#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

## TELLING NUMBERS

# **Good Governance Index:** TN on top among big states

ON WEDNESDAY, the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions launched the Good Governance Index (GGI) that assesses the status of governance and the impact of various interventions undertaken by states and UTs over a period of time.

The assessment spans ten sectors. Within these sectors are over 50 indicators, with states given scores based on their performance. The states and UTs have been divided into big states, Northeastern and hill states, and UTs.

In the composite rankings, which takes into account performance in all sectors, Tamil Nadu tops the list of big states with a score of 5.6, followed by Maharashtra (5.4), Karnataka (5.1), Chhattisgarh (5.05), Andhra Pradesh (5.05), Gujarat (5.04), Haryana (5), Kerala (4.98), Madhya Pradesh (4.85) and West Bengal (4.84).

Among the Northeastern and hill states, Himachal Pradesh has the highest score at 5.22, followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura, Mizoram, Sikkim, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir (before bifurcation). Among the UTs, Puducherry has the highest composite score at 4.69, followed by Chandigarh (4.68), Delhi (4.39), Daman & Diu (4.33), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (4.12), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (3.12) and Lakshadweep (2.97).

### How it was worked out

The 10 sectors covered are: agriculture & allied sectors, commerce & industries, human resource development, public health, public infrastructure and utilities, economic governance, social welfare and development, judicial & public security, environment, and citizen-centric governance. Within these sectors, the 50 indicators include foodgrains production, meat and milk production, ease of doing business, access to potable water, sex ratio at birth and the availability of police personnel.

The indicators have been assigned different weights based on their importance, data reliability and other factors. The weights assigned to each indicator are aggregated to obtain a value for that particular sector. These values then become the score for a sector after they have been multiplied with sector weights.

By that yardstick, Tamil Nadu, the highest ranked big state overall, has the highest scores in judicial and public security, and public infrastructure. It has the second highest score for public health and is among the top five for sectors including economic governance, environment and human resource development. Maharashtra, on the other hand, is among the top five big states in judicial and public security, economic governance, public infrastructure and public health. Karnataka is ranked one in economic

# **OVERALL BANKINGS**

OAFWAFFWAHWIIIO						
BIG STATES						
	1.	Tamil Nadu	5.6			
	2.	Maharashtra	5.4			
	3.	Karnataka	5.1			
	4.	Chhattisgarh	5.05			
	5.	Andhra	5.05			
	6.	Gujarat	5.04			
	7.	Haryana	5			
	8.	Kerala	4.98			
	9.	MP	4.85			
	10.	W Bengal	4.84			
N-E& HILL STATES						

2.	Uttarakhand	4.87
3.	Tripura	4.5
4.	Mizoram	4.41
5.	Sikkim	4.21
6.	Assam	4.07
7.	J&K	4.04
8.	Manipur	3.93
9.	Meghalaya	3.81
10.	Nagaland	3.55

5.22

1. Himachal

10.	. Nagaland	3.55			
<b>UNION TERRITORIES</b>					
1.	Puducherry	4.69			
2.	Chandigarh	4.68			
3.	Delhi	4.39			
4.	Daman & Diu	4.33			
5.	<b>A&amp;N Islands</b>	4.12			

## **SECTOR-WISETOP** RANKS (BIGSTATES)

Agriculture & allied **MADHYA PRADESH** Commerce & industries **JHARKHAND** 

Human resource development GOA

Public health **KERALA** Public infrastructure

**TAMIL NADU** 

Economic governance **KARNATAKA** Social welfare and

development **CHHATTISGARH** 

Judicial and public security

**TAMIL NADU Environment** 

**WEST BENGAL** 

governance. Among the Northeastern and hill states, Himachal Pradesh is among the top five in agriculture and allied sectors, commerce and industries, human resource development, public infrastructure, economic governance, social welfare and development, judicial and public security, and environment.

# SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Why a scheme for groundwater

Atal Bhujal Yojana has been launched amid growing concerns over the country's groundwater resources. A look at the extent of depletion of these resources, and how the scheme will seek to address such issues

### **HARIKISHAN SHARMA**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

ON WEDNESDAY, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Atal Bhujal Yojana, or Atal Jal, a day after the Cabinet approved it. Atal Jal is a World Bank-funded, central scheme aimed at improving groundwater management. It was approved by the World Bank Board in June 2018.

