





*The Indian***EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## CROSSING A LINE

By being seen to make a partisan point, questioning campus protests, Army chief does damage to his reputation and office

WHEN THE ARMY chief, General Bipin Rawat, took a position on the ongoing students’ protests against the new citizenship law at a public event in the national capital on Thursday, he overstepped an important line. Despite the exception and aberration, it is a line that has, by and large, held in India’s constitutional democracy, dividing the polity from the military, and underscoring civilian supremacy. That its armed forces are neither an extension or instrument of the ruling party, nor a dominant player in the polity, and that, for the most part, the military abides by an apolitical ethos, a voluntary restraint, a culture of neutrality, marks India out from less evolved democracies in its neighbourhood and beyond. General Rawat’s criticism of the protests, therefore, his publicly expressed conviction that protesters are “leading masses and crowds to carry out arson and violence in cities and towns”, and his stern pronouncing of judgement “this is not leadership”, are conspicuously improper. The fact that the general, only days away from retirement, chose to wade into a sensitive political issue playing out live across the country, and in doing so, echoed the point of view of the ruling regime, says disquieting things.

General Rawat’s comments reinforce attempts by the Narendra Modi government in the last few days to criminalise the protests. The reality is that these protests have been and they continue to be mostly spontaneous, mostly leaderless, and mostly peaceful. There have been a few disturbing incidents of violence and arson but across several cities and states, students and young people have turned out peacefully on the streets in large numbers to speak up against a discriminatory law and for the Constitution’s letter and spirit. On the other side, the government has seemed utterly lacking in the ability to either listen to them, or to talk to them. It is trying to mask this inability and failure by unleashing the police lathi charge and arbitrary detention, the suspension of internet and imposition of Section 144. In Uttar Pradesh, it has done much worse. Here, the conduct of the Adityanath government is fast turning into a textbook case of how not to deal with a protest in a democracy. The UP government has taken political and administrative imperviousness to a shocking level, with those killed crossing 20, police putting out “reward posters” for “miscreants” and “suspects”, issuing notices and warnings of property attachment and detaining local civil society leaders who have, on evidence, little to do with the violence.

Beyond the immediate events, the backdrop for General Rawat’s intervention is also made of a more general tendency by the ruling regime to paint all criticism and political opposition as unpatriotic, if not pro-Pakistan, and to put the figure of the soldier to political and electoral use. By being seen to make a partisan point in this moment, by appearing to fall in political line, General Rawat does damage to both his own reputation and to his high office.

## POWER AND THE SENA

Uddhav Thackeray’s leadership skills will be tested as he attempts to steer party away from Hindutva camp

THE ASCENT TO office in the company of the NCP and Congress seems to be forcing the Shiv Sena to rethink some of its core ideals. Recently, party chief and Maharashtra Chief Minister, Uddhav Thackeray, responding to a taunt from BJP leader and former CM, Devendra Fadnavis, said in the legislative assembly that the Sena “probably made a mistake by mixing politics and religion” and “took a hit for it”. This is a major departure for the Sena, which had embraced Hindutva as its ideological compass in the 1990s.

As Thackeray has explained, Hindutva was the ground on which the Sena and BJP built an alliance that lasted for nearly three decades. It is too early to say that Thackeray and the Sena have taken a step towards abandoning Hindutva, but his remarks do suggest that the compulsions of heading a “secular” coalition government have forced a churn in the party. The first sign was when the party agreed to a common minimum programme, the preface of which states that the alliance is committed to “uphold the secular values enshrined in the Constitution”. The Sena’s position on the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) also shifted even as the bill was debated in Parliament — its MPs voted in favour of CAB in the Lok Sabha but walked out when the bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha. Thackeray was unambiguous, however, in condemning police action on the anti-CAA protests in Jamia Millia Islamia — he compared it to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Sena leaders stayed away from the anti-CAA mobilisations in Maharashtra, but it could be said that the massive rallies were peaceful also because of the party’s tacit support.

