

## NEARBY



**NPR will serve as database for NRC: Roy**  
NEW DELHI  
Acclaimed author Arundathi Roy on Wednesday said that the NPR would serve as a database for the NRC and asked people to oppose it by furnishing wrong names and addresses. She was addressing students during a protest at the Arts Faculty on North Campus.

CITY PAGE 3

## JJP vice-president resigns from party post

GURUGRAM  
Indicating that all was not well within the Jannayak Janta Party, the party's national vice-president Ram Kumar Gautam on Wednesday resigned from the post, accusing Dushyant Chautala of "not thinking about party MLAs".

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## CBI launches probe into YEIDA land scam

NEW DELHI  
The CBI has taken over the probe into an alleged ₹126-crore scam in the acquisition of land in Uttar Pradesh's Mathra for the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA). Its former Chief Executive Officer P.C. Gupta and 20 others are accused in the case.

NATION PAGE 9

# U.P. tense as PM calls for introspection

State government issues notices to people in Meerut for damage to property during protests

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday denounced the damage to public property in Uttar Pradesh during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and asked those who indulged in vandalism "in the name of protest" to introspect if their path was right.

Stressing that the rights and duties of citizens go hand in hand, Mr. Modi said while getting a safe environment was the right of a citizen, it "is the duty of every citizen" to honour the work of the police responsible for security.

"In Uttar Pradesh, some people, in the name of protests, indulged in violence, damaged government property ... sitting at home they should ask themselves, was their path right? All that was torched and destroyed, was it not going to come to the use of their children," Mr. Modi asked.

He was addressing a gathering after unveiling a statue of the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary at the Lok Bhavan here.

Mr. Modi's words against vandalism and arson in Uttar Pradesh came days after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said his government would "take revenge" on those involved in the violence in Lucknow and seize

and auction their property as compensation for damage to public property.

## Over 900 people held

The State government has been issuing notices to such people and formed a four-member panel in Lucknow to estimate the damage. Over 925 persons have been arrested and about 5,500 detained across Uttar Pradesh for protests against the CAA.

Violent protests across the State against the CAA led to the death of at least 18 persons and damage to public and private property, including that of media personnel. While no new incident was reported on Wednesday, parts of the State, in particular western districts, continue to be tense. In the State capital, Internet services were restored only at 8 p.m. on Wednesday.

Mr. Modi appealed to those "coming under false rumours and engaging in violence and destroying government property" to remember that better roads, transport system and sewer lines were their right, but to protect and keep them clean was the duty of the citizens.

The Prime Minister asked people to think about what those who died in the violence, and the citizens and policemen who got injured must have gone through. He said the decades-old issues of Article 370 and the Babri Masjid dispute had been re-



**Homage to a giant:** PM Narendra Modi unveiling a statue of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Lucknow on Wednesday. ANI

solved peacefully.

"What an old disease Article 370 was. How tough it appeared," Mr. Modi said.

Another issue solved by the 130 crore Indians was the citizenship of lakhs of oppressed people who came to India from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh "to save their *dharma* and honour their daughters," Mr.

Modi said of the CAA.

Meanwhile, the Meerut district administration has issued notices to 517 arms licence holders and 148 persons named in the FIR to compensate for the damage to property during protests. In Bijnor, 43 persons have been issued notices to pay for the damage after being identified as 'vandals'.

## Assam warns govt. staff

The Assam government has warned its employees of disciplinary action for "indulging and participating in political activities" on social media. The warning follows the strike by some four lakh State government employees on December 22 in protest against the CAA.

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## 'Clear link in CAA, NRC, NPR'

JD(U) vice-president Prashant Kishor termed PM Narendra Modi's statement that there had been no discussion on NRC within the government a "tactical retreat" as there is a "straight connection between the CAA, the NRC and the NPR".

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## BJP aim is out: Kamal Nath

Terming the CAA "anti-people", Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath said the BJP had showed its "real intention" by clubbing the NRC and the NPR. Any law that was "anti-people and anti-religion" would never be implemented in the State under the Congress regime, he said.

PAGE 13

# Massive locust invasion in Gujarat

Officials caught napping despite alert



**Raiding army:** Locusts invading farms at Tharad village in north Gujarat on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

MAHESH LANGA  
AHMEDABAD

Sharing borders with neighbouring Pakistan, Gujarat is under attack from hoppers — new-born locusts — that have flown in across the international border. As the swarms mature, they have ravaged farms in north Gujarat, devastating farms in the three border districts — Banaskantha, Patan and Kutch.

The locusts, known as *tiddis* locally, have wreaked havoc on standing crops including castor, cumin, jatropha and cotton, and fodder grass in around 20 talukas.

Gujarat has not witnessed such an invasion of locusts since 1993-94. According to local experts, the State ad-

ministration has been caught napping despite an alert from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of a massive locust attack in South Asia, covering Pakistan and India.

Also, the Locust Warning Organization (LWO) in Jodhpur had noticed the swarms and predicted their trajectory across the international border. However, preventive measures by the authorities were not taken.

Among the border districts, Banaskantha is the worst affected. The insects fly in during the day and settle on the farms at night, making it difficult to ward them off.

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# It was a brutal attack, say AMU students

University authorities say police action was required to restore normalcy on the campus

SIDHARTH RAVI  
ALIGARH

Stun grenades, rubber bullets and tear-gas shells have all become part of student parlance at Aligarh Muslim University following a crack-down by the police on December 15, leaving several of them severely injured. One had his hand amputated.

While most students have since left the campus, those residing in Aligarh, some of whom continue to stage protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, demanded answers from the police over the use of "excessive force" and from the administration for letting it happen.

"Why was it so brutal," asked Tuba, a final-year degree student. Even if the police



AMU students taking out a march in Aligarh. PTI

were needed to disperse the crowd, why did they cross the line? Why were they given permission to do so," she asked.

Following rumours that some students had been killed during a police crack-down at Jamia Milla Islamia on the evening of December 15, students reportedly began

gathering at the university's Bab-e-Sayed gate. Since Section 144 of the CrPC had been imposed in Aligarh, students were not allowed to assemble outside the campus. Following an altercation with the police and the Rapid Action Force stationed to stop the students from going out, authorities reportedly start-

ed a lathi-charge along with the firing of several rounds of tear-gas shells.

"Some Kashmiri students brought out some salt and water to help protect us from it but it didn't really help me," said Nadim, a 19-year-old B.A. first-year student who was hit on the head by a tear-gas shell. Others such as Mohamed Aasim, also a B.A. first-year student, said that he was hit by a rubber bullet.

## Rubber bullets

"They used rubber bullets used in Maoist areas," alleged Nadeem Usma, a former student union leader. "Some students are said to have run into a guest house near the gate. There, they were reportedly threatened and bea-

ten up by the police," he said.

After the initial lathi-charge, students had retreated to a second roundabout inside the campus and many of them sat in protest, asking the police to leave the campus, those present said. "Everything was going on respectfully but the police provoked the students, making all sorts of communal, vulgar comments," said Arib Ahmed, a second year student.

The police launched an attack again, with both parties throwing stones. In a statement, the university's PRO highlighted various instances in the past when students were even killed in police firing. In this context, officials argued that allowing the police in was necessary.

# 'Closure order' sends coaching hub into tailspin

Mukherjee Nagar starts emptying out even as police deny issuing directive

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI

Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar area, a hub of private hostels and coaching centres, has been witnessing a gradual exodus of students since Tuesday. The police, claimed several owners of coaching centres and paying guest accommodations, had ordered them to shut up shop from December 25 to January 2.

The police appealed to everyone on Wednesday not to believe "rumours and fake videos" about the closure of PGs/hostels in the area. "We have registered a case against a fake video being circulated on social media and are also writing to the social media platform to remove it as the contents have been edited so as to place it out of context," said DCP (North West) Vi-



Students outside a coaching centre in Mukherjee Nagar. SAURABH TRIVEDI

jayanta Arya.

The message has, however, spread and coaching centres and PG accommodations are closing for the year one after the other. A coaching centre owner, on condition of anonymity, said he was instructed by a local policeman citing "orders from top" to down shutters from

December 25 to January 2. Eateries and hang-outs near Batra Cinema were agog with discussions about the "police order".

## Students disappointed

Renu, a student from Haryana, said she came to know that policemen had landed up at her coaching centre on Tuesday evening and ordered it to close for a week from Wednesday. "It will be my loss. I don't know why it has been done but surely it is not good," she said.

Ms. Renu is staying put in Delhi, but another student, Chandra Mohan from Rajasthan, is returning home. "Even the private library in Mukherjee Nagar will remain closed for a week because of orders. My landlord has asked me to leave citing pol-

ice orders," he said.

Amit, who is preparing for SSC exam, said there are around 4,000 students in his batch and the coaching centre has told everyone not to come until January 2. "The staff said extra classes will be taken to make up for the loss," he said.

A police officer said there are around 3.5 lakh students staying in localities in and around Mukherjee Nagar and enrolled in various coaching centres in the area. "The exercise was done to prevent students from getting involved in any kind of antisocial activity during New Year celebrations," the officer said, claiming that the police had a tough time on New Year's Eve both last year and in 2017 because of the ruckus created by revellers.

# Ajit Pawar tipped to be Deputy CM

SHARAD VYAS  
MUMBAI

A much-awaited expansion of the Maharashtra Cabinet due at the end of the year will most likely see Nationalist Congress Party leader Ajit Pawar play a prominent role in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

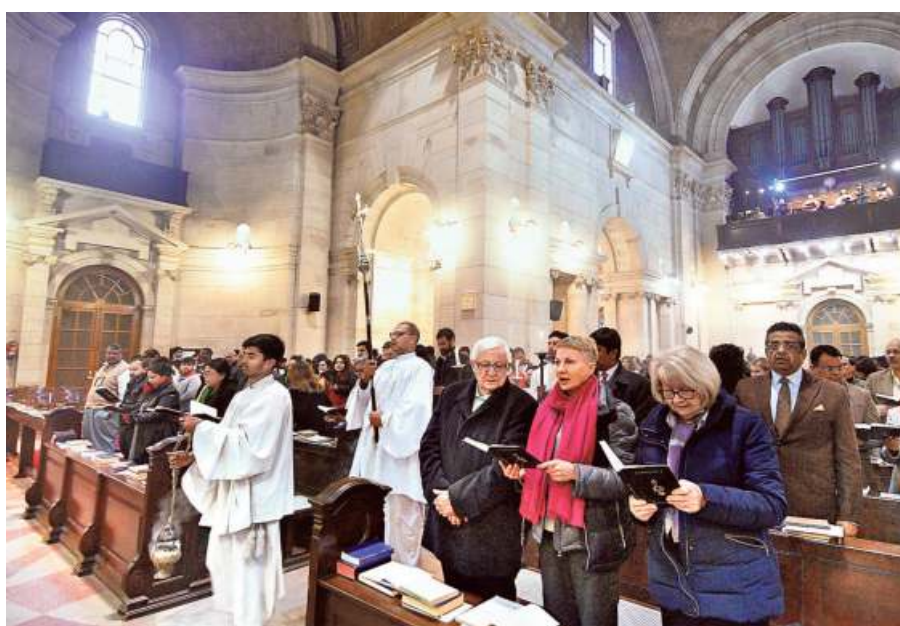
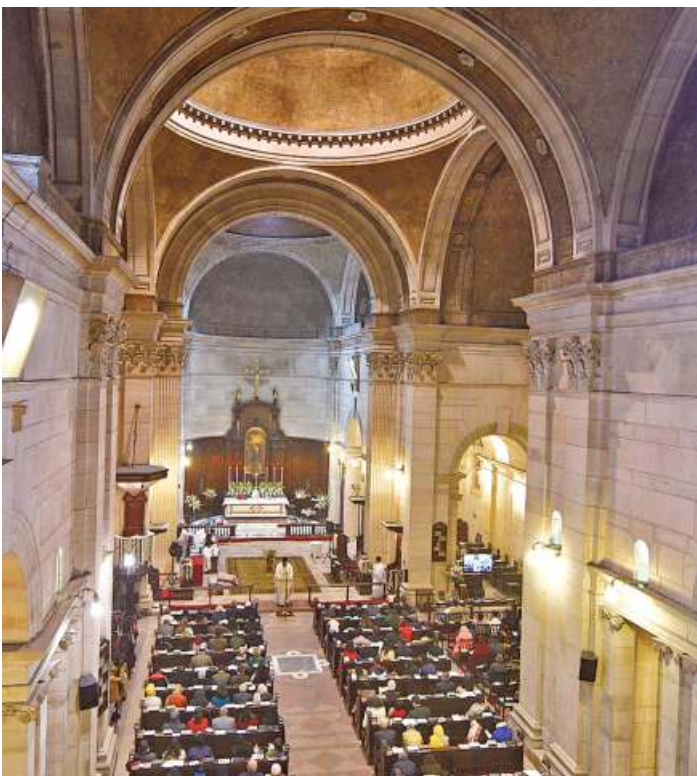
Senior NCP leaders said the Home Department may go to the party's Dilip Walse Patil, while Mr. Pawar could be again appointed Deputy Chief Minister along with charge of two Ministries. "Any expansion of the MVA government is not possible without including Ajit Pawar in it," said NCP leader and Cabinet Minister Jayant Patil.

