

**PROPERTY TRANSFER**

## I-T says stamp duty evasion by family of EC Ashok Lavasa

Lavasa wife, sister say duty was paid, this is bid to malign family reputation

**RITIKA CHOPRA & SUKHBIR SIWACH**  
NEW DELHI, CHANDIGARH,  
DECEMBER 26



No stamp duty evasion, I-T should get facts: Lavasa

THE INCOME Tax (IT) Department has approached the Haryana government seeking a further enquiry into the transfer of an apartment in Gurgaon from Novel Lavasa, wife of Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa, to his sister Shakuntala Lavasa for alleged evasion of stamp duty.

The IT Department has flagged "discrepancies" between the income tax returns of Novel Lavasa for the financial year 2017-18 and registered transfer deeds of the Gurgaon property to Haryana's Additional Chief Secretary and Financial Commissioner.

Haryana's Financial Commissioner of Revenue and Disaster Management, Dhanpat Singh, confirmed that the I-T

**FAMILY REBUTS**

**'Rs 10 LAKH IN DUTY PAID, ROVING INQUIRY TO SULLY IMAGE'**  
PAGE 8

department's letter was received on November 27. "The communication was shared with the Deputy Commissioner of Gurugram on December 9. We haven't received his reply yet. We have reminded him to apprise IT department and also my office," Singh told *The Indian Express*.

The Lavasa family, including Ashok Lavasa, have denied  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**GENERAL RAWAT ON ANTI-CAA PROTESTS**

## Army chief wades in: Students being led to arson and violence

'Leading people in inappropriate directions not leadership'



Gen Rawat at an event in New Delhi Thursday. ANI

**SUSHANT SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

WADING INTO the bitter political row over protests against the new citizenship law days before his retirement, Army Chief General Bipin Rawat Thursday criticised those at the head of the protests, saying they were "leading masses", including university and college students, to carry out arson and violence in cities, and this did not amount to leadership.

"Leaders are not those who lead people in inappropriate directions, as we are witnessing in a large number of universities  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**EXPLAINED**  
**E Army brass has a view**

GENERAL RAWAT'S remarks are not the first by a senior military officer on the ongoing protests. Earlier, Eastern Army Commander Lt Gen Anil Chauhan said the government was keen to take hard decisions. He mentioned the scrapping of Article 370 and the passage of the citizenship law.

## UP protest in numbers: toll up to 19, over 1100 arrested, 5500 detained



Police in Muzaffarnagar on Thursday. Vigil has been stepped up across UP as a precautionary measure. Praveen Khanna

**MANISH SAHU**  
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 26

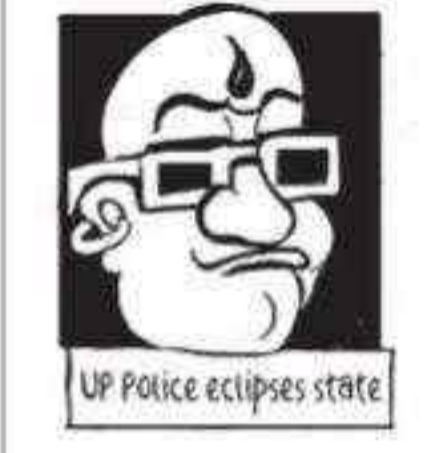
AS THE death toll in protests against the new citizenship law climbed to 19 in Uttar Pradesh Thursday, the state police said it had arrested 1,113 people in 327 cases registered so far and placed another 5,558 people under preventive detention.

This is the biggest police crackdown in Uttar Pradesh since the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots when 1,480 people were arrested in 567 cases. The riots had claimed 63 lives and displaced an estimated 50,000 people.

Incidentally, the number of preventive arrests in the Kashmir Valley following the scrapping of Article 370 in August this year totalled 5,161, according to Minister of State (Home) G Kishan Reddy on November 19. Among the people arrested

**BUSINESS AS USUAL**

By UNNY



in Lucknow are social activist and Congress worker Sadaf Jafar, retired IPS officer S R Darapuri (75), lawyer Mohammad Shueb (76), theatre artist Deepak Kabir, Robin Verma and Pawan Rao Ambedkar.

Darapuri, Shueb and Robin are members of the Rihai Manch  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Youngest casualties: Children injured, shot at, at least two are locked up in jail

**KAUNAIN SHERIFF M & KRISHN KAUSHIK**  
SAMBHAL, MUZAFFARNAGAR,  
DECEMBER 26

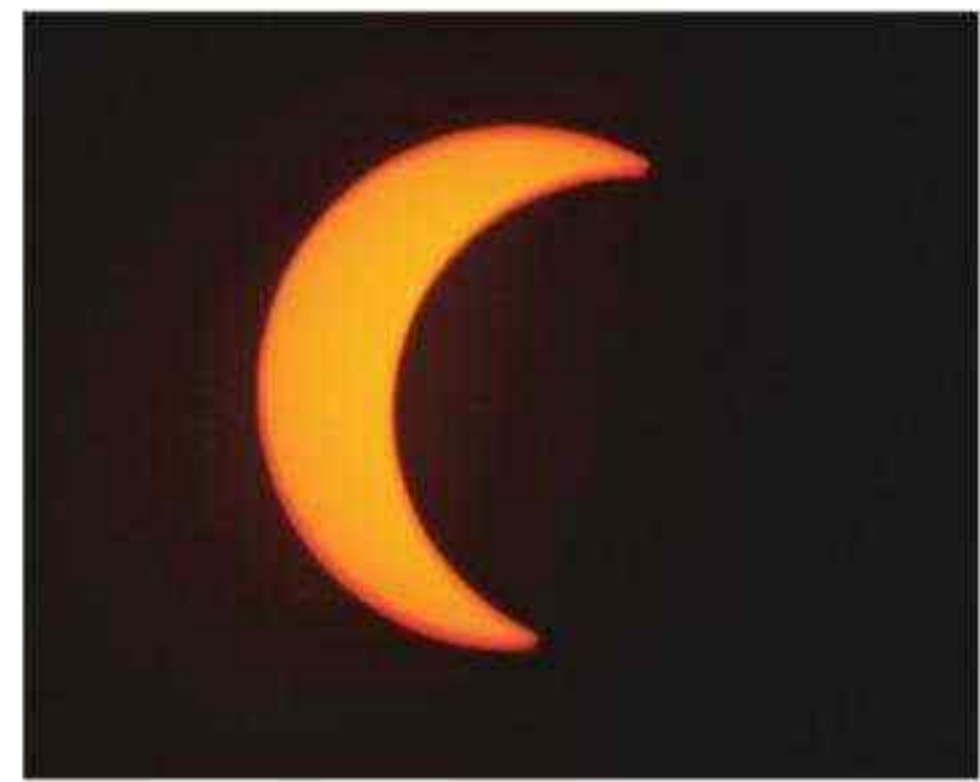


The notebooks of one of the minors arrested in Sambhal. Abhinav Saha

MINORS, MOSTLY school students, are among the thousands arrested, detained, put on notice, or injured, in different cities in Uttar Pradesh, following protests

against the new citizenship law and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC).

In Sambhal, among the 42 arrested, families of at least two claimed that they were boys aged 16 and 17, respectively — both were arrested late last Thursday. In one case, *The Indian Express* accessed Aadhaar details  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



**SUN & MOON**

Watching the solar eclipse from the Sabarmati riverfront in Ahmedabad, Thursday. Javed Raja REPORT, PAGE 2

## Railway board chief hints at passenger fare hike

**AVISHEK G DASTIDAR**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

THE GOVERNMENT is actively considering a hike in fares of passenger trains after over five years since they were last raised when the NDA came to power. Sources told *The Indian Express* that the attempt is to get the hike implemented before the end of this financial year, if the political establishment gives the green signal.

Asked Thursday about the possibility of a fare hike in the future, Railway Board chairman V K Yadav told reporters that "something is being thought

about" on these lines.

"We are going to rationalise both fare and freight. Freight rates are already very high so I don't think we will be raising freight rates... in fact, we need to rationalise freight rates... to bring down logistics cost," Yadav said.

He did not specify a timeline. "Being a very sensitive subject, I will not be able to give you any details, but some thinking is going on," Yadav said.

Late Thursday, however, Railway Board spokesman R D Bajpai said that "there is no proposal to hike fares". "Rationalisation of fare is a  
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**THE EDITORIAL PAGE**

**CAA IS BAD IN LAW, POOR IN HISTORY**

BY ATUL NANDA  
PAGE 12

**EXPLAINED**

**SIMPLY PUT GROUNDWATER SCHEME: WHY, HOW**  
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WHY THE GAMOSA WRAPS THE ASSAMESE SOCIETY TOGETHER

The current wave of anti-CAA protests in Assam has prominently featured the gamosa. Why does this humble piece of cloth remain central to the articulation of Assamese identity?

VIDEO OF THE DAY



CAA PROTEST  
Do you think what you did was right, asks PM Modi

FULL COVERAGE



'DON'T FEAR ANYBODY'  
Mamata asks students to carry on with CAA protests

EXPRESS AUDIO  
Muzaffarnagar and UP government's response to the CAA protests

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In today's episode of the 3 Things podcast, we talk about the alleged crackdown of police in Muzaffarnagar, how things have been on the ground and discuss UP gov't's response to the protests in the state.

FROM PAGE ONE

Ashok Lavasa

evasion of stamp duty in response to questions emailed by *The Indian Express*. Shakuntala Lavasa said that she has paid "stamp duty of Rs 10,42,220 as per law".

When contacted by *The Indian Express* over email, Ashok Lavasa replied, "There is no evasion of stamp duty, which has been paid as per applicable rates by the person liable to do it. It is for the department to ascertain the facts and not indulge in selective leaks."

Novel Lavasa too said that the property transfers were done "by permission of competent authority" and the due stamp duty has been paid. She alleged that these "roving inquiries" were meant to "humiliate and malign me and my family's reputation."

According to the report of IT department, Novel Lavasa's returns show that she sold the first floor of the four-storeyed building in Gurugram to Shakuntala Lavasa for Rs 1.73 crore. This "sale" is corroborated by the returns filed by Shakuntala Lavasa for the financial year 2017-18 in which she has shown the said property as "self-occupied".

"Deduction under relevant section of Income Tax Act has been claimed on the capital gains arising on this transaction in ITR by Mrs Novel Lavasa and no tax has been paid," states the report of the IT department accessed by the newspaper.

However, according to the department, the registered transfer deeds show that Novel Lavasa gifted the property to her husband on 27.12.2018 and Ashok Lavasa, in turn, gifted the same property to his sister, Shakuntala Lavasa, on 21.1.2019. Gift of immovable property between spouses and between blood relatives (parents, children, grandchildren and siblings) does not attract stamp duty as per an order of the Haryana government dated June 16, 2014. The registered deeds state that the above transfers are "on account natural love and affection" and hence are exempt from stamp duty. Any property sale transaction in urban areas of Haryana attracts a payment of stamp duty at 5%.

"The property is shown to have been transferred to Dr Shakuntala Lavasa without consideration as per registered transfer deed whereas as per the ITR, the transfer has been taken place in consideration of Rs 1.73 cr," the report of the IT department states.

"Prima facie, this appears to be a case of stamp duty evasion by Mrs Novel Lavasa and Dr Shakuntala Lavasa. The 'sale' transaction between Mrs. Novel Lavasa and Dr. Shakuntala Lavasa has been camouflaged as 'gift' of immovable property in a circuitous manner — first by Mrs Novel Lavasa to Sh Ashok Lavasa (spouse of Mrs Novel Lavasa) and then by Sh Ashok Lavasa to Dr Shakuntala Lavasa (sister of Ashok Lavasa)," the report further states.

The *Indian Express*, on September 25, had first reported the IT department's probe against three members of the Lavasa family. Novel and Shakuntala have received income tax notices. Abir Lavasa, Ashok Lavasa's son, and the company in which he is a director (Nourish Organic) have also received income tax notices and are facing an investigation by the Enforcement Directorate for alleged violation of foreign exchange laws.

That apart, on August 29 the government wrote to 11 PSUs to verify their records for any exercise of "undue influence" by Ashok Lavasa during his tenure in the Power Ministry from 2009 to 2013.

Incidentally, Ashok Lavasa is one of the three commissioners in the Election Commission (EC) who had on five occasions opposed the clean chit given by the EC to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah on charges of violating the Model Code of Conduct during the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections.

In response to the reports on Lavasa's insistence of having his opposition recorded in the final orders of the EC, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora had said in a statement, "The three members of ECI are not expected to be template or clones of each other. There have been so many times in the past when there has been a vast diversion of views as it can and should be. But the same largely remained within the con-

Army chief slams protests

and college students... the way they are leading masses of crowds to carry out arson and violence in our cities and towns," General Rawat said at a health summit here.

"This is not leadership," the Army chief said. "Even amongst the crowd you find leaders... But leaders are those who lead people in the right direction."

"What is so complex about leadership, if it is all about leadership. It is all about leading. Because when you move for-

ward, everybody follows. It is not that simple. It appears simple, but it is a complex phenomenon," he said.

General Rawat, who is scheduled to retire as Army chief at the end of the month and is seen as the front-runner for the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), is the second top-ranking military officer to comment on the citizenship law and its aftermath.

Earlier this month, Eastern Army Commander Lt General

Anil Chauhan told journalists in Kolkata that "as far as the Indian security scenario is concerned, the current government is keen to take hard decisions which have been pending for a very long time. In the first year of its second term, we have already seen Article 370 revoked and Jammu and Kashmir state has been bifurcated into two."

"The government is keen to conclude the talks with the Nagas which have been going on for a long time. They are primarily assessing its impact on Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur before taking a call on this... you have seen the CAB has been passed despite reservations expressed by couple of North-eastern states," Lt General Chauhan had said. "It would not be hard to guess that some hard decisions in respect of the Left Wing Extremism may also be on the card after this. So the internal security environment is a very challenging one," he said.

The 16-year-old studies in Class VIII. After returning from tuitions last Thursday, he had left home at around 7.30 pm to buy milk from a nearby shop, but went missing since then. "We searched for him for three hours but could not trace him," said the minor's father, who works as a mason in Sambhal. The minor is the youngest of six and the only one enrolled in a nearby school.

"Five days later, his name appeared in a newspaper report, which said he was sent to Bareilly jail," the minor's brother said.

The family claimed he was taken to four locations. "From the police station, he was taken to a location near Chandausi. He said he did not identify the place. After that, he was brought back to Chandausi. From there, he was taken to Moradabad and placed under custody in Bareilly," the brother said.

When contacted, Sambhal SP Yamuna Prasad said: "We have arrested 42 persons related to the protests. But no juvenile has been arrested. We will check and, if they are found to be so, we will produce them before the Juvenile Justice Board."

The other detained minor's family in Sambhal fears that "men from the house will be wrongfully arrested" if they sought bail for him. The only family member fighting for the minor's release is his 70-year old maternal grandmother, who stays with the siblings. "We are poor and cannot raise our voice. Only God can give us justice," she said. The minor's eldest brother said his brother's school records and Aadhaar card proves he is a minor.

In Muzaffarnagar, the 16-year-old who said he was hit a bullet "managed to limp to a house nearby" from where he was brought to his house on a cart. His father took him to a government hospital, he said. The police recorded his statement at the hospital, and asked the family to admit him in a private hospital.

The boy had to be operated upon since the bone on his left leg had been shattered, the family said, adding that he has been advised bed rest for three months. The hospital report stated he was admitted on December 21.

The injured 14-year-old from Muzaffarnagar said he was returning from the madrasa when policemen stopped them. "When they learnt we were returning from a madrasa, they bashed us. My classmate was badly beaten," he said. The police, he alleged, took them to the station and "beat us again in the night".

FULL REPORTS ON  
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Many witness solar eclipse, clouds obscure view in North India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

THURSDAY'S SOLAR eclipse was witnessed by thousands of scientists, students and spiritualists across India. Overcast skies and fog played spoilsport in many areas, particularly north India, but those in towns like Kozhikode were able to watch the eclipse unfold in clear skies.

The Moon slowly masked the Sun to leave a burning ring of fire. The partial phase of the eclipse began at 8 am and the annular phase at 9.06 am. The annular phase ended 12.29 pm, while the partial phase ended at 13.36 pm, the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MES) said.

An annular solar eclipse occurs when the angular diameter of the Moon falls short of the Sun so it cannot cover the latter completely. As a result, the Sun is visible only as a 'ring of fire' around the Moon.

Various temples, including Lord Ayyappa Temple in Sabarimala, Padmanabha

Swamy Temple at Thiruvananthapuram and Krishna temple at Guruvayur were closed during the solar eclipse, believed to be inauspicious by some. In Bhopal's Moti Masjid, Muslim devotees offered Namaz-e-Kusuf, a special prayer.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted to view the phenomenon, but the fog blocked his view. "Like many Indians, I was enthusiastic about #solareclipse2019. Unfortunately, I could not see the Sun due to cloud cover but I did catch glimpses of the eclipse in Kozhikode and other parts on live stream. Also enriched my knowledge on the subject by interacting with experts," he said on Twitter.

When a Twitter user posted a picture of Modi looking up at the Sun and said it was becoming a meme, Modi took the remark in his stride and responded: "Most welcome... enjoy :)".

The next solar eclipse will be visible from India on June 21, 2020. It will also be an annular solar eclipse.

PLA says India-China military ties 'improving', thanks to Modi, Xi efforts

K J M VARMA  
BEIJING, DECEMBER 26

CHINA'S PEOPLE'S Liberation Army (PLA) said on Thursday that its ties with the Indian military are "improving" with the strategic dialogue, practical cooperation and exchanges, thanks to the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping.

Providing an upbeat picture of the relations between the two militaries, Defence spokesman Col Wu Qian said the just-concluded joint counter terrorism

drills in India "showed the determination" of the two sides to protect the regional stability besides fighting terrorism.

"For the China-India relations, military relationship is the important component of the overall relationship," Col Wu told a media briefing here, in response to a question.

"Thanks to the efforts of the two heads of the state, the military relationship is improving and two countries maintain strategic dialogues and conduct practical cooperation, and also strengthen their exchanges

along their borders," he said.

The military ties constituted important component of two informal summits - Wuhuan in 2018 and Chennai this year - between Modi and Xi, especially after the 2017 Doklam stand-off.

Colonel Wu said the PLA looks to further develop its ties with the Indian military in 2020.

"The year 2020 marks the 70th anniversary of the diplomatic ties between China and India, and the two militaries have plans to conduct various exchanges and celebration activities," he said. PTI

Those threatening Hindus would be forced to go to Pak: BJP leader

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DECEMBER 26

BJP SPOKESPERSON B Gopalakrishnan has said some people are threatening Hindus based in Gulf countries for their stand on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and added that those responsible would be "forced to go to Pakistan".

"Indian Union Muslim League has unleashed communal elements. Certain persons are threatening the Hindus in

Gulf. Such persons would be forced to go to Pakistan," he said.

Gopalakrishnan said a hotel owned by a Kerala Hindu in Bahrain was targeted by people from Kerala after he supported the new citizenship law.

Recently, a video on social media showed a group of people from Kerala protesting at a hotel in Bahrain after its owner, who hails from Thrissur, supported the new Act.

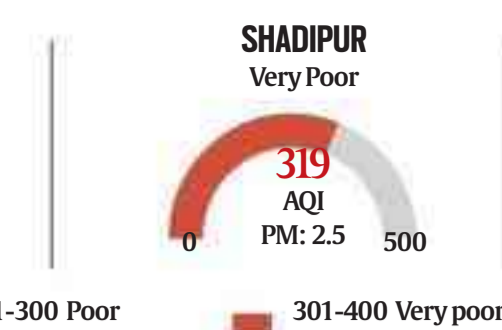
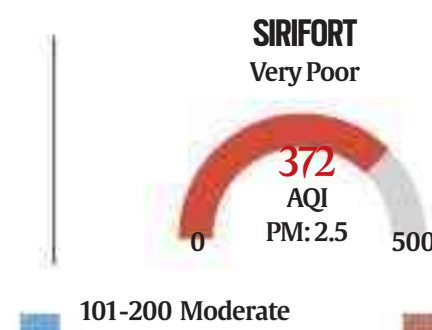
Referring to the LDF government's decision to suspend all activities related to updation of National Population Register in

the state, Gopalakrishnan said, "(CM Pinarayi) Vijayan would be made to initiate the process in the state. Otherwise, Kerala would not get ration under the public distribution system."

Gopalakrishnan's remarks come days after one Ajith Sreedharan, a doctor from Kerala, had to resign from a hospital in Doha after his comments in support of the new law triggered an uproar. Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan on Wednesday visited him at his residence in Kollam and offered him all help.



0-50 Good



'AAP GOVT TAKING CREDIT FOR CENTRE'S WORK'

# It is time Delhi punishes Congress, tukde-tukde gang for unrest: Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

STATING THAT they are responsible for the "current unrest" in the capital, Home Minister Amit Shah said that it is time for the people of Delhi to punish the Congress and the 'tukde-tukde gang'.

Speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony of an 'Integrated Development of East Delhi Hub', a project under the Delhi Development Authority, in East Delhi's Karkardooma, Shah said: "The Opposition, the Congress leadership, created confusion on the Citizenship Amendment Act. After a very long time, Delhi saw people coming out on the streets. Delhi's peace was disturbed. Today, with a lot of responsibility, I want to say that the Opposition destroyed the peace of Delhi by leading people astray. People of Delhi, the police will do its work, but shouldn't you also bring in a government which will bring peace?... It is time for the people



Union Minister Hardeep Puri, L-G Anil Bajjal and Home Minister Amit Shah at the foundation stone laying ceremony of 'Integrated Development of East Delhi Hub'. Anil Sharma

of Delhi to punish the Congress party, and the tukde-tukde gang under them, who are responsible for the lack of peace in Delhi," he said.

Training his guns on the AAP government in Delhi, Shah claimed the party takes credit for development work done in the capital by the Centre.

"Even ahead of Congress's culture, there's another culture at work. Delhi's Chief Minister Kejriwal ji... comes up with new things... why think of a project? Why come up with a budget for it? Why allot land and why even inaugurate? Work is already being done by others — just take it and put your name against it," he

said.

Shah was referring to the Union Cabinet approving the proposal to grant ownership rights to the residents of 1,797 unauthorised colonies in Delhi, for which he claimed Kejriwal will take credit.

"Yesterday, I saw an advertisement saying Delhi government has given drinking water to each house. After getting the 2019 mandate, Modi ji had said in his Independence Day speech that before the 2014 elections, he had promised that the work of providing clean water in the taps of every government will be done by the BJP government. You tell me one thing, how much money did you (the AAP government) provide in your budget for this? What plan of action did you have for this?" he said.

Shah accused the AAP government of obstructing the implementation of central schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and the Ayushman Bharat scheme. "Should the pace of work done in Delhi [by the

Central government] be sped up or not?... the *jhadoo wali sarkar* is a big obstacle. Put in place a chief minister who wants to work, and not one who wants to obstruct work," he said.

The event saw Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri, Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal, Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari, East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir, and area MLA from BJP Om Prakash Sharma, in attendance.

Referring to a 'new work culture' which he claimed was introduced by the Narendra Modi government, Shah said: "The Prime Minister has presented a new work ethic to the people of this country... Under the Congress, a government would create a scheme in five years, allocate budget for the same in the next five years, take another five years to allot land for it, and the next government would forget all about it (the land allocation)... Work would not be done," he said.

## AAP hits back: BJP far removed from reality

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

AAP SAID that Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks were a clear reflection of the fact that the BJP is "far removed" from Delhi's ground reality.

AAP spokesperson Raghav Chadha said that by crediting the Centre for the development works in Delhi, Shah was trying to "get back in the good books" of PM Narendra Modi.

"To claim that AAP has done no development work in the last five years is a classic example of how removed from ground reality BJP is in Delhi," Chadha said.

"There is no doubt that this was his desperate attempt to get back in the good books of Prime Minister after he was reprimanded by him three days ago," he added. Referring to Shah's claims about piped water distribution in Delhi, Chadha said the AAP government increased the coverage area of water supply network from 58 per cent to 93 per cent.

"Who should be credited for that? Which BJP leader should be thanked..." Chadha said.

## Upload list of Urdu, Persian words in FIRs with meanings: HC

PRITAMPAL SINGH  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

OBSERVING THAT the usage of common Urdu words such as *ki-taab*, *ilzaam* and *hawalat* may be permissible, but "obscure and archaic expressions can find no place in an FIR", the Delhi High Court Thursday directed Delhi Police to upload on its website the list of archaic Urdu and Persian words which are used in registering FIRs.

The High Court in a previous order had clarified that Urdu and Persian words of general use can still be used by police while registering FIRs.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shankar said: "...we deem it appropriate to clarify that we have not opined against the use of Urdu words per se. Every language is entitled to command its own respect, and we are conscious of the richness of Urdu as a language."

The HC also directed the Delhi Police Commissioner that its order and circular "be circulated to

police officers concerned, so as to percolate the same in the hierarchy and also to the teaching/educational institutes meant for training of police personnel"

Clarifying the nature of common Urdu words which can be used in complaints, the bench said: "We only seek to emphasise that an FIR...has to be worded in a manner...comprehensible to the common man."

The High Court's observation came on a PIL, which had challenged the Delhi Police's November 20 circular to its stations to stop the use of 383 Urdu or Persian words while registering FIRs. The circular contains their meaning in Hindi and English. For example, *Adam shanakh* translates to unidentified; *Arsaal* to submitted; *Istighasa* to complaint; and *Qalam Band* to writing statement, among other words.

Delhi Police had issued the circular after the HC in August observed that FIRs should be in words of the complainant and flowery language should not to be used.

## Days to polls, EC takes stock of preparedness

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India reviewed poll preparedness in the capital at its headquarters Thursday, ahead of the assembly polls scheduled for February. The meeting had District Election Officers (DEOs), Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCPs), commissioners of municipalities, CEO of Delhi Cantonment Board, nodal officers, chief secretary, and commissioner of Delhi Police in attendance.

The Commission directed DEOs and DCPs to assess vulnerable areas to prevent intimidation

of voters. It directed the transport department to ensure smaller vehicles are available for movement of machines in smaller lanes. It also emphasised on the need to ensure detailed training on EVM/VVPAT.

Ranbir Singh, the Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi, gave a presentation on Delhi's status of preparedness and updated officers on the status of electoral rolls, manpower availability and EVMs/VVPATs. He apprised the EC of other facilities such as ramps, water, wheelchairs, etc. **ENS**

## East Delhi hub to be mix of residential & commercial space

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

DELHI DEVELOPMENT Authority (DDA) officials have said that the first phase of the 'Integrated Development of East Delhi Hub' in Karkardooma — stated to be a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project — will be completed in three-and-a-half years.

TOD is a type of urban development which aims to create integrated urban spaces with resi-

dential, working and leisure spaces within walking distance of each other and public transport. It is aimed at improving self-sustainability, encouraging public transport and walking and optimising density.

