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SC rejects review plea of Nirbhaya case convict

NEW DELHI The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition filed by one of the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape-and-murder case to review its May 5, 2017 judgment confirming his death penalty. The court refused Akshay Singh's plea to grant him three weeks' time to file a mercy petition before the President of India.

NATION ▶ PAGE 9

Tharoor wins Akademi's 2019 award for English

NEW DELHI The Sahitya Akademi on Wednesday announced its annual literary awards for 2019 for works in 23 languages, including one for Shashi Tharoor's non-fiction book about British rule in

NATION ▶ PAGE 9

Kejriwal blames opposition for violence NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal expressed his concern over the law and order situation in the city, accusing "the opposition" for fuelling incidents of violence City BJP chief Manoj Tiwari challenged the AAP and the Congress for a debate on the Citizenship (Amendment)

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Tribunal reinstates Mistry as Tata Sons executive chairman

Appellate body rules that decision to remove him from the top post was illegal

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH NEW DELHI

Three years after Cyrus Pallonji Mistry was unceremoniously removed from the post of executive chairman of Tata Sons, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Wednesday ruled that the decision was "illegal", paving the way for his reinstatement.

The replacement of the present 'executive chairman' and the reinstatement of Mr. Mistry will, however, come into effect after four weeks, during which Tata Sons has the option to challenge the tribunal's verdict before the Supreme Court.

Additionally, the tribunal clarified that Mr. Mistry will be reinstated as director of 'Tata Companies' with immediate effect.

The tribunal also ordered Ratan N. Tata and the nominee of the 'Tata Trusts' to desist from taking any decision in advance which requires a majority decision of the board of directors or in the annual general meeting.

It also declared as illegal the conversion of Tata Sons Limited from a 'public company' to a 'private company' by the Registrar of Companies. The tribunal remarked that the decision to convert the company as private was "prejudicial" and "oppres-

Back at the helm

Three years after he was removed as executive chairman of Tata Sons, Cyrus Mistry was reinstated on Wednesday by the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal. Key points from the ruling



 NCLAT said resolution passed by the board of directors on October 24, 2016, removing Mistry as executive chairman of Tata Sons was illegal

 Mistry to be reinstated after four weeks, during which time Tata Sons can appeal against

sive" to the minority share-

holders, including the Sha-

FULL COVERAGE: PAGE 15

The Shapoorji Pallonji

Group is in business with the

Tata Group, i.e. Sir Dorabji

Tata Trust and Sir Ratan Tata

Trust, for more than four de-

Earlier, Mr. Pallonji Sha-

poorji Mistry, father of Mr.

Cvrus Pallonji Mistry, was

appointed as the executive

For better protection of

the interest of all stakehol-

chairman of Tata Sons.

poorji Pallonji Group.

the verdict before the Supreme Court

Tata Sons ordered to go back from private company' to public company

Ratan Tata and nominees of trusts told to desist from taking any decision in advance

Told to 'create healthy atmosphere removing the mistrust' and Shapoorji Pallonji

NCLAT said there

ders, the tribunal said that in

future at the time of appoint-

ment of the executive chair-

man, independent director

and directors, the Tata

Group, which is the majority

group, should consult the

minority group - the Sha-

It also barred Tata Sons

from invoking its power un-

der Article 75, which em-

powers Tata Sons Limited at

any time to transfer "ordin-

ary shares" of any of the sha-

reholders, against Mr. Mistry

poorji Pallonji Group.

was nothing on record to suggest that the board of directors or any of the trusts at any time expressed displeasure about the performance of Mistry

 While the board of a motion to remove discussed or deliberated

Tata Group likely to move Supreme Court

The Tata Group is likely to move the Supreme Court against the NCLAT judgment to restore Cyrus Mistry as the executive chairman of Tata Sons Ltd. "Tata Sons strongly believes in the strength of its case and will take appropriate legal recourse," said Shuva Mandal, group general

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

responded. 'Lot of confusion' zenship Act. counsel, Tata Sons. PAGE 15

No stay on Citizenship Act implementation, says SC

Court says it will hear the 59 petitions on January 22

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to stay the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, which fasttracks citizenship by naturalisation process for "illegal" migrants from six religious communities, other than Muslims, who have fled persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde instead orally suggested to the government to publicise the actual intent of the Act so that there was no confusion among the public about its objectives and aims.

Protests have broken out all over the country since the notification of the Act on December 12.

"There is need to publicise why the Act [CAA] is passed. There is a need for that," Justice Bobde addressed Attorney General K.K. Venugopal for the Centre. "I agree. We will see Mr. Venugopal

The CJI's comments came on a submission by advocate A.K. Upadhyay that there was a lot of confusion in the public mind about the objectives of the amended Citi-



Protests continue: Students raising slogans outside Jamia Millia Islamia on Wednesday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The government has maintained that the amendments made to the Citizenship Act of 1955 were meant to protect and welcome religiously persecuted people fleeing the three neighbouring countries, where Muslims form the majority.

The Supreme Court issued a formal notice admitting 59 petitions filed by people from all walks of life and faiths. The court said it would hear the petitions on January 22. This is its last working day before it closes for the winter vacation till January 1.

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No threat to Muslim citizens: Naqvi

Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Wednesday said there was no threat to citizenship of any Indian Muslim or any other citizen due to the Citizenship Amendment Act. He said there were many myths around the Act that needed to be busted. "When you speak to people there is a refrain that 'We will get thrown out [of the country]'. That is absolutely untrue, why would anyone throw anyone out and why?" he

Prayer for peace



Open again: After a gap of four and a half months, the historic Jamia Masjid in Srinagar was thrown open for the public on Wednesday. • NISSAR AHMAD (REPORT ON PAGE 5)

Council votes for 28% GST on all lotteries

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ NEW DELHI

The GST Council broke its tradition of taking decisions by consensus at its 38th meeting on Wednesday, with a first-time vote on a proposal to tax all lotteries at the uniform rate of 28%. After Kerala pushed for a division, States voted 21-7 in favour of the proposal. There were no proposals or discussion regarding overall GST rate changes at the meeting, said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

A presentation on revenue augmentation made by State and Central officials contained data and projections of revenue collection and compensation cess collection, but did not make any suggestions to increase or cut rates, she said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Eight held for Seelampur violence

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Eight persons have been arrested in connection with violence that erupted during protests in east Delhi's Seelampur area on Tuesday, police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North East) Ved Prakash Surva said that six persons were arrested from the spot on Tuesday while two others were arrested on Wednesday. "They are all locals of

the area and whether they have a criminal background or not is being verified," he said, adding that others have been identified and action will be taken against them. At least 18 people have also been taken in preventive custody, police said.

Police had on Tuesday registered two first information reports into the incident of violence in which 21 persons, including 15 security personnel, were injured.

On Wednesday, Section 144 (unlawful assembly) was imposed in most parts of east Delhi to maintain law and order in the area. Police also conducted a flag march in the area which was joined by Joint Commissioner of Police Alok Kumar and Mr. Surya. "The idea was to send a message of peace and to request people not to indulge in any unlawful activity," the DCP

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 3



Four held guilty in 2008 Jaipur serial blasts case

Quantum of sentence expected today; 71 persons were killed, around 200 injured in the explosions

MOHAMMED IQBAL

A special court here on Wednesday convicted four persons of the serial blasts that ripped through the Walled City of Jaipur 11 years ago, killing 71 persons and leaving about 200 injured. One of the five accused, charged with sending an e-mail which claimed responsibility for the blasts on behalf of the Indian Mujahideen, was acquitted.

Those held guilty of planting the bombs and carrying out the explosions on May 13, 2008, were Mohammed Saif, Mohammed Sarwar Azmi,



The van carrying the blast accused in Jaipur on Wednesday. •

Saifur Rehman and Mohammed Salman. Special Judge Ajay Kumar Sharma

scheduled the hearing on the quantum of sentence for the convicts for Thursday.

Chand said the four persons were convicted under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and Explosives Act in eight cases registered by Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Rajasthan police.

Public Prosecutor Sri

One acquitted

Shahbaz Ahmed, a resident of Lucknow who was the first one to be arrested three months after the blasts, was acquitted in all the cases for

want of evidence. The convicts were between 21 and 25 years old at the time of their arrest. The eight locations target-

ed in a series of nine synchronised bomb blasts are situated within a 2-km radius in the densely populated Walled

The court pronounced the judgment in the presence of the blast accused amid tight security in the Bani Park District Courts Complex. Three accused - Yasin Bhatkal, Asadullah Akhtar, and Mohammed Aariz - are at present lodged in Tihar Jail in Delhi, facing trial in other blast cases.

Parties blame each other for violence over Citizenship Act

While Kejriwal chooses not to name anyone, Tiwari challenges AAP and the Congress for a debate on the Act

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Each of the three political players in the Capital continued to blame the other for violence associated with protests related to the Citizenship Act here on Wednesday.

While he chose not to name either the BJP or the Congress directly, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal expressed his concern over the law and order situation in the city accusing "the opposition" for fuelling such incidents while Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party chief Manoj Tiwari challenged AAP and the Congress for a debate on the Act.

The Congress, on its part, accused the AAP and the BJP for "being complicit" in triggering such events at Okhla and Seelampur and demanded that a sitting High Court judge probe these.

"I am very worried about the law and order situation in the city...we want that peace be maintained. Everyone has a right to protest but not to attack or harm others and damage public property...I also want to say that all this is happening at a time when AAP is poised to win the upcoming Assembly election," Mr. Kejriwal alleged at a press conference

'Nothing to gain'

Mr. Kejriwal said, AAP had nothing to gain and much to lose by its name "getting dragged" into the mess in relation to the CAA protests. "What will AAP gain from such incidents? It is clear that those who think such events can help them electorally are fanning them...Everyone knows who is capable of triggering such incidents across the country," he added.

Mr. Tiwari, meanwhile, challenged both AAP and Congress for a debate on the CAA even as he sought to caution both parties against creating "disturbance by spreading rumours in Delhi" related to it.

I am very worried about the law and order situation in the city...we want that peace be maintained.

Everyone has a right to protest but not to attack or harm others and

ARVIND KEJRIWAL

"The Act is to give citizenship to the refugees and not meant for depriving any person of citizenship rights...15 cases have been filed in connection with the incidents in Seelampur out of which five cases are against the leaders of AAP and the Congress," Mr. Tiwari argued.

damage public

property...

"It clearly shows that both these parties are working to disturb peace in Delhi. Everybody has right to express his view but there is no place for violence in the society. It is very sad that people are not studying the Citizenship Act but believing in rumours. AAP and the Congress are taking advantage of it and adding fuel to fire for creating disturbance," he alleged further.

Delhi Congress president Subhash Chopra, making a direct attack on the BJP and the AAP, accused both parties for being "responsible for vitiating the atmosphere in Delhi."

Terms it direct insult

The Citizenship Act, he alleged further, was "a direct insult" to the Constitution in addition to questioning the "silence" of the AAP on the CAA and arguing that this showed "its complicity with the BJP."

"The attack on students of Jamia was an indelible blot on democracy which will not be tolerated...the violence witnessed in the Capital was a calculated conspiracy to scuttle the peaceful agitations against CAA," he alleged.





(Clockwise from top) Jamia

Teachers' Association taking

Wednesday thanking other

universities and organisations

that have extended solidarity

protest against the amended

Citizenship Act outside Jamia

protesting against the Act at

Turkman Gate; and sudents

and local residents during a

with the university; a Delhi

Police van stuck during a

Millia Islamia; people

protest outside Jamia.

SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

out a peace march on





Jamia teachers thank others for the support

Fact-finding committee constituted to probe 'police brutality' on students: JTA

STAFF REPORTER

While "categorically" rejecting the recently passed Citizenship Act and the National Register of Citizens, the Jamia Teachers' Association (JTA) on Wednesday took out a peace march, thanking other universities and organisations that have extended solidarity with the university.

The JTA said that a fact-finding committee was constituted to probe the "police brutality unleashed on innocent students" on December 15. They demanded adequate compensation from the government for loss of property.

Call to withdraw cases

The teachers' association also sought withdrawal of cases registered against students following the police crackdown which took place on Sunday.

Sonia Gupta, a professor at the university, said, "You can destroy a library but you cannot destroy ideas. Our academic degrees are not to remain silent. The issue is not just restricted to Jamia. Students from across the universities are facing police atrocities."

Addressing the media, JTA secretary Majid Jamil said, "Over the years Jamia has demonstrated its secular character. It is very unfortunate that a 100 years later, the university is going through such a critical phase. On Sunday, innocent students and guards had to face police brutality and it is shameful."

Complaint emailed

A complaint emailed to the SHO Jamia Nagar, DCP southeast and the police commissioner on Tuesday. While the proctor declined to share a copy of the complaint, the email states that

Kanhaiya joins protest outside Jamia Millia

Former Jawaharlal Nehru

University Students' Union

outside Ja

(JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar on Wednesday joined the protest outside the Jamia Millia Islamia and said that the fight was not limited to protecting the Muslim community but to protect the entire country. Mr. Kumar, addressing a large gathering of protesters, said: "If the National Register of Citizens is implemented in pan-India, we will all have to stand in long queues like the demonetisation days. The protests against the citizenship law will go down in history as the one which saved the Constitution."

same level of energy. Remember we hold pens and not AK-47."

attempts had been made to

register the complaint at

the police station but the

complaint "was not re-

Adding that peaceful protests

need to be carried out, Mr.

Kumar said, "We must ensure

that we remain in our senses

while trying to maintain the

ceived."

The proctor said that the complaint had been made against the illegal entry of police personnel into the university, the attack on students and the damage caused to the reading room and other infrastructure. It had demanded action against the personnel responsible.

Shikha Kapoor, another professor of the university said: "The support garnered reflects that Jamia has taken up the right cause. A law which is arbitrary is not acceptable and in no way should dissent be crushed."

No role in plea against disqualification:EC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday told the Delhi High Court that the

poll panel has no role to play in the matter pertaining to disqualification of former AAP MLAs Anil Bajpai and Devender Sehrawat. The submission by the Election Commission was made on an affidavit placed before Justice Navin Chawla.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: "Poverty, Equity and Social Justice - The Role of the Civil Services". A tribute to former bureaucrat B.N. Yugandhar. Speakers: Dr. Y.K. Alagh, economist and former Union Minister; Dr. Aruna Roy, political and social activist; and Harsh Mander, author and columnist. Tributes by Ravi Vira, former Secretary Economic Affairs, Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank of India; and Mohan Kanda, former Chief Secretary, Andhra Pradesh at Seminar Rooms I, II & III, Kamaladevi Complex, India International Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.

