



NEARBY



Reign of terror prevailing in U.P., allege activists

NEW DELHI
 Activists on Thursday alleged that with the Uttar Pradesh government "intimidating" citizens who were protesting against the CAA and the NRC, a "reign of terror" was prevailing in the State. An appeal signed by film personalities was read out by actors Swara Bhaskar and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 13

Kejriwal vows free bus rides for all in next term

NEW DELHI
 AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, while addressing his first town hall meeting in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly election, said his government will provide free bus rides to all in the next five years.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 4 PAGES

NPR: house-to-house verification planned

Data on parents' place of birth to be gathered; register already has data of 119 crore residents

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi government proposes to update the National Population Register (NPR), which already has an electronic database of more than 119 crore residents, by verifying the details of all respondents through house-to-house enumeration, according to an official manual for conducting the fresh NPR exercise.

The NPR exercise has become controversial because the Citizenship Rules, 2003, link the Population Register to the creation of a National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) or National Register of Citizens.

Coupled with the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, which excludes Muslims, fears about an NPR-NRC have brought lakhs of people on to the streets in protest. More than 20 people have been killed during the protests, most of them in Uttar Pradesh.

Clubbed with census

Data for the NPR was first collected in 2010 and updated in 2015. The Modi government has proposed that the next phase of NPR be conducted, along with the cen-

Asking the right questions

The manual details how an enumerator should collect information from a citizen:

The person may be assisted to arrive at the correct year of birth by stimulating her/his memory with reference to any historical event, such as war, flood, earthquake or change in regime.

Examples:
 First World War (1914-1918), Dandi March (1930), Quit India movement (1942), Independence (1947), war with China (1962), war with Pakistan (1965), liberation of Bangladesh (1971), Asian Games (1982), India's first win in the cricket world cup (1983), etc.

■ The year of birth/age can also be ascertained with reference to the birth/age of another person in the same household or in the neighbouring household or that of a well-known person in the village

her eldest living child and her age at the time she gave birth. Subtract her age at the time of birth of her child to get a fair estimate of her year of birth

■ If a woman is not able to tell her age at the time when the first child was born, try to ascertain her age at the time of marriage and the interval between her marriage and the birth of her eldest child

■ If a woman does not know her age at marriage, try to find out the difference between her age and that of her husband whose year of birth may be known. Use this to record the woman's year of birth

■ If the respondent does not know the age of any member of the household and asking questions also does not help, you will have to estimate her/his age by using your best judgment



SOURCE: NPR MANUAL

sus exercise, between April and September 2020.

According to the government manual seen by *The Hindu*, the enumerators, all government officials, will "modify and correct the demographic data items". They are also tasked with collecting mobile, voter card, Indian passport and driving licence numbers from residents.

The manual requires the "inclusion of all new residents, new households

found in the local area during the field work".

The 2010 NPR form collected details on 15 parameters, whereas a "pre-test" form that was used to collect data on a trial basis from 30 lakh people in September this year sought additional details on columns such as "place of birth of father and mother, last place of residence," etc. It also added details such as Aadhaar number, voter ID card number, mobile phone number and

driving licence number.

The manual states that in cases where the date of birth or age was not known, the enumerator could help the respondent by "stimulating her/his memory" with reference to historical events well known in the area such as a "war, flood, earthquake, change in political regime, etc."

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NRC A ROUTINE EXERCISE, SAYS RAM MADHAV ▶ PAGE 12

'Our emphasis was on residency'

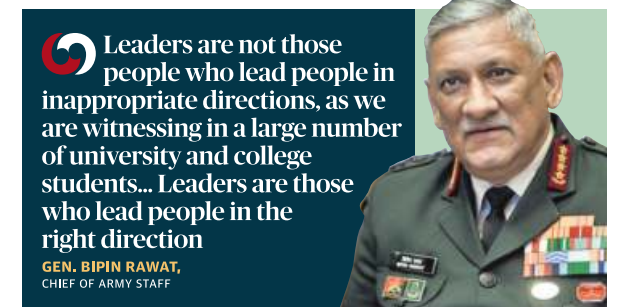
Senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram said the emphasis of the National Population Register (NPR) in 2010, when the UPA was in power, was on "residency" and not on "citizenship". Highlighting the differences between the UPA-era NPR and the present version, he wrote on Twitter, "We were enumerating the 'usual residents'..." The NPR was to help in the 2011 Census. There was no mention of the NRC, he said. ▶ PAGE 12

Punish 'tukde tukde' gang: Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said it was time to "punish" the "tukde tukde [divisive] gang under the leadership of the Congress", which was responsible for "disrupting the peace" in Delhi during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The people of Delhi would punish them, he stated, referring to the Assembly election. ▶ PAGE 13

Army chief: leading crowds for arson is not leadership

Remark sparks outrage from political parties, leads to social media storm



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Students leading crowds to carry out arson and violence is not leadership, the outgoing Army chief, General Bipin Rawat, said on Thursday, in an apparent reference to the protests across the country against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

It is unusual for a serving Army chief to comment on the country's civilian affairs, and the remarks drew sharp criticism on social media and from political parties.

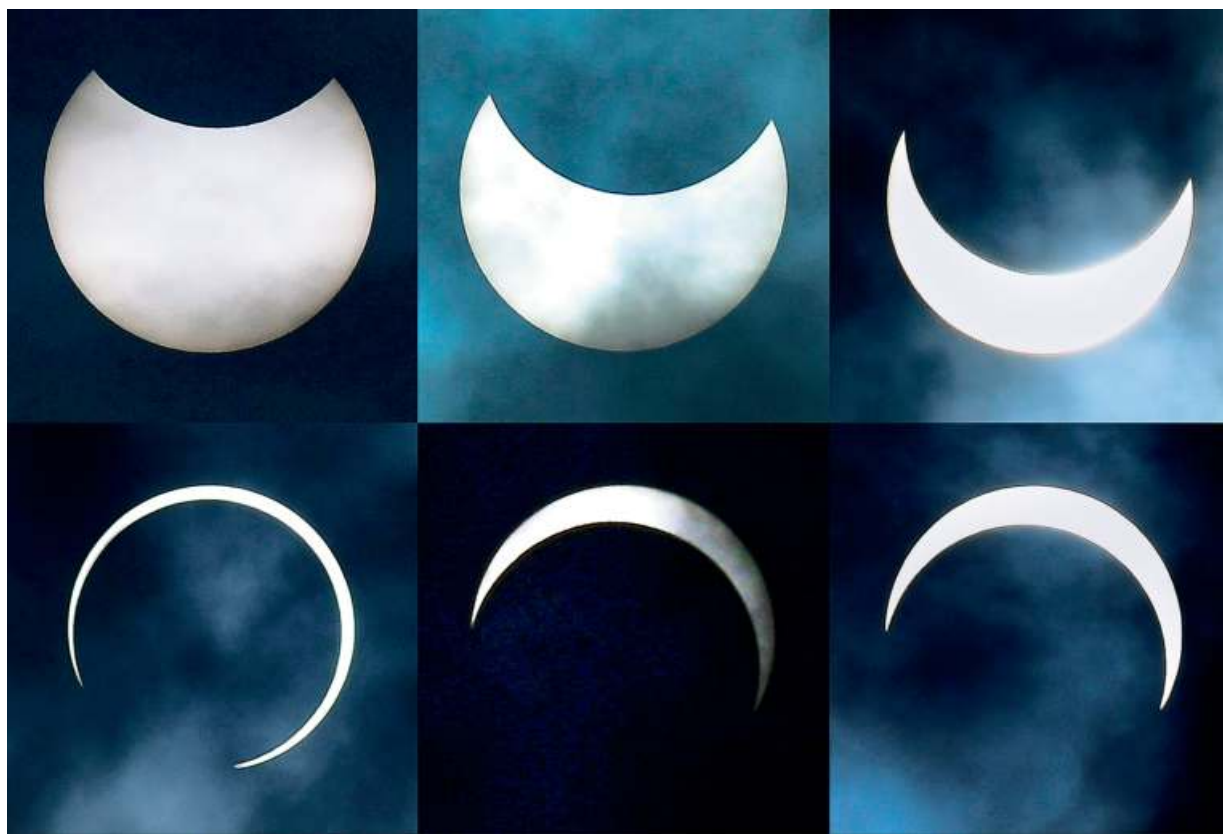
"Leaders are not those people who lead people in inappropriate directions, as

we are witnessing in a large number of university and college students, the way they are leading masses of crowds to carry out arson and violence in our cities and towns. This is not leadership," Gen. Rawat said at an event in the national capital.

Leadership, he said, was all about leading, and the complex thing about it was "when you move forward, everybody follows". "Even amongst the crowd you find leaders... But leaders are those who lead people in the right direction."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Ring of fire



Different stages of the annular solar eclipse as seen from Dindigul in Tamil Nadu on Thursday. ■ G. KARTHIKEYAN

Revamp of railway fares likely

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Railways is mulling "rationalising" of the charges for both passenger and freight services, Railway Board Chairman V.K. Yadav said on Thursday. But he did not clarify whether the fares would be increased.

"We are looking at rationalising the fares and freight rates. Something is being thought about... While the freight fares are already high, our target is to draw more traffic from road to the Railways," he said.

The announcement comes at a time when a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General pointed out that the steadily declining performance of the Railways was reflected in the operating ratio of 98.44% in 2017-18, which was the worst in the last 10 years.

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CARGO CAPACITY ▶ PAGE 15

EC sets the ball rolling on Delhi polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday reviewed preparations for election to the Delhi Assembly, the term of which will end on February 22.

Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Elec-

tion Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra reviewed the poll preparedness at a meeting attended by district election officers, deputy commissioners of police and heads of municipalities, said a statement issued by the office of Delhi

Chief Electoral Officer Ranbir Singh.

During the meeting, Mr. Singh briefed the Commission on the status of the electoral rolls, EVMs and awareness drives.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

Two injured from Firozabad die in Delhi hospitals

They had sustained bullet injuries on December 20 during protests against new citizenship law

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Mohammed Haroon, 30, and Mohammed Shafeeq, 40, from Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh, who were shot during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on December 20, died of their injuries at hospitals in Delhi on Thursday.

Haroon's relatives were at the trauma centre of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, where the body was kept. A few others were at the hospital police post completing the procedure.

His brother-in-law, Zaki Sheikh, said Haroon's four sisters were waiting for him to come back home in good health. "It was just bad luck that he went to that area on December 20. There was no plan," he said.



Detainees raising slogans outside U.P. Bhawan in New Delhi on Thursday during a protest against alleged police violence. ■ AP

The family members said that they were in the buffalo trade. They used to go to the weekly market at Rasulpur for business. "On December 20, a Friday, the weekly market had been set up. None of us had any plan to go, but Ha-

roon went. We don't know why he decided to go," Mr. Sheikh said.

According to the family, Haroon had sold a buffalo for ₹33,000. Mr. Sheikh said they had the receipt to prove he was in the area for business.

However, the money and his mobile phone could not be found, they said.

'Shot in the face'

"We don't know who shot him - whether it was the police or someone in public. We got the information that he was shot when he was taken to a hospital in Agra. He was shot in the face. They referred him to AIIMS and we brought him here on Wednesday," Mr. Sheikh said, adding that doctors here tried their best to save him but "it was his destiny".

At Safdarjung Hospital, Shafeeq's family stood outside the mortuary. They had just submitted the documents required before conducting the post-mortem.

They haven't told Shafeeq's wife Rani about his

death. "She will lose her mind if we tell her straightaway. When we brought the body to the mortuary, we told her that he is being taken for operation. She will eventually get to know when we go to Firozabad," Shafeeq's brother Shaheed said.

Early on Thursday morning, Ms. Rani told *The Hindu* that her husband was still undergoing treatment. He had passed away at 2 a.m. The brother said doctors at Safdarjung told the family that he was brain-dead because of the gunshot wound in his head. He was brought here on Monday.

On December 20, several people sustained injuries. Haroon, Shafeeq and Mukeem, 20, were referred to the Delhi hospitals. Mukeem passed away on Tuesday morning.

IN BRIEF


Tiwari proposes new date to observe Children's Day

NEW DELHI
Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding the observance of the Martyrdom Day of the sons of 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh as Children's Day. He said the birthday of former PM Jawaharlal Nehru is observed as Children's Day since 1956, based on the premise that children were "very much dearer to him...but the children of our country have also sacrificed for the country and the highest sacrifice is of the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh ji, named Sahibjaada Joravar Singh ji and Sahibjaada Fateh Singh ji".

Air quality of Delhi-NCR	
Delhi	349
Gurgaon	290
Ghaziabad	359
Faridabad	360
Noida	370
Greater Noida	370

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

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

DELHI TODAY

Music and dance: The second and concluding day of 12th Guru Debaprasad Nritya Parampara event will feature a Odissi vocal by Dr. Sangita Gosain, a Mohiniattam performance by Gopika Varma & troupe, and a Odissi performance by Ramli Ibrahim & group at The Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Realms of peace", a solo paintings show by Bhaskar Singha at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "A Dialogue with Soil", a solo glass sculpture show by Sisir Sahana at Gallerie Ganesha, E-557, Greater Kailash-II, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

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

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

Rights body releases report on police action at Jamia university

'Right to protest must be recognised inalienable; FIR should be filed against police'

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

The Peoples Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) on Thursday released a fact-finding report on the crackdown by Delhi Police at Jamia Millia Islamia and termed the police action "unjustified, excessive and unauthorised".

Demanding a Commission of Enquiry to be instituted, the PUDR, in its report, said: "The right of citizens to protest must be recognised as inalienable and the practice of routine refusal to grant permission must be stopped. An FIR should be registered against the police for brutal use of force inside the Jamia campus."

