Prof. Purushottama Bilimoria, Fulbright-Nehru Visiting Professor, Ashoka University; and Prof. Christopher Key Chapple, Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, at Conference Room - I, India International Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.

Talk: Lecture on "Indian Ocean World and the Meanings of 'Indian Merchant Capitalism', 1500-1800" by Prof. Pius Malekandathil, Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, JNU at Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMMML), Teen Murti House, Teen Murti Marg, 3 p.m.

Exhibition: "Family is Plural", an exhibition of recent works by Artist Provir Gupta at Bikaner House, Pandara Road, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Pinnacle", an exhibition of paintings by Ramesh Anand at Triveni Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. (Mail your listings for this column at cityed@delhi@thehindu.co.in)

DU students burn copy of CAB, up the ante

Protesters term it 'unconstitutional, illegal and communal'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Hundreds of students of Delhi University held protest demonstration against the passing of the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill and "State repression" in Assam and Tripura on Thursday.

The protesters, including members of students' group AISA, students from Assam and others took out a rally at the Arts Faculty on North Campus, burnt a copy of the Bill, raised slogans against the government and demanded its rollback, terming it "unconstitutional, illegal and communal."

"CAB has been brought by the RSS-BJP to further the agenda of a Hindu Rashtra of the Sangh Parivar. Amit Shah is none to tell us whether we are citizens of this country or not. The country will not accept citizenship on religious grounds. We also condemn



Members of AISA, students from Assam and others protesting on North Campus on Thursday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

the State repression in Assam on protesters," said AISA DU secretary Madhurima Kundu.

In a statement, the group said that through an all India National Citizens Registry (NRC) and the CAB, the "Modi-Shah duo" wants to deny citizenship rights to Muslims. "It does not even respect the indigenous voices of the Northeast," it said, adding "all voices are attempted to be suppressed by military and snapping of

internet connection. But the movement will only strengthen."

Protest at India Gate
Meanwhile, a motley group of protesters gathered at India Gate protesting against the Bill. The protesters raised anti-BJP and anti-government slogans and asked the President not to sign the Bill into a law.

The police appealed to the protesters to disperse but to no avail.

BJP celebrates passage of CAB, hits out at AAP, Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after it went through the Rajya Sabha, BJP leaders and office-bearers fanned out across the Capital as part of outreach programmes scheduled by the party to celebrate the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) here on Thursday.

Felicitation ceremonies were held at Adarsh Nagar, Majnu ka Tilla and Rohini followed by a press conference where Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari alleged that

opposition to the Bill had "exposed" the "real face" of AAP and the Congress.

"AAP is trying to create confusion among the people that this Bill is against the minority, while the truth is that refugees from outside India are being given citizenship," Mr. Tiwari alleged.

The North East Delhi MP and Rajya Sabha MP Vijay Goel participated in an event for Hindu refugees at Majnu Ka Tilla and Union Minister Harsh Vardhan at Sharnarathi Basti, Adarsh Nagar.

Goyal promised to reallocate trains for free pilgrimage scheme: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, after meeting Union Minister Piyush Goyal over cancellation of trains for the free pilgrimage scheme of the Delhi government, said that the latter has promised to reallocate trains for the scheme.

The scheme was temporarily suspended by the Delhi government on Wednesday due to unavailability of trains.

On Wednesday, Mr. Siso-

Expect light rain by today afternoon

Showers on Thursday brought down pollution levels; AQI is expected to improve

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Most parts of the city received rainfall on Thursday evening due to western disturbances and light rains are expected in the city in the first half of Friday also, according to Regional Meteorological Centre.

The rains also brought down the air pollution levels slightly by 9 p.m. and the air quality is expected to further improve from "severe" category on Thursday to "poor" category on Friday, according to government-run monitoring agency System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR).

"The air quality was severe on Thursday as it was cloudy and there was high moisture in the air. This increased the particle holding capacity of the air and thus trapping more pollutants. Also the wind speed was very less," an official at SAFAR said.

"There was rainfall between 5.30 pm and 7 p.m. in the evening in most parts of



A cyclist covers himself with an umbrella during a spell of rain in the Capital on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Delhi and we expect light rainfall in some parts of Delhi in the first half of Friday also," said Kuldeep Srivastava, Head of Regional Weather Forecasting Centre of the India Meteorological Department.

It rained in parts of the city later in the night around 9 p.m. also, accompanied by thunder and lightning.

IMD prediction for NCR on

Friday reads: "Generally cloudy sky, light rain/thundershowers, accompanied with hailstorm and strong surface winds (speed 15-20 kmph)."

The air quality is expected to improve to "moderate" category by Saturday. "The air quality will improve rapidly and significantly by Thursday night and the impact will be seen by Friday with AQI

falling from severe to poor category. The western disturbance started to influence the region with an induced cyclonic circulation over northwest Rajasthan. An increase in surface winds and scattered rainfall is expected. Further improvement in AQI is forecast towards the lower end of the poor to moderate category by December 14," SAFAR said.

Cash users at Kherki toll plaza dip by a mere 2%

Only 2 more days to go for FASTag deadline

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Though only two days are to go for the extended December 15 deadline for FASTags at the National Highways Authority of India toll plazas, the number of cash users at Kherki Daula toll plaza - one of the busiest and the most sensitive plazas - here has gone down by only 2%. The cash transactions have reduced only from earlier 70% to 68% - which is still more than two-thirds of the total traffic volume.

Assistant Manager, Toll Operations, Millennium City Expressway Private Limited, Mohammad Sohrab Khan told *The Hindu* that implementing the FASTag decision would be "very difficult" in the current situation with the "traffic congestion" and the "users behaviour" being the two major challenges.

He said that as part of the preparations to gear up for

the D-day, trials were being conducted from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day dedicating a few of the lanes to FASTag users.

"Marshals are deployed to filter the traffic according to the payment modes and allow only FASTag users in the dedicated lanes. But the results have not been encouraging. Every time the traffic piles up, the boom are lifted to clear the mess. Around 50-60 marshals would be deployed from December 15 onwards," said Mr. Khan.

However those availing the PassTag, a local discounted tag for Kherki Daula, have switched over to FASTag in large numbers. While the number of FASTag and PassTag users was recorded as 14,141 and 9,389 respectively on November 1, the FASTag users increased to 21,549 and the PassTag users decreased to 4,917 on December 10.

TRF gives certification to four rummy operators

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Rummy Federation (TRF), a not-for-profit society to regulate, guide and support the online rummy, has awarded "TRF dynamic seal" to four online rummy operators, so that players can know that these platforms are safe, fair, and responsible environment for them, the TRF said.

The certificate was issued after the TRF asked the platforms to enforce a "code of conduct" for six months

and conducted audits at big four firms, said Sameer Barde, CEO of TRF.

Under the code of conduct, now players have an option of exclusion from the game for a particular time to avoid impulsive behaviour. "A player who has chosen to be excluded for a particular time can join the game before that period ends by writing to the operator, but the player can't start playing for at least 72 hours. This will avoid impulsive playing," Mr. Barde said.

ED wants bail cancelled in chopper case

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday moved the Delhi High Court seeking cancellation of bail granted by a trial court to businessman Ratul Puri in the AgustaWestland money laundering case.

It has claimed that the trial court had not taken note of all the documents put on record.

The trial court, while granting bail to Puri, had directed him not to "tamper with evidence" or "try to contact or influence witnesses".

Puri was named as an accused in the sixth chargesheet filed by the ED in the ₹3,600-crore AgustaWestland chopper deal case.

JNU students stand firm, boycott exams over fee hike

Talks between student representatives and administration remain inconclusive

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) students from various departments, including the School of Social Sciences, School of International Studies and others, boycotted examinations on Thursday over the hostel fee hike issue.

The JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) said that by boycotting examinations, students of the university had shown "exemplary unity in the face of intimidation, violence and a barrage of threats in the form of circulars" issued by the administration.

However, the School of Sanskrit and Indic Studies (SSIS) saw students appearing for their papers.

In a bid to end the deadlock, the JNU administration also held several meetings with student representatives throughout the day and said that the meetings were a "significant step towards normalising the situation."

V-C appeals to end strike

"The JNU administration reiterated that students and their



JNU students during a protest on the campus on Thursday. • SANDEEP SAXENA

representatives are always welcome to have a dialogue and discussion. The V-C ended the meeting with an appeal to call off the strike in the interest of thousands of students," the administration said, after a meeting with presidential candidates who had contested in the JNUSU elections this year.

Earlier in the day, Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar also met 18 hostel presidents to discuss the matter and "explained about the revised hostel manual," accord-

ing to the university administration.

While the administration maintained that it was a step towards "normalising" the situation, students' representatives said that "nothing conclusive" came out of the meeting.

"First they tried to convince us how the service and utility charges are justified. Then the hostel presidents demanded a rollback of the new hostel manual and a fresh IHA meeting to be held in a democratic manner. We

said that the students will not pay a single paisa. The V-C did not reply to our demands," the hostel presidents said in a statement.

Yamuna hostel model

The student representatives also said that the V-C "wanted the Yamuna hostel (fully privatised) model to be applied to all the hostels.

"We rejected such proposals. They even justified the 10% annual hike. Nothing conclusive came out from the administration side. When the hostel presidents started to ask the V-C tough questions, he concluded the meeting and ran away," the statement read.

Meanwhile, the Human Resource Development Ministry has called for a "fool-proof" system to prevent recurrence of similar instances like the ongoing stand-off between the administration and students, according to officials. The Ministry has also asked the university to consider and give a relaxation of two weeks to make up for the lost academic period, said officials.

Three policemen booked for extortion, 2 of them suspended

They searched car for drugs, demanded money from 2 men

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three Delhi Police officers have been booked for allegedly trying to extort money from two persons in Dwarka's Mohan Garden, the police said on Thursday.

They said that two of the officers have been suspended and disciplinary action is being taken against the third.

A senior police officer said that in the last week of November, two persons — one hailing from Himachal Pradesh and another from Rajasthan who work in Mohali — had come to Delhi and were on Najafgarh Road in their car. The victims had stopped to buy fruits when a person in civil dress approached them and introduced himself

as a Narcotics Cell officer.

"The victims said that the man searched their car and interrogated them. He took out around ₹9,000 from their wallet alleging that they were supplying drugs. He was later identified as constable Harish posted in West District's Narcotics Cell," the officer said.

The two persons kept on telling the officer that they were not supplying drugs and were not in possession of any either, but the latter allegedly called two locals officers and asked them to conduct a thorough search. Mr. Harish then left the spot, they said.

The other two officials, later identified as Constable Ram Avtar and Head Consta-

ble Mohan Lal, the complainants stated, took them to a barren plot a few km away and started interrogating them. The complainants alleged that they were harassed by the officers who demanded money to release them. The complainants then called a relative who helped them in getting released and filing a complaint at Mohan Garden police station.

The senior police officer said that a case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code was registered. Mr. Avtar and Mr. Lal were suspended pending enquiry. A senior officer from West District said that strict disciplinary action is being taken against Mr. Harish.

Verdict deferred in shelter home abuse case

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday deferred by a month the verdict in the case of sexual and physical assault of several girls at a shelter home in Bihar's Muzaffarpur run by former Bihar People's Party (BPP) MLA Brajesh Thakur.

Additional Sessions Judge Sudesh Kumar deferred the verdict till January 14 next year, as Judge Saurabh Kulshrestha, who conducted the trial, was on leave on Thursday.

The court had on March 20, 2018, framed charges against the accused for criminal conspiracy to commit rape and penetrative sexual assault against minors.

The matter had come to light after the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) submitted a report to the Bihar government on May 26, 2018, highlighting the alleged sexual abuse in the shelter home. The accused included eight women.

The court had held in-camera trial for the offences of rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, drugging of minors and criminal intimidation among other charges, said advocate Dheeraj Kumar Singh, appearing for some of the accused in the case.

Women take to streets, demand capital punishment for rapists

Protesters brutally assaulted by police, alleges DCW

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Several women and members of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) took to the streets on Thursday demanding capital punishment for those convicted on rape charges. While the protest march was scheduled from Rajghat to Parliament, the Delhi police stopped the protesters near ITO.

DCW members said that the protesters were "brutally assaulted" by the force despite the march being a "peaceful" one.

Rajrani Sharma, 60, who was a part of the protest

said: "How long will the police stop us? They will get tired but we will not. Our fight is against the government for not taking adequate steps. Nobody seems to think about the poor. Our daughters do not have bodyguards that the affluent sections have"

The march was organised on a day when DCW chief Swati Maliwal's hunger strike entered the tenth day.

The women's panel also said that several women were detained and injured following a scuffle between the force and the protesters.

DCP (Central) Mandeep Singh Randhawa said that

around 10 people were detained during the protest and later let off.