Talk: "Christmas Through the Ages", an illustrated lecture with live demonstration by Marilyn Thomas, Lyric Ensemble of Delhi at Lecture Room - II, Basement Annexe, India International

Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.

Talk: Public lecture on "The Literary and Intellectual Worlds of Qasbah Towns in Colonial India" by Dr. Raisur Rahman, Wake Forest University Winston-Salem, North Carolina, at Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMML), Teen Murti House, Teen

Murti Marg, 3 p.m.

Exhibition: "Out of Line" an art show tracing abstraction within contemporary art in Cambodia at Akar Prakar, First Floor, D-43 Defence Colony, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Screening: "Laces", a Hebrew film directed by Jacob Goldwasser will be screened as part of the ongoing mini festival of Israeli films at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m. (Mail your listings for this column at Cityeditordelhi@thehindu.co.in)

Man from Odisha sets himself ablaze

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old man from Odisha has allegedly set himself ablaze on Wednesday evening near India Gate.

A PCR van rushed the injured to a hospital where doctors said that he has suffered 90% burns.

The man belong to Odisha. He was not connected to the protesters gathered at the India Gate lawns against the Citizenship Act, the police said.

Freedom under threat from religion: Gopal Gandhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Criticising the Citizenship Act and the National Register of Citizens, former West Bengal governor Gopal Gandhi said that freedom in India today is under threat.

Mr. Gandhi was delivering the first Mushirul Hasan Memorial Lecture on the theme "the enterprise of free speech in a market of control" here on Tuesday.

Stating that "fear is a fever and our freedom is fevered", Mr. Gandhi added that fear was merely the symptom, not the disease. The underlying compromising freedom are three-fold, he said. They are the role of religion and money in politics, and "the role which political power, legitimately elected and democratically installed, plays in ways that befuddle the laws and bewilder democracy".

Money and graft

Deploring the NRC and CAA as efforts to determine citizenship by religion, Mr. Gandhi said these initiatives of the current government would have left the Constituent Assembly aghast. Corporate money in politics has resulted in corruption as well as loss of indepencandidates, dent added.

However, Mr. Gandhi also made it clear that the threat to freedom is not simply a post-2014 phenomenon. Noting Sheikh Abdullah had been jailed for 11 years during Jawaharlal Nehru's term as Prime Minister, while his son and grandson are under arrest today, Mr. Gandhi said that "the imprisoners have changed, but the prisoners stayed the same".

The judiciary also came in for flak from Mr. Gandhi who said that it was "fallible" like any human being, and the defenders of freedom could not take it for granted any more than the peasant could take the monsoon for granted.

He also deplored the disdain of the left liberal secular intelligentsia for the religious middle class. It is not arrogant, but rather, self-defeating, he

Ragpicker shoots to fame after saving police officer

She stopped a mob from attacking him during Seelampur clash

HEMANI BHANDARI

A 45-year-old ragpicker rose to fame in a day after she saved a police officer from the mob during the clashes in Seelampur. A WhatsApp video of her saving the official is making rounds among the residents while Anwari Begum sat on a rickshaw chatting with her friends as usual on Wednes-

A resident of Seelampur jhuggis, Anwari is not aware of the nuances of Citizenship Act. She only knows that it has to do something against the Muslim community.

When The Hindu visited Seelampur, a resident showed a video of the incident in which an official wearing a uniform and helmet and holding a stick in his hand runs behind scores of protesters. Suddenly, the mob turns towards him and start pelting stones. The video made by a woman, who did not wish to be identified, can be heard saying "It was wrong for the official to come alone. He will get hurt".

The official then runs towards a street where Anwari was sitting with a couple of people. She can be seen coming towards the crowd and asking them to stop. Her son also comes and stop the two men who were pelting stones.



Anwari Begum sitting on a rickshaw in Seelampur on Wednesday. • HEMANI BHANDARI

Speaking to The Hindu, Anwari recalled the incident and said that the official came towards her and she made him sit. "Vo police wala sehem gaya tha [The police official was shaken]". She turned towards the men pelting stones and told them "haath mat lagana [Don't touch him]" after which they ran towards the other side.

Anwari and her family then took the official to the street and offered him tea. "He drank it and then left,"

Anwari doesn't know what Citizenship Act is. She only knows "Kuch Musalmanon ke khilaaf hai [There

is something against Muslims]" but she said, "Whatever it is, it is against the leaders. What have the police done? Why beat them?"

Laraib, a resident, standing next to Anwari butted in and criticised the police for thrashing students at Jamia Millia Islamia. But she said: "They did what they did there but here, they should not have been attacked."

Rakesh Chawla, a resident said: "She is the real hero. She saved him, otherwise they would have hurt him very badly".

Efforts were made to identify the official, but details could not be ascer-

Thousands protest in Nuh against CAA

Traffic comes to a grinding halt; agitators ride tractors, mini-trucks on highway

ASHOK KUMAR

Amid nation-wide protests against the amendments in the Citizenship Act, thousands of residents holding Tricolours, placards and banners, took out an eightkm-long march on Gurugram-Alwar Highway here on Wednesday afternoon to protest against the Act and the National Register for Citizens. The protests remained peaceful, said the police.

Raising slogans demanding the rollback of the controversial CAA and the NRC, people of all ages took over both carriageways of the Highway around noon, bringing the traffic to a complete halt on the busy road. They emerged from the Nuh PWD Guest House to the Idgah at Ghasera village for a public meeting under the aegis of Mewat Vikas Sabha.

While most of them walked on foot holding banners that read, "No to CAA, No to NRC" and "Save Constitution, Save Country", a large number of them rode tractors, mini-trucks and motorcycles with the posse of police personnel in riot gear accompanying them on foot and deployed along the

Labelling the CAA and the NRC against the spirit of the Constitution, prominent Muslim leaders addressing the gathering, sought its immediate rollback and vowed that none of the around 80 lakh Muslims in the Mewat region spread across Raias



Led by deputy Congress legislative party leader and Nuh MLA Aftab Ahmed, protesters walk towards the Idgah in Ghasera village on Wednesday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

than, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh would submit their papers to prove their citizenship.

Former Rajya Sabha MP Ali Anwar Ansari termed CAA as an attack on the "soul" of the Constitution and the secular character of the country. He added that the people in power had the mandate, but it did not allow them to distort the Constitu-

'Situation akin to 1947' Referring to the attack on the students protesting against

the law, Mr. Ansari said the students were being arrested, beaten up and treated like "enemies". He said that situation today was akin to 1947 when there was chaos and anarchy all around during Partition and Gandhiji had come to Ghasera at that time to make an appeal to the Muslims to stay back.

Deputy Congress Legisla-

tive Party leader and Nuh MLA Aftab Ahmed said religion had never been the criterion for citizenship in India and the country belonged to the people of all religions and communities. He said the ideology of "Nathuram Godse will not be allowed to flourish on Indian soil and the struggle against it would

continue".

Vow not to submit papers MVS president Salamuddin called upon the audience to not submit their papers to prove their citizenship. He said that none of the 80 lakh Muslims in the Mewat region would gave their documents. Salamuddin, an advocate, said that if needed they would not hesitate to walk to Delhi in protest and the demonstrations would continue till the time the "black

Shahid Khan, a protester,

expressed apprehension that a vast majority of the Muslims in the region, though staying for ages, might find it difficult to arrange papers to prove their citizenship. He said that most of them were illiterate and did not have proper papers in place.

Mewat RTI Manch president Rajuddin Meo said the law was aimed at creating rift between the Hindus and the Muslims and to gain political mileage.

The traffic on the highway remained affected for more than six hours with the Nuh-Sohna carriageway remaining closed to traffic for long and the vehicles being diverted towards Palwal.

Superintendent of Police, Nuh, Sangeeta Kalia said eight additional companies were sourced from across the State for the protest and more than a thousand police personnel were deployed.

Police to use AI to counter deepfake videos

'Fake videos shared via social media have contributed to violence in Jamia Nagar'

SAURABH TRIVEDI

With the help of Artificial Intelligence, the Delhi police will counter deepfake videos circulating on the social media, said a Delhi officer police Wednesday.

A senior police officer said that during the investigation, it was found that deepfake videos were posted through social media accounts operating out of Delhi and such videos have fuelled the violence. Fake or morphed videos shared via social media have contributed to the violence in Jamia Nagar.

"We are taking the help of cyber experts to detect deepfake videos with the

help of Artificial Intelligence. We have come across more than 30 old videos of violence that happened in U.P., Bihar and other parts of the country that were posted as Jamia Millia Islamia incident. These videos are making rounds in the social media," the officer added.

"We are contacting social media influencers to pass the message about these deepfake videos and appeal people to maintain peace. False conspiracies like loss of life and police opening fire on students are proliferating via WhatsApp and it has caused a lot of destruction during the Jamia incident," he added.

In a peace meeting with

senior residents of Jamia Nagar on Tuesday, locals suggested the police to spread the message on social media about fake and morphed videos because teenagers are active on social media and the message will directly reach them.

Accounts identified

A team of cyber experts working in close coordination with Delhi police have identified several Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp and Telegram accounts indulged in rumour-mongering, he added.
"We are also concerned

about the fact that the videos of bus burning, stonepelting and police firing tear gas shells shot during

Jamia protest will be used on other parts of the country to create unrest. Therefore, acting swiftly, a team under supervision of senior police officer has been formed to keep track on such activities and counter them with the help of social influencers," added.

On Monday, Delhi Police spokesperson, M.S. Randhawa had mentioned that during investigations, the Delhi police has found that rumours like death of students, students getting injured in police firing, buses being set afire by the police and passing visuals of Patna and Aligarh as Jamia incident have instigated violence and created unrest.

Fresh advisory issued on law and order situation in city

law" is rolled back.

'Police detected distribution of inflammatory pamphlets'

SAURABH TRIVEDI NEW DELHI

The intelligence wing of the Delhi Police has issued a fresh advisory to the district police on law and order situation in the city after they detected distribution of inflammatory pamphlets in certain pockets of the city as it could fan the flames, said a senior police officer on Wednesday.

According to intelligence officers, one of the pamphlets mentioned a daylong shutdown in the country on Friday as protests rage against the Citizenship Act. The pamphlets were also found pasted in a certain

area in north-east Delhi and it was also being circulated on the social media.

"We are trying to intercept the origin of pamphlets but as part of precautionary measures, fresh security advisory have been issued to all police stations in the city. The reserve police force has been asked to be on stand added the police

As per security advisory, the SHOs and other senior police officers should organise a meeting with locals and clear their doubts on the Citizenship Act. The locals should not fall in the trap of rumour mongers.

Senior officers have been told that they can impose Section 144 if required. Police officers should meet locals politicians and the local police should eye on bad characters in sensitive areas.

"We have already warned the local police of the protest called for in north-east Delhi... Drones were also used, but when protesters were about to disperse, a section of mob started pelting stones on buses and indulged in violence. We are working on close coordination with the local police," said the officer. A report has also been sent to MHA.

Sengar likely to serve sentence in Delhi jail

Appeal can be made before Delhi HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Kuldeep Singh Sengar, a former BJP MLA who was on Monday convicted for raping a minor girl in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao in June 2017, may have to serve his sentence in a Delhi prison.

"The trial in the case, as directed by the Supreme Court, took place in a Delhi court. Therefore, the convict will have to serve his sentence in a city jail. An appeal against the conviction can be made before the Delhi High Court," said an official.

The case was initially pursued by the Uttar Pradesh Police. However, alleging police inaction, the victim had approached the Allahabad High Court in February last year and then attempted self-immovable outside the residence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on April 8, 2018.

Days later, the case was transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for further probe.

The matter then came up before the Supreme Court in August this year, while all the cases pertaining to the victim and her family members were shifted to Delhi for court proceedings.

Subsequently, on a court

The trial in the case, as directed by the Supreme Court, took place in a Delhi court. Therefore, the convict will have to serve his sentence in a city jail.

directive, Sengar was shifted from Sitapur prison in Uttar Pradesh to Tihar jail in Delhi, where he is currently lodged.

Based on its chargesheet, the court framed charges against Sengar and Shashi Singh, the co-accused in the case. After the trial, the court convicted him. However, the co-accused was given the benefit of doubt and acquitted.

The CBI has sought maximum punishment for Sengar and adequate monetary compensation to the vic-

Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, under which he has been found guilty, prescribes a minimum of 10 years and maximum of life imprisonment, besides fine.

The next court hearing on the quantum of sentence is on Friday.

JNU to conduct take-home end-semester examinations

JNU students' body terms alternative mode of examination announced by the university 'farcical'

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Wednesday said that the university has decided to follow a 'take-home exam' process to conduct the end-semester in view of the examination boycott called by its students.

The university administration, in a statement, said: "Since the bonafide students are prevented from writing the end-semester examinations by some protesting students, the Deans of Schools and Chairpersons of Special

Centres have decided to give take home exams to students. Those who refuse to write the exams on their own will, in spite of the fact that the university is making every effort to conduct the examinations, will not be able to register in the next semester if they do not fulfil the academic requirements as per university ordinances."

The INU administration added that a schedule will be prepared by the Deans of Schools and Chairs of Special Centres and released online. Terming the alternative

mode of examination announced by the university "farcical," the INU Students' Union (JNUSU) said that the move was an attempt to "turn the university into a WhatsApp university."

"The online mode is a cynical way to try and bring disunity among students. However, students have already started taking pledges to boycott the WhatsApp university model. The university shall not succeed in dividing us or breaking this historic movement," a statement issued by the JNUSU

The students' body further said that it was "illegal for the administration to push for online exams as per convenience, as evaluations are governed by university ordinances and statutes".

The JNU Teachers' Association (JNUTA), meanwhile, said, "Deans of Schools have no power under the statutory provisions to direct Centres or individual faculty to conduct examinations through such an alternative system. Conducting examinations in the prescribed way would make a complete mockery of our commitment to maintaining high academic standards."

After the question papers were e-mailed, students of M.A. Political Science and International Studies wrote to the authorities stating that the new mode of examinations will "create an indelible blot on JNU's legacy". The students also urged authorities to accept the demands of students for a complete rollback of the proposed hostel fee hike.

