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NEARBY



Shaheen Bagh protesters told to end anti-CAA stir
 NEW DELHI
 Hundreds of protesters opposing the amended Citizenship Act gathered at Shaheen Bagh on Sunday for a candlelight vigil even as those sitting here on an indefinite stir were reportedly asked to end their sit-in. The protesters, however, refused to budge saying that their demands must first be met.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

U.P. DGP told to apologise to inter-faith couple

NEW DELHI
 The Delhi High Court has ordered the Director-General of Police of Uttar Pradesh to apologise to an inter-faith couple, who had eloped against the wishes of the woman's family, for illegally arresting them. It also ordered the U.P. government to pay a compensation of ₹50,000 each to Sandeep Kumar and his wife Nisha.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Capital may have a rainy start to 2020

NEW DELHI
 The Capital is likely to witness thunderstorms accompanied by hail and lightning on January 1 and 2. A western disturbance is likely to bring a change in wind direction that will help bring relief from the ongoing cold wave conditions, said the meteorological department.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

No legal rules framed yet for NRC: Ravi Shankar Prasad

'Hidden elements behind protests against CAA'

NISTULA HEBBAR
 NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has clarified that while there is a "possibility" that the National Register for Citizens (NRC) "may take place", it will only be through a due legal process, with rules for it being defined "through adequate consultation".

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Prasad said, "Prime Minister Modi has clarified that no discussion has taken place so far. There is a possibility that it [the NRC] may happen, but there is a legal process attached to it; NRC preparation has a distinct legal process to be initiated, with defining of rules with adequate consul-



Ravi Shankar Prasad

tations. But nothing has been done so far."

He added that the data for the same "would be collected, scrutinised by the registrars, appeals will be heard, but most importantly, the Registrar-General will have to notify the period and duration of the exercise in the official gazette. Nothing so far, not a word,

has been done so far."

Referring to the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, especially in Uttar Pradesh where 19 people have died so far, Mr. Prasad said, "Hidden elements have joined hands to escalate the violence around the protests. In Uttar Pradesh, that is what happened, and the Internet had to be shut down for that reason."

The Minister said that the CAA was perfectly legal and constitutional, and berated the Congress for not repealing the 2003-04 amendment to the Citizenship Act, which enjoins the government to prepare an NRC.

INTERVIEW ON ▶ PAGE 13

Hemant back as Jharkhand CM

At swearing-in ceremony, anti-BJP Opposition leaders display bonhomie

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
 BHUBANESWAR

In a second stint at the helm, Hemant Soren, executive president of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, was sworn in as the 11th Chief Minister of Jharkhand in Ranchi on Sunday.

Governor Draupadi Murmu administered the oath to Mr. Soren. Two MLAs of the Congress and one of the Rashtriya Janata Dal were inducted into the Ministry.

At the ceremony, parties opposed to the BJP found a common platform to display bonhomie. Exactly a month ago, Uddhav Thackeray had taken oath as Maharashtra Chief Minister, which was seen as a loss for the BJP in the power game in the face of rare Opposition unity. At a time when countrywide protests are



Meeting of minds: Rahul Gandhi, left, greeting Tejashwi Yadav after Hemant Soren, centre, was sworn in on Sunday. • PTI

erupting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens, the presence of Opposition leaders assumed significance.

Rahul takes centre stage
 Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi took centre

stage in the galaxy of Opposition leaders. Chief Ministers Bhupesh Baghel of Chhattisgarh, Ashok Gehlot of Rajasthan and Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal attended the swearing-in, while former Chief Ministers Tarun Gogoi of Assam and Jitan Ram Manjhi of Bi-

har sent their wishes to Mr. Soren.

CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI general secretary D. Raja, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam president M.K. Stalin, party MPs Kanimozhi and T.R. Baalu, Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh and Loktantrik Janata Dal leader Sharad Yadav also took part in the ceremony.

The 44-year-old JMM leader took over as the Chief Minister of the tribal-dominated Jharkhand for the second time. He was the Deputy Chief Minister in the Arjun Munda Ministry in 2010 and went on to become Chief Minister in 2013.

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CASES TO BE DROPPED ▶ PAGE 12

Big moment



Thespian's day: President Ram Nath Kovind presenting the Dada Saheb Phalke Award for 2018 to actor Amitabh Bachchan in New Delhi on Sunday. Mr. Bachchan said he was looking forward to doing more work in the future. • PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 9)

EDUCATIONPLUS ▶ PAGES 18 & 19

Today's youth prefer to follow the system, detest anarchy: PM

'They get restless if the system does not respond properly'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the youth preferred to "follow the system" and "courageously question the system itself" if it didn't respond properly, adding that they "detest" anarchy.

His statement was made in the backdrop of protests across the country, including on campuses and led by students, against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

In his last 'Mann Ki Baat' radio address for 2019, Mr. Modi said the coming decade would see the contribution of those born in the 21st century. Referring to the many terms for the youth today,



Narendra Modi

including "millennials" and "Gen Z", he said this was the "social media generation".

"All of us experience that this generation is extremely talented. It thrives on the dream to do something new, something different. It has its own set of opinions. And the best part is, especially in the case of India, according

to me, they appreciate the system. Not just that, they prefer to follow the system. And in the event of the system not responding properly, they get restless and even courageously question the system itself. I consider this attribute as a virtue."

He said, "The country's youth detest anarchy of any sort" as well as lack of governance, instability, nepotism, casteism, favouritism and gender discrimination.

Mr. Modi said he believed that the coming decade for India would be not just about development and progress for the youth but also the country's progress.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

'No BJP person will decide if we are citizens or not'

Akhilesh says he will not fill any form under the National Population Register

OMAR RASHID
 LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said he would not fill any form to enrol in the National Population Register, saying the BJP "will not decide if we are citizens or not".

"I am a citizen of India. We all are. No BJP person will decide if we are citizens or not. And if the need arises, we will not fill any form," Mr. Yadav said addressing student leaders of his party at the Samajwadi Party headquarters.

"How will you make us fill the form? And if required, I



Akhilesh Yadav

will be the first person not to fill any form," the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said. Referring to Mahatma Gandhi's disobedience in South Africa, Mr. Yadav asked his party persons to use a similar strategy of

non-cooperation.

"The question is will you support me or not? If we don't fill, you and I will all be thrown out. I won't fill NPR. What will you [government] do," Mr. Yadav asked.

He appealed to the youth and the people of the country to "save India" from those people who are "tearing the Constitution into shreds".

"Tell me, youngsters, you want NPR or rozgar [employment]," Mr. Yadav asked.

According to the State police, 19 persons have died, most of them through gunshot wounds, in Uttar Pra-

desh during protests over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. Except for the death of one protester in Bijon, the police had distanced themselves from the other deaths, saying they did not fire at the crowds.

Referring to those incidents, Mr. Yadav said the BJP government and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were solely responsible for the "injustice, you can see, the people who are getting killed by police bullets."

"This injustice is taking place as the CM wants to save his seat," Mr. Yadav said.

For backing CAA, Mayawati suspends MLA

STAFF REPORTER
 BHOPAL

Declaring that the BSP acts immediately against legislators who break party discipline, party president Mayawati on Sunday suspended the membership of an MLA in Madhya Pradesh, Ramabai Parihar, for not toeing its line on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, and supporting it publicly.

The BSP has two MLAs in the State and supports the Kamal Nath government

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 13

Kin of the dead wait for justice in U.P.'s Firozabad

Six persons died of gunshot wounds during CAA protests

HEMANI BHANDARI
 FIROZABAD

Among six persons killed in Firozabad during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, on December 20 was a differently-abled man with a five-year-old daughter. Another victim leaves behind an ailing and dependent mother.

The dead have been identified as Mohammed Shafeeq, 40, Arman, alias Kallu, 24, Mukeem, 20, Mohammed Haroon, 30, Navi Jaan, 22, Rashid, 27 — all residents of areas along the Rasulpur bypass between Naini Glass junction and Jatpuri junction.

The stretch was the centre of protests against the CAA, which started from the main market in the Mohammedganj area.

Arman, a labourer, was walking back from his factory when his brother Farman met him and told him to quickly go home because the situation was becoming tense. But as he was crossing the bypass, a bullet hit him on his chest and he died instantly.

People nearby informed his paternal uncle Mohammed Taufeeq that Arman was lying dead by the road. Mr. Taufeeq and others then brought the body home and informed his father Yameen who was at their residence in Azadnagar a few metres away.



Mukeem's family recalls the tragic event. • HEMANI BHANDARI

"We didn't call the police because they were the ones who shot him. Only the police were firing. Protesters were throwing stones. We kept his body at home that night. We didn't know what to do... that's when our elders came and told us to take him to hospital for a post-mortem and also get an FIR registered," Mr. Taufeeq said.

Mukeem was shot at in front of his uncle Kallu. The two were returning from work at a bangle-making factory.

Seeing the crowds, they started running back when Mukeem was hit at the back by a bullet near his shoulder. "I found a wooden cart, put him on it and pushed about 3 km to the government hospital. He was referred to Agra. He wasn't treated well there; wasn't even cleaned," Mr. Kallu said, adding that he was taken to Delhi where he breathed his last on Decem-

ber 23. At Rashid's house in Kashmere Gate, his father Noor Mohammed, 59, is feeding his five-year-old granddaughter Afreen. It was chicken and rice for lunch. "We'll take care of her now. She doesn't realise he's gone," Mr. Noor said.

Rashid was differently abled. He couldn't move his right hand. Mr. Noor showed his documents and pictures. "How could he be a protester?" asked the grieving father.

Helpless mother

Navi Jaan of Mohammedganj had gone to the factory in the morning after helping his mother Hakeela Begum to the washroom as she has a knee injury and has difficulty walking.

"He had left the house after lunch. I told him he is not eating enough. He said he'll come back and eat well. He will not come now," Ms. Hakeela sobbed.

M.P. gets its first elephant colony in Bandhavgarh forest

38 elephants that strayed into Bandhavgarh from north Chhattisgarh last year have stayed back

SIDHARTH YADAV
 BHOPAL

Last November, elephants in herds, 38 of them, wandered into the forests of Bandhavgarh looking for food and water, like each year. A year on, they have stayed back in Madhya Pradesh for the first time over seasons and even bred two new calves, choosing not to return to the withering forests of north Chhattisgarh.

The herd has found plenty of space, food and water within the core area of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, and that's why it may have stayed back, believes Reserve Deputy



New home: Elephant herds travel for miles each year in search of new habitats. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT/FILE PHOTO

Director Sidharth Gupta. Stating that the species is migratory, and often travels hundreds of miles to look for new habitats with enough food and water, he says: "The animals came in

herds of 20, 10 and eight over two months last year. That we have two new members now indicates that the species is comfortable here."

The 'Tiger State' of

Madhya Pradesh, which in the 2019 census recorded the most number of estimated tigers at 526, thus securing the title, presently has no know-how of dealing with elephants.

Experts from West Bengal and Chhattisgarh were roped in, who held workshops with local staff on imparting techniques to avert man-animal conflicts.

As regards monitoring, three patrolling teams track the herd's movement round-the-clock, says Mr. Gupta.

Ruling out the possibility of conflict between the herd and tigers, J.S. Chauhan, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests,

Wildlife wing, said that both animals can coexist within the same territory. "While one is a herbivore, the other is a carnivore, so there is no competition. The presence of elephants will not alter the movement of tigers in the area," he says.

"We have proposed to the Centre to secure the right to collar the elephants to track their movement. The State has so far allocated no separate funds for the upkeep of their habitat though," says Mr. Chauhan.

Besides Bandhavgarh, two male elephants have strayed their way from Odisha into the forests of Narsingpur.



Protesters wearing bandages to express solidarity with the students while watching a play outside Jamia Millia Islamia on Sunday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Play re-enacting police crackdown on students staged outside Jamia

Titled 'Jamiawala Bagh', it draws parallels with Jallianwala Bagh massacre

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two weeks after police crackdown on students protesting against citizenship law near Jamia Millia Islamia, a play re-enacting the events of December 15 was held in front of the university on Sunday.

The play, organised by the Hamdard Alumni Association, titled "Jamiawala Bagh" drew parallels with the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Scores of people watched the play by wrapping bandages across their face to express solidarity with the injured students of Jamia.

