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Mixed response to land rights plan in Assam

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President Ashraf Ghani wins a slim majority, on track for second term

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Kohli, Rahul and Rohit power India to ODI series win against WI

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NEARBY



Railway unveils new signalling system
NEW DELHI
The Railways will roll out its new signalling system from April 2020 onwards. It is expected to make train travel faster and safer, a senior official said. The implementation will begin with four sections of about 640 route kilometres with an estimated cost of around ₹1,810 crore.

NATION PAGE 9

Jel activist from J&K dies in U.P. jail

SRINAGAR
A Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel) activist from Kashmir's Handwara district died in a jail in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. A police officer said the family of Bhat, a resident of Handwara's Kulangam village, was informed about his death in a jail located in Allahabad. An official said Bhat was arrested prior to the August 5 move to revoke J&K's autonomy.

NATION PAGE 9

EDUCATIONPLUS PAGES 18 & 19

Pan-India NRC never on the table, says PM

Modi contradicts Amit Shah's statement in LS, accuses Congress and 'urban Naxals' of spreading lies

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

In a twist to the raging controversy over the National Register of Citizens, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared on Sunday that there had been no discussion, no talk on an NRC for India since his government had taken power in 2014.

Mr. Modi's comments fly in the face of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement in the Lok Sabha on December 9: "We are very clear that NRC will happen in this country."

Mr. Shah also said in the House, "*Magar maan ke chaliye ki NRC aane wala hai*" [but accept that there will be an NRC].

'In line with SC order'

Addressing a rally at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan to kick off the BJP's campaign for the Delhi Assembly election, Mr. Modi, however, said the NRC was conducted only in Assam in line with the Supreme Court's order.

He attacked the Congress and "urban Naxals" for spreading "lies and rumours" about the NRC, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and detention centres for Muslims, and followed it up with an appeal to the youth to both read and read up on the NRC and the CAA.

"The NRC - what lies are being spread about it... this [the NRC] was made during



In campaign mode: PM Modi, along with BJP leaders Harsh Vardhan, Manoj Tiwari and Vijay Goel, at a rally in New Delhi on Sunday.

the Congress era. We were asleep then? We didn't make it; it didn't come to Parliament, nor did it come to the [Union] Cabinet. Nor have its rules and regulations been formulated. A bogey is being created," he said, towards the middle of his one hour-and-forty-minute address.

'Childish criticism'

Terming statements by the Congress and its allies "childish", the Prime Minister argued how a government which had succeeded in conferring land and ownership rights on the urban poor "without considering" either the religion or caste of the beneficiaries could make

another law in the same session to expel them.

"These are childish statements. The Congress, parties like it and their allies... you're continuing to peddle lies? After the formation of my government, from 2014 till this day, I want to tell the 130 crore citizens of the country, there has been no discussion on the word NRC. There hasn't even been any talk [about it]. Only, after the Supreme Court said so, it [the NRC] had to be done for Assam. What are you talking about? Lies are being spread," Mr. Modi said further.

The CAA, Mr. Modi said, was not for any Indian citizen, whether Hindu or Muslim.

"This has been said in Parliament... This law has no connection to the 130 crore citizens of this country... The Congress, its allies and some literate naxals living in urban areas - Urban Naxals - are spreading the rumour that all Muslims will be sent to detention centres. I am amazed that this rumour is leading even well-educated people to ask what detention centres are," he said.

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UNDOING HARMS EDITORIAL

Food inflation spike transient: RBI Governor

RAGHUVIR SRINIVASAN
VIKAS DHOOT
MANOJIT SAHA
MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the recent spike in food inflation looks transient but added that the central bank needed to wait for a confirmation of this. The comments come after the RBI decided to hold interest rates during the monetary policy review earlier this month.

Stating that food inflation is monitored, he told *The Hindu*, "At this point in time, it [food inflation] also looks transient. And going forward, it should come down, but we need some time to watch..."

On the slowdown, he said there are structural issues which need to be addressed. "We have said in our annual report that it would appear the current slowdown is cyclical. However, there are structural factors also. Without getting into categorisation... the focus should be on steps [that] need to be taken by the fiscal and monetary authorities. There have to be some counter-cyclical steps."

INTERVIEW PAGE 13

With 2 more deaths, U.P. toll climbs to 18

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Two more persons, who were injured in firing during protests in Meerut on Friday against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, died on Sunday. Inspector-General of Police Alok Singh identified them as Aalim, of Meerut, and Asif, of Delhi.

The death toll in firing in Uttar Pradesh during the recent protests has mounted to 18. However, Director-General of Police O.P. Singh told *The Hindu* that the toll was 15.

Internet suspended

Internet services remained suspended in large parts of the State, with the police claiming that 108 persons had been arrested for "objectionable posts, rumours and messages" on social media.

The Lucknow administration has set up a panel of four officials to assess the damage to public and private property in the arson and vandalism that took place in the State capital on December 19.

This comes after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's statement that the government would "take revenge"



Police and RAF personnel on a patrol in Lucknow. PTI

on those involved in the incidents of violence, in which over two dozen vehicles were torched, and seize and auction their property for compensation.

The Rampur district administration said it was taking steps to attach the assets of 25 people, identified as those who had vandalised public property.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra visited Bijnor, where two protesters were killed in violence last week.

In Jaipur, close to two lakh people, led by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, took to the streets. Reports of protests and rallies have also come in from Tamil Nadu and Bengal.

OIC VOICES 'CONCERN' PAGE 12
DEATHS CAUSED BY ARMS OF PROTESTERS, SAYS DGP PAGE 13

Police turned arsonists in U.P.: Akhilesh

The Samajwadi Party chief says innocent persons lost their lives

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Holding the BJP government led by Yogi Adityanath responsible for the violence and loss of lives in Uttar Pradesh over protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday alleged that the police deliberately damaged public property, engaged in stone-throwing and set fire to many places, turning a peaceful protest violent.

At least 15 persons have died so far in the State.

Talking to *The Hindu* here, the SP chief, who has strongly spoken out against the CAA, said the State government and the officials vitiated the atmosphere, "as a result of which innocent persons lost their lives".

"The police deliberately damaged things and set



Akhilesh Yadav

property on fire. Not just in U.P., but in West Bengal and Delhi, news is coming in that policemen themselves pelted stones, damaged things and set fire at many places," Mr. Yadav said.

'Who will compensate?'

Referring to the State government's decision to seize the property of those allegedly involved in arson and vandalism at various places, Mr. Yadav asked:

"Who will compensate for the damage done by the police?"

He said Mr. Adityanath's "language" and his call for "revenge" was to blame for the escalation in violence and tense law and order situation.

Soon after the protests against the CAA turned violent in Lucknow on December 19, in which one protester died of gunshot wounds, Mr. Adityanath said "revenge" would be exacted from those involved in the arson by seizing their property and auctioning it.

He also accused the Congress, SP and Left outfits of providing patronage to the arsonists.

Mr. Yadav asked: "Is this the language one speaks in a democracy? *Thok do, Baddo lo. U.P. chhor do.* (Shoot them. Take revenge. Leave U.P.) Whose language is this?"

"The more he speaks improperly, the more the officials act in a wrong manner," Mr. Yadav said.

The SP chief said his party was trying to reach out to the families of the "innocent" persons arrested over the violence and provide them legal help.

SP not involved
He also dismissed the State government's allegations that his party members were involved in the violence. "No SP members were involved in violence anywhere. They have CCTV cameras everywhere and other things available. If they correctly look at CCTV footage of the people (during protests), they will find what their police were doing. You lathi-charge those who were protesting peacefully," Mr. Yadav said.

Trinamool team detained at U.P. airport

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

In high drama at the Lucknow airport on Sunday, a Trinamool delegation, led by former Union Minister Dinesh Trivedi was whisked away from the aircraft and detained for hours at an undisclosed location at the airport. The team had to return by an 8.30 p.m. flight without fulfilling its plan to visit the families of those killed in the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in U.P.

Mr. Trivedi drew parallels with the treatment of Indians during British rule. He said they were detained without any provocation. The delegation included Rajya Sabha members Nadiemul Haque and Abir Ranjan Biswas and Lok Sabha member Pratima Mondal.

DETAILS ON PAGE 13

Jharkhand election verdict today

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
RANCHI

Results of the Jharkhand Assembly election held in five phases are set to be declared on Monday with the ruling BJP finding itself in a spot of bother to retain power in the mineral-rich State.