The 'East Delhi Hub' in Karkardooma is planned to be developed on 30 hectares of land. Of this, 70% is stated to be put for residential use, 19.92% for commercial use, and 10.08% for common civic amenities. According to the plan, the hub will have

### EXPLAINED E Bringing work and leisure together

THE IDEA behind a TOD is to encourage people to travel shorter distances for work and leisure. The plan is similar to building small self-sustaining pockets within a big city so that people don't have to travel long distances. Among the most crucial things for a TOD project to succeed, town planners say, is that it should be located in proximity to mass transit systems, such as the Delhi Metro.

4,526 residential units, of which 1,108 would be completed in the first phase. It will also have 2,088 EWS residential units, of which 522 are to be completed in the first phase. According to the plan, the hub will include schools, dispensaries, a library, gymnasium and cultural centre.

According to Shailendra Sharma, engineer member, DDA, the location had been selected because of its proximity to two Metro stations — Karkardooma station on the Blue Line and

Karkardooma Court station on the Pink Line — and to the Anand Vihar bus terminal and the Anand Vihar Terminal railway station. Both Metro stations are located within the layout of the hub.

Home Minister Amit Shah said that the cost of the project is estimated to be Rs 1,400 crore: "It's a mixed use project. There will be residential units for the poor, connection from within to both the nearby Metro stations... 30% of the area will be developed as green open public space."

AVG MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE MAY FALL TO 19.15 DEGREES: IMD

# '2019 December could be the second coldest since 1901'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

THIS DECEMBER could be the second coldest in 118 years in Delhi if the average maximum temperature meets the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) estimation.

Between 1901 and 2018, only four Decembers have had average maximum temperature below 20 degrees Celsius, an IMD official said. This December, the mean maximum temperature recorded as of Thursday was 19.85 degrees, with the IMD expecting the average of the entire month to come to 19.15 degrees.

"If this happens, it will be the second coldest December since 1901 — after 1997 when the average maximum temperature was 17.3 degrees," the official said.

Average maximum temperature has been below or equal to 20 degrees in 1919 (19.8 degrees), 1929 (19.8 degrees), 1961 (20 de-



grees) and 1997 (17.3 degrees).

The lowest maximum temperature recorded in Delhi this month was 12.2 degrees on December 18 at the IMD's Safdarjung observatory, and 11.4 degrees on December 25 at the Palam observatory.

Severe cold or cold day conditions have prevailed over Delhi-NCR since December 14, and are expected to continue till

December 29, an official said.

The reason behind this, as per an IMD report, is the "persistence of cold northwesterly winds" over northwest India and other favourable meteorological conditions. After December 29, the wind direction over Delhi-NCR is expected to change from northwesterly to easterly, which would reduce the severity of the cold weather. Under the influence of

an approaching Western Disturbance, wind speed is expected to increase significantly and light rain is expected over Delhi-NCR from the night of December 31 to January 2. A hailstorm is also expected on the first two days of the new year.

On Thursday, the maximum temperature recorded was 13.4 degrees Celsius, 8.2 degrees Celsius lower than normal.

## THE WEEK AHEAD

Day	Min	Max
Fri	5.0	15.0
Sat	4.0	16.0
Sun	4.0	15.0
Mon	5.0	16.0
Tue	6.0	16.0
Wed	7.0	16.0

All figures in °C

Max temperature was 13.4°C Thursday. Praveen Khanna

## Seelampur: FIR claims ex-Cong MLA incited crowd, he denies charge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

IN AN FIR filed in violence in Seelampur during a protest against the new citizenship law, police have accused an AAP councillor and a former Congress MLA for allegedly inciting the crowd.

The FIR was filed against unknown persons based on a complaint of the SHO of Jaffrabad police station on December 17.

The FIR claims several protesters were shouting slogans and held a bike rally under the "leadership" of former MLA and Congress leader Mateen Ahmed. The police officer said the protesters did not seek permission for the bike rally and the protest.

It also names East MCD councillor Abdul Rehman.

The two leaders have denied the charges.

Rehman said, "The FIR is to



Violence broke out in Seelampur area during anti-CAA protests in capital

defame me and is completely untrue."

Ahmed said, "I too condemn the violence. We didn't lead any protest."

Meanwhile, Delhi Police Thursday opposed the bail pleas of nine of the 16 accused arrested in connection with a violent protest in Darya Ganj. The court reserved its order on their bail applications for December 28.

## Detentions, denial of medical help: Report on Jamia violence

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

A FACT finding report on the incidents in Jamia Millia Islamia between December 13 and 15 alleged excessive use of police force on students and protesters, both inside and outside the campus, as well as "illegal" detentions and "deliberate denial of medical help" to those in police custody.

The report, released on Friday, has been compiled by a six-member team of the People's Union for Democratic Rights. The report also claims that several injured students took refuge in the a women's hostel within the campus to escape police action.

"The extent of cruelty shown by police is wholly unacceptable... the nature of injuries make clear that they were intended to cause maximal damage," read the report on the police crack-

down on the campus on December 15.

It stated that around 85 students had sought treatment at Alshifa Hospital. Of the total, 35 required stitches, 15-20 suffered orthopaedic fractures, and around 20 sustained head injuries.

According to the report, residents of the women's J&K hostel took several men who they recognised or were severely injured, to the first floor of the hostel and switched off the lights. When an ambulance managed to enter the campus at around 7:30 pm, three severely injured men were taken out from the hostel.

The report also stated that security guards on the campus were also beaten, as was the imam of the campus mosque.

A senior police official of the South East district said that they denied all the allegations made in the report.

## For socio-economic survey, Delhi govt collects data of 21 lakh households

SOURAV ROY BARMAN  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

OVER THE last one year, the Delhi government has collected data on a range of parameters — including caste, income, place of origin and mental illnesses — from 21.38 lakh households, according to information obtained by *The Indian Express* through RTI.

The data collection drive was part of a 'socio-economic survey' carried out between November 10, 2018, and November 10, 2019, at a cost of Rs 21.79 crore, according to the RTI.

A planning department official said the government will use the data, which is being tabulated currently, for more effective implementation of its social

## Fire in East Delhi building, 40 rescued

New Delhi: Delhi Fire Services (DFS) personnel rescued over 40 people from a fire in a building in East Delhi's Krishna Nagar Thursday. The fire was doused within two hours and no casualties were reported.

DFS chief Atul Garg said that they received a call at 2.10 am and deployed five fire tenders to the location.

"When we reached the building, the ground floor was gutted and the smoke had spread to the first and the second floor. There were around 10-12 people standing on the rooftop screaming for help and a few locals were throwing water inside the building," said a firefighter.

Garg said the building housed a godown: "This time, we were informed that the residential building houses a godown on the ground floor. Half of the team doused the fire on the ground floor while the others used ladders to rescue the people on the upper floors and rooftop."

DFS officials said the fire broke out in the building's ground floor, which housed a godown with plastic and cardboard packaging materials. They are yet to ascertain the cause of the fire. Just days ago, nine people were killed in a fire which broke out in a godown of a building in Kirari. **ENS**

## YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

AN EXPRESS RTI APPLICATION

welfare schemes and "better hyperlocal interventions" by the way of creating even ward-specific profiles.

Data relating to 63 different parameters — covering health, education, income, gender and caste, among others — has been collected under the survey, the broad framework of which was created following the starvation deaths of three minor girls at East Delhi's Mandawali in July, 2018.

The Directorate of Economics and Statistics carried out the survey, which was announced in

August, 2018. Touted as the "biggest such survey till date" by the government, the initial plan was to cover 38 lakh households within four months at an estimated cost of Rs 10 crore.

However, work was delayed due to a number of factors, including around 60 per cent of the 7,000 surveyors — appointed on a contractual basis — leaving midway, the Lok Sabha elections and "non-cooperation of residents", according to the RTI.

"Around 3,000 field surveyors were there who completed their assignment either fully or partly... Delay in survey was due to non-availability of requisite number of field surveyors... induction of Model Code of Conduct due to the general elections and non-cooperation by the residents in different

parts of Delhi.

"Field survey closed on 10/11/2019. Data is under process. Finalised data will be made available in public domain after completion of tabulation subject to the approval of competent authority. The finalisation of data may take a couple of months," the response added.

The surveyors, who were paid Rs 25 per person surveyed, collected information through an app. They were also directed to target areas housing the needy and the poor on a priority basis. The homeless population is not under the purview of the survey.

Explaining the need for the survey, an official said existing statistics available with the government are extrapolation of limited sample sizes.

## More than 22,000 incidents of fire this year: DFS data

JIGNASA SINHA  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

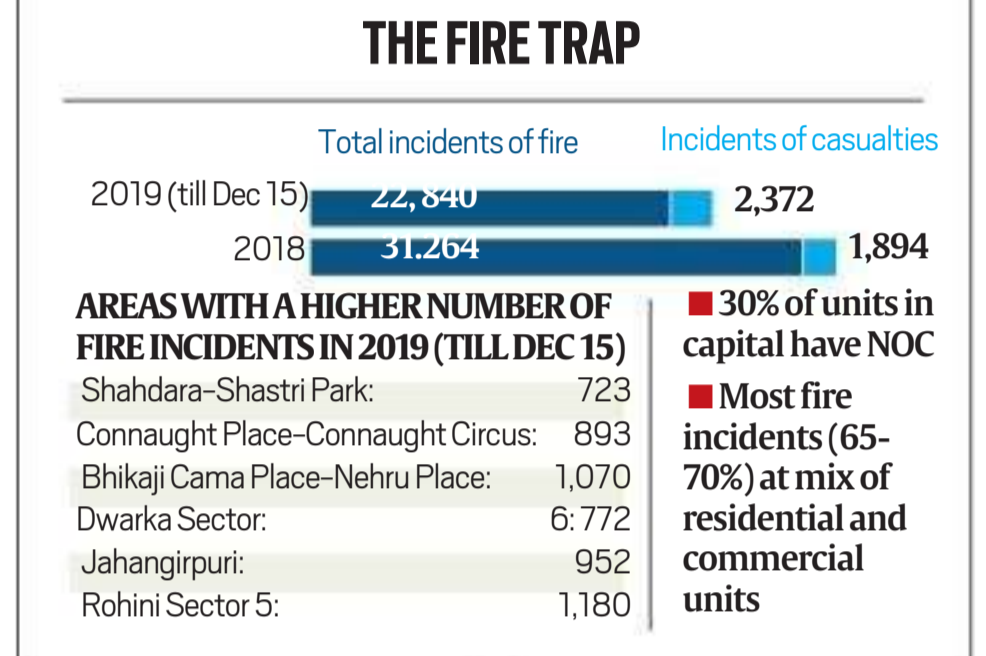
THURSDAY'S FIRE in a building in East Delhi's Krishna Nagar that served as a godown could have been as destructive as the fires in Old Delhi's Anaj Mandi area and in Kirari, officials at the Delhi Fire Services said.

What made this fire call different was that the officials knew that they were dealing with a fire in a residential-commercial space.

Atul Garg, director, DFS, said they often get information that the fire is in a residential unit, but the reality turns out to be different. "Once we reach the spot, we find that a godown or a factory is on fire. The raw materials and machines inside these units create a lot of smoke... we then have to call in other tenders and deploy more men to the spot. This wastes time," said Garg.

He added there could be unknown and hazardous substances inside the building. "A commercial unit could have machines and materials dangerous for the firemen. If we are informed about the commercial space beforehand, we send more teams to douse the fire and are better prepared," said Garg.

The first responders after a



fire breaks, DFS receives approximately 60 calls every day.

More than 22,840 incidents of fire were recorded until December 15 this year by the DFS, of which there were deaths or injuries in over 2,372 incidents. The total incidents of fire in 2019 may be less compared to the previous year, but the number of casualties has increased in the city.

The data also states that South West Delhi, North West Delhi, Dwarka and Rohini saw a higher number of incidents of fire. Areas such as Rohini, Janakpuri and Nehru Place have recorded more than 1,000 incidents each in 2019.

According to data collected by the DFS, about 65-75% of inci-

idents of fire occur in buildings that house both residential and commercial units. Fire officials said most of these buildings don't have a fire NOC (No Objection Certificate) and are located in unauthorised colonies.

The DFS official said it would be beneficial for both the victim and the fireman if the caller informs them about the basic infrastructure of the building. "Only a handful of the population in the city live and work in space that has a fire NOC. According to our data, only 30% of the people in Delhi have NOC for their houses. Others live in unauthorised colonies or places and have not even applied for it yet," said a DFS official.

## BRIEFLY



The buses have panic buttons, CCTVs

## CM flags off 100 buses

New Delhi: With CM Arvind Kejriwal flagging off 100 new standard-floor buses, the Delhi government's proposal to induct 1,000 such buses crossed the halfway mark Thursday. The 37-seater standard-floor buses equipped with CCTVs and panic buttons are being commissioned in batches since August. As of now, around 6,000 buses are plying in the national capital.

## Teen held for stealing

New Delhi: An 18-year-old man was arrested by the police for allegedly stealing a mobile phone at a church near Gole Dak Khana on Christmas. The man was caught by the police and a case was registered at Mandir Marg police station.

## Road safety drive for schools

Gurgaon: Schools in Gurgaon will soon have to carry out a drive on road safety to train their drivers and conductors, SDM directed officials of the Department of Education Thursday. **ENS**

## Insufficient funds hit Delhi govt's solar scheme for RWAs

ANANYA TIWARI  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

COOPERATIVE GROUP housing societies in Delhi wishing to install solar panels on rooftops through the Mukhyamantri Solar Rooftop Yojana scheme are struggling to get funding or installations done free of cost, which are guaranteed by the project.

Under the scheme launched in 2018, housing societies opting for the Renewable Energy Service Co (RESCO) model will get solar panels installed for free by solar developers in return for a commitment to keep them in place for 20-25 years.

At the Arya Group Housing Society in Patparganj, the resident welfare association (RWA) planned to install solar panels a year ago, but a company that showed interest in setting up the project was denied funding by the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA). The society had opted for the RESCO model as society members did not want to foot installation charges of Rs 35 lakhs.

Sandeep Bandu, RWA member, said, "Around a year ago we decided to get rooftop solar installations in the RESCO model for around 200 kW. Our society has a capacity of 80-90 kW and we wanted to generate extra power. With lowered tariffs, plus selling surplus energy at Rs 4.50/unit, we hoped to save Rs 12-14 lakh a year. However, the solar company could not get funding from IREDA."

While IREDA is one of the agencies listed for funding under the scheme, an official from the agency said the project was too small in scale. "IREDA finances commercial projects above 2 MW capacity, depending on



Many housing societies are giving up on the scheme

profit margins. IREDA has financed rooftop projects for schools and railways," the official said.

The Arya Group Housing Society gave up the project after it failed to get loans from banks as well. The same story played out for some other societies.

As per the Delhi government scheme, most domestic installations, even aggregated ones, range below 1 MW, said an official at the power department of the Delhi government.

Government officials admitted the scheme is facing problems. Padmini Singla, secretary of power department of Delhi government, said, "RESCO projects are running into problems because banks are not giving funds. Ultimately, banks need finances to fund projects. Also the return from such investments takes a long time, around 25 years."

A K Jha, advisor to Delhi government's power department, said, "There are around 10-12 societies in Delhi that have installed panels through RESCO, and around 35-40 using their own money. In the past six months, around 500 projects of around 15,000 MW capacity for domestic and social institutions have been sanctioned. However, for the past few months, funding is getting difficult for such projects," he said.

## Labourer dies in wall collapse at Gurgaon construction site

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
GURGAON, DECEMBER 26

A LABOURER working at a construction site in Gurgaon's Sector 50 died Thursday evening after a wall collapsed on him while he was operating a pokland machine, said Gurgaon Police.

According to police, the incident took place around 4.30 pm, while the victim was trying to break a wall. The structure, however, collapsed on top of

the machine he was operating, burying him underneath.

"Police and ambulance services were dispatched as soon as information was received on the incident. But it took over two hours to retrieve his body, by which point he had succumbed to the injuries," said Subhash Boken, PRO of Gurgaon Police.

"His body has been kept in the mortuary, and the post-mortem is yet to be conducted. An FIR has not been filed yet," PRO Boken said.

## AT FIRST TOWN HALL MEET

# Will make Delhi cleanest city in 5 years: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal Thursday said his government's target for the next five years, if it comes to power, will be to make Delhi "the cleanest in the world".

Addressing a packed 'Town Hall Meeting' at Malavankar Auditorium, attended by residents and AAP members, Kejriwal said that in the past five years the Delhi government has worked on issues that are crucial for the foundation and growth of a nation. "These issues are education and health. No country can move forward unless its people are properly educated... If a party is not giving importance to education, not talking about improving schools, colleges and universities, not talking about giving proper education to citizens, then that party can never make the nation progress," Kejriwal said.

While Thursday's meeting covered the New Delhi con-

stituency, the AAP will conduct six more such 'town hall meetings' at six other Lok Sabha constituencies in Delhi. The meetings are a brainchild of the Indian Political Action Committee (IPAC), a political advocacy group that the AAP joined hands with earlier this month, and they are aimed at reaching out to sections of society that do not necessarily attend mass rallies.

At the meeting, the CM discussed 'AAP ka report card', launched earlier this week, and emphasised his government's major achievements in the past five years, including in power, water, women's safety, education and other areas.

He added that his "target and promise" for the coming years is to make Delhi the cleanest city in the world. "There are mounds of garbage at places, there are mosquitos, mud, filth from sewers, unclean drains, and the three mountains of garbage (landfills). We have to clean all of this," he said. The mandate of sanitation in the city lies with Delhi's mu-



AAP will conduct six more town hall meetings in the remaining constituencies. Amit Mehra

nicipal bodies, which are controlled by the BJP.

Asked by a resident about steps taken by the government to ensure safety of women in the city, Kejriwal said everyone, including the police, government and society, needs to work to control rising crimes against women and children.

"Police needs to strengthen its force and needs to instill peo-

ple's faith in them. Parents are terrified of going to the police and report a crime on their child, out of fear of denigration and blame," the CM said.

He added that the Delhi government has installed CCTV cameras across the city, deployed 13,000 bus marshalls, and is putting up more than 2 lakh streetlights to ensure women's safety.

Kejriwal also appealed to

### CM SPEAKS

**"Police needs to strengthen its force and needs to instill people's faith in them. Parents are terrified of going to the police and report a crime on their child out of fear of denigration..."**

**"No country can move forward unless its people are properly educated... If a party is not giving importance to education, it can never make the nation progress"**

ARVIND KEJRIWAL  
DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

women to have a word with their sons and brothers about the issue. "Instead of saving the convicts from punishment, tell them you will disown them if they ever commit such a crime, to make them realise their fault."

Replying to another question on "free schemes", the Chief Minister said the Delhi government had pointed out that revenue was surplus for the last five years. The same, he said, was found by the CAG in a recent audit, because they were an "honest government".

He also said the government has not increased tax rates in the city and has brought down VAT from 12% to 5%. To a question on when the entire city will get clean water, Kejriwal said: "When we came to power, we found 2,300 areas were not getting clean water and now only nearly 125 areas do not get clean water. We are changing water lines in these areas too. In the coming five years, we will also give you a report on the water quality of every area in the city."

# 6 GOVT & POLITICS



**DELHI CONFIDENTIAL**



## STEPPING OUT

**TRINAMOOL CONGRESS** Lok Sabha MP Saugata Roy has resigned from the Joint Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill 2019. Trinamool sources said a miffed Roy, whose name was announced in the House, took the step after party chief Mamata Banerjee insisted on the inclusion of Mahua Moitra in the committee. Moitra has been pursuing the issue in court.

## VISIT OFF, TALKS ON

**JAPANESE PRIME** Minister Shinzo Abe's visit may have been called off earlier this month due to protests in Assam over the new citizenship law, but New Delhi and Tokyo are not letting that affect the bilateral dialogue between the two sides. An Indian team went to Tokyo this week and held talks on maritime affairs and disarmament and non-proliferation — both key strategic areas. While no concrete outcomes were announced, it is expected that the deliverables will be part of Abe's visit in 2020.

## CAPITAL TEAM

**WHILE THE** Congress had pulled 72-year-old Subhash Chopra out of political wilderness and handed him the baton of the Delhi Congress ahead of Assembly elections, it has given the task of selecting candidates to a young team. So AICC in-charge of Gujarat and former Youth Congress chief Rajeev Satav will head a committee that will screen the candidates. He will be assisted by two young AICC secretaries — Virender Singh Rathore from Haryana and Challa Vamshi Chand Reddy from Telangana. While some senior leaders prefer a seat-sharing understanding between the Congress and AAP, most of the state leaders are said to be against the idea.

# Oppn leaders slam Army chief remark: Undermines civil-military relations

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

**ARMY CHIEF** General Bipin Rawat on Thursday came under fire from Opposition leaders after he criticised people leading protests against the new citizenship law. While Congress leaders accused him of undermining civil-military relations, the CPM asked whether India is going the Pakistan way of "politicising the military".

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury tweeted, "Army Chief's remark on CAA is highly objectionable, unethical and beyond his remit, he is appeared to be a BJP leader who is going to be promoted or rewarded as cds. Rawat needs to

be restrained to maintain the impartiality of our army".

"Since when have Army Chiefs started commenting about internal affairs? It undermines civil-military relations whose cornerstone is that Armed Forces neither comment or interfere in domestic politics. This has been our singular success going back to 1947," former Union minister and senior Congress leader Manish Tewari said.

Former Union minister Yashwant Sinha said, "There are many ways in which democratic norms are being destroyed in India. But Army Chief Bipin Rawat wading into the current political controversy is a new low. Must be nipped in the bud."

Referring to General Rawat's

remarks that leaders are not those who lead masses to carry out arson, senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh tweeted, "I agree General Saheb but also leaders are not those who allow their followers to indulge in genocide...Do you agree with me General Saheb?"

The Congress did not make an official statement. Asked about the Army Chief's remark, party spokesperson Ajay Maken, who was addressing a press meet at AICC headquarters, said, "Well, he is Army chief and we would desist from making any comments on his statement."

The CPM was scathing. In a statement, the party said the "Army Chief's statement undermines as to how the situation has degenerated under the Modi gov-

ernment where the highest officer in uniform can so brazenly breach the limits of his institutional role".

"It is, therefore, necessary to raise the question as to whether we are going the Pakistan way of politicising the military. Such obnoxious interference in matters of democratic struggles from top-ranking military professionals is unheard of in the history of independent India," the CPM said and demanded that the Army Chief apologise to the nation "for his indiscretion which has extremely adverse ramifications for the Constitutional arrangement in the country".

It also demanded that "the government takes note of such a breach and censures the General".

In Hyderabad, AIMIM chief and Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi said the Army should not interfere in civilian issues and argued that the right to protest was a fundamental right.

"If whatever Army chief says is true, then I want to ask the government, our Prime Minister writes in his website that he participated in the struggle during the Emergency as a student... according to him (Rawat) that is also wrong," Owaisi said.

Responding to the remark, activist-politician Yogendra Yadav said, "I agree with him. Yes, leaders should lead (people) in the appropriate direction. I am absolutely sure, he has the prime minister of this country in mind when talking about that."

## Dushyant says JJP leaders will talk to rebel MLA

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 26

**A DAY** after Narnaul MLA Ram Kumar Gautam quit as JJP's national vice president, Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala said that "senior leaders of the party would speak to him to look into his grievances".

Speaking to the journalists at JJP's office here, Dushyant said that the state party chief was authorised to take action if any loss was caused to the party by his grievances (actions).

Upset with the denial of a cabinet berth in the BJP-JJP alliance, Gautam had announced that he was quitting from the senior party post. He had taken on Dushyant for keeping all the ten portfolios with him stating that "he did not share power with anybody else".



Mamata Banerjee at a protest march against the new citizenship law and NRC. Express

## Mamata: BJP playing with fire, even I don't know father's birth date

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 26

**WEST BENGAL** Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday warned the BJP against "playing with fire", asking students to carry on with their movement against the new citizenship law and proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). The TMC supreme alleged the BJP was creating confusion over citizenship with "the CAA, NRC and now National Population Register (NPR)".

"This government is afraid of the movement. I warn the BJP not to play with fire," Banerjee said, asking students not to be scared. "This government is even persecuting the students... They (students) are the voters of the country. It is their right to protest. No one can stop them..." she said.

Asserting that she herself doesn't know the birth date or place of her father, she said, "They (BJP) are lying and creating confusion. Now for NPR, people are being asked about the date of birth of their parents, especially their father. I don't know the date of birth of my father. I can tell when my father died. But in those days (when her father was born), people hardly kept records of date of birth. When I can't say it, how will you?" Banerjee said. It is to be noted that the West

Bengal government has already stayed NPR work in the state.

Banerjee also warned BJP of "dire consequences" if it continues to take action against people protesting against the new citizenship law in BJP-ruled states. "They are saying they will take action against people who are protesting. We also have laws. We are warning them. In many states, other parties are in power. If they start doing the same against the BJP, they will be in problem," she said.

She also accused the BJP of not keeping its promises, referring to her Karnataka counterpart B S Yediyurappa's remark about putting on hold compensation to families of two people killed in police firing on anti-CAA protesters in Mangaluru.

"If you make a promise, you should keep it. A TMC delegation will be sent to Karnataka to meet the families of the victims allegedly killed in police firing there. We have decided the TMC trade union will hand over cheques of Rs 5 lakh each to the families," said Banerjee.

Her announcement came a day after the Karnataka CM told reporters that his government would not give a single rupee to the families of the two persons, if investigation proved their involvement in violence during the December 19 anti-CAA protests.

## Narayanasamy says will not implement new citizenship law in Puducherry

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, PUDUCHERRY, DECEMBER 26

**PUDUCHERRY CHIEF** Minister V Narayanasamy on Thursday claimed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act "ignores" Muslims and that he will not implement the newly enacted law, as well as the NRC, in the Union Territory "come what may". The Congress Chief Minister alleged that the new citizenship law and the NRC were aimed at achieving the goal of "Hindutva, as championed by the BJP".

"Even Tamils from Sri Lanka residing in India as refugees were persecuted in the Island country. Why you have left them out? Similar is the case with the Rohingya," he told PTI over phone.

Saying that the new law "ignores" Indian Muslims, he said, "It cannot be done in a partisan way. You have to include people of all the religions. You can't do it selectively for the people of some religions. Come what may, I will not implement CAA and NRC in Puducherry."

Narayanasamy, who addressed participants at the end of a rally, condemned the new law and reiterated his stand that Puducherry government would not implement the Act.

# Cong alleges 'more sinister agenda' behind NPR exercise

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

**THE CONGRESS** on Thursday accused the Central government of bringing the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the garb of the National Population Register (NPR), arguing that the pre-test of the NPR had questions that are required for the NRC.

However, the Opposition party was silent on whether the Congress governments in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Punjab would stop the NPR exercise.

