

ACQUIRED TO TRACK MISSING CHILDREN, SOFTWARE USED AT PM'S RAMLILA MAIDAN RALLY

Police film protests, run its images through face recognition software to screen crowd

Best industry standard checks, balances against potential misuse of data in place: Delhi Police



A policeman videotapes an anti-CAA protest at Jorbagh in New Delhi on Friday. Tashi Tobgyal

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 27

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's Ramlila Maidan rally on December 22 — where he said there was no talk of NRC — was the first political rally where Delhi Police used a facial recognition software to screen the crowd. This was also the first time Delhi Police used a set of facial images collected from footage filmed at the city's various protest events to filter "law and order suspects" at the Prime Minister's rally. Following a Delhi High Court order in a case related to missing children, the Delhi Police had acquired Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS) software in March 2018 as a tool to identify lost and found boys and girls by matching photos. Before December 22, AFRS was used only thrice — twice at the Independence Day parade

and once at the Republic Day parade. Sources said Delhi Police has so far created a photo dataset of over 1.5 lakh "history-sheets" for routine crime investigation. Another dataset meant for monitoring sensitive public events has over 2000 images of terror suspects and — the latest addition — alleged "rabble-rousers and miscreants". The use of AFRS by police assumes significance given ongoing protests across the city against the new citizenship law and the National Register of Citizens — events where police were seen videotaping proceedings. For long, Delhi Police has been filming major protest events in the city. This footage is now being fed to AFRS which extracts "identifiable faces" of the protesters to its dataset. Once extracted, say sources, the lot is manually screened to identify and retain "habitual protesters" **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



After days of disruption, markets open in Muzaffarnagar Friday evening. Anil Sharma

Drones to bandobast to peace meetings: UP has a quiet Friday

MANISH SAHU, ASAD REHMAN, AVANEESH MISHRA, KRISHN KAUSHIK
LUCKNOW, KANPUR, MAU, MEERUT, DECEMBER 27

WITH SECURITY drones flying overhead and police and paramilitary personnel keeping tight vigil on the ground to snuff out any fresh protest against the new citizenship law, Uttar Pradesh remained peaceful Friday with people offering prayers at

mosques across the state and dispersing quietly. Internet services remained suspended in 14 districts since Thursday night and were to resume late Friday. Director General of Police O P Singh said the law and order situation was totally under control and no incident had been reported from any part of the state. Since morning, Singh and senior police officers were in regular touch with district police chiefs, and there was special focus on the districts of Lucknow, Bijnor, Sambhal, Muzaffarnagar,

Firozabad, Kanpur, Mau and Varanasi where protests turned violent last week. At least 19 people were killed during the protests in the state. Security drones kept watch on groups of people moving on roads and senior officers led police patrols. In Lucknow, roads were deserted looks with heavy police bandobast in areas of the old city which was rocked by violence on December 19. People were not allowed to assemble at any place for long after the Friday prayers. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

28-MEMBER COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS

Facing fire on quality of data, Govt gets critics on board reform panel

New panel, led by ex-Chief Statistician Pronab Sen, includes three academics who red-flagged 'political interference'

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 27

FACED WITH increasing questions about the credibility of official economic data and the abrupt shelving of official reports, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has made a move to overhaul the system for reviewing statistics related to economic activity. It has constituted a broad-based 28-member "Standing Committee on Economic Statistics" (SCES) headed by India's first Chief Statistician, Pronab Sen, which includes three academicians who had, earlier in March this year, signed a joint statement of 108 economists and social scientists that flagged concerns over "political interference" in influencing statistical data in the country. Incidentally, Sen, too, has been critical of the way the government has handled data and reports. The new, broad-based panel, which has a sweeping mandate to review key data sets that track economic activity and labour force participation trends, will have representatives from the United Nations, Reserve Bank of India, Finance Ministry, NITI



Sen has been critical of Govt

EXPLAINED
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A key step forward

THE MOVE to include vocal critics of the NDA signals that the government has taken serious note of objections related to the way it measures and handles key economic indicators. A single committee with an overarching mandate aims to counter the negative perception and reaffirm the government's commitment to maintaining the sanctity of India's official statistics.

