



on Sunday



Telangana HC orders re-autopsy of bodies of four rape accused
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Farm loans up to ₹2 lakh will be waived, says Uddhav Thackeray
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Pakistani professor sentenced to death for blasphemy
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India meets West Indies in ODI series-decider at Cuttack today
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NEARBY



Bhim Army chief held in dawn drama
NEW DELHI
The Delhi police on Saturday arrested 27 persons, including Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad, in connection with the violence that erupted at Seemapuri in Shahdara and Delhi Gate on Friday. All accused have been sent to judicial custody.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

Protests continue at Jamia Millia Islamia

NEW DELHI
Braving freezing cold on Saturday morning, a large crowd gathered at Jamia Millia Islamia for the sixth consecutive day to condemn alleged police brutality against students of the university, and continue their protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens.

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Toll touches 16 in U.P. as protests continue

Fresh incidents of violence in Kanpur, Rampur; police claim they did not open fire at protesters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Protests against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) continued in many parts of the country on Saturday, as the death toll from widespread violence in Uttar Pradesh rose to 16.

Fresh incidents of violence were reported from towns in Uttar Pradesh, while a bandh called by the Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar affected road and rail traffic.

Protests in West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Maharashtra and the national capital were peaceful. Chennai continued to witness protests, with activists from several students' organisations, including the Students Federation of India (SFI) and the Untouchability Eradication Front, clashing with the police at the Dr. Puratchi Thalaivar MGR Central Railway Station.

A 25-year-old youth died and several people were injured in clashes between protesters and the police in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, officials said. Many persons were injured in Kanpur, after protesters set the Yatimkhana police post on fire and threw stones at the police. Over 260 policemen were also injured, of whom 57 received gunshot wounds, IG (Law and Order) Praveen Kumar told PTI.



Fiery agitation: A vehicle allegedly torched by protesters during a demonstration against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Kanpur on Saturday. ▶ PTI

The Uttar Pradesh police maintained that it did not open fire at protesters anywhere on Friday or Saturday, and firing came from agitators. "All the deaths that took place have been in crossfire, and this will become clear in the post-mortem examination," DGP O.P. Singh told reporters. "Women and children were used as shields by the protesters," he alleged.

"If anyone died in our fire, we will conduct a judicial inquiry and take action. But nothing happened from our side," he said.

Internet services remain suspended in many parts of Uttar Pradesh. In Patna and several other towns of Bihar, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supporters picketed rail and bus stations and blocked roads.

While the BJP has announced a nationwide campaign to drum up support for the law, the Congress vowed to keep up the momentum of protests and announced a silent dharna at Rajghat for Monday.

As the BJP signalled that it would brazen out the protests, its ally, Shiromani Akali

Dal (SAD), called for bringing Muslims under the purview of the CAA and put a lid on the controversy. Party president and former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal said, "We strongly feel that the Muslim community should be included in it [the CAA]."

The law fast-tracks citizenship for followers of six religions if they have fled from persecution in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, and excludes Muslims.

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BJP to conduct awareness drive

The BJP will conduct a mass contact programme to inform the people of the details of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, assure them that it is not against any citizen and bust the "myths" around it, the party said on Saturday. ▶ PAGE 10

Cong. MP: include Ahmadiyyas

Congress MP Partap Singh Bajwa has urged the President to expand the ambit of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act to include the Ahmadiyyas in the list of communities eligible for citizenship. They had faced persecution in Pakistan since 1953 and Pakistan did not recognise them as Muslims, he said. ▶ PAGE 10

Topper to shun convocation

Karthika B. Kurup, a gold medalist in M.Sc. Electronic Media at Pondicherry University, has decided to reject her medal and not to attend the convocation scheduled for Monday, demanding the withdrawal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. ▶ PAGE 11

India, China to seek fair border solution

Doval holds talks with Minister Wang

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

India and China will intensify the quest for the settlement of the boundary question.

A statement from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued after the 22nd round of the Sino-India boundary talks, held here on Saturday under the framework of Special Representatives' dialogue, said the officials resolved to respect each other's sensitivities for the sake of better ties. "The Special Representatives resolved to intensify their efforts to achieve a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the India-China boundary question in accordance with the directives provided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping," the statement said.

It said both sides agreed that it was important to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas for the "overall bilateral relationship".

A statement issued by the Chinese embassy on the talks said the two countries are planning 70 events to celebrate the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties next year. The statement added that the two sides would "actively advance boundary negotiations in line with the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the



Ajit Doval and Chinese team agreed to intensify efforts to resolve the border issue.

Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question".

The 22nd round was led by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi.

The MEA statement said the officials underlined the importance of approaching the question from the "strategic perspective of India-China relations". The Indian and Chinese leaders last met at the Mamallapuram informal summit in October.

Saturday's border-related meeting was specially significant as China has been critical of India's August 5 decision to end the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcation of the region into two Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. India had retorted by reiterating Delhi's claims over the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir by urging China to stop its activities in that region.

AMU sets up one-man judicial panel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ALIGARH (U.P.)

Aligarh Muslim University has set up a one-man judicial panel to conduct an internal inquiry into violent incidents that rocked the campus early this week.

"The inquiry into the violent incidents that took place on the campus on December 15 and 16 will be conducted by former Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh High Court, Justice V.K. Gupta," AMU Vice Chancellor Tariq Mansoor said on Saturday. "We are glad that Justice Gupta has given his consent for the same," he said.

Prof. Mansoor said the university has decided to get the origin of the violence probed as it is not interested in suppressing any fact. "We are not interested in suppressing any fact and that is why we have taken such a prompt decision to ensure speedy justice," he said.

Blanket of ice



Winter blues: Women walking along a snow-covered road near Srinagar on Saturday. Many places in Kashmir recorded sub-zero temperatures at the start of 'Chillai-Kalan', the 40-day period when the winter is at its harshest. ▶ NISSAR AHMAD

Trinamool team to meet kin of those killed in U.P. protests

Former Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi will lead delegation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

A four-member Trinamool delegation, led by former Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi, will visit Uttar Pradesh on Sunday and meet the "grieving families of those killed in police firing in Lucknow".

"Our delegation is going to Lucknow on a humanitarian mission to be with the grieving families of those killed and would meet the people injured in the incidents," a press statement by the party's general secretary, Subrata Bakshi, said on Saturday.

The delegation will include Trinamool MPs Pratima Mondal, Mohammad Nadimul Haque and Abir Biswas.

The statement referred to the deaths of several people "in police firing in various



Dinesh Trivedi

her party to take out a procession in every sub-division on December 23, and take up a similar programme from north Kolkata's Simla Street to Belegghata Gandhi Bhavan in northeast Kolkata the next day.

Students' protest

Thousands of students from different universities of the city joined a march in protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act from Shahid Minar in Esplanade area to the State BJP headquarters in north Kolkata.

A scuffle broke out near the BJP headquarters, but the police kept the students and the BJP supporters from coming face to face.

Earlier in the day, Congress supporters held protests against the CAA in front of Raj Bhavan.

'Protesters say they were held after Friday prayers'

All 15 sent to two-day judicial custody; family of one claims he is a minor

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The 15 persons arrested in connection with Daryaganj violence on Friday have been sent to two-day judicial custody, senior advocate Rebecca John said.

The lawyer, who appeared before the court for all the 15 arrested persons on Saturday, said the police did not produce them till 4.30 p.m. after which the matter went to a duty magistrate. The matter is now scheduled for Monday, she added.

When asked about the profile of the accused, Ms. John said they are all from humble background, with one being a carpenter. "Most of them say they were picked up by the police when they were returning after Friday prayers," she said.



Relatives of those arrested in connection with Friday's violence at the Daryaganj police station on Saturday. ▶ R.V. MOORTHY

One of the 15 arrested persons may be a minor, said the senior advocate. "The boy's family said he was 15 years old but the police said they are verifying his age," she said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Mandeep Singh Randhawa remained unavailable for comment. In a parallel development,

a Delhi court sent 11 persons, arrested in connection with the violence in Seemapuri on Friday, to 14-day judicial custody. Metropolitan Magistrate Mayank Mittal sent them to jail as the police did not seek their custodial interrogation, said advocate Nitya Ramakrishnan, who represented the accused.

The counsel submitted before the court that three of the accused had serious injuries and no prima facie case was made out against any of them. She further said the police had not placed on record any MLC (medicolegal case) to show the nature of injuries suffered by its personnel and sought to know the basis on which Section 307 (attempt to murder) of the Indian Penal Code was applied against the accused.

The police said the arrested persons damaged public property and hurled stones at the police. Some of the police personnel received serious injuries and, therefore, Section 307 was slapped against them, the police said. (With inputs from PTI)

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 2

Govt. moves on plan for new Parliament House

DDA issues notification to change land use of plot near South Block to 'residential'

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

A 9.5-acre plot opposite the existing Parliament House is likely to be used for the construction of a new Parliament building, with the government on Saturday moving to change the land use of the plot currently designated for recreational use to "Parliament House" in the Master Plan-2021 of Delhi.

In a notification by the Delhi Development Authority, the government sought objections and suggestions for a period of 30 days on its proposal to change the land use of the plot, after which the land-use change will be finalised.

The plot is opposite Parliament House, with Red Cross Road to its north, Raisina Road to its south and



Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

Parliament to its west, and is currently demarcated for recreational use in the form of a district park, according to the notification.

Changes aplenty

Making way for a residential space near the seat of power, a 15-acre plot located "North of Dalhousie Road, near South Block", with South

Block to its north, Dara Shikoh Road to its south, part of South Block to the east and Rashtrapati Bhavan to its west, was proposed to be used for "residential" use instead of the existing "government office" and "recreational (neighbourhood play area)", according to the notification.

This comes at a time the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, under which the DDA operates, is preparing for a revamp of Parliament, the Central Vista and government offices in the area. While the Ministry is yet to publicly share the exact plan, sources have said the Prime Minister's residence could be shifted closer to the PMO at South Block.

Also in the notification, the DDA proposed changing

the land use of a 15-acre plot on Church Road near the Central Secretariat bus terminal from transportation (bus terminal and parking) and recreational (neighbourhood play area) to "govt. office".

The land use of a 7.7-acre plot to the south of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road that houses the National Archives was proposed to be changed from public and semi-public facilities to "govt. office" for 5.88 acres and recreational (district park) for 1.88 acres.

Another plot on "South of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road and East of Janpath", spread over 24.7 acres, was proposed to be changed from public and semi-public facilities to government office on 22.82 acres and recreational (district park) on 1.88 acres.

Timings
DELHI

SUNDAY, DEC. 22
RISE 07:10 SET 17:30
RISE 02:57 SET 14:36

MONDAY, DEC. 23
RISE 07:10 SET 17:30
RISE 04:00 SET 15:17

TUESDAY, DEC. 24
RISE 07:11 SET 17:31
RISE 05:04 SET 16:01

Delhi Weather max min

Delhi City 18 09
Safdarjang 18 09
Palam 17 09

Delhi Palam Today
17°C Dense fog during very cold morning. Day will be cool with partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
18°C Moderate fog with dense in pockets. A partly cloudy sky on comfortable day.

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IN BRIEF



HC asks RIL to disclose assets on Centre's plea
NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court has asked Reliance Industries (RIL) and British Gas (BG) to disclose their assets on the Centre's plea for directions to both companies not to dispose of their assets. The government has sought to restrain the two companies from disposing of their assets as they have allegedly failed to pay it USD 3,856,734,582 as per an arbitral award in favour of the Centre in relation to the Panna-Mukta and Tapti (PMT) production-sharing contracts.

THE HINDU
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Not allowed to meet protesters held from Daryaganj, allege kin

Family members complain those responsible for Friday's violence managed to flee

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Families of those arrested in connection with violence during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Seemapuri and Delhi Gate alleged that the police "randomly" arrested them and that those who indulged in violence managed to flee.

Munna Malik, a resident of Old Seemapuri and a property dealer, waited outside Seemapuri police station to meet his friend Aitamad Ahmed alias Haji Guddu.

"He is among the prominent people in our locality and on Friday, after the violence, he had come to the police station to help all those who had been detained from our area... but the police arrested him. He was not a part of any protest. Those who actually indulged in violence fled from there," he said.

Families also said that the police did not allow them to enter the police station or meet the ones in custody.

A relative of Aitamad, who identified himself as Mohsin, said he and his family had come to the police station on Friday night and had been waiting to see him since Saturday morning but were not



Thousands protested against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens at Daryaganj near Delhi Gate on Friday. • SANDEEP SAXENA

being allowed to do so. At the entrance, a barricade had been put up and an official refused entry to those who enquired about the detained.

The official said he had been told by senior officers to not let families inside.

Akram, brother of one Amjad, who was in police custody, waited at the police station clueless.

He also complained that

he wasn't allowed to meet his brother and was waiting for police to take him to court so he could see him.

Mr. Akram said that Amjad, resident of Shaheed Park, works as a chicken supplier and was returning from Ghazaipur mandi when he is suspected to have been picked up by the police.

"He usually reaches home by 5 p.m., but when he didn't, we started looking for

him. His phone had been switched off. As violence was under way, we went to the police post and then came to the police station as well but there was no news of him. Meanwhile, a local told me that the police had arrested him. I saw him in the morning when the police had taken him for medical examination. He has a head injury and was walking with a limp," the brother said.

Waqf board to give ₹5 lakh to kin of those killed in protests

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Waqf Board on Saturday said they will give ₹5 lakh to families of people who have died across the country during protests against the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizen

(Amendment) Act.

"This is a fight to save the country and the Constitution," said Board chairman Amanatullah Khan. In a Facebook post, he claimed that several people were killed in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka's Mangaluru during prot-

ests due to "police bullets".

The AAP MLA said that currently they are thinking about giving compensation to only protesters. On giving financial assistance to the families of injured policemen, Mr. Khan, said: "We will think about it." Earlier, Mr. Khan

had provided financial help of ₹5 lakh and a permanent job at the Board to Jamia Millia Islamia student Mohammad Minhajuddin, who lost sight in his left eye after police entered the campus and allegedly baton-charged students last week.

PM's rally an election stunt, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally at the Ramlila Maidan on Sunday which is related to the regularisation of unauthorised colonies is a "mere election stunt to betray over 40 lakh people" living in such settlements, alleged the Delhi Congress.

Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra said: "When the Congress was in power both at the Centre and in Delhi, unauthorised colonies were not only given big relief but all-round developments were carried out in these colonies. The Modi government has done injustice to these colonies by showing them the mirage of regularisation without any intention to do so."

The Modi government had "changed the core principles" of the 2008 notification to "ruin the lives of those living in unauthorised colonies", he alleged. Congress leader Ajay Maken argued that both these governments were "anti-poor."

DELHI TODAY

Music: Saptorshi Sangeet Sammelan. Solo Hawaii guitar recital by Monideep Mitra, accompanied by Susamay Mishra (tabla). Followed by tabla solo by Prasentji Adhikary, Nagma by Daksh Raj Sharma. The evening concludes with Hindustani classical vocal recital by Surparna Adhikary, accompanied by Fateh Singh Gangani (tabla) at Amaltes Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Dance and music: Legends of Tomorrow, an evening of Hindustani classical will feature Odissi dance recital by Madhur Gupta and vocal recital by Anisha Ray at Triveni Kala Sangam, 205 TansenMarg, Mandi House, 6:30 p.m.

Talk: Ambarish Dave will recite verses of Srimad Bhagavat Gita selected by Shri Ramana at Ramana Kendra, Lodhi Road, 5 p.m.

Exhibition: "India: A Mapful Story", an exhibition of Unseen Historical maps and other important engravings (circa 18th century to 1946) at Ojas Art Gallery, IAQ, Qutab Minar Roundabout, Mehrauli Road, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "My dreams, My world", a group art show by specially-abled children of Deepashram at Arpana Fine Arts Gallery, Siri Fort Institutional Area, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@thehindu.co.in)

The target is to secure more seats in Assembly polls this time, says Kejriwal

CM says AAP forced the BJP to talk about development

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party needs to set a target of winning more seats in the upcoming election than in the 2015 polls when it secured 67 of the 70 Assembly seats, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal told party members on Saturday.

Elections to Delhi Assembly are due early next year. This time, Prashant Kishor-led political consultancy firm I-PAC has come on board with AAP to help in its election campaign.

Mr. Kejriwal said: "Just over a month is left for the Delhi Assembly polls and since the city is AAP's base, we have to fight the election strongly. Our target is also very big. Last time, we won 67 seats. This time, we should not get less than that but more."

"Take up responsibility"
He advised party members and volunteers to take up whatever responsibility that are assigned to them for the poll campaign in earnest.

Mr. Kejriwal claimed that his party has changed the



Arvind Kejriwal

political discourse and forced the BJP to talk about development issues in Delhi.