In the backdrop of exit

polls giving marginal advantage to the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led Opposition alliance in a close contest, counting will take place across 24 districts. The postal ballots will be counted first and then the EVMs will be brought in. Paper slips generated by the VVPATS

will also be counted.

The overall voter turnout in this Assembly poll was estimated at 65.23% compared to 66.53% in 2014. The counting will decide victors among 1,216 candidates, including 127 women.

DETAILS ON PAGE 12

'Nobody knows where the bullet came from'

Muzaffarnagar mourns Noor who died of a bullet injury during the anti-CAA protest

ANUJ KUMAR
MUZAFFARNAGAR

The wailing of women is heard from a distance. As one steps closer the smell of cooking fills the air in front of Noor Mohammed's dilapidated house in what is ironically called Nayi Abadi in Muzaffarnagar's Khalapar area.

Guests have come to mourn Noor who died of a gunshot injury on December 20, when the protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act turned violent, leaving one dead and several injured. Noor was buried on Saturday evening at Daurala, a town between Muzaffarnagar and Meerut.

According to Noor's elder brother Umardaraz, the police thought if the body was brought to Muzaffarnagar, it would create a law and order



Brother in distress: Umardaraz, brother of Noor Mohammad, who died of a gunshot injury on December 20.

situation.

Nobody knows where the bullet came from.

Umardaraz, who was part of the protest, says gunshots were fired after the local MP and Union Minister Sanjeev Baliyan arrived with his supporters at Mahavir Chowk. "He pushed the police to take action against the peaceful protesters," Umar-

daraz, like many others around him, alleges. "We want to fight back but we know it is a lost battle. Only God is with us now," says Umardaraz. Mr. Baliyan could not be reached for comment.

The youngest of three brothers, Noor used to earn ₹400 to 500 a day by driving private vehicles. "He has left

behind a year-and-a-half old daughter, and a wife who is six months' pregnant. Who will fight his case?" asks Umardaraz who works as a cook at weddings. "We haven't lodged any complaint. There is pressure from the police not to talk about the case," he says.

Salman Sayeed, Congress leader, whose four cars were also allegedly burnt down by the mob, said the administration is "one-sided." "The aim is to ruin the Muslims financially," he says.

A local lawyer requesting anonymity says the local MP was trying to communalise what was essentially an anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protest. "It seems like completing the unfinished agenda of the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013."

According to official

sources, FIRs have been registered against 258 named and 6,000 unnamed persons. Around 57 shops have been sealed by the district administration.

SSP denies charges

Abhishek Yadav, SSP, Muzaffarnagar denies all the charges.

"These are all allegations. There is nothing arbitrary in our action. We are not working under anybody's pressure. We were up against a huge mob. We have photographic and video evidence against people who have been charged. Those who were detained on suspicion are being released. We are still investigating what led to Noor's death. If anybody comes up with a complaint, we will surely register an FIR," he says.

Modi accuses Opposition of 'selfishness, politics' over CAA

PM pulls up AAP govt. for water woes; advises youth to read up on citizenship law

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed India's unity in diversity at a rally here on Sunday to kick-start the BJP's campaign for the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections.

At the 'Dhanyawad Rally' in Ramlila Maidan, which is located at the intersection of Lutyens' Delhi and the Walled City — just a few kilometres from Daryaganj where a violent confrontation between anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protesters and the police had erupted on Friday — Mr. Modi attacked both the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress on Delhi-related issues without naming either.

He also spoke in favour of the police and said that the force had suffered the brunt of protest-related violence across the country. He, however, did not make any direct reference either to the student-led protests or any incident related to a particular university.

The PM also chose to make an appeal to the youth of the country to read the CAA and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

PM Modi accused both the Congress and AAP of going "to any extent for their selfishness and politics" in relation to CAA protests.

Unauthorised colonies

"This venue has borne witness to many significant developments in its history... here I am happy that I and the BJP are able to get an opportunity to better the lives of over 40 lakh people in Delhi. Words such as 'unauthorised, bulldozer, slums', which are often associated with these colonies, need to end," Mr. Modi said, terming the residents of 1,731 unauthorised colonies "VIPs".



A man wears a mask of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a BJP rally at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi on Sunday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

"Today, you have gotten complete ownership of your homes, which are the biggest assets you have. Those who attempted to put stumbling blocks in our way [for this project] should bear this in mind... Elections came and went but the promise remained the same," he said.

Those who wanted to "mislead" the residents of unauthorised colonies had "shamelessly" talked about fixing boundaries at properties in such settlements by 2021, he said, adding that this was the time when he decided "this farce cannot be allowed to continue".

With the help of technology, within a short period of time, the boundaries of over 1,700 colonies were delineated and the maps of more than 1,200 of these have been put up on the web, the Prime Minister said.

"Letting problems linger on is not our nature; it is not our training nor is it our habit. The people whom you had turned to for help were helping their rich industrial friends construct 2,000 buildings in the posh parts of

your city... Previous governments gave the residents of rich colonies concessions but did nothing for your houses," he said.

Blocks in my way: PM

"They tried to create stumbling blocks in my way whenever I tried to seek a solution; they thought they would succeed but this is Modi. Their VIPs may be different but for me, you, the poor are the real VIPs," he said further.

Mr. Modi then blamed "highly placed" individuals in AAP of spreading "rumours" during the recent anti-CAA protests.

"You must have heard the statements that were made, the way people were instigated, the provocative things said. These people have conspired to push not only Delhi but many cities across the country into an atmosphere of chaos and fear. There have been attacks on school-buses, passenger buses, trains, people's vehicles have been burnt, government properties have been damaged... their politics tells

the truth," he said "I want to tell such people that if you want to pelt stones then pelt them at Modi, if you want to burn something, burn an effigy of Modi... do not harm any poor person's property. What will you get by beating a poor auto driver or a bus driver? What will you get by injuring the policemen on whom you are pelting stones?" he added.

Mr. Modi also demanded to know why the Delhi government had not implemented Centre-sponsored schemes. He also attacked the AAP government for the quality of potable water in the Capital. "The people who were making excuses in the name of buses have paralysed public transport in Delhi... The Delhi government is not even concerned about the biggest problem — the problem of water. The government claims that clean water is available everywhere, but the truth is that today the maximum numbers of water purifiers i.e. water purifying machine is sold in the country," he said.

Thousands of armed officers keep tight vigil at Prime Minister's rally

People wearing black mufflers barred from entering venue

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Central Delhi was brought under ground-to-air security cover with thousands of armed personnel keeping a tight vigil for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally at Ramlila Maidan on Sunday.

Fearing untoward incidents or entry of protesters, all roads leading to Old Delhi were blocked. Security personnel did not allow anyone wearing a black muffler or scarf to enter the rally.

Even the entry passes issued to journalists and BJP workers with 'All-Area Access' were withdrawn at the last moment and new passes with restricted access were issued.

"We have strict instructions from our superiors to be vigilant and thoroughly check every visitor entering the ground. Policemen in plainclothes were deployed among the crowd to keep watch on miscreants," said a police officer. Minutes before



Minutes before PM's arrival at the ground, a helicopter making rounds over the venue. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

the Prime Minister's arrival at the rally ground, a helicopter made several rounds over the venue and adjoining areas. Policemen were deployed in all high-rises near the maidan and windows facing the venue.

An officer said due to ongoing protests across the city against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, security had to be further increased. On Friday, Delhi Gate, which is located near Ramlila Maidan had witnessed violence during a protest against the Act.

"All roads towards Daryaganj from Ramlila Maidan remained blocked till the time visitors left the rally venue. We took all precautions to prevent any confrontation of locals with visitors. The rally ended peacefully," said the officer.

Even the shops located on the road taken by Mr. Modi to reach Ramlila Maidan were shut by the police for security reasons. A senior officer said 20 companies of outside force were deployed across the city. Each company has 70-80 personnel.

"Twenty DCP-rank officials were handling security. As many as 1,000 personnel from the local police, anti-drone teams and NSG commandos were also deployed," the official said.

The buses ferrying visitors to the rally from across Delhi-NCR caused major traffic congestion on DDU Marg. Normal traffic resumed by 4 p.m., said a traffic police personnel.

'People were expecting registry to start today'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at Ramlila Maidan on Sunday, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the BJP has cheated 40 lakh people living in unauthorised colonies as they were hoping to get registry today "but nothing happened".

