



(NRC) UNBORN BABY: MINORITY AFFAIRS MINISTER NAQVI

# Protests swell, allies push back: Govt signals a climbdown on all-India NRC

Allies Nitish and Chirag Paswan oppose NRC; Ram Madhav, Naqvi say no plan yet

LIZ MATHEW, ABANTIKA GHOSH, SANTOSH SINGH  
NEW DELHI, PATNA, DECEMBER 20

AS PROTESTS against the new citizenship law swelled nationwide and there was a pushback from state governments and even its allies, the first voices from the government and the ruling BJP were heard Friday climbing



'So far, no discussion on matter'



'Why to implement it?'

down on the plan for a pan-India National Register for Citizens (NRC). While JD(U) president and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said the NRC would not be implemented in Bihar, Lok Janshakti Party president Chirag Paswan said his party would not support any legislation which is not in the interest of the common people. Both are BJP's allies in Bihar and had supported the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Parliament. In Patna, breaking his silence on the NRC, Nitish said: "Kahe ke liye laagu hoga, ekdum nahi laagu hoga (Why should it (NRC) be implemented? It will not be implemented (in Bihar))." And Paswan weighed in: "The way demonstrations are taking place in the country, linking the CAB

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Protesters at a demonstration against the new citizenship law at Jama Masjid; the protests turned violent in the evening, in New Delhi on Friday. Praveen Khanna



## Six killed in protests across UP; Net shutdown in several districts

AVANEESH MISHRA & MANISH SAHU  
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 20

AT LEAST SIX persons were killed in firing during protests in UP on Friday against the Citizenship Amendment Act, taking the death toll from the agitation over two days to nine. Police said that over 660 people from towns across UP



Security forces in Lucknow on Friday. Vishal Srivastav

## Karnataka HC slams govt: 'You will ban each protest? Can't an author speak up?'

RALPH ALEX ARAKAL  
BENGALURU, DECEMBER 20

A DAY after police in Bengaluru detained several persons, including historian Ramachandra Guha, for defying prohibitory orders to protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the Karnataka High Court criticised the state government for impos-

ing those curbs in the city under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). While hearing a clutch of petitions against the security clampdown, Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka asked: "Are you (state) going to ban each and every protest? How can you cancel permission previously granted following due course of process?..."

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were taken into custody as part of "preventive action".

According to police, two persons died in Bijnor, and one each in Meerut, Kanpur, Firozabad and Sambhal. Doctors at the Meerut Medical College, however, said there were two deaths in the city.

Officials and police said at least 38 policemen were injured

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## After daylong peaceful protests at Jama Masjid, violence erupts in Old Delhi

AMIL BHATNAGAR & SHIVAM PATEL  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 20

AT LEAST 45 people, including 13 police officers, were injured as Walled City protests that had largely remained peaceful till 5 pm turned violent on Friday evening — a turn of events police have attributed to over 1,000

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OPPOSITION DRAWS NRC-NOTE BAN PARALLEL

IN MANGALORE, POLICE TARGETED HOSPITAL TOO  
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## After Bengal, Kerala govt puts NPR on hold

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DECEMBER 20

THE CPI(M)-LED government in Kerala on Friday ordered a "stay (on) all the activities connected with the updation of National Population Register (NPR) in the state forthwith".

Earlier this week, the TMC government in West Bengal had put on hold the NPR updation process amid fears that it was the "first step" to the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Citing similar fears, the order in Kerala, issued by the General Administration Department, said the decision was taken "considering the apprehension

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Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan

## Expelled BJP MLA Sengar gets life term in Unnao rape case

ANAND MOHAN J  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 20

A DELHI Court on Friday sentenced expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar to life imprisonment "for the remainder of his biological life" for raping a minor girl in Unnao in 2017.

Saying that Sengar "was a public servant" when he committed the "depraved act" and "betrayed" people's faith, District Judge Dharmesh Sharma said "all possible coercive measures were employed against the (victim's) family".