The PUDR also said that police stations in the vicinity



Activists Radhika Chitkara and Harish Dhawan releasing the report in New Delhi on Thursday. •R.V. MOORTHY

need to be "sensitised" to counter "communal outlook and ensure civil behaviour".

"The police personnel and officers who were part of the attack on students need to be shunted out of the police station without delay. Whatever evidence remains at Jamia should be preserved and we appeal to

the Delhi High Court to take cognisance of the issue," said activist Harish Dhawan.

The report named 'Bloody Sunday: Police Brutalities at Jamia University 13-15 December, 2019' added that there was a "clear template" of crackdown by the police on protesters across the national capital.

"The patterns have been

similar - lathi-charge, tear gas firing followed by large-scale detentions and denial of legal and medical aid to detainees. Targeted attacks on Muslim neighbourhoods were seen at Seelampur-Jafraabad, Daryaganj and Seemapuri. The most brutal of these were in Daryaganj where 11-12 minors were detained till late in the night and without any medical or legal aid," the PUDR said.

The report by a six-member PUDR team added, "The residents of the area surrounding the Jamia campus have a high degree of distrust on the police. The police have, on its part, provided reason on past occasions to earn this distrust. The spiteful verbal abuse noted in this report is a reflection of the same."

213 detained from outside Uttar Pradesh Bhawan

The people were protesting without permission: police

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

The Delhi police on Thursday detained 213 protesters from outside the Uttar Pradesh Bhawan in Delhi. The people had gathered to stage a protest against alleged police atrocities in Uttar Pradesh during protests against the amended Citizenship Act.

The protesters were released at 5 p.m., said a police officer.

Scores of people from all walks of life had gathered outside the U.P. Bhawan to protest against the alleged "undemocratic onslaught on organisations and activists in the State".

The protesters who came from Jamia Nagar, Nangaloi and Seelampur were detained and taken to nearby police stations, a senior police



Protesters being detained outside Uttar Pradesh Bhawan in New Delhi on Thursday. •AFP

officer said.

"A total of 213 people were detained from outside U.P. Bhawan for protesting without permission. They were detained and taken to Mandir Marg police station and Connaught Place police station," said Eish Singhal,

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi).

The protesters also demanded the release of Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad who was arrested in connection with the violence reported in old Delhi's Daryaganj recently.

Police oppose bail plea of nine accused in Daryaganj violence case

Court's decision will be pronounced on Saturday

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI**

Delhi Police on Thursday opposed the bail pleas of nine accused arrested in connection with a violent protest against the amended Citizenship Act in Daryaganj here.

The counsel for the arrested persons claimed that the police had detained many but decided to arrest 15 who had no prior antecedents.

Additional Sessions Judge Satish Kumar reserved its order on the bail applications of the nine people and said the decision would be pro-

nounced on December 28.

The court will also hear on the same day the arguments on the bail plea of other six persons arrested in the case.

During the hearing, the prosecutor said that the police had 19 witnesses to support its case and as per an eyewitness, these accused were present at the site of the incident from where they were taken into custody.

The court has asked the police to verify the address and other details of one of the arrested accused in the case.

A magisterial court had denied bail to the 15 accused on December 23, after which they approached the sessions court for relief.

They were arrested after a violence broke out in the area on December 20 as a group of agitating demonstrators resorted to stone-pelting when police tried to forcefully evict them. One car was set on fire and several others were damaged.

All the accused are in judicial custody. One of those arrested had claimed he was a juvenile. However, the police said he had told them he was 23.

City on high alert, forces deployed in sensitive areas

Policemen meet Imams, leaders, request them to ask people to maintain peace

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

A high alert has been sounded and the national capital was put under a heavy security cover in view of the Friday prayers since the police crackdown on protesters in Daryaganj, said a police officer on Thursday.

A senior police officer said that they have deployed extra security personnel in sensitive areas in north-east, south and central Delhi. Rapid Action Force (RAF) and CRPF have also been deployed at certain locations.

"We have got intelligence

inputs regarding a march towards Jantar Mantar from Jamia Nagar and north-east Delhi. We met the Imams of various mosques and requested them to make an appeal to people to maintain peace and not to get involved in any kind of violence," the officer said.

Protests on Friday

On Friday, a group of students will stage a protest outside the Uttar Pradesh Bhawan. Then other groups will march to 7, RCR, and people from Jama Masjid might march towards Jantar Mantar.

Senior police officers held a meeting with local leaders and requested them to ask the youth not to get involved in any kind of rumour-mongering and ask them to avoid getting motivated by any rumour of violence. "We have got assurance from most of the locals and it will be a peaceful day," the officer added.

The city has been witnessing demonstrations for the past few days, with the situation turning violent last week when hundreds of locals protesting the amended Citizenship Act clashed with the police at Delhi Gate.

"We are in touch with the U.P. police and trying to identify accounts on social media spreading rumours. We are working in close coordination. We also keep a tab on WhatsApp and Telegram groups," the officer said.

Around 200 police personnel in civil dress have been deployed in sensitive areas to alert the local police in case of any violence.

On December 15, Jamia Nagar witnessed violence. On December 17 and 20, there were incidents of stone-pelting in north-east and central Delhi.

Prohibitory orders in Nuh ahead of anti-CAA protests

Section 144 of CrPC has been imposed

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NUH**

Ahead of the scheduled protest marches across Nuh over the next fortnight against the amended Citizenship Act, the district administration on Thursday imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC across the district, putting restrictions on the assembly of five or more persons.

As per the schedule for the demonstrations under the aegis of Mewat Vikas Sabha, a protest march is to be held from Rangala village to Ferozepur Jhirka on Friday; Mandikhera village to Badkali Chowk on December 29; Uttawar Mor to Roppraka Shaheed Minar on December 31; Shahidi Park to Mini Secretariat on January 3; Chharora to Tauru on January 5 and Khanpur Ghati to Pinangwan on January 7. The decision regarding the march to Delhi is to be made at a meeting on January 9.

The orders issued by Ad-

ditional District Magistrate Vivek Padam Singh stated that there appeared to be a likelihood of tension, annoyance or obstruction. The prohibition will remain in place for two months or till the time the situation became peaceful.

Mewat RTI Manch president Rajuddin Meo said the administration's decision to impose the restrictions was unfortunate since the protests here were peaceful.

All-India Mewati Samaj national president Ramzan Chaudhary said the prohibitory orders were politically motivated and an attempt to muzzle the voice of the people. He said that still a method would be devised to register the protest.

Mewat Vikas Sabha president Salamuddin said the administration's decision to invoke prohibitory orders was unwarranted and illegal. "We will devise some Gandhian way to register our protest," said Mr. Salamuddin.

People march in Sohna in support of new law

Neighbouring villages, Nuh take part

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM**

Holding placards and Tricolours, a large number of people took out a march and held a public meeting in support of the amended Citizenship Act in Sohna on Thursday.

Amid slogans in support of the amended Act and chants of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Inquilab Zindabad", a large number of people, under the aegis of Sanyukt Hindu Sangharsh Samiti and Dharam Raksha Samiti, took out the march on the city roads in the evening.

People from Sohna, neighbouring villages and parts of Nuh district took part in the demonstration. The demonstrators maintained the amendment in the law was congruous with the Constitution and the age-old tradition of the country.

Earlier, addressing a gathering at Tau Devi Lal stadium, Bharatiya Kisan

Sangh state secretary Virender Badkhalsa said the Opposition could not digest the soaring popularity of the country at global level and was trying to achieve its political ambitions in the guise of Opposition to the amended law. He added that the law did not deprive anyone of citizenship, but granted citizenship to the persecuted religious minorities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

'Civil war-like situation'

Samiti's Gurugram president Mahavir Bhardwaj and the Manch's president Tek Chand Saini also supported the amendment. The two opined that there was an attempt to vitiate the atmosphere by opposing the CAA and help Pakistan by creating a civil war-like situation. The awakened people of India would not allow these evil designs to succeed and the huge turnout in support of the law was the proof, they said.

Mercury to drop to 4°C in Delhi tomorrow

Delhi's air quality to deteriorate to 'severe' category on weekend, says SAFAR

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

The minimum temperature in the Capital was 5.8 degree Celsius on Thursday and is expected to drop to 4 degree Celsius on Saturday and Sunday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

On Thursday, the air quality of the city was in the 'very poor' category and is expected to be 'severe' on Saturday and Sunday, said SAFAR, a government-run monitoring agency.

The minimum temperature on Thursday was two notches lower than the season's normal, while the maximum temperature was 13.4 degree Celsius, colder than the season's normal by se-



The minimum temperature in the national capital on Thursday was 5.8 degrees Celsius. •AFP

ven degrees, the IMD said. The maximum temperature is likely to pick up slightly over the next few days.

The city's air quality index (AQI) on Thursday was 349, said the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

"On Friday, the AQI is forecast to deteriorate towards the higher end of 'very poor' category which is likely to enter 'severe' category by Saturday night. AQI is likely to further deteriorate and remain in the 'sev-

ere' category on December 29," SAFAR added.

On Thursday, the average level of PM 2.5 was 172.5 ug/m3, which was about three times the safe limit of 60ug/m3, as per Indian standards in Delhi-NCR at 8 p.m., the CPCB said. The level was, however, more than six times the safe limit (25 ug/m3) set by the World Health Organization.

'2nd coldest December'

The mean maximum temperature for December 2019 is expected to be 19.15 degree Celsius. "In that case, will be the second coldest December after 1997," said Kuldeep Srivastava, head of regional weather forecasting centre, IMD.

EC sets the ball rolling on Delhi Assembly polls

Officials told to conduct 'flawless election'; term to end on Feb. 22

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday reviewed preparations for elections to the Delhi Assembly, the term of which will end on February 22, 2020.

Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra reviewed the poll preparedness at a meeting attended by District Election officers, Deputy Commissioners of Police and heads of municipalities, read a statement from Delhi Chief Electoral Officer Ranbir Singh's office.

In his presentation during the meeting, Mr. Singh informed the Commission of the status of the electoral rolls, electronic voting ma-

chines and awareness drives to target low turnout areas, among other things.

The DEOs also gave presentations on the preparations in their districts, while DCPs informed the ECI about the law and order situation in their jurisdiction, the statement further read.

Addressing the officials, Mr. Arora said the Constitution had given the ECI the mandate to conduct free, fair and credible elections. He asked all election officials to conduct "flawless election" in Delhi.

Mr. Lavasa told the election officials to be prompt in their response to complaints received through the ECI's C-Vigil app and to be attentive to the training on EVM/VVPAT.

"The Commission direct-

ed all the DEOs and DCPs to ensure immediate assessment of vulnerable areas so as to prevent any intimidation. The Commission further directed all the DEOs to ensure provision of assured minimum facilities including ramp of gradient of 1:10 or lower and adequate facility of mobile toilets on locations having more than six polling booths," the statement read.

Facilities for voters

The ECI asked local bodies to make sure that facilities for voters are made available at all polling stations.

The DEOs were asked to coordinate with local bodies in order to address any deficiencies in facilities. The DEOs were told to monitor the hands-on training on EVM/VVPAT.

If voted to power, will make bus rides free for all: Kejriwal

'Will make Delhi the cleanest city in the world'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal while addressing his first town hall meeting in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections said the government will provide free bus rides to all in the next five years and also make the Capital, the cleanest city in the world.

"For women, we have already made it [bus rides] free and in the next five years, we will do it for others too," the Chief Minister said.

Stressing on the need to make the city clean, he said, "Our Delhi is very dirty... After coming to power, we had given priority to education, health, water among other things. Now my target in the next five years is to shine Delhi. We will make Delhi the cleanest city in the world."

As supporters of different MLAs started shouting slo-



Arvind Kejriwal.
• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

gans supporting respective MLAs, Mr. Kejriwal said: "This type of sloganeering is not right. We have come to change the country. Not to give tickets to some people."

Answering a question on high traffic challan rates, he said: "After the rates of challans increased, the traffic has gotten better, right? It is high but the number of challans has now decreased."

Talking about women's safety, he said: "From tomorrow we will start installing 1.4 lakh CCTV cameras. For us, women's safety is very important."

City gets 100 new buses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday flagged off 100 new buses to be operated under the Cluster Scheme.

525 buses

The addition of 100 buses, equipped with features, including CTTVs, panic buttons on every seat, hydraulic lifts for differently abled passengers and GPS tracking systems, brings the total number of such vehicles to be inducted under the scheme to 525 since August this year, the government said.

"Hundreds of new buses will be added within the next 5-6 months. The shortage of buses for many years is now being addressed with these new additional buses," said Mr. Kejriwal, adding: "It is my dream to modernise Delhi's public transport infrastructure so that it becomes a comfortable option for every citizen. One thousand electric buses will also be inducted very soon."

The first lot of such vehicles to be inducted, which consisted of 25 buses, became operational in August following which 100 buses have been inducted every

month since, the government said. While 12 buses each from the lot inducted on Thursday will ply from Tilak Nagar to Bakkargarh Border and Auchandi Border to Azadpur, respectively, 11 buses will ply on the route between Inderlok metro station and Dhansa Border, nine buses will ply from Old Delhi Railway Station to Ramzanpur Village and an equal number from Singhu Border to Tikri Border.

Eight buses, each will ply from Singhu Border to Kamla Market, Azadpur to Narela Terminal, Old Delhi Railway Station to Jhingola Village and Nilothi Extension to Mori Gate Terminal. Six buses, each, will ply from Sultanpur Dabas to Old Delhi Railway Station and Narela to Najafgarh. Three buses will ply on the route between Tilak Nagar and Jaffarpur Kalan.