"It's the same BJP that seeks votes based on Jats and non-Jats in Haryana and Hindu-Muslim in the rest of the country. But in Delhi, it has been forced to talk about development. The BJP's agenda of Hindu-Muslim politics does not work in Delhi. Through our work done in the last five years, we have given a hope to the people," he said. On Friday, the party launched its new slogan - *Acche beete paanch saal-Lage raho Kejriwal* (the last five years went well - keep going Kejriwal). The Chief Minister also said it is often observed that the political

parties formed out of a movement could not sustain itself because of internal feuds and differences between the members.

"The examples of 1977 and Assam are stark reminders of this fact. People had the same misconception about AAP. We formed the party and garnered a large number of votes which was contrary to the expectations of all the sceptics," he said.

He also said: "What came after the victory was more difficult for AAP. It often happens that after coming to power, parties become arrogant and eventually are not able to handle the responsibility for which they were elected."

Rajya Sabha MP and senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh claimed that the work of his party's government in education, health, power, water and other sectors are being discussed all over the world.

Other prominent party members who attended the meeting included Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, party leaders Gopal Rai and Atishi.

Delhi BJP collects over 11 lakh signatures for Modi's rally today

Preparations on at Ramlila Maidan to make event a success

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Preparations for the "Dhanyawad Rally" to be addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Ramlila Maidan here on Sunday were completed after the State unit of the BJP dispatched a tempo containing over 11 lakh signatures from the residents of 1,731 unauthorised colonies to the venue on Saturday.

These signatures will be handed over to Mr. Modi to thank him for this "historic decision and for proving their full trust in the BJP", the party said.

"Lakhs of people of 1,731 unauthorised colonies participated in the signature campaign initiated by the State BJP. The Centre has given a valuable gift to more than 40 lakh people living in these colonies before the New Year," said BJP Rajya Sabha MP Vijay Goel.

He added: "Previously, the Congress governments kept this work pending for 15 years and now the Chief Minister deliberately kept it



A worker carries cut-outs of PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah at Ramlila Maidan on Saturday. • PTI

pending for five years so that the Centre can be blamed for it. BJP is the well-wisher of the poor people but the Aam Aadmi Party government is anti-people."

This was why the Aam Aadmi Party government did not implement the Ayushman Bharat Yojana under which medical insurance of ₹5 lakh is given to

poor families, he alleged. "Under the PM Awas Yojana, 3.5 crore people have been provided houses till date but the poor people of Delhi have not been included in this scheme because it was not implemented here," he said, adding: "Arvind Kejriwal must answer why he is doing such injustice with the poor people?"



Labourers on their way to work on a cold Saturday morning near Yamuna Pushta. • R.V. MOORTHY

'Very poor' air quality expected today

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality stayed in the 'severe' category on Saturday and is expected to improve to 'very poor' on Sunday owing to higher wind speeds, said forecasting agency SAFAR.

The minimum temperature was 9.5 degree Celsius, one degree below normal, while the maximum temperature was 18 degree Celsius, three notches below normal. On Sunday, the sky will be

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	418	Gurgaon	302
Ghaziabad	454	Faridabad	441
Noida	474	Greater Noida	467

Legend:
 Good: 0-50
 Satisfactory: 51-100
 Moderate: 101-200
 Poor: 201-300
 Very poor: 301-400
 Severe: >401

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

ug/m³ - four times the safe limit of 60ug/m³ - in Delhi-NCR at 7 p.m., according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). On November 3, the PM_{2.5} level had hit 625 ug/m³. The Air Quality Index (AQI) was 418 (severe).

"Wind speed is likely to pick up by Sunday and AQI is likely to improve to the higher end of 'very poor'. Decrease in minimum temperature will be favourable for dense fog formation for the next two days," said SAFAR.

Into the night



For the second consecutive day, hundreds of students and citizens assembled outside the Delhi Police headquarters at ITO on Saturday to condemn police brutality and demand the release of those detained for protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens. ■PTI

‘Secular fabric of the nation is in peril’

Gurugram residents brave the cold to raise voice against new citizenship law

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

In response to a call from Gurugon Nagrik Ekta Manch, an inter-faith community-based organisation, for protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and National Register of Citizens, a large crowd gathered at Leisure Valley Park in Sector 29 here on Saturday for protest on the twin issues.

Former two-time Planning Commission member Syeda Hameed, who was among the prominent speakers at the event, said she saluted the youth and those who had lost their lives protesting against the controversial Act, and for “keeping alive the foundation of India and its Constitution”.

There is a need to remain vigilant against any attempt to colour the movement as “communal”, she warned. The demonstration began with the crowd reading the Preamble of the Constitution.

Sunita Sethi, a doctor, and her husband C.S. Sethi, a civil constructor, who came from Golf Course Road area to take part in the protest, felt that the “secular fabric of the nation was never in as much peril as it was today”.

In her early 60s, Ms. Sethi said that when even the elderly had to come out, it meant



Citizens during the protest at Leisure Valley Park in Sector 29, Gurugram, on Saturday. ■MANOJ KUMAR

that “something is seriously amiss”. As she talked about how Indians had fought the Britishers and the Emergency to remain on the path to progress, her husband, a Sikh, interjected: “We chose to be a secular nation after Partition. But today we are being told that we are not. What can be more serious than this?”.

Prominent speakers

The event saw a predominantly urban crowd – a mix of college and school students as well as professionals, activists and the elderly – holding up creative placards and Tricolours. The crowd intermittently broke into sloganeering, demanding “Azadi” and denouncing the present regime. Several speakers re-

cited revolutionary poems and songs, which charged up the crowd on a cold evening.

Avni, a Class 9 student of Shikshantar, was at the protest with her parents, brother and friends to support her “idea of equality”. Her classmate Sara, holding up a copy of the Preamble, said she felt scared as a Muslim.

Chaitanya Kapila, who is preparing for his MBA entrance exam, said he came to the protest as he could not make it to the demonstrations in Delhi. “I wanted to go to Mandi House, but the metro was not halting at a few stations and the traffic was terrible,” he said, adding that some of friends were beaten when the police allegedly entered the Jamia Millia Islamia



library, and at Delhi Gate.

“There can be a difference of opinion on issues, but my point is that the freedom to disagree should not be curbed,” said the 21-year-old.

Inspired by the incident at JMI, Aamir Aziz, another speaker, read out a poem *Jamia Ki Ladkiyan* dedicated to the female students of the university amid loud cheers from the protesters.

Former Rajya Sabha MP Mohammed Adeb said the people would show their documents only when those in power showed their degrees, referring to the controversy over the degree of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The protest ended with the demonstrators tearing up copies of the CAA.

Protests continue for 6th consecutive day at Jamia

‘Attack on secularism an attempt to distract us from rising poverty, unemployment’

ELISHA VERMANI
NEW DELHI

Braving freezing cold on Saturday morning, a large crowd gathered at Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) for the sixth consecutive day to condemn alleged police brutality against students of the university, and continue their protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

On December 15, Delhi Police personnel had entered the university campus to look for ‘outsiders’ who were allegedly involved in violence and arson during a nearby protest against the Act.

Amid heavy sloganeering, protesters ensured that traffic movement in the area remained unaffected and urged the crowd to keep moving in order to avoid blocking the road at any point.

They also took up initiatives to clean up the site of protest and roads along the massive Jamia campus.

‘Will voice our dissent’

Twenty-two-year-old Rahat Parveen, who was on campus on December 15, said: “I have been to several protests in the last few days and we have gathered here at Jamia everyday to stand by the students of this college and voice our dissent against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the NRC.” She also said that police action on students and the general public was “unlawful”.

Calling the CAA “discriminatory”, and the actions of the government “arbitrary”, 18-year-old Samia Zahoor, a first-year student of JMI, said: “We know that this attack on secularity of the Constitution is a ploy to distract the masses from real issues such as poverty and unemployment, and



Students and citizens protest against the amended Citizenship Act outside Jamia Millia Islamia; (right) volunteers hand out food to the protesters on Saturday. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



direct their attention towards communalism.”

JMI students as well as those from universities across Delhi, local residents and JMI alumni participated in the protest.

Several former JMI stu-

dents expressed their disappointment over the way the university was being targeted by the authorities.

Nineteen-year-old Shalini Singh, a Delhi University student who narrowly escaped detention during protest on

Friday, said: “The police detained protesters at U.P. Bhanwan, so I headed to Jamia to extend my solidarity against this oppressive government. I have been to every single protest so far and will continue to do so.”

In Gurugram, youngsters send special messages to PM

People from all walks of life join protest, hold up eye-catching placards

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

A bunch of youngsters, working with an air pollution start-up, decided to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens at Leisure Valley Park on Saturday. They wanted to link the two – the protest and their start-up – and came up with a slogan that read: “PM 2.0 is worse than PM 2.5”.

Holding the placards, Parth, said he had come to the protest with his colleagues. Comprising mostly urban population, with a majority of them young students and professionals, the



A man with a placard during the protest against CAA at Leisure Valley Park on Saturday. ■ASHOK KUMAR

crowd carried placards with slogans that were fresh, witty and new.

“Babri giraane wale ba-ta rahe hai protest peaceful kaise rakhna hai. CAA go

back,” read a placard, held by a young woman. Even Bollywood did not escape the minds of these young people. Prachi, a school teacher, penned down a slogan that read: “Kuch-Kuch Hota Hai Mo-Sha, Tum Nahi Sam-johge, Reject NRC-CAA.” She said, “Being a movie-buff, I thought of this slogan at the spot itself.”

Nisheeth Shrivastava, an advertisement professional, carried a hand-written placard that read: “Bure din wapas do.” Worried over the sluggish economic growth, Mr. Shrivastava, said the people had voted for the BJP hoping for a better future and a leap in growth but the

opposite had happened.

A placard bearing a picture of former President APJ Abdul Kalam asked: “Shah Ji, Mera Naam List Mein Hai Kya,” emphasising the contributions of the Muslims in the growth of the country. One more placard equated Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Hitler.

Many young protesters carried placards that read: “Error 404, Democracy Not Found,” underscoring the corporate culture of the Millennium City, also an IT-hub. “Dear PM, please use the taxpayers money to make educational and not detention centres,” said a placard, with reference to the NRC.

₹24 lakh given to kin of road accident victim

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Motor Accident Claims Tribunal on Friday awarded ₹24 lakh compensation to the family of a 21-year-old youth who was killed in an accident after being hit by a truck in Lonni area of Ghaziabad in 2016.

The victim was riding a bike when the truck hit him. The owner-cum-driver of the offending vehicle made no submission in his defence, while insurer of the truck said that the claimants, in collusion with the police, had registered a false case and the truck was dragged into it later.

The petitioners claimed that the victim was earning ₹16,500 per month but his family could not produce any papers in support of it. So, the tribunal fixed his wage as per the then existing minimum wage of a non-matriculate.

Couple found dead inside residence

Man suspected to have killed wife: police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old woman and her 45-year-old husband were found dead inside their house in Dwarka's Dichaon Kalan on Saturday morning, the police said.

Debt of ₹13 lakh

They suspect that the man killed his wife and then ended his life. The woman had stab injuries on her body while the man, an engineer who lost his job a year ago, died by hanging, an officer said. The police said preliminary investigation revealed that the man was under a debt of ₹13 lakh. He was upset and undergoing treatment for the same. "The couple got married in 2002. It seems that they had a fight on Friday night following which the man stabbed his wife to death," a senior officer said.

er said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem.

The couple is survived by a 13-year-old son and a 15-year-old daughter, the police added. The daughter allegedly told police that on Friday night, they all dined together after which she went to sleep with her mother while her brother went with their father. Later in the night, the daughter woke up to her parents' argument and went to the other room to check on them but found the door locked from inside. The man opened the door and asked her to go back to sleep. In the morning, the children found the couple dead and called their relatives.

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

Man held for kidnapping 2-year-old boy in Dwarka

'He committed crime after minor's mother rejected his advances'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 30-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly kidnapping a 2-year-old boy from Dwarka, the police said on Saturday.

The accused committed the crime because the minor's mother had refused to be in a relationship with him, they said, adding that the boy has been rescued. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said Shiv Poojan alias Pandit was held from his hometown in Rajasthan.

Threatened to kill minor

On December 18, a PCR call was received regarding the kidnapping of a 2-year-old boy from Baba Haridas Nagar, the police said.

On reaching the spot, the minor's mother told the officers that her son was kidnapped by Poojan, who has been her neighbour for the past 10 months.

She also said he had threatened to kill the boy if she did not accept his



The accused in police custody. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"friendship". A case was then registered.

During investigation, the accused's mobile number was put on technical surveillance and it was traced to Ghaziabad after which it was found to be switched off. A team was then sent to Ghaziabad but the accused could not be found.

Mobile phone traced

On December 19, the accused called the complainant and told her to come to a place, details of which he said he will give her later. "He told her that he will kill the boy if she approached the police," Mr. Alphonse said.

The accused had at times switched on his phone when it was traced to Rajasthan's Bharatpur and then at Shyam Nagar in Jaipur. After this, the device was found switched off again. Mr. Alphonse said a team had inspected the area and traced the accused to a residence which was then raided. "When the team went to a room on the first floor of the house, they saw the boy in the accused's arms. He then tried to throw the minor but was overpowered by the team" Mr. Alphonse said.

During interrogation, Poojan allegedly told the police that he is married and has two children. He said he had come to Delhi about a year ago and was residing in the complainant's neighbourhood.

The woman used to live with her son and was separated from her husband. The accused said she had rejected his advances after which he decided to kidnap the boy to put pressure on the woman, the police added.

Court pulls up CBI, acquits two in corruption case

Probe agency accused of being 'laidback'

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

Pulling up the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for its "casual and laid-back" investigation into a corruption case, a court here has acquitted a junior engineer of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) and a daily wager.

'Blind eye to facts'

Acquitting the two, Additional Sessions Judge Santosh Snehi Mann said: "This case is an illustration of a bad prosecution launched by the CBI, an elite investigating agency, on the basis of a motivated complaint. The officers involved in the investigation did not do any independent probe about the allegations against the accused. They turned a blind eye to the crucial facts and official records of the south civic body and Palam police station. It is a matter of concern that senior supervisory officers of the probe agency mechanically forwarded the chargesheet and failed to dis-

charge supervisory duty diligently."

The CBI had lodged a complaint against the two based on allegations levelled by a builder that the officer, through the daily wager, had demanded a bribe of ₹1,50,000 from him in lieu of permitting him to construct a building.

The probe agency said it had caught the daily wager red-handed while accepting part payment of bribe of ₹40,000 from the builder during a trap while the junior engineer was caught when he came to meet the bribe acceptor.

Failed to prove bribery

"The prosecution has miserably failed to prove demand of bribe by accused junior engineer Vijay Jadhav from the complainant; the motive for demand; conspiracy between accused Jadhav and daily wager Govind Ram and acceptance of part payment of bribe by accused Govind Ram at the behest of Jadhav," the judge added.

College told to pay student over ₹50K for refusing refund of admission fees

Institute to pay amount with interest of 10% per annum

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The State Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum here has directed the D.R. College of Engineering and Technology to compensate a student by paying over ₹50,000 after it was alleged that the institute refused to refund the amount deposited by the complainant after he withdrew admission.

Directing compensation, the State Commission said: "The institute never pleaded that the seat vacated by the complainant remained vacant. Hence, the role relied upon by the institute does not come to its rescue. There is nothing wrong in directing

The institute never pleaded that the seat vacated by the complainant remained vacant. Hence, the role relied upon by the institute does not come to its rescue

STATE CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL FORUM

refund of the fees."

The directions came following an appeal by the institute where it was contended that the student did not furnish the withdrawal form on time.

"Classes were scheduled to start from September 2008 but due to some personal rea-

sons complainant did not join the classes and opted for withdrawal of the admission. He was asked to furnish an application for withdrawal on the prescribed proforma which he did," the Bench noted while noting arguments made by the complainant.

"Compensation of ₹50,000 for non-refund of ₹51,700 is extremely excessive and cannot be sustained. Appeal is accepted in part..." the Bench said.

However, the consumer panel specified that the institute will have to pay ₹51,700 with an interest of 10% per annum from September 2008 till the date of refund to the complainant.

DPCC told to inspect parks used for 'commercial purpose'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking remedial action against alleged illegal and unregulated use of parks for commercial purposes, the National Green Tribunal has directed the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to conduct random inspections and ensure that noise pollution is kept in check.

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said: "It is stated that the DPCC will carry out random inspections as well

as noise monitoring during peak season. A report will be compiled by the DPCC's Member Secretary."

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by the Budhela Welfare Association alleging illegal use of a park in Vikaspuri for commercial purposes. Following earlier orders of the Tribunal, the DPCC furnished an additional action taken report to the NGT and said existing policies of the Delhi Development Authority and civic body requires amendment.

Travel agency told to pay over ₹3 lakh compensation to family

Firm failed to provide visas for two of the complainants

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A district consumer disputes redressal forum here has directed a city-based travel agency to compensate a family of six by paying over ₹3 lakh over "sub-standard facilities" provided to the complainants during a trip to South Africa.