Act as per law against cab aggregators: HC

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the Delhi government to act as per law against cab aggregators, like Ola and Uber, if they are found flouting the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act

DUTA marches demanding absorption of ad hoc and temporary teachers

Teachers' delegation meets UGC Secretary on Wednesday

teachers. "The Secretary

ELISHA VERMANI

The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) on Wednesday took out a march from Feroz Shah Kotla to the University Grants Commission (UGC) demanding absorption of ad hoc and temporary teachers and immediate promotions.

A DUTA delegation also met UGC Secretary and urged authorities to fulfil the demands put forth by the

was categorical in stating that the demand for absorption can only be met by the government as it concerns teachers from universities across the country. The DU-TA delegation was also informed that the setting up of a committee to look at the total length of past service for promotion of teachers, can be considered," said Rajib Ray, the DUTA president. Amidst heavy sloganeering demanding Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Tyagi's resignation, Sant Prakash, an ad hoc teacher at Bhagini Nivedita College said, "We are facing repercussions of the faults that lie within the system. Even after filing the required forms, interviews for permanent positions have not been conducted since

The DUTA added that a general body meeting will be held on Friday.

Mercury drops to 7° , lowest this season

STAFF REPORTER

The minimum temperature in the national capital dropped to 7 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, the lowest this season, according to Regional Meteorological Center, New Delhi. Light rainfall and cloudy skies are expected in the city on Friday and Saturday.

On Wednesday, the air quality of the city deteriorated to the upper level of 'poor' category and is expected to further worsen chiefly owing to slower winds, according to government-run monitoring agency SAFAR.

The minimum temperature was one notch lower than the season's normal. while the maximum temperature was 18 degree Celsius, five degrees colder than the season's normal. The temperatures during the day are likely to increase over the next few days. "Cold weather conditions are likely to abate from Thursday onwards due to a western disturbance from Friday," said Regional Meteorological Center.

"The AQI is likely to deteriorate towards the 'very poor' category by Thursday. On Friday and Sturday, the AQI is likely to be recorded in the lower to middle end of 'very poor' category," SA-FAR said. The major pollution hotspots as per the SA-FAR are likely to be Vinobapuri, Adarsh Nagar and Dwarka.

Nirbhaya convicts' view on mercy plea sought

Tihar jail has to take their opinions and reply within a week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A Delhi court has asked the Tihar jail authorities to ascertain from the four 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape death row convicts whether they wanted to file mercy petitions with the President.

The jail authorities have to take their opinions and respond to the court within a week

Additional Sessions Judge Satish Kumar Arora passed the direction while hearing a Delhi government plea for issuance of death warrants against them.

Review plea dismissed

The court began hearing the plea after the Supreme Court earlier in the day dismissed the review petition of Akshay Kumar Singh, one of



posted the matter to January

The apex court had last year dismissed the review pleas of the three other convicts – Mukesh, Pawan Gupta and Vinay Sharma, saying that no grounds were made out by them for review of the judgment upholding their death sentence.

The main accused in the

case, Ram Singh, had ended his life by hanging in his prison cell in the Tihar jail in

The child in conflict with law was convicted by the Juvenile Iustice Board. He was later released from a reformation home after remaining there for three years.

Earlier, the Delhi High Court had upheld the lower court judgment to send them to the gallows.

A 23-year-old paramedic student, who came to be known as Nirbhaya, was gangr-aped on the intervening night of December 16-17, 2012, inside a moving bus in south Delhi by six people and severely assaulted before being thrown out on the road. She succumbed to injuries on December 29 at a hospital in Singapore.

Convict moves court claiming he was juvenile

'Ossification test was not conducted'

STAFF REPORTER

One of the four convicts facing death sentence in the 2012 gang rape and murder case moved the Delhi High Court on Wednesday claiming that he was a juvenile at the time of the offence.

Convict Pawan Kumar Gupta, in his plea, said he was a juvenile at the time of the incident. The High Court has listed the case for hearing on Thursday. Pawan alleged that his ossification test was not conducted by the investigating

The plea said that the

provision of Section 7A of the Juvenile Justice Act lays down that a claim of juvenility may be taken before any court and it shall be recognised at any stage, even after final disposal of the case.

Pawan, who was awarded death sentence and lodged in Tihar jail, sought that the authority concerned be directed to conduct his ossification test to ascertain his claim of juvenility.

Apart from Pawan, the other three convicts in the Nirbhava case are Mukesh. Vinay Sharma and Akshay Kumar Singh.

Three convicted in attempt-to-murder case

Accused held guilty on witnesses' evidence

NIRNIMESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has convicted three persons in an attempt to murder case reported in west Delhi in 2014.

Though the prosecution failed to recover the knife with which the victim was stabbed, the court held them guilty of the offence on the basis of evidence by three witnesses and the injured person.

One of the accused took the defence that he had been falsely implicated in the case after the victim allegedly got upset for being asked to pay a milk bill. He said the victim used to take milk from his dairy. However, the court dismissed the argument as the accused could not produce evidence

in support of his submission. The accused further argued that the victim had selfinflicted the injuries, but the court dismissed this argument as well as the medical report contradicted it. Additional Sessions Judge

Pooran Chand said: "In the present case, injured Ashish Pandey has categorically deposed that all three accused confronted him and with intend to kill him accused Tarun Sharma gave three knife blows on his left side below the shoulder. Accused Kaka DJ caught hold of him and accused Kaka Kashmere hit on his head. Kaka DJ had caught hold of him prior to stabbing him by Tarun Sharma. This makes it clear that the accused had the intention to kill the injured."

Power subsidy scheme to lawyers to be extended

Advocates will get free electricity up to 200 units, 50% subsidy up to 400 units

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Delhi Cabinet on Wednesday decided to extend the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's flagship power subsidy scheme to lawyers' chambers in addition to providing health and life insurance facilities to all lawyers in the Capital under the Chief Minister Advocate Welfare Scheme.

In another decision, the Cabinet also affected an increase in circle rates of agricultural land in their first revision - from ₹53 lakh per acre to between ₹2.25 crore and ₹5 crore.

"Today the Delhi Cabinet has decided to convert commercial electricity connection to domestic connection in chambers of advocates in Delhi. With this decision, like other domesso get free electricity up to 200 units per month and 50% subsidy up to 400 units, in their chambers," the Chief Minister said at a press conference here.

4,902 connections

According to the government, an exercise was carried out by the Power department to extend the electricity subsidy to the lawyers' chambers in court complexes which showed that there were 4,902 power connections for lawyers' chambers in Delhi.

In terms of usage, 4,007 connections fall under up to 200 units, 665 up to 400 units and 230 above 400 per month. The special subsidy scheme, the government said in a statement, will cost approximately ₹5.93 crore per year – ₹2.88 crore as fixed charge, ₹2.63 ₹42 lakh as additional charges among related expenses.

Four additional projects under the Chief Minister's Advocates' Welfare Scheme were also cleared by the Cabinet and announced by Mr. Kejriwal.

"Under the Chief Minister's Advocates' Welfare Scheme, the Cabinet approved... mediclaim of up to ₹5 lakh, life insurance worth ₹10 lakh, e-library in all courts in Delhi and crèches in six district courts in Delhi. The first two projects will also cover the family members of the advocates – his/her spouse and two dependent children," Mr. Kejriwal said

Meanwhile, as per the newly approved rates, the Chief Minister said, circle

crore as energy charge and rates in Delhi will now range between ₹2.25 crore to ₹5 crore per acre depending upon the type of

"There has been a longpending demand of farmers of Delhi for enhancement of circle rates of agriculture lands in Delhi as the same has not been revised since 2008 and the present circle rate of ₹53 lakh per acre for all categories of villages is much less than the prevailing market rates," Mr. Kejriwal said.

"Immediately after we came to power in Delhi, a proposal to increase the circle rate had been made and sent to the L-G but was not approved by him. We will send the new cabinet decision in this regard to the L-G... we see no reason for him to disapprove it," he

HC tells Delhi government to consider afresh Chautala's plea

Court sets aside govt. order rejecting ex-Haryana CM's plea

STAFF REPORTER

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the city government to consider afresh former Haryana Chief Minister O.P. Chautala's plea for early release from jail in a teachers' recruitment scam.

A Bench of Justice Manmohan and Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal set aside the Delhi government's order April 3 that rejected Chautala's plea to grant special remission on the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi as notified by the Central government.

The Bench, however, clarified that it had not expressed any opinion regarding the early release of the 84-year-old Indian National



O.P. Chautala

Chautala, in his plea filed through advocate Amit Sahni, has said that he deserved to be released early under the Centre's policy of special remission as he had already spent seven years in prison.

The plea was opposed by the Delhi government, which had said he was not eligible for the relief as he was convicted under the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act and that as per the proviso of the

The central

assistance given by

Government of

India to NCT of

Delhi was ₹370

crore in the year

2000-01 and after

18 years it is still

₹472 crore as

Union Budget

2019-20

allocated in the

such convicts cannot be granted special remission.

Chautala had claimed in his plea that he should be considered for release from jail in view of his old age and disability as also the period of seven years already undergone by him behind bars.

His counsel had argued that the maximum sentence prescribed under the anticorruption law at the time of Chautala's conviction in 2013 was seven years and, therefore, the incarceration under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) in this case cannot exceed seven years.

Chautala, his son Ajay Chautala and 53 others were convicted in the case of illegal recruitment of 3,206 junior basic teachers (JBT) in

Winter makeover



NGT refuses to extend deadline for STPs for lakes

'Erring officers will be liable to pay ₹10 lakh per plant per month'

STAFF REPORTER

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has refused to extend the deadline for setting up of sewage treatment plants (STP) beyond September 2020 for the protection of the Bellandur, Varthur and Agara lakes.

A Bench headed by NGT chief Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "If the work remains incomplete even till September 30, a compensation at the rate of ₹10 lakh per sewage treatment plant per month will be liable to be paid... to be recovered from the erring officers, apart from adverse entries in their service records and other adverse action."

approximately 256 million litres of untreated sewage was entering Bellandur lake on a daily basis was a "criminal offence", which needs to be tackled on a war footing. While observing that the

lake, which is said to be 130year-old, is a habitat to several species of birds and aguatic life, the Bench said, "This [pollution] has also

charge. Waste dumping has resulted in foul stench around the lake. Major cause for foam formation is considered to be the discharge of untreated sewage through open drains." Noting that authorities

have failed to take appropriate action, the Bench said, "Desilting of the lake has not been done from time to time nor have steps been taken to stop the flow of untreated sewage into the waterbodies. There is also failure to prevent dumping of municipal solid waste.'

The Tribunal further directed the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewage Board (BWSSB) to ensure that no effluent is discharged into the lakes till the STPs are installed and specified that a compensation of ₹5 lakh per month per inlet into the lakes will be levied in case of non-compliance. "Sources of discharge be

controlled or regulated and electricity and water supplies to the defaulting establishments be stopped for enforcement of law till remedial steps are taken for compliance. Encroachment which are still continuing be removed by using force wherever necessary," the Bench said.

Additionally, the Karnataka State pollution control board was directed to develop a "robust water quality monitoring programme" to keep a check on the water quality of drains leading to the lakes.

'Increase the share of central taxes to Delhi'

Sisodia pens letter to Sitharaman, says share is 'stagnant' since 2001-02

STAFF REPORTER

Finance Manish Sisodia on Wednesdav, in a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, urged to increase the share of central taxes to Delhi which has been 'stagnant' since 2001-02 and increase central assistance to neighbouring States to fight air pollution in the region.

Mr. Sisodia said that the government of NCT of Delhi is only getting grants in lieu of share in central taxes and that too has been kept stagnant at ₹325 crore since 2001-02, while all other States get an enhanced share in central taxes every year.

The Minister also requested the Union Finance Minister to allocate GNCTD's the legitimate share of about ₹3202 crore in the ad hoc settlement of unsettled IGST balance of ₹1.68 lakh crore, as on 31.03.2018, in the current year itself, an official



statement said.

"The central assistance given by Government of India to NCT of Delhi was ₹370 crore in the year 2000-01 and after 18 years it is still ₹472 crore as allocated in the Union Budget 2019-20 of MHA, GOI. However, our expenditure on schemes/programmes has increased by more than 8 times i.e. from ₹3,129 crore in 2000-01 to ₹27,000 crore in 2019-20 [BE]," an official



OFFICIAL STATEMENT statement said.

The normal central assistance which was 11.8% of the plan expenditure in 2000-01 and has declined to just 2% in 2019-20 (BE). "It is therefore requested to increase the Normal Central Assistance to at least ₹1,500 crore in the current year revised estimates and ₹1,800 crore in 2020-21 [BE]," the letter

Mr. Sisodia said that the Government of India has launched a scheme - 'Pro-

motion of Agricultural Mechanisation for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue in the State of Puniab, Harva na, Uttar Pradesh & NCT of Delhi - to tackle air pollution and to subsidise machinery required for in-situ management of crop residue in these States.

"Under this scheme, Government of India has also released ₹4.52 crore to NCT of Delhi and funds amounting to ₹273.80 crore, ₹192.06 crore and ₹l 05.29 crore to the States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in CFY 2019-20 till 31, 11,2019, However, more stubble burning cases were recorded this time as compared to last year despite a strict enforcement," Mr. Sisodia's letter

said. To tackle the issue of air pollution in Delhi, Central government needs to augment the financial assistance to our neighbouring states, Mr. Sisodia said.

Complete projects to curb Ganga pollution: NGT

Green panel sets deadline of June 30, warns of compensation in case of failure

STAFF REPORTER

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Wednesday came down heavily on authorities for failing to curb pollution in Ganga river and directed completion of all projects related to sewage treatment by June 30 next year.

A Bench headed by NGT chief Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "There is no information on water quality of river Ganga in the stretch falling in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. The reports from the States other than Uttarakhand do not describe the number of drains and a plan for their interception and diversion to the sewage treatment plants."

Directing authorities to demarcate flood plains and



Ganga in the stretch falling in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. • FILE PHOTO

prevent encroachment, the Bench said, "Timely completion of all projects relating to sewage treatment be ensured, that is by June 30, 2020, in respect of ongoing projects and by December 31, 2020 in respect of others failing which compensation has to be paid apart from action against the erring

officers."

"Till then, to avoid untreated sewage being discharged directly into the Ganga, interim remedial measures have to be adopted and for the default after November 1, 2019, compensation has to be deposited," the Bench added.