The idea first came up in 2015, in view of depleting groundwater resources. The government announced its intention to start a programme for management of groundwater resources in the Budget of 2016-17, with an estimated cost of about Rs 6,000 crore.

#### How scarce is water in India?

India accounts for 16 per cent of the world's population living in less than 2.5 per cent of the global area, and has just 4 per cent of the global water resources. According to the Central Water Commission (CWC), the estimated water resources potential of the country, which occurs as natural runoff in the rivers, is 1,999 billion cubic metres. Of this, the estimated utilisable resources are 1,122 billion cubic metres per year — 690 BCM per year surface water and 432 BCM per year replenishable groundwater. With the population rising, demand for water will increase manifold in coming years. According to the CWC, per capita availability in the country will decrease from 1,434 cubic metres in 2025 to 1,219 cubic metres in 2050. By CWC benchmarks, a water-stressed

condition happens when per capita availability is less than 1,700 cubic metres, and a water-scarcity condition when per capita availability falls below 1,000 cubic metres. Some river basins are facing a water-scarcity condition. Among these are the basins of the Indus (up to the border), Krishna, Cauvery, Subarnarekha, Pennar, Mahi, Sabarmati and east-flowing rivers, and west-flowing rivers of Kutch and Saurashtra including Luni. Water scarcity is most acute in the basins of the Cauvery, Pennar, Sabarmati and eastflowing rivers, and west-flowing rivers of Kutch and Saurashtra including Luni.

#### What is the groundwater situation in particular?

According to 'Water and Related Statistics



Villagers of Shahapur, Thane, look for water in a well in June 2019. Deepak Joshi

2019', a report published by the CWC, the annual replenishable groundwater resources in India (2017) are 432 BCM, out of which 393 BCM is the annual "extractable" groundwater availability. Fifteen states account for about 90 per cent of the groundwater potential in the country. Uttar Pradesh accounts for 16.2 per cent, followed by Madhya Pradesh (8.4%), Maharashtra (7.3%), Bihar (7.3%), West Bengal (6.8%), Assam (6.6%), Punjab (5.5%) and Gujarat (5.2%). The current annual groundwater extraction is 249 BCM, the largest user being the irrigation sector. This is why the government has called for alternatives to water-intensive crops such as paddy and sugarcane.

Compared to the decadal average for 2009-18, there has been a decline in the groundwater level in 61% of wells monitored by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), according to a reply by the Jal Shakti Ministry in Parliament recently. Among the states where at least 100 wells were monitored, the highest depletion has been in Karnataka (80%), Maharashtra (75%), Uttar Pradesh (73%), Andhra Pradesh (73%), Punjab (69%).

### What is the role of the CGWB?

The Board monitors water levels and quality through a network of 23,196 "National Hydrograph Monitoring Stations"

-6,503 dug wells and 16,693 piezometers -in January, March-May, August and November every year. A piezometer is a device placed in a borehole to monitor the pressure or depth of groundwater.

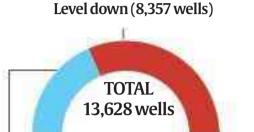
The CGWB has classified the country's assessment units (blocks, taluks, mandals etc) into safe, semi-critical and over-exploited in terms of groundwater resources. The number of over-exploited units has increased to 1,186 in 2017, from 839 in 2004. In the north, more than 60% of the assessment units in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are either over-exploited or critical. During the Monsoon Session of Parliament, the Jal Shakti Ministry had said 14% of the country's assessment units are semi-critical, 5% are critical, and 17% are over-exploited, as of 2017.

#### How much of this does the new scheme seek to address?

For now, the Atal Bhujal Yojana will be implemented in seven states - Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and UP over five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25. It is expected that it will benefit about 8,350 gram panchayats in 78 districts. According to Jal Shakti Ministry sources, if the scheme meets its objectives in water-stressed areas, it will be extended to other parts of the country.