Noting that due to deficiency in services, three out

of the six members could not go for the trip, the consumer panel said, "The complainant had also asked for a refund but the opposite party [SOTC Kuoni Travel] had refused to do so. Therefore, we hold the tour operator guilty of deficiency in service." The panel asked the travel agency to pay ₹2.80 lakh to the complainants along with additional amounts of ₹26,000

and ₹10,000 for harassment and mental agony.

Booked in advance

The directions came when the panel was hearing a plea which claimed that despite booking a tour to South Africa with the travel agency three months in advance, the tour operators had failed to provide visas for two of the family members.

Cong. peace march in Jaipur today

CAA, NRC would tear apart the social fabric of the country, says Ashok Gehlot

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

The Congress will hold a 'peace march' here on Sunday to register its protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens, while sending across a message that the people of all communities in Rajasthan want to live in peace and harmony. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot will lead the march.

The march will start from Albert Hall Museum at Ram Niwas Garden and culminate at the Mahatma Gandhi Circle near Rajasthan University, covering a distance of about three kilometres. Participants in a rally of civil rights groups to be organised at the nearby Moti Dungri Road are likely to join the march.

Mr. Gehlot told reporters on Saturday that the members of all communities, taking part in the march, would



Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot, Deputy CM Sachin Pilot and other Congress leaders at a rally in Jaipur. ■ FILE PHOTO

reject the attempts being made by the BJP to "polarise the society" for its electoral benefit. "The BJP's top leaders are promoting hatred by making announcements for the NRC's preparation like a threat... we will not allow them to succeed," he said.

Mr. Gehlot said the CAA and the NRC did not deserve to be implemented in the country, as they would tear

apart the social fabric and affect the entire population. "The failure of the NRC exercise in Assam has proved its futility. How can it be implemented all over the country?"

Demanding an immediate repeal of the CAA, Mr. Gehlot said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should announce that his government at the Centre would move

ahead by taking all communities together. He also expressed concern over the continuing violence on the issue in the country.

He said several demonstrations were held in Rajasthan and the situation was peaceful, barring a few stray incidents in Bikaner and Jodhpur. He later visited Albert Hall and Mahatma Gandhi Circle to review the preparations for the march.

'Provoking people'

State BJP president Satish Poonia alleged in a statement that Mr. Gehlot, who was responsible for maintaining law and order, was himself provoking the people. "Mr. Gehlot's decision to hit the roads and lead a march against the CAA amounts to violation of constitutional norms. He is challenging an amendment of a law passed by the Parliament."

Haryana government has failed on all fronts, says Selja

'BJP's ill-conceived policies behind economic slowdown'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Congress president and Rajya Sabha MP Kumari Selja on Saturday said the government in Haryana has proved to be a complete failure on all the fronts, resulting in distress across all sections of society.

'Farmers suffering'

Ms. Selja said farmers in the State are suffering due to non-procurement of sugarcane crop besides non-payment of paddy (rice). "Economic slowdown is causing industries to shut down and unemployment is on the rise. It's all due to the ill-conceived policies of the BJP government," she said.

"Instead of bringing in investment and opening new industries in the State in the last five years, the industries



Kumari Selja. ■ FILE PHOTO

due to wrong policies and misplaced priorities of the government, Ms. Selja said.

'Industry also hit'

"Non-procurement of the sugarcane crop and non-payment of dues to the farmers are some of the other issues to which the government has turned a blind eye. Farmers are being deliberately harassed over the purchase of sugarcane crop," she alleged in a statement. Ms. Selja said that earlier, farmers were harassed during the purchase of paddy crop and now they were not being timely paid at many places in the State. "State government should immediately take concrete steps to solve problems being faced by industries and farming community," she added.

which were established during the Congress tenure previously were being shut down. Maurya Industries in Faridabad had shut down recently due to which thousands of employees have become jobless," she said.

Numerous small and big industries have shut down

2 Pak. soldiers killed along LoC in J&K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMMU

At least two Pakistani soldiers were reportedly killed on Saturday as Indian Army retaliated "effectively and befittingly" to the ceasefire violation by Pakistan along the Line of Control in Akhnoor and Sunderbani sectors of J&K, Defence sources said. They said Pakistani troops fired on forward posts in Khour and Pallanwalla areas of Akhnoor sector here, prompting strong retaliation by the Indian Army.

In the morning, the Indian Army spotted two bodies near the LoC, said sources, adding the wireless intercepts too confirmed the killing of two Pakistani soldiers.

A physical verification, however, could not be carried out because of the tense situation along the border, they added.

Curfew relaxed in Jabalpur

35 arrested in connection with Friday's violence: police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JABALPUR

Restrictions on movement were relaxed for a brief period on Saturday in parts of Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur city where curfew is in force, the police said.

As many as 35 persons have been arrested in connection with Friday's violence, they added.

Areas under four police stations here had witnessed stone pelting during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on Friday, leaving 20 policemen injured.

On Saturday, no violent protests were reported in the city or elsewhere in the State, where restrictions on assembly of more than four people are in place in 44 out of 52 districts.

"The period during which curfew was relaxed passed off peacefully as people came out of houses and purchased essential commodities," District Superintendent of Police Amit Singh said.



People out on the streets to buy essential goods when curfew was relaxed in Jabalpur on Saturday. ■ PTI

Curfew was relaxed from 3 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. in Hanumatal police station area and parts of Adhartal police station limits.

Restrictions were also relaxed from 4.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. in area under Gohalpur police station and parts of Kotwali police station.

At least 35 people have been arrested across the State in connection with Friday's violent protests, Mr. Singh said.

Under the amended Citizenship Act, non-Muslim refugees who came to India before December 31, 2014, to escape religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan will be granted Indian citizenship.

Protests against the law, which critics allege discriminates on the basis of religion, have rapidly spread across the country.

Akali Dal stages protest in Patiala over 'govt. failures'

'Illegal mining, liquor have not stopped'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Shiromani Akali Dal members on Saturday staged a protest in Patiala against the Congress government in Punjab, accusing it of failing to curb illegal mining and drugs menace across the State.

Akali Dal president Sukhbir Badal, who led the protest in Chief Minister's home town, alleged that illegal mining activities were rampant not just in Patiala but across most parts of the State.

"At the behest of Congress leaders, illegal mining and business of illegal liquor and drugs are also rising and the local administration was turning a blind eye towards these activities," alleged Mr. Badal. He added that SAD would not allow the State government to take over 'Shamlat' land to hand it over to their favourites at throwaway prices.



Sukhbir Singh Badal. ■ FILE PHOTO

Notably, the cabinet had recently cleared the proposal of the Rural Development and Panchayat Department for insertion of Rule 12-B in the Punjab Village Common Lands (Regulation) Rules, 1964, to provide special provision for transfer of 'Shamlat lands' (consolidation of landholdings for common use) for development of industrial infrastructure projects.

Two get life term for 2007 twin bomb blasts in Faizabad court

Third accused was acquitted due to lack of evidence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
FAIZABAD (U.P.)

A special anti-terror court has sentenced two persons to life imprisonment for their alleged roles in the November 2007-twin blast case in the district court premises here in which five people were killed and 24 were injured.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Ashok Kumar, heading the special court set up under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, pronounced the quantum of sentence amid tight security in the special courtroom in the Faizabad jail.

"The special court sentenced two persons to life imprisonment and acquitted one on Friday in the 2007 district court serial blast case," Faizabad Bar Association president Vijay Bahadur Singh said on Saturday.

A fourth accused, Khalid Mujahid, had died in police custody under suspicious conditions

The two who were sentenced are Tariq Quasim and Mohammad Akhtar, while the third accused in the case, Sajjad Ur Rahman, was acquitted due to lack of evidence.

A fourth accused, Khalid Mujahid, had died in police custody under suspicious conditions.

On November 23, 2007, the Faizabad district court had been rocked by two simultaneous bomb blasts in which five people, including a lawyer, were killed and 24 others were injured, seven of them critically.

The case was lodged on

the complaint of erstwhile Faizabad Bar Association secretary Mansur Ilahi and the case was probed by the anti-terrorist squad of the Uttar Pradesh Police.

The police had nabbed four persons for their alleged involvement in the case.

It had sent three of them, barring one who died in police custody, for the trial in the case.

The trial in the case was held in a courtroom in Faizabad jail premises as the Faizabad District Bar Association had decided neither to represent any of the accused in the blast case, nor let any other lawyer represent them.

This had led the erstwhile Chief Minister Mayawati to arrange for the trial in the jail premises to ensure security of lawyers representing the accused.

One arrested in Mohali teacher's murder case

He was hired by her husband: police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

A contract killer, allegedly hired by the husband of a woman teacher who was shot dead in front of her five-year-old daughter outside a school in Kharar in Mohali district earlier this month, was arrested on Saturday, police said.

Forty-year-old Jaswinder Singh was arrested from Bathinda district, Mohali Senior Superintendent of Police Kuldeep Chahal said.

Prime suspect

Sarabjit Kaur, in her early 30s, was shot dead when she was parking her scooter outside a school in Kharar on December 5. Her husband Harvinder Singh was the prime suspect in the murder.

Jaswinder, a native of Bathinda, was hired as contract killer allegedly by Harvinder for the murder of his wife, the SSP said.

Jaswinder was given ₹1 lakh as advance and promised the remaining ₹5 lakh after the murder, Mr. Chahal said.

A .32 bore licensed weapon, cartridges and a four-wheeler used in the crime were also recovered from Jaswinder's possession, he said.

The SSP said both Jaswinder and Harvinder knew each other.

'Out of country'

To a question, he said Harvinder was most probably outside the country and efforts were being made to trace him.

Another accomplice of Jaswinder has been identified and would soon be nabbed, the SSP said.

According to police, Kaur, who used to teach Punjabi and French at the private school, had lodged a complaint with police against Harvinder alleging that he did not tell her about his first marriage.

Harvinder had married Sarabjit seven years ago after which they lived in France for some time.

Police said the relation between the two became strained after Sarabjit came to know about Harvinder's first marriage some time ago.

Rajasthan bags four prizes for job guarantee scheme

Ministry praises geotagging of NREGA works

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Rajasthan has bagged four prizes for its performance under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

The Union Ministry of Rural Development has especially praised the State's initiative of geotagging the NREGA works in Kota district.

Union Minister of Rural Development Narendra Singh Tomar

gave away the prizes at a function in New Delhi over the weekend.

The prizes were given to the Zila Parishad officials and panchayat representatives of Kota, Dungarpur, Bhilwara and Jaisalmer districts.

The achievements of the Panchayati Raj bodies in the NREGA works included construction of watershed structures and strengthening of rural infrastructure.

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BEAUTIFUL 9 and Designed for 150 Serviced Apartments on 213 Cents at Prime Location of Ooty is for Sale.

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FARMHOUSE / LAND / RESORTS

BEAUTIFUL 8 Acre Land in Kothamangalam, Kerala Suitable for Resort, Housing, Retirement Home etc. Please call +91551000874 (WhatsApp)

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Modi, Shah, Sonowal misleading people: AASU

Students' union says CAA threatening the very existence of indigenous people

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal of misleading the people of Assam that their identity, language and land are secure, even though Bangladeshis are being settled here through the contentious Citizenship

(Amendment) Act.

AASU chief advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya speaking at an anti-CAA women's rally said: "We don't understand their [BJP's] peculiar formula. On the one hand they say the language, identity and land of the Assamese people are secure, on the other hand they will bring in Bangladeshis here through the CAA threatening the very existence of the indigenous people."



All Assam Students' Union activists raise slogans against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Nalbari on Friday. •PTI

AASU president Dipanka Kumar Nath said the Modi government is creating confusion among the people to

keep those Bangladeshis who entered the State till December 2014 using the CAA when the Assam Accord of 1985 said

that all those who came in after Bangladesh independence on March 26, 1971 will have to leave.

"Through the Assam Accord we have on behalf of the country already taken the burden of illegal foreigners on our small State. Because of CAA now, we cannot take the additional burden till December 2014," he said.

"We have given the illegal migrants all facilities in Assam so far, but we cannot allow them to contest elections in our State," he said.

Mr. Bhattacharya referred

to Mr. Sonowal claiming that only a negligible number of Bangladeshi refugees in Assam will benefit from the amended Act and said, "If the number is negligible then let him [Sonowal] tell Modi and Shah to take them from Assam and settle them in Gujarat. Being a small number, those people can be taken in one train only from Guwahati railway station."

AASU general secretary Luringiyoti Gogoi claimed that the Modi government had brought the CAA with a "communal agenda".

Mobile Internet services resume in Meghalaya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHILLONG

Mobile Internet services have resumed in Meghalaya, eight days after they were shut down in the wake of violent protests over the new citizenship law, officials said on Saturday.

The ban on mobile Internet and messaging services, imposed on December 12, was lifted around 7 p.m. on Friday due to improvement in law and order situation, a senior home department official said.

The decision to restore the mobile Internet and messaging services was taken after the Assembly on Thursday unanimously adopted a resolution urging the Centre to implement the Inner Line Permit in Meghalaya.

The curfew imposed in Sadar and Lumdingjri police station limits in the hill town was also relaxed for 16 hours from 5 a.m. on Saturday and no untoward incident was reported in these areas, East Khasi Hills District Magistrate M.W. Nongbri said.

'Monsoon decided history of Indian subcontinent'

IIT-KGP study throws light on last 900 yrs.

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Deficient rainfall led to the collapse of the Mansabdari system, started by Mughal emperor Akbar, in the late 17th century. Similarly, drought interspersed with violent monsoon rains sounded the death knell for the Khmer empire of south-east Asia in the 15th century.

A recent study by researchers at Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur (IIT-KGP) has revealed that abrupt changes in the Indian monsoon in the last 900 years decided the course of human history in the subcontinent. A paper titled "Abrupt changes in Indian summer monsoon strength during the last 900 years and their linkages to socio-economic conditions in the Indian subcontinent" by Anil K. Gupta, professor at the geology and geophysics department of IIT-KGP, highlights that decline of Indian dynasties was linked to weak monsoon and reduced food production.

Rise and fall

Several dynasties, such as the Sena in Bengal, Solanki in Gujarat in the mid-13th century and Paramara and Yadav in the early to mid-14th century - all of which flourished during abundant rainfall - declined during the dry phases of Indian summer monsoon (ISM), suggesting role of the climate in the socio-political crisis, the study revealed.

The paper published in international journal *PALEO* 3 highlights three phases in

the 900-year stretch - Medieval Climate Anomaly from 950 CE to 1350 CE, Little Ice Age from 1350 CE to 1800 CE and Current Warm Period from 1800 CE till today. The paper highlights strong monsoon during Medieval Climate Anomaly and Current Warm Period and phases of weak and strong monsoon in Little Ice Age.

"There can be no doubting the profound impact of the abrupt shifts of rainfall on human history - a fact we need to constantly remind ourselves in this day and age of irretrievable climate change. Abrupt shifts in the ISM precipitation has similarly impacted history in India," Prof. Gupta said.

For the study on long-term spatio temporal variability of the ISM, a group of researchers, which also included experts from Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, looked at palaeoclimatic records using oxygen isotope proxy record from speleothems (a structure formed in a cave by deposition of minerals from water) at the Wah Shikar cave in Meghalaya.

"We took samples from every half millimetre or sometimes even one-third of a mm, and we dated using uranium-thorium time series. Such fine sampling of less time interval means we were covering data at two-three years' interval while most researches collect data at 20-30 years' interval. We even captured the drought events of last few centuries," Prof Gupta said. The results showed abrupt shifts in the ISM, he added.

IN BRIEF



Jagan launches scheme for handloom weavers

ANANTAPUR
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Saturday launched Nethanna Nestham at Dharmavaram of Anantapur district. The scheme aims to extending an aid of ₹24,000 every year for each handloom weaver family that is currently running a loom. The scheme plans to provide financial aid to about 85,000 families across the State for five years. The total amount a family would get by the end of the term would be ₹1.2 lakh.

Seer favours lesser number of 'abhishekams'

TIRUMALA
Visakha Sarada Peetham seer Sri Swaroopanandendra Swamy has supported the move of reducing the number of 'abhishekams' performed to the 'utsava' (processional) idols at the temple of Lord Venkateswara. "It remains an indisputable fact that the 'utsava' idols, to which various sevas are rendered on a regular basis, are more prone to corrosion with the passing of time," he said. The TTD 'Agama' advisory panel has recommended reduction of 'abhishekams' during 'arjitha sevas'.

Veteran cinematographer Ramachandra Babu dies

KOZHIKODE
Eminent cinematographer Ramachandra Babu, 72, who wielded camera for over 125 movies, passed away at a hospital here on Saturday, family sources said. Babu was part of the technological advancement made by the Malayalam movie industry and was behind the camera when the industry shifted from black and white to colour. Babu had won the Kerala State Film Award for Best Cinematography four times. PTI

Yediyurappa offers probe into violence

Karnataka Chief Minister defends police firing in Mangaluru, says they were 'compelled' to use force

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MANGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, who visited the curfew-bound coastal city on Saturday, promised an inquiry into the violence during anti-CAA protests, which left two dead in police firing.