The green panel also di-

rected the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to assess the compensation to be levied on respective States, within one month, and recover the same. Earlier, the Tribunal had

pulled up the Uttar Pradesh government for failing to curb sewage discharge containing toxic chromium into the river and imposed a penalty of ₹280 crore on 22 tanneries for causing pollution.

Following two reports filed by an NGT-appointed committee, the Bench observed, "The report is selfspeaking and paints a grim picture of failure of authorities in taking remedial measures forcing the inhabitants to drink polluted water which is a serious hazard to health."

The green panel further observed that the fact that

affected groundwater re-

Delhi Palam Today 16°C Dry weather with moderate fog in patches/mist during cold morning. Day will be cool with cool breeze and partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow 17°C Rise in day temperature to continue. Moderate fog/mist during cold morning. Day will

be cool with partly cloudy sky

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019

MLAs in M.P. to make their assets public

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

In a bid to bring transparency in political system, MLAs in Madhya Pradesh have decided to disclose details of their assets, including those of dependents, by June 30 every year which will be verified by a chartered accountant and put into public domain.

A resolution to this effect was passed unanimously by the legislators of the ruling Congress, Opposition BJP and others in the 230-member Assembly on Wednesday.

As per the resolution, the details of the assets of the MLAs and their dependents would be made public through the website of the Assembly.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Govind Singh presented the government resolution in the House stating that every MLA would submit details of his assets to the Assembly's Principal Secretary before June 30 every year.

Report puts question mark on number of detained students

Fact-finding team contests official version of only 7 of 27 held being students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

In the preliminary report released by the first fact-finding team that visited Aligarh Muslim University after the clash between the police and students on the intervening night of December 15-16, the number of students detained/missing didn't match with the official figure of seven. The report lists 15/16 students.

"Though we arrived at the figure by speaking to students, it was not seven for sure," said advocate Fawaz Shaheen of Quill Foundation, one of the three members of the team, the others being advocates Aman Khan and Fazal of Human Rights Law Network.

The university and district administration had



A protest against CAA in Jamalpur area of Aligarh on Tuesday. ■ MANOJ ALIGAD

maintained that out of 27 detained only seven were students, rest were either expelled students or antisocial elements intermingling with the students. All of them have been released now. "Some of those released have complained of custodial torture," said Mr. Sha-

Like John Dayal, who visited the campus on Tuesday

as part of another fact-finding team, Mr. Shaheen said there were clear signs of police excesses and the decision to call the police by the university administration was uncalled for. The report also says that the police showered communal abuses on

the students and provoked them to come out of the campus.

"Based on several student accounts, around 8 p.m. the police and RAF started firing tear-gas shells, rubber bullets, stun grenades, pellets and other kinds of explosive weapons into the crowd inside the gate. The students were pushed back and fearing for their safety, they started hiding in nearby buildings such as Guest House no. 2 and 3. The situation did not demand any further intervention as the protesters had dispersed and students were hiding in buildings," said Mr. Shaheen.

Still, he said, the police moved inside the campus and lathi-charged the students in Sir Sved North and Morrison Court hostels

Two Haryana school staff held for sexually harassing girls

Students threatened with failure in exams, harm to family

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A Physical Training Instructor and a lab attendant at a Haryana government high school in Hisar's Adampur were arrested on Wednesday for allegedly sexually harassing several girls, aged between 12-14 years. One of the accused, a computer teacher, is on the run.

A police team on Wednesday visited the school following a complaint by the Child Protection Officer in writing two days ago and recorded the statement of 24 students, including a few cases of corporal punishment.

A case has been registered at Adampur police station in this regard under sections of the Juvenile Justice Act and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. The number of girls sexually harassed is more than a

The matter pertaining to mass sexual harassment of the girls came to light when Child Protection Officer Sunita Yadav visited the school in Bhana village on Monday following a slew of complaints in this regard a day earlier.

'Students share ordeal'

"Since we did not expect the students to be forthcoming with the complaints of sexual harassment, our team began by conducting an activity on good and bad touch. As expected, the students gradually opened up and shared their ordeal," Ms. Yadav told The Hindu over phone.

The girls, mostly from Class VII-X, naming three teachers told the CPO that the trio would grope them and sexually harass them.

"The girls were told to stay back for extra classes for almost a year without any permission from the authorities and harassed. Since there was no female teacher in the school for the past 14 years, the girls were uncomfortable sharing their ordeal. Though they complained to the headmaster, but it was ignored. The accused belong to the same village," said Ms. Yadav.

She added the victims were threatened with failure in the exams and that their family members would be killed. The staff also kicked and abused the students and smoked inside the school.

The police found that the closed-circuit television cameras were missing at the strategically important locations.

The accused have been identified as Dharampal and

Section 144 enforced in all of U.P. ahead of CAA protest

Internet services suspended in Azamgarh for 48 hours

OMAR RASHID

Section 144 was enforced in all of Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday night ahead of the scheduled protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) on Thursday. DGP O.P. Singh appealed to the parents not to allow their children to participate in any demonstration or march or else they will face action.

Internet services were also suspended in Azamgarh district on Wednesday for 48 hours after protests on two consecutive days against the

The police resorted to using mild force to disperse protesters in the Mubarakpur area on Tuesday after stones were allegedly pelted at them during the march. A day earlier, a protest march was staged in Azamgarh city



PSPL protest against CAA in Lucknow on Wednesday. • PTI

Azamgarh police said on Twitter that the protesters violated Section 144 and raised provocative slogans. On the basis of videography and CCTV footage, 20 persons had been identified in Azamgarh city and 30 in Mubarakpur tehsil, out of which 10 were detained, pol-

ice said. "Those posting provocative items on social media are being identified. Strict action will be taken against all unruly elements," said the police.

A spokesperson for Azamgarh SP said Internet had been suspended for two days due to the law and order situation

. Earlier in the day, district police chief Triveni Singh told a television channel that Internet services could be suspended as "some people are trying to spread rumours through WhatsApp and Facebook.

Meanwhile, ahead of Thursday's scheduled protest march against the CAA in Lucknow by various groups, the president of a local outfit, Rihai Manch, which is one of the petitioners against the CAA in the Supreme Court, was placed under house

Biting cold



Commuters make their way on a cold winter morning near Amritsar on Wednesday. •PTI

Man held for threatening to come drunk at Nitish rally

Alcohol freely available in the State despite ban: accused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SITAMARHI (BIHAR)

A resident of this north Bihar town was on Wednesday sent to jail after being arrested the previous night for posting a video on Facebook in which he had threatened to attend a public meeting of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in a drunken state, defying the prohibition law.

Thakur Chandan Kumar Singh, an advocate by profession, had caused ripples Tuesday when he posted a video alleging that despite the complete ban on sale and consumption of liquor that was imposed three years ago, alcohol was freely available in the State.

The video was taken strong note of as Mr. Singh picked up from his house, booked under relevant sections of IPC, the State's Excise Act and the IT Act, Sub Divisional Police Officer (Sadar), Kumar Veer Dheeren-

was threatening to break the

law. He was accordingly

14-day remand

He was produced before the CJMs court which remanded him to 14 days in judicial custody, the SDPO added.

In the video footage which has been beamed on a number of regional news channels, Mr. Singh can be heard using objectionable language against the Chief Minister whom he squarely blames for the flagrant violation of prohibition.

"It is an open challenge to you, Mr. Nitish Kumar. You are scheduled to hold a public meeting in Sitamarhi on December 23. I will come there after consuming alcohol. If your police is worth its salt, let it arrest me.

"I would come drunk to spread the message either the prohibition should be enforced or scrapped. We must not have a farce in the name of liquor ban", Mr. Singh says in the nearly five-minute-

long footage. The Chief Minister, who is on a State-wide "Jal-Jeevan-Hariyali Yatra", is currently touring central Bihar and expected to touch this northern town situated close to the Indo-Nepal border next

'High prevalence of pre-diabetes in Rajasthan'

ICMR study covers State through extensive surveys in both urban and rural areas

MOHAMMED IQBAL

A new study on diabetes prevalence, sponsored by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has revealed that the number of persons with pre-diabetes in Rajasthan have increased faster than those with diabetes. The prevalence of pre-diabetes at 15.2% in Rajasthan's population is the same as that in 15 more developed States, while the persons with diabetes are lesser in number.

The ICMR-India Diabetes Study covered Rajasthan in its third phase through extensive surveys in both urban and rural areas, in which the data on demographic and socio-economic parameters as well as behavioural aspects, including tobacco use, alcohol use and physical activity, was obtained. The surveyors also collected information on



Principal investigator Dr. Arvind Gupta •

family history of diabetes and heart disease in the cross-sectional study.

The project's principal investigator, Jaipur-based endocrinologist Arvind Gupta, told The Hindu here on Tuesday that 5.7% of the State's population was found suffering from diabetes mellitus. "Though the average prevalence of diabetes in Rajasthan has been found to be lower than more developed States, it is greater among the urban,

sedentary and high-income men with hypertension and abdominal and generalised obesity," he said.

Dr. Gupta, who heads the

Jaipur Diabetes Research Centre, presented the study's results at the International Diabetes Foundation (IDF) Congress in Busan, South Korea, earlier this month. The five-day event brought together global researchers to tackle a broad range of diabetes issues, from the latest scientific advances to cuttingedge information on education, diabetes care, advocacy and awareness.

'Worrying aspect'

Dr. Gupta said the high prevalence of pre-diabetes was a "worrying aspect" of the lifestyle disease, as the people with impaired glucose tolerance could progress to type 2 diabetes, unless controlled by healthy eating habits and regular exercise. The study factored in body mass index, height and waist circumference and also tested cholesterol for all participants.

The epidemiological study, which was one of the largest in the world, was designed to provide estimates for pre-diabetes, dyslipidemia, hypertension, obesity and the level of glycemic control among the confirmed cases of diabetes. The community-based surveys conducted by the field volunteers covered the adults of either sex aged above 20

About 4,000 eligible participants were identified for assessment of characteristics during the study for multistage sampling. Among those found with pre-diabetes, 17.1% were in the urban areas and 14.7% in the villages.

failed rape bid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dalit woman

A young Dalit woman was shot at and critically injured by unidentified assailants at her home in a village of Rohtas district, a couple of days after she had registered an FIR accusing four persons of having tried to rape her, police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place in a village under Rajpur police station area of the district on Tuesday night where a police party has been camping since Sunday to prevent escalation of tensions that have been running high since the attempted rape.

All the accused Zafar Khan, Farookh Khan, Sharbook Khan and another were arrested on Sunday itself, Superintendent of Police, Rohtas, Satyaveer

Singh said. Sub Divisional Police Officer, Sasaram, Raj Kumar said "As per the family members of the woman who is in her early 20s the attackers were four in number and they requested for an interview with the woman claiming to be journalists. When she arrived, one of them whipped out a firearm and opened fire after

which all of them fled.

"The bullet pierced through the side of the woman's neck and she was rushed to the local PHC by a police party which rushed to her home upon hearing the sound of gunshot. Her condition required surgery so she was referred to a hospital in the district headquarters," the SDPO said.

Release GST compensation every month, says Manpreet

Punjab Finance Minister also requests Centre to continue procuring wheat and paddy at MSP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal on Wednesday said that the cash flows of the State have been seriously impacted by the unilateral decision of the Central government adopting a new pattern in transferring the devolution of the State share in taxes as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission and also the transfer of State share in Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and Integrated Goods and Services Tax

He was participating in the pre-budget meeting of Finance Ministers of all States and Union Territories with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New

Mr. Badal said Punjab has been hit hard by the unending delay in release of its compensation of assured re-

"In the first two years of implementation, bimonthly release of GST compensation by the Central government to the States had been adversely affecting their ability to meet their committed and



Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal •

regular outflows," said Mr. Badal, urging for monthly release of such compensation to enable the State to timely and efficiently plan their ex-

"The non-release of the bimonthly GST compensation to the State even after the expiry of 4 months is severely affecting the State's fiscal management cycle," he added.

Mr. Badal also urged the Centre to continue the procurement of wheat and paddy at minimum support price from Punjab, besides ensuring procurement of maize and alternate crops to promote crop diversification and to address the problem of depleting groundwater table. Also for crop residue

management the Centre should make provision in the provisional cost sheet at ₹100 per quintal over and above the MSP, he added.

Groundwater depletion Amid the growing concerns on the depleting groundwater levels and a dire need for the management of waste water, Mr. Badal asked the Union Finance Minister to formulate a special scheme for the establishment of water treatment plants and re-

juvenation of village ponds

in the forthcoming Union

Budget.

Daily prayers resume in Srinagar's Jamia Masjid

Closed for 19 weeks since August 5

PEERZADA ASHIQ

Daily namaz were resumed on Wednesday in Srinagar's historic Jamia Masjid after remaining closed for a record 19 consecutive weeks since August 5, as security forces thinned out from outside the premises.

"Constituents of the Aniuman-e-Augaf held a meeting on the resumption of prayers on Tuesday. It was decided that the mosque should resume prayers as the shops in the local mar-

ket has begun to reopen and the security presence outside has also come down," Shams-ul-Haq, spokesperson of the mosque's head priest Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, told *The Hindu*.

'Immense relief'

"We were able to offer noon and late afternoon prayers on Wednesday. It has brought immense relief to the local population who were yearning to pray at this historic mosque," he

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DELHI THE HINDU THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2019

Not as happy as I should be, says Sahitya Akademi Award winner

I am distressed at the prevailing condition in Assam: Joyasree Goswami Mahanta

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA GUWAHATI

Novelist and former Asom Gana Parishad Rajya Sabha member Joyasree Goswami Mahanta on Wednesday said, "I am not as happy as I should be" with the news of winning the Sahitya Akademi Award. She also promised to distribute the prize money among the families of those killed during the anticitizenship law protests in

In a dig at the AGP for supporting the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, she said she is deeply hurt at the betrayal by "those elected by the people" as the law is not acceptable to the people of Assam.

"I received the news... but I am not as happy as I should



be on hearing it due to the prevailing troubled situation in the State," Dr. Mahanta, wife of former Assam CM and senior AGP leader Pra-

fulla Kumar Mahanta, said. Dr. Mahanta was chosen for the Sahitya Akademi award for her novel Chanakya. Twenty-two other writers and poets will receive the award, which comprises

Young people have lost their lives for a cause... I have decided to pay my tribute to them by distributing the prize money among their

families IOYASREE GOSWAMI MAHANTA

an engraved copper plate and ₹1 lakh cash prize, on February 25, 2020, in Delhi.