The performers narrated how the events taking place today had already taken place in the past with the use of "time" as a metaphorical narrator, played by a blindfolded woman.

Characters and events

Among the characters and events in the play were a "General Dyer" giving directions to open fire in an accented Hindi, a swipe at Home Minister Amit Shah with the phrase "aap chronology samjheye" explaining how the CAA would come first and the NRC after, and a scene where a maroon hijab clad woman yelling at the "police" telling them to back off as they attempted to



A play presented by Hamdard Alumni Association detailing the December 15 events, outside Jamia Millia Islamia on Sunday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

lathi-charge "protesters."

Speaking after the performance, one of the them urged the public to look beyond communal differences.

"You might have a different ideology but how can you celebrate students being beaten up, losing an eye, losing an arm? At least on this there shouldn't be two opinions," he said.

Hub of protest

The area around the university continues to be a hub of protest with colourful anti-

CAA, anti-NRC and other posters, pictures of B.R Ambedkar, and slogans as well as loud speaker system set up on the sides of the road running through the university. Designated areas have also been set up for volunteers to make posters as well as read and work.

"Read for revolution" reads one poster put up near a photo exhibition on the life of Mahatma Gandhi, where each phase of his political career is captured in an iconic photograph along with a brief write up.

Meanwhile, students protesting at the university were joined by residents of the area in large numbers as well as a contingent of the Aligarh Muslim University's Old Boys Association, who took out a march condemning police brutality in Uttar Pradesh.

Candlelight march

Later in the evening, large numbers of protesters took out a candlelight march to Shaheen Bagh where area residents have been on a similar indefinite sit-in protest for over the last two weeks.

A call to defend the Constitution with creative expression

The annual event of Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust to highlight India's secular traditions

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

At a time when protests are being organised across the country against the citizenship law, the National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register, the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (Sahmat) will start the New Year with its annual event that seeks to resist all forces that threaten the right to freedom of creative expression.

Sahmat, created in memory of political activist, actor,

playwright and poet Safdar Hashmi, who was violently attacked while performing a street play in Sahibabad on January 1, 1989 and succumbed to injuries the following day, has for thirty one years been a platform for creative expression that resists communal forces. Safdar Memorial is conducted on the eve of his death anniversary every year.

Speaking about this year's event, Sohail Hashmi, Safdar's brother said: "This year we have seen a series of at-

tacks on the Constitution of India. First with the abrogation of Article 370, the dismantling of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and the bifurcation of the State without the consent of the people of Kashmir and then with the passing of the amended Citizenship Act, which is against the secular fabric of our country. The memorial on January 1 will be a call for the people to defend the Constitution using creative expression.

He added that Sahmat was

created as a platform for artists to defend creative freedom and expression as Safdar was attacked by forces that did not want him to perform.

Religious intolerance

"The biggest threat to all forms of expression we have found after Safdar's attack comes from one source, which is religious intolerance and a majoritarian discourse that were being pushed then and continue till today," Mr. Sohail said.

Court lets off man in drunk driving case with softer punishment

Judge takes into account his old age and family dependency

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

An Additional Sessions Judge has modified three days' imprisonment to a day's stay in the courtroom till its rising for the 27,000 and reduced fine of ₹27,000 to ₹10,000 in a drunk driving case on compassionate ground in view of the old age of the accused and his family dependency.

The 56-year-old accused had pleaded guilty and wanted the court to relieve him of the jail term. He was

working as an accounts assistant in a private company. The public prosecutor opposed the plea submitting that the magistrate court had awarded an appropriate sentence to the accused in view of the fact that cases of drunk driving are increasing day by day.

Allowing an appeal by the accused against the magistrate court judgment, Special Judge Vidya Prakash said: "The appellant himself voluntarily pleaded guilty to the offences charged against

him and out of remorse. Moreover, he is shown to be old, infirm person aged 56-years-old and is doing private job to earn his livelihood. In this backdrop, I am of the opinion that he should be granted at least one opportunity to reform himself instead of sending him behind the bars which would further affect not only his future prospects but also may also cause great hardship to his family members, who are solely dependent upon him," the Judge said.

Release interim amount to staff of DSGMC-run schools, orders HC

High Court was hearing a batch of petitions on non-payment of dues of employees and ex-employees

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed its Registry to release "some interim amount" to teaching and non-teaching staff and ex-employees of schools run by the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee (DSGMC) who had moved the court over non-payment of their dues.

167 petitioners

Justice Rekha Palli ordered the Registry to release some interim amounts to "the 167 petitioners in chart I and II to whom amounts are payable

Shaheen Bagh protesters asked to end stir as normal life being hit

Supply and transport of essential goods and services affected

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Hundreds of protesters opposing the amended Citizenship Act gathered at Shaheen Bagh on Sunday evening for a candlelight vigil even as those sitting here on an indefinite demonstration were reportedly asked to end their sit-in protest. Organisers of the demonstration, however, refused to budge saying that their demands must be met first.

In a notice said to be posted near the protest site and signed by the area SHO and issued on Saturday, protesters have been asked to stop the demonstration with immediate effect.

The sit-in has been going on for nearly a week now with scores of residents and others coming out and lending their support. Protesters, led by housewives, who have pitched tents on the middle of the Noida-Kalindi Kunj Highway, have blocked the road.

The blocking of the road is creating inconvenience



The sit-in protest has been going on for nearly a week now.

• FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

not just to daily commuters but also to the supply and transport of essential goods and services, the notice states. As the national highway, which acts as a "link road", is being blocked, heavy traffic has been accumulating on the DND and Mathura Roads, disrupting daily life and supply of essential goods and services there too, it adds.

It also states that health and emergency services at the nearby Apollo Hospital has also been affected as a consequence of the road being shut. Hence, the notice calls for the demonstration to be stopped.

Meraj Khan, one of the or-

ganisers, however, said that the protesters would not move until they get written assurance that the NRC and CAA would be rolled back or a Central government representative meets them.

Braving weather

"It has become very cold here, but thinking of the conditions we might have to face in detention centres, we are continuing the protest," he added.

Meanwhile, large number of people from nearby areas as well as those protesting at Jamia Millia Islamia gathered here on Sunday evening to hold a candlelight vigil.

Ex-constable arrested after video goes viral

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A retired police constable has been arrested for allegedly making a video threatening to shoot protesters agitating against the citizenship law. The video went viral on social media.

Police said that the man has been identified as Rakesh Tyagi, who had taken voluntary retirement in 2014. In the video, he is seen wearing the uniform of a Sub Inspector rank officer of Delhi Police.

A case was registered against him on Thursday by the Cyber Cell and he was arrested. However, he was subsequently released on bail.

In the video, the retired constable can be heard addressing the public saying that the Ministry of Home Affairs had given directions to police officials and they will abide by it and save the Constitution. He also said that if he or his fellow officials are pelted stones at, then he will shoot them.

Clarion call



People march against the new citizenship law at Hauz Khas on Sunday. • R.V. MOORTHY

DU's notice on 'prior intimation' for protest opposed by students' groups

They say it is a sign of country turning into surveillance State

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A notice issued by Delhi University making it mandatory to give prior intimation before organising protest on the campus was condemned by students' groups on Sunday.

The notice, issued by the university proctor states that prior intimation for gatherings, protests or demonstrations outside the Arts Faculty Gate is mandatory. The organisers will have to furnish particulars of the demonstrations at least 24 hours in advance. These include name of the organiser, their institution, contact information, nature of the programme, its duration, use of logistics,

The notice is a brutal reminder of the curbs which are being placed on the students' and citizens' voice all over the country

KYS
Students' group

list of speakers and the expected number of participants. The notice, however, does not mention any penalty in case these procedures are not followed.

Condemning the move, students' group AISA, in a statement said: "Resistance is our right! We won't seek permission to resist!"

Linking the move with reports of Delhi Police's ap-

plication of face-recognition software, it said that the notice was "another sign of our country turning into a surveillance State." It added that to protest was the Constitutional right of citizens and the students and must be free from any kind of paperwork.

Students' group KYS also condemned the notice arguing that it is an attempt to clampdown on the democratic voice of students. "The notice is a brutal reminder of the curbs which are being placed on the students' and citizens' voice all over the country," it said, adding that it would be mobilising students against the "diktat" in the coming days.

IN BRIEF
BJP to organise event for traders today

NEW DELHI
In an attempt to popularise decisions made by the Modi government to benefit traders, the BJP on Sunday said it would organise "Vishal Vyapari Sammelan" on December 30. The event at Talkatora Stadium will be addressed by FM Nirmala Sitharaman, Commerce and Railways Minister Piyush Goyal, Housing and Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and other senior leaders.

DELHI TODAY

Exhibition: "The Homeland" an exhibition that interrogates the idea of home by Moutushi Chakraborty at IIC, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Alekhyia", a group show of painting and sculpture exhibition by Artist Nidhi and Artist Mohit Bhardwaj along with their Ganesh Prasad Sahu and Krishna Shreshtha at AIFACS, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "A Dialogue with Soil", a solo glass sculpture show by Sisir Sahana at Gallerie Ganesh, E-557, Greater Kailash-II, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@thehindu.co.in)

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	431	Gurgaon	343
Ghaziabad	432	Faridabad	449
Noida	456	Greater Noida	434

■ 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

HC directs U.P. DGP to apologise to inter-faith couple for arresting them

Government to pay ₹50,000 compensation each to duo within four weeks

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has ordered the Director-General of Police (DGP) of Uttar Pradesh to apologise to an inter-faith couple, who had eloped against the wishes of the woman's family, for illegally arresting them.

A Bench of Justice S. Muradidhar and Justice Talwant Singh also ordered the U.P. government to pay a compensation of ₹50,000 each to Sandeep Kumar and his wife Nisha.

"The amount should be paid within four weeks along with a letter written by the DGP of Uttar Pradesh himself, apologising to each of them for the conduct of police officials," the High Court said.

Disciplinary actions

It also directed initiation of disciplinary actions against three U.P. policemen for illegally arresting the couple from Jawaharlal Nehru University campus here with-



out informing the local police station.

The court also accepted the report of a panel comprising former High Court Judge and former DGP of the Delhi Police. The panel had given detailed suggestions as to the protocol to be followed by the police in the event of an inter-State arrest.

It directed that the report be adopted for implementation by both Delhi and Uttar Pradesh in their respective jurisdictions.

The committee had suggested that in an inter-State arrest, since the arrestee is to be taken out of his State to a place away where he may

The amounts should be paid along with a letter written by the DGP of U.P. himself, apologising to each of them. How could the police officials so easily come to JNU and take away the couple

HIGH COURT

not have any acquaintance, he may be permitted to take along with him (if possible), his family member/acquaintance to remain with him till he is produced before the jurisdictional Magistrate.

The committee also said the arrested person must be produced before the jurisdictional Magistrate at the earliest, in any case, not beyond 24 hours from the date of arrest, excluding the journey time.

The court's order came on a habeas corpus plea by Kumar, seeking to produce

Nisha before the court in July last. The couple had got married in U.P.'s Ghaziabad in June 2018 as per Hindu customs and rituals after Nisha, a Muslim, embraced the Hindu faith.

After marriage, the couple started living at Kumar's residence at the JNU Campus in Delhi. While Kumar's parents had no objection, Nisha's relatives were unable to reconcile with it.

On a complaint by Nisha's brother in Loni police station that she had been kidnapped, two police officers - a male and a female - from Loni detained the couple. While Nisha was handed to her family, Kumar was kept in a police lockup for three days and two nights.

The court had questioned how the police officials had "so easily come to JNU" and take away the couple, despite Nisha being over 21 years of age, and knowing fully well that she had married Kumar of her own free will.



Traffic on a cold Sunday morning in the city. • R.V. MOORTHY

Capital may welcome new year with thunderstorms

Cold wave likely to abate after today, forecasts Met dept.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Capital is likely to witness thunderstorms accompanied by hail and lightning on January 1 and January 2 under the influence of Western Disturbance, said Met department on Sunday.