Aayog, two industry chambers, Tata Trust, and economists and statisticians from several educational institutions. CP Chandrasekhar, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University; Hema Swaminathan, Professor, IIM Bangalore, and Jeemol Unni, Professor, Ahmedabad University are the three members of the new panel who were signatories to the March joint statement against the alleged "suppression of statistics". The new Standing Committee on Economic Statistics, with 10 non-official members and 16 official members, has been mandated to review the framework for economic indicators pertaining to the industrial sector, the services sector and the labour force statistics, an order dated December 6 said. This new panel, which is slated to meet for the first time on January 7 next year, will effectively subsume four existing committees — the Standing Committee on Labour Force Statistics (SCLFS), Standing Committee on Services Sector (SCSS), Standing Committee on Industrial Statistics (SCIS) and the Standing Committee on Services Sector and Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (SCSSUSE). **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Meerut SP tells protesters go to Pak if you don't want to live here; his defence: they raised pro-Pak slogans

AMIL BHATNAGAR
MUZAFFARNAGAR, DEC 27

A TOP police officer in Meerut has been caught on camera asking local residents to tell protesters to "go to Pakistan" during clashes on December 20, when four persons died during protests against the new citizenship law. The video clip, shot in Lisari Gate, shows SP City Akhilesh N Singh saying: "Kahan jaoge, is gali ko theek kar doonga (Where will you go, I will sort out this lane)", referring to four protesters po-



An image grab from the video in which SP Akhilesh N Singh is heard saying: "Khaoge yahan ka, gaoge kahin aur ka"

lice were chasing. The officer then turns to three persons and says: "Yeh jo

kaali aur peeli patti baande huye hain inse keh do Pakistan chale jao...khaoge yahan ka, gaoge kahin

aur ka... Yeh gali mujhe yaad ho gayi hai. Aur jab mujhe yaad ho jaata hai toh mein naani tak pahunch jaata hun (The ones tying black and yellow bands, tell them to go to Pakistan. You eat here but sing praises of another place... This lane is now familiar to me. And once I remember, I can even reach your grandmother)." In the video, the officer, surrounded by other personnel, can also be seen warning the three men standing at the junction of two lanes. "Agar kuch ho gaya toh tum log keemat chukooge... Har ek-ek aadmi ko jail mein bandh

karoonga (If something happens, you guys will pay the price. Every man from each house will be arrested)," the official can be heard saying. When contacted by The Indian Express, Singh said "the context is that anti-social elements were making pro-Pakistan statements". "We had come to the area to see who all were making pro-Pakistan statements. When we arrived with force, they had run away. We found out that there were 3-4 such people who wanted to create an issue. We had discussions with locals," the SP said.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Andhra govt panel indicts Naidu, son, TDP leaders for land 'insider trading'

Map and rules tweaked to favour plots bought by leaders: probe report

REENIVAS JANAYALA
HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 27

A CABINET sub-committee in the YSRCP government in Andhra Pradesh has accused former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, his son N Lokesh and six other TDP leaders of insider trading and either purchasing or helping purchase land in an area in Guntur district which was declared as capital city Amaravati six months later. A report submitted by the cabinet sub-committee Friday states that "persons privy to the likely location of capital purchased lands in the capital city/region area just prior to a formal official declaration". The report was submitted to Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy by the sub-committee headed by Finance Minister B Rajendranath and including Panchayati Raj Minister P Ramachandra Reddy, Industries Minister M Goutham Reddy and Irrigation Minister P Anil Kumar. "Certain highly placed indi-