"The rally was to mark the passing of the Bill to ensure the regularisation of unauthorised colonies. For the past several weeks, the BJP had been talking about giving permanent registry to at least 100 residents of such colonies at Sunday's rally, but not a single person was given a permanent registry," Mr. Sisodia said.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted: "What happened to the registry? People living in unauthorised colonies have been cheated again... they expected the registry to start today."

"Earlier, the Congress used to make false promises, now the BJP is doing the same. But don't worry. We got the development works done in unauthorised colonies, now we will also get the registry done," he added.

Talking about Mr. Modi's comments on the quality of water in the city, Mr. Sisodia said: "We are happy that the PM is concerned about the people of Delhi. He said before the formation of the AAP government in Delhi, only 53% of the colonies used to get water through pipelines, but today [after five years], 93% of the colonies have piped water connections, and clean drinking water has reached across the city."

He pointed out that the PM did not comment on Delhi's 24-hour power availability or its education and health systems.

'People protesting Act misled'

Muslim residents need not worry, say those present at rally

SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

Not everyone at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally at Ramlila Maidan on Sunday knew what the amended Citizenship Act entailed but everyone *The Hindu* spoke to believed that people participating in the ongoing protests against the law had been misled and falsely instigated.

"It is all a conspiracy," said Prem Priyapatri, who hails from Mathura. "The protests are being orchestrated by jihadists and will be resolved quickly. And if they don't, we are not afraid."

Chants of "shoot the traitors" were heard among

small groups at the rally along with versions of 'Azadi' sloganeering, which came into the spotlight at the Jawaharlal Nehru University protests in 2016. Sixty-four-year-old Lal Sahib Mishra dismissed concerns of a nationwide NRC, being opposed by the protesters, stating that the proposal had come to Parliament yet. "It will not matter if you do not have a birth certificate. My details in the village register will be enough. Those who are citizens are already in the NRC," he believed.

BJP supporters at the rally said Muslim residents of the country had nothing to worry about. "All those who are

citizens of the country, who have been here from before, they have no reason to fear. This Act is not even for Muslims living here," claimed Ramesh Chand, a resident of Janakpuri. Others stressed that the protests against the Act should not have turned violent. "Whatever your concern is, place it before your local MP, let the case be heard. What is the sense in rioting?" said Nehal Kumar, a resident of Rohini.

The Act itself received widespread support among the attendees. "Where else will Hindus go if not come back to their country?" said Mr. Mishra, echoing the view of several others.

When push comes to shove

Promise of granting ownership rights to residents of unauthorised colonies and rehabilitation of slum clusters are on the BJP's bucket list before Assembly polls. But what transpires need to be looked into

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

Housing, mainly for the urban poor, has emerged as a major plank in the Capital with Assembly elections round the corner. Beginning with the promise of granting ownership rights to lakhs of residents of 1,731 unauthorised colonies in November and later connected to the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre's project related to the in situ rehabilitation of slum clusters in Delhi, both projects are a part of a large push towards the government's "housing for all" goal.

According to the BJP insiders, both schemes are symbolic of the party's localised poll slogan 'Ek Vote, Teen Sarkar' (One Vote, Three Governments) for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls during which it will seek to garner the electorate's support in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ability for governance to return to power in the Capital after a gap of close to three decades.

At public meetings, the party has already begun propagating the benefits of welfare schemes that the citizens are likely to get — in a comparatively shorter period of time — if the same party is in power at the Centre, the State and municipal levels of governance and in-charge of administration.

Housing and Urban Affairs Minister of State (independent charge) Hardeep Singh Puri has said the Centre took up the project of delineating boundaries of the 1,731 colonies after the Delhi government delayed the work for 11 years. Mr. Puri has said in several public appearances and in media interviews, including to *The Hindu*, that the Delhi government had asked for two more years to complete the process.

Speaking to reporters earlier this month, Mr. Puri said the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) is expected to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "vision" of providing housing to all

TRACKING THE OUTCOME

Unauthorised colonies	In situ rehabilitation	Survey for another
Number of colonies 1,731	Number of clusters 32	Survey for another 160 clusters is under way
Projected number of people to get ownership rights 50 lakh	Number of projects 18	
Total number of registrations (till Dec. 20) Over 18,000		



SOURCE: DDA

under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) by 2020 — well in advance of its initial deadline of the year 2022.

Process begins

While the application portal for grant of ownership rights was launched on December 16, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the designated nodal agency for the project in Delhi, has received over 18,000 registrations as of Friday.

Senior DDA officials said that after registration on the portal, the applicants are required to obtain their respective geo-coordinates. "Once applicants log into the system after filling up the basic details, they are required to provide the respective geo-coordinates. Agencies engaged by the DDA for the purpose of GIS mapping can be contacted by stakeholders. Once the GIS mapping is done, the ID will be sent to the applicant, who can then continue with the rest of the procedure," a senior

DDA official explained.

DDA Vice-Chairman Tarun Kapoor said: "We are ready with everything and now it is up to the people to come forth and register. The main challenge is to get the system in place which is now running. Completing the entire application form can be time consuming as people have to upload relevant documents apart from the coordinate maps."

"Once we start receiving complete applications, we will process the same immediately. We are hopeful that the process of granting ownership rights will begin very soon," Mr. Kapoor added.

The urban body has also completed delineation of boundaries in all 1,731 unauthorised colonies and maps for around 1,300 are available in the public domain. Residents of unauthorised colonies who register for ownership rights are likely to be granted rights within 180 days pending relevant verification processes by the land ownership agency.

A total of 1,797 colonies had been identified in 2008, but the current grant of rights excludes 66 colonies deemed "affluent" at that time plus three added later (Sainik Farms, Anant Ram Dairy and Mahendru Enclave). The Delhi government had demanded these affluent colonies be included in the process now. Mr. Puri has said these colonies would be taken up later, as the rates to be charged for them would be different.

In order to facilitate the process, a Bill — the National Capital Territory of Delhi (Recognition of Property Rights of Residents in Unauthorised Colonies) Act, 2019 — was passed in the recently-concluded session of Parliament allowing applicants to use general power of attorney, will, agreement to sale, payment and possession documents to register their properties.

In situ rehabilitation

The DDA has also undertaken in situ rehabilitation projects in JJ clusters across the city. Under the first two phases, officials said, 32 clusters were considered for a total of 18 projects, which includes clusters in Haiderpur, Kalkaji, Kohat Enclave, Moti Bagh, Dilshad Garden, Vasant Vihar and Kirti Nagar.

DDA Housing Commissioner Rajiv Gandhi said: "Tenders for at least five of the 18 projects will be invited in December itself so that work can start. A model similar to that of the Kathputli colony will be followed where residents will be rehabilitated temporarily till the completion of development work." Mr. Gandhi also added that survey of another 160 clusters is currently under way.

"A PPP model will be followed where 60% of the land has to be kept for the in situ rehabilitation while the remaining 40% will be the remunerative component, which means that the developer can utilise the area as per the land use norms," explained Mr. Gandhi. (With inputs from Damini Nath)

PM lead a 'betrayal rally', says Congress

BJP, AAP governments are anti-people: Subhash Chopra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra called Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally at Ramlila Maidan on Sunday a "betrayal rally" as thousands gathered at the venue were told only lies.

"The BJP was supposed to give ownership rights to those living in unauthorised colonies but it has cheated over 40 lakh people as it did not give registry to any of them," he said.

Addressing a rally at north-west Delhi's Narela

and south Delhi's Jaitpur against the BJP and the AAP governments' "anti-people and destructive policies", Mr. Chopra said both the governments have made only hollow promises people.

'Shops will face sealing'

"The BJP government's notification regarding regularisation has created fear among the people. If Section 7A in the notification is enforced, over 700 unauthorised colonies will go out of the purview of regularisation and small shops and

commercial establishments will face sealing," he said.

The Congress said a majority of those living in unauthorised colonies hail from Poorvanchal and that the BJP and the AAP governments were conspiring to uproot these people through a "calculated deception".

The Centre has given a blanket licence to the DDA to take lakhs of rupees from those living in these colonies, the party said, adding that people should not believe the government until they get registry papers.