Addressing presspersons after reviewing the law and order situation in the city with senior police officials and the district administration officials, Mr. Yediyurappa, however, did not reveal the nature of the inquiry and said that no time frame could be fixed at this juncture on completion of investigation. He said that the nature of the investigation will be decided in consultation with Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

Talking about the police firing that claimed two lives, Mr. Yediyurappa said that no one was happy with what had happened on Thursday, even as he defended police action. The police were "compelled" to use force to deter the surging crowds. "They tried to storm a police station," he said. The Chief



Some respite: Residents thronging a shop after curfew was relaxed in Mangaluru on Saturday. •PTI

Minister said that the crowd had also tried to gain entry into the armoury at the police station. If they had got entry the situation would have been serious, he added.

Mr. Yediyurappa said that the curfew under the jurisdiction of Mangaluru Police Commissionerate will be relaxed for the entire day on December 22 and it will be continued on Sunday night. The curfew will be lifted on Monday. Mobile and Internet

services were also restored. However, the prohibitory orders will continue for some more days. The Chief Minister met the daughter and son of Jalil Kudrolli, who died during Thursday's violence. He also met the mother and brother of Nausin, a youth who also died in the same police firing incident.

Meanwhile, former Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah has been served a notice by

Congress ups its ante in Kerala against CAA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress on Saturday mobilised its cadres across Kerala to register an emphatic protest against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) that "discriminates" against Muslims seeking national status in the country.

The stormy protests unfolded almost

simultaneously in multiple district centres and resulted in tussles with the police. The demonstrations were part of the party's expanding national-level "protect the Constitution of India" campaign against the Centre government.

The demonstrations pivoted around Central government offices guarded by phalanxes of police.

the Mangaluru police Commissioner barring his entry into the Commissionerate limits till midnight on Sunday. The notice also bars anyone from helping him reach the city through any mode of transport.

BJP's 'urban naxal' taunt

The official Twitter handle of the Karnataka BJP called historian Ramachandra Guha an "urban naxal" for participating in the protests against

the CAA. Mr. Guha was detained during protests on December 19 and later released.

Posting a video of an interview given by Mr. Guha at the protest site, the BJP tweeted that "urban naxals who operate in a dark world are unknown to the common man", and that they make their presence felt by "inciting violence and organising protests at the behest of their masters".

Sabarimala review petitions to be listed in January

SC notice does not specify the date of hearing, nor the composition of the seven-judge Bench

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Saturday issued notice informing that review petitions challenging its September 28, 2018 judgment allowing women of menstruating age entry into the Sabarimala temple is likely to come up before a Bench of seven judges in January 2020.

The notice does not specify the date of hearing, nor the composition of the Bench. It merely asks the lawyers involved in the case to

file four more complete set of paperbooks containing documents and pleadings.

On December 13, Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said the seven-judge Bench would be set up soon. He urged "patience" on women of menstruating age fighting for their right to enter the temple. The occasion had arisen when two women in their thirties had approached the court with a plea to direct the Kerala police to provide them protection for their pilgrimage dur-

ing the ongoing season. They had referred to the September 28, 2018 majority judgment of the Constitution Bench, which had lifted the ban on women of menstruating age entering the temple. The State's refusal to provide them protection was in contempt of this ruling, they had said.

Woman's right

However, the CJI pointed to a judgment by a Review Bench of five judges on November 14, which had referred to a

seven-judge Bench the fundamental question of whether a woman's right to worship was subservient to age-old religious customs, faith and traditions.

The Review Bench's majority judgment chose not to reconsider the September 28, 2018 judgment – the very purpose for which it was formed.

On December 13, the CJI said the situation was "explosive", and the two women should wait till the seven-judge Bench took a decision.

The Review Bench did not stay the September 28, 2018 verdict allowing women aged 10-50 to enter the temple.

Senior advocates Indira Jaising and Colin Gonsalves, for Bindhu Ammini and Rehana Fathima, had said the court's silence would send a wrong message to the country.

Justice Rohinton F. Nariman, who was part of the majority in the September 28, 2018 verdict, saw his opinion relegated to a minority on November 14.

Shadnagar killings: HC orders second autopsy

SIT asked to seize guns used by police

Case trail

Sequence of events after four accused in the Disha case were shot dead by the police



Forensic experts collecting evidence from the spot where police shot dead four accused at Shadnagar. • PTI

Dec. 9: Bodies shifted from Mahbubnagar district hospital to Gandhi Hospital morgue

Dec. 12: Supreme Court constitutes three-member panel to inquire into the killings

Dec. 17: SC, in an interim order, asks HC to pass appropriate direction on collection of proof

Dec. 21: HC orders second autopsy and sets 5 p.m., December 23, as deadline for completing it

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Saturday ordered re-post-mortem examination of bodies of the four accused in the Disha case, who were gunned down by Cyberabad police on December 6 at Shadnagar.

A bench of Chief Justice Raghendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy instructed the Telangana government to request the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to constitute a board of three senior-most forensic doctors to perform the second autopsy. The second PME should be completed by 5 p.m. on Monday. It should be video recorded and the video footage should be handed over to the HC Registrar General, the bench said.

On completion of the autopsy, the bodies should be handed over to the respective families of the slain persons. Gandhi Hospital superintendent Sravan Kumar, who was present in the court and explained the condition of the bodies to the bench, should hand over the bodies to the families under the supervision of police, the order said.

The bench instructed the

SIT constituted by the State government to investigate the 'Shadnagar encounter', to seize the firearms used by police personnel in the encounter and send them to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory in Hyderabad for ballistic analysis. Along with the arms and ammunition used by policemen in the encounter, the SIT should also collect details like the case diary, video footage related to the crime since the issuance of First Information Report of Disha's murder to the killing of the four accused in the firing, the order said.

The SIT also has to collect details of mobile phones used by policemen, location of the cell phone towers, call data record, movement records of police teams, the vehicles they had used and all other evidence, the bench said. This crucial evidence should be preserved and placed before the three-member panel constituted by the Supreme Court to inquire into Disha case.

All the four were killed in a police firing on December 6. The police alleged that they tried to escape when they took them to the crime site, to 'reconstruct' the scene.



IN BRIEF
Need to promote family system: Venkaiah Naidu
NEW DELHI
Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday stressed the need to promote the family system and teach children about respecting elders. Family values are the 'unique selling point' of the Indian civilisation, he said, while addressing a gathering at a book release function.

Two arrested for girl's murder in Vellore
VELLORE
The Sathuvachari police in Vellore arrested two persons, both auto drivers, for murdering a girl and dumping her body in a stone quarry. The body of Nivedha was found in a decomposed state with multiple injuries on Wednesday, the police said. She was reported missing four days earlier.

CPWD raises concern after attack on official
NEW DELHI
Central Public Works Department director-general Prabhakar Singh wrote to Bihar Chief Secretary on Friday raising security concerns, after an executive engineer of the department Amirullah Ansari was shot at in Patna's Anishabad Mor area while he was returning from work. No arrests have been made so far in the case.

Gallows for man who raped, killed and set afire Ranchi girl

Special CBI court also slaps ₹20,000 fine on the convict

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA
A special CBI court on Saturday sentenced to death Rahul Raj, who had been convicted for the 2016 rape and murder of a fourth-semester engineering student in Ranchi.

The court found Raj, 23, a native of Bihar's Nalanda district, guilty of raping and murdering the student in December 2016 and convicted him on Friday. The court also slapped a fine of ₹20,000 on the convict.

The victim's half-burnt body had been found at her house in Buti Basti area of Jharkhand's capital city Ranchi. A subsequent autopsy confirmed that the student had been raped and strangled to death before being burnt. The crime had triggered a huge protest march by students in Ranchi.

Habitual offender
In March 2018, the State government had triggered the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Raj, a native of Bihar's Nalan-



Pronounced guilty: Rahul Raj leaving a special CBI court after the hearing on Saturday ■ PTI

da district, figured as a prime suspect as he had been living in the neighbourhood of the victim and went missing after the incident.

A 'habitual offender', Raj was also alleged to have been 'absconding' in connection with the rape of a minor girl in Patna and had been named as an accused in another case in Lucknow. He was taken into the CBI's custody on June 23, 2019, from Lucknow and brought to Ranchi, where his blood samples matched the DNA samples collected from the

victim's body. The CBI filed a charge sheet against Raj and the charges were framed on October 25, 2019.

The trial started on November 8 and during the day-to-day hearings more than 30 prosecution witnesses were examined over a period of 16 days.

The court wrapped up the trial in a little over a month and found Raj 'guilty' under sections 302 (murder), 376 (rape), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) and 449 (house trespass) of the Indian Penal Code.

70-year-old gets life term

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

A POCSO court has booked a 70-year-old man Babulal Mali and his 40-year-old accomplice Mohit Mali for gang rape and sentenced them to life imprisonment for raping a minor girl, who was then in class VII, two years ago in Rajasthan's Kota district. The court also imposed a fine of ₹35,000 each on the two convicts.

Minor raped, accused caught

STAFF REPORTER
AGARTALA

Police on Saturday arrested 27-year-old Abdul Khalek alias Joy, the key accused in the rape of a 15-year-old girl from Sonamura under Sepahijala district. The victim's condition, who is currently undergoing treatment at GBP Hospital, remained critical, doctors said. Search was on to nab the other accused, said the police.

Manual scavenging left 282 dead since 2016

Tamil Nadu tops the list, followed by Haryana

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

As many as 282 people have died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the country between 2016 and November 2019, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment said in a response to a question by Rajya Sabha MP Vandana Chavan.

Among the States, Tamil Nadu has recorded 40 deaths, the highest in number, in these four years. This is followed by Haryana with 31 deaths, and Gujarat and Delhi with 30 deaths each. Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have recorded 27 deaths each in the same period.

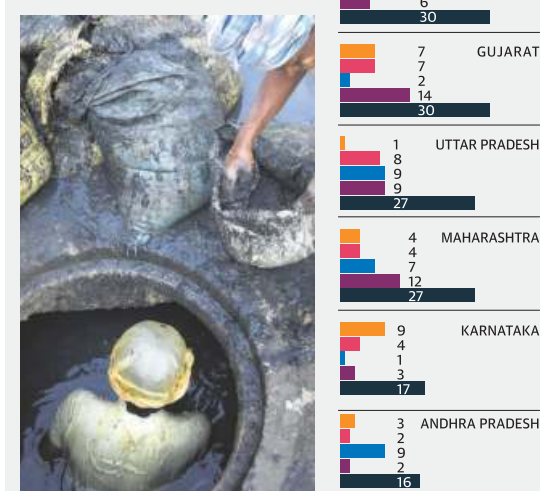
In its response the Ministry stated that these figures are on the basis of FIRs filed by the respective State governments. According to the data tabled in the Rajya Sabha, 50 deaths were reported in 2016, 83 in 2017, 66 in 2018 and 83 till November 2019.

'Higher than reported'
"Sanitation being a State subject, the people for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks are employed by local bodies. States and Union Territories have been requested to ensure filing of FIRs and prosecution in all cases of employment of persons for hazardous cleaning of sewers as per the provisions of The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013," the response said.

Speaking about the deaths, Bezwada Wilson, national convener of Safai

Raising a stink

States where large number of deaths were reported while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the last four years



Karmachari Andolan, an organisation working to eradicate manual scavenging, said that the deaths are much higher than what is reported in the official statistics.

"We have been collecting statistics of such deaths since 1993. It is only after 2000 that we started getting figures. Our website has put the figure at 1,760 deaths," Mr. Wilson told *The Hindu*. The Magsaysay award winning activist said that every year hundreds of people die but nothing much has been done on ground.

Rapid urbanisation
"The deaths have been higher in states like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh where there has been rapid and unplanned urbanisation," Mr. Wilson said. Reducing human intervention in cleaning septic tanks and sewers is important to

bring these numbers down, he added.

Bindeshwar Pathak, founder, Sulabh International Social Service Organization, also spoke on similar lines and said: "There are technologies available not only to detect the presence of poisonous gas in sewers and septic tanks but also for mechanized cleaning of it."

In the same response, the Central government has put on record that there are about 60,440 manual scavengers identified across the country, in 17 States.

More than half of them, about 35,472, have been identified from Uttar Pradesh alone.

The Parliament had enacted the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 which came in force from December 6, 2013.

'Raising of retirement age to benefit 4 lakh army personnel'

A study is currently under way to identify the disciplines where the service tenure can be extended

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The Army's attempt to increase the retirement age of jawans in specialised disciplines progressively to between 55-58 years is likely to benefit 30-40% of the force, or about four lakh personnel, who would get to continue in the service longer, army officials said. A study is currently under way to identify various disciplines where the retirement age

can be enhanced. "We are loosing skilled manpower," said an army official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We have identified specialists in various disciplines and looking if we can increase their [retirement] age progressively to 50, 54 and eventually 58," the official added. Such specialists include medical assistants, radiologists and technicians in the electronics and mechani-

cal engineering corps posted at Corps Headquarters and base workshops among others. "Our estimate is this will benefit 30-40% of the personnel in the 1.2 million strong army," the official stated.

The study, which was initiated earlier this year and is being carried out by the Adjutant General, was to have been submitted to the government a couple of months back. However, it

was later extended. "It was sent to the Commands for comments but the initial feedback was not encouraging," the official said, explaining the delay.

For instance, the Army Medical Corps (AMC) recommended only three trades for enhancement. So, Army Headquarters had asked for another assessment and the revised comments "are expected in a month."

A majority of jawans start

retiring at about 40-42 years of age. While this has been set due to the rigours of military service, there has been huge technological advancement over the decades and not all personnel go through the same stress or serve in extreme situations, officials said.

"The effort is to identify specialised disciplines by category and service and enhance the age of retirement," the official added.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17:00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Cold day conditions likely in isolated pockets over Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and west Rajasthan. Dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, south Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura in the morning hours.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...	16.0	11.0	Kozhikode	...	35.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	...	30.0	16.0	Kurnool	...	32.0	21.0
Aizawl	...	18.0	7.0	Lucknow	...	20.0	7.0
Allahabad	...	22.0	8.0	Madurai	...	30.0	23.0
Bengaluru	...	26.0	18.0	Mangaluru	...	36.0	23.0
Bhopal	...	26.0	13.0	Mumbai	...	31.0	19.0
Bhubaneswar	...	27.0	15.0	Mysuru	...	28.0	17.0
Chandigarh	...	13.0	9.0	New Delhi	...	18.0	9.0
Chennai	...	30.0	25.0	Patna	...	19.0	8.0
Coimbatore	...	30.0	21.0	Port Blair	...	30.0	25.0
Dehradun	...	22.0	9.0	Puducherry	...	29.0	20.0
Gangtok	...	13.0	7.0	Pune	...	30.0	17.0
Goa	...	34.0	22.0	Raipur	...	28.0	16.0
Guwahati	...	24.0	13.0	Ranchi	...	24.0	10.0
Hubballi	...	29.0	19.0	Shillong	...	16.0	4.0
Hyderabad	...	29.0	17.0	Shimla	...	14.0	3.0
Imphal	...	21.0	5.0	Srinagar	...	6.0	-3.0
Jaipur	...	22.0	9.0	Thiruvananthapuram	...	11.4	33.0
Kochi	...	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	...	30.0	22.0
Kohima	...	18.0	5.0	Vijayawada	...	31.0	21.0
Kolkata	...	22.0	13.0	Visakhapatnam	...	29.0	23.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	10	69	35	443	366	...
Bengaluru	4	62	89	101	107	...
Chennai	6	34	27	155
Delhi	15	61	75	426	353	...
Hyderabad	18	72	38	262
Kolkata	20	101	40	324	323	...
Lucknow	7	91	88	410
Mumbai	10	54	38	248	144	...
Pune	80	25	83	180	129	...
Visakhapatnam	10	45	50	137	128	...

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO_x: 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

SC condemns detention on 'irrelevant grounds'

'It is akin to punishment without trial'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A person cannot be detained on the basis of "stale and irrelevant" grounds, the Supreme Court has held in a judgment.

A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Hrishikesh Roy said detaining a person on "stale incidents" will be akin to punishing him for a crime without trial.

Assessing past conduct
A court can set aside a detaining order if it is based on stale and irrelevant grounds. "A live and proximate link must exist between the past conduct of a person and the imperative

need to detain him," Justice Chandrachud said while referring to a precedent in the 23-page judgment.

The case concerned an appeal by a man, Khaja Bilal Ahmed, who was detained as a "goonda" under the Telangana Offenders Act of 1986. The apex court quashed the detention order, saying there is no proximate link between his past and the immediate need to detain him.