The Congress said the party will not have any objection to the NPR exercise if the Central government reverts to the questionnaire used by the UPA government. It asserted that the NPR exercise conducted by the UPA government in 2010 was not linked to the NRC.

The ruling BJP hit back, putting out an old video clip of former Home Minister P Chidambaram in which he said "...the NPR process is for the purpose of issuing the resident card which eventually will lead to a citizenship card later".

Reacting to this, Chidambaram tweeted, "I am happy that the BJP has released a

## Cong slams JD(U)'s Kishor

**New Delhi:** JD(U) leader Prashant Kishor came in for attack from the Congress for his remarks that the party should ask its Chief Ministers to declare that they will not implement NRC in their respective states. "Beats the life out of me, on how Mr Prashant Kishor goes about preaching how the Congress and Rahul Gandhi should ensure opposing CAA-NRC in Congress ruled states, but does not offer the same advice to his own clients?! Hypocrisy or strategy? Your call!" senior Congress leader Manish Tewari said. **ENS**

video clip of the launch of NPR in 2010. Please listen to the video. We were enumerating the 'usual residents' of the country. The emphasis is on residency not citizenship. Every usual resident was to be enumerated irrespective of his or her religion or place of birth. The NPR aided the preparation of the Census of 2011. There was no mention of NRC."

# BJP: Congress, Communists speaking language of Jinnah

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

**BJP MP** Virendra Singh Mast on Thursday slammed the Opposition "Congress and Communist party", saying they were speaking the language of Mohammed Ali Jinnah on the new citizenship law.

Mast, who heads the party's farmers' wing BJP Kisan Morcha, said Jinnah used to call the Congress the party of Hindus and addressed Mahatma Gandhi as the leader only of Hindus even though the Congress during those times had all kinds of leaders and never claimed to represent only Hindus.

# BJP: Congress, Communists speaking language of Jinnah

Now, the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi represent the whole country and never said they represent only Hindus, but the Congress and Communists are saying that the party and leaders like Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah only represent Hindus, Mast said.

When the government announced policies for farmers, it never said these would only benefit one particular section. They were for all sections, he said, adding that the PM's slogan 'sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka viswas' showed that the government stood for all. Farmers across the country were angry with the Opposition for speaking the language of Jinnah, he said, adding

the Morcha would speak to farmers on the issue.

Meanwhile, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra hit out at senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his liar jibe at the PM. Calling him "jhothon ka sarda" (master of lies), Patra said that detention camps in Assam were set up when the Congress headed governments in the state and Centre. He was referring to a tweet by Rahul alleging that Modi was lying to the country on the issue of detention camps in Assam.

He also highlighted the "white paper" issued by the Assam government on illegal migrants and said it had spoken about setting up detention centres.

—WITHPTIINPUTS

## GOOD GOVERNANCE INDEX RELEASED BY CENTRAL GOVT

# TN tops among big states, Puducherry best-governed UT

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

**TAMIL NADU** has topped the Good Governance Index released by the Centre on Wednesday, followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

The government celebrates December 25 as Good Governance Day to mark the birthday of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Odisha, Bihar, Goa, and Uttar Pradesh did not fare well in the Big States category and Jharkhand was at the bottom of the list.

The other two classifications are North-East and Hill States, and Union Territories.

HOW THE STATES RANKED			
BIG STATES	SCORE	N-E AND HILL STATES	SCORE
Tamil Nadu	5.62	Himachal Pradesh	5.22
Maharashtra	5.40	Uttarakhand	4.87
Karnataka	5.10	Tripura	4.50
Chhattisgarh	5.05	Mizoram	4.41
Andhra Pradesh	5.05	Sikkim	4.21

In the North-East and Hill States category, Himachal Pradesh ranked first, followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim. Jammu and Kashmir is at the sixth place, followed by Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

Among the Union Territories, Puducherry emerged as the best-governed, ahead of Chandigarh and Delhi. Lakshadweep was found to be the worst-performing.

The rankings were launched by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances and the Centre for Good Governance. A government statement said the index is a uniform tool to assess the status of governance and the im-

pact of various interventions by state governments and Union Territories.

"The Index was designed scientifically based on various parameters of governance," said Jitendra Singh, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, while releasing the index on Wednesday.

As per the methodology of

the index, states are assessed on their performance in 10 sectors — agriculture and allied sectors, commerce and industries, human resource development, public health, public infrastructure and utilities, economic governance, social welfare and development, judicial and public security, environment and citizen-centric governance.

In the agriculture and allied sector, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Daman and Diu are the best performing states in their respective classifications, taking into account the growth rate of agriculture and allied sector, foodgrain production, horticulture produce, milk and meat production, and crop insurance. In the category of commerce and industries, Jharkhand was at the top among big states,

Uttarakhand among hill states and Delhi among Union Territories.

West Bengal emerged as the topper in the Environment category among the big states and Jammu and Kashmir has topped among the North-East and Hill States. Chhattisgarh has topped the Social Welfare and Development Sector ranking among big states and Meghalaya is on the top in its category.

In Economic Governance, Karnataka has emerged at the top among big states and Uttarakhand has topped among North-East and Hill States. In terms of Public Infrastructure and Utilities, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh have topped their respective categories. Kerala is on top in terms of Public Health.

## Kerala cabinet nod to Rs 1.3 cr compensation to ex-ISRO scientist

**SHAJU PHILIP**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DECEMBER 26

**THE KERALA** cabinet on Thursday approved a recommendation that former ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan be paid Rs 1.3 crore as compensation for his unlawful arrest and torture while in police custody.

The recommended amount would be paid to the scientist accused in the ISRO spy case, apart from the compensation of Rs 50 lakh he was given following a Supreme Court order and Rs 10 lakh suggested by the National Human Rights Commission.

An official communication from the state government said Rs 1.3 crore would be given for

settling a suit Narayanan had filed at the sub-court in Thiruvananthapuram in 2003. The recommendation was made by former chief secretary K Jayakumar, who was assigned by the government to look into the issue and suggest remedies. The cabinet on Thursday gave its approval for the recommendation.

In 1994, Narayanan was accused of selling vital secrets associated with Indian space technology to Pakistan. Though he was later acquitted by a CBI court and the Supreme Court in 1998, he spent a total of 50 days in jail along with fellow scientist D Sasikumar and four others.

In 2018, he was compensated Rs 50 lakh by the Supreme Court for "unnecessary arrest, harassment and mental cruelty".

# 8 EXPRESS NETWORK

## Many doubts on dept merger move, Rly Board chief tries to allay fears

**AVISHEK G DASTIDAR**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

SEVERAL RAILWAY officers spoke up against the proposed merger of services at a video conference with Railway Board chairman V K Yadav and other Board members held on Thursday.

The conference was held to get a sense of the effect of the massive administrative restructuring announced by the Cabinet earlier this week on officers across the organisation.

Those who expressed apprehension about the move to merge all eight Group A railway services — five technical and three non-technical — were mostly from the civil services working in zonal units. Top officers in the fields belonging to engineering services either remained silent or supported the move.

Sources said some service-specific officers' associations have informally started exploring legal options as well, although nothing has crystallised as yet.

In the video conference, addressed to Group A officers, most of them in mid-management to upper management in zones, Yadav is learnt to have sought to allay their misgivings about the sudden move and said that both seniority and promotion prospects of officers will be taken care of after the merger. He is also learnt to have said that merger of the existing services does not mean that an officer working in one department will be asked to do the job of his counterpart in another.

Many participating officers said they were given to understand that this outreach by the Railway Board, and possibly also by the minister in future, will continue.

Many present at the meeting said the main point of contention was that once the services are merged, the engineering services would stand to gain more than the civil servants — Traffic, Accounts and Personnel — mainly due to the age disparity between the two; and that civil services cannot possibly be clubbed with engi-

## 2 soldiers killed during training for bridge construction in Pune

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
PUNE, DECEMBER 26

Two Indian Army soldiers died and nine others, including an officer and eight soldiers, were injured during a training session for the construction of a bridge on the premises of the College of Military Engineering (CME) in Pune. A Court of Inquiry (CoI) has been ordered into the incident.

According to defence officials, the incident took place around noon on Thursday when a unit of soldiers from various engineering regiments was training on a Bailey Suspension Bridge (BSB), which is used extensively when instant construction of bridges is required.

During the training session, the support tower of the under-

### EXPLAINED

#### Need to address worries

THE MOVE seems to have taken officers down the ranks by surprise, and a large section of bureaucracy is apprehensive about their future, most of them civil servants. If the merger does not address these concerns, the big move runs the risk of turning against the very objective with which it was conceived.

neering services.

An officer said, "Engineers usually join the service in early 20s, whereas civil servants generally join a few years later. So in the same year's batch, the engineering officer would be a few years younger than his civil servant counterpart. If they are merged, several officers stand to lose their seniority and promotion prospects."

This is a contention the organisation has said will be addressed through the government's alternate mechanism of the Committee of Secretaries and Group of Ministers.

Yadav told *The Indian Express*: "As per DoPT rules, if you are a topper in your batch and I am a topper in my batch, then the older among the two of us gets promotion. We will follow something similar. There is no need for anyone to worry. I am going to say this to young officers."

An officer from an Engineering service told *The Indian Express* that civil servants' apprehensions are unfounded. "After 15-20 years, every officer has enough experience to get the work done in any department. As an engineer, my job is mainly managerial in nature, which involves decision-making and running a team. It is not strictly technical. Look at heavy engineering organisations, for instance. Many of them are headed by officers from civil services," the officer said.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## One acquitted in Jaipur blasts case is held again in another case

**HAMZA KHAN**  
JAIPUR, DECEMBER 26

THE RAJASTHAN Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) on Thursday said it has re-arrested five persons in the 2008 Jaipur bomb blasts case — including Shahbaz Hussain, a 42-year-old resident of Lucknow, who was acquitted last week in connection with all other cases linked to the blasts.

In the blasts on May 13, 2008, nine bombs exploded at eight locations in Jaipur's crowded old city between 7.20 pm and 7.45 pm, killing 71 and injuring 185. The latest arrests are linked to the recovery of a live bomb, which was defused in the same area that day.

Apart from Hussain, the four re-arrested are Mohammad Saif alias Carryon, 32, Mohammad Sarwar Azmi alias Rajhans Yadav, 34, Saifur alias Saifur Rehman Ansari, 32, and Mohammad Salman, 26, who were sentenced to death in the blasts case last week. All four are residents of



Also re-arrested in the case are four convicts in the Jaipur blasts case. File

Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh.

"The five were produced in a court today (Thursday). Four of them were sent to 15-day judicial custody and one, Shahbaz, was sent to police custody for two days," Hari Prasad, Additional SP, ATS, said. Prasad said the five were arrested from the Jaipur jail Wednesday.

The live bomb was found on a bicycle near shop number 17, in front of Ramchandraj temple, Chandpole. A day after the blast, in an email sent to news chan-

nels and news agencies, Indian Mujahideen (IM) had claimed responsibility for the attack.

Investigators had claimed during trial that Shahbaz had sent the mail claiming responsibility for the attacks. But while acquitting him, the court observed that upon perusal of the evidence and arguments put forth by the prosecution, it cannot be said that he conspired with the other four, or provoked anyone, or was in touch with any of the accused.

"As per prosecution's evidence, it cannot be proven beyond reasonable doubt that the email sent in the name of Indian Mujahideen was sent by Shahbaz," the court said. The court had also described as "suspicious" the statement by a Ghaziabad cafe owner, Madhukar Mishra, in which he claimed to have identified Hussain.

Paker Farooq, the amicus curiae for the four sentenced to death, said, "They are investigating the case after 11-and-a-half

years when they could have investigated and arrested them back then. Shahbaz, who was acquitted in the eight cases, has been sent to police custody, which makes little sense since he has already been acquitted in all other cases which played out in similar circumstances."

Describing the police action as "vindictiveness" and "shocking", People's Union for Civil Liberties state president Kavita Srivastava said: "For over 11 years, Shahbaz and four others were in Jaipur Central Jail, next to the office of the ATS. It's clear malafide intention of Jaipur ATS police to not investigate and charge sheet this case along with the eight other cases... Jaipur police has operated maliciously." Srivastava and Farooq also claimed the defence lawyers were not informed about the arrests Wednesday.

Responding to the allegation, ATS chief Prasad said: "I had informed their lawyer on my phone. We followed all legal formalities..."

## Srinagar mayor wins floor test

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 26

SRINAGAR MUNICIPAL Corporation (SMC) Mayor Junaid Mattu on Thursday proved majority in an impromptu floor test after independent councillors backed by the BJP moved a no-confidence motion against him. The BJP termed the floor test "unconstitutional", saying that no notice was given prior to the floor test.

Mattu told *The Indian Express*, "Four people (BJP's strength in the SMC) and some independents tried to move a no-confidence motion against me, but out of the names of 40 people they had submitted, at least 12 clarified that their signatures were fake. Therefore, today in the House, I submitted myself for a floor test and we successfully proved our numbers."

Mattu's People's Conference, backed by councillors from the Congress and some Independents secured 50 out of total 70 votes.

Deputy Mayor Sheikh Imran submitted his resignation to the Municipal Secretary ahead of the floor test. He lost the test zero to 70. He is currently under detention at the MLA hostel in Srinagar.

BJP state general secretary Ashok Koul said the independents "were supporting 'have withdrawn their petition'". "But, this is an unconstitutional floor test since no notice was given and the mayor sidelined all officials and protocols for this floor test." He said the party had extended its support to the independent candidates "for the betterment of Srinagar".

## ED attaches properties worth Rs 36 cr of ex-IAS officer, wife

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
AHMEDABAD, DECEMBER 26

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) on Thursday attached properties worth Rs 36.12 crore of former IAS officer-turned-entrepreneur Sanjay Gupta and his wife Neelu under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, in an investigation related to MEGA (Metro Link Express for Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad Company Limited) scam.

Gupta is in jail after Gandhinagar CID Crime Branch arrested him on May 14, 2015, following two cases of fraud pertaining to MEGA project against him and his associates and one by Gandhinagar Police.

A team of ED Ahmedabad

## Paid stamp duty, this is bid to malign: Lavasa family

**RITIKA CHOPRA**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

THE LAVASA family, including Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa, has denied evasion of stamp duty as alleged by the I-T Department.

In a detailed response to questions shared by this newspaper, Shakuntala Lavasa, Ashok Lavasa's sister and a paediatrician, said she had paid Stamp Duty of Rs 10,42,220 on the Gurugram property transferred in her name. She also said that she is not aware of the I-T Department's investigation in this regard.

"It is unfortunate that law-abiding citizens who are hallmarks of integrity, duty, and patriotism are being maligned and harassed by such needless investigations on account of vague and baseless allegations for which irregular notices are being issued. I have already raised the issue of the validity of the notices being issued by the department in contravention of its own notified guidelines," she said over email.

She added, "I have received certificates of appreciation from the Income Tax department continuously for the years 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. As per the Press Release of Ministry of Finance dated 19th Sept 2016, such certificates are given to 'taxpayers by ... honest taxpayers... where taxes have been paid in full, and taxpayers have no out-

standing tax liabilities"

Shakuntala Lavasa further said that any communication between the Income tax department and the assesses is confidential as per law and any selective leak of that information is a breach of "taxpayer's confidentiality". "It is apprehended that this is a motivated attempt to malign my reputation by leaking selective information," she wrote.

"I would urge you to ask Income Tax Department that does stamp duty fall in its domain and what makes them so eager to investigate matters relating to state government? And what are the extraneous considerations that are guiding them in targeting me and my family?," she wrote.

Novel Lavasa too asserted that stamp duty has been paid on the property transfer. "I would like to state that all transfers have been done by permission of competent authority and due stamp duty has been paid. While I think in my limited understanding that stamp duty is not the jurisdiction of the I-T Dept, further supporting that they are doing these roving inquiries to humiliate and malign me and my family's reputation," she said in her response.

When contacted by *The Indian Express* over email, Ashok Lavasa replied, "There is no evasion of stamp duty, which has been paid as per applicable rates by the person liable to do it. It is for the department to ascertain facts and not indulge in selective leaks."

## HC issues interim stay on deportation of Rohingya couple to Myanmar

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 26

THE CALCUTTA High Court on Tuesday ordered an interim stay on the deportation of a Rohingya couple to Myanmar. It also said that in order to "uphold the spirit of humanity", the state government should provide basic amenities to the couple to help them live with dignity.

In an order issued on December 24, a bench headed by Justice Sabyasachi Bhattacharya stayed their deportation until the disposal of a writ petition that was filed on behalf of Abdur Sukur alias Adi Sukur and his wife Anowara Begam on December 18.

Abdur and Anowara are lodged in Dum Dum jail for the last two years. They had entered India in 2017.

The court directed the state government and Union of India to file an affidavit by January 10, and the petitioners to reply by January 17. The matter will be heard again on January 20.

"In view of the imminent plight of the petitioners, who,

despite having basic human rights in consonance with the Fundamental Rights provided by the Constitution of India as well as the U.N. Charter and the norms of any civilized society, a minimum protection ought to be given to the petitioners till the writ petition is decided, in order to uphold the spirit of humanity, if not the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution of India, which is the groundnorm of all Indian statutes. Accordingly, the respondents are directed to file their affidavit(s) in-opposition within January 10, 2020. Reply/replies, if any, shall be filed by the petitioners within January 17, 2020. The respondents shall be restrained by an order of injunction from deporting the petitioners from India during pendency of the writ petition," read the order.

The couple, in the 64-page writ petition, said they did not want to be deported because they would face persecution. According to the submission by counsel Indrajit Dey, deporting them to Myanmar would be tantamount to a death sentence.

## Odisha ex-MP caught on camera asking supporters to 'set fire' to things during bandh

**SAMPAD PATNAIK**  
BHUBANESWAR, DEC 26

CONGRESS LEADER from Odisha and former Nabarangpur MP Pradeep Majhi was captured on camera giving instructions to his supporters over the phone "to be ready for directions to set fire" to things during a bandh in the area on Thursday.

Majhi said the protest was against lack of progress in investigation of a case of rape and murder in the district.

Not denying having made the call, the Congress leader told media, "I believe in non-violence. We have always protested for people's safety and rights; sat on hunger strikes. But we have not received justice". Majhi was referring to the rape and murder of a tribal girl, believed to be a minor, in Nabarangpur district earlier this month. He also asked the government to release the postmortem report. Nabarangpur SP Nitin Kusalkar Dagdu said, "Postmortem report cannot be released since it is part of the probe. Perpetrators will be apprehended."



One of the rooms of the Mandsaur bungalow that was razed; (below) the property was demolished by the police and administration on Thursday. Express

## MP: Bungalow of narcotics smuggling kingpin razed

**MILIND GHATWAI**  
BHOPAL, DECEMBER 26

MANDSAUR POLICE and the district administration on Thursday demolished a bungalow spread over 6,000 sq feet, reportedly belonging to opium smuggler Mohammed Ayub, younger brother of Mohammed Shafi, one of the biggest smugglers in the country.

Shafi, who has been absconding for nearly two decades, is wanted in connection with 11 cases registered in Mandsaur district. Ayub, who ran the illicit business in the absence of his elder brother and is also on the run for nearly eight years, faces 20 cases registered in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the police said.

The Central Bureau of Narcotics had initiated action against Ayub under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. Mandsaur Superintendent of Police Hitesh Chaudhary told *The Indian Express* that the bungalow, with plush interiors, demolished on Thursday was worth crores. He added that the brothers were probably the biggest smugglers in the country.

According to police, Ayub's two sons lived in the property that was demolished. They had moved the court against the demolition notice sent by the district administration but did not get a stay order.

The family members finally moved out on Wednesday, the police said. Ayub's sons maintain



that the bungalow was not registered in their father's name, and that none of the other relatives were accused under NDPS Act.

The contraband sold by Shafi was famous as "Chand tara aphim" in the Mumbai market. According to the police, he was associated with late Mumbai underworld don Haji Mastan and built an empire selling the illicit commodity in Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring Rajasthan.

Shafi had reportedly taken to crime at an early age and was once convicted in a case of looting an opium factory in Neemuch, MP. Ayub had reportedly fled from the custody of Rajasthan police when he was brought for a trial in MP.

The brothers are among 25 people accused of violating the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The police said they are collecting details of the siblings' other properties, which will also be demolished — either fully or partially.

The authorities in Mandsaur have started an unprecedented crackdown on opium smugglers, criminals, land mafia and people running prostitution

racket on highways. The police have drawn up a list of 40 criminals, including the 25 accused under NDPS Act, who are either at large or in jail, an officer said.

Over last few days properties of people accused under NDPS Act, valued at between Rs 50 crore and Rs 100 crore, have been demolished in Mandsaur district, and Thursday's operation was the biggest, officials said.

The action against Shafi and Ayub follows the demolition of a three-storey building belonging to alleged gangster Sudhakar Rao Maratha, known for his proximity with right-wing organisations, in Mandsaur. Maratha, who is in jail, ran a local cable network called SRM (Sudhakar Rao Maratha) from the building.

Mandsaur is among the three districts in MP where opium is legally cultivated but there is a parallel mafia involved in smuggling the contraband.

After the 2017 farmers' unrest in the district, and death of five farmers in police firing, the then BJP government in the state had blamed anti-social elements involved in opium smuggling for stirring the violence during the unrest.

# 10 days on, Mau, centre of UP's first violent protests, awaits normalcy amid bandobast

AVANEESH MISHRA  
MAU (UP), DECEMBER 26

TEN DAYS after protesters vandalised a police station and set fire to vehicles in Mau district of Uttar Pradesh, Mirzahadi Chowk market, the scene of the first incident of violence during the ongoing protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and NRC in the state, on Thursday seemed peaceful on the surface, though with an underlying sense of anxiety.

Niyad Ahmad's house, with several shops, including his two general stores, a Western Union office and a footwear store, is located right on the chowk. Dakshintola police station, which was vandalised, with parts of the boundary wall damaged and computers inside broken, is barely 100 metres away.

Ten days on, with his four sons still in jail, Ahmad, 74, is in no

shape to open his shops yet. "They look after business; there is no one who can handle it," he said.

Recalling the violence, Niyad said, "The whole time we were sitting inside, scared. When it ended around 8 pm, and there was a curfew-like situation, we felt relieved. That night, I woke up around 3 am and found a group of 20-30 policemen in our home. We have heavy iron doors since we keep business material at home, and I don't know how they entered."

The policemen, Niyad said, were polite and said they will take his four sons to the police station — only for identification, and then let them go in an hour. "They let them get dressed but did not allow phones. It has been 10 days, and last I checked my sons were still in jail. We are business people — we own five shops in my house itself — and if there is a riot-like situation, will we save our shops and goods or be part of the violence?"



Police have put out posters in Kanpur, Firozabad and Mau with pictures of those suspected of involvement in incidents of violence

Ishtiyaq, 45, who stays nearby, said five members of his family — his two sons, younger brother and two nephews — were arrested in the early hours of December 16 in almost a repeat of what happened at Niyad's home.

He alleged that policemen "broke into our house" and took the five male members, including his sons Hassam (15) and Maadh (18). "I was not home, else I would also have been arrested. For two days they did not even tell where my sons are. I learnt only recently that Maadh is in jail and Hassam at a juvenile home," he said.

Ishtiyaq said his work of colouring fabrics is shut because he cannot handle it without other family members.

Another resident, Badruzzma, said 11 people, including a minor, were arrested that night, and eight more the following day.

Dakshintola SHO Nihar Nandan Kumar told The Indian

Express that 19 people have been arrested from his police station area. The 11 arrested the first day include a minor and came from three households, he said.

Mohammad Kamaal, whose son and elder brothers were arrested on December 16, said the gathering that day was unplanned. Local residents said violence began after a mob attacked a passenger bus and the police subsequently used force. The crowd then allegedly became violent and vandalised the police station.

Mau SP Anurag Arya told The Indian Express that three FIRs were registered in connection with the incident, and 21 people have been arrested so far. "We have identified 110 other miscreants involved in the violence. Since we have no information about them, we have released posters with their photographs," Arya said.

On Wednesday night, posters carrying images of these 110 peo-

ple were put up at Mirzahadi Chowk. On Thursday, the area was under a heavy cover of police and riot forces.

Recounting how it unfolded, a local medical shop owner (name withheld on request) said: "It began peacefully. Around 3 pm, close to a hundred youths gathered to give a memorandum to the administration to show their support to students of Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia. A senior police officer came and took the memorandum. However, when people were returning, a passenger bus coming from Azamgarh was attacked by someone in the crowd. There was panic among the passengers, and the police tried to disperse the crowd. Soon, rumours started spreading on WhatsApp groups that police have started a lathicharge, and within minutes a mob of around 600 gathered. "It soon took a violent turn and they all entered the police station."

# Opened fire but no protester was killed by us: Meerut police

AMIT SHARMA  
MEERUT, DECEMBER 26

MEERUT POLICE have said that they had opened fire during last Friday's protest against the new citizenship law and proposed NRC, but added that none of the six protesters who died during the protests were killed in police firing.

Earlier this week, police in Bijnor and Kanpur had said that they opened fire, but only in self-defence and that none of the protesters was killed by them.

"While there was heavy firing on the police by protesters, the police fired only seven rounds and none of the police firings took place at the spot where the bodies of the protesters have been recovered," Superintendent of Police (Meerut City) Akhilesh Narain Singh said on Thursday.

According to police, the six deaths were reported from Khatta Road, where they did not open fire. "We have seized 67 empty cartridges from Khatta Road during our search on December 20. We also fired from non-lethal projectiles like rubber bullets, anti-riot and tear gas guns to frighten people that day," the SP added.

In its report to the state government and Union Home Ministry, Meerut police have also sent detailed post-mortem reports of five of the six men who died in the protests that day.

As per the police, the autopsy report of the victims said that two of them — Asif (20) and Asif Ahmed (32) — suffered bullet injuries in their stomach, two others — Aleem Ansari (34) and Zaheer Mohammed (32) — on their head and one Mohsin (34) on his chest.

The autopsy report also stated that neither the bullet and nor the splinters were found in bodies of the deceased, which means that only an in-depth forensic report can identify the type of bullets that hit them, the police said.

Barring the 20-year-old Asif, all the dead were residents of Bhumia Ka Pul in the city. The sixth person, Saalim (28), a resident of Tala factory lane in Bhumia Ka Pul, died at a Delhi hospital this week.

Meanwhile, police have registered 17 FIRs against 180 named people and nearly 5,000 unidentified people at four police stations — Kotwali, Lisadi Gate, Nauchandi and Brahmपुरi. A total of 54 people have been arrested so far, the SP said.

"We have also formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) for an unbiased investigation into the violence on December 20. No innocent will face police action, but those involved will face stricter actions like being charged under the National Security Act. Special instructions have been issued to ensure a foolproof investigation," said Senior Superintendent of Police Ajay Sahni.