The disturbance is likely to bring a change in wind direction that will help bring relief from the cold wave conditions. The forecast by the IMD read: "Due to per-

sistence of cold northwesterly winds in lower levels and likely weak easterly winds on December 30, cold day to severe cold day conditions are very likely in Delhi and across North India. It is likely to abate thereafter due to increase in easterly wind speed over northern parts of the country." The minimum temperature in various parts of Delhi varied with 2.5 degrees Celsius being recorded at Ananagar, 2.8 degrees Cel-

sus at Lodhi Road, 3.2 degrees Celsius at Palam and 3.6 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung, said the Met department.

The maximum temperature in various parts of Delhi varied with 14.8 degrees Celsius at Ananagar, 15.6 degrees Celsius at Lodhi Road, 13.5 degrees Celsius at Palam and 15.8 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung. Delhi had recorded the season's coldest day on Saturday.

BJP's lies on unauthorised colonies exposed on DDA portal: Sisodia

'PMUDAY registration is not for regularisation of illegal colonies'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday alleged that the BJP was misleading Delhiites by claiming that 1,731 colonies have been regularised whereas the Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) portal states that the PMUDAY registration "is neither regularisation of unauthorised colonies nor the structures therein".

"The DDA's portal was launched by the BJP government on December 16 purportedly to register residents of unauthorised colonies to apply for ownership rights. This came soon after the BJP put up hoardings across the city claiming that the 1,731 unauthorised colonies are now authorised. The BJP's lies have been exposed by the DDA's own website. The Frequently Asked Questions section uploaded on the DDA website clearly states that the PMUDAY registration 'is neither regularisation of unauthorised colonies, nor the struc-



Manish Sisodia at a press meet in the city on Sunday. • R.V. MOORTHY

tures therein", Mr. Sisodia said.

"This is a fraud on the 40 lakh people living in Delhi's unauthorised colonies. BJP must apologise to the people for this huge betrayal," he said.

'AAP gov't. did its part'

Mr. Sisodia added that there were mainly two important works to be done with respect to unauthorised colonies. The first one was to regularise colonies and the second, to develop them.

The task of regularisation

was with the Centre and that of the development was with the Delhi government. "The government has fulfilled all its responsibilities like laying drains, roads, sewer lines, water pipelines, street lights, CCTV cameras but the Centre did not do its part," Mr. Sisodia alleged.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also tweeted at Union Urban Development Minister Hardeep Puri saying that the BJP has been "blatantly lying" about regularising unauthorised colonies and thanked him for telling people the truth on the DDA's portal.

CM tweets

"DDA website says that centre's scheme will neither regularise unauth colonies nor their houses. Really shocking. Can't believe that BJP spoke such a blatant lie to the people and has put up so many hoardings. Thanks @HardeepSPuri ji for telling truth to people through DDA website [sic]," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted.

BJP erects thousands of hoardings of 'newly authorised' colonies

'8,000 such hoardings put up at vantage points across city'

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Thousands of hoardings proclaiming them "newly authorised" have been installed by the BJP across illegal colonies in the Capital. This is a move which seeks to say more than meets the eye at first glance, said party sources.

The party aims to erect a total number of 21,000 such hoardings - bearing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image and seeking to reinforce his claim of having "removed the blot of being unauthorised" from their foreheads - over the coming days as part of its electoral campaign, said sources.

"The intent of the hoardings is not just to remind the residents of such colonies about the removal of the stigma of being unauthorised by this landmark initiative of the BJP-led government but also to pitch to them, once again, Prime Minister Modi as the sole face of the party in the city," said a source.

As many as 8,000 such



One such hoarding erected by the BJP in the city. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

hoardings were put up at vantage points in areas including Burari, Sangam Vihar, Kirari and Swaroop Nagar among others overnight between Saturday and Sunday, said an insider.

This comes in the wake of Mr. Modi at his rally at Ramlila Maidan last Sunday, calling the residents of such colonies "VIPs" and asserting that words such as "illegal", "bulldozer" and "demolition" had become a thing of the past after the Centre's decision to confer ownership rights on them post the passage of the National Capital

Territory of Delhi (Recognition of Property Rights of Residents in Unauthorised Colonies) Act, 2019 by both Houses of Parliament.

Leave aside the projection of a Chief Ministerial face, the hoardings even exclude BJP national president Amit Shah as well as party's national working president J.P. Nadda in line with its strategy to make the Delhi Assembly elections a direct contest between Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Mr. Modi, a source said.

"The decision to confer ownership rights to the residents of such colonies is a big-ticket decision and the party has no qualms in seeking votes either in relation to the decision or in the name of PM," said Pratyush Kanth, Delhi BJP media in-charge.

"Mr. Shah will address a booth workers' convention specifically on the issue of the CAA on January 5. This will be followed by a three-day, back-to-back campaign at the booth level focusing on the CAA," the source added.

'Will raise pension for old, widows and handicapped'

Chopra says manifesto to be out soon

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra said if the party comes to power in the city then pension for old people, widows and handicapped will be raised to ₹5,000 per month. He made the announcement while addressing rallies at Model Town and Rajouri Garden Assembly constituencies on Sunday as part of Congress' Jan Jagran Abhiyan.

He also said the Congress was working on a detailed manifesto for the upcoming Assembly elections in Delhi and would release it soon.

'Govt.'s failures'

"The failure of the AAP government can be gauged from the fact that pensions for the old, widows and physically challenged persons have not been distributed. Instead, that money has been misused by the Kejriwal-led government," Mr. Chopra alleged. He added that the



Subhash Chopra addressed rallies at Model Town and Rajouri Garden Assembly constituencies on Sunday.

AAP government has not met any of the targets it had set as it could not even spend the budgeted allocation for distributing pensions.

'15-year Cong. regime'

The party alleged that several welfare schemes started by former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit had been discontinued and that it would organise rallies across the State to remind people of the "development-driven 15-year Congress regime in Delhi".

One dead, two hurt in road accident in north Delhi

Accused, a minor, is absconding: police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man was killed and two others injured when the bike, driven by the deceased, was hit by a speeding two-wheeler coming from the wrong direction in north Delhi's Sarai Rohilla on Saturday, the police said on Sunday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Monika Bhardwaj said the deceased, Lal Babu Mehto, was a resident of Shahdara's Kardampuri.

The injured have been identified as Babu's friend Deepak from Jyoti Nagar and pillion rider of offending bike Pawan from Sarai Rohilla (22).

Deepak allegedly told the police that he and Babu were going from Shahdara

to Punjabi Bagh at 7.30 p.m. when the incident happened.

"He said when they reached near Usha Mata Mandir on Old Rohtak Road, two persons driving on the wrong side hit their bike after which they fell on the road. Pawan also fell down while the driver sped off," Ms. Bhardwaj said.

All the injured persons were rushed to Deep Chand Bandh Hospital where Babu was declared brought dead while the other two are undergoing treatment.

It has been revealed that the driver was a minor. "He has been identified and will soon be apprehended. Further action will be taken according to law with respect to a minor driving," said an officer.

Three persons shot at by unknown men

'It appears to be a case of personal enmity'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three persons sustained gunshot injuries after they were attacked allegedly by unidentified persons in Outer North Delhi's Alipur on Sunday afternoon, the police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Gaurav Sharma said the victims have been identified as Naveen alias Narendra (38), his wife Sangeeta and Pushkar (30).

They are currently undergoing treatment.

The police said they received information about firing in Bakhtawarpur at 3.48 p.m.

On reaching the spot, the officers were told that four unidentified men

fired indiscriminately near a tyre shop. Mr. Pushkar is the owner of the shop while Naveen and his wife had come there for car service.

Criminal records

During preliminary investigation, it has been revealed that Naveen runs a gym in Model Town and has a criminal record.

"He was previously arrested in two cases of Arms Act and rape," Mr. Sharma said.

Prima facie, it appears to be a case of personal enmity with Naveen, who was the target, but the other two got shot during the firing, the police said.

Efforts are on to identify the accused, they added.

Eyesore



Cows feed on garbage lying unattended in Anand Vihar on Sunday. • R.V. MOORTHY

Boy reunited with family

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

An 11-year-old differently abled boy, wandering in the biting cold in Rohini, was united with his family on Sunday, the police said.

DCP (PCR) Sharat Sinha said the boy was found near Avantika Chowk at 12.30 a.m. after which they asked his name. "The boy could not detail about his parents. The staff then took him inside their van and started looking for his family in nearby areas," Mr. Sinha said.

Subsequently, the staff noticed a contact number on his hand and called on the number.

The phone was picked up by his sister who shared an address in Rohini with the officers. The boy was then taken there where he reunited with his family.

Kejriwal felicitates ex-servicemen, kin of slain soldiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday felicitated a group of ex-servicemen and the families of slain soldiers, said a government statement.

Speaking at an event, he said the AAP government has never neglected the ex-

servicemen.

"We cannot put a price to the lives of slain soldiers but we have tried to honour them. Soon after the formation of the AAP government, we have worked to provide financial assistance of ₹1 crore to the family of slain soldiers living in Delhi and job to one family member,"

Mr. Kejriwal said.

In the last five years, the government has recruited ex-servicemen on a large scale in several departments and utilised their abilities, he said.

'Recruited ex-servicemen'

"This is the reason why education and security arrange-

ments have improved in Delhi today..." he said.

He added that the AAP dispensation has recruited a lot of ex-servicemen in the Enforcement Wing of the Transport Department. "We want to work closely with ex-servicemen. We are very proud of the nation's army," Mr. Kejriwal.

FIR filed against firm on complaint by Ministry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The police have filed an FIR against a private company on a complaint by the Defence Ministry for allegedly not returning a database containing personal information of 45 lakh ex-servicemen after it completed a contract for ECHS smart cards, the officials said.

The case was unearthed in RTI applications and follow-ups filed by activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (retd). He was recently informed by a Defence Ministry official through an email that the police registered the FIR on December 19 against a private vendor who did not handover the personal data of the 45 lakh ex-servicemen

enrolled in the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme. Mr. Batra had sent an RTI query seeking file notes about the issue. The notes received show that "in absence of any written confirmation in form of 'Confidentiality Certificate' from the firm, the security of the database of ECHS beneficiaries cannot be confirmed."



Trying to stay warm: A homeless family in a makeshift shelter; residents at the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara night shelter on a cold night in the Capital. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Left out in the cold

The municipal-run Sheetla Mata Mandir night shelter in Gurugram mainly allows devotees to stay in the facility; staff says 'vagabonds' are denied entry due to security concerns

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

This December has been one of the coldest that Gurugram has witnessed in the past several decades. But despite near-freezing temperature, the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram's Sheetla Mata Mandir night shelter was nearly empty on December 24 when *The Hindu* made an on-spot visit.

In a city where hundreds, including children, spend the night shivering on pavements or under flyovers, the shelter's register for December 23 showed that only 39 people had stayed in the facility, which has a capacity to accommodate 150 people.

The two-storey shelter – one of the largest among the eight such facilities run by the civic body – provides drinking water and toilets. There is also a guard.

The security staff of the nearby temple inform that only devotees are allowed inside the shelter. The facility's guard, Prakash Negi, said that "vagabonds" are turned away as it is not "safe" to allow them inside with the devotees – mostly families with female members.

The 39 people that stayed in the shelter on December 23 were all devotees, he added.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Rajender Kumar, who is attached to the Sheetla Mata police post, said there was no separate space for the devotees and that "the homeless and the worshippers cannot be allowed to stay together". "The vagabonds are mostly drunk, disoriented or drug addicts. What if they misbehave with a woman or a girl devotee? We cannot even ask for their identity cards and most of them do not have it. So, we do not allow the homeless inside. The matter has been brought to the notice of the temple management but the issue is yet to be resolved," said Mr. Kumar, wrapped in a blanket with a heater humming nearby.

Four to five guards are on night duty at the shrine but it is not enough for the sprawling premises, he added.

The devotees through the temple during *Shukla Paksha* (waxing moon) on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays; the shelter, therefore, lies mostly vacant during *Krishna Paksha* (waning moon), said the staff.

Other night shelters

Besides the Sheetla Mata Mandir night shelter, the municipal corporation runs facilities in Bhim Nagar and Kanhai village, which



Clockwise from top: Bhim Nagar night shelter; people using the facility; porta cabin shelter at Rao Mahabir Singh Chowk. ■ASHOK KUMAR

have a total capacity of around 200. The three facilities are situated inside permanent structures. The rest of the shelters, at Rajiv Chowk, Sohna Chowk, Rao Mahabir Singh Chowk (near bus stand), Railway Station and IFFCO Chowk, run from inside porta cabins with a capacity to hold 8-10 people each.