DETAILS ON PAGE 12



# Santa-stic!

People throng Delhi's churches, markets and other areas to celebrate Christmas, with some continuing to protest against the CAA



(Anti-clockwise from left) People attending an anti-CAA demonstration outside Jamia Millia Islamia; children take part in Christmas celebrations at Sacred Heart Cathedral Church; mass prayer sessions in progress at Cathedral Church of Redemption; people lighting candles at Sacred Heart Cathedral; Christmas paraphernalia on sale at Khan Market



**IN BRIEF**



**'There is dissatisfaction over city's water quality'**

**NEW DELHI**  
Hitting out at the AAP government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that there is dissatisfaction among people in the Capital over "unclean" drinking water and added that this is a worrisome issue. This is the second time this week that the Prime Minister has attacked the AAP government over water quality in Delhi. At a rally on Sunday, he said that the Delhi government had kept its eyes closed towards the biggest problem of the city which is drinking water. PTI

**DELHI TODAY**

**Talk:** Discussion on the book titled "The Tibetan Suitcase" authored by Tsering Namgyal. The book deals with the Tibetan community in exile in a fictional form at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

**Exhibition:** "Sands of Time", a solo art show by Rashmi Khurana at Art Konsult, 3, Ground Floor, Qutab Minar Roundabout, Mehrauli Village, 10:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

**Exhibition:** "India: A Mapful Story", an exhibition of unseen historical maps and other important engravings (circa 18th Century to 1946) by Anubhav Nath, Curatorial Director of Ojas Art Gallery at 1AQ, Qutab Minar Roundabout, Mehrauli Village, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

**Exhibition:** "Realms of Peace-IV", a solo show of paintings by Bhasraj Singh at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@thehindu.co.in)

## Will ensure 24-hour water supply in Delhi in next five years, says Kejriwal

Chief Minister inaugurates 18-lakh-litre underground reservoir in Kishangarh

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurated underground reservoir with the capacity of 18 lakh litre in Kishangarh here on Wednesday.

Water from the underground reservoir, constructed at a cost of ₹16 crore, will help water reach many areas of Mehrauli and Kishangarh, Mr. Kejriwal said.

"I have provided water in every household of Delhi in the last five years by laying pipelines. We have a plan for the next five years. We will ensure 24-hour water service to the entire city in the next five years. Moreover, the water will be so clean that you will be able to drink with the spout," Mr. Kejriwal said at the event.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Mehrauli MLA Naresh Yadav at the inauguration in New Delhi on Wednesday. •PTI

"There was only one tank in this area, with a capacity of 6 lakh litre, due to which water could not reach all areas. In many areas, water reached in four to five days. After the commissioning of

this reservoir, drinking water will be available in most of the surrounding areas. Two more reservoirs are yet to be built in this area. About 80% work on both has been completed," Mr. Kejriwal

said further. The Chief Minister also said that when the government was formed five years ago, only 58% of the people in Delhi used to get water. "The remaining used water from tankers in Delhi. The governments of the Opposing parties could not provide water in the country's capital in 70 years. But it was not that they could not do so. In the last five years, we have laid pipelines, underground reservoirs and tanks at war level in Delhi. Today, 93% of Delhi's households are getting water," he said.

"The government will devise a system to store water inside the ground as well. Underground water will be recharged. Very big plans like this have been made," he added.

## Gahlot inaugurates two sports complexes

Facilities in Najafgarh have been developed at a total cost of ₹147 crore

**STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI**

Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot on Wednesday inaugurated two sports complexes in Mundhela Kalan and Kair in Najafgarh, which were developed at a total cost of ₹147 crore.

The sport complex at Kair measuring 18.20 acres has

Delhi's first FIFA-certified football field in a sports complex and a new cricket ground with seating stands, synthetic athletic track, tennis court, basketball court, swimming pool, jogging track, indoor sport facilities and residential blocks, the Delhi government said.

"The Delhi government

has initiated various schemes for promoting various sports amongst children and youth from the grassroots level and has invested generously in sports infrastructure to provide international standard sporting facilities," Mr. Gahlot said. He said that the two sports complexes will go a long way in encouraging and

nurturing local talent, especially the youth from rural areas of Delhi-NCR.

The sports complex at Mundhela Kalan has a six-lane 400-metre and eight-lane 100-metre synthetic tracks and synthetic football field for which FIFA certification is likely to be issued very soon, the government said.

## Extreme cold spell continues in city, minimum temperature settles at 6°C

Maximum temperature was 9 degrees below normal at 12.7°C

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

Cold day conditions continued in the Capital making for a cold Christmas day with the maximum temperature settling at 12.7 degrees Celsius that was nine degrees colder than the normal for this time of the year.

The minimum temperature settled at 6 degrees Celsius which was two degrees below normal for this time of the season. The forecast shows that it is set to get colder with the minimum temperature expected to fall to 4 degrees Celsius by January 26-27. The maximum temperature is also likely to stay below 15 degrees Celsius.

Delhi has been going through its longest extreme cold spell since 1997. It has



E-rickshaw drivers sit around a bonfire in New Delhi on Wednesday. •R.V. MOORTHY

recorded nine cold days in December, while in 1997, 17 cold days were recorded.

A "cold day" is when the maximum temperature is at least 4.5 notches below the normal and a "severe cold day" is when the maximum temperature is at least 6.5 degrees below the normal. The forecast for Thursday

shows that there will be mainly clear sky with moderate fog in the morning. There will be cold day conditions at many places and severe cold day conditions at isolated places. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 16 and 6 degrees Celsius respectively.

On Tuesday, the minimum temperature recorded in Delhi was 5.7 degrees Celsius, which was two degrees below normal and was the second coldest night of the season. On December 19, the minimum was recorded at 5.2 degrees Celsius which was the coldest. Last year, the lowest temperature recorded in December was 2.6 degrees Celsius on December 28.

## AQI to deteriorate to 'severe' on Saturday

Air pollution likely to rise in the last week of 2019

**STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI**

The air quality of the city continued to be in the 'very poor' category on Wednesday and is expected to deteriorate to 'severe' category on Saturday, SAFAR, a government-run monitoring agency, said.

The city's overall air quality index (AQI) on Wednesday was 350 (very poor), down from Tuesday's 383,

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	350	Gurgaon	211
Ghaziabad	370	Faridabad	370
Noida	383	Greater Noida	398

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

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M., YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]

said the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). "The AQI on December 27 [Friday] is forecast to de-

teriorate towards the higher end of the 'very poor' category and will enter 'severe' category by December 28 [Saturday] night," SAFAR said.

Air pollution is expected to rise during the last few days of the year. Very calm surface winds, low mixing layer and moderate to dense fog with high humidity are expected in the week starting December 27.



IN BRIEF

**'Protests at Shaheen Bagh continue to cause jams'**

**NEW DELHI**  
People commuting between Delhi and Noida via Kalindi Kunj will have to suffer huge traffic jams as long as protests against the amended Citizenship Act continue at Shaheen Bagh, the police said on Wednesday. "The Shaheen Bagh protests started on December 15, which forced us to divert traffic," said Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic) A.K. Singh.

**'Over 350 calls received about violent protests'**

**SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi Police received over 350 PCR calls between December 15 and 22 in connection with violence during protests against the amended Citizenship Act and the National Register of Citizens.

A police officer said that maximum calls were received on December 15 when violence broke out in Jamia Nagar. Over 170 calls were received from New Friends Colony and premises of Jamia Millia Islamia.

Over 100 calls were received on December 17 when violence broke out during protests in north-east Delhi's Seelampur. "Many of the calls were from motorists who got stuck in stone pelting incidents," the officer added. Another flurry of calls, around 150, were received on December 20 when violence broke out in Daryaganj. During the same period, several calls related to rumour-mongering were also received.

# NPR will serve as database for NRC, must oppose it, says Roy

Author-activist asks people to furnish wrong names and addresses

**STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI**

A protest was organised at the Arts Faculty on North Campus on Wednesday against the amended Citizenship Act, the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Speaking at the protest venue, author Arundhati Roy claimed that the NPR would serve as a database for the NRC and asked people to oppose it by furnishing wrong names and addresses.

She claimed that NCR was against the Muslims of the country and that those conducting the survey would visit the homes of people in the garb of taking names for the NPR and then use the data to create a database for the NRC. "We need to fight it [NPR]. When they visit your home for NPR and ask for your name, give them some different name, and your address as 7, Race Course Road [the PM's residence]. A lot of subversion will be needed," Ms. Roy said.

Protesters read out the Preamble of the Constitution and said that they would fight against any attempts to change it. Students also raised slogans against the BJP government, and said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah were issuing different statements on NCR and could not be trusted.

The gathering also condemned police brutality to suppress peaceful protests. The protest call was given by



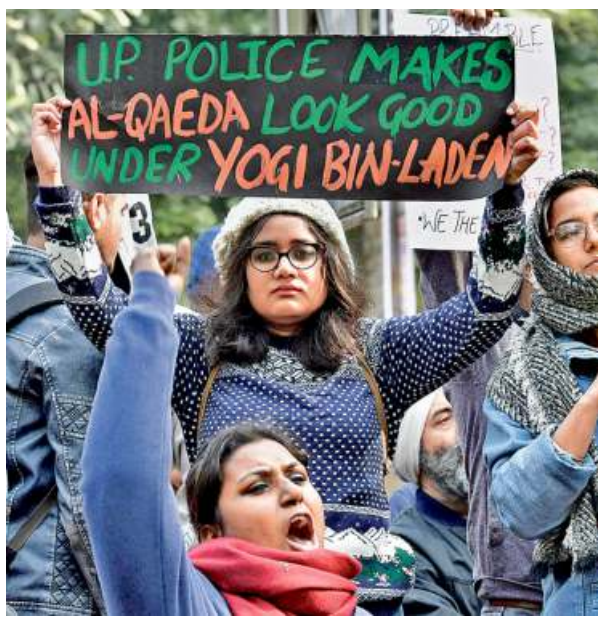
Arundhati Roy addressing students during a protest against the citizenship law on North Campus; students raising slogans on Wednesday.  
• SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

the Joint Committee For Action Against CAA/NRC.

The Union Cabinet had on Tuesday approved ₹3,941.35 crore for updating the NPR, which is a list of "usual residents" of the country. A "usual resident" is defined for the purposes of NPR as a person who has resided in a local area for the last six months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months or more.

The data for NPR was collected in 2010 along with the house-listing phase of Census of India 2011. The data was updated in 2015.

Ms. Roy also accused PM Modi of telling a "lie" at his



Ramlila Ground rally on Sunday that his government never said anything about the NRC process and that there are no detention camps in the country.

"He told the lie knowing that it will be caught but still he lied because he has the media with him, which will not question him," she added.

# We are helping detainees as it is our duty, say lawyers

Collective consciousness made them come out in large numbers

**SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI**

Many of the lawyers who had gathered at Daryaganj police station last week to help people detained during protests against the amended Citizenship Act, said they had gone as it was their duty as an officer of the court of law.

The lawyers stayed on the sidelines of protest sites and kept a lookout for any human rights violations. The names and numbers of the lawyers who were helping detainees pro bono (without charge), were shared on WhatsApp groups and other social media platform so that people could have easy access to them.

Advocate Mishika Singh said she and other lawyers had gone to the Daryaganj police station after the anti-CAA protests. "We were there to give the detainees legal counsel. Initially, the police were not allowing us to meet the detainees," said Ms. Mishika.

She and other lawyers had to move applications before the magistrate courts in Tis Hazari and Karkardooma so that they would be allowed to meet the detainees.

"Their families were calling us... We had to ensure that after their arrest, the detainees were taken for a medical check-up to see if they had suffered any injuries. We also had to ensure that no minors were put in jail," Ms. Mishika



Lawyers helping relatives of detainees by filling up relevant forms. • FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

**Any detained person has a right to a lawyer. Besides, I feel that the right to peaceful protest is sacrosanct**

**TARA  
Advocate**

Most of the lawyers, including Ms. Mishika, have come out in their individual capacity.

**50 lawyers offered help**  
"The detainees do not come from affluent social backgrounds... We are working on our own expenses," she said, adding that around 50 lawyers had come together to help the detainees.

Advocate Tara, who was helping detainees at the Tis Hazari Courts, said it was their "collective consciousness" that made them come out in large

numbers. "Any detained person has a right to a lawyer. Besides, I feel that the right to peaceful protest is sacrosanct. In numerous judgments, the Supreme Court has held the right to protest as a fundamental right under the Constitution," she added.

Ms. Tara, however, said that criminality should not be condoned, including violence during protests.

Advocate Paritosh Dhawan, who is also helping the detainees, said he was against the CAA and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) as they were against the Constitution. Mr. Dhawan said a few of his friends were detained during a protest last week, however, they were released before he arrived at the spot.

"I am available 24 hours for anyone seeking help," Mr. Dhawan said.

# Real-time monitoring of noise levels by March

The move comes after NGT pulled up pollution control board and asked it to set up monitoring stations

**NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI**

Twenty six ambient Noise Monitoring Stations (NMS) are expected to come up across the city by March. The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has floated a tender for setting up the stations, which will provide real-time data on noise levels.

The move comes after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) pulled up the DPCC in November and asked them

to set up the stations by January 31, 2020.

The tender, which will be opened on January 2, has a deadline of two months for the company who wins the bid to set up the 26 stations, as per the tender document.

"Last date of tender is January 2 and we will process both technical and financial bids within 10 days. The monitoring stations will come up in the next two months. Most of the stations will come up at existing air

quality monitoring stations of the DPCC," a DPCC official told *The Hindu*.

**Reserved ₹4 crore**  
"The Delhi government has reserved ₹4 crore for the project and we might increase it if needed," the official added.