# 1,200 AMU students booked for candlelight protest march

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 26

ALIGARH POLICE have booked 1,200 students of Aligarh Muslim University for holding a candlelight march on Tuesday evening, saying that they had violated the prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC.

Late on Thursday evening, Aligarh Senior Superintendent of Police Akash Kulhary assured a delegation of AMU students that the case will be dropped since it was a peaceful march.

While the students said that the candlelight march was held within the campus, the police claimed that it was held outside on the city road and, therefore, was in violation of Section 144.

While saying that they were not aware of the police action, the university administration said that the candlelight march was

by public servant) against 1,200 unidentified people," he added. Hamza Sufyan, former vice-president of AMU Students' Union, slammed the police action. "How can they charge us under Section 144 when it was held inside the campus. The campus is not a public property but belongs to the students of AMU. The district administration and police should not dictate to us what we do inside our campus. It was a candlelight march which is the most peaceful way to make our voices heard," he said, adding that the march started from Chungi Gate on the campus and concluded at Bab-e-Syed Gate after which the students returned.

Meanwhile, AMU authorities are planning to open the university in a phased manner. "We are still deciding how it will be done. But it will be done in a phased manner. The dates will be decided very soon," Kidwai said.

However, Station House Officer of Civil Lines Police Station, Amit Kumar, said that the march was held near Bab-e-Syed gate. "It was held on a public road and not within the campus. The FIR has been lodged under IPC Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated

held till the Bab-e-Syed gate of the university, located within the campus. "We did not lodge any complaint and the candlelight march was held within the campus," said Shafe Kidwai, in-charge of Public Relations of AMU.

While the students said that the candlelight march was held within the campus, the police claimed that it was held outside on the city road and, therefore, was in violation of Section 144.

While saying that they were not aware of the police action, the university administration said that the candlelight march was



At a protest by SP workers in Lucknow Thursday. Vishal Srivastava

held till the Bab-e-Syed gate of the university, located within the campus. "We did not lodge any complaint and the candlelight march was held within the campus," said Shafe Kidwai, in-charge of Public Relations of AMU.

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# Made to take down editorial on Faiz episode, says IIT-Kanpur student body

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 26

FIVE DAYS after the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur (IIT-K) administration formed a high-level committee to probe allegations that students made "communal statements" during a recent event against the new citizenship law and NRC, the premier engineering institute's student media body "Vox Populi" on Thursday said they had to take down a recent editorial against the institute's decision on the direction of the authorities.

"A high-level inquiry committee had been set up by the (IIT-K) director to investigate the complaints against the students' march of December 17. Vox Populi published an editorial on December 21 on the same. The committee has asked our publication to pull down our recent editorial — "Don't communalize the peaceful gathering at IIT Kanpur" — to reinstate harmony on campus... The editorial was the opinion of the editorial board on the issue surrounding December 17 march. As a team, we stand by every word in our editorial, but as per the instructions, we have to take it down. This is the first time, since the launch of the online edition of Vox Populi, that we are pulling down any article following instructions from the administration," stated a post by Vox Populi on their Facebook page Thursday.

The controversy pertains to the reported recitation of Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz's "Hum Dekhenge" by students during the protest. INSPIRE faculty Vashi Mant Sharma had complained to institute director Abhay Karandikar that protesting students had made communal remarks at the event by singing the lines "when all idols will be removed, only Allah's name will remain".

The Vox Populi had stated in its editorial that a peaceful gathering at IIT-K was being communalised. It claimed that the Faiz's lines were taken out of context and the events of the march were grossly misrepresented.

# NIA court remands Akhil Gogoi in judicial custody for 14 days

ABHISHEK SAHA  
GUWAHATI, DECEMBER 26

ON A day NIA officials raided his residence and the office of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) that he heads, a special NIA court on Thursday remanded activist Akhil Gogoi to judicial custody for 14 days.

The special court turned down the NIA's plea to extend his custody by 10 days. Gogoi was arrested by the agency under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act on December 12 when protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act rocked Assam.

The Gogoi-led KMSS has been one of the organisations instrumental in organising the protests against the new citizenship law in Assam. Gogoi has been accused of working in close coordination

with the Maoists. Gogoi's wife Gitashree Tamuly told reporters, "They have taken some files from the house and some bank-related documents. When he was in jail earlier, he had met some people and he had been writing a prison diary about his experience. There were two files of that, they took that and a laptop."

People in the KMSS office said nine books pertaining to Communism, Marxism and Socialism and books related to Mao Zedong and Vladimir Lenin were seized from the office.

The state unit of the BJP, meanwhile, continued to reach out to the people. State BJP president Ranjeet Dass visited Chabua town in Dibrugarh district which saw large-scale violence and arson earlier this month.

The residence of Binod

Hazarika, BJP MLA from Chabua, was set ablaze by miscreants during the violence. Dass visited the house on Thursday. At the end of an address by Dass, the gathering made a financial contribution to Hazarika towards the repair of his house.

Demonstrations against the new law continued across Assam on Thursday. A massive gathering was organised in Tanga town and it was addressed by leaders of the All Assam Students' Union and attended by popular artists.

The Congress has said Rahul Gandhi will address a public rally against the new law in Guwahati on December 28. The Bharat Bachao Samvidhan Bachao rally will be held at a field in Khanapara locality and the Congress leader will also speak on economic slowdown and unemployment.

Sheikh said Haroon was not a part of the protest. "Some local residents who saw him at the site rushed him to a hospital. He was in a hospital in Agra for three days, and on Wednesday morning we got him to AIIMS Trauma Centre," he said.

On Wednesday evening, Firozabad SP Sachindra Patel said, "We have learnt from local residents that one Haroon was injured in the violence and his family got him admitted to a hospital in Delhi. The police have no information how Haroon was injured and when he was taken to Delhi for treatment."

Haroon is survived by his mother and two brothers.

# Firozabad man hit by bullet during protest dies in AIIMS

SOMYA LAKHANI  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

A 30-YEAR-OLD businessman from UP's Firozabad district died in Delhi's AIIMS Trauma Centre early Thursday, six days after he was shot in the neck during a protest against the new citizenship law on the Firozabad highway.

Mohd. Haroon died during treatment at 12.50 am, said his brother-in-law Zaki Sheikh.

Late Wednesday evening, when The Indian Express met Sheikh at AIIMS Trauma Centre, Haroon was on ventilator. Dr

Ammit Lathwal, Medical Superintendent of the hospital, had said, "There is a bullet lodged in his neck and his condition is critical."

Sheikh said that last Friday, Haroon was returning home to Naglamullah village in Firozabad district from Pachokhara, which is 20 km away, when the incident took place. "He was returning home after selling a buffalo at a mandi in Pachokhara. On the Firozabad highway, there was violence and suddenly he was shot at. No one knows whether the police or the protesters fired the shot," Sheikh said.

Haroon is survived by his mother and two brothers.

# Over 900 lawyers disagree with Bar Council on protesters

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

A GROUP of lawyers on Thursday sought to "distance themselves" from a Bar Council of India (BCI) resolution dated December 22 regarding the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, and the protests over it, and stated that the resolution "does not speak for all advocates".

The statement, with names of 991 lawyers appended to it, said that the BCI "ought not to release statements that give the impression that it is doing so on behalf of all advocates, as the Resolution does not represent the views of

the Bar and certainly not the undersigned advocates".

It said, "While individual office bearers of BCI are free to express their opinions in their personal capacity, the use of BCI's platform to express the personal views of some is a disservice to the principles that the BCI stands for."

In its December 22 resolution, the BCI had stated, "Leaders of the Bar and young students are requested to take active role in defusing the disturbances and violence in the country; We are to convince the people and the illiterate ignorant mass, who are being misled by some so-called leaders [that] the matter with regard to Citizenship

Amendment Act is under the consideration of the Supreme Court, therefore everyone should await the decision..."

In their response, the group of lawyers stated, "It is clear that the Resolution does not speak for all advocates as various statements have been released by sections of

the Bar condemning not only the disparate impact of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on minorities but also the excesses of police forces."

Pointing out that the BCI resolution stated that damage to public property and violence against police personnel are serious issues, the lawyers maintained, "While there is no dispute with regard to this, the deaths of more than 25 people including minors (as on 24.12.2019), the use of excessive and disproportionate force against protesters, minors being detained and beaten, and the widespread use of arbitrary internet shutdowns are also grave issues."

They stated that the BCI's role is to "ensure that law and procedure take the proper course, and not to embolden impediments to justice, especially by State entities. Excessive and unnecessary deference to the State is unbecoming of the BCI's standing. When allegations of grave abuse of State power are involved, it is not for the BCI to pass judgment either way."

It stated, "pendency of the challenge before the Hon'ble Supreme Court does not, in any manner, take away from the right of citizens to exercise their democratic and constitutional right to protest — either against the Act itself or against State excesses relating to the Act."



## 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 (5.05), Gujarat (5.04), Haryana (5), Kerala (4.98), MP (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 RANKINGS

##### 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

1. Himachal 5.22
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

##### UNION TERRITORIES

1. Puducherry 4.69
2. Chandigarh 4.68
3. Delhi 4.39
4. Daman & Diu 4.33
5. A&N Islands 4.12

#### SECTOR-WISE TOP RANKS (BIG STATES)

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 east-flowing 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.

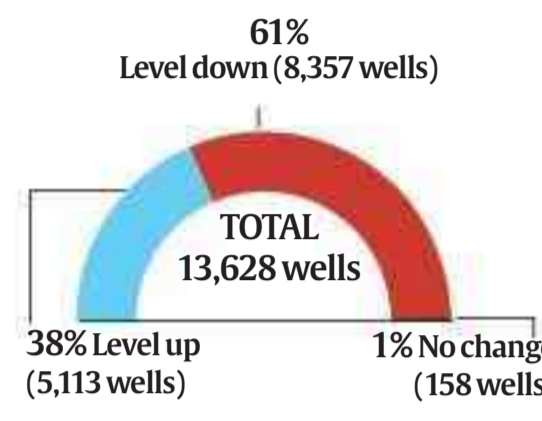
The CGWB has classified the country's assessment units (blocks, taluks, mandals etc) into safe, semi-critical and over-exploited in terms of groundwater resources. The number of over-exploited units has increased to 1,186 in 2017, from 839 in 2004. In the north, more than 60% of the assessment units 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)



#### HIGHEST DEPLETION

(Minimum 100 wells)

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

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 mis-

sile 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 Mashinostroyeniya 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 analy-

sis 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-platformed 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.

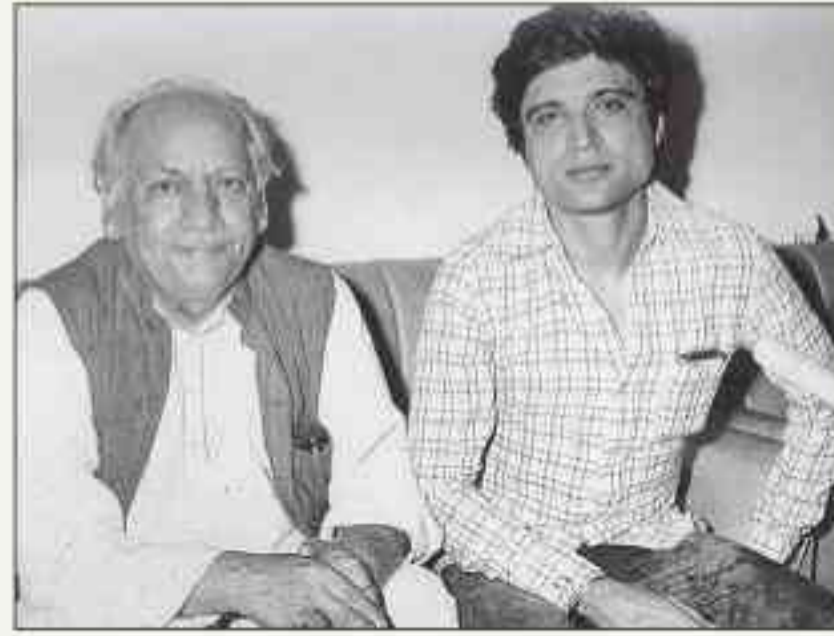
Faiz was a communist who employed traditional religious imagery to attack political structures in his quest for revolution. In *Hum Dekhenge*, the description of *Qayamat*, the Day of Reckoning, is trans-

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-Hae-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 bithaaye jaayenge / 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 Iqbal Bano in 1986, and live recordings of that performance were smuggled out of Pakistan. That



Faiz Ahmad Faiz with Javed Akhtar; (above) Iqbal Bano. Express Archive

performance inextricably linked her voice and rendition with the poem — indeed, it was Iqbal 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.

Iqbal 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. Iqbal 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."

Iqbal 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.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## Bad in law, poor in history

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



ATUL NANDA

## 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 Fadnis, 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 tansuring 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."

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-

finied under Section 2(b) as one who was without the necessary passport or travel documents 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 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 then returned to India.

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 Muslim 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."

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&amp;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.

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 JP 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.

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. Borbora 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 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

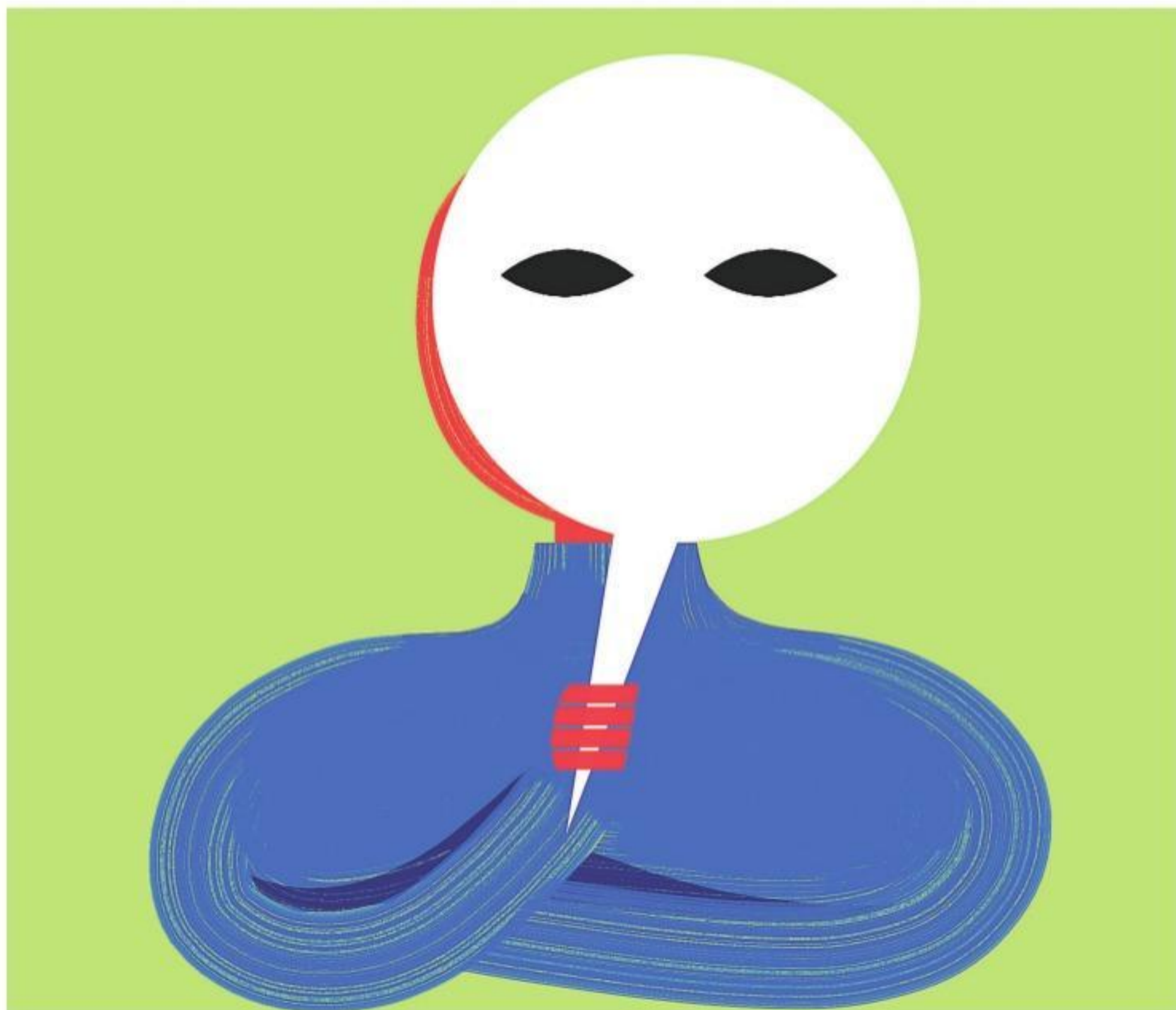
SOME POLITICAL PARTIES and people with narrow political interests are spreading misinformation amongst a particular section of society about the Citizenship Amendment Act, NRC and the government's decision to update the National Population Register (NPR). This is a futile attempt to hide the mountain 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 per 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, 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, 4,020 additional class rooms, 574 hostels, 81 IIT, 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 gundadantra (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

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

### 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

### 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.

Afshen Rizvi, Lucknow

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 tableeli)?"

Compiled by Seema Chishtii

## THE Urdu PRESS

### POWER OF PROTESTS

WRITING ABOUT the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the *Inqilab* 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".

*Inqilab'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: "Bechainei par awaam ki bechainei" (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-

**IN COLD NUMBERS**  
**100,000**

The number of Afghan civilians killed or injured over the past decade, according to the United Nations, which renewed calls to end the bloody 18-year-long conflict in the country.

**TOP OF THE WORLD**



Lisa Murkowski

**IMPEACHMENT**  
**GOP Senator 'disturbed' by party leader's coordination with White House**

Washington: Republican US Senator Lisa Murkowski said she was "disturbed" by the Senate leader's approach to working with White House counsel on the impeachment trial of President Donald Trump, saying there should be distance between the two. The comments by the Alaska lawmaker come after Mitch McConnell, majority leader of the Republican-led Senate, said during a Fox News interview earlier this month that he was working in "total coordination" with the White House on the upcoming trial.

**SC LAST MONTH CUT DOWN 3-YR EXTENSION TO 6 MONTHS**

## Pak govt files review petition in Army Chief extension case

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN**  
ISLAMABAD, DECEMBER 26

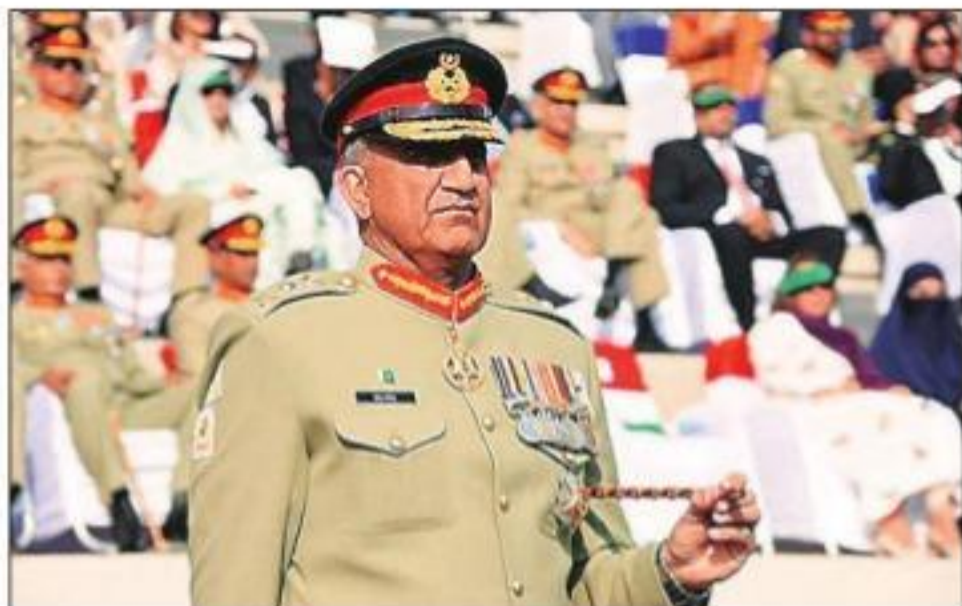
THE PAKISTAN government on Thursday filed a review petition against the Supreme Court's decision about legislation on the extension of service of Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa.

A three-member apex court bench headed by then chief justice Asif Saeed Khosa on November 28 granted a six-month extension to Bajwa after being assured by the government that Parliament would pass a legislation on the extension or reappointment of the Army Chief within six months.

The ruling came in the nick of time as Gen Bajwa, 59, was set to retire at midnight on Nov 28.

In the review petition filed by Attorney General Anwar Mansoor, the government has urged the apex court to form a larger Bench to hear the case and set aside the earlier judgment. It also requested the court to keep the proceedings in-camera.

Firdous Ashiq Awan, the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for Information and Broadcasting, said the review pe-



The Pakistan government was told by the top court to push through legislation for extending or reappointing General Qamar Javed Bajwa as Army Chief. Reuters

tion was filed "because our legal team thoroughly, comprehensively, and closely reviewed all aspects of the decision and concluded that there are several legal gaps in the verdict".

In its detailed judgment on December 16, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court cautioned the government that "unbridled power or position, like unstructured discretion, is dangerous".

Prime Minister Imran Khan had extended Bajwa's tenure for

another three years through a notification in August, but the Supreme Court suspended it on November 26 due to irregularities in the manner of extension.

After three days of heightened uncertainty, Chief Justice Khosa announced that Bajwa would remain the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) for another six months during which the country's Parliament would legislate on the Pakistan Army Chief's extension or reappointment. PTI

**IMRAN: BAJWA TOLD ME PAK IS PREPARED FOR INDIA 'THREATS'**

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan claimed on Thursday that India could carry out "an action of some sort" in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to divert attention from its domestic issues and warned that his Army was prepared for any such move.

Khan made the remarks while addressing a public gathering in Jhelum district, hours after the Army said that two of its soldiers were killed in "unprovoked firing" by the Indian troops along the Line of Control.

The Prime Minister said he had told Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa about the threats from India and the General "told me that Pakistan is prepared for them". He extended condolences to the families of the two soldiers killed on Thursday. PTI

## Israeli lawmaker aims to oust Netanyahu in Likud primary

First serious challenge to PM from his party for over a decade

**TIA GOLDENBERG**  
JERUSALEM, DECEMBER 26

ISRAEL'S GOVERNING Likud party was holding primaries on Thursday, in the first serious internal challenge to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his more than a decade in power.

Veteran politician Gideon Saar hopes to unseat Netanyahu, arguing that he will be better placed to form a government in national elections in March after Netanyahu failed to do so twice in two repeat elections this year.

Despite the shadow of corruption indictments hanging over him, Netanyahu remains popular among Likud members and the fiercely loyal party, which has only had four leaders since its inception in the 1970s, has stood firmly behind the long-serving leader.

But Saar, who has garnered support from a handful of Likud backbenchers, could benefit from stormy weather that may keep turnout low. If he wins, he would become Likud's candidate for prime minister in the March polls.

"We are imbued with the spirit of victory," lawmaker Yoav Kisch, Saar's campaign manager, told Israeli Army Radio. "This candidacy is good for the party and I believe can also bring the



Benjamin Netanyahu with his challenger for Likud party leadership, Gideon Saar. Reuters

change and the hope for a revolution in the Likud."

Netanyahu has portrayed Saar an inexperienced, while depicting himself as a security buff and master of international diplomacy. Still, in what was seen as an embarrassment at a critical moment a day before the primary, Netanyahu was rushed off stage after a rocket was fired from Gaza, setting off an air raid siren, at a campaign rally in the southern city of Ashkelon on Wednesday.

A similar incident happened in September when Netanyahu was in the nearby city of Ashdod campaigning for the second general Israeli election of the year.

Polls close at 11 pm and results are expected Friday. REUTERS

**EXPLAINED**  
**E**  
**Weakened by graft charges, electoral setbacks**

THE BIGGEST challenge to Netanyahu's grip on his party since 2005 comes at a time when the Israeli PM has been politically weakened after twice being unable to put together a ruling coalition following close elections. Israel now faces an unprecedented third election in less than a year, but Netanyahu's chances have been further hit by indictments in corruption cases. Despite all this, he is still expected to win the party leadership contest. However, he has been campaigning aggressively, seeking a big win in order to consolidate his power within the party and get a big boost ahead of the general election in March. If he loses, or even comes close to losing the party leadership, that could derail his already bumpy general election campaign.

## Iraqi President: Won't pick PM that protesters reject, would rather quit

Refuses to designate nominee of Iran-backed parliamentary bloc

**REUTERS**  
BAGHDAD, DECEMBER 26

IRAQI PRESIDENT Barham Salih refused on Thursday to designate the nominee of an Iran-backed parliamentary bloc for prime minister, saying he would rather resign than appoint someone to the position who would be rejected by protesters.

The Bina bloc, led by Iran-backed militia leader Hadi al-Amiri, had nominated Basra Governor Asaad al-Edani to be the next prime minister.

But Salih said in a statement that appointing Edani would not placate protesters demanding an independent prime minister with no party affiliation or help calm the unrest that has rocked the country.

He said that because the constitution does not give him the right to reject nominees for the premiership, he was ready to quit. "Out of my desire to stop blood and maintain peace, and with due respect to Asaad al-Edani, I refuse to nominate him," Salih said. "Therefore I put my willingness to resign the post of president to



BARHAM SALIH  
Iraq President

members of parliament so that they decide as representatives of the people what they see fit."

Mass protests have gripped Iraq since Oct. 1 and the protesters, most of them young, are demanding an overhaul of a political system they see as profoundly corrupt and keeping most Iraqis in poverty. More than 450 people have been killed.

PM Adel Abdul Mahdi resigned last month as the protests continued, but he has remained in office in a caretaker capacity.

Sources in Salih's office said the President left Baghdad Thursday for his hometown of Sulaimaniya in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

## China sails carrier group through Taiwan Strait

Taipei: China has sailed its new aircraft carrier into the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan's defence ministry said on Thursday, as a presidential election campaigning was in full swing on the island amid heightened tension with Beijing.

Democratic Taiwan is claimed by China as a wayward province and is the Communist Party's most sensitive and im-

portant territorial issue. China has threatened to attack if Taiwan moves toward formal independence.

Taiwan holds a presidential vote on Jan. 11 with President Tsai Ing-wen hoping to win reelection. She has repeatedly mentioned what she sees as the threat of China as a warning to voters. REUTERS

## TYPHOON PHANFONE LEAVES 20 DEAD IN PHILIPPINES



In Biliran, Philippines, on Thursday after the typhoon wreaked havoc. Reuters

A typhoon that barreled through Philippines left at least 20 people dead and forced thousands to flee, devastating Christmas celebrations in the country, which is predominantly Catholic.

Typhoon Phanfone stranded many people in sea and airports at the peak of holiday travel, set off landslides, engulfed low-lying villages with floods, destroyed houses, downed trees and electrical posts and knocked out power in entire provinces.