Incidents believed to have taken place nine to 14 years earlier cannot be a basis for the detaining authority to conclude that the person is engaging or making preparations for committing an illegal act, the SC said.

ED initiates action against wildlife smuggler

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate issued a look-out circular against Supradip Guha, for carrying out organised wildlife smuggling. The ED has provisionally attached a

parcel of land under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The agency had earlier attached three chimpanzees and four marmosets that were rescued from Mr. Guha's Kolkata residence.



Fury rages: Protesters blocking a road by burning tyres during a bandh in Patna; a man displaying a poster during a demonstration at the Rajghat in New Delhi, and the police cornering a protester in Varanasi on Saturday. ■RANJEET KUMAR, R.V. MOORTHY & AFP



Kerala scribes protest against police action

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Kerala Union of Working Journalist (KUWJ) submitted a memorandum to Governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Saturday, highlighting the recent attacks on journalists in Kerala and Delhi.

The KUWJ staged a protest in front of the Kerala House in New Delhi. It noted in the memorandum that the journalists were attacked while covering the recent protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, who also took part in the protest, said: "We stand for a free and independent press. They are the sentinels of our democracy. The muzzling of the media highlights the government's weakness and failure. But the truth cannot be hidden. We extend our full support to journalists who have been targeted, and we will continue to fight for the freedom of the press."

He said the worst-affected by the violence were the BJP-ruled States.

In the memorandum, the KUWJ said: "We strongly condemn the brutality of the Delhi police unleashed on journalists recently."

Aazad held in dawn drama

Bhim Army chief was held outside the Jama Masjid in Delhi during a protest

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Saturday arrested 27 persons, including Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad, in connection with the violence that erupted at Seemapuri in Shahdara and Delhi Gate on Friday. All accused have been sent to judicial custody.

Around 4 a.m. on Saturday, Mr. Aazad was on the steps of the Jama Masjid with several others while staging a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act as the police waited outside the mosque. "If all the people (detained) are released, I am ready to get arrested. Continue the struggle and stay together to protect the Constitution," he tweeted. He later walked outside after which he was arrested.

In a video before his arrest, he said that this was a bigger fight and that CAA-NRC would divide the country.

"This fight is not just of our Muslim brothers but everyone's and we will not let this fight die down. Our unity is our strength. Protest peacefully, don't give them an opportunity to use bullets and sticks," he said.

During the day, Mr. Aazad was taken for a medical examination after which he was produced before the



Catching fire: A gathering of about 50 students grew into a big protest outside the Jamia Millia Islamia campus in New Delhi on Saturday. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

court. He was then sent to 14-day judicial custody. Apart from Mr. Aazad, 15 others were arrested on charges of rioting, arson and damage to public property at Delhi Gate who were sent to two-day judicial custody.

In a parallel development, 11 persons were arrested on the same charges for violence in Seemapuri. They were produced before the court and sent to 14-day judicial custody.

The FIR stated that Mr. Aazad gave a provocative speech after which a huge crowd started moving towards Delhi Gate.

Jamia women students lead a mass protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia students staged a demonstration outside the campus on Saturday in protest against the amendments to the citizenship law, days after clashes between the police and protesters there.

The demonstration was led by woman students of the Central university. Male students, alumni and other

protesters joined later. The initial gathering of around 50 students turned into a mass protest in a few hours, with over 500 people joining in.

Salim Ahmed, a protester who came with his five-year-old child, said, "I am with the students of this country. My son is here carrying a poster and I want my son to grow up in a secular nation and not a biased country."

Youth dies of bullet injury amid clashes in Rampur

Four others injured, five vehicles set ablaze

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

A 25-year-old man died of a bullet injury and four were injured as the protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act turned violent in Rampur on Saturday.

District Magistrate Aunjaneya K. Singh told *The Hindu* that Faiz, 25, was hit by a bullet in the neck and died during treatment at a government hospital. "The police didn't fire any bullet. We are investigating how he was hit. Those who have doubts should wait for the post-mortem report," he said.

Mr. Singh denied reports that two persons had died. Sources said hundreds of protesters gathered at Chauraha Hathi Khana in the Idgah area and threw stones at the police. They set ablaze a police vehicle, the motorcycle of a traffic policeman and three other vehicles.

The police lathi-charged the crowd and fired tear-gas shells. "At other places in the city, we could control the crowd with the help of Ulemas, but at Chauraha Hathi Khana, the protesters put teenagers in the front who were throwing *sutti* bombs at the police. They also tar-



In solidarity: Residents of Gurugram came together to protest against the CAA and the NRC on Saturday. ■MANOJ KUMAR

geted journalists recording the incident," Mr. Singh said. "It seemed to be a planned protest as the stones that were hurled were sharp, capable of passing through the mesh of police helmets. Twelve policemen were injured while controlling the protesters," he said.

In Meerut, Mohammad Salahuddin, whose younger brother Aleem, 22, was one of the four killed during the clashes with the police, was inconsolable. "He was killed by the police," he alleged. Aleem used to make chapatis and sheermal at a shop. "He was going home after the shop was closed, and he was hit near the Hapur bus stand," Mr. Salahuddin said.

"There is no solace now. I will make a statement," he said, before taking the body for burial.

The police in Meerut maintained that they did not open fire on Friday and four persons died in a cross-fire. Seventy-five weapons, including local guns, swords and knives, have been recovered and 250 people rounded up, Prashant Kumar, Additional Director-General of Police, Meerut Zone, told presspersons.

In Bijoor, a day after the death of two persons in a clash with the police, Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Tyagi said one of them, Suleman, died of a wound caused by a police bullet.

Varsity topper to boycott convocation

Pondicherry University alumna not to accept her degree, in protest against the CAA

RAJESH B. NAIR
PUDUCHERRY

A gold medallist in M.Sc. Electronic Media from Pondicherry University has decided to reject her medal and not attend the convocation to be held on Monday. President Ram Nath Kovind is scheduled to preside over the convocation.

Karthika B. Kurup said she was registering her protest and pushing for the withdrawal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens. Ms. Kurup's WhatsApp status message on Saturday went viral by late evening.

Ms. Kurup, who completed her Masters last year, told *The Hindu*, "It is my personal choice. It is my democratic right to protest against a law which is against humanity and unconsti-



A protest against the CAA by students of Pondicherry University. ■M. SAMRAJ

tutional." She added, "I will not accept the degree until the government withdraws the legislation."

The Pondicherry University Students Union had on Friday exhorted students to boycott the convocation. Following the

union's call, Ph.D. scholar A.S. Arun Kumar from the Anthropology Department also decided to stay away. "I want to express my anger against the CAA and the brutal way the Central government cracked down on the students protest in New Delhi. So I have decided not to accept my degree from the President," he said.

Mr. Kumar also announced his decision through a WhatsApp message, claiming it was in solidarity with the students protesting against CAA across the country. "When the entire country is burning, I do not want to rejoice by accepting the degree. I will get it once the government agrees to amend the wrong done to the country," he added.

A senior administrative official said the university had not

received any communication from the students who had announced their call to boycott.

"We have announced the list of medal winners and first rank holders on the university website. The students themselves have registered on the website for the convocation," he said.

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) urged Pondicherry DGP Balaji Srivastava to take action against those spreading rumours with the intent of disrupting the convocation. In a complaint on Saturday, ABVP urged the police to crack down on people posting 'vicious' messages on WhatsApp. "In the name of student council, some anti-social elements are spreading provocative messages to create chaos," ABVP general secretary Selva Kumar said in his complaint.

Stir will be on till law is repealed, says Stalin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Saturday said the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) would continue till it was repealed.

Releasing 64 books of C.N. Annadurai – *Anna Arivu Kodai* – Mr. Stalin said while laws were enacted to maintain law and order, it had instigated protests in the case of CAA.

He said Anna and his works were far more relevant since the enemies of the Tamils had increased and they were angry with the assertion of the Tamils.

"They are angry that the Tamils are opposing imposition of Hindi and Sanskrit. Tamils are protesting against the CAA," he said.

Reiterating that the Tamil movement and Dravidian movement were one and the same, Mr. Stalin said the first anti-Hindi agitation was seen as the first Tamil nationalist revolution.

JU cancels special convocation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

The Jadavpur University on Saturday decided not to hold the scheduled Special Convocation programme to be addressed by the Chancellor, who is also the State's Governor, in view of the threat of students' bodies to show black flag to him, an official said.

The university's annual convocation which does not require the Chancellor's presence, however, will be held on the same date, December 24, JU Registrar Snehanjanu Basu said.

The decision not to hold the Special Convocation was taken at an Executive Committee meeting in the wake of the threat of Left students' bodies to show black flag to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, he said.

India summons Malaysian envoy over Mahathir's comments on CAA

Remarks not in keeping with accepted diplomatic practice: Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Saturday summoned the Malaysian envoy to India and lodged a "solemn protest" after Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad made observations critical of the Citizenship Amendment Act.

"It was conveyed that such remarks are neither in keeping with accepted diplomatic practice of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, nor with the state of our bilateral relations," a government source said after the Malaysian Charge D'Affaires was summoned.



Mahathir Mohamad

Speaking after the Islamic Summit in Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian leader had said the police action against Indians protesting over the Citizenship

Amendment Act, 2019 was "very unfortunate".

"India is a secular state from the start; religion of the people did not prevent them from becoming citizens," Mr Mohamad had said.

He also referred to the situation in Kashmir during a meeting with the media.

India described these comments as "ill-informed and insensitive". The government source conveyed that the Malaysian leader's comments were not helpful for the bilateral ties, saying, "Malaysia was asked to take a long-term and strategic view of the bilateral relations".

'No need to declare religion for bank KYC'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Finance Secretary Rajiv Kumar on Saturday denied the "baseless rumours" that Indian citizens need to declare their religion for opening of bank accounts and KYC purpose.

The clarification comes after a news report suggested that Indian banks may ask depositors and customers to list their religion. "There is no requirement for #Indian citizens to declare their religion for opening/ existing #Bank account or for #KYC. Do not fall for baseless rumours about any such move by Banks," Mr. Kumar tweeted.



ELSEWHERE
Cuba to have a PM for the first time since 1976

HAVANA
Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel on Saturday named Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz as the country's first Prime Minister since 1976, under a new Constitution. Manuel Marrero Cruz, 56, whose nomination was ratified by the National Assembly, is a former functionary of the military-run Gaviota tourism corporation. **REUTERS**

Twitter blocks 88,000 Saudi-linked accounts

WASHINGTON
Facebook and Twitter on Friday said they had blocked multiple government-backed manipulation operations around the world as part of a crackdown on state-sponsored propaganda efforts. Twitter said it had blocked some 88,000 accounts linked to Saudi state-backed "information operations", in violation of its manipulation rules. **AFF**

Pak. academic sentenced to death over blasphemy charges

Junaid Hafeez was arrested in 2013 for allegedly posting derogatory remarks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LAHORE

A Pakistani court on Saturday sentenced a university professor to death for blasphemy under a law that critics say is often used to target minorities and liberal activists.

Junaid Hafeez, 33, was arrested in March 2013 for allegedly posting derogatory remarks against Prophet Mohammed on social media.

Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Pakistan, where laws against it carry a potential death sentence. Even unproven allegations have led to mob lynchings and vigilante murders.

Lawyer to appeal verdict
Hafeez's sentence was announced in central city of Multan, where he was a university professor at the time of his arrest, and his counsel Asad Jamal slammed the decision as "most unfortu-



Tight security: Junaid Hafeez; right, police officers outside Multan jail after the decision. **• AFP**



nate". "We will appeal against this verdict," said Mr. Jamal. There was tight security in and outside Multan prison where the trial was held. After the verdict, prosecution lawyers distributed sweets among their colleagues, who chanted "Allahu-akbar" (God is great) and "Death to blasphemers."

Hafeez's lawyer was killed in 2014 after receiving death threats during a hearing. About 40 people convicted of blasphemy are on death

row in Pakistan, according to a 2018 estimate by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The acquittal last October of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman who had spent more than eight years on death row for blasphemy, provoked violent protests across Pakistan, leaving large swathes of the country paralysed. Ms. Bibi now lives in Canada with her family.

U.S. sanctions companies building Russia's gas pipeline to Germany

Congress fears it will give Kremlin leverage over Europe

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Friday signed off on U.S. sanctions against companies building a Russian natural gas pipeline to Germany that Congress fears will give the Kremlin dangerous leverage over European allies.

The sanctions, which are opposed by the European Union (EU), were included in a sprawling defence spending Bill Mr. Trump signed at a ceremony on Joint Base Andrews. They target companies building the nearly \$11 billion Nord Stream 2 pipeline under the Baltic Sea with the aim of doubling deliveries of Russian natural gas to Germany.

U.S. lawmakers have warned that the pipeline would enrich a hostile Russian government and vastly increase President Vladimir Putin's influence in Europe. Both houses of Congress overwhelmingly approved the sanctions, with the Se-



Sea tensions: The Audacia ship belonging to an Allseas offshore service company, which is responsible for laying parts of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in the Baltic Sea. **• AFP**

nate voting on Tuesday to send the measure to Mr. Trump's desk. Mr. Trump, who has been accused by Democratic opponents of being soft on Mr. Putin, had little choice but to give his approval.

Annual Pentagon Bill

The sanctions were inserted into a much wider \$738 billion annual Pentagon funding Bill and, given the level of congressional support, a veto would likely have been

overturned. The U.S. measures have angered Moscow and the EU, which says it should be able to decide its own energy policies.

Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas discussed the issue during a phone call Friday with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortogus said. Mr. Pompeo expressed "strong opposition" to the project, Mr. Ortogus said in a statement.

ICC to probe 'war crimes' in Palestinian territories since 2014

'There is reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
THE HAGUE

The International Criminal Court (ICC)'s chief prosecutor said on Friday that she wanted to open a full investigation into alleged war crimes in the Palestinian territories, sparking a furious reaction from Israel and condemnation from the U.S.

The Palestinians welcomed the move by the ICC as a "long overdue step" following a nearly five-year preliminary probe by the prosecutor into the situation since the 2014 war in Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the decision made the Hague-based court a "political tool" against the Jewish state.

"I am satisfied that there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation into the situation in Palestine," ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said in a statement. "In brief, I am satisfied that war crimes have been or are being committed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip," she added, without specifying the perpetrators of the alleged crimes.

She said that before opening a full probe, she would ask the ICC to rule on the territory over which it has jurisdiction because of the "unique and highly contested legal and factual issues attaching to this situation." "Specifically, I have sought confirmation that the 'territory' over which the Court



A home in Gaza City that was damaged following an Israeli attack on December 8. **• AFP**

may exercise its jurisdiction, and which I may subject to investigation, comprises the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza." The prosecutor added however that she did not require any authorisation from judges to open a probe as there had been a referral from the Palestinians, who joined the court in 2015.

U.S. criticism

"We firmly oppose this and any other action that seeks to target Israel unfairly," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said of Washington's top ally in the region. "We do not believe the Palestinians qualify as a sovereign state, and they therefore are not qualified to obtain full membership, or participate as a state in international organisations, entities, or conferences, including the ICC."

The issue is highly sensitive, with former White House National Security Ad-

viser John Bolton threatening last year to arrest ICC judges if they moved against Israel or the United States. Both countries have refused to sign up to the court, which was set up in 2002 to be the only global tribunal trying the world's worst crimes, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Ms. Bensouda launched a preliminary probe in January 2015 into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Israel and the Palestinian territories, in the wake of the 2014 Gaza war. A full ICC investigation could possibly lead to charges against individuals. States cannot be charged by the ICC.

"Palestine welcomes this step as a long overdue step to move the process forward towards an investigation, after nearly five long and difficult years of preliminary examination," the Palestinian statement said. Mr. Netanyahu however lashed out at what he called a "dark day for truth and justice". "The ICC prosecutor's decision has turned the International Criminal Court into a political tool to delegitimise the State of Israel," he said. The ICC's preliminary investigation has looked at the 2014 war which left 2,251 dead on the Palestinian side, the majority civilians, and 74 on the Israeli side, most of them soldiers. It has also looked at violence near the Israel-Gaza border in 2018.

Hong Kong suspect fired at officers: police

He could be linked to the group arrested earlier this month that was plotting to attack policemen

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

Hong Kong police on Saturday said an armed suspect fired a live round at officers as they tried to arrest him in an operation linked to the months of pro-democracy protests engulfing the city.

Police said a 19-year-old man pulled a semi-automatic pistol from his waistband as officers approached him in Tai Po district on Friday evening. The shot did not hit anyone and the man was subdued.

AR-15 rifle found

A subsequent search of a nearby flat uncovered an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle

and more than 250 rounds of ammunition.

Police said they believed the man and the newly discovered weapons were linked to a group arrested earlier this month who were also allegedly found in possession of a pistol and were plotting to attack officers.