Currently, noise levels exceed accepted levels at many spots in the city and the new network will provide more data to authorities to frame policies and take proper ac-

tion, said officials.

The tender is for supply, installation, commissioning, and operation and maintenance (O&M) for 10 years of real-time ambient Noise Monitoring Station network, which will comprise 26 noise monitoring stations and a central server. "Equipment/instruments, including central server under the 'Noise Project' shall be supplied, installed and commissioned within 60 days," read the tender document.

The central server will be at the DPCC office and it will have real-time data of all the stations. Real-time noise levels will be displayed on its website and displayed at selected spots across the city.

During the O&M period, in case of any NMS failure, penalty of ₹2,000 per day per will be levied on the operator - after a grace period of seven continuous non-working days. The grace period will be allowed only once in three months.

**STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI**

A 38-year-old man was killed in Chanakypuri after he was allegedly hit by a speeding luxury car being driven by an MBA student, the police said on Wednesday. The accused is out on bail.

Praveen Kumar lived with his family in Trilokpuri and worked as a gardener with the New Delhi Municipal Council, they added.

The incident was reported to the police around 7 a.m. on Tuesday.

The police said that Praveen was on his motorcycle when he was hit by a speeding luxury car from behind at the roundabout on Niti Marg.

The car was being driven by 23-year-old Kavish Teotia, an MBA student and a resident of Rajokri, a senior police officer said. The victim was wearing a helmet at the time of incident. Kavish was taken into custody from the accident spot, and the offending vehicle was also seized, the officer added.

**Released on bail**

A case was registered and Teotia was arrested. The accused was later released on bail, said the officer.

A medical examination of the accused revealed no trace of alcohol in his body, the police said, adding that further probe is under way.

# Snatcher nabbed while trying to flee

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI**

A 25-year-old man was nabbed while trying to escape along with his accomplices after snatching a mobile phone and cash from a person in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar, police said on Wednesday.

The accused was identified as Shankar, a resident of Ghaziabad, they said.

On Tuesday, around 5 p.m., the PCR staff spotted three men running in a suspicious manner. The police chased the suspects and apprehend one of the accused, said DCP (PCR) Sharat Kumar Sinha.

## Morning meeting



Pigeons assemble near a traffic signal on a cold Wednesday morning. • R.V. MOORTHY

## Body of man with stab injuries found

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI**

The body of a 27-year-old man with multiple stab injuries was found lying on a street in Dadri village of south-west Delhi on Wednesday morning, police said.

Bipin Yadav, the deceased, belonged to Begusarai in Bihar and was living in Matiala.

There were multiple stab wounds on Yadav's chest and back. A case of murder was registered and a probe is on, a police officer said.

**THE HINDU**

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# A chance to taste the street food of India

11th edition of the National Street Food Festival begins at JLN Stadium

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI**

The 11th edition of the National Street Food Festival began in the Capital on Wednesday. The event will see street vendors from 26 States cooking up over 500 regional delicacies.

The festival, which is being held at JLN Stadium, has been divided into four regions: North, South, East and West. The stalls have been categorised based on

origin so that foodies can better navigate through the plethora of options.

Ahead of the festival, the vendors were trained in food hygiene and safety standards. Sessions were also organised for them so that they could develop a better business sense.

"The participating vendors have undergone their training on safety and hygiene and every one of them received a kit containing

aprons, gloves etc. to ensure that food safety standards are maintained," said the organisers.

"With our main focus being the food the vendors are offering, we have taken steps to ensure that it is a wholesome experience by including fun-filled activities during the day, and music and dance performances later in the evening," they added.

Visitors will also be able to see street vendors showcas-

ing live preparations.

Some of the dishes on offer include Rajkot ki Tandoori Chai, Puducherry Peri-Peri Chicken, Assamese Bamboo Chicken, Raagi Idli, Raagi Baal, Mahua ke Phool ki Bhajia, Ayodhya ki Kulhad Dahi Jalebi, Kashmir se Tabak Maaz, Kerala ka Malabar Parotta, Naryaal Gravy, Pokka Vada, Karnataka ka Chicken 65 and Jabalpur Mava Jalebi.

The festival is on till December 29.



## Chilly ride



Farmers carrying their produce on a tractor-trolley in Maham Tehsil of Rohtak, Haryana, on a cold morning. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

## BJP accuses AAP of being 'anti-women'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Wednesday accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of being "anti-women" even as it sought to criticise it for its "negative politics".

Speaking to party workers and local residents at Kranti Chowk, the president of the party's national Mahila Morcha Vijaya Rathkar said, "The BJP has always worked towards the holistic development of women... such as Beti Bachao movement and Triple Talaq Bill... on the other hand AAP Ministers are involved in serious crimes (against women)."

## Court halves fine for convict as he is sole breadwinner of BPL family

Jail sentence also reduced in cheque bounce case

NIRNIMESH KUMAR  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court reduced time in prison and halved the ₹16-lakh fine imposed on a man convicted in a cheque bounce case as he is the sole breadwinner of a Below Poverty Line (BPL) family.

## Lack of evidence

A Magistrate court had convicted and awarded one-year jail sentence to the accused while dismissing his defence that he had issued a cheque for ₹8 lakh to the complainant as a security for an agreement to sell a piece of land to him.

The court dismissed the argument as the accused could not produce any evidence in support of it.

## Trial on since 2016

"If it is the defence of the accused that the cheque in question was handed over as security in respect of an agreement to sell (land), it was incumbent upon the accused to have led evidence... No such agreement was produced," the court said.

The Magistrate court too took a lenient view while considering his sentence and fine since he belonged to a BPL family, as per his ra-

tion card.

Additional Sessions Judge Neelofer Abida Perveen upheld the conviction but modified the sentence order: "Taking into consideration that the accused is facing trial since 2016 and that he is the sole breadwinner of his BPL family comprising three children, wife and elderly mother, he is ordered to be released on sentence already undergone."

In regards to the compensation, the Judge stated: "The compensation to the complainant is also reduced to the cheque amount i.e. ₹8 lakh."

## Delhi's first transit-oriented hub to come up in Karkardooma

Project to be kicked off today; aims to make urban development sustainable

DAMINI NATH  
SHINJINI GHOSH  
NEW DELHI

With goals to reduce the need to commute for work or recreation, and making urban development more sustainable, work on the Capital's first transit-oriented development (TOD) – the east Delhi hub at Karkardooma – will be kicked off on Thursday.

The foundation stone for the first project under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry and Delhi Development Authority's TOD policy will be laid by Home Minister Amit Shah, the Ministry said on Wednesday.

## To be completed by 2023

The integrated development of the hub, which will bring together metro stations, residences and workplaces; and recreational spaces such as museums, is expected to be completed by 2023, said Dikshu C. Kukreja, managing principal of CP Kukreja Architects, which is designing the 60-acre site.

"The way we have been talking about our cities, the way they have been ill-planned or unplanned, will need to change as sustainability becomes more important. A new paradigm will be imperative," he said, adding that



An artist's impression of what the hub will look like.

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the east Delhi hub would serve as a "smart city" in itself. The project will be the first step towards that new paradigm for urban planning, where people will not have to travel much for work or recreation, he said.

The location has two metro stations and is near a railway station and an inter-State bus terminal. One of the challenges will be to ensure that the hub does not end up becoming an energy guzzler, for which infrastructure like solar power and water recycling will be incorporated, he said.

In September this year, the land-owning agency had approved the much-awaited TOD policy, which consists of a variety of "high-density, mixed-use, mixed-income buildings within a short dis-

tance of a rapid public transport network".

## Public transport

Senior DDA officials connected to the project said that the TOD policy primarily aims to encourage the use of public transport.

"The policy mandates that residential, commercial, civic or institutional establishments have to be in close proximity to allow locals to access facilities like plazas and shared parks. This would also enable people to walk, cycle and use public transportation over personal modes of transport," the official said.

According to the TOD policy for Delhi, development along or around transit corridors can have higher floor area ratio (FAR) to accommo-

The east Delhi hub would serve as a smart city in itself, the project will be the first step towards a shift in urban planning, where people will not have to travel much for work or recreation

DIKSHU C. KUKREJA  
Managing principal of CP Kukreja Architects, which is designing the 60-acre site

date more residential, office and recreational spaces in walking or cycling distance of the transit stations.

The official added, "The TOD policy would open up development opportunity to the private sector to bring in investment into city building, its growth and revenue also help cross-subsidise social amenities, affordable housing and public transport using a variety of possible financial development models."

The DDA on December 19, also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Railways for development and redevelopment of the Anand Vihar station. Officials said that the TOD policy to be kicked off in Karkardooma will also be linked to the Anand Vihar station.

## Plea in NGT flags issue with Noida rainwater harvesters

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Following a plea alleging that rainwater harvesting systems in Noida were not functioning scientifically and were leading to contamination of groundwater, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has formed a committee to

look into the matter and file a report within a month.

## Joint panel constituted

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel constituted a joint committee and directed it to furnish a factual and action taken report.

The panel will comprise officials from the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB), Central Pollution Control Board, District Magistrate of Gautam Buddh Nagar, Noida Authority and the Central Ground Water Authority. The UPPCB will be the nodal agency.

The petition, moved by Mahesh Chandra Saxena, states: "Rainwater harvesting systems in Noida are not scientific, resulting in contamination of groundwater... further, potable water is being used for horticulture purposes even though treated water is available."



**Timings**  
**DELHI**

THURSDAY, DEC. 26  
RISE 07:12 SET 17:32  
RISE 07:07 SET 17:43

FRIDAY, DEC. 27  
RISE 07:12 SET 17:32  
RISE 08:03 SET 18:37

SATURDAY, DEC. 28  
RISE 07:13 SET 17:33  
RISE 08:54 SET 19:34

**Delhi Weather**

	max	min
Delhi City	13	06
Safdarjang	13	06
Palam	11	05

**Delhi Palam Today**  
14°C Morning will remain chilly with dense fog. Cold winds are likely to blow during afternoon with a partly cloudy sky.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
14°C A cold morning with moderate fog is being forecast. Wind chill will prevail during the day. Sky remains sunny.

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**IN BRIEF**

**'5 antique idols stolen'**  
BANDA/ U.P.  
Five 'ashthadhatu' idols worth crores were stolen from a 500-year-old temple in a village in Mahoba district, police said. ■ PTI

# JJP leader resigns from party post, accuses Dushyant of neglecting MLAs

Ram Kumar Gautam expresses resentment over Deputy CM holding on to 11 portfolios

**ASHOK KUMAR**  
GURUGRAM

Indicating that all was not well within the Jannayak Janta Party, the alliance partner of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Haryana, the party's national vice-president and Narnaund MLA Ram Kumar Gautam on Wednesday announced his resignation from the post, accusing Dushyant Chautala, the Deputy Chief Minister, of holding "eleven portfolios by himself and not thinking about the party MLAs".

Holding a press meet, Mr. Gautam said that Mr. Chautala was holding eleven portfolios and enjoying the "feast" all by himself without thinking about his nine other MLAs. He added that Mr. Chautala was made Deputy Chief Minister because of his MLAs, but now they were left grumbling and running around to get their works done. He said that there was



JJP national vice-president Ram Kumar Gautam said Dushyant Chautala is enjoying the 'feast' all by himself without thinking about the party MLAs. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

resentment among all the MLAs.

Mr. Gautam, who defeated Haryana Finance Minister Capt. Abhimanyu in the recently held Assembly elections, said the people and the region would have been benefited had he been made a Minister. He added that the Chautalas too would have made a bigger leap had he been elevated as a Minister, but "now the game was all over". He also accused the Chautalas of not allowing

anyone from their community to grow politically taller than them.

In an obvious reference to the post-poll alliance between the BJP and the JJP, Mr. Gautam said he was pained to know that a deal was struck at the Ambience Mall. "It would have been better, had they done it before the elections. Why trouble so many people. It pains me the most," said Mr. Gautam, adding that not being a Minister did not matter much to him.

He maintained that he was still a member of the party. "The law is such that I need to quit as MLA if I quit the party. Since people have voted for me, I want to serve them. Things have not come to a pass where I need to quit the party. I am one of its founders," said Mr. Gautam.

JJP spokesperson Deep Kamal Saharan said the party was yet to receive the formal resignation of Mr. Gautam. He denied the allegations of any agreement having been reached in the Ambience Mall saying that it was all hearsay and Mr. Chautala had never been to the shopping mall post the election result.

Besides, Mr. Chautala, JJP Uklana MLA Anoop Dhanak is an MoS in the Council of Ministers. The party has a quota for three Ministers in all and one more MLA could be inducted during the next expansion.

# Oppn. turns up the heat after Punjab Governor seeks clarifications on Bill

SAD demands govt. shelve bid to amend disqualification law

**VIKAS VASUDEVA**  
CHANDIGARH

With Punjab Governor V.P. Singh Badnore seeking from the State government certain clarifications on the Punjab State Legislature (Prevention of Disqualification) Amendment Bill, 2019 – relating to conflict of interest in the case of appointment of six MLAs as advisers to the Chief Minister – the politics surrounding the issue has started gaining momentum as the Opposition has turned up the heat against the ruling Congress government, demanding it to withdraw the Bill.

The Bill was sent to the Governor for his approval after it was passed during the two-day special session of the State Assembly in November. Mr. Badnore has asked for clarifications on certain provisions of the Bill and related matters, a government spokesperson said on Wednesday, dismissing

reports that the Bill has been returned by the Governor.