One disaster response officer described the battered coastal town of Bataad in Iloilo province as a "ghost town" on Christmas Day.

Most of the 20 deaths reported by officials were due to drowning, falling trees and accidental electrocution.

## TURKEY'S TOP COURT: BAN ON WIKIPEDIA VIOLATES FREE SPEECH

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
ISTANBUL, DECEMBER 26

TURKEY'S CONSTITUTIONAL Court ruled Thursday that the government's ban on access to online encyclopedia Wikipedia violated freedom of expression, the official Anadolu news agency reported.

The ban has remained in place since April 2017. Turkish officials said at the time the measure was needed as Wikipedia had failed to remove content deemed false from its pages that linked Turkey with terror groups.

But the move caused an outcry among freedom of information activists who accuse Turkey of slapping bans on websites and social media with alarming regularity. A local court is due to decide whether the ban will be lifted.

## Erdogan: Turkey to send troops to Libya at Tripoli's request

**ECE TOKSABAY & ALI KUCUKGOCMEN**  
ANKARA, DECEMBER 26

TURKEY WILL send troops to Libya at the request of Tripoli as soon as next month, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Thursday, putting the north African country's conflict at the centre of wider regional frictions.

Libya's internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) has been fending off a months-long offensive by General Khalifa Haftar's forces in eastern Libya, which have been supported by Russia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

Last month, Ankara signed two separate accords with the GNA, led by Fayeze al-Seraj, one on security



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a meeting of his ruling AK Party in Ankara on Thursday. Reuters

and military cooperation and another on maritime boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean.

"Since there is an invitation (from Libya) right now, we will

accept it," Erdogan told members of his AK Party in a speech. "We will put the Bill on sending troops to Libya on the agenda as soon as Parliament opens." REUTERS

## Kremlin critic's Moscow office raided, laptops confiscated



Alexei Navalny outside the office of his Anti-Corruption Foundation during the police raid. Reuters

**ANDREW OSBORN & ANASTASIA TETEREVLEVA**  
MOSCOW, DECEMBER 26

RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES raided the Moscow headquarters of opposition politician Alexei Navalny on Thursday, using power tools to gain entry before dragging Navalny out by force and confiscating technical equipment such as laptops.

Navalny and his allies said the raid on his Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) was carried out by the Federal Bailiffs Service and was connected to his refusal to delete a video investigation which levelled graft allegations against Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and billionaire businessman Alisher Usmanov.

The Federal Bailiffs Service said it was carrying out investigative activities at Navalny's foundation as part of a criminal investigation.

Usmanov brought and won a defamation lawsuit against Navalny in 2017. That case ended with a court ordering Navalny to delete within 10 days all references to the allegations in his video, which Medvedev and Usmanov said were utterly false.

Navalny said on Thursday he would not delete the video, which has been watched over 32 million times on YouTube since it was first posted in March 2017. REUTERS

**ROADSIDE BOMBINGS, AMBUSHES AND AIRSTRIKES**

## In Afghanistan, driving on the highway makes you a target

**DAVID ZUCCHINO**  
KABUL, DECEMBER 26

AFTER SHIR Mohammad Panjshiri shovelled a final spadeful of dirt onto his brother's grave, he left the cemetery burdened with questions.

His brother, Aziz Ahmad Panjshiri, a retired college professor, had been abducted from a car in northern Afghanistan on Nov 5. He was later shot dead, his body dumped in a neighbouring

province. His grieving brother still did not know why. "What happened to my brother isn't clear," Panjshiri said after the 69-year-old professor was buried on a Kabul hillside. "We're waiting for the government to tell us."

Afghan roads are some of the most dangerous in the world, turned into killing grounds through years of bitter guerrilla warfare. Off-duty police officers and soldiers, judges, government officials, human rights workers, businessmen, prosecutors — all



have been killed on highways in Afghanistan's rugged countryside. Often, Taliban insurgents claim

Afghan roads are some of the most dangerous in the world, turned into killing grounds through years of guerrilla warfare. Reuters

responsibility for ambushing representatives of the Afghan government. But in other cases, like the

killing of Professor Panjshiri, families are left wondering whether their loved ones were killed by insurgents, thieves, kidnappers or someone else — and why.

There are so many ways to be killed simply for travelling here. Each day, Afghans are killed by suicide blasts, roadside bombs, checkpoint ambushes and airstrikes. People plan their routes carefully, sometimes seeking protection from government security forces who are not always up to the task.

Provincial roadways have strategic value. The Taliban attack travellers to demonstrate that the government cannot protect its citizens. They put up checkpoints in areas they control.

Government security forces fight to keep roadways open. But they frequently hunker down on their bases, leaving long stretches of road as no man's lands where travellers risk their lives.

Because only provincial capitals are typically served by commercial airlines, local roads are the

only way for many residents to reach jobs, family members and markets. Many flights are fully booked as people opt not to drive.

Two days after Professor Panjshiri was killed, three judges and a court clerk travelling to Kabul, the capital, were shot dead by gunmen in eastern Afghanistan. A week earlier, a man who worked for a CIA-backed government strike force was shot dead in his car in southern Afghanistan in front of his three-year-old daughter, who survived. NYT

# 15 ECONOMY

<b>GOLD</b>	<b>RUPEE</b>	<b>OIL</b>	<b>SILVER</b>
₹39,630	₹71.31	\$67.29	₹48,060

\*Indian basket as on December 25, 2019

SENSEX: 41,163.76 ▼ 297.50 NIFTY: 12,126.55 ▼ 88.00 NIKKEI: 23,924.92 ▲ 142.05 HANG SENG: 27,864.21 ▼ 42.20 FTSE: 7,632.24 ▲ 8.65 DAX: 13,300.98 ▼ 17.92

\*International market data till 1900 IST

## ARRANGEMENT TO OFFER ONE SHARE OF RIL FOR EVERY FOUR SHARES OF RRL

# Reliance Retail share swap plan to value firm at around ₹2.5 lakh crore

**ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

ANNOUNCING THAT there is no plan to list the company, Reliance Retail Limited (RRL) has proposed a scheme where it will offer one share of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) for every four shares of the company to its shareholders, thereby valuing RRL at close to Rs 2.5 lakh crore.

At this valuation, Reliance Retail — which runs several domestic retail outlets and houses a number of international brands — would be equivalent to the 12th largest listed entity in India with a market cap higher than that of Bharti Airtel, Maruti Suzuki and Larsen and Toubro among others.

Share of RIL fell 1.94 per cent, following the disclosure of the share swap arrangement. RRL will also be the largest retail company in the country as its market cap will be over two times that of Avenue Supermarts — the highest-valued listed retail entity in the country.

Other than Reliance Fresh, Reliance Smart, Reliance Trends, Hamleys and Reliance Digital, the company has a portfolio of over 45 international brands.

Disclosing the scheme of

### EXPLAINED Scheme positions company as India's largest retailer

THE SHARE swap plan effectively positions Reliance Retail as the largest retail company in India with a market cap of over two times that of Avenue Supermarts — the highest-valued listed retail entity in the country.

Other than Reliance Fresh, Reliance Smart, Reliance Trends, Reliance Digital and Hamleys, the company has a portfolio of over 45 international brands that include Armani Exchange, Diesel, Burberry, Marks & Spencer, Hugo Boss, Tiffany & Co and Mothercare, among others.

arrangement that has been recommended by BDO and Ernst & Young Merchant Banking Services, the company said that it had been receiving requests from employees holding equity shares for providing them options for exit and liquidity, including by way of listing of the equity shares.

RRL further said that the company does not have any plan for listing of its equity shares on the stock exchanges.

"In view of the above, the Company is proposing a scheme of arrangement with its equity shareholders in terms of which,

As per documents made available on its website, there are a total of 35,77,527 shares of Reliance Retail that are held by the specified shareholders — shareholders of the company other than RRL (promoter entity of RRL).

While 25,24,590 shares have already been allotted, 10,52,937 shares remain outstanding as on December 11, 2019 and the company plans to allot them before the effectiveness of the scheme.

The company said that it "had implemented two schemes namely Reliance Retail Employees' Restricted Stock Unit Plan 2006 and 2007 under which Restricted Stock Units (RSU) have been allotted to eligible employees. On exercise of the RSUs by some of the employees, equity shares have been allotted to them. Some RSUs are outstanding against which equity shares will be allotted on exercise before effectiveness of the proposed scheme of arrangement."

Detailing the implementation of the proposed scheme, Reliance Retail said that Pranatharthi Commercial Private Limited (set up by two RIL group employees) will first "acquire the required number of equity shares of RIL for the purpose of exchange with the equity shares of the Company

held by the Specified Shareholders".

The equity shares of RRL so acquired by Pranatharthi, will be cancelled and reduced without payment of any consideration.

"Upon the implementation of the scheme, Reliance Retail Ventures Limited, the holding company of the Company, will hold 100 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of the Company," said the company. As of now, 99.95 per cent stakes of RRL are held by RRLV.

Clarifying that the scheme will have no impact on the preference shareholders of the company, RRL said that since, the scheme does not contemplate any outflow of funds/assets of the company, "the aggregate of equity and other equity" of the Company pre and post implementation of the Scheme will remain the same and unaltered".

It also said that the scheme will have no impact on the preference shareholders of the company. In the first half of FY19, Reliance Retail announced a net profit of Rs 2,193 crore on a revenue of Rs 63,521 crore. In the financial year ended March 2019, the company reported a net profit of Rs 3,138 crore over a revenue of Rs 1,02,058 crore.

## BALANCING FISCAL POSITION

# Amid low tax revenues, minority stake sales and privatisation set to dominate disinvestment agenda

**SUNNY VERMA**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

EVEN AS the government pursued aggressive disinvestment in the last five years, this year was characterised by a clear shift towards privatisation of key state-owned companies, with the Centre planning to exit them fully along with transfer of management control. Going forward, privatisation along with minority stake sales will impart momentum to the disinvestment programme. This has become crucial in balancing the fiscal position of the government in the wake of slack in tax revenues.

The government has cleared plans for complete sale of its equity in BPCL, Shipping Corporation of India Ltd and Air India, while approving majority stake sale in Container Corporation of India Ltd (CONCOR) along with transfer of management control. It has also given in-principle approval to pare down its stake in select central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) to below 51 per cent while retaining management control.

Even as the execution of privatisation proposals may spill over to next year, the government exiting from non-core business has been seen as a key positive by industry. Sources said through these stake sales, the government may raise a total of around Rs 1 lakh crore, which would partially help it in containing the fiscal deficit at 3.3 per cent of GDP by March-end 2020. In this year's Budget, the government has set a disinvestment target of Rs 1,05,000 crore compared with Rs

### AMOUNT REALISED FROM DISINVESTMENT

Year	Disinvestment Target (Revised Estimates) ₹ Crore	Proceeds from disinvestment (actual) ₹ Crore
2014-15	26,353	24,349
2015-16	25,313	23,997
2016-17	45,500	46,247
2017-18	1,00,000	1,00,057
2018-19	80,000	84,972
2019-20 (BE)	1,05,000	

Source: Finance Ministry

80,000 crore in 2018-19.

This fiscal, the Centre has raised only Rs 17,364.26 crore so far — comprising mainly of Rs 4,368.80 crore through further fund offer (FFO) of Bharat 22 ETF (Exchange Traded Fund) and another Rs 10,000.39 crore through FFO of CPSE ETF. It raised another Rs 637.97 crore through initial public offer (IPO) of IRCTC and another Rs 475.89 crore through IPO of Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd.

Apart from IPOs and minority stake sales, privatisation will drive the disinvestment targets of the Centre. In BPCL, the government will sell its 53.29 per cent holding, and in Shipping Corporation of India the stake sale will be 63.75 per cent. In CONCOR, the government will sell 30.8 per cent out of its total stake of 54.8 per cent.

The Centre wants to retain its 24 per cent stake in CONCOR given its importance in the railway sector, but will transfer entire management control to a private player since its remaining stake will be below the critical threshold of 26 per cent. As for the un-

listed Air India, the government has decided to sell 100 per cent of its stake in the loss making state-owned carrier — a move that could attract investor interest.

Last year, the government's attempt to sell 76 per cent of its equity in Air India did not attract investor interest as the Centre retaining 24 per cent stake in the carrier was seen as dissuading private players. Government hopes this time Air India sale will attract investors, especially since it will be done after hiving off a major portion of the airline's debt.

Out of Air India's total debt of Rs 58,282.92 crore as on March 31, the government has transferred debt of Rs 29,464 crore from Air India Limited to a special purpose vehicle i.e. Air India Assets Holding Limited (AIAHL). The Centre has provided Rs 1,300 crore to SPV to meet the interest payments October-March 2018-19. Privatisation of these companies in near future could set a precedent for the Centre to exit other non-core areas as well as land and properties across the country.

## Sensex extends losing streak, tanks 297 points on F&O expiry

New Delhi: Benchmark indices nursed losses for the third straight session Thursday, led by selling in market heavyweights Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank amid expiry of December derivatives contracts.

After tumbling 328.37 points during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 297.50 points, or 0.72 per cent, lower at 41,163.76. It hit an intra-day low of 41,132.89.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty closed 88 points, or 0.72 per cent, down at 12,126.55. Meanwhile, the rupee erased its early gains to settle down by 4 paise at a three-week low of 71.31 against the US currency on Thursday, marking its fifth straight day of losses amid heavy selling in domestic equities and steady rise in crude oil prices. **ENS**

## 'Delhi records most cancellations and re-bookings'

Uttar Pradesh emerged as the most welcoming state throughout 2019, while Delhi retained its spot as the city which recorded the maximum number of travel cancellations followed by re-bookings, OYO Hotels & Homes said in its annual travel index 'OYO Travelopedia 2019'

**MOST WELCOMING STATES ON BASIS OF NUMBER OF TRAVELLERS AND BOOKINGS RECEIVED:**

- Uttar Pradesh
- Maharashtra
- Karnataka

**MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS THAT RECORDED MOST BOOKINGS IN FIRST 10 DAYS OF EACH MONTH**

- Delhi
- Hyderabad
- Bengaluru

**■ August 9, 2019: Day that received highest number of bookings on OYO**

**■ 11 am: Most popular time of the day to book an OYO**

**■ 27x: Jump in number of bookings in OYO as compared to last year**

**SHARE OF OYO BOOKINGS BASED ON PLATFORMS:**

- OYO Mobile App (92% — Android + iOS)
- Mobile web (6%)
- Desktop web (2%)

Source: OYO Hotels & Homes

## DoT plans 'millimeter' spectrum sale, to seek Trai view in Jan

**AASHISHARYAN**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

THE DEPARTMENT of Telecommunications (DoT) plans to auction the 24.75 - 27.25 gigahertz (GHz) spectrum in the 5G band in the next calendar year, and is likely to seek Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (TRAI) views on the same, officials in the know of the developments said.

This new spectrum under the 5G band called the 'millimeter-wave bands' is separate from the 8,300 megahertz (MHz), which the government plans to auction between March and April. The DoT is likely to approach TRAI in January for seeking its views on the sale of these additional bands, DoT officials said.

The millimeter-wave band or extremely high-frequency frequency spectrum is mainly de-

### This new spectrum under the 5G band called the 'millimeter-wave bands' is separate from the 8,300 MHz, which the government plans to auction between March and April

signed for usage in airport security scanners, closed-circuit television, scientific research, machine-to-machine communication, and military fire control.

"As your wavelength becomes smaller, the cell size becomes less, which is the footprint of the relay station. This will be used more by the industry. And where you already have fiber connection and you want to reach houses, this will be through millimeter bands," a government official said.

Though the DoT wanted to put up these bands for auctions earlier, possibly with the 8,300 MHz spectrum sale, the reference to

dustry leaders that the Central government was considering "pricing reforms in the sector", hinting at the reserve price for spectrum auction.

The three biggest telecom players in India have expressed their reservations about the high prices of spectrum auction to be conducted in March-April next year. Industry body Cellular Operators Association of India's Director General Rajan Mathews also had, in a note, said that the current price "recommended by the regulator is significantly high if compared globally and needs to be reviewed and rationalized looking at the financial distress that the sector is reeling under".

Despite the reservations expressed by the industry, the government is hopeful of selling the 5G spectrum when the auctions take place next year. Telecom Secretary Anshu Prakash had ear-

lier this month said that he was hopeful that the companies would participate in 5G sale as the "telecom operators do require spectrum". "I think we should be able to sell. Their services are expanding, their networks are expanding. There should be good competition in bidding for this. I will wait and watch" he had said.

Going by the current prices, only 35 per cent of the total Rs 5.22 lakh crore reserve price has been kept aside for the 5G band sale, the sources quoted above said, adding that telecom companies would have to shell roughly only about Rs 9000 crore upfront for now.

"There is a two-year moratorium (on spectrum payments). The remaining has to be paid in 16 installments...so if companies have a vision of giving 5G to the country, then they should also be able to invest that much money," DoT sources explained.

## Nasdaq, S&P hit fresh highs

Gold rises above \$1,500 to near 2-month high

**REUTERS**  
BENGALURU, DECEMBER 26

THE NASDAQ breached the 9,000-point mark for the first time and the S&P 500 hit a fresh record high on Thursday, boosted by optimism over US-China trade relations and gains in Amazon.com after a report signaled robust online holiday sales.

Shares of the retail giant rose 3.2 per cent after Mastercard's report showed US shoppers spent more online during the holiday shopping season, with e-commerce sales hitting a record high.

The S&P 500, which has touched all-time intraday highs in two out of three sessions this week alone, is about one percentage point short of its best year since 1997.

The Nasdaq was on track for an 11 session winning streak.

At 12:46 pm ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 49.82 points, or 0.17 per cent, at 28,565.27 and the S&P 500 was up 8.72 points, or 0.27 per cent, at 3,232.10. The Nasdaq Composite was up 42.17 points, or 0.47 per cent, at 8,995.06.

Meanwhile, gold prices rose to a near-two month high on Thursday, holding firm above the key \$1,500 level.

## ON TRADE HOPES, OPEC CUTS

# Oil nears \$68, highest since Sept

**REUTERS**  
NEW YORK, DECEMBER 26

OIL PRICES were at the highest in more than three months on Thursday, buoyed by hopes of an end to the China-US trade fight and by a report showing lower US crude inventories.

Brent crude gained 48 cents to \$67.68 a barrel by 1622 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude also gained 48 cents, to \$61.59. Both benchmarks were their strongest since September 17. US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday he and Chinese President Xi Jinping would have a signing ceremony for the so-

called Phase 1 agreement to end their trade dispute that was put together earlier this month.

The roughly 17-month trade war between the world's two largest economies has hit global growth and demand for oil.

Even so, Brent has still rallied 25 per cent in 2019, supported by supply cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia. Also supporting prices, the American Petroleum Institute, an oil industry group, said late on Tuesday that US crude stocks fell by 7.9 million barrels last week, much more than forecast by analysts.

Trading volume remains low due to the Christmas holiday, which has delayed the release of the US government's official oil inventory report by two days until Friday.

The so-called OPEC+ group agreed this month to extend and deepen production cuts that would take as much as 2.1 million barrels per day (bpd) of supply off the market from Jan. 1, or roughly 2 per cent of global demand.

Still, US producers, not party to the OPEC+ agreement, have been pumping record amounts of oil, especially shale. Growth in US production is forecast by many to slow in 2020.

## ICRA, CARE fined over ratings given to IL&FS debt instruments

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) Thursday, in two separate orders, imposed a penalty of Rs 25 lakh each on ICRA and CARE Ratings over ratings given to the non-convertible debentures (NCDs) of IL&FS.

The regulator said in its order that despite the declining financial indicators of IL&FS, the rating agencies failed to intervene on time. The rating agencies continued to assign highest rating to the NCDs issued by IL&FS, despite its stressed balance sheet, asset-liability mismatch and negative debt to equity ratio.

Earlier this year, ICRA had terminated the employment of its CEO and MD Naresh Takkar. Takkar was on leave since July 1 pending an inquiry. Similarly,

**Sebi imposed a penalty of ₹25 lakh each on ICRA and CARE Ratings over ratings given to the non-convertible debentures of IL&FS**

CARE Ratings had sent its MD and CEO Rajesh Mokashi on leave, pending the completion of the examination of anonymous complaint received by Sebi. Mokashi resigned on December 20.

In its order, Sebi said, "The Noticee (rating agencies) continued to assign the highest possible rating (AAA) to the NCDs issued by IL&FS, based mainly on institutional parentage of IL&FS and the assurances given by IL&FS management to the Noticee from time to time."

It added, "In view of the same, it was alleged that the Noticee had failed to exercise proper due diligence by way of independent confirmation of various claims made by the management of IL&FS which ultimately led to misrepresentation of financial health of IL&FS in the eyes of the investors."

Sebi also said that the credit rating agencies relied heavily on information provided by the management of IL&FS with regard to updates on the status of implementation of various projects and fund raising plans and failed to carry independent due diligence to ascertain the veracity of the updates provided by the management of IL&FS.

"The Noticee also failed to keep track of the various disclosures available on the website of BSE, as made by IL&FS from time to time," said Sebi in its order. **FE**

## RBI to buy, sell ₹10K cr of G-Secs via OMOs on Monday

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

AS PART of its 'Operation Twist', the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday announced the simultaneous purchase and sale of long-tenor and short-tenor government securities (G-secs), respectively, worth Rs 10,000 crore each, which will take place on Monday.

The open market operations (OMOs) to be conducted by the banking regulator will be the second in the series as was expected by market participants, who anticipate at least Rs 50,000 crore of OMOs.

"On review of the current liquidity and market situation and an assessment of the evolving financial conditions, the Reserve Bank has decided to conduct one more simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities under OMO for Rs 10,000 crore each on December 30, 2019," the central bank said in a statement.

In the latest round of Operation Twist, which takes its name from the monetary policy tool used by the US Federal Reserve, the RBI is again targeting the 10-year benchmark bonds or the 6.45 per cent yielding notes maturing in 2029 by deciding to purchase Rs 10,000 crore of the papers thereby reducing their supply in the market.

At the same time, the RBI is looking to sell short-dated securities maturing in 2020 worth Rs 10,000 crore.

As on Thursday, the yield on the benchmark bonds are down by about 22 basis points from the peak seen in December. **FE & PTI**

## COAI: Surgical tools should be used instead of blunt instrument of internet shutdowns

RITUSARIN  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

TELECOM INDUSTRY body, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), has been regularly writing to the government about what it describes as a "policy for disenfranchising people" by frequent internet shutdowns, but no replies have been forthcoming.

The COAI has calculated that losses from internet shutdowns have gone up in 2019 to an estimated Rs 24.5 million per hour due to the high dependence on internet for several services. According to Secretary General of COAI, Rajan Mathew, the government has been resorting to an identical "shutdown policy", say, for fear of examination papers leaking in Rajasthan or for fear of spiralling of violence in Jammu & Kashmir.

"We do not know what intelligence inputs are being used for disenfranchising people or whether there is a real-time review process being undertaken by the government. In fact, we are not aware of any review of the perceived dangers of connectivity and we cannot do any second guessing. The government has to think of the cost and benefits of internet shutdowns instead of using the same shutdown policy for all parts of the country," Mathew said.

The remarks come in the wake of continuing internet curbs in the Kashmir Valley and in parts of Uttar Pradesh where they were imposed after violent protests were witnessed after December 19.

The COAI official said that "lapses" in procedures for internet shutdowns — which were listed in a gazette notification dated August 8, 2017 — have also been brought to the attention of the government.

He said, "Very often the notification is not signed by a Secretary-level officer and subsequently, the authorisation does not come within 24 hours as has been stipulated in the gazette notification. I am reasonably confident that confirmations do not often come and technically, the shutdown order should then lapse. These matters have been escalated with the government but it is done in a very closed circuit by the nodal officers appointed by each service provider. The COAI is not always in the loop. Maybe the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) or some other auditor which should examine such lapses."

Speaking about how with almost 100 internet shutdowns have been logged in 2019, Mathew said that such a clampdown should be the "last resort" for the government given the "cascading" economic and social impact such an action has.

He also linked the increasing frequency with which shutdowns were being resorted to with the investments and capabilities of the intelligence and cyber agencies to monitor and decrypt what they deem could be suspicious internet traffic. "We have to ask the question why countries like the US and UK as well countries in Europe which have also witnessed mass protests and unrest in the recent past do not resort to internet shutdown? This is because in India, enough investments are not going into training and capabilities of the intelligence and cyber agencies to monitor and decrypt what they deem could be suspicious internet traffic."

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## INVESTORS AVOID EXPOSURE TO PAPERS NOT OF HIGH QUALITY

# FPI investments in corporate bonds at over 2½-year lows

BHAVIK NAIR  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO investors (FPIs) investments in Indian corporate bonds have hit over a two-and-a-half year low after falling below the \$27 billion-mark in December. FPIs have utilised only 58.36 per cent of the investment limits available, NSDL data shows.

Experts indicate that after the NBFC default crisis, foreign investors are avoiding exposure to papers that are not of high quality. On top of it, liquidity still remains a concern in the Indian corporate bond market.

As Manish Wadhawan, independent fixed income and cur-

### LIQUIDITY A CONCERN IN CORPORATE BONDS

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■ Government securities are considered to be risk-free investment. As per NSDL data, general category investors have utilised just above 75.29% of investment limits available

rency expert, points out, post the IL&FS credit default last year, the impact has resonated across the credit space, especially the non-banking and finance companies (NBFC) names.

"FPIs have been reducing exposures in troubled names and are left with the option of buying

only select good quality public sector unit (PSU) and banking names. However, there are restrictions that prevent them to take more than a certain exposure due to prudential limits. The appetite of foreign investors for Indian corporate papers have reduced in recent times," Wadhawan said.

It is interesting to note that FPI investment limits remain unutilised even for the government securities segment. Government securities are considered to be risk-free investment. According to NSDL data, general category investors have utilised just above 75.29 per cent of the investment limits available.

In April 2018, the central bank had notified that no FPI shall have an exposure of more than 20 per cent of its corporate bond portfolio to a single corporate, and in case an FPI has exposure in excess of 20 per cent, it shall not make further investments in that corporate until this stipulation is met. However, earlier this year, the RBI relaxed the rules. **FE**

## ONGC gets green nod for ₹3,500-crore Assam project

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

STATE-RUN ONGC has received environment clearance (EC) for carrying out onshore exploration, development and production of oil and gas in 100 locations in non-forest area of Assam, that would entail an investment of Rs 3,500 crore, according to official documents.

The Union Environment Ministry has given green clearance to ONGC, the country's largest oil and gas exploration and production company, after taking into account the recommendations of a green panel.

"The EC is however subject to obtaining prior permission from the wildlife angle, including clearance from the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife," the ministry said in a letter to ONGC.

The company proposes to carry out drilling in 100 locations to evaluate the hydrocarbon potential of 21 different onshore Petroleum Mining Lease (PML) blocks in a non-forest area covering 944.39 km in Assam and Assam Arakan Basin covering whole of the Upper Assam North in Sivasagar district.