The tender process for the procurement of 300 electric buses has begun and is expected to be completed by December 15, the government said.

Meanwhile, LoP in the Legislative Assembly Vijender Gupta alleged the number of buses flagged off by Mr. Kejriwal on Thursday was "too small and too late".

CM captions video 'holy war'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal captioned an introductory video "Yeh Dharmyudh hai [This is a holy war]", on his Twitter timeline on the day of the AAP government's first town hall meeting in view of the upcoming Assembly elections.

"...This is a holy war to change the system, to change politics," Mr. Kejriwal says in a short audio clip as part of the video which then brings forth visuals related to AAP's governance model and its five-year Report Card released on December 24.

CM inaugurates underground reservoir in south Delhi

He promises clean water within 15 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurated an Underground Reservoir (UGR) with a capacity of 60 lakh litres at south Delhi's Mahipalpur here on Thursday.

Mr. Kejriwal said: "I want to congratulate you all for the installation of the underground reservoir of 60 lakh litres of water capacity. Residents of this area have faced a lot of trouble in getting clean water, which will be resolved soon with the installation of the UGR."

"We also had to face a lot of obstacles while carrying out the installation work but now new pipelines have been installed and clean wa-

ter will be available to the residents within the next 10-15 days. This reservoir will also provide clean water supply to the residents of the Vasant Kunj area," he added.

The government's aim was to provide "clean and safe water to every household" in the city, he said.

Earlier, nearly 40% of Delhi received its water supply from tankers and only 58% of the households had access to water from pipelines, he added. But over the last five years, the government had ensured tap water availability to more than 90% of the households and installed water pipelines covering "almost the entire Delhi" with just 7% remaining.

BJP appoints convener of its poll management panel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP national secretary, Tarun Chugh, has been appointed the convener of the party's poll management committee for the Delhi Assembly elections, the party said here on Thursday.

As many as 35 different committees were formed at an organisational meeting convened by National Organizational General Secretary B.L. Santosh here in relation to next year's State poll. This, even as the party announced that BJP national president Amit Shah will address a significant meeting of booth level workers at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here on January 5. "For winning the election in Delhi we must

expose the failures of AAP before the people due to which the people of Delhi are suffering," Mr. Tiwari said.

The party said while the significant poll management committee will be presided over by Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari, former Delhi BJP president Satish Upadhyay, New Delhi MP Meenakshi Lekhi and State-General Secretary, Rajiv Babbar, have been appointed co-conveners of the committee. In addition to these appointments, Union minister Harsh Vardhan was appointed convener of the manifesto committee with nine co-conveners including Vijender Gupta, Ramber Singh Bidhuri, Kapil Mishra, Raj Kumar Chauhan among others.

Campaign launched for clean Delhi

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Urban Development Minister Satyendar Jain and Social Welfare Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam on Thursday flagged off "Saaf Delhi, Swasth Delhi" for creating awareness on waste segregation, discouraging single-use plastic among others.

With cloth bags as prizes, comic strips and street plays to spread awareness, the campaign will have 70 vehicles with LED screens displaying messages on the themes deployed across the city for 10 days. "The campaign will run in all 70 Assembly constituencies," Mr. Jain said.

Respond to plea of cancer patient: HC to AIIMS, Centre

'Hospital denied treatment saying cannot take outside cases'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to respond to a plea by a woman suffering from fourth stage of esophageal cancer seeking direction to the hospital to provide her medical treatment.

Justice Navin Chawla, in an interim order, asked AIIMS to examine and render full treatment to the woman if she goes there till January 16.

"Till the next day of hearing, in case the petitioner [woman] produces herself for examination/ treatment before the respondent no. 2 [AIIMS], it shall examine and render full treatment to the petitioner," the court said and listed the matter for hearing on January 16.

Fifty two-year-old Shashi Bala, in her petition, sought



direction to the AIIMS to provide her treatment according to her present medical condition and after considering her previous reports and tests conducted in two different hospitals.

The counsel appearing for Bala also sought direction to the Centre to frame guidelines to be followed by government hospitals wherein no patient should be denied medical treatment if he/she is earlier treated at some other hospital.

"Denial to admit or treat

the woman, who is suffering from fourth stage of cancer, is violation of her fundamental rights... The condition of the woman is weak and fragile and if she is not treated by AIIMS, she might lose her life. Failure by AIIMS to provide timely medical treatment to a needy person abrogates his/ her right to life guaranteed under Article 21," the plea said.

It said the woman was earlier being treated at Batra Hospital and thereafter at Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre but the treatment was not satisfactory.

Subsequently, the woman's son had visited AIIMS but the doctors refused treatment saying that they would not "entertain or take outside cases," the plea alleged. It claimed that the doctors said they only take those cases where the patient directly comes to them.

Four-storey building goes up in flames, 40 rescued

Most of the occupants managed to reach rooftop, which made the rescue operation easy: DFS director

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A major tragedy was averted and 40 people were rescued from a building in east Delhi after a fire broke out in the early hours of Thursday.

Delhi Fire Service Director Atul Garg said that plastic waste and scarp were stored

on the ground floor of the four-storey building in Krishna Nagar, while people lived on the upper floors. The building had only one staircase for entry and exit.

The officer said that they received a call at 2.10 a.m. and five fire tenders were rushed to the spot. As the

caller gave correct information, they could act swiftly. All the residents went to the terrace after the fire broke out and hence, the rescue operation was easy compared to other such incidents, he said.

Forty people were rescued from the building and the fire was doused by 4 a.m.

"We heard people screaming for help from the terrace. During the operation, the team was split into two with one trying to control the fire and the other rushing to the upper floors to rescue those trapped inside," said Santosh Kumar, Station Officer of Delhi Fire Service, Mandwali un-

it, who headed the operation. The fire had started from the scrap on the ground floor. When those on upper floors sensed smoke, they ran towards the terrace. Most of them managed to reach the rooftop, though some couldn't. But all of them were rescued.

Woman found dead; three arrested for dowry death

Victim's husband is absconding

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In a case of dowry death, a 25-year-old woman was found dead under mysterious circumstances at her residence in south-west Delhi's Kapashera on Wednesday. Three persons have been arrested in connection with the case, police said.

A senior police officer said that the accused have been identified as the victim's brother-in-law Mohit Vats, mother-in-law Suresh, and sister-in-law Meenu. Her husband Rohit Vats is absconding, police said.

According to the police, a PCR call was received at 5.40 a.m. on Wednesday stating that a woman had jumped from her second floor residence in Samalkha village. When police reached the spot, it was found that the woman had sustained multiple fractures on her skull. She was taken to the hospital where she

was declared brought dead.

During investigation, the death appeared to be suspicious. It is being probed whether the woman fell herself or was being pushed by someone.

Family's allegation

The woman's father told the police that she got married in 2015 and had been harassed for dowry ever since her marriage. They also suspect that the family pushed her from the second floor, the police said.

Based on a complaint, police registered a case under Section 498A (husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty), 304B (dowry death) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code and arrested the three family members.

A magisterial inquiry has also been initiated as the couple hadn't completed seven years of marriage.

Two foreigners with fake tickets detained at IGI

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two foreign nationals have been apprehended for allegedly entering the terminal building of IGI airport by showing forged air tickets, the CISF said on Thursday.

Tan Ya, a Chinese national, was found roaming suspiciously in the check-in area of Terminal-3 at 8.40 p.m. on Wednesday following which he was detained. He disclosed that he had gained access to the terminal by showing an edited ticket of Spice Jet bound for Hong Kong to see off his friend.

In another case, on Thursday, Zhihui Li, also a Chinese national, was detained for entering Terminal-3 with a fake ticket to see off his friend.

Timings DELHI

FRIDAY, DEC. 27		
RISE	07:12	SET 17:32
RISE	08:03	SET 18:37
SATURDAY, DEC. 28		
RISE	07:13	SET 17:33
RISE	08:54	SET 19:34
SUNDAY, DEC. 29		
RISE	07:13	SET 17:34
RISE	09:39	SET 20:30

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	13	06
Safdarjang	13	06
Palam	12	06

Delhi Palam Today
14°C Morning will remain chilly with dense fog. Cold winds during afternoon with clear sky is likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
14°C A cold morning with moderate fog is likely. The sky would remain clear.

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THE HINDU
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Five held for running fake currency racket

FICN with face value of over ₹1 crore seized

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Five men were arrested for operating a fake currency racket in the national capital and other parts of the country, police said on Thursday.

The accused were identified as Tabrez Ahmed (38), Shoaib Malik (28), Raghuraj Singh (52), Danish Malik (28) and Unwan Ansari (40), they said.

Fake Indian currency notes (FICN) with a face value of more than ₹1 crore in the denomination of ₹2,000, ₹500, ₹100 and ₹50 and 1,675 US dollars in the denomination of \$100 were recovered from their possession, the police said.

On December 20, specific inputs were received that a delivery of fake currency would take place at a location in Laxmi Nagar following which a trap was laid and three persons were apprehended, said DCP (Special Cell) P.S. Kushwaha.

Around ₹3 lakh was recovered from them, he said.

During investigation, it was revealed that they were exchanging fake currencies with original Indian currency notes at the rate of ₹20 for ₹100 fake currency, he added.

On instance of Shoaib, two more accused – Danish and Unwan – were arrested on December 23, the DCP said.

AAP gave undue benefits to discoms, claims Cong.

Party demands CBI probe into it

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Thursday alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party government had extended undue benefits to discoms and demanded a CBI inquiry into it.

Delhi Congress president Subhash Chopra said, "In the guise of giving up to 200 units free power to consumers, the government has

committed corruption on a big scale. The power subsidy should have gone to the consumers directly. Instead it is going to the discoms. This scam should be probed by the CBI."

Mr. Chopra also said that the Delhi Congress, in its manifesto, for the upcoming Assembly elections will include free power up to 600 units as a "relief package" to consumers.

U.P. Minister refuses to meet Muslim families

PRESS TURST OF INDIA
BIJNOR (U.P.)

An Uttar Pradesh Minister on a visit here on Thursday refused to meet the families of the two Muslim men who died in the recent protests against the new citizenship law, terming them “upadra-vi” (vandals).

“Why should I go to vandals’ place? How can those who are involved in vandalism and put the entire country and State in arson be social,” Minister Kapil Dev Agarwal posed, defending his decision to not visit the homes of the two Muslim families.

“Why should I visit those who want to put Nahtaur/Bijnor in flames?” the Minister in-charge of the district shot back when asked by reporters to justify his decision.

Mr. Agarwal, the Vocational Education Minister in the Yogi Adityanath government, did meet Om Raj Saini, who was injured in the violence that hit the district’s Nehtaur area, and his family.

During Friday’s violence 20-year-old Suleman, an IAS aspirant, and 25-year-old Anas lost their lives.

U.P. police put death toll at 19 in anti-CAA protests

Total of 327 FIRs, 1,113 arrests and 5,558 detentions so far

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Nineteen persons have died in Uttar Pradesh since December 10 during the violence in the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the State police said on Thursday.

The police have also arrested 1,113 persons and detained another 5,558 others under preventive custody over the protests. A total of 327 FIRs have been lodged so far.

Issuing an official statement, Uttar Pradesh Police, which had maintained silence on the rising death toll over the past few days, also said that 288 policemen were injured in the violence, arson and vandalism. Out of these, 61 received firearm injuries.

The U.P. police also claim to have found 647 shells of .315 bore and .12 bore weapons, 69 live cartridges, and 35 illegal country pistols from the protest sites.

A police pistol was snatched by protesters in Sambhal on December 20, the police said.

DGP O.P. Singh has or-



A motorcycle allegedly torched by anti-CAA protesters in Kanpur. ■ FILE PHOTO

dered an SIT to be headed by the SP (Crime) or an Additional SP-rank officer to probe the cases.

‘Situation under control’ “The law and order situation in the entire State is under control,” the police said.

The police have also arrested 124 persons and lodged 93 FIRs for “objectionable posts, rumours and messages” posted on social media related to the CAA.

The State police also said that it had initiated the legal process to identify vandals and confiscate their property as compensation for damage to public and private property.

This comes in the background of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath promising to take “revenge” against those who damaged property during the protests by seizing their property and auctioning it.

‘Vengeance’ of U.P. govt. condemned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

In an open letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Magsaysay awardee Sandeep Pandey on Thursday condemned the “vengeance” with which the State government was acting in response to the violence during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

While stating that the violence was carried out by “anarchist elements”, Mr. Pandey said more “maturity and restraint” was expected of any government and administration.

He referred to the arrests of several social activists and students in Lucknow and Varanasi, and said, “If you’ll send social activists, who have faith in the Constitution, to jail because your police is unable to identify the anarchist elements then the space for peaceful means of expressing dissent with the government in a democracy will be eliminated and anarchist elements will be easily able to mislead the common people”.

Eggs in anganwadis on the anvil

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government is planning to introduce eggs in anganwadis across tribal areas to battle severe malnutrition among children and meet the nutritional needs of lactating mothers and pregnant women.

“There is a correlation between tribal areas in the State and high malnutrition levels. Moreover, tribals have an inclination towards a non-vegetarian diet,” said Anupam Rajan, Principal Secretary, Women and Child Development Department. “A proposal has been sent to the Finance Department for the sanction of ₹113 crore a year for the programme, which may be implemented in the next financial year.”

“Undeniably, eggs are a major source of protein, are cheap and can be procured locally,” he added.

For three times a week, an egg each will be provided to children and the women at centres in 89 tribal blocks under the Integrated Child Development Services.