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 25 lakh on Sengar, of which Rs 10 lakh will be given to the victim and the rest to the Uttar Pradesh government for costs incurred during the trial. The CBI has been told to continue to assess the threat perception to the



Court also imposed a fine of Rs 25 lakh. File

life and security of the victim and her family members, and to provide them a safe house, and, if needed, new identities.

Sengar broke down in the courtroom when he was handed a copy of the judgment.

As per the judgment, the investigating officer recorded the victim's statement in the rape case and then went on to record her statement in the gangrape

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### 'ECONOMY WILL EMERGE STRONGER'

## PM tells India Inc: Decide and invest boldly, no reason to fear

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 20

STATING THAT he was aware of the discourse around the economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Friday that the country had seen such "ups and downs" and the economy has the potential to come out of the current situation. Modi said the economy was heading for disaster five years ago and his government brought about discipline and built a strong foundation for a \$5-trillion economy.

"I am well aware about the discussions related to the economy. But, within those discussions, we have to remember that during the previous government, GDP growth in one quarter had fallen to 3.5%, CPI inflation had touched 9.4% and fiscal deficit had breached 5.6% of GDP. I do



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday. PTI

not want to get into the debate that why some people stayed quiet then. There were ups and downs in the economy earlier too. Our country has shown the capability to come out from such situations always and it has come

out stronger. And, this time also, India will come out of this situation," the Prime Minister said at a function organised by industry body Assocham to celebrate its centenary year.

India's GDP growth has slowed to over a six-year low of 4.5 per cent in July-September, the second quarter of this financial year. Modi said the government has decriminalised many provisions of the Companies Act and that work is underway to bring in more provisions, adding that the government listens to industry, understands their needs and is sensitive to their suggestions. He also said that the government is working to eliminate the inverted duty structure (where taxes on inputs are more than the tax on output).

Modi said that no inappropriate decisions will be taken in case

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## Jaishankar cancels key US Congress panel meeting to avoid a J&K critic

Jayapal introduced resolution calling for lifting of curbs in J&K; Elizabeth Warren says deeply troubling

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 20

IN AN unusual step that has raised a few eyebrows in Washington, Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is said to have cancelled a meeting with the influential Congressional committee on foreign affairs because it included Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal who introduced the resolution urging India to lift all restrictions in Jammu and Kashmir after revoking Article 370.

This prompted a response from one of US Presidential candidates Elizabeth Warren, a top Democrat leader. "Efforts to silence Pramila Jayapal are deeply troubling. The US and India have an important partnership — but our partnership can only succeed if it is rooted in honest dialogue and shared respect for religious pluralism, democracy, and human rights," Warren tweeted.

Following Jaishankar's snub, Jayapal's House Resolution 745 — introduced on December 6 — which urged "the Republic of India to end the restrictions on communications and mass detentions in Jammu and Kashmir as swiftly as possible and preserve religious freedom for all residents" and had 19 co-sponsors, now added 10 Democrats over the last 24 hours, making the count at 29 on Friday.

While Jaishankar said he had "no interest" in meeting Jayapal, she tweeted that that this "only furthers the idea that the Indian government isn't willing to listen to any dissent at all".

The Washington Post first reported that Jaishankar "abruptly cancelled a meeting with senior members of Congress this week after US lawmakers refused demands to exclude" Jayapal from the meeting. Jaishankar was to meet chairman of the House



Jaishankar with US State Secy Mike Pompeo. AP

EXPLAINED  
Curious step from a veteran

JAISHANKAR has engaged with a range of members of the US Congress and overcome many a diplomatic challenge in DC. His rejection sends a signal that Delhi is thin-skinned. The panel is bipartisan and singling out a member makes it harder for India's friends on Capitol Hill.

Foreign Affairs Committee, Congressman Eliot L Engel; committee's top Republican Michael McCaul and others, including Congresswoman Jayapal, the report said.

The US House Foreign Affairs committee is a powerful bipartisan committee in the US Congress, which has been an advocate of stronger Indo-US ties, Jayapal has been vocal in her criticism of the government's moves in Kashmir over the last few months, including at the October hearing.