SHOPPING FRENZY

Markets across the city are packed with consumers braving the winter in the hunt for bargains



1	2	3	1,2 and 3: Shoppers in Sarojini Nagar Market
4	5	6 and 7	4 and 5: Sadar Bazar 6 and 7: Lajpat Rai Market
6	7	8	8: Bhagirath Palace Market in Chandni Chowk

PHOTOS BY: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Timings
DELHI
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
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 25
RISE 07:11 SET 17:31
RISE 06:07 SET 16:50

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 15 07
Safdarjang 15 07
Palam 14 09

Delhi Palam Today
16°C Moderate fog will prevail. Dense fog will prevail in pockets. A partly cloudy sky lies ahead.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
17°C Moderate fog will prevail during chilly morning. Day will be cool with a partly cloudy sky.

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IN BRIEF

Man wanted in 15 cases of ATM theft arrested

NEW DELHI
A 27-year-old man, who was wanted in 15 cases of looting ATMs in different States, has been arrested from south Delhi, the police said on Sunday. Wakil, a resident of Palwal district in Haryana, was absconding for the past one-and-a-half years, they said, adding that he was carrying a reward of ₹50,000 — ₹25,000 from U.P. Police and ₹25,000 from M.P. Police — on his arrest. He was held on Friday following a tip-off, said DCP (Special Cell).

THE HINDU
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When a celebration could easily turn into a tragedy

Delhi Fire Service officials say they do not know how many banquet halls are operating illegally in the city and whether the establishments have taken adequate fire safety measures

SAURABH TRIVEDI
SIDHARTH RAVI
NEW DELHI

Banquet halls in Delhi are openly flouting fire safety norms and seem to have not learnt any lessons from the massive fire in Anaj Mandi that claimed 44 lives earlier this month.

An official with the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) said they do not have an estimate of the number of unauthorised banquet halls operating in the city as it is not their job to check. We only issue No Objection Certificates (NOC) in cases that are referred to us by the civic agencies, which have the power to issue licences, said the officer, adding that banquet halls operating without an NOC are only detected when a fire incident happens.

"All assembly buildings, which include banquet halls, require an NOC from the fire department. There is a list of buildings that are covered under Rule 27 of DFS, 2010," said Atul Garg, DFS director.

Long checklist

The checklist for fire safety clearance for banquet halls is a long one. All fire safety equipment must be in working condition. Any deviation in construction has to be verified by the sanctioned agency. An automatic sprinkler system and a smoke management system has to be installed. A public address system is mandatory in the lifts, which should also have a speaker/telephone. There are many more rules that have to be followed before an NOC is issued.

"After going through the long checklist, the NOC is issued for a pe-



Officials say many banquet halls are flouting licence norms by concealing their operations.

CITY MATTERS

riod of three years. We always respond to the concerns raised by the civic agencies in terms of violation of fire safety norms in any building," said another fire official.

Banquet halls, which are used for marriages and other functions, are flouting licence norms by concealing their operations. "We have formed a team to randomly check fire safety clearances of various hotels and banquet halls. The report will be compiled soon," he added.

Under the Master Plan of Delhi 2021, banquet halls are permissible

in "industrial and commercial areas, including notified commercial streets under mixed-use regulations." A municipal official said that such facilities require an NOC from the fire department only if they have an area of over 50 square metres.

The halls also have to ensure space for adequate parking. While some have arranged for valet facilities, others are using civic parking facilities and paying a fee to the municipality. The MPD-2021 calls for parking space for three cars for every 100 square metres.

Such facilities also have to follow various other building norms and ensure proper waste disposal.

Staff of banquet halls in Mayapuri said that the establishments have taken various fire safety precautions.

At Grand Dreams Nouveau, the employees pointed to the separate entry and fire exit gates in every hall, and the availability of fire fighting equipment such as extinguishers. At the Clay Grand, which stands between factories, the staff said that a water sprinkler system had been installed throughout the building, and an NOC had been received. Most of them argued that tent houses were at greater risk of fire due to excessive use of synthetic material.

While some had arranged valet facilities to ensure adequate parking, others used the MCD's parking facilities to meet their requirements and paid the civic body a fee for the same. Despite this, parking in the area becomes difficult with several banquet halls on the road, and not everyone sticking to the prescribed norms.

Lakhs join Congress rally in Jaipur

Markets remain closed, public transport grounded, mobile Internet suspended

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

A large number of people, led by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, took out a massive march on the roads of Jaipur on Sunday with the demand for withdrawal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and pledged to oppose the National Register of Citizens. Members of the Congress and several political parties as well as activists and common people of all communities participated in the march, called the 'Samvidhan Bachao Rally'.

Markets remained closed, mobile Internet services were suspended, public transport was grounded, traffic was diverted to alternative routes and elaborate security arrangements were made in the capital city. The participants, including women, carried the national Tricolour and banners and placards with slogans against CAA and NRC.

Mr. Gehlot affirmed that the amended citizenship law was not only against the Constitution, but it also formed part of an agenda of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to make India a 'Hindu Rashtra'. "The Rajasthan government will neither implement the CAA, nor will it comply with the Centre's directive to initiate the process for NRC," he said.

Besides Mr. Gehlot, leaders of the CPI, the CPI(M), the



Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot leads a march against CAA in Jaipur on Sunday. • ROHIT JAIN PARAS

Aam Aadmi Party, the Samajwadi Party, the Janata Dal (Secular) and the Rashtriya Lok Dal also addressed the rally. The speakers included Loktantrik Janata Dal leader Sharad Yadav, RLD leader Jayant Chaudhary and Jamaat-e-Islami Hind State president Mohammed Nazimuddin.

According to police sources, nearly 3 lakh people attended the march, which covered a distance of about three kilometres between the iconic Albert Hall and Mahatma Gandhi Circle.

'Undeclared emergency' While demanding an immediate repeal of CAA, Mr. Gehlot said the violence during the agitation against the amended legislation had taken place only in the BJP-

ruled States. "Lakhs of people gathered at places like Mumbai, Pune and Hyderabad, but nothing untoward happened there. What does it indicate?" he asked.

Separately, Mr. Gehlot took strong exception to Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking his name at a rally at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan while claiming that he had written to the Home Ministry during his previous term for giving citizenship to Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan. "What was wrong in writing a letter? Why is Mr. Modi misleading the country in my name?" Mr. Gehlot asked.

While Deputy CM Sachin Pilot said the BJP-led government at the Centre was not interested in addressing the real challenges of economic slump, Mr. Sharad Yadav said

the nation was passing through a difficult phase and there was an undeclared emergency. Social activist Aruna Roy said the people's struggle would not stop until the law was withdrawn.

'CM created fear'

Later, Rajasthan BJP president Satish Poonia alleged in a statement that Mr. Gehlot had created fear among the people of the State by leading a crowd belonging to "a particular community". "Mr. Gehlot wants to create anarchy in Rajasthan by showing an ugly side of democracy. As a responsible CM, he should have explained to the people that the CAA gives citizenship to the persecuted people rather than taking away anyone's nationality," he said.

Curfew relaxed for seven hours in Jabalpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JABALPUR (M.P.)

Curfew imposed in some parts of Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh after violence during Friday protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was on Sunday relaxed for seven hours from 1 p.m., police said.

Curfew was imposed on Friday at four police station areas in Jabalpur after protesters pelted stones, clashed with the police and indulged in destruction of property, an officer said. These areas are part of Gohalpur, Hanumantal, Kotwali and Adhartal police stations.

'Internet restored'

"Curfew was relaxed for seven hours on Sunday from 1p.m. in four police station limits. Mobile internet service has also resumed in the city. Curfew was relaxed so that people could buy essential items," said Additional Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar Tripathi.

Curfew was relaxed for one-and-half hours on Saturday.

Meanwhile, BJP vice-president Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday told Mr. Kamal Nath to resign as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister before leading a CAA protest march scheduled in Bhopal on December 25.

Congress starts padayatra in Assam against CAA

Assam will never accept it, says party's State chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

Protest against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act continued on Sunday with the Opposition, the Congress, kicking off an 800-km-long padayatra from Sadiya to Dhubri.

Sadiya is a far east town of Assam and Dhubri is the headquarters of the western-most district, which is located along the India-Bangladesh border.

'Anti-Assam Act'

"We have been stating it very clearly that Assam will never accept this Act. It is anti-Assam and anti-Northeast. The Congress is with the people of Assam," Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Ripun Bora said. Addressing a huge crowd, the Rajya Sabha MP said that the agitation will be further intensified till the Act is repealed.

Meanwhile, a public funeral service in memory of teenager Sam Stafford, who was killed in the firing by the security forces, was organised in Guwahati on Sunday.