Anti-CAA protests continue in Assam

Students' groups lead largest gathering

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

Protests against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, continued unabated across Assam on Thursday, primarily under the aegis of student bodies AASU and AJYCP, with agitators vowing not to relent till the law is scrapped.

The Opposition Congress, which has kick-started an 800-km 'padyatra' from Sadiya in eastern Assam to Dhubri in the western end of the State, reached Demow in Sivasagar district with thousands of participants.

The largest anti-CAA gathering took place at Tangla in Udalguri district under the banner of the All Assam Students' Union.

"[Prime Minister] Narendra Modi, [Union Home Minister] Amit Shah and their puppets [Chief Minister] Sarbananda [Sonowal] and [State Minister] Himanta [Biswa Sarma] are planning to snatch our food, but we will not tolerate that.

"Assam has to be for Assamese always. A conspiracy is being hatched to finish the identity, language and culture of the Assamese people," AASU general secretary Lurinjyoti Gogoi said while addressing the huge crowd.

Popular singers Zubeen Garg and Manas Robin and theatre artiste Pabitra Rabha also participated in the protest.

After singing a protest song that he has penned, Robin said, "The BJP government had promised to give two lakh jobs a year and seal the border with Bangladesh. Both did not materialise. Today, we are on the streets because we do not accept CAA as it will destroy us."



AASU general secretary Lurinjyoti Gogoi addressing a protest rally in Dibrugarh. • FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

Teacher suspended for protesting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JORHAT (ASSAM)

A woman school teacher in Assam's Jorhat district has been suspended for allegedly taking part in protests against the amended Citizenship Act, officials said on Thursday.

Bondita Bora, a teacher in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in Titabar, was suspended on Tuesday for "unauthorised participation" in anti-CAA protests. "She is also accused of instigating students to take part in the protests," they said.

AASU president Dipanka Kumar Nath said the agitation against the Act will continue in the court and on the streets.

Protests were also held in Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Morigaon and Sivasagar.

'Protests to continue till CAA is not withdrawn'

Mamata warns against attack on students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Leading a march against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in the city for the fourth time since December 16, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee asserted on Thursday that peaceful protests will continue as long as the law is not withdrawn.

Before leading the march from Rajabazar to Mullick Bazar, the Trinamool Congress chairperson warned the BJP-led governments not to use force against students protesting against the CAA. She also appealed to the students to continue their movement on the issue without bowing down to threats and repression.

"We express our solidarity with the students of Jamia Millia, IIT-Kanpur and other universities who are protesting against the CAA and the NRC [National Register of Citizens]," she said. The protesting students are adults and voters, Ms. Banerjee said. "So if they stage any protest, where is the harm in it? They have a role to play," she said, suggesting they use the social media to unite the people.

"In BJP-ruled States such as Uttar Pradesh, force is be-



CM Mamata Banerjee leads a rally against the CAA in Kolkata on Thursday. • AP

ing used on students. I would like to tell the BJP, don't try to muzzle the movement through force. If anybody tries to terrorise people, use brute force, then the people of the country, of Bengal, will not support that," said the Chief Minister.

Ms. Banerjee said her party stands by the families that have lost their loved ones during the anti-CAA protest. Earlier this month, the TMC sent a delegation to Uttar Pradesh but the members were not allowed outside Lucknow airport.

(With inputs from PTI)

One killed, three hurt in clash over land in Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAIGANJ (WEST BENGAL)

A woman was killed while three others suffered bullet injuries during a clash in West Bengal's North Dinajpur district on Thursday, the police said.

"The clash at Nayabasti village under Islampur police station limits took place over the control of a piece of land in a tea garden," said Islampur police district SP Sachin Makkar.

The deceased has been identified as 34-year-old Rasheeda Khatun.

Sources said, the clash allegedly broke out between two factions of the Trinamool Congress. Islampur MLA Choudhury Abdul Karim of the TMC alleged that the persons who opened fire are supporters of the party's district president Kanaia Lal Agarwal.

Mr. Agarwal, a former Islampur MLA, had switched sides from the Congress to the TMC and unsuccessfully contested the Raiganj Lok Sabha seat this year. He has denied his involvement in the incident.

IN BRIEF

**Mandala puja at Sabarimala today**

PATHANAMTHITTA
The presiding deity at the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple will be adorned with the Thanka Anki (golden attire) prior to the Mandala puja to be performed between 10 a.m. and 10.40 a.m. on Friday. The temple will be closed after the Athazhapuja at 11 p.m., marking the end of the 41-day Mandalam festival. It will be reopened at 5 p.m. on December 30 for the Makaravilakku festival. The Makaravilakku day falls on January 15.

Tribal mauled to death by tiger in Wayanad

KALPETTA
A 58-year-old tribal man was mauled to death by a tiger in the Wayanad wildlife sanctuary of Kerala on Wednesday. Masthi alias Jadayan of the Pachadi Kattunayakka settlement went missing on Tuesday noon after he went to the forest to collect firewood. His partially devoured body was found some 300 metres from his house. Officials found pugmarks of a tiger near his body. Ten cameras have been installed in the area to track the animal.

Jagan releases funds for fast-track courts

VIJAYAWADA
Enforcement of the Disha Act required fast-track courts in all the districts, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said on Thursday and ordered release of ₹2 crore for each of them. He also called for augmenting the capacity of the forensic laboratory at the State Police Headquarters and setting up of new ones in Visakhapatnam and Tirupati. Addressing a review meeting on the Act, Mr. Jagan called for a speedy investigation, particularly those pertaining to violence against women.

MLA eyes crowdfunding route to help kin of firing victims

'Karnataka Chief Minister should apologise for backtracking on compensation'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MANGALURU

Stating that the Karnataka government is "humiliating" the families of those killed in police firing by withholding compensation, Mangaluru MLA and former Minister U.T. Khader on Thursday said they would be compensated through crowdfunding.

Nausin, 23, and Jalil Kudroli, 49, were killed last week during a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens.

Mr. Khader told presspersons here that Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa spoke to the family members of the victims at the Circuit House in the city on December 22 and announced the compensation [of ₹10 lakh each to the kin of the duo] the next day. However, on Wednesday, he said the compensation could not be paid until an investigation proved them innocent.



U.T. Khader

"Now, he should make it clear who were all behind his decision to go back on his promise," Mr. Khader said, and demanded that the Chief Minister apologise for backtracking on compensation. "The decision has pained all. The government is playing politics with deaths and tragedy," the MLA alleged.

The former Dakshina Karnataka district in-charge Minister said funds would be collected from a cross-section of society. "The public will give more money than the government," he said.

Mamata offers help

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday criticised her Karnataka counterpart B.S. Yediyurappa for putting on hold the compensation to the families of those killed during the anti-CAA protests. She said her party, the Trinamool Congress, would give such families

financial assistance.

Ms. Banerjee, who led yet another march in the city against the Act, said a delegation of the Trinamool trade union wing would visit Karnataka to meet the families. She did not name Mr. Yediyurappa, but referred to a "BJP leader from Karnataka". "If you make a promise, you should keep it," she said.

All-party meet in Telangana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD

The Joint Action Committee of all political parties, the United Muslim Action Committee (UMAC), Muslim organisations and student unions affiliated to Left parties and the ruling TRS on Thursday demanded that the Centre withdraw the CAA and the National

Population Register (NPR), describing them as anti-constitutional. UMAC chairman Mohammed Raheem Ansari said a public meeting would be organised here on Friday. MP and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi, Telangana Minister V. Prashanth Reddy would address the meet, he said.

Amjad Ali Khan drops plan for global institute in Kerala

Sarod maestro cites commitments for performances

N.J. NAIR
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala capital has missed an opportunity of being a second home to sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan. Mr. Khan has relinquished his plans to set up an international institute here for the convergence of diverse streams of music and hone young talent in view of his other commitments.

He returned the two acres of land sanctioned by the State government at Kadakampally village here on February 18, 2016, with a request for setting up a world-class hospital that would cater to people of all religions. Mr. Khan has communicated his wish to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan too.

He rescinded the plan considering his commitments for holding performances all over the world. Mr. Khan reiterated the need for having more hospitals than temples and mosques.

While working out the modalities of the institute,



Amjad Ali Khan returned the land allotted by the government and urged it to set up a hospital there. • M.A. SRIRAM

Mr. Khan had expressed his desire to settle in Kerala and spend the rest of his life here dedicating time for honing the skills of young artistes.

Cultural hub

Stone for the proposed institute, to be set up on the 'Gurukul' fashion, was laid on May 19, 2016 and music aficionados were looking forward for the crystallisation of the project, projected as a home for music of different genres. Much more than a

music institute, it was expected to be a cultural hub for promoting universal brotherhood and amity.

Mr. Khan's plan was to impart training in Hindustani, Carnatic, Western and all instruments, including percussion. The residential programme proposed was expected to offer a unique milieu for nurturing Indian ethos and create an inextricable bond between students and teachers through constant interaction.

Kerala plans detention centre for foreigners; set for headcount

K.S. SUDHI
KOCHI

Kerala will count the foreigners detained in its prisons, so that it can identify a suitable building to set up a Foreigners' Detention Centre, and move them there. This comes amid the raging nationwide controversy over such centres.

The Department of Social Justice (DSJ), Kerala, which has been entrusted with the task of setting up the facility,

has been awaiting the data on foreigners, who have been either convicted here or waiting to be extradited for various offences, for setting up the facility.

The department can scout for a building for the facility only after getting an idea of the requirement said a senior government official.

The department has been unsuccessfully writing to the State Crime Records Bureau (SCR) since June this year

asking for the number of foreigners for identifying suitable buildings to house them. It was on November 26 that the latest reminder was sent to the SCR, government sources said.

The setting up of the detention centres in Assam and some other States had invited severe criticism during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Nambi Narayanan to get ₹1.3 crore

Govt. to give money to ex-ISRO scientist to settle case filed by him against State



Nambi Narayanan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Cabinet has decided in principle to give ₹1.3 crore to former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scientist Nambi Narayanan of the infamous ISRO spy scandal case to settle the case filed by him against the State in the sub-court in Thiruvananthapuram.

The amount is in addition to the ₹50 lakh provided by the State on the basis of a Su-

preme Court order and the ₹10 lakh recommended by the National Human Rights Commission to Mr. Narayanan.

Acting on a report submitted by former Chief Secretary K. Jayakumar, the Cabinet on Thursday decided to submit the documents to be prepared in consultation with legal experts to the sub-court to settle the case and to act as per the directive from the court.

In September 2018, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court led by the then Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra had found him to be a victim of trumped-up allegations of espionage by the Kerala police. The court ordered the State to pay him ₹50 lakh as compensation for loss of his fundamental right to live with dignity and self-respect for all these years since his arrest on November 30, 1994.

Some enthusiasts took flight to take a closer look at the sun; in contrast, people in villages took refuge in superstition

Scientists get air borne for special view of the eclipse

ADITYA ANAND MUMBAI
A group of astrophysicists and space enthusiasts took to the skies for a special view of the solar eclipse on Thursday.

A six-seater Beechcraft C-90 aircraft flew at 21,000 feet with a clear view of the sun and the organisers dedicated this first eclipse flight to Narendra Dabholkar and Shreeram Lagoo, both of whom were associated with the anti-superstition movement.

Among those on the hour-long observational flight were Director of Nehru Planetarium Arvind Paranjape, Head of the Centre of Excellence for Astrobiology in Mumbai and Amity Space Centre, Delhi, Siddharth Pande, astronomer Ananda Hota, and Gateway House fellow of the Space and Ocean Studies Programme Chaitanya Giri.

The astro tourism event



Astro tourism: The six-seater Beechcraft C-90 aircraft that took to the skies to view the solar eclipse. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was jointly organised by Space Geeks – a group that promotes space and astronomy – and private jet operator MAB Aviation.

To ensure that the eclipse was clearly visible, Space Geeks had provided pocket-sized telescopes with filters that were fitted to the mobile phones of those on board.

Mr. Paranjape, who termed the experience

People perform 'half burials' of children

KARNATAKA BUREAU KALABURAGI

Despite efforts to clear misconceptions surrounding the solar eclipse, people in parts of Karnataka continued to follow practices that are not founded in science. Among the bizarre were cases of children with disabilities being buried neck deep in compost pits during the eclipse in Kalaburagi, Vijayapura and Tumakuru districts, with the belief that it would cure them.

There were cases of three children being buried neck deep in Taj Sultanpur village on the outskirts of Kalaburagi by their parents till the solar eclipse ended.

A team of rationalists, including Shrishail Ghooli, Ravindra Shahabadi and Sarangdhara Deshikendra Swami of Sarang Mutt in Srisailam reached the spot and told the parents that such practices would only cause further health problems.

The flight landed at Juhu aerodrome and was welcomed by Ashok Kumar Verma, airport director, Juhu.



Unsound customs: Disabled children being buried in compost mud at a village in Karnataka on Thursday. •ARUN KULKARNI

State president of the Indian Orthopaedic Association S.B. Kamareddy, who visited the spot, said that as the children suffered from congenital deformity, surgery was needed. He also offered to perform the surgeries free of cost.

In similar incidents in Vijayapura district, a five-year-

old boy of Ainoli village and six-year-old girl of Gadilingadahalli village had to spend over two hours in compost pits during the solar eclipse. In Indi taluk, a 24-year-old physically challenged person was buried neck deep in compost.

Many locals gathered to see this ritual.

Closure of Aahar Kendras in Odisha invites criticism

STAFF REPORTER BERHAMPUR

The decision to close down Aahar Kendras on Thursday in view of the annular solar eclipse has invited criticism from rationalists in Odisha, who said that the move only promoted superstitious beliefs regarding food intake during eclipses.