The Minister-officers concerned had been directed to clarify the issues raised by the Governor so that a suitable response could be shared with the latter at the earliest, to pave the way for inclusion of MLAs in the exempted category covered under conflict of interest provision of the Prevention of Disqualification legislation. "The Governor's letter had been forwarded to the Chief Minister's Office and the necessary response would be submitted soon," the spokesperson added.

The Congress government had in September this year appointed four MLAs as advisers (political), while Kuljeet Singh Nagra of Fatehgarh Sahib, was appointed adviser (planning), in the Cabinet rank and status. Tarsem Singh DC of Attari was designated adviser (planning) with the rank of Minister of State.

The Opposition, meanwhile has hit out hard at the Congress government, asking it to immediately withdraw the Bill.

Shiromani Akali Dal leader and former Minister Janmeja Singh Sekhon said: "The Governor has posed thirteen queries to the government clearly indicating that the Bill does not stand Constitutional scrutiny. It would be better for the Congress government to withdraw the Bill and apologise to Punjabis for riding roughshod with the Constitution by acting against the 91st amendment which clearly states that the strength of the Ministry cannot be more than 15% of the strength of the members of the Vidhan Sabha."

He added that the nature of queries indicated that the Governor was prima facie not satisfied with the amendments.

## Freezing point



A Kashmiri boatman breaks the ice of a partially frozen section of the Dal Lake during a cold Wednesday morning in Srinagar. The city recorded the coldest night of the season on Tuesday as the minimum temperature settled at -4 degrees Celsius, leading to freezing of water supply lines at several places. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

# Major offensive planned against organised mafias in Rajasthan

Special teams will be formed at district level to deal with it

**MOHAMMED IQBAL**  
JAIPUR

A major offensive against mafias involved in organised crimes has been planned in Rajasthan to control illegal acts of human trafficking, adulteration, spurious medicine supply, land encroachments and cattle theft. The State police will appoint special teams at the district level to deal with these offences.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has asked the police to strengthen the Special Operations Group (SOG) and CID-CB in order to tighten the noose around organised mafias. At a high-level meeting of the Home Department and police officers here on Tuesday, he said officials of special teams, to be headed by police inspectors, should be given training separately. Mr. Gehlot said the State



Ashok Gehlot

government would not tolerate any kind of carelessness in the control of organised crimes. The police officers present at the meeting pointed out that while the SOG units were being formed in all the districts, the recent establishment of special fraud investigation and cyber crime investigation units in SOG had facilitated probe into these offences.

Director General of Police Bhubendra Yadav said gangs involved in blackmailing through social media platforms and blackmailing by lodging fake cases were also active in the State.

**'Formulate action plan'**  
Mr. Gehlot directed the DGP to hold meetings and video-conferencing with the Additional Directors General and Inspectors General of Police in charge of various ranges as well as the Superintendents of Police in the districts to formulate an action plan and ensure an effective action against criminals.

"If the involvement of any police officer or official of any government department in the crime comes to light, strict action should be taken against him," Mr. Gehlot said.

# BSP: probe deaths during anti-CAA stir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LUCKNOW

BSP supremo Mayawati on Wednesday asked the Uttar Pradesh government to conduct a thorough probe into the deaths during anti-citizenship law protests and help the innocent victims.

"The maximum number of deaths during CAA/NRC protests were in U.P. The State government should conduct a probe into these deaths accurately and come forward to help the [families of] innocent ones," Mayawati said in a tweet in Hindi.

Mayawati had on Tuesday said the Centre should allay concerns of Muslims over the CAA and the proposed nationwide National Register of Citizens.

"...it will be better if the Centre allays all apprehensions of Muslims on CAA/NRC to their satisfaction," she had said.

# Madhya Pradesh's cleanliness drive spells trouble for officials

Administration to 'name and shame' erring officials

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**  
GWALIOR

The administration here in Madhya Pradesh, which has some of the cleanest cities like Indore, has taken a strict stand and will "name and shame" officials found not up to their mark in maintaining cleanliness in their zone.

Many districts have been vying for better position in the cleanliness ranking. In Gwalior, the responsibility of the cleanliness drive has been entrusted to other officials besides the Municipal Corporation.

It has also been decided that notices will be pasted outside the homes of officials who do not discharge their responsibilities properly. The entire administration has been engaged to get Gwalior a better spot on the 'swachhata' table.

When District Magistrate Anurag Chaudhary reviewed the progress made, then it came to light that many officials were not taking interest in the campaign.

According to official information, Mr. Chaudhary while reviewing cleanliness work at the Inter-Departmental Coordination Committee meeting on Tuesday said that "monitoring of cleanliness work is everyone's responsibility".

"District officers of all the departments are assigned with regular area visits. They have to submit their report regularly. Officers who are not inspecting their zone will face penalty," he said.

# Cong. misleading people on CAA, claims Chouhan

'Why didn't it say a word in Parliament?'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday hit out at Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party's former president Rahul Gandhi on the issues of the new Citizenship law, National Register of Citizens and National Population Register, accusing them of "misleading the people" of the country.

Mr. Chouhan said that the Congress and other Opposition parties were misinforming and misleading the people

of the country to spread hate, violence and unrest in the country.

"The Act was passed in Parliament with due process and diligence after a debate. Sonia Gandhi or Rahul Gandhi did not participate in the debate and never said a word when this Act was being discussed in Parliament. While Ms. Sonia along with her family is leading protests against CAA at Rajghat, why was she and Rahul silent about this when it was being discussed in Parliament," asked Mr. Chouhan.

# Railways starts vistadome train on Kalka-Shimla route

It has a seating capacity of over 100; tourists can experience snow and rain through glass-enclosed coaches

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
CHANDIGARH

The Railways on Wednesday started a seven-coach glass-enclosed vistadome train on the heritage Kalka-Shimla route.

The red-coloured train, which was decorated with balloons, chugged off from the Kalka railway station in Haryana around 7 a.m., a railway official at the station said.

The 'Him Darshan' train has a seating capacity of over 100 passengers and the bookings are full over the next few days in view of the peak tourist season and New Year being round the



The Him Darshan Express chugging off on the Shimla-Kalka Heritage route on Wednesday. Bookings are full over the next few days in view of the peak tourist season. ■ PTI

corner, the official said.

Earlier this year, the Railways had put only one see-through vistadome

coach on the narrow-gauge route, but in view of the huge response, now the entire train has such

coaches, he said.

Along the route, one of the few heritage railways in the world, tourists headed to

Shimla will be able to experience snow and rain in these glass-enclosed coaches.

"It feels so nice to enjoy the nature with transparent roofs as it gives a panoramic view. We will also return in a few days. Hope we get a chance to witness snowfall while we are on this train," a family said after boarding the train.

The vistadome coaches were tastefully decorated with plush interiors and tourists will also get a chance to feel close to the nature on the 95.5 km route with big glass windows in the air-conditioned train.



## Hindu Jagran Manch worker murdered in Nadia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KALYANI (WEST BENGAL)

The body of a 27-year-old man, who his family claimed was a worker of the Hindu Jagran Manch, with injuries on his head and neck was found a little distance away from his home, the police said on Wednesday.

The man's body and his motorcycle were found at the spot around 11 p.m. on Tuesday at Kalyani in West Bengal's Nadia district, the police said.

The man had left his home in a hurry after receiving a phone call. Later, his family was informed that his body was lying

near the local primary school. They rushed to the spot and found him dead, said the police.

### 'Pre-planned murder'

The victim's elder brother alleged that the murder was pre-planned.

He said the victim was a

worker of the Hindu Jagran Manch and had been asked by local Trinamool Congress workers to join their party. When he had refused to comply, he was murdered, the brother alleged.

The police said an investigation into the death has been launched.

## Dhankhar 'hurt' as State govt. skips Vajpayee portrait event

Governor says CM didn't turn up despite invite being sent by Raj Bhavan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday said he is "hurt" as no senior State government representative attended the unveiling of a portrait of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 95th birth anniversary at the Raj Bhavan here.

The idea to unveil a three-dimensional portrait of the late PM was conceived on November 27 and an invitation for the programme was sent to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on that day, Mr. Dhankhar told reporters here.

"The CM is the executive head and I have not said she has to unveil [the portrait]. She may have many other engagements and I have the highest respect for her. My grievance is not that she could not come, but lack of representation by the government and bureaucracy has hurt me," the Governor said.

Asserting that there must be respect for people who hold con-



West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar . ■FILE PHOTO

Mamata pays tribute to ex-PM

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday paid tribute to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary. The Trinamool Congress chief, who shared a cordial relationship with the late BJP leader, said Vajpayee was missed by everybody "a lot". "Tribute to Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji on his birth anniversary. He was a statesman who rose above partisan politics for the country's good," Ms. Banerjee wrote on Twitter. PTI

stitutional positions, Mr. Dhankhar, who has had several face-offs with the Trinamool Congress government, said: "Unfortunately there is a very disturbing trend ... There seems to be no representation from the State ... This should not happen to a person who served the country with such distinction." Vajpayee, he said, was known for his eloquence and had no enemies in the political parties. "I could have contacted anyone

in the country to unveil the portrait of Vajpayeeji and you [media] know it more than I do that anyone will be happy and gratified to do this as it will be an honour. I thought the Hon'ble CM was eminently most suitable to do the act at the Raj Bhavan," he said.

"As the Constitutional head, I cannot sit tight if someone is not responding. I would continue discharge my duty and try to connect with her," he said.

## Anti-CAA stir brings Adivasis into focus

Sonowal meets leaders of 2 students' unions, promises to fulfil demands

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

The anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Bill protests have brought demands of the Adivasis or tea tribes in Assam to the forefront.

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal met the leaders of two influential Adivasi students' unions – the All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam and the All Santhal Students' Union – on Tuesday evening to assure them that the BJP-led ruling alliance in the State would take steps to fulfil their demands.

The demands include providing land deeds for settlement of landless Adivasis, appointment of Adivasi language teachers in the State's higher secondary schools and taking in more students of the

community for free UPSC, medical and engineering coaching classes.

### Land deeds

"Submit a revenue circle-wise list of eligible beneficiaries for providing land pattas [deeds] to the tea community," Mr. Sonowal told the students, adding that steps will be taken for granting Scheduled Tribe status to the community after the submission of a report by a group of Ministers.

The Adivasis, comprising 106 sub-groups, are the largest of the six communities demanding the ST status. The others are Chutiya, Koch-Rajbongshi, Moran, Matak, and Tai-Ahom.

The Adivasis comprise 18% of Assam's 3.1 crore population and

are considered a major vote bank because of their alleged tendency to back political parties or individual candidates en masse. They are said to be the determining factor in at least 30 to 35 of the State's 126 Assembly seats.

Assam's Devakanta Barooah, the then Congress president during the Emergency era, had infamously said that his party would continue to rule the State on the strength of the "Ali-Kuli" voters. Ali represents the State's 34% Muslims, while Kuli means the "tea tribe". The Congress and the All India United Democratic Front led by perfume baron Badruddin Ajmal have shared the Muslim votes, the Adivasi votes began swinging in favour of the BJP since the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.



Christmas celebrations at a church in Baliguda in Kandhamal district of Odisha. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Kandhamal rises above violent past on Xmas

Celebration held amid peace and harmony

SIB KUMAR DAS  
BERHAMPUR

Christmas was joyously celebrated in the communally sensitive Kandhamal district of Odisha on Wednesday, a sign that peace and harmony has returned to the area.

Forgetting the riots in 2007 and 2008, residents of Kandhamal gathered in churches for midnight mass on Tuesday and for prayers on Wednesday.

### High security

As a precautionary measure, security had been stepped up across the district. According to sources, apart from the regular police force posted in the district, additional 25 platoons of armed police force had been deployed in Kandhamal since the past few days. Mobile parties, static and striking forces of police were busy maintaining law and order. Patrolling had been intensified in areas with history of communal tension as well as Maoist-prone regions. All churches and prayer houses were under heavy security cover.

According to Kandhamal Superintendent of Police Prateek Singh, ahead of

Christmas, peace committee meetings had been held in all police station areas. Till Wednesday evening, no untoward incident had been reported from any part of the district.

Representative of All India Christian Council for Kandhamal, Arup Jena, who also happens to be the president of Kandhamal district United Citizens' Forum, said, "We feel a majority of inhabitants of Kandhamal have realised the futility of animosity and violence. Hence we are returning to times of peace and harmony." At most places in the district, people from all communities got together to enjoy Christmas festivities.

Out of around 8,40,000 population of Kandhamal district, around 1,30,000 are Christians.

According to Mr. Jena, there are around 1,000 churches and prayer centres in Kandhamal. Communal riots had erupted in the district during Christmas in 2007. The riots happened again the next year following the assassination of senior VHP leader Swami Lakshmananda Saraswati on August 23, 2008.



# After concession of up to ₹2 lakh, complete farm loan waiver is coming soon, promises Uddhav

CM shares stage with Congress, NCP leaders; showers praises on Sharad Pawar; to set up panel of agricultural scientists

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government will stand by the farmers through thick and thin, Chief Minister and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray declared on Wednesday, reiterating his government's commitment to total farm loan waiver. He said his government was actively working towards this and could be rolled out in the coming days.

"We have already announced an immediate waiver of loans totalling ₹2 lakh per farmer as immediate relief to cultivators. While we are certainly going to do this, we are also taking steps to ensure that their entire crop loan [above ₹2 lakh] is waived," Mr. Thackeray said in his address at the 43rd Annual General Meeting of the Vasantdada Sugar Institute (VSI), whose chairman is Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar.