"The firearms we discovered matched the intelligence we had collected which indicated that some people hoped to use firearms in some public assemblies to wound some others, including police officers on duty," Senior Superintendent Lee Kwai-wah told reporters on Saturday. However, Mr. Lee said the



In black and white: Protesters marching through a mall in the Tsim Sha Tsui district of Hong Kong on Saturday. **• AFP**

suspect was also facing ongoing firearms charges from an arrest last year before the protests.

Riot police had to be called in to back up the officers as local residents began heckling police, with at least two tear gas rounds fired to disperse them, the *South*

China Morning Post reported.

Semi-autonomous Hong Kong has been shaken for six months by increasingly violent pro-democracy protests. Millions have marched peacefully in multiple rallies, with Beijing and local leader Carrie Lam digging their heels in. But a newly radicalised youth armed with petrol bombs, bricks and sometimes bows and arrows has added a dangerous layer to the movement, leading to increasingly violent battles with riot police.

In recent weeks, police have made arrests indicating some protesters may be plotting more drastic action.

50,000 guns surrendered in New Zealand scheme

Govt. had initiated a buyback programme after the Christchurch terror attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WELLINGTON

New Zealand authorities said on December 21 that their country will be a safer place after owners handed in more than 50,000 guns during a buyback programme following a ban on assault weapons. But critics say the process was flawed and many owners have illegally stashed their firearms.

The government banned the most lethal types of semi-automatic weapons less than a month after a lone gunman in March killed 51 worshippers at two Christchurch mosques. The police then launched a six-month



Arms handed over: New Zealand police officers with a firearm ahead of a gun buyback scheme in Upper Hutt in July. **• AFP**

programme to buy the newly banned weapons from owners. The buyback ended midnight on December 20, with gun collection events staying open late as police reported in a surge in last-minute re-

turns. Provisional figures indicate 33,000 people handed in 51,000 guns, and another 5,000 guns as part of a parallel amnesty in which owners could hand over any type of firearm but

without getting compensated.

'A difficult process'

Police Deputy Commissioner Mike Clement thanked gun owners for doing the right thing. He acknowledged in a statement it had been "a difficult process for some people".

But Nicole McKee, a spokeswoman for the advocacy group Council of Licensed Firearms Owners, said owners had kept about two-thirds of the banned weapons because they had lost faith in the government and hadn't been offered adequate compensation.

North Korea hits out at U.S. for criticising rights record

REUTERS
SEOUL

North Korea lashed back at the United States for taking issue with its human rights record on Saturday, saying Washington's "malicious words" would only aggravate tensions on the Korean Peninsula, state news agency KCNA reported.

The KCNA statement, attributed to a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, warned that if the United States dared to take issue with the North's system of government by citing human rights problems, it would "pay dearly". The UN General Assembly on Wednesday condemned North Korea's "long-standing and ongoing" violations of human rights in an annual resolution sponsored by dozens of countries including the U.S., that Pyongyang's UN envoy rejected.

The North Korean Foreign Ministry statement is its first since U.S. special envoy for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, publicly urged Pyongyang on Monday to return to talks. There has been no direct response from North Korea to Mr. Biegun's entreaty.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Friday that he remains hopeful the U.S. can restart diplomacy with North Korea, as the clock ticks down to North Korea's declared year-end deadline for new U.S. concessions in talks over its nuclear arsenal. North Korea has repeatedly called for the United States to drop its "hostile policy" before more talks. But tension has been rising in recent weeks as Pyongyang has conducted a series of weapons tests and waged a war of words with President Donald Trump.

SUDOKU

			4			9	2	
7		4			3			6
	2				6	4		3
		7	1	8	9			
	3			4			9	
			6	3	2	7		
3	5	8					1	
4			3			6		9
	1	2			5			

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	9	2	1	3	4	6	7	8
1	3	6	5	7	8	4	9	2
7	8	4	6	9	2	1	3	5
9	6	1	2	5	7	3	8	4
4	2	7	8	1	3	9	5	6
8	5	3	9	4	6	7	2	1
3	1	9	4	8	5	2	6	7
6	7	5	3	2	1	8	4	9
2	4	8	7	6	9	5	1	3

Banksy unveils nativity artwork in Bethlehem

It is part of the 'Walled-Off Hotel' and is aimed at creating awareness on the Palestinians' suffering

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BETHLEHEM

A manger scene juxtaposed against concrete blocks seemingly pierced by a mortar shell: with Christmas looming, the latest Bethlehem offering by secretive artist Banksy appeared on Saturday in West Bank.

Dubbed the "Scar of Bethlehem", the artwork's baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph are backlit through damaged concrete, chiselled pockmarks exploding out from a gaping hole in four directions to approximate the Christmas Star. The work is installed at Banksy's Walled-Off Hotel, where all rooms overlook a concrete section of the barrier built by Israel to cut off the occupied West Bank from Israeli territory.

Love and peace

"Love" and "peace" are respectively graffiti tagged in English and French on the artistic installation's concrete blocks, while three large wrapped presents are



Art that makes you think: A new Christmas-themed artwork, dubbed the 'Scar of Bethlehem' and made by Banksy, at the Walled-Off Hotel in Bethlehem. **• AFP**

at the forefront of the scene. "It is a nativity," said the hotel's manager Wissam Salsaa after the piece was installed. "Banksy has his own contribution to Christmas." "It is a great way to bring up the story of Bethlehem, the Christmas story, in a different way - to make people think more" of how Palestinians live in Bethlehem.

Mr. Salsaa calls the Israeli wall a "scar" that should induce "shame in anyone who supported" its construction.

Israel began building the separation barrier in 2002 during the Palestinian uprising, or intifada. Built mostly inside the West Bank, Israel says it is necessary to prevent attacks, but Palestinians label it an "apartheid wall",

separating them from Jerusalem. Traditional Bethlehem Christmas festivities will take place next week at the church built on the spot where Christians believe Jesus was born.

Other West Bank works

The manger scene and hotel - an establishment opened two years ago - are far from

Banksy's only West Bank imprint. In 2007, he painted a number of artworks in Bethlehem, including a young girl frisking an Israeli soldier pinned up against a wall.

In 2005, he sprayed nine stencilled images at different locations along the eight-metre-high (27-foot) separation barrier.

They included a ladder on the wall, a little girl carried away by balloons and a window opening onto a peaceful mountain landscape.

The identity of the world's best known graffiti artist remains a mystery and he was not present during the revealing of his latest work. "Banksy is trying to be a voice for those that cannot speak," said Mr. Salsaa. He "is creating a new model of resistance through art."

Banksy rose to prominence after his subversive artworks started to appear in public spaces in the U.K. in the early 2000s, and he has long worked on themes of violence and conflict.

Can't cut deposit rates beyond threshold: SBI

Senior citizens rely on interest income

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar on Saturday said banks cannot go beyond a threshold to bring down interest rates on deposits as India lacks social security schemes and likewise cannot lend at lower rates to corporates as the risk of default is too high.

When the repo rate was going up 5-6 years ago, interest rates for borrowers did not increase in that proportion, he said. In 2013, the repo rate was around 10%, the SBI Chairman said, adding that since 2013, Reserve Bank's repo and bank interest rates for consumers have been moving in a completely aligned manner.

"Second... banking system's dependence... in In-



dia, is largely on depositors. Today, 90% of my deposit is retail deposit. If I want to lend money cheap, obviously I will have to pay less to depositors; and in our country where there is a huge population of senior citizens and in the absence of social security schemes, interest on deposits is a source of earning," he said, speaking at the 92nd FICCI Annual Convention.

Banking sector NPA situation to improve by fiscal-end: SBI

Infrastructure and consumer lending offer opportunities, says Chairman Kumar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar on Saturday said most banks will be in a 'good position' with respect to stressed assets by March and that there is no dearth of liquidity in the system for lending.

He added that there were opportunities to lend in sectors such as infrastructure and consumer lending, as there is not much of a decline in demand from consumers.

"By March 31, most of the banks will be in a good position with respect to stressed assets," Mr. Kumar said at the 92nd Annual Convention of industry chamber FICCI here.



Banks have been careful in lending to telcos as the probability of default is very high, says Rajnish Kumar. ■ PAUL NORONHA

On transmission of monetary policy, he said the banks cannot lower rates beyond a threshold due to asset liability mismatch issues. Mr. Kumar said that there

was no shortage of capital in the system, but that the corporates were not borrowing enough and not utilising their capacities well. On lending to the telecom

There is no shortage of capital, but corporates are not borrowing enough

sector for the next round of spectrum auctions, he said, "For us, lending to the telecom sector for spectrum is completely unsecured."

'Telco loans unsecured'

"On paper, it is secured as the auction is to be done by the government, but practically, it is totally unsecured."

"So, in such circumstances, banks will have to evaluate carefully before lending to the sector as the probability of default is very high," Mr. Kumar said.



VECV has been supplying Euro VI engines to the Volvo Group for the last six years, says Vinod Aggarwal. ■ PAUL NORONHA

BS VI pre-buying to boost demand: VECV

CV sector to improve from September

SANJAY VIJAYAKUMAR
CHENNAI

VE Commercial Vehicles Ltd. (VECV), a joint venture between the Volvo Group and Eicher Motors, said it hoped demand would improve in the January-March quarter as a result of pre-buying by customers ahead of BS VI norms kicking in from the next financial year.

"We are looking at some green shots at this point because of the pre-buying. People were deferring replacement and not buying BS IV vehicles. Now, of course, if they don't buy before March 31, the prices are going to go up with BS VI vehicles hitting the market from April 1," Vinod Aggarwal, MD and CEO, VECV, told *The Hindu*. "We expect some pre-buying to happen during this period. And we are already getting more enquiries, which have gone up from this month," he said.

Mr. Aggarwal said the company was hopeful of the demand for commercial vehicles (CVs) reviving from September onwards.

"Because of the pre-buying happening in the fourth quarter, the demand would be down in the April-June period. As the monsoon kicks in, the CV demand

would improve and the industry would be in a better situation from September," he said.

Mr. Aggarwal also said the company would be in a better placed to handle the BS VI transition compared with its peers. The company has gained from its experience of supplying Euro VI engines manufactured at its facility in Pithampur, near Indore, to the Volvo Group in Europe and Asia for the last six years, which would help in making BS VI trucks, he added.

'Rising investments'

Mr. Aggarwal said usually the firm invests ₹500 crore every year and it has gone up to ₹600 crore this financial year, which includes a new unit in Bhopal, new engines and product series along with BS VI work.

Admitting that BS VI trucks would raise the cost of ownership, he said fuel efficiency and productivity improvements brought in through the new technology would be the firm's key value proposition. However, brokerage firm Motilal Oswal expects limited pre-buying in the CV segment due to fleet operators carrying 30-40% excess capacity.

Tata companies in a quandary over reappointing Cyrus Mistry as director

'Procedure for reinstatement is unclear; we are going through the legal process'

PIYUSH PANDEY
MUMBAI

Tata Sons and three of its group companies ie, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Tata Industries Ltd. and Tata Teleservices Ltd. are in a quandary over the re-appointment of former Tata Sons chairman Cyrus Mistry as director on their boards, to comply with the order of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal.

The tribunal, while suspending a part of the judgment relating to the replacement of the present executive chairman and reinstatement of Mr. Mistry as executive chairman for



Cyrus Mistry

four weeks, said the "rest of the judgment and directions, including the direction to reinstate Mr. Cyrus Mistry as director of the company and directors of the three Tata companies shall be complied forthwith."

This is because Mr. Mistry was removed from the boards of these firms by way of extraordinary general meetings while in the case of other Tata firms, he himself had resigned from their boards.

'Procedural thing'

"Our legal team and company secretary are working on the order of the NCLAT. It's a procedural thing. We were not even party to the case," a senior TCS official told *The Hindu*. According to Mr. Mistry's counsel, Somasekhar Sundaresan, the Tatas 'should immediately offer a board seat' to Mr. Mistry in

Tata Sons and other companies of the Tata group.

'Wait for appeal'

A source in the know of the development said these firms would wait for Tata Sons to move the Supreme Court, as Tata Sons is expected to challenge the judgment citing the fact that the decision to remove Mr. Mistry was taken at shareholder meetings constituted in a valid manner.

"The procedure for such reinstatement is unclear and we are going through the legal process," said a Tata Group official on the condition of anonymity.

No possibility of any change in GST slabs, rates

Revenue to stabilise first: Sushil Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

States are not in favour of increasing GST rates at a time when there is a consumption slowdown and it is not the right time to bring down the number of slabs under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), Sushil Kumar Modi, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar and Convenor of Group of Ministers on IGST, said.

There is no possibility of any change in the GST rates till the revenue stabilises, Mr. Modi said at an event.

Not ready

"I want to assure you that not a single State... (and) the Union government is ready to raise tax rates," he said.

"At a time when the economy is in a slowdown, if you cannot cut the tax rate to boost consumption, do not increase the rates at least. In these times, you cut the duties and tax rates," Mr. Modi said. On the chances of any reduction in GST rates, he said, "Till GST revenue stabilises, we cannot think of decreasing the tax rates."

There has been a shortfall in GST revenue collections against projections. It crossed the ₹1 lakh crore mark after a gap of three months in November with revenue growing by 6% to ₹1.03 lakh crore during the month. The collection was ₹95,380 crore in October.

INTERVIEW | AZAD MOOPEN

'We're adding one hospital in India every year'

Hospital chain to embark upon lab business in the country, says Aster DM CMD

LALATENDU MISHRA

Started as a single-doctor clinic in Dubai in 1987 by Azad Moopen from Kerala, Aster DM Healthcare has now grown into a global healthcare chain with 380 facilities, including hospitals and clinics. In an interview, Dr. Moopen, CMD, speaks about the company's plans.

What is the difference between running hospitals in the Gulf Co-operation Countries and India?

Initially, it is quite difficult GCC countries when you establish a business as you have to go through all the regulations and fulfil every licensing norm. But once you start, it becomes easier. In India starting is easy but once you start and go forward it becomes difficult.

In GCC, authorities exercise greater control. There, doctors need to upskill themselves. In GCC, fixed hours of continuing medical education is mandatory; that is required to be certified for

your licence to be renewed. But in India, most people do not bother to upskill themselves. All healthcare institutions in the GCC have to be accredited by one of the international agencies. That is not the case in India.

So, here, one is not sure whether a hospital is keeping to a certain level of standard. In GCC, mostly it is insured patients. But in India, a majority of patients are uninsured. Here insurance is only for the in-patient cover. But in GCC, insurance cover is both for in-patient and out-patient. Return on investment is much higher in GCC compared with India.

What is your pan-India expansion plan?

There is still opportunity in south India.

There are many places where we can go. Our strategic plan is to remain in south and west. We hope we will go to north in future.

What is your investment plan for the next five years?

We are adding one hospital in GCC and one in India every year. In the next five years, we will add 1,500 beds in India and 400 beds in GCC. Every year, we will invest about ₹300-₹400 crore in building hospitals.

Are you looking at acquisitions?

In India, the valuations are very high. So, we are not looking at any [acquisitions] now. As a strategy, we don't want to spend a lot

of capital now. We are reducing capital investment and want more of free cash flow. We are opting for an asset-light model. We will look at more management contracts. We may also get our hospitals built by somebody and we will run it. We are looking at running government hospitals in Saudi Arabia.

What is your overall global expansion plan?

We would like to remain an Asia player. Until at least 2025, we would not go to other geographies.

What's new being planned for India?

We will soon be starting our laboratories business in India. We already have them in GCC. The Indian ventures will start in next three months. These will be stand alone pathology labs. To begin with, we will open these labs in the five States where we are present.



Brokers seek tax cuts to boost equity flows

Representative body wants removal of dividend distribution tax, LTCG on shares

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
MUMBAI

With just a little over two months left for the Union Budget to be presented in Parliament, market participants have again initiated efforts to convince the government to lower trading costs and offer certain tax rebates to investors in a bid to enhance the equity investment culture in the country.

The Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI), in its pre-Budget memorandum submitted to the government, has sought the lowering of the securities transaction tax (STT), along with bringing back a tax rebate that was available earlier in lieu of the tax paid by

Not only have STT and CTT rates remained high, but GST has added to trading costs

investors. ANMI has also sought the removal of dividend distribution tax as also the long-term capital gains tax on listed shares, which was introduced last year.

Incentivising investment

"We are of the view that for enhanced GDP growth, we will need to incentivise and encourage equity investment," stated the ANMI memorandum.

"Our submission covers issues which have large im-

act on stock market trading, like reintroduction of rebate under erstwhile Section 88E for STT and CTT (commodities transaction tax) paid, and reduction in rate of STT to tackle increased transaction cost, withdrawal of dividend distribution tax (DDT) and restoring exemption of long-term capital gains tax on listed shares," it added.

According to ANMI, while the tax - STT and CTT - rates have remained high, a withdrawal of rebate under Section 88E and introduction of Goods and Services Tax have raised trading costs. Under the erstwhile Section 88E, entities could avail tax benefits on income

generated through transactions on which STT was paid.