During the scuffle a photojournalist was also allegedly manhandled by the force.

Responding to the allegations, Mr. Randhawa said, "During the protest, a photojournalist who was standing close to the barricade was requested by the police staff not to stand there as protesters were throwing bangles and pushing barricades. Further on my intervention, he argued with me and neither his camera was taken nor he was assaulted. Many other journalists were also present there."

CAIT holds protest

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Several traders under the banner of the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Wednesday protested against a proposed move of the Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises to "join hands with Amazon and Flipkart"...

A proposal to bring the e-commerce players on to a government e-commerce portal has attracted the ire of CAIT which said the government should create an independent portal which traders would support.

IN BRIEF

Personal security officer of BJP MP shoots self

NEW DELHI

The personal security officer of a BJP MP allegedly shot himself with his service pistol on Thursday, the police said. He was posted with the Delhi Police's security unit and had joined as the PSO of the BJP MP on Thursday morning. No note left behind by the deceased was found. An investigation is under way, the police said.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health: 011-4076 9002 (Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -7.30 p.m.).

Karol Bagh fire: liability of civic agency to be fixed

Delhi Home Dept. told to set up SIT to probe Anaj Mandi fire

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police will fix criminal liability of civic agency concerned and file supplementary chargesheet in Karol Bagh hotel fire tragedy where 17 people were killed in February 2019, said a police officer on Thursday.

A police officer said that they had filed a 42-page chargesheet filed in Tis Hazari Courts in which the hotel owner, general manager and manager were charged under various sections of the IPC.

After going through the reply sent by the fire department, North Delhi Municipal Corporation, power discom and district administration, they have found negligence of civic agencies and soon they will be filing supplementary chargesheet in which the officer of department concerned will be named.

"In Anaj Mandi fire trage-

Earlier, only building owners or factory owners were held in cases of fire. We will now fix the criminal liability of the department concerned that issued clearance to manufacturing units

POLICE OFFICER

dy, the criminal liability of department concerned will be fixed. Earlier, only building owners or factory owners were held in cases of fire incidents, but we will now fix the criminal liability of the department concerned that issued clearance to manufacturing units to carry out operation," the officer added.

To make the entire process more transparent, for the first time, Delhi Police has

asked the Delhi Home Department to set up an SIT to probe the Anaj Mandi fire tragedy. It will help in fixing the responsibility of the department concerned that did their job "negligently".

"The building owner was using moulding machine on the ground floor but instead of industrial, he has been operating it on commercial power connection. The height of the building was more than 15 metres. It violated building by-laws. More than 100 people used to work and sleep in the building when all exits are blocked with piles of raw material inside. The building owner have violated each and every rules and regulations," the officer added.

He said that five out of the 43 workers who died in the said fire tragedy were juveniles. They have added more sections under the JJ Act.

Anaj Mandi fire: HC seeks reply on plea

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought response of the Centre and Delhi government on a petition alleging that child labourers were employed at Anaj Mandi factory where a fire incident on Sunday claimed 43 lives.

The court issued notice to the Central government, Delhi government, police and the State of Bihar on the plea by NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA).

Senior advocate H.S. Phoolka, appearing for BBA, sought directions to the authorities to enquire into the number of children who were employed at the factory and to also provide police protection to the injured children who are admitted in hospitals.

BBA has also sought a direction to the authorities to enquire into the angle of trafficking and child labour and submit reports.

Gym trainer kills medical store owner, arrested

They had a fight over price of medicine

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 30-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly killing a medical store owner following an argument between the two over money in south-west Delhi's Palam, the police said on Thursday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West) Devennder Arya said that the accused has been identified as Neeraj Gupta alias Khali, a resident of Dabri, who works as a gym trainer in Chanakyapuri. He allegedly killed Sanjeev Kumar, a medical store owner in Mahaveer Enclave, on December 7.

The police said that on December 7, they received a call around 11 p.m. regarding an incident of firing at a medical store. When they reached the spot, they were told that the injured had been shifted to a hospital.

The victim told the police that a customer had come to his shop to buy a medicine and an argument broke out between them over the price. The customer then took out a pistol and shot at him, the victim said. A case under IPC Section 307 (attempt to murder) was then registered.

The victim succumbed to the bullet injury in his stomach the next day after which IPC Section 302 (punishment for murder) was added.

The police identified the accused after scanning the CCTV footage of the incident. On December 9, they received a tip-off that the accused would be travelling from Sadh Nagar and flee to Raipur. A trap was laid and he was arrested from Sagarpur. A revolver with 10 live cartridges and a bike was seized from him, the police added.

Woman dragged by bike-borne snatchers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 23-year-old woman's was robbed of her phone and dragged by three bike-borne men in north-east Delhi's Jyoti Nagar on Wednesday, the police said on Thursday. The accused have been arrested, they said.

Victim Pooja had gone to Durgapuri Chowk around 3 p.m. "As I was answering a call, three men on a bike tried to snatch my phone. They dragged me for a few metres before I managed to free myself," she said.

NORTHEAST REMAINS ON EDGE

Angry protesters defied curfew and came out on the streets in Assam, prompting the police to open fire on Thursday, while schools, colleges and offices in neighbouring Tripura remained shut amid a 24-hour bandh call given by the Congress over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill



Raging protests: (Clockwise from left) Security personnel walk past burnt vehicles amid curfew in Assam; a police officer takes aim during a protest march towards the secretariat office in Guwahati; slogan-shouting protesters drive past burning debris in Guwahati; security personnel stand guard during the 24-hour Tripura bandh; and a Congress worker being dragged away by policemen in Agartala. ■ PHOTOS: RITU RAJ KONWAR & PTI



Passengers stranded at Guwahati airport

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Nearly 500 passengers were stranded at Guwahati's Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport on Thursday evening as authorities struggled to make arrangements for safely transporting travellers arriving from different cities into Assam.

"There is total chaos outside the terminal building. We have got only four ASTC (Assam State Transport Corporation) buses when we need at least 10. I have made several requests to District Commissioner of Kamrup district, MD of ASTC as well as the police top brass requesting for more buses as well as police personnel to escort passengers to Paltan Bazaar [in Guwahati]. Safe transportation of passengers is a law and order issue," Airport Director Ramesh Kumar told *The Hindu*.

Nearly 200 passengers were ferried by the four buses sent to the airport.

According to the official, "five to six" flights were cancelled at the airport. He maintained that inside the airport building passengers were being looked after. "We have provided drinking water and refreshments and ensured functioning toilets. But there is complete chaos at the city side (outside the terminal building)."

Earlier in the day, airlines cancelled all flights to Dibrugarh as passengers were unable to reach the airport.

"Passengers have been evacuated in a phased manner. The temporary suspension of operations on December 12 is being closely monitored," the Ministry of Civil Aviation posted on Twitter. IndiGo operated an Airbus A320 from Dibrugarh to Kolkata to evacuate passengers.

Timings
DELHI

FRIDAY, DEC. 13
RISE 07:05 SET 17:26
RISE 18:34 SET 07:55

SATURDAY, DEC. 14
RISE 07:05 SET 17:26
RISE 19:33 SET 08:54

SUNDAY, DEC. 15
RISE 07:06 SET 17:27
RISE 20:36 SET 09:49

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	21	13
Safdarjang	21	13
Palam	21	12

Delhi Palam Today
20°C Light to moderate rain and thundershowers are likely. Gusty strong winds are likely to blow over the area.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
21°C Shallow to moderate fog is likely to prevail during morning. Pollution level will remain very poor.

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CAB is a divisive tool, says Mahanta

'It will damage composite culture of Northeast and must be immediately scrapped'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is a "divisive tool" that will damage the composite culture of the Northeast and must be immediately scrapped, two-time Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta said on Thursday as massive protests against the proposed legislation rocked the region.

The CAB has been brought in to create a Hindu-Muslim divide, said the former student leader who spearheaded a six-year movement demanding deportation of illegal Bangladeshis in the late 1980s.

The State will continue to "burn" if the Modi government does not realise the se-



Former CM and AGP leader Prafulla Kumar Mahanta

riousness of the situation and respect the sentiments of the people, the leader of the Asom Gana Parishad said.

'We will not relent'

"Every nook and corner in Assam is erupting in spontaneous protests against the

black bill. The people of Assam are determined to defeat this divisive and unconstitutional tool called CAB. We will not relent till it is scrapped," Mr. Mahanta told PTI over phone from Guwahati.

Asked why several leaders of the party he had founded in 1985 are defending the CAB and why the party's alliance with the BJP is still intact, he said it is but a small group and does not reflect the AGP's views.

A number of AGP leaders have resigned from the party alleging that it has failed to stand with the people of Assam when they are facing an "existential crisis".

Mr. Mahanta also cautioned the Central govern-

ment that the situation in Assam may take a "dangerous turn" and any delay in taking the right decision may cause unimaginable harm to the region.

"The indigenous people of Assam and the Northeast are staring at an existential threat to their composite culture. The proposed law will open the floodgates of illegal foreigners to the region. We are determined to fight it out till our last breath," said Mr. Mahanta, who was Assam chief minister from 1985 to 1990 and then from 1996 to 2001.

Referring to the bill being cleared by Parliament, the former Chief Minister said the "majority" is not the essence of democracy.

AMUSU protest march against CAB

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

The Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union has decided to lead a protest march against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill from the Jama Masjid of AMU to the District Magistrate office on Friday after the prayers.

According to Salman Imtiaz, president of the outgoing students' union, "32,000 students of the university are expected to join the peaceful mega march."

"We have also called upon AMU Teachers' Association, AMU Court members and the non-teaching staff to join the march," he said.

Missing girl returns home from Dubai

'Misled by man with better job offer'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

The Meerut girl who went missing on November 8 and was traced to Dubai, returned home on Tuesday night. She said she was "misled" by an alleged Dubai resident, Nadeem, whom she interacted with on the social media.

"He said that I have better job prospects in Dubai and that I could earn upto 10,000 dirhams (around ₹2 lakh) per month there. When I landed there, there was nobody to receive me. I met a Kerala family at the airport who allowed me to stay with them. I looked for jobs, tried to learn Arabic but soon realised that it was

beyond me," said the girl. She then approached the Consulate General of India in Dubai. "He ensured my return to India," she added.

There are gaps in her statement like who financed the ticket and who sponsored the visa.

She said she had some savings which allowed her to stay in Dubai for 33 days.

Brother relieved

Her brother said he was relieved that her sister was back home.

He said her sister had big dreams and she wanted to do something for the family. "Perhaps, somebody misused her naivety," he said.

Rape victim threatened with Unnao-like fate

Accused warns her not to testify

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

A rape accused out on bail was arrested in Baghat on Thursday for threatening the survivor with "consequences worse than Unnao" if she testified in court against him.

The unsigned message typed on a sheet of paper was pasted outside the residence of the girl in a village in Baghat.

Victim to testify

The accused and the survivor belong to the same village and hail from the same community. The survivor is expected to testify in court on December 13 in a Rohini court.

According to police, the girl was allegedly raped by the accused Soran Singh when both were living in Mukherjee Nagar area of Delhi.

'Drink spiked'

"In March 2018, he took the survivor, in her early 20s, to the rented accommodation of his friend and raped her after allegedly mixing some intoxicant in her drink. He, along with his two friends were arrested by the Delhi Police," said Pratap Gopendra Yadav, Superintendent of Police, Baghat. Later, the names of his friend were dropped from the FIR and Soran Singh was granted bail.

IN BRIEF

**Delay likely in Karnataka Cabinet expansion**

TUMAKURU
Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa hinted here on Thursday that Cabinet expansion may be pushed further, with his meeting with Central BJP leaders likely only after eight days. This means that expansion is unlikely till at least December 20.

Three tribes set to enter Karnataka ST list

NEW DELHI
The Rajya Sabha on Thursday passed a Bill to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 to include three tribes - Parivara, Talwara and the Siddi community of Dharwad and Belagavi districts - in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka. Currently, the Siddi tribe of Uttar Kannada alone is included in the list.

Rape case proceedings against Nithyananda

BENGALURU
The High Court of Karnataka on Thursday stayed the proceedings of a rape case against self-styled godman Nithyananda in a court in Ramanagaram and directed the Registrar-General of the High Court to secure the records of the case from the trial court. The order came on a petition filed by Lenin Karuppan, a former aide of Nithyananda.

Gold seized from two foreigners in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD
Sleuths of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence on Thursday recovered 14 kg of smuggled gold at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here. The gold was allegedly concealed in hollow pipes under the seats of the Air India aircraft that came from Dubai. The two suspects are from South Korea and China.