Vendetta by YSRCP Govt, says Naidu's son Lokesh

viduals procured land through benami transactions; defined the boundary of the capital area to benefit certain connected people, holding lands on the fringes; fraudulent surrender of some lands towards land pooling scheme to receive returnable plots; irregularities in land allotment; Violation of provisions of AP Assigned Lands (Prohibition of Transfer) Act of 1977; and violation of provisions of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989" have been observed, the report states. "Certain individuals, having the white ration cards meant for

Day after his removal, deputy mayor of Srinagar held for fraud

ADIL AKHZER
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 27

SRINAGAR'S FORMER Deputy Mayor Sheikh Imran has been arrested for "illegal appropriation of subsidy," the Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) said on Friday. "Case FIR 3/2019 was registered by ACB against Shiekh Imran Director M/S Kehwa Square Pvt. Ltd. Bohri Kadal Srinagar, officers of J&K Bank and other Govt officials, for illegal appropriation of subsidy with inflated project cost for establishment of CA storage at Lassipora, Pulwama," the ACB said in a statement. Earlier this year, the ACB had registered a case against Imran and other officials. Imran was removed as deputy mayor of Srinagar Municipal Corporation after a no-confidence motion against him was carried in the corporation on Thursday. Imran, who is also the director of Kehwa Group of Companies, had set up a cold storage unit under M/S Kehwa Square Private Limited at Lassipora. The ACB said that Kehwa Group had got its loan of Rs 138 crore with J&K Bank "restructured for merely an amount of Rs

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SUSHANT KULKARNI
PUNE, DECEMBER 27

"I would put it in just one word: intoxicating." THAT WAS Wing Commander (retired) Vijay Joshi recalling his time inside a MiG-27. In 1984, he was the first test pilot to fly the Russian-origin aircraft at the handing-over ceremony that December. On Friday, Joshi was at the IAF station in Jodhpur to mark the end of the aircraft's journey. The 76-year-old was among the several serving and retired officers who watched the

"swing-wing" aircraft they had once flown get decommissioned from service. "It is the end of an era... The shift from MiG-21 to MiG-27 was a huge move forward and now, it is time to move on. I felt sad seeing the MiG-27 get retired but that was the only way," says Joshi. Commissioned in 1963 as a fighter pilot, Joshi has flown the Sukhoi-7 and Mig-21, too, among other jets. And after retirement, he flew civilian and corporate aircraft. But there's something about the MiG-27 that continues to tug at his heart.

"The technology of swing-wing was really something," he says, referring to the additional capability that allowed the aircraft to change the sweep of its wings according to operational requirements. But subsequent developments in aerodynamics meant that the MiG-27 was the last swing-wing aircraft in the IAF. Among the other memories of the aircraft that Joshi treasures is a watercolour painting by Russian pilot "Major Maximenkov, who had come to Ojhar in Maharashtra's Nashik to help prepare Indian pilots". In just under two hours, says



(Left) The MiG-27 bids farewell in Jodhpur on Friday. Joshi with his wife. IAF/Express

Joshi, Maximenkov painted a MiG-27 taking off — a detailed work including the hills in the background. "My interaction with the Russian pilot was very friendly as I was fluent in Russian and could follow his instructions," says Joshi. Speaking about his experience as a fighter pilot, Joshi says modern jet fighters are "not just some high-speed toys as some people think", "Like any state-of-art equipment, they have to be handled with great skill. And this, I think, is what I enjoyed most as a pilot. The bond between plane and pilot is very deep and difficult to fathom

unless you are in the cockpit," he says. Friday's event at the Air Force Station in Jodhpur was marked by a final farewell flight of 'Scorpions' from the Number 29 squadron — the only IAF unit that operated the upgraded MiG-27s — in a five-jet arrowhead formation flanked by Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft. According to a defence spokesperson, the MiG-27 has been the mainstay of the air force's ground attack capability since 1985, while the upgraded variant "has been the pride of the strike fleet since 2006". (WITH ENSIN JAIPUR)