"Tax incentives, by reducing STT and CTT, removal of LTCG and DDT on corporate earnings will help create positive sentiment, which will further give fuel to the domestic capital market," said Puneet Maheshwari, director, Upstox, a discount broking firm.

ANMI is of the view that the current form of DDT was 'adversarial' in nature, leading to double or triple taxation of corporate earnings.

The association has suggested that the dividend should be taxed only in the hands of the receiver and the company can deduct it at source.



FILE PHOTO/PTI

Tata-Mistry ruling

How does the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal's ruling impact corporate governance?

SURESH SESHADRI

The story so far: On December 18, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal or NCLAT (as the appellate tribunal is known) declared as "illegal" the October 2016 removal of Cyrus P. Mistry as Executive Chairman of Tata Sons Limited and ordered his reinstatement to the post. In a 172-page order, a two-member bench of the NCLAT comprising its Chairperson Justice S.J. Mukhopadhyaya and Member (Judicial) Justice Bansi Lal Bhat, set aside the judgment passed by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Mumbai, on July 9, 2018, and ordered that "disparaging" and "unsubstantiated" remarks made by the NCLT against the appellants, Mr. Mistry and others, be expunged. The appellate tribunal, however, suspended its order on Mr. Mistry's reinstatement as Executive Chairman of Tata Sons – in place of the incumbent, whose appointment was deemed illegal – for a period of four weeks "with a view to ensure smooth functioning of the company". In response, Tata Sons has said it "strongly believes in the strength of its case and will take appropriate legal recourse".

What is the NCLAT?

As part of a comprehensive revamp of the adjudication of corporate law disputes, the NCLAT was constituted with effect from June 1, 2016, for hearing appeals against the orders of the NCLT, which, in turn, simultaneously replaced the erstwhile Company Law Board. Constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013, the appellate tribunal was conceived as the dedicated appeals forum for resolving corporate law disputes and speeding up the resolution by taking over the role hitherto played by overburdened High Courts in adjudicating such appeals.

Besides deciding on prayers against the NCLT's rulings, including in matters relating to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), the NCLAT also serves as the appellate body for those aggrieved by decisions made by the Competition Commission of India or orders passed by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Sections 202 and 211 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

A party aggrieved by a National Company Law Tribunal ruling can appeal against it to the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal. The NCLAT's verdicts can be challenged in the Supreme Court

Established in New Delhi, the NCLAT initially comprised five members: two members each on the judicial and technical sides and the Chairperson Justice S.J. Mukhopadhyaya.

As part of its efforts to strengthen the entire NCLAT and NCLAT apparatus with a view to further reducing pendency, the Centre this year added a total of four new members to the NCLAT – two each in judicial and technical capacities. The government has also decided to set up a bench of the appellate tribunal at Chennai, Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Singh Thakur said in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha on December 2, 2019

While a member (Judicial) of the NCLAT has to have been a judge of a High Court or a judicial member of the NCLT for five years, a technical member ought to possess proven ability and standing with domain knowledge and experience of not less than 25 years in areas such as law, industrial finance, industrial management, investment, accountancy, labour matters or corporate restructuring. The chairperson must have been a judge of the Supreme Court of India or a Chief Justice of a High Court.

How does the appeals process work?

A party aggrieved by a ruling by any of the NCLAT's numerous benches can file an appeal against it within 45 days of receipt of a copy of the order, with a further 45 days allowed if the NCLAT is satisfied that the appellant had sufficient cause that prevented the filing of the appeal within the stipulated period.

The NCLAT's verdicts can in turn be challenged on a question of law in the Supreme Court, within a 60-day window.

Have the NCLAT's rulings been challenged?

While the appellate body has adjudicated on several significant precedent setting cases, some of its recent decisions have faced intense judicial scrutiny including one pertaining to ArcelorMittal's bid to acquire debt-laden Essar Steel.

The NCLAT ruling in this case was challenged in the Supreme Court, which overturned a significant portion of the verdict. In its November judgment, the top court upheld the primacy of financial creditors over operational creditors in the repayments waterfall, settling the disquiet spurred by the NCLAT's decision to seemingly place secured financial creditors on a par with the operational creditors.

And earlier in September, the Supreme Court had first stayed and then overturned a ruling by the NCLAT in an IBC case pertaining to Amtek Auto. While the appellate tribunal had ordered the liquidation of the embattled auto parts maker, the court ordered that the resolution professional and lenders could invite fresh bids for the company.

What connects the NPR, NRIC and Census?

How is the National Population Register compiled? How is it related to citizenship and the decennial census? And, can States refuse cooperation with the NPR process?

K. VENKATARAMANAN

The story so far: As protests spread all across the country against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019 and the proposed National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), West Bengal and Kerala suspended work related to the preparation and update of the National Population Register in their respective States. The NPR, a register of residents of the country with demographic and biometric details, was supposed to be prepared between April 2020 and September 2020 ahead of the Census slated for 2021. Preliminary work on the NPR has begun in several States. In Bengal, civil rights activists had been protesting against the compilation of the NPR alleging that it had nothing to do with the Census, but the "first step to initiate the National Register of Citizens" in the State. According to Section 14A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 (which was inserted in 2004), the Central Government may compulsorily register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card to him; and it may maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens.

What is the National Population Register (NPR)?

The NPR is a database containing a list of all usual residents of the country. Its objective is to have a comprehensive identity database of people residing in the country. It is generated through house-to-house enumeration during the "house-listing" phase of the census, which is held once in 10 years. The last census was in 2011, and the next will be done in 2021 (and will be conducted through a mobile phone application, according to the Home Minister, Amit Shah).

A usual resident for the purposes of NPR is a person who has resided in a place for six months or more, and intends to reside there for another six months or more. The census involves a detailed questionnaire – there were 29 items to be filled up in the 2011 census – aimed at eliciting the particulars of every person, including age, sex, marital status, children, occupation, birthplace, mother tongue, religion, disability and whether they belonged to any Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe. On the other hand, the NPR collects basic demographic data and biometric particulars.

Once the basic details of the head of the family are taken by the enumerator, an acknowledgement slip will be issued. This slip may be required for enrolment in NPR, whenever that process begins.

And, once the details are recorded in every local (village or ward), sub-district (tehsil or taluk), district and State level, there will be a population register at each of these levels. Together, they constitute the National Population Register.

What is the legal basis for the NPR?

While the census is legally backed by the Census Act, 1948, the NPR is a mechanism outlined in a set of rules framed under the Citizenship Act, 1955.

Section 14A was inserted in the Citizenship Act, 1955, in 2004, providing for the compulsory registration of every citizen of India and the issue of a "national identity card" to him or her. It also said the Central government may maintain a "National Register of Indian Citizens".

The Registrar General India shall act as the "National Registration Authority" (and will function as the Registrar General of Citizen Registration). Incidentally, the



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Registrar General is also the country's Census Commissioner.

The NPR is the first step towards establishing the NRIC.

Is there any link between the NPR and Aadhaar?

Better targeting and delivery of benefits and services under the government was one of the early objectives of the NPR. During the early days of the NPR enrolment, under the United Progressive Alliance regime, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) scheme for issuance of Aadhaar numbers was also concurrently on. There was a conflict between the Union Home Ministry, which administers the NPR, and UIDAI, leaving the impression that there was duplication of work, as both involved gathering personal particulars, including biometric data.

Ultimately, they agreed that both databases will exist with different objectives, and that each will use the other's biometric data. Those already enrolled for Aadhaar need not give their biometric details again during NPR. At the same time, data captured for NPR would be sent to UIDAI for "de-duplication". In case of discrepancy between Aadhaar and NPR data, the latter would prevail. The present regime decided to update the NPR originally created after the 2011 Census.

What will happen after the NPR is compiled?

Out of the NPR, a set of all usual residents of India, the government proposes to create a database of "citizens of India". Thus, the "National Register of Indian Citizens" (NRIC) is a sub-set of the NPR. The NRIC will be prepared at the local, sub-district, district and State levels after verifying the citizenship status of the residents.

The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003 spells out the rules for operationalising the idea of registering all citizens and issuing national identity cards to them. However, so far, there has been no decision on introducing a national identity card.

The rules say the particulars of every family and individual found in the Population Register "shall be verified and scrutinized by the Local Registrar ...". In the process, details of those "whose citizenship is doubtful" will be entered with a comment suggesting further

The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003 spells out the rules for operationalising the idea of registering all citizens... so far, there has been no decision on introducing a national identity card

inquiry. The family or individual will be informed about it and given an opportunity of being heard by the Sub-district or Taluk Registrar of Citizen Registration before a final decision is made on excluding them from the NRIC. The decision should be made within 90 days.

Is the NRIC complete after this step?

No. A draft of the Local Register of Indian Citizens

Why is it taking so long to label fast food?

What are the regulations on salt and trans-fat in junk food, and why is the FSSAI draft still not law?

JACOB KOSHY

The story so far: The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) unveiled a new study this week which showed that salt and fat in an array of "junk food" was well above proposed regulatory thresholds. The packaged and fast foods analysed were chips, savouries, pizzas and burgers that are widely available in restaurants and other commercial outlets. This is not the first time that the CSE has conducted such research. However, the findings are significant as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is yet to make into law draft regulations on setting limits, and publicising information, about nutrients in fast and packaged foods.

How did the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) conduct the study?

Its Environment Monitoring Laboratory tested salts, fat, trans-fat and carbohydrates in 33 foods using 14 samples of chips, savouries, instant noodles and instant soup. There were also 19 samples of burger, fries, fried chicken, pizza, sandwiches and wraps, sourced from grocery stores and fast food outlets in New Delhi. The pizza, burgers, chips and snacks to be tested were stored in laboratory conditions and ground to a powder or paste. Then they were chemically analysed to determine the salt, fat, trans-fat and carbohydrate levels. The aim was to find out the levels of these products in actual servings/packets of the foods.

How was it established that these nutrients were above thresholds?

To calculate this, the organisation relied on the concept of the recommended dietary allowance (RDA), a daily ceiling on the amount of salt, fat, carbohydrate and trans-fat. The RDA is based on scientific consensus and has been agreed upon by expert bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad (in India). It says that, ideally, an adult should consume no more than 5g of salt, 60g of fat, 300g carbohydrate and 2.2 g of transfat every day. Further, the RDA from breakfast, lunch and dinner should not be more than 25% and that from snacks (assumed to be those munched between meals), must be no more than 10%. Thus, a snack should ideally have no more than 0.5g of salt and 6g of fat.

What is the law on disclosing nutritional components?

Current Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labelling) Regulations, 2011 only require companies to disclose energy (kilo calories), protein, carbohydrates, total fat, trans-fat and saturated fat contained per 100g or per millilitre or per serve. It is not intuitively easy, without some mental math, to figure out how much is actually contained in your serving. There are also no



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disclosures on high salt content and added sugar, and no compulsion on companies to disclose nutritional information on the front of the pack. In 2013, the FSSAI, the apex food regulator under the Union Health Ministry, set up a committee to regulate packaged snacks. This committee, which consisted of doctors, nutrition experts, public policy activists and the CSE itself, recommended in 2014 that information on calories, sugar, fat, saturated fat and salt be displayed upfront. In 2018, the FSSAI came up with a draft law, the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2018. The draft recommended that a packet should have clear information on how much each nutrient, such as salt, sugar, contributed to the RDA. The draft said salt must be declared as sodium chloride for instance, and that those ingredients which breached the RDA should be marked in 'red'.

Food companies had reservations mainly because they felt 'red' signified danger, fearing that this would give consumers the impression that they were consuming toxic food. The draft regulations never became law. Instead, a third committee was formed, headed by B. Sesikeran, a former director of the NIN. Based on this committee's recommendations, a new draft (Draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019) was prepared. This replaced sodium chloride with salt, total fat with saturated fat and total sugar with added sugar, which CSE says, dilutes information on the health harm posed by packaged foods. The new draft also exempts beverages less than 80kcal. In theory, a beverage can breach "added sugar" RDA without informing consumers as long as it is within the energy requirement. The proposed law allows companies three years to adjust to the new laws. However, the contribution of each individual nutrient to the RDA and whether it is breaching safe limits will have to be displayed on the front of the package. Though the draft regulations have been out in the public domain since July, it is yet to become law. The CSE's calculations are based on recommended nutritional values in the draft versions of these laws.

Why is industry opposed to the proposed laws?

Other than the red labels, the industry says the norms are unscientific and that packaged food is made to cater to the "taste" of people. Moreover, the packaged industry argues, immense quantities of junk food – think samosas

shall be published to invite objections or claims for inclusion or corrections.

Any objection or request for inclusion must be made within 30 days of the publication of the draft. The sub-district or taluk registrar shall summarily dispose of the objections within 90 days. Thereafter, the entries in the Local Register will be transferred to the National Registrar.

Any person aggrieved by an exclusion order can appeal to the District Registrar within 30 days, and the appeal should be disposed of within 90 days. In case, the appeal succeeds, the names of those concerned would be added to the NRIC.

What are the documents that would help establish citizenship?

The government is yet to notify a date for generation of the NRIC. It has not yet prescribed rules for the sort of documentary proof that would be required to prove citizenship. The government says any document that shows date of birth or place of birth, or both, will be sufficient. And that common documents will be accepted, and those unable to produce documents may produce witnesses or other proof supported by members of the community.

Many State governments have said the NPR would not be implemented. Is this possible?

As of now, this is a political decision. Kerala and West Bengal have put on hold activities related to NPR work. Most State governments would have, by now, re-issued a Central government notification on the initiation of work to update the NPR.

As the house-to-house enumeration is a part of the Census operation, it is unlikely that the NPR process can go ahead without State governments agreeing to deploy their staff for the purpose. The legal position is that while the Centre is in charge of the census, the State governments are expected to provide staff whenever required.

Section 4A of the Census Act, inserted through a 1994 amendment, says: "Every local authority in a State shall, when so directed by a written order by the Central Government or by an authority appointed by that Government in this behalf, make available to any Director of Census Operations such staff as may be necessary for the performance of any duties in connection with the taking of census."

Further, Rule 5 of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003, lays down that "Every official of the Central Government, State Government, local bodies or their undertakings shall assist the Registrar General of Citizen Registration or any person authorized by him in this behalf, in preparation of the database relating to each family and every person, and in implementing the provisions of these rules."

In any case, it is compulsory on the part of every citizen to assist in the preparation of the National Register of Citizens, the rules say.

In practical terms, it may not be possible for the process to be undertaken without the State government's cooperation at the local level.

What is the relationship between the NPR and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act?

There is no direct link. But remarks by the Home Minister that the CAA would be followed by the NRC has given rise to fears that when people are excluded from the final citizenship register, the CAA may help non-Muslims take the CAA route to apply for citizenship, and leave Muslims with no option. However, the government seeks to allay these fears.

Why is it taking so long to label fast food?

What are the regulations on salt and trans-fat in junk food, and why is the FSSAI draft still not law?

or fried food sold on unregulated pushcarts – are consumed in the country with no check on their nutritional status and there is an inherent unfairness in regulating one section alone. Because nutritional information only guides consumers on how to regulate their intake, the industry feels people should be advised on what makes a healthy diet, the role of exercise and consuming appropriate amounts of food. They claim the current regulations only contribute to fear-mongering.

Why has not the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) moved on the draft?

A top FSSAI official told *The Hindu* that nearly 700 comments had been received on the 2019 draft and there were thorny issues to be resolved. To brand packaged food in different colours sends out the message that they are unsafe or "toxic"; this would be counterproductive to the larger aim of having a regulated but viable packaged food industry and people being educated about their food choices.

Pawan Kumar Agarwal, CEO, FSSAI said he did not agree with the CSE's analysis and that there was still considerable work to be done on establishing appropriate "thresholds" (for salt, fat, etc) for India. He said regulation is "inevitable" and there would be more scrutiny of nutrient levels but in a way that would give packaged food companies time to adapt to stricter norms.

The Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2018 suggested that a packet should have clear information on how much each nutrient, such as salt, sugar, contributed to the recommended dietary allowance

Food companies had reservations mainly because they felt 'red' signified danger, fearing that this would give consumers the impression that they were consuming toxic food. The draft regulations never became law. Instead, a third committee was formed, headed by B. Sesikeran, a former director of the NIN. Based on this committee's recommendations, a new draft (Draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2019) was prepared. This replaced sodium chloride with salt, total fat with saturated fat and total sugar with added sugar, which CSE says, dilutes information on the health harm posed by packaged foods. The new draft also exempts beverages less than 80kcal. In theory, a beverage can breach "added sugar" RDA without informing consumers as long as it is within the energy requirement. The proposed law allows companies three years to adjust to the new laws. However, the contribution of each individual nutrient to the RDA and whether it is breaching safe limits will have to be displayed on the front of the package. Though the draft regulations have been out in the public domain since July, it is yet to become law. The CSE's calculations are based on recommended nutritional values in the draft versions of these laws.