Hundreds of people, including All Assam Students' Union leaders, celebrities, writers, artistes and general



Protesters holding placards and raising slogans against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Sonitpur on Sunday. • PTI

public, attended the service and condemned the "government's brutality".

"The Chief Minister and his forces are engaged in killing innocent children. Sam is the first martyr of the anti-CAA movement. We will not forget him and we will not sit down until the Act is repealed," AASU president Dipanka Kumar Nath said.

Protests in tea gardens

Protest marches were organised at several tea gardens in upper Assam, while a huge gathering took place in Rowta of Udalguri dis-

trict. People and artistes came out in large numbers in Guwahati and other places during the day.

Assam has witnessed one of the worst violent protests by the public in its history with three railway stations, a post office, a bank, a bus terminus, shops, dozens of vehicles and many other public properties being set ablaze or totally damaged.

Already five persons, including four in firing by security forces, have lost their lives since December 11 when the Rajya Sabha passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

Shillong curfew lifted, Internet restored

People flock to buy essential items

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHILLONG

Curfew was on Sunday morning lifted in Shillong, as no report of violence or arson over the amended Citizenship Act was reported from any part of the city, officials said.

Streets decked-up

People were seen flocking to local shops to buy essential items and Christmas goodies and gifts. Streets in the State capital were being decked up in Christmas lights and festoons since morning.

Curfew was imposed in areas under Sadar and Lumdiengjri police stations in the city since December 12 as anti-citizenship law protests turned violent, leaving several injured and properties vandalised.

Over the past few days, prohibitory orders were relaxed during the day, but night curfew was still in force to avoid break-down of law and order.

East Khasi Hills District Magistrate M.W. Nongbri said the curfew was completely lifted from 4 a.m. on Sunday. Mobile Internet and messaging services, which were withdrawn as a precautionary measure to prevent circulation of fake news, were also restored on Friday night.

Inner Line Permit

The Meghalaya Assembly had earlier this week unanimously adopted a resolution to urge the Centre to extend the Inner Line Permit regime to the State to keep it out of the purview of the contentious law.

Four held for beating youth to death

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

A group of people allegedly beat a tribal youth to death at a village meeting accusing him of indulging in sorcery. The incident took place at Intaguda village under the Kalimela police station limits in Odisha's Malkangiri district on Saturday night.

According to Kalimela police sources, four persons were arrested in this connection on Sunday. Investigation is on to find out other persons involved in the case. The deceased was identified as Irma Kartami (25). The accused alleged that the deceased had used black magic to cause the death of Jaga Madhi (23) at Intaguda on Saturday.

The villagers attacked Kartami with lathis and he died on the spot.

CAA, NRC not against Muslim community: Athawale

RPI(A) leader says protests are being triggered by a great deal of misapprehension

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

The countrywide protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) are unfortunate, Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale said on Sunday and urged the minority community not to be perturbed as the CAA and the NRC are not directed against them.

"These protests [against the CAA and the NRC] are being triggered by a great deal of misapprehension...the vandalism and loss of life in these protests is truly unfortunate. I urge the Muslim community to remain calm and maintain peace as the CAA and the NRC are not against them at all," said Mr. Athawale, Republican Party of India (A) president, while backing Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mr. Athawale, whose party is an ally of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Centre and in the State, was speaking to reporters at VVIP Circuit House following a meeting of his party's executive committee and



Taking pot shots at the CM, Ramdas Athawale asked when the Cabinet expansion and portfolio allocation of the new government would take place. ■ FILE PHOTO

workers. His press conference was briefly interrupted by the sudden appearance of BJP leader and former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, who exchanged pleasantries with the RPI (A) chief.

Declining to answer questions, Mr. Fadnavis merely said he was in the city to attend some programmes and

had to immediately proceed to Kolhapur. "I reached the Circuit House after attending to my engagements in the city and learned that Mr. Athawale, too, was holding a press conference. Hence, I dropped by to meet him before leaving for Kolhapur," Mr. Fadnavis said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Athawale hit out at the Maharashtra

Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government led by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, saying the alliance partners — the Shiv Sena, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress — make strange bedfellows and that ideological schisms are already apparent in this coalition.

"The Sena and the Congress are already at odds over the issue of according respect to Vinayak Damodar 'Veer' Savarkar...the two parties ought to part ways right now instead of remaining partners in an uneasy coalition," he said.

Taking pot shots at Mr. Thackeray, Mr. Athawale asked when the impending cabinet expansion and much-anticipated portfolio allocation of the new government would take place.

"While Mr. Thackeray has announced an ambitious farm loan waiver scheme, it remains to be seen from where he will get the funds to implement it," said the RPI (A) chief.

Commenting on the expansion of his party, Mr. Athawale said his objective in the coming year will be to increase his party's membership to one crore.

Gadkari hits out at Cong. for vote bank politics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Sunday said the Citizenship Amendment Act is not against the Muslim community in India. He said by bringing the new law, the NDA government is not doing any injustice to Muslims in the country. Mr. Gadkari also accused the Congress of spreading misinformation over the issue for vote bank politics.

He was addressing a rally in support of the NDA government's decision to enact a new law, which seeks to provide citizenship to persecuted minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The rally was organised by a local body and supported by the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS).

"The decision taken by the government to give justice to religious minorities from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh is not against the Muslim community of India. We are not talking about sending Muslims out of the country," Mr. Gadkari said.

He said the government's only concern is foreign intruders living in the country. The minister said Muslims should understand that the Congress cannot help in the development of the community. "What has it (Congress) done for you? I request the Muslim community of the country to understand the conspiracy. Your development can be



Allaying concerns: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari addresses a rally in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act in Nagpur on Sunday. ■ PTI

done only by the BJP and not the Congress."

"You used to ride cycle-rickshaw, we gave you e-rickshaw and helped you stand. The Congress considers you as a vote machine so that it can rule afterwards. Don't fall for this misinformation," he said.

"We all are one, our legacy is one. You go to masjid, we don't oppose it. We all will live together and work according to the Constitution framed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. This is what we have been saying, not anything new," the minister said.

Mr. Gadkari said before 1947, there was an "Akhand Bharat". After partition, Muhammad Ali Jinnah declared Pakistan as a Muslim nation. "But, in our country, under

the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, it was accepted that our nation would not be a 'Hindu Rashtra', but a 'secular nation' for all communities." But, when this was decided, Mahatma Gandhi was asked that Pakistan is a Muslim country and there were 22% Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis and Christians there, and where would they go if they faced injustice and persecution, he said. "Gandhi replied that minorities in Pakistan and Afghanistan, whenever they will require support, India will help them."

It is written in the Constitution that when Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from Pakistan and Afghanistan go to India they would be referred as 'refu-

gees', the BJP leader said. "You will ask why Muslim community members are not called 'refugees'. Dr. Ambedkar has clarified that in the Constitution."

Pakistan and Bangladesh are Islamic nations and there are over 100 to 150 countries which have declared themselves as Islamic or Muslim nations, he pointed out.

Dr. Ambedkar said in the Constitution that Muslims of these countries, if they want to leave their country, they have 100 to 150 alternatives and they can get shelter in any Muslim country of the world, he said. "But, Hindus, Sikhs, Indian Buddhists, Christians, and Jains have no nation to go," the minister said, adding "our country accepts all".

Ex-CM blames some parties for spreading falsehood

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is not against any community or religion, and alleged that some political parties are spreading falsehood about the new law to create unrest in the country.

Addressing a pro-CAA rally organised in Nagpur by a local body Lokadhikar Manch, he said people are now coming out on streets in support of the amended citizenship law.

There have been anti-CAA protests across the country with several of them turning violent, leading to arson and damage to property. Under the new law, 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.



Dispelling the myth: BJP supporters taking out a rally organised by Lokadhikar Manch in support of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Nagpur on Sunday. ■ S. SUDARSHAN

"People are supporting the amended citizenship law in huge numbers. The Act is in the interest of the country and it is not against any com-

munity or religion," Mr. Fadnavis said.

"But some political parties are knowingly misleading people and trying to

create unrest in the country," he said. People have now come out on streets to show their support for the CAA, the BJP leader said.

'Cong. wrongly portraying BJP as communal'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Goa Deputy Chief Minister Chandrakant Kavlekar has accused the Congress of wrongly projecting the BJP as a communal party.