# **DEPLETING GROUNDWATER**

(2019 compared to 2009-18 average)



1% No change

(158 wells)

(5,113 wells) **HIGHEST DEPLETION** (Minimum 100 wells)

38% Level up

WELLS LEVEL **STATE DOWN** 1,098 881 (80%) Karnataka 1,241(75%) Maharashtra 1,645 UP 581 483 (73%) 518 (73%) 714 Andhra 245 170 (69%) Punjab

Source: Ministry of Jal Shakti

#### How will these objectives be met?

The focus will be on arresting the rate of decline of groundwater levels as well as water consumption. The scheme will seek to strengthen the institutional framework and bring about behavioural changes at community level for sustainable groundwater resource management. It envisages community-led Water Security Plans.

There has been a Groundwater Management and Regulation scheme to manage the country's groundwater resources since 2013. The new scheme is an updated and modified version. Concepts such as 'Water User Associations' and Water Budgeting will be introduced. Better performing districts and panchayats will get more funds.

#### Where will this money come from? Of the Rs 6.000 crore, Rs 3,000 crore will

be contributed by the World Bank as loan while the other half will be provided by the central government in the form of central assistance. All of it — the World Bank component and central assistance — will be given to the states as grants.

# What is BrahMos missile's latest upgrade?

#### **SUSHANT KULKARNI** PUNE, DECEMBER 26

LAST WEEK, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) carried out two successful tests of the latest variant of the BrahMos missile, one from the land platform and the other from air. BrahMos, developed through a collaboration between India and Russia, is one of the most advanced weapons in India's armoury.

# The missile

BrahMos is a cruise missile, meaning it can be guided towards a pre-determined land- or sea-based target. With a capability to attain speeds 2.8 times that of sound (Mach 2.8), BrahMos is classified as supersonic cruise missile. A newer version under development is aimed at flying at speeds greater than Mach 5. These are called hypersonic cruise missiles. Besides decreasing the reaction time of the enemy, higher speeds also substantially reduce the chances of the missile getting intercepted.

An amalgam of the names of the rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva, BrahMos is being produced by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture company set up by DRDO and Mashinostroyenia of Russia in 1998. The first version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was inducted into the Indian Navy in 2005, meant to be fired from INS Rajput.

# The test

While the missile has been in India's arsenal for long, it is continuously upgraded and updated with new hardware and software. This is what necessitates periodic tests of the missile.

DRDO scientists said that in every such exercise of a specific variant of BrahMos, different parameters are put to test. Though the exact details are not disclosed, additional hardware and software systems are tested based on the inputs from the user, against more complex targets, and under different atmospheric conditions. The test results and observations are important for future analysis and further advancement.

"India's missile development programme has made sure that its missiles are upgraded and new systems are also developed. BrahMos has undergone development through the early 2000s till date. Its land-to-land, submarine-fired and now air-fired variants have been developed stage by stage. Each new version has something additional compared to the previous version," said a DRDO scientist.

# Air-based test

One of the tests last week was carried out from air, using the Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter jets of the Indian Air Force as the base. The missile destroyed a target at sea. This was the third air-based test of the missile and marked the completion of the integration of BrahMos missile with the Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft.

In November 2017, the Indian Air Force had become the first in the world to successfully air-launch a Mach 2.8 supersonic surface-attack missile of this category from a fighter jet. It had destroyed an at sea-target in the Bay of Bengal at that time. This year, on

May 22, an air-launch was tested again, this time against a land-based target in the Car Nicobar Islands region. The BrahMos Air-Launched Cruise

Missile (ALCM), as it has since been called, has been a significant addition in IAF's air combat capability from stand-off ranges. Stand-off range missiles are ones that are launched at a distance sufficient to allow an attacking party to evade defensive fire expected from the target area. Officials said that stand-off range missiles, of which cruise missiles are a type, have been in the arsenal of all the major powers of the world. Last week's test has again validated the

ship attack capability of the ALCM. During the test, the missile was gravity-dropped from the fuselage of a Su-30 and the two-stage missile's engine fired up. Subsequently, the missile propelled towards a target ship at the sea, destroying it with pinpoint accuracy.

The successful testing of air-platform of BrahMos has further strengthened the tactical cruise missile triad - land, sea and air for India.