The contradictions in Thackeray’s attempt to balance coalition compulsions with the long-held beliefs of cadres will surely soon come to the fore. His challenge as a leader, moreover, is not restricted to the ideological sphere. He will need to instill in the Sena cadres the values of a constitutional democracy, which include accepting the restraints of the rule of law, and allowing political rivals to express their views. The recent incident of Sena workers tnsuring the head of a BJP supporter in Mumbai for a social media post lampooning Thackeray is a reminder of the party’s disgraceful legacy of physically targeting its critics.

## WALKING HOME

On his final journey, Ram Dass has become ‘nobody’, a condition to which he aspired all his temporal life

WHITE GURU GUY back from India with kundalini chakra on fire. LSD freak who gave it away too freely. Magic mushroom researcher who turned his own body into an organic chemistry lab. Such are the stereotypes that Ram Dass, disciple of Neem Karoli Baba of Kainchi Dham and fellow traveller of Timothy Leary of Harvard, discarded throughout his eventful life. He was one of the very few icons of the counterculture era who adapted to a rapidly changing world, and became a proselytiser of decency and humanity in everyday life.

From Leary’s “turn on, tune in, drop out” to Dass’s own exhortations to “be here now” and to “treat everyone you meet as if they are God in drag,” you see the trajectory of the counterculture as it swept down from LSD towards the contemporary nirvana of spiritual wellness. While hot yoga and levitation powered by transcendental meditation fail to inspire, and Carlos Castaneda is stuck fast in the country of the quaint, Ram Dass remains a comfort for hearts and minds bruised by life.

Dass, who has died aged 88, was born Richard Alpert, the son of a Jewish railroad company director in Boston. He was an alumnus of Tufts and Stanford, taught psychology at Harvard, flew a Cessna and drove a Mercedes. After he was kicked off campus along with psychedelic co-conspirator Leary, he came to India and was strongly influenced by Neem Karoli Baba, a humour-loving guru who was interested in the here and now, and who valued happiness. His teacher named him Ram Dass, and he is the link in the chain of being that drew the young Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg to Kainchi Dham in Uttarakhand. Dass touched innumerable lives before leaving this plane of existence. As he always said, “We’re all just walking each other home.”

# Bad in law, poor in history



ATUL NANDA

CAA neither redresses ‘errors’ of Partition nor does it address religious persecution. It attacks secularism

THE VERITABLE CHAOS into which the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has plunged the nation is just the beginning of the far-reaching and dangerous consequences it threatens to have on India’s constitutional character.

The rationale for the CAA has its roots in two sources — Partition and the alleged religious persecution of non-Muslims in Islamic countries. The emotional argument is that such non-Muslims have no other place that they may claim as home as a matter of right and India would be remiss in not remedying this injustice. While a legislative crusade against religious persecution may seem attractive, the rhetoric of the present central government in support of the law is both legally misconceived and historically flawed.

Even a cursory look at the Act exposes the lacunae in the government’s argument that the legislation seeks to remedy the errors of Partition. Those errors were quite adequately taken care of when the Constitution brought about Article 6, recognising and restoring the rights of persons who migrated to India from Pakistan in those unhappy times.

The government (through Parliament) has been deliberately selective about the choice of countries to which the Act will apply — Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan — while ignoring others such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, China and Bhutan. This makes the intent to deny protection to Muslims patently clear, even though it is a universally acknowledged fact that Muslims are no more safe from religious persecution than other communities. Instances of such persecution abound, as in the case of the Ahmadi and Shia sects in Pakistan, Taslima Nasrin in Bangladesh, and indeed Salman Rushdie in practically every Islamic country. The CAA fails to recognise the powerful truth that religious persecution is not necessarily premised on the religion of the victim.

One must also worry about the eventual legal effects of the amendment. Under the earlier citizenship regime, “an illegal migrant” was denied access to citizenship even through the process of naturalisation under Section 6 read with Third Schedule of the Citizenship, 1954. An illegal migrant was de-

The list of non-Muslim communities excluded from the definition of illegal migrants does not even require that they be of Indian origin. This again makes a mockery of the ‘persons of Indian origin protection’ set out in the objects of the Act. All they have to be is ‘from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan’. What does ‘from’ mean? A citizen? A resident? A passenger in transit? This may lead to many an undesirable element slipping through the cracks, causing even national security to be sacrificed at the altar of religious jingoism.