In an interview to PTI, Mr. Kavlekar said the BJP is committed towards development and takes along everyone. Mr. Kavlekar was among the 10 Congress MLAs who switched over to the BJP in July. He

was later inducted into the Pramod Sawant-led Cabinet and appointed Deputy Chief Minister.

"I spent 22 years of my political career in the Congress. Its leaders are always busy spreading wrong notion about the BJP that it is a communal party. They keep hammering this thought in the minds of their leaders," he alleged.

Mr. Kavlekar said when

he and his nine other colleagues, including eight from Christian faith, joined the BJP, they saw a different picture than what was portrayed by the Congress.

"We were welcomed instantly. The BJP is not communal, but a party that takes along everyone. It is a pro-development party," the former leader of opposition in Goa Assembly said. Mr. Kavlekar said some

leaders in the Goa Congress unit were busy fulfilling their "own interests" due to which the party was unable to form government in 2017, despite it then emerging as the single largest party in the State polls.

"Some senior leaders in the Congress, who have enjoyed their share of power, are unwilling to let others prosper," Mr. Kavlekar alleged.

Shinde to take stock of law and order situation in Gadchiroli

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

State Home Minister Eknath Shinde will be touring sensitive areas in Gadchiroli to take stock of the security situation in the Naxal-affected district. The government under Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has been reviewing several projects in Vidarbha.

During the winter session of the Assembly, the CM first started with a review of Amravati district in the backdrop of crop losses due to unseasonal rains. He reviewed various water management schemes and other projects. He directed officials to take measures to supply pure drinking water



Eknath Shinde

to Bhandara city as it suffered from water contamination, ordered that the Dhapewada irrigation project in Gondia district be completed soon, and announced a steel project in eastern Vidarbha and ₹253 crore for an irrigation project in Yavat-

mal among others.

At a review meeting of Gadchiroli district, the CM directed an iron ore mining project to be expedited. Assembly Speaker Nana Patole has too been reviewing projects in Vidarbha also because he is a former Member of Parliament from the region.

Even as the Assembly session is now over, Mr. Shinde will be touring Gadchiroli district to assess the law and order situation.

The naxal-affected district saw an IED blast earlier this year which killed 15 jawans. He will hold discussions with law enforcement officials especially in remote areas.

Sweet harvest



Ready for crushing: Farm labourers busy in harvesting sugarcane at Karad in Maharashtra on Saturday. ■ RAJU SANADI

Hunar Haat inaugurated by Koshyari, Naqvi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Sunday inaugurated a Hunar Haat at Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai.

The Haat, a platform made available by the Union Minority Affairs Ministry led by Mr. Naqvi to promote works of artists and craftsmen from minority communities, is being held at the MMRDA Ground in BKC.

It began on December 20 and will go on till December 31.

More than 180 stalls have been set up, where some 400 master artisans, including a substantial number of women, and craftsmen from across the country are participating, a statement issued by Mr. Naqvi's office said.

More plastic pollution on Maharashtra beaches than Karnataka, Goa: study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Beaches in Maharashtra are more polluted with micro plastics and macro plastics than those in Goa and Karnataka, according to a study conducted by a research institute. The study has blamed plastic industries located near the shore and increased tourism activities for the pollution.

"The highest abundance of macro and micro plastic contaminants is found on beaches in Maharashtra at the high tide line as compared to Karnataka and

Goa," said the study carried out by Goa-based National Institute of Oceanography (NIO).

"Such a phenomenon of finding macro and micro plastics in abundance on Maharashtra beaches suggests that the contaminants are land-based, like (coming from) near shore plastic industries, port areas, petroleum industries, and high tourism activities," it said.

The study, titled 'Assessment of macro and micro plastics along the west coast of India: abundance, distribution, polymer type and

toxicity', was published in Netherlands-based journal 'Chemosphere' last week.

The researchers conducted the assessment of macro and micro plastic contamination for two years on 10 beaches along the western coast of India and their toxic effects on marine organisms.

The plastic contaminants on these beaches were found in various colours like white, pale yellow, dark brown, green, blue and red, said the study, led by NIO scientists Mahua Saha and Dushmant Maharana.

Six fishermen rescued from flooded boat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PORBANDAR

Six fishermen stranded on a flooded boat in the Arabian Sea off Gujarat coast were rescued in the early hours of Sunday, the Indian Coast Guard said.

The Coast Guard operations centre received a distress call on Saturday evening following which its team, which was on a routine patrol on a ship in the waters,

rushed to provide assistance to the fishermen, a release issued by the Coast Guard said. The boat, named 'Vismita', with six fishermen on board, got flooded in the waters following which its engines stopped working. The fishermen were stranded about 24 nautical miles in the sea from Porbandar.

"The Coast Guard ship C-445, which was on a routine patrol, was immediately

diverted to render assistance to the distressed boat," the release said.

Technical personnel of the rescue team stopped flooding by plugging the crack in the boat hull and then carried out de-flooding. "The boat was then safely towed to the Porbandar harbour by another fishing vessel under escort of the Coast Guard ship around 3 a.m. on Sunday," the release said.

Three killed as wall collapses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUJARAT

Three people, including a father-son duo, were killed and two others injured after a compound wall fell on them during its demolition at Palitana town in Gujarat on Sunday.

Farooq Deraia and his son Toufiq, both contractors, died on the spot, while the third victim, a labourer, succumbed to inju-

ries at a hospital.

"The incident occurred at Taleti locality of Palitana town in Bhavnagar district when an old compound wall was being demolished. Eight labourers were engaged in the task of pulling down the wall, while the Deraia's were overseeing the work," a police official said.

"At least five people were trapped under the wall," he said.

A Hindu critique of Hindutva

We need to rescue religion from zealots and rediscover the spirit of religiosity



AVIJIT PATHAK

The question I ask myself as we witness the assertion of the ideology of Hindutva and its resultant fear among minorities is this: Is it possible to have yet another reading of my religion or the experience of religiosity and take part in a collective movement for creating a society filled with love, empathy and pluralism? This is both a sociopolitical and an ethico-existential question. At a time when the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 has caused fear and existential insecurity among the minorities, there is a danger of the movement against the discriminatory nature of the CAA degenerating into violent communal politics. Therefore, it is important to introspect and redefine one's politics, culture and religiosity for a collective struggle.

Transcending limiting identities

Yes, there is a Left-Ambekarite version of secularism, and many of us – university-educated/metropolitan intellectuals and civil society activists – are reasonably free from the burden of the conditioned mind that religious orthodoxy causes. Yet, a careful look at India's culture and society would indicate that religion is all-pervasive: it can be seen in beliefs, rituals as well as in the dangerous stereotypes we nurture about others. Hence, the mere act of de-bunking religion will not help. We need to rescue religion from zealots and rediscover the spirit of religiosity as, to use Rabindranath Tagore's language, our 'surplus'. It is in this context that as someone born in a Hindu family, I would like to critique Hindutva or, for that matter, any deterministic/one dimensional doctrine of religion. This critique emanates not from scientism or soulless secularism, but from deep religiosity, the urge to transcend limiting identities.

The kind of Hindutva we see today is against some of the finest aspects of my religiosity that I learned as a Hindu. While the discourse of Hindutva with its hypermasculine nationalism is essentially monolithic



"Even though it may appear impossible to imagine a world where Kabir and Rumi, Gandhi and Maulana Azad, and Tagore and Nizamuddin Auliya work with us, it is a task we ought to strive for." Gandhi and Azad in Bombay. ■ GETTY IMAGES

and centralising, I have learned about the beauty of the elasticity of human consciousness and merger of multiple faiths and paths from the likes of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. While the doctrine of militant Hindutva is recklessly engaged in an act of 'othering' and stigmatising Muslims, I have learned about love, empathy and listening from M.K. Gandhi's remarkably nuanced engagement with Hinduism. Likewise, while Hindutva intensifies aggression, Mira's bhajans teach me that love and religiosity are not separate. The character of 'Anandamayee' that Tagore created in his classic novel *Gora* makes me see the enchanting power of maternity, the current that absorbs everything. And hence, I begin to see the hollowness in the assertion of brute masculinity seen in instances of mob lynching by zealots, which ruthlessly denies the possibility of an evolutionary journey towards what Sri Aurobindo regarded as the 'divine consciousness'.