Two more shelters at Kadipur and Badshahpur are under construction.

No food, water

Most of the people at the Bhim Nagar facility complained that free food was not available this year, unlike the previous years. The canteen providing subsidised food at ₹10 per person shut down six months ago.

It had been inaugurated by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar under the Antyodaya Aahar Yojana last year.

Bablu, a daily-wager, said there was also no arrangement for drinking water and the sub-



mersible pump had not been working for the past three days leaving them without a drop of water in the toilets. "There are only two toilets for more than 50 people and one of them has been locked for a long time. It would be better if mobile toilets can be stationed here," he said.

A municipal staff member staying on the premises – the facility has rooms for the Group-D employees – said they have to fetch drinking water from the nearby fire station or buy bottles. He said that the local councillor, Rajni Sahni, who also has an office on the premises, is aware of the issue but has done nothing.

Fifty-year-old Mahender, another daily-wager, has been a regular at the shelter for over 12

years. He is satisfied with the facilities but rued that there was no arrangement for medicines, not even for common ailments such as fever and body ache.

Rakesh, another inmate, said that most of the people who come to the shelter are drunk and create a nuisance.

Security guard Virender Bahadur Singh confirmed that many people came drunk to the shelter but he was helpless to do anything about the menace. "At least two guards should be deployed for better management," he said, adding that the shelter recently received around 100 new mattresses and quilts after a gap of several years.

'Looking into issues'

MCG night shelters nodal officer Mahender Singh said he was recently made aware of the issue at the Sheetla Mata Mandir night shelter, and a room close to the temple's main gate was being renovated to be used as a night

shelter.

The officer added that the canteen at the Bhim Nagar facility had shifted to Khandsa Road and that the administration was in talks with private firms to arrange free food for the inmates under the Corporate Social Responsibility scheme.

He also promised to look into complaints of shortage of water, locked toilets and extra guards at the Bhim Nagar facility.

'Need more shelters'

"People, including children, sleeping under flyovers is a common sight at Subhash Chowk, near HUDA City Centre metro station, Civil Lines bus stand and Kanhai village," said Vijay Kumar, assistant project coordinator of CHETNA, an NGO.

He added that the combined capacity of the night shelters in the city should be 1,000, and more shelters should be built along Sohna Road in Badshahpur and the outskirts of the city.

Plenty of room at night shelters in Dwarka

One reason for the low occupancy is that individuals do not want to leave their families to come and stay at the facilities

ELISHA VERMANI
NEW DELHI

It has been the coldest December since 1997 with minimum temperature dropping to 2.4°C, and forecast show that a western disturbance is likely to bring rain in the first week of January. Under these conditions, those living in the city without a roof over their head have been forced to return to night shelters to stay warm, but in Dwarka, several night shelters are not packed to capacity.

In Sector 10, a porta cabin night shelter is home to 48-year-old Surender Chouhan, a rickshaw puller who works in the vicinity. "I am one of the oldest regular occupants of this shelter and I cannot complain about it. We get proper bedding and blankets here, there is hot water to drink and everything is clean," said Mr. Chouhan.

The cabin has a functional toilet but no bathing facility.

Mishri Chawdhary, caretaker of the shelter, said the cabin can accommodate 25-30 people.

But on any given night, there are never more than 25.

Of the four permanent shelters located in Dwarka, two are situated within 500 metres of each other in Sector 3. While one is for men, the other is for women only. The facilities can accommodate a maximum of 70 people each, although the actual number of occupants remains fairly low.

The shelters have working toilets, a geyser-equipped bathing facility, a television and sufficient bedding.

Yogendra Kumar, caretaker of the men's shelter, said: "We have 150 blankets and around 50 mattresses, but only 30-35 people come here every night."

One reason for the low occupancy is that the men do not

want to leave their families to come and stay here, he said.

Ranjeet Lal (35), who is unemployed, said: "I have been living here for a year and our caretakers treat us like family. They provide us with everything we need." Another regular visitor of the shelter, Mahesh Joshi (42), who is from Uttarakhand, said: "I come to stay here every winter to look for work and go back in March after the snow clears from my village."

"Alcoholics Anonymous holds a meeting here every evening and I do not allow the people here to smoke or drink. I lived here for two years, and our old caretaker and his supervisors felt I was honest and responsible so they gave me a job here," said Mr. Kumar.

Underutilised facility

The women's shelter had just one occupant. The caretaker, Nidhi Kumari (25), said: "There aren't more than 7-8 women on a usual night. A couple of women come during the day sometimes but that is all."

Despite having the same facilities as the men's shelter and an all female staff, the shelter has remained underutilised, said Ms. Kumari.

"Sometimes the rescue van brings a few women here but most of them can't leave their family on the road to come stay here," said Poonam Yadav (26), who works at the shelter as a security guard.

These shelters are run by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board in alliance with NGOs and charitable foundations. While ensuring proper infrastructure and facilities are the responsibility of the government, the NGOs function as management agencies that take care of daily maintenance.



Children at the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara night shelter. ■SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



Timings
DELHI

MONDAY, DEC. 30		
RISE	07:13	SET 17:34
RISE	10:19	SET 21:26
TUESDAY, DEC. 31		
RISE	07:14	SET 17:35
RISE	10:55	SET 22:19
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 01		
RISE	07:14	SET 17:36
RISE	11:28	SET 23:12

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	16	03
Safdarjung	16	03
Palam	13	03

Delhi Palam Today
14°C A cold morning with dense fog is likely. A comfortable day with mainly clear sky is expected.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
15°C Dense fog at many places is likely. A comfortable afternoon with partly cloudy sky is likely.

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IN BRIEF

3 killed as car runs over labourers in Haryana

CHANDIGARH
Three labourers were killed and as many injured in Haryana's Jind district on Sunday when they were run over by a car, police said. ■

Policemen named in Nehtaur death probe

Suleman was shot dead during CAA protests in U.P. town

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Nine days after Suleman died during a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Nehtaur town of Bijnor, the complaint of the family of the deceased against six policemen has been accepted and made part of the investigation.

Sanjeev Tyagi, Superintendent of Police, Bijnor, told *The Hindu* that no separate FIR had been lodged. "The complaint of the brother of Suleman has been accepted and made part of the investigation."

When asked if two contrasting versions could be part of the same FIR, Mr. Tyagi said it was routine and the investigation would reveal the truth.

Those who have been named include the then SHO Rajesh Solanki, Sub-Inspector

Ashish Tomar and Constable Mohit.

Afzal Ahmad Ansari, advocate and uncle of Suleman, confirmed that they were only given a signed copy of the complaint and were told that their FIR had been lodged. "It is against natural justice. The law allows us to lodge a separate FIR. It is up to the court to merge them or not," he said.

Separate FIR
Police sources and media reports had indicated that a separate FIR had been registered against six policemen for killing Suleman during the protest against CAA on December 20. Mr. Solanki was replaced by Satya Prakash Singh three days back.

Mr. Ansari alleged that Constable Mohit had earlier been involved in cases of 'encounters' and his role

was suspect. "The District Magistrate has also promised a magisterial inquiry to the family members but it seems the police were trying to save their own".

Brother's complaint

In the complaint, Shoab Malik, brother of Suleman, said Suleman was picked up by SHO Solanki, S-I Tomar, Constable Mohit, and three others from Agency Chowk of Nehtaur and was shot dead in the nearby Ghasmandi area.

The police had maintained that the S-I's pistol was snatched by a mob and when constable Mohit went to recover the weapon, he was fired at. When he fired in self-defence, Suleman got grievously injured. The ballistic report had revealed that Suleman was hit by a police bullet.

AMU students to continue peaceful stir

Daily dharna near Bab-e-Syed gate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ALIGARH

Students of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on Sunday said that they would continue holding peaceful anti-CAA agitation on the campus.

This was decided at a meeting of the general body of the students on Saturday evening and a "coordination committee" was formed to decide the future course of the ongoing stir against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

In a statement, a coordination committee spokesperson said that from Monday students would hold a dharna near Bab-e-Syed gate everyday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The AMU was one of the sites of protests against the amended citizenship law and alleged police action on students of Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia.

Meanwhile, the Aligarh



An anti-CAA protest at AMU. ■ FILE PHOTO

police has asked the university to take action against those protesters who are not students but are still active in the ongoing protest.

The letter said that these people, dubbed as "brains behind the December 15 protest which led to violence", should not be allowed entry into the campus.

The AMU is scheduled to reopen after the winter vacation on January 6.

Punjab Minister files police complaint

'Doctored' video of him goes viral

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa has filed a police complaint alleging a "doctored" video was being circulated on social media and other platforms that showed him making some remark about a Sikh Guru which he never made.

The Congress leader also claimed a malicious attempt has been made to tarnish his image and said he was a baptised Sikh and can never even think of showing disrespect to the Gurus.

Mr. Randhawa, who is the Jails Minister, filed the complaint with the Batala police.

Cyber cell probe

"We have received a complaint from the Minister. We have forwarded it for further investigations to the State Cyber Crime Cell," Batala SSP Opinderjit Singh Ghuman said on Sunday.

Mr. Randhawa told the media that he will also ask Punjab's Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta to thoroughly probe and identify the culprits behind the "mischievous act".

"It is a doctored video. I want the matter to be thoroughly investigated and I will also ask the DGP that the culprits who tampered the video and circulated it are identified and punished," he said.

'Voice edited'

"The voice has been edited in the video and some words are being attributed to me which I never spoke," said the Minister.

He asserted that he didn't equate Guru Sahib with anybody as was being claimed.

The Minister added it was an old video which was being circulated after tampering the voice.

Birla expresses concern over death of infants in Kota

Lok Sabha Speaker urges State govt. to act with sensitivity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday expressed concern over the death of infants at a government hospital in Rajasthan's Kota district and urged the State government to act with sensitivity.

Mr. Birla, representing the Kota parliamentary constituency, visited JK Lone Maternal and Child Hospital to take stock of the situation where 77 infants have reportedly died in the last 24 days. He also directed the officials to make adequate arrangement to ensure such incidents do not occur in the future.

"The untimely death of 77 infants in 24 days in the largest hospital in Kota-Bundi parliamentary constituency is a matter of serious concern. The State government



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

should act with sensitivity so that such incidents do not occur in future," Mr. Birla tweeted in Hindi.

"The untimely death of any infant due to lack of medical equipment and resources is worrying. According to the advice of doctors, the availability of necessary life-saving equipment and resources will be ensured in the next 15 days by public

support," he said in another tweet.

During the visit to the hospital, Mr. Birla termed the death of newborns tragic and painful while instructing officials to make adequate medical arrangements.

High-level meeting

On Saturday, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot had held a high-level review meeting on the infants' deaths at the hospital in Kota.

The Chief Minister instructed health department officials to take proper care of newborns in all hospitals in the State and do intensive monitoring.

Also, he gave directions to set up a high-level committee of expert doctors and subject experts in the case of deaths to submit a report at the earliest.

Passengers stranded



Stranded passengers sleep inside Prayagraj railway station on a cold morning on Sunday as heavy fog delayed trains. ■PTI

₹10 canteen for farmers in Haryana

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARNAL (HARYANA)

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday inaugurated a canteen here where farmers and labourers will get food for ₹10.

Mr. Khattar inaugurated the Atal Kisan Mazdoor canteen in Karnal's New Anaj Mandi.

"The canteen has been constructed by the Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board at a cost of ₹4 lakh. It is very pocket friendly as people will get a wholesome diet from the canteen at a price of ₹10. The food will include four rotis, pulses, vegetables and rice," an official statement said.

The Chief Minister hoped the scheme will be effective with nutritious food provided to labourers and farmers at an affordable rate.

Seven killed, five injured in Rajasthan accidents

Truck falls off bridge in Sirohi district

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

Seven persons were killed and five others injured on Sunday in two separate road accidents in Rajasthan's Sirohi and Bhilwara districts, the police said.

Three occupants of a truck, including a 62-year-old man and his grandson, were killed and another was injured when the vehicle careened off a bridge and landed on its side in Sirohi, they said.