"Young people have lost their lives for a cause and for their homeland and I have decided to pay my tribute to them by distributing the prize money among their families," she said.

"I am deeply distressed and hurt at the betrayal by

those elected to Parliament from the State and to the Assembly on the CAA issue as it is not acceptable to the people of Assam," she added.

"I will be grateful to the families if they accept it. This my humble way of honouring them," Dr. Mahanta said.

Criticism for AGP

Mr. Mahanta has been vocal in his criticism against the party leadership for not opposing the Act in public and its lone Rajya Sabha MP Birendra Prasad Baishya for voting in its favour.

Dr. Mahanta has to her credit several books including Dronacharya, Sreshta Bideshi Galpo, Ekuki Dhemali Sadhu and some volumes the agitation.

Curfew relaxed for 14 hrs. in Shillong

Mobile Internet services remain suspended for the 8th day

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Curfew was relaxed for 14 hours in two police station areas in Meghalaya's capital Shillong on Wednesday while the suspension of mobile Internet services remained in force for the past eight days, officials said.

There is no fresh trouble over the new Citizenship Act in the hill city for the past several days.

According to a district administration official, East Khasi Hills District Magistrate M.W. Nongbri on Wednesday issued an order relaxing the curfew for 14 hours from 6 a.m. in areas under Lumdiengjri police station and Sadar police sta-

"As precautionary measures, the curfew would be reimposed in these two police station areas from 8 p.m. on Wednesday till further orders," the official added.

Meghalaya Cabinet approved a resolution to bring the State under the

Inner Line Permit regime

All banks, shops and markets, educational institutions were open and vehicles were plying on the roads. Agitators protesting the amended Citizenship Act were planning to hold a prayer meeting at the Students' Field here later in the day.

After protests against the new law, curfew was imposed in Shilling and its outskirts on December 11.

Another official of the Chief Minister's secretariat said that the Cabinet meeting chaired by CM Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday had approved a resolution to bring the State under the Inner Line Permit regime.

"The Cabinet resolution would be moved at the oneday special session of the Assembly on Thursday," the of-

ficial added. Mr. Sangma last week had led a delegation of the ruling Meghalaya Democratic Alliance to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah and demanded to introduce the ILP

in Meghalaya. "We discussed the ILP issue and other problems of Meghalaya with the Home Minister and he assured us with positive approach," said Mr. Sangma, who is also the chairman of the MDA.

The ILP, which is now in force in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and in Manipur, was notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited and stipulated period. The new Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, would not apply to the ILP

CPI(M) demands land rights papers for tribals

'They may get exploited by outsiders'

STAFF REPORTER BERHAMPUR

The Odisha unit of the CPI (M) has demanded that the State government immediately start providing patta or documented land rights

to the tribal inhabitants of 'Swabhiman Anchal', the erstwhile cut-off area of the Balimela reservoir. State CPI(M) secretary Ali Kishor Patnaik said lack of

proper land rights is a major obstacle in the path of development of people of this underdeveloped area. "Unless their land rights are protected, these tribals will again get exploited by outsiders," he said.

The Balimela reservoir in Malkangiri district got direct road communication only after the inauguration of Gurupriya bridge in 2018. But till now a large number of

villages in the region do not have any road connectivity. A CPI(M) activist from Malkangiri, Braja Majhi, said that locals fear people from outside will reach their area to procure land.

According to the Left party, tribals here have not yet received benefits of housing schemes for the poordue to lack of patta. "The government should declare how much land of Swabhiman Anchal is part of the Balimela project area. If the police station and government offices at Chitrakonda could come up on project land, why not provide land rights to the tribals," said Mr. Patnaik.

The party also suggested that the State government initiate cooperative fish farming inside the Balimela

Bengal Guv. wants to visit violence-hit districts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

Expressing his satisfaction over the briefing provided by senior officials of the West Bengal government on Wednesday, Governor Jadgeep Dhankhar said that he would like to visit the areas affected by violence after taking the State government confidence.

"The fact that the Chief Secretary and the DGP briefed me is very positive indication that we can work together in future," Mr. Dhankar said after CS Rajiva Sinha and DGP Virendra called on him at Raj Bhawan.

Over the past few days, the Governor had sent a number of communications to the State government that senior officials should come and brief him about the prevailing law and order situation. After the meeting, Mr. Dhankhar said that he was hopeful that situation will improve.

On the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, he said, "it is the law of the law and must be respected by all." "I appeal to all to abide

by it. The Act is not against any citizen of India. It does not deprive any citizen in any manner whatsoever." he said. Mr Dhankhar said any misinformation has to be dispelled and any redressal against it should only be in "judicial do-

Tarun Gogoi appears as lawyer in SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Former Assam Chief Minister and veteran Congress leader Tarun Gogoi was seen in lawyer's black robes on Wednesday to witness the crucial proceedings in the Supreme Court which decided to examine the validity of the Citizenship (Amendment)

Mr. Gogoi, 83, was seen in the crowded courtroom

On Twitter

The news that Mr. Gogoi would be appearing as a lawyer in the case pertaining to the validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was shared on Twitter by his son and Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi, who represents the Kaliabor Lok Sabha constituency.

THE HINDU

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IN BRIEF



Khadse unhappy, but will pacify him: Mungantiwar

Former minister Sudhir Mungantiwar on Wednesday admitted that senior BJP leader Eknath Khadse was unhappy with the party, but said all efforts will be made to pacify him. There has been speculation that Mr. Khadse might join the NCP. "Khadse saheb will not leave the BJP Our party is in his DNA," Mr. Mungantiwar said. PTI

Engineering student hurt in acid attack in Gondia

A 20-year-old engineering student was seriously injured in an acid attack at Mundipar bus stand in Gondia on Wednesday, the police said. A resident of Khalbandha village, the victim studies at a college in Nagpur. The two motorcycle-borne assailants had covered their faces and fled the spot. A suspect has been detained, additional superintendent of police Gondia Atul Kulkarni said. PTI

Three senior citizens killed by speeding car

Three senior citizens, Suresh Patel (62), Gunwant Patel (60) and Ranchhod Mahanbhai (60) on a morning walk, were killed after being hit by a car at Rena Morva village in Gujarat's Godhra taluka on Wednesday. The driver lost control of his car and in a bid to evade an oncoming vehicle hit the trio. an official from Shehra police station said. The driver fled the scene, he said. PTI

Nagpur Mayor shot at while driving, escapes unhurt

Two assailants open fire as Joshi was returning from anniversary celebration

GAUTAM S. MENGLE

Nagpur Mayor Sandip Joshi, a close friend of Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis, escaped an attempt on his life after unidentified assailants opened fire at his vehicle in the early hours of Wednesday.

According to the Nagpur Police, the incident occurred on Outer Ring Road near Jamtha cricket stadium a little after midnight. The police said Mr. Joshi, his family members and a group of around 35 friends had been out to celebrate the Joshi couple's marriage anniversarv and were on their way back when the attack oc-

"Mr. Joshi was driving his official vehicle with a friend in the passenger seat, while his family was following in another vehicle. The two assailants, who were on a motorbike, drew up behind his car near the junction of Outer Ring Road and Wardha Road, and fired three rounds from what we suspect to have been a countrymade handgun," an officer with the Beltarodi police station

The officer said all the three rounds hit the vehicle but did not cause any injuries to its occupants, while the shooters sped away. Mr. Joshi immediately pulled over and informed the police, after which he drove down



Relieved: Sandip Joshi Mayor of Nagpur, arriving at Vidhan Bhavan on Wednesday. • s. sudershan

to the Beltarodi police station and registered an FIR.

Threat letter

With the winter session of the legislature under way in Nagpur, the incident sent shock waves through the city and elicited outrage over the

state of law and order.

The police have deployed additional personnel in the area and provided police protection to Mr. Joshi. The investigation into the case has been transferred to the Nagpur Crime Branch. Officials said five teams are currently working on the case, scanning all available CCTV footage and making inquiries with suspects.

"Mr. Joshi had received a threatening letter a few days ago, after he started an antiencroachment drive in the city. We are trying to ascertain whether the attack stemmed from the same issue. Inquiries are being made with all those who stood to sustain any losses due to the anti-encroachment drive," the officer said.

A police official also said that Mr. Joshi's official vehicle was stolen from his residence last month, but was found within a day, and one person was arrested in connection with the theft.

The police have registered a case of attempt to murder against unidentified persons under the Indian Penal Code, along with sections of the Arms Act.

Attack condemned

Mr. Fadnavis condemned the attack on his party colleague, while senior BJP leader Sudhir Mungantiwar raised concern over the incident in the Assembly. "It is a serious matter that the first citizen of Nagpur has been attacked in this way. This indicates the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government's failure to maintain law and order in the State," Mr. Mungantiwar said.

(With PTI inputs)

Patil warns of tax hike if GST compensation is not paid

Govt. will be compelled to seek remedies, says minister

SHARAD VYAS MUMBAI

State Finance Minister Jayant Patil has warned of an imminent tax hike to shore up revenue on account of implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) regime in the State. The State government will be compelled to seek various remedies, including increasing general taxes, if the Central government does not pay the committed GST compensation at the earliest, he said, following a consultation meeting for the Union Budget 2020-21 in New Delhi.

The meeting, chaired by Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman, was followed by a discussion of the GST Council on Wednesday. The Maharashtra delegation, which Mr. Patil led, urged the Centre to contribute ₹14,000 crore towards damage caused by natural calamities. "On behalf of the Government of Maharashtra, we have asked Government of India (GoI) to help to the tune of ₹14,000 crore for all damage caused by natural calamities. I will be proposing various measures on behalf of several stakeholders of Maharashtra,"

Mr. Patil said. The Maha Vikas Aghadi government's coalition partner Shiv Sena has already warned of a 'conflict' with the Centre if it does not compensation for



Jayant Patil

revenue losses in the States on time. During the discussion, Mr. Patil requested the GoI to pay the promised Central assistance, which is pending for a long time. The demand of ₹14,000 crore includes pending assistance, he said. "In addition to this, there are various projects which the GoI is supporting but funds are not reaching

us on time." The minister confirmed participation in a discussion on the rationalisation of rates and changes in slabs during the GST Council meeting with finance ministers of other States. Mr. Patil said States will have to take a "considerate" view on the issue of raising the tax slabs since revenue is falling in the past few years owing to adjustments in GST rates. "At various points before some elections, the GoI reduced taxes. This has affected the revenue of various States, and Central support to bridge this gap is not happening," he said. Maharashtra will look to shore up revenue, including focussing on compliance, and hike taxes as a last resort to remedy the situation, he added.

An editorial in the Sena mouthpiece Saamana on Saturday had warned that the compensation for loss of revenue from implementation of the new tax regime must be shared immediately or a new 'struggle' could start between the Centre and States. The failure to pay the compensation and haphazard of implementation of economic policies by New Delhi has resulted in 'economic anarchy', Saamana said.

The Sena mouthpiece had said Ms. Sitharaman had assured that the Centre is committed to paying GST compensation but earlier, the government had promised payments of compensation would be made every two months. "The Centre had promised to pay ₹50,000 crore to States to compensate them on account of revenue loss due to GST implementation. But the States have not received the compensation for the past four months," the editorial said. "The money belongs to the States and any further delay can spoil their financial situation. The States will have to raise their voice against the Centre if their rightful share in resources is not passed on to

For the farmers



Seeking relief: Bharatiya Janata Party MLAs raise slogans demanding compensation of ₹25,000 per hectare to rain-affected farmers, outside the Assembly in Nagpur on Wednesday. • s. SUDERSHAN

Thousands bid adieu to Havildar Chougule

Soldier laid to rest with full military honours at Gadhinglaj in Kolhapur

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

With grief and fortitude, the relatives and loved ones of Havildar Jotiba Ganpati Chougule, who died on Monday in a ceasefire violation by Pakistani troops in Kashmir's Gurez sector, performed his last rites amid a sea of mourners in Kolhapur's Gadhinglaj taluka on Wednesday.

The soldier's mortal re mains reached Kolhapur in the morning on a special military plane from Jammu. The funeral, which was to have taken place on Tuesday, was delayed as poor weather had prevented the plane from flying out of Jammu.

Mourners followed the funeral cortège bearing Chougule's remains, draped in the Tricolour, as it made its journey from Kolhapur city to his ancestral village in Mahagaon-Umbarwadi.

All shops and establishments in Mahagaon and Um-



Final goodbye: Nine-year-old Atharva Chougule after lighting his father's pyre on Wednesday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

barwadi downed shutters as a mark of respect to their fallen brave heart. Thousands of residents from neighbouring villages converged at the funeral in Mahagaon to partake in the sorrow of the Chougule family.

In a particularly poignant moment, the soldier's eldest son, nine-year-old Atharva,

saluted the funeral pyre after lighting it and bid adieu to his gallant father as he was laid to rest with full military

The pyre was lit amid chants of "Shahid Jotiba Chougule amar rahe (Long martyr Jotiba Chougule)."

The 37-year-old soldier,

who sustained bullet injuries while manning a forward post in Gurez sector in Bandipora district, is survived by his wife, Yashoda, and

Chougule's relatives recalled his spirit of self-sacrifice and burning ambition to join the armed forces right from childhood, while local residents reminisced about his helpful nature and capacity for hard work. His dream was realised when ioined the Army in April 2002.

All senior officials from the Kolhapur district administration, senior police officers, soldiers of the Maratha Light Infantry and Army personnel of other ranks were present at the funeral.

"Havildar Chougule had been home on leave barely a fortnight ago. This brief spell of happiness was shattered on Monday when the news of his death reached the family," said a district official.

ASSEMBLY BACKBENCHER



Night scare

Legislators staying in the Nagpur MLA hostel were in for a fright on Tuesday night after an intoxicated man banged on the door of a BJP MLA's room, asking for money. Sachin Kalyanshetty of Akkalkot complained about a

group of drunk men barging into the hostel "There was no guard at the door. I had to go and wake up the security personnel and inform them. If MLAs are facing this, what about common citizens of the

Pawar point

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis, in his speech on the Governor's address in the House, brought along copies of Shiv Sena mouthpiece Saamana with headlines criticising NCP chief Sharad Pawar. Interestingly, the BJP leader, who during the poll campaign had declared Mr. Pawar's political career to be over, spent much of his speech talking about the



NCP chief. As one NCP MLA said with a sly smile: "Time changes rapidly."