The committee has also been critical of the recent Citizenship (Amendment) Act. Last Monday, US House Foreign Affairs

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## Jharkhand voting ends, most exit polls predict defeat for ruling BJP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
RANCHI, DECEMBER 20

EXIT POLLS for the Assembly elections in Jharkhand have predicted a lead for the JMM-Congress-RJD alliance in the 81-member House. While the India Today-Axis survey has predicted that the Opposition alliance is likely to form the next government, the IANS-C Voter-ABP poll has predicted a hung Assembly.

The ruling BJP currently has a clear majority in the House. Assembly polls in the state were held in five phases — the last on Friday. The final and fifth phase saw 71.69 per cent polling across 16 seats. The counting of votes will take place on December 23.

The India Today-Axis survey predicted 38-50 seats for the Opposition alliance and gave

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JHARKHAND

THEIR FORECAST	
INDIA TODAY-AXIS	
BJP	22-32
JMM+ Cong+RJD	38-50
AJSU	3-5
JVM(P)	2-4
IANS-C VOTER-ABP	
BJP	28-36
JMM+ Cong+RJD	31-39
AJSU	5
JVM(P)	3

### PAGE 1 ANCHOR

SHAJU PHILIP  
KOCHI, KOZHIKODE, DECEMBER 20

HIS CELLPHONE is ringing but Divakar Kumar, a migrant worker from Bihar, is reluctant to answer. That's because he knows who is calling and why.

"It's my wife," says Kumar, standing outside his rented room on Kochi's outskirts. "She wants me to send Rs 5,000 immediately to buy five blankets; for my children, aged parents and her. How will I arrange that amount? This time last year, I was sending home Rs 15,000,

but now I am struggling to scrape together Rs 3,000 every month. There are hardly any jobs left here now," he says.

The 26-year-old's predicament captures the crisis that has engulfed migrant workers from states in the north and North-East in Kerala due to the economic slowdown. At the last official count — a government study of 2013 — the state had around 25 lakh migrant workers, mainly employed in construction and allied areas, and the service sector, especially hotels and restaurants.

Kumar, for instance, has been a construction worker in Kochi

for the last three years. But now, he says he is struggling to feed his family in Lakhisarai district's Babhangawan village. "There were 40 men from my village working in construction sites in Kochi. But 25 have returned home over the last three months. Last week, I got work only for two days. If this is the situation, all of us will have to return," he says.

Sravan Kumar, 35, from Nawada in Bihar, says it's been five days since he got any work. "I have been here for five years, but I have never faced this situation. There were seven others in my room and all of them have gone back. Our contractors say there



Waiting for work in Perumbavoor. Floods, recession have hit the construction sector. Nirmal Harindran

are no jobs. The daily wages were around Rs 800 last year, it's Rs 600 now. Even then, we get work only for two or three days a week. We have nothing left to send home," he says.

At Koduvally in Kozhikode district — the state's famed Gulf pocket — labour contractor V T Shihab says migrant workers from the eastern states have been returning home over the last six months. "I was managing over 150 workers, mainly from Malda and Murshidabad in West Bengal. Now, there are about 25. Not a single new project is coming up in rural and semi-urban areas due to the financial crisis

and entrepreneurs' reluctance to make fresh investments. What is happening now in the construction sector is mainly completion of pending and government-sponsored work," he says.

Shihab says he is getting frequent calls from those who have returned to their home states. "They are ready to come back if there is work only for 2-3 days a week. In the present situation, I can't give any assurance. It seems these workers have no other place to go now," he says.

According to economist and state finance commission chairman Dr B A Prakash, the return of migrants should be seen

against the backdrop of a severe recession in Kerala. "The floods in the last two years have damaged trade, agriculture and small-scale industries. Business activity has come down considerably in rural and semi-urban areas. Purchasing power has shrunk and non-resident Keralites are returning from the Middle East due to job losses there," he says.

"The slump in construction, which is the major economic activity across Kerala, has affected the prospects of migrant workers, mainly the unskilled ones," says Prakash.

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