After establishing the potential, the company will put the field under development and production. The project cost is estimated to be Rs 3,500 crore, the company added.

According to ONGC, there is still a lot of scope in exploring new sub-surface structures in Assam for hydrocarbons.

The total area of Sivasagar district PML is 957.73 square kilometre, in which Lakwa, Rudrasagar, Geleki and its adjoining areas are important oil producing fields in North Assam Shelf of Sivasagar district.

## 'Banking sector net NPA may fall to 3.2% by March-end'

Aided by better recoveries and declining slippages, overall net NPAs of the banking sector are likely to improve to 3.2-3.3 per cent by the end this fiscal from 3.7 per cent in September 2019, rating agency ICRA said

**3.8%** Net NPAs (non-performing assets) of banking sector, as of March 2019

**15.5%** Banks recovery from bad loans in FY19, which rose from 14.9 per cent in FY18

**4.8%** Net NPAs of public sector banks as on September 30, 2019 — falling from 7.2 per cent in September 2018 and 4.9 per cent as on March 31, 2019 — on back of sizeable capital infusion in public sector banks and accelerated provisions

**1.7%** Net NPAs of private sector banks as on September 30, 2019 — falling from 1.9 per cent in September 2018, but up from 1.6 per cent as on March 31, 2019

**1.6-1.8%** Expected decline in credit provisions for banks in current fiscal, from 3.6 per cent during FY19

**2.1-2.3%** Expected fall in credit provisions for state-run banks, from 4.4 per cent in FY19



■ Improvement in recovery of stressed assets: As per a recent RBI report, recovery of stressed assets improved during FY19 propelled by resolutions under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, which contributed more than half of the total amount recovered

■ Improvement in solvency profile of banks: Decline in net NPAs will improve the solvency profile of banks, with core equity bettering to around 29 per cent by March 2020 and nearly 27 per cent by March 2021 from 33 per cent as on September 30, 2019

Source: ICRA/PTI

## 'FM to meet CEOs of PSU banks tomorrow'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman will hold a meeting with heads of public sector banks on Saturday to review financial performance of the lenders and their business growth, sources said. Given the importance of the banking sector in generating demand and boosting consumption, the sources said the meeting with the MD and CEOs of PSBs ahead of the Budget 2020-21 is considered important.

Sitharaman is expected to present her second full Budget on February 1.

The meeting is also expected to take up discussion on non-performing asset recovery through both NCLT and non-NCLT means, the sources said.

Banks have recovered Rs 4,01,393 crore over the previous four financial years, including record recovery of Rs 1,56,702 crore during 2018-19.

The meeting is expected to take stock of the banking sector and pushing loan growth, the sources said adding that the banks may be nudged to further cut interest rates to fully pass on transmission of the repo rate cut.

Despite the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) making credit cheaper, lending rates are rising for borrowers after accounting for inflation and falling economic growth.

Economic growth has fallen to over six-year-low of 4.5 per cent in the September quarter and is widely expected to slip further with almost all key components of the economy contracting. The RBI has responded by cutting rates by 110 basis points to a nine-year-low of 5.40 per cent.

As bad loan recognition process nears completion, gross non-performing loans of banks improved to 9.1 per cent as of end-September 2019, compared to 11.2 per cent in 2017-18, says an RBI report.

## 'Delay in aircraft deliveries, non-availability of engines led to disruption in network'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

GOAIR, WHICH has come under fire from passengers for cancelling dozens of flights abruptly earlier this week, on Thursday attributed the disruption in network to delay in aircraft deliveries and non-availability of engines. In a clarification issued on Thursday, the budget carrier also sought to defend its choice of Pratt & Whitney engines for its A320 Neo fleet.

GoAir cancelled as many as 40 flights between November 23 and 24, during which it also reported air turn back of two if its aircraft due to engine glitches, which were later taken out of operations for further inspection.

"GoAir has placed an order for 144 Airbus A320neo aircraft and has experienced delivery delays during the month of November and December, adding to its operational challenges," the airline said.

The airline further said "during the same time, non-availability of Pratt & Whitney spare engines have also hampered the smooth functioning of the airline".

Data collated from an aircraft deliveries tracking website suggest that GoAir has inducted less

"GoAir has placed an order for 144 Airbus A320neo aircraft and has experienced delivery delays during the month of November and December, adding to its operational challenges"

GOAIR

planes in the fleet this year as compared to 2018.

As against 17 aircraft inducted between May-December last year, the carrier took deliveries of only 11 planes between April-December this year.

The airline said that due to inclement weather in North India, it experienced extensive flight delays and diversions leading to cancellations of flights as its crew approached its flight duty time limits (FDTL) in the last two-three days.

The cockpit and cabin crew duty and rest norms are governed by the aviation safety regulator, Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

The anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests wherein GoAir crew members were unable to report for duty further exacerbated the issue, the airline added.

## US weekly jobless claims fall by 13,000

Washington: The number of Americans filing applications for unemployment benefits fell last week in a sign of ongoing labor market strength. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits decreased 13,000 to a seasonally adjusted 222,000 for the week ended December 21, the Labor Department said on Thursday.

The drop in the latest week largely unwound a surge in new claims two weeks earlier that appeared to reflect a late Thanksgiving Day this year compared to 2018. **REUTERS**

### BRIEFLY

#### Allahabad Bank gets capital of ₹2,153 crore

New Delhi: State-owned Allahabad Bank on Thursday said it will get a fresh capital infusion of Rs 2,153 crore from the government in the current financial year. The Department of Financial Services in a letter on Thursday conveyed the sanction for release of the fresh capital infusion fund of Rs 2,153 crore, Allahabad Bank said in a filing.

#### PNB raises ₹1,500 crore through bonds

New Delhi: State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Thursday said it has raised Rs 1,500 crore by issuing Basel III compliant bonds. The bank will use the funds for business expansion. "Our Bank has issued and allotted Rs 1,500 crore Tier - II Basel III compliant capital bonds at a coupon of 8.15 per cent per annum on private placement basis," PNB said in a filing.

#### J&K Bank lead bank convenor for UT of J&K

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank on Thursday appointed Jammu & Kashmir Bank as the lead banker for the newly carved out union territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). State Bank of India will be the lead convenor bank for union territory of Ladakh.

#### Tariff offers: Jan 23 deadline for comments

New Delhi: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on Thursday extended by nearly a month to January 23 the timeline for stakeholders to submit their comments on its consultation paper on the issue of 'transparency in publishing of tariff offers'. **PTI**

## KEEPING CAPS OUT OF HANDS

# China once stressed the importance of setting minimum wages

As the economy slows, some officials are becoming lukewarm about the policy

XIANG JINGUO works as a security guard in the industrial city of Shijiazhuang, 300km (185 miles) south-west of Beijing. He has long been living on just 1,700 yuan (\$237) a month. He grumbles about the rising cost of food, especially the soaring price of pork. "I've become an unwilling vegetarian," he huffs. Happily for him, however, the monthly minimum wage in his city was raised to 1,900 yuan on November 1st, up from 1,650 yuan. "Now I can try going back to my normal diet," he says.

Minimum wages have long been a feature of most advanced democracies. America introduced a national minimum wage in 1938. Japan did so in 1959. China caught up in 1995 when it revised its labour law to require local governments to set a wage floor. The central government stressed the "importance and urgency" of this as a way of "protecting workers' rights".

In recent years, however, the mood has changed. Despite the rising cost of living, Mr Xiang had to endure a three-and-a-half year gap between adjustments of the minimum wage in Shijiazhuang. The law used to say that local governments must revise them every two years. In 2015 this was extended to three years, but the authorities in Shijiazhuang still dawdled. Provincial governments set different floors for each city within their jurisdiction based on such factors as the local cost of living and unemployment rates. In 2019 just eight provinces raised minimum wages, down from 15 the year before. In 2010 all but one of China's 31 provinces raised them.



Labourers work at a steel plant at Jinan in Shandong province, China, in 2017. Reuters

## KEEPING THE BAR LOW

Average of minimum wage  
As % of average national wage



Source: National Bureau of Statistics; Jing Wang, York University; OECD

To ensure that firms do not squeal, officials have tried to keep minimum wages low. Most employers observe them — a good indication that they are not too onerous. Yanan Li of Beijing Normal University estimates that only about 5-10% of Chinese workers earn less than the minimum, a smaller proportion than in most developing countries that have such a system. By taking an average of the highest minimum wages in each province, Jing Wang of York University in Canada has calculated a notional national minimum wage. She finds that the ratio of the minimum wage to the average wage has fallen sharply since 1995 (see chart), from 40% to just 26% in 2018. In the OECD, minimum wages were 42% of average wages in 2018, up from 35% in 2000.

The central government appears to want localities to use changes in the minimum wage as a way of indicating how much they would like wages in general to rise. Since China's economic growth began slowing early in the 2010s, provinces have parted company in their enthusiasm for raising the level. Inland spots such as Hebei, which are poorer than coastal areas, want to compete using their abundant cheap labour. The manpower-rich south-western region of Chongqing, where growth slowed from 11% in 2016 to 6% in 2018, waited until the last day of the three-year window before modestly increasing its minimum

wages in January 2019.

Richer areas with a shortage of labour have gone the other way. Shanghai, for instance, has raised its minimum wage every year since 2010. It now has China's highest monthly wage floor, at 2,480 yuan. That is a sign it wants to move up the value chain and attract higher-wage workers.

Initially the central government stood back when local officials failed to punish companies for ignoring the rules, perhaps reckoning that strict enforcement might deter at least some firms from hiring. But in the early 2000s it grew more worried that fast-rising income

inequality would cause unrest. In 2004 it began demanding tougher enforcement. The fine for firms that misbehave was raised from a fifth of the accumulated shortfall in wages paid to five times the arrears. "Full implementation" of the minimum-wage rules was needed to reduce "excessive income inequality", said the Ministry of Commerce.

In 2011 the government unveiled a new five-year plan that set a target of increasing minimum wages nationwide by at least 13% annually. The goal was achieved, but some firms, especially in poorer provinces, complained (the rises were far higher than infla-

tion each year). In the north-eastern province of Liaoning, a leader of the chamber of commerce says his organisation tried to convince the local government to "slow down a bit". As growth slowed, companies in backward areas grumbled that big and frequent increases in the minimum wage were harming competitiveness.

In the latest five-year plan, adopted in 2016, the central government appears to have accepted this argument. The document sets no minimum-wage targets. Central officials have refrained from berating provinces for foot-dragging. In July *Economic Daily*, a state-

controlled newspaper, said that those setting minimum wages should not only take into account the interests of "low earners" but also "the actual burden on enterprises".

Officials still talk about a need to reduce income inequality. But they no longer suggest that increasing the minimum wage frequently is a good way of achieving this. Mr Xiang, the security guard, says he understands why his wages are not rising faster. "The reality is that there are still too many unskilled people like me," he says.

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## ICE AND NO

# Disarmament talks between US and N Korea are in jeopardy

The looming breakdown heralds a dangerous start to the new year

STEPHEN BIEGUN sounded like a jilted spouse pleading with an errant partner. North Korea's recent statements about its relationship with America were "so hostile and negative and so unnecessary", America's special envoy lamented in South Korea on December 16th. Mr Biegun was on a last-ditch mission to revive stalled disarmament talks with North Korea, in which the North has said it is no longer interested. Towards the end of his remarks, Mr Biegun directly addressed his North Korean counterparts: "We are here. You know how to reach us."

North Korea responded to the envoy's entreaties with icy silence. This leaves the Korean peninsula in a precarious position as the year draws to a close. Negotiations have faltered ever since a summit between Donald Trump, America's president, and Kim Jong Un, the North's dictator, collapsed in February over the two sides' irreconcilable expectations. America says North Korea must begin disarming before sanctions can be lifted or America's military footprint in South Korea scaled back in any significant way. North Korea insists it has already taken notable steps towards dismantling its nuclear-weapons and long-range missile programmes, for which it demands some recompense before it will make any further concessions.

The stalemate could give way to escalation.

Though America says it wants to keep talking, the North seems to have decided that it has nothing more to gain from the talks. Following the failure of the summit, which many observers believe Mr Kim found deeply humiliating, the North set a deadline. If the Americans did not become "more flexible" before the end of the year, its negotiators said, it would abandon talks. In October, after a lower-level meeting between the two sides ended in acrimony, North Korea reiterated the threat. It would not return to the table without a "complete and irreversible withdrawal" of America's "hostile policy".

The tough talk has been accompanied by a string of provocations, which have grown more flagrant in recent weeks, along with lots of martial symbolism. North Korea has tested new short-range missiles on 13 occasions since May. In the past month it has conducted two engine tests at a site in Sohae that it had showily dismantled when negotiations first began. Analysts say the tests are

consistent with preparations for the launch of a long-range missile, which would end Mr Kim's self-imposed moratorium on such tests, the basis of Mr Trump's claim in 2018 that there was "no longer a nuclear threat from North Korea".

Mr Kim has also taken two well-publicised trips on horseback up Mount Paektu, the mountain hailed as the birthplace of communism in North Korea, preparing his people for "hard times" and a "new path" ahead. At a plenum of North Korea's Workers' Party planned in the next few days, he is expected to describe the path in more detail. Kim In-tae of South Korea's Institute for National Security Strategy thinks he may formally renounce the moratorium. "That," he says, "will demolish any hope of getting assistance from America."

Mr Kim may be willing to risk that, since the North does not appear to be in a desperate situation economically. Several regions are in the midst of a construction boom, says Cheong Seong-chang of the Sejong Institute



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un rides a horse during snowfall in Mount Paektu in this image released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency on October 16, 2019. Reuters

in Seoul. Tourism from China has grown into an important source of revenue, bringing in tens of millions of dollars a year by some estimates. Moreover, China and Russia have put forward a resolution at the UN advocating the lifting of some sanctions, including a reversal of the decision to compel all North Koreans working abroad to return home by December 22nd. Russia, which hosts many

such workers, claimed the move was aimed at encouraging further talks between America and North Korea.

North Korea may be imagining that it can force America's hand with further provocations, says Bob Carlin of Stanford University. "If they think escalation puts pressure on America to make a deal they're wrong. They're just backing themselves ever further

into a corner." That leaves a return to the high tensions and aggressive rhetoric that preceded the pivot to diplomacy in early 2018 as the most likely outcome. On December 16th Mr Trump said ominously that America would "take care of" any hostile step by North Korea.

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## 'India is the story of migration..its cultural richness comes from that multiple layering'



Author William Dalrymple in conversation with Seema Chishti, Deputy Editor, *The Indian Express*, and Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group



**A**T THE Express Adda in Delhi last week, writer William Dalrymple spoke about the rise of the right wing across the world, how India has benefited from immigration, the importance of teaching history and his latest book on the East India Company.

**On the parallels between East India Company and today's corporate world**

I always try and find a story that has a contemporary resonance. *White Mughals* (2002) was just after 9/11, everyone was talking about clash of civilisations. It was about how the East and the West have never been alienated from each other, and there were always possibilities of crossover. There was a porousness of identities. Privately, at the centre of the story, you have an East India Company resident, who converts to Islam and becomes a double agent, working against the company. This message seemed important at the time. I wrote *Return of the King* (2012) just after the West had gone back into Afghanistan and seemed ignorant of the lessons that previous incursions into the region had got them, particularly the catastrophe of 1839 when British army got completely wiped out, and famously only one man, Dr (William) Brydon, made it out on a pony to tell the news. *Anarchy* is very much in that line. I think history is most interesting when it has a lesson for us today.

**On *Anarchy* and audacity of the Company**

*Anarchy* has two combined stories. One has been forgotten, not accidentally; it has been deliberately removed from the record. The Victorians were embarrassed by the crude commercial, capitalist, grubby way that the Empire had started. They spun it as a story of glorious conquest. In reality, of course, it wasn't the British per se, it was one London company, in a small office block. The evil genius of the Company is the way it was able to exploit the profit motive of the Indian bankers. The audacity of the Company was to borrow money from Indian financiers to pay for Indian troops and to conquer India. It's a story so improbable that if you take it to Netflix, they

will laugh you out of court, but it happened.

**On the global right-wing swell**

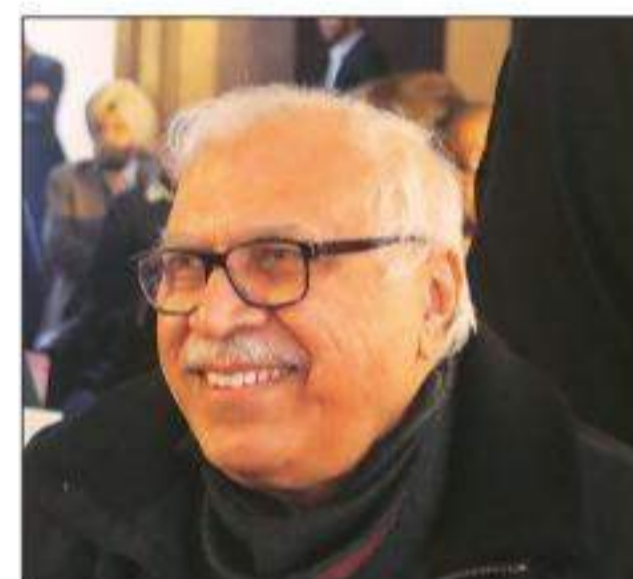
In the '80s, we had Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. These things go in ebbs and flows. Sixties was the decade of the left, '80s was the decade of the right. These are waves of public opinion. We can see the what's happening — from (Jair) Bolsonaro, (Narendra) Modi, Boris Johnson, to (Donald) Trump — unstitching itself. These things go in 10-20 year cycles.

**On India at its prime**

Hindutva myth apart, this country had an extraordinary millennium between about 400 AD and 1200 AD, when you have the whole of Southeast Asia adopting Sanskrit names; you have the churning of the ocean on the back wall of the Angkor Wat; the Ramayana passing all the way down to Java and Malaysia. You have this huge Sanskrit cosmopolis which is converted to Indian ways through soft power rather than through conquests. What I think has happened is that the civilisational story of India at its most brilliant, beaming out ideas of kingship, technology, ways of living and the Sanskrit language gets divided into two different departments — you get the story of the spread of Buddhism and the story of the Sanskritisation of Southeast Asia... Chinese traveller, Huien Tsang, sets off from China, and says, 'The country in the world most admired by educated people is India'. In fact, it's one story of India commanding the imagination of Asia during this period.

**On the theory of clash of civilisation and its effect**

This one book that I have written, which doesn't deal with this part of the world, is called *From the Holy Mountain* (1997). It's about the Middle East and the Eastern Christians, and what struck me, writing it with



SY Quraishi, former Chief Election Commissioner



Mani Shankar Aiyar, former Union Minister



Vasudha Dalmia, author and Professor Emerita, Hindi and Modern South Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley



Ashis Nandy, eminent sociologist



Journalist Prem Shankar Jha



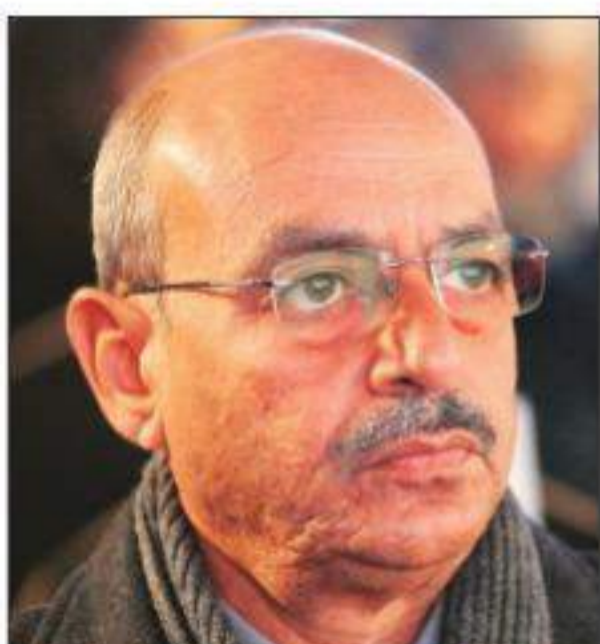
Sree Sreenivasan, Marshall R Loeb visiting professor, Stony Brook University



Filmmaker Meera Dewan



Asad Lalljee, Curator, Royal Opera House, Mumbai



Sudeep Lakhtakia, former Director General, National Security Guard



Klas Molin, Ambassador of Sweden



Journalist Nalini Singh with Nitin Puri, Group President and Global Head - Food and Agri Strategic Advisory and Research, Yes Bank







The audience at Express Adda



Sunita Kohli, interior designer and architectural restorer



William Dalrymple was presented a portrait done by Suvajit Dey, Illustrator, *The Indian Express*



Dalrymple with artist and wife Olivia Fraser



Nasim Zaidi, former Chief Election Commissioner of India



Federico Salas Lotfe, Ambassador of Mexico

Huntingdon in the background, was the extraordinary way in which Islam and Christianity, which are said to be very different, grew out of the same world. Christianity is not a Western religion as people tend to imagine, it grew up in Israel, Palestine, received its intellectual superstructure in Alexandria and Istanbul before it made it to Western Europe. When you travel to Eastern Turkey, Syria, you see how Eastern Christians pray with prostration, like in Islam. When you see the specifics, you see the common roots and it's very easy to undermine divisive theories based on wild generalisations based on classes and religions.

**On whether as many versions of the same specifics can be found elsewhere**

I think the Eastern Mediterranean world, until recently, was as divided. The whole Ottoman world, every town, had Sunnis, Shias, five types of Christians, Jews, Yazidis. This isn't the only very plural society in the world. It's an incredibly plural society, which is one of the most wonderful things about it and how different philosophies have emanated from it. But it's not unique. There are other societies in the world which are not monolingual and monocultural.

**On the importance of teaching history to children**

It's crucial and hugely important and one has huge respect for a country like Germany, which has faced up to the crimes and teaches its students, and that they in a sense can walk on to the next century unencumbered by that baggage, having faced it, apologised for it, and moved on. The British simply haven't done that. It isn't that they deny it, it's just that when the Empire ended, they, in a sense, just packaged it all up, put it into a trunk and forgot about it. So my kids going to school learned about the Tudors and then learned about the Nazis, and there is a brief stop on the way for the British liberating the slaves. The impression they've given is that Britain is this anti-racist force in history, which has been fighting racism and bigotry. Which is why you see generations of British High Commissioners and well-meaning diplomats coming here, assuming that India is this friend of Britain that loves us to death.

**On the right wing alleging that after Independence, the academic part of managing the country was given to the left**

It is true that the early Nehruvian textbooks were written by Romila Thapar and so on, many of whom were Marxists. Sometimes, those textbooks did sort of emphasise a slightly rose-tinted vision of Hindu-Muslim unity running through the whole of the Delhi Sultanate right through

the Mughals, which left room for the right wing to say this isn't history. But the reality was that all those Nehruvian historians were great historians which the right wing successors were not.

**On whether he would like to write a textbook**

Not much... but the serious point is that every nation has its myths, and its mythologies are often reflected and some of them come out of their school textbooks... Then there are certain parts of the world like India or Israel-Palestine, where history is so politicised that textbooks get rewritten depending on who's in government.

**On how important it is for the Empire to apologise**

So the first thing that's important to me, more so than any of the rest, is education. You've got to tell people what their ancestors did — good and bad. There are things we can be proud of, the health service in 1947 was the best in Asia, the universities were the best in Asia. It isn't like it's an unbroken chamber of horrors, but that the British took the richest country in the world and turned it into an economic basket case is unquestionable history. When the Company took control of Plassey, India controlled 30 per cent of world GDP and when Lord Mountbatten sailed away in 1947, I think it was seven per cent. Should there be an apology? Yes, in due course. What the Archbishop of Canterbury did at Jallianwala Bagh seems to be entirely appropriate and necessary. What I'm worried about is the sort of apology that was being mooted when (David) Cameron arrived with a chain of British businessmen wanting contracts... that an apology could be sort of a pro quid quo for some sort of economic deal.

**On the possibility of a Scottish referendum**

My family were politicians that helped bring about the Acts of Union 1707 stitching England and Scotland together, they've only been together 300 years, and I voted for the union at the last referendum. But, if we end up with a little Britain, a little England run by Boris Johnson pulling out of Europe, we Scots want to be part of Europe. I think Nicola Sturgeon will not get her referendum under Boris Johnson — there has been one only five years ago.

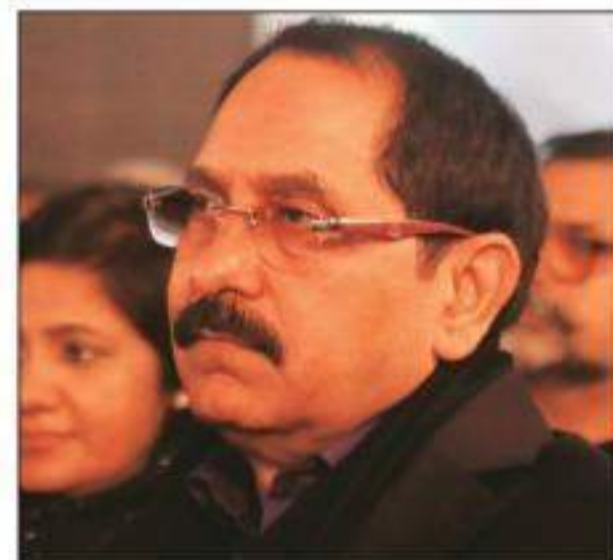
**On whether India has benefited from immigration**

Yes, India is a huge mixed pot of million migrations. You are all immigrants, man originated in Africa and everyone of you in this room has the genes of those early out of African migration... I firmly believe that the richness of this country culturally comes from that multiple layering. So it's a history of conflict but the richness of Indian culture comes from that.