The Chief Minister shared the dais with Mr. Pawar and other politicians, sugar barons and cooperative sector heavyweights across the political spectrum including senior NCP leaders Jayant Patil and Ajit Pawar, Balasaheb Thorat of the Congress, NCP 'rebel' and former Deputy Chief Minister Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil, and Harshavardhan Patil of BJP among others.

"The cooperative sector and politics of Maharashtra are inseparable. This sector has bequeathed several tall leaders to the State. The rural



Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray with (from left) NCP leader Ajit Pawar, State Congress president Balasaheb Thorat, Cabinet Minister Jayant Patil, and NCP chief Sharad Pawar at the Vasantdada Sugar Institute in Pune on Wednesday. ■ JIGNESH MISTRY

economy is dependent on this sector. As a result, it is incumbent upon us to ensure the well-being of the farmer, who is the fulcrum of this sector," Mr. Thackeray said.

Taking potshots at his estranged ally, the BJP, Mr. Thackeray said that in the earlier government, the Sena was figuratively only "half a component".

## Changed situation

"What I mean by this is that we did not have the complete freedom to take decisions and follow them up. But that has changed now. [NCP chief] Sharad Pawar has taught us not only to raise farm productivity but also to form a government despite having lesser number of MLAs," said Mr. Thackeray adding that the BJP should

not boast of having emerged as the single largest party after the Assembly polls.

Praising Mr. Pawar's vision behind setting up the VSI, Mr. Thackeray announced his government's intention of establishing another branch of the institute in the Marathwada region.

"I am proud that such a concern [VSI] which delves into the technical problems of agriculture and disseminates its researches in my State...so, their work, which has contributed so much to well-being of farmers while enhancing knowledge about best agricultural practices, must expand across the State," Mr. Thackeray said.

Noting the dire economic conditions in the country, the Chief Minister said even the former Chief Economic

Adviser (CEA) Arvind Subramanian had spoken of the Indian economy heading towards an "intensive care unit".

"At a time when we are in such economic doldrums, we have to ensure security for farmers' livelihoods. While a number of problems all the cooperative sector today, we will set a committee comprising of technical experts and agricultural scientists to come with suggestions and most importantly, act upon them to resolve problems in this sector," Mr. Thackeray said.

Indicating that the ideologically opposed coalition of the Sena and the Congress-NCP was working in harmony, the Chief Minister said that he deferred to the knowledge and experience of Mr.

Pawar and other leaders in the government on issues pertaining to agriculture and revenue.

"We have a wealth of experience on these issues, be it Mr. Pawar's knowledge or the experience of Ajit Pawar, Jayant Patil and Balasaheb Thorat," Mr. Thackeray said.

This is the first time that the Chief Minister addressed the VSI meet since becoming Chief Minister. While Maharashtra's cooperative sector has been overwhelmingly dominated by politicians from the NCP and the Congress, the BJP has only managed to secure a marginal toehold in recent times, mainly by acquiring NCP and Congress leaders who defected to their side.

In contrast, the Shiv Sena has had a minimal presence in sugar cooperatives.

A sense of this awareness was reflected in Mr. Thackeray's speech, in which the Sena chief continually deferred to the expertise of Mr. Pawar.

Earlier, eyebrows were raised when senior NCP Ajit Pawar changed his seating arrangement to be close to his *bete noire* ex-Congressman turned BJP leader Harshavardhan Patil, who had quit the Congress ahead of the Assembly polls.

A bitter Mr. Patil, a former Minister in the Congress-NCP government, had exited the Congress ahead of the Assembly polls while openly blaming the Pawar clan for their 'duplicity' in not leaving the Indapur Assembly seat for him.

Just before the Lok Sabha polls in May this year, Mr. Ajit Pawar had personally conferred with Mr. Patil to ensure that he campaigned for his cousin, Supriya Sule's win in the Baramati Lok Sabha constituency. (of which Indapur is a part).

## Harshavardhan on stage

Mr. Ajit Pawar was seen amicably chatting with Mr. Patil prior to the VSI meet.

"There was no political talk...we discussed issues pertaining to agriculture," Mr. Patil said later.

Similarly, former NCP stalwart Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil, whose relations with the Pawar clan soured after a bitter tiff over ticket allocation during the Lok Sabha polls, was seen in conversation with Mr. Sharad Pawar ahead of the event.

"I have not gone anywhere...I am still with the NCP and Sharad Pawar. I had even met him a number of times after the Lok Sabha polls," was Mr. Mohite-Patil's cryptic remark when asked whether he had indeed gone over to the BJP.

Mr. Mohite-Patil's son Ranjitsinh Mohite-Patil joined the BJP after the NCP brass allegedly refused the Mohite-Patils' a ticket for the Madha Lok Sabha seat in Solapur. The elder Mohite-Patil had subsequently gone out to ensure the BJP's victory in Madha and had shared the dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the latter's rally in Solapur ahead of the general elections.



Anna Hazare with Anusaya Mapari, one of the residents of Ralegansiddhi on Wednesday, the sixth day of his vow of silence to condemn the string of crimes against women across the country. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## 'Nothing wrong with Anna Hazare's health'

Veteran activist's agitation enters Day 6

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

Veteran activist Anna Hazare's *maun-vrat* to protest the Centre's tardy delivery of justice in atrocities against women entered its sixth day on Wednesday as the anti-graft crusader's office quashed rumours about Mr. Hazare's allegedly deteriorating health.

"For the past two days, social media has been full of rumours regarding Anna's health, prompting a string of inquiries from his well-wishers. We want to assure them that his [Mr. Hazare's] condition is absolutely fine. There is nothing wrong with his health and consequently, no cause for alarm. We urge people not to believe these rumours...Such speculation is deliberately being spread by anti-social elements and individuals ill-disposed towards Anna," read a statement issued by his office.

Mr. Hazare's office further said that several social activists as well as students were regularly meeting the

veteran activist to express their solidarity in his protest.

"However, as he has taken a vow of silence, he communicates with them in writing," said the statement.

The 82-year-old anti-graft activist is on a 'silent agitation' since December 20 at the Yadavbaba Temple in Ralegan Siddhi village (in Ahmednagar district) to condemn the string of recent crimes against women in the country and protest the Centre's failure in delay in capital punishment to those convicted in the Nirbhaya gang rape case.

However, even after six days, the Modi government has yet to take official notice of Mr. Hazare's agitation despite the activist warning the Centre of going on yet another hunger strike if it did not do so.

Mr. Hazare had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 9 announcing his intent to agitate and citing reasons for his latest protest.

## Backstage theatre



Before the show: School children, aged less than 14 years, getting ready for a Bal-Dashavatar competition at Kendrashala Pat Varchawada at Kudal to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the school. This competition is being held for the first time in Sindhudurg district to encourage students to develop an interest in traditional theatre. ■ RAJENDRA GAWANKAR

## Two labourers held for rape of 12-year-old

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

Two labourers allegedly raped a 12-year-old girl in a village in South Goa, the police said on Wednesday.

The accused, who hail from Bihar, were arrested on Tuesday evening, hours after they committed the alleged crime in the village under Quepem taluka, an official said.

Quepem police inspector Santosh Desai said the duo, working as casual labourers in South Goa, were taken into custody after a complaint by the victim's father.

He said the accused raped the girl when she was sleeping in her house.

One of the accused is 18 years old, while his accomplice was identified as Jitendra Chowdhury (20).

## 21-year-old woman concocts own kidnapping story

Did not want family to know she had gone out with boyfriend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NAGPUR

A young woman from Nagpur concocted a story about her own abduction to hide the fact from her family that she had gone out with her boyfriend, the police said on Wednesday.

Sunil Gangurde, inspector with the Gittikhadan Police Station, said the 21-year-old woman along with her parents filed a kidnapping complaint at 8 p.m. on Monday.

The parents alleged that four men forced their daughter into a four-wheeler while she was on way to college, and took her to a secluded place, from where she somehow managed to

escape, he said, quoting from the complaint.

Soon after, the police swung into action and took the woman to the spot from where she was ostensibly taken. Nagpur Crime Branch team also joined the probe and rushed to the spot.

However, the police grew suspicious after finding contradiction in her statements.

The police then checked CCTV footage from near her college and noticed the woman, who is a B.A. second year student, going with a young man on a motorcycle, Mr. Gangurde said.

The police confronted the woman with the evidence in front of her family after which she confessed to cook-

ing up the kidnapping story, he said.

After attending classes, she came out of college and left with her boyfriend for Waki, a place on the outskirts of Nagpur city, police said.

Her boyfriend later dropped her near her house in the Seminary Hill area, they said.

Realising she would be scolded by family members for going out without informing them, the girl came up with the fake kidnapping story, the police said.

She thought the matter would end with the parents believing her story. However, her parents approached the police.

## Lokayukta gets 23,718 complaints in 5 years, recommends action in 364

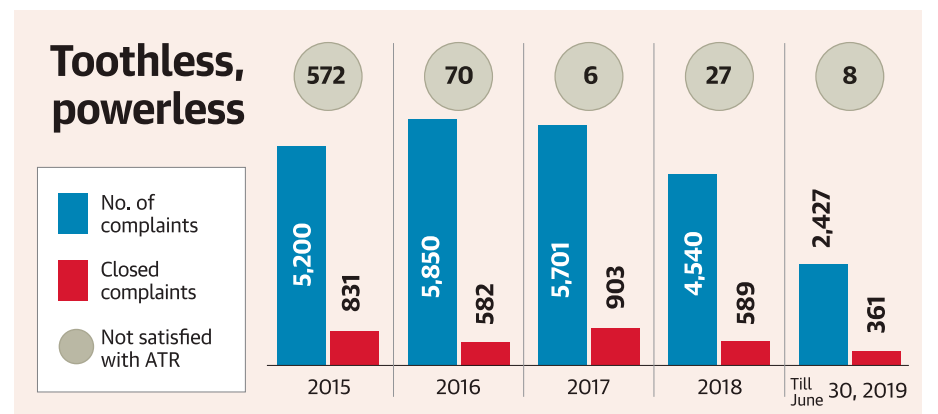
'No record of what happens to the special report, how many corrupt officers suspended'

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Lokayukta received 23,718 complaints between January 1, 2015 and June 30, 2019 of which it submitted report to the competent authority recommending action in just 364 cases.

Social activist Jeetendra Ghadge had sought to know through the Right to Information Act details on the number of cases brought in front of the Lokayukta since January 2015. As per the reply received by him, the number of action taken reports sent by respective departments, in response to reports submitted by Lokayukta to competent authority recommending action, stands at 226 only.

"Although the new Lokpal and Lokayukta Act 2013 was passed years ago, the state of affairs with the Maharashtra Lokayukta remains the same. As the information



obtained under the Right to Information Act, people are approaching Lokayukta hoping that their complaints will be addressed. But there has hardly been any action as the present set-up has no power at all," said Mr. Ghadge.

During this period the Lokayukta has closed 3,266 complaints out of 23,718 without any action.

In case the Lokayukta is

not satisfied with the action, Section 12(5) of the Lokayukta Act has the provision to send special reports to the government to express dissatisfaction with the action taken by the government after Lokayukta's orders.

The total number of such reports stands at 683, of which 572 are from 2015 alone. The figures for such reports in 2016 was 70, for 2017 (six) and in 2018 (27).

"There is no record about what happens to the special report or how many corrupt officers have been suspended so far. The whole process, and the information indicates that the current Lokayukta is toothless and successive governments have failed to implement the new act," he said, adding that the Lokayukta has no power except to send such reports.

## Car rams auto, four of family among five killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AURANGABAD

Five persons, including four of a family, died after a car collided with an autorickshaw at Shekta near Aurangabad on Wednesday, the police said.

While one of the deceased is a nine-year-old boy, a six-month-old child is critically injured, a police official said. The driver of the car, which was heading towards Akola, lost control and rammed into the autorickshaw that was going to Aurangabad. The mishap occurred around 10 a.m., he said.

Dinesh Ramlal Jadhav (32), his wife Renuka, Vandana Jadhav (27) and her son Soham (9) – all residents of Jalna district, died.

## CAA a ray of hope, says Sindhi migrant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AURANGABAD

A member of the Sindhi community who migrated from Pakistan in the 1990s and settled down in Aurangabad is hopeful that he and others like him would get Indian citizenship soon with the passage of the new amendment. The controversial Citizen-

ship (Amendment) Act provides for grant of citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhists and Christians who migrated from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh before 2015 due to persecution.

"We are expecting grant of citizenship with less paperwork now," said Vikram Tal-

reja, who has been living here for nearly three decades.

He was speaking after taking part in a procession in support of the CAA.

"We arrived here from Pakistan in 1991, but we are still waiting for citizenship. The amended Act has given us a ray of hope," he said.



## IN BRIEF



## Jagan inaugurates sports academy in Kadapa

**KADAPA**  
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has indicated the government's resolve to transform his constituency, Pulivendula, into an educational and sports hub. On the concluding day of his three-day tour of the district on Wednesday, Mr. Reddy inaugurated a sports academy at Dhyana Chand playground on Government Junior College campus and an outdoor gymnasium. The academy will impart training to aspirants in hockey and wrestling.

## 2 Indian students killed in Dubai road accident

**DUBAI**  
Two Indian students were killed in a road accident in Dubai on Wednesday, according to media reports. Rohit Krishnakumar, 19, and Sharat Kumar, 21, both from Kerala, were returning from a Christmas party when they met with the accident, *The Khaleej Times* reported. Both died on the spot, the paper said. While Mr. Krishnakumar was pursuing higher studies in the U.K., Mr. Sharat Kumar was studying in the U.S., the report said. They were spending their university break in Dubai with family.