'Driver dozed off'

The truck driver apparently dozed off and lost control of the vehicle. The truck carrying 'mung' beans was on way to Palampur when it fell off the Chandrawati Bridge, killing three occupants on the spot and injuring another, according to police.

The deceased were identified as Hukmaram Jat, his grandson Kuldeep (21) and driver Tejaram Jat (57), the police said.

In another accident that occurred in Bhilwara, four persons were killed and as many others injured when a mini-truck rammed into a container truck.

The accident occurred near Mandapia bypass on Chittorgarh-Jaipur national highway, the police said.

The deceased, all occupants of the mini-truck, were identified as Harilal Meena (23), Deepak Meena (17), Rakesh Meena (20) and Karan Meena (20). Of them, three died on the spot while the driver, Harilal Meena, succumbed to injuries at a hospital.

No respite from freezing cold

Hisar in Haryana, Bathinda in Punjab coldest in two States

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

There was no let up in the freezing cold sweeping Haryana and Punjab where Hisar was shivering at 0.2 degrees Celsius and Bathinda at 0.5 degrees.

Hisar in Haryana and Bathinda in Punjab were the coldest places as night temperatures dropped seven notches below normal.

Chandigarh at 2.9

As the cold wave further tightened its grip, Chandigarh, the common capital of the two States, recorded the season's coldest night of the season so far at 2.9 degrees Celsius, a Met official said here.

Among other places in the region which were under the grip of bone-chilling cold included Narnaul, Sirsa and Rohtak in Haryana,



Rush for winter clothes at a roadside stall in Amritsar on Sunday. ■AFP

where night temperatures settled at 1.5, 1.8 and 1.6 degrees Celsius, respectively. Adampur in Punjab reeled at a minimum temperature of 1 degree.

Karnal, Bhiwani and Ambala, too, were under the influence of piercing cold recording respective

minimums of 3.8, 3.3 and 3.7 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, the Met official said that fog also continued to engulf most places in Haryana and Punjab reducing visibility levels in the morning. The cold wave conditions are likely to continue for the next two days.

51 IAS officers get new posts in Haryana bureaucratic reshuffle

Vijay Vardhan will be the new Additional Chief Secretary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Haryana government has administered a major reshuffle with immediate effect by transferring and posting as many as fifty-one Indian Administrative Service officers.

Key among the IAS officers who were transferred include - Vijay Vardhan, who will be the new Haryana Additional Chief Secretary (Home).

V.S. Kundu has been given charge of Chief Executive Officer, Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority in addition to his current duty of Additional Chief Secretary (Printing and Stationery).

Anand Mohan Sharan has

been given additional charge of Social Justice and Empowerment Department as its Principal Secretary.

G. Anupama has been posted Secretary to Haryana Governor while Neerja Sekhar has been given charge of Principal Secretary of Animal Husbandry and Dairying Department.

Labour Commissioner

Vijay Singh Dahiya has been posted as Labour Commissioner while Amneet P. Kumar has been given charge of Director General of Secondary Education department, said the order issued by State government on Saturday night.

As per the order Amit Kumar Agarwal has been posed

as director of Urban Local Bodies while Ajit Balaji Joshi has been given charge of Excise and Taxation Commissioner.

Sanjay Joon has been posted as Commissioner of Faridabad division while Saket Kumar will be Director of Industries and Commerce. R.C. Bidhan has been posted as Director of Consolidation of Land Holdings and Land Records Department while Sumedha Kataria has been given charge of Commissioner of Panchkula Municipal Corporation.

S.S. Phulia has been posted as Transport Commissioner while J. Ganesan has been given additional charge of Secretary, Haryana Public Service Commission.

Red sand boa rescued in M.P., five nabbed

Rare non-poisonous snake is used for making medicines and cosmetics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAJGARH

A red sand boa snake, worth around ₹1.25 crore, was rescued from five persons, who were trying to sell it in Narsinghar town in Rajgarh district of Madhya Pradesh on Sunday, an official said.

The five accused, including three minors, have been taken into custody, the official said.

According to police, the rare non-poisonous snakes are used for making certain



Red sand boa. ■FILE PHOTO

medicines, cosmetics and in black magic, and are in huge demand in the international market.

They are also believed to bring good luck and wealth.

"Our informer overheard three persons speaking on a mobile and striking a deal to sell the snake at Narsinghar bus stand. He immediately alerted the police," Narsinghar police station Kailash Bhardwaj said.

"A police team rushed to the spot and recovered the snake from a plastic bag that two of the accused - Pawan Nagar and Shyam Gurjar - were carrying. Along with

the duo, three minors were also rounded up," he added.

As per the initial investigation, this snake can fetch ₹1.25 crore, Mr. Bhardwaj added.

'Bought from Sehore'

"The accused told us that they had bought the snake from Sehore district in Madhya Pradesh and came to Narsinghar to sell it," he said, adding that the accused have been charged under the Wildlife (Protection) Act.

Second FIR against Raveena, two others

'Hurt the religious sentiments of a community in a television show'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
FEROZEPUR (PUNJAB)

A second FIR has been registered within a week in Punjab against actor Raveena Tandon, director Farah Khan and comedian Bharti Singh for allegedly hurting the religious sentiments of a community in a TV show, police said on Sunday.

The celebrities were booked on Saturday evening under IPC section 295-A (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious

feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) after a Kamboj Nagar resident filed a complaint against them, Ferozepur SSP Vivek Sheel Soni said.

The complainant alleged that religious sentiments of the Christian community have been hurt.

On Wednesday, Amritsar police had booked Ms. Tandon, Ms. Khan and Ms. Singh on the same charge.

"We have registered a case against the three and investi-

gations are being held," Amritsar Rural SSP Vikram Jeet Duggal had said.

Protests in Punjab

There have been protests at some places in Punjab against the three by Christian outfits. They have also been booked in Beed city of Maharashtra in connection with the show aired on Christmas eve.

On Friday, Ms. Khan apologised. "I respect all religions, and it would never be

my intention to disrespect any. On behalf of the entire team, Raveena Tandon, Bharti Singh and myself, we do sincerely apologise," the filmmaker tweeted.

Ms. Tandon too tweeted, "I haven't said a word that can be interpreted as an insult to any religion. The three of us (Farah Khan, Bharti Singh and I) never intended to offend anyone, but in case we did, my most sincere apologies to those who were hurt."

AASU threatens to intensify stir

If PM Modi comes to inaugurate 'Khelo India' games, says students' union president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

Intensifying its agitation against the amended Citizenship Act, the All Assam Students' Union on Sunday said a "massive protest" will be organised if Prime Minister Narendra Modi comes to inaugurate the 'Khelo India' games on January 10 in the State capital.

Addressing a press conference, AASU leadership said the organisation is keeping a "close watch" on the upcoming T20 match between India and Sri Lanka on January 5 in Guwahati and the 'Khelo India' games scheduled from January 10 to 22, 2020.

"After the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was passed, the Prime Minister is likely to visit Assam for the first time. If he visits for the 'Khelo India', there will be a massive protest," AASU president Dipanka Kumar Nath said.

He said details will be shared in the coming days after getting confirmation of Mr. Modi's visit to Guwahati.



Members of indigenous organisations protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Dibrugarh, Assam. ■ FILE PHOTO

"Mr. Modi and the BJP are planning to destroy Assam and we will not sit idle. The struggle against the CAA will be a long one. We are fighting a legal battle in the Supreme Court and we have full faith in it. Democratic protests will go on simultaneously," Mr. Nath said.

Demanding immediate repeal of the contentious Citizenship Act, AASU chief adviser Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharya said the organisation will observe all the actions of the government to deviate peoples' attention

from the movement.

"There are two games happening in Guwahati in the coming days. The first one is the cricket match on January 5 and then 'Khelo India' We are keeping a close watch on both," he added.

When asked repeatedly what he meant by "close watch", Mr. Bhattacharya said, "We will inform in due course of time".

The student leader also asked Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to disclose the source of his statement that only a "negligible" num-

ber of illegal Hindu Bangladeshis will benefit by the CAA in the State.

On December 14, Mr. Sonowal had said that people benefitting by the amended Citizenship Act will be "very negligible" in number and the exact number of people will be disclosed at an appropriate time.

Different data

AASU general secretary Lurinjyoti Gogoi questioned Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for quoting different figures of illegal Hindu Bangladeshis residing in the State from the National Register of Citizens. "The government is giving misleading figures like four lakh, five lakh and 10 lakh. They are saying that they got this number from the NRC," he said.

The AASU leadership announced a series of agitational programmes along with 30 other indigenous groups across the State till January 17 and appealed to people to join them in large numbers.

Fresh war of words in Bengal over varsities

Governor, Minister take to Twitter over programme cancellations, protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

Snubbing Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's proposal to hold a discussion over the recent programme cancellations and protests at State-run universities, Bengal Minister Partha Chatterjee on Sunday took to Twitter to provide the State government's perspective on the incidents.

Mr. Dhankhar had on Saturday shared on the microblogging site a letter sent to him by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in response to his offer for talks over matters related to State-aided universities.

The CM, in the letter, said the subject "pertains to the Department of Education, I am forwarding the letter to Minister-in-Charge Education department Partha Chatterjee to discuss all issues with you at a convenient time".

Attaching an image of the official communication from the CMO, Mr. Dhankhar said that "efforts to ensure improvement in education scenario seem to be bearing

results".

Mr. Chatterjee, however, chose to tweet details of programme cancellations and the December 24 incident at Jadavpur University, when Mr. Dhankhar was stopped from entering the campus by non-teaching employees – triggering a fresh war of words between the two sides.

'Amused at gesture'

The Governor said he was "frankly amused" with the Education Minister's gesture. In his tweet, Mr. Chatterjee wrote, "As you (Dhankhar) have posted a letter of Hon'ble CM to you on a social media platform, I (am) hereby posting necessary details through the same mode for your kind information.."

The dates of formal programmes pertaining to universities "are fixed and chalked out and cancelled depending upon the circumstances by the Vice-Chancellors. The universities are autonomous bodies and the State government hardly interferes in the discharge of

their duties and responsibilities based on available rules 2019," he said in his missive to the Governor.

Referring to the December 24 incident at JU, when Mr. Dhankhar was barred from entering the campus and protests at the varsity the day before, the Minister said, "incidents happened as the students were agitating against the proposed implementation of National Register of Citizens, CAA and NPR by Centre".

"The students and people of the State reportedly want the withdrawal of the same and are dead against implementation of it in West Bengal," he said.

Mr. Chatterjee also clarified that he was "ready to work with the chancellor, provided his approach is cordial" and amicable, in the best interest of the Education department.

In his reply, Mr. Dhankhar said it was not the time for "tit for tat".

"Am frankly amused. Hon'ble CM's communication reflected far-sighted approach

and hence my step. Hon'ble Minister may check a critical communication of CM was on screen of all channels. No time for tit for tat. Hope we'll move ahead as indicated by CM and discuss issues across," he wrote on his Twitter handle.

JU fiasco

Quizzed by reporters, Mr. Chatterjee had on Saturday expressed his dismay over the fact that the Governor posted on social media an official letter sent by the CMO. "We (the Higher Education department) will first give a detailed reply to some of his questions on the State universities. If he still has more queries, we will take a call (about any further meeting) later on," he had said.

Mr. Dhankhar had said on December 24, after the JU fiasco, that the situation in the State was indicative of a "massive downgrade" in the education sector.

He told reporters at Raj Bhavan that he would like to meet the Chief Minister to discuss the matter.

Five arrested in RTI activist's murder case

One accused absconding, say police

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

Five persons allegedly involved in the murder of RTI activist Abhimanyu Panda at Baliguda in Odisha's Kandhamal district on December 10 have been arrested by the police.

Informing newsmen on Sunday, Kandhamal Superintendent of Police Prateek Singh said Panda was killed due to a dispute over a shop at Baliguda Jagannath temple. The arrested persons included prime accused Biswajit Patra and two hired contract killers from Ganjam district.

Two others, S. Balaji Achari and Rasa Bihari Das, who had acted as mediators between the prime accused and the killers, were also arrested.

Revolver, bullets seized

Police investigation has revealed that one more person was also involved in the murder, who is absconding. A hunt is on to nab him.

One country made revolver, three live bullets, six mobile phones and a bike were seized from possession

of accused.