RAJA MUZAFFAR BHAT

ONE OF THE reasons given by the Narendra Modi government for making Article 370 redundant was that the “special status” had deprived the people of Jammu and Kashmir of various rights that the rest of India enjoyed, as central laws were not applicable in the state. That assertion is inaccurate for many reasons. But I want to focus on the claim that the Right to Information Act (RTI) was not applicable to the state.

To put the record straight — I was unable to do so earlier as I was detained for three months — the J&K state legislature enacted the legislation for RTI in 2004, a full year before the national legislation. It was a carbon copy of the Freedom of Information Act 2002, passed by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA government. However, the 2002 law was not operationalised by the government as RTI activists had pointed out several shortcomings with it.

In its 2004 Lok Sabha election manifesto, the Congress had promised to come up with a strong access to information law. This was enacted in 2005 during the UPA I government. As J&K had seen much corruption and misgovernance, a group of us in Kashmir had launched a movement to mobilise public opinion in favour of ensuring the applicability of the central law to the state. We urged the then state government, headed by Ghulam Nabi Azad, to amend the J&K RTI Act 2004 to include provisions contained in the RTI Act 2005.



## A MORE PROGRESSIVE ACT

*J&K RTI law provided a time-frame for disposal of appeals*

I even wrote to the then Chief Justice of J&K High Court, B A Khan. The J&K High Court division comprising the then Chief Justice B A Khan and Justice J P Singh sought a response from the government. Subsequently, the J&K government brought an RTI amendment bill in 2007 and another one in 2008. But, the amendments were not at par with the national RTI law and our struggle continued.

Around October 2008, when the dates of that year’s assembly elections were announced, we started lobbying the political parties in the state for a strong RTI law. We were able to persuade the National Conference leader Omar Abdullah and CPM leader M Y Tarigami to make RTI a part of their parties’ election manifesto, which they did. The National Conference won the election, and soon after taking charge, the government enacted the RTI law with all the amendments we had campaigned for.

The J&K RTI Act 2009 was almost a carbon copy of the central RTI Act 2005. But, on some counts, it was more progressive. In the central law, there is no time-frame to dispose of the second appeal filed when it reaches the state or the Central Information Commission. But under the 2009 J&K law (now repealed), the State Information Commission (SIC) was required to dispose of the second appeal within four months. This time-bound provision ensured a better justice delivery mechanism, and is the reason for the least penden-

cies of appeals before the SIC as compared to the Central Information Commission and some other state commissions.

As someone who gave several years of his life advocating for the J&K RTI Act 2009, its repeal feels like a personal loss. J&K is now governed by the RTI Act 2005. How it will be implemented is still unclear. Most likely, the state will not have a SIC as union territories don’t have the power to establish them. In 2006, Puducherry established a SIC. But, it was wound up on July 20, 2007, on the direction of the Union Home Ministry. The matter is pending before the Madras High Court.

On November 28, the J&K administration constituted a committee headed by the secretary, general administration department, to examine if it will be clubbed with the CIC for RTI related matters or whether it would have a separate information commission. If it does not, appellants and complainants will need to make the long journey to the CIC in New Delhi. Faced with this, many might give up on their right to information.

The J&K Law Commission has recommended the constitution of a J&K SIC. But the final decision is awaited. Even if the SIC is set up, the central law has been watered down so much over the past few months that it would not have the same effect as that of the J&K RTI Act 2009.

*The writer is an RTI activist, based in Kashmir*

### DECEMBER 27, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

**LOK DAL CANDIDATES** AT LONG LAST, THE Lok Dal central office announced the final state-wise break-up of its Lok Sabha candidates. In all, there are 301 Lok Dal nominees, including five candidates who have not been allotted party symbol. Some days ago, when the Lok Dal released what it called the “final list”, there were 319 contestants. With a score of candidates retiring, the final figure now comes to 301. Among the Lok Dal candidates, there is only one Harijan who is fighting for a general seat. The party has put up 47 SC candidates and 16 ST candidates for reserved seats. There are 33 Muslims, five Christians and nine women in the Lok Dal list.