Aahar Kendras provide subsidised meal for ₹5 to the needy. There are 19 such centres in Ganjam district.

On Thursday morning, people, especially the poor who are the key beneficiaries

of the programme, were shocked to see notices at the Aahar Kendras in the State, stating that the centres were to remain closed for the solar eclipse.

According to authorities of Manna Trust, which manages Aahar Kendras in Ganjam district, the decision was taken as a large number of people do not eat during the day on a solar eclipse due to religious beliefs.

The authorities ordered closure of the centres fearing that there might be wastage of food.



No service: A closed Aahar Kendra at the Old Bus Stand area in Odisha's Berhampur. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Humanist and Rationalist Organisation (HRO), which organises feasts for all

during eclipses to tackle superstitious beliefs regarding food intake, criticized this

decision. "Usually the poor and the needy depend on the meals provided at Aahar Kendras. For no logical reason, these poor people suffered as most small and cheap roadside restaurants were also closed for the eclipse," said E.T. Rao, president, HRO.

'Missed opportunity'
According to Mr. Rao, the administration could have used this event to eradicate superstitious beliefs regarding solar eclipses.

"Today, food could have

been provided early at these centers and the needy would have eaten it. By doing that, the downtrodden would have realized that their time of food intake should be as per the need of the body, in stead of any superstitious belief," he said.

"Seeing the poor eat openly at Aahar Kendras during the eclipse could have compelled the others to reconsider whether their superstitious beliefs of not having food during eclipse is a scientific decision or not," Mr. Rao added.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Light to moderate rain likely in many parts of Maharashtra while scattered showers are expected in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Cold day conditions likely to continue in north-west India, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...	23.0	15.0	Kozhikode	5.0	33.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	...	27.0	12.0	Kurnool	...	32.0	20.0
Aizawl	...	19.0	6.0	Lucknow	...	12.0	6.0
Allahabad	...	16.0	9.0	Madurai	0.4	30.0	23.0
Bengaluru	...	29.0	18.0	Mangaluru	...	37.0	24.0
Bhopal	...	23.0	10.0	Mumbai	...	29.0	22.0
Bhubaneswar	...	26.0	17.0	Mysuru	...	28.0	19.0
Chandigarh	...	10.0	7.0	New Delhi	...	14.0	5.8
Chennai	...	30.0	21.0	Patna	...	16.0	11.0
Coimbatore	6.5	28.0	22.0	Port Blair	...	29.0	21.0
Dehradun	...	16.0	6.0	Puducherry	...	30.0	20.0
Gangtok	...	11.0	5.0	Pune	...	31.0	22.0
Goa	...	33.0	24.0	Raipur	...	29.0	21.0
Guwahati	...	24.0	11.0	Ranchi	21.1	18.0	10.0
Hubballi	...	31.0	20.0	Shillong	...	15.0	4.0
Hyderabad	...	28.0	20.0	Shimla	...	11.0	1.0
Imphal	...	22.0	4.0	Srinagar	...	9.0	-5.0
Jaipur	...	22.0	5.0	Thiruvananthapuram	0.4	33.0	24.0
Kochi	...	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	...	29.0	23.0
Kohima	...	16.0	5.0	Vijayawada	...	30.0	21.0
Kolkata	...	21.0	15.0	Visakhapatnam	...	31.0	21.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE	Yesterday	
							AQI	Score
Ahmedabad	7	214	65	362	249	...	...	...
Bengaluru	12	60	42	...	83	...	In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 373 indicating a severe level of pollution. In contrast, Mysuru, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 43.	...
Chennai	26	44	45	...	135	...	...	...
Delhi	8	52	65	362	249	...	...	...
Hyderabad	15	42	42	...	154	...	...	...
Kolkata	23	90	38	...	321	285	...	...
Lucknow	33	4	43	...	414	...	...	...
Mumbai	13	42	62	...	282	199	...	...
Pune	76	25	108	...	160	116	...	...
Visakhapatnam	10	64	45	...	120	...	...	...

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

IN BRIEF



Pune police to seek forensic aid from FBI

NEW DELHI
The Pune police will seek forensic aid from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to retrieve data from an allegedly damaged hard disk seized from the house of poet-activist P. Varavara Rao, one of the nine people arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Bhima Koregaon case.

ED attaches assets in MEGA scam case

NEW DELHI
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹36.12 crore of retired IAS official Sanjay Gupta and others for alleged misappropriation of funds meant for the Metro Link Express for Gandhinagar and Ahmedabad (MEGA) Company Limited. The action was taken based on an FIR filed by the Gandhinagar police.

Karat urges CMs not to cooperate on NPR

CHENNAI
CPI (M) Polit Bureau member Prakash Karat on Thursday called upon Chief Ministers of various States not to allow enumeration for the National Population Register (NPR), contending that it alone would prevent implementation of the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Stars booked for hurting religious sentiments

CHANDIGARH
The Punjab police have registered a case against actress Raveena Tandon, film director-choreographer Farah Khan and comedian Bharti Singh for allegedly hurting religious sentiments, police said on Thursday. The case has been registered on a complaint submitted by Sonu Jafar, president of the Christian Samaj Front of Ajnala block in Amritsar, for allegedly making fun of the word "Hallelujah" (word of praise to God).

Two soldiers killed during bridging exercise in Pune

The tower support collapsed, injuring several jawans

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUNE

Two jawans were killed and five others injured during a bridging exercise on the premises of the College of Military Engineering (CME) in the city's Dapodi area on Thursday.

Sources said that a unit was training on a mobile bridge used in surmounting obstacles in rough terrain when the mishap occurred, resulting in serious injuries to seven jawans, two of whom died later. The deceased were identified as lance havildar Sanjivan P.K. and Naik Waghmode B.K.

"During the training of bridge construction, the tower support collapsed



Major mishap: A Court of Inquiry has been ordered by the authorities into the incident. •ADG PI-INDIAN ARMY/TWITTER

and six-seven troops were injured. They were immediately shifted to Military Hospital in Kirkee and the Command Hospital. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered for investigating the incident and the next of kin of

the deceased soldiers have been informed," said an official statement issued later in the day.

The CME is a technical and tactical training institution of the Engineer Corps of the Indian Army.

SC outlines 3 conditions for stay orders

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has outlined three aspects it usually considers while granting a stay order.

A Bench of Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Bose, in a judgment in November, said the three include: the balance of convenience does not favour the alleged violator; the stay order does not cause irreparable harm or injury; and there should be a prima facie case for granting the stay order. The observation came while deciding on pleas filed by Mizoram against an HC order to keep in abeyance all paper lottery draws pursuant to the pending outcome of a writ petition filed by a lottery company.

Kiran Bedi questions recall plea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY

A day after the ruling Congress in Puducherry sought the intervention of President Ram Nath Kovind in seeking her recall, Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi on Thursday questioned the government's rationale in terming her opposition to the Cabinet move to set up casinos and breweries as "autocratic, illegal and irregular."

In a message on WhatsApp to reporters, Ms. Bedi said differences with the government on policy matters and referring such disputes to the Centre could not be termed autocratic, irregular and illegal. Did being "sensitive to the social and spiritual fabric" of Puducherry reason enough to demand her recall, she asked.

Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy in a memorandum

to the President had sought the removal of Ms. Bedi alleging that she was "functioning in an autocratic manner and subverting the provisions of the Constitution."

Ms. Bedi said the CM was duty bound to explain whether "opening of casinos, breweries and concurring with widespread lottery sale" was part of his development agenda for the UT.

UGC issues norms for ethics in higher education

Guidelines call for modesty, harmony

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on Thursday launched new guidelines for values and ethics in higher education.

In a section on the role of different stakeholders, the guidelines prepared by the University Grants Commission (UGC) has the following advice for student unions: "Support the administration for right and timely decision [and] raise legitimate issues in dignified manner."

The guidelines also call for students to "observe modesty in their overall appearance and behaviour", "maintain good health and refrain from any kind of intoxicants" and "maintain harmony among students belonging to different socio-economic status, community, caste, religion or region".



Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank

In another development, with regard to professional ethics, the UGC now requires all Ph.D. candidates to complete two compulsory credit courses on publication ethics from the coming academic session.

In a letter to all Vice-Chancellors, UGC secretary Rajnish Jain said the 30-hour courses would provide awareness on publication ethics, misconduct and research integrity.



Endless wait

A prolonged election process will do little to end political instability in Afghanistan

The announcement of preliminary results for the Afghanist Presidential election is a significant step for India's war-torn neighbour. The fourth Presidential poll since the Taliban's fall in 2001, it consolidates the country's democratic process in the face of odds, including continuing violence and terrorism there. According to the Independent Election Commission, President Ashraf Ghani has won 50.64% of the votes counted, which, if ratified, will obviate the need for a second round of polling. A second round – probably only after winter – would prolong the uncertainty around the polls, given that even these results took more than three months to announce. That these polls were held was a miracle, having been delayed for months, and almost cancelled after progress in reconciliation talks with Taliban leaders, who do not recognise the electoral process. The U.S.'s decision to cancel the talks in September – now resumed – gave the necessary breather for the September 28 polls and counting to be carried out. But questions remain. Voter turnout was a record low, with only about a quarter of 9.6 million registered voters voting. Thousands of votes were also disqualified after biometric match failures and other irregularities, setting off allegations of voter fraud. As a result, Afghanistan's former Chief Executive Officer and Mr. Ghani's chief rival, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, has rejected the preliminary results. Mr. Ghani's vote margin over Mr. Abdullah is only about 214,769, and if more votes are disqualified during the review process, the men may have to fight the second round. This will possibly be more divisive for Afghanistan given that Mr. Ghani, a Pashtun leader, has drawn much of his support from the Pashtun-majority south and Mr. Abdullah has won mainly in the Northern areas with Tajik presence. The U.S.-Taliban talks also cast a shadow over whether the results will be respected if the Taliban negotiates its way into a power-sharing arrangement in Kabul.

Setting aside the concerns, Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Mr. Ghani for winning the elections, a gesture which will be noted by Mr. Ghani and Vice President-elect Amrullah Saleh. Mr. Modi reaffirmed India's close and strategic partnership with Afghanistan since 2010. The move came in sharp contrast to the rest of world that has chosen to be more cautious at present; the U.S. Ambassador has reminded all that "many steps remain" before the final results are certified and declared, and the UN has called for all candidates to "safeguard and complete the election". It will be in everyone's interests, particularly the Afghans who braved violent attacks to go out and vote, if the remaining steps of the electoral process are completed at the earliest, and democracy is reaffirmed in Afghanistan.

Cracks in the relic

The downturn in Turkey's relations with the U.S. holds implications for the future of NATO

Rising tensions in U.S.-Turkey relations are threatening to upset North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) unity. In the latest of a series of incidents, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has threatened to shut down two U.S. bases in retaliation for the proposed American sanctions on Ankara over purchasing Russian weapons. The U.S. and Turkey are the largest and second largest standing armies of NATO, respectively. There are U.S. nuclear warheads in the Incirlik airbase, a critical facility for American operations in West Asia. Mr. Erdoğan has warned that Incirlik and the Kurecik radar base would be shut if there are sanctions. U.S.-Turkey ties began slumping in recent years after Washington's refusal to extradite Fethullah Gülen, a U.S.-based Turkish Islamic preacher who is accused by Ankara of orchestrating the failed 2016 coup against Mr. Erdoğan. The U.S. decision to arm and assist Kurdish rebels in Syria against the Islamic State was another blow. Ankara sees the People's Protection Units, the main Syrian Kurdish militia that became an American ally in the anti-IS war, as an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers Party, the Kurdish militia on the Turkish side. In return, Turkey moved closer towards Russia, now trying to raise its regional profile, and invaded Kurdish-held towns in northern Syria earlier this year. Turkey's decision to purchase the Russian S-400 missile system despite U.S.-NATO opposition, was the tipping point.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, NATO – founded as a Soviet counterweight – remained as a vehicle of western military might and continued to expand to Russia's borders, creating tensions between Russia and the West in the recent past. But with the resurgence of populist, nationalist leaders in several western countries, the NATO's relevance has been called into question several times; U.S. President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron have used the words "obsolete" and "brain death", respectively. Fast-deteriorating ties between the U.S. and Turkey is adding to the crisis. The Trump administration has already suspended Turkey from the F-35 programme, citing concerns over Russia spying on the fighter jet's capabilities using the S-400 system's radar. Earlier this month, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a Bill seeking sanctions on Turkey over the S-400 purchase and the Syria offensive. But Ankara seems determined to go ahead with the S-400 deal and even buy advanced Russian aircraft if the U.S. does not deliver the F-35s. And with threats to shut down Incirlik and Kurecik bases, it is now clear that the cracks are wide open. The question the Atlantic alliance faces in this hour of crisis is not just whether the U.S. and Turkey would manage to resolve their differences, but also whether NATO, a Cold War relic, could stay relevant in a post-Cold War era where bilateral ties are fast-changing.

The Data Protection Bill only weakens user rights

A culmination of flawed policy proposals, this piece of legislation will refine, store and trade personal information



APAR GUPTA

In the continuing social churn and widespread citizen protests, it would seem out of place to direct thought towards issues such as data protection. The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha this month, is a revolutionary piece of legislation that promises to return power and control to people in our digital society. Pending deliberation before a Joint Parliamentary Committee, it is intimately connected to the very same fundamental rights and constitutional principles that are being defended today on the streets and in the fields.