According to the SP, the motive for the murder apparently was an ongoing dispute over a rented shop at Baliguda Jagannath temple. Prime accused Patra was running the shop.

The deceased was a key member of the temple's managing committee that wanted to evict Patra which irked him.

According to the police, Patra then decided to eliminate the activist. He allegedly took help of his associates Achari and Das to hire the two contract killers from Aska area of Ganjam district.

They were paid ₹1 lakh for the murder, said the SP.

Killed in front of house

On December 10, Panda was shot dead by two bike-borne persons in front of his house at Baliguda. Kandhamal police had formed five teams to track down the culprits.

Basing on eyewitness account of the shooters, the police had managed to nab the two hired killers, who later confessed to the crime and named the other accused.



Amaresh Naresh Samant and others arriving in Berhampur on Sunday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Man travels 700 km on bicycle to honour green activists

Protect environment, says Samant

STAFF REPORTER
BERHAMPUR

Amaresh Naresh Samant, an environmental activist from Odisha's Paradeep, travelled over 700 kilometres on bicycle to Berhampur to honour youth green activists of the city.

Mr. Samant, an engineer by profession, is well known for his dedication to protect the environment. He took nine days to reach Berhampur by cycle on Sunday morning. He was welcomed with a cycle rally that started from Engineering School square in Berhampur that culminated in a public meeting at the city stadium.

Activists of various organisations, Berhampur Divisional Forest Officer Am-lan Nayak, NCC cadets,

members of Boxing Odisha and students attended the function.

Mr. Samant praised Berhampur Sabuja Bahini for saving trees from metal intrusions in Odisha and Anchalika Vikas Parishad that has played a key role to make Ganjam first house sparrow-friendly district in the State by use of artificial nests.

"During my nine-day journey by cycle, I passed through several places where I motivated people to protect their surroundings through examples of youth activists from Berhampur," he said.

Mr. Nayak hoped that people like him will continue to motivate the new generation to save nature and end pollution.

Flare-up on Maharashtra-Karnataka border

Bus services halted on Kolhapur-Belagavi route; Shiv Sena activists burn Yediyurappa's effigy

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

The long-standing Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute over the status of Belagavi district witnessed a reigniting of tensions, compelling the police on Sunday to suspend bus services between Kolhapur (in western Maharashtra) and Belagavi (in Karnataka) as a precautionary measure.

Protests by the regional outfit Karnataka Navnirman Sena (KNS) in Belagavi and counter-protests by the Shiv Sena in Kolhapur and Sangli districts prompted the police to stop State Transport (ST) bus services from Kolhapur to Belagavi. The Karnataka police authorities took similar measures, causing bus services to come to a standstill along the Kolhapur-Belagavi route.

Retaliatory attacks

Earlier in the day, KNS activists defaced Marathi hoardings and billboards in Belagavi and adjoining areas. Sena activists, in retaliation, blackened Kannada hoardings and hotel billboards in Kolhapur city. A large crowd of Sena activists also burnt an effigy of Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa near the Kolhapur ST stand.

Meanwhile, Yuva Sena workers stormed into Apsara Theatre in Kolhapur city and halted the screening of *Avane Srimannarayana*, a popular Kannada film. They also issued a warning to theatre owners to desist from showing Kannada mo-



Stranded: An elderly man reads a notice put up at Kolhapur bus depot informing commuters about the suspension of services between Kolhapur and Belagavi on Sunday. •DEEPAK KUMBHAR

tion pictures. A number of demonstrations by Sena activists against the KNS were witnessed in Sangli district as well.

The trigger behind the soaring political temperatures on the border is a recent controversial statement by KNS chief Bhimashankar Patil, who allegedly said that leaders of the Belagavi-based Maharashtra Eklikiran Samiti (MES) "ought to be shot dead". Mr. Patil's remarks evoked strong reactions from the Shiv Sena, which has lent political support to the MES throughout its decades-long struggle.

The MES, which claims to represent the Marathi-speaking populace of Belagavi, has been agitating for the merger

Our protest is to send a strong message that the Sena stands firmly behind the Marathi-speaking populace in Karnataka

DHARIVASHEEL MANE
Shiv Sena MP from Hatkanangale

of the Marathi-speaking border areas with Maharashtra and staking a claim on Belagavi, which has a significant Marathi-speaking populace, as an integral part of Maharashtra.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has even referred to Belagavi and its nearby areas where people chiefly speak Marathi as 'Karnataka occupied Maharashtra',

drawing the ire of Karnataka politicians, including culture minister C.T. Ravi.

'Shameful statement'

Lashing out at Mr. Patil, Sena MP from Hatkanangale Dhairvasheel Mane, who led the protests in Kolhapur, said at a time when the border dispute is pending before the Supreme Court, "certain persons [Mr. Patil] are making shameful statements and escalating tensions on linguistic grounds".

Mr. Mane said, "They [the KNS] had the audacity to burn the effigy of our Chief Minister and party leader Uddhav Thackeray, who has shown uncommon restraint in dealing with this issue. Our protest today, in which a

number of MES leaders participated, is to send a strong message that the Sena stands firmly behind the Marathi-speaking populace in Karnataka. In the event that outfits like the KNS attempt to harm even a single hair on their heads, the Sena will storm into Karnataka and answer in kind."

'Need climate of security'
Mr. Mane said the Sena has so far safeguarded the rights of Kannadigas who have settled in Maharashtra and it is the duty of the Karnataka government to create a climate of security for Marathi-speaking people and condemn statements by outfits like the KNS.

Mr. Patil's "shooting dead" remark has stirred a hornet's nest with the KNS and the Sena, both regional and chauvinistic parties, attempting to outdo each other in both rhetoric and deed.

Mr. Thackeray had earlier this month appointed ministers Chhagan Bhujbal and Eknath Shinde as 'co-ordinators' to oversee his government's efforts to expedite the boundary dispute, which has been festering for more than 60 years.

While Belgaum (as Belagavi was known till recently) was formerly part of the Bombay State, it was merged with the Mysore State (later Karnataka) at the time of the reorganisation of States in 1956. The MES, which came into being in 1948, has been opposed to the merger and continues to do so.

State Cabinet to be expanded today

Ministers likely to represent different communities, regions

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

A month after taking oath as the Chief Minister, Uddhav Thackeray's Cabinet will be finally expanded on Monday and is likely to represent different communities and regions in the State. The swearing-in ceremony will be held at 12 p.m. on Monday at Vidhan Bhavan.

Sunday saw the NCP and the Congress camps go into a huddle to work out a final list of ministers. NCP sources said former deputy CM Ajit Pawar's name figures on the list. Earlier, putting an end to speculation, Shiv Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* had announced that the Cabinet expansion would take place on December 30.

The *Saamana* said both the Sena and the NCP would have 13 ministers each, including 10 Cabinet ministers

and three junior ministers. The Congress will have 10 ministers. However, on Sunday, it could not be confirmed if the three parties of the Maha Vikas Aghadi have stuck to the 13-13-10 formula.

On Sunday evening, after a meeting with senior Congress leaders in Delhi, State Congress chief and State minister Balasaheb Thorat told media persons, "Our list is almost finalised, we will give representation to all social elements." Mr. Thorat did not confirm the roles that would be given to former chief ministers Ashok Chavan and Prithviraj Chavan.

NCP sources said party chief Sharad Pawar held a meeting with senior party leaders on Sunday and eight names have been finalised for the post of Cabinet minister: Ajit Pawar, Dilip Walse-Patil, Hasan Mushreef, Na-

wab Malik, Jitendra Awhad, Dhananjay Munde, Rajendra Shingne, Anil Deshmukh. Mr. Pawar reportedly called each of these leaders personally to inform them of their role. The NCP is likely to make Aditi Tatkare, Sanjay Bansode and Datta Bharne junior ministers. Without giving an answer, Mr. Awhad put up posters in Thane thanking the NCP chief and called it a 'fruit of loyalty'.

From the Shiv Sena, former minister Deepak Kesarkar, MLC Anil Parab, MLAs Pratap Sarnaik and Abdul Sattar are likely to get a Cabinet berth. However, there is ambiguity about the prospects of former ministers Ramdas Kadam and Diwakar Raote. There is uncertainty over who will hold the reins of the home department. Sena's Eknath Shinde now holds the portfolio.

Sena-Amruta Fadnavis Twitter spat continues

Party deputy leader calls for conflict of interest inquiry

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

The war of words on Twitter between former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis's wife Amruta and Shiv Sena deputy leader Priyanka Chaturvedi continued on Sunday.

Ms. Fadnavis had claimed that the State government was shifting salary accounts of employees out of Axis Bank, where she is a senior executive, to target her and her husband. On Sunday, Ms. Chaturvedi said this was

an admission that Mr. Fadnavis had favoured the private bank, and called for a conflict of interest inquiry.

Ms. Fadnavis spoke to an English daily about the development. She said, "The accounts were bagged by Axis Bank much before I married Devendra... The government should think rationally." She called it an attack on their freedom of expression.

Sharing a link to the article, Ms. Fadnavis tweeted, "Having a bad leader was

not Maharashtra's fault but staying with one is. Wake up Maharashtra."

Responding to the article, Ms. Chaturvedi tweeted, "Surprised that she is calling it vendetta because if it were, she agrees that the former CM favoured moving accounts to Axis Bank as she was employed there. If decision to move accounts was business as usual with zilch involvement of her and former CM then where is the question of targeting?"

Cong. alleges drug use at Sunburn festival, Goa Police say no evidence

Sniffer dogs, three undercover ANC teams deployed at venue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

The Congress on Sunday claimed that drug overdose could be the reason for the death of two tourists at Sunburn Music Festival, and it indicated sale of narcotics at the venue.

The Goa Police, however, said no case of drug use or sale has been detected at the festival venue at Vagatore in North Goa district so far.

The opposition party demanded that the permission for the annual electronic dance music festival, which began on Friday and will end on Sunday, be revoked and an inquiry be conducted. Festival organisers were not available for comment.

Sai Prasad and Venkat, who had arrived from Andhra Pradesh, felt uneasy outside the venue of the festival on Friday while waiting for the gates to open. They were

declared dead at a hospital in Mapusa the same evening.

The police said the possibility of drug overdose cannot be ruled out, but are yet to get the autopsy reports.

A Congress delegation, including State Youth Congress leaders Varad Mardolkar, Amarnath Panjikar, Janardan Bhandari and Urfan Mulla, met Utkarsh Prasoan, Superintendent of Police (North), on Sunday, demanding that the permission given to the Sunburn organisers be revoked.

Talking to reporters, Mr. Mardolkar said "similar deaths due to drug overdose" had been reported at the festival in the past. He said, "Two deaths is a clear indication that drug-peddling takes place at the festival. Goa has already got the dubious distinction as a place of drugs. We can't allow the image of the State to

be tarnished further."

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Digamber Kamat, in a statement, demanded that Chief Minister Pramod Sawant take action before Goa is branded as a "drug destination".

Mr. Kamat said, "I have serious apprehensions about the alleged nexus between politicians, police and drug traders and peddlers in Goa. I have raised this in the past too." He said "drugs have reached the far remote areas of this tiny State" and Mr. Sawant should act "before the Bhasmusur [monster] of drugs turns Goa into ashes".

However, the Anti Narcotics Cell (ANC) of the Goa Police said no case of drug use has been found at the festival venue. Drug-sniffer dogs have been deployed at the venue along with three undercover teams of ANC personnel, the Goa Police said.

Confluence of traditions



In sync: Tribal people from different hamlets in Aarey colony perform a traditional dance as part of Aarey Mahotsav to celebrate World Biodiversity Day in Goregaon on Sunday. •VIJAY BATE

'Hydropower plants likely in Mahadayi basin'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

The Centre will explore the possibility of installing hydropower plants in Mahadayi basin of Goa region if feasible sites are identified, Union Power Minister R.K. Singh has said.

Goa is also looking into the possibility of installing hydropower plants at two of its prominent dams, according to State Power Minister Nilesh Cabral. Mr. Singh met Mr. Cabral at the Power Grid Corporation's facility at Colvale village.

After the meeting, Mr. Singh said if Goa identifies some sites for hydroelectricity projects in the Mahadayi basin, then the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) would look into its feasibility. "If you indicate some sites to us, I will ask the NHPC to investigate the sites, and if feasible, we will set up hydropower plants," he said.