## Wild elephant killed after being hit by train

**PALAKKAD**  
A wild elephant, which was crossing a railway track here, was killed after being hit by a train, railway sources said on Wednesday. The incident occurred around 10.30 p.m. on Tuesday, they said. However, train services were not disrupted. **PTI**

## Yediyurappa does a U-turn on solatium

'Compensation will not be paid until probe into Mangaluru incident proves 2 deceased are innocent'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
MANGALURU/MOODIBIDI

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday backtracked on his promise that the kin of the two persons killed in police firing in Mangaluru on December 19 would be paid a compensation of ₹10 lakh each.

Speaking to presspersons in Mangaluru, he said compensation could not be paid until the investigation into the violent incidents proved that the two were innocent. The government had announced a CID as well as magisterial inquiry into the violence.

Mr. Yediyurappa on Sunday announced an immediate compensation of ₹10 lakh each to the kin of the two killed in police firing — Nausin, 23, and Jalil Kudroli,



**Violent protest:** People hurling stones at the police during a demonstration against the CAA in Mangaluru on December 19. **•AFP**

49. They were killed in the course of a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens.

Defending his U-turn on paying compensation, the Chief Minister argued that the First Information Report (FIR) had named the two dead as the "accused" and there were allegations of

their possible involvement. "Everyone has felt that at this point it is not proper to give compensation," he said, adding that it would be a "an unpardonable crime" to

compensate people who vandalised public property.

While the family and eye-witnesses claimed that the two killed were not involved in the agitation and were bystanders, the police have named them in the FIR. Reacting to the government's changed stand, the families of the two victims said they were more keen on justice rather than monetary compensation from the government.

## Siddaramaiah's tweet

In a tweet, former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the reversal of the announcement was testimony to an elected government turning "inhuman, cruel and communal." It shows that the government had "drawn conclusions even before the investigation is over."

## KCR urged to stay work on update of NPR

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD

The United Muslim Action Committee has urged the Telangana government to stay any work taken up on the update of the National Population Register (NPR) after holding consultations with the Kerala government and experts.

The government should take steps to ensure that citizens in the State were protected from "arbitrary and discriminatory" measures such as National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC). Measures should be initiated to ensure that conduct of public services was in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and not contrary to them," the committee said.

A delegation of the com-



**Seeking assurance:** MIM president Asaduddin Owaisi speaking to the media in Hyderabad on Wednesday. **•NAGARA GOPAL**

mittee headed by MIM president and MP Asaduddin Owaisi called on Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao to represent their objections to the exercise launched by the Central government with regard to the Citizenship

(Amendment) Act (CAA), NPR and NRIC. During the meeting, the delegation expressed concern that the CAA had incorporated a religious qualification for the first time and, when seen in the light of the NRC, it would

create the possibility of an avoidable humanitarian disaster.

The delegation said the link between the NPR and NRIC should be clearly understood as the exercise would cause disproportionate hardship to the most marginalised communities, besides imposing unnecessary and excessive burden on government employees and civil servants. The Constitution placed the power and responsibility of public order on the State governments. Burdening citizens, especially from poor and marginalised sections, with the arbitrary procedure under the provisions of the CAA, NPR and NRC was likely to deepen the fissures and empower miscreants to disrupt public order.

## Anti-CAA carols sung in Kerala

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Christmas celebrations in Kerala at some places witnessed some colours of the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protest.

Kerala has been one of the States at the forefront of the anti-CAA protests. This theme was used by a musical troupe in the St. Thomas Marthoma Church in Kozhencherry.

Wearing Muslim costume, the group sang Carols in Muslim style, expressing solidarity with the community, who have been protesting against the CAA and the National Citizen Register (NRC).



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat addressing a gathering in Hyderabad on Wednesday. **•G. RAMAKRISHNA**

## '130 crore Indians are Hindu society'

RSS chief lists 3 features of a Hindu

**STAFF REPORTER**  
HYDERABAD

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) considered the 130 crore people in the country a Hindu society, said Sangh's chief Mohan Bhagwat, delivering a speech at the Sangh's Sarvanika Utsav of Vijay Sankalp Sibiram, organised at Sa-roornagar Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

He listed three features that made a person Hindu — a person who considered 'Bharat' (India) his or her motherland, worshipped it, and loved its land and water.

"Any person, regardless of the region he is from, language he speaks, regardless of the method of prayer followed or whether he does not pray, such son of Bharat is a Hindu," said Mr. Bhagwat.

## 3 kinds of victory

As part of his speech, he detailed three kinds of victory — Asura, Rajasika and Dharm. People belonging to the Asura category lived in sadness, made others sad, caused violence, yet

achieved victory, which would ultimately cause destruction of everything. And those belonging to the second category did things that were self-centred. They used others to gain riches and pride for themselves.

Mr. Bhagwat said the Sangh and India believed in Dharma victory where people lived for the happiness and well being of others, and did not want heaven, kingdom or anything for themselves.

Mr. Bhagwat said though the English ('angrez') had wished that Hindus and Muslims would finish each other by fighting each other, it would not happen.

"Amid the struggle, society will come up with a solution to live together. And that solution will definitely be a Hindu 'upaay' (solution). These are Rabindranath Tagore's words," said Mr. Bhagwat.

Chief guest B.V.R. Mohan Reddy, who is chairman of Cyient Technologies, spoke on the importance of values, women power, and technology.

## Rich harvest



Farmers are harvesting onions in Medak district of Telangana even before the crop has fully grown. The high prices prevailing in the market and the high demand for the bulb are the reasons. **•NAGARA GOPAL**

## Tight police security in A.P. capital area

Crucial Cabinet meet will be held tomorrow

**RAJULAPUDI SRINIVAS**  
VIJAYAWADA

Additional police forces have been deployed in the Capital region here ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for December 27 in the wake of ongoing protests against the proposal to make Visakhapatnam the executive capital. The Andhra Pradesh government is likely to announce its decision on de-centralisation of the capital after the Cabinet meeting.

Farmers, villagers and advocates have been taking to the streets for the last seven days, and have decided to step up protests in the next few days.

Police have taken the measure following intelligence inputs on the protests at Velagapudi, Thullur, Undavalli, Nenlapadu, Mandadam, Penumaka, Tadepalli,



**Upset over plan:** Farmers standing in Krishna river to protest against the A.P. government's proposal of three capitals.

Prakasam Barrage and other places in Krishna and Guntur districts.

Additional Director General (Law and Order) Ravi Shankar Ayyannar told *The Hindu* on Wednesday that no protests would be allowed on Prakasam Barrage and on the roads leading to the Secretariat on Friday.

Traffic would be diverted if the situation warranted. Special Protection Force (SPF) personnel would be deployed at the Secretariat.

In all, about 3,000 personnel would be deployed for the Cabinet meeting, Mr. Ayyannar said.

"SDF and NDRF teams will be deployed at Prakasam Barrage and on either sides of the river as a precautionary measure," the Additional DG said.

The Guntur district police said protests were banned on Friday as Section 144 and Section 30 were in force and urged villagers not to provide shelter to outsiders.

## 'Proposal to develop three capitals unwise'

**STAFF REPORTER**  
VIJAYAWADA

BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana said the proposed shifting of the Capital city from Amaravati was not just the problem of farmers who gave their fertile land but of the five crore people of Andhra Pradesh who believed that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy would do better than his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu. But, by seeking to develop three capital cities, Mr. Jagan had proved that he was not only inexperienced but also unwise.

"The credibility of the entire Andhra Pradesh is at stake now as the farmers are staring at an uncertain future," Mr. Lakshminarayana said.

## Earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India found in A.P.

Saptamatrika cult evidence dates back to 207 A.D. in Satavahana king Vijaya's era

**R. KRISHNA KUMAR**  
MYSURU

In a significant find, the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India has discovered the earliest epigraphic evidence so far for the Saptamatrika cult. It is also the earliest Sanskrit inscription to have been discovered in South India as on date.

Saptamatrikas are a group of seven female deities worshipped in Hinduism as personifying the energy of their respective consorts. The inscription is in Sanskrit and in Brahmi characters and was issued by Satavahana king Vijaya in 207 A.D.

Dr. K. Muniratnam, Director, Epigraphy branch,

ASI, Mysuru told *The Hindu* that it was discovered in Chebrolu village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh earlier this month.

The inscription came to light when some local villagers informed the authorities of the presence of a pillar with some engravings when they were restoring and repairing the local Bheemeshwara temple.

The inscription was first copied and studied and it transpired that it records the construction of a prasada (temple), a mandapa and consecration of images on the southern side of the temple by a person named Kartika for the merit of the king at the temple of Bhagavathi (Goddess)

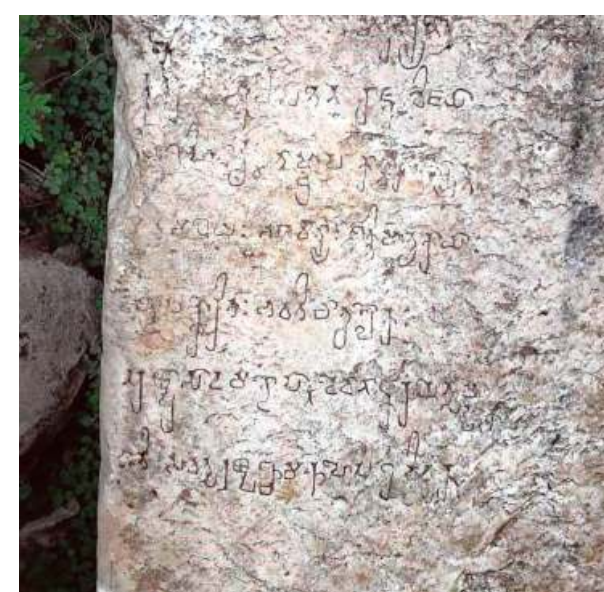
Saktimatruka (Saptamatrika) at Tambrape; Tambrape being the ancient name of Chebrolu, said Dr. Muniratnam. He said there are references of Saptamatrika worship in the early Kadamba copper plates and the early Chalukyas and Eastern Chalukya copper plates. But the new discovery predates them by almost 200 years.

The verification of all the available records proved that the Chebrolu inscription of Satavahana king Vijaya issued in his 5th regnal year — 207 A.D. — is also the earliest datable Sanskrit inscription from South India so far, said Dr. Muniratnam. He pointed out that according to Matsya Purana,

Vijaya is the 28th king of the Satavahana dynasty and ruled for 6 years.

So far the Nagarjunakonda inscription of Ikshavaku king Ehavala Chantamula issued in his 11th regnal year corresponding to the 4th century A.D. was considered the earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India, he added.

Calling for conservation and preservation of the pillar given its historical importance, he pointed out that there were many such ancient monuments and structures across the country that lacked protection but could contain a treasure trove of information.



The inscription on Saptamatrikas discovered by the ASI near Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. **•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

## Three held in Kollam on charge of moral policing

They tried to misbehave with a woman

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
KOLLAM

In a case of moral policing, five men hurled abuses and allegedly assaulted a couple waiting in their car along with two other friends at Kavanad in Kollam, the police said on Wednesday.

The police have arrested three men in this connection.

The incident occurred on Tuesday night as the couple was waiting in the car along with two other friends to collect a bag from a person, the police said.

## Lewd remarks

The men, who were standing nearby, made lewd remarks and one of them put his head inside the car and

allegedly tried to misbehave with the woman.

When her husband, an IT employee in Kochi, who was inside the car, questioned them, they hurled abuses and a scuffle ensued.

As the woman tried to take pictures on her mobile phone, the men, who were inebriated, abused her and tried to misbehave, the police said.

The Kerala police have registered cases against the accused under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code, including for causing grievous hurt, assaulting woman with intent to outrage her modesty, singing obscene song in public place and wrongful restraint.



IN BRIEF



Haryana orders closure of schools due to cold

CHANDIGARH Government and private schools in Haryana will remain closed on Thursday due to intense cold, according to an official statement. Day temperatures have been hovering between 11 and 15 degrees Celsius at most places in the State. PTI

Migrant worker thrown out of moving train

CUDDLALORE Four persons were arrested by the Government Railway Police in Vriddachalam on Tuesday for killing a migrant labourer by throwing him out of a moving train following an argument. The accused were identified as Jiththan Giri, Anil Kumar, Sukdev Kadaiyaa and Sottu Badaik, all hailing from Rourkela in Odisha. The accused were produced before a local court in Panruti and remanded in judicial custody.

Army officer, civilian killed in firing in Uri

SRINAGAR An Army officer and a civilian were killed as Pakistan violated ceasefire agreement and opened fire along the Line of Control in north Kashmir's Uri sector in Baramulla on Wednesday. An official said the Junior Commissioned Officer and a woman were hit by bullets and splinters and civilian areas were shelled with mortars in the attack.

Allow us to quit without notice period: AI pilots

NEW DELHI Flagging concerns over unpaid dues, the Indian Commercial Pilots' Association, an Air India pilots' union representing nearly 800 pilots, has urged the government to allow its members to quit the debt-laden carrier without serving the notice period. The union has warned that they are in no position to work amid uncertainty over the airline's future.

Study warns of growing cancer burden across India

Fastest epidemiological transition recorded in Kerala, lowest in U.P.

SHYAMA RAJAGOPAL KOCHI

A study tracing the growing burden of cancer in India states that most of the increase in cancer incidences are attributable to its epidemiological transition and improvement in the use of cancer diagnostics.