Jajnavalkya's conversation with Maitreyi in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad helps me conceive the depths of spirituality, the quest for the Eternal, and also helps me see the ugliness in a doctrine that reduces religion into mere identity politics, or a weapon for intensifying the narcissistic ego of the 'Hindu nation'. Engagement with the Bhagavad Gita acquires a different meaning. I see the ethos of *niskam karma* (or the spirit of work as an offering without selfish interests) in Gandhi's politico-

spiritual pilgrimage to Noakhali in 1946, not in the calculative Machiavellian urge to build a temple at Ayodhya at the demolished site of the Babri Masjid. Moreover, there is a culture of conversation and argumentation in the broad tradition of Hinduism. While Nachiketa dared to converse with Yama, the proponents of Lokayata did argue with the followers of Vedanta. In a way, it is possible to be a Hindu with the spirit of pluralism and dialogue in our consciousness. Paradoxically, it is possible to be a Hindu, yet be a non-Hindu. This is why the ideology of Hindutva is not in conformity with religiosity as people's inner quest for moving towards a world of love and togetherness.

We are passing through difficult times. First, as the CAA and the National Register of Citizens together indicate, the minority community has further been stigmatised. And in a society with a long history of the tension-ridden relationship between the two communities, the ghettoisation of space and mind has further erected a huge wall of separation. Hence, the danger is that the anger against the CAA might take a communal turn, and it is not impossible for the 'nationalist' media to project it as a conflict between 'patriotic' Hindus and 'problematic' Muslims. From Seelampur in Delhi to Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh, these 'Muslim sites' might be immediately projected as 'war zones'. And in a vicious cycle of humiliation and

provocation, the minorities could feel more and more lonely.

A culture of communion

Majoritarian Hindutva is not merely against Muslims; it is no less hostile to those Hindus who think and live differently – while some would be castigated as 'leftists', 'pseudo secularists' and 'urban Naxals', the rest would be regarded as 'effeminate idealists' or 'Gandhian fools'. Therefore, in such a situation, it is important to try to evolve a culture of communion between the two communities, and fight together for a better world. However, the discourse of communalism or a politics based on exclusivist religious identity (and even though majority communalism is immensely destructive, minority communalism is no answer to it) is essentially against this spirit of communion. Likewise, a soulless secularism which fails to deal with the religious/spiritual quest doesn't succeed much in touching people's hearts for inspiring them to create a new moral politics for collective redemption.

In troubled and directionless times, Gandhi could tap the therapeutic power of religiosity and move towards this communion. He could be a Hindu; yet, dialogic, experimental and elastic. In a way, as Nathuram Godse might have thought, he was also a non-Hindu. Likewise, I would imagine that a Muslim with true religiosity is equally eager to resist the attempt by the orthodox clergy or the fundamentalist elements to hijack the religious sphere. He/she ought to be inherently against the Talibanisation of consciousness. Because true religiosity is the art of using the 'form' in order to be formless. Imagine a world where Kabir and Rumi, Gandhi and Maulana Azad, and Tagore and Nizamuddin Auliya work with us, become our educators, and inspire us to heal the world through the power of love and understanding. Even though in the age of dystopia it may appear to be impossible, it is a challenging task we ought to strive for. This is precisely the most important *sadhana*, or the meaning of being a 'Hindu' – a seeker who seeks to break the iron cage of Hindutva or, for that matter, any other fundamentalist doctrine.

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FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Towards a non-toxic news environment

Readers are invited to give their views on the changes in the news industry over the last two decades



A.S. PANNEERSELVAM

As a prelude to this column, I would like readers to read the lead article by Suhrith Parthasarathy, "The virtual effacement of civil liberty" (December 21), as well as the first-person account in *The Hindu's* online edition by the paper's U.P. correspondent, Omar Rashid, of how he was picked up, threatened and released by the U.P. police. These articles reveal how the space for free expression, free dissemination of information and free thought in India has shrunk.

Most news organisations have moved to a mobile-first editorial policy to cater to readers who access news on hand-held devices. Hence, the disturbing data that 67% of the world's documented shutdowns took place in India last year amounts to a formal censorship, which is violative of Article 19 of the Constitution. And if journalists are going to be harassed and manhandled in the most populous State of the country because of their religious identity, then the situation we are living in now is certainly worse than what this country faced during the Emergency.

Failure to ensure protection of rights

As a news ombudsman, my concerns are not only about accuracy and fairness in journalism but also the overall environment. It is only in an enabling environment that independent news media can work fearlessly to help citizens make informed choices. Internal lapses in a news organisation are relatively easy to address. A visible mending process within responsible organisations creates a sense of accountability to produce news and opinions in an ethical manner. Publishing corrections and clarifications are an effective way to rectify mistakes.

However, the failure of the executive and the judiciary to ensure constitutionally guaranteed freedoms and rights is sending shivers down the spine of every reporter. Journalists find this new normal difficult to handle because they pay a price for simply doing their duty. Since the days of the Watergate investigation, journalists have been saying that journalism is not a crime. There are

numerous reports titled "Journalism is not a crime" published by different organisations such as UNESCO, Amnesty International, and Reporters without Borders. How I wish those in the executive, the judiciary and the legislature would read these reports!

Changes in a digital world

Readers are an integral part of the news media's struggle for its independence, autonomy and sustainability. Credible information remains not only the bedrock of a vibrant democracy but also helps it differentiate itself from a mobocracy that is fed by shrill rhetoric. News organisations need to come up with viable strategies to deal with the digital environment. One of the finest news design experts in the world, Mario Garcia, has spelled out what 2020 holds for the news industry. The crucial four points of his reading are: "It's a mobile-first world for the audience. It's an opportune time to become more aggressive about monetizing content. It's time to stop romanticizing the print product – give it its place, but not at the head of the parade. It's not too late to become serious about the impact of audio. Start that podcast now!"

It is evident that journalistic values, principles and best practices should guide the information landscape. We cannot permit trend-driven algorithms to shape the generation and the dissemination of information. Former publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, L. Gordon Crovitz, rightly says that even to fight disinformation and misinformation we need journalism, not secret algorithms. "Watching Silicon Valley exercise news judgment has been like watching Walter Cronkite try to write code in Python," he writes.

I would like to know what readers think about the changes in the news industry over the first two decades of this century. What are the changes you like? What are the changes you want this newspaper to discard? Craig Newmark, whose charities fund trustworthy journalism and the information ecosystem, drew our attention to the spread of the 'truth sandwich' in American journalism. This means that a lie is sandwiched between the truth and a fact-check, as a means to confront disinformation. Do we need such a system in India? Over the next two weeks, I will collate readers' reflections in order to devise a method to keep our news environment free from toxicity.

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FACTWISE

Mixed signals on NRC

PM Modi's remarks on the National Register of Citizens contradict the Home Minister's claims

SUMANT SEN & HARI NARAYAN

Addressing a rally at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that there have been no discussions on an all-India National Register of Citizens (NRC) since the BJP-led government assumed power in 2014. He said that the NRC was implemented in Assam alone following the Supreme Court's orders. Is this statement accurate?

Claims and counterclaims

On November 20, 2019, in a reply to a question by Rajya Sabha MP Swapan Dasgupta, Home Minister Amit Shah said that the NRC exercise would be carried out across India. He said that the gazette notification of September 7, 2015, which was made in the case of Assam, would be applicable to the rest of India as well. The Prime Minister's remarks on the "nationwide NRC" therefore contradict what the Home Minister has been saying on the issue.

"Nationwide NRC" also finds a mention in the BJP's 2019 election manifesto. Under the section 'Combating Infiltration', the manifesto clearly mentions that NRC will be implemented across the country. The manifesto says, "There has been a huge change in the cultural and linguistic identity of some areas due to illegal immigration, resulting in an adverse impact on local people's livelihood and employment. We will expeditiously complete the National Register of Citizens process in these areas on priority. In future we will implement the NRC in a phased manner in other parts of the country".