Seek Supreme Court's views on preservation of bodies, says HC

Court declines to intervene in pleas on the killing of four accused in vet rape case

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

Declining to intervene in the petitions relating to the Shadnagar killings, the Telangana High Court on Thursday suggested to the State government to approach the Supreme Court on further course of action over the preservation of bodies of the four persons accused of raping and murdering a veterinarian recently.

A Division Bench, headed by Chief Justice Raghendra Singh Chauhan, on Monday directed the State to shift the bodies from the Mahbubnagar hospital to the Gandhi Medical College morgue and preserve them till Friday.

Four PIL petitions were filed in the HC on the police action. When they came up for hearing at 10.30 a.m., the Bench posted them till 12.45 p.m. on learning that the Supreme Court was hearing



The four accused in the Hyderabad rape and murder case.

pleas in the matter. Later, the Bench declined to intervene as the SC was seized of the matter. Advocate General B.S. Prasad raised the issue of the bodies, stating that the

families were ready to receive them. The Chief Justice told him to make a mention about the preservation before the SC by Friday and secure clarification.

FSL submits Disha's DNA analysis report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

A fortnight after the Disha rape and murder in Hyderabad, experts from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) here have concluded the DNA profiling of her charred body recovered at Chatanpalli near Shadnagar.

Sources in the Telangana police said the DNA of sternum bone of the victim matched with that of her parents. Semen samples collected from the undergarment and scarf of the victim matched with the DNA of the four accused. The report was submitted on Thursday.

HC suo motu takes up snakebite case

It issues notices to concerned officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Thursday initiated suo motu proceedings in connection with the recent death of a girl student owing to snakebite at a government school in Wayanad.

The victim was Shehala Sherin, a class V student of the Government Sarvajana Vocational Higher Secondary School, Sulthan Bathery.

The Bench comprising Chief Justice S. Manikumar and Justice Anu Sivaraman issued notice to the Chief Secretary and the Health Secretary on the suo motu public interest litigation based on letters of Justice C.K. Abdul Rehim, executive chairman, Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KELSA), and Justice A.K. Jayasankaran Nambiar.

The letters said Shehala Sherin died of snakebite in-

side the classroom.

A report submitted by the Wayanad District Legal Services Authority chairman to the KELSA said the inference arrived at by the team which inspected the school was that the irresponsible attitude of the school authorities, coupled with the non-availability of 'anti-venom' for snakebite in the nearby hospitals and the irresponsible attitude of the doctors and other staff at the taluk hospital, were factors which contributed to the death of the child. Snakebite anti-venom or ambulances with intensive care facility were not available in the hospitals near educational institutions, the report said.

The report pointed out that educational authorities needed to intensify periodic inspections to ensure hygiene, health facilities and environmental safety in schools.



Gollapudi Maruthi Rao

Veteran Telugu actor-writer Gollapudi dead

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM

Veteran film personality and writer Gollapudi Maruthi Rao, who made Visakhapatnam his home for the past several decades, died at a private hospital in Chennai on Thursday. He was 80 and is survived by wife and sons Subba Rao and Ramakrishna.

Born in Vizianagaram on April 14, 1939, Mr. Maruthi Rao began his career as a journalist with the Telugu daily *Andhra Prabha* as a sub-editor in Chittoor in the early 1960s. He acted in stageplays as a student and led the drama troupe 'Raghava Kala Niketan'.

He penned his first story Aashajeevi in the mid-1960s. He began scripting stories for films with encouragement from film lyricist Dasaradhi. His first story for a film was *Dr. Chakravarthi* starring Akkineni Nageswara Rao.

At the age of 42, he established himself as a character actor in his debut film *Intlo Ramayya Veedhilo Krishnayya* (1982).

His third son Srinivas, who was a film director, died in an accident while shooting for a film in 1992. Mr. Maruthi Rao then instituted an annual memorial award in the name of Srinivas for the best debut film director.

He portrayed varied roles in over 250 films. His last film was *Jodi*. He wrote 12 novels, three children's stories and several essays.

Mysuru giraffe travels 3,200 km by road to Guwahati zoo

Eight-member team accompanied the animal that was shifted in a special crate

SHANKAR BENNUR
MYSURU

The management of the century-old Mysuru zoo has created a record of sorts by successfully transporting a 12-foot tall male giraffe to Guwahati in Assam, covering a distance of about 3,200 km, including roads in hilly terrains, through many States in a custom-built crate that was mounted on a long-chassis truck.

It's not the first time the zoo, which has expertise in the captive breeding of giraffes, has ferried the tallest land animal on long-distance routes. What is unique in this

case was the distance. This was perhaps the longest distance a giraffe has travelled on road so far in recent decades, claimed zoo authorities.

The giraffe, Jayachamarajendra, aged about 14 months, safely reached Guwahati after eight days of travel on the truck and has already acclimatised to its new home in Assam capital. The giraffe was exchanged with an Indian rhino, which is being brought from Guwahati by the team that transported Jayachamarajendra.

The zoo had been making preparations for its long-dis-

tance travel for six months. Food and other essentials for the animal were from Mysuru. An eight-member team, including vets, keepers and helpers, which accompanied the giraffe to Guwahati, put in a lot of efforts to ensure its safe journey.

Gruelling journey

The journey from Kolkata was gruelling with many ghats and congested roads en route. Carrying the tallest animal by road was a big challenge for the team.

"I call this mission a record because of the sheer distance and the difficult

routes. Clearing hurdles such as hanging electric wires, the animal reached safely," said Zoo Executive Director Ajit Kulkarni. Mr. Kulkarni claimed that Jayachamarajendra's road journey could be considered the longest a giraffe had covered so far in the country. "I deem it a major achievement and a milestone for the zoo," he added.

The Mysuru zoo had in the past transported a giraffe to Patna zoo, covering a distance of about 1,800 km. Bheem, the male giraffe, was exchanged with another animal from Patna zoo in 2014.



The giraffe inside the crate on its way to the Guwahati zoo.

IN BRIEF



Medha Patkar's passport set to be impounded

NEW DELHI
In more trouble for Narmada Bachao Andolan activist Medha Patkar, the Regional Passport Office, Mumbai, is set to impound her passport for not disclosing pending criminal cases in her passport application. Since she surrendered the document on December 9, it will automatically be impounded, sources said. PTI

Madras HC nod for release of 'Queen'

CHENNAI
The Madras High Court on Thursday cleared the decks for the release of director Gowtham Vasudeva Menon's web series *Queen*, a "fictional" rendition of the life of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha. It also rejected a plea by Jayalalitha's niece J. Deepa to injunct the release of a biopic titled *Thalaivi*.

2 Maoists killed, jawan injured in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR
Two Maoists were killed and a Special Task Force jawan was injured at separate places during a joint counter-insurgency operation by security forces in Sukma, Chhattisgarh, on Thursday, police said. The ultras were gunned down in an exchange with security forces in the forest between Morpalli and Timapuram villages in the afternoon, officials said.

Odisha officer arrested for abusing wife

BERHAMPUR
Basant Kumar Behera, a recently appointed trainee Odisha Administrative Service officer, allegedly involved in the physical and mental abuse of his wife, was arrested by the Golanthara police in Ganjam, Odisha. He was arrested on Wednesday, following a complaint filed by his wife Kanaklata Behera, sources said.

CAG hints at massive diversion of LPG

Report finds that around 13.96 lakh beneficiaries of PMUY scheme consumed 3 to 41 refills in a month

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, in a report on the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), has highlighted the risk of diversion of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial use, as 1.98 lakh beneficiaries had an average annual consumption of more than 12 cylinders.

The CAG said this level of consumption seemed improbable in view of the BPL (below poverty line) status of such beneficiaries.

"Similarly, 13.96 lakh beneficiaries consumed 3 to 41 refills in a month. Further, IOCL [Indian Oil Corporation Limited] and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) in 3.44 lakh instances issued 2 to 20 refills in a day to a PMUY beneficiary having single-bottle cylinder connection," it said.

The scheme was launched

Vanishing into thin air?

A CAG audit found that in 3.43 lakh instances LPG distributors had issued 2 to 20 refills in a day to a single Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana beneficiary having a single cylinder connection. Table lists customers who ordered more than one refill in a single day and the number of such instances

Daily refills	Customers	Instances
2	2,60,934	3,02,193
3	17,589	20,389
4	6,931	7,574
5	3,829	4,065
6 - 13	9,283	9,587
14 - 20	5	5
Total	2,98,571	3,43,813

■ At least 2.98 lakh customers have applied for more than one refill a day in 3.43 lakh instances

■ As a domestic connection won't need so many refills, the CAG suspects that they are being diverted for commercial use (such as in restaurants)



in May 2016 to safeguard the health of women and children by providing them with clean cooking fuel. Its target was revised to eight crore LPG connections.

As on 31 March 2019, the oil marketing companies had issued 7.19 crore connections, which is about 90% of the target to be achieved till March 2020.

To rule out existing LPG connections in beneficiaries' household, de-duplication was to be carried out based on Aadhaar of all family members.

"Audit noticed that out of 3.78 crore LPG connections, 1.60 crore (42%) connections were issued only on the basis of beneficiary Aadhaar which remained a deterrent

in de-duplication," said the report.

Errors in identification

The CAG said laxity in identification of beneficiaries was noticed as 9,897 connections were issued against Abridged Household List Temporary Identification Numbers (AHL TINs), where names of all family members

Committee to study porn content on Internet

Panel formed by RS Chairman on Dec. 5

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu converted an informal group of MPs constituted to study issues related to pornographic content on the Internet and social media platforms into an adhoc committee.

Mr. Naidu said the committee would submit a report within a month. The group, with Congress MP Jairam Ramesh as coordinator, was formed by the Chairman on December 5.

"On December 5, 2019, I had announced in the House the constitution of an informal group... The group has held several meetings... However, Jairam Ramesh, the coordinator of the informal group, met me



Jairam Ramesh

and explained certain logistics problems being faced by the group being an informal one. I have considered the matter and decided to form an adhoc committee with the same composition," Mr. Naidu told the Upper House.

The group had 14 MPs and was studying issues related to pornographic content on the Internet and its effect on children.

T.N. registers first case of child porn

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu police have booked a suspect under the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and the Information Technology Act for allegedly downloading or uploading and circulating child pornography. This is the first time that the State police have invoked provisions under these amended Acts to curb child pornography.

The Tiruchi police on Thursday arrested Christopher Alphonse, 42, of Khajapet on charges of possessing and circulating child porn. After the investigators summoned the suspect based on specific inputs, he deleted the content from his mobile phone and other devices. However, the police retrieved the child porn films forwarded by the suspect.

IBM's weather forecast system to tap users' phones for data

IBM GRAF can generate forecasts at a resolution of 3 km

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

International technology company IBM plans to make a high-resolution weather forecast model that will also rely on user-generated data to improve the accuracy of forecasts available in India.

IBM GRAF, as the forecast system is called, can generate forecasts at a resolution of 3 kilometres. This is a significantly higher resolution than the 12-kilometre models used by the India Meteorological Department to generate forecasts.

These weather forecast techniques rely on dynamic modelling and collect a trove of atmospheric and ocean data, crunch it in supercomputers and generate forecasts over desired timeframes — three days, weekly or fortnightly. "From the



Weathering the storm: People walking towards a shelter during Cyclone Titli in Odisha in 2018. *AP

tests we've done so far, our forecasts are 30% more accurate than those generated by 12-km resolution models," Cameron Clayton, general manager, IBM Watson Media and Weather, said at a press conference here on Thursday.

For its forecasts, IBM relies on a global network of sensors — automatic weather station, data bouys and barometric pressure data from

'Lotus on passports is security feature'

National symbols will be used: MEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A day after Opposition members in the Lok Sabha raised the issue of the lotus being printed on new passports, the Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday said it was part of the enhanced security features to identify fake passports. The MEA said the measure would involve the use of other national symbols as well on rotation.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, M.K. Raghavan of the Congress said the matter had been highlighted in a newspaper report. He alleged that this was "further saffronisation" of the government establishment, with the lotus being the election symbol of the BJP.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, "This symbol is



Raveesh Kumar

our national flower and is part of the enhanced security features to identify fake passports."

These security features have been introduced as part of the International Civil Aviation Organisation guidelines, he said.

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

12-year-old gang-raped in Haryana

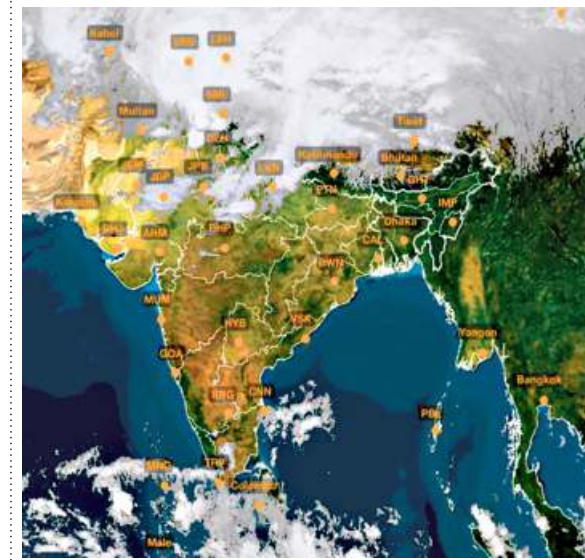
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

A 12-year-old was raped by four persons, including a minor, over the past few months in Haryana's Karnal, police said on Thursday.

