

Across UP, police use protest photos to churn out 'reward posters' of suspects

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 25

CRACKING DOWN on people they suspect were behind the violence in Uttar Pradesh during protests against the new citizenship law, police have put out multiple reward posters in Kanpur, Firozabad and Mau. Notices warning of property attachment have been issued in Gorakhpur while in Bijpur, police have announced a reward of Rs 25,000 each for information on three wanted persons.

In Firozabad and Gorakhpur, police have circulated photographs of wanted persons on WhatsApp and Facebook, seeking information on their whereabouts. In the reward posters displayed at public places, police have appealed to the public for information on "miscreants" and promised not to disclose the identity of any person who helps police.

At least 16 people have been killed in protests across the state. According to an official at the DGP Headquarters, police have so far registered 213 cases and arrested 925 people.



Police have put out posters in Kanpur, Firozabad, Mau

In Mau, police have released a poster carrying photographs of 110 people they suspect were involved in the violence Monday during which stones were hurled and vehicles torched. Police said they made the poster after scrutinising videos and photographs of violence provided by media houses and local

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Young parents to CPM members to students of BHU: 73 held in Varanasi

AVANEESH MISHRA
VARANASI, DECEMBER 25

FOURTEEN-MONTH-OLD Champak is being taken care of by her grandmother Sheela Tiwari after the Uttar Pradesh police picked up her parents Ekta, 32, and Ravi Shekhar, 36, six days ago.

Social activists Ekta and Ravi Shekhar, who run an NGO, Climate Agenda, are among 73 people arrested so far in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi, following protests against the newly enacted citizenship law and proposed National Register of Citizens. Besides activists, those arrested include members of Left-wing political parties, and students.

According to senior police officers, 56 people were arrested on December 19 from Beniyabagh locality that comes under the purview of Chetganj police station. They were participating in a protest organised by



CPI, CPM, and CPI(M-L), they said. Another 17 people were arrested the same day from nearby localities, including the Dashashwamedh Ghat.

More arrests were likely since many of the 100-150 more people against whom FIRs were lodged in different parts of the district were yet to be identified, the police said.

Students of Banaras Hindu
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

POINTS TO VIOLENCE, DAMAGE TO PUBLIC PROPERTY Rights vs responsibilities: PM has a message for protesters

Rights and duties go hand in hand, respect police, docs, teachers: Modi

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 25

DAYS AFTER his Ramlila Maidan address where he said there was no talk of NRC and that the Opposition was spreading "pernicious" rumours to instigate protesters against the new citizenship law, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday cited the violence and vandalism in a section of the protests to distinguish between "rights" and "responsibilities".

Targeting those who resorted to violence and damaged public property in Uttar Pradesh during protests, Modi said they should "ask themselves if their path was right."

Speaking in Lucknow after unveiling a bronze statue of Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Lok Bhawan and laying the foundation stone for a medical university named after the former Prime Minister, Modi said while people have the right (adhikar) to education, healthcare and secure environment, they also have duties (kartavya) and responsibilities (dayitva) towards teachers, doctors and the police force.

At least 16 people have been killed and scores injured, including policemen, during protests across the state amid a police crackdown.

E.
Focus on arson dents campaign

AS THE Opposition tries to pin the government over the killing of protesters in Uttar Pradesh, the Prime Minister and his party are trying to draw attention to acts of vandalism during the protests. The hope is that amplifying the violence will focus on the method more than the cause and dent the anti-CAA-NRC mobilisation.

"Uttam shiksha hamara haq hai, lekin shiksha ke sansthanon ki suraksha, shikshakon ka samman yeh hamara dayitva bhi hai... Chikitsa suvidha hamara haq hai, lekin doctoron ka sahyog aur samman karna hamara dayitva bhi hai... Surakshit mahaul milna hamara haq hai, lekin suraksha ke liye zimmedar police tantra ke kaam ko samman dena yeh hamara dayitva hai," he said.
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Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveils former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 25-ft statue in Lucknow on Wednesday. Vishal Srivastava

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EXPRESS NETWORK



EX-GRATIA FOR FAMILIES OF 2 KILLED IN KARNATAKA FIRING PUT ON HOLD

NIRMA UNIVERSITY MAKES STUDENTS SIGN UNDERTAKING AGAINST PROTESTS

POLICE SAY NO SUCH NOTICE OR ANNOUNCEMENT

Near DU, PGs and tutorials shut doors after cops come knocking

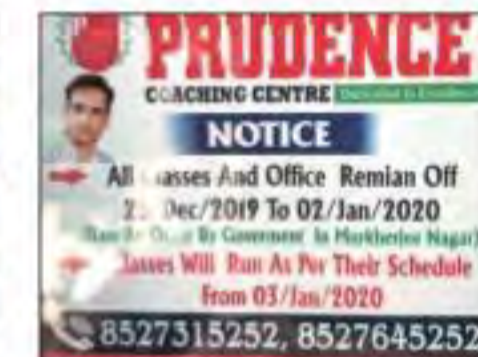
SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

SHUTTERS WERE down at coaching centres and reading rooms in Mukherjee Nagar — one of Delhi's largest coaching hubs — on Wednesday after a notice directing them to do so, purportedly issued by the police, and a purported video of a police officer telling students to leave began doing the rounds.

While police claim the notice is fake and the video has been doctored, three coaching centres and a paying guest (PG) accommodation owner *The Indian Express* spoke to confirmed that they had been told by Delhi



(Left) A notice outside a coaching centre; received by a student from his coaching centre. Amit Mehra



Police personnel to shut shop until January 2.

The purported notice, circulated online on Tuesday night, bears the name of SHO, Mukherjee Nagar, and directs all coaching centres and PG owners

to keep their facilities shut from December 24 to January 1. It also threatens them with a fine of up to Rs 50,000 or with sealing if they don't comply.

A video circulated on social media
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Slowdown puts a question mark on 14% GST compensation

Challenge for states as inflation 4-5%, tough for Centre to pay at that rate

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

AS THE Centre grapples with lower GST collections, a fresh tension now engulfs the Union Finance Minister-chaired GST Council with a certain section questioning the assumption of a 14 per cent "high" revenue growth rate covered by a compensation mechanism mentioned in the Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act.

"With inflation hovering around 4-5 per cent and India's growth expected to be 5-6 per cent, it will be difficult for the Union government to provide compensation to states at 14 per cent annualised rate," a Finance Minister of a BJP-ruled state told *The Indian Express*.

With an increase in GST rate ruled out for now, the focus has shifted to the actual growth rate of taxes collected by states, but subsumed under GST since July 2017. In the three years preceding 2015-16, the growth rate in taxes for non-special category states was just 8.9 per cent. This is significantly lower than the 14 per cent growth rate assumed over the 2015-16 base year while committing compensation.

Including the special category states, the all-India average tax growth had worked out to 10.6 per cent in the three years preceding 2015-16.

According to data available with the GST Council, the average revenue to be protected for states in 2018-19 stood at about Rs 49,020 crore a month. The average monthly collection for states was lower at Rs 43,166 crore. This meant, the Centre made good the gap of almost Rs 6,000 crore a month, or Rs 72,000 crore a year.

However, in 2019-20, this gap has increased to almost Rs 13,000 crore a month, or Rs 1,56,000 crore for the year. This is more than double the previous year's compensation, leaving the Centre hard-pressed to find resources. States have already expressed displeasure over delayed payment of GST compensation.

The Centre has estimated Rs 1.09 lakh crore as compensation in the Budget for the current financial year. Cess collection till November was Rs 64,528 crore. Extrapolated for the full financial year, it is expected to yield Rs 96,792 crore, which will still leave a shortfall of Rs 59,208 crore.
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14% PROMISE AND REALITY

States likely to be hit most based on growth record	Average revenue growth (2013-14 to 2015-16)
Andhra Pradesh	3.5%
Chhattisgarh	8.7%
Gujarat	3.6%
Odisha	6.7%
Punjab	5.9%
Tamil Nadu	6.2%
West Bengal	7.7%

Source: GST Council

Panel works on how to split assets between J&K and Ladakh UTs

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

ALTHOUGH THE committee for division of assets between the newly formed Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh submitted its preliminary assessment two months ago, many contentious issues remain. These pertain to division of immovable assets owned by the erstwhile state in Delhi, Amritsar, Chandigarh and Mumbai, besides allocation of government officials of various state departments to the two UTs.

The three-member committee for division of assets between the two UTs, headed by former Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra, submitted an interim assessment report in October where it recommended certain guidelines for division of assets. The final report of the Committee is expected by the end of the current financial year.

The committee, sources said, created an index which measured the backwardness, area, remoteness along with the historical deprivation suffered by Ladakh.

As part of a restitution process towards Ladakh, the committee proposed a formula of 80:20 for dividing the divisible resources — essentially liquid assets — for J&K and Ladakh. But J&K government officials contend that that the ratio of population between the two UTs is 97:3, which makes the proposed formula unfair on J&K.

They also argue that even a few years ago, a report by the state finance commission, had recommended only 13.5% of resource allocation to Ladakh division from the erstwhile J&K state. But that report was never accepted by the state government, which has historically allocated around 2% of plan and
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EXPLAINED



POST-POLL SURVEY
JHARKHAND RESULT FITS INTO A PATTERN
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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

HOW TO REVIVE CONSUMPTION
BY SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH
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Badminton doubles coach blames 'bad attitude' of Indian players for early exit of foreign coaches

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

INDIAN BADMINTON'S specialist doubles coach Flandy Limpele, from Indonesia, has flagged "bad attitude of some players" in the country's elite camp, and warned that it is not conducive to the growth of the doubles discipline. He also said it was one reason why "three previous foreign coaches left before their contracts ended."



Some players only care about self: Flandy Limpele, coach from Indonesia

"I could probably feel what the previous coaches felt, because this attitude thing is so unique in India. Plus it looks like foreign coaches ending their contracts faster is a common tradition, so it will be nothing new to me," he said.

In an interview to Indonesian website *indosport.com*, Limpele had hinted that he may suffer the same fate as his compatriot, Mulyo Handoyo, and Korean, Kim Ji Hyun, the former singles coaches of top Indian shuttlers

who quit before their contracts expired. "It could be that I will also experience things like coach Kim and Mulyo, there are already signs. It's tradition, so no one wants up to 4-5 years," he had said.

Handoyo has been credited with the success of K Srikanth, Sai Praneeth and H S Prannoy, while Kim was at the courtside when P V Sindhu won her first World Championship final earlier this year.
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WORLD



IRAN STARTS NET SHUTDOWN AHEAD OF POSSIBLE PROTESTS

TALIBAN ABDUCT 27 PEACE ACTIVISTS IN AFGHANISTAN
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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

Sambhar lake may have been lethal electric trap when birds arrived

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
SAMBHAR (RAJASTHAN),
DECEMBER 25

MORE THAN 20,000 migratory birds died since they began congregating at Rajasthan's famed Sambhar lake late October, their carcass samples testing negative for avian flu and poisoning. The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) attributed the deaths to avian botulism, a lethal paralytic disease caused by a bacterial neurotoxin produced in rotting organic matter. What led to the outbreak remains unclear.

An investigation by *The Indian Express* has revealed that a vast network of live wires running thousands of bore wells could have created a submerged electric trap and the carcass of electrocuted birds could have served as the biomass for the toxic bacteria to thrive.

When the birds arrived in October at Sambhar, India's largest saltwater lake, they were greeted, thanks to heavy rain, by water levels at a two-decade high. Under the surface was a messy network of cables that came alive every night to power thousands of illegal bore wells that keep Sambhar's innumerable



Due to record rain, a vast network of live wires running thousands of bore wells remained under lake water well into the migration season. Jay Mazoomdaar

private salt pans in business. There is no official count of these but an estimated 5000 to 20,000 illegal bore wells extract saline groundwater across a 25-

45 km stretch along the north-western shores of Sambhar lake. From this assembly of submersible pumps, electric wires and water pipelines stretch 2-5

km between the lake and the surrounding villages where thousands of salt pans draw brine. Away from tourists' gaze, this throbbing illegal network has

been expanding in and around Sambhar. The pumps are run mostly in the night so that the leaking current does not endanger labourers who work through

the day. The bore wells are active round the year, except in July-August when rainfall expands the lake's boundaries and re-

duces salinity. Post-monsoon, between Dusshera and Diwali, the pumps resume groundwater extraction. Until last year, lake water would recede laying bare most of the cable network by the beginning of the migration season in late October.

But this year, Sambhar received its heaviest rain in two decades. Result: pumps and power lines remained under lake water, leaking electricity, when the birds arrived — among the most common species in the flock were Northern shoveler, plover, black-winged stilt and the common teal.
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IN TRIPURA, HANDFUL OF PORTUGUESE NAMES, WITH NO CLEAR STORY FROM THE PAST
In the early 16th and 17 century, just decades after Vasco Da Gama's fleet anchored off the port of Calicut on the Kerala coast, the Portuguese were very active along the Bengal coast too



VIDEO OF THE DAY
WHAT IS NPR (NATIONAL POPULATION REGISTER)
NPR updation holds significance in context of the proposed NRC



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EXPRESS AUDIO
How the NPR is connected to the NRC
NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In today's episode of the 3 Things, we talk about what is NPR, how it is the NRC and the concerns that it raises

FROM PAGE ONE

UP: Crack down

residents. Police also scanned CCTV footage. Mau Superintendent of Police Anurag Arya said: "Three FIRs were lodged in connection with the incident in which 21 people have been arrested so far. We identified 110 other miscreants involved in the violence. Since we have no information about these 110 people, we released posters carrying their photographs."

Kanpur police also released posters carrying photographs of 48 people allegedly involved in the violence that took place last Friday and Saturday. Three persons were killed and 11 injured in the violence. Police have lodged 17 FIRs and arrested 24 people so far. Babupurwa Circle Officer Manoj Kumar Gupta said: "We have released posters of 48 suspects whose identities could not be ascertained."

In Firozabad, police have released a poster with photographs of 80 people they claim were involved in the violence at Nalband locality last Friday.

Bijnor police have announced a reward of Rs 25,000 each for information on three persons who they claim were involved in violence that left two persons dead last Friday. So far, 146 people have been arrested.

Bijnor Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Tyagi said: "During investigation, we found former Nagar Palika chairman Javed Aftab, Dr Furqan Meharban and Adil. We announced a reward because they are on the run. Furqan runs a madrasa in Bijnor."

In Gorakhpur, police have pasted notices at homes of 33 people who were allegedly involved in violence that left 16 injured. Police have also released photographs of 60 unidentified people who allegedly hurled stones at policemen.

City Kotwali police station SHO Jaideep Kumar Verma said:

"In the notices, the missing 33 people have been asked to report to the police station in two days, otherwise legal action will be taken against them. They have also been told to produce evidence of their innocence in the case."

ENS adds from New Delhi: On the use of photographs in reward posters, advocate Sarim Naved, who practises at the Supreme Court, said: "In cases related to protests, when an FIR is registered, it is common practice for police to invoke Section 186 of the IPC (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions). And police put out such posters, asking people to identify unknown accused persons. It is legally admissible in such circumstances. However, the law is not the same if it involves minors. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 prohibits disclosure of identity of children. Police have to be cautious if it involves minors."

Coaching centre
media, meanwhile, purportedly shows a police officer speaking at night in what appears to be a marketplace. He is heard telling students to book tickets, head home and return on January 2, citing a delicate law and order situation. He can be heard telling them not to create a "nuisance" or participate in any protests or gatherings, stating that section 144 of the CrPC has been imposed across Delhi. He can also be heard telling them that an FIR against them can destroy their careers and that this is a "warning".

On Wednesday, police distanced itself from both the notice and the video. "The video contents are tampered. For now, we can't say when the video was even shot. Delhi police have written to Twitter to have the content removed," said DCP (Northwest) Vijayanta Arya.

When The Indian Express asked her about the video show-

ing ACP (Model Town) Ajay Kumar addressing the crowd and SHO (Mukherji Nagar) Pradeep Kumar standing behind him, Arya said, "Police officers have been going to the area to sensitise the students to not pay attention to rumours and not indulge in rumour mongering. The content of the video which shows the two officers has been tampered with. No such order has been passed by the police."

Kumar, when contacted, said: "It is a doctored video. Two-three days ago, we got a call about students in the area shouting slogans like 'Pakistan Mordabad', and we had intel that they were going to move towards New Delhi the next day. That's why we went there to speak to them."

However, on Wednesday, shutters were down at most coaching centres in the area and classes were suspended in all.

Some had put up notices on their doors. "The coaching will remain closed from December 25 to January 2, 2020 in accordance with the notice issued by Delhi Police. The lectures will resume on January 3, 2020 as per schedule," read a message by the management of GS Mentors outside their centre.

Students of Prudence Coaching Centre received a notice on their phones as well as a voice message from their management, telling them that classes would remain suspended between December 25 and January 2.

Members of the management of coaching centres also told The Indian Express that police personnel had come to their centres, conveying these instructions to them.

"Three constables had come to the centre and instructed us to close till January 2. When we asked for a reason, we were told it was orders from higher up," said Ashok Shukla from Bharti Centre.

Management employees of GS World coaching said four police personnel visited their centre around 11 am on December 23 and instructed them verbally, but did not hand them a written notice.

DCP Arya denied any such visits by police personnel. "No such visits have been made and if anyone claims so, they can visit the area SHO or me with the issue."

Management at coaching centres said they do not observe a "winter break" and usually remain shut only on December 31 and January 1.

Students who reside in some PGs in the area also said they had been asked to leave their rooms during the period. The Indian Express met a resident of Aryan PG leaving the area with her suitcase; she said she had been asked to leave by the PG owner.

"Police came to different PGs and asked us to do so. A couple of personnel had come on Tuesday morning to our office and gave verbal directions," said a member of the management.

Mukesh Tomar, owner of Tomar PG, said he even approached Mukherjee Nagar police chowki to appeal against the directives. "Students who live in my PG were putting pressure on me to keep it open because they needed to stay and study. I told them I will be fined, but they asked me to try and appeal against it. So I took some of them and went to the chowki twice. But we were told by personnel there that they have received orders from higher up," he said.

J&K and Ladakh
non-plan expenditure to Ladakh. Moreover, giving an indication of the Centre's approach, it apportioned the 14th Finance Commission award between the two UTs in the ratio of 70:30 for the remaining five months of the 2019-20 fiscal, when the two UTs came into being on October 31.

While immovable assets located in the respective UTs are

Rights versus responsibilities: PM

"Good education is our right but keeping institutions of education safe and respecting teachers is our responsibility. Healthcare is our right but co-operating with doctors and respecting them is our responsibility. A secure environment is our right but respecting the police force responsible for security is our responsibility."

He said as the nation moves toward the 75th year of Independence, it is the need of the hour — "samay ki maang...

waqt ki maang" — that emphasis be given not just on citizen rights but also duties and responsibilities. "Haq ki ek maryada hai, ek dayera hai, seema hai, lekin dayitva, kartavya ki bhavna bahut vyapak hai (right has sanctity, boundary, limit but responsibility and duty are broad)," he said.

"I am saying this because in Uttar Pradesh the way some people resorted to violence in the name of protests... and damaged government prop-

erty... they should sit at home and ask themselves if their path was right... Whatever was torched, was it not for their child's use? How must have the inured common people and policemen felt?"

Referring to Article 370 as "purani bimari" (old disease) which his government "inherited" along with other "social, economic and political problems and challenges", the Prime Minister said it was settled "easily". The Ram

Janmabhoomi issue, he said, was also resolved peacefully.

On the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Modi said granting citizenship to those who came to India from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to "save the dignity of their daughters" was another problem, but 130 crore Indians found a solution. No matter how great the challenge, he said, "it is in our nature to challenge the challenge".

and accumulate the toxin. When other birds feed on the toxic maggots, they die, setting off the carcass-maggot cycle until all infected carcasses are removed," Ashraf said. He added that bore wells should never have been allowed to operate under lake waters.

As late as November 24, almost two weeks after the deaths were reported, the state government began removing illegal bore wells and wires from the lake bed in Nawa. Officials maintained that the move was long overdue since the National Green Tribunal had ordered their removal in November 2016.

"We will continue looking for dead birds all of December and keep removing illegal bore wells. We have started digging a three-foot-deep trench to guard against pipelines and power cable," said Nawa SDM Brahm Lal Jat.

Said Rajesh Oza, general manager (works) of government-owned Sambar Salt Ltd: "In the past, our efforts to remove those illegal bore wells were unsuccessful. While we produce around 2.5 lakh tonnes a year, they (the private firms) produce 15-20 lakh tonnes. You can imagine the clout they have."

BHU
University protesting under a banner of joint Action Committee said a dozen of their colleagues have been arrested. FIRs reviewed by The Indian Express revealed that at least three of those arrested had mentioned the room numbers of BHU hostels as their address.

"Of the 12 arrested, three are PhD students, eight MA students and one a BA student. On Tuesday, they were denied bail by a Sessions court. The next date of hearing is January 1. The administration is doing nothing," said Priyesh Pandey, MA first year student, and member of the Joint Action Committee.

When contacted, BHU spokesperson Rajesh Singh said the police had not shared the list of those arrested. "If someone is arrested for breaking the law at a third place, there isn't much the university can do," he said. The police also denied that students were arrested.

SSP Prabhakar Chaudhary said: "Neither BHU students were arrested nor did we pick any one up from inside BHU. Those arrested were mainly leaders from the Left front. There might be some former students of the BHU. But no one was arrested from the university campus."

The FIR lodged by the police at Chetganj station said the police denied permission for a protest called by the CPI(M) on December 19 since Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code (barring assembly of more than four persons) was imposed in the district.

"Around 1 pm, these 56 persons along with 20-25 unidentified others gathered and started raising anti-national slogans," the FIR registered on the complaint of Chetganj SHO Praveen Kumar said.

CPI state secretary Girish Sharma, however, said the Beniayabagh protest was peaceful. "Among those arrested by the police, there are 12 CPI members, 11 CPI-M and seven of CPI (Marxist-Leninist). Rest are social activists and students," Sharma said.

Meanwhile, Champak's grandmother is struggling. "For six days now, Baby Champak is without her parents. It's hard for us to take care of her as every now and then she starts crying for her mother," said Ravi's mother Sheela Tiwari.

"On Thursday, around 11 am Ekta left the house saying she is going to buy milk for Champak. But around 3 pm, I got a call that she and Ravi have been arrested. Around an hour later, I got another call saying their phones will be taken away," said Sheela.

Slowdown puts a question mark on GST compensation

Had the GST growth rate assumption been less than 14 per cent, the compensation amount would have been lower.

The state-wise breakup accessed by The Indian Express shows that only eight states out of 17 non-special category states recorded a double-digit average rate for revenue growth in the three-year period (2013-14 to 2015-16): Jharkhand (13.1 per cent), Bihar (13 per cent), Haryana (11.7 per cent), Rajasthan (11.6 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (11 per cent), Karnataka (10.7 per cent), Goa (10.5 per cent) and Kerala (10.4 per cent).

Manufacturing states like Gujarat and Maharashtra had

an average revenue growth of 3.6 per cent and 9.4 per cent, respectively, while states such as Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh had recorded average revenue growth of 3.5 per cent, 7.7 per cent and 9.4 per cent, respectively.

While fixing the projected growth rate of compensation, the GST Council had discussed several options including considering average revenue growth achieved in three years preceding 2015-16 or five years preceding the base year or three of the five years preceding by excluding outliers or a rate equivalent to the nominal GDP growth rate of the country.

A growth rate equivalent to the nominal GDP growth rate of

the country had not found favour with the Centre as it was felt that since revenue earned depends on the growth of the economy, in case, sufficient revenues are not generated due to an economic slowdown, it would not be possible to pay compensation at higher growth rates.

While chairing the first few meetings of the GST Council, the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had, in fact, proposed a revenue growth rate of 10.6 per cent as being closer to reality since it was the average all-India growth rate during the three years preceding 2015-16. However, GST Council meeting's records show that the suggestion of 14 per cent revenue

growth was accepted "in the spirit of compromise" to reach a unanimous agreement on the proposal.

In the GST Council meeting held in Goa in September, the 15th Finance Commission had suggested lowering of the legally guaranteed 14 per cent annual growth rate for states in the remaining compensation period of three years till 2022. The Commission cited that the rates were fixed keeping in mind the pre-GST rates, which have been lowered significantly. States, however, had not agreed with the proposal, saying the GST rate and structure should be the prime objective of the Council instead of frequent tinkering.

likely to remain in that UT, the big question is about the share of prime real estate properties outside the erstwhile state which will be given to Ladakh. There are six major properties in Delhi, Amritsar, Chandigarh and Mumbai, which include the Kashmir House on Delhi's Rajaji Marg and J&K House in Chanakyapuri.

Kashmir House is currently used by the Army and is unlikely to be vacated to be given to the two UTs. The division between the other properties also seems to be a tricky proposition as it would pose major challenges of management and control. A bungalow allocated to the erstwhile state government on Akbar Road is also something which cannot be realistically divided between the two UTs.

Considering the issues of pending utilities bill and their share to Ladakh, there is a thought that a new UT like Ladakh should not be burdened with those liabilities. It is possible that some real estate property may be allocated by the Centre ab initio to Ladakh in Delhi to obviate this problem.

The other issue is of allocation of government officials of various departments to the two UTs. As per provisions of the Reorganisation of J&K Act, an option has been given to various officials to choose between the two UTs. There is a fear that this will lead to most people opting for J&K which will leave Ladakh with huge vacancies.

Badminton coach

When asked to elaborate, Limpele told The Indian Express: "Some players are individualistic. There is lack of team work and they only care about individual self. In doubles, you can't do that."

The 45-year-old, who trains India's top pairings in men's, women's and mixed doubles, including Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Ashwini Ponappa, Sikki Reddy and Pranav Jerry Chopda as well as a clutch of second-tier pairings, did not, however, name the players whose attitude bothered him.

"Some players in this camp have bad attitude. I don't know why that happens. But I think maybe it's been like that for a long

time and it looks like this habit could turn into the culture in the camp," he said.

"I'm trying to change (this culture) because it's not good to have individualistic players in doubles. I want to slowly change this, hopefully it will work. But if it doesn't and (this is) the way they want it, then no foreign coach will be willing to stay longer," he warned.

He said nobody had been disrespectful to him yet, but added that Indian shuttlers lacked gratitude towards foreign coaches. Asked if bad attitude meant being lax in training, or not being receptive to ideas, or not working hard enough, he said, "Yes, all (of those). But including respect and appreciating coaches."

Limpele — who has been assigned the task of taking a shot at a doubles medal for India at Tokyo through Satwiksairaj-Chirag, India's most exciting pair — said he wanted to flag this early as the country was laying the foundation of excellence in doubles, where India has rarely done well internationally on a consistent basis.

The Indonesian was roped in as a consultant expert coach and technical advisor in August for a monthly remuneration of US\$ 5,500.

India had a Top 10 mixed doubles pairing in Jwala Gutta-V Diju in the last decade; Jwala Gutta-Ashwini Ponappa won a World Championship bronze in 2011. Ponappa led India to its first CWG team event gold in 2018, shouldering the responsibility of a bulk of the doubles matches, under former Malaysian coach Tan Kim Her, who moved to work with Japan.

But Indian pairings have always struggled to make medal contention grade on a regular basis, till this season when Satwiksairaj-Chirag won the biggest men's doubles title for an Indian pairing at Thailand and surged into Top 10 on the back of some breakthrough results in the last three months. The national camp also has the next rung of doubles shuttlers, who, while coming up, help the top pairing as sparring mates too.

It must be noted that the Indonesian juggernaut — they

have been powerhouses in doubles for many decades — has rolled on a strict national camp system, where top pairings train together and push each other to get better, while maintaining the camaraderie. The current World Nos 1 and 2 are from Indonesia.

Sambhar lake

Denial is the dominant response. "All of us are very concerned but please don't link the bird deaths to the salt industry. Salt is not produced in the areas where most of the dead birds were found," said Rajasthan Refined Salt Manufacturers Association's president Anil Gattani.

Local rescue workers, however, said that nobody went looking for dead birds in the "bore well zone" for days after dead birds were spotted in the "tourism areas" near Sambhar. "Forget birders, very few locals venture into the bore well areas. Officials did not bother to check there until mid-November when thousands of dead birds were found in the Nawa belt. Many suspect that Nawa is where the deaths began," says local activist Pawan Modi who reported the mass die-off on November 10.

In the villages of Nawa, there are clues. "Yes, salt keeps eroding our wires and there is some leakage of current. If the (wire) joints come off, we switch off and rewire," said a local salt pan owner, insisting "par waise gun-guna-ta paani se chidiya nahin marti (a little tingling in the water does not kill birds)."

Studies on the impact of electro-fishing — stunning fish with electricity — show that water birds exposed to a low-intensity shock immediately take flight to settle at a safe distance. In a shoreline like Sambhar's this year, strewn with live wires, a safe perch may not have been easy to find.

"No sign of electric shock was found in the postmortem... why did no flamingo die?" asked a senior forest official in Jaipur. Told that flamingos stick to open waters away from the shoreline, he declined to comment.

To identify internal signs of an electric shock in the absence of

external injuries, a carcass needs to be examined within 48 hours, explained a senior veterinarian who did not wish to be named. "From the development stage of maggots found in the carcasses spotted on and after November 10, one can tell that the die-off began around Diwali (October 27). After so many days, decomposed samples won't show if the birds suffered electric shock," he said.

As reporters and officials came rushing after dead birds were spotted on November 10, most salt pan owners stopped running the bore wells. Two weeks later, botulism was declared the killer.

Said V K Gupta, joint director, Centre for Animal Disease Research and Diagnosis (CADRAD), IVRI-Bareilly, who signed the report diagnosing botulism: "Botulism toxin cannot be found in a carcass unless the bird died of botulism," he said.

But the presence of an electrical current in the lake water when the birds arrived, said the senior vet, might explain what triggered botulism in the first place.

For, botulinum spores are found everywhere in nature. To germinate and produce toxin, these otherwise harmless spores require temperatures above 25 degrees C, non-acidic pH level (7.5-9), low or no oxygen, and, most importantly, decaying biomass.

While the IVRI report inferred that rotting plankton and invertebrates in and around the lake fostered the outbreak, multiple studies show that mere decaying vegetation is a poor substrate (substance) for the bacteria's growth. In fact, decaying animal material — in this case dead birds — is more suited for generation of toxin.

N V K Ashraf, chief veterinarian and senior director at Wildlife Trust of India, said that the carcasses of birds or animals that may have died due to reasons other than botulism could also provide the organic material required for bacterial germination under anaerobic conditions and cause a botulism outbreak.

"It is impossible to pinpoint the initial trigger since samples were collected several days after the outbreak set in. Once established, botulism is self-perpetuating. Maggots feed on carcasses

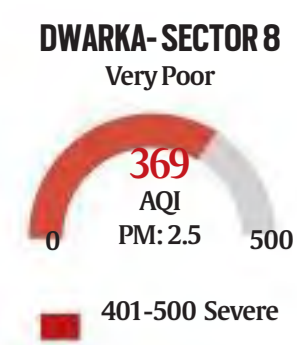
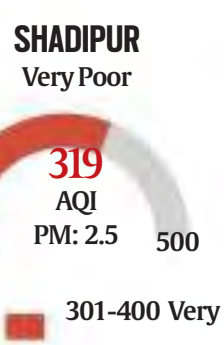
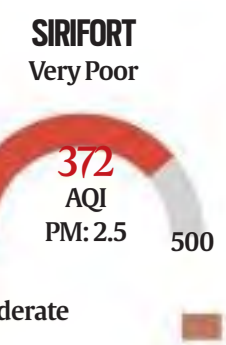
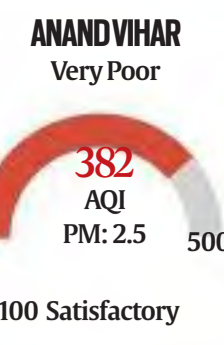
and accumulate the toxin. When other birds feed on the toxic maggots, they die, setting off the carcass-maggot cycle until all infected carcasses are removed," Ashraf said. He added that bore wells should never have been allowed to operate under lake waters.

As late as November 24, almost two weeks after the deaths were reported, the state government began removing illegal bore wells and wires from the lake bed in Nawa. Officials maintained that the move was long overdue since the National Green Tribunal had ordered their removal in November 2016.

"We will continue looking for dead birds all of December and keep removing illegal bore wells. We have started digging a three-foot-deep trench to guard against pipelines and power cable," said Nawa SDM Brahm Lal Jat.

Said Rajesh Oza, general manager (works) of government-owned Sambar Salt Ltd: "In the past, our efforts to remove those illegal bore wells were unsuccessful. While we produce around 2.5 lakh tonnes a year, they (the private firms) produce 15-20 lakh tonnes. You can imagine the clout they have."

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SETS TARGET OF NEXT FIVE YEARS

CM promises 24x7 water: Will be able to drink from tap

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A DIP in the Yamuna and round-the-clock supply of water in every household of Delhi will be made possible in the next five years, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal promised the capital's residents Wednesday.

Addressing a public rally after inaugurating an underground reservoir in South Delhi's Kishangarh, Kejriwal said his government has ended the nexus between the tanker mafia and politicians by increasing the coverage area of water supply from 58% to 93%.

"Within the next five years, you will get water round-the-clock. The water will be so clean that one would be able to directly consume it from the tap. This is my promise. It won't happen overnight, but will take some time," Kejriwal said.

In his public rallies preceding the one on Wednesday, Kejriwal read out the achievements of his government, which were released in the form of a report card on Tuesday.

On Thursday, the AAP will launch a door-to-door campaign with the report card, through which the party seeks to connect with at least 35 lakh households. The AAP will also organise 700 mohalla sabhas and seven town hall meetings to discuss the report card during this period.

The card has 60 pointers listing the AAP's initiatives in the areas of education, health, power, water, unauthorised colonies, transport, and delivery of public services, among others (see box).

In its 2015 manifesto, the AAP had said that the Delhi Jal Board Act will be amended to make clean drinking water a right of

THE 'AAP KA REPORT CARD'

DELHI'S BUDGET (2015 to 2019)

₹31,000 crore to ₹60,000 crore

EDUCATION BUDGET (2015 to 2019)

₹6,600 cr to ₹15,600 cr

- More than 20,000 new classrooms
- In 2019, Class 12 result in private schools saw 93% pass percentage as compared to 96.2% of govt schools
- Roads constructed in 1,281 unauthorised colonies, sewer lines laid down in 1,130 such colonies

HEALTH BUDGET (2015 to 2019)

₹3,500 cr to ₹7,500 cr

- Only state in the country to spend 13% of state budget on healthcare
- Provided free healthcare facilities to citizens' doorsteps, established more than 400 mohalla clinics
- ₹8,000 crore invested in development of the unauthorised colonies

20,000 litres of free water; more than 14 lakh consumers' water bills reduced to zero

Delivered water access to 1,554 unauthorised colonies

24x7 availability of power; every household received 200 units of free power; 31 lakh consumers received zero bills

the people with a promise of 100% collection and treatment of Delhi's sewage through an extensive sewer network.