The Prime Minister also denied the existence of detention centres in India. In response to a question by Md. Nadimul Haque in the Rajya Sabha on December 11, 2019, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai, said that the Central government had circulated a document titled Model Detention/Holding Centre Manual to all State and Union Territories on January 9, 2019. He also revealed in another answer in the House that, as on November 22, 2019, Assam already had six functioning detention centres with 988 foreign-

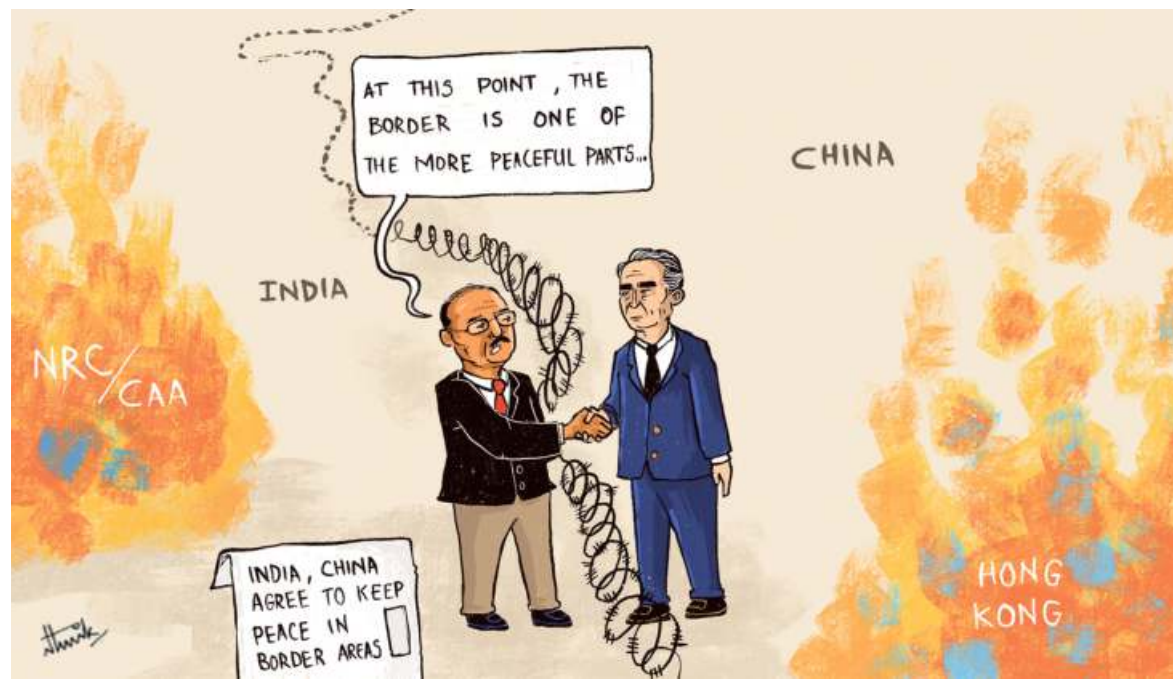
ers lodged in them.

In response to Mr. Haque, Mr. Rai also said that "detention centres are set up by State Governments/ Union Territory Administration (UTs) as per requirement to detain illegal migrants or convicted foreigners pending deportation to their native country. Instructions have been issued to all State Governments/UTs from time to time for setting up the detention centres... and [States/UTs] will not require any specific approval from the [MHA] for setting up of such detention centres". He also said that the government has approved a detention centre at Goalpara in Assam at a budget of ₹46.5 crore.

While referring to opposition among a section of the political class to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, Mr. Modi said, "The very people opposing citizenship rights to refugees had supported in 2004 a move to deprive Jammu and Kashmir's women of rights if they married someone outside the State." His reference was perhaps to the Jammu and Kashmir Permanent Residents (Disqualification) Bill, 2004. This contentious issue was adjudicated upon by the J&K High Court in 2002 in *State and others v. Dr Susheela Sawhney*. In that judgment the court said that "a daughter of a permanent resident marrying a non permanent resident will not lose the status of permanent resident of the state of Jammu and Kashmir".

The Peoples Democratic Party, which was in a coalition government with the Congress in 2004, brought the said Bill to overturn the decision. The Bill passed 47-34 in the Lower House in the then State of J&K. However, partly due to opposition by the Congress, it lapsed in the Upper House. Peerzada Muhammad Sayeed, the Congress chief for J&K, was reported to have said: "There are thousands of students studying in various States and some have married there. If we enact this law it would create problems for them. Legally and morally, the Congress will not be part of any Bill which is anti-women".

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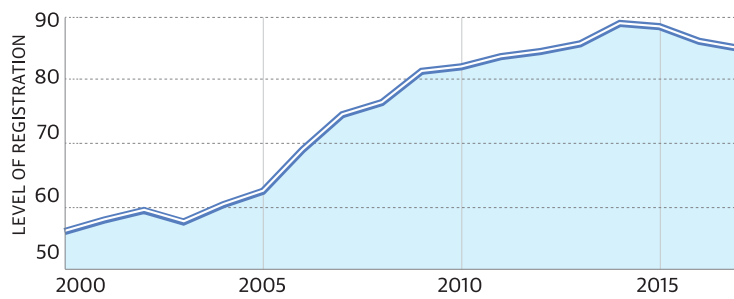


DATA POINT

Burden of proof

According to an official Q and A*, "citizenship can be proved by any documents related to date & place of birth." Documents are "likely to include voter cards, passports, Aadhaar, birth certificates, school leaving certificates, etc." An analysis of the coverage levels of these documents shows that not everyone who is eligible for a particular document possesses it. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Birth certificate | In 2000, only 56% of newborns were registered. In the years prior to that, the share of registered births was much lower. While it has gone up since, even as of 2017 at least 15% births were unregistered



Aadhaar card | As of December 2019, 89.6% of the population have Aadhaar cards. The coverage was particularly low in Assam (17.6%), Meghalaya (29.3%), Nagaland (57.0%). The Aadhaar Act says the card cannot be a proof of citizenship

Passport | As on December 2018, only 7.96 crore citizens held valid passports (only 5.8% of the population at that time). Aadhaar is accepted as proof of address and photo identity for passport applications

Bank account | As of 2017, 80% of the adult population had access to bank accounts. Aadhaar can be used to open a bank account

Voter ID | As of 2017, 92% of the eligible population had voter ID cards. Also, in some age cohorts the coverage was much lower. Aadhaar can be used as proof to obtain a voter ID card

Age group	% gap in registration
18-19	40.26
20-24	75.12
60-64	81.94
65-69	85.37
70-74	81.24
85+	81.04

Education certificate | Less than 80% of the population eligible to go to secondary school were enrolled as of 2016-17. In 2004-05, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) was even lower (51.7%). Table shows GER in secondary level

Year	GER
2004-05	51.7
2005-06	52.2
2006-07	53.5
2014-15	76.91
2015-16	79.3
2016-17	79.35

* Q & A ON NRC (NATIONAL REGISTER OF CITIZENS) RELEASED BY PIB. SOURCE: CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEM, MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, UIDAI, RESERVE BANK OF INDIA, ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 23, 1969

Condemnation of Stalin

The Soviet Communist Party to-day [December 27, Moscow] marked the 90th birth anniversary of Stalin by formally reiterating condemnation of him originally made under the leadership of ousted party chief Nikita Khrushchev. It was the first time the late dictator's birthday had been marked since the 80th anniversary in 1959, when Mr. Khrushchev was in power. A 750-word unsigned editorial today in the main party newspaper Pravda bearing all the stamps of an official party statement, was virtually identical in its assessment of Stalin to a similar editorial in 1959, which was twice the length. Though Stalin had made a great contribution in the ideological-political battle with the enemies of Leninism he had made "theoretical and political mistakes which took on a serious character in the last period of his life", the editorial said.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DEC. 23, 1919.

Ireland and Home Rule.

(From an Editorial)

It is not without reason that the London Times has achieved an unrivalled position in the newspaper press of England. The Times never fails to speak out boldly and convincingly on the abuses and blunders of the Government when dealing with great questions of policy or procedure. It is no respecter of persons or powers when injustice, evasion, force or partiality characterize the powers that-be in their action towards public matters, and domestic or foreign relations; and this policy of fearless and just criticism has never been more evident than in regard to the English Government actions in Ireland, India, and Egypt - the three countries that are making a gallant, if so far ineffectual, struggle for political emancipation. Only the other day we cited the opinion of the Times on the Dyer atrocities in the Punjab, and Egypt and its concerns have been generously, treated; but with regard to Ireland the "Thunderer" has recently condemned in most emphatic language, the shilly-shallying, the delay, the evasions the general policy with regard to the treatment of Irish claims and aspirations. Lord French, however capable as a military officer, is certainly no statesman, and his drastic action in trying to suppress and eradicate Sinn Fein on the eve of an announcement granting a substantial measure of home rule to Ireland, the Times declares to be not only futile but irreconcilable.