"One of the accused, identified as Lovekesh, 20, alias Lovely, has been arrested, while three others have been detained and were being questioned after we received a complaint from the girl," Harjinder Singh, Station House Incharge, Karnal police station, said. The incident happened around two-and-a-half months ago, but the victim with her parents approached the police on Wednesday, he said. The police has registered a case under Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code and other Sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Thunderstorm/hailstorm accompanied with lightning very likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh and Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karaikal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	25.7	13.3		Kozhikode	35.2	25.3	
Ahmedabad	29.5	12.8		Kurnool	31.1	19.1	
Aizawl	8.4			Lucknow	22.4	11.8	
Allahabad	26.0	13.3		Madurai	31.4	22.6	
Bengaluru	27.8	16.8		Mangaluru	35.6	23.4	
Bhopal	15.8			Mumbai	32.5	21.4	
Bhubaneswar	31.0	17.6		Mysuru	28.9	17.3	
Chandigarh	0.6	21.5	13.3	New Delhi	21.5	12.8	
Chennai	30.3	22.1		Patna	23.8	13.0	
Coimbatore	30.2	21.6		Port Blair	30.5	25.6	
Dehradun	22.2	11.6		Puducherry	30.2	20.6	
Gangtok	2.3	11.0	6.6	Pune	30.7	18.3	
Goa	33.6	21.8		Raipur	30.2	16.4	
Guwahati	26.4	13.8		Ranchi	25.0	12.8	
Hubballi	28.0	18.0		Shillong	15.2	5.0	
Hyderabad	18.5	17.0		Shimla	2.8	5.9	2.8
Imphal	22.3	8.3		Srinagar	6.4	-1.4	
Jaipur	24.0	14.4		Thiruvananthapuram	0.5	31.9	24.8
Kochi	34.6	24.4		Tiruchi	31.5	21.8	
Kohima	24.4	6.5		Vijayawada	30.1	21.0	
Kolkata	28.1	18.3		Visakhapatnam	29.3	22.0	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	.73	.20	.08	.149	.121	121
Bengaluru	.11	.43	.47	.64	.84	84
Chennai	.07	.21	.40	.71	.71	71
Delhi	.11	.62	107	.477	.469	469
Hyderabad	.16	.70	.39	.171	.171	171
Kolkata	.18	.81	.21	.189	.168	168
Lucknow	.12	.67	.73	.361	.361	361
Mumbai	.21	.49	.55	.260	.153	153
Pune	.102	.25	.54	.138	.107	107
Visakhapatnam	.07	.54	.41	.54	.99	99

Pollutants in the air you are breathing
In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 467 indicating a dangerous level of pollution. In contrast, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 41.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

'Feroz Khan is at BHU, will teach there'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

"Sanskrit is not just a language but contains the essence of our nation, culture and tradition," said Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal in the Lower House, which on Thursday cleared the Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019.

The Minister, while replying to a question, also told the House that Feroz Khan "will continue teaching Sanskrit in BHU".

Mr. Khan was appointed as an Assistant Professor in the Sanskrit Vidya Dharam Vigyan at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) last month but faced protests by the department's students, who objected to a Muslim teaching Sanskrit.

The Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019, seeks to convert three deemed Sanskrit universities presently functioning in the country into Central universities.

The 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' of the Bill notes that the upgrading of the three deemed to be universities in Sanskrit — the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, the Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth and the Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth Tirupati — into Central universities will enhance the status of these universities and will give a boost to postgraduate, doctoral and post-doctoral education and research "in Sanskrit and Shastraic education".

Assuring the House that the Ministry will work towards promoting all classic languages, starting with Tamil, Mr. Pokhriyal said languages were key to our traditions, heritage and culture.



An exoneration

The clean chit to Modi is unsurprising, but the riots can't be described as spontaneous

Commissions of Inquiry are often seen as tools to manage public perception about lapses on the part of the state whenever an untoward incident takes place. Their reports are rarely submitted on time, many are not made public, and few stray from the 'clean chit' route mapped out for them by the regimes that appointed them. Often, the findings are made public so late as to make little difference. The G.T. Nanavati-A.H. Mehta Commission, constituted to probe the horrific burning of the Sabarmati Express train at Godhra in 2002, and the deadly communal carnage that followed, fits this profile of a judicial commission to a tee. Its exoneration of Narendra Modi, the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, should come as no surprise. Mr. Modi had already been absolved by a Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team. A judicial magistrate had accepted the team's report. There were allegations that Mr. Modi had instructed the police to "allow Hindus to vent their anger" and that he had placed two Ministers in the police control room, but except for some oral testimony, there was no material evidence to back them. The Supreme Court did not accept the views of amicus curiae Raju Ramachandran that there was prima facie material to proceed against Mr. Modi for "promoting enmity between different groups" and "imputations prejudicial to national integration". Since then, Mr. Modi has led his party to victory in two general elections. The issue was never about direct involvement or instigation, but rather about culpable inaction, and his moral and political failure to take responsibility for the lawlessness that consumed the lives of over a thousand people and the mayhem unleashed by perceived supporters of the ruling party under his watch.

It would have been unrealistic to expect that the probe would unearth any new evidence to establish a conspiracy at the highest level of the State government. However, what is somewhat disconcerting is that the panel says there was no orchestrated violence anywhere, and that no organisation or party was involved. This flies in the face of convictions obtained in trial courts against political functionaries, including former BJP Minister Maya Kodnani. Its only major finding on administrative failure pertains to Joint Commissioner of Police M.K. Tandon, under whose jurisdiction 177 people were killed in incidents at Gulburg Society, Naroda Patiya and Naroda Gam. He is indicted for failing to appreciate the gravity of the situation. Otherwise, the report sails with the official explanation that the riots were wholly spontaneous, and that the police did their best to contain it. It is disappointing, but not surprising, that the panel dismisses the testimony of three IPS officers on police complicity or inaction, as false, and questions the work of NGOs working for the victims.

Nation #194?

Bougainville is some distance from nationhood but its people have spoken

With Bougainville's overwhelming vote for independence from Papua New Guinea (PNG), the country has crossed a milestone in the peace process following the civil war that ended in 1998. The non-binding referendum, to ascertain a preference for either greater autonomy or separate statehood, was a promise enshrined in the 2001 Bougainville Peace agreement. In a province of fewer than 3,00,000, the voting process spanning two weeks underscored the challenges facing the regional administration in Buka and that in the national capital of Port Moresby. The Bougainville Referendum Commission undertook the commendable task of enlisting inmates in hospitals and prisons and non-residents to ensure that the conduct of the franchise was inclusive. A testament of the participation was the 85% turnout in the plebiscite. With 98% opting to secede, the people spoke emphatically at the end of an animated campaign.

The demand for separate statehood in Bougainville dates back almost to PNG's independence in 1975. This sentiment was further crystallised by the conflict over the open cast copper mine in Panguna town – among the world's largest and richest – whose revenues accounted for over 45% of the country's export earnings. In the confrontation that centred around sharing the mineral resources, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army was pitted against the PNG security forces for a decade. An estimated 20,000 lives were lost and many were displaced. Enforcing the Bougainville verdict is bound to be protracted, characteristic of the political and administrative processes of carving out the boundaries of a new state. Foremost, in an attempt to give shape to the decision, Port Moresby and Buka will engage in negotiations. Any agreement would have to be ratified by the country's Parliament. Significantly, the Central government had hoped that the region would vote to remain rather than secede, whereas among Bougainvillians and observers, the choice for separation was a foregone conclusion. In a sign of the future shape of events, the PNG Minister responsible for Bougainville recently expressed concern that Buka could set a precedent for any other breakaway movement. There are, moreover, issues around the economic viability of the tiny island group. The controversy over the Panguna mine still lingers, as the company that once controlled operations is vying for restoration of its licence. The Bougainville government, which last year clamped an indefinite moratorium on the mine's reopening, would inevitably have to revisit that decision sooner rather than later. But the advent of the world's 194th nation may be some distance in the future.

In the name of a majority

The NRC in Assam has given us an indication of risks involved in such exercises of inclusion and exclusion



ANUPAMA ROY

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), passed in both Houses this week, promises to give the protection of citizenship to non-Muslims who fled to India to escape religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. While religious persecution is a reasonable ground for protection, the problem with the CAB is that it does not include all communities that suffered religious persecution, and explicitly excludes Muslims who suffered persecution in the specified countries and other non-Muslim majority countries like Myanmar.

This majoritarian notion of religion-based citizenship, although intrinsic to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s idea of India, is not shared by the majority of people in this country. In addition, such a view is alien to the constitutional consensus which emerged in 1950, embodying the idea of a people who committed themselves – and those governing on their behalf – to a constitutional order. Those in support of the CAB have rallied around the argument that it is non-discriminatory and its objectives are justifiable. In doing so, they have often invoked the moral imperative of correcting a perceived past wrong – in this case the Partition. In the process, the CAB changes completely the idea of equal and inclusive citizenship promised in the Constitution.

Changes in citizenship law

The CAB cannot, however, be seen in isolation. It must be seen in tandem with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and other changes

in the citizenship law, which have preceded it. The Home Minister and the Law Minister have clarified that the CAB and the NRC are distinct – the NRC protects the country against illegal migrants and the CAB protects refugees. This, however, is incommensurate with the election speeches made by BJP leaders. For instance, speaking in Kolkata earlier this year, Amit Shah had promised an NRC in West Bengal, but only after the passage of the CAB to ensure that no Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain and Christian refugee is denied citizenship for being an illegal immigrant. In a triumphal note after the passage of the CAB in Lok Sabha, Mr. Shah declared that a nationwide NRC would follow soon.

Despite their seemingly disparate and adversarial political imperatives, the CAB and the NRC have become conjoined in their articulation of citizenship. Indeed, the two represent the tendency towards *jus sanguinis* in the citizenship law in India, which commenced in 1986, became definitive in 2003, and has reached its culmination in the contemporary moment. In 2003, the insertion of the category 'illegal migrants' in the provision of citizenship by birth became the hinge from which the NRC and the CAB later emerged.

The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules of 2003 made the registration of all citizens of India, issue of national identity cards, the maintenance of a national population register, and the establishment of an NRC by the Central government compulsory. Under these rules, the Registrar General of Citizen Registration is to collect particulars of individuals and families, including their citizenship status, through a 'house-to-house enumeration'. In an exception to the general rule, Assam has followed a different



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procedure of 'inviting applications' with particulars of each family and individual and their citizenship status based on the NRC 1951 and electoral rolls up to the midnight of March 24, 1971. The purpose of the NRC is to sift out 'foreigners' and 'illegal migrants', who were referred to at different points as 'infiltrators' and 'aggressors', and a threat to the territory and people of India.

Exempting minority groups

The second strand emerging from the 2003 amendment has taken the form of the CAB, which exempts 'minority communities', Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Christians, from three countries – Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan – from the category of 'illegal migrants'. The CAB brings the citizenship law in line with exemptions already made in the Passport Act 1920 and Foreigners Act 1946 through executive orders in September 2015 and July 2016. It sets a cut-off date of December 31, 2014 as the date of eligibility of illegal migrants for exemption.

It must be noted that a PIL filed by the Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha pending before the Supreme Court has contested the deviation in the cut-off date set for Assam by the Citizenship Amendment Act 1986, March 24, 1971, from the date specified in Article 6 of the Constitution, i.e., July 19, 1948, which applies to the rest of the country. The

CAB is applicable to entire India, and takes the cut-off date forward by several years.

The claim that the CAB does not violate the Constitution is reflective of the recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). The JPC was advised by constitutional experts to use a broader category, 'persecuted minorities', to protect the Bill from the charge of violating the right to equality in Article 14. The CAB uses the category 'minority communities' and goes on to identify them on the ground of religion. The notifications of September 2015 and July 2016, which changed the Passport and Foreigners Acts, had mentioned the term 'religious persecution'. The consideration of religious persecution for making a distinction among persons, the JPC argued, could not be discriminatory, because the distinction was both intelligible and reasonable – satisfying the standards laid down in the Supreme Court judgment in *State of West Bengal vs. Anwar Ali Sarkar* (1952) to affirm adherence to Article 14.