HC seeks State response to PIL on deaths of sewage workers

'Increasing number of deaths show rules not being followed'

SONAM SAIGAL MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed the State government to reply to a plea highlighting the deaths of sewage workers.

A Division Bench of Justices Ranjit More and S.P. Tavade was hearing a criminal public interest litigation (PIL) filed by lawyer Abha Singh following increasing cases of deaths of sewage workers. The alarming frequency of deaths, the PIL says, indicates that the provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, are not being

implemented. The PIL mentions the increasing number of sewer deaths in the city despite the fact that manual scavenging and unprotected sewer operations are banned under the law since 1993. It further says that manual scavenging is modern day untouchability and in violation of Article 17 (abolishes the practice of



Bombay High Court

untouchability) Constitution.

The PIL says that on January 9, two conservancy workers and a contractor died of asphyxiation in a Panvel sewage manhole/ CIDCO; on January 16 three labourers died after inhaling toxic gas in a civic sewage treatment plant at Mira Road; on March 16, five BMC workers inhaled poisonous fumes, one of whom died, in a 15-feet manhole at Nana Chowk; on May 3, three people died while cleaning a

septic tank in Nallasopara; and later in May three men died in a septic tank at a housing society in Thane.

"Lack of protective gear has been cited as the reason for death. Till date, not a single criminal conviction regarding these deaths has been reported and most are classified as accidental deaths by the police. This is in stark violation of certain sections of the Act which provides for imprisonment if manual scavengers are employed or humans are made to clean sewers," the PIL states.

The PIL also refers to an RTI query, to which the BMC replied that no deaths have taken place. Moreover, as per information about the safety measures, as provided by the BMC, safety equipment does not contain full body suits, oxygen cylinders, and gas masks. It is an accepted practice in other countries like China, U.S., and Japan to use such protective gear.

Worn canals causing Jayakwadi dam water to leak in transit'

Experts emphasise need for major repair of network

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA AURANGABAD

The poor structural condition of the Jayakwadi dam water canal network in Marathwada is causing 35-40% of water to leak in transit, according to experts.

Corroborating claim, an Irrigation Department official said on Wednesday that almost 70% of the canal network needs major restoration.

"Canals taking water from the Jayakwadi dam to rural regions of Marathwada region need major repairs. The resultant water loss due to leakages has reached 40%, as the weak canals cannot carry the dam water to their fullest capacity," water analyst Y.R. Jadhav said.

"Some years ago, the Irrigation Department told courts that it needed ₹7,000 crore for a major overhaul of this system. Unfortunately, none of the governments lis-

tened," Mr. Jadhav claimed. Dam expert Pradeep Purandare said the govern-



Jayakwadi dam network needs major restoration. ■ FILE РНОТО

ment should repair these canals and bring down water losses. He said new projects, such as a water grid, are needed in the region. "These canals were never repaired. Minor repairs are not sufficient," Mr. Purandare said, adding that public pressure need to be created to revive the dam network in the absence of a third party monitoring the matter.

An Irrigation Department official said almost 70% of the Jayakwadi dam network needs major restoration.

"The structures like aqueducts are leaking while the canal network is not performing to its fullest capacity. Moreover, the present water losses of 35-40% are increasing day by day. We are never sure that this dam will fill to its entire capacity every year," he said. The damage is also affecting irrigation potential in the region, he said.

Jayakwadi project executive engineer Rajendra Kale, too, said the canal system needs to be repaired.





Gold bar found pasted on passenger's head

Customs sleuths arrested a passenger at the Mangaluru International Airport, who was reportedly carrying a gold bar weighing 247.7 g, valued at ₹9.57 lakh, on his head. In a tweet, the Mangaluru Customs sleuths said the passenger had reportedly pasted the gold bar on his head and covered it with false hair

A.P., NMDC ink pact on iron ore supply to Kadapa

Wednesday entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Mineral **Development Corporation** (NMDC) for supply of iron ore to the Kadapa steel plant.

Skill development varsity to come up in Tirupati

VIJAYAWADA The Andhra Pradesh government will establish a Skill Development University in Tirupati and a High-end Skills University in Visakhapatnam, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said the government has planned to set up 25 skill development centres in A.P.

STAFF REPORTER

Continuing their crackdown

on people associated with

alleged frontal outfits of the

outlawed Community Party

of India (Maoist), the Telan-

gana police on Wednesday

arrested four more persons

from Hyderabad and Gad-

wal. While the Jogulamba-

Gadwal police arrested

Chaitanya Mahila Sangam

Maoist links: four more

arrested in Telangana

Students in Kerala clash over CAA Farmers oppose Jagan's 3

Campuses turn restive as pro and anti-Act groups lock horns

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala police have flagged increasing restiveness on college campuses across Kerala.

Officials privy to field intelligence reports said the student community appeared deeply divided over the new citizenship law.

The controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), which allegedly discriminated against Muslims seeking citizenship and scraped away at the secular tenets of the Constitution, has met with opposition and support in almost equal measure on fiercely politi-

cised college campuses. The issue was likely to be deeply schismatic for the student community if the developments on several campuses on Wednesday were any indication.

Fisticuffs in Thrissur

In Sree Kerala Varma College in Thrissur, Students' Federation of India and Campus Front activists allegedly prevented Akhil Bharativa Vidyarthi Parishad activists from organising a seminar to 'justify' the law, resulting in violence.

The outbreak of fisticuffs,

State committee member

Gunta Renuka, 21, from Gad-

wal town, a police team

from Bhadradri-Kothagu-

dem came to Hyderabad

and arrested CMS joint se-

cretary Dongari Devendra,

38, and one of its members

Telangana Vidyarthi Vedi-

ka general secretary Men-

chu Sandeep, 26, was also

Dubasi Swapna, 30.

taken into custody.



Loud and clear: Students shouting slogans during a protest march against the Citizenship Amendment Act in Kochi on Wednesday. • THULASI KAKKAT

caught on a mobile camera, was soon aired on TV channels and amplified on social media.

In Thiruvananthapuram, a group of youths waving saffron flags and wearing Sangh Parivar headbands charged a police barricade in front of the Secretariat.

In Kochi, students from various colleges marched bearing Indian flags to protest against the "biased" law. A police official said Campus Front activists formed the bulk of the protesters.

Section 144 imposed across Karnataka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

On the eve of protests planned by various groups across Karnataka against the Citizenship Amendment Act on Thursday, Section 144 of the Cr. PC has been imposed across the State. It will be in force for the next three days and permission to hold

protests and rallies have been denied, according to senior police officials. The ban orders had been imposed as they were anticipating a law and order problem, the police said.

The Bengaluru police have also warned citizens against sharing provocative messages on social media.

PM inquired about circumstances that led to killing of rape accused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inquired about the killing by the police of the four accused in the rape and murder of a veterinarian near Hyderabad on November 27, at a meeting with the Telangana police chief a few days ago. Mr. Modi asked the Telangana DGP M.Mahendar

Reddy about the fallout of the shooting when he met him at the annual DGP's conference organised by the Intelligence Bureau in Pune on December 7.

During one of the sessions, Mr. Modi asked the police chief about the circumstances that led to the killings, an official familiar with the development said.

The four were shot dead in the Chatanpally area of Shadnagar, 50 km from Hyderabad, where the police had taken them for reconstruction of the incident on December 6.

According to the police, the accused allegedly tried to attack the team and escape, at which point they opened fire in self-defence.

capitals idea, call for bandh

A.P. CM's proposal is detrimental to their interests, they say

STAFF REPORTER VIIAYAWADA

Farmers in the Capital region have called for a bandh on December 19 as part of their protest against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's idea of having three capital cities -Amaravati, Visakhapatnam and Kurnool.

They took to the streets in the morning at Uddandaray unipalem, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation for Amaravati, and some other villages demanding that the Chief Minister shelve his plans to shift the Capital city in the name of decentralisation.

Police were deployed in strength in the villages as farmers and activists of civil society organisations squatted on the road, and some of them began a relay hunger

The farmers said they had given their land under the pooling scheme keeping in view the larger interests of the State, and Mr. Reddy's concept was detrimental to their interests and that of the future generations.

'Contradictory remarks' The farmers said they wel-

comed decentralisation of development but not administration and that the Ministers' contradictory statements had opened a can of worms. Mr. Reddy stoked the fire by springing a surprise in the Assembly on the last day of the winter session on December 17, they said.

Mr. Reddy said he favoured development of three capitals in a marked departure from former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's plans to develop 26 villages in the Vijayawada-Guntur region as one mega capital city.



One too many: Residents protesting against the A.P. Chief Ministers' plan to develop three capitals in the State. • V. RAJU

Best bet for Vizag, say entrepreneurs, NRIs

Ex-State CII chief for consultations

SANTOSH PATNAIK VISAKHAPATNAM

The indications of making Visakhapatnam the executive capital of Andhra Pradesh have generated a lot of enthusiasm among entrepreneurs, with several U.S.based NRIs exuding confidence that the decision will help in the promotion of 'Brand Vizag.'

"By and large NRIs greet the move wholeheartedly as Visakhapatnam is blessed with natural splendour, good international connectivity and a robust infrastructure," Rathnakar R. Pandugayala, Government's Special Re-

presentative for North America, told *The Hindu* on Wednesday. He said the commitment by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan

Mohan Reddy to develop the

city into a leading IT, phar-

ma and tourism hub would

attract overseas invest-

ments. America Telugu Aca-

mesh Bheemreddy said the hint given by the Chief Minister had brought cheer to people of Andhra Pradesh origin settled in North America. Entrepreneur and past chairman of CII-AP R.V.S.

demy (ATA) president Par-

Rudraraju said: "It's a good move for decentralised development but I think rather than shifting the whole executive we should identify geographic relevance of departments and locate them accordingly. It will also be important for the experts' committee to discuss with the stakeholders before submitting its report."

Vizagapatam Chamber of Commerce and Industry former president A.V. Monish Row said the idea of three capitals in South Africa was due to various historical reasons, including colonialism, apartheid and the **Dutch and British conquests** of that country.

⁺ Goa relieved after MoEF's decision on Mahadayi project

Ministry keeps in abeyance letter to Karnataka giving nod

In a reprieve to Goa, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF) on Wednesday kept in abeyance its letter earlier written to Karnataka stating that its proposed Kalasa Banduri project on Mahadayi river does not need an environment clearance (EC).

The MoEF's move comes after Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who is in New Delhi to attend the GST Council meeting, met Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar on Wednesday, seeking withdrawal of the letter.

Soon after the meeting, the MoEF wrote to Chief Engineer, Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Limited, informing that it was keeping in abeyance its letter written

on October 17, 2019.

The Kalasa Banduri project is aimed at providing drinking water to three important districts of north Karnataka – Belagavi, Gadag and Dharwad - which go parched in summer due to acute water scarcity.

Diversion of water

The project involves diverting water from Mahadayi river, the lifeline of Goa, into the Malaprabha river.

However, the Goa government had strongly objected to the MoEF's October letter and demanded that it be either withdrawn or kept in abevance.

On Wednesday, MoEF's Deputy Director Mohit Saxena wrote to Karnataka that based on the facts made available subsequently to the Ministry, it is observed that applications for clarification of the award of the Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal dated August 14, 2018 filed by the governments of Goa and Karnataka are still pending.

"The award has also been challenged by Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra before the Supreme Court," the letter reads. "Pending resolution of all these cases, the letter issued earlier by this Ministry is hereby kept in abeyance," it said.

Opposition's demand

However, Opposition parties in Goa sought complete withdrawal of the MoEF's October letter to Karnataka.

Leader of the Opposition in the Goa Assembly, Digambar Kamat, said the letter should not be merely kept in abeyance, but "withdrawn."

Balancing act



Serving it hot: An agriculture worker in Khammam district of Telangana carrying home-cooked food on his two-wheeler to be delivered to farm labourers. He has adopted the famed business model of Mumbai's dabbawalas. •G.N. RAO

'Treat KLIP as a national project'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Telangana government has once again re quested the Centre to treat Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) as a National Project and make adequate provision for it in the Union Budget for

Representing on various issues specific to the State, Finance Minister T. Harish Rao in the pre-budget meeting convened by the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman in New Delhi on Wednesday said the project was taken up at an estimated cost of ₹1 lakh crore to provide irrigation to the parched lands in the State. The expenditure on the massive project was being met through borrowings but it is burdening the State. "There is merit in treating it as a National Project," he said.

told NGO workers about Ms.

Ammal and expressed inter-

Mr. Menon was brought to

the old-age home here two months ago, and Ms. Laksh-

mi Ammal began taking care

During an interaction

with inmates, Mr. Daniel

came to know the story of

Mr. Menon and Ms. Ammal,

and realised they wanted to

live together and support

each other. Initially, both Mr.

Menon and Ms. Lakshmi

est in meeting her.

One painting a day via WhatsApp since 2013

Avanavu Narayanan reaches out to 5,000 people with a new work of art every day

ABDUL LATHEEF NAHA

Avanavu Narayanan is a prolific artist. Every day he reaches out to at least 5,000 people with a new work of art through WhatsApp. And he has been doing it without a single day's break since

Mr. Narayanan says none in his knowledge has achieved such a feat. But his polite nature pushes him to do more sketches and paintings and to send them to people who appreciate them, rather than attempting an entry in the record books.

"My aim has been to create a culture of art appreciation in our society," he said, recounting how he started the habit of sending one painting every day to his friends through WhatsApp.



Avanavu Narayanan showing one of his works on a mobile

When people started sending blind forwards on WhatsApp, Mr. Narayanan thought, "Why not a work of mine every day?'

And the practice clicked and soon gained acceptance and popularity among his friends and followers.

Although he has only two dedicated WhatsApp groups to send his sketches and paintings, his works end up being forwarded regularly in dozens of groups, and they travel across different social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

Warm response

A self-taught man, Mr. Narayanan wakes up 3.30 a.m. every day and finishes one or two works on A3 or A4 drawing sheets. By 5 a.m., he broadcasts his fresh work of through WhatsApp. "Nearly 25% of people respond with warmth and love. Some people complain when they miss the paintings," he said.

It was his grandfather Vaidyamadom Valiya Narayanan Namboothri who identified the talent in him and sent him to learn drawing. But he compensated what he had missed from his private study through persistence and dedication.