**BORBORA STAKES CLAIM** THE LEADER OF the Janata-Congress group, Golap Borbora, formally staked his claim to forming a government in Assam, now under President’s Rule. Bonbora talked to Governor L P Singh and told him that he could form the new government in coalition with the Congress. Meanwhile, the Assam Congress legislature party leader Sarat Chandra Sinha said his party would go ahead with the formation of a viable government with the Janata Party’s support.

**MGR vs KARUNANIDHI** THE CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY election in Tamil Nadu is significant in more than one

way as it will, besides sending 39 members to the Lok Sabha, decide the future pattern of working of the All India Anna DMK (AIADMK) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which dominate the political scene in the state. The election campaign presents a picture as though only two candidates — the chief minister and AIADMK leader M G Ramachandran and DMK President M Karunanidhi — are in the field. The national parties — Congress (I), Janata and the Communists — appear as mere dummies. With the AIADMK wishing to destroy Karunanidhi for all time, the DMK’s political survival depends on the outcome of the election.



# The perils of misinformation

Contrary to what some political parties and people say, the NRC is restricted to Assam. There is no talk at any level regarding the extension of the exercise to the rest of India



MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI

SOME POLITICAL PARTIES and people with narrow political interests are spreading misinformation amongst a particular section of society about the Citizenship Amendment Act, NRC and the government's decision to update the National Population Register (NPR). This is a futile attempt to hide the mountain of truth by using bushes of lies.

That the Narendra Modi-led government is committed to inclusive empowerment and prosperity is evident from its policies. "Development without discrimination" has been the credo of this government, which has been working to ensure the happiness and prosperity of all, irrespective of religion and region. Thirty-one per cent of the two crore beneficiaries of the government's housing project for the poor are from the minority community. People from minority communities are the most numerous in 39 cent of the 6 lakh villages that have been provided electricity by this government. More than 33 per cent of the 22 crore farmers who have benefited under the government's "Kisan Samman Nidhi" scheme belong to minority communities. About 37 per cent of the more than 8-crore beneficiaries of the Ujjwala Yojana are also from minority communities. The government has provided easy loans for economic activities to about 21-crore people under the Mudra Yojna — more than 36 per cent of the beneficiaries are from minority communities. People from minority communities have also benefited significantly from welfare schemes pertaining to water, electricity, roads, education, and employment opportunities. In the past 70 years, minorities, especially Muslims, were left behind with respect to economic development and education. They have benefited the most as a result of the Modi government's welfare policies.

It is unthinkable that a prime minister who has provided houses and electricity to the poor without discrimination would want them to be homeless or do anything that jeopardises their future. That's why Modi has given a clear message about the CAA and NRC. He has made it clear that "the Citizenship Amendment Act is about providing citizenship and not taking away the citizenship of any person". And the NRC, undertaken for the first time in Assam in 1951, is limited to that state. The PM has made it clear that there is no question mark over or threat to the citizenship of any Indian Muslim from the CAA or NRC.

The CAA aims to provide citizenship to minorities facing religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It will provide citizenship to only those who want it. As far as giving Indian citizenship to Muslims from other countries is concerned, the Indian Citizenship Act 1955 already has a provision for that purpose. Any foreign national, including a Muslim, can apply for and gain Indian citizenship under Section 5 of this Act. In the past five years, this government has provided citizenship to more than 500 Muslims from other countries.

Minorities, who constituted about 24 per cent of Pakistan's population at the time of Partition, have been reduced to just 2 per cent of the population as result of the atrocities



C R Sasikumar

perpetrated on them. But the earlier Indian governments did not take any steps to mitigate their hardship. The CAA will provide dignity to those facing humiliation in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It has nothing to do with the Indian Muslims.

While minorities are facing injustice in Pakistan, they are equal partners in India's development. The Modi government's schemes for socio-economic and educational empowerment of the minorities have been effective instruments for this purpose. In the past five years, the government has provided scholarships to more than three crore students from minority communities, 60 per cent of whom are women. The employment of more than 8 lakh youths from minority communities has been facilitated by skill development schemes such as Seekho aur Kamao, Ustad, Nai Manzil, Garib Nawaz Employment Scheme and Nai Roshni. About 50 per cent of these beneficiaries are women. In the past two years, more than 2.65 lakh artisans and craftsmen have been provided employment through the Hunar Haat scheme.