Test of reasonableness

The JPC appears, however, to have overlooked the substantive conditions that the Supreme Court laid down in the same verdict. These require that the criteria of intelligibility of the criteria and the reasonableness of classification, must satisfy both grounds of protection guaranteed by Article 14, i.e., protection against discrimination and protection against the arbitrary exercise of state power. In 2009, the Delhi High Court judgment in *Naz Foundation vs. Government of NCT of Delhi* referred to "a catena of decisions" to lay down a further test of reasonableness, requiring that the objective for such classification in any law must also be subjected to judicial scrutiny. The restraint on state ar-

bitrariness, according to the judgment, was to come from constitutional morality, which as B.R. Ambedkar declared in the Constituent Assembly, was the responsibility of the state to protect.

It remains a puzzle as to why the government wishes to change the citizenship law to address the problem of refugees. The JPC refers to standard operating procedures for addressing the concerns of refugees from neighbouring countries. In the case of refugees from the erstwhile West Pakistan who deposited before the JPC in favour of a CAB, the standard operating procedure was the grant of long-term visas leading to citizenship. One wonders how these refugees will benefit from a law which will put them through an arduous process of proving religious persecution. Immediately after Partition, 'displaced persons' constituted an administrative category, and citizenship files of 1950s tell us how district officials expedited their citizenship in the process of preparation of electoral rolls.

The focus in the recent parliamentary debates, for various reasons, was the eastern borders. States in the region have resisted the CAB, and simultaneously asked for an NRC. West Bengal has been an exception. The reality of imposing a national order of things, through a CAB and an NRC, in non-national spaces will unfold in future but Assam has given us adequate evidence of the risks involved. It can only be hoped that the judiciary and civil society are able to restore constitutional and democratic politics through an exercise of counter-majoritarian power in a context where electoral gains have determined political choices.

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Not many lessons learnt from water planning failures

In the absence of scientific planning and implementation, measures like Jal Shakti Abhiyan may not be successful



J. HARSHA

Following the massive water crisis across India in the summer of 2019, the Central government hurriedly launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA), a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign to be carried out in two phases, across the 255 districts having critical and over-exploited groundwater levels. This campaign, however, was not intended to be a funding programme and did not create any new intervention on its own. It only aimed to make water conservation a 'people's movement' through ongoing schemes like the MGNREGA and other government programmes.

The JSA is partly modelled and driven by some sporadic success stories such as NGO Tarun Bharat Sangh's experiment in Alwar, Rajasthan and Anna Hazare-led efforts in Ralegan Siddhi, Maharashtra. These projects primarily involved building tanks and ponds to capture rainwater and building recharge wells to recharge ground-

water. However, it is unclear whether they were based on reference to watershed management or groundwater prospect maps.

Planning scientifically

Water planning should be based on hydrological units, namely river basins. And, political and administrative boundaries of districts rarely coincide with the hydrological boundaries or aquifer boundaries. However, contrary to this principle of water management, JSA was planned based on the boundary of the districts, and to be carried out under the overall supervision of a bureaucrat. This resulted in the division of basins/aquifers into multiple units that followed multiple policies. There was no data on basin-wise rainfall, no analysis of run-off and groundwater maps were rarely used. As a result, one never came to know whether water harvested in a pond in a district was at the cost of water in adjoining districts.

The JSA also fundamentally ignored the fact that most of India's water-stressed basins, particularly those in the peninsular regions, are facing closure, with the demand exceeding supply. Hence, groundwater recharge happened at the cost of surface water and vice versa. This is where an absence of autonomous and know-



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ledge-intensive river-basin organisations is acutely felt.

As on date, the JSA's portal displays impressive data, images and statistics. For example, it claims that there are around 10 million ongoing and completed water conservation structures; 7.6 million recharge structures. The website also says that one billion saplings have been planted and that six million people participated in awareness campaigns. But, data and statistics can deceive or lie, as claimed by journalist Darrel Huff in his 1954 book *How to Lie with Statistics*.

For example, the data displayed on JSA portal do not speak anything about the pre-JSA water levels, the monthly water levels and impact of monsoon on the water levels across the 255 districts with

critical and over-exploited blocks. They also don't convey anything about the quality of the structures, their maintenance and sustainability. Even if the water levels had been measured, it is unknown whether the measurement was accurate. Many such queries remain unanswered and hidden behind these data and statistics. The results for a 2016 study conducted by the Central Groundwater Board showed that water levels always increase post-monsoon. Therefore, it will require long-term monitoring of water level data to determine the actual impact of a measure like JSA. At present, there is no such parameter to measure the outcome of such a mission-mode campaign. The rat race among districts for ranking has turned out to be meaningless.

Facile assumptions

True, the aim and intent of JSA are noble. But the assumptions are distorted. For example, it assumes that common people in rural areas are ignorant and prone to wasting water; on the contrary, they are the ones who first bear the brunt of any water crisis. The per capita water allocation to those living in rural areas is 55 litres, whereas the same for urban areas like Delhi and Bengaluru is 135-150 litres.

Therefore, the JSA's move to

reach out to poor people and farmers, asking them to 'save water', appears hypocritical, particularly when district administrations blatantly allow the sewage generated from towns and cities to pollute village water sources such as tanks, ponds and wells.

Moreover, it is difficult to say whether measures like JSA can provide long-term solutions. Most of the farm bunds built with soil can collapse within one monsoon season due to rains and/or trespassing by farm vehicles, animals and humans. Further, there are issues like lack of proper engineering supervision of these structures, involvement of multiple departments with less or no coordination, and limited funding under MGNREGA and other schemes. Finally, there have hardly been many efforts undertaken to dissuade farmers from growing water-intensive crops such as paddy, sugarcane, and banana, when it is widely known that agriculture consumes 80% of freshwater.

The summer water crisis has not led to our policymakers learning many lessons, and the country just seems to have returned to a business-as-usual situation.

J. Harsha is Director, Central Water Commission. Views expressed in the article are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Test of democracy

The Rajya Sabha's decision to vote for the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) marked the defeat of the Indian democracy (Front page, "After a heated debate, RS clears Citizenship Bill," Dec. 12). It signalled victory of Hindutva over the Constitution enacted under the supervision of B.R. Ambedkar and was violative of the founding document's basic structure. The Bill is a polarising measure and victimises people belonging to one community.

MAHMUDUL HASAN,
Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh

Protect the Northeast

It pains me and every single person who lives in Assam, speaks Assamese, writes in

Assamese, eats Assamese meals, and loves the culture of Assam, that our birthplace and our motherland is facing a very serious situation due to the CAB. I, and every fellow Assamese, do not wish that this Bill should become an Act. We fear that the number of immigrants in Assam will increase in great numbers and our culture will be overwhelmed. This will also put more pressure on the depleting resources. There already is an abundance of graduates in the State facing unemployment. Unsurprisingly, students in various districts of Assam are protesting, and these demonstrations will grow only get bigger.

DIKSHA DEKA,
Sontipur, Assam

The CAB's very nature has caused the North-Eastern States to protest against it. The Bill has offered citizenship to members of certain minority communities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, without specifying what proof or document will be required to support their claims. The Bill aroused greater suspicion after the non-inclusion of many Bengali Hindus in Assam's National Register of Citizens. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is perhaps attempting to create a vote bank out of these immigrants rather than protecting them. It looks like communities apart from Hindus are included in the CAB only to avoid making it appear too arbitrary. It is also to be noted that the violence that

has gripped the region, especially Assam, has been ignored by the Centre. The government must think about the welfare of all citizens of the country, including those in the North-Eastern States. We need to protect our people and our Constitution.

REAKOR SHISHA KHARKRANG,
Upper Shillong, Meghalaya

Unnecessary hysteria

The Opposition parties have been unnecessarily hysterical in their reaction to the CAB. The Bill could have been objected to had it provided for dispossessing any section of the people of their citizenship. But the Centre is well within its sovereign rights to determine who should be granted citizenship among foreigners. The Opposition

parties are trying to create a false narrative that the Bill is against the Indian Muslims. However, the government does need to answer a few questions: How many such immigrants are there in India eligible to get citizenship? Where these immigrants are staying at present and where will they be accommodated after grant of citizenship?

K.R. JAYAPRAKASH RAO,
Mysuru

Anglo-Indian MPs

The Anglo-Indian community, a microscopic minority comprised mostly of Christians, has been

nominating members both to Parliament and State Assemblies since the passage of the Constitution. The Centre's decision to scrap the quota for the community's members is discriminatory and a clear violation of the Constitution. This cruel move could leave the group with no representation, making it vulnerable. A civilised nation has to ensure that it safeguards the rights of all its minorities, irrespective of how small their numbers are.

J. FERNANDEZ,
Kochi

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: >>>A Sports page story headlined "Rijiju confident of India's good showing at Tokyo" (Dec. 12, 2019) erroneously referred to 2028 Tokyo Olympics. Actually, the 2028 edition will be held in Los Angeles and 2020 games will be held in Japan.

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Should the creamy layer norm be extended to SC/STs?

PARLEY

Reservation for Dalits is not to undo economic backwardness, but as remedy for untouchability

The Centre has called upon the Supreme Court to constitute a seven-judge Bench to examine whether the 'creamy layer' concept should be applied to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for promotions in service. In a conversation moderated by K. Venkataraman, Sukhadeo Thorat and Ashwini Deshpande discuss the basis for reservation and the myths associated with it. Edited excerpts:

Can you give us a perspective on the idea of applying the creamy layer concept to reservation and, in particular, to SCs and STs?

Sukhadeo Thorat: Reservation in politics, services and institutions is given to SCs particularly because they were denied the right to property, education and industries for nearly 2,000 years. Besides they were treated as untouchables. Discrimination continues even today in society. The argument was that to provide them the safeguard [against discrimination] and compensate them to some extent for past exclusions, they should be given representation as per their population share. Because otherwise, due to persisting discrimination in services, enterprises and agriculture, they won't get their due share.

They continue to be landless. I think there the policy should have been reparation or compensation. That has not been done. What we are doing is simply giving some protection against discrimination in the present, and giving a share in proportion to the population. So, instead of going to the Supreme Court, the government should have set up a committee and checked whether people in service face discrimination or not. And I have a feeling that there is a huge discrimination once you get into service. There are about 12,000 cases lying with the SC/ST Commission, complaining about discrimination in service. Therefore, they need protection in promotion also.

Ashwini Deshpande: I agree that the reason for having reservation, at the entry level and then in promotions, is to combat discrimination,

which can be economic or social. But reservation is not an anti-poverty programme. The more advantageous sections of all caste groups are able to enter higher education. So, if we want to make sure that the poor are getting represented, we need a separate set of policies.

We have to recognise that while both OBCs and SCs get reservation, the social reality under which Dalits live and the situation under which OBCs live are very different. So, I would make a case for justifying the 'creamy layer' exclusion from within the OBCs, because for them a lot of it is economic backwardness. And if you are rich enough to cross a certain threshold, there isn't the kind of social discrimination that happens towards Dalits. In fact, there is an argument in the U.S. that richer Blacks face greater discrimination because the Whites resent their entry into areas that are considered privileged for the Whites. So, in a way, there is some evidence to show that discrimination actually increases with a rise in economic position. Even after Dalits get entry into jobs or higher education, there are little micro-aggressions that they face. For example, in educational institutions students complain of harassment because they came in through reservation. We need more data, but to link it with economic status is wrong.

How far do you think the test of backwardness, the adequacy of representation, and the impact of reservations on the efficiency of administration affect or do not affect the prospects of SC/ST candidates?

ST: The reservation policy type of affirmative action is against discrimination; it is not based on economic consideration because the discrimination is independent of your economic standing. Women are asking for reservation. Have they ever raised the issue that relatively better-off women should not get political reservation? Because they are discriminated based on gender, poor or non-poor. So, I think this clarity has to be there.

I take the view that economic concessions should not be given.



RAJESH BHATT

Don't give them subsidies, scholarships, because some of them are economically better-off, but you cannot extend that argument to say that reservation should not be given to the economically better-off. So, I think the Supreme Court has to understand the point academically; I don't think the issue is legal.

If there is a question of limit, the limit can be modified. If promotion harms others, there are other ways of helping them. The Supreme Court should not put a legal limit on it, 50% or otherwise. Find out the alternative ways of benefiting non-SCs/STs, while retaining reservation for SCs/STs.

AD: One more point. If you treat the unfilled vacancies as a separate unit to be filled, you actually don't even exceed the 50%. In any case, the 50% limit is a bit arbitrary. It also has to be rethought. But even if you don't go into that today, the point is that if you consider the unfilled vacancies as a separate unit, and not club that with upcoming vacancies, it is possible to not violate that 50%.

One more aspect is the test of backwardness. In Jarnail Singh, the court felt that the test of backwardness should not be made applicable at all to SC/STs. But at the same time it advocated the creamy layer concept to be applied. Isn't there some contradiction here?