Excerpts and full video of *The Adda* is available on [indianexpress.com](http://indianexpress.com)



VN Dalmia, Chairman, Dalmia Continental Pvt Ltd



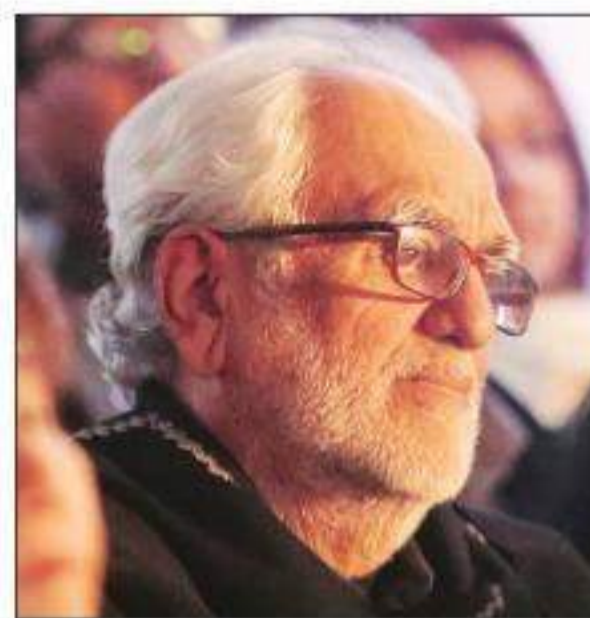
PN Arora, Managing Director, Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital



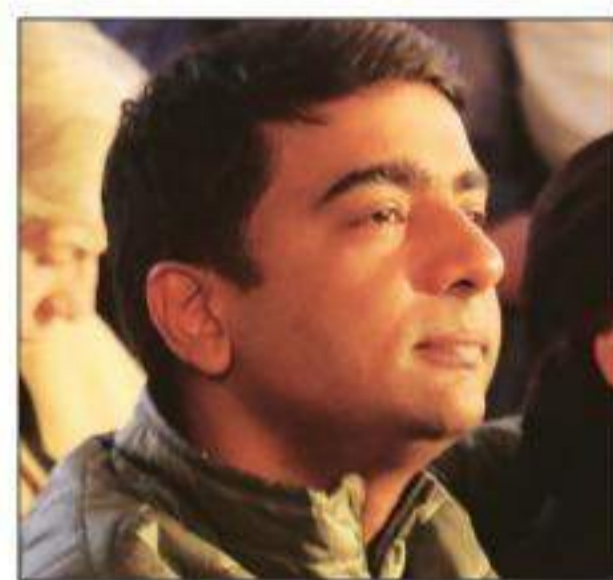
Sreekant Khandekar, Co-founder, Afaqs



Vijay Joshi, Editor-in-Chief, Press Trust of India



Journalist Maseeh Rahman



Nitin Saluja, Founder and CEO, Chaayos



(Left) Jan Thompson, Deputy High Commissioner, British High Commission with Francois Delhaye, Ambassador of Belgium

**VOICE BANK**



SWAMINATHAN S ANKLESARIA AIYAR  
COLUMNIST

**I've heard the story all my life that there was a Britisher who ordered the thumbs of weavers to be cut. Did this actually take place?**

During the 1770 famine, a whistleblower called William Bolts produced this blockbuster account of the iniquities of the East India Company, published in London. He says that in order to up production, the EIC began corralling the weavers into what we would call concentration camps, in order to stop them from going home and push them to maximise production. The regime was so harsh in these camps that the weavers cut their own thumbs off to escape. Now this is the only source for the story. But it was written specifically to bring down (Robert) Clive, who had thrown Bolts out of India. There is another account, by a man called Dao, which is the usually-considered version because he didn't have an axe to grind. It later became a nationalist story that the British cut the weavers' thumbs off.



CRAJA MOHAN  
DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE, AND CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, *THE INDIAN EXPRESS*

**If Indians are still bashing the Brits, the Chinese seem poised to buy the Brits. Is there a way how both look at it differently?**

I think that is such a hugely important point. In this country, everyone's looking at Pakistan and no one is noticing the massively greater threat of this enormous army, which is 20-30 years ahead of you guys, in terms of aircrafts, tanks, communication, stealth bombers, owning Gwadar, Trincomalee. I didn't know they bought Darwin as well. They've just taken over Piraeus (in Greece). It's clearly the big rival and yet no one is looking over the Himalayas.



MANI SHANKAR AIYAR  
FORMER UNION MINISTER

**Between the period that you're concentrating on in this book and the subsequent 19th century, was there a qualitative change in the way the East India Company, and then after 1858 the British Empire, operated?**

This is a very broad generalisation, there are two very different periods of British rule in India. You have the Company period, which is extractive, looting, asset-stripping, but it's also collaborative. The Raj is a much shorter period. But that was much more racist, it was the period of the cantonments, white-only clubs, no dogs or Indians signage. But it's also a period when you do have, at least in rhetoric, a sense of public responsibility. It's when the universities, the hospitals, get built.



SY QURAIISHI  
FORMER CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER OF INDIA

**Was the vote for Boris Johnson vote for Brexit or one against Labour?**

Brexit played a huge part in it but (Jeremy) Corbyn was a very unattractive prospect — an old-style, early 70s, hard-lined Marxist is not going to win many hearts. The genius of Tony Blair was to extend Labour's popularity into Middle England, and in the same way, Boris Johnson has... As for Scotland, the other factor is that in Nicola Sturgeon, we have the most articulate politician. The vote for the Scottish National Party hasn't just been because it's hard-lined nationalist, but because she's a gifted politician and orator.



PUNITA SINGH  
INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT

**There seems to be a long list about what should the British apologise for. What about the division of the nations?**

I have a problem with the idea that the British were able to create all these divisions themselves. You have very similar polarisation of identities going on at the same time in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th, 16th and 17th century. I think the self-consciousness and growth of separate identities, or the idea of a Muslim nation, or the ideas of Sarvakar of a Hindu nation are part of the story of the growth of nationalism. Nationalism seems to be the boogeyman of the 19th and early 20th century, and it creates these massive divisions and conflicts.



SREE SREENIVASAN  
MARSHALL R LOEB VISITING PROFESSOR, STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

**Speaking of the famine, do you think Churchill's reputation will ever be damaged in the US with the reconsideration that's happening?**

Churchill was voted the most popular Brit in Britain, I'm ashamed to say, very recently. We don't have a very large Bengali population, sadly, and there's no knowledge of the Bengal famine. This hasn't percolated into the British consciousness at all.

**ROUND-UP**

**Bad light plays spoilsport**

ONLY 21 overs could be bowled on the second day through four stoppages and an early afternoon finish due to bad light. Bengal, resuming on overnight 241/4, folded up for 289 in their first innings. For Andhra, CV Stephen and KV Sasikanth took four wickets apiece.

**BRIEF SCORES (IN KOLKATA):** Bengal 289 (Abhishek Raman 112; KV Sasikanth 4/64, CV Stephen 4/78) vs Andhra.

**Thampi bags 5/56 to give Kerala hope**

BASIL THAMPI'S five-for ensured Kerala still had a chance to pull off a comeback win. With the pitch gradually easing out, a victory target of 268 doesn't look improbable.

**BRIEF SCORES (IN SURAT):** Gujarat 127 and 210 (Manprit Juneja 53, Chintan Gaja 50 not out; Basil Thampi 5/56) vs Kerala 70 and 26/0

**Nath leads UP response**

AKSHDEEP NATH led the response for Uttar Pradesh after Saurashtra were bowled out for 331. Nath has already added 98 runs with Mohammad Saif for the fourth wicket.

**BRIEF SCORES (IN RAJKOT):** Saurashtra 331 vs Uttar Pradesh 222/3 (Akshdeep Nath 80 not out)

**TN under the pump**

Rameez Khan and Venkatesh Iyer all but took the game away from Tamil Nadu. Khan anchored the innings, while Iyer and Mihir Hirwani frustrated the opponents after a middle-order collapse.

**BRIEF SCORES (IN INDORE):** Tamil Nadu 149 vs Madhya Pradesh 281/7 (Venkatesh Iyer 88, Rameez Khan 87; T Natarajan 4/96)

**J&K hit 4th gear**

JAMMU AND KASHMIR scored at over four runs per over on another truncated day. The pace they are going at, Jammu and Kashmir have given them a chance to at least secure three points if Assam's batting wilts under pressure.

**BRIEF SCORES (IN JAMMU):** Jammu and Kashmir 210/2 (Shubham Khajuria 87 not out, Suryansh Raina 73) vs Assam.

**HP in ascendency**

KARNATAKA PROBED, but Himachal Pradesh took a decent first innings lead, thanks to Rishi Dhawan's unbeaten 72.

**BRIEF SCORES (IN MYSORE):** Karnataka 166 vs Himachal Pradesh 235/7 (Rishi Dhawan 72 not out; Vasuki Koushik 3/48).

**Murasingh picks 7**

MANISANKAR MURASINGH took seven wickets to keep Tripura firmly in the game against Services.

**BRIEF SCORES (IN DELHI):** Tripura 126 and 16/1 vs Services 173 (Manisankar Murasingh 7/63).

**VP shines**

VEER PRATAP SINGH took a five-for to keep Chhattisgarh in the game against Maharashtra, though the latter's response had begun shakily.

**BRIEF SCORES (IN PUNE):** Maharashtra 289 (Veer Pratap Singh 5/80) vs Chhattisgarh 131/3.

# Yearend sale: Dozen wickets for 89 runs

Simarjeet and Ishant roll out Hyderabad for 69 in the first innings, visitors lose two more after following on

**SANDIP G**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

WHEN MEDIUM-pacer Simarjeet Singh was scything through Hyderabad's top-and-middle order on a chilly Kotla afternoon, those crowding the Mohinder Amarnath Stand grew increasingly restless. "Arre ek over Ishant bhai ko do," they collectively screamed. They'd packed the lunchboxes and tea-flasks to Kotla to watch one of the Delhi's finest run a weak batting line-up ragged.

In the morning session, after Delhi settled for 284 in the first innings, everything conspired for an Ishant master-class—gloomy clouds, helpful surface and a line-up with eight left-handers. However, in an anticlimax, after his stifling but the wicketless first spell that read 6-2-6-0, Ishant was pulled out of the attack. That didn't end Hyderabad's troubles as the rest of the Delhi pace bowlers stepped up. At stumps the visitors, following on after shrinking to 69 all out, were 20/2 in the second innings.

It wasn't that he bowled well, but his Test blueprint didn't work here. He was too good for the Hyderabad batsmen. Ishant would hit back-of-length, on the fourth-fifth stump channel, angle the ball inwardly and make it nibble away from the left-handers. They would chance their luck and leave the ball, or cover the line and defend when it was stump-bound. Skating on thin ice.

They had no intentions whatsoever to play their strokes—they crawled at less than half a run per over in the first 10 overs. But for what it was worth, the second-wicket pair of skipper Tanmay Agarwal and PS Chaitanya Reddy saw out Ishant after left-arm Pawan Suyal had bowled Akshath Reddy in the first over.

Against such a defensive strategy, Delhi needed more straightforward, stump-to-stump bowling to bargain the wickets, more so as the odd ball kept low. Simarjeet, brisk and wiry, provided just that. With a full, straight first ball, he trapped the scratchy Agarwal in front, who played down the wrong line. Six overs later, an identical delivery nailed Himalay Agarwal, ending his tormented 32-ball stay.

Bookended by the straight-ball dismissals was the exit of Chaitanya Reddy, losing his patience and slashing wildly at a wide Suyal delivery. Then at the stroke of lunch, Simarjeet burst through Kolla Sumanth's feeble defences with extra pace. From 5/38, it was imperceivable to see Hyderabad forge a comeback.

Their lone hope of avoiding follow-on rested on Bavanka Sandeep, arguably their most promising batsmen and considered the inheritor of a uniquely proud batting legacy. But a careless stroke—trying to cut an awkwardly bouncing Simarjeet short-ball—ensured his departure. Thus, Simarjeet, supposedly the stock bowler, turned out to be the



Ishant Sharma was the crowdpuller and he reciprocated their affection with a lower-order mopping. *PTI*

strike bowler. By default, he emphasises: "My job was to support Ishant bhaiya by bowling tight lines. Initially, he was beating the batsmen but they took fewer risks against him. Perhaps, they thought they can attack me more and I got those wickets."

Then as the mild sun dispersed and the gust of breeze got stronger, Ishant blew the lower-order with a four-wicket spell, delighting the crowd, who crooned: "Ishant miya, kal ke liye kuch bacha ke rakhal!" Hyderabad, thus, stumbled to their second successive double-digit score—Punjab had shot them out for 76 in the second innings. They could be a third too, as they look equally shaky in the second innings, having already lost two wickets for 20 runs before the fading light forced an early wrap-up of the second day. In all, they lost 12 wickets in 39 overs, which's a session and nine overs. Their plight could have been worse had Delhi clung into all their catches.

Such abject capitulations cease to surprise, for Hyderabad has been a side on a

steep slide for much of the decade. Their treasured legacy of insouciant batsmanship, of twinkling foot-work, silken wrists and artful flicks, emblazoned by the likes of ML Jaisimha, Mohammad Azharuddin and VVS Laxman, has died a slow death.

**Storied collapses**

From the 21 in Jaipur in 2010—still the lowest Ranji total—to the 69 here, Hyderabad has plunged to the depth several times in the last decade. The shortage of quality batsmen is mirrored by their receding contribution to the national side.

For much of the last three decades, there was at least one indispensable Hyderabad in the national side. But not since Laxman retired had had they a Hyderabad of that stature. In fact, the last Hyderabad to represent India was the medium-pacer Mohammed Siraj, but unconvincing to burst through the ranks.

What they're left with—as evidenced in Kotla—is a crop of batsmen with staggering

ineptitude, lacking in technique and tactics, composure and courage, fight and fortitude. They showed neither old-fashioned dourness nor new-age enterprise. Though the Kotla pitch was, by no stretch of imagination, a placid batting surface, it wasn't unplayable either.

Forget the runs Shikhar Dhawan made. After all, he's a Test batsman, accustomed to such challenges, but even rookies like Anuj Rawat and Kanwar Bhiduri demonstrated that making runs is not impossible if they had a method. Each batsman stared suspiciously at the strip when they were dismissed, as though it was wickedly misbehaving. It was seldom the case, though.

There are obvious talks of talent. Bavanka Sandeep is one—he's a delightful strokeplayer, averages 47, has a double hundred to his name (against Services). Debutant Chaitanya Reddy is deemed a wonderful talent. The Agarwals, Himalay and Tanmay, and Akshath Reddy all average over 40, but at the slightest sniff of a challenge they shirked.

Twice in two innings.

In so grim a situation as this, the exiled Ambati Rayudu's name pops up. The middle-order batsmen had come out of retirement and joined the team before the season, only to opt out claiming "too much politics". Mohammad Azharuddin, who took charge as the president a few months ago and promised quick turnaround, brushed it aside as the rant of a "frustrated man".

But, as they stare at a third crushing defeat, Rayudu is being badly missed. Instead, they're left with a group of inadequate batsmen, who were ruthlessly exposed not just by Ishant, but by the straight balls of a shy rookie in his fifth match. That Hyderabad didn't need Ishant to be at his deceptive best tells the day's story.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Delhi 1st Innings 284 (Shikhar Dhawan 140, M Ravi Kiran 4/60, Mehedy Hassan 3/61). Hyderabad 1st Innings 69 in 29 overs (Ishant Sharma 4/19, Simarjeet Singh 4/23, Simarjeet Singh 2/25) and 20/2 (Kunwar Bhiduri 2/7).

## Gandhi removed from dressing room after Tiwary's complaint



Manoj Tiwary complained to the ACU of national selector Devang Gandhi's presence in the Bengal dressing room.

**SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

NATIONAL SELECTOR Devang Gandhi was removed from the Bengal Ranji team dressing room after Manoj Tiwary raised a complaint to the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) official about his presence. This happened during the second day's play of the Ranji Trophy match between Bengal and Andhra at Eden Gardens. Gandhi, though, denied the allegation.

"As per the anti-corruption protocol, only players and support staff are allowed inside the dressing room. The selector had no business coming there. So obviously I took exception to his presence and took the matter to the ACU official. Accordingly, the ACU official asked the selector to go," Tiwary told reporters after bad light had stopped play in the first session. Gandhi, however, drove home his point that he didn't do anything "illegal". "I was sit-

ting outside the boundary, which as a selector I am entitled to. I am having a back problem and Lal ji (Bengal coach Arun Lal) asked me to come to the dressing-room and consult the physio. I took permission from the ACU official before entering the dressing-room and I took the physio to the CAB medical room," the national selector told *The Indian Express*.

Tiwary, on the other hand, said he took the initiative as a senior member of the playing squad. Gandhi was present at the match as the East Zone representative of the selection committee. The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) later issued a statement, saying Gandhi "wanted to enter the dressing-room area", when play was stopped.

"Mr Devang Gandhi, being a national selector, wanted to enter the dressing rooms area today when the game was not in play. He was allowed to enter the PMOA (Players' & Match Officials' Areas) as a temporary visitor by the ACU official only

**I was sitting outside the boundary, which as a selector I am entitled to. I am having a back problem and Lal ji (Bengal coach Arun Lal) asked me to come to the dressing-room and consult the physio. I took permission from the ACU official before entering the dressing-room."**

**DEVANG GANDHI**  
NATIONAL SELECTOR

after obtaining necessary permission from the match referee," CAB secretary Avishek Dalmiya said in the statement.

He added: "However, when Mr Gandhi wanted to get some medical treatment done and the same was informed to the ACU officer, he was instantly asked by the ACU officer to

get the same done at the medical room outside the PMOA in order to maintain the required protocols. Accordingly, Mr Gandhi moved to the medical room forthwith to ensure there is no breach."

According to a team source, the whole controversy was "unnecessary". He described it as "a mountain out of a molehill". A CAB official, however, said: "One (read, Gandhi) should be cautious."

It is learnt that during Bengal's Ranji Trophy opener against Kerala at Thumba, Subhomo Das, the selector who travelled with the Bengal team, was requested by the ACU official not to sit with the coaching staff during the match. Das readily obliged and sat alone in the box. The anti-corruption protocol allows only those who have their mug-shots on the outer wall of the PMOA to enter the dressing-room.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Bengal 1st Innings 289 (Abhishek Raman 112, CV Stephen 4/61, KV Sasikanth 4/78) vs Andhra.

**CRISIS MAN**

## After inspired dressing-room speech, skipper Sharma walks the talk



All-rounder Karn Sharma scored a brave 112 not out to dig Railways out of trouble against Mumbai, enabling them to snatch a 152-run lead. *File*

**DEVENDRA PANDEY**  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 26

IN THE dressing room, before he took the field, Karn Sharma, Railways' captain, told his team a simple truth: "Cricket is a game where you don't know what can happen once you go inside (the arena)—you can become a hero."

As it turned out, it was Sharma who returned the hero on the second day's play against Mumbai, hitting an unbeaten 112, gaining a 152-run lead, before Mumbai were left wobbling 64 for 3 in their second innings, still 88 runs adrift of Railways.

It wasn't an easy start to the season for Sharma. He had to come back from pre-season camps to attend to his daughter's health that had demanded regular hospital check-ups.

"My daughter has an eye-sight problem since birth and as a professional player it was getting tough. My mind was always on family, they couldn't have done it without my presence. Being a professional player means I had to attend camps, pre-season

fitness camps, there is no liberty to skip those once you are roped in as professional player. But I had to look at my family also," he recalls.

Sharma says he spoke to Railways selectors, who were sympathetic to his situation. He spoke to officers in Diesel Locomotive Works in Varanasi, where he was posted earlier. "They (DLW) knew my case where officers had filed charge sheet when I went to play IPL. They too were interested in hiring me again. I did a fresh joining, went as low-grade officer. It was tough decision but I had to take it," he added.

**Wobbly start**

Sharma's knock had revived Railways from 43 for 5 as he first added 85 runs for the seventh wicket with Avinash Yadav before continuing the fight with the tail.

In their reply, Mumbai top order again fell cheaply—Prithvi Shaw made 23, fellow opener Jay Bista for 13 and Siddhesh Lad too didn't last long. It was left to Ajinkya Rahane and Suryakumar Yadav to hold the fort but Mumbai still have to do a lot to climb out of the hole. In his team meeting,

Sharma had also spoken about the importance of doing well against Mumbai. "It doesn't matter what you do against many other teams but a performance against a strong team like Mumbai counts. It's always a big plus point," he shared what he told the team. "I told the boys that it's just a bat-and-ball game, you will be under pressure if you go by the names."

Railways had bundled out Mumbai before lunch on the opening day for a paltry 114, before Sharma helped them post 266 in response. Sharma believes the match is not over as yet, as a "big team like Mumbai know how to come back".

He is of course pleased with his contribution and its vital role in putting them in a strong position. "We were five down, they had experienced bowlers. It was delayed start, the moisture had seeped in. I just wanted to stay there and bat on, take it ball by ball. When I was 70-odd runs, I felt I could get a hundred. If we win it from here, it will be give more satisfaction than the hundred," Sharma said.

Sharma has been part of two IPL-winning teams before Mumbai Indians and

**We were five down, they had experienced bowlers. It was delayed start, the moisture had seeped in. I just wanted to stay there and bat on, take it ball by ball. When I was 70-odd runs, I felt I could get a hundred."**

**KARN SHARMA**

Chennai Super Kings. Last season, he hardly got games but he says he isn't complaining too much about it. Back in the dressing room, he insists of setting an example, especially as the lone player who has played Test match for India.

Asked if the Indian dreams are still present, he says, "I want to make a comeback, I'm waiting for that day. I have hope. And the day I lose that hope, I will leave this game."

**BRIEF SCORES:** Mumbai 114 and 64/3 (Prithvi Shaw 23, Suryakumar Yadav 15 batting, Himanshu Sangwan 2-11) trail Railways 266 (Karn Sharma 112 not out, Arindam Ghosh 72; Tushar Deshpande 4-44) by 88 runs.

# Thousands brave winter chill, witness Kashmir's long-awaited football match

**ADIL AKHZER**  
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 26

**BRAVING WINTER** chill and cold weather, the Valley witnessed its first major sporting event in Srinagar since the revocation of special status of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5. On Thursday, Real Kashmir hosted I-league champions Chennai City at TRC Turf Ground, drawing several thousand in the stands.

Unlike past, however, the attendance was less, with rows and rows of seats remaining empty during the match. "The seating capacity is around 13,000 at the ground. Today, we saw around 5,000-6,000 people present at the match," Umar Amin, Media Manager of Real FC the told *The Indian Express*. "The match ended peacefully."

Thursday's match -- which Real Kashmir won 2-1 -- was the first home game of the season, after Real Kashmir's previous match against Gokulam Kerala, which was to be played on December 12, had to be rescheduled due to adverse weather conditions. Real Kashmir's next match here will be on January 5 against Mohun Bagan.

Since early morning, hundreds of fans arrived at the ground to watch the match despite the sub-zero temperatures during the night and the day temperature dipping significantly ahead of the New Year. On December 21, the 40-day chill period Chilai Kalan started in the valley with locals gearing up for some harsh weather conditions.

The match on Thursday afternoon, however, started in sunshine. "I am hardcore football fan. I left early morning to reach here and to support Real Kashmir," says Arshid Ahmad, a resident of North Kashmir's Sopore -- 50 kilometers away from Srinagar.

While the match was going on at the ground, BJP General Secretary Ram Madhav arrived at the ground and watched the match briefly. Talking to media persons on the sidelines, Madhav said he was "delighted to be present today at this match." "I am happy that I witnessed two first two goals and both were by Real Kashmir FC," he said.

Kashmir has witnessed a complete lockdown since August 5, when government revoked special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the state into two Union Territories. While the businessmen, after the restrictions were lifted, did not open the shops for the whole day, there has been a change in the last two weeks, as the shops are now open and public transport is also back on the roads.

Team officials told *The Indian Express* that the J&K police had advised them not to sell more tickets and keep the tickets limited. "We had initially sold more than 2,000 tickets because it was the first big event post August 5. But then there was more crowd at the ground and it reached over 5,000," said an official. "We are hopeful that there will be more crowd in the next match."

**Farooq, Armand score in Kashmir's maiden win**

*PTI*: Taking advantage of the home conditions, Real Kashmir on Thursday scored their first victory of the ongoing I League season with a 2-1 defeat of the defending champion Chennai City. Danish Farooq (22nd minute) and Ivory's Bazie Armand (27th) scored for the winners while Syed Suhail Pasha was the lone scorer for the visitors as he found the net in the 48th minute. Real Kashmir had drawn their away matches against Kolkata giants East Bengal and Tiddim Road Athletic Union (TRAU) of Imphal before taking on the Holders.

The win takes Real Kashmir to seventh place in the standings with five points, while the defending champions drop to eighth place with an inferior goal difference of -2.

## Goa survive Chennaiyin resurgence in goalfest

*Chennai*: FC Goa regained the top spot in the Hero Indian Super League after trumping Chennaiyin FC in an edge-of-the-seat contest that ended 4-3 in favour of the visitors. First-half goals from Ahmed Jahouh (26'), Brandon Fernandes (41') and Hugo Boumous (46') set the Gaurs on their way. Chennaiyin threatened to come back with goals from Andre Schembri (57') and Rafael Crivellaro (59') but Ferran Corominas (63') added a fourth for Goa before Crivellaro managed to get another goal back in injury time, setting up a grandstand finish. However, Sergio Lobera's team held on to seal the win. FC Goa head the table with 21 points from 10 matches.

been a change in the last two weeks, as the shops are now open and public transport is also back on the roads.



Security personnel watch Real Kashmir's match against Chennai City at TRC Turf Ground in Srinagar on Thursday. Kashmir won 2-1. *AIFF*

## Akhtar alleges teammates treated Kaneria unfairly

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
KARACHI/NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

**FORMER PACER** Shoaib Akhtar has claimed that his teammate Danish Kaneria faced discrimination at the hands of a few Pakistani cricketers, who were reluctant to even eat with him because he is a Hindu. Kaneria supported Akhtar's claim.

Kaneria, only the second Hindu to play for Pakistan after his maternal uncle Anil Dalpat, took 261 wickets in 61 Tests at an average of 34.79. He also played 18 ODIs. Akhtar made the revelation during a show 'Game on Hai' aired on PTV Sports.

"In my career I fought with two-three (in the team) when they started talking on regionalism. Things like 'who is from Karachi, Punjab or Peshawar', that used to infuriate. So what if someone is a Hindu, he is doing well for the team. They used to say 'sir ye yaaha se khaana kaise le raha hain' (how is he taking food from this place)?" said the 44-year-old, who played 46 Tests and 163 ODIs.

"The same Hindu won the Test for us against England. If he is taking a bagful of wickets for Pakistan, he should play. We could not have won the series without Kaneria's effort. But not many gave him credit for that," said Akhtar.

When contacted, Kaneria supported Akhtar's claims. "Shoaib has been a legend of the game. His words are also as blunt as his bowling. When I was playing I did not have the courage to speak on these matters but after Shoaib bhai's comments, I do. He has always supported me and also Inzy bhai (Inzaman-ul-Haq), Mohammad Yusuf and Younis bhai (Younish bhai)," Kaneria told PTI over phone from Karachi.

"Those who did not support me, I will make their names public soon. Having said that, I feel fortunate and honoured that I got to play for Pakistan," added Kaneria.

Kaneria, now 39, was found guilty of spot-fixing alongside Mervyn Westfield while playing for Essex against Durham in 2009. The leg-spinner was found to have convinced Westfield to concede 12 runs during the one-day game. Westfield was handed a four-month prison sentence and ECB banned him for five years.

Kaneria admitted to spot-fixing in 2018 after six years of denial.