Meanwhile, during his address at Kishangarh, Kejriwal said: "Hindu dharm mein paani pilane se sabse zyada punya hota hai. By increasing the water supply coverage, we have earned a lot of blessings."

"Before the next polls, I will take this village for a dip in the Yamuna. Ganga snaan kitne logon ne kiya hai idhar? I have made arrangements for that through the teerth yatra scheme. Now we will ensure that you get to do a Yamuna snaan before the next elections," Kejriwal said.

By the "next elections", he was referring to the scheduled

Assembly polls in 2025, suggesting that the AAP victory in the 2020 elections was a foregone conclusion.

He also spoke extensively about the CAG report, tabled in the Assembly during the winter session. "The CAG audited our accounts of the last five years and said that our government is running on surplus."

Heading to work, NDMC gardener run over, 23-year-old law student arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A 38-YEAR-OLD gardener, employed with the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), died after an allegedly speeding white Mercedes rammed into his two-wheeler in New Delhi's Chanakypuri Tuesday morning.

The vehicle was allegedly being driven by 23-year-old Kavish Teotia, who, police claimed, was driving rashly when he hit Praveen Kumar's bike at Niti Marg, behind the Pakistan High



The vehicle was registered in a company's name

Commission. The incident took place at 9.30 am.

DCP (New Delhi) Dr Eish Singhal said, "Kumar was a resident of Trilokpuri. He was rushed to Primus Hospital where he was declared dead on arrival. The driver of the Mercedes has been arrested." A case has been registered against Teotia.

Kumar is survived by his wife and their 10-year-old daughter. A police officer said, "Kumar was on his way to work when the incident took place. The impact of the hit was such that he got flung in the air and died on the spot."

Police said that Teotia, who is studying law, was on his way to his coaching class near Nehru Park, when his vehicle allegedly hit Kumar's two-wheeler. "The accused is a resident of Rajokri and his father is a businessman. The Mercedes is registered under his father's company's name," said a police officer.

Police said Teotia was arrested from the spot following the accident. Police said that "prima facie it appears that Teotia was speeding", though a probe is underway to ascertain more details of the accident.

People dissatisfied with water quality in Delhi, says Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Wednesday brought up the issue of water quality in Delhi while launching the Atal Bhujal Yojana, which is aimed at saving groundwater in water-stressed districts in the country.

Referring to the issue of Delhi's tap water not meeting criteria set by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the Prime Minister said, "Aapne dekha hoga ki in dinon Delhi mein paani ko lekar kitni ja-grukta aur kitni narazagi aayi hai. Charon taraf se awaz uth rahi hai ki Delhi mein, desh ki Rajdhani mein, ganda peene ka paani aur ashuddh — chinta ka vishay bana hua hai." (You have seen how there has been awareness and anger over water in Delhi. Everyone is talking about how in Delhi, in the national capital, the water is dirty and impure — it is worrisome).

In a report made public in November, the Bureau of Indian Standards had found that of 21 cities, water quality in Delhi was the worst and failed on several



The PM at the launch of the Atal Bhujal Yojana, Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey

parameters. Eleven samples were picked up from several areas of Delhi, including from the house of Union Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan and the Krishi Bhawan. Delhi Jal Board, which has rejected the BIS report, had picked up samples from over 4,000 locations after the report was made public. According to officials, more than 98% of the samples tested were declared safe to drink.

Marking governance day, Khattar asks govt employees to avoid agitations and dharnas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, DECEMBER 25

THE YEAR 2020 will be celebrated in Haryana as 'Sushasan Sankalp Varsh', during which the state government will invite suggestions from people on changes and reforms in governance, announced Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar at the Good

Governance Day celebrations in Gurgaon Wednesday morning.

At the event, Khattar said all governance must be "good governance", and must focus on "fair and prompt delivery of services".

"People elect representatives with aspirations and expectations. It is the responsibility of government employees and officers to provide them with unin-

terrupted services as close to their homes as possible," said Khattar.

Citing e-governance as a way to achieve this, he said it would also help reduce corruption by "minimising human interference".

"All employees should work to serve the residents of Haryana with honesty and without favouritism. Haryana does not

belong to a single person, but to 2.75 crore people," he said.

Khattar also appealed to employees to avoid agitations and dharnas to press for their demands.

"You should always help to maintain an atmosphere of peace, harmony and brotherhood, and be cautious of forces that try to create an environment against the government," he said.

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Shri Arvind Kejriwal
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Delhi

Chief Guests
Shri Manish Sisodia
Hon'ble Dy. Chief Minister, Delhi

Shri & Smt. Hamid Ansari
Hon'ble Former Vice President of India

Sahitya Kala Parishad
Department of Art, Culture and Languages
Government of NCT of Delhi presents

Remembering
Ghalib
(1797-1869)

27th to 29th December, 2019

"Kehnte Hain Ki Ghalib Ka Hal Andaz - E - Bayan Aur...."

Dr. Uma Sharma
Padma Bhushan Kathak Dancer

Shri Javed Akhtar
Author

27th December, 2019 at 6:30 PM
Tamsili Mushaira
Guest of Honour: **Shri Shahid Siddiqui**
Editor, Nai Dunia

Uday Pratap Singh, Gulzar Dehvi, Manzar Bhopali, Popular Merathi, Nadeem Shaad Deobandi, Kunwar Ranjeet Singh Chauhan, Madan Mohan Danish, Sharaf Nanparvi, Moin Sadab, Qaiser Khalid

28th December, 2019 at 6:30 PM
Cultural Programme
Guests of Honour: **Shri Vijay Kumar Dev**, Chief Secretary, Delhi
Dr. S. Farooq

1. Screening of Film on Ghalib produced by Dr. Uma Sharma 2. Short Ballet based on Ghalib's poetry by Dr. Uma Sharma & senior disciples Radhika Shah, Sukriti & others S.M. Zaheer as Ghalib 3. Discussion on Ghalib by Shri Pavan K Varma, Author and Diplomat and Shri Javed Akhtar, Author, 4. Compete - Ms. Khekkashan Tyagi 5. Concept - Dr. Uma Sharma, Padma Bhushan Kathak Dancer

29th December, 2019 Remembrance-Candle march
5:00 PM Assembly near Nizamuddin west Police Station.
5:30 PM Candle Light Procession To proceed to Ghalib's Mazaar at Nizamuddin, New Delhi.
6:00 PM Offering of flowers, chaddar and lighted candles
6:30 PM Homage by **Shri Arvind Kejriwal** Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Delhi
Shri Manish Sisodia Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Delhi

Dr. Vinay Bharat Ram, Chairman, DCM, Shri Pavan K Varma, Author, Shri Shahid Siddiqui, Editor, Nai Dunia, Dr. Suresh K Goel, Former DG, ICCR, Dr. S. Farooq, Shri Firoz Rakht Ahmed, Chancellor, MAAMI, Historian, Sh. Badrudduja Siddiqi Najmi, Kunwar Ranjeet Singh Chauhan, Iqbal Ahmed Khan, Dr. Uma Sharma & others

7:00 PM Qawwali by Ustad Nawaz Sabri & Party

Venue: Ghalib's Mazaar at Nizamuddin West Police Station

Please give a missed call for future programmes detail : 9323 300 300

You are cordially invited

Secretary
Sahitya Kala Parishad

BRIEFLY

To get rid of plastic, South body starts a garbage cafe

New Delhi: The South Delhi Municipal Corporation has started 'Garbage Café', aimed at disposing plastic waste in Najafgarh zone. As part of the concept, in exchange of plastic waste, free meals will be provided to people by a restaurant in Vardhman Plus, City Mall, Dwarka, the South body said in a statement. The restaurant will offer free breakfast to citizens who will bring at least 250 grams of plastic waste, and lunch/dinner to those who bring 1 kg of plastic waste. The plastic waste includes empty water bottles, cold drink bottles, plastic cans. **ENS**

Capital gets two sports complexes

New Delhi: Delhi Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot Wednesday inaugurated two sports complexes in capital's Najafgarh. The complexes have been developed at Mundhela Kalam and Kair in Najafgarh at a cost of Rs 147 crore. **PTI**

Man found dead with stab injuries

New Delhi: The body of a 27-year-old man with multiple stab injuries was found lying in a street in Dadri village of South West Delhi Wednesday morning. Police said the man, identified as Bipin Yadav, hailed from Begusarai in Bihar and was currently living in Matiala. A case of murder has been registered, a senior police officer said.

Trying to flee, snatcher nabbed

New Delhi: A 25-year-old man was nabbed while trying to flee after snatching a mobile phone and cash from a person in East Delhi's Vivek Vihar area, police said Wednesday. The accomplices of the accused are absconding. On Tuesday, the PCR staff deployed near Surya Nagar crossing spotted three men running in a suspicious manner. "The police chased the suspects and managed to apprehend one of the accused," said DCP (PCR) Sharat Kumar Sinha. **ENS**

Heavy traffic in Central Delhi

New Delhi: Several parts of the capital witnessed heavy traffic on the occasion Christmas Wednesday. Anticipating heavy traffic, the Delhi Traffic Police had Tuesday released a traffic advisory asking commuters to avoid several roads in Central Delhi. **PTI**



Outside Jamia Millia Islamia; (below) a man dressed as Santa Claus distributes the Preamble to the Constitution to protesters

Library inside college damaged, Jamia students recreate one outside

SHAARDHOOL SHREENATH & ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

STUDENTS HAD envisioned an open library, where anyone can come and read. They had even brought books to distribute.

Outside Jamia Millia Islamia's gate number 10, 25-year-old MA student Sahil Ahmed saw close to a hundred people gather Wednesday. The organisers encouraged onlookers to sit down and read, handing out copies of Mahatma Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* in Hindi, English and Urdu.

"We invite students to come sit with us and read; they can choose to read anything they want. I understand some people have exams to prepare for. This



initiative is in response to the violence on campus when police entered the library on December 15. Our library has been shut ever since, but that cannot stop us from reading," said Ahmed.

Students of JMI and area residents have held a protest outside the university each day

since December 13. On Wednesday, many speakers spoke on the secular history of the country and said that the CAA and the NRC went against the idea of the nation.

"When RSS and the Muslim League were spreading their ideologies of a nation based on religion, the pioneering leaders such as Nehru and Gandhi said India will not be a Pakistan-like nation but a secular republic, like it has been for around 1,000 years," said Qurban Ali, a journalist.

Social activist Swami Agnivesh was also present at the protest and said the BJP had no right to ask the people, who are the real patriots, for certificates of citizenship.

Another student, Salan Riaz (22), dressed up as Santa Claus and distributed copies of the Preamble to the Constitution.

"Students from all over India,

followers of different religions, study here. By celebrating Christmas together, we are showing our respect," he said.

Father Suman Sarin from Sukhdev Vihar Church said: "Jesus was not from Bethlehem, but from Galilee, and his parents had to go to Bethlehem as there was a census. In that sense, Jesus was a person fighting for citizenship. His message is justice, peace and hope. And we find this message in the Preamble, in which 'We the People of India' includes people of all religions, caste and creed."

Some people were seen reading out to others, teaching them. Others brought books to distribute. Sharique Raza (25), who was in the library on December 15, was seen reading a copy of the Indian Constitution.

(Shaardhoool Shreenath is an intern with The Indian Express)

DDA to begin regularisation of godowns under North civic body

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

DAYS AFTER nine people were killed in a fire at a cloth godown in North Delhi's Kirari, the DDA will begin the process of regularising godowns and warehouses located within the jurisdiction of North MCD, as per the provisions of Delhi Master Plan-2021.

North body standing committee chairperson Jai Prakash said the civic body will also formulate a plan for godowns and warehouses in unauthorised colonies once it is regularised. "We will specify where they are allowed and not allowed. These warehouses would also be brought under the tax net," said Prakash.

Fixing responsibility for fire or other hazards had been an uphill task, with officials at the North body maintaining they do not have the power to seal illegal activity in unauthorised colonies since they lack jurisdiction.

"Once the process of regularisation is completed, civic bodies will have control over these colonies," said a senior official. Meanwhile, a senior leader said the civic body will soon begin the process of registering farmhouses in its jurisdiction to bring it under the tax net. The leader added that it will begin collecting property tax from unauthorised colonies from the date of regularisation.

Asked to leave, coaching students in a tight spot

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

WITH CLASSES suspended in coaching centres across Mukherjee Nagar and police claiming they have issued no directives ordering the closure of such centres and PG facilities, students are stuck in the middle, trying to assess where to go.

Students who have lived and studied in the area for years said they have never been asked to leave during this time in the past.

And even though police have dismissed a notice being circulated online as fake, many students, PG owners and residents of the area said they had seen it. Azra Sultan, the resident of a PG in the locality, said the notice had been put up at her PG.

"I've seen the notice but there's no stamp on it and no signature of the SHO. PG owners have asked us to leave but I won't because I've heard all this could be rumours," she said.

However, Navneet, who is preparing for state civil service examinations, said he will buy train tickets to return home to Jharkhand. "We were in our coaching class on Tuesday afternoon when around 1 pm, our teacher stepped out of class because police had come. He came back and told us classes would stop from the next day. We even received a voice message from him saying he had tried to reason with them, but that he had



Classes have been suspended in coaching centres across Mukherjee Nagar. However, police have claimed they issued no directive ordering the closure. **Amit Mehra**

no option but to stop classes. My PG owner is also asking us to leave for a week. It looks like I will have to return home during this time," he said. He takes classes at Prudence coaching centre.

PG and coaching centre owners who had spoken to police themselves said no explanation was provided for the move.

However, in conversations in the locality, they have been linked to a mix between violence on new year's eve in the area three years ago and the anti-CAA and NRC protests taking place in the city.

In January 2017, a 27-year-old man had been arrested in connection with a case of alleged molestation of a woman

and attack on police personnel. Meanwhile, writer Arundhati Roy and actor Zeeshan Ayyub Wednesday addressed students at the Faculty of Arts at Delhi University's North Campus. Roy warned the students to be wary of the National Population Register, cleared by the Union Cabinet this week.

"The NPR will be the database for the NRC... but we should have a plan. When they come to your house for the NPR and ask for your name, let's choose five names that we will all submit. Let's submit 7 Race Course Road as our address and let's all choose one phone number. We will have to do a lot of subversion... we really need to have a plan," she said.

5 MORE DAYS TO BREAK RECORD

Delhi's biting cold a throwback to 1997: Low cloud, fog cover

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

AS THE minimum temperature in the capital dipped 4.5 degrees Celsius in a single day, Delhi recorded its longest cold spell in 22 years.

On Wednesday, the maximum temperature was recorded at 12.7 degrees Celsius, 9 degrees below normal. The minimum was recorded at 6 degrees Celsius.

In 1997, Delhi recorded a long cold day spell, with temperatures remaining 4.5 degrees below normal for 16 days. Delhi has seen 10 such days so far, officials at IMD said. "Severely cold days" are recorded when the temperature is 6 degrees below normal.

"There were six cold to severely cold days in 1973 and 16 in 1997. So far, Delhi has seen 12 such days since December 13. To break the record set in 1997, which saw the highest number of cold days, Delhi will have to see five more such days till December 31," said R K Jenamani, scientist, National Weather Forecasting Centre.

He said the reason for both the cold spells was a dense cloud cover for an extended period of time. "Low cloud and fog cover

LOWER THAN EARLIER

Date	1997		2019	
	Max	Min	Max	Min
Dec 15	13.3	10.6	19	10.2
Dec 16	13.7	6	12.9	10.4
Dec 17	17.4	9.8	12.2	7
Dec 18	16.9	6	18	5.2
Dec 19	13.2	8.4	15	6.4
Dec 20	13.6	9	17.5	9.5
Dec 21	12.5	8.8	18	7.4
Dec 22	14.2	4	14	8.3
Dec 23	15.6	5.4	14	5.7
Dec 24	15.7	7.5	17.2	5.7
Dec 25	14.7	7.5	12.7	6

Temperatures in degrees Celsius

day after day prompted the long cold spell in both years... in 1997, all days between December 13 and 31, except December 30, were cold or severely cold days. It was the coldest December on record," Jenamani said.

According to officials, temperatures are expected to increase slightly on Saturday.

"Starting December 29, cold day conditions are expected to reduce due to change in wind

direction from North Westerly to Easterly. However, a drop in minimum temperature is expected over the weekend, with minimum temperature on Saturday and Sunday being around 4 degrees Celsius. A significant increase in wind speed is expected over Delhi starting December 31, and light rain is expected late night on December 31 and January 1," an IMD official said.

SC acquits woman jailed for 'strangling newborn girl'

Apex court says not enough evidence, motive lacking

PRITAMPAL SINGH
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A WOMAN, serving life term for allegedly strangulating her newborn baby girl, was acquitted by the Supreme Court as the evidence on record was not sufficient to establish her guilt. The apex court also noted that her "family was not orthodox" and "not averse to having a female child".

"By considering the oral evidence on record and post-mortem report, the appellant was convicted by attributing the motive that she strangled her because the newborn was a girl... It is clear from the evidence... as deposited by her husband, they had a male child aged five," a bench of

Justice M M Shantanagoudar and Justice Ramayyagari Subhash Reddy observed.

The court noted the woman's husband also stated that as they already had a male child, they wanted a female child to complete the family. "He stated his brother had three daughters, which shows the family was not orthodox and not averse to having a female child... if the totality of evidence on record is considered, the motive is not established..."

The apex court's verdict came on the mother's appeal against the Delhi High Court's March 2010 verdict, which convicted her and sentenced her to life imprisonment for murder. The High Court had upheld a trial court's December 2009 judgment.

The woman had pleaded innocence before the trial court and deposed that she had been falsely implicated by police in connivance with hospital authorities, to shift blame from doctors.

The woman was admitted to Lady Hardinge Medical College Hospital and delivered a baby girl on August 24, 2007. The prosecution stated that as the newborn was a girl, the mother strangled her. The court however raised doubts over the delay in conducting the baby's post-mortem and on registration of case. "It is clear the baby was put in an incubator with an oxygen mask. She had not opened her eyes and did not cry after birth. There is a possibility of natural death..." the court said.

DU invites suggestions to streamline admissions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE DELHI University (DU) has invited suggestions from public for "strengthening DU admissions" in 2020-21 in order to make it more "student-friendly" and "rigorous". An online form has been floated on the DU website for the purpose by the Dean (Admissions).

The form was uploaded on the DU website on December 21 and can be filled till January 5. One needs to enter their name, affiliated institution and email ID for the same.

Suggestions have been sought for both undergraduate (UG) admissions and postgrad-

uate (PG) admissions. Among the things that the administration has invited suggestions for is regarding "rationalising the cut-offs for merit-based admissions to control over/under admissions". DU's cut-offs have been skyrocketing each year, but that has not prevented over-admissions. This year, Hindu College saw over admission in its political science course despite having the highest cut-off at 99%.

Other aspects on which suggestions are sought include "strengthening the online interface for applicants", "minimising students' visit/s to College/s for document verification", "developing a single admission form in order to reduce multiple filling of admission forms at the time

of admissions", how to make "admissions for the candidates belonging to SC/ ST/ OBC/ EWS/ KM/ PWD/ CWAP quota easier" and suggestions for "closing admissions by the beginning of the academic session so as to minimise academic loss of students".

Dean (Admissions) Pankaj Arora said they have received around 80 responses so far. "This is the first time that an independent admission branch has been created... We have a software to analyse the data and categorise it," he said.

"Other than this, we are also taking suggestions from all HoDs and principals," he said.

This year, DU received more than 2.5 lakh applications for its UG courses.

AT MEWAT'S GHASERA VILLAGE

Refugees told to stay by Gandhi in 1947 say new law breaks old promise

SAKSHI DAYAL
GHASERA, DECEMBER 25

SEVENTY-TWO YEARS after Mahatma Gandhi visited Mewat's Ghasera village during the Partition, and convinced Muslim refugees who had stopped there en-route to Pakistan to remain in their homeland, residents of the Muslim-dominated village say the Citizenship Amendment Act and proposed National Register of Citizens will violate the promises made to their ancestors.

The sentiment is echoed among residents across the dis-

trict, located less than 40 km away from the capital. As per the 2011 census, 79.20% of the population in Mewat practices Islam.

In Ghasera, however, the new law feels more personal. Residents of the village, who took pride in their connection with the Father of the Nation, say they now fear feeling like "second-class citizens".

Local lore suggests that on December 19, 1947, Gandhi made his way to Ghasera, where members of the Muslim community, who had been living in Alwar and Bharatpur, had halted on their way to Pakistan. In the field where they set up camp,

now home to a Government Senior Secondary School, Gandhi addressed the crowd, "calling the Muslim community the backbone of the country", and reassuring people that equal rights would be given to them.

"I have heard stories of what happened from my elders, how Gandhiji urged them to remain here and reassured them that their safety and security would be taken care of. Remaining in India was a choice our ancestors made based on his promises, and because they have affection for their motherland," said Ashraf, the sarpanch of Chasera.

"In fact, December 19 is cele-



At a protest organised in the village last week

brated as Mewat Divas here," said Salamuddin, chief of the Mewat Vikas Sabha.

This year, however, the occasion was marked a day earlier — with a protest against the CAA and NRC, which saw thousands march from the PWD Rest House in Nuh to the Eidgah in Ghasera village 9 km away.

"There is a lot of fear and anger... People who are being persecuted in their countries should be given shelter, we agree, but don't persecuted Muslims deserve safety just as much as other communities?" said Deen Mohammad, a resident.

Mohammad Rashid, a taxi

driver, said, "People here are poorer and cannot afford to miss a day of work... Will they stand in lines to fill applications, or should they fill their children's stomachs?" he said.

Among the youth, concerns are different. Residing in an area plagued by poor water and power supply and acute poverty, villagers in their 20s fear such a legislation would further strain the country's resources.

"There are already no jobs or seats available in college. Now if they start offering citizenship to outsiders; it will get worse," said Hamid, a 22-year-old labourer. His co-worker, Aarif, said: "This is

all politics of votes, nothing else."

The link to politics is a common refrain in the village while discussing the CAA, with residents drawing a link between the legislation and other work done by the government in its second term, all of which, they say, has been against their community.

But protests across the country, residents say, have given them hope. "People from all communities are participating in these protests, and we are lucky in that sense... With the whole country speaking up, maybe they will listen," said Shehzad Khan, a resident.

Puducherry CM writes to President, seeks Bedi's recall

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, DECEMBER 25



Narayanasamy Kiran Bedi

PUDUCHERRY CHIEF Minister V Narayanasamy has written to President Ram Nath Kovind, demanding that Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory, Kiran Bedi, be recalled. Besides accusing Bedi of interference and of running a parallel government, Narayanasamy has cited her presence at a function in a Karnataka school where students re-enacted the demolition of Babri Masjid.

Narayanasamy told *The Indian Express* that he had given the memorandum to President Kovind in person. He said Bedi's style of functioning is blocking the functioning of the elected government in Puducherry. "She is interfering in day-to-day affairs of the elected government, running a parallel government by summoning officials, conducting review meetings and directly interfering in the functioning of areas that come under the state cabinet and the elected government," he said.

opment of the state, she blocks the government's functioning. She has become a liability for Puducherry," he added.

In his memorandum, Narayanasamy has written that there are 28 Governors and three Lieutenant Governors (for Union Territories with a Legislative Assembly) in India. "But she (Bedi) has been misusing her official position and subverting the provisions of Constitution of India against the oath taken by her during assumption of office," he has written.

Citing Bedi's presence at a function in a Karnataka school where students enacted the demolition of Babri Masjid, Narayanasamy wrote Bedi was not only a silent spectator but also "shared this in the social media proudly and thereby disrespected the orders of the Supreme Court of India".

Nitish takes exception after Muzaffarpur admin misses ration card deadline

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, DECEMBER 25

BIHAR CHIEF Minister Nitish Kumar has taken exception to Muzaffarpur administration's failure to meet the September 15 deadline to provide ration cards to over 15,000 BPL families in five blocks affected by Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES). The Chief Minister has also expressed dissatisfaction that some identified BPL families have not yet been allotted homes under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana.

Nitish visited Muzaffarpur on Tuesday during his ongoing "Jal, Jivan and Hariyali" yatra to take stock of implementation of government schemes.

Muzaffarpur Deputy Development Commissioner Ujjawal Kumar said, "We have been giving homes as per the list as there is no separate list of AES-affected families. We are surely prioritising the five blocks which are AES-hit zones."

Muzaffarpur supply officer Mehmood Alam said the administration would soon meet its target for providing ration cards.



PM Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and BJP working president J P Nadda at the memorial of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the occasion of his birth anniversary, in New Delhi on Wednesday. Anil Sharma

PM launches Atal Bhujal Yojana for managing groundwater

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

URGING FARMERS to adopt alternatives to water-intensive crops such as paddy and sugarcane, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said farmers in areas where groundwater level is very low should make a water budget.

"Our farming is heavily dependent on irrigation from groundwater. A lot of water is wasted in our old methods of irrigation. There are crops such as sugarcane and paddy which are water-intensive. It has been found that wherever such crops are grown, the groundwater level decreases

rapidly. To change this situation, we have to make farmers aware of rainwater harvesting and alternative crops. We should move towards micro-irrigation. We have to promote Per Drop, More Crop," he said after launching Atal Bhujal Yojana, aimed at improving management of groundwater in seven states, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Modi requested people of every village to make a water action plan and create a water fund. The total budget of the scheme is Rs 6,000 crore out of which Rs 3,000 crore will be contributed by the World Bank. It aims to benefit nearly 8,350 gram panchayats across 78 districts in 7 states — Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Under the scheme, money will be given to the states as a grant.

The Prime Minister said there is a provision in Atal Jaj Yojana under which better-performing gram panchayats will get more allocation.

Modi also released operational guidelines of Jal Jeevan Mission on the occasion. He said that on one hand, Jal Jeevan Mission will work towards delivering piped water supply to every home and on the other, Atal Jaj Yojana will pay special attention to areas where groundwater is very low.

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HARYANA

Denied Cabinet berth, JJP MLA who defeated minister quits party post

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 25



Ram Kumar Gautam

IN A major setback to the Haryana Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala-led JJP in less than two months after it entered into an alliance with the BJP to form the state government, a founder member of the party, Ram Kumar Gautam, has quit as JJP's national vice-president over denial of a Cabinet berth from the party's quota.

In the Assembly polls in October, Gautam defeated former state Finance Minister Captain Abhimanyu in Narnaud.

Gautam told *The Indian Express* on Wednesday that he is not going to resign from the party. He said his main grouse is that Dushyant kept 10 portfolios with him and left nothing for other legislators, expect a low-profile ministry for a two-time MLA, Anoop Dhanak.

Dhanak is Minister of State (independent charge), Archaeology and Museums, and is part of the Labour and Employment Ministry as Minister of State (attached with the Deputy CM).

Sources said that while the JJP has one more Cabinet berth in its

quota, it has no plans to fill that vacancy at this point.

Gautam said, "He is keeping all the portfolios, including industry, excise and taxation, PWD (B&R), revenue and food & supply with him... What can we do? He did not share power with anybody else. He made me MLA, but we have made him Deputy Chief Minister."

He said, "Anoop Dhanak has been given the portfolio of Archaeology and Museums. What will he do there? It's a joke on him and his community."

In Faridabad on Wednesday, Dushyant told reporters, "You have brought the matter to my knowledge. We will look into it."

About quitting as the party's national vice-president, Gautam said, "It is not a national party. In these circumstances, there was no need of remaining under the burden of the post."

Gautam said he had no plans to quit the party. "I am a founder member. We formed the party with a lot of hard work. People of the constituency who voted for me have a lot of hopes from me." He also claimed that the JJP leadership can't stand any tall, at least other than themselves.

EXPLAINED

Rebellion not a good news for JJP

The rebellion from its legislator is not good news for JJP. In less than a year of its formation, it had surprised many when it won 10 out of 90 seats in the Haryana polls. MLA Ram Kumar Gautam's outburst shows all is not well in the party. This may prompt rival parties to make attempts to woo MLAs of the Dushyant Chautala-led party.

Universal Health Coverage: Health Ministry looks at innovative tips

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

FOLLOWING A unique brainstorming initiative earlier this month, the Union Health Ministry is looking at some outside-the-box recommendations, including pass-books for health and wellness centres and a "Lal Path Lab-like" model for diagnostic services.

The recommendations were made by three expert groups —

policy labs — put together to grapple with questions about India's road to Universal Health Coverage.

The policy labs tackled three different questions — how to communalise wellness, comprehensive primary healthcare (CPHC) in urban areas and strengthening service delivery for CPHC. While the focus of the groups was on health and wellness centres, the primary and preventive care arm of Ayushman Bharat, the experts also deliberated on the conver-

gence of the other arm of Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, under which families will be provided an annual cover of Rs 5 lakh for secondary and tertiary care procedures.

The ministry had compiled questions whose answers the experts at the policy labs would need to look for. Some of these were how to engage communities better, how to better inter-ministerial convergence, how to look at a continuum of care in urban areas,

the role medical colleges need to play and what kind of preparedness is required for the expanded basket of services health and wellness centres aim to provide.

"Universal Health Coverage has become a key global priority so this Universal Health Coverage Day, we looked at the question through policy labs. The idea of policy labs was to look in a structured way at questions we need answers to as we go ahead. So we gave questions to each policy lab and they

came out with recommendations, some of them innovative, some drawing from existing models but all focused on finding answers to questions rather than open-ended recommendations. Policy Lab is a tool to bring people-centred design approaches to policy-making," said a health ministry official.

Among the experts who participated in the policy labs were Niti Aayog member Dr Vinod Paul, Public Health Foundation of India president Dr K Srinath Reddy, Dr V

R Murlidharan from IIT Madras, Dr Thelma Narayan, Director, School of Public Health, Equity and Action, and Dr Abhay Shukla, SAATHI, Pune and member of advisory group for community action, National Health Mission.

The questions discussed were identified through regional workshops on operationalisation of health and wellness centres to review progress, assess gaps and understand areas that have to be strengthened.

SAFETY, CONVENIENCE, COMFORT 100 MORE NEW BUSES ON DELHI'S ROADS



UNIQUE FEATURES

- Hydraulic lift for differently abled
- GPS
- CCTV
- Panic Button
- Two way communication with control room

FLAG-OFF CEREMONY

Thursday, 26 December 2019 at 11:00 am
Rajghat Cluster Bus Depot

Chief Guest
Arvind Kejriwal
Chief Minister, Delhi

Guest of Honour
Kailash Gahlot
Transport Minister, Delhi



6 GOVT & POLITICS



YOUTH'S HERO

GENERAL BIPIN Rawat was the centre point of attraction at Vigyan Bhavan on Wednesday, with many youths trying to get a selfie with the Army chief at an event to announce re-naming the Rohtang tunnel after former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi finished his speech and left the main hall, the youth sitting in the rear seats rushed to the front to click a picture with General Rawat, who is expected to become the Chief of Defence Staff. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and some other Union ministers were present at the event.

STATUE SPIRIT

THE NEHRU-GANDHI iconography is passe. The BJP, it seems, is building its own iconography, with former PM Vajpayee's statues across the country. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated one in Lucknow, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar unveiled another in Patna, and BJP MP Jugal Oram a third - a bronze statue - at Rourkela Steel Plant.

WORLD ON GANDHI

THE GOVERNMENT is taking out an anthology of essays on "What Gandhi means to me" by world leaders, which will include essays by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Nepal Prime Minister K P Oli, Maldives Speaker Mohamed Nasheed and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, among others. The foreword for the collector's edition, to commemorate the Mahatma's 150th birth anniversary, is written by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

CAMPAIGN-READY

WITH THE BJP getting ready to campaign in favour of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Union ministers are now busy drawing up tour plans and holding meetings with representative groups. Minorities Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi is set to travel not just to his home state of Uttar Pradesh but also to Maharashtra and a couple of other states to quell concerns about the new law and its effect on Muslims.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath at a rally in Bhopal on Wednesday. PTI

MP CM: Won't implement CAA, we understand their intention

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, DECEMBER 25

CALLING THE Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA), a law that was against people, society, the Constitution and religion, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath on Wednesday asserted that it will not be implemented in the state as long as the Congress was in power.

"Jo jan virodhi, samvidhan virodhi, samaj virodhi, dharam virodhi, aisa koi kanun hoye, ye Madhya Pradesh mein kabhi laagu nahi hogajab tak Congress kisarkar hai (No law that is anti-people, anti-Constitution, anti-society and anti-religion will ever be implemented in MP till the Congress is in power)," he said, after leading a march to protest against the CAA in Bhopal.

Thousands took part in what the Congress called a Peace March against the legislation. Carrying the tri-colour and placards and raising slogans against "the black

law", Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, the marchers walked for a little over a kilometre.

"Are we illiterate? Do Modiji and Amit Shahji think we are illiterate? We have read the legislation. We understand their niyat (intention). The question is not what is written, but what is unwritten. The question is not how it will be used, but how it will be misused," he said when asked about the Prime Minister's assertion that Opposition CMs did not know about the legislation.

Nath added that his party wanted to implement the National Population Register, but not the National Register of Citizens (NRC). Nath went on to criticise the citizenship law further saying it hid more than what it revealed. He added that he had never seen such an anti-Constitutional law in his four-decade parliamentary career and added that it can be misused.

In a brief speech before the rally, he accused the BJP govern-

ment of attacking the Constitution and dividing the nation. "The Congress party will not let this conspiracy succeed," he said, adding the rally was being taken out to give the message that the Centre was endangering the future of coming generations with this Act. "The whole world knows India as a country that follows the Constitution and where every one is free to follow their religion, caste and culture," he added.

He went on to add that Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the Prime Minister were making contradictory statements in the matter.

Former CM and senior BJP leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan slammed the Congress government's decision to take out a rally. "What peach march? It's a move to whip up passions," he said, wondering "can a CM occupying the Constitutional post continue to remain in chair after declaring that he will not implement a law passed by Parliament?"

Owaisi urges KCR to stop NPR in state

Hyderabad: Several Muslim leaders including AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and members of the United Muslim Action Committee met Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababoo Nara on Wednesday to appeal to him to stop the updation of the National Population Register (NPR), which they said was connected to NRC.

The delegation also discussed the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, (CAA) at the meeting, which comes ahead of municipal elections scheduled for January 22.

"We met the CM to bring to his notice the concerns of Muslims regarding the NRC which is proposed to be implemented across the nation. We are thankful to the

CM for opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the houses of Parliament. Now, we urge him to stop NPR work in Telangana. They are preparing NPR as per the Citizenship Act, 1955. It is connected to the NRC. Why is Home Minister Amit Shah giving misleading statements?" Owaisi asked. ENS



Jharkhand CM-designate Hemant Soren meets Congress president Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

Hemant meets Sonia, Rahul; Cong may get deputy CM post

JHARKHAND CHIEF Minister designate Hemant Soren on Wednesday met Congress president Sonia Gandhi and senior party leader Rahul Gandhi and invited them to his swearing-in ceremony in Ranchi on Sunday. The alliance partners also got down to working out the nitty gritty of government formation ahead of the swearing-in.