ST: Yeah, I think there is a contradiction. On the one hand, they say that no criteria or indicator should be applied of backwardness to the SCs and STs. And on the other, they are trying to apply the same economic criteria to exclude some of the relatively economically better-

The economically better-off also face discrimination, in service and many other spheres. They also need a safeguard and that safeguard is the affirmative action policy

off SCs. And if at all the Supreme Court has to take a position, it should ask the government to set up a comprehensive committee to study the practice of untouchability and discrimination faced by SCs and STs. The court should revise its position, and see where they continue to face discrimination in all spheres of life. If a community does not face discrimination, then you can develop an anti-poverty policy for the poor. But when there is discrimination, you have a separate policy all over the world.

AD: The point that both of us are repeating is that the reason for reservations for Dalits is not economic backwardness. It is the stigma that comes on account of the untouchable status. And even though legally untouchability has been abolished, there is a lot of data that show that people still practise untouchability. So the stigma that comes on account of an untouchable status... reservation is only a tiny remedial measure for that. This continuous clubbing together of economic backwardness and stigma because of the untouchable status is wrong. Because you can talk about economic backwardness, but for Dalits you have to address the stigma.

One argument was that while at the entry level a person is genuinely deprived, and reservation is a remedial measure, as he goes up the

ladder in both income and status there may not be any need for reservation in promotions. And that the creamy concept should be applied at that level.

ST: We are emphasising the point that the policy of reservation or affirmative action is based on discrimination, that is denial of equal opportunity which others enjoy. And the economically better-off also face discrimination, in service and many other spheres. They also need a safeguard and that safeguard is the affirmative action policy. What I had also said is that since they are economically better-off, don't give them economic advantages like subsidies. They can afford that but you cannot extend this argument to say reservation should be withdrawn for the better-off. There is need for reservation in promotions because they face discrimination in promotions. We don't have studies on this. The Supreme Court and government should undertake a study.

Reservation is sort of peanuts. The public sector accounts for a small portion of jobs. And it is there they get some share. In private, they have no protection against discrimination. What you require is compensation for 2,000 years of repression. We have to give them land, funding to start industries, and for education. So, you require a large policy of compensation, reparation, supplemented by reservation.

There is a provision in Article 335 on how affirmative action should be subject to overall efficiency. A Division Bench recently rejected the idea that reservation will have an impact on efficiency, but even then I think the view is still prevalent.

AD: This belief that reservations affect the efficiency of public services is a complete myth. I have done a study with the Indian Railways. And that is the only long-term, big-scale study to actually empirically estimate the effect of reservations on efficiency. Reservations have no negative effect on efficiency. If anything, at the top level, they actually have a positive effect. Recently, another study came out looking at IAS officers' performance indicators, and that study reached the same conclusion. There is another study too.

The point is that this myth is so strong that people are not willing to publicise the rigorous examination of this question.

The courts insist on quantifiable data - whether it is on backwardness, on inadequacy of representation or the question of efficiency. Do you think it's too onerous a requirement for the government to demonstrate everything through quantifiable data?

AD: I strongly support a data-based, evidence-based approach to judging reservations. We need to have greater transparency and data-based evidence to support any claims.

ST: I would like to add that under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, it is the government's responsibility to undertake a study every five years, to bring out the nature of discrimination and untouchability faced by Dalits. The government's SC/ST Commission report is supposed to have a separate chapter on untouchability. That report has not been brought out in the last 20 years or so. The government has also not done any study. There are quantitative techniques that will capture qualitative relationships but unfortunately such surveys have been bypassed by the NSSO.

The reservation policy as it exists has been helpful and is a pro-poor policy. More than 60% of government employees are Class 3 or Class 4 employees and are poor and less educated. At the same time, there is massive privatisation of public sector jobs and the public sector is increasingly taking on contractual jobs for which there is no reservation. There is a need to extend reservation to the private sector as well.

AD: We need a strong anti-discrimination framework. There are so many barriers for the oppressed to approaching the justice system that it is difficult for somebody with genuine grievances about discrimination to seek justice. There is now a greater awareness about gender discrimination and institutions are making sure they develop structures to tackle it. We need similar structures for caste discrimination in the workplace.



Sukhadeo Thorat is former chairman, UGC, and Professor Emeritus, Centre for the Study of Regional Development, School of Social Sciences, JNU



Ashwini Deshpande is Professor of Economics, Ashoka University



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

Capitol Hill raises an eyebrow

In some quarters, Washington's love affair with Modi's India has hit a rough patch

MICHAEL KUGELMAN

On December 9, when the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha, the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) issued an extraordinary statement on Twitter: "Religious pluralism is central to the foundations of both India and the United States and is one of our core shared values. Any religious test for citizenship undermines this most basic democratic tenet. #CAB-Bill." This statement says much about shifting perceptions in Capitol Hill about India and the U.S.-India relationship. It comes on the heels of sharp Congressional criticism of India, much of it leveled by Democrats, and mainly focused on New Delhi actions in Jammu and Kashmir.

A significant statement

However, the HFAC tweet is particularly significant. First, it was issued by a Congressional committee - in this case, a key bipartisan body involved with legislation on international affairs. This was not a case of a sole elected official levying criticism. It was a tweet that required some level of informal consensus from the committee in order to be posted. In other words, it reflected the views of a critical mass of elected officials focused on foreign affairs.

Second, the statement targeted a piece of legislation in India that hasn't even been signed into law. This was not a case of the HFAC railing against a newly enshrined law, much less an implemented policy. In other words, the committee was delivering a pre-emptive salvo against a Bill that has quite some time to go before it becomes the law of the land in India. Such criticism, at this relatively early moment in the legislation's life, is quite unusual, and a reflection of the deep concern harboured by Capitol Hill about the Bill.

Third, the HFAC statement invoked the U.S.-India relationship. It underscored the shared values that underpin the partnership, before suggesting that the Bill undermines those very values. Indeed, the two democracies have both seen considerable democratic backsliding, including on religious pluralism, over the last few years. The HFAC state-

ment is a reminder that one of the core pillars, shared values, of U.S.-India partnership is taking a major hit. Shared interests more than shared values are increasingly what drive the relationship today. Recent messaging from both capitals, which has emphasised the former more than the latter, makes that quite clear.

To be sure, we shouldn't overstate the significance of the HFAC's tweet. Congress doesn't drive or determine policy towards India - a useful reminder when considering the intensifying drumbeat of Congressional criticism (ranging from hearings to a recently introduced bipartisan resolution) of India's actions in J&K. Still, make no mistake: A bipartisan Congressional committee has called out a piece of Indian legislation and highlighted the potential damage it could inflict on the U.S.-India relationship. And such criticism has emerged from one of the most pro-India political places in Washington.

Another critic

Consider as well another American government critic of the Citizenship Bill - the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). On December 9, USCIRF released a missive decrying the legislation and calling on the U.S. government to "consider sanctions" against Home Minister Amit Shah and "other principal leadership" if the Bill passes in both legislative chambers. USCIRF too doesn't set U.S. policy on India. Still, it's quite striking to hear an organ of Washington officialdom speaking of sanctioning Indian officials five years after the Obama administration ended its visa ban on Narendra Modi.

This isn't to say that the bilateral relationship is about to take a major plunge. Indeed, the State Department, the Defence Department and the White House remain firmly on board with U.S.-India strategic partnership. Still, at least in some quarters, Washington's love affair with Modi's India has hit a rough patch.

Michael Kugelman is Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia with the Asia Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington, DC

NOTEBOOK

News that goes around comes around

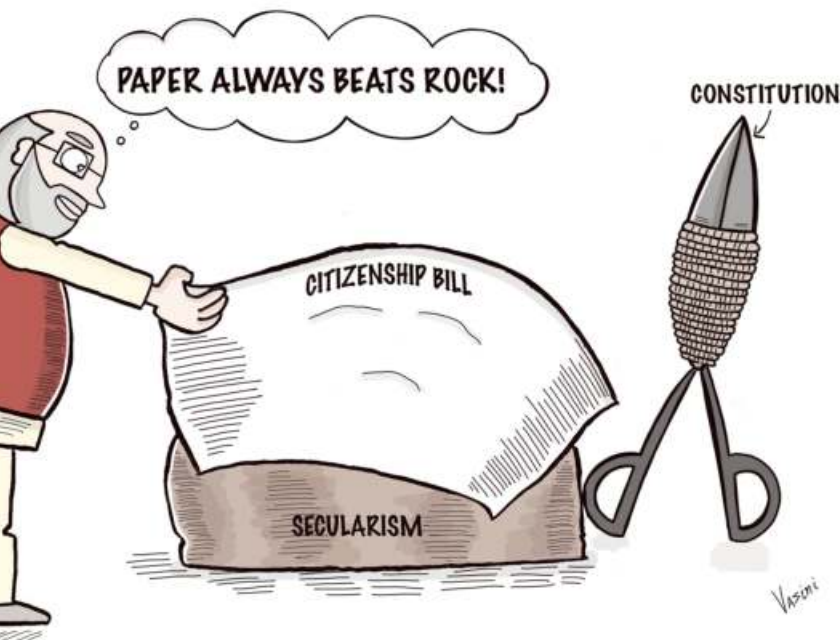
Journalists cannot depend on just one source of information

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN

You might have heard the story of the native Indians and the weather forecast.

Here's how it goes: Winter is coming, and the native Indians ask their chief how bad it will be. The chief tells them he will get back after listening to nature's secrets. It's the modern era, and there are meteorologists around. Pragmatic as he is, the chief reaches out to experts in the weather station, who tell him that the winter is going to be colder than usual. When this is communicated to his people, they start cutting more wood than usual.

After some time, the chief reaches out again to the weathermen. This time the forecast is of an even harsher winter. And again, after the chief tells his people this, much more wood is cut. This goes on for a few more cycles, and in the



final exchange the meteorologists tell the chief that it's going to be the harshest winter ever. By now, the pragmatic chief is sceptical. How did you figure this out, asks the chief. Their answer: "The Indians are cutting wood like crazy."

It's a story alright, and a funny one at that, but it may not be a bad starting point to understand how people form views as well as spread cheer and fears. Also, an important lesson if you are a journalist: don't depend on just one source of information.

I learnt this lesson quite early in my career, as they say many moons ago, when I worked briefly for a business wire agency. I was then working as a reporter and one of my tasks was to religiously track the cotton market in which varieties with fascinating names like Shankar-6 and Bengal Desi abound. Often referred to as 'white gold,' cotton has



AP

been considered valuable since ancient times. But in the world of commodities where oil and metals rule, cotton is easily inconspicuous. It's an utterly low profile item - so low profile that, back then, there used to be only a few analysts who tracked the commodity. And they were low profile too!

On the flip side, tracking cotton gave a journalist an understanding of not only the agriculture side of things but also its end use in textile manufacturing, garments, and branding. Its importance to the well-being of the textile indus-

try, the second largest employer after agriculture in India, cannot be ignored. At that time, however, my concern was in writing multiple stories a day, sometimes on how cotton will fare in the market - both the physical one as well as the future one.

Over time, I found a few analysts who were helpful with their insight. Once, many days after perfecting this daily routine, I wrote a piece on why prices could stiffen in the coming days because of unseasonal rains in many cotton-growing regions of the country. I don't vividly remember the conversation that I had with one of those routine analysts the next day but what I very well remember is the lesson. I reached out to him as usual, seeking insight. He gave me some. I asked him for the reasons. He hesitated a bit, and said, "You yourself have said so in your report yesterday."

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 13, 1969

President addresses Governors

The President, Mr. V.V. Giri to-day [December 12, New Delhi] called upon the Governors to face new situations with sagacity and impartiality, and free from political pressures or party bias. Mr. Giri, who was inaugurating the annual conference of the Governors at Rashtrapati Bhavan said: "The Governor's position today is becoming increasingly important. The Governor's action and inaction are open to the public gaze and often public criticism." The President hoped that in the discussions of the conference, the Governors would exchange views based on their personal experience and evolve norms and conventions which might facilitate their work and help in laying down proper standards. He laid considerable stress on the responsibilities of a Governor in the new context and said that his role had assumed special significance. "To-day, more than at any time before, the Governors are called upon to face situations which were perhaps not fully envisaged when our Constitution was framed."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DEC. 13, 1919

The Australian Flight.