The country's cancer burden will continue to increase as a result of the ongoing ageing of India and improving access to cancer diagnostics in rural India, said Mohandas K. Mallath of the Tata Medical Centre, Kolkata, and Robert Smith from Kings College, London, in a recent paper: History of Growing burden of Cancer in India: From Antiquity to 21st century.

The paper was published in the Journal of Global Oncology which is promoted by the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

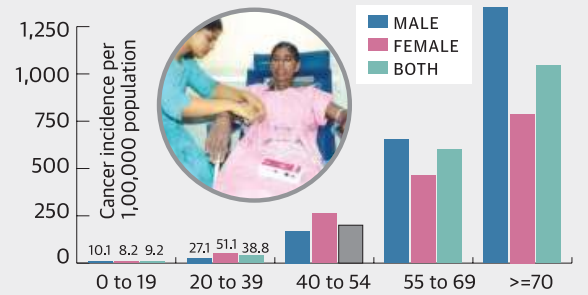
The study has stated that while cancer-like diseases were documented since antiquity, recording of cancer in India began in the 19th century when the Western practices of biopsy and pathological examination came to India during the colonial British regime.

Cancer is primarily a disease of older people, hence, as life expectancy went up, cancer incidences too went up, said Dr. Mallath, a senior consultant of Digestive Oncology. Maximum increases will occur in the most populous and least developed States, where the facilities for cancer diagnostics and treatment are inadequate.

According to Dr. Mallath, the present study offers lessons for planning cancer care in States as well as other countries experiencing epi-

Killer cells

While cancer incidence among women aged between 20 and 54 was higher than in men, the trend reversed for patients aged 55 and above in 2018



demological transition. In India the fastest epidemiological transition happened in Kerala, whereas Uttar Pradesh remained in the slowest group, he said.

Kerala vs U.P. A direct comparison of the demographic and social variables, available health care facilities and leading causes of mortality in these two

States, such as cervical, stomach, and penile cancer, and an increase in cancers associated with energy intake, physical activity imbalance and ageing, such as breast, colorectal and prostate cancers.

Cancer transitions can influence the requirements for site-specialized cancer surgeons, the study says. For example Kerala will need more breast oncologists and U.P. will need more gynecological oncologists, said Dr. Mallath.

The association of tobacco chewing with cancer were published over a century ago. But the habit is now estimated to cause a fifth of all cancers in India, the study says.

Out-of-pocket expenditure is three times higher for private inpatient cancer care in India. Approximately 40% of cancer costs are met through borrowing and contributions from friends and relatives.

No evidence of cancer in Indus Valley sites

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOCHI

Evidence of cancer in early humans were found in a review of 154 paleopathological studies dating back to 1.8 million years in historic Egyptian and German sites.

However, the study, "History of Growing Burden of Cancer in India from Antiquity to 21st century", published recently in the Journal of Global Oncology, states that no comprehensive historical review could be gathered scanning through voluminous data on medical literature from pre-historic times.

Dr. Mohandas Mallath, the co-author of the study states that no paleo-oncology reports of cancer have been recorded at the Indus

Valley civilization or Deccan Chalcolithic sites except for mention of some benign osteomas. Fewer samples and poor preservation were some of the limitations of these studies, he said.

The study says, there are references to cancer-like symptoms in many ancient texts including the Atharva Veda and two ancient medical systems, Ayurveda and Siddha, which have been in use for more than 2,500 years. These texts mention the use of surgery and herbal medications for these diseases. The ancient medical classics of India have devoted little attention to cancer-like illnesses, suggesting a low prevalence of cancer in those times perhaps, said Dr. Mallath.

CBI probes Yamuna Expressway scam in U.P.

Land allegedly bought at twice the rate

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has taken over the probe into an alleged ₹126-crore scam in the acquisition of land in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura for the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA). Its former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) P.C. Gupta and 20 others are accused in the case.

Over 57 hectares of land has been acquired in the seven villages of Mathura for ₹85.49 crore.

An internal probe revealed that months ahead of the acquisition, the associates and relatives of YEIDA officials had purchased the land parcels from villagers. Sham companies were also used to buy the land.



Over 57 hectares of land has been acquired in seven villages of Mathura.

It is alleged that as part of a conspiracy, the land was acquired for YEIDA projects at more than two times the authorised rates.

The case was initially registered at the Kasna police station in Uttar Pradesh on June 3, 2018, after an internal inquiry was conducted into the allegations of financial irregularities.

Groups call for ban on surgeries on intersex minors

The demand comes months after Tamil Nadu banned normative surgeries on infants and children

JAGRITI CHANDRA NEW DELHI

Intersex individuals and rights organisations have sought a national ban on unnecessary medical surgeries conducted on children with intersex traits and appealed to the Union government to protect their human rights.

The demand for a nationwide ban comes months after the Tamil Nadu government banned normative surgeries on infants and children except in life-threatening situations after a historic judgment of the Madras High Court on April 22.

If adopted nationally, India could become only the third country after Malta and Taiwan, to have a legal regime which protects the rights of intersex children.

The demand for a nationwide legislation emerged at the first national conference

on intersex human rights organised by Srishti Madurai in partnership with Intersex Asia on Sunday in New Delhi.

While the term intersex is confused with transgender, the two in-fact have very different meanings.

Individuals who identify as transgender or transexual have a gender that is different from the one traditionally associated with the sex they were assigned at birth, while intersex refers to people born with biological or physical characteristics that are more diverse than stereotypical male or female bodies.

Lack of understanding "You can self-determine your gender identity and sexual orientation, but not your sexual characteristics. That is why there is a need to regulate sex normalising surger-



Being aware: While the term 'intersex' is confused with 'transgender', they have different meanings. S. MAHINSHA

ies for intersex children. Parents often subject their infants and children to these surgeries and the Madras High Court has once again underlined that the consent of the parents is not the same as that of their children," says Gopi Shankar, Executive

Director of Srishti Madurai and co-founder of Intersex Asia.

"Often parents do not understand the nature of the condition exhibited by a child and under pressure from the society want to assign a gender ... Therefore,

there is no straightjacket medical solution available - some variations may require hormonal treatment, others may require a surgical intervention and sometimes it may be advisable to wait until puberty. There is a need to educate parents, activists and medical practitioners to ensure intersex is not treated as a medical disorder but as a sex characteristic," says Dr. Anuradha Udumudi, a senior medical geneticist.

She added that there is no data available to determine whether sex normalising surgeries have helped individuals.

The World Health Organisation and the United Nations Human Rights Council have called upon Member States to end invasive and irreversible medical surgeries and other medical treatment on intersex children.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Cold day conditions likely in many pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, north Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. Dense fog likely over Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam and Meghalaya.

Table with columns for CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN, CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN. Lists various cities and their weather conditions for the previous day.

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Table with columns for CITIES, SO, NO, CO, PM2.5, PM10, CODE. Lists cities and their air quality index (AQI) scores.

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

IPC law on suicide is redundant, says expert

Now, a suicide attempt is a criminal offence under the law

SHIV SAHAY SINGH KOLKATA

A national strategy for suicide prevention is under discussion at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said psychiatrist Lakshmi Vijayakumar, adding that it should remove confusion surrounding Article 309 of the IPC, according to which attempted suicide continues to be a criminal offence.

Dr. Vijayakumar, who is also a member of WHO's Network on Suicide Research and Prevention, said that after the Mental Healthcare Act (MCHA), 2017, the Section has become "redundant" but still remains in law books.

While Section 309 of the



Lakshmi Vijayakumar

IPC says that a suicide attempt is punishable with simple imprisonment, which may extend up to one year, Section 115 of the MCHA, 2017 states: "...any person who attempts to commit suicide shall be presumed, unless proved otherwise, to have severe

stress and shall not be tried and punished under the said Code (Section 309 of IPC)."

Dr. Vijayakumar said the Article makes attempted suicide a medico-legal case and the golden hour of providing effective treatment to the person is wasted.

India continues to have the dubious distinction of recording the highest number, or 34% of all suicides in the world, said Dr. Vijayakumar.

She was speaking to The Hindu on the sidelines of a panel discussion on 'Decriminalization of Attempted Suicide: MCHA 2017 and the Ground Reality' organized by the Indian Psychiatric Society in Kolkata earlier this week.

Maharashtra reviews security cover of prominent citizens

Anna Hazare's security enhanced. Tendulkar's downgraded

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MUMBAI

Batting legend Sachin Tendulkar's security cover has been downgraded, while that of Shiv Sena MLA Aadiya Thackeray upgraded to 'Z' category, an official said on December 25.

The changes in security cover were made after a review was undertaken by a Maharashtra government committee on threat perception to them, he said. Security cover of over 90 prominent citizens were reviewed by the committee at a recent meeting, the official added.

Mr. Tendulkar, a Bharat Ratna awardee, previously enjoyed 'X' category security which has been withdrawn,



Instead of round-the-clock protection, the cricketer will now be given a police escort.

steps out of his home, he said. Aadiya Thackeray, the son of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, has been given 'Z' security cover with more security personnel.

Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar will continue to enjoy 'Z+' security, whereas his nephew and party leader Ajit Pawar retains 'Z' category security cover, he said.

Social activist Anna Hazare's security has been enhanced from 'Y+' to 'Z' category, the official said.

Several Ministers in the erstwhile BJP-led government may also see security downgrades in the coming days, he added.

Request for no water cut ahead of eclipse refused

Residents would face difficulties in performing ablations, BJP corporator said

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE PUNE

A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) corporator's request to the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), urging the civic body to postpone its weekly water cut on grounds that citizens in her ward would need to perform rituals after the solar eclipse on December 26 has drawn condemnation from the anti-superstition outfit - the Maharashtra Andhashradhha Nirmoolan Samiti (MANS).

Manjushri Khardekar on Wednesday said she would give a written request to Mayor Murlidhar Mohol in this regard.

Strict customs "The eclipse coincides with the maintenance. Residents in my ward have complained



Religious beliefs cannot be the basis for such a request, the PMC said.

of difficulties they would face as they need to perform ablations and clean houses after the eclipse," said Ms. Khardekar, adding that the residents were particular about the customs.

The PMC implements water cuts in several parts of the city every Thursday for carrying out essential maintenance and pipeline repair work.

Earlier, Ms. Khardekar's husband and BJP leader Sandeep Khardekar, too, had written to the PMC authorities, requesting them to postpone the water cut due to Hindu traditions.

However, the civic body officials have rejected the request, saying religious beliefs could not be the basis for halting repair work needed for better channeling of potable water.

Condemning the superstitious beliefs behind the corporator's request, Hamid Dabholkar of MANS said it was unfortunate that elected representatives were indulg-

ing in such demands instead of actively quelling them.

"Bizarre request"

"We learn all about eclipses in school and know that the ridiculous beliefs propagated by Hindu tradition about not eating or drinking allegedly contaminated water during the eclipse are mere myths. Unfortunately, these superstitions are still followed despite scientific awareness campaigns. Instead of ensuring water to citizens of her ward by permitting the civic authorities to carry out repair, the corporator is bizarrely urging a postponement," said Dr. Dabholkar.

The BJP heads the 162-member Municipal Corporation and enjoys an absolute majority in the body.





## Dangerous doublespeak

The government's position on the NRC appears designed to create confusion

The Centre appears to have marginally mellowed its position on rolling out a National Register of Citizens (NRC), going by the statements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah this week. But the Prime Minister's contention that the widespread concerns about the NRC are merely fear-mongering by his political opponents is disingenuous and lame. The Prime Minister said no discussion on NRC had taken place in the government, which may be a clever statement but is certainly not reassuring. The plans for a countrywide NRC were announced repeatedly by senior functionaries of the government including Mr. Shah, even in Parliament. The concern that such an exercise, in combination with the recently enacted Citizenship (Amendment) Act, or CAA, could lead to disenfranchisement and harassment of the poor and undocumented segments of the population was not born out of anyone's imagination. Such a link has been stated by the ruling dispensation. The political thought behind the CAA-NRC fusion is the distinction that Mr. Modi makes between "infiltrators" and "refugees", as if they could be separated on the basis of their religion. This argument was advanced in the 2014 campaign and it is ironical that the Prime Minister reiterated it in the same speech in which he accused the Opposition of spreading misinformation on the NRC. If the government has a rethink on its strident position on the NRC, it must say so upfront, and at any rate desist from denigrating critics. So far, what has come as clarification has only added to the confusion.

In fact, the government must seriously reevaluate its position. India has a host of serious national challenges to tackle, the economy being the most critical. In his first Independence Day speech as Prime Minister, Mr. Modi had in 2014 called for a 10-year moratorium on communal and caste conflicts. He also promised to run the country on the basis of consensus and not of legislative majority. It is time he redeemed that pledge, and worked to heal the deep wounds inflicted by his misguided policy priorities. The intolerance towards opposing views and political opponents is expressed in horrifying terms down the ladder. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, vowed to take "revenge" against CAA-NRC protesters who turned violent. The Uttar Pradesh police have not explained satisfactorily how several people died of bullet injuries, while claiming that their personnel did not fire a single bullet. A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA threatened to "wipe out" critics of CAA-NRC. Several other BJP functionaries have continued to make menacing statements regarding the NRC, even after the Prime Minister blamed the Opposition. The Prime Minister must demonstrate he is a man of his word, and that his writ runs in the party and the government.