NCP in 2019: Sharad Pawar leads unexpected comeback

The challenge for the NCP chief in the new year would be to ensure that the Maha Vikas Aghadi, the unlikely of coalitions, endures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

It's never over until it is over. This would be the takeaway from the year 2019 for the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). If anyone thought that a regional party with an aging patriarch and eroding base did not have much of a future in the face of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) juggernaut, the Lok Sabha polls proved them right, but the Maharashtra Assembly polls told a different story.

The NCP continued its alliance with the Congress for the Lok Sabha, but both the parties fared badly.

The Mr. Pawar-led party only retained its 2014 tally of five seats, four of which came from Maharashtra.

The Congress was reduced to a single seat in the State. As Assembly elections drew near, the NCP was beset by desertions. The party, made up mainly of leaders who rule over individual pocket-boroughs across the sugar-belt of western Maharashtra, saw

several of them jumping ship. Prominent among them was Satara MP Udayanraje Bhosale, a descendant of King Shivaji, who joined the ruling BJP.

"At that juncture it seemed it was a difficult task to retain even 41 seats won in 2014, our worst-ever performance," said an NCP leader, requesting anonymity. But an aggressive campaign by former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and BJP chief Amit Shah had an unintended effect, he said. "Fadnavis's comment that Pawar's brand of break-and-make parties was now over stoked the fire in the belly of our workers," he said.

Turning the tables

Weeks before the polls, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) named 78-year-old Mr. Pawar in a money-laundering case. The wily politician swiftly turned the tables on the BJP by announcing that he would visit the ED office in Mumbai on his own and offer full



Still going strong: NCP chief Sharad Pawar being greeted by party workers on his 79th birthday in Mumbai. •FILE PHOTO

cooperation in the probe. He dropped the plan at the last minute at the request of city police who feared a law and order disruption. But

for the ruling party, the damage was already done, as the NCP chief had garnered sympathy. "Mr. Pawar's decision to visit the

ED was a brilliant move. It charged up our rank and file," said the NCP leader.

As the campaign began, Mr. Shah and Mr. Fadnavis trained their guns at Mr. Pawar, realising that he was the de-facto leader of the opposition camp. Then came the defining moment of the campaign: Mr. Pawar delivering a fiery speech in Satara, where the Lok Sabha by-election was being held simultaneously, in pouring rain. Pictures of a soaked-to-the-bone NCP chief went viral. "His announcement of the ED visit and the speech in Satara reversed the tide in our favour," the NCP leader said. The party won 54 seats in the Assembly, 13 more than its 2014 tally, and its candidate, Mr. Pawar's old friend, Srinivasa Patil, defeated Mr. Bhosale.

The BJP-Sena combine crossed the majority mark comfortably. But the simmering tension in the saffron alliance boiled over with the Sena seeking the chief minister's post.

In the weeks that

followed the October 24 election results, the unthinkable unfolded in Maharashtra politics. The Sena burnt bridges with the BJP and joined hands with the NCP and Congress, ignoring niggles of ideological incompatibility.

During the tortuous alliance talks between the three parties, Mr. Pawar's nephew and the party's legislature wing leader Ajit Pawar made a dramatic move to join hands with the BJP and was sworn in as deputy chief minister on November 23. However, his uncle managed to keep the flock together, and the few NCP MLAs who were with Mr. Ajit Pawar returned one by one to the party.

Realising that he had no support, Mr. Ajit Pawar resigned and returned to the party fold, paving the way for the Sena-NCP-Congress combine to come to power. The challenge for the NCP chief in the new year would be to ensure that the Maha Vikas Aghadi, the unlikely of coalitions, endures.

Hundreds take part in anti-CAA march in Pune

Protesters shout slogans against PM Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE

Hundreds of people took out a march in Pune to protest the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens on Sunday (NRC). The protesters shouted slogans against the new law and held placards with messages such as "We reject Modi Made Holocaust", "We Reject CAA and NRC", "Stop dividing India" and "Boycott CAA and NRC". The march, organised by

various group, including some Left outfits and Muslim organisations, under the aegis of CAA and NRC Virodhi Maharally Nijojan Samiti, began at Golibar Maidan in Cantonment area and concluded at the divisional commissioner's office.

The protesters also shouted slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Heavy police bandobast was deployed to maintain law and order.



United stand: Residents of Pune take out a march against the Citizenship Amendment Act on Sunday. •JIGNESH MISTRY

IN BRIEF



Let's have a meaningful debate, says Venkaiah

HYDERABAD
Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday urged the people to have a 'meaningful and constructive discussion and not jump to conclusions with regard to the Citizens Amendment Act, the NRC and the National Population Register. "Dissent has to be expressed in a constructive and peaceful manner," he said at the birth centenary celebrations of the late Chief Minister of united Andhra Pradesh Dr. M. Chenna Reddy here on Sunday.

Nadda to lead rally in support of CAA

ANANTAPUR
BJP national president J.P. Nadda will lead a rally in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 at Kadapa on January 4 to create awareness among the people. At a press conference here on Sunday, party national secretary and Andhra Pradesh co-in-charge Sunil Deodhar said the BJP was getting overwhelming support for the rallies and marches it was conducting all over the country to counter the campaign by the Congress-led Opposition.

Swamy rubbishes charges against Jagan Reddy

TIRUPATI
BJP Member of Parliament Subramanian Swamy on Sunday gave a clean chit to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, rubbishing the spate of allegations over attempts to infuse Christianity into the world-famous Tirumala shrine. Dr. Swamy also termed 'mischievous' the campaign in some quarters on the faith of Mr. Jagan's uncle and Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) trust board Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy.

Pejawar seer passes away

Three-day mourning declared in Karnataka; thousands of devotees pay tributes

KARNATAKA BUREAU
UDUPI/BENGALURU

Vishweshwara Tirtha Swami, senior seer of Pejawar Mutt, known for his reformist steps trying to reconcile tradition with modernity and for taking an active lead in the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, passed away in Udupi on Sunday, following a brief illness. He was 88.

He was buried at Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha, a traditional gurukul he started and nurtured in Bengaluru, as per his wishes, with full State honours.

'Powerhouse of service'

Condolences poured in, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi calling him "a powerhouse of service and spirituality" and saying that "he continuously worked for a more just and compassionate society".

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, who declared a three-day mourning in Karnataka, said that with the seer's



Devotees paying their last respects to Pejawar Mutt seer Vishweshwara Tirtha Swami in Bengaluru on Sunday. ■PTI

death, the Hindu religion had lost a guide.

An icon of the Hindu right politics, he was a strong votary of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement and was present at the site when the Babri Mosque was demolished in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

Mr. Yediyurappa said he was sad that the seer couldn't see the Ram temple being built there.

Closely associated with several politicians, he was the spiritual guru of senior BJP leaders L.K. Advani and Uma Bharti.

A sombre atmosphere prevailed in the temple town of Udupi, where Vishweshwara Tirtha Swami led a record five "paryayas" of the Krishna Mutt/Temple, a practice of handing over responsibilities of worship and administration of the temple in turns

of two years each among the seers of the eight mutts of the Madhwa tradition. Starting from 1952-54, he led the temple till as recently as 2016-18.

Ordained at seven

Born in 1931 at Ramakunja, he was ordained as a monk in 1938, at the age of just over seven.

The seers of the Ashta Mutts conducted rites on the mortal remains of the swami and it was airlifted to Bengaluru. Thousands of devotees gathered in Udupi and Bengaluru to pay their last respects.

He was given full State honours and the Chief Minister collected the tricolour that covered him from Bengaluru Police Commissioner Bhasakar Rao, usually given to family members.

Vishwaprassanna Tirtha Swami is the new seer. He is the 35th seer in the lineage, or *guruparampara*, of the Mutt.

He balanced tradition and reform

The seer visited Dalit colonies, allowed Muslims to hold iftar near temple complex

GANESH PRABHU,
K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ
UDUPI/BENGALURU

Vishweshwara Tirtha Swami, the 88-year-old pontiff of the Pejawar Mutt who breathed his last on Sunday, will be remembered for his attempts to negotiate through centuries-old traditions and the demand for radical reform in the modern context. While many of them were controversial, he did not shy away from engaging with this fraught question constantly.

He visited Dalit colonies at a time when it was considered taboo. He attracted criticism from both tradi-

tionalists and progressives, who saw it as "tokenism". Noted writer U.R. Ananthamurthy had a running conversation with him throughout his life and once welcomed Vishweshwara Tirtha going to Dalit colonies.

Nuanced approach

His outreach to Dalits was both nuanced and complex. "While he seemed to have been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi on eradication of untouchability and reform of Hindu dharma, the outreach was also aimed at retaining Dalits in the Hindu fold, preventing conversions and

building a social base for Hindutva politics," said senior advocate and activist C.S. Dwarkanath.

On 'Made Snana' - the practice where devotees rolled on the plantain leaves containing leftovers after Brahmins had their lunch at Kukke Subrahmanya - the Pejawar seer came up what he considered a solution in the form of 'Ede Snana'.

In the alternative practice he proposed, devotees rolled on plantain leaves containing the "prasada" offered to the deity. This is being followed at the Subrahmanya Temple at

Muchlugodu under the jurisdiction of Pejawar Mutt. He had recently welcomed the Supreme Court order allowing women to enter Sabarimala Temple, as well.

He incurred the ire of Hindutva groups when he allowed a group of Muslims to break their fast in the dining hall in the outer periphery of Sri Krishna Mutt/temple complex followed by an Iftar, or "Souharda Upahara Koota" as he termed it, on June 24, 2017.

However, the seer stood his ground, stating that he held it to promote harmony among communities.



Capital woes: Women participating in a protest organised by Amaravati Parirakshana Samithi members at Benz Circle in Vijayawada on Sunday. ■V. RAJU

'Centre will not be quiet if A.P. govt. shifts capital'

BJP leader Sujana says State will plunge into financial crisis

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

The Joint Action Committee of the Amaravati Parirakshana Samithi on Sunday submitted a memorandum to BJP Rajya Sabha member Sujana Chowdary demanding that Amaravati be retained as the capital of Andhra Pradesh.

Mr. Chowdary said decentralisation of administration [with Visakhapatnam, Amaravati and Kurnool as executive, legislative and judicial capitals respectively] was against the law and that he would raise the issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At a press conference, he said the Centre would not keep quiet on the State government's plans to make Visakhapatnam the executive capital. "I am saying this after discussing with the Central government," he said.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had welcomed Amaravati as the capital while in the Opposition, but changed his stand soon after coming to power. None of the MLAs had opposed Amaravati then. The CM had not explained the rationale

New panel will study issue

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has constituted a 16-member high-power committee to examine the reports of the expert committee and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) on the issue of the State Capital. The government, in a GO issued on

Sunday, said the committee should give its recommendations within three weeks. The expert committee headed by former civil servant G.N. Rao, has already submitted its report. It favoured decentralisation of administration. The BCG group is expected to submit its report in the first week of January.

behind shifting the capital till date. As a result, the situation had become volatile.

The State would plunge into a financial crisis like Venezuela and Panama if the Capital was shifted. The government would have to pay a heavy compensation to the farmers and contractors who were executing works after availing bank loans.

JAC convener A. Siva Reddy said 50 committees had been formed in all 13 districts to demand that Amaravati be the sole capital. He said around 25,000 farmers in 29 villages had given up close to 33,000 acres for the capital.

Members of various walkers' clubs in the city took to the streets. Slogans such as "one State one Capital", "Save Amaravati" and "Save Andhra Pradesh" were raised by the protesters.

Former Krishna Zilla Parishad Chairperson Gadde Anuradha said the agitation would intensify unless the government withdrew the proposal, she said.

CPI(M) Polit Bureau member B.V. Raghavulu said it was wrong to presume that making Visakhapatnam the executive capital would lead to the development of the backward areas of north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

More naval personnel may be held for spying: A.P. DGP

'The sailors were honey-trapped online by hawala operator'

RAJULAPUDI SRINIVAS
VIJAYAWADA

The police, who arrested seven Navy sailors of Visakhapatnam, Karwar and Mumbai naval bases and a Mumbai-based hawala operator on charges of leaking secret information to Pakistan, are likely to arrest more Navy personnel across the country.