Sources said the Congress is likely to get the post of Deputy Chief Minister and four ministers in the government. Pakur MLA Alamgir Alam, who was elected Congress legislative party (CLP) leader Tuesday, is likely to take over as Deputy Chief Minister. A four-time MLA, Alam is one of the seniormost leaders of the Congress in Jharkhand.

Among those in the ministerial race are state Congress president Rameshwar Oraon, Jamshedpur West MLA Banna Gupta and Bermo legislator Rajendra Prasad Singh. Sources said the party is likely to make one of its four women MLAs a minister. All four of them - Deepika Pandey Singh, Purnima Neeraj Singh, Mamata Devi and Amba Prasad Sahu - are first-time MLAs. Sources said the choice could be between Deepika and Amba.

Soren said Rahul will attend the swearing-in ceremony. Soren said he has spoken to many leaders in the Opposition. "I have spoken to many leaders and will be speaking to others. Many leaders will come...it will be a grand ceremony," he said. Soren said he will also Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president and Home Minister Amit Shah to the ceremony.

Sena MP's letter supporting CAA-NRC rally stirs row

VISHWAS WAGHMODE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

SHIV SENA MP Hemant Patil triggered a controversy on Wednesday with a letter expressing support for a protest rally in favour of the new citizenship law and National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Hingoli district in Marathwada region.

However, Patil's claims that "people associated with" the RSS had "copy-pasted" the text on another letter written by him to Railways authorities for reservation. He also gave a written letter to Hingoli police asking it to investigate the matter.

Patil's letter surfaced on Wednesday. Addressed to the Hingoli district collector, the December 24 letter expresses his support for CAA and NRC. "I express my regret for not being able to attend today's protest rally in support of CAA and NRC in Hingoli as I have to attend a meeting in Mumbai with the CM on issues of irrigation projects and vacancies in government departments in Hingoli. I have voted in favour of the law in Lok Sabha. Shiv Sena has been a Hindutva party and has taken an aggressive stand on it. I am giving this letter expressing my complete support to the law," the letter stated.

Earlier this month, the Sena's stand on CAA was questioned after its MPs voted in favour of it in Lok Sabha. After the Congress expressed its displeasure on it, the Sena changed its stand and abstained from voting in Rajya Sabha.

Patil claimed the text of the letter has been pasted on a letter he had written for reservation for a railway seat. "Why will I write a letter to the district collector expressing support for the law? If I wanted, I would have written to the organisation behind the protest. Yesterday, I was with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray in Mumbai. Some people from RSS have copy pasted the text on my other letter written for railway reservation," Patil said.

Patil, on Wednesday evening, submitted a written letter to the Hingoli police asking it to investigate the matter of "illegally misusing his letter". Ganesh Hake, BJP spokesperson, said, "It is wrong to blame RSS as they would not do such a thing. The Sena has voted in favour of CAA in Lok Sabha. So, they should say so openly."

Farmers with over Rs 2 lakh loan will get help: Uddhav

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, DECEMBER 25

DAYS AFTER announcing to waive farm loans of up to Rs 2 lakh, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday said the state government would soon come out with a special scheme for farmers with outstanding loans of more than Rs 2 lakh.

Thackeray made the announcement while addressing the 43th annual convocation of the Vasantdada Sugar Institute (VSI) here. Besides, he said his government would also bring another scheme to reward farmers who regularly repay their agricultural loans.

"There are farmers with outstanding loans of more than Rs 2 lakh. Banks have been asked to submit details of farm loans outstanding, post that we will come up with a scheme to help them. A similar scheme would be announced for farmers who regularly repay their loans," he said.

While the opposition BJP has slammed the announcement of the loan waiver, most farmers in the state have welcomed it and are waiting for the Government Resolution (GR). At present, outstanding farm loan in the state is Rs 1,31,578 crore.

In his address, Thackeray also said his government would

bring in policies for the sugar sector in consultation with experts. The chief minister, while admitting his lack of exposure to the sector, said he would take the advice of ministers like Jayant Patil and others while developing policies for the sector. The chief minister also promised to speed up the process of helping VSI set up an unit in Jalna district of Marathwada.

Former Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, in his address, urged sugar mills to invest in cane development work. Citing the example of Uttar Pradesh, the NCP supremo said the state had surged ahead of Maharashtra in sugar production.

State Minister for Cooperation Jayant Patil hoped that the state and central government would help sugar mills pay the minimum Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) to growers. Patil, whose family controls the Rajarambapu Cooperative Sugar Mill in Sangli district, also pointed to lack of price parity in ethanol although the central government has brought a policy to wean mills away from sugar to ethanol production. "Mills have started selling molasses (which forms the basis of ethanol production) given its better prices. A ban needs to be imposed on movement of molasses out of the state," he said.



Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray and NCP president Sharad Pawar at an event in Pune on Wednesday. Ashish Kale

Irrespective of region, religion, any true son of India a Hindu: RSS chief

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 25



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat

STATING THAT Hindu society is capable of finding solutions in a Hindu way to unite the nation, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday said any true "son of mother India", irrespective of his language, region or religion, is a Hindu.

Bhagwat said Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote in his 'Swadeshi Samaj' that "despite some inherent contradictions between Hindus and Muslims, the Hindu society is capable of finding solutions in a Hindu way to unite the nation. This is the Hindu thought process, and our cultural values define the Hindu way of life."

Explaining who is a Hindu, Bhagwat said, "Irrespective of religion and culture, people who have nationalistic spirit and respect Bharat's culture and heritage are Hindus. The RSS considers 130 crore people of the country as Hindus... Sangh aims to build such a united society."

He said, "The son of mother India, whether he may speak any language, from any region, follow any form of worship or not believing in worship of any, is a Hindu..."

Bhagwat was speaking at an event organised as part of Vijay Sankalp Sibiram of Telangana RSS.

He said, "The RSS's purpose is not to be an organisation but to organise and strengthen the society with the right kind of cultural and social values. People always look towards great leaders and governments for development, but it is our responsibility to work for the nation with dedication."

Bhagwat said swayamsevak work for development and success of the nation, without any selfish motive and without taking any credit. But, he said, "unfortunately, the world is filled with tamasik and rajasik forces. Our Bharatiya culture alone is capable of achieving 'dharma vijay', and such an organised Hindu society can guide the world as a vishva guru. People of sattvik nature are positive and work for society with a constructive approach... When we attain success in this manner, we achieve dharma vijay."

matter. On December 21 afternoon, Jugdar and a few other Sena workers had allegedly assaulted 33-year-old Hiramani Tiwari for berating the CM in a Facebook post and calling him bald. Both parties had filed non-cognizable offences against each other Saturday. Police said since then they have been urging Tiwari to file a formal complaint, but he reportedly did not respond. Jugdar and a few other men have now been booked on charges of rioting, unlawful assembly, causing hurt and criminal intimidation under the IPC. No arrests have been made so far.

Case against Raghubar Das under SC/ST Act

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, DECEMBER 25

A DAY after Chief Minister-designate Hemant Soren staked claim to form the government in Jharkhand, former Chief Minister Raghubar Das was on Wednesday booked under Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, for using a slur before taking his name during a campaign speech in Jamtara.

Soren had lodged a complaint on December 19 at Dumka SC/ST Police Station where he wrote: "Ek chunaavi Sabha ko sambhodhit karte hue mere naam avem jaati suchak upnaam lekar mere viroodh jaati suchak apsabdon Ka prayog Kiya hai. Isse main aahat hoon tatha mere Pratistha ko the Pahuncha hai. (In an election speech Das took my name and caste surname, and the used caste based slur. I am hurt and there has been a damage to my prestige)."

Jamtara SP Anshuman Kumar said, "Since the election rally took place in Jamtara, the Dumka police sent the complaint to us and we have registered a case under SC/ST Act against former CM Raghubar Das."

The election rally took place in Jamtara on December 18. In his speech, Das had said: "...Congress to sochta hai, desh Mera bapouti hai, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, iska phir beta beti... usi tarah Soren pariwar, baap adhyaksha, beta karyakari adhyaksha... ye log bhita saala Jharkhand, sorry, chahta Hain Jharkhand Mera bapouti ho (Congress thinks the country is their inheritance... Similarly, in the Soren family... father president... son executive president... these people think Jharkhand is their inheritance)."

'Will be independent... as of now govt has my moral support'

INDEPENDENT MLA Saryu Roy, who defeated Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das in a bitterly fought contest from Jamshedpur West constituency in the Assembly elections, speaks to **Abhishek Angad** about what the next government should do, and why the outgoing Chief Minister came a cropper in the polls. Excerpts:

What will be your role in the Hemant Soren-led government?

I will have no role to play. I will be independent and will support them according to merit (of each issue). As of now, they have my moral support and I would never want to destabilise this government. If any issue arises, I will make them understand it.

The JMM manifesto contained many populist promises. What do you feel should be the Soren government's priorities?

They should first form a competent team to look into the state's finances. There has to be an assessment of the state's liabilities. There is now a hostile government at the Centre and money is required for many Central schemes. It has to be seen how the work will be completed. Since the Congress is also part of the alliance, a message should not come out that the Jharkhand government is run from Delhi. I think they have to curtail populist measures and strengthen the house first.

Unemployment has been central to Soren's campaign. But where will jobs come from?

It is very difficult to generate jobs here (in Jharkhand). If you give government jobs then it will



WITH SARYU ROY
INDEPENDENT MLA,
JHARKHAND

won from adjacent Jamshedpur East in 2014). So it was a mix of several factors.

Is there a message for the BJP central leadership from the election results?

I cannot give any message to the central leadership because I am no longer in the party. But I am still unable to comprehend how and why voices (of state BJP) were not heard. Das remained protected by Amit Shah or (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi-ji. Of late, many (BJP) MLAs felt humiliated. The (party's) central leadership turned a deaf ear to the problems.

A report by your committee spoke about the need to cancel a consultancy contract awarded to Meinhardt, when Raghubar Das was the state Urban Development minister, irregularities. You were very vocal about it. Do you expect the new government to proceed on it?

It is at a stage where the government has to give sanction to register an FIR. Whether the next government will do that or not, that is to be seen.

You were earlier Food minister in the Raghubar Das government which linked Aadhaar with PDS, resulting in reported problems surrounding disbursement of ration. Many people could not get ration. Retrospectively, do you think it was a flawed decision?

I don't think there was a problem in linking Aadhaar (with PDS), but the technology has to be pro-people. One can say there are flaws in ground-level implementation. There are a lot of shops where there is no signal, and it has to be strengthened.

7 EXPRESS NETWORK

In Lucknow hospital, two teenagers with gunshot wounds, neither of them a protester

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 25

AMONG THE three people who suffered gunshot injuries during the December 19 protest against the new citizenship law in Lucknow are two teenaged students recuperating at a hospital here. While both were shot in the abdomen, neither of the two — 15-year-old Mohammad Jeelani and 17-year-old Mohammad Shameem — have been identified by police as injured protesters.

The third person succumbed to his injuries a day after the violence.

"On Friday afternoon, I was returning home at Chaupatiyan locality from my aunt's house in Khadra in an e-rickshaw. I was not aware of the protests. All of a

sudden, there was chaos and people started throwing stones and bricks. The e-rickshaw driver asked me to get down and left. I tried to hide in a lane, but suddenly a bullet hit me. I did not see who fired the bullet. I fell unconscious and woke up here at KGMU hospital," Jeelani, a student of Class VII, said.

His father, Mohammad Naeem (38), who drives a mini-truck, wants the government to pay for his son's medical expenses, saying they are in no position to afford it. "The doctors keep prescribing tests and medicines. We have been paying for these expenses from our pocket," said Naeem, who has already spent Rs 35,000 on his son's treatment. "Police visited on Tuesday and recorded the statement of my son. They are dis-

criminating against my son. If a person from the other community had been shot, the government would have given compensation," Naeem added.

On the adjoining bed, Shameem, a student of Class X at a government school, is recovering after being operated for a gunshot wound in his stomach. According to him, he was going to his sister's place in Hussainabad area of the city after getting a cooking cylinder refilled at Muffiganj when he found himself in the middle of the Friday's clash.

"I was going to my sister's place in Hussainabad area when the stone-pelting began. I tried to hide in a lane but was shot in the stomach. I managed to reach home and told my mother that I had been shot at. After that, I

don't remember what happened. I woke up a few days later in the hospital bed," said Shameem, who is barely able to speak due to the pain.

His father used to ply an auto-rickshaw before he met with an accident six years ago. "We don't have money to get him treated," said Shameem's sister Sama, who is studying in Class XII. He has two more brothers and the family lives in a two-room house on a rent of Rs 2,500 per month.

"We have received no call or assurance from anyone in the government or administration. My brother is not a rioter, then why should he not get compensation for what happened to him?" Sama said.

Meanwhile, Station House Officer of Thakurganj Police Station, Pramod Kumar Mishra,

said that the two boys have not been found involved in the rioting that took place in Hussainabad area of the city on Friday.

"They were present when the situation turned violent. And yesterday (Tuesday), when we took their statements, they told us that they were shot from behind. So far in our investigation, we have not found any role of these two boys in the protest during the investigation," said Mishra.

The doctors at the KGMU said that both Jeelani and Shameem were doing well after they were operated upon for their gunshot wounds.

"The plan is to discharge them tomorrow. We will conduct a check-up and then decide," Dr Sameer Mishra of the KGMU Trauma Centre said.

CAA protest: BSY puts on hold ex-gratia for kin of two killed in police firing

DARSHAN DEVAIAH BP
BENGALURU, DECEMBER 25

DAYS AFTER announcing a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each to the families of two persons killed in police firing during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in Mangalore, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Wednesday said his government had decided to "put it on hold", adding that "giving criminals compensation is an unpardonable crime in itself".

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with senior officials of Dakshina Kannada district, Yediyurappa said: "We have not decided yet to give the compensation to the family members of those killed in the police firing because giving criminals compensation is an unpardonable crime in itself. Earlier, the government had decided to give them compensation, but now we have put it on hold."

"Till the investigation is complete and until their roles are not cleared, we will not release any funds," he said. "It is now clear that



'Giving criminals compensation unpardonable crime'

it (Mangalore protests) was a conspiracy. People tried to barge into the armoury of the police station. We are not going to spare anybody," he said.

Two persons, Abdul Jaleel (49) and Naushin Kudroli (23), were killed in police firing during the protests in Mangalore on December 19. While Jaleel worked at the local fish market, Kudroli was a welder in Bunder area of Mangalore.

Three days later, on December 22, Yediyurappa announced compensation for their families. He also asked the authorities in Mangalore to consider building houses for the two families.

On December 23, the Mangalore North police registered an FIR against 29 people, including Jaleel and Kudroli, based on a complaint filed by the city's

Deputy Police Commissioner (law and order) Arunangshu Giri.

According to the FIR, a crowd of 1,500-2,000 people violated prohibitory orders, assembled outside the Mangalore North police station, and threw stones. The FIR said that when the crowd did not disperse despite warnings, police fired in the air; two persons were killed and five injured.

The state government had announced a CID and a magisterial probe into the violence.

On Tuesday, BJP MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal had demanded that the compensation be withdrawn, saying the two men who were killed were "anti-nationals". "Only patriots and people who are protecting cows should be given compensation, not the people who were involved in this protest," he said.

Meanwhile, former Karnataka Chief Minister and Congress leader Siddaramaiah tweeted: "An elected government should not turn inhumane, cruelly communal... It is now clear that you are the person who ordered the police to take lives."

Son, brother critical, trauma for kin at AIIMS

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE MOTHER of a 17-year-old boy from Meerut, who has a bullet lodged in his spine, and brother of a 30-year-old businessman from UP's Firozabad district, with a bullet in his neck, sat worried, anxious outside the Emergency ward of AIIMS Trauma Centre in Delhi on Wednesday afternoon. Both victims were rushed to Delhi after they received gunshot wounds on Friday, allegedly during anti-citizenship law protests in their respective cities.

The victim from Firozabad has been identified as Mohammed Haroon. The teen's mother requested not to be identified out of "fear of the police". Dr Amit Lathwal, medical superintendent of AIIMS Trauma Centre, said, "Haroon is on the ventilator and his condition is critical; there is a bullet lodged in his neck. He arrived at 3.30 am Wednesday. The victim from Meerut reached the hospital on Saturday. He has a bullet in his spine and is a paraplegic because of it. He is in ICU."

The woman told The Indian Express that her son was returning home from a school books manufacturing unit where he works when he allegedly received a gunshot wound at Meerut's Lisari Gate. He returned around 5 pm, semi-conscious and in bloodied clothes. "There was a wound on his shoulder and I put first-aid; we didn't

know it was a gunshot wound. He cried all night, as he couldn't move his arms or legs - we couldn't take him to hospital, as everything was shut."

On Saturday morning, an X-Ray at a local hospital showed a bullet lodged in his spine and the family rushed him to AIIMS. "Doctors say my son will never walk again. He's so young...he was not protesting; he didn't even know about it," she said.

Meerut SSP Ajay Sahni said, "It has not come to our knowledge that he was injured during the protests. There is a possibility that there was a personal dispute and it has been linked to the protests. There was absolutely no firing from our side."

On Friday, a similar protest in Firozabad turned violent and Haroon was among those injured. After three days at an Agra hospital, he was moved to Delhi early Wednesday. His brother Zaki Sheikh said, "Haroon was returning home after selling a buffalo at a mandi in Pachokhara, 20 km from his home in Firozabad. He was suddenly shot at - no one knows whether the police or the protesters had fired the shot."

Sheikh claimed Haroon was not a part of the protest. Firozabad SP Sachindra Patel said, "We have learnt from locals that one Haroon got injured in the violence and his family got him admitted at a hospital in Delhi. The police have no information how Haroon got injured and when he was taken to Delhi for treatment."



CRPF personnel at the Latasil ground in Guwahati where artists, sculptors and others took part in a protest against the new citizenship law on Wednesday. *Dasarath Deka*

ASSAM BJP takes out march, Sarma says not an ant illegally entered Assam after 2014

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, DECEMBER 25

AS PROTESTS against the new citizenship law continued in Assam, the BJP on Wednesday took out a peace march in Barpeta district. The BJP's march in Barpeta Road was led by state finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Assam BJP president Ranjeet Dass.

"It is being said that the BJP will bring foreigners. From where will the BJP bring foreigners? No foreigner [who came to India] after December 2014 will become Indian citizen [by the new law]...", Sarma told the gathering. He added that he was sure that after 2014, when Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister, "not

even an ant" has dared to cross into Assam illegally.

Sarma lashed out against the Congress and held it responsible for illegal migration into Assam prior to 2014. "We had to bring in the Citizenship (Amendment) Act for the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian people who have come into Assam from 1972 to 2014. And during whose rule did they come in? During the Congress days and not the days of Sarbananda Sonowal and PM Narendra Modi. You let them come, and the Hindus you have allowed to come, how can we chase them away?"

Sarma added that Modi has taken steps to ensure the safety of Hindus in Bangladesh and argued that had Manmohan Singh and Rajiv Gandhi done the same, "this

problem" would not have been created at all in Assam. "The whole problem has been created due to the weak leadership of the Congress... If the Congress had such strong policy, then no one would have had to leave their home and come to India," he said. Meanwhile, protests against the new citizenship law continued across the state, with people taking out cultural demonstrations, protest marches and rallies.

In Guwahati, artists, writers, poets, sculptors, singers and cultural personalities gathered at Latasil ground and presented pieces of art on themes related to protecting identities of the indigenous people of Assam and the on-going movement against the new citizenship law.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, DECEMBER 25

NIRMA UNIVERSITY'S Institute of Law has sought an undertaking from a few of its students who took part in a recent protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that they would refrain from participating in any protest in the future.

The university also sent an advisory to their parents, asking them to "counsel" their wards. A few students of Institute of Law from the Ahmedabad-based private university participated in a protest outside Gandhi Ashram on December 17. Out of more than a dozen students who participated in the protest, around five were asked to give the undertaking. They were identified by the university from pictures published by local newspapers.

The university administration's message to the parents of these students stated, "...The Police and Intelligence Bureau-IB have taken details of your ward from us. We have counselled the students to refrain from any such activities and expect support from your side also. This is also to in-

form you that if your ward continuously to participate in protests, the police might create a record against him."

The university is located in Sola police station area. In-charge of the police station JP Jadeja said a "letter of solidarity" had emerged on the social media in which a student organisation of Nirma University had expressed support to Jamia Millia Islamia students. "We did not find it a serious issue. Police have not submitted any list of students to the university."

Ashish Desai, Dean, Student Affairs, Nirma University, admitted taking such an undertaking from the students. "How can they protest in the name of Nirma University? They used the letterhead of Nirma Institute of Law Student Activity Association (NIL-SAA)," said Desai, also head, corporate affairs at Nirma Limited.

Abhishek Khandelwal, one of the protesters who is an alumnus of the institute and obtained permission from police for a protest outside Gandhi Ashram, declined that the university's name was used in the protest. "We did not participate in the protest under the name of the university but in our individual capacity.

Two PFI members held in Meerut: cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MEERUT, DECEMBER 25

POLICE ON Wednesday said that they have arrested two members of Popular Front of India (PFI) in connection with the violence that erupted in Meerut last Friday during protests against the new citizenship law and the proposed NRC.

Police said that they have recovered "placards containing slogans against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and NRC, party flags, pamphlets with objectionable content and controversial literature."

"We have intelligence inputs that the two arrested persons — Amzad (22) and Javed (25), who are residents of Shakoor Nagar and Khushal Nagar in Lisadi Gate area of Meerut — had distributed pamphlets on December 19 in the affected areas and also after the Friday prayers on December 20," said SP of Meerut city, Akhilesh Narain Singh.

The SP said that Javed owns photostat shop in the area where he made copies of the pamphlets and Amzad and his three aides distributed them. "We have also recovered four mobile phones and various other objectionable materials," Singh added.

Supporters of CAA, NRC rally across Pune

HARSH SHUKLA & TIYASHI DATTA
PUNE, DECEMBER 25

AMID NUMEROUS rallies against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), BJP leaders, workers and local residents took to the streets in support of CAA-NRC at over 45 locations in the city on Wednesday.

Hundreds took part in the rallies at Mandai, Ramtekdi, Jai Shree Ram Chowk, Nanded city and Padale Palace Chowk, among other places. BJP MP Girish Bapat joined the rally at Mandai.

"This law is not against any religion. It is necessary for the se-



Pune MP Girish Bapat leads a march in support of the new citizenship law at Pune on Wednesday. *Arul Horizon*

curity of our citizens. Everyone is studying the law at this time. The government will make

changes if needed... CAA is not against Indian Muslims. According to us, the law is right

and there is nothing wrong if the government makes a register of the country's citizens," said Deepak Pote, PMC Corporator and president of the BJP Yuva Morcha's Pune unit.

Supporters of CAA-NRC held placards with slogans declaring 'I support CAA and India supports CAA', and blew conch shells. They also raised slogans of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram'.

Another supporter, Shantanu Khilare, 42, said, "The CAA is for people who have been victims of religious persecution in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The government did not even bring the National Register of Citizens on the floor of Parliament..."

Gujarat activist detained over fast, let off

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, DECEMBER 25

A DAY after Sabarmati Ashram denied permission to journalist-activist Nachiketa Desai to observe a 12-hour fast every day until December 31 on the ashram premises to protest against alleged police brutalities on protesters in many states against the new citizenship law, Ahmedabad police on Wednesday detained him for over three hours after he sat on a hunger strike outside the ashram.

Desai is son of Narayan Desai, the late Gandhian best known for 'Gandhi Katha', or recital of incidents from the Mahatma's life to promote his message.



Nachiketa Desai. *Javed Raja*

Desai, who had began a 12-hour fast at 8 am on Sabarmati Ashram premises, claimed that he was moved out by trustees of Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust (SAPMT).

"They moved me out, so I continued my fast on the footpath outside. Soon, the police took me away saying I don't have permission to observe a fast."

Sudarshan Iyengar, a trustee member of SAPMT, said, "There was no permission sought (for a fast). On Tuesday, he (Desai) told us that he is informing us he will conduct the fast. Today, when he came to the ashram to observe his fast, we repeatedly tried to persuade him that this can't be allowed, and he may do so outside.

He was taken outside, where we laid down a mat for him as well so that he can continue observing his fast there."

Desai was detained from outside the ashram and taken to Ranipolice station.

Inspector J B Khambhla said, "He was taken into detention under Section 68 of Gujarat Police Act since he had not taken any police permission to sit on a fast."

Ashram director Atul Pandya said, "He (Desai) had come to seek permission to observe a fast on the ashram premises, which is not permitted as per tradition of the ashram. In fact, this is a museum which sees 3,000 visitors a day, and allowing something like that would not be proper."

IN A FIRST, HERD THAT CAME FROM CHHATTISGARH HAS STAYED ON IN MP RESERVE FOREST

Bandhavgarh forests get a trunk call in elephant-less MP

ESHA ROY
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

FOR THE first time, Bandhavgarh reserve forest in Madhya Pradesh has a colony of elephants — the same herd of about 40 animals that arrived at the sanctuary around this time last year, and has stayed on.

This, experts say, is an unusual occurrence in Bandhavgarh, which has, over the years, played host

to herds of elephants that arrive to graze and forage and subsequently travel back to neighbouring Chhattisgarh. Elephant experts now say the development is a sign not only of a rise in elephant numbers in the country, and the fact that they are travelling, but also that they can thrive at a place given the right conditions.

Pointing out that this is the first time in centuries that MP has had elephants, Bandhavgarh National

Park deputy director Sidharth Gupta said, "This herd arrived in December 2018. The fact that it has stayed on is unusual. We have never had wild elephants reside here before. But Bandhavgarh is a large reserve forest — they have plenty of food and water, and we believe that is why they stayed on."

He said while the reserve has received no new funds for the elephants, certain measures have been taken. "Since this is not an

elephant area, we were not trained in handling them. So we have had elephant experts and wildlife officials from West Bengal and Chhattisgarh to come and train our staff," he said. "We have deputed patrol teams and are monitoring the elephants round the clock. We have conducted awareness campaigns in surrounding villages so that the locals are aware and we can control the man-elephant conflict, if there arises any." So far,

Gupta added, there has been no reports of a conflict.

In October, the Union Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change constituted a technical committee to develop a National Elephant Action Plan. Committee member Bivash Pandav, who also works for Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Chhattisgarh and is currently tracking several herds in the state, including the one now at Bandhavgarh, said, "When they

(herd of elephants) migrated to Bandhavgarh, we kept expecting them to return, but they did not."

Giving an example from Surguja, in north Chhattisgarh, Pandav said there were elephants in that area earlier. "There are records of this, and even records of elephants being hunted or captured and presented to Mughal emperors from Surguja. But in the 1920s, they disappeared for unknown reasons. They reappeared in late-1990s and

early-2000s. Today, there are 250 elephants in north Chhattisgarh that have mostly come from Odisha and Jharkhand."

Qamar Qureshi of WII said migrating elephants is now a country-wide trend, with the animals moving from south to north, and east towards the west. "The source population is increasing, so the animals are migrating. Tiger and elephant ranges in the country are also expanding," he said.

EXPLAINED
A case of migration

There are no elephants in MP, the state with most number of national parks (10). There is no known reason, but experts say a loss of habitat could have led to this. Growing urbanisation and deforestation in other elephants areas, such as Bengal and Jharkhand, could now be pushing the animals west.

YAMUNA EXPRESSWAY SCAM CBI takes over probe, YEIDA ex-CEO booked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE CBI, on Tuesday, took over the probe into the Rs 126 crore Yamuna Expressway land scam case and has booked to former CEO of the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA), PC Gupta, and 20 others in connection.

According to the CBI FIR, which is a reproduction of the FIR registered by the UP Police in 2018, Gupta and his relatives, among others, fraudulently purchased 57 acres of land around the Yamuna Expressway in 2012-13, before the same was acquired by YEIDA at double the price. YEIDA paid Rs 85 crore for this land. The Samajwadi party government was in power in the state at the time.

There were further losses to YEIDA in acquisition of land for entry and exit routes to the Expressway where the purchased land was never used for the purpose, the FIR has alleged.

On July 24 last year, the state government had recommended a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities and it was forwarded to the agency by the Centre after 15 months, on October 24.

According to the initial investigation carried out by the UP police and as reported by The Indian Express, money for the purchase of the land was moved through 19 'shell companies' owned by relatives of senior government officials, including Gupta. They bought scattered plots less than four months before they were ac-

quired by the government. A now defunct cooperative bank in Ghaziabad was used to fund the purchases, made through cheques of small amounts.

"These people bought land at low rates from farmers, two-four months before it was acquired by YEIDA at rates that were two or more times higher. Due to this, the Authority, as well as farmers, incurred huge losses and these people profited illegally. In order to hide the scam, the accused hid their names by forming sham companies. By mutual agreement, they forged documents and made false claims to form these companies," read the inquiry report submitted by YEIDA officials to the Authority's chairperson and to the district police in UP.

The FIR was registered after the report was submitted to the YEIDA chairperson and Meerut Commissioner Prabhat Kumar.

The report further throws light on the manner in which money exchanged hands.

"The compensation was also given very cleverly — through cheques in smaller amounts of Rs 30 lakh. Due to this, the same piece of land was registered more than once and the Authority lost money in numerous registrations for the same plot. Cheques of smaller amount were given so that they do not draw attention. These were given to six people, through a bank, which is no longer operational. It seems that bank officials and workers were also hand-in-glove with the accused," said the report.

Tendulkar loses X category security, Aaditya gets Z cover

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government has withdrawn the security cover of former Rajya Sabha MP and cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, although a police escort will be provided for every time he steps out.

On the other hand, the security was upgraded from Y+ to Z security for Aaditya Thackeray who is the newly elected MLA from Worli constituency and the son of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

"The security modification is done on the suggestions made by the police. It depends on the inputs they receive about an individual. A report is then submitted to government following

which a security assessment review meet is called by the bureaucrats," said an officer.

"Tendulkar's security was of 'X' category but it was downgraded," said an IPS officer.

The modifications on security of around 90 prominent citizens were declared after an assessment by Maharashtra authority committee, comprising chief secretary Ajoy Mehta, additional chief secretary (home) Sanjay Kumar, Maharashtra DG Subhodh Jaiswal, intelligence department Rashmi Shukla and Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Barve. ENS

'Spineless': In open letter, JU students 'rusticate' Chancellor

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, DECEMBER 25

IN AN open letter, Jadavpur University (JU) students have announced their decision to rusticate West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar as the university Chancellor. The letter, which was written on Tuesday, also had a report card that described the Governor as "spineless".

The letter was published after the Governor had tried to enter the campus to attend a court meeting on Monday and JU convocation on Tuesday, but faced back-to-back resistance from university students and staff on both the days.

In their letter, the students' body wrote "You (Dhankhar) are being informed of your rustication from the position of Chancellor of Jadavpur University. The students' body of Jadavpur University has also decided to disown you from the position of the West Bengal Governor."

In their report card published in



Debosmita Chowdhury tears a copy of the CAA in protest while receiving her degree during convocation on Tuesday. Express

the letter, students wrote that the Governor's general knowledge was less than satisfactory, arguing capability was poor, sense of history was nil and strength was unwavering dedication to ignoring violence against students, activists and Muslims. They also wrote that his overall character was spineless.

On Monday, the Governor was shown black flags by students and non-teaching staff at the university. It was only after considerable struggle against a sea of students that Dhankhar managed to enter the building. However, the non-teaching staff then blocked his way and he failed to attend the court meeting. The Governor then offered to take questions. However, when students sought his reaction on Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Delhi Police's recent attack on Jamia Millia Islamia students and those killed in anti-CAA protests in Uttar Pradesh, he claimed ignorance. The students heckled him, following which he left.

On Tuesday, Dhankhar's convoy was blocked at the gate of the university for nearly two hours by TMC's non-teaching staff association. The Governor failed to attend the convocation and had to return. A section of students also protested against him.

While the university authorities expressed their helplessness, an angry Governor called it a

"death of democracy and education". Meanwhile, JU post-graduate gold medalist, Debosmita Chowdhury, who had torn a copy of the CAA in protest while receiving her degree during the Convocation, said on Wednesday that she had further plans to protest against the CAA and NRC. However, she added she would protest in her own way, and not with any political organisation.

Chowdhury said, "I have pre-planned to do that because, this CAA and NRC not only divide us in terms of religion, in future it will also divide us in terms of cast, creed and language. So, in my own capacity I decided to use the space given to me."

Many people thought that Chowdhury had torn up her degree on stage. Clarifying her act, she said: "I will not tear my degree, which I have earned with my own capability. But I should protest to increase the political consciousness of others. And I am proud to be a student of Jadavpur University, which taught us humanism and equality."

6 months, 35 artistes to give shape to 25-ft Atal statue

MAULSHREE SETH LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 25

IT TOOK 35 artistes around six months to build the 25-foot-tall bronze statue of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, according to sculptor Rajkumar Pandit, who was assigned the task.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the statue in Lucknow on Wednesday.

The statue, which weighs 5 tonnes, cost nearly Rs 90 lakh, top government officials said.

"I have done some small private work in Uttar Pradesh in the past, but this (Vajpayee statue) was the first (UP) government work we undertook," said Pandit, whose work was praised by the Prime Minister.

For Pandit and his team, the next task — his second UP government assignment — would be to sculpt a 12-foot statue of former Uttar Pradesh CM Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna. "I got the contract for that along with Vajpayee's statue," Pandit told The Indian Express.

Pandit, originally from Bihar, said his grandfather used to make "mitti ke bartan (clay utensils)"; the family moved to Jaipur about two decades ago, and he is since then working out of the 'Pink City'.

"The state Culture Department gave us a photograph of Atal-jii — it was a long desire to sculpt his statue, and this was a dream come true opportunity when I got the order last year. Primarily a bronze statue, it has mixed metals, including zinc, lead, tin, etc," he said. The tallest statue Pandit has built so far is one of Arjun, the warrior-prince from Mahabharat, "in action" — "I built that for the Rajasthan government about four years ago. It is 47 feet tall and has been installed at a stadium in Rajasthan."



The statue weighs 5 tonnes, costs nearly Rs 90 lakh. PTI

Principal Secretary, Culture, Uttar Pradesh, Jitendra Kumar told The Indian Express, "Last year we had floated an e-tender for installation of this statue and Rajkumar's company quoted lowest price."

The cost of the project, he said, came to approximately Rs 90 lakh.

Prime Minister Modi on Wednesday also laid the founda-

tion stone of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical University. The blueprint of the proposed varsity mentions that it would be built in the shape of a "Lotus".

According to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, until the university is built its operations would be run from the campus of Ram Manohar Lohia Institute in Lucknow.