London, December 9. - The Report of the Advisory Committee on civil aviation on imperial air routes, and the speeding up of inter-imperial communications unhesitatingly decide that the initial route should be between Great Britain and India and ultimately from India to Australia. The Report therefore recommends the development of a route from Egypt to India. It considers that Imperial routes will be best developed by private enterprise backed by state assistance, which latter should consist of the provision of meteorological and wireless services and air ports, including shed for running purposes the necessity of additional expenditure on the development of air ports will be determined by experience. The Report recommends that some of the surplus material of the Air Force should be distributed gratis in Great Britain and the Colonies and the ban prohibiting civil aviation in Egypt and India should be removed. The Committee states that the present report is confined to a discussion about heavier than air machines. It will present a report on lighter than air machines later. The Committee also has only investigated the establishment of main trunk lines between the United Kingdom and the principal parts of the Empire.

FROM PAGE ONE

Anti-CAB protests rage through Assam

A government order said Mr. Singh was posted as ADGP, Law and Order, pending repatriation from central deputation "in the interest of public service".

The State has indicated a crackdown on protesters with more than 5,000 paramilitary personnel, besides the Army, deployed in sensitive areas. It has also instructed the local authorities to take action.

RTI activist and peasant leader Akhil Gogoi was arrested in Jorhat district as a preventive measure, offi-

cials said. A senior official of the Jorhat administration said Mr. Gogoi was taken into custody to avoid any "un-toward incident" in the district, as well as other parts of the State by his supporters.

As protests continued, Assam Assembly Speaker Hitendra Nath Goswami in statement said doubts over the CAB were not baseless, and there was a strong possibility of it creating divisions if implemented.

(With inputs from Vijaita Singh, PTI)

Opposition objects to advisory for TV channels

"Information and Broadcasting Ministry advisory to TV channels tantamount to media censorship. Stop intimidating the media. A second emergency," Mr. O'Brien tweeted.

Congress leader Pranav

Jha tweeted: "By issuing this advisory, is the Government actually ordering the Media to not show protests against the #CAB? After internet ban, this is Media ban. Repression at any cost. Condemnable to say the least".

IIP shrinks again in October; inflation up

The electricity sector contracted sharply by 12.2%, compared with a contraction of 2.6% in the previous month.

"The growth story is driven by a continuing fall in demand, and the inflation spike is driven by seasonal factors," Mr. Srivastava ad-

ded. "If the government had anticipated this, it should have filled in the gaps by imports and inflation would not have spiked".

Within the CPI, food inflation climbed to 8.66% in November compared with 6.93% in October, which itself was a 39-month high.

Hyderabad 'encounter': SC forms panel

The Telangana government, represented by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, welcomed an impartial probe.

The government said it had registered an FIR against the four dead accused for attempting to murder policemen. "We don't think your trial for non-existing, dead accused will take you anywhere," CJI Bobde drily dismissed the submission. In fact the court found an FIR against dead people "rather odd" as it was obvious that "no prose-

duction is contemplated against dead persons who can neither be tried nor convicted".

The four accused were taken to the scene of the crime around 60 km from Hyderabad in the early hours of December 6 for a re-construction of crime scene. The Telangana government stuck to its version that the accused men surprised their police escort there, grabbed their guns and tried to kill the policemen to escape custody.

'Fall in onion output caused price spike'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

"There is a shortfall of over 15.8 lakh tonnes in onion production, which has caused a spike in onion prices," said Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar in Lok Sabha, replying to a discussion on crop loss and its impact on farmers.

"There is definitely a shortage of onions...The current problem [price rise] is due to this. And this is natural. Our government has taken several measures, including banning its export and allowing import," he said.

Talking about the shortage, the Minister said the States placed the expected onion production at 69.9 lakh tonnes in November, but actual onion production was likely to be 53.73 lakh tonnes. To deal with the problem, the government had banned the export of onions and ordered imports, said Mr. Tomar, adding, "I have also written to the Chief Ministers to take steps to deal with the issue." Speaking on other farmer-related issues, Mr. Tomar said the government was working to make the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna more beneficial to farmers.

Uproar in Parliament over CAB

Kashmir model replicated in northeast: Adhir; Cong. instigating violence: Joshi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government and the Opposition clashed in the Lok Sabha on Thursday after Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi accused the Congress of stoking protests and instigating violence in the northeastern region following the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

During Zero Hour, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said the entire region was in flames, barring a few places. He said the violence stemmed from the passage of the Bill and the apprehensions of the people about the consequences. "The Kashmir phenomenon is being replicated in the northeastern region; it has become a Kashmir, and it is seeing a similar Internet shutdown. The situation in Kashmir has not normalised because of these people [the ruling party members]..."

Mr. Pralhad Joshi said it was, in fact, the Congress that was instigating violence in the region, and the government condemned it. His remark prompted an uproar among the Congress members, who walked out.

In the Rajya Sabha, as Home Minister Amit Shah reiterated the government's resolve to prepare a nationwide National Register of Ci-



On fire: The violence in Assam found an echo in Parliament on Thursday. (PTI)

tizens (NRC), Congress MP Rajeev Gowda asked the government on Thursday to spell out what it would do with those excluded from the list in view of the deplorable condition in Assam's detention camps, where the death toll was rising.

Plight of NRC-excluded Mr. Gowda said "now-illegal immigrants" would be housed in these camps after the NRC was published in the State. Nearly 19 lakh individuals had been excluded from the list, and the government had not sent them any letter, spelling out the reasons for their exclusion. The excluded were supposed to file corrective petitions at

the foreigners' tribunal with supporting documents to prove their Indian citizenship.

He spoke about a 2.5-hectare camp, one of the proposed 10, that is operational in Goalpara district. "While officials claim that the camps will be better than prisons, media reports and the past history paint a different picture. As per the latest reports, the death toll in detention centres has reached 28. The reasons range from consumption of unfit food and insanitary conditions to suicide."

In January 2019, the government circulated a 'model detention centre manual' to all the States and Union

Territories, which had not been made public. "In response to questions raised in Parliament, the Home Ministry said there would be "sufficient toilets, communication and medical facilities". This reply led to more questions such as what did "sufficient" mean? what are the communication facilities and how can they be used? Given the segregation by gender, how often can members of the same family interact? Will they be permitted to work? How long will they be detained? "This is a humanitarian issue. At the very least, the government should be transparent about the process and the future of detainees," he said.

SC dismisses 19 Ayodhya review pleas

One petition said the verdict had a direct impact on the secular fabric of India

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde, on Thursday dismissed 19 petitions seeking a review of the court's November 9 verdict permitting the construction of a temple on the land in Ayodhya where Babri Masjid stood before it was razed on December 6, 1992, by kar sevaks.

"We have carefully gone through the review petitions and the connected papers filed therewith. We do not find any ground, whatsoever, to entertain the same. The review petitions are, accordingly, dismissed... Applications for listing of review petitions in open court are dismissed," the Bench, which considered the review pleas in an in-chamber ses-



sion, said. Review petitions are usually examined for merit in the chambers.

If the judges find any reason for a review, they would order open court hearings, during which lawyers from both sides would present their arguments.

'Several illegalities' Among the review petitions is one filed by Maulana Syed Ashhad Rashidi, president of

country. They include Irfan Habib, Harsh Mander, Farah Naqvi, Nandini Sundar, Shabnam Hashmi, John Dayal and Jayati Ghosh, among others.

The verdict had declined the Muslims' claim of title over the disputed land but allowed them five acres somewhere else in the area as compensation.

The unanimous judgment was originally delivered by a Bench of then CJI Ranjan Gogoi, Justices S.A. Bobde, D.Y. Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer. Interestingly, it did not carry the name of the judge who wrote it for the Bench.

Justice Bobde succeeded Justice Gogoi as CJI on the latter's retirement in mid-November and Justice Sanjiv Khanna replaced Justice Gogoi on the Review Bench.

IN BRIEF



RS names 10 MPs in data protection Bill panel

The Rajya Sabha nominated 10 members to the joint panel of Parliament on the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, on Thursday. The Upper House passed the motion to nominate the members moved by Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. He said the Bill provides for a "robust" mechanism for protection of data.

Minister writes to CMs, CJs on women's safety

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday wrote to Chief Justices of 25 High Courts and to all Chief Ministers urging them to ensure that investigation into cases of crime against women and children are completed within two months. The letters stressed on fair and prompt investigation.

Third phase of Jharkhand Assembly polls peaceful

The third phase of the Jharkhand Assembly elections passed off peacefully on Thursday, with voter turnout estimated at 62.35% in 17 Assembly constituencies, including 12 Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected segments. There was no report of any major violence in the third phase.

INTERVIEW | P. CHIDAMBARAM

'It is a clear signal, a blunt signal to Muslims'

You can live and work in India, but you will not be entitled to rights, says former Minister

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

In this exclusive interview, his first after his release on bail in the INX Media case, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram speaks of the Citizenship Bill and the ills plaguing the economy.

Now that the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) has been passed, where do you go from here? Your tweet did hint that the Bill might be challenged in the Supreme Court.

■ It's not a hint. It will happen. I think already a number of people are getting ready to challenge the Bill. Whether political parties will formally challenge the Bill, I cannot say, but it will be challenged by a number of concerned citizens and groups.

Assam has virtually erupted, other States in the Northeast are also pretty tense. Why do you think the government went ahead at this time?

■ Government was taken by surprise when it found that the bulk of the 1.9 million people finally excluded under NRC (National Register of Citizens) were Bengali Hindus. That's what Derek O'Brien [Trinamool Congress MP] said in Parliament. Now the bulk of them are Bengali Hindus. It's very unlikely though that all of them are illegal migrants. They had to find a

way in which to take the Bengali Hindu out of the 1.9 million NRC list.

Some critics say that this is bringing in Hindu Rashtira through the back door. What is your take?

■ It is. It is a clear signal, a blunt signal to the Muslim community of India: "Listen you are not equal. You are in India but you are not equal". This is the Golwalkar-Savarkar theory: you can live in India, you can work in India but you will not be entitled to the rights and privileges of an Indian citizen.

You have accused the government of being clueless, if Mr. Chidambaram were to handle the economy at this juncture what are the four or five things he would do?

■ First, tell the Prime Minister: let's admit our mistakes: demonetisation; a poorly drafted and poorly implemented GST; tax terrorism and excessive powers to the taxing and other investigating agencies completely disproportionate to the nature



of the problems that we face. Today, any officer of any department can send out a notice. So, first, let us admit our mistakes. Secondly, admit that our diagnosis of the problem was wrong. Even day before yesterday, the Chief Economic Adviser said these are cyclical problems. Whereas economist after economist - including Raghuram Rajan [former RBI Governor] - day before yesterday said this is a structural problem.

If the first two pieces of advice are not accepted by the Prime Minister, my third advice to the Finance Ministers is to resign.

Do you see a political revival for the opposition parties, for the Congress?

■ I think the parties are reviving. But there is still some distance to go because they

back but he doesn't seem to be interested. There seems to be confusion.

■ The Congress has a problem. We have found a temporary solution to the problem by asking Mrs. Gandhi to assume the Office of interim leader. And I think eventually the Congress leaders have to sit down together and find the leader who will run the party machinery.

See, running the party is one thing from leading the nation. Sometimes it will be a happy coincidence, the party leader can also be the leader of the nation. But at the moment we need party leaders to lead the party at the Centre and in the States.

When you look back at those 106 days, what comes to your mind?

■ What comes to my mind is that our criminal justice system, at least, the procedural criminal justice system, appears to be badly broken. It requires to be repaired. There are 14,000 undertrials in that jail and nobody gets bail. And many of them would have spent seven-five years.

Let me underline that the procedural criminal justice system is badly broken.

(Full interview on bit.ly/ChidambaramInterview)

Sena gets Home, NCP Finance, Cong. Revenue

Cabinet expansion after winter session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Fifteen days after swearing in ceremony in Maharashtra, the government has finally announced the portfolio distribution in the state, ahead of winter session of the legislature to begin from December 16. At present six ministers will handle all portfolios and Cabinet expansion will take place after the session.

While Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has not taken any portfolio, the Sena's Eknath Shinde will be the new Home Minister. Mr. Shinde will also handle Urban Development, Environment, Water supply and sanitation, Tourism, MSRDC and Parliamentary Affairs.

Nationalist Congress Party's Jayant Patil will handle

Finance and Planning. He will also handle Housing, Public Health, Cooperation, Minority Affairs, Food and civil supplies and Labour. Congress minister Balasheb Thorat will handle Revenue, Power, Medical Education, School Education and Animal Husbandry and Fisheries.

Industries, Higher Education, Agriculture, Transport, Horticulture will be with Sena's Subhash Desai. While Chhagan Bhujbal of NCP will handle Rural development, Irrigation, Social Justice, Excise, Skill development and FDA. Nitin Raut of the Congress will have OBC department, Tribal welfare, PWD, Relief and Rehabilitation, Women and Child Welfare, Social Justice and Textile.

Article 370 petitioners seek a larger Bench

Cite conflict of opinion in two verdicts

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The petitioners challenging the abrogation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday urged the five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court to refer the case to a larger Bench.