When he became a drawing teacher at Vanneri Higher Secondary School, he used to wake up very early and practice diligently. "It really helped me grow," he

The winner of Kerala State Lalithakala Akademi Award in 2011 and 2014, Mr. Narayanan has nearly three dozen solo exhibitions to his credit. Although he first used

charcoal and high-grade pencils as his medium, Mr. Narayanan now dabbles in all mediums including oil and water colour. But sketching with the pen remains his favourite medium.

Beginning of a new life in the twilight years Elderly couple in Thrissur are getting married to support each other

MINI MURINGATHERI THRISSUR

There was a unique 'Save The Date' post on Facebook by John Daniel, the Welfare Standing Committee Chairman of the Thrissur Corporation recently.

Bridegroom – 67-year-old Kochaniayan Menon. Bride - 66-year-old P.V. Lakshmi Ammal. Both are inmates of the Government Old Age Home, Ramavarmapuram, Thrissur. They will get married at the facility on December 30.

G.K. Krishna Iyer, Lakshmi Ammal's first husband, died 22 years ago. He was an expert in Brahmin cuisine in Thrissur. Kochaniayan Menon from Irinjalakuda was his assistant for many years. On his deathbed, Iyer had asked Mr. Menon to take care



Lakshmi Ammal and Kochaniayan Menon will get married at the Government Old Age Home in Thrissur on December 30.

of Ms. Lakshmi Ammal.

Mr. Menon would extend

support to Ms. Lakshmi Am-

After Iyer's death, Mr. Menon travelled as an expert on the cuisine for many years. Lakshmi Ammal reached the old age home about a year-and-a-half ago.

he suffered a paralytic stroke about six months ago.

An NGO in Wayanad gave him shelter. He underwent treatment at the Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode. When he returned to the Wayanad old-age home, he

Ammal were hesitant to due mal whenever possible, till to the fear of social stigma,

It is the first time in the Kerala that a wedding would be conducted between in-

mates of an old age home, said the Superintendent. Preparations are under way for the wedding

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY

Forecast for Thursday: Cold day conditions in some pockets likely over east and west Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Puniab. Harvana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Madhva Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim. Dense to very dense fog likely in isolated pockets over south Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MI
Agartala	–	24.0	13.0	Kozhikode	–	35.0	24.
Ahmedabad	–	26.0	15.0	Kurnool	–	32.0	19.
Aizawl	–	20.0	8.0	Lucknow		13.0	8.
Allahabad	–	18.0	9.0	Madurai	–	27.0	23.
Bengaluru		27.0	17.0	Mangaluru		37.0	22.
Bhopal		18.0	8.0	Mumbai		31.0	23.
Bhubaneswar		29.0	17.0	Mysuru		28.0	14.
Chandigarh	–	13.0	8.0	New Delhi	–	17.0	7.
Chennai	–	30.0	24.0	Patna	–	16.0	13.
Coimbatore	0.4	27.0	19.0	Port Blair	–	31.0	25.
Dehradun	–	22.0	7.0	Puducherry	–	30.0	21.
Gangtok	–	12.0	6.0	Pune	–	29.0	17.
Goa	–	34.0	22.0	Raipur	–	26.0	15.
Guwahati	–	25.0	10.0	Ranchi	–	20.0	8.
Hubballi	–	29.0	18.0	Shillong	–	16.0	6.
Hyderabad		29.0	18.0	Shimla		13.0	3.
Imphal		23.0	5.0	Srinagar		8.0	4.
Jaipur		19.0	7.0	Thiruvananthapuram		33.0	23.
Kochi		33.0	24.0	Tiruchi	0.1	29.0	22.
Kohima		18.0	6.0	Vijayawada		30.0	21.
Kolkata		23.0	13.0	Visakhapatnam		29.0	23.
(Rainfall data i	n mm:	temper	ature in C	Celsius)			

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

, ,										
ITIES	SO ₂	NO_2	co	PM2.5	PM10	CODE				
hmedabad	39	.30	26	119	.102					
Bengaluru	4	.61	93	85	97					
Chennai	18	.40	36	140						
Oelhi	4	.73	62	339	.199					
lyderabad	18	.62	34	226						
Colkata	13	.56	30	187	.148					
ucknow	5	7	45	307						
/lumbai	19	.49	31	172	.132					
une	96	.30	59	165	.120					
/isakhanatnam	9	36	60	141	114					

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score

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

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.

PM2.5 & 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

Tharoor wins **Akademi's 2019** award for English

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Sahitya Akademi on Wednesday announced its annual literary awards for 2019 for works in 23 languages, including one for Shashi Tharoor's non-fiction book about British rule in India.

Akademi The nounced that it would honour seven books of poetry, four novels, six books of short stories, three of essays and one each of nonfiction, autobiography and biography. The award, including ₹1 lakh in cash, would be presented at a ceremony on February 25, 2020, the Akademi said in a statement.

'An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India' by Mr. Tharoor, who is a Congress MP, was selected in the English category.

The awards honour works of poetry by Dr. Phukan Ch. Basumatry (Bodo), Dr. Nand Kishore Acharya (Hindi), Nilba A. Khandekar (Konkani), Kumar Manish Arvind (Maithili), V. Madhusoodanan Nair (Malayalam), Anuradha Patil (Marathi) and Prof. Penna Madhusudan (Sanskrit).

Novels by Dr. Joysree Goswami Mahanta (Assamese), L. Birmangol Singh (Manipuri), Cho. Dharman (Tamil) and Bandi Narayana Swamy (Telugu) were also among the winners.

Books of short stories by Abdul Ahad Hajini (Kashmiri), Tarun Kanti Mishra (Odia), Kirpal Kazak (Punjabi), Ramsawroop Kisan (Rajasthani), Kali Charan Hembram (Santali) and Ishwar Moorjani (Sindhi), an autobiography by Dr. Vijaya (Kannada) and a biography by Prof. Shafey Kidwai (Urdu) were also among the winners.

Accordingly, Mr. Rajago-Ranjan on Monday.

of Revenue on October 18

EC to lodge new FIR in R.K. Nagar bribery case

Poll body cites new report from IT Dept.

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S. CHENNAI

The Election Commission on Wednesday informed the Madras High Court that it had received a fresh report from the Income Tax Department on October 18 regarding the April 2017 R.K. Nagar bypoll bribery issue, and a decision had therefore been taken to get a new FIR registered by the police.

The submission was made before Justices M. Sathyanarayanan and R. Hemalatha, who were seized of writ petitions seeking a CBI probe into the issue since an FIR registered by the city police in 2017, at the instance of Election Commission, had been quashed by a single judge of the High Court in March 2018, without the knowledge of the poll watchdog.

Wondering if the quashing of that FIR could be grounds to order a CBI probe, the judges had directed the Election Commission to disclose what other legal remedies it proposed to seek.

In response, the Election Commission continued to update the court about the decisions taken by it from time to time, with a request not to disclose them in public "in view of the sensitive nature of the issue".

Such

non-disclosure

forced senior counsel P. Wilson, representing a petitioner N. Maruthu Ganesh of DMK [who was defeated in the bypoll], to file a memo last month insisting upon disclosure of all documents related to the issue. Following this, the judges had directed EC counsel Niranjan Rajagopal to obtain necessary instructions from the within commission

pal on Wednesday submitted a letter written to him by EC Undersecretary Rajiv

The letter stated that the commission had received a report from the Department



The Madras HC had in 2018 quashed an FIR filed by the Election Commission

and, on the basis of the report, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Tamil Nadu had been directed on October 21 to lodge a police complaint.

The CEO was specifically instructed to get an FIR registered against those suspected to have been involved in bribing voters, and indulging in electoral corrupt practices, following recovery of incriminating documents during searches conducted at the residence of Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar and other places in April 2017.

However, CEO Satyabrata Sahoo sought certain clarifications on October 25. Subsequently, the commission wrote to the Central Board of Direct Taxes seeking to know the current status of income tax assessment proceedings initiated against Mr. Vijayabaskar pursuant to the searches and also sent a reminder on December 5, but the information was still awaited, the letter read.

After the judges perused the letter, senior standing counsel for the Income Tax Department, A.P. Srinivas, told the court that the I-T department was expected to complete the assessment proceedings by December 31. In the meantime, the Health Minister had filed a writ petition before a single judge of the High Court insisting upon cross-examining witnesses, he said.

The Division Bench was also told that Justice Anita Sumanth was expected to hear the Minister's writ petition on Thursday.

SC rejects review plea of Nirbhaya case convict

It denies extra time for filing of mercy plea

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition filed by one of the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case to review its May 5, 2017 judgment confirming his death penalty.

The court refused Akshay Singh's plea to grant him three weeks' time to file a mercy petition before the President of India.

The Delhi Police said the law allowed a death row convict only a week's time. The court said it would not express anything in this regard and it was open for the convict to avail whatever time the law prescribes for the purpose of filing mercy plea.

A three-judge Review Bench led by Justice R. Banumathi said a review petition did not mean hearing "over and over again" the same arguments made in the appeals.

At 1 p.m., Justice Banumathi, flanked by Justices Ashok Bhushan and A.S. Bopanna on the Bench, read out excerpts from the judgment pronounced merely a couple of hours after they finished hearing the oral arguments made in the review petition earlier in the morning.

During the review hearing, advocate A.P. Singh, counsel for Akshay, submitted that "executions only kill criminals, not the crime." "The State must not simply execute people to prove that it is attacking terror or violence against women. It must persistently work towards systematic reforms to being about change," Mr. Singh said.

Countering the review for the Delhi Police, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted that the death penalty was the law and as long as it remained in the statute book, the punishment had to be followed.



Long struggle: Nirbhaya's parents arriving at the Patiala House Court in New Delhi on Wednesday. • PTI

'Time to take stock of implementation of law'

Atrocities against women still high: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

It is "time to take stock" if the Nirbhaya case is the best the country's law enforcement and judiciary could do to bring the guilty to justice for crimes committed against women, the Supreme Court said in an order on Wednesday.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said there was no letdown in the atrocities against women.

The latest data from National Crime Records Bureau shows 32,559 rape cases were registered in 2017

In the 18-page order, the court said the rising crime graph was despite the sweeping amendments made to criminal law, especially anti-rape laws, in 2013 and 2018. "Delay in recent times has created agitation, anxiety and unrest in the minds of the people," it acknowledged.

'Not an isolated case' "The Nirbhaya case is not an isolated case where it has ta-

ken so long to reach finality.

In fact, it is said that it has been one of the cases where agencies have acted swiftly taking into account the public outrage... We are, therefore, of the view that it is necessary to take stock of the implementation of provisions of criminal law, including amendments relating to rape cases and other sexual offences," the Bench, also comprising Justices B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant, observed.

The court directed the Supreme Court Secretary General to call for information from the Chief Secretaries and police chiefs of all States on the status of affairs regarding investigation, prosecution, medico-forensic agencies, rehabilitation and legal aid in cases of rape and other sexual offences.

The court also asked whether the 60-day deadline each for investigation and trial is being adhered to; whether women judges preside over trials concerning crimes committed against women and if such cases were being tried in special courts designated for the purpose.

⁺ Plea in SC against felling of 64,000 trees

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Centre and the State of Uttar Pradesh on a petition claiming that

64,000 trees are being proposed to be felled in Lucknow by January 15 to hold a

defence expo. A Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde issued notice on a petition filed by

activist Sheela Barse that the cutting of the trees amounts to intergenerational injustice. The loss of green cover would not only affect the current generation but future ones too, it said.

Quick, not hasty

Real deterrence is when there is certainty of punishment without justice-denying delays

The trial court verdict finding former BJP legislator Kuldeep Singh Sengar guilty of raping a minor girl from Unnao in Uttar Pradesh underscores the merits of a justice system that managed to overcome initial apathy and take the investigation to its logical end. The Supreme Court transferred the Unnao cases involving Sengar and his associates from Lucknow to Delhi on August 1 and set a 45-day deadline for completing the trial. That the judgment is out before the end of the year, with the sessions court recording a conviction for rape under the IPC and penetrative sexual assault on a minor under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, shows a welcome sense of urgency. The sentencing, a few days on, holds out hope that the guilty politician may have to serve a minimum of 10 years or life imprisonment. Judge Dharmesh Sharma's judgment has struck a blow for a system about which there is much cynicism over justice-denying delays. The history of this case also reveals the difficult path to justice that survivors of sexual offences have to tread. It highlights a principal systemic problem: how the unequal power relations between perpetrator and victim will almost succeed in silencing the survivor, but for the intervention of superior courts.

Threatened into silence for two months, the survivor and her family ultimately reported the crime, only to face fierce retribution. She drew attention to her plight by threatening to set herself ablaze outside U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's residence in April 2018. Her father, arrested in a case under the Arms Act, died mysteriously in judicial custody. The girl also revealed that a week after the MLA's crime, his associates once again abducted and raped her. It was only after the Supreme Court transferred the investigation to the CBI, and later the trial to Delhi, that justice was seen to be done. The court also pulled up the CBI for delaying the chargesheet in the second case and not adhering to victimfriendly norms during the probe. A key lesson is that justice is not necessarily about giving the death penalty for rape through rapid-fire trials. It should mean that perpetrators should fear the certainty of punishment, and live with the taint of guilt for long years in prison. This is a point that knee-jerk law-making, of the sort that Andhra Pradesh has done, and the public clamour for executing all rape suspects, of the sort seen after the rape and murder of a veterinarian near Hyderabad, seem to miss. The essential framework of justice in rape cases should consist in a quick, but not hasty, probe by investigators and prosecutors sensitised to the travails of survivors, especially children, and a conducive atmosphere for them to depose during trial. The resulting lengthy jail terms will constitute both just deserts for grave crimes and an opportunity for remorse.

A duty to publish

Limiting RTI responses based on locus standi of the applicants could create a chilling effect

he Right to Information Act's role in fostering more informed citizenry and an accountable government has never been in doubt ever since its implementation in 2005. But there have been persistent and growing misgivings. Section 4 of the Act calls for pro-active and voluntary dissemination of information, but only a few Central and State institutions have published relevant information; here, Rajasthan has taken a lead through its Jan Soochna portal. The other problem has been persisting vacancies in the State and Central Information Commissions, which was raised in a plea in the Supreme Court on Monday. A three-judge Bench led by the CJI allowed the request and asked the Centre and States to expedite filling up the vacancies. The CJI also curiously observed that officials were sensing fear leading to paralysis of action due to the working of the RTI, going on to elaborate that the kind of queries that were sometimes being asked were not always in public spirit and were posed by people who had no "locus standi" in the matter regarding the queries. This argument by the CJI is difficult to accept as the RTI Act explicitly rejects the need for locus standi in Section 6(2) – "an applicant making request for information shall not be required to give any reason for requesting the information...". This clause is present for vital reasons seeking locus standi in order to respond to public requests could result in a chilling effect as public authorities (PAs) could choose to deny information to general citizens on subjective grounds. Besides, information commissioners and public officials have the authority to reject requests based on criteria that enable exemption from information disclosure. Data on RTI requests since 2005 show that the yearly rejection rate (requests rejected as a percentage of those received) has come down steadily to 4.7% in 2018-19. A change in the Act that seeks locus standi as a criterion could dramatically increase this number. Rather than focusing on locus standi, public authorities would be advised to provide for greater voluntary dissemination on government portals, which should ease their load.