The UPA government could identify only 90 districts of the country for the development of minority communities. Under the current government, development programmes for minorities have reached 308 districts and 1,300 blocks. In the past five years, 33 degree colleges, 1,398 school buildings, 4,0201 additional class rooms, 574 hostels, 81 ITI, 50 polytechnics, 39,586 anganwadi centres, 398 sadbhavna mandaps, 123 residential schools and 570 market sheds have been developed under the Pradhanmantri Jan Vikas Karykram.

While Pakistan has become a hell for minorities, India is a heaven for minorities. This reality is unacceptable to some forces who are involved in a conspiracy to weaken the country's "Unity in Diversity".

It is unthinkable that a prime minister who has provided houses and electricity to the poor without discrimination would want them to be homeless or do anything that jeopardises their future. That's why Modi has given a clear message about the CAA and NRC. He has made it clear that 'the Citizenship Amendment Act is about providing citizenship and not to taking away the citizenship of any person'. And the NRC, started in Assam in 1951, is limited to that state. The PM has made it clear that there is no question mark over or threat to the citizenship of any Indian Muslim from the CAA or NRC.

Let us now go into the NRC issue. The NRC process was first undertaken in Assam in 1951. In the 1970s, the state witnessed agitations and there were demands to accelerate the NRC process. In 2013, the Supreme Court asked the government to update the NRC. The NRC process is still going on in Assam and is limited to the state. A draft NRC list was published on August 31. Those people who didn't find their names in the list are being helped by the government through NRC service centres and tribunals.

There is no talk at any level regarding the extension of the NRC to rest of India. But some people have started a political drama on the issue. Some political parties and people with prejudiced mindsets are fomenting trouble amongst a particular section of society for their narrow political gains.

These people and political parties are trying to spread misinformation on the National Population Register (NPR) and Census as well. The Census and NPR are regular exercises. The people of the country should understand that those who have been defeated through democratic process are trying to hijack loktantra (democracy) through gun-datantra (anarchy).

Every section of society in India is an equal partner in the country's development and prosperity. It is our national duty to ensure that people who are spreading misinformation do not succeed in their nefarious designs.

For us, the soil of India is our faith; there is no threat to the social, religious, constitutional and other rights of any citizen of the country. This is the reality and truth, the rest is propaganda. Let us work together to defeat those who spread misinformation and fear.

The writer is Union Minister for Minority Affairs

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"For both secular liberals and Christians, there are lessons to be drawn from what might be seen as a prophetic alliance between Pope Francis and Greta Thunberg on the most urgent issue facing the world: the climate emergency." — THE GUARDIAN

# Restructuring isn't always reform

Done right, Railway restructuring could be a game changer. Else, it will only create a bigger mess than it claims to clear



AJAY SHUKLA

THE RAILWAY MINISTER, Piyush Goyal, has recently announced the policy decision of "restructuring" of the organisation. He has thereby put the onus (of mismanagement?) on the structure of the officer cadre, and hence also on the officers. The stated aim is to end "departmentalism" — unification of services will "expedite decision making", "create a coherent vision" and "promote rational decision-making". It is an unusual admission — that hitherto decision-making in the Railways was incoherent and irrational — and this coming after he has been the minister for over two years. Or is it an abdication of responsibility for the past? And for future actions as well — till the decision is fully implemented?

Reportedly, a comprehensive plan for execution of the decision would be worked out by a committee of secretaries, and perhaps a group of ministers. If true, it is a very strange — no, incoherent — way of proceeding, that so disruptive a policy should be decided without firming up a blueprint of action and examining its future implications.

Restructuring of the Railways has been on the agenda for decades. Committees — Prakash Tandon 1994, Rakesh Mohan 2001, Sam Pitroda 2012 and Bibek Debroy 2015 — have done this exercise in past. Is it just the familiar family ghost that visits the corridors of Railway Board with indeterminate periodicity and with the predictable outcome of nothing?