# The story of Faiz's Hum Dekhenge — from Pak to India, over 40 years

**SUSHANT SINGH** NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

LAST WEEK, a professor at IIT-Kanpur alleged that students protesting on campus against the police action in Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia were "spreading hate against India". The complaint was provoked by the use by students of a couple of lines from the late Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem Hum Dekhenge.

# The poet and his poem

Faiz's poem, Wa-yabqa-wajh-o-rabbik, a Quranic verse from Surah Rahman meaning, literally, 'The face of your Lord', is popularly known by its refrain, "Hum Dekhenge". In South Asia, the mythology around the poem and one particular rendition by the Pakistani ghazal singer Iqbal Bano (an audio recording is available on YouTube) is embellished by every new protest, which recalls

the revolutionary verse. Faiz was a communist who employed traditional religious imagery to attack political structures in his quest for revolution. In Hum Dekhenge, the description of *Qayamat*, the Day of Reckoning, is trans-

formed sharply into the communist day of revolution.

The religious symbolism in the poem, which was written in 1979, is to be read in the context of Pakistan under the military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq. Zia had deposed Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in a coup in 1977, and declared himself President of Pakistan in September 1978. Zia's dictatorship soon took a powerful religious turn, and he used conservative Islam as an authoritarian and repressive tool to tighten his grip over the country. In *Hum* Dekhenge, Faiz called out Zia – a worshipper of power and not a believer in Allah — merging the imagery of faith with revolution.

Hum Dekhenge was censored, with one verse being permanently excised, even from Faiz's complete works, *Nuskha-e-Ha*e-Wafa. A Coke Studio performance of the poem last year omitted what is arguably the most revolutionary part of the poem:

"Jab arz-e-Khuda ke Ka'abe se, sab buutt uthwaae jaayenge / Hum ahl-e-safa mardood-e-haram, masnad pe bithaave jaavenge /Sab taaj uchhale jaayenge, sab takht giraaye jaayenge", roughly translated as "From the abode of God, when the icons of falsehood will be removed / When we, the faithful,





who have been barred from sacred places. will be seated on a high pedestal / When crowns will be tossed, when thrones will be brought down".

# The singer and the context

Hum Dekhenge was a powerful and popular poem, but it assumed iconic status and became a universal anthem of protest and hope after it was rendered by Igbal Bano in 1986, and live recordings of that performance were smuggled out of Pakistan. That



Javed Akhtar; (above) **Iqbal Bano.** Express Archive

performance inextricably linked her voice and rendition with the poem — indeed, it was Igbal Bano who made Faiz's revolutionary *nazm* immortal.

The most authentic description of that performance — at Lahore's Alhamra Arts Council on February 13, 1986 – comes from Faiz's grandson, Ali Madeeh Hashmi.

Faiz had passed away in November 1984, and the occasion was the 'Faiz Mela' organized on his birthday by the Faiz Foundation. The open air *mela* would be

held in the day and, in the evening, there would be a concert.

The 1986 concert was given by Iqbal Bano. Hashmi recounts that the hall — with a capacity of either 400 or 600 — was full even before she came on stage. (From Hashmi's account, it appears that the popular story of 50,000 people being in the audience is untrue.) There was commotion after all seats were taken, so the doors were opened and people streamed in, packing the hall completely.

Igbal Bano sang several of Faiz's poems, and Hum Dekhenge received the loudest cheers. She finished the concert, but the audience refused to let her leave, begging for an encore of *Hum Dekhenge*. She obliged, and a technician in Alhamra surreptitiously recorded the encore — this is the recording that survives today.

The clapping and cheers were so thunderous, Hashmi says, that it felt at times that the roof of Alhamra hall would be blown off. Igbal Bano had to stop repeatedly to allow the cheers and slogans of "Inquilab Zindabad" to subside before she could carry on singing. The applause was the wildest for the verse "Sab taaj uchhale jaayenge, sab takht giraaye jaayenge".

# After the concert ended

The poet Gauhar Raza has written of a Pakistani friend who attended the concert. Raza's friend had received a late-night call from someone he knew well in the Pakistani armed forces. The caller advised Raza's friend to not stay at home for the next two or three days. He took the advice, and in the days that followed, many of those who were present at the Lahore auditorium were questioned, and some were detained. His home was visited in the middle of the night by the military police.