The Bill has seen serpentine movement, passing expert committees, central ministries and then the Lok Sabha in the winter session. Before focusing on the nuances and finer details which merit deliberation we must take a step back to look at the broader politics of personal data protection. This would help contextualise the legislative proposal and understand the degree of protection which is limited by overboard exceptions in favour of security and revenue interests.

Securitisaition and revenue

The rise of the national security narrative has not been gone unnoticed by seasoned political observers. What is novel is its intersection with technology. This is central to several policy and political pronouncements by the present government. In many ways, it is a continuation of the politics of

securitisation of the government from its previous term. For instance, the Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto (sankalp patra) released before the general election 2019 provides useful insight where it states appropriate technological interventions centred around Aadhaar. This shrugs off any recognition of its contested legality before the Supreme Court which ruled on the fundamental right to privacy. Privacy is mentioned just once in this voluminous document – 49 mentions of 'security' and 56 mentions of 'technology'.

This is a trend which continues. The President of India's address to Joint Sitting of Parliament on June 20, 2019 – fresh from the results of the general election – proclaimed that "my government is committed to that very idea of nation-building, the foundation for which was laid in 2014". The priorities of the government are clearly charted out with zero mention of privacy or data protection; there are 18 mentions of 'security' and eight of 'technology'. This familiar template is again found in the Prime Minister's Independence day speech on August 15, 2019 which focussed on dramatic social change. He noted: "I believe that there should be change in the system, but at the same time there should be a change in the social fabric." There is zero mention of 'privacy' or 'data protection'; however there are seven mentions of 'security', six on 'technology' and five for 'digital'. There may be government policy documents that may emphasise or contradict these assertions. However these statements made by high public officials at historic times when they may be widely viewed by large number of Indians are deserving of primacy. They reveal, at the very least, a pecking order in terms of viewing both technology and se-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

curity as high priorities in governance objectives. As Edward Snowden explains in his *Permanent Record*, there is a symbiotic relationship between the financial model of large online platforms and security interest. They both feed off personal data and the attention economy, where platforms gather this data and the government then seeks access to it. In India this is being taken a step further. The government is seeking to not only access data but also collect it and then exploit it – making it an active data trader for the generation of revenue to meet its fiscal goals.

Principles in conflict

First, the scale of data collection is ambitious and broadly contained in the 'Digital India' programme; on its website it says: "to transform the entire ecosystem of public services through the use of information technology...". Here, all elements of a citizen-state interaction are being data-fied. In the view of some technologists, this also fulfils geostrategic goals when personal data is viewed as strategic state resource. However, this poses grave risks to the right to privacy. These become evident from a casual reading of the national Economic Survey of 2019, which in Chapter 4 devotes an entire chapter on the fiscal approach towards personal data. In a "Chapter at a glance" it says: "In thinking about data as a public good, care must also be taken to not impose

the elite's preference of privacy on the poor, who care for a better quality of living the most."

Two tangible examples show the operation of this policy framework. The first is with respect to the recent sale of vehicular registration data and driving licences by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. Here, quite often, the principles of a data protection law would conflict with these uses as it would break the fundamental premise of purpose limitation. This principle broadly holds that personal data which is gathered for a specific purpose cannot be put to any other distinct use without consent of the person from whom it was acquired. The second is an expert committee (headed by Kris Gopalakrishnan, Chairperson, Infosys) on what is termed "community data". While the definition of such, "community data" is contested, as per the note it is plainly obvious this is again to serve fiscal interests of the state and technology businesses when it states that such data "is critical for economic advantage".

Muddled formulation

The existing draft of the Data Protection Bill is reflective of a political economy that is motivated towards ensuring minimal levels of protection for personal data. It has a muddled formulation in terms of its aims and objectives, contains broad exemptions in favour of security and fiscal interests, including elements of data nationalism by requiring the compulsory storage of personal data on servers located within India.

From its very preamble it seeks to place the privacy interests of individuals on the same footing as those of businesses and the state. Here, by placing competing interests on the same plane, two natural consequences visit the drafting

choices within it. First, the principle of data protection to actualise the fundamental right to privacy is not fulfilled as a primary goal but is conditioned from the very outset. Second, by placing competing goals – which contradict each other – any balancing is clumsy, since no primary objectives are set. This results in a muddled articulation that would ultimately ensure a weak data protection law.

This present draft of the Bill comes as a disappointment especially after the emphatic judgment by the nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court on the Right to Privacy. The judgment contains categorical language that the Bill is a measure to actualise the fundamental right. However, this draft serves a political economy which at first blush appears attractive in its promise of taking us away from the dull maxims of constitutionalism and delivering us a digital utopia. Again, this was best phrased by the Prime Minister when he stated at the Digital India dinner on September 26, 2015, at San Jose, California: "... technology is advancing citizen empowerment and democracy that once drew their strength from Constitutions." Hence, on a broader read, the Data Protection Bill is not a leaky oil barrel with large exceptions, but it is a perfect one. It will refine, store and then trade the personal information of Indians without their control; open for sale or open for appropriation to the interests of securitisation or revenue maximisation, with minimal levels of protection. For this to change, we have to not only focus on redlining the finer text of this draft but also reframing large parts of its intents and objectives.

Apar Gupta, Executive Director of the Internet Freedom Foundation, is a Delhi-based lawyer

Assam's identity fears face up to divisive politics

Protests in the State have been brought about by the BJP's failure to gauge the popular mood



UDAYON MISRA

When Assam was first rocked by anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Bill protests in 2018, the argument put forward against the Bill was that granting of citizenship to Bengali Hindu immigrants up to December 2014 would eventually reduce the indigenous people to a minority in their homeland.

It was said that the Bill was blatantly unconstitutional because citizenship could never be given on the basis of religion. Not many outside Assam and the Northeast were then taken in by this argument because the common perception in the rest of the country was that the protests were chiefly motivated by the ever-present xenophobic fear of the outsider. The assertion that Assam was not prepared to accept any more foreigners, be they Hindu or Muslim, did not get enough attention at the national level.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 after being referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee, was reintroduced in the Lok Sabha in January 2019 and passed, but it lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha because the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) did not have the requisite numbers in the Rajya

Sabha. Subsequently, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in the Lok Sabha in December 2019. This revised version was bulldozed through, promptly receiving the President of India's assent, but this time the protests were not limited to the Northeast alone.

Threat to indigenous people

The dangerous divisive nature of the move to create second-class citizens of the country's largest minority population has become evident to all those who nourish the idea of India as enshrined in the Constitution of India. However, for the people of Assam, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, or the CAA, goes beyond re-defining citizenship on religious lines; it poses a threat to the identity of the many small indigenous communities that make up the composite Assamese nationality while at the same time fomenting a linguistic-religious divide. Hence, there has been a massive upsurge cemented by a strengthened sense of Assamese identity. Some youth have already been killed in police firing and scores injured.

How does one describe the laceration of the soul of a people? This is exactly what has happened with the Central government's dictatorial move to impose the CAA on the people of Assam. What defies rationale is that the CAA applies selectively to only the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys of Assam and some areas of Tripura and Meghalaya while all the States,



RITURAJ KONWAR

which have Inner Line Permit regulations and all areas which fall under the Sixth Schedule, have been kept outside its purview. Yet, unlike Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram which do not share a border with Bangladesh, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura have extensive land borders with that country and have been facing continuous immigration from East Bengal/East Pakistan/Bangladesh resulting in a swift demographic change.

Immigration, land and identity have long been core issues for Assamese indigenes who, through the Assam Accord of 1985, accepted all Bengali-speaking Muslim and Hindu immigrants from 1951 to March 1971. The National Register of Citizens, all its shortcomings notwithstanding, was seen as a closure of sorts. Now that the cutoff date for illegal Bengali Hindu immigrants has been extended till December 2014, Assamese apprehensions about their language and culture being jeopardised have increased tenfold. Census figures over the years have shown a steady decline in Assamese speakers, prompting fears of the language

losing its official status in the State.

Just one voice

The marked feature of the current protests is that people in their thousands have taken to the streets defying curfew and other restrictions. Though 30-odd ethnic organisations, including the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, the All-Assam Students' Union and the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad have been at the forefront of the protests, yet, this time, the protests seem to have gained an even wider base. Not only have Opposition parties and several employees' unions extended support, but minority student organisations as well as tea tribes bodies have also joined in the demonstrations.

Not even during the heyday of the Assam Movement (1979-1985) were tea garden workers drawn into the protests. What is most striking is the fact that there is a sense of union throughout the Brahmaputra Valley brought about by the arrogance of a party in power which has utterly failed to gauge the feelings of the masses. It is significant that attempts to divide the movement along linguistic and religious lines have met with stiff resistance. For, every struggle in Assam and the Northeast has, in some way or other, been linked to the rights of the small nationalities. The BJP will never be able to appreciate this, for in its scheme of a mono-cultural Hindu India there is obviously no space for a multi-nationality country.

Initially, the State BJP leadership tried to dismiss the rumblings against the CAA as an aberration. But the party has been caught off-guard, as people's anger is targeted at BJP legislators. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which thought it was emerging as the determining political force under the Sarbananda Sonowal government, suddenly finds its offices being attacked, with most of its functionaries having disappeared from public view. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, which had earlier brought out a procession or two in support of the CAA, faces an existential crisis, with many of its leaders having left the organisation. The BJP-RSS agenda of polarising the State on religious lines seems to have hit a major roadblock, with organisers and participants of the present upsurge insisting that they are against all post-1971 illegal immigrants, both Hindus and Muslims.

If the present outrage of people in Assam is any indication, it is almost certain that it will be impossible for the BJP-RSS to regain its pre-CAB position in the State. And, with the 2021 Assembly elections not too far away, it is almost certain that the party will pay a heavy price, especially in the Brahmaputra Valley. This, however, depends on how the present protests are channelised to offer an alternative to the BJP in the State.

Udayon Misra is a former National Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, and the author of 'Burden of History'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Defusing the tensions

There is a lot of confusion around the Central government's proposed National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). Though the leaders who matter in the polity have denied there being any plan to take forward these plans, few people trust these statements. The country-wide agitations against these laws and plans might have led the Central government to step back temporarily, but it would be naive to believe that these ideas and plans have been shelved totally. In this atmosphere of mistrust, even the counting of ordinary residents under the NPR would be enough to heighten tensions again.

Some States have declared that they will not cooperate in the undertaking of these exercises even though it would be constitutionally untenable. Instead, the Central government should shelve these ideas and plans in total.

D. V. G. SANKARARAO,
Nellimarla, Andhra Pradesh

For the sake of clarity, credibility and uniformity, it would be better if the Central government issues advertisements in the media across the country spelling out the laws and plans in unambiguous detail and providing answers, with examples, to every possible question. This will go a long way in removing apprehensions.

KAMAL LADDHA,
Bengaluru

The faux pas on the Assam NRC had the government err in haste over its subsequent and contradictory narrative on the NPR-NRC. It must be said that the government counted on this miasma to look for electoral leverage in the upcoming Assembly elections. Assam, however, has long been vehement over the primacy of the Assamese ethos in any political prescription. The net result is a nationwide reaction, with each section interpreting the same page to its own understanding. The feverish attempts at translation by every stakeholder can be toned down, if not be subdued, only when the Supreme Court gives its ruling on the CAA. We have seen how a simple referendum over Brexit has tied up a nation

with four centuries of vintage democracy in knots for three long years.
R. NARAYANAN,
Navi Mumbai

Locusts on the rampage

It is surprising that Indian authorities were unprepared for the locust attack. Locusts have scant respect for national borders and have been a dramatic cause of famine and terror since the dawn of history. India and Pakistan, arch-rivals, should find common ground to share information and fight the locust devastation (Page 1, "Massive locust invasion in Gujarat", December 26).

H. N. RAMAKRISHNA,
Bengaluru

The cancer fight

The growing incidence of cancer, most detected due to

improvement in the use of diagnostics and epidemiological transitions, is cause for concern primarily because of the heavy financial burden associated with cancer care (Inside pages, "Study warns of growing cancer burden across India", December 26). Hence, appropriate preventive strategies need to be given enough consideration. According to the WHO, "between 30-50% of all cancer cases are preventable". Awareness about modifiable risk factors related to lifestyle and the environment needs to be

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the opening paragraph of the story titled "IPC law on suicide is redundant, says expert" (Dec. 26, 2019) the reference to Article 309 of the IPC needs to be corrected to Section 309 of the IPC.

The Reader's Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

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created. Legislation needs to be in place to address issues about carcinogens in air, water and food.

A. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN,
Tiruchirappalli

The study reflects an urgent need for the government to focus more on establishing cancer health-care institutions. India's disease burden is bound to increase with changing lifestyles and there needs to be an equally fine-tuned response.

RATNARAJ JAIN,
Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh

What are the amendments that the CAA needs?

PARLEY

India should ensure a clear, non-discriminatory and inclusive refugee policy

Providing protection, and a home, to refugees facing persecution of any kind is a welcome idea but the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) has faced more questions about the people it excludes than those it takes in its ambit. Jayant Sriram speaks to Gautam Bhatia and Priya Pillai on what would the contours of a more humane law be. Edited excerpts:



Gautam Bhatia is a Delhi-based lawyer

When it comes to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), what according to you would be a more humane way to address the question of the status of refugees from India's neighbouring countries? I think we all agree that there are parts of it that are good, but how do we broaden this?