While the details of the plan are not yet available, it would nonetheless be worthwhile to discuss what we know of the decisions. The size of the Railway Board is proposed to be reduced from the present eight to five. This is a good decision in itself, but also raises the question — why were two additional posts of members added to the Board as recently as April 2019? Whose irrational decision was that? What is the methodology by which decisions are being taken?

The decision that posts of some 27 general managers would be raised to the "apex" level (secretary?) and hence at par with the board members is doubly problematic. Will the IAS lobby agree to create so many secretary-level posts for Railway officers — unless they are given the top positions? Is that the aim? The panel of secretaries may well make such a recommendation, but will the finance ministry agree? It is claimed that Railway officers have welcomed the decision. How could they, when they do not even know what is in store for them? They were certainly not consulted. Of course, that was not even necessary because democracy gives the right to the elected — even to be dictatorial!

Secondly, the Railway Board is the governing body and the general managers are subordinate to the board. How would the board control the GMs of equal rank? Or is it a ploy to make board members dispensable, and hence pliable, because once the GMs and members are of equivalent grade, an uncomfortable member can easily be shunted to some remote corner as GM. In the present set-up, the minister can do nothing to an unyielding member except to suffer in silence, and at worst, sabotage his foreign trips and post-retirement aspirations.

Coming to the basic objective of the policy decision — of ending "departmentalism" — prima facie, this sounds well intended. However, departmentalism is just a word and means nothing for the rail users, or for the national economy. Every large organisation is bound to have many departments. Even after the merging of cadres, departments will continue to exist, they would continue to quarrel, and it is the minister's job to settle these disputes. He cannot remain a bystander, passing judgements.

The minister should also understand that the problem is not departments but the composition of the same, and their role in the Railway organisation. This should be seen from the perspective of the national economy rather than as an issue pertaining to the Railways in isolation.

If the restructuring is done with such national priorities in mind it can be a game changer, not only for the Indian Railways, but for India as a nation. Or else, it may only create a bigger mess than it imagines it is solving.

The writer is former Member Traffic, Railway Board

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### WHO IS A REFUGEE?

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'From refugee to citizen' (IE, December 26). The numerous citations in the article indicate that the CAA's primary purpose is to fulfill the Congress's promise via the BJP — not protection of minorities. The cut-off date mandated by the act, December, 31, 2014, means that immigrants who entered India as recently as five years ago would be under its purview. This belies the premise of the article that this Act seeks to aid people persecuted during Partition. The author refers to promises dating back to 1950's. The population of the country then was roughly one-fourth of what it is today.

Raunak Singh Maini, Delhi

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

### TIGER DOES WELL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The right count' (IE, December 26). It's heartening that India's wild tiger population has increased by more than 30 per cent in four years. This is an "historic achievement". More tigers are breeding in protected areas but there are worrying signs of tigers not able to disperse outside the protected areas and find their own territory. Tigers are extremely territorial and its range could sometimes be as large as 200 sq km, so they need quite a bit of space. Habitats are increasingly being encroached upon by developmental projects such as roads, canals and railways. Conflict between humans and tigers is also a threat to the tiger population.

Vandana, Chandigarh

### CHIEF'S TASKS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Towards jointness' (IE, December 26). Creating the post of a chief of defence staff is a long due defence reform and will provide direction to the three armed forces. It would, however, have been better if the government made it a five-star rank rather than four-star — the existing rank for chiefs of the three services. But there are tougher challenges as integration between the forces would be a tough task. A new department of military affairs has been created. It's critical that

that a proper link between armed forces and the civilian bureaucracy is established.

Bal Govind, Noida

### TAXING WELFARE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'State incapacity and NRC' (IE, December 26). The article rightly notes that India lacks the administrative structure to conduct a pan-India NRC. The simple fact of births and deaths not being registered in the country should have alerted the government to this reality. Poor medical facilities and meager rations are the lot of the poor in this country. How can the country accommodate refugees?

Prateek Mitra, Noida

### TAXING WELFARE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'For people to spend more' (IE, December 26). There is a need for communication connectivity between various stakeholders of the economy like banks, telecom, automobiles and other industries. Banks can provide the loanees' preference graph to industries, thus helping them to plan their production preferences. Innovative ideas related to EMI, deferred billing and hire purchasing arrangements could also be made.