Many copies of Iqbal Bano's rendition were confiscated and destroyed. An uncle of Hashmi's had managed to get hold of one copy — which he handed over to friends who smuggled it out to Dubai, where it was copied and widely distributed.

Before leading a mass singing of "We shall overcome" in Atlanta in 1967, the American folk singer and social activist Pete Seeger said, "Songs are sneaky things, my friends. They can slip across borders. Proliferate in prisons. Penetrate hard shells. The right song at the right time can change history."

Igbal Bano sang Faiz's Hum Dekhenge in 1986. Two years later, in August 1988, Zia was gone, his 11-year rule ended by a plane crash.

### WORDLY WISE

THE FACT THAT POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES ARE TANGIBLE REALITIES IS NOT A PROOF OF THEIR VITALLY NECESSARY CHARACTER. — WILHELM REICH

# 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

HEN 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

HE 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 tonsuring 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

HITE 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



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 deuments as specified therein. Hence, whether or not a person was an illegal migrant was simply an outcome of the existence of requisite travel documents or the lack thereof. The CAA has shredded this definition by introducing the parameter of religion. Parliament has effectively decreed that a Muslim will remain an illegal migrant, whereas any non-Muslim will not, irrespective of lack of travel documents. The list of non-Muslim communities excluded from the definition of illegal migrants

fined under Section 2(b) as one who was

without the necessary passport or travel doc-

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? Given no requirement of being of Indian origin or having to prove any such origins means that an alien could simply apply on the terms of the CAA, prove entry on/before December 2014, and be eligible for citizenship. On the other hand, a Muslim of possibly Indian origin would be denied such a benefit. 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. If the government does not seek to execute

a political programme, and wants merely to protect the rights of those who are victims of religious persecution, then why doesn't India have an effective policy/legislation for victims of religious persecution seeking asylum? Such a policy/legislation would suffice to serve the purpose, as is the case in most countries. The routine law of citizenship through naturalisation could then take over in due course.

What then is the legal imperative, much less the rationale, to elevate a refugee to a citizen merely because he is a non-Muslim while denying the same right to a Muslim?

The idea of citizenship is contained in Part II of the Constitution under Articles 5 to 11. The fact that these Articles were drafted, debated, redrafted and re-debated over a period of two years, culminating in their final form only on August 12, 1949, shows what a vexed question it was then too.

Unfortunately, the incumbent Union government has, through its brute majority in Parliament, managed to sneak into the constitutional charter what the founding fathers rejected more than 70 years ago. The introduction of religion-specific parameters for granting of citizenship was attempted by some members of the Constituent Assembly and completely rejected by the majority Panjabrao Deshmukh had proposed a definition of citizenship to include one "who is naturalised under the law of naturalisation and every person who is a Hindu or a Sikh by religion and is not a citizen of any State wherever he resides". The law of naturalisation is nothing but Section 6 read with the Third Schedule, which has now been amended. The argument even then was that while Muslims have Pakistan, neither the Hindu nor the Sikh has any other place and hence he should get Indian citizenship. This sordid logic was raised not just for the primary issue of citizenship but even the troubling subject of citizenship for persons (read Muslims) who had initially migrated to Pakistan but

Fortunately for young India, this divisive refrain was drowned out by saner voices. It was birth, circumstance and domicile and not religion which would define citizenship. Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava was perhaps the strongest proponent of the disconnection of religion from citizenship when he said "...If a Muslim comes to India and bears allegiance to India and loves India as we love her, I have nothing but love for that man. If any nationalist Musalman who is afraid of the Muslims of East Pakistan or West Pakistan comes to India he certainly should be welcomed. It is our duty to see that he is protected. We will treat him as our brother and a bona fide national of India."

then returned to India.

That, in essence, is the ethos on which we have built a secular and progressive India The danger of the CAA is that it says if you are a Muslim, you do not conform to the idea of being an Indian. And that, my friends, would no longer conform to what we know as India.

The writer is advocate general of Punjab

# A More Progressive Act

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

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.

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.