The state's 40 medical colleges, 17 dental colleges, 299 nursing and paramedical colleges — in both semi-government and private sector — would come under the ambit of this university and would be affiliated to it, Adityanath said.

An Agovernment spokesperson said 6,210 medical students, 2,016 dental students and 12,544 nursing and paramedical students would be enrolled every year in colleges under the upcoming medical university named after Vajpayee.

"The administrative building of the medical university is being developed in the shape of the national flower 'lotus', which reflects the multifaceted personality of Atal," according to a release issued by the state Medical Education Department. It stated that 50 acres have been allotted by the Lucknow Development Authority at Chak Gajaria City project on Sultanpur Road, and the project will save 65 per cent energy by using solar power.

The first phase of the project would see the development of the administrative building, an auditorium with a sitting capacity for about 1,500 people, a library with 2 lakh books and about 100 computers, museum, a guesthouse with 16 rooms and four "high-level rooms".

Classified PERSONAL

I, Vinod Kumar S/O-Ram Chand Khatter R/O-1234, Sector-A, Pocket-A, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070, have changed my name to Vinod Khattar for all purposes. 0040525440-5

I, Satbir Bhardwaj S/O Umrao Sharma R/O A-180, 2nd Floor, Majlis Park, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi-110033, have changed my name to Satbir Sharma. 0076069872-1

I, M.D. ALAM S/O-MD. AAKAL, R/O-B-1722, SHASTRI NAGAR, DELHI-110052, have changed my name to ZULFAQAR ALAM for future. 0040525440-3

I, Sreeja Sujji W/o Sujji C Ayyar R/O Flat No-202, Grace Apartment, Gali No-5, Raj Nagar Part-1, Palam Colony, New Delhi-110077, have changed my name Sreeja O5 to Sreeja Sujji for all future purposes. 0040525344-1

I, Gyaneshwar S/O-Lakhan Singh, R/O-B-292, Camp No.2, Nangloi, Delhi-110041, inform that Gyaneshwar & Gayneswar both are one & the same person. 0040525440-1

I, Khagesh S/o Shashi Kumar Goyal R/O K-2/24, Krishan Vihar, New Delhi-110086, have changed my name to Khagesh Goyal for all purposes. 0040525383-1

I, ANSHUL AGRAWAL, S/O-KRISHAN KUMAR AGGARWAL, R/O-3173, FIRST FLOOR, GALI SANGTARASHAN, PAHARGANJ, SWAMI TIRATH NAGAR, DELHI-110055 have changed my name to ANSHUL AGGARWAL for future. 0040525440-2

I, Anuradha Chouhan W/o Chander Mohan Singh R/O G-251B Sector-22 Noida have changed my name to Anuradha Chauhan permanently. 0040525436-1

I, Vani Kumar D/o Sh. Prem Kumar Ganesan R/O 13A/4, W.E.A., Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005, have changed my name to Vaani Kumar for all purposes. 0040525330-1

I, Sukhdev S/O, Payara Singh R/O Ugf-4, Plot# 1243, Sector 5, Vasundhara, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh 201012 have changed my name to Sukhdev Luthra for all purposes. 076698971-1

I, Jyoti W/O Sarbjit Singh R/O-B-27/6, Double Storey Ramesh Nagar, New Delhi-110015, Have Changed My Name To Jyoti Arora For All Future Purposes. 0040525440-4

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MP Jan Abhiyan Parishad submitted false utilisation certificates: CAG

MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, DECEMBER 25

MADHYA PRADESH Jan Abhiyan Parishad (MPJAP), which functions under the Department of Planning, Economics and Statistics, submitted false utilisation certificates to the tune of Rs 20.80 crore, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has pointed out in its latest report (March 31, 2018).

Meant to work as a bridge between the government and NGOs, the government body was accused of employing people ideologically inclined to the RSS and the BJP when Shivraj Singh Chouhan was the chief minister, and was engaged by the BJP government to carry out programmes like Narmada Yatra and Ekatma Yatra. Since the change of guard in December 2018, a question mark hangs over the organization and hundreds of employees.

According to the CAG report, a closing balance of Rs 23.30 crore was available in the bank account of head office of MPJAP (as per annual accounts for 2017-18), of which, Rs 20.80 crore pertained to grants-in-aid received (during 2007-08 to 2017-19) from the department. "However, 100 per cent utilization was shown in the UCs submitted to the department. This shows false UCs amounting to Rs 20.80 crore were submitted by the concerning authorities," says the report.

MPJAP, in its explanation, said it's a grant recipient institution and meets expenses from the grant received and that it op-

erates through state, division and district offices. "UCs are issued by the state office after allocating the grants to different offices and balance available with them at the end of financial year is utilized to meet expenses of the next financial year because grants are received late in the first quarter."

"The reply is not acceptable as UCs should have been submitted on the basis of actual expenditure," the CAG noted and recommended that the state government identify the issues holding up submission of UCs and strengthen internal control mechanism of the department to watch timely submission of UCs.

The report has also pointed out MPJAP received Rs 338 crore in grant from the department for its activities and administrative expenditure during 2006-07 to 2017-18. However, the body furnished records of UCs amounting to only Rs 305.89 crore pertaining to the audit period 2010-11 to 2017-18. Records of UCs for Rs 32.11 crore for the period between 2006-07 and 2009-10 were not furnished to audit.

The body drew Rs 56.47 crore between 2010-11 and 2016-17 from the capital budget but spent the money on operating activities like salaries, allowances, office expenditure and schemes like Navankur, Prasphan and Sanwad as also Narmada Seva Yatra and Ekatma Yatra. The auditor noted that the amount should have been used as capital expenditure for minor construction work, not as revenue expenditure, in contravention of rules.

Armyman, civilian killed in cross-border shelling in Baramulla

ADIL AKHZER SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 25

A JUNIOR Commissioned Officer (JCO) of the Indian Army and a civilian woman were killed in cross border shelling in Uri sector of North Kashmir's Baramulla district on Wednesday, officials said.

Sources said heavy artillery shelling started in the afternoon. It was going on at the time of going to press.

"Pakistan violated the ceasefire in Uri sector and it was responded to by our troops effectively," said a senior police officer in Uri on Wednesday evening.

According to officials, the deceased woman was a resident of Churanda in Uri and she died of splinter injuries.

"Both sides used heavy weaponry to target each other," said officials.

Local residents said people remain confined to their homes in the region. "Heavy shelling is going here from so many hours and everyone is scared because of the situation," a resident of Balkote area told The Indian Express over the phone.

JK Police said on Twitter, "One #civilian #lady Naseema wife of Mohd Ikhlq #killed due to firing from #Pakistan at Churanda in #Uri. @jmuKmpPolice."

There has been an increase in cross border shelling along the LoC in three North Kashmir districts. Both armies have been exchanging fire in North Kashmir's Uri, Tandghar, Keran and Gurez sectors.

Last month, the Defence Ministry informed the parliament there have been 950 incidents of ceasefire violations along the LoC in J&K during the period between August and October this year.

Bengal minister: Denied visa to Bangladesh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, DECEMBER 25

WEST BENGAL Minister and Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind leader Siddiquillah Chowdhury on Wednesday said that he has been denied a visa to visit Bangladesh.

Chowdhury said Bangladesh consulate did not cite any reason for denying him the visa, adding that he had applied for a visa to visit Bangladesh 10 days ago and had booked his tickets in advance as well. However, on Wednesday he was informed about the visa being denied to him.

"Being a minister, I had to take necessary permission from the Centre and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to visit any foreign country. I had got the No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Centre and permission from the Chief Minister as well. Now, I have learnt that the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission has denied me the visa. It is very unfortunate as both countries share such good relations. I will take this matter up with the Chief Minister," Chowdhury told The Indian Express.

Chowdhury was scheduled to attend a function at Sylhet madrasa in Bangladesh with his wife, daughter and granddaughter. Bangladesh Deputy High Commission could not be reached for comment.

Sources in the Bangladesh government, however, said that Chowdhury being a "sympathiser of Jamaat-e-Islami could be up for some mischief".

Recently, Bangladesh Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan had cancelled their visits to India following protests across the country over the new citizenship law and proposed NRC.

Momen had said that the CAA and NRC are India's "internal matters", but any "uncertainty" in the country will likely affect the neighbouring countries. "The CAB (now Citizenship Amendment Act) and the NRC (National Register of Citizens) are internal issues of India. Indian government assured us again and again that these are their domestic issues, they are doing it because of legal and other reasons... We are the No.1 friend of India. So, if there is uncertainty in India, it is likely to affect its neighbours," Momen had said.

Telangana govt planning to introduce coding in govt schools

REENIVAS JANYALA HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 25

THE TELANGANA government will launch a pilot programme across 33 schools in the district to introduce coding to government school students in the state, a senior official said.

The state's Education Department, the IT and Communications Department and the Telangana Information Technology Association (TITA) will carry out the week-long pilot in 33 schools in Wanaparthy district.

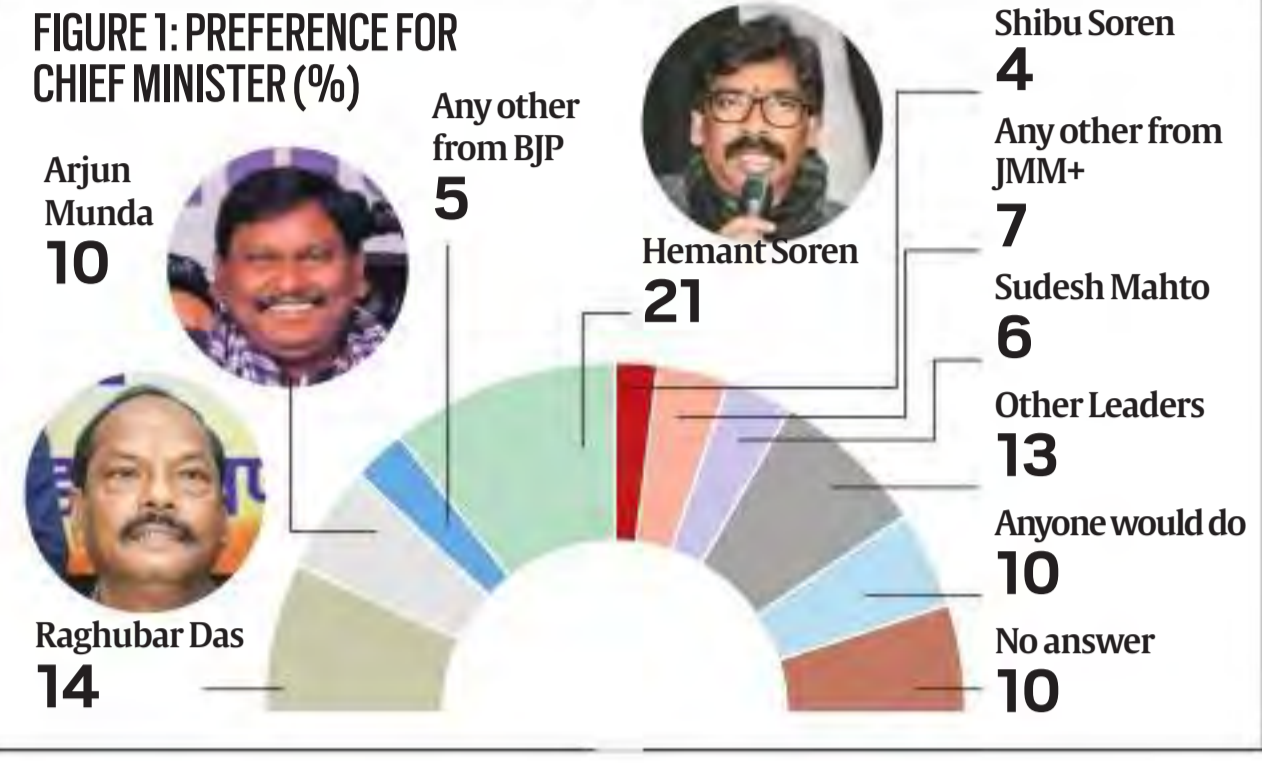
"TITA members have been identified to carry out a practical pilot of this project to assess the challenges that might arise while scaling the programme across the state," Principal Secretary, IT, Jayesh Ranjan said.

After an entry level training programme, school students and a teacher would be trained in Scratch programming, HTML and Python programming languages over five days.

"This project will expose students to new skills. Introducing coding skills at the school level will inculcate problem-solving skills among students. This will also orient them to entrepreneurial possibilities. We have selected 99 students - 3 each from 33 schools - for this programme," said TITA global president Sundeep Kumar Makthala.

How Jharkhand result fits into a pattern

Data from the Lokniti-CSDS Post-Poll Survey underline the difference in the roles played by local and national factors in determining the outcome. In keeping with recent trends across the country, this Assembly poll saw a focus on local issues and a limited influence of the central leaders of parties, particularly the BJP



SUHAS PALSHIKAR, SANDEEP SHASTRI & SANJAY KUMAR

THE LOSS of an incumbent government is not very dramatic, but losing over 17 per cent of the vote in just six months is indeed deeply troubling for a government. This is what the Jharkhand results have brought about for the BJP. As the post-poll carried out by Lokniti-CSDS (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies) shows, there are many state-level factors contributing to this debacle but, at the same time, the larger impact would still haunt the BJP.

The Jharkhand elections happened when the national scene was becoming more and more heated due to the national-level debate on the question of citizenship. As such, a first temptation would be to see the Jharkhand outcome in retrospect as a response to all-India issues. In order to understand how the BJP lost this election and how JMM and its allies managed to win, it is necessary to dispel this temptation and situate the outcome firmly into the dynamics of state politics of Jharkhand.

No CAA resonance

For instance, did the debate around the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) make any difference? There is very little evidence to indicate this. The last two rounds of voting (fourth and fifth) were held after the debate on the Citizenship Amendment Bill and the passage of the legislation. The BJP won eight of the 15 seats that went to polls in the fourth round. In 2014, the BJP had won 11 of these 15 seats. In the seats that went to polls in the fifth round, the BJP won three of the 16 seats and had won five of the 16 in 2014. Further, the CAA and NRC were rarely mentioned by respondents as a factor that influenced the way they voted. This, despite reports that top BJP leaders did mention this issue in their campaign rhetoric with the Prime Minister defending CAA as "1,000 percent correct".

Despite the state-specific explanations which we discuss below, the outcome must be rattling for the BJP because while state-level factors caused the defeat, the larger, all-India implications are unmistakable. The Jharkhand outcome fits into a pattern. In consonance with the trends across the country since the Gujarat Assembly elections, state polls have seen a specific focus on local specificities rather than national issues and therefore, influence of the central leaders of parties — particularly the BJP — has been rather limited. More significantly, the voter choices appear to be increasingly different from national to state elections.

Loss of popularity for CM

While all-India narratives did not work, problems faced by voters of Jharkhand might still be the same as those faced by citizens elsewhere. The data emerging from the CSDS-Lokniti Post-Poll Survey in Jharkhand endorse the critical role of local factors and developments in explaining the electoral outcomes in the state. More than four of every ten respondents (43%) in the Jharkhand post-poll survey indicated that economic issues were the most important factor that influenced their voting choice (Table 6). The state government had to bear the brunt of popular dissatisfaction on this account.

Thus, it is important to record that in the post-poll survey, more than half the respondents (55%) expressed their dissatisfaction with the outgoing Raghubar Das government (Table 1). In a sense, the present outcome was pre-destined because at the time of the Lok Sabha elections too, the Raghubar Das government was not at all popular. At the time of the state election, the ex-

tent of dissatisfaction with the state government increased from 37 per cent in April-May 2019. Five years ago, the post-poll survey done at the time of the 2014 state assembly elections indicated that just over one-third (34%) of the respondents were dissatisfied with the then Soren government in the state.

What is more, no community was actually much satisfied with the state government. Among all communities, net satisfaction with the state government was negative (i.e., more respondents were dissatisfied than those satisfied). With voter dissatisfaction thus spread across the social sections, it would have been a surprise if the BJP had managed to win because past surveys have indicated that an incumbent government which evokes a high level of dissatisfaction from voters is often voted out of power; Jharkhand proves to be no exception in this regard.

No wonder, half the respondents said they did not want the Das government to be given another chance. Only a little over one in every three voters were willing to give the government another chance — incidentally, that is exactly the vote share of the BJP in the election.

A linked factor is the low levels of approval for the incumbent Chief Minister (Figure 1). When respondents were asked an open-ended question on who they would prefer as the Chief Minister after the Assembly polls, just over one of every ten respondents (14%) mentioned the name of Raghubar Das. Hemant Soren's name was mentioned by over one-fifth of the respondents (21%). This seven-percentage-point gap between the incumbent and his challenger is indicative of how the popularity of state-level leaders could have influenced the electoral verdict.

Modi factor limited

For quite some time now, the Indian electorate has been making a clear distinction between national-level and state polls. The data clearly indicate that national issues could well have been accorded a lower level of priority in the state polls. In an Assembly poll, local factors and the impact of economic factors appear to play an important role. Nevertheless, some attrition in the overall popularity of the BJP is evident. So much so, that even the "Modi factor" played a limited role and voters seemed to have begun to be disenchanted with the central government as well.

Compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, this time around two of every five of those who had voted for the BJP changed their party choice (Table 3). Among BJP voters, only two of every ten mentioned that they voted for the party on account of Prime Minister Modi (Table 2). Moreover, among the respondents in Jharkhand there has been a dip in the popularity of the central government since it assumed power for a second term.

At the time of the Lok Sabha poll of 2019, three-fourths of the respondents in Jharkhand had expressed satisfaction with the performance of the central government (Figure 2). Now, in the post-poll in Jharkhand, less than half the respondents (47%) expressed satisfaction with the performance of the central government. If at the time of the Lok Sabha polls one-fourth were fully satisfied with the performance of the central government, that number has steeply dipped to one-seventh of the respondents at the time of the Jharkhand assembly polls. If one-fourth were dissatisfied with the performance of the central government at the time of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, it has increased to close to half the respondents (47%) around the time of the Jharkhand Assembly polls.

The implications of these trends are important. While local factors and dissatisfaction with the state government did play a central role in shaping voters' choice, the popularity of the Prime Minister or the performance of the central government could not bail out the state government; in fact, the result suggests a more all-round distancing by the voters from the BJP.

Demographic divisions

The BJP breaking its alliance with the All

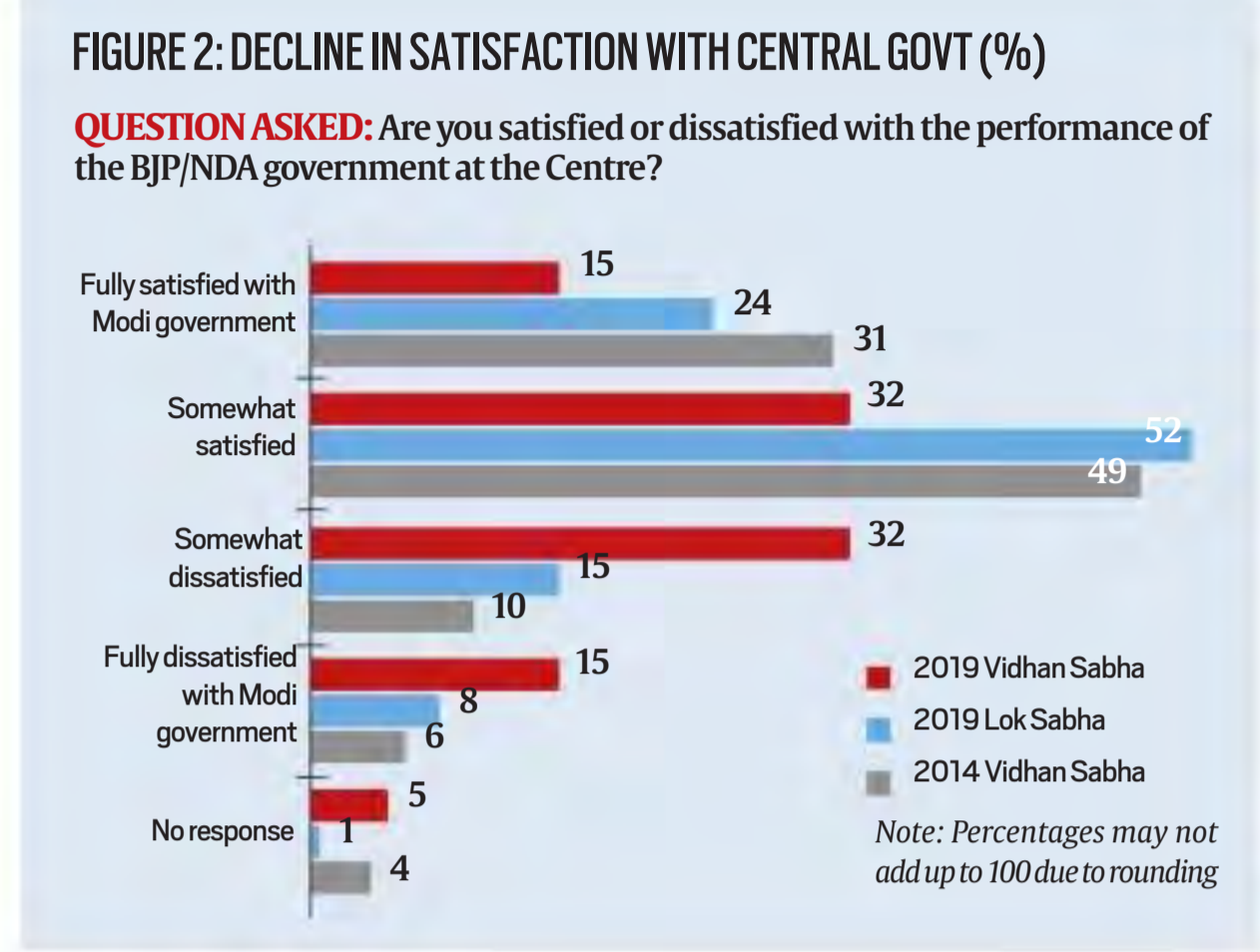


TABLE 1: DAS GOVT ASSESSED FAR MORE NEGATIVELY THAN SOREN GOVT

QUESTION ASKED: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the ruling state government in Jharkhand?

	During 2019 Vidhan Sabha (Das govt)	During 2019 Lok Sabha (Das govt)	During 2014 Vidhan Sabha (Soren govt)
Fully satisfied	13	13	11
Somewhat satisfied	26	48	51
Somewhat dissatisfied	31	27	14
Fully dissatisfied	24	10	20
No response	6	2	5

TABLE 2: WHICH OF THESE MATTERED MOST TO VOTERS (%)

	Party	Candidate	CM candidate	Narendra Modi
Voters of JMM+	50	32	12	1
BJP voters	50	18	9	21
AJSU Voters	57	30	5	3
JVM voters	44	42	12	2
Voters of other parties	31	61	3	2
Overall	43	30	8	8

TABLE 6: ECONOMIC ISSUES TOP PRIORITY FOR VOTERS

QUESTION ASKED: What was the single most important issue for you while voting in this election?

Unemployment	18
Rising prices	16
Development and governance	10
Education and health	10
Corruption	9
Basic needs	7
Poverty	6
Political choice-related	4
Crimes and law & order	4
Housing	3
Farmer woes	2
Caste and tribal identity related	2
Terrorism and Naxalism	2
Environment	1
Hindutva-related	<1
NRC and CAA	<1
Other issues	1
No response	5

TABLE 7: IN VOTING PATTERNS BY KEY SOCIAL DEMOGRAPHICS IN JHARKHAND, PREFERENCES ARE MOST DIVIDED AMONG ECONOMIC CLASSES

	JMM-Congress+	BJP	AJSU	JVM	Others
EDUCATION					
Non Literate	38	31	9	5	18
Up to Primary	32	37	8	6	16
Up to Matric	38	34	8	5	15
College and above	33	33	8	5	22
AGE					
Up to 25 yrs	35	31	9	5	20
26-35 yrs	35	34	10	6	16
36-45 yrs	37	32	7	6	18
46-55 yrs	39	34	6	5	16
56 yrs and above	32	36	8	6	19
ECONOMIC CLASS					
Poor	38	36	9	3	14
Lower	37	31	10	5	17
Middle	34	34	8	6	19
Rich	32	35	5	7	20
OCCUPATION					
Farmers	36	40	7	5	12
Non-farmers	35	32	8	6	19

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TABLE 3: BJP LOST TWO OF FIVE OF ITS LOK SABHA VOTERS TO OTHER PARTIES, GAINED VERY LITTLE FROM OTHERS' SUPPORTERS

	JMM-Congress+	BJP	AJSU	JVM	Others
JMM-Cong-RJD's LS 2019 voter	73	3	2	4	18
BJP's LS 2019 voter	17	58	9	4	12
AJSU's LS 2019 voter	7	32	61	—	—
JVM's LS 2019 voter	29	2	2	60	7
Others' LS 2019 voter	10	—	2	—	88
Did not reveal LS vote	17	8	14	13	48
Did not vote in LS elections	33	23	7	4	34

TABLE 4: COMMUNITY-WISE GAINS & LOSSES SINCE 2014 (%)

	JMM-Congress+ gains/losses compared to 2014	BJP gains/losses compared to 2014
CASTE-COMMUNITIES		
Upper caste	-2	-8
Yadav	+11	-14
Kurmi	-11	-4
Other OBC	+2	-6
Jatav	+1	-2
Other SC	-1	+14
Oraon (Hindu and Christian)	+8	-21
Santhal (Hindu and Christian)	+2	+13
Munda (Hindu and Christian)	-7	+22
Other ST	-11	-13

TABLE 5: THE RELIGION VOTE, AS SHARED AMONG PARTIES

	JMM-Congress+	BJP	AJSU	JVM	Others
Hindu	31	39	9	6	16
Muslim	53	14	5	6	22
Christian	41	23	7	4	25
Other	40	28	9	4	19

TABLE 8: BJP RETAINS ONLY HALF ITS ST VOTE SINCE LS POLLS

BJP's retention of its LS vote

Communities	Percentage
Upper caste	70
Yadav	49
Kurmi	58
Other OBC	65
SC	57
ST	49
Religion	
Hindu	60
Muslim	66
Christian	40
Other	49
Economic classes	
Poor	61
Lower	53
Middle	59
Rich	65
Age groups	
18-25	51
26-35	62
36-45	55
46-55	66
56+	59

Methodology

THE FINDINGS here are from a post-poll survey conducted in Jharkhand by the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). It was conducted from December 2 through December 22, 2019 among 2,700 voters in 108 polling stations spread across 27 Assembly constituencies. The sampling design adopted was multi-stage random sampling. The constituencies were randomly selected using the probability proportional to size method. Thereafter, four polling stations within each of the sampled constituencies were selected using the systematic random sampling method. Within each polling station, 35 voters were randomly sampled from the electoral roll using the systematic random sampling method. Of these 35, 25 interviews were targeted. Except in Phase 5, in all other phases the interviews were conducted a day or two after they had voted. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Hindi using a standardised questionnaire. In order to ensure representativeness, the achieved raw sample has been weighted by Gender, Religion, Locality, and Caste group based on Census 2011 data. The survey was designed, supervised and analysed by a team of researchers associated with Lokniti. The survey was coordinated and supervised in Jharkhand by Harishwar Dayal (Associate Professor, Department of Economics, St. Xavier's College, Ranchi) and Amit Kumar (Institute for Human Development, Ranchi). It was directed by Prof. Sanjay Kumar of CSDS, Delhi.

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The Indian EXPRESS

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

For people to spend more

Governments must ensure policy continuity, refrain from creating sector-specific uncertainty



SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH

TOWARDS JOINTNESS

A Chief of Defence Staff is welcome, points to reform roadmap for future — leading to joint theatre commands

THE UNION CABINET'S approval for the post of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on Tuesday brings to fruition the process set in motion by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech when he announced that "... after formation of this post, all the three forces will get effective leadership at the top level". The office of a principal military advisor to the government was first mooted many decades ago but it got a serious push only after the 1999 Kargil War. The Kargil Review Committee, headed by the late K Subrahmanyam, stated the requirement which was fleshed out in detail in 2001 as a substantive recommendation of a CDS by a Group of Ministers (GoM) on National Security in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. But the recommendation did not find favour with either the Vajpayee government or the UPA government, largely due to bureaucratic and political resistance to the idea of an all-powerful military commander and also because of the interservice rivalry between the Air Force, the Navy and the Army. Meanwhile, another expert committee, headed by Naresh Chandra, again recommended a top military advisor, not a CDS but a Permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee — but it, too, did not see the light of day.

The major task of the CDS, as stated by the government, is to ensure coordination between the three services, especially in matters of defence procurement, besides helping in force structuring of the services to bring in savings and operational synergy. The CDS will prioritise requirements of the three services within budgetary allocations, taking a big responsibility away from the ministry, and has also been tasked to facilitate "restructuring of military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands". That is an important role, which also points to a reform roadmap for the future — towards the eventual creation of joint theatre commands.

While the CDS will provide principal military advice to the government, he is not the commander of all the armed forces in the country — a far cry from the Commander-in-Chief of the British colonial era. In fact, the government made it clear that "CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs, so as to be able to provide impartial advice to the political leadership". It also means the dilution of the 2001 GoM recommendation which had envisaged the CDS as a single-point military advisor — not limited to principal advisor — to the government. Not only is there no concentration of power, he will be functioning as the secretary of a department within the ministry, while being at par with the three service chiefs in military status and rank. Some teething problems can be expected in the beginning but things are bound to fall in place as norms, processes and rules are worked out between the three services, the CDS and the defence ministry. It will require the navigation of entrenched institutional interests, hierarchical powers and military traditions, to lay the foundations for a strong and functional CDS.

THE RELEASE OF second quarter GDP data and the subsequent revision by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) of its own growth estimate for the year has brought the spotlight firmly back on the issue of reviving growth. Even as the government and the RBI collectively battle the slowdown, its extent has left most of us befuddled. The question, therefore, is: Is a turnaround in sight?

First, the world has fundamentally changed since the onset of the global financial crisis. India and China accounted for 19.1 per cent of world GDP in 2018, as against 9.1 per cent in 2008. India's GDP has jumped 2.3 times, while that of China jumped 3 times since then. Over the same period, while India's per capita GDP has increased by 102 per cent, that of China's has grown by an even sharper 182 per cent. Clearly, while we have done well, we could have done even better if we take China as the benchmark. But, what is more important is that as a nation, our aspirations have increased manifold.

The GDP numbers convey a serious policy predicament on the fiscal front. Take, for instance, the gap between gross domestic product (GDP) and gross value added (GVA), which reflects indirect taxes, net of subsidies. A higher gap (higher GDP and lower GVA) could simply mean that while indirect taxes are growing, government transfer payments like subsidies have been stagnant because of fiscal compulsions. In the context of the current fiscal, it is imperative that the government clears the fertiliser subsidy at the earliest so that the system is unclogged.

This has been the trend in earlier years as well when the gap between GDP and GVA has been as high as 80 basis points on some occasions, peaking in the third or fourth quarter as the government tried to maintain the delicate trade-off between fiscal discipline and growth. During such apparent trade-offs, the point we conveniently forget is that it is only growth that leads to adherence of revenue targets, and hence fiscal prudence. Fiscal policy in India has often been painted as the

mother of all villains (populist dole-outs like loan waivers have not helped either) and the obsession of the markets with a 3 per cent deficit target has led to unrealistic, unjustified and irrational exuberance in the debt markets.

Interestingly, we must remember that contrary to popular perception, rating agencies are concerned about growth and the recent S&P episode only underlines this. Thus, we must chase growth and strictly avoid using fiscal policy targets to satisfy bond market traders. Further, by repeatedly emphasising that we will stick to the mandated fiscal deficit target during a year when growth poses a serious challenge, it makes one prone to non-transparent and non-credible fiscal rules that markets will not believe in.

Second, the Monetary Policy Committee's decision not to hike rates, though surprising, clearly defines the limited role of monetary policy in the context of the current growth conundrum. It needs to be reemphasised that when we are facing a quadruple balance sheet problem (corporates, banks, NBFCs and households), rate cuts will only increase household leverage and in such a scenario, they might not work unless accompanied by counter-cyclical fiscal policy measures.

Now, coming back to the question that we asked at the beginning of this piece, let me present some interesting facts.

Take the case of the growth challenges that the auto industry is facing in India. Strangely, it seems that the auto industry globally is facing a structural dilemma. Even though sales have been falling across almost all emerging and developed economies, the SUV segment has belied all doomsday predictions and continues to expand. India has been no exception. Our in-house study, based on a stratified sample of the SBI portfolio, reveals that car sales are income agnostic across regions, age and gender, as more and more car buyers, in every population group, are showing a preference for high-end

cars. This finding provides food for thought for car makers looking to adjust to changing demand preferences.

In a related study, our customer behavioural analysis of a large portfolio of individuals, who used SBI cards to buy online products from Flipkart and Amazon, during the festive season, reveals an even more interesting trend. We observe a significant latent demand among consumers. The median spends of people in tier II and tier III cities, spread across states like West Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, that have a population size of not even 1 per cent of Mumbai, were close to 40 per cent higher than that of Mumbai and other metro cities. Thus, the current slowdown in demand could be largely attributed to consumers holding back spending because of uncertainties.

Since we have talked about uncertainties, we must also emphasise how to remove them. First, we must refrain from creating sector-specific uncertainties in areas like telecom through contradictory policy statements. Any potential setback in the telecom sector could hold back consumption spending further. This will negate any impact of a counter-cyclical fiscal push in the forthcoming budget.

Second, the states of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana together account for around 16.8 per cent of the global GDP (in purchasing power parity terms). We strongly recommend that these states maintain policy continuity, especially when the political regime changes. For example, rather than opting for measures like farm loan waivers, which lead to problems of moral hazard that impact credit culture, measures should be undertaken to improve agricultural productivity. Alternatively, can we not enact a law to preserve policy continuity?

The author is Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India. Views are personal

THE RIGHT COUNT

National Tiger Conservation Authority acknowledges need for greater transparency in census. Now, bring in peer review

EVER SINCE THEY slumped to an all-time low of around 1,400 in 2006-2007, India's tiger numbers have increased. The last Tiger Census Report, released in July, put the population at 2,967, a 33 per cent increase over 2014 when tigers were last enumerated. But the achievements in conservation have been clouded by doubts over the counting methods. In September, an investigation by this paper revealed that the last tiger census had over-reported the population by 16 per cent. Following that investigation, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) — which along with the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) conducts the tiger census — has taken the first step towards introducing correctives. It has admitted the necessity of "bringing more scientific robustness to the exercise".

In the 1970s, when India embarked on Project Tiger, conservation authorities sought to identify every tiger in the wild from its paw print. But scientists criticised this method as highly subjective and riddled with the possibilities of duplication. Their fears came true in 2005, when this newspaper reported that the Sariska National Park in Rajasthan had lost all its tigers — an year before, pug mark surveys had claimed that all was well at the reserve. Since 2006, tiger audits have relied on camera traps, they have estimated the animal's prey base and tried to gauge the health of the tiger's habitats. All this has helped the NTCA and WII to arrive at more realistic numbers. But doubts over methodology have persisted. The quality of camera traps has been a major issue in several reserves and scientists have contended that the NTCA and WII have not devised sound protocols.