**In my career I fought with two-three (in the team) when they started talking on regionalism. Things like 'who is from Karachi, Punjab or Peshawar', that used to infuriate. So what if someone is a Hindu, he is doing well for the team. They used to say 'sir ye yaaha se khaana kaise le raha hain' (how is he taking food from this place)?."**

**SHOAIB AKHTAR**  
ON ALLEGED TREATMENT TO KANERIA

# Boxing Day: England first punch

Curran records best bowling performance for England (4/57); de Kock's gritty 95 takes hosts to 277/9

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
CENTURION, DECEMBER 26

**JAMES ANDERSON** marked his 150th appearance with a wicket off the first ball of the series before England lost a little of its early impetus in the opening test as South Africa reached 277-9 at stumps on Thursday.

Anderson forced Dean Elgar out caught behind down the legside at SuperSport Park to give England immediate reward for loading its bowling attack with quick bowlers and putting South Africa in to bat. Stuart Broad, Anderson's long-time pace partner, and newcomer Sam Curran followed up as South Africa struggled to 111-5 soon after lunch before recovering.

Broad took three wickets and Curran 4-57 in his best bowling performance for England so far. Quinton de Kock led a middle-order revival for South Africa with his 95 off 128 balls. De Kock blasted 14 fours to hit South Africa out of trouble and found help from debutant Dwaine Pretorius (33) and Vernon Philander (28 not out).

Curran removed de Kock just short of his century, Broad had Kagiso Rabada for the final strike of the day, and Jofra Archer also picked up a wicket to give all of England's four front-line fast bowlers some success. Anderson had 1-69 on his return from a calf injury that's kept him out since the beginning of the Ashes series. He's the first bowler ever to play 150 tests.

While celebrating that achievement, his first offering of the series was wayward down the legside. Elgar still managed to push his bat out at it and edge behind to wicket-keeper Jos Buttler. Anderson leaped in the air in celebration.

Curran claimed the wicket of Aiden Markram (20) in his first over into the attack - England's first change. Broad sent back Zubayr Hamza (39), South Africa's new No. 3 following Hashim Amla's retirement, shortly before lunch. Curran and Broad both struck to remove Rassie van der Dussen, the second South African on debut, and captain Faf du Plessis (29) respectively soon after lunch.

## In deep trouble

The Proteas were in deep trouble at that point. It was the kind of start England captain Joe Root was hoping for. There was also a sense of relief for Root that England's leading two pace bowlers came through their first challenges of the four-test series. The 37-year-old Anderson had bowled just four overs in test cricket since February before this match.

Broad had struggled in the buildup to the first test in South Africa with a flu-like illness that struck down a number of England's touring players. Broad had spent nearly a week in bed recovering. Batsman Ollie Pope missed out on selection for the series opener completely and was one of three England players still sick and quarantined at the team hotel.

Jonny Bairstow came into the team for Pope but the attention was on England's bowling attack. Star allrounder Ben Stokes also played and added a fifth pace option. His father was in a critical condition in a Johannesburg hospital earlier this week suffering from a serious illness while vacationing in South Africa to watch his son play. Ged Stokes has improved and is now stable. That allowed England's vice captain and most important player to take part in the first test and Stokes collected catches to get rid of Hamza and tailender Keshav Maharaj.

The 21-year-old Curran was undoubtedly the spark for England, though, as was de Kock for South Africa. The left-handed wicket-keeper-batsman attacked from the moment he arrived at the crease with South Africa under pressure. He just missed a sixth test hundred when Curran cleverly found enough movement with the old ball to produce an edge behind to Buttler.

**BRIEF SCORES:** South Africa 277/9 (de Kock 95, Philander 28\*, Curran 4/57, Broad 3/52) vs England



James Anderson took his 150th Test wicket -- Dean Elgar -- off the first ball bowled on Thursday. *AP*

Anderson's long-time pace partner, and newcomer Sam Curran followed up as South Africa struggled to 111-5 soon after lunch before recovering.

Anderson had 1-69 on his return from a calf injury that's kept him out since the beginning of the Ashes series. He's the first bowler ever to play 150 tests.

While celebrating that achievement, his first offering of the series was wayward down the legside. Elgar still managed to push his bat out at it and edge behind to wicket-keeper Jos Buttler. Anderson leaped in the air in celebration.

Curran claimed the wicket of Aiden Markram (20) in his first over into the attack - England's first change. Broad sent back Zubayr Hamza (39), South Africa's new No. 3 following Hashim Amla's retirement, shortly before lunch. Curran and Broad both struck to remove Rassie van der Dussen, the second South African on debut, and captain Faf du Plessis (29) respectively soon after lunch.

## Photographer trips, delays start of play

*Centurion*: Photographer Christiaan Kotze became part of the story on Thursday when he was injured in front of the sight screen and caused a delay to the start of a Test match - and possibly contributed to South African batsman Dean Elgar's wicket.

Kotze, on assignment for AFP, had finished shooting some pre-play images before the first Test between South Africa and England. He was walking in front of the sight screen when he tripped on the boundary rope and then lost his footing on a slippery pitch cover. He collapsed in severe pain from what was diagnosed as badly-sprained right knee

ligaments and needed medical treatment on the spot before he was carried away on a stretcher.

The start of the match was delayed by several minutes - and when it began Elgar played a loose shot and was caught behind down the leg side off the first ball of the match, delivered by James Anderson. Kotze's his wife Catherine took over his ground level camera, while after treatment he hobbled up to a more comfortable position in the press box.

"I hope I didn't cause Dean Elgar to lose concentration," he said. "But when I was limping past some English guys they thanked me for the wicket."

## For failed dope test, Olympian Sangwan banned for one year

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 26

**FORMER ASIAN** silver medalist boxer Sumit Sangwan was on Thursday banned for one year by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) for failing a dope test. Sangwan, who competed in the 2012 London Olympics and formerly a 91-kg category boxer, was set to appear for the Olympic qualifier trials. But that will not be possible now as his suspension starts with immediate effect.

"Sumit Sangwan banned for 1 year with immediate effect for consuming specified prohibited substance," NADA DG Navin Agarwal posted on his twitter handle. Sangwan's sample was collected "out of competition" (OOC) on October 10 and he tested positive for Acetazolamide, which is listed as Diuretics and masking agents under S5 of WADA's 2019 Prohibited List.

However, the boxer had not opted for provisional suspension. His period of suspension starts from Thursday, December 26, 2019. "The Hearing Panel holds that since Athlete in the present case was negligent in consuming the specified prohibited substance without verifying its composition and elements and without disclosing same in the doping form, he is liable for sanctions under Article 10.5.1 for ineligibility period of 1 year," the order stated.

## Bidhuri seeks Rijiju's intervention

Former World Championship bronze-medallist boxer Gaurav Bidhuri has challenged the selection procedure for the upcoming trials for next year's Olympic Qualifiers and sought Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju's intervention in the matter. In a letter addressed to Rijiju, the Boxing Federation of India, and the Sports Authority of India, Bidhuri has said that he has been unfairly kept out of the trials to be held on December 29 and 30 in Bellary, Karnataka.

"I have had enough of this unfair system. The medallists from this year's world championships were given direct slots in the Olympic Qualifiers. But when I won the world bronze in 2017, I wasn't even allowed to appear for Commonwealth and Asian Games trials," Bidhuri told PTI. "At that time I was told I hadn't competed enough, this time I am being told I haven't competed against strong opponents. Can somebody explain what is the selection criteria here? It doesn't make any sense," he said.

Bidhuri wants to appear in the 57kg category trials for the Qualifiers scheduled in February in China. The world medallists exempted from trials are Amit Panghal (52kg) and Manish Kaushik (63kg).

The boxers finalised for the trials in the 57kg division, on the basis of a ranking points system, are former world quarterfinalist and Asian silver-winner Kavinder Singh Bishit, Commonwealth Games medal-winning duo of Mohammed Hussamuddin and Gaurav Solanki and former world youth world champion Sachin Siwach.

# 'Is that what happened?' Smith asks after being booed at MCG



Steve Smith was greeted by a mixture of boos and cheers by the Melbourne crowd. He was unbeaten on 77 at the end of Day 1 against New Zealand. *AP*

**AP & AFP**  
MELBOURNE, DECEMBER 26

**IT'S THE** biggest event on Australia's cricket calendar, the opening day of the Boxing Day test at Melbourne Cricket Ground. It's not the time an Australian batsman would expect to be booed. "Is that what happened? I have no idea," Steve Smith said on Thursday after scoring an unbeaten 77 on day one of the second test against New Zealand.

Walking to the crease at the fall of Australia's second wicket, in front of a record crowd of more than 80,000 -- the biggest attendance ever for a day's play in an Australia-New Zealand test -- Smith was greeted by a mixture of boos and cheers. The booring was no doubt linked to Smith's 12-month ban at the hands of Cricket Australia for his role in the ball-tampering affair in the Cape Town Test against South Africa in March, 2018. Smith was Australia's captain at the time.

Smith is eligible to regain Australia's captaincy role in March 2020. The 30-year-old showed tremendous resilience during

Australia's Ashes tour of England in 2019, scoring 774 runs at an average of 110.57 and jointly winning the player-of-the-series award with England's Ben Stokes, despite constant abuse from English crowds.

And now he is hearing boos in his home country. "I don't really listen when I walk out to bat. Cheering, booing, dunno. I've learnt to just block it all out, regardless, good or bad." Smith has scored centuries in his past four Melbourne tests, before missing last year's clash against India because of his 12-month suspension. It will be interesting to see if the boos turn into cheers if the World No.2-ranked batsman's sheer class is on display again on Friday.

On Thursday, in the Black Caps' first Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground since 1987, skipper Kane Williamson won the toss and opted to bowl, and it looked to be a good decision with Joe Burns out first ball and David Warner just before lunch.

But first Marnus Labuschagne, the world's leading run-scorer for 2019, and then Smith smacked half centuries to seize back control and leave them on 257 for four, frustrating the disciplined New Zealand bowlers.

## I don't really listen when I walk out to bat. Cheering, booing, dunno. I've learnt to just block it all out, regardless, good or bad.

**STEVE SMITH**  
ON BEING BOOED

Along with the fidgety Smith, Travis Head was not out 25, desperate for runs after a lean spell. Labuschagne made 63 with Colin de Grandhomme taking 2-48.

The signs are ominous for New Zealand with superstar Smith scoring centuries in his past four Tests in Melbourne, and a fifth looking likely. "The way they bowled and placed their field, I had to be patient," said Smith. "It's not the kind of wicket you could go after them. I think we did pretty well today. The plan will obviously be to score as many as we can (on Friday)," he added. "But after getting sent it, I think you'd take 257 for four at the end of the day. One more good partnership would be nice and sort of set the game up for us."

The visitors need to win to square the

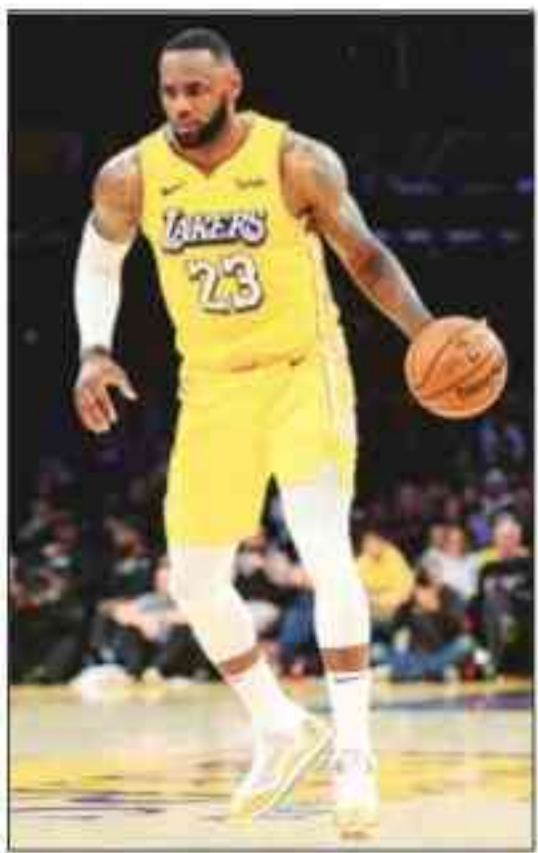
three-match series after crashing in the opening day-night clash in Perth by 296 runs.

It was a bold decision by Williamson to bowl on a pitch that has traditionally been docile and favoured the batsmen. And it appeared to pay dividends in a sizzling opening over from Trent Boult, back after missing two Tests with a rib injury. After three testing balls to Warner, his fourth clattered into Burns' middle stump, with the opener out for a golden duck to huge roars from the large New Zealand contingent in the 80,000-strong crowd.

Boult was sorely missed by the Black Caps in Perth and along with Tim Southee found early swing and zip with the ball. "Obviously we would have liked a few more wickets on our tally," said Boult. "I think the overheads (cloudy conditions) and the way the pitch played in the first hour or two, it's annoying not to have them a couple more ahead. On the positive, they haven't got too far ahead of the game. Hopefully we get a couple (of wickets) early tomorrow."

**BRIEF SCORES:** Australia 257/4 (Smith 77\*, Labuschagne 63, de Grandhomme 2-48) vs New Zealand

BRIEFLY



Groin injury may force LeBron to sit out

LeBron James aggravated a right groin injury in the first quarter of the Los Angeles Lakers' 111-106 loss Wednesday and could be forced to miss some time, ESPN reported Thursday. James said he was kneed in the groin when taking a charge from the Clippers' Patrick Beverley and said that "kind of set me right back to where I was five days ago." He missed the Lakers' game on Sunday, a loss to Denver, because of the a throacic muscle strain, which affects the ribs, and lingering discomfort in his right groin. It was on Christmas Day in 2018 that James tore his left groin against the Golden State Warriors, and he was limited to just 55 games on the season. The Denver game was the only one James has missed on the season, and he has said he doesn't believe in the idea of load management.

China slaps spending curbs on clubs

Chinese football authorities have announced major curbs on spending by clubs ahead of the 2020 season that include a cap on foreign and domestic players' salaries as they seek to stave off financial ruin. Overseas recruits to the Chinese Super League in the upcoming winter transfer window will be limited to earning 3 million euro (\$3.3 million) after tax, the first time a salary cap has been implemented in the Chinese Super League in more than a decade. Additionally, a ceiling of 10 million yuan (\$1.4 million) has been placed on Chinese players' salaries. Clubs will also not be permitted to spend more than 1.1 billion yuan on their operations throughout the upcoming campaign, with salaries not to exceed 60% of that amount. **REUTERS**

Railways, Punjab and MP enter semis

Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Railways registered wins in their respective women's and men's matches of the 70th Senior National Basketball Championship here on Thursday. Punjab women outplayed Telangana 72-65 while Madhya Pradesh beat Delhi 64-59 to book their places in the last four stage. In the men's quarterfinal, Railways beat Karnataka 93-78. Sahil came up with 23 points and Lovneet Singh scored 22 points for railways while for Karnataka, the bulk of the scoring was done by Harish M, who contributed 26 points. The early morning session witnessed pre-quarterfinal matchups with teams battling it out for a berth in the quarterfinals. **PTI**

# The whistleblowers

The Stepanovs fled Russia with their son and a secret. Now they live a quiet life in USA while the doping scandal they disclosed rages on

JULIET MACUR  
DECEMBER 27

THE BOY and his parents blended in.

One Saturday in December, they competed in a set of holiday running races in which some participants wore reindeer onesies. Later in the day, they stopped at a dollar store to buy Secret Santa gifts, then sneaked them onto a neighbor's porch.

That night, they went to a Christmas parade where marching Boy Scouts handed out candy canes and Santa waved at spectators from inside a fire truck. The mother and her 6-year-old son posed for photos in front of a giant inflatable SpongeBob SquarePants.

"We are just like any middle-class American family," Vitaly Stepanov said of life with his wife, Yuliya, and their kindergartner son, Robert. "Well, except for the whistleblower part."

Oh, yes. That. The Stepanovs, in truth, are not a typical family at all: Yuliya, 33, once was a top middle-distance runner on Russia's national team. Vitaly, 37, worked for the Russian Anti-Doping Agency. Now living in America, they do their best to keep a low profile in a city they would rather not name.

They have a complicated past. The Stepanovs were the whistleblowers who originally exposed Russia's widespread, state-sponsored doping program, before the 2016 Summer Olympics. The information they provided, including secret recordings Yuliya made of coaches and athletes, led to Russia's being barred from the track and field events at those games in Rio de Janeiro. It also paved the way for Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of the Moscow anti-doping laboratory, to divulge his role in hiding the failed doping tests of Russian athletes at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

The consequences of the combined disclosures still reverberate. Russia's continuing efforts to cover up the scandal recently resulted in a new, stricter ban from international sports.

"As whistleblowers, we never imagined things going this far, and it's surreal that the cheats won't be welcomed at the Olympic Games," Vitaly said. "Finally, after so many half-measures, something real is being done to Russia as a punishment."

But the Stepanovs have paid a price, too. In 2014, two days before a German documentary detailed their doping accusations, the couple left Russia with four suitcases and their infant son. They moved to Germany, fleeing into an uncertain future.

In the years since, Yuliya's former teammates have labeled them traitors, and Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, has called her "Judas." Meanwhile, on the promise of a job that did not materialize, the Stepanovs moved to the United States in 2015 and, the following year, applied for asylum to remain in this country. But three years later, that application is still pending.

For now, after moving at least six times since leaving Russia, they live in a sort of stateless limbo in which, according to two people with knowledge of the situation, they have been cooperating with authorities investigating fraud and conspiracy relating to Russian doping. The two people declined to be named because they are not authorized to speak publicly about the situation.

Robert celebrated his sixth birthday at a trampoline park with friends, and he said he wants to be a zoologist to help animals such as his pet fish, Racer.

Life is good, his parents said. "I feel like I'm home here, and I'm happy here, and I wake up every morning with my family and have this beautiful view," Yuliya said from her kitchen as she watched a dozen deer graze only feet from her back porch. "I feel like it was my destiny to end up here."

While she left most of her possessions in Russia when she and Vitaly ran for their lives, she did carry with her a deep sense of betrayal. It started in her childhood. Her father, who died



Vitaly Stepanov and Yuliya Stepanova with their son, Robert, at their home in an undisclosed location in the USA. **NYT**

**They hate us for telling the truth. I've seen comments on the internet like, 'We should kill those traitors, we should go poison them.' But we feel safe here. We want to stay here."**

**YULIYA STEPANOVA**  
FORMER MIDDLE-DISTANCE RUNNER

of cancer when she was 27, beat her, her mother and her two sisters, she said, and often scolded her for having Olympic dreams. He wanted her to work on their potato farm instead.

Her coaches turned on her when she received a two-year ban for blood values that indicated doping. Her teammates, even her best friend, declined to stand with her and fight the team's doping. By the time she arrived in America, she said, she had cut all ties with people outside her family. She admitted that she is

cautious about forging relationships with new friends. "I don't want anyone close to me because I could be hurt," she said.

She likes that Americans tend to be friendly, though, and that the ones she knows don't pry into her past. When mingling with her neighbors or the women in her running group, she smiles easily and has a natural radiance to her, but keeps her backstory to herself. Sometimes, it finds her.

Yuliya said her heart sank when a neighbor once said she and her Russian husband had seen Yuliya on Russian TV.

"She told me, 'I just want to let you know that we are on your side,'" Yuliya recalled. But when she told Vitaly about the conversation, he snapped, "I told you not to talk to strangers."

Yet at times, she has been very vocal about the need for clean sports, testifying to Congress about doping and speaking publicly about it at the White House.

The Stepanovs said they support themselves through financial arrangements with the International Olympic Committee. Vitaly

works as a consultant, meeting with the IOC's president, Thomas Bach, and some of the same Olympic officials he battled in 2016 as he tried, but failed, to get Yuliya into the Rio Games. Yuliya receives an IOC scholarship that provides financial support for athletes training for the Olympics. It pays for her training expenses, though it is unlikely she will ever get to run in the games.

Despite the income — much more than the \$18,000 a year Vitaly said he would be making at the Russian Anti-Doping Agency — the Stepanovs live frugally. Most of their furniture came from Craigslist or from local benefactors, they said. Yuliya's favorite store is Ross Dress for Less, and she drives a 2012 Ford Escape with nearly 184,000 miles on its odometer. Their go-to pizza dinner is the \$5.99 special from Domino's.

Vitaly, who attended high school and some college in the United States, has earned two college degrees online — he hopes to work in Olympic sports one day — and Yuliya was in school for a time, too. She enrolled to learn

EXPLAINED  
**E**

**The couple that shook-up Russian sports**

In 2014, 800m runner Yulia Stepanova and her husband Vitaly — a former employee of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency — appeared in a German documentary and lifted the lid on what was later described as one of the most 'sophisticated doping programmes' in sports history. Their claims were backed by another whistle-blower — Grigory Rodchenkov, a former head of the RUSADA — two years later. They have all alleged that Russia ran a carefully planned, state-sponsored doping scheme, pointing at a wider conspiracy, in which the country's anti-doping and members of intelligence services substituted urine samples of the athletes. The lab, according to investigations, was guarded by members of Russia's state security services.

English, but found it easier to pick up words by watching subtitled films. The "Harry Potter" movies are her favorite. But she never thought she would need to know English.

One of the handful of people Yuliya and Vitaly speak to on a consistent basis is Patrick Magyar, the former vice chairman of the Diamond League, the prestigious series of global meets. He became their unofficial adviser in 2014 soon after they left Russia, and now they talk weekly. Magyar, who retired from sports in 2017, helps Yuliya with her training and the couple with navigating their new lives. Magyar won't count Yuliya out from the Olympics just yet. Despite her battling injuries in recent seasons, he said, she has a toughness that he has never seen — both on and off the track.

"The mental strength of that woman is absolutely second to none, and it's not typical for Yuliya to give up even if the odds are against her," Magyar said in a telephone interview. "But no matter what happens, she is going to be very, very fine, and Vitaly is a supersmart guy. If they just knew they could stay in the United States, their lives would be set."

On typical weekdays, the couple drop off Robert at school before heading to work out at a high school track or a gym. Yuliya races in collegiate events that welcome all comers, but she expects 2020 to be her last year of competition. She says she wants to have another baby. A girl, hopefully.

Robert doesn't know a thing about the central role his parents played in the global anti-doping fight. Last year, Vitaly read him a Russian children's book that addressed the issue of doping and was published by the Russian Anti-Doping Agency.

"Did you understand what I just read?" Vitaly remembered asking.

"No," Robert answered. "I'm going to bed now." Robert has asked about the Olympics, however. He has a hunch that his mother is a pretty good runner. At the races this month, Yuliya won the women's 5K for the second year in a row, finishing seventh overall. Vitaly was second in the men's division.

In the boys' half-mile, Robert took second. Asked about his performance, he didn't seem to care. "Oh, I don't know," he said. "Let's go find Santa. He has candy!" **NYT**

NEW BOSS, SIMILAR OUTCOME

## Arteta settles for draw in his first game as Arsenal manager

REUTERS  
DECEMBER 26

CARLO ANCELOTTI got off to a winning start as Everton manager but new Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta had to settle for a draw at Bournemouth in the Premier League on Thursday. Fourth-placed Chelsea suffered a shock 2-0 loss at home to Southampton while Harry Kane and Dele Alli were on target as Tottenham Hotspur came from behind to beat Brighton & Hove 2-1.

Leaders Liverpool are at second-placed Leicester while Manchester United host Newcastle later on Thursday.

Italian Ancelotti, a Champions League winner with AC Milan and Real Madrid, was appointed by Everton on Saturday to replace the sacked Marco Silva and was given a warm welcome by the Goodison Park crowd.

A scrappy game was decided 10 minutes from the end when Djibril Sidibe whipped in a cross from the right which Dominic Calvert-Lewin met with a superb angled diving header that flew in off the inside of the far post.

It was a less enjoyable start for former Everton midfielder Arteta, as he took charge of Arsenal for the first time at Bournemouth.

Arteta restored Mesut Ozil to the starting

line-up and the German forward looked sharp in the opening exchanges, but chances were rare. Arsenal's sloppiness was punished when they gave the ball away cheaply on the left wing and Bournemouth sliced through them quickly, midfielder Dan Gosling stabbing home Jack Stacey's centre from close range to give the home side the lead.

The Gunners equalised in the 63rd minute as Reiss Nelson's shot deflected into the path of Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, and he swivelled to rifle the ball home.

"It was intense, I was so excited, I just wanted to pass that energy to the players and I really enjoyed it. I think we had the chances in the second half to put the game in our favour," Arteta said.

**Poor form**

Chelsea's poor form continued with goals from Michael Obafemi and Nathan Redmond earned Southampton a surprise victory at Stamford Bridge and condemned Frank Lampard's side to their fifth defeat in seven league games.

Obafemi broke the deadlock with his first goal of the season, bursting inside from the right and curling into the top corner after a tight opening half hour.

The Saints added their second when

Redmond nicked the ball over the advancing Kepa Arrizabalaga to finish a slick attack.

Spurs were also facing a possible upset, until Kane followed up his own shot to equalise in the 53rd minute and cancel out Adam Webster's first-half header.

Alli got the winner in the 72nd minute with a brilliant lofted finish as he met a Serge Aurier ball. Substitute Conor Hourihane got the winner for Aston Villa in their 1-0 win over fellow strugglers Norwich City to end Villa's four-match losing run.

Watford moved off bottom spot with a hard-earned draw at in-form Sheffield United. Gerard Deulofeu's goal on the break put Watford ahead but Oliver Norwood's penalty ensured the points were shared.

A magnificent solo goal in the 90th minute from Jordan Ayew secured a 2-1 win for Crystal Palace at home to West Ham United. West Ham had grabbed the lead through Robert Snodgrass but former Hammer Cheikhou Kouyate equalised before Ayew's jinking run and fine finish stole the points for Roy Hodgson's side.

**Mourinho furious**

Tottenham Hotspur coach Jose Mourinho has lashed out at the Premier League's congested fixture list over the Christmas period

which means his side have to travel to face Norwich City two days after beating Brighton & Hove Albion 2-1 on Thursday.

Spurs were without suspended forward Son Heung-min and will be without the South Korean against Norwich in addition to Moussa Sissoko and Harry Winks who picked up fifth yellow cards of the season against Brighton. Tottenham visit Southampton on Jan. 1 for a fourth Premier League game in 11 days.

"It's a crime that they are playing again on the 28th, it's against every rule of physiology and biology," Mourinho told a news conference after his side overcame Brighton thanks to second-half strikes from Harry Kane and Dele Alli. "It's against every rule, but that's how it is and now we have three players suspended, it's completely unfair." The Portuguese was echoing criticism of the schedule made by Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp, who said there was no reason why teams only had two days to rest between games.

Leicester City manager Brendan Rodgers described the calendar as "nonsense".

Brighton coach Graham Potter joined Mourinho in complaining about the impact of the games on players but said he understood that the number of fixtures over the holiday period boosted the Premier League's global appeal.



Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta with Reiss Nelson after the match. **Reuters**