A Transparency Audit report submitted to the Central Information Commission (CIC) in November 2018 sought feedback from 2,092 PAs under the CIC to evaluate implementation of Section 4 of the Act. Only 838 (40%) responded and even here, 35% of the PAs fared poorly with little transparency in parameters such as organisation and functions, budget and programme, egovernance, and other information disclosures. The other key misgiving with RTI implementation has been the persisting problem of vacancies in the CIC and State commissions – the CIC has four vacancies and 33,000 pending cases. After the top court's directions, this lacuna should be addressed by governments quickly.

The last bastions of secular India

The Jamia Millia, AMU assaults show a dangerous convergence of the Modi regime's anti-Muslim, anti-university agenda



ANANYA VAJPEYI

The battle against the Hindu Rashtra has to be fought simultaneously on all fronts in electoral contests, in legislatures, in the courts, in the media, in social movements - but most of all, in universities. This is because our universities are now the last remaining line of resistance to the complete fascist takeover of our democratic polity and its myriad institutions. There is simply no option but the one being exercised by students on campuses across the country today: if these young people falter, all will be lost. As parents, as teachers, as voters, as citizens, we have to support them with all our might.

Unravelling the Republic

No official declaration was made, but ever since the Modi 2.0 regime came to power in May 2019, the Constitution has been put on notice and India has been de facto in a state of emergency. Normal life was openly suspended at first in Kashmir, starting with the announcement of the dilution of Article 370 and abrogation of Article 35A on August 5. This suspension is now encroaching on several States of the Northeast, with complete communications blackouts, curfew, and massive paramilitary deployment becoming alarmingly commonplace measures.

Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh

statehood; the entire political and civil society leadership of the Valley of Kashmir was placed under preventative detention, where it continues to be four-and-a-half months later; and 50,000 more troops were sent in to occupy the region that already has close to three quarters of a million stationed there. At 136 days, Kashmir has had one of the longest Internet shutdowns in any democracy, ever. There is no word from Central authorities to indicate when this altogether extraordinary situation will cease

Next, the Supreme Court verdict on the Ayodhya case gave the go-ahead for the construction of a Ram Mandir at the very site of the destroyed mosque. From the siege and lockdown of a disputed Muslim-majority area like Kashmir, from one protracted legal conflict over a single house of worship in the Ram Janmabhoomi case, the entire Muslim population of India, numbering close to 200 million, has now been presented with an existential threat in the form of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 and the National Register of Citizens. This process of systematic exclusion that points towards the ultimate elimination of hundreds of thousands of Muslims from the count of citizens, from property ownership, from the electoral rolls, and from any kind of legal recognition as Indians, began in Assam but is now on the of being imposed nation-wide.

Campus and nation Meanwhile, the state's assault on

universities has been ongoing since Mr. Modi's first term in office. A few different agendas of

Hindutva ideology were unleashed on campuses like the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, Hyderabad Central University, and Jadavpur University

in West Bengal, among others. This multi-point programme includes: one, dismantling public institutions of higher education and privatising this sector; two, disenfranchising the humanities and social sciences because they encourcritical thinking especially targeting the discipline of history); three, gutting the bastions of left, liberal and secular intellectuals; fourth, retracting the opportunity for education from weaker sections of society, including Dalits, women, minorities, backward castes, Scheduled Tribes, and the poor; fifth, undoing the gains of egalitarian struggles like the feminist, Ambedkarite and left-wing movements; and lastly, shutting down spaces for free speech, dissent and resistance, so threatening to all authoritarian governments.

From the weekend of December 14-15, universities like Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi and the Aligarh Muslim University have practically been turned into war-zones, with the Central government in the capital and the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Uttar Pradesh sending in police that has been kicking and beating, freely wielding sticks and batons, releasing tear-gas, entering libraries, hostels and toilets, and roughing up students. The sheer brutality towards male and female students alike has been shocking, with dozens of youngsters injured and hospitalised, and hundreds forced to leave their campuses overnight. The supposed pretext for this assault on unarmed students is that they protested - albeit peacefully against the contentious and draconian Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, pushed through Parliament just earlier in the week.

Here we find a convergence of the Modi-Shah regime's anti-Muslim and anti-university designs. Jamia and AMU being minority institutions (albeit with plenty of non-Muslim students, faculty and staff in both universities), they present in one place an opportunity to terrorise Muslims and intimidate students. They also insult and repudiate a tradition of secular. nationalist and integrationist Muslim politics that carried the day at the time of decolonisation and throughout the Nehruvian period in the postcolonial republic.

Hindutva's endgame

Those who populate these campuses are the exact target group Their patriotism is suspect. Their rights are fair game. Their citizenship is precarious. Their very appearance, to paraphrase the Prime Minister, singles them out (for what, one wonders). Their physical existence and their presence as a group is an affront to the Hindu Rashtra. They trigger what Arjun Appadurai, in his analysis of majoritarian nationalism, calls "the fear of small numbers". They provide the perfect occasion for those practising majoritarian politics to turn "predatory" - seeking to swallow up the minority, to narrow and eventually close the gap between the largest identity group and the totality of the ethnos.

What the creators of Hindutva wanted from the very beginning was the separation of a Hindu nation from a Muslim nation. The long road to India's independence and the making of its Constitution did not permit such a divided and divisive outcome. Now that the Hindu Right has captured absolute power - democratically - they seek to effect a second communal Partition of India, to unravel our secular Constitution, to render illegal and stateless millions of our fellow-citizens, and to subdue our young people –the real majority – into voiceless, docile, obedient subjects.

As batons and bullets rain down on India's students, Muslims and Hindus alike, all those who care for democracy must stand with them and stand up to the fascist behemoth. The alternative is too terrifying to contemplate.

Ananya Vajpeyi, a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. New Delhi, is currently a Visiting Fellow at

Trump cards in the impeachment deck

The process to pin down the U.S. President could be politically wasteful for the Democratic Party



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

n the United States, the rule of law is in head-on collision with party politics. This has also been the case with previous impeachment cases: Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 before he could be removed, while Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton were impeached by the House of Reprein 1868 and respectively, but not convicted by the Senate. If President Donald Trump used Congress-authorised funds for military purposes in Ukraine for an alternate purpose, in this case for attempting to generate damaging evidence against one of his leading political opponents, it would exceed the severity of alleged illegal actions by any of the past Presidents who faced impeachment investigations.

Task before the Democrats

Going by opinion polls, the curimpeachment inquiry launched by the Democratic Party majority in the House of Representatives faces a singular obstacle; nearly four in 10 Americans trust Mr. Trump more than they trust the nation's public institutions, and 90% of registered Republicans support the President. The Democrats face an uphill battle in the political and perception fields; they have not only to establish that the President committed acts meeting the impeachment re-

quirement, but to convince the public they are not out to subvert the will of the people when 40% view the process, as does Mr. Trump, as a witch-hunt.

In fact, the Republican popular base support Mr. Trump because he disrupts, and his actions challenge long-accepted norms in American public institutions. Mr. Trump represents a profoundly anti-establishment bias which many Americans, embittered from the 2008 financial crisis and prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan and West Asia, share against officialdom, compromise and pragmatic governance. The President's oach may be a winning domestic political strategy but it also represents a deeply destabilising trend which erodes the effectiveness of institutions and damages American credibility abroad.

Political process

Impeachment is both a legal and a political process. The framers of the U.S. Constitution limited the grounds to treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanours, but rejected maladministration as grounds for removal from office; in other words they wanted Congress to examine cases of treachery and criminality but not bad policy or incompetence. The prescribed standards of culpability are left to the lawmakers and differ substantially from normal courts of law. The process is political because this power is given to politicians and elected officials and not judges. Congressional impeachment power is therefore the essence of the legislature's primacy, without check or balance, over the executive branch, and differs

from the lawmaking power which is subject to executive veto and judicial review.

The lower House's judiciary committee examined a range of charges against Mr. Trump such as bribery, extortion, obstruction of iustice and abuse of power. The House will assert that the U.S. President was asking Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky to advance Mr. Trump's personal interest, as opposed to the American interest, by investigating Democrat and former U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden for corrupt practices, and that mere solicitation, as opposed to implementation, was severe enough to warrant impeachment. Under U.S. criminal law, soliciting a bribe is as illegal as receiving one, but even if illegal, Congress must still determine if Mr. Trump's action constitutes a high crime or misdemeanour.

The Republican supporters of Mr. Trump argue that the President wished to combat corruption and was not seeking personal favours, but expressing legitimate public concerns. They also argue that regardless of Mr. Trump's actions, no linkage was insisted on, Ukraine received the military aid and never launched the investigations. However, the circumstances in which the aid was eventually released are murky; John Bolton, the National Security Adviser at that time, claims to have released the funds without the President's knowledge. Unfortunately for the President, both his hand-picked Ambassadors to Ukraine and the European Union have admitted to seeking, on Mr. Trump's behalf, Mr. Zelensky's authority for investigations into Mr. Biden specifically, an action that would benefit Mr. serving any recognised national interest.

Mr. Trump claims in his defence to have exclusive authority to define the national interest in the field of foreign policy. It is true that the President enjoys wide latitude, but in this case Congress has some say due to its appropriations power because it had authorised nearly \$400-million to help Ukraine after the Trump administration had certified that Ukraine was combating corruption sufficiently to qualify for the assistance.

Advantage Trump

The Democrats recognise that the longer the hearings drag on, the more it will appear that they are trying to engineer an outcome that they cannot achieve through the ballot box. This is why they wish to resolve the issue before the party caucuses start in February 2020. or as early as possible in the presidential nomination process. However, moving so rapidly inevitably involves skipping some of the

so removed is not

comparable to the volume of

water lost through damaged

surplus weirs. As a result of

with the surplus weirs, as

much as 40% of the storage

capacity is estimated to be

lost in every tank in every

year of a good monsoon.

The authorities are fully

aware of the fact that this is

because the sill level of the

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encroached area free from

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solution would be to involve

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available with the Public

Works Department. A

the vested interests meddling

careful due process consistent with the rule of law. They may be objectively convinced that multiple actions on the President's part warrant impeachment, but proof of motive and explicit culpability are required for a trial by the Senate presided over by the Supreme Court Chief Justice.

The Republicans hold 53 of the 100 seats in the Senate, which means they will prevail in any judgment against Mr. Trump, which requires a two-thirds majority of those present to remove him from office. It cannot be assumed that no Republican Senator will care about the evidence presented but the fact remains that the President can inflict substantial damage on Republican legislators who break ranks. This makes the semblance of any bipartisan inquiry impossible, and the President will almost certainly be acquitted.

Having initially opposed impeachment, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is now racing to conclude the impeachment process and articles of impeachment have been drafted. The charges are twofold and narrowly focused: abuse of authority in regard to Ukraine and obstruction of the investigation. The Senate trial will distract from the Democratic presidential primary contest with the Senator candidates having to cease campaigning to sit as jurors.

In short, the impeachment process looks like being politically wasteful for the Democratic Party, both now and its bid to seize power from Mr. Trump in the presidential elections next November.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign

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.

Standing up to the CAA

The Kerala Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, using his lucid three-point reasoning. has perfectly encapsulated the perilous nature of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (Editorial page, "Time to defend India's secularism", December 18). The tenets of our Constitution cannot and should not be ripped apart by the incumbent government in order to fulfil its Hindutva agenda. Taking a leaf out of Kerala's book – the State has been a melting pot of diverse religions from an early era – the Central government can perhaps learn a lesson or two from the 'Kerala Model' of religious syncretism. That said, it is high time all concerned in

this nation stand up to

oppose this subversion of our democracy. ADRIAN DAVID,

■ The propagation of Hindutva has never been so palpable as it is under Modi 2.0, especially with the current Home Minister at the helm. The Bharatiya Janata Party is resorting to pushing issues that do not even remotely connect to the development of the country, thereby diverting - and successfully – attention from the real problems: unemployment, economic distress and the agrarian crisis, to name a few. The secular fabric of this country is in grave danger of being torn apart and divisive forces are trying to drive a wedge

among communities. As

suggested by the Chief

Minister of Kerala, it is time that these divisive forces are shown their place. G.B. SIVANANDAM. Coimbatore

Three capitals Decentralisation in a modern administration is a must. But that does not mean one has the capital's core wings at three different places ("Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister hints at three Capitals for State", December 18). It will be a Herculean task, especially in a State that is still struggling under the weight of a huge Legislature, Executive and Judiciary at one place, with the branches of the Executive and the Judiciary spread all over the State. The Chief Minister should reconsider this proposal and

GOVARDHANA MYNEEDU,

State of irrigation tanks

think of returning to

Amaravathi.

The requirement of water for domestic, industrial and agricultural use has increased manifold. The government is handling the situation fairly well in the first two instances. However no attention is being paid to issues affecting irrigation tanks, which have lost almost 50% of their actual impounding capacity. This has happened because vast amounts of water are discharged through damaged surplus weirs. This is worrisome especially in years of good rainfall. With a view to maintain the actual storage the government removes silt from the tank

To read more letters bed, an operation that is carried out at the deepest the beneficiaries of tanks point of the tank close to the tank bund. The volume of silt

who can have a say in the ANBALAGAN RAMASAMY,

Waste menace in Kerala

It may come as a shock to many that there is a serious problem in Kerala – civic and attitude; namely, waste disposal in public places. Large stretches of the State are littered with garbage, which poses a health hazard too. It is upsetting that a State which prides itself in 100% literacy lacks a basic civic sense. Cleanliness is also a catalyst for investors, tourists and NRIs to explore

nature's beauty and deepen

economic activities.

BOBBY THOMAS,

Dubai, UAE