The last tiger census, however, invited questions. It counted under-age cubs, methods used to identify the uniqueness of an individual animal were given short shrift and the problem of duplication resurfaced. These have led to renewed demands by scientists for transparency in the census operations. In the past, the NTCA has stonewalled such demands. It is heartening, therefore, that it has finally acknowledged the need for "accountability". However, it is disappointing that the agency has dismissed calls to subject the tiger census procedures to peer reviews. Without passing this credibility test, India's greatest wildlife protection success story will not have a place in scientific literature. Worse, tiger conservation will continue to be linked to attempts to score political points.



NAMAN PUGALIA

PROTESTS AND AFTER

Real remedies are beyond political and institutional realms, require societal efforts

ANGER IS AMONGST the most powerful of emotions. It is also ephemeral. Therefore, how the sentiment is channelled across time and space determines how its incidence will eventually be judged — as an enduring celebration or as mere frustration. We have been furious often, but have failed consistently in harnessing our rage for sustainable change. Hopefully, the current clamour over citizenship is different.

In 1979, the Mandal Commission was established with a mandate to identify socially or educationally backward classes of India. Though its report, which advocated reservation, had been completed in 1983, the V P Singh government declared its intent to implement the report in August 1990. This led to widespread student protests including self-immolation by Rajiv Goswami, a student of Deshbandhu College in Delhi. While the dispossessed rallied for reservation, the privileged defended their privilege. Since then, there have been political, administrative and judicial efforts to increase access for the marginalised by way of reservations. However, caste-based discrimination has only worsened outside the walls of institutions that grant symbolic space.

In 2010, the self-immolation of Tunisian, Mohamed Bouazizi, triggered the Arab Spring — a series of anti-government protests across the Islamic world. The early hopes that these movements would end corruption, increase political participation, and bring about greater economic equity collapsed in the wake of the counter-revolutionary moves by foreign state actors in Yemen and of the Saudi-UAE linked military deep state in Egypt, the regional and

international military interventions in Bahrain and Yemen, and the civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

In 2011, the India Against Corruption movement evoked widespread resentment against corruption. Given the subject's secular appeal, campaigners came from across socio-economic strata and geographies. On December 27, the government passed the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill 2011. Among the several outcomes of the protracted agitation was a hope that the venality of the state and its arms would end. Yet, graft at all levels continues unabated.

In 2012, in the aftermath of the Delhi sexual assault case, millions of Indians poured onto the streets across the country. A legislation — the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 (Nirbhaya Act) — was passed by both houses of the Parliament in March 2013. It provided for amendments to the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offences. For good measure, we got a Nirbhaya Fund too, for schemes that would improve women's safety. Yet, women's safety continues to be a distant dream.

What was common across all these episodes? Each of these initially had at least two kinds of participants — those who were impacted by the event and those who were sympathetic to the cause. In most cases, the former continue to suffer and persist, while the latter moved on. In many of the cases cited above, the revolutionaries sought institutional and specifically, legislative responses; they gave up too easily. The causes warranted additional societal efforts.

Based on the evidence from India and elsewhere, our grim reality points to a few lessons that the current crop of rebels must bear in mind. Rallying for causes needs a consistent critical mass in an attention-deficit world. Will the movement have enough votaries to sustain it when the news cycle changes?

In 2019, people across the country have rallied against the Citizenship Amendment Act on the grounds that it discriminates against Indians based on religion. At least 24 lives have been lost in the protests. Among the remedies that have been sought, the ones trending call for a rollback and for state governments to reject it. Sloganeering apart, will these steps truly end religion based discrimination? Legislative changes may be necessary, but they will be woefully insufficient in altering mindsets.

Based on the evidence from India and elsewhere, our grim reality points to a few lessons that the current crop of rebels must bear in mind. Rallying for causes needs a consistent critical mass in an attention-deficit world. Will the movement have enough votaries to sustain it when the news cycle changes? Seeking legislative answers as magic bullets is the surest way to prematurely lose our battles. Real remedies may be above and beyond the political and institutional realms.

The current uprising points to growing national consciousness. It seems to be saying that on discrimination, we have had enough and we want our voices to be heard. What we are yet to discover is whether the revolutionaries will do enough. Do they have the strategy and stamina it takes to defend an important term in the preamble of our Constitution, and move beyond it, towards creating a deeper resistance enterprise?

The writer is founder, WalkIn. He previously co-founded, FourthLion Technologies, a political campaign planner

WHERE I AM

North Pole is shifting, and Google Maps may not work as well anymore. It's time to re-navigate the city

IN THE LAST few years, the only time street names have mattered, really, is when they are being changed. And as they are burdened with the onerous task of rewriting history and fulfilling the demands of a majoritarian politics, their primary purpose has been lost. Since the advent of Google Maps and other navigation systems on the smartphone, the name of a place is no longer the marker it once was — a pleasant, if obviously artificial, voice guides you along the way. A sense of direction — like the memory for phone numbers — has been outsourced to technology. Now, it appears that it's time to go back to navigating by direction, not dictation.

The North Pole, it turns out, is shifting eastwards at an unprecedented pace. About 15 years ago, this would have made little difference to the daily lives of people and even Google Maps relies largely on satellite imaging, which is mostly unaffected by this shift. But now, in addition to its implications for industries and sectors that rely on the magnetic north — airports, defence, drilling — it will affect smartphones as well. Most contemporary phones have three magnetic sensors that tell the direction the user is facing. This feature could be compromised with the pole shifting, and people would be, quite literally, direction-less.

Learning to navigate by memory, and, more importantly, asking for directions may not be a terrible development. In fact, in India, it is a necessary skill. The spate of frequent internet shutdowns means that Google is of erratic help across cities in India. And since Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (deployed recently with increasing frequency) ensures that no more than four people gather at a time in one place, there is the joy of an illicit pleasure to the simple act of asking for directions.



DECEMBER 26, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO SECRET PACT

JANATA PARTY LEADER Jagjivan Ram denied that there was any secret understanding between the Congress and the Janata Party, as being speculated in some circles. Asked if his party would form a government at the Centre with the help of Congress after the elections, Ram commented: "Where is the question of forming such a government? We (Janata Party) are getting a majority and will form the government." When his attention was drawn to Devraj Urs's statement admitting his party's mistake in joining the Charan Singh Cabinet, Ram said the Congress President had indeed made a sensible statement.

ASSAM ALLIANCE

THE ASSAM PRADESH Congress is understood to be going ahead with an alliance with the Janata Party to form a government in the state despite the high command's directive to defer the matter till the general elections are over. The leader of the state Congress legislature party, Sarat Chandra Sinha, is said to have informed Congress president Devraj Urs that the PC had decided to form a coalition government in Assam because of the peculiar situation in the state. Meanwhile, the leader of the Janata-Congress coalition, Golap Borbora, said that he had not yet contacted Governor L P Singh to stake his claim to form a government.

X'MAS IN TEHERAN

FOUR WESTERN CLERGYMEN held tearful Christmas services with the American hostages in the US embassy. They said they were told there were only 43 captives, that they met all of them and they were in "good shape" even though some were suffering psychologically. They also said they were assured by the captors — who filmed the services — that they would be allowed to pick up messages from the hostages and convey them to the hostages' families. The clergymen added they would release the hostages' names. "As far as we could tell, and on the physical side you can tell, they are in good shape," Reverend William Sloan Coffin said.

THE IDEAS PAGE

State incapacity and NRC

Existing government infrastructure is not conducive to launch such an operation. It will lead to chaos, confusion and exclusion of the weakest and poorest sections of society



MUDIT KAPOOR AND SHAMIKA RAVI

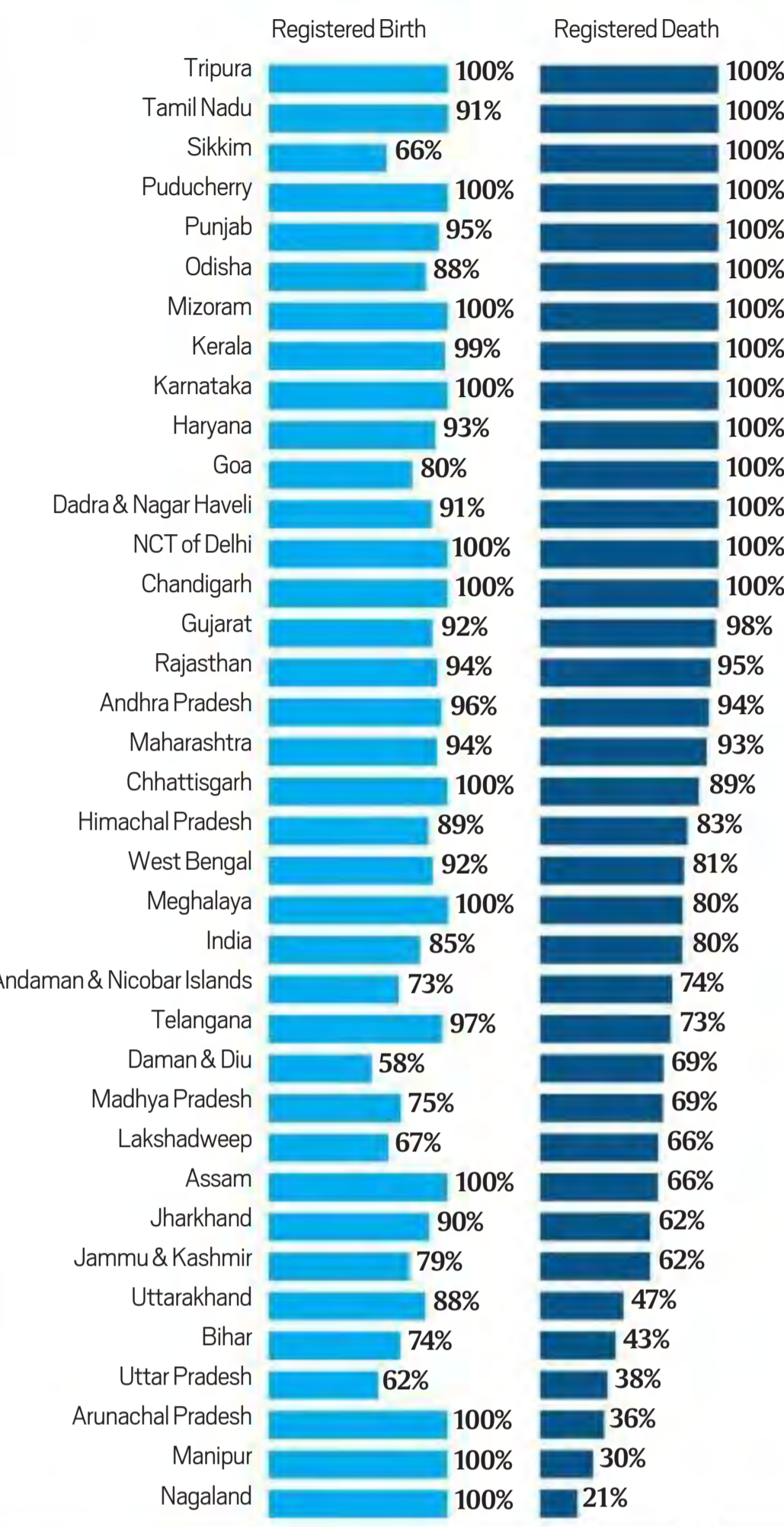
WHILE DEFENDING THE Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019 in Parliament, the Union home minister announced that the government will launch a countrywide NRC very soon. This has led to an ideological divide, and a fiery debate across the country. It is worth noting that the Citizenship Act of 1955 has a provision (point 14A) where: One, the central government may compulsorily register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card to him. Two, the central government may maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens and for that purpose establish a National Registration Authority. Three, on and from the date of commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003, the Registrar General, India under sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1969 (18 of 1969) shall act as the National Registration Authority and he shall function as the Registrar General of Citizen Registration.

However, in contrast to the important normative question of whether the central government should launch an NRC or not, it is perhaps more important to look at the positive question of whether the central government has the capacity for such an ambitious undertaking. A faulty implementation of the NRC could create a human rights issue of unimaginable magnitude.

To understand issues related to the central government's capacity to launch an NRC, we focus our attention on the most important activity of the Registrar General of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) — the implementation of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1969, whereby every birth and death in the whole of India is to be compulsorily registered. Registration of birth is the right of every child and is the first step towards establishing a legal identity. It was envisaged under this Act that the Civil Registry System (CRS) would be "the unified process of continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the vital events (births, deaths, still births)". Closer inspection of data from the MHA report on Vital Statistics of India based on the Civil Registry Systems, 2017 reveals several shortcomings, which are a harbinger of the challenges that the government will face in the implementation of the NRC.

First, there are large variations in registered births and deaths across states. For example, in large and less developed states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, 62 per cent and 74 per cent of the births, respectively, were registered, while only 38 per cent and 43 per cent of the deaths, respectively, were registered. Overall in India, 85 per cent of births and 74 per cent of deaths were registered. Some of the Northeastern states, such as Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh have less than 40 per cent of deaths that are registered. Even in Assam, which has 100 per cent of birth registration, only 66 per cent of the deaths are registered. This clearly reflects the acute poverty of infrastructure across

FIGURE 1: REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS, ACROSS STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES, 2017



states to implement the constitutionally mandated Registration of births and deaths Act of 1969. Unfortunately, this also suggests that the NRC implemented under present conditions will disproportionately hurt the vulnerable and weaker sections of the society. (See Figure 1)

Next, to understand the nature of the exercise, we look at the registration of deaths of a particularly vulnerable group — children less than a year old. They are vulnerable because they depend on adults for all their needs and do not have adequate political representation. They are, therefore, neglected by society and the state. This apathy is reflected in their registration numbers. We estimate by using data from the sample registration system (SRS) and comparing it with data from the CRS, that only 19 per cent of infant deaths are registered. In some large states like Bihar, less than 1 per cent of infant deaths were registered, in Uttar Pradesh it was merely 4.3 per cent. Even in states that report high levels of social development, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, merely 62 per cent and 58 per cent of infant deaths were registered. This clearly reflects the impoverished nature of the state to address the

In contrast to the important normative question of whether the central government should launch an NRC or not, it is perhaps more important to look at the positive question of whether the central government has the capacity for such an ambitious undertaking. A faulty implementation of the NRC could create a human rights issue of unimaginable magnitude.



FIGURE 2: REGISTERED INFANT DEATHS, ESTIMATED INFANT DEATHS, ACCORDING TO LARGE STATES, 2017

State	Registered Infant deaths (A)	Estimated Infant deaths (A)	Ratio (%) (A/B)
Andhra Pradesh	9115	27123	33.6%
Assam	3372	30718	11.0%
Bihar	840	97438	0.9%
Chhattisgarh	8779	22677	38.7%
Gujarat	16093	38070	42.3%
Haryana	5481	17219	31.8%
Jharkhand		22520	
Jammu & Kashmir	2131	4458	47.8%
Karnataka	10832	27445	39.5%
Kerala	3176	5103	62.2%
Maharashtra	16951	36390	46.6%
Madhya Pradesh	11359	92468	12.3%
Odisha	11868	32201	36.9%
Punjab	2455	9218	26.6%
Rajasthan	10435	68001	15.3%
Telangana	5390	18426	29.3%
Tamil Nadu	9730	16650	58.4%
Uttarakhand		5981	
Uttar Pradesh	10204	236387	4.3%
West Bengal	13035	34509	37.8%
India	165494	858929	19.3%

identity of the voiceless.

We also found a strong negative correlation between infant mortality rate and proportion of infant deaths that were registered. States that have poor infrastructure in registering infant deaths also have a significantly higher infant mortality rate. Given India's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative upon the state to accurately account for all infant deaths.

In light of the severe capacity constraint, if the NRC is to be ever launched then the first step for the MHA should be to strengthen the existing infrastructure to account for at least every birth and death within the country. An unintended consequence of this could be its immediate effect on health and safety policies, which are significantly hampered by the non-availability of regular and reliable data, in particular on deaths. At present, the existing infrastructure is not conducive to launch an NRC. It will only lead to chaos, confusion and exclusion of the weakest and the poorest sections of society.

Kapoor works at ISI and Ravi with Brookings India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The US and Western political and public opinion elites should realize that the Western political system is unleashing negative energy that is splitting society. They should try to prevent such Western political logic extending to the outside world."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Refugee to citizen

CAA will not take away anyone's citizenship, only seeks to confer dignity and rights to the persecuted



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

THE HISTORIC CITIZENSHIP Amendment Act (CAA) has come into effect across the country following a gazette notification on December 12. This moment signifies the continuous struggle of many visionary leaders and freedom fighters. With the CAA, a long-pending demand for relief to persecuted religious minorities has been met.

Recalling two incidents from history will be useful to understand the importance of the CAA.

Following the 1971 Indo-Pak war, Rajasthan faced an influx of around one lakh refugees comprising people from the Sodha Rajput, Meghwal, Bheel, Charan, Maheshwari and Sindhi communities. The Simla Agreement signed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and President of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, sought to bring about the withdrawal of troops and exchange of prisoners of war. Atal Bihari Vajpayee rushed to Shimla during the five-day summit and pleaded with Indira Gandhi to take a tough stand and insisted that "sacrifices made by the jawns should not be surrendered at the negotiation table".

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh led by Vajpayee opposed the return of refugees to Pakistan on the Simla Agreement's terms and took out a march to Indian occupied territories of Pakistan in Gadrta city in July 1972. During Vajpayee's stay at Gadrta Road, Barmer, which was the focal point of the agitation, thousands of refugees joined hands with him. Atalji, along with the volunteers, walked five to six kms from Gadrta Road in India to territory India had occupied in Pakistan and assured the persecuted minorities and Dalits a dignified life in India. He stayed in the House of Kojhraj Maheshwari, visited the refugees' camp and assured the refugees that they will be allowed to stay in India. Tarun Rai Kaga, a former MLA from the Chohtan constituency in Rajasthan was one such Dalit who had come to the Gadrta Road camp in 1972 from Chachro township in Tharparkar district, Pakistan. The NDA-I government of Vajpayee conferred special rights to district collectors in Rajasthan and Gujarat to decide on citizenship requests made by Hindu and Sikhs refugees.

The tale of the erstwhile Mohata Palace (now Jinnah House) in Karachi reveals the various shades of the hostile attitude of Pakistan's leadership towards religious minorities. Shiv Ratan Mohata, a successful Marwari entrepreneur from Bikaner, had built the palatial house in the seaside neighbourhood of Clifton in Karachi for his wife. At the peak of World War II, leaders preferred to visit London via Karachi for meetings related to Independence and Partition. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, used to stay at Mohata Palace during these visits. During one such occasion, Jinnah told Shiv Ratan Mohata that he will have to vacate the magnificent building after Partition. Mohata's numerous requests that he be allowed to retain his palace were refused by Jinnah.

Shiv Ratan Mohata spoke about his exchange with Jinnah to his brother Ram Gopal Mohata, a very simple, affluent and spiritual personality of Bikaner. He told Shiv Ratan that, "if the king cannot take care of people of his region, we should not live there" and suggested that he leave Pakistan immediately.

After Independence, Shiv Ratan Mohata settled in Mumbai and his Mohata Palace became the Jinnah House of Karachi. After Jinnah's demise in September 1948, the palace was handed over to Fatima Jinnah. In the 1950s, Shiv Ratan Mohata wished to have Jinnah House in Mumbai for Mohata Palace under the government's provisions for exchange of immovable properties. He got the then chief minister of Bombay state, B G Kher, to recommend his case to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. But his efforts were unsuccessful since Jinnah had told Nehru not to give his property to anyone.

The historic occasion of the CAA brings a sigh of relief and smile to every person who was affected by Partition — from affluent business families like the Mohatas of Bikaner to Dalits like Tarun Rai Kaga and lakhs of other unnamed individuals.

From time to time, various political parties, including the Congress, have voiced the cause of persecuted religious minorities. On November 15, 1950, while replying to the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address in the provisional Parliament, Prime Minister Nehru, referring to Syama Prasad Mookerjee's statement said: "I am perfectly prepared to agree with him (Mookerjee) that the situation of the displaced persons is very far from desirable", and added that "there is no doubt, of course, that people who have come to India, those displaced persons who stay in India, are bound to have citizenship. If the law is inadequate, the law should be changed".

During a discussion on the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the Rajya Sabha on December 18, 2003, the then Leader of Opposition, Manmohan Singh, demanded a liberal approach towards religiously persecuted refugees. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, in his previous tenure, wrote to the then Union Home Minister P Chidambaram on the plight of Pakistani Hindus and Sikh migrants. Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi had submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on April 20, 2012, pleading that Indian citizens who had to flee due to persecution and discrimination on religious ground at the time of Partition should not be treated as foreigners. Even Prakash Karat, the then CPM general secretary, had written to Manmohan Singh in May 2012 regarding the citizenship problems of Bengali refugees. When the Modi government showed the courage to address this daunting issue, the Opposition parties are trying to mislead the people.

The CAA is about inclusion and not exclusion. It has nothing to do with Indian Muslims. The Act is not meant to take away anyone's citizenship, but it will confer citizenship on persecuted minorities. The Act will ease the lives of Partition refugees and provide them a dignified life by allowing them access to the government's welfare schemes.

The writer represents Bikaner in the Lok Sabha and is Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries, Public Enterprises and Parliamentary Affairs

Whose head is it, anyway?

The problem with Gujarat government's decision to relax the helmet rule



SATISH K SHARMA

MY FATHER, WHO was a religious teacher in the 7th Grenadiers during the 1965 India-Pakistan war, wrote a tribute in verse for the soldiers of his battalion who were killed in action in the Khemkaran sector. As a child, I was fascinated by this poem and felt particularly sorry for one soldier who died when shrapnel hit his exposed head. The jawan had, apparently, lost his helmet earlier in the battle and could not get a replacement immediately. He was marching ahead with nothing but a towel as protection when the enemy shell exploded near him.

Twenty-four years later, on May 7, 1989, in the town of Mangrol in Junagadh district, 10 people, all Muslims, were killed in police firing as a direct result of a police officer not wearing a helmet on law and order duty. Apparently, an Eid procession of Bin-Tablighi Muslims was passing through a route disputed by the Tablighi Muslims. As the procession neared the Tablighi locality, a hail of stones from the rooftops of houses lining the street greeted it. When the sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), who was leading the police bandobast came out of his jeep to assess the situation, a piece of rock, hit him on the head. He fell down, bleeding profusely. The police thought he had been killed. It unnerved the force which, in sheer panic, fired more than 120 rounds causing 10 fatalities. The SDPO survived but if he had been wearing a helmet, the loss of lives

could have been averted.

I have personal knowledge of this incident because, I was rushed to Mangrol post haste ("Report your departure to state police control room in 1 hour", said the terse radio message) as a young assistant superintendent of police to replace the injured officer. For the next one-and-a-half years — the time I was there — not a single incident of stone throwing happened and much of my time went in coping with the judicial enquiry which had been ordered into the police firing. In the end, the enquiry exonerated everyone but I learnt a lesson — ensure that every police officer wears a helmet during bandobast duty.

The helmet came to haunt me again, but in a different context. On the August 28, 1990, my 25-year-old brother-in-law, Manish, was riding his motorcycle in the late evening on an empty road in New Delhi. The anti-Mandal agitation was at its peak. Some rioters had placed a large garbage bin in the middle of the road. Manish could not see it and his motorcycle crashed into the huge bin. He suffered a fatal head injury. When police came to the scene, they found the helmet on the handle of the bike. The accident triggered a set of events that changed the lives of my family forever.

A year later, on July 22, 1991, as a deputy commissioner of police, I was supervising the bandobast of Tazia procession at Mandvi —

the city square of the walled city in Vadodara. The atmosphere was tense because the city had seen a long spell of communal clashes. Yet, all seemed to be going well when suddenly, instigated by provocative sloganeering, some miscreants from the adjoining Hindu locality started throwing rocks at the procession. There was immediate retaliation from the other side and the street turned into a battleground.

As we tried to control the situation, a big piece of rock landed on my forehead. Fortunately, I was wearing the helmet and the visor was down. It saved my head, but on deflection, the rock hit my left collar bone and fractured it. I was shaken but happy that the elementary precaution saved my life.

In 2017, out of 1.47 lakh road accident fatalities in India, 36,000 victims were helmetless two-wheeler riders. It works out to an alarming figure of 98 per day. The otherwise law-abiding citizens of Gujarat are not only averse to wearing helmets but it is also a sensitive issue with them. A helmet is one "inconvenience" they do not want to put up with.

During my tenures of three years each as commissioner of police at Vadodara and Surat, I could not enforce the helmet rule with any degree of success. How can you when nine out of 10 bike riders violate it? We would challan thousands of bike riders but the vio-

lators ran into lakhs.

However, in recent months, as a consequence of strict enforcement and a stiffer penalty one could see much better compliance. But it clearly did not go down well with people.

Bowing down to the public outcry, the Government of Gujarat decided to relax the helmet rule substantially. Now, it is no longer mandatory for two-wheeler riders to wear protective headgear in eight metropolitan city areas of Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Junagadh and Gandhinagar and all 160-odd municipal towns of Gujarat. The decision has been welcomed all over Gujarat.

Indeed, one could argue that enforcement is not the only way by which police can ensure better traffic discipline. The authorities still have the option of launching a massive state-wide education-cum-awareness campaign. One only hopes that considering the number of lives, especially young lives, at stake, such a campaign will start sooner than later.

But while that happens, the question one wants to ask the two-wheeler riders of Gujarat is this: If you don't wear a helmet, whose head is at risk?

The writer is a retired IPS officer and former commissioner of police, Surat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISTORTED PICTURE

THIS REFERS TO the article, "In citizenship debate, a related question — that of Sri Lankan Tamils" (IE, December 24). In response to the question "What do the refugees from Sri Lanka expect from the government?" it is stated that "they expect citizenship of India — because they fear persecution and violence at the hands of the Colombo government and the Sinhala Buddhist majority". In my view, the article attempts to create a negative image of Sri Lanka by depicting it as a place where the government, and Sinhala Buddhist majority will persecute the Tamil refugees if they return. There is no basis for the fears. In fact, the government welcomes voluntary repatriations, and arrangements are in place to resettle such refugees when they return. A large number of Sri Lankan refugees from Tamil Nadu have returned to Sri Lanka and no incidents of persecution against them have been reported so far.

Austin Fernando, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India

ATAL FOREVER

THIS REFERS TO the article, "Firm policy, gentle politics" (IE, December 25). Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a courageous person with a soft heart. Resisting US pres-

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

CARTOON EXPLAINS

THIS REFERS TO E P Unny's cartoon on December 25. It has managed to explain what a thousand words could not. Between the NPR, NRC and CAA, hapless citizens are being tossed around and eventually dumped into the wastebins.

Barad Krishnapalsinh, Ahmedabad

sure, he declared India a nuclear power. He is indeed comparable to Swami Vivekananda as an orator.

Barad Krishnapalsinh, Ahmedabad

12 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Michael Bloomberg hopes to take on Trump in the 2020 White House race

USA

Bloomberg says his campaign unknowingly used prison labour

Washington: Billionaire US presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg on Tuesday said his campaign had unknowingly used prison workers to make telephone calls on his behalf. Bloomberg, who last month entered the Democratic Party race to face Republican President Donald Trump in the 2020 election, said the campaign ended its relationship with a company that used prison labour for making phone calls. "We do not support this practice and we are making sure our vendors more properly vet their sub-contractors moving forward," Bloomberg said.

PHILIPPINES

Typhoon Phanfone pummels central Philippines

Manila: Typhoon Phanfone pummelled the central Philippines on Christmas Day, bringing a wet, miserable and terrifying holiday to millions in the mainly Catholic nation. Police said six people were missing as the typhoon leapt from one small island to another for the second day — crumpling houses, toppling trees and blacking out cities and towns, including in popular resorts like Boracay. At the height of the festive season Wednesday, thousands were stranded at shuttered ports or evacuation centres.

SINGAPORE

Disney removes lesbian kiss from Star Wars film

A BRIEF kiss between two female characters was removed from screenings of *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* in Singapore, which has restrictive laws against gay people. Though just a few seconds and hardly a major plot point, the kiss between two minor characters was notable as the first overt appearance of gay characters in a *Star Wars* film. Disney cut the kiss to preserve the film's PG-13 rating in Singapore, according to reports. The next-highest rating, NC-16, would have barred children under 16 from attending. Disney did not respond to a message sent on Tuesday.

WILDFIRE DESTROYS 120 HOMES IN CHILE



Firefighters at work in Valparaiso, Chile, on Tuesday. Reuters

■ A wildfire raged through a residential area on the outskirts of the Chilean city of Valparaiso on Tuesday, engulfing houses and prompting evacuation orders.

■ As of late Tuesday night, the blaze had destroyed more than 120 houses and was only partly under control, the local fire department said.

■ The cause of the fire was not immediately known, but its rapid spread was worsened by warm, dry weather and steady winds.

■ Wildfires, which are exacerbated by climate change, have caused widespread destruction in Australia, Brazil, the United States and other countries this year.

Saudi FM to visit Pak to address concerns over Imran's Malaysia summit pull-out

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, DECEMBER 25

SAUDI ARABIA'S Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud will visit Pakistan on Thursday in what appears to be a damage-control exercise by Riyadh to address the growing criticism against the Gulf Kingdom after Islamabad pulled out of the Kuala Lumpur summit of Muslim nations under what Turkey termed Saudi threats, a media report said on Wednesday.

Pakistan faced huge domestic and international embarrass-



PRINCE FAISAL BIN FARHAN AL SAUD
Saudi Foreign Minister

ment after Prime Minister Imran Khan refused to attend the summit at the eleventh hour.

The summit from December 19-21 in Kuala Lumpur was seen by Saudis as an attempt to create a new bloc in the Muslim world that could become an alternative to the dysfunctional Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) led by the Gulf Kingdom.

Khan had accepted Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's invitation to the summit, but pulled out of it at the eleventh hour reportedly due to Saudi pressure.

Saudi Arabia never wants to lose the public support it enjoys in Pakistan and the Saudi Foreign Minister is believed to be visiting Islamabad for a day-long trip to

dispel such an impression, *The Express Tribune* quoted diplomatic sources as saying.

Prince Faisal will meet Pakistan's top civil and military leadership and convey a message that Riyadh values its "long-term strategic partnership with Pakistan", it said. Pakistan's explanation for not attending the summit was that Islamabad wanted to maintain its neutrality.

A Turkish newspaper quoted President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as saying that Pakistan was pressured to stay away from the summit in which leaders of Malaysia, Turkey, Iran and Qatar participated. PTI



Pope Francis prays as he celebrates Christmas Eve Mass in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. AP

Pope defends migrants, calls for peace in Christmas message

PHILIP PULLELLA
VATICAN CITY, DECEMBER 25

POPE FRANCIS urged the world to let the light of Christmas pierce the "darkness in human hearts" that leads to religious persecution, social injustice, armed conflicts and fear of migrants.

In his "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) Christmas Day message, the 83-year-old pope called for peace in the Holy Land, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Venezuela, Ukraine and African countries caught up in conflicts.

The common thread of his address to tens of thousands of people in St. Peter's Square and millions watching or listening around the world was that change starts in the hearts of individuals.

"There is darkness in human hearts, yet the light of Christ is

greater still," Francis said, as he marked the seventh Christmas of his pontificate. "There is darkness in personal, family and social relationships, but the light of Christ is greater. There is darkness in economic, geopolitical and ecological conflicts, yet greater still is the light of Christ," he said.

Francis singled out the persecution of Christians by militant groups in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, asking God to console those who suffer for their faith.

Francis, who has faced flak because of his defence of migrants, dedicated a section of his address to their plight. "It is injustice that makes them cross deserts and seas that become cemeteries. It is injustice that forces them to endure unspeakable forms of abuse, enslavement of every kind and torture in inhumane detention camps," Francis said. REUTERS

Taliban militants abduct 27 peace activists in western Afghanistan

REUTERS
KABUL, DECEMBER 25

TALIBAN MILITANTS have kidnapped 27 peace activists from a highway in Afghanistan's western Farah province, local officials and peace activists said on Wednesday.

Massoud Bakhtawar, the deputy governor of Farah, said the activists were travelling with six cars from Herat to neighbouring Farah on Tuesday evening when their convoy was stopped by the Taliban on a main highway and taken to an unknown location.

Bismillah Watadost, a member of the group, said the activists had planned to travel to various parts of Farah to call for a ceasefire

EXPLAINED

Broad movement for peace, facing resistance from all sides

THE PEOPLE'S Peace Movement is an umbrella group comprising people from all walks of life, most of them directly affected in some way by the nearly 2 decades of fighting. They march into Taliban-controlled areas and speak to the militants, trying to get them to lay down their arms. The government has objected to this, warning them against going into Taliban territory, and the Taliban itself have both met with the group and dismissed it as a government-funded initiative. However, for a period of time, when the US-Taliban talks had stalled, the People's Peace Movement was the only ongoing effort for peace that was actually gaining ground.

between the warring parties in Afghanistan. The group, People's Peace Movement, was formed to protest violent attacks after a car

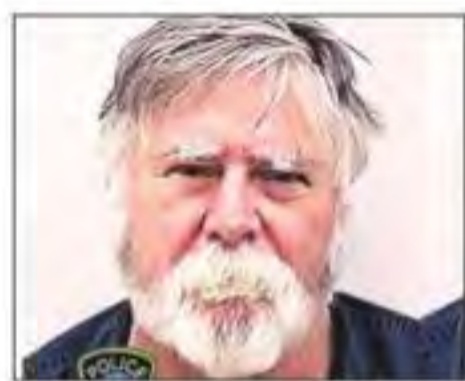
bomb exploded at a sport stadium in southern Helmand province last year killing 17 civilians and wounding 50 others.

'Merry Christmas': Bank robber throws cash in air

KEITH COFFMAN
DENVER, DECEMBER 25

A MAN with a white beard was being held on \$10,000 bond for allegedly robbing a Colorado bank and throwing the stolen cash into the air while shouting, "Merry Christmas" to passersby, police and local media reported Tuesday.

David Wayne Oliver, 65, was arrested at a nearby Starbucks coffee shop after he held up the Academy Bank in Colorado Springs on Monday afternoon, according to a police report.



David Wayne Oliver

Police said the suspect had "threatened the use of a weapon" and left the bank with an undisclosed amount of cash.

A police spokesperson could not immediately be reached for comment, but Colorado Springs television station KKTV reported that eyewitness Dion Pascale recounted Oliver stepped outside the bank and tossed the money "all over the place."

"He started throwing money out of the bag" before yelling, "Merry Christmas," the TV station quoted Pascale as saying.

Pascale said bystanders retrieved some of the money and returned it to the bank as Oliver walked to the Starbucks, sat down and appeared to be wait-

ing for police to arrest him, KKTV reported.