What is the practice internationally?

The CSE says that the proposed labelling regulations publish too many numbers and an assortment of colour codes. This could potentially confuse people particularly because India has a vast non-English speaking population. Chile, for instance, has a system where a black hexagon in a white border appears on the front of a package. In the hexagon is a phrase that says a product is "high in salt" or "high in trans-fat." The more the hexagons the less desirable the product becomes for the consumer; surveys suggest that even children are becoming more conscious about the health impact of their favourite snacks and often influencing parents' buying choices. Surveys undertaken by the WHO show that a vast majority of European countries have some form of front-of-pack labelling, but fewer countries have interpretive systems which explain the health factor of foods.

SNAPSHOTS



Iron snow

The Earth's inner core is capped by snow made of tiny particles of iron, much heavier than the snowflakes seen in the atmosphere, a study published in the journal *JGR Solid Earth* finds. The iron-snow falls from the molten outer core and piles up in the inner core of the Earth creating stacks that are up to 320 km thick.



Quick to see

The peregrine falcon, one of the world's most common predatory birds, has the fastest vision in the animal kingdom and can register nearly 130 frames per second, according to a study published in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*. In comparison, humans see up to a maximum of 50 to 60 blinks per second. This is the first time scientists have studied the speed of vision among birds of prey, calculating how fast they see.



Early immunity

Researchers have discovered how a brief disruption in the guts of pre-born mice can compromise their adult immunity to rotavirus infection. The study, published in *Science Immunology* showed that this prevented a robust antibody response in adult mice to rotavirus. This early disruption limits the ability of the immune system to later trigger and generate production of Immunoglobulin A (IgA) antibodies.



Ancestral home

The last known settlement of *Homo erectus*, direct ancestors of modern humans, who disappeared around 4,00,000 years ago, was situated in Ngandong on the Indonesian island of Java, a new study published in *Nature* finds. According to the researchers, the human ancestors existed on the Indonesian island between 1,08,000 and 1,17,000 years ago.

Mutation in smell gene found to be associated with asthma

Studying a multi-generational Indian family led to the discovery of associated gene variant

R. PRASAD

Based on a study of a four-generation family in Mysuru with high prevalence of asthma, a multi-institutional study by Indian researchers has shown that a variant of an olfactory gene (OR2AG2) is a novel candidate for asthma. This is the first time in India a four-generation large family with high asthma prevalence has been studied for the said purpose.

The gene was validated in a north Indian cohort of 141 children with asthma and 130 controls. About 80% of children with asthma carried a copy of the gene variant.

Twenty individuals representing the four generations were selected. Of the 20 persons studied, 14 had asthma and the rest served as a control group. Whole genome genotyping was undertaken on all the 20 participants and exome sequencing was carried out on five people with asthma and three controls. While whole genome genotyping helps in detecting variations across the genome, the exome sequencing allows variations in the protein-coding region of any gene to be identified.

Several variants were seen after genotyping and exome sequencing. The team led by Anurag Agrawal, Director of the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB), Delhi, turned to computer modelling to narrow down the possible variants that might be responsible for asthma and finally confirmed the genetic variant through conventional sequencing. "Mutation in the sensory pathway such as olfaction is a plausible mechanism for increased asthma



Inherited: All 14 family members with asthma had one copy of the gene variant • P.V. SIVAKUMAR

risk because of inability to mount an appropriate counter response. The inability to mount a counter response could lead to lung damage," says Dr. Agrawal. The inability to smell could be a potential mechanism for lung damage.

Identifying odour

To test this, the researchers evaluated the ability of the 20 participants to smell a sweet odour and the concentration at which they could identify the odour. All 14 family members with asthma had one copy of the gene variant.

"Healthy individuals and those with asthma were able to identify and differentiate different smells, but those with asthma could detect smells only at higher concen-

trations," he says. "This suggested a defect in their ability to smell. Also, family members with asthma said they could not smell burning odour."

"Whether olfactory gene was associated with asthma or not was not known till now. Ours is the first study to find such an association," says Dr. Samarpana Chakraborty from CSIR-IGIB and the first author of a paper published in the journal *Scientific Reports*. "The gene variant may cause olfactory dysfunction in the family members who have asthma."

"By studying the four-generation family alone or the children cohort individually, we couldn't have identified the gene. We need both groups," Dr. Chakraborty

says. "In population-based studies that have been undertaken, it becomes difficult to identify such variants."

"There are three main reasons why we could identify the gene variant – asthmatics in the family had difficulty in smelling, we saw the same variant in the cohort and we were looking for a novel genetic variant," Dr. Agrawal says.

Suppressing expression

But during the validation studies, asthmatic children with or without the variant did not show significant difference in the ability to smell, which was unexpected. "Asthmatic children without the variant too had impaired smell threshold, which made us wonder if asthma-related pathway itself can cause suppression of the gene independent of the genetic variation," he says.

To validate the hypothesis, the researchers directly measured the gene expression in lung samples of those with asthma and normal subjects. In people with asthma, there was significant reduction in the expression of the gene.

They also carried out cell culture studies. When the cultured human cells were treated with IL3 cytokine, which is associated with allergy, there was suppression of OR2AG2 gene expression.

"So there is either a genetic defect in the OR2AG2 gene at birth leading to suppressed expression or there is acquired suppression of gene expression later in life due to inflammation or environmental factors," he says. "This supports our hypothesis that the gene may be a convergence point for asthma pathways at the lung level."

Carbon dots help detect herbicide pollution

ASWATHI PACHA



Waste to wealth: Water hyacinth was used to produce carbon nanoparticles. • M. KARUNAKARAN

In an extraordinary waste-to-wealth feat, researchers from Assam have used the commonly found invasive plant water hyacinth to produce carbon nanoparticles. These extremely tiny (less than 10 nanometre) particles can be used for detecting a commonly used herbicide – pretilachlor. The nanoparticles were found to be selective and sensitive for the detection of the herbicide.

"At the biodiversity hub of our institute we have been trying to figure out how to convert this weed into a value-added product. Here in Assam, every water body is infested with water hyacinth, and it was an easy and cheap option to explore. Some teams are exploring if its fibre can be used to make furniture. We are also working on making activated carbon using the plant and these carbon dots were one of the innovations born in our lab," explains Devasish Chowdhury from the Material Nanochemistry lab at the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology, Assam. He is the corresponding author of the work published in *Heliyon*.

Leaves to carbon

The team harvested water hyacinth leaves, removed the chlorophyll, dried and powdered it. The sieved powder underwent several treatments including heating at 150 degree Celsius to convert it to carbon dots. "When a nanoparticle is less than 10 nanometre we call it a dot or nanodot. Our carbon dots were able to give a green fluorescence under UV light. The extremely small oxygen functional groups on the surface of the dot are responsible for the fluorescence," explains the first author of the paper Ma-

nash Jyoti Deka.

The herbicide pretilachlor is mixed with water and carbon dots, and studied using special equipment. The fluorescence intensity increases in the presence of the herbicide. The team also tested using different pesticides and other compounds having similar chemical structure and found that the carbon dot was extremely sensitive to pretilachlor and could detect even very small quantity of the herbicide. After successful testing in the laboratory conditions, the team collected soil samples from different places across the State and proved the efficiency of the carbon dots in detecting pretilachlor in soil samples.

Fluorescence enhancement

The paper also describes the mechanism by which electron transfer happens between the dot and the herbicide which enables the fluorescence enhancement. Dr. Chowdhury adds that this will be a commercially viable option when compared with the sensors currently available in the market, as the raw material for the construction of the sensor – the water hyacinth – is readily available and is practically a waste material. Based on this study, the group is now developing a paper strip-based sensor for on-site detection of pretilachlor.

IIT Hyderabad team uses plant extract, heat to kill cancer cells

The nanoparticles, which encapsulate the extract, had no adverse effect on mice, indicating their biocompatibility

R. PRASAD

Lipid-based nanoparticles encapsulating chlorophyll-rich extract of a medicinal plant *Anthocephalus cadamba* and a near-infrared dye has been found to selectively kill cancer cells when exposed to near-infrared light.

Unlike the conventional photothermal therapy that relies on heat to kill cancerous cells, a multi-institutional team led by researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad used heat generated by the dye when exposed to light to destroy the encapsulation and release the extract.

Through *in vitro* studies, the team led by Aravind Kumar Rengan from the Department of Biomedical Engineering at IIT Hyderabad found that the extract generated excess amount of reac-

tive oxygen species, which caused cell death through autophagy (body's way of removing damaged cells).

Collaborative effort

Researchers from the University of Hyderabad, IIT Bombay and Bose Institute, Kolkata, were part of the study and the results were published in the journal *Nanoscale*.

The extract showed selectivity in killing only cancer cells; the extract released inside normal cells caused insignificant cell death. The reason: the extract did not increase the amount of reactive oxygen species generated inside normal cells thus not causing them through autophagy.

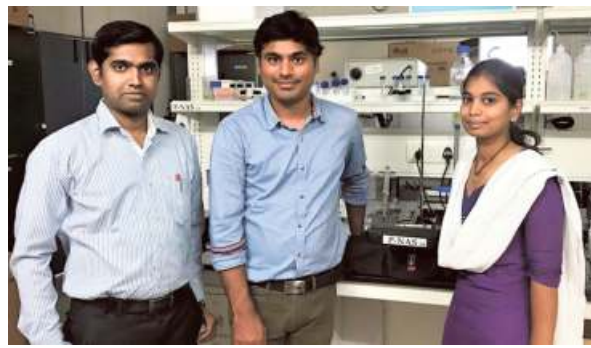
"In our study, heat is used mainly to destabilise the lipid nanoparticle encapsulation and release the extract,"

says Prof. Rengan. "We optimised the amount of dye used and the duration of illumination so that the thermal effect is mainly for triggering the release of the extract."

Potent mechanism

The lethal effect of the extract to kill the cancer cells when exposed to thermal energy was already demonstrated by the team a couple of year ago. But the mechanism through which the extract killed the cancer cells was not known then. "Based on studies using breast cancer cell lines we found that the extract increased the generation of reactive oxygen species, which enhanced autophagy-mediated death of cancer cells," he says.

When photothermal therapy alone was used, nearly 50% cancer cells died in



Targeted killing: The extract showed selectivity in killing only cancer cells, says Aravind Kumar Rengan (left).

about 24 hours. But 45% cancer cells grew back in about a day. "But there was no significant growth (about 7.5% of cancer cells even 48 hours when photothermal therapy was used along with the extract. The extract was able to restrict cancer cell growth," says Tejaswini Appidi from IIT Hyderabad and one of the first authors of the paper.

Autophagy-mediated cell death was confirmed by using a particular protein that serves as an autophagy marker. "When cancer cells were treated with the extract, the amount of protein marker generated showed an increase. The protein marker produced varied depending on the amount of extract used," says Deepak Bharad-

waj Pemmaraju from IIT Hyderabad and the other first author of the paper.

Reactive oxygen

Since the extract increased the amount of both reactive oxygen species and autophagy, the researchers set out to explore the link between the two. They used a known chemical that inhibits the generation of reactive oxygen species and then treated the cancer cells with the extract. "Cells where the ROS generation is inhibited showed negligible cell death due to reduced autophagy" says Appidi. "This helped confirm the role of reactive oxygen species in causing cell death."

Similarly, the researchers used an inhibitor to prevent autophagy and treated the cells with the extract. "We saw significant reduction in

cell death in the presence of the extract when autophagy was inhibited. This helped confirm the role of autophagy in causing death of cancer cells," says Pemmaraju. "These two experiments helped confirm that the cell deaths that occurred could be due to ROS-mediated autophagy."

The efficacy of the nanoparticles containing the plant extract and dye was tested in mouse model with breast cancer. The tumour volume reduced significantly when treated with the extract along with photothermal therapy compared with controls and cells treated with the extract alone. "But the nanoparticles had no adverse effect on the body weight of mice, indicating the biocompatibility of the nanoparticles," says Pemmaraju.

Ramanujan's legacy used in signal processing, black hole physics

Due to the remarkable originality and power of Ramanujan's genius, the ideas he created a century ago are now finding applications in diverse contexts

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

There is no question about the fact that mathematical genius Srinivasa Ramanujan has left behind a rich legacy of problems in pure mathematics. What is surprising is that his mathematics, done over a hundred years ago, finds applications today in areas other than pure mathematics, which were not even established during his time (22 December 1887 - 26 April 1920). Two among these are signal processing and black hole physics.

Signal processing

Examples of signals that are processed digitally include obvious ones like speech and music to more research-oriented ones such as DNA and protein sequences. These all have certain patterns that repeat over and over again and are called periodic patterns. In reality, complex repeating patterns may need to be identified as they bear significance to health conditions. So in sig-

nal processing, one thing we are interested in is extracting and identifying such periodic information.

The mathematical operation of identifying and separating the periodic portion is much like using a sieve to separate particles of different sizes. Some of the best known methods to extract periodic components in signals involve Fourier analysis. Using Ramanujan Sums is much less known.

"A Ramanujan Sum is a sequence like $c(1)$, $c(2)$, $c(3)$... This sequence repeats periodically... It was thought by a number of authors before me to be useful in identifying periodic components in signals, much the same as sines and cosines are used in Fourier analysis," says P.P. Vaidyanathan who has developed these ideas over the last decade. He is the Kiyo and Eiko Tomiyasu Professor of Electrical Engineering at the California Institute of Technology, U.S.

Prof. Vaidyanathan came across this work in an inter-



Still relevant: Srinivasa Ramanujan's mathematics now finds applications in areas not known during his lifetime. • M. SRINATH

esting process that illustrates the role of friendly connections in the development of science. Several years ago, mathematicians H. Gopalakrishna Gadiyar and R. Padma, from VIT, Vellore, were studying the twin prime problem when they observed that some arithmetical function which captures the properties of the primes should have a Ramanujan-Fourier Series.

They sent their paper to Bhaskar Ramamurthi, Director of IIT Madras, who in

turn forwarded the paper to Prof. Vaidyanathan, a friend from his graduate days. Intrigued by the Ramanujan Sum mentioned in the paper, Prof. Vaidyanathan delved deep into it and developed the concept of "Ramanujan subspaces".

These ideas were further developed by his doctoral student Srikanth Tenneti who showed that using these gave a method that worked better than Fourier analysis when the region of periodicity is short. "A number of ex-

tensions using two- and high-dimensional generalisations for images and video, and extensions for non-integer (non-whole number) periods," are on the cards according to Prof. Vaidyanathan.

Partitions of a number

Ramanujan was famously interested in the number of ways one can partition an integer (a whole number). For instance 3 can be written as 1+1+1 or 2+1. As the number to be partitioned gets larger and larger, the number of ways to partition it becomes difficult to compute. The seemingly simple mathematical calculation is related to a very sophisticated method to

reveal the properties of black holes, as has been established by physicist Atish Dabholkar, who is now Director, International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy.

Ramanujan related this counting problem to some special functions called "modular forms". A modular form is symmetric, in the sense that it does not change, under a set of mathematical operations called "modular symmetry". "A geometric analogy for such a function would be a circle which does not change its shape under the 'circular symmetry' of rotations," explains Prof. Dabholkar. "Using this symmetry, Ramanujan and G.H. Hardy found a beautiful formula to compute the number of partitions of any integer."

Nearly modular

In his famous letter to Hardy in 1919, Ramanujan introduced the "mock theta functions" and observed that they were "almost modular". "A geometric analogy would

be a 'mock circle' that is nearly circular but with a small blip," explains Prof. Dabholkar. "It is not easy to explain precisely what a 'blip' is, similarly, 'almost modular' remained a mystery for close to a century," he adds.

Following the work of mathematician S. P. Zwegers in 2002, in which he introduced "mock modular forms," giving a precise definition of what "almost modular" means, Prof Dabholkar's paper with Sameer Murthy and Don Zagier made the connection between mock modular forms and Black Hole physics.

Black Hole entropy

A separate concept in physics, entropy, explains why heat flows from a hot body to a cold body and not the other way around. The results of Ramanujan and Hardy on partitions and his subsequent work on what are called mock theta functions have come to play an important role in understanding

the very quantum structure of spacetime - in particular the quantum entropy of a type of Black Hole in string theory, according to Prof. Dabholkar.

Stephen Hawking showed that when quantum effects are taken into account, a Black Hole is not quite black, it is rather like a hot piece of metal that is emitting Hawking radiation slowly. Thus one can associate thermodynamic quantities like temperature and entropy to a Black Hole.

"Mock modular forms are beginning to appear more and more in many areas of physics... Our work has also had unexpected applications in new topics in mathematics such as 'Umbral Moonshine', which are quite unrelated to black holes," adds Prof. Dabholkar.

"It is a tribute to the remarkable originality and power of Ramanujan's genius that the ideas he created a century ago are now finding applications in such diverse contexts," he says.