Appearing before the Constitution Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana, senior advocate Dinesh Dwivedi, appearing for economist Prem Shankar Jha, said there was a "direct conflict" of opinion between two judgments, one of 1959 and the other of 1970, about the nature and extent of Article 370. The President's notification on August 5 abrogated the special status of J&K by blunting Article 370, which sources the privileges accorded to the erstwhile State in accordance with the assurances which was made in the Instrument of Acces-

sion signed between the J&K ruler and the Government of India.

However, the two past judgments, both by five-judge Benches of the Supreme Court, gave contradictory viewpoints on Article 370. The 1959 one, *Prem Nath Kaul versus State of Jammu and Kashmir*, indicated that Article 370 was applicable only till the J&K Constitution was enacted on January 26, 1957. After that, no further changes could be made to the relationship between India and J&K.

But the judgment reported in the 1970 *Sampath Prakash versus State of Jammu and Kashmir* case ignored the 1959 verdict and concluded that Article 370 was permanent in nature and a "perennial source of power" for the Centre to govern its relationship with the State of J&K.

APPEAL
Name of Patient: Sivakesava, 7 years.
Hospital Name: Christian Medical College.
Diagnosis: T Cell Non Hodgkins Lymphoma. His treatment is for 3 years and total Cost of treatment is Rs. 7,00,000/-
We request kind hearted Philanthropists to save him. Kindly send donation by Cheque / D.D / M.O favouring Save Poor Lives and on the back of cheque write A/C Sivakesava SIB Account No. 20000913487. State which is exempted under 80G of I.T. Act.
Bank of India, Raja Annamalaiapuram Branch, and IFSC CODE: SBI0001655
Contact: SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, (ADMIN DIVISION) Flat No. A1, Ceetros Garden, Ground Floor, Old No. 76, Kamarajar Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai-600028. Ph: 044-42044165, Mobile: 9884607377, E-mail: savepoorlives@gmail.com Our website: www.savepoorlives.com
DONATION GIVEN TO PATIENTS UPTO MARCH 2019 FOR Rs. 4.26, 83,355/- AND SCHOLARSHIP 7,30,800/- NOVEMBER DONATION GIVEN Rs. 4,71,734/-

INTERVIEW | RAM MADHAV

‘Citizenship Bill is intended to address Partition-related fallout’

The legislation is for empowering minorities, giving them an opportunity for claiming citizenship, says the BJP general secretary in charge of northeast India

NISTULA HEBBAR

BJP general secretary and party in-charge for northeastern States **Ram Madhav** says the *Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019*, fulfils the party's promise to undo the harm of Partition and give an opportunity to those in a stateless condition.

The passage of the Bill in Parliament has set off unrest in the northeast, especially Assam. Wasn't there an anticipation of this reaction?

■ The Bill passed in the Rajya Sabha yesterday [Wednesday] is another historic commitment fulfilled by our government and party.

It will open doors for those waiting for many years in an almost stateless condition in our country for citizenship. It is unfortunate that some parties and groups are trying to mislead the public by portraying it wrongly. This Bill is for the entire country, it is not for excluding anybody. In the northeast, largely the situation is normal and peaceful. There was some issue in Tripura, which we have resolved through dialogue and nego-

tations. The tribal groups have met and discussed their issues with Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb, and announced yesterday that they are withdrawing the agitation.

The only State where there are some protests is Assam. Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have both said this Bill is not against the interest of any State. We are reassuring again that the Government of India and Assam take the responsibility for protecting the State's culture and language; we are committed to the implementation of the Assam Accord, especially Clause 6, which is all about providing constitutional and legal and other mechanisms for protection of the identity of Assam.

A major criticism of the Bill

is that it specifically excludes Muslims.

■ The Bill is for empowering minorities, giving them an opportunity for claiming citizenship. This Bill is specific to minorities for a particular reason. During Partition, which was on the basis of religion, there was huge migration, both ways. We had taken care of citizenship issues in the first three years, but many more came over the years as the two countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh, became Islamic Republics. Many in fluxes continued over the years.

Today, those things have abated, at least from Bangladesh, but continue from Pakistan. Even now a large number of the Scheduled Caste people come over the border fearing persecution. It's a clear case of religious persecution as a fallout of the religious partition of this country. We had accepted them in the immediate aftermath of Partition. We accepted them after the Bangladesh war. In the latter case, under



the Indira-Mujib Accord, we accepted 1.5 million minorities who had migrated to India but denied them citizenship. So they lived here as our people but without citizenship. This Bill will provide an opportunity to these people to claim citizenship; we are not thrusting it on anybody nor denying it to anybody else.

But, as was pointed out in Parliament by the Opposition, Balochs, Hazaras, Ahmediyas are also groups that can be included under the rubric of the religiously persecuted.

■ Historically, India has been

related fallout, this number is huge.

What is the number?

■ Exact number is not known, but in the 1970s when the Indira-Mujib agreement happened, at that time itself the number was 1.5 million.

There is a charge against the government that the Bill has been brought solely as part of the BJP's strategy in West Bengal, to create a Hindu vote bank of those who have come over from Bangladesh into West Bengal.

■ It is not proper to link this decision to elections. You know that polls are more than a year-and-a-half away. If that was our intention, then what was to stop us bringing this in the next year, closer to the polls. The whole objective was to fulfil our commitment, one which we have made to the people before the Lok Sabha election.

Bangladesh Foreign

Minister A.K. Abdul Momin has cancelled his trip to Delhi and there seems to be much hurt feelings over the parliamentary debate over the Bill in Bangladesh and in Afghanistan. Has the government shot itself in the foot diplomatically?

■ Every effort will be made to ensure that there will be no adverse diplomatic fallout. This Bill is, as I said, in a way, a continuation of the efforts to sort out the unfinished fallout of Partition. For example in 1950, the then Union government had promulgated a Bill called the Expulsion of Illegal Immigrants from Assam Act. When the issue of migrants fleeing persecution across the border was brought to Pandit Nehru's notice, at that time too, it was decided such people would be exempted from the purview of expulsion. I have already mentioned the Indira-Mujib Accord.

What we are doing is that those migrants who had come over into India, living here, would be given an op-

portunity to claim citizenship. We are not using any coercive stance against any other country. So no other country's interests are in anyway affected by this Bill. It's not going to be a prospective Bill. There is a cut-off date of December 31, 2014.

Home Minister Amit Shah has said a nationwide National Register of Citizens is coming. There is an apprehension that it will be used to strategically disenfranchise some communities.

■ That is a baseless fear. No country in the world allows non-citizens the rights of citizens, and has its own ways of determining citizenship. The last time such an exercise was undertaken in India was in 1951. Late Home Minister, CPI's Indrajit Gupta who served in the Gujral government, had said in Parliament that there were 1.25 crore illegal residents, but we have never tried to identify them. So the exercise will be to repeat the 1951 exercise.

Kashmir model imposed on Assam, says Opposition

'Internet, media blacked out, Army deployed'

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Condemning the deployment of paramilitary forces and suspension of the Internet in Assam and Tripura, Opposition leaders said the Kashmir model was being imposed in the northeast by the Modi government.

"They have brought the Kashmir model to Assam and the northeast. Internet has been suspended, media blackout has been advised by this government. They don't want people to know what is happening in Assam and the rest of the northeast. Trains and flights have been cancelled. Army has been brought out on the street," Gaurav Gogoi, Congress MP from Assam, told *The Hindu*.

Rajya Sabha MP and Congress Assam State president

Ripun Bora said, "The situation in Assam is worse than in Kashmir. Eleven districts are under curfew, there have been police firing at nine places. Paramilitary forces have overrun the State".

Union Minister and Dibrugarh MP Rameswar Teli said that his uncle's shop was set on fire and the boundary wall of his house was damaged by protesters on Wednesday night.

Bodoland Peoples Front's Biswajit Daimary said the go-

vernment needed to speed up the report of high-level committee on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord that promises to safeguard the interest of Assamese people from the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. "We supported the Bill because Home Minister assured us that Schedule Six areas will not be affected," Mr. Daimary said.

"There has to be a way of settling these protests by negotiations," K.G. Kenye, Naga Peoples Front MP, said.

Civil rights groups hold protests in Kolkata

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Scores of civil rights groups organised protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill here on Thursday, while celebrations were witnessed outside the State headquarters of the BJP. The Trinamool did not organise any protest. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who was busy at the Bengal Business Summit in Digha, called a

meeting of MPs and the MLAs to chalk out a strategy to counter the Bill.

BJP workers at the party headquarters came face to face with Congress supporters who were taking out a rally. A few hours later, tensions prevailed in the area when a few students of Presidency University, less than 200 metres from the BJP office, marched with copies of the Constitution.



Uncontained rage: People taking to the streets during a curfew in Guwahati on Thursday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

India faces a diplomatic challenge

Bangladesh and Afghanistan ties, Shinzo Abe visit under a cloud

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

In the wake of a statement from United States Congress members on the Citizenship Amendment Bill, the Union government has spoken to lawmakers across parties in Washington, the External Affairs Ministry said on Thursday.

New Delhi is grappling with the diplomatic and logistical fallout of the Bill on relations with Bangladesh and Afghanistan and the coming visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

In particular, the Ministry said it had noted a statement from the bipartisan House Foreign Affairs Committee that had said that any "religious test for citizenship" would undermine Indian de-

U.S. legislators express concern

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

Soon after the Rajya Sabha passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, reactions from U.S. lawmakers, raising concerns about the implications of the Bill, have continued.

"Today, we witness yet another potentially devastating move by the Prime Minister, as lawmakers enacted his draconian Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. However, this action is not unexpected, considering the history of Mr. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and

mocracy. Earlier, the Ministry had reacted strongly to the Commission for International Religious Freedom favouring sanctions against Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior leadership.

its connections to strident communalism. This is yet another attempt to effectively reduce Muslims in India to second-class citizens," Andre Carson, an Indiana Democrat and member of the U.S. House of Representatives, said in a statement.

Earlier this week, the House Foreign Affairs Committee had tweeted about the Bill, calling it a "religious test for citizenship".

"Any religious test for citizenship undermines this most basic democratic tenet. #CABBill," it said.

Shortly after the Bill was cleared in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, Congressman Andre Carson issued a statement criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for what he called a "draconian"

Bill which attempts to "reduce Muslims in India to second class citizens".

Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar on Thursday said, "We have reached out to the members of the U.S. Congress and to other stakeholders to share our perspective on the Bill. We feel that given our strong engagement with the U.S. Congress and others within the U.S., we do expect that the Congress members will take into account our views before taking a position on the Bill."

India hit out at Pakistan and its Prime Minister Imran Khan's tweet accusing the Modi government of furthering a "Hindu supremacist agenda".

"Instead of casting aspersions on others, Pakistan needs to look inwards and ensure protection and promotion of the right of its minorities," the spokesperson said.

(With inputs from Kallol Bhattacharjee)

IUML moves Supreme Court against Bill

Party terms it 'unconstitutional'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) on Thursday moved the Supreme Court against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, a day after it was passed by the Rajya Sabha, saying the law violated the basic and fundamental value of the Constitution that "all should be treated equally alike" and should be struck down for violation of the fundamental right to equality under Article 14.

The IUML is the first off the block even as more Opposition parties are expected to move the court against the Bill, which ostensibly bestows the benefit of Indian citizenship by naturalisation to illegal immigrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who are



IUML chief P.K. Kunhalikutty outside the Supreme Court. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, except Muslims.

The petition said the Bill flagrantly "discriminates" against religiously persecuted Muslim immigrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The petitioners include prominent IUML leaders.

Mobile Internet services withdrawn in Meghalaya

Deteriorating law and order situation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHILLONG

The Meghalaya government on Thursday withdrew mobile Internet and messaging services across the State for the next 48 hours following the deteriorating law and order situation triggered by protests over the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, officials said. The services have been withdrawn since 5 p.m., they added.

Curfew imposed

The district administration in Shillong has also clamped curfew in areas under two police stations in view of the "serious" deterioration of law and order. The curfew will come into effect from 10 p.m. on Thursday till further orders, they said.

Chief Minister Conrad K.

Sangma postponed a scheduled meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah as his Cabinet colleagues failed to reach the Guwahati Airport to board a plane to Delhi amid violent protests in the neighbouring State.

Mr. Sangma, who had managed to reach the LGB airport, however, left for the national Capital, official sources said. He was scheduled to meet Mr. Shah, along with his Cabinet Ministers, to seek total exemption of Meghalaya from the purview of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

"The CM had visited western Meghalaya earlier in the day. He took a separate route to reach the airport, on the outskirts of Guwahati. His Cabinet colleagues, however, were stuck in violence-hit Guwahati," a source said.