The list of non-Muslim

the definition of illegal

migrants does not even

require that they be of

Indian origin. This again

'persons of Indian origin

protection' set out in the

have to be is 'from

mean? A citizen? A

many an undesirable

the altar of religious

jingoism.

resident? A passenger in

transit? This may lead to

element slipping through the

cracks, causing even national

security to be sacrificed at

objects of the Act. All they

Afghanistan, Bangladesh or

Pakistan'. What does 'from'

makes a mockery of the

communities excluded from

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 pendencies 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 LP 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 INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2019

# THE IDEAS PAGE

### 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

# 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

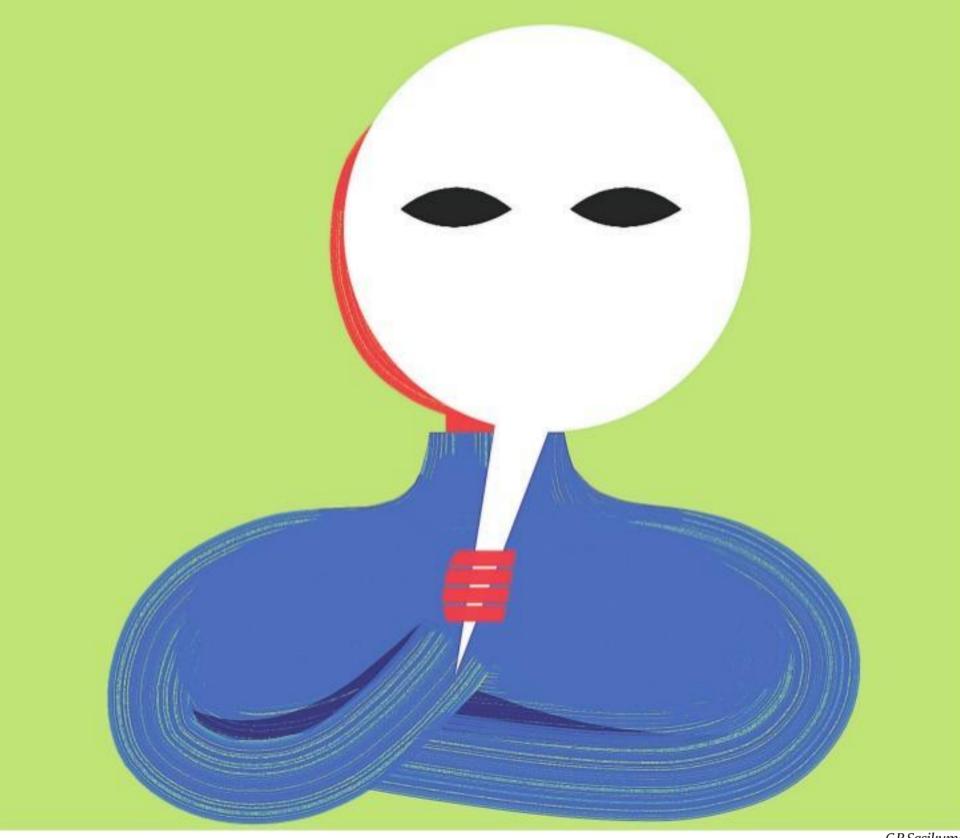
SOME POLITICAL PARTIES and people with narrow political interests are spreading misinformation amongst a particular section of society about the Citizenship Amendment Act, NRC and the government's decision to update the National Population Register (NPR). This is a futile attempt to hide the mountain 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 8crore 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 gov-

ernment'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



minister who has provided

houses and electricity to the

poor without discrimination

homeless or do anything that

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

citizenship of any person'.

Assam in 1951, is limited to

that state. The PM has made

question mark over or threat

And the NRC, started in

not to taking away the

it clear that there is no

to the citizenship of any

Indian Muslim from the

CAA or NRC.

would want them to be

jeopardises their future.

CR 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 de-

velopment. 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, Usttad, 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".

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 It is unthinkable that a prime

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 try-

Let us now go into the NRC issue. The NRC

ing 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 gundatantra (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

# 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

# TIGER DOES WELL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial. 'The right forces and the civilian bureaucracy is 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

### To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian

LETTER OF THE

WEEK AWARD

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

Noida-UP 201301.

that a proper link between armed

# Bal Govind, Noida

TAXING WELFARE

established.

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 accom-

modate 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.

**Afsheen 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".

epaper indianexpress.com

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 Moditalked 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 allIndia 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."

# HARKHAND 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