The Denver Post quoted police as saying "thousands of dollars" remained unaccounted for, adding there was no indication Oliver used a weapon in the heist.

Oliver, pictured in police mug shots with gray-and-white hair and a full white beard, is being held at the El Paso County jail and is set to make his first court appearance on Thursday, jail records showed. It was not clear from the records if he has an attorney. REUTERS

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Iran starts Internet shutdown ahead of possible new protests

Move comes after online calls for renewed stir, ceremonies to commemorate those killed in last month's demonstrations



In November, Iran shut down the Internet for about a week to help stifle the protests against fuel price hikes, which turned political, sparking the bloodiest crackdown in the 40-year history of the Islamic Republic. Reuters

REUTERS
DUBAI, DECEMBER 25

IRANIAN AUTHORITIES have shut down mobile Internet access to overseas sites in several provinces, an Iranian news agency reported on Wednesday, a day before new protests called for on social media.

Social media posts and some relatives of people killed in unrest last month over hikes in gasoline prices have called for renewed protests and commemoration ceremonies for the dead on Thursday.

The semi-official news agency ILNA quoted an informed source at the Communications and Information Technology Ministry as saying the shutdown was ordered by "security authorities" and covered the Alborz, Kurdistan and Zanjan provinces in central and western Iran and Fars in the south.

"According to this source, it is possible that more provinces will be affected by the shutdown of mobile international connectivity," ILNA said.

In November, Iran shut down the Internet for about a week to help stifle the fuel protests which turned political, sparking the bloodiest crack-

IRAN WARPLANE CRASHES, PILOT MISSING

Tehran: An Iranian military fighter jet crashed on Wednesday near a dormant volcano in the northwest of the country and its pilot was missing, official media reported.

State news agency IRNA said the jet went down at 9am near Mount Sabalan, in the Lesser Caucasus range, and

was a MiG-29 on a test flight after being overhauled.

Amateur video footage appeared to show smoke rising above snow-capped peaks.

Fars news agency said the plane had been found but there was no trace of its pilot and that he could have ejected from the aircraft. PTI

down in the 40-year history of the Islamic Republic.

The internet blockage made it difficult for protesters to post

videos on social media to generate support and also to obtain reliable reports on the extent of the unrest.

35 civilians killed in double Burkina Faso attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
OUAGADOUGOU, DECEMBER 25

JIHADISTS IN Burkina Faso killed 35 civilians, almost all of them women, when they simultaneously attacked a town in the north and its military base in one of the deadliest assaults in nearly five years of jihadist violence in the West African country.

Seven soldiers and 80 jihadists also died in the double attack Tuesday in Arbinda in Soum province which lasted "several hours" and was of a "rare intensity", the Army said.

Burkina Faso, bordering Mali and Niger, has seen regular jihadist attacks which have left hundreds dead since the start of 2015 when militant violence

began to spread across the Sahel region.

"A large group of terrorists simultaneously attacked the military base and the civilian population in Arbinda," the army chief of staff said in a statement.

"This barbaric attack resulted in the deaths of 35 civilian victims, most of them women," President Roch Marc Christian Kabore added on Twitter, praising the "bravery and commitment" of the defence and security forces.

Communications minister and government spokesman Remis Dandjinou later said 31 of the civilian victims were women, adding around 20 soldiers and six civilians were wounded.

The President has declared 48 hours of national mourning.

Nepal: Parliament committee to probe land case involving PM Oli

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, DECEMBER 25

MONTHS AFTER extensive media coverage and public debate over alleged lack of transparency and corruption while leasing out large chunks of land and other property belonging to the Nepal Trust, the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has decided to investigate the matter. The Nepal Trust controls the confiscated property of former royals.

Committee chairman Bharat Shah said the PAC would study the case, ask for all relevant files concerning the leasing out of the Trust's property and investigate any possible discrepancy.

The Nepal Trust was formed soon after the 2006 political change that saw the suspension of the monarchy for about two years, followed by its abrogation along with the confiscation of royal property, promising it would be used for the advancement of health and education.

The Trust, with PM KP Oli as its patron and his nominee as its chairman, however, amended the governing rule, making it legal to lease out the Trust property for commercial use. Deputy PM Ishwar Pokharel, who is in charge of Defence Ministry, is the current chairman of the Trust.

Further changes made to the composition of the Trust by the Oli government, allegedly favouring some companies, had caused a scandal.

HIS INVENTION BROUGHT DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO A NEW BREED OF CONSUMER DEVICES

Chuck Peddle dies at 82; his \$25 chip helped start the PC age

CADE METZ
DECEMBER 25

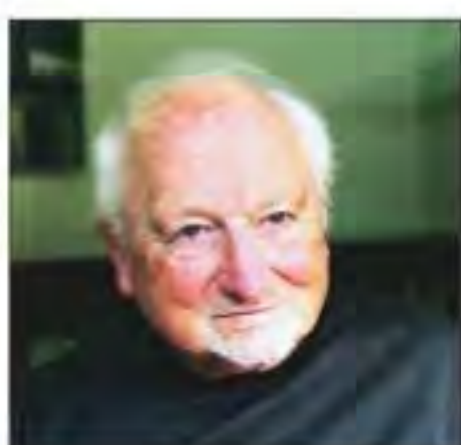
CHUCK PEDDLE, the engineer and entrepreneur who helped launch the age of the personal computer after designing a microprocessor that sold for a mere \$25, died Dec. 15 at his home in Santa Cruz, California. He was 82.

His partner, Kathleen Shaeffer, said the cause was pancreatic cancer.

In 1974, Peddle and several other engineers were designing a new silicon chip at the Motorola Corp. in Phoenix when the company sent him a letter demanding that he shut the project down.

Peddle envisioned an ultra-low-cost chip that could bring digital technology to a new breed of consumer devices, from cash registers to personal computers. But his bosses saw it as unwanted in-house competition for the \$300 processor Motorola had unveiled that year.

So Peddle moved the project to MOS Technology, a rival chip-maker near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, taking seven other Motorola engineers with him. There they built a processor called the 6502. Priced at \$25 — the cost of a dinner for four, and the equivalent of about \$130 today — this chip soon powered the first big wave of personal computers in both the United States and Britain,



Chuck Peddle

including the Apple II and the Commodore PET.

"The market needed a cheap one," Peddle said in a 2014 interview with the Computer History Museum.

In later years Intel, the Northern California chip giant, would come to dominate the personal computer business. But the market was seeded in Valley Forge, not Silicon Valley.

"Chuck Peddle is one of the great unsung heroes of the personal computer age," said Doug Fairbairn, a director at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California. "Virtually all of the early, successful, mass-market personal computers were built around the 6502, not chips from Intel or anyone else."

Charles Ingerham Peddle was born on Nov. 25, 1937, in Bangor, Maine, the oldest son of Thomas and Maxine (Denno)

Peddle. His father was a salesman, his mother a commercial illustrator. In high school Chuck dreamed of being a radio announcer. (Television was still in its infancy.) But after traveling to Boston for an audition, he realized that his talents lay elsewhere. At the suggestion of a neighbor, he enrolled in the engineering school at the University of Maine.

After graduation, his aim was twofold: He wanted to live in California, and he wanted to build computers. So he took a job with General Electric, where he helped design early space vehicles, electronic cash registers and so-called time-share computers, massive mainframes that could

be shared across companies, schools and other organizations.

Later, at Motorola, he worked on the 6800 chip, a \$300 processor used in pinball machines and other arcade games, before turning his attention to a lower-cost processor. When the company sent him a letter killing the project, he responded with a letter of his own. He told Motorola that because it was abandoning the project, all the work he had done now belonged to him.

When he first took the idea to MOS Technology, one of the company's founders, L.J. Sevin, turned him down, worried that Motorola would sue. So Peddle took the project to the other founder, John Paivinen, with whom he had

worked at General Electric. Paivinen gave his approval.

After Paivinen had brought Peddle and the other Motorola engineers to Valley Forge and they built their low-cost chip, Motorola sued, just as Sevin had predicted. MOS fought the suit for years before paying a \$200,000 fine.

By then, its \$25 chip was feeding the rise of the personal computer. At MOS, Peddle built a personal computer around his new chip called the KIM-1 (the letters stood for Keyboard Input Monitor), and he started selling chips to a pair of young entrepreneurs, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, who were building a company called Apple. NYT

MOVE AIMS TO HELP FIRMS AVOID LONG-DRAWN JUDICIAL CASES

Govt forms expert panel for time-bound resolution of disputes in oil & gas sector

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

IN A move that may lift overall business sentiment, especially in the oil and gas sector, and will help the sector get rid of disputes choking investment in it, the government has constituted an expert committee for time-bound resolution of exploration and production disputes without having to resort to tardy judicial process.

According to a government notification dated December 16, the three member 'Committee of External Eminent Persons/Experts' for dispute resolution will comprise of former Secretary of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas C C Chaturvedi, former Chairman and Managing Director of OIL and ONGC Bikash C Bora, and former MD of Hindalco Industries Satish Pai.

The notification further stated that the panel will have a tenure of three years and the resolution will be attempted to be arrived at within three months.

"The Committee shall exercise all powers and discharge all functions necessary for carrying out conciliation and mediation

Panel gets 3-year term; 3 months to arrive at resolution

THE DECISION may lift overall business sentiment, especially in the oil and gas sector, which, in return, will help the sector get rid of disputes choking investment in it. The expert committee will help companies get their issues resolved quickly without going through the tardy judicial process.

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proceedings for resolution of the disputes between the parties as per the provisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 and endeavour that the parties arrive at a Settlement Agreement within three (3) months from the date of the first meeting of the Committee," the notification read.

It added that the members and the parties may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, extend the time for arriving at such Settlement Agreement by mutual agreement

The country's oil and gas sec-

India can be referred to the committee, if both parties to the contract agree in writing for conciliation or mediation and further agree to not invoke arbitration proceedings thereafter," it said.

Once a resolution has been referred to panel, the parties cannot resort to arbitration or court case to resolve it.

As per the notification, for procedural aspect, the committee will be guided by the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, and the venue of the conciliation or mediation proceedings shall be New Delhi.

Stating that the parties will represent their case before the committee acting as conciliators or mediators only through their employees or executives, the notification said that "Advocates or Consultants shall not participate in the conciliation proceedings, unless the committee on application filed by a party to the proceedings finds that some issue of legal nature or an issue requiring highly specialised knowledge is in dispute requiring clarification/interpretation by an Advocate or Consultant and takes a view that in absence of such assistance or participation the party's interests shall not be adequately represented in the

conciliation or mediation proceedings." It further said that if the concerned parties are unable to arrive at a settlement, "no interest shall be claimed in any further proceedings for the period from the date of notice till date of completion of the proceedings pending before the committee or date of the receipt of the final recommendations from the committee or date of execution of the settlement agreement whichever is later."

'Free WiFi to all villages connected through BharatNet till March 2020'

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU REWARI, DECEMBER 25

THE CENTRAL government will provide free WiFi till March 2020 to all villages connected through the BharatNet broadband service at present, Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Wednesday. At present, around 48,000 villages connected through the BharatNet project have WiFi access.

"We have connected 1.3 lakh gram panchayats through BharatNet network so far. Our aim is to take this further to 2.5 lakh gram panchayats. To promote further utilisation, we will provide WiFi free in all villages connected through BharatNet till March 2020," Prasad said at an event here.

The government's BharatNet project aims to provide access to all the 2.5 lakh gram panchayats

'CONNECTED 1.3 LAKH GRAM PANCHAYATS'

The BharatNet project of the government aims to provide access to all the 2.5 lakh gram panchayats across the country

The government had last year said that it had connected nearly one lakh

gram panchayats via BharatNet in phase-one

Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the government has connected 1.3 lakh gram panchayats through BharatNet network so far

across the country. Last year, the government said it had connected nearly 1 lakh gram panchayats through BharatNet in phase-one.

So far, a total of Rs 20,431 crore has been spent from the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for connecting villages under BharatNet.

The total cost of both the phases was pegged at Rs 45,000 crore by the government in November 2017.

NITI Aayog's Ramesh Chand in favour of only two GST slabs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

GOVERNMENT THINK-TANK NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand on Wednesday made a case for only two slabs under the goods and service tax regime as against the multiple slabs currently, and said rates should be revised annually if required.

The goods and services tax (GST), which replaced almost all the indirect taxes, came into force from July 1, 2017, and the rates on goods and services have been revised several times since then. Currently, there are four GST rate slabs — 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent. Several items fall in exempt category or nil duty. Besides, cess is also levied on five goods.

Talking to PTI, Chand said that when a large taxation reforms like GST are brought in, there are always "teething problems" but soon they stabilise. He said most of the countries took long time for GST stabilisation.

The NITI Aayog member, who looks after the agriculture sector, is also strictly against fre-

quent changes in GST rates as it leads to problems. The all-powerful GST Council, presided over by the Union finance minister and comprising state finance ministers, decides on rate for particular goods and services.

Besides frequent demand for reduction in the rates on various goods and services, there has also been clamour for a slash in the number of tax slabs. "It has become tendency of every sector to ask for lower GST. I feel GST issues are much larger than asking for rates," Chand said.

And, "we should not fiddle with rates or change rates frequently... We should not have many rates. Have only two rates," he added.

Chand said the focus should be on steady increase in revenue collection from the new indirect tax regime rather than tinkering with rates. He prescribed that if at all rates need to be changed, it should be done annually. On demands of lower GST on process food, like dairy products, Chand, an agronomist, said the 5 per cent GST on such products is "very very reasonable".

Grievance redressal mechanism for taxpayers to be set up

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE GST Council will set up a grievance redressal mechanism for taxpayers. The decision was taken at the 38th meeting of the GST Council on December 18.

It has decided that a structured grievance redressal mechanism should be established for the taxpayers under GST to tackle grievances on GST-related issues, a statement said on Wednesday.

The Council will set up the Grievance Redressal Committee at zonal and state levels comprising central tax and state tax officers, representatives of industry and GST stakeholders. The panel will be constituted for two years and the term of each member will be for likewise. If any member of the panel would be absent for three consecutive meetings, without adequate reasons, the member will be replaced with a fresh nomination by the principal chief commissioner/ chief commissioner of central tax in consultation with the chief commissioner/ commissioner of state tax. WITHPTI

BRIEFLY

Piramal Enterprises to raise ₹2,750 cr

New Delhi: Piramal Enterprises on Wednesday said it will raise up to Rs 2,750 crore by issuing bonds on private placement basis. Piramal Enterprises said the money can be raised in one or more tranches from time to time.

Hyatt plans to open 11 hotels by 2020-end

New Delhi: Global hospitality firm Hyatt Hotels Corporation is looking to open 11 hotels across India by the end of 2020 as part of its expansion plans in the country, a senior company executive said. The Chicago-headquartered firm currently has 32 hotels across 20 destinations under its eight brands in India.

TVS Motor launches scooter in Nepal

New Delhi: Chennai-based TVS Motor Company on Wednesday said it has introduced NTORQ 125 Race Edition scooter in Nepal. The Race Edition comes with various design elements and features like LED DRLs and headlamp, hazard lamp among others. PTI

'Housing sales up 6% in Delhi-NCR during 2019'

Housing sales in the National Capital Region went up by 6 per cent to 46,920 units during 2019 on higher demand for affordable homes and completed flats, according to property consultant Anarock

PRICES IN DELHI-NCR remained stagnant at nearly Rs 4,600 per sq ft, while unsold inventories fell by 6 per cent to 1,75,079 units from 1,86,714 units

REASONS: Unrelenting liquidity crisis, lower-than-expected buyer sentiments and faltering GDP growth eventually put brakes on the overall housing growth in the second half of 2019

MUMBAI METROPOLITAN REGION saw housing sales rise the maximum — by 22 per cent — to 80,870 units this year from 66,440 units



5% Across seven major cities, sales rose by 5 per cent to 2,61,370 units in 2019 compared to 2,48,310 units in the previous year

22% Sales dropped by 22 per cent in the second half of this year to 1,47,120 as against 1,14,250 units during January-June period this year

Nissan's third senior-most executive quits

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE TOKYO, DECEMBER 25

THE SENIOR executive in charge of plans to revive crisis-hit Nissan has decided to quit just weeks after taking the job, sending the car-maker's stock plunging more than three per cent on Wednesday.

Jun Seki, 58, number three at Nissan, had informed them of his decision to leave and the company had accepted it, the automaker said in a statement.

Seki, currently executive officer and vice chief operating officer, is expected to become president of major electric components maker Nidec, according to a source close to Nissan.

Ashwani Gupta, chief operating officer and number two at

Nissan, should take the responsibility for the recovery plan instead of Seki, the source told AFP.

Struggling to rebuild itself after former chief Carlos Ghosn's financial scandal, Nissan just started its new management under chief executive and president Makoto Uchida on December 1.

The company said Wednesday it "has been on a steady path to regain trust, restore the company's performance and work on its business transformation, and is already seeing progress."

"Under the new top management, Nissan will continue to focus on these key areas, which remain our highest priority," it said in the statement. But investors were not convinced.

Nissan shares plunged 3.09 per cent to 633.4 yen on the Tokyo

Stock Exchange.

Makoto Sengoku, market analyst at Tokai Tokyo Research Institute, said Seki's resignation came at "an impossible timing."

"He was the No.3 and was supposed to be a central figure to drive the reform. It was inevitable that such a man's departure spawned caution towards Nissan," Sengoku told AFP.

"It's an urgent task for Nissan to revamp itself but there is a doubt over how stable its leadership is," he said.

Nissan, in a three-way alliance with Mitsubishi Motors and France's Renault, last month slashed its full-year forecast for both sales and profit as it struggles with weak demand in Japan, the US and Europe, as well as fallout from the arrest of Ghosn.

Honda Motorcycle halts wage revision of 1,900 workers at Manesar plant as sales dip

PRITISH RAJ NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

HONDA MOTORCYCLE & Scooter India (HMSI) has denied revision of wages to its around 1,900 permanent workers at the Manesar plant until next year, citing slowdown in vehicle demand and falling revenues as the primary reason, two people aware of the development said.

The last wage revision happened in August 2015, under which the permanent staff got a salary hike of Rs 23,300 each over a period of three years. The next hike was supposed to happen in

The last wage revision happened in August 2015, under which the permanent staff got a salary hike of Rs 23,300 each over three years

August 2018, but the workers' union members maintain that the management deferred it on account of falling two-wheeler sales and higher marketing expenses. "So far since August 2018, the discussions on salary hike were on. However, the company has now indicated that it won't happen un-

til the second half of next year when the demand is expected to improve," a union member said.

The wage revision is part of a regular exercise undertaken by auto companies once in three years. With the revision, the workers would have received a salary hike of around Rs 25,000 each over the next three years, the union member said.

An HMSI spokesperson said while the average monthly CTC of permanent workers at Manesar plant is the highest in this industrial belt, manpower efficiency and productivity is lowest among all its plants here. "Manesar plant management started the wages discus-

sion in 2018. Despite overall economic slowdown and production realignment, plant management offered a significant hike with expectation of increased manpower efficiency and discipline. Post this, an average worker's CTC would cross Rs 1 lakh per month," the spokesperson said.

"But unfortunately, some workers are dragging the wage settlement discussion to further their personal agendas, and are instigating labour unrest in the region," the spokesperson said.

The permanent workers' union has so far not decided to avoid an agitation path like strike or anything similar. FE

AIRLINE PROVIDES BATCH OF DOCUMENTS TO REGULATORS AND CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATORS, HOURS AFTER ANNOUNCING LEADERSHIP REJIG

'Boeing document dump shows disturbing picture on 737 MAX aircraft'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NEW YORK, DECEMBER 25

BOEING HAS provided a fresh batch of incriminating documents on the 737 MAX to regulators and congressional investigators, only hours after announcing a leadership shakeup. The document dump came just before Christmas, when many officials already are on holiday, and "appear to point to a very disturbing picture" about Boeing's response to safety issues regarding the 737 MAX, a congressional aide said.

The aide said Boeing sent the documents "late in the evening" Monday to congressional staff investigating the issues with the aircraft, which has been grounded since March following two crashes that killed 346 people.

The aerospace giant has faced scrutiny over its decision to keep flying the plane after the first crash and to brush off safety concerns of some employees, and over whether it sacrificed safety in the race to develop a plane to compete with an Airbus jet. US regulators also have been criticized for a too-cozy relationship with the company it is charged with overseeing.

The Federal Aviation Administration confirmed it received what appear to be the same documents Monday afternoon, a few hours after Boeing ousted Dennis Muilenburg as chief executive amid his much-criticised handling of MAX crisis.

Boeing said it "proactively" contacted the FAA and Congress "as part of our commitment to transparency," a company spokesman said in email. "As

US FAA CONFIRMS RECEIVING DOCUMENTS

The US FAA confirmed it received what appear to be the same documents Monday afternoon, a few hours after Boeing ousted Dennis Muilenburg as CEO amid his much-criticised handling of MAX crisis

According to a congressional aide, "the records appear to point to a very disturbing picture of both concerns expressed by Boeing employees about the

company's commitment to safety and efforts by some employees to ensure Boeing's production plans were not diverted by regulators or others

In one text message exchange that surfaced in those documents, a pilot described a problem on a simulator with a flight handling system that has been implicated in both crashes

organization and culture." That references the period after the Ethiopian Airlines crash in March. The first 737 MAX crash of a Lion Air flight in Indonesia happened five months earlier.

The latest revelations make it clear that despite shaking up its leadership, Boeing will continue to face questions well into 2020 over the actions that led to the crashes as it tries to win approval to return the MAX to service and to restore its damaged reputation.

The document dump — which surfaced on a normally tranquil Christmas Eve — came hours after Boeing announced it was replacing Muilenburg with Chairman David Calhoun, saying the company needed to "restore confidence" and "repair relationships with regulators, customers and all other stakeholders."

FAA Chief Steve Dickson ripped Boeing in October after the company only provided the agency with revealing documents months after unearthing the records.

In one text message exchange that surfaced in those documents, a Boeing pilot described a problem on a simulator with a flight handling system that has been implicated in both crashes.

The aide with the House Transportation Committee declined to release the latest papers on Tuesday and said committee staff were still reviewing the documents.

"The records appear to point to a very disturbing picture of both concerns expressed by Boeing employees about the company's commitment to safety and efforts by some em-

ployees to ensure Boeing's production plans were not diverted by regulators or others," the aide said in an email.

The panel is led by Democratic Representative Peter DeFazio, who grilled Boeing executives at an October hearing at which some lawmakers called for Muilenburg to resign.

DeFazio on Monday called Muilenburg's ouster "long overdue," and said the company "made a number of devastating decisions that suggest profit took priority over safety."

The CEO shakeup at the company drew muted response Tuesday from Wall Street analysts, a bombshell that came only days after the company took the monumental step of halting production on the 737 MAX and a day after it suffered a setback on

a high-profile NASA mission.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch said it had "mixed feelings" in light of Calhoun's lengthy tenure on the Boeing board.

"We wonder if appointing from within, especially an insider that has been with the company for 10 years, signals more of the same from Boeing vs an outside appointee who may have offered more of a change of pace and culture," the bank said in a commentary.

JPMorgan Chase said Muilenburg had struggled as a public voice for Boeing in response to the tragedies and in communication with regulators and customers.

"We expect David Calhoun to do better on both scores. This something," JPMorgan said in an analysis.

14 THE RURAL TRACKING THE CHANGING INDIA IN ITS VILLAGES

YEAR-ENDER

Will 2020 be better for agri?

Farm prices looking up, along with bumper rabi production, can set the stage for long overdue turnaround



HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

ONION PRICES, at Rs 100-plus per kg in retail and an average of Rs 6,500/quintal even in Maharashtra's Lasalgaon wholesale market, have made headlines in a year that is coming to a close.

But it's not just onions. There are many other farm commodities whose prices have been looking up, if not soaring, of late.

Take pulses: Last year, at this time, *arhar* (pigeon-pea) was trading at Rs 4,500 per quintal in Latur *mandi* of Maharashtra. Currently, it is selling at Rs 5,000. Likewise, prices of *urad* (black gram) in Latur have crossed Rs 7,000 per quintal, compared to Rs 4,500-4,600 a year ago, while that of *moong* (green gram) in Rajasthan's Sumerpur market has gone up from Rs 5,200 to Rs 6,000 levels in the same period. These rates are close to or even higher than the minimum support prices (MSP) of Rs 5,800/quintal for *arhar*, Rs 5,700 for *urad* and Rs 7,050 for *moong*.

The price increase in pulses would, in fact, have been higher, but for the stocks built from government procurement. During the 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 agricultural years (July-June), the Central agencies - National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed), Food Corporation of India and Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium - together bought 18.78 lakh tonnes (lt), 44.96 lt and 19.50 lt of pulses, respectively. While stocks in the Central pool with Nafed amounted to nearly 42 lt at its peak in June 2019, the apex agency is still holding 20.90 lt (as on December 21), mainly comprising 16.41 lt of *chana*, 2.19 lt of *moong*, 1.99 lt of *urad* and 0.29 lt of *masur* (lentil).

Those stocks have come useful this year, which saw less area being sown under kharif pulses, courtesy poor monsoon rains till about the last week of July. That, along with excess rains thereafter up to early-November, causing significant damage to the standing crop, has resulted in a decline in kharif pulses production similar to that for onions. The only reason why *dal* has not gone the *pyaaz* way is the stocks with Nafed.

The absence of such a buffer is now being felt not only in onions, but perhaps also in milk.

Last year, around this time, dairies in Maharashtra were paying farmers Rs 19-21 per litre for cow milk containing 3.5% fat and 8.5% solids-not-fat. That same milk is today being procured at Rs 29-31 a litre. In 2018-19 (April-March), India exported 45,082 tonnes of skimmed milk powder (SMP), with the Centre even extending a subsidy of Rs 50/kg to enable dairies to ship out their excess stocks. But with output set to dip in 2019-20, due to the cumulative impact of sustained low producer prices and extended rains, SMP prices have doubled to over Rs 300 per kg in the last one year.

Not having created a buffer stock, when dairies were saddled with surplus powder and forced to slash procurement as well as prices paid to farmers, may prove costly soon. The winter and spring months are the 'flush' season for milk. Animals normally produce more during this time because of better fodder and water availability, besides reduced body stress on account of lower temperatures and humidity. This year, though, the onset of 'flush' has been delayed by the late rains, which have not allowed the fodder to grow properly and accumulate sufficient dry matter. Most dairies have recorded negative milk procurement growth so far in 2019-20. It remains to be

ALL-INDIA RABI SOWING AREA* (LAKH HECTARES)

	This year	Last year
1.Wheat	277.91	250.02
2.Pulses	131.46	131.38
Chana	89.28	86.70
Masur	14.49	15.62
Matar	8.73	8.50
3.Oilseeds	71.79	73.08
Mustard	63.92	65.32
4.Coarse grains	43.70	40.10
Jowar	25.03	21.57
Maize	11.06	11.41
Barley	7.10	6.55
TOTAL	537.21	504.69

Note: Progressive coverage as on 20.12.2019 and for the corresponding date of last year. Source: Ministry of Agriculture.

seen how much of this can be made up for in the next few months before summer, when 'flush' gives way to 'lean' and dairies would need to have sufficient stock of powder for reconstituting into milk.

Onions, pulses and milk apart, even commodities such as soyabean, maize and *bajra* (pearl-millet) are showing some bullishness. Soyabean is quoting at Rs 4,000 per quintal in Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh), up from Rs 3,300 a year ago. Prices of maize at Davangere (Karnataka) have similarly risen from Rs 1,600 to Rs 1,900 and that of *bajra* from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,100 per quintal in Chomu (Rajasthan). The current market prices are higher than the MSPs: Rs 1,760

per quintal for maize, Rs 3,710 for soyabean and Rs 2,000 for *bajra*.

The above price recovery - even sugar seems to be turning around, thanks to a global deficit that has opened up export opportunities for Indian mills - should actually be welcome for an economy desperately looking for good news. The underlying factors here are partly structural (farmers reducing planting or investing less in yield-enhancing inputs in response to low realisations in the past few years) and partly weather-induced (early season drought followed by prolonged unseasonal rains). But to the extent these are helping bring back 'sentiment' in produce markets, badly battered in the post-demonetisation period, there is a strong case for policymakers not to be unduly perturbed.

In the days to come, there is bound to be lot of pressure for cutting duties or allowing more import of SMP and pulses. The Narendra Modi government, in its first term, was very hawkish with regard to food inflation. It would be interesting whether it will adopt the same approach in its second term as well - this has already been witnessed vis-à-vis onions - especially with consumer food inflation in crossing single-digits in October for the first time in almost six years.

The one consolation, however, is the prospect of a bumper *rabi* harvest. The surplus monsoon and post-monsoon rains have recharged groundwater aquifers, apart from filling the country's major dams close to their full reservoir capacities. That has, in turn, encouraged farmers to aggressively expand the area sown under most *rabi* crops.

If the current price recovery trend holds and *rabi* production turns out good - there is room for optimism on that count - it would set the stage for a long overdue agricultural turnaround.

Stepping on the gas

Now, a women's cooperative for processing animal dung in Gujarat



Jagrutiben putting dung into her bio-gas plant. Express

DEEPIKA YADAV & HAREKRISHNA MISRA

JAGRUTIBEN SAMANTHBHAI, a dairy farmer from Mujkuva village in Anklay taluka of Gujarat's Anand district, put up a bio-gas plant at a cost of Rs 24,000 two years ago. She was till then finding it difficult to dispose of the dung from her four buffaloes; each of them produced 15-20 kg on an average daily. However, since the installation of the bio-gas plant, not only has dealing with dung become easier, but today, she has also stopped refilling of her LPG cylinder as well as fetching firewood for use as household cooking fuel.

Jagrutiben's bio-gas plant was set up with the support of the National Biogas and Manure Management Programme (NBMMMP). Implemented by the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, it offers 40% subsidy on the project cost. The effective investment on the 2 cubic-metre bio-gas plant, thus, worked out to around Rs 14,400. On this investment, Jagrutiben now gets the biogas equivalent of two refilled LPG cylinders, whose unit cost is about Rs 750 after factoring in a direct benefit transfer of Rs 150. Simply put, Jagrutiben's entire investment was recovered in less than a year. What's more, the 1.2 tonnes of slurry generated as byproduct, and sold as organic manure at Rs 0.75-2/kg, fetches her additional monthly income of Rs 900-1,200.

Baluben Gulabbhai, who is also from Mujkuva and rears three buffaloes, is happy that the bio-gas plant installed by her has ensured she no longer needs to go to others' farms to gather twigs or dried stems. Nor does she have to purchase firewood from the nearby timber mart at exorbitant prices, especially during the monsoon when burning of farm biomass is not possible. Leelaben Manubhai, from the same village with 10 animals, claims that her coughing has come down significantly after switching to bio-gas.

A household bio-gas plant mixes raw dung and water in equal portion. The mixed dung gets decomposed in an anaerobic digester and produces bio-gas and slurry. Two years back, a majority of Mujkuva's 600-odd households, owning two-three buffaloes each, depended predominantly on dairying. The dung produced by the animals - 15-20 kg by adults and 10-12 kg by calves - was stored in an open space, locally known as *ukeda*, for later use as fuel and manure. Open composting, apart from not capturing the true economic value of dung, is also a source

of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission.

In late-2017, the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) organised 40 women dairy farmers from Mujkuva to form a self-help group (SHG) by the name of 'Jai Ambe'. Each member got a new-generation bio-gas plant with prefabricated digester installed at their home. It was envisaged that slurry obtained from these plants would be sold to the SHG, which would, then, convert it into nutrient-fortified bio-organic fertiliser.

The NDDB, in association with the Pune-based Swasti Agro & Bioproducts Pvt Ltd, is currently engaged in developing a market for bio-gas slurry-based organic agricultural inputs. These include PROM (phosphorus-rich organic manure) and Su-Dhan (a mixture of essential micronutrients like iron, zinc, manganese, copper and boron).

"One more of our members put up bio-gas plants, we will start a unit that will process slurry from other neighbouring villages as well," says Labobhai K Patel, secretary of the Mujkuva Dairy Cooperative Society, whose 850 farmer-members supply over 5,000 litres per day of milk to the Amul dairy that is part of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF).

The NDDB is planning to expand the Mujkuva model to other villages, while leveraging the existing network of dairy cooperatives to market its bio-inputs to farmers in different regions. In Jakariyapura, a village in Anand's Borsad taluka, it has undertaken installation of bio-gas plants in all of its 370 dairy society households.

The NDDB has so far set up roughly 1,000 bio-gas plants across 12 states under its National Dairy Plan and is targeting a total of 10,000 in the next five years. The main focus is to provide additional income to dairy farmers through sale of slurry, besides promoting use of organic inputs in their fields. Under the NBMMMP scheme, more than 1.25 lakh bio-gas plants have been installed during 2016-17 to 2018-19, with a target of 76,000 fixed for the current fiscal itself. Apart from boosting dairy farmers' income, the programme is expected to lead to more scientific handling of animal dung. Converting dung into renewable energy will also prevent emission of methane, a key GHG, into the atmosphere.

The writers are with the Verghese Kurien Centre of Excellence at the Institute of Rural Management, Anand. Views expressed are personal

MILK PROCESSING

Like its name, *khoya* a lost opportunity for dairies

There is huge scope for organised manufacture of this primary ingredient used in indigenous sweets



TARUN SHRIDHAR & SHARAD GUPTA

BURFI, PEDA, *gulab jamun* and a host of other traditional Indian sweets owe their taste and texture to the humble *khoya*. This versatile base and primary ingredient in *mithais* is nothing but milk concentrated and reduced to one-fifth of its original volume through heating in an open pan. The bulk of Indian sweets are made from *khoya* (partially heat-desiccated milk), *chhena* (coagulated milk drained of whey), *chakka* (concentrated curd) and, of course, *ghee/makkhan* (butter fat).

While we do have quite a few industrial-scale producers of canned/cup-packed *rasogolla*, *gulab jamun*, *shrikhand* and other *mithais* (the likes of Haldiram, Bikanervala, Amul and K C Das) and also of *ghee* (Patanjali, RKG and various dairy cooperative brands), there are, however, hardly any organised manufacturers of *khoya* or *chhena*.

Out of India's annual milk production of 175 million tonnes (mt), an estimated 10 mt goes just for converting to *khoya*. At Rs 200

per kg, the value of India's 2 mt output of *khoya* would be worth Rs 40,000 crore. It is intriguing, then, why a commodity having such a humungous market size isn't really on anybody's radar. With an assured market - including scores of *halwais* (sweetmeat makers) and households - it is an ideal product to move milk up the value chain. Our traditional sweets were, after all, developed basically to preserve the nutritional goodness of milk and to extend its shelf life under high ambient temperatures.