Priya Pillai is an international lawyer and head of the Asia Justice Coalition secretariat

Gautam Bhatia (GB): I think the inclusive aspect of the Act is obviously good. It's the exclusionary part of it that creates a problem. So, look at the legal regime that existed before the CAA. There was a 2011 Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the Home Ministry, which is not yet in the public domain. And, according to that, anyone who could establish persecution of any form - not just religious, but also social persecution, caste-based and so on, would be entitled to a long-term visa in India. And, this would be examined on a case-to-case basis. So, that SOP actually provides you the base for what could be a decent legal regime. Of course, that also had a lot of discretion given to the Home Ministry. But something along those lines is what I think would be a good idea.

Priya, I want to ask you about the international law aspect. What does international law say on dealing with refugees? Does the CAA meet the tests?

Priya Pillai (PP): I want to preface this whole discussion by saying that some aspects of this in terms of the focus on refugees and refugee law are a bit of a red herring, in terms of looking at the larger context of what this is about, including the NRC [National Register of Citizens]. Having said that, there are a few aspects to

this: one is that India has not signed the Refugee Convention [1951] and protocol. India has not signed on to the Statelessness Convention. But it is good to remember that the basic premise of a refugee law is that humanitarian concerns motivate the whole idea of having an inclusive regime. So, the fact is that India has not had any formal refugee policies; there are ad hoc provisions. If India is serious about ensuring that persecuted people are protected, there are a few very simple things to do: sign and ratify the conventions; and ensure that you have a clear, non-discriminatory, inclusive policy. And the fact that the 1951 Convention has 145 state parties but India has not signed up to it is highly problematic.

I'll just add one more thing as well, which is that there's a basic premise of refugee law, which is called non-refoulement, which is that you don't send people back if they are in fear of life or of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or opinion. The CAA does not cater to [this principle]. Non-refoulement is a customary international law norm, which means that even if you've not signed up to the treaty, it is something that still binds you.

Gautam, I want to draw you out a little bit on the religion test for granting citizenship and also for determining who is a persecuted minority. How can a better law actually broaden these definitions?

GB: I think it's problematic on two points. One is to elevate religion and religious persecution to a level that links it with citizenship and ignore other forms of persecution that are as severe and have as serious consequences. For example, persecution of Tibetans, political persecution, and so on. So, I think the very act of elevating religion above other forms of persecution and giving it this special link with citizenship affects the secular character of the Constitution. And, of course, the second issue is one that has been discussed multiple times, and is there in the



Rohingya refugees in New Delhi holding a protest rally in 2017. -REUTERS

petitions challenging this law, which is that there is no rational connection between the countries and communities singled out and the goal of protecting people from religious persecution. So, even if you take the goal at face value, it leaves out Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, it leaves out Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka and so on. So even within the subset of 'religiously persecuted people' from neighbouring countries, the CAA is irrational and exclusionary.

And Priya, what can you tell us about cases from other countries where similar laws have used religion as a basis for framing citizenship laws?

PP: The Refugee Convention article talks about what it means to be persecuted and what it means to be a refugee. And, by that logic and definition, you can assert that you were persecuted on the basis of religion, race, or a combination of factors, but it is not for the state to discriminate on these bases. So, your cause of persecution may vary, and it might just be religion, but the whole idea of non-discrimination on the part of the state is that it doesn't have the ability and cannot cater to those categories. If you say you're being persecuted on whatever basis, then it's incumbent on the state to ensure that there's humanitarian

protection and you are granted certain protections within the context of the refugee regime. That's really the fundamental point that I would emphasise, looking at the Rohingya case specifically.

I'd also like to draw attention to that because India has 40,000 Rohingya within the country. There have been statements made by the government of India that they are going to be deported. And, of course, this is a case that is pending before the Supreme Court right now. The persecution there is on the basis of ethnicity, of religion. And it's very, very problematic to have the government say that they are going to send them back, given that the UN fact-finding mission has clearly articulated that there is evidence of the possibility of genocide. So, the CAA is a very, very problematic terrain.

Gautam, even before this law was brought, and a few years back, when there was a discussion about clearing a path to citizenship for certain communities from certain countries, there was also a discussion about how India doesn't have a proper policy on refugees. Is there a sort of legal history to this? Has this been challenged in the courts? Have there been attempts to get this in legislation?

GB: The problem is that the courts have been even more strident on this issue, in fact much more strident than the executive. So you have this judgment in 2005, *Sarbananda Sonowal v Union of India*, which according to me was the worst judgment in our history. It refers to migrants as this 'horde of people' streaming in from outside who constitute an external aggression onto the territory of India. So, I think that the courts have proven to be even more hostile to this entire issue than the [government]. And that's saying something, you know.

There has been a lot of discussion about the state's power to frame citizenship laws. Is this an absolute right?

PP: Absolutely not. There's a myth that state sovereignty is everything and state sovereignty is sort of fundamentally what dictates all these issues; but there is such a thing in international law called 'state responsibility' as well and the ability of the state is not unfettered.

India has signed a number of other international treaties and this means that there are international legal obligations on the state to ensure that fundamental principles such as non-discrimination are included within whatever laws the government frames. So, the argument that this is unfettered, that is completely untrue.

There needs to be a recognition that the legal norms that emanate from the obligations that states signed up to are also enforceable. I mean, traditionally, international law has always been seen as quite weak in terms of implementation and enforcement. But I would emphasise that there are a number of other legal avenues now that are opening up now. And, there are various committees that monitor these international conventions, and those are now gaining strength.

Have there been examples of international legal bodies actually intervening to place checks and balances on states, other countries enacting citizenship laws?

PP: Yes. The one example that I will give you, of course, links again to the Rohingya crisis right now. In

1982, Myanmar actually enacted a very discriminatory Citizenship Law, which excluded the Rohingya from a lot of basic rights and services, essentially created a system of apartheid within the country, and marginalised the Rohingya to an extreme extent.

Two weeks ago, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was seized of a case brought by Gambia against Myanmar on the basis of the persecution of the Rohingya and allegations of genocide. And, I think it is important to trace the evolution of the mass atrocities, hate speech and the persecution of the Rohingya Muslims to this pivotal point of a really discriminatory citizenship law. There is also a case moving forward at the International Criminal Court (ICC). And, in terms of other treaty bodies, they are also looking at inter-state disputes. So, there are multiple legal avenues and fora.

Assuming that this law does go forward, if you were able to write in a few amendments, what are the things that you would include?

GB: One is to adopt a national standard. And that should be the standard that the law follows. And second, I think there is a dichotomy in that we either look at people as 'illegal immigrants' or as citizens [but] there are a range of statuses that exist between those two - temporary work visas, long-term visas and so on.

So, we need to expand the conversation on migration to beyond this binary of 'illegal immigrants' and citizens. I think under the new law, I would definitely have a number of provisions that deal with the reality of economic migration, other kinds of migration and the appropriate statutes that go with that.

PP: Honestly, I would just echo that. And, I would just add one more thing, given that this is about prosecution and engaging refugees and the norms around refugees. This is an opportunity for the government to actually sign up to the Refugee Convention as well as the protocol and the Statelessness Convention and, you know, show that it is serious about this issue beyond the narrow optics that are currently playing out right now.

Disrupting the gender-blind political discourse in India

Affirmative action can empower more women

PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

India is believed to be resolutely moving forward as an economic entity. Not even the currently slowing growth takes away from this perception. Added to this is a celebration of the Constitution undergirding our democracy. So here, it would seem, is a country forging ahead economically while upholding freedoms for its people. Recent reports of gruesome assaults on women, involving rape and ending with murder, have jolted this narrative.

Democracy in India is directly impugned when the accused men allegedly receive protection from the ruling dispensation, as is the case in Uttar Pradesh, or when the police force fails to protect women, as was the case in Telangana. In a democracy where the political class deploys identity politics to capture power, it is striking that not only is the case of women left scrupulously untouched,

course to the 'fatalistic attitude bred by Indian culture'. This we see to be false when we recognise the differentiation whereby not everyone is at the receiving end, most evident in the case of violence against women.

It is difficult to think of any part of the world where historic inequity has been removed entirely through the agency of the oppressed. An end to the most overt forms of domination of women in the U.S. came after at least half a century of education, which enabled women to imagine a life crafted by themselves. Education further enabled them to be economically independent, sloughing off the patriarchal norm that had bound them for ages.

Role of the public sector

The greater part of the spread of education in the U.S. was through public school system. By comparison, in India, very little of the myriad public policy interventions has been directed towards women's empowerment. Girls stop attending school due to the absence of functioning toilets there and women drop out of the labour force as they do not feel safe when travelling to work. This also restrains economic progress.



The empowerment of religion via 'Indian secularism' and a caste-laden political discourse has served to keep out a public discussion of the 'women's question' in India. It is not difficult to see that India's politics as 'honour among men' leaves patriarchy secure from challenge. The opposition of caste-based political parties to the Women's Reservation Bill only reflects this. They have no credible argument and rely solely on their numbers in a fractured polity. Affirmative action aimed at a far greater inclusion of women in India's institutions of governance, especially the police and the judiciary, is central to ending the violence against women. India's gender-blind political discourse needs disruption.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor, Ashoka University and Senior Fellow, IIM Kozhikode



NOTEBOOK

Total eclipse of the heart

When a spectacle in the skies left the spectators transformed

DINESH KRISHNAN

Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's famed capital, added one more page to its rich history when it became the "observatory" for sky-gazers, scientists and photojournalists to watch a total solar eclipse.

On October 24, 1995, the date of one such eclipse, the weather-man had brought glad tidings: Chances of a stray rain were as slim as a quark. The winter fog was a few months away. Smog was not yet in our dictionary. There was little else to expect. Internet was in its nascency, restricted to chunky computers with tortoise-quick modems.

More significantly, there was no Google to quickly ferret out information and sound wise before the event. My attitude towards the event lay somewhere between plain curiosity and nervous anticipation. It was a first for me, and I

did not have the luxury of being just a casual watcher. It was an assignment and I had to take images of the spectacle to my publication back in Delhi.

Being prepared

So, I treated it as I would any other assignment, making the necessary preparations. In this case, it meant hitting Fatehpur Sikri much before the crack of dawn, to get a sense of the trajectory of the sun before the drama unfolded.

Settling down with my equipment on a high platform within the ruins of Fatehpur Sikri complex, I could see Panch Mahal, over which the sun would sail. The eclipse would start a few seconds after 7.24 a.m. The tripod-mounted camera with its telephoto had been primed for the occasion. It was the day of the 'film', when the option of sneak peeks to see if the images were coming right was yet-unthinka-



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

erately-lit sky. At 8.34 a.m., the sun vanished behind the moon, as if it were camera-shy, and the sky became ominously-dark, and not just for the birds. The whole of Fatehpur Sikri was enveloped in a quiet I was not prepared for. As I took it all in, my breathing became shallow.

Many seconds later, the famed diamond ring phenomenon took place. From down on the ground, it did look like a giant diamond ring. Very soon after this, there were a series of flashes in the sky. They were all rays of the sun escaping towards the earth from behind the moon, and then, a crescent of the sun began to become visible. That was when I saw something beautiful that perhaps only such a celestial event can trigger in humans - even strangers were making a preternatural connection by exchanging hugs, their differences eclipsed by a rare sense of awe.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 27, 1969

Malayalam dialects

A survey recently completed by the Kerala University Department of Linguistics has helped identify 12 major dialect regions in Kerala in respect of Malayalam as spoken by a single community alone, the Ezhavas/Tiyas. The report said that these dialect regions had at least 25 sub-dialects due to criss-crossing of "isoglosses" and this number of major and minor dialect regions astonishingly tallied with the number of major and minor kingdoms in Kerala during the late medieval period. The complexity in dialects is attributed to the political heterogeneity. The three-year project was taken up in 1965 with aid from the University Grants Commission. Among the Indian languages, it is for Malayalam alone that such an exhaustive survey of dialects based on a single community has been completed. Among the major gains of the project are: The marking out precisely for the first time in the history of Malayalam studies the dialect boundaries and the sub-dialect regions in each major dialect area; listing the isogloss terms distinguishing one dialect region from another; completion of six dialect grammars, four of which have been submitted as Ph.D. dissertations and the other two also to be presented likewise shortly; compilation of a dialect dictionary of over 3,000 items.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DEC. 27, 1919

In Parliament: The Punjab Massacre

LONDON: In the House of Commons on the motion for adjournment, Mr. Wedgwood raised the Amritsar case. He denounced what had happened in the strongest terms and declared that it had destroyed our good reputation. He urged the necessity for having a perfectly independent enquiry. Mr. Wedgwood accused General Dyer of destroying Mr. Montagu's efforts to bring about complete co-operation between the people of England and India. Mr. Montagu interposed and condemned Mr. Wedgwood's action in dealing with matters which were sub-judice. He declared that he had never known a case where so many deductions had been drawn in the Home, for events which were being enquired into by an impartial tribunal. Col. Yate protested against Mr. Wedgwood's speech and declared his belief that General Dyer had saved the whole Punjab from being swept by another rebellion. Mr. Montagu stated that General Dyer had not been relieved of his command. He was communicating with the Viceroy on the whole matter.

FROM PAGE ONE

NPR: house-to-house verification planned

The manual says that if the respondent does not know the age of any member of the household and probing also does not help in determining the age of that person, "you will have to estimate her/his age by using your best judgment."

The manual was prepared before the pretest was conducted.

On Thursday, Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy confirmed that additional details related to the place of birth of the parents of a person being enlisted, Aadhar number and last place of residence were being recorded as part of "basic requirements for NPR."

Mr. Reddy said, "I strongly condemn the deliberate and baseless misinformation campaign being spread by the Opposition parties and a section of media that NPR is a precursor to NRC. I want to make it categorical that there is no link between the two. The present NPR is part of the 2021 Census enumeration. We are just continuing the NPR exercise started by the UPA Government in 2010 with just additions of three or four columns...The opposition parties are playing a mind game of vitiating people's faith in the government."