Afshin Rizvi, Lucknow

## THE Urdu PRESS

### POWER OF PROTESTS

WRITING ABOUT THE protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the *Inquilab* on December 17 condemns the police action against students. "The police not only entered the Jamia campus without permission but went into the library and bathrooms and targeted students violently. The students and civil society went to Delhi police's headquarters and registered strong protests against this action. The police was forced to release the students." The editorial notes, "the Jamia administration also says that the police entered the campus without permission and attacked students, who were not participating in the demonstration. University, students and the police are all part of society and students have a right to protest peacefully and be heard".

*Munsif's* editorial on December 17 is titled, 'Police terrorism in Jamia Millia'. "The Jamia students were protesting peacefully for three days. But after two buses caught fire in a locality outside the university, police claimed that the protestors had set the buses on fire. But there are videos on social media that show Delhi police personnel sprinkling petrol on the buses. After that the police went to the Jamia campus. It appeared as if terrorists had entered the University in police uniforms".

The editorial notes, "the police behaved in a most barbaric manner with women students and also with people praying in mosques. The Jamia Vice Chancellor said the students were not alone and "I stand with them".

*Inquilab's* editorial on December 19 is titled, "The power of peaceful protests". "The Citizenship Amendment Act is not acceptable to large sections of India's population. Objections are not limited to any section, political party, university or a specific school of thought. It was ignorance of this that led to this bill being tabled and passed in Parliament. The government should have tried to gauge the opinion of all sections of society. But it did not feel it necessary to do so. This was exactly like demonetisation, when even ministers knew nothing about the move." It also points out that, "Democracy is not about slapping a parliamentary majority on people, it is about understanding sentiments of those opposed to it. The soul of democracy is to understand what people really want and not just imposing one's own idea. Just getting bills passed is not democracy." The editorial finds it "sad that the ruling party has put all these norms on the back-burner".

*Urdu Times* on December 20 notes: "Bechaini par awaam ki bechaini" (People are restless about the restlessness). "The country

is in a terrible state and people are angry about the CAA. There are restless people on the streets everywhere." It points out that "in 27 days, government has made contradictory statements on detention centres. On November 27, a Union minister informed Rajya Sabha about many such camps. Twenty eight deaths have occurred in Assam's camps... But on December 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked of detention camps as a rumour"

### COSTS OF NRC

THE AIMIM'S PAPER *Etemad* focuses on the costs of a national NRC in its December 17 editorial. "Amit Shah had announced in Parliament that the NRC will be conducted all-India. The point is: Is it possible?" The editorial notes that the "NRC in Assam under the supervision of the Supreme Court took about five years. Rs 1,300 to 2,000 crore were spent. More than 50,000 government servants were deployed. But this massive exercise came to nothing as the Assam government 'rejected' the NRC. India's population is 130 crore. Won't an NRC for the entire country be an expensive proposition?... In certain border states with a porous border, if there are infiltrators, such an exercise is understandable. But what is the logic of an all-

India NRC? How wise is it to hassle an entire country for political gains? Why not have welfare schemes for the same money?"

*Siasat* on December 26 calls the "NPR a new trap". "The Centre, instead of working transparently to find out what people feel, is only interested in tripping people in its net," it says. The editorial also argues that "after sensing the anger on CAA and NRC, the government is laying a new trap called the NPR. Though the Census and NPR happen each decade, but this time it has aroused fears and doubts in people. The government says that the NPR is not connected with the NRC. But after hearing its contradictory orders, one can say that its claims are not correct."

### JHARKHAND ELECTION

THE BJP'S LOSS in the Jharkhand assembly polls has been commented upon extensively. *Siasat* on December 24 has an editorial, "Jharkhand for BJP is the writing on the wall". *Etemad* on the same day makes virtually the same comment: "Results in Jharkhand are the writing on the wall for the BJP".

*Munsif* on December 25 asks "Could this be the signal of a new change (nayi tabdeeli)?"

Compiled by Seema Chishti