Khoya is obtained by rapidly evaporating milk in shallow pans to a total solids content of about 70 per cent. About 5-6 kg of cow milk yields 1 kg of this dense ball of protein and fat, which has a shelf life of a few days at room temperature and can even be frozen for long-term conservation. Currently, 99% of all *khoya* is produced on cottage scale in rural/mofussil areas and brought to urban centres for making *khoya*-based sweets. The lack of standardisation due to production in informal units, using very rudimentary technology, tends to compromise in quality. Further, it is reasonable to believe that sizeable quantities being sold in the market are adulterated: How else is *khoya* sometimes available at Rs 150 per kg, when the raw product itself (5 litres of milk) costs that much?

We have established *khoya*-making clusters such as at Srivilliputhur in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu, but the units there too are mostly small scale. There is no nation-



These *halwais* can do with better quality *khoya* and *chhena*. Archive

ally-known brand of *khoya*. Organised dairies should not only add *khoya* to their basket of products, but also aim to manufacture at least 20% of the *khoya* currently marketed in the country. If this production of 4,00,000 tonnes is done over, say, 200 days in a year, it would require a capacity of some 2,000 tonnes per day. An average modern *khoya* plant with 40 tonnes/day capacity - there could be 50 of them - will need to han-

dle 2,00,000 litres of milk daily. None of the large-scale dairies now produces *khoya*, as even the available machines mostly use run-of-the-mill scraped surface heat exchangers that merely simulate the traditional batch-type process involving evaporation of water and concentration of milk. These can handle only about 1,000 litres of milk per hour, whereas modern dairies can process 10,000-50,000 litres.

But there are today more sophisticated, even patented, processes of continuous *khoya*-making using scraped surface heat exchangers arranged in cascade fashion. Such processes, amenable to industrial-scale production, also employ vacuum evaporators that result in lower energy consumption and use of steam as opposed to coal or firewood.

By deploying the newly-developed continuous manufacturing machines and processes, *khoya* can be the perfect product for adding value to raw milk, assuring better returns to the primary producer and secondary handler alike. Like milk powder and white butter, it can also be produced from the surplus milk during the flush winter-spring months and frozen, so as to make available in plenty in the lean summer and monsoon months. The *khoya* supplied by organised dairies under reputed brand names would, moreover, provide quality integrity and assurance to the large quantities of *mithais* produced even by ordinary *halwais*. The quality of milk-based sweets is frequently questioned because of fear of adulterated ingredients. Branded *khoya* could eliminate these fears and stimulate demand for *mithai*, which is good for our milk producers as well.

The National Milk Grid, originally conceived during Operation Flood to link rural milk sheds with urban markets of the country, works on the use of surplus conserved dairy commodities to even out regional and

seasonal variations in supply and demand. Currently it consists only of milk powder and white butter. *Khoya* can be added to the list of dairy commodities for better functioning of the grid. The informal market is already doing it in a way, by storing *khoya* in quantities just enough to meet the festival demand during Diwali. Even *chakka* for the manufacture of *shrikhand* is prepared in winters for use in the summer marriage season. By taking the load off high demand for milk in summers, when production by animals also dips, *chakka* is contributing to the orderly functioning of the milk grid.

Khoya becoming part of the product portfolio of modern dairies, and also a commodity for the National Milk Grid, will ultimately benefit small dairy producers. The surplus milk produced in the flush winters can now find an additional market in organised dairies that pay better and in a more transparent manner. Consumers, too, benefit from the better quality of ingredients in their *mithais*.

Our *gulab jamuns*, *burfis* and *rabis* are today gradually losing to chocolates. For generations, *khoya* has created India's sweet moments, but now several of them come out of chocolate wrappers. The 175 mt of milk produced in our country is an aggregation of the output of millions of smallholder dairy farmers. Strengthening the production and market base of our traditional milk-based sweets would multiply the economic gains right across the value chain. And *khoya* could be the key to that.

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CHARLEMAGNE

The spirit of Noël

Carols and nativity scenes are barred from public property — except in Strasbourg



Strasbourg at Christmas captures Europe's festive enthusiasm as well as its diverse heritage. Reuters

STRUNG ACROSS the cobbled street, between half-timbered Alsatian houses, the festive white lights pronounce: "Strasbourg, capitale de Noël". In the run-up to Christmas, every façade of this town tucked up against France's border with Germany seems to sparkle. The sweet smell of gingerbread and cinnamon-tinged vin chaud hangs in the air. In the courtyard of the 18th-century Palais Rohan, now a municipal museum, a life-size wooden crèche (nativity scene) has been installed, complete with real bleating sheep. The town hall has illuminated giant angels with trumpets above the narrow street that leads to the cathedral.

Strasbourg at Christmas captures Europe's festive enthusiasm as well as its diverse heritage. The town blends the Catholic tradition with the Protestant. It is as proud of its many crèches, whose pre-Reformation roots reach back to medieval times, as it is of its Christmas trees, which legend says Martin Luther introduced in the 16th century. Indeed Strasbourg is said to be the birthplace

of the first decorated tree, in 1605, adorned then with roses, apples, wafers and sweets. Closer to Munich than it is to Paris, annexed by Germany in 1871 and 1940, Strasbourg reflects the Germanic. Locals call the Christmas market, founded in 1570 and one of the world's oldest, Christkindelsmärik. With its Provençal clay crèche village figures (santons), and Scandinavian bearded gnomes (tomte), the market embraces the Mediterranean and the Nordic too.

These days Christmas time in this town, as elsewhere in Europe, also has a strong secular pull.

Strasbourg in the festive season in reality mixes the commercial and the spiritual, as tacky plastic ornaments and winking Father Christmas figures compete for attention with the crucifix and holy child. A massive 2m visitors, of all faiths, crowd into the town in December every year. One of the five people murdered in a terrorist attack near the Christmas market a year ago was a local garage mechanic of Afghan origin, who had been visiting the market with his family.

Strasbourg's unapologetic embrace of Christmas, in other words, locates it at the

intersection of many of Europe's traditions. Yet if there is one country in which the town's relaxed approach to religion feels in reality distinctly odd, it is France. Elsewhere in the country, French town halls hang lights that wish their citizens a secular joyeuxes fêtes, or happy holidays. No French state school is allowed to hold a nativity play or carol service, just as no French town hall can display a nativity scene. When the far-right mayor of Béziers, Robert Ménard, installed a crèche in his town hall, it was ruled illegal and he was ordered to take it down. This weekend, after

a nativity performance outside a church in Toulouse was disrupted, the archbishop deplored the fact that "a simple reminder of the birth of Jesus... is no longer respected in our country."

France's strict form of secularism, known as laïcité, was enshrined in law in 1905 after a long struggle with the Catholic church. Today 54% of the French say they are Catholic. This doctrine protects their private right to religious expression. But it also keeps religion separate from public life. It was these principles that led France to ban the Muslim headscarf from state schools, as well as the crucifix and other "conspicuous" religious signs.

Strasbourg, by contrast, like the surrounding Alsace region, enjoys a derogation under the Napoleonic Concordat of 1801, which survives to this day. Four faiths—the Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed churches and Judaism—are established religions in the region. Public schools teach religious studies. Religious ministers are paid by the state. The town hall contributed to the financing of the city's grand mosque. The French president even officially appoints the archbishop of Strasbourg.

For those in the rest of France brought up on laïc law, Strasbourg's relaxed approach to religion, like its town hall's involvement in Christmas, is startling. For France is periodically consumed by a divisive row of one sort or another about religious expression. If it is not over a municipal nativity scene then it is about an attempt to ban a parent from accompanying a class trip while wearing the Muslim veil. The line between the secular and the sacred in France is a constant source of contest and conflict.

It does not automatically follow, of course, that Strasbourg is spared religious trouble. On the contrary, the terrorist responsible for

the attack in December 2018, Chérif Chekatt, was Strasbourg-born. A local network actively recruited jihadists to head to Syria to fight for Islamic State. The region has rooted extreme-right and neo-Nazi fringe groups, and periodically suffers anti-Semitic acts. Officials are particularly concerned about overseas Turkish influence in the town. "There are many hidden tensions in Strasbourg," says Hakim El Karoui, author of a report on French Islam for the Institut Montaigne, a think-tank. He argues that part of the problem is precisely that Islam, unlike other faiths, does not enjoy the same status as the (locally established) religions.

O come, o come, Emmanuel

Yet the tie between Strasbourg's town hall and its religious authorities points to a less abrasive link between the political and the spiritual. Officials and clerics talk often, and know one another. To mark Ramadan, the town hall hosted an iftar dinner on its premises—unthinkable elsewhere. Christophe Castaner, the interior minister, who attended another iftar dinner, called such events "an inspiration for the whole of France".

Elsewhere in the country, a nativity scene built by a far-right mayor constitutes provocative identity politics. Strasbourg's version, by contrast, is regarded as "normal and natural", says Murat Ercan, a leader of Turkish origin at the regional Muslim council. "We shouldn't be naive, there are real difficulties," says Nicolas Matt, in charge at the town hall of the link with religious leaders. "But we believe in celebrating difference. The fact that we talk to each other means that we know how to talk about religion, and that gives us a common language." Joyeux Noël.

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HOUSING FIRST

Oh give me a home

Finland has slashed homelessness; the rest of Europe is failing

TUYA'S COLLECTION of bongos occupies an entire bookshelf in her immaculate little flat, though she does not smoke marijuana—she just likes the way they look. Her weaknesses, alcohol and pills, landed her in a homeless shelter in Helsinki for three years. But since 2018 she has had an apartment of her own, thanks to a strategy called "housing first" with which Finland has all but eliminated homelessness.

Akbar has no such luck. Last month the Afghan migrant stood in the mud of a camp outside Paris, brushing his teeth at a hose that served as a communal shower. For two months Akbar had been living in a tent city of 3,500 Asian and African migrants, hoping to apply for refugee status.

Tuya and Akbar are at opposite ends of Europe's growing homelessness problem. Finland is the only European country where the numbers are not rising. In other rich welfare states, escalating housing costs are pushing more people into homeless shelters. In countries with weak social services, many end up on the street. And everywhere, migrants with the wrong papers fall through the cracks.

Statistics on homelessness are patchy, but dispiriting. In 2010–18 the French government doubled the spaces in emergency accommodation to 146,000, yet cannot meet demand. In Spain the number in shelters rose by 20.5% between 2014 and 2016. In the Netherlands homelessness has doubled in the past decade. In Ireland, the number in shelters has tripled. The German government estimates homelessness rose by 4% in 2018 to a record 678,000, most of them migrants. All this has thrown a spanner into governments' plans. For years, they have been trying to shift from providing beds for the night to housing-first

strategies like Finland's. Instead they are struggling to keep people off the streets.

The housing-first approach got its start in North America in the 1990s. Previously social-service agencies used a "staircase" model: to qualify for a subsidised flat, homeless people first had to control their behavioural problems (such as addiction, petty crime or mental illness). In the meantime they had to sleep in shelters.

But being homeless makes it hard to quit drugs or crime. Shelters are often dangerous, because they are full of desperate people. Some homeless folk prefer to sleep rough, though that is risky. Street sleepers are often robbed and often get ill. When American and Canadian cities tried first giving homeless people a place to live and then working on behavioural problems, the approach saved more money on police, jails, shelters and health care than it cost.

In 2008 Finland became the first European country to embrace housing first. The number of long-term homeless has since fallen by 21% to about 5,500. (This includes those in shelters; the number sleeping rough in Finland is negligible, as they would die of

cold.) Chronically homeless people were shifted from hostels to flats with contracts under their own names. They pay rent with the help of government benefits. The government saves €15,000 (\$16,500) per year in overall spending on each homeless person it houses. Hostels can be counterproductive, says Juha Kaakinen of Y-Foundation, the country's biggest social-housing group: they "create a kind of culture of homelessness".

The complex where Tuya lives, run by the Salvation Army, is classified as "supported housing". There are 20 staff for the 87 residents. Each flat has a kitchen, and there is a jolly communal café. Social workers keep track of each resident's problems and run work activities. Every year a few graduate to less dependent housing, but expectations are modest, says Antti Martikainen, the complex's director. Persuading a troublesome resident to stop dropping rubbish out of the window is a win.

All this takes resources. Finland has hired hundreds of new social workers. In 2017 it built more subsidised public housing for low-income renters (over 7,000 units) than England, with a population one-tenth the



A woman begs for money on a street in downtown Helsinki. Reuters

size. Still, in a small, wealthy country to which few poor people move, it appears that homelessness is solvable.

Can big countries do the same? In France, the national emergency shelter hotline (number 115) gets 20,000 calls per day. Paris's annual "solidarity night", when volunteers systematically scour the city to count everyone sleeping rough, found 3,622 people in February this year.

The poor face rising rents and precarious employment, says Bruno Morel of Emmaüs Solidarité, a housing organisation. Each year from November 1st to March 31st France bars landlords from evicting tenants, and this year the Paris region created an extra 7,000 temporary winter shelter places. But Mr Morel says it needs 10,000.

Another problem is the split between native homeless, for whom municipalities are responsible, and migrants, who fall under the national government. Dominique Versini,

Paris's deputy mayor for solidarity, blames the state for the migrant camps: when the city tried to set up a reception centre to house them, she says, the government blocked it. (In November it closed the camps and moved the migrants to temporary shelters farther out.)

Anne Hidalgo, the Socialist mayor, converted the reception hall of Paris's Hôtel de Ville into a shelter for 39 homeless women. Visiting dignitaries brush shoulders with women recovering from addiction and abuse. Ms Hidalgo has also strengthened Paris's rent controls. The move keeps current homes cheaper but may discourage private firms from building new ones. The city is building 7500 new social-housing units a year, but Mr Morel says too few are for the very poor.

Germany is more proactive at sheltering migrants than France. But its public housing stock has shrunk dramatically: houses built with government aid can be freely sold or rented out after 30 years. Berlin, which had

360,000 social-housing units in the 1990s, now has just 100,000. Rents have doubled in the past decade. As in Paris, the city government has capped rent increases.

Europe's homelessness problem combines two issues. Public-housing construction has slowed, and rents are rising fast, because red tape makes it so hard to build in many cities. Meanwhile, illegal immigration creates a homeless population many countries are unwilling to house. That is sabotaging the shift to housing first. France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and others have all committed to the policy. But their programmes remain a patchwork of local initiatives and pilots. "Why pilot it when you know that it works?" asks Mr Martikainen, the director of Tuya's building in Helsinki. In most of Europe, things are not so simple.

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17 TALK

ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



LOVE BEYOND BORDERS

Wonder Woman actor Gal Gadot will produce the film adaptation of Dorit Rabinyan's controversial novel *All the Rivers*. The book, banned in schools by the Israeli government, deals with the romance between an Israeli woman and a Palestinian man.



SUANSHU KHURANA

SOUMIK DATTA, 35

The title track of a recent EP, titled *Jangle* (Urdu word for forest), opens with a rhythm played on the Latin American bombo drum, an ancient instrument traditionally used by Amazon tribes to celebrate nature and the rainforest. Soon, there is an array of synth sounds along the piano. Straddling the two spheres — old and new — is a hook in raag Miyan Malhar on the sarod by London-based Soumik Datta. Four other pieces in the EP — a haunting, raging call to preserve our environment — cement Datta's place in the current music scene, not just as a sarod player but also as a composer. A musician engaging with the environment, and the politics around it, through his art is a rarity when it comes to classical music. Datta's is a promising endeavour, something we will be looking forward to.

Datta plays the sarod, but often while he is not sitting down. Unlike most sarod players, he has the instrument strapped to himself like a guitar and looks like a cross between an Indian classical musician and a pop star, strumming away with a compelling whim, improvising, thinking and travelling along with the melody. The sarod sings, hollers in joy, and wails, too. London-based Datta plays the first-ever electro-acoustic sarod, which he has created by adding a combination of mics and pick-up mics to an electric sarod. These help him create a combination of traditional and processed sound. He learned from a significant name in sarod — Buddhadev Dasgupta of the Shahjahanpur gharana. According to Carnatic classical vocalist Aruna Sairam, who had collaborated with Datta on a jazz project two years ago, Datta has been one of the most interesting artistes she has worked with. "He is extremely innovative and great fun as a musician," she says.

ANOUSHKA SHANKAR, 38

Sitar maestro Pt Ravi Shankar's daughter, Anoushka Shankar, has hardly been on such lists in the past. Whenever she would perform with her father, before he died in 2012, one could see the struggle in her attempts to present something thought-provoking. It would seem that she found it difficult to enter the meditative world of classical music. Anoushka may not be the most gifted performer, but she has turned out to be one of the most hardworking musicians, with five Grammy nominations, a feat not many can boast about. With her sitar legend father not around anymore to suggest, teach and mould her music, her world of *swaras* is only her own now — intense and intimate. A mother to two, she has been busy with back-to-back tours, a year after she split

2020 LOOKING AHEAD

Take Note

Meet some of the most exciting and edgy contemporary independent musicians who are poised to redefine the idea of music



with her filmmaker husband, Joe Wright. For her, the last seven years have been filled with a blend of heartache and happiness, poignancy and playfulness. In her recent video, *Bright Eyes*, Anoushka seems to delve deep into her personal life, along with German-Turkish singer Alev Lenz. She strums the majestic and poignant Bhairavi, the raga used in a slew of separation songs and creates a hook that hits the heart hard. Her composition skills are immaculate and her concerts quite an experience. She speaks her mind about the issues she feels strongly about, improvises, finds her own space musically, takes inspiration from her own life and includes it in her music and attempts to reach spaces that few musicians do. With Anoushka planning a handful of tours next year, her new work is likely to be a treat.

OMKAR DADARKAR, 42

When one collates Hindustani vocalist Omkar Dadarkar's training in music, its extensive nature gives a glimpse into Dadarkar's quest for learning various contours of the art form. He began by learning from his parents, Marathi Natyasangeet exponents, Shrikant and Shubhada Dadarkar. He then learnt from Pt Ram Deshpande,



(Clockwise from top) Soumik Datta; Abhishek Raghuram; Anupama Bhagwat; Anoushka Shankar and Omkar Dadarkar

iconic vocalist Manik Verma of Kirana and Agra gharana, and Pt Yeshwantbuwa Joshi of Gwalior gharana. In 1999, he also received advanced training from Pt Ulhas Kashalkar, followed by training in *purab ang gayaki* (the semi-classical style of the Banaras gharana) by thumri queen Girija Devi. The deep sonorous voice, steeped in tradition, and improvisations that can baffle, make his performances unique and exemplary.

ABHISHEK RAGHURAM, 34

Abhishek Raghuram is an artiste of rare pedagogy. He is the grandson of iconic mridangam player Palghat Raghu and related to the famed Lalgudi family on his mother's side. He is also related to ghazal singer Hariharan. But lineage can help only till your first stage performance. What is interesting about Abhishek is that, at an age, when classical musicians are just about establishing themselves, he comes across as a mature artiste with an extraordinary vision of music and musicality. Sometimes, during his performance, a *taan*, a particular phrase, may seem out of grasp even to some more senior musicians. His gusto and enthusiasm at a concert are infectious. He has trained under Carnatic vocalist P S Narayanaswamy,



His open approach to music and serious training has held him in good stead. In the coming months, one is likely to notice more of Raghuram, who is establishing himself as a once-in-a-generation performer who can redefine the course of Carnatic music.

ANUPAMA BHAGWAT, 45

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan had once said of sitar player Anupama Bhagwat: "When Anupama began her recital, my interest started piquing. It was after a long time that I was hearing a female instrumentalist playing with such commitment and dedication. I was pleasantly surprised to hear her". In the annals of Indian classical instrumental music, women singers have always been more feted than women instrumentalists. The truth is



that there is no difference: anyone can play and sing anything as long as there is hard work involved. Over the decades, false impressions about gender have been built due to patriarchy and the social norms of a particular era. But the truth of Khan's statement lies in the fact that she is one of the finest sitar players from a relatively younger generation at this point. She trained under Bimalendu Mukherjee (Pt Buddhadev Mukherjee's father) of the Imdatkhani gharana and attempts the Vilayatkhani Baaj that one finds only in a few artistes. Her sitar playing combines a rare combination of technical mastery and evocative lyricality. Her precision during performances at Darbar Festival in London and all over Europe as well as in India have established her as a sitar player of repute and an artiste to watch out for.

Reading for a Cause

Dalbir Kaur Madan on turning reading into a community activity and creating libraries for the underprivileged, with help from children



Dalbir Kaur Madan conducts a reading session at OneUp Library

DIVYA A

"YOU'RE NEVER too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child," said American children's author Theodor Seuss Geisel, popularly known as Dr Seuss. It's upon this cardinal principle of "reading aloud and turning it into a community activity" that Dalbir Kaur Madan set up a OneUp Library in Amritsar eight years ago. "My children were in school at the time and I realised that there was a need to inculcate reading habits in children by making reading a community activity," says Madan, the library's director.

"The children of today are growing up between malls, schools and hobby classes. When will they see the world?" says the 50-year-old, who holds a Masters degree in education, and later, studied professional reading and literacy from Harvard and Columbia universities. She adds, "Libraries provide a third environment to children — beyond schools and homes — to discover life through books."

So, when Madan moved to Delhi along with her children in 2017, she brought OneUp along, which found a new home in Vasant Vihar. OneUp consists of a children's library, a learning lab, a book studio and school programmes, offering a web of linguistic, social and cognitive experiences to toddlers and teenagers alike. Madan says she has no plan to expand OneUp (through franchise), but is now utilising her extra hours to curate school libraries across the country — working with Shri Ram School

and Heritage School in Delhi, Cathedral and Oberoi in Mumbai and will soon be on board with Shiv Nadar School in Noida. She conducts workshops with teachers and librarians, advises libraries on steps they should take to innovate, and to initiate non-readers, but doesn't charge anything. Each school which registers gets a customised feedback on how it can improve its library.

At OneUp, she also gets 200-plus young members to "give back to the community". Two months ago, a children's mela was held on the OneUp campus, where kids in small groups put up gaming stalls, invited their friends over and earned some money. From selling bookmarks to personalised cards, games and food, children raised Rs 1.82 lakh, along with OneUp's contribution. It was used to set up a fully-stocked library for children of the nearby Rangpuri slum.

In December 2018, a similar initiative was carried out to create a library in Kusumpur Pahari slum nearby, in collaboration with NGOs, Youthreach India and Shanti Devi Charitable Trust. The library serves the need of nearly 500-750 children with more than 1,000 books. The teacher-librarians at the trust ensure regular read-aloud storytelling sessions for all age groups. "The OneUp readers visit the library once a month and children from Kusumpur library visit it every two months for exchange of ideas," says Madan, adding that the slum children need to learn how the "privileged" can change the world. "You can only teach them through literature how to be responsible and responsive to those around you," she says.

SNAP SHOTS

In Memoriam



CHINESE AUTHOR Da Chen (pictured), whose revered 1999 memoir *Colours of the Mountain* captured the struggles he faced as a persecuted child during China's cultural revolution, has passed away at the age of 57. Having suffered due to his family's landlord status, Chen passed away due to lung cancer in California. Set against the backdrop of China's cultural revolution, Chen has authored books such as *Brothers* (2006), a fictional narrative of two brothers, where one is the son of a wealthy general and the other is born into poverty to the general's mistress, and *Girl Under a Red Moon* (2019), which shows his real sister Xi Xi as the heroine of the upheaval.



Maximum Phishing

NETFLIX HAS released the teaser of its upcoming series *Jamtara: Sabka Number Ayega* centering around a village in Jharkhand, which is known as India's phishing capital. Inspired by true events, the fictionalised series, directed by Soumendra Padhi, delves into the world of phishing scams taking place in the underbelly of Jamtara. The series, starring Amit Sial, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Aksha Pardasany and Monika Panwar, will stream January 10 onwards.



Portrait of a Bug

In her debut solo, artist Nibha Sikander introduces us to the intricate details of the insect world

BENITA FERNANDO

IT'S NOT often that the menacing mantis gets an art exhibition named after it. Nibha Sikander's debut solo owes its title to a peculiar member of this species called the wandering violin mantis. Far from evoking deadly insectoids and aliens, a wandering violin mantis is more docile than its other cousins. It's a master at camouflaging, with a body like a violin and appendages that mimic foliage. It's also Sikander's favourite insect.

On view at Tarq gallery in Mumbai, "Wandering Violin Mantis" displays more than 200 bugs and birds handmade from paper. Making these critter portraits has been on the 36-year-old artist's mind since 2012, after she encountered a Great Indian Hornbill at Nameri National Park in Assam. Many of the species on display are those she encounters at her home in the coastal town

of Janjira in Maharashtra. In her backyard is the Rousseau-esque setting of the Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary, which allows various fauna to visit her place regularly. "I used to see three kinds of mantises around my home. They are usually camouflaged well but I found a wandering violin mantis right in my house and was able to study it in detail," says the artist.

Sikander's creatures are stunningly life-like. Viewers may feel that at any moment a luna moth may flutter right out of its display case. One can see the feathery edges of moths, the translucent wings of a dragonfly and the shimmer of beetles. However, the works are not just about representation.

In his catalogue essay for the exhibition, critic Ranjit Hoskote writes, "The artist translates the flower mantis — that beautiful, cunning predator, which camouflages itself to look like flora — as a segmented portrait, a choreography of head, abdomen, legs in yogic posture, antennae, and exoskeleton."



ton." The same goes for the titular hero. Instead of presenting the wandering violin mantis in full, Sikander shows us that it is the sum of its eight parts.

The approach may smack of a natural history museum. However, instead of an ento-

mologist's obsession with literally pinning down bugs, Sikander is encouraging us to participate in her fascination with details. The artist is not dissecting, but deconstructing.

Resting in the intersection of art and science, the display in vitrines is intentional.

Sikander says that her references came from research based on digital natural history resources, a field guide on Indian moths by Dr V Shubhalaxmi, and the natural history section at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai.

Sikander's works are apt examples of the inordinate amount of patience and precision that goes into paper cutting. Some of them took about a fortnight to make. She trained in painting at Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodra, but is self-taught in paper cutting. While she did not intend the exhibition to be a comment on the falling numbers of insect population, it can be read so. However, the paradox of making forest creatures out of paper is there. Sikander says that she is careful to minimise paper wastage and has even exhibited the negatives of the paper sheets that she cuts. Her material is as neat as her art.

The names of some of the creatures in the exhibition are as evocative as the wandering violin mantis. There is a pomegranate fruit piercing moth and a crimson spotted emerald moth. But you won't find the names listed under each critter, as with lab specimens. They rest here namelessly and we meet them, as if for the first time.

The exhibition is on view at Tarq gallery in Mumbai till January 4

BOXING DAY TESTS

5am: Australia vs New Zealand,
1.30pm: South Africa vs England
Live on Sony Six

Pradeep picks 6/37; Mumbai shot out for 114

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

THE MAN who shot out Mumbai before lunch for 114 runs wasn't sure whether he would be playing cricket at the start of this season. A few months ago, T Pradeep had a tough choice to make: a secured job or cricketing career? His father had retired as a police constable with Bengaluru police, his brother was unable to find a job, and the 24-year-old Pradeep had an offer from Railways in March. It meant security for the family but his friends feared that the move to Railways could stall his cricket growth.

Pradeep, a medium pacer, was part of the Karnataka set up until last year and had played a few games of Vijay Hazare. Eventually, he decided to move to Railways. On Wednesday, on a green-pitch at Wankhede, Pradeep finished with six-wicket haul against a star-studded Mumbai batting line-up that included wickets of Ajinkya Rahane and Suryakumar Yadav. His stellar effort enabled Railways to derail Mumbai's first innings for 114 runs. Yadav top-scored with a counter-attacking 39 but he was bowled by Pradeep, playing across the line – the wicket that gave the most satisfaction to the bowler.

He had also removed Rahane, edging to second slip. Mumbai never got going, especially after Prithvi Shaw edged the seamer Amit Mishra to gully for 12. Mumbai too got a decent start with the ball, reducing Railways from 20 for 1 to 43 for 5 at one stage. In a low-scoring game, it was Arindam Ghosh, who countered Mumbai's seamers with a superb 53. At stumps, Ghosh's unbeaten half-century and captain Kam Shama's unbeaten 24 – and their stand of 73 – helped Railways getting two runs lead. Bad light stopped play 47 minutes after tea on the first day.

"Getting a job in Bengaluru is tough," Pradeep says. "I come from a very humble background, my elder brother is still looking for a job and father retired a few months ago. Looking at the circumstances at home, I just wanted to take it but I was in two minds. You know getting a job is tough in Bengaluru. I'm 24 now, I had to step-up, someone has to look after the family, after all family comes first," Pradeep recalls.

"I was playing for Karnataka which is among best associations. When I got the offer my friends told me not to go, Railways will spoil my career as it isn't a great cricketing team these days but at the same time I was getting a job, my future was secure. I thought at least I will get more matches to play, I will be part of Ranji Trophy team which back in Karnataka was tough especially team having a stable pace attack. Now I think I took the right decision."

BRIEF SCORES: Mumbai 114 (Suryakumar Yadav 39; Pradeep T 6/37) vs Railways 116/5 (Arindam Ghosh 52 batting, D Shetty 3-20).



Pradeep's wickets included Ajinkya Rahane and Suryakumar Yadav.

Elegant but effective, Raman proves his worth again

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

ABHISHEK RAMAN is not an elegant left-hander. His placements lack refinement. At times he hit half-volleys straight to the fielder. Raman is an artisan, who thrives on his patience and tenacity. He doesn't allow outside edges, playing and missing, and mistimed shots to ruffle his batting. He is always ready for the next ball.

In a Bengal batting line-up that greatly depends on Abhimanyu Easwaran and Manoj Tiwary to flourish, Raman is offering the much-needed reliability at the top. The opener scored his second century in as many matches on Wednesday, as Bengal, after losing the toss, finished Day One on 241/4 in their Ranji Trophy Elite, Group A game against Andhra at Eden Gardens. It was Raman's fourth hundred at this level. At stumps, he was batting on 110, on the heels of his 110 in Bengal's tournament opener against Kerala.

A green pitch has been laid out for this game. Bengal needed a good start. But Easwaran got out caught behind off CV Stephen for six and alarm bells rang. Despite the grass cover, the pitch played a tad slow. The Andhra seamers needed to bend their back to extract life from the



DECEMBER AND A 25TH

Shikhar Dhawan scored his 25th first-class hundred, his first in 18 months, against Hyderabad at the Feroze Shah Kotla. His unbeaten 137 cornerstoned Delhi's 269/6 at stumps on Day One. Praveen Khanna

Not just another Dhawan hundred

Opener fights muscle-memory and instincts, mixes caution with aggression to stay unbeaten on 137

SANDIP G
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

JUST AFTER lunch, when Hyderabad's left-arm spinner Mehdi Hassan began tracing his run-up, Shikhar Dhawan's impulses kicked in. "Mein isko marunga," he later admitted was his first instinct. But then the rational voice in his mind said: "Team ki haalat achi nahin hai, mujhe lumbi paari khelni hai".

As Kotla toggled between bursts of sunshine and gloom, it was engrossing to watch Dhawan curb his natural instinct while scoring his 25th first-class hundred, his first in 18 months. His unbeaten 137, in Delhi's total of 269/6, was the only narrative on Day 1 at Kotla.

So rather than taking on Hassan from ball one with cuts, sweeps and slogs, the Delhi opener kept defending or working him off his legs. The situation and condition had warranted a cautious approach. Dhawan was frequently losing his partners, partly due to the surface that helped movement and also due to injudicious stroke-play. Delhi kept facing trouble. They were 4/2 at one stage, later it was 100/4 and 128/5.

But not for long before the instincts snuck in. There was an unseemly trigger too. On 67, medium-pacer Ravi Kiran induced an outside edge of a rare reckless Dhawan drive. The overjoyed bowler gave the Delhi star an elaborate send-off. For a moment, Dhawan stopped and stared at the bowler, who was being pulled away by his teammates. Much to the embarrassment of the visitors, the third umpire confirmed the field umpire's doubt that Kiran had over-stepped.

For the next 30-odd minutes, until he reached his hundred, Dhawan went on instinct mode, ripping the spinners with a flurry of sweeps and lofted drives. The team was still precariously placed at 128/5, the last of Delhi's batting specialist, Lalit Yadav, too had departed. Hyderabad bowlers were

Delayed start on Day 2 due to Solar Eclipse

Mumbai: The second day of the ongoing Ranji Trophy Group matches in Mumbai and Rajkot will start late by two hours from the regular time due to solar eclipse. A source in the host state association confirmed the development after the opening day's play between Mumbai and Railways concluded at the Wankhede Stadium here.

A solar eclipse occurs when a portion of the earth is engulfed in a shadow cast by the moon which fully or partially blocks sunlight. All Ranji Trophy games begin at 9.30 am.

Railways have taken a narrow two

runs lead after bundling out the 41-time Ranji Trophy champions for a party 114. They are 116/5 in their first essay. Similarly, the Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA), which is hosting Uttar Pradesh at its stadium in Rajkot, also said that the play will start there at 11.30am on Thursday. "Tomorrow, the match will start at 11:30 a.m. due to Solar Eclipse," the SCA stated in a release.

Saurashtra are comfortably placed at 322/8 with Test specialist Cheteswar Pujara, Sheldon Jackson and Harvik Desai slamming half centuries.

The shots that I would have played when I was 21 or 22 years old, I didn't play here. I didn't drive any of those deliveries. I didn't play most of the deliveries outside the off-stump. Some of our young guys fiddled with those deliveries. Now, this comes with experience. You have a look at the wicket and you know what shots you will play."

SHIKHAR DHAWAN

bowling with their tails up. But then Dhawan threw caution to the chilly wind that was slicing through the stadium.

Instincts kick in

He skipped down the track and consigned left-arm spinner Tanay Thyagrajan into the locked Gautam Gambhir stands. The ball, retrieved after a delay, bore more of his fury, as he slog-swept him twice through mid-wicket for boundaries. Hyderabad reintroduced Mohammad Siraj, he was gloriously driven down the ground and then flicked.

Hassan bounded in, only for Dhawan to pile on more misery. A slog-swept six took him to 99, before a late-cut double rounded off his hundred. The celebrations were muted. It was a "normal jaisa" hundred, he would say later, downplaying the effort.

As he hit two more boundaries post hundred, it looked Dhawan would continue with the carnage. It would have made sense, too, for he was steadily losing partners at the other end. But then he switched on the guarded mode again. With sun-beaten Kotla track drained off nip, and his partners, Anuj Rawat first and then Kunwar Bidhuri, stroking boundaries, at will, Dhawan was sedate.

Though the conditions were different from what it was in the first 30-odd overs, he chose the same block-or-leave method that helped him survive initially. He calls it "Box" cricket. Not the trivial version of indoor cricket which goes by the same name, but a more serious way of playing the ball as close to the body as possible. It's batting's fundamental principle, but one that's hard

to achieve on a consistent basis, most batsmen would admit.