'Leading crowds for arson is not leadership'

Gen. Rawat, who is set to retire on December 31, is a front runner for the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the creation of which was approved by the Union Cabinet on Tuesday.

Vice-Chief of the Army Staff M.M. Naravane has been named as the next Chief of the Army Staff.

"Since when have the 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," Congress Lok Sabha member Manish Tewari wrote on Twitter.

The CPI(M) also condemned Gen. Rawat's comments. "The Army chief's statement underlines how the situation has degenerated under the Modi government, 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," the polit bureau said in a statement.

Revamp of railway passenger fares likely

On the restructuring of the Railway Board, Mr. Yadav said it was a long-pending reform suggested by many committees.

Following Cabinet approval earlier this week, the new restructured Railway Board will consist of one CRB/CEO and four members on functional basis - Member Infrastructure, Member Rolling Stock & Traction, Member Operation & Business Development and Member Finance.

"Independent Members will be inducted in Railway Board as non-executive Members who will be in advisory role. They will not be involved in day-to-day functioning of Railways...The idea to unify all eight services of the Indian Railways into one service namely the Indian Railways Management Service, is to break the departmentalism and make officers work in cohesion for the development of Railways," an official release said.

Mr Yadav said only officers of the Indian Railways will be considered for the post of CEO. "Secondly, career growth of Indian Railways officers is assured. No officer of Indian Railways shall be at disadvantage in this new restructured service," he said.

'Better coordination'

The Railway Board Chairman added that offering apex level to the General Managers is a step to empower them for a better coordination with State authorities to take decisions swiftly and independently.

"This will enable the Railway Board to concentrate on policy framing, strategic planning and coordination of Zonal Railways," he said.

Assam MP seeks rethink on NRC officialSPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Assam MP Abdul Khaleque on Thursday asked Governor Jagdish Mukhi to reconsider the appointment of Hitesh Dev Sarma as the Coordinator of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), citing his controversial posts on social media.

Mr. Khaleque represents the Congress from the Barpeta Lok Sabha constituency.

"That in pursuant to the various controversial posts as shared by Mr. Dev Sarma in social media against a particular community, it is not desirable to appoint such a biased person to handle a highly sensitive position, i.e., State Coordinator of the NRC," he wrote.

Mr. Dev Sarma went on a month's leave for his son's wedding soon after his appointment. His leave ended last week. Mr. Dev Sarma's predecessor Prateek Hajela was transferred to Madhya Pradesh after a Supreme Court order in November.

1,000 lawyers object to BCI stand on protests**'Resolution is not view of the Bar'**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Close to 1,000 lawyers from across the country have distanced themselves from the statements made by the Bar Council of India (BCI) on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the protests against it.

The lawyers disassociated themselves from the BCI's resolution dated December 22, stating that it did not represent the views of the Bar.

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

The lawyers said the resolution did not speak for all advocates as several of them had condemned the disparate impact of the CAA on minorities and the excesses of police forces.

A protest march was con-

Grand alliance in a flux in Bihar

Ahead of election in 2020, Manjhi-led HAM(S) has been keeping it on edge

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) president Jitan Ram Manjhi's plan to organise a joint rally with Asaduddin Owaisi of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) against the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens in minority-dominated Kishanganj district, on December 29, has triggered speculation about new political equations taking shape in Bihar ahead of the Assembly elections due in October-November 2020.

Loaded statements

While Mr. Manjhi's HAM(S) is currently part of Opposition mahagathbandhan (grand alliance) led by the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the former Chief Minister has been keeping the alliance on edge with his loaded statements.

Recently, he caused em-



Grand plans: HAM(S) president Jitan Ram Manjhi, right, is seen with RLS leader Upendra Kushwaha and RJD leader Tejashwi YadaV. ■ FILE PHOTO

barrassment to the alliance by demanding that it appoint a convener to avoid any confusion among the partners.

Congress leaders backed Mr. Manjhi's demand, and said a convener would be appointed soon but nothing has happened as yet.

Seemingly sidelined in the mahagathbandhan, Mr. Manjhi is reported to be exploring new political equations and platforms ahead of

the upcoming Assembly election.

'Dalit-Muslim bloc'

"Mr. Manjhi's political game plan could be to bring Dalits and Muslims, both are in sizeable number in the State, on a common political platform to make it a big electoral force during the 2020 Assembly poll and this joint rally with AIMIM in Kishanganj may be the first step in

that direction," retired Patna University Professor N. K. Chaudhury told *The Hindu*. In Bihar, Muslims constitute 17% of the population, while Scheduled Castes are about 16%. "Together, they could make a major dent in the secular votes in the election," Mr. Chaudhury said.

In October, AIMIM candidate Qamrul Hoda won the Kishanganj Assembly byelection defeating BJP candidate Sweet Singh by more than 10,000 votes. AIMIM's Bihar president, former MLA Akhtarul Iman, said the proposed joint HAM(S)-AIMIM rally would be the first of its kind in the State and would be held at Kishanganj's Ruidhasa Maidan. Apart from the AIMIM chief, the Maharashtra cadre IPS officer who had recently resigned from the service in protest against the CAA, Abdur Rahman, too would address the rally, Mr. Iman confirmed.



Under watch: KMSS adviser Akhil Gogoi being produced at an NIA court in Guwahati on Thursday. ■ PTI

NIA raids house of Assam peasant leader

Special court rejects plea for custody

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Officials of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday raided the residence of Assam peasant leader Akhil Gogoi as well as the office of his organisation, Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), in Guwahati.

The three-hour raid preceded the production of Mr. Gogoi before the NIA's special court in Guwahati. It rejected the plea for further NIA custody and sent him to 14 days' judicial custody.

The police arrested Mr. Gogoi, who is leading an anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) movement, from eastern Assam's Jorhat on December 12. He was brought to Guwahati where the police registered a case against him the following day.

He was handed over to the NIA, which arrested him on December 16 and flew

him to Delhi. It brought him back to Guwahati on Wednesday for production in court.

An NIA team started the search operation at Mr. Gogoi's residence in the Nizarpur locality at 7 a.m. and another one raided the KMSS office in the Gandhibasti area.

Files seized

The NIA teams reportedly seized files containing documents relating to the NHPC - Mr Gogoi has been vocal against the 2000 MW Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project on the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border - and other issues. His laptop, identification and bank documents were also seized, his wife Geetashree Tamuly said.

The NIA has charged Mr Gogoi, who has earlier been arrested on charges of sedition, under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

'UPA-era NPR's focus was residency, not citizenship'

Chidambaram says the key difference lies in proposed NRC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Union Home Minister and Congress MP P. Chidambaram has said that the emphasis of the National Population Register (NPR) in 2010 by the UPA government was on "residency" and not "citizenship".

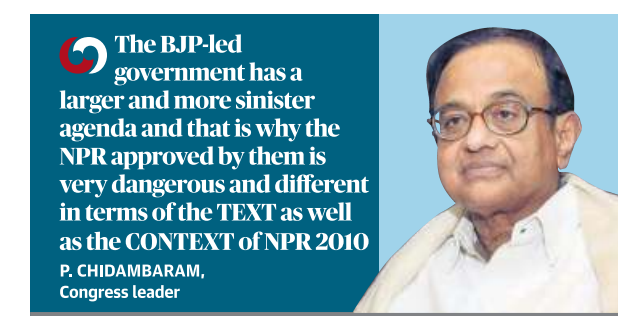
The BJP on Wednesday released a video clip of the launch of the NPR in 2010, where Mr. Chidambaram says an exercise like this has not been attempted anywhere in the world.

In response, Mr. Chidambaram sought to highlight the differences in the UPA-era NPR and the present version through a series of tweets.

"We were enumerating the 'usual residents' of the country. The emphasis is on residency not citizenship," The NPR was to aid the preparation of the 2011 census, he said. "Every usual resident was to be enumerated irrespective of his or her religion or place of birth."

The most important difference between the two was that there was no mention of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the UPA-era exercise.

"The BJP-led government has a larger and more sinister agenda and that is why the NPR approved by them ... is very dangerous and different in terms of the TEXT as well as the CONTEXT of



NPR 2010," he said. Mr. Chidambaram dared the BJP government to say unequivocally that it had no intention to link the NRC with the NPR.

He said, "If the BJP's motives are bona fide, let the government unconditionally state that they support the NPR form and design of 2010 and have no intention of linking it to the controversial NRC."

Pilot project

At a press conference held in the Congress headquarters, Ajay Maken, who was the Minister of State in Home Affairs in charge of the NPR, said the exercise was first started in 2003 by the first NDA government under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Twelve States and a Union Territory, with a total population of 31 lakh persons, were picked for a pilot project. When the UPA came to power, the pilot project was on. The idea

More trouble over MVA Cabinet expansion

Cong. likely to demand Deputy CM post

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government's troubles over Cabinet expansion seem to be far from over.

With a possibility that the Home Ministry may go back to the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), a section within the Congress is now reportedly staking claim to Deputy Chief Ministership saying the allotted portfolios to the party are not satisfactory.

Asked whether the party is unhappy over the allotted portfolios, Maharashtra Congress president and Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat said: "It is natural for every party to wish for important departments. At the same time it has to be taken into account that there are three parties in this government. It is possible that someone would feel different

about the portfolio distribution." The MVA government, he added, works as per the Common Minimum Program (CMP) and will continue to do so.

As per the initial understanding between the three parties, NCP would get to keep the deputy CM's post with Home going to Shiv Sena. However, recent reports have indicated that the Sena may also give Home to the NCP. This, a section within the Congress fears, would make the NCP too powerful.

"There is a thought within the Congress that if this change happens, then the party must demand a Deputy Chief Ministership for itself. This government survives only if three parties are happy and there is no point in making one of the three grumpy," said a senior Congress leader on condition of anonymity.

NRC a routine exercise, says Ram MadhavSPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav arrived in Kashmir on Thursday to dispel fears on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). He, however, refused to share any timeline on the release of political detenus or restoration of Internet services in the Valley.

Mr. Madhav said the National Register for Citizens (NRC) and the CAA are not linked and the new Act is not against anybody and doesn't discriminate Muslims. "The NRC is a routine exercise while the NPR is an extension of the countrywide census. The CAA is just to give citizenship to some people who have been persecuted elsewhere," said the BJP's Kashmir incharge.

Refusing to share any timeline on the release of 36 top political prisoners including National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, vice-president Omar Abdullah and Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti, Mr. Madhav said, "Several people have been released from house arrest and preventive detention. It is an ongoing process. The State administration based on security assessment will take appropriate decisions from time to time."

Mr. Madhav also did not give any response on when mobile Internet would be restored.

Gujarat battles locust swarms with pesticides

Centre has rushed 11 teams to assist

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

As insects swarm farms in north Gujarat gobbling up crops, the State government has initiated an elaborate pesticide spraying operation in affected areas as it battles to counter the massive locust attack.

The State administration, with the help of the central government, has constituted more than 30 teams to spray pesticides in villages in Banaskantha, which is the worst affected district, and neighbouring Patan and Sabarkantha.

"To tackle the menace, 11 central teams have arrived in Gujarat," a senior officer from the Ministry of Agriculture said. "They will take all necessary steps, including spraying of pesticides, to contain the attack. The teams will remain in the State until the problem is solved," the officer added.

On Thursday, Gujarat's Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture) P.K. Parmar told mediapersons that the State had formed 30 teams



A man spraying pesticides to control locusts in Tharad taluk, Gujarat. ■ PTI

to spray pesticides in the affected areas in north Gujarat.

Damage being assessed

According to Mr. Parmar, locusts had ravaged crops in about 6,000 hectares in the State and farmers would be provided compensation after a survey of the damage was done.

"With the use of pesticides, our teams have eliminated nearly 20% of locusts and in the next 3-4 days, more or less, entire swarms will be eliminated or they will fly away from the State," he asserted.

JJP leader says he will sort out issues with MLA

'Party is working like a family'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

A day after Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) MLA from Narnaud Ram Kumar Gautam announced resignation as party's national vice-president, Haryana Deputy Chief Minister and senior JJP leader Dushyant Chautala on Thursday said the party had so far not received any resignation, but if there was any issue it would be resolved.

"The party's office has not received any resignation and the party president and senior leadership will soon

meet Mr. Gautam and resolve his issues. "The MLA is one of the most senior leaders of the JJP and if he has any complaint, he should speak to the party," said Mr. Chautala.

On resentment of other MLAs, Mr. Chautala said the whole team of the JJP was working together like a family. Mr. Gautam, who defeated BJP's stalwart and former Finance Minister Capt. Abhimanyu, had expressed his anguish over Mr. Chautala keeping 11 portfolios with him and ignoring others.

APPEAL

Name of Patient: Iyappan.B 12 years. Hospital Name: Christian Medical College. Diagnosis: Aortic Ventricular Septal Defect. He has been advised to undergo Ventricular Septal Defect closure at the earliest. The cost of the operation would be around Rs. 1,80,000/- to Rs.2,00,000/-.

We request kind hearted Philanthropists to save him. Kindly send donation by Cheque / D/D / M.O favouring Save Poor Lives and on the back of cheque write A/C Iyappan.B S/B and IFSC CODE: SBIN001855, which is exempted under 80G of I.T. Act.

Contact: SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, (ADMIN DIVISION) Flat No. A1, Ceebros Garden, Ground Floor, Old No. 76, Kamarajar Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai-600028. Ph: 044-42044165, Mobile: 9884607377, E-mail: savepoorlives@gmail.com Our website: www.savepoorlives.com

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