## Mind the gap

A rounded approach is necessary to ensure women's access to resources, opportunities

Assessing women's access to equal opportunity and resources against the access that men have would be a scientific way of evaluating a nation's commitment to the advancement of its citizens. But going by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020, released last week, questions can easily be raised about whether this government is doing the right thing by the country's women. India has dropped four points from 2018, to take the 112th rank on the Index. The Index measures the extent of gender-based gaps on four key parameters – economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Notably, it measures gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities in countries, rather than the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities. Despite a small score improvement, India has lost four positions as some countries ranked lower than India have shown better improvement. The country has reportedly closed two thirds of its overall gender gap, with a score of 66.8%, but the report notes with concern that the condition of women in large fringes of Indian society is 'precarious'. Of significant concern is the economic gender gap, with a score of 35.4%, at the 149th place, among 153 countries, and down seven places since the previous edition, indicating only a third of the gap has been bridged. The participation of women in the labour force is also among the lowest in the world, and the female estimated earned income is only one-fifth of male income. An alarming statistic is India's position (150th rank) on the very bottom of the Health and Survival subindex, determined largely by the skewed sex ratio at birth, violence, forced marriage and discrimination in access to health. It is on the educational attainment (112th rank) and political empowerment (18th rank) fronts that the relative good news is buried.

There is no question that the Gender Gap Index presents India with an opportunity to make the necessary amends forthwith. Doing what the government is currently doing is clearly not going to be sufficient; it needs to engage intimately with all aspects indicated by the Index to improve the score, and set targets to reduce the gender gap in the foreseeable future. It will have to drastically scale up efforts it has introduced to encourage women's participation, and increase opportunities for them. To do so it also needs to make sure there is actual implementation at the ground level. While a good score on any global index is a target worth pursuing, what is being questioned here is basic – is the state renegeing on its commitment to half its population? A commitment to ameliorate the conditions for women is a non-negotiable duty of any state.

# The Musharraf verdict was a long time coming

But in their silence in the High Treason case, Pakistan's political parties are only strengthening the military's hands



S. AKBAR ZAIDI

Many of those who have supported democracy in Pakistan since its inception in 1970 and after the Constitution of Pakistan was promulgated in 1973, have demanded that the two military generals who undertook coups and abrogated the Constitution, be held accountable. Both General Zia-ul-Haq (1977) and General Pervez Musharraf (1999) were able to convince the superior judiciary that their coups to dismiss elected governments were in the "national interest", with both coups being validated by the superior judiciary, and neither of the two coup-makers held accountable for his actions. In fact, provisions were subsequently introduced into the Constitution on both occasions, which ratified such action through Parliament granting impunity for numerous unconstitutional acts.

Last Tuesday, on December 17, 2019, a Special Court of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, held the now retired Gen. Pervez Musharraf guilty (in absentia) of the offence of high treason and to be hanged to death, not for undertaking the coup against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October 1999, but for imposing an Emergency on November 3, 2007. The term used to applaud this sentence, that the judgment is "unprecedented" – given Pakistan's political economy with the dominance of the military and which Gen. Musharraf of the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG) himself led as Chief of the Army Staff from 1998 to 2007 – is itself severely understated.

Since the first of three major coups, in 1958, with generals ruling Pakistan collectively directly for more than three decades, and also determining political processes for a further two decades, such a judgment has been a long time coming. Even those who are against capital punishment have endorsed the decision in principle, hoping that if ever it is implemented, it would be converted into life imprisonment.

### A verdict's ripple effects

Clearly, former President General (retired) Pervez Musharraf is not going to be hanged. Nor, will Paragraph 66 of the judgment which states that even if found dead, "his corpse be dragged to the D-Chowk, Islamabad, Pakistan and be hanged for 03 days", be applied to him if he were to pass away. Such dramatic language notwithstanding (which was a minority view which is not part of the official judgment), the fact that the Supreme Court of Pakistan could take such an extraordinary decision has major repercussions and consequences.

Before one begins to interpret the nature of the consequences of this particular judgment, it is worth citing a few recent instances in the nature of decisions by the Supreme Court. In 2007, through a Lawyers' Movement which rallied thousands of lawyers against the decision of the then President Musharraf to dismiss the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the legal fraternity reinvented itself as an institution which wanted to be seen as democratic, impartial and independent. By taking on Gen. Musharraf with the critical support of the three main political parties led by Nawaz Sharif, Asif Ali Zardari and including the incumbent Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan himself, the La-



wyers' Movement changed from one of protecting the legal community's specific self-interests into one of a broader anti-Musharraf, pro-democracy movement, eventually leading to Gen. Musharraf's resignation as President of Pakistan in 2008 in order to avoid an impeachment process initiated by Parliament.

Since 2008, the judiciary has had Pakistan's former Prime Minister imprisoned, found a sitting Prime Minister to be ineligible to hold office resulting in his resignation, and along with the National Accountability Bureau opened trials against numerous ministers. It has also been involved in prosecuting a former civilian President of Pakistan. Numerous former Ministers and one former Prime Minister of Pakistan are currently in captivity. Some have still not been charged. The courts have been particularly active in dispensing judgments and justice against numerous civilian representatives. They have also passed two critical judgments against the military.

In November 2017, a sit-in took place near Islamabad by a newly formed religious political party called the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). A suo motu case was taken up by the Supreme Court and in its judgment in 2018 it ordered "action against army officers who engaged in political activity" supporting the TLP in the sit-in. The judgment cast aspersions on the Pakistan military's ex-

cret Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) wing and felt that there was a perception that the ISI might have been involved in the sit-in. It also felt that the Director General (DG) of the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) had "taken to commenting on political matters". Clearly, the military and its leadership could not have been pleased by such new-found judgments.

However, the subsequent involvement of the superior judiciary in military affairs was an even bigger surprise and a reflection of an attempt to assert a new sense of its power and independence. Just a three weeks before the high treason judgment against Gen. Musharraf by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, it suspended the three-year extension in the services of the current Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Bajwa – it was to have taken place smoothly, as it has in the past, on November 29, 2019, the day he was to retire. The court extended his tenure by a mere six months, asking Parliament to find constitutional means to deal with such extensions.

### The military reacts

The Musharraf high treason judgment drew the wrath of the DG-ISPR who issued a press release immediately after, stating that the decision "has been received with a lot of pain and anguish by the rank and file of Pakistan Armed Forces". Gen. Musharraf, with his exemplary record, the press release stated "can surely never be a traitor". Clearly, the military and its establishment have not been pleased by the Supreme Court's judgment. Immediately after the announcement of the judgment, General Bajwa visited General Musharraf's former unit, the SSG, and was photographed raising a clenched fist.

While the military has ex-

pressed its displeasure and disappointment in this series of judgments by issuing press releases and holding press conferences, the military's B Team, the incumbent government of Prime Minister Imran Khan, has also risen to the defence of the military, perhaps trying to pay back much support that the military has provided to the civilian government. Since the civilian government has repeatedly stated that it is on the "same page" as the military, this was to be expected.

### Jarring note

What has been surprising, however, has been the utter silence from the two main political parties on the Musharraf High Treason case – that of Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari. Perhaps the saddest aspect of the Supreme Court's independent stand in following its interpretation of the Constitution has been the absence of support by political parties which ought to have benefited the most by such a judgment. This judgment clearly enhances democracy in Pakistan, but if those who are supposedly democracy's champions are unable to celebrate a huge symbolic victory, it only reaffirms the perception that despite three civilian elected governments since 2008, the military continues to rule Pakistan. Without the support of democratic forces, it is improbable that even the Musharraf High Treason judgment would deter the military from taking any sort of political action it feels necessary in the "national interest". Yet another opportunity to strengthen democracy in Pakistan may have been lost.

S. Akbar Zaidi is a political economist based in Karachi. He teaches at Columbia University in New York, and at the IBA in Karachi.

## An Act that fails the constitutional test

The government needs to display an accommodative approach in its reaction to the protests against the Citizenship Act



ANMOLAM & FARHEEN AHMAD

a large majority; the historic context for the legislation; and the equation of "Hindutva" with 'secularism'. The arguments in the December 21 article appear hollow on multiple grounds and mandate rebuttal.

Quite often, conceivably discriminatory laws are camouflaged by language. What requires analysis is a reasonable scrutiny of the cumulative effects of the legislation, read not in isolated silos. Dr. Swamy argues that the need for this Bill arose partly because the Islamic theocratic nations, of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, have brutally persecuted non-Muslim minorities since 1947. However, India's official position on a number of occasions necessitate us to make a nuanced observation. While exercising its Right of Reply at the 38th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, in 2018, the Indian representative said of Pakistan's stand: "In its obsession with puritanism, it has unleashed systematic persecution against its own Muslim minorities including Shias, Ahmadis, Ismailis and Hazaras, who have been reduced to second class citizens."

### It is about rights

In the course of justification, Dr. Swamy has argued that "no Muslims or Jews came to India over the last 70 years on grounds of religious persecution". It is devoid of constitutional logic because as per the Indian Constitution, even in

placed" lacks academic rigour. Arriving at a concrete definition of "religious persecution" is a difficult task.

In the context of persecution, religion has to be understood not from the believer's point of view; rather it is about what it means to its adversaries. For instance, the treatment meted towards an atheist or agnostic gets completely ignored under the parochial understanding of the CAA. Even the agents of persecution can be of various types, including state agencies persecuting one or more religious communities, religious organisations persecuting other religious communities or, individual puritans enforcing conformity on their own people.

As an illustration, UN experts and special rapporteurs have reported, *inter alia*, that "the current legal requirement for a separate electoral list for the Ahmadis, who have to declare themselves as non-Muslims in order to vote, is of particular concern".

On the aspect of human rights, the words of statesman-philosopher Dr. Radhakrishnan should suffice: "This view of religious impartiality, of comprehension and forbearance, has a prophetic role to play within the national and international life. No group of citizens shall arrogate to itself rights and privileges which it denies to others. No person should suffer any form of disability or discrimination because of his religion but

all alike should be free to share to the fullest degree in the common life."

### Basis of Partition

Drawing parallels between Hindutva and secularism appears to be a complete misadventure as minor incidental overlaps may exist between two diametrically opposite philosophies. Contrary to many misinformed, aggressive and irresponsible statements made by some parliamentarians on the issue of Partition and a Hindu Rashtra, let us remind ourselves that the Partition of 1947 did not take place on religious lines. Rather, it was based on a philosophical understanding of the nature of society citizens and leaders wanted. Pakistan opted for a theocratic nature of governance, but our founding fathers coveted a plural, inclusive and modern society based on democratic and secular credentials. The CAA has witnessed large-scale, non-violent protest by both the masses and intellectuals. It is hoped that the Government will display an accommodative approach. To conclude by paraphrasing Edmund Burke, "Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great democracy and little minds go ill together."

Anmolam is a lawyer, running a non-profit organisation BDLAAW. Farheen Ahmad is a research scholar at the South Asian University, New Delhi

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### NRC, NPR and more

When the country is already in turmoil over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the National Register of Citizens, not to speak of the reading down of Article 370 relating to Jammu and Kashmir's special status, the announcement of updating the National Population Register has to be viewed as the proverbial last straw (Page 1, "Cabinet clears NPR update, census", December 25). When the Home Minister tries to allay fears by saying there is no link between the NPR and the NRC, it is a tacit admission that the NRC is not an innocuous exercise as the government claims it to be.

AYYASERI RAVEENDRANATH, Aranmula, Kerala

Without standing on prestige, the Bharatiya Janata

Party government at the Centre is requested to shelve, at least for a year, implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, the National Register of Citizens, and the National Population Register which do not need as much urgent attention as do these issues listed: economic decline, price rise and unemployment. We now see people in turmoil over large-scale protests and struggles against comparatively secondary issues which can be solved through discussion. Let us spend our energy in finding ways to improving our economic condition, and also achieving harmony.

M. VATHAPURESWARAN, Erode, Tamil Nadu

### Getting back

There is no doubt that more numbers of Tamils would

enable them to gain more bargaining power with the Sri Lankan Government (OpEd page, 'Explainer', "Return to the homeland", December 25). But over and above safety and security, there are two important aspects which need to be addressed. First, the refugees on return should be able to have a decent livelihood to meet their ends. Many have lost properties and there are less job opportunities. The Indian Government should take up these issues with Sri Lanka so that repatriation is smooth. Second, political leaders in Tamil Nadu should desist from making provocative statements just to whip up Tamil sentiments for political gains.

Much water has flown down the Ganga since the call for Eelam, a separate statehood for Tamils. With all the bloodbath, loss of lives and

property, it would be preposterous on the part of Tamil Nadu politicians to continue to indulge in rhetoric about a separate state for Tamils and protest whenever leaders from the island nation come to India. The endeavour should be to create a conducive atmosphere for Tamils to live in peace with the locals.

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

### Sledgehammer act

It is a matter of great national shame that Jakob Lindenthal, 24, a German student pursuing his post-graduation at IIT Madras, was summarily asked to leave the country by Immigration Bureau officials for 'having committed the sin of participating in protests' in Chennai against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, violating his visa conditions. It is even more

ironical that a German student should have been subjected to such a harsh treatment. After all, IIT Madras, founded in 1959 during the premiership of Jawaharlal Nehru, owes its very existence to technical and financial assistance from the former government of West Germany – the largest educational project sponsored by West Germany outside that country. His act in no way had the potential of even remotely causing any prejudice to our national interest. Yet, if

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

Two Sports page (Dec. 24, 2019) reports – "Memorable day for Pakistan" and "SL Skipper declares Pakistan 200% safe" – gave the year of the Lahore attack as 2006 and 2009, respectively. The year 2009 is correct.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com



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