Fighting muscle memory

It's a fight against your own muscle-memory. In the past, his instinct-defying attempts have been backfired. Like slowing down his bat-swing in England to counter swing or shuffling back-and-across the stumps in South Africa. But on Wednesday, his outside-the-off-stump discipline, barring a couple of instances he couldn't resist driving, was impeccable. Siraj and Co continuously tested his conviction, repeatedly tempting him by bowling outside the off-stump.

Dhawan would keep leaving, and only when it hummed on off-stump or thereabouts did he offer the full blade. Just a stout block. No thrust, no flourish, no reaching for the ball. He resisted the drives, the cuts and slashes. Often, he would shape up for the expansive shot, before pulling away.

And with a glint of satisfaction, he says: "The shots that I would have played when I was 21 or 22 years old, I didn't play here. I didn't drive any of those deliveries. I didn't play most of the deliveries outside the off-stump. Some of our young guys fiddled with those deliveries. Now, this comes with experience. You have a look at the wicket and you know what shots you will play."

Typically, he pleased the crowd to no less an extent that they started chanting, almost pleading: "(KL) Rahul se zyada mar lay."

He later admitted of not harbouring such thoughts: "I had nothing (of competing with Rahul) on my mind. Jo cheez aani hai woh aa jaati hai. I am a very relaxed person and I don't make my mind heavy with extra thoughts. The way you guys think, I don't think like that." But given the sheer determination he demonstrated in curbing his instincts, there could yet be a chapter waiting to unfold in his career.

BRIEF SCORES: Delhi 269/6 in 66 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 137 not out, Anuj Rawat 29, Kunwar Bidhuri 22 not out) vs Hyderabad.

ROUND-UP

Bowlers' harvest: A 20-wicket day

TWENTY WICKETS fell on Day One and Gujarat took a 57-run first innings lead over Kerala despite being bowled out for 127. After Jalaj Saxena ran through Gujarat batting with a five-for, the hosts responded via left-arm seamer Roosh Kalaria who took four wickets followed by Axar Patel's left-arm spin that accounted for three scalps. Kerala had five noughts in their first innings.

BRIEF SCORES (AT SURAT): Gujarat 127 (Jalaj Saxena 5/26) and 1/0 vs Kerala 70 (Roosh Kalaria 4/20, Axar Patel 3/11).

Pujara turns Mr Quicksilver

CHETESHWAR PUJARA scored 57 off 74 balls, hit two sixes in his innings and set up Saurashtra's charge against Uttar Pradesh. Scoring at a rate in excess of 3.5 runs per over, Saurashtra finished the first day on 322/8. Uttar Pradesh spinner Saurabh Kumar, though, shone bright.

BRIEF SCORES (AT RAJKOT): Saurashtra 322/8 (Cheteshwar Pujara 57, Sheldon Jackson 57; Saurabh Kumar 4/79) vs Uttar Pradesh.

Satish holds fort

GANESH SATISH held the fort for defending champions Vidarbha after they were five down for 72 runs. Satish finished the day on 88 not out, while after making early inroads, Punjab bowlers lost steam.

BRIEF SCORES (AT NAGPUR): Vidarbha 196/6 (Ganesh Satish 88 not out; Baltej Singh 3/32) vs Punjab.

Haryana steady

THREE HALF-CENTURIES saw Haryana have their nose slightly in front at the end of the first day against Jharkhand. For the hosts, Varun Aaron was expensive and wicketless in the 12 overs he bowled. Shahbaz Nadeem though bagged a couple.

BRIEF SCORES (AT JAMSHEDPUR): Haryana 274/6 (Chaitanya Bishnoi 75 not out; Ashish Kumar 2/33) vs Jharkhand.

Nair stands tall

MAYANK AGARWAL departed for a golden duck but Karun Nair played a lovely hand to ensure Karnataka went past 150 against Himachal Pradesh. Right-arm seamer Kanwar Abhinay took a five-for. When Himachal batted, they lost three quick wickets. Left-arm medium pacer Prateek Jain's two wickets inside five deliveries allowed Karnataka to bounce back...

BRIEF SCORES (AT MYSORE): Karnataka 166 (Karun Nair 81; Kanwar Abhinay 5/37, Rishi Dhawan 3/27) vs Himachal Pradesh 29/3 (Prateek Jain 2/11).

Ishwar Pandey rolls back years

Ishwar Pandey rolled back the years to return with a six-for, as Tamil Nadu stumbled to 149 all out. Baba Aparajith played a lone ranger and scored an unbeaten half-century.

BRIEF SCORES (AT INDORE): Tamil Nadu 149 (Baba Aparajith 61 not out; Ishwar Pandey 6/26) vs MP 56/3.



Abhishek Raman scored his fourth first-class hundred. PTI

side by a distance, was timing the ball well. Andhra came up with a different strategy post-tea. It made things exciting. The visitors decided to target Tiwary with the short ball. Slips were removed, mid-wicket was pushed a little squarer, a short backward square leg was brought in and deep backward square leg was placed a little straighter.

Prithvi Raj Yarra wasn't quick but he directed his short-pitched deliveries well. Against a faster bowler, Tiwary might have played out the spell, but the veteran batsman decided to take on Andhra's left-arm medium pacer. A top-edge went over the wicketkeeper for a four. Tiwary, however, was a little late on the hook to another bouncer and gloved it to KS Bharat behind the stumps.

He was scoring at a brisk pace and his departure gave Andhra an opportunity to make inroads. But Yarra had a cramp that forced him to leave the field. Also, Raman ensured that Andhra's efforts were blunted. As Bengal coach Arun Lal said after the day's play, without the 26-year-old holding one end up, the hosts could have been eight or nine down today.

Andhra paid for not taking their chances. Bharat missed a stumping off Shoaib Khan, when Raman was on 93. Soon after, the batsman reached his century by

hitting a six over deep square. Raman had another reprieve towards the fag end of the day, as Stephen missed a simple caught and bowled opportunity.

Before that however, Stephen had managed to move one late to have Sudip Chatterjee out caught behind. It was another failure for the left-hander whose game has regressed considerably over the last couple of seasons. Chatterjee is now walking a tightrope. Andhra will take the second new ball tomorrow morning and a lot will depend on how they use it. From Bengal's perspective, as Raman said, the key would be to play out the second new ball.

Manish injured

Andhra left-arm spinner G Manish sustained right shoulder dislocation after having a bad fall while trying to stop a single. He was stretchered off and was taken to a private nursing home. Any further participation in the match for him appears unlikely.

Meanwhile, the solar eclipse on Thursday will not alter the playing hours and the second day's play will have a scheduled start. The Bengal team management, however, has asked the players to wear sunglasses.

BRIEF SCORES: Bengal 241/4 (Abhishek Raman 110 not out, Manoj Tiwary 46; CV Stephen 2/60) vs Andhra.

India offers to host Commonwealth Shooting C'ships in 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

CHANCES OF India hosting a Commonwealth Shooting Championship in 2022, an idea mooted to compensate for the sport's exclusion from the Birmingham Games, brightened after the Commonwealth Games Federation asked IOA to submit a "formal" proposal for its consideration.

The submission of the proposal must be done by early January to the Sports Committee of the CGF which will then place the bid before its Executive Committee for approval. The encouraging response comes weeks after a meeting between the CGF and

International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) in Munich on December 5. National Rifle Association of India President Raninder Singh also attended the meeting.

In a letter to Indian Olympic Association President Narinder Batra, the CGF said it was encouraged by the NRAI President Raninder and the Vladimir Lissin-led ISSF's proposal to host the event just prior to the 2022 CWG.

"The NRAI will work with you and Government of India to develop a formal submission to the CGF for consideration early January by the CGF Sports Committee and then to the CGF Executive Board for approval. This proposal must be formally endorsed and submitted by the Indian Commonwealth Games Association (IOA) as the official mem-

Batra also said that India would not be interested in taking part in such a Commonwealth Shooting Championships if the medals won there are not counted in the country's tally of the 2022 CWG.

ber of the CGF," the CGF said in the letter. "We look forward to supporting them (ISSF and NRAI) with your endorsement in developing their innovative proposal," CGF chief Louise Martin wrote in the letter to Batra.

Raninder, in a separate letter to Batra, gave an outline of the proposal for hosting the championships which he said has "complete support of the ISSF". His proposal touched upon the tricky issue of the counting of medals won in this championships towards the 2022 CWG tally of the respective countries.

"...medals awarded at this proposed event being accorded equal protocol as any medals won by a competing nation at the main event conducted later in the Birmingham CWG (in sports included within its sports programme)," Raninder wrote in the letter while also proposing March 14, 2022 as tentative date of the championships to coincide with the Commonwealth Day.

"In essence these medals would be

treated in nature as an opening balance for each competing nation to build upon by competing in those other events in Birmingham. Thus affording nations the capability to maximise their medal potential at the CWG, an issue central & so established by the IOA to the CGF," he added.

Batra had earlier raised this issue of counting of medals won from the Commonwealth Shooting Championships to the country's 2022 CWG tally when Martin and CGF CEO David Grevenberg visited India last month to discuss IOA proposal to withdraw from the Birmingham Games. At that time, Martin and Grevenberg had not made any commitments.

He also said later that India would not be

interested in taking part in such a Commonwealth Shooting Championships if the medals won there are not counted in the country's tally of 2022 CWG. The CGF's letter to Batra did not directly deal with this issue but said that the joint proposal of the ISSF and NRAI "substantively meet the expectations of all stake holders".

"Their joint proposal briefly outlined during our meeting with them this month; subject to careful examination and ratification by various competent levels within CGF, and assuming such a proposal would be in conformity with our constitution and regulations; would in our opinion substantively meet the expectations of all stake holders including those of India effectively," Martin wrote.

Five horsemen & an apocalypse

On a prospective flier at MCG, Australia mull on playing four seamers and spinner Lyon

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

MELBOURNE, DECEMBER 25

AUSTRALIA COULD play five specialist bowlers against New Zealand during the second Test, captain Tim Paine said Wednesday, with the decision being left until the last moment. The Melbourne Cricket Ground track has been lifeless during the past two Boxing Day Tests, making it hard to take 20 wickets, although a Sheffield Shield match there this month was abandoned due to a dangerous pitch.

With this in mind, Paine said a decision would only be made after a late inspection. But one scenario could be a five-pronged attack, in which Queensland seamer Michael Neser likely makes his debut. "We'll find out tomorrow. The wicket is a bit unknown... but we've got a plan in place for both scenarios (with five bowlers or without)," Paine told reporters on Wednesday. "We've probably got two different teams (in mind), to be honest, so we'll make the final call tomorrow." Australia traditionally play only four front-line bowlers -- three quicks and spinner.

According to Cricket Australia, they have only fielded five once before in the past decade -- at the 2013 Sydney Test against Sri Lanka. If they go down this route on Thursday, Neser is set to line up alongside Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon, with James Pattinson replacing the injured Josh Hazlewood.

Travis Head is expected to be the fall guy, with wicketkeeper Paine moving up the batting order to six. "Our batting team has been scoring a lot of runs so if we were to go one more bowler, we would be comfortable they could do the job," said Paine. "The bowlers we would be bringing in can all bat so while we're taking a batter out, we're probably lengthening our line-up."

Australia head into the Melbourne clash on the back of three wins at home this summer -- two against Pakistan before their 296-run thrashing of New Zealand in the first Test at Perth, a day-night affair. Marnus Labuschagne has been their star batsman, smashing his third century in a row at Perth before a second-innings 50.

In contrast Steve Smith, their hero during the Ashes against England this year, has managed only 43 and 16 in his last two innings, out twice to short balls from Neil Wagner. It followed a quiet series against Pakistan and he is keen to pile on runs in Melbourne.

"I've been facing a fair bit of short stuff in the nets because I'm expecting a bit (in Melbourne)," Smith said. "It's going to be completely different with the red ball as opposed to the pink ball, particularly (compared) to the second innings in Perth when it was a bit up and down with cracks and

NUMBER PLATE

6 Number of years since Australia fielded five specialist bowlers. According to Cricket Australia, they have adopted this strategy just once before this decade -- at the 2013 Sydney Test against Sri Lanka.

stuff. It's going to be different, but I'm looking forward to it."

New Zealand make two changes

New Zealand made two changes Wednesday for the Boxing Day Test against Australia with fast bowler Trent Boult back from injury and Tom Blundell replacing Jeet Ravel at the top of the order. The dangerous Boult missed the first Test in Perth, where his team crashed by 296 runs, with a rib injury that also kept him out of their final clash against England.

But he has worked his way back to fitness, desperate to play in the Black Caps first Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground since 1987, with a crowd of more 75,000 expected on day one. Williamson also confirmed Blundell, usually a middle-order batsman, would open alongside Tom Latham in place of the out-of-form Ravel.

"He's a positive player and a smart cricketer so it's just trying to adapt to the conditions. It's important he goes out and plays his natural game," Williamson told reporters of Blundell. "He's been a very good player for a long time and he's a mature head... it's a really exciting opportunity for him."

New Zealand have had 10 days to recover from their Perth day-night Test thrashing, which saw their batsmen skittled for 166 and 171. Williamson said they had learned from their mistakes. "Perth was tough and Australia are very good and tactically sound," he said after his team were put through their paces in the nets on Christmas Day. "It's important we learn from some bits of Perth but turn our focus to Melbourne and changing conditions and perhaps not be too reactive to that performance."

Williamson was also keen to ensure his players do not get carried away with playing in front of such a big crowd during one of the most prestigious days on the cricket calendar. "I guess there's a sense of romance about being involved in the Boxing Day Test... at the same time it's about removing a little bit of that and bringing the focus back to the cricket and making those improvements we need to."



MARY CHRISTMAS

Boxing legend MC Mary Kom celebrates Christmas at her residence in New Delhi on Wednesday. *Renuka Puri*

Anderson back to join elite club on 150 Test caps

REUTERS

PRETORIA, DECEMBER 25

JAMES ANDERSON'S return from injury could not be more timely for England, who are still unsure about the make-up of their bowling attack as they head into the first test against South Africa.

But while Jofra Archer and Stuart Broad are still not sure of playing in the match, which starts on Boxing Day, after being laid low with flu, Anderson will be back on the frontline for what will be his 150th test.

England are expected to field a five-man seam attack, foregoing spin, if all their pacemen are fully fit. However, that situation may need to be reassessed based on the availability of Ben Stokes. The all-rounder's father was admitted to hospital in Johannesburg his condition was described as being "critical" on Tuesday in a statement from the England and Wales Cricket Board.

The 37-year-old Anderson will be the ninth cricketer to reach the 150-test milestone -- joining the likes of Sachin Tendulkar, Steve Waugh and Jacques Kallis -- when he makes his return to the England attack for the first time since limping off with a calf injury at the start of the Ashes in August. "He's looking as good as I've ever seen him," said captain Joe Root.



With Jofra Archer and Stuart Broad down with flu, Anderson will be back on the frontline in the first Test. *File*

Anderson had arrived in the country ahead of the majority of the England squad to attend a fast bowlers' camp, underlining his desire to get back into the team. "It feels like a long time since I've played a competitive game so to get some overs... was very pleasing," he told reporters. "There was a bit of rust but that's to be expected having not played for four or five months. I'm just happy to be back out there."

Anderson was only 20 when he made

It feels like a long time since I've played a competitive game so to get some overs... was very pleasing. There was a bit of rust but that's to be expected having not played for four or five months. I'm just happy to be back out there.

JAMES ANDERSON

PACER, ENGLAND

his debut, taking five wickets against Zimbabwe at Lord's in 2003, and last month said he wanted to continue through to the next Ashes series, which will start at the end of 2021 in Australia.

"I still want to do it, that's part of the reason I worked so hard to get back," added England's record wicket taker with 575 test scalps. "It's something I love and I still feel I've got something to offer, so that hunger and desire to get back is still very much there."

Stokes rejoins team, but three players sit out

Ben Stokes returned to practice with England on Wednesday after the condition of his critically ill father improved, but three others missed out as illness continue to plague the tourists, 24 hours ahead of the

first test against South Africa at Centurion. Stokes spent Tuesday at the bedside of father Ged, who was hospitalised the day before due to a "serious illness".

"He remains in intensive care, but has responded positively to treatment and is now in a stable condition," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement. "The Stokes family wishes to thank everyone for their support and in particular the medical practitioners in South Africa for their care of Ged."

Christmas morning practice went ahead, however, without Jack Leach, Ollie Pope and Chris Woakes, who are battling the flu bug that has hampered the tourists since their arrival in South Africa 11 days ago. But an ECB spokesman said none of the trio had been ruled out of the first test of the four-match series with South Africa, which starts in Centurion near Pretoria on Thursday.

But it will certainly delay England's team selection for the opening test. The flu bug hit England particularly hard soon after their arrival with pacemen Jofra Archer and Stuart Broad missing the two warm-up games and now racing to be fit to play on Thursday.

"It's quite frustrating," England skipper Joe Root said on Tuesday. "We have to handle it. We'll have to wait and see. We'll make a very late call on our side."

[SPORTS BAR]



Real Kashmir host Chennai in I-League

Real Kashmir FC face defending champions Chennai City FC in their first I-League home match of the season on Thursday in the first big sporting event in the valley since it became a union territory. The abrogation of Article 370 and the ensuing lockdown in the valley had raised security concerns, but Real Kashmir have made elaborate arrangements since then, allaying the fears of the visiting teams. Real Kashmir have played only two matches this season, both ending in draws away from home against Kolkata giants East Bengal and Tiddim Road Athletic Union (TRAU) of Imphal.

AIFF invites clubs for Futsal Championship

The All India Football Federation has invited clubs from the Indian Super League, I-League and Second Division League to confirm their participation in the inaugural edition of AIFF Futsal Club Championship. In a letter to all the clubs, AIFF General Secretary wrote: "Futsal is one of the fastest-growing sports in the world, and has been increasing popularity with the AFC Member Associations as well. Das said that the AIFF is planning to start the tournament in July/August next year. The decision comes after the AIFF Executive Committee meeting on December 10, which decided to introduce a Futsal Club Championship in the calendar.



Anjum Moudgil finished ahead of Raj Chaudhary and N Gaayathri.

Anjum claims third straight 50m rifle 3P title

Anjum Moudgil won the women's 50m rifle 3 positions title for a third year in a row in the National Championships in Bhopal on Wednesday. Moudgil's fellow Tokyo Olympics quota holders Abhishek Verma and Yashaswini Singh Deswal were also crowned national champions in the 10m air pistol mixed team competition. Manu Bhaker, another Tokyo Olympics quota winner, clinched the junior mixed team pistol event partnering Sarabjot Singh, thereby winning her seventh gold of the Nationals. She had claimed four gold medals on Tuesday, sweeping the senior and junior individual and team events in 10m air pistol titles. Moudgil was in top form throughout the day, topping qualification with a 1172, way ahead of the field where Raj Chaudhary of Haryana came second with a 1164. She then shot 449.9 in the finals to claim gold, leaving Tamil Nadu's N Gaayathri a clear 2.6 behind for silver.

Mavericks star likely to return vs Spurs

Dallas Mavericks star guard Luka Doncic is closing in on a return, which could come as soon as Thursday's home game against the San Antonio Spurs. The 20-year-old has missed the past four games with an ankle injury but returned to practice on Tuesday. Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle remained non-committal but was certainly glad to see the MVP candidate on the practice floor. Doncic is averaging 29.3 points, 9.6 rebounds and 8.9 assists in 25 games. He suffered the injury against the Miami Heat on Dec. 14.

Aussie Open prize money boosted

The total prize money for next month's Australian Open has been boosted by 14 per cent to A\$71 million (US\$49.1 million). According to the organisers of the year's first Grand Slam, the biggest gainers will be the players who are knocked out in the early rounds. Those who lose the first round of the qualifying round will take home A\$20,000, a three fold hike from last year. While the singles players who exit in the first round of the main draw will earn A\$90,000, a jump of 20 per cent. Japan's Naomi Osaka is the reigning women's singles champion while Djokovic pocketed his record 7th title by defeating Spain's Rafa Nadal in the 2019 final.



BCB firm on not playing Tests in Pakistan

Refusing to budge from its stand, the Bangladesh Cricket Board has said it was ready to play only T20 Internationals in Pakistan, preferring a neutral venue for the planned Test series. The message was conveyed by BCB chief executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury on Tuesday. His comments come a day after Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ehsan Mani asserted that there was "absolutely no doubt" they would play all home series in the country, going forward. In an e-mail to the BCB, the Mani asked the Bangladesh board to give "acceptable reasons" for refusing to send its team to Pakistan for the two Tests of the ICC World Test Championship, scheduled to be held from January 18. The Bangladesh board's top officials have been quoted this week in the media as saying that they will not be playing Tests in Pakistan due to security concerns.

Paes, 46, says 2020 will be his last year as professional

SHAHID JUDGE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

"ONE LAST roar," pens Leander Paes, along with the customary hashtag that dominates social media. It's the language of new-age netspeak that the 46-year-old – a man born in an era where colour televisions were a novelty and the sport of tennis wasn't even a part of the Olympic programme – has kept up with. It's been the same with how he has handled his tennis, staying abreast with new developments in racket technology and sport science to aid his longevity. But the wear and tear of the 28 years of playing as a professional was inevitable. What wasn't surprising was that Paes, the oldest player currently on tour, chose twitter to announce his intention of hanging his racket at the end of the 2020 season.

"I want to announce 2020 as my farewell year as a pro tennis player," he writes. "I am looking forward to the 2020 tennis calendar where I will be playing a few select tournaments, traveling with my team and celebrating with all my friends and fans around the world. It is all of you who have inspired me to become me and I want to take this year to say 'thank you' to you."

The last few years have been tough on Paes. He won his last Grand Slam in 2016 (mixed doubles with Martina Hingis in French Open) and last tour title at Auckland with South African Raven Klaasen a year earlier. He reached the final of two Challenger events this year, but for the first time in 19 years, the former world no 1 dropped out of the top 100 – he currently sits on 105. Regardless of the slump, his career has been the most decorated among all Indians. Just under a month ago, the veteran ex-



tended a Davis Cup world record, winning his 44th doubles match in the tournament. And it was in that elite competition where Paes had first announced himself, back in April 1990, a few months short of his 17th birthday. When he burst onto the scene, his strokes didn't quite have the technical grace associated with Indians like the Krishnans

and Vijay Amritraj. But he had the energy to propel his chip-and-charge game to a level that would see him beat stalwarts like Henri Leconte and Goran Ivanisevic. And those lightning-quick reflex volleys at the net is what fans came to see.

A year after turning professional, he played his first Olympics in Barcelona 1992. Four years later, at Atlanta 1996 he became only the second Indian, after KD Jadhav in 1952, to win an individual Olympic medal for independent India. Coincidentally, India has won at least one individual medal at all the Games that have followed. And Paes, who has competed at seven editions of the Olympics – the most for any tennis player and for an Indian – has been present for all.

What truly made him one of the sport's greats was when he shifted to playing doubles full time in the early 2000s. Till date he has won a total of 18 Grand Slam titles – eight

in men's doubles and 10 in mixed doubles – which is the most by any Indian. Then there were also the two junior singles titles he won at Wimbledon 1990 and the US Open in 1991. It's been three years since he won his last major, and the period in between has been marred by a dip in form and personal problems. But when he finally draws the curtains on a career that has spanned almost 30 years, Paes, 'Lionheart' as he calls himself, boasts a CV like no other Indian player has ever had.

An Olympic medallist, just like his father Vece Paes (field hockey bronze at the 1972 Munich Games), the only Indian to win all four Grand Slam in men's doubles, a holder of 65 titles including 18 majors and a singles win in 1998, and record holder for most doubles wins at Davis Cup. Actor, Arjuna Award winner, Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, the most successful tennis player India has produced. And now he's ready for one last roar.

BRIEFLY

Fraser-Pryce to go for sprint double at Tokyo Games

Jamaican Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce will run in both the 100 metres and 200 metres events at the Tokyo Olympics next year. Fraser-Pryce is a two-times Olympic 100 metres champion and she won gold at this year's world championships in Doha. The 32-year-old, who has four world 100m titles to her name, did not compete in the 200 at the 2016 Rio Olympics to focus on the shorter event in which she finished third despite a toe injury. "I will be doubling up definitely," Fraser-Pryce was quoted as saying by website *insidethegames.com*. "Last year I really wanted to attempt the double but coach had other plans so I just worked with that plan. He knows best."

Fraser-Pryce, who won the 200 metres gold medal at the 2013 world championships and silver at the 2012 London Olympics, said her aim was to run under 22 seconds for the first time in what will be her fourth and final Olympics. "I am definitely looking forward to running the 200 metres, especially because I believe in my heart that I can run 21 seconds," she added. "It's a big passion of mine so I am working really hard towards that."

Mandzukic leaves Juventus, joins Qatar's Al-Duhail

Croatia striker Mario Mandzukic has joined Qatari club Al-Duhail on a free transfer from Juventus. Al-Duhail announced the signing on their official website on Tuesday. The move ends speculation that the 33-year-old Mandzukic was a possible target for Manchester United. "The team's management succeeded today in contracting with the Croatian striker Mario Mandzukic of Juventus in a free transfer deal after the end of his contract with his Italian team," Al-Duhail said. Mandzukic was a World Cup runner-up with Croatia in 2018. He scored in the 4-2 defeat to France in the final along with an own-goal in the first half. He has been frozen out at Juventus as he neared the end of a four-year deal, which he signed when joining from Atletico Madrid in 2015.

Pardew appointed manager of Dutch side Den Haag

Former Newcastle United and West Ham United manager Alan Pardew has been appointed head coach of ADO Den Haag until the end of the season, the Dutch Eredivisie team announced. Pardew, who has been out of a job since being sacked by West Bromwich Albion in April last year, has been tasked with getting Den Haag out of the relegation zone with the struggling top-flight side second from bottom after 18 games. "I am glad ADO Den Haag came my way during the search for a new challenge," the BBC quoted 58-year-old Pardew as saying. "The team is in a difficult phase, but we will do everything we can to turn the tide. We have to do that together. Together we have to achieve a comeback." Pardew, who has also managed Reading, Charlton Athletic, Southampton and Crystal Palace, replaces Alfons Groenendijk who left Den Haag earlier this month. Den Haag later appointed former Tottenham Hotspur and Ajax Amsterdam manager Martin Jol as their new technical adviser.

AGENCIES

When the monkey chants are for you

As players in Europe endure racist incidents with increasing regularity, striker Romelu Lukaku opens up about his trauma

RORY SMITH
MILAN, DECEMBER 25

ROMELU LUKAKU was planning on a relaxing evening in front of the TV. He might now find himself playing in Italy, but he was looking forward to following the fortunes of two of his former teams in the Premier League.

His hopes of a quiet night ended long before the games did. Not for the first time this season, he found himself composing a message for his Twitter and Instagram feeds. Not for the first time this season, he felt compelled to speak out against racism.

The cause, in this case, was the front page of the next day's *Corriere dello Sport*, one of Italy's sports newspapers. Its cover had been posted on Twitter late that evening with images of Lukaku, a Belgian striker whose parents were born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Chris Smalling, a former teammate of his who is of Jamaican descent and is now playing for Roma, to tease their teams' weekend matchup. The headline read: "Black Friday."

When Lukaku saw it, he was staggered. "It's crazy," he replied when he was sent an image of the front page over WhatsApp. He then criticized the paper publicly, saying it was the "dumbest of headlines."

The mix of disappointment and frustration is a feeling Lukaku has had with dispiriting regularity in recent months. From England's national team threatening to walk off the field during a game in Bulgaria to a match stopped by racist chants in the Netherlands to more recent incidents at Manchester City earlier this month and at Tottenham on Sunday, black players have reported being targets of racist incidents on what has seemed like a weekly basis in Europe this season.

In Italy, it has been particularly virulent. Lukaku was racially abused in his second game after moving to the country this season, a chorus of monkey chants greeting him as he prepared to take a penalty during his Inter Milan team's game at Cagliari. As he listened to the abuse in a stadium with a long, grim record of such incidents, he said he thought what he has always thought in these situations: "I'm going to score. I'm going to win. I'm going to go home. I've been confronted by it many times in life," he said. "You build a type of shell. I take my anger out on the field."

He is not the only one to have been placed in that invidious position. Fiorentina's Brazilian left back, Dalbert, heard racist chants at Atalanta and Sampdoria's Ronaldo Vieira was targeted by Roma fans while playing at home. Mario Balotelli, now at Brescia, was so incensed at the abuse he received during a game in Verona in November that he picked up the ball and kicked it into the upper deck. Like Lukaku, Balotelli then had to endure a group of his own team's fans publishing a verbose statement explaining away the incident. And he is not alone in feeling that the re-



Romelu Lukaku was racially abused in his second match with Inter Milan. AP

sponse of the country's authorities has been lacking. Cagliari, whose officials initially denied anything had happened to Lukaku, escaped punishment from Serie A.

Outbursts of racism have long disfigured games in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, but the frequency with which they have occurred this season is especially alarming, given the rising nationalist tide across the continent. Italy, for example, saw racially motivated attacks triple after the populist Five Star movement entered into government with the Lega, a far-right party, in 2017. That increase is reflected in the experience of black players in the country's stadiums.

The situation has grown so troubling that the Italian league's clubs were moved to action themselves. In November, all 20 released a public statement admitting they had "not done enough" to address racism in Italian soccer, and informing the country's authorities that now was the time for "serious change."

In the weeks after that statement came the *Corriere* front page, which the newspaper defended, saying the criticism of it was like a "lynching." Then Serie A's general manager was caught on tape suggesting the solution might be muting stadium microphones, so at least the abuse is not broadcast. This week, Serie A unveiled a new anti-racism initiative featuring three paintings of chimpanzees, provoking a heated backlash that it was tone deaf.

I'm going to score. I'm going to win. I'm going to go home. I've been confronted by it (monkey chants) many times in life. You build a type of shell. I take my anger out on the field."

ROMELU LUKAKU
ON DEALING WITH RACIST COMMENTS

There has been so many incidents, so many low moments, that it has been hard to keep up. Lukaku has found himself talking, and thinking, about the issue far more frequently than he would have hoped. Education is critical, he said, but he is not prepared to wait for others to address the issue. "I say what I think," he said. "If something is on my mind, I will stand up and speak."

Pace and power

Lukaku wanted Paul Pogba, a friend long before he was a Manchester United teammate, to be the first to know. Last summer, while they were in Australia on a preseason tour, Lukaku pulled Pogba aside and told him he had decided to leave England. "I told him I was done," Lukaku said.

Lukaku had reached the conclusion a few months earlier. He had spent close to eight years in England by then, blossoming into one

of the world's best forwards, but his final two, after a \$90 million transfer to United, had been arduous.

"It was always, 'Yes, but ...' right from the start," he said. "I scored against Real Madrid in the European Super Cup but missed a chance. It was: 'But he missed that one.' I scored against West Ham in my first Premier League game: 'Yes, but ...' From then on, I started to wonder how it was going to go."

He still scored goals – 96 games, 42 goals – but he bristles at how his perceived poor form affected his reputation in England. "One year at United erased eight years prior to that," he said. He feels that he and Pogba were "blamed for Manchester United's fall."

He wonders, now, if it was because United had paid so much money for him; he is, in cumulative transfer fees, the third most expensive player in history. There is, though, one other possibility.

There has always been a divergence between the player Lukaku is and the player he is perceived to be. One former manager, Roberto Martinez, always regarded Lukaku as a "thinker," but that opinion was an outlier in discussions about him. As with many black players, analysis of Lukaku's performance tends to focus on his strength, his athleticism, his physical attributes.

"It is never about my skill when I am compared to other strikers," he said. "My one-on-one dribbling is good. I can do a step-over. I

TOP-OF-THE-TABLE CLASH

Vardy dilemma for Leicester as they host Liverpool with title hopes in balance

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
LONDON, DECEMBER 25

LEICESTER CITY face runaway Premier League leaders Liverpool on Boxing Day knowing their own title hopes are very much in the balance. Thursday's match will see the second-placed Foxes, the shock 2015/16 champions, kick off 10 points adrift of Liverpool, who will arrive in the East Midlands fresh from winning a maiden Club World Cup title following a 1-0 victory over Brazilian side Flamengo in Qatar.

One of the more remarkable statistics in English football is that it is nearly 30 years since Liverpool were last crowned domestic champions in what was then the First Division. But Premier League silverware is now in sight following a successful 2019 that has also seen Liverpool take the Champions League and UEFA Super Cup trophies back to Anfield as well as the Club World Cup.

One of the enduring peculiarities of the English game that has not changed, however, is the packed programme of matches that take place during the Christmas and New

Year holiday period. The congested schedule is again causing headaches for managers, with Foxes boss Brendan Rodgers saying the fixture list is a "nonsense".

Leicester kick off against Liverpool at 2000 GMT on Thursday before they play West Ham on Saturday.

They then complete four games in 10 days with a trip to Newcastle on New Year's Day, before hosting Wigan in the FA Cup on January 4. This presents Rodgers with a problem about how often to field Jamie Vardy, the league's leading scorer so far this season, given the striker is now aged 32.

"The game is about money now. You can't say it's about the welfare of players," insisted Rodgers, himself a former Liverpool manager who added that Vardy, for all he has scored 16 goals this term, had "no chance" of being involved throughout the festive period.

This season sees the Premier League experimenting with a 'winter break' that will see all teams get a weekend off in February. But that pales into insignificance compared to the Bundesliga's long-established winter break.

The German top-flight closes down for several weeks in December and January,

PLAYING TONIGHT

- Tottenham vs Brighton (6pm)
- Bournemouth vs Arsenal (8.30pm)
- Chelsea vs Southampton (8.30pm)
- Crystal Palace vs West Ham (8.30pm)
- Everton vs Burnley (8.30pm)
- Aston Villa vs Norwich (8.30pm)
- Sheffield vs Watford (8.30pm)
- Man United vs Newcastle (11pm)
- Leicester vs Liverpool (1.30pm)

Live on Star Sports Network

with Rodgers saying the English break was a "let's pretend" version. Liverpool will be without Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain after the midfielder suffered an ankle injury against Flamengo as Jurgen Klopp's side, unbeaten in the Premier League this season, bid to go 13 points clear and all but end the title-race before by the halfway stage.

"If anyone wants to think things are over

before they are over we cannot stop them doing that, though it is not important to us," said Liverpool manager Klopp.

'Man Utd further behind in development than expected'

Reuters: Manchester United have not progressed as much as what manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer had hoped for as they near the halfway stage of the Premier League season, but the Norwegian said his team would become more consistent with experience.

Solskjaer, who took charge of United in December last year, has guided the team to eighth in the standings after 18 games and their tally of 25 points is four fewer than what they had collected at this stage last season.

"At the moment we're a little bit further behind than what I was hoping for," Solskjaer told the British media. "We knew this season was going to be a season of some ups and downs." United have failed to win more than two league games in a row this season but Solskjaer said that they needed time to reach their best form. "This season will be used to find a team for next season, but hopefully we can speed this process up by getting more results."



Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers has said Vardy, who has scored 16 goals this season, had "no chance" of being involved throughout the festive period. Reuters