Under 'Operation Dolphin's Nose', sleuths of Andhra Pradesh Intelligence, Navy and the Central Intelligence wings busted the espionage racket on December 20, and arrested the sailors.

More under scanner

"More Navy personnel have been under scanner for the last one year. Our intelligence personnel are tracking the movements of the Indian Navy personnel, their contacts, transactions and

conversations with different persons," Andhra Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) D. Gautam Sawang said.

The hawala operator, who had links with Pakistani handlers, targeted the young Indian Navy officers and honey trapped them by using some women on various social media sites.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Sunday, the DGP said the State and the Central Intelligence agencies busted the racket before they leaked vital information to Pakistan.

"We arrested seven sailors and a few more are being questioned. More arrests are likely soon," Mr. Sawang said.

Sailors from Maharashtra, Alwar and Jodhpur of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Odisha are under scanner. They were taken into custody for allegedly having links

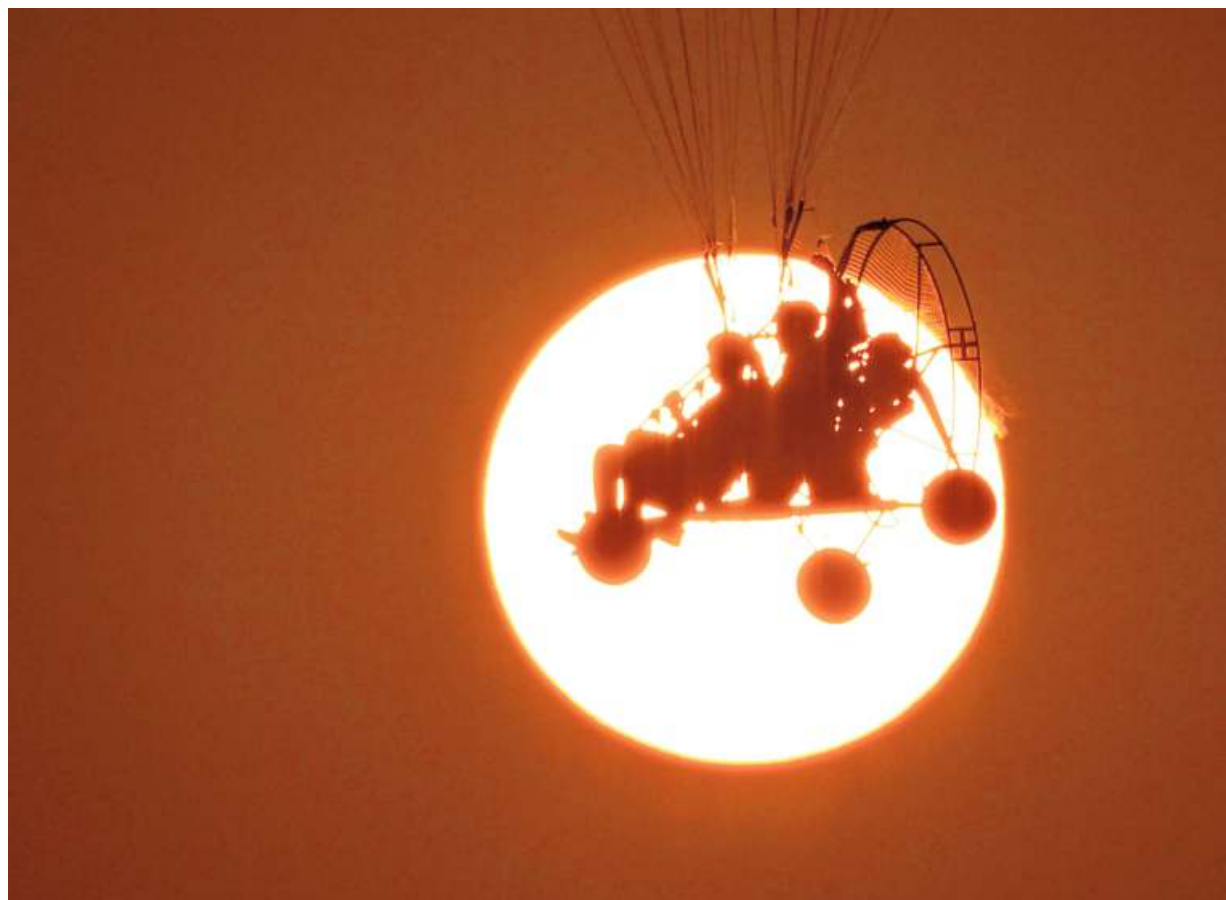
and acting as spies, the DGP said.

International racket

"We are also probing deep into the international racket on whether any other private persons, hawala operators or navy personnel from any academies, institutes or naval bases were involved in the espionage racket," Mr. Sawang said. He, however, refused to divulge details on the arrested sailors or those under the scanner.

"The young Indian Navy sailors were honey-trapped online by a woman. Intelligence sleuths are investigating whether the profiles were fake or genuine. The sailors were in touch with the woman and the hawala operator since 2018. But, we are confident that no secret information causing any harm to the nation has been leaked so far," the DGP said.

Sun screen



A tourist enjoying a paraglider ride during the Visakha Utsav on Beach Road in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. ■K.R. DEEPAK

Industrial Health Clinic to spread wings

N. RAVI KUMAR
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Industrial Health Clinic Ltd (TIHCL), a one-of-its-kind initiative of the State government to handhold micro and small manufacturing enterprises from slipping into sickness, is ready to extend services to units in other States.

Since its inception about 18 months ago as a fintech non-banking finance company, the TIHCL has been managing with just one-tenth of the originally envisaged ₹100 crore corpus.

The proposed foray, however, would be subject to the State government giving an assurance of no intrusion either in the model of funding, offered to the micro and small enterprises, or governance.

Another condition is that the Centre or the State government ought to take care of the administrative, legal and consulting expenses.

Music adds fuel to anti-citizenship Act protests

With fiery lyrics, two Kerala bands hope to spread awareness among people, especially youth

S.R. PRAVEEN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

From Billie Holiday's 1939 song *Strange Fruit*, a searing anthem against racism to Rage Against the Machine's 2000 song *Testify* against the American government's policies, protest songs have fuelled movements on the ground and vice versa.

Poet-comedian Varun Grover's *Kaagaz Nahi Dikhayenge* (the NRC papers, we won't show) and rapper Madara's *Tukde tukde gang* have gone viral nationwide during the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA)/ National Register of Citizens (NRC) protests. Kerala too has witnessed



Songs of resistance: The 'Street Academics' at a show.

a burst of creative anger in multiple genres this week.

Metal band 'The Down Troddence' (TDT) from Kannur has released *Fight*.

React. Be A Part., which the band says is an exhortation to fellow Indians, especially the youth, to unite and protect the spirit of our

Constitution. Their lyrics cover everything from the economic crisis to the shutdown in Kashmir.

"We have been going to all the anti-CAA protests in Bengaluru, where we are based now. Most of our discussions in recent days have been about this, as the whole idea of a law which makes religion a criterion for citizenship, was disturbing for us. Being part of the biggest protest movement witnessed in the country after Emergency, we had to write this song, with a wish that at least a few who have not realised the danger of this law will try to study it," says Munz,

TDT's vocalist.

Kochi-based hip hop band 'Street Academics' is more direct in their protest song *Hara Hara*, with the chorus chant of 'Boycott CAA, Boycott NRC'. Like TDT's music video, theirs also is filled with visuals of the anti-CAA protests from Delhi and elsewhere. "We sat together and completed the entire song and the video in three days. We knew we had to get it out fast, since the intention is to make people aware. It is alarming that there are still many who call themselves neutral, thinking that this is harmless," says Haris Saleem, who conceived the song.

Governor was not invited to speak on CAA: Irfan Habib

STAFF REPORTER
KANNUR

Historian Irfan Habib said the Indian History Congress (IHC) had not invited Governor Arif Mohammad Khan to Saturday's event, which saw protests by delegates. It was the host institution, Kannur University, which invited him and other political leaders.

Mr. Habib was responding to the happenings that unfolded during the inauguration of the 80th session of the IHC at Kannur University on Saturday, when delegates and students and raised slogans against the Governor, alleging that his address was provocative. Mr. Habib, who was on the dais, had also



Prof. Irfan Habib

joined the protest. The Governor left the venue following the protest.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Habib said the delegates were provoked when the Governor started to speak about the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and de-

nounced Muslims. "The Governor was not invited to speak on the CAA. The IHC has no time to waste," he said.

The historian pointed out that the Governor was going into things that were no concern to the IHC. He was asked to address the IHC and not a political audience.

To a question whether there was a violation of the Governor's protocol, Mr. Habib said the protocol did not apply to the IHC which had its own constitution.

Mr. Habib pointed out that in the past the President of India, Vice President and other dignitaries had attended the congress without any protocol.

IN BRIEF



Mulayam Singh discharged from hospital

MUMBAI
Samajwadi Party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav was discharged from a hospital in Mumbai on Sunday. The 80-year-old leader had complained of abdominal pain three days back, a close aide of his said. PTI

Students complain against drunk teachers

AURANGABAD
Students of a zilla parishad school in Aurangabad have complained that their teachers were drunk during a recent excursion and misbehaved with them, following which an inquiry was instituted. The students left for a trip to the Konkarn region on December 21 and the alleged incidents happened on Christmas, said an official. PTI

IED detected along LoC in J&K's Rajouri

JAMMU
A major terror strike was averted on Sunday with the timely detection of a powerful Improvised Explosive Device (IED) along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said. He said the IED was found planted in Keri sector by an Army patrol team, which immediately cordoned off the area. PTI

Portal for swift grievance resolution likely

NEW DELHI
The Labour Ministry has chalked out a plan to launch a portal 'Santush' next month for speedy redressal of worker as well as employer grievances and ensuring implementation of labour laws at the grassroot level, a source said. Initially, it would monitor all services provided by retirement fund body EPFO and health insurance and services provider ESIC. Later, the portal would cover other wings of the Ministry as well. PTI

3 years on, a mere 30% of Poshan Abhiyaan funds used

Barring three States, none of the governments used even half of the sum

JAGRITI CHANDRA
SUMANT SEN
NEW DELHI

The State governments and the Union Territories utilised a mere 30% of the funds released under the Poshan Abhiyaan, or the National Nutrition Mission, since it was launched in 2017.

Barring Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar, none of the governments used even half of the sum granted in the past three years, according to an analysis of the data shared in Parliament.

The Poshan Abhiyaan, the Centre's flagship programme, is aimed at improving nutritional outcomes among pregnant women, lactating mothers and chil-

dren by reducing the level of stunting, underweight, anaemia and low birth weight by 2022. It is meant to benefit more than 10 crore people and was launched after a Cabinet decision on December 1, 2017, with a total budget of ₹9,046.17 crore for three years, 50% of which is through budgetary support, which is further divided into 60:40 between the Centre and the States, 90:10 for the north-eastern region and the Himalayan States and 100% for the Union Territories without legislature.

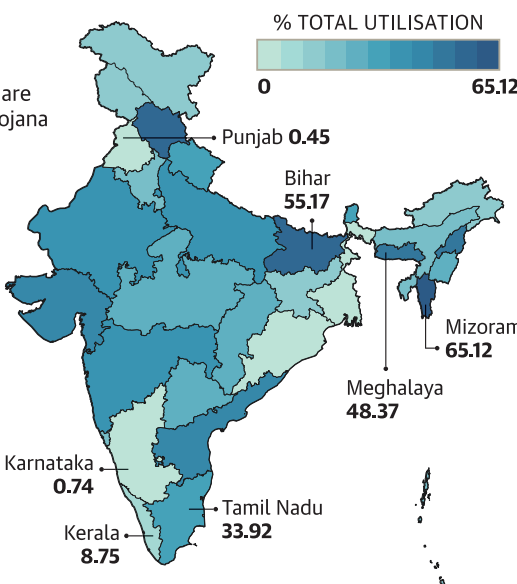
A grim picture

The remaining 50% is from the World Bank or other multilateral development banks. As a result, the Centre's total

Long road to health

Between 2018 and October 31, 2019, Mizoram has utilised the maximum share of funds released under the Poshan Yojana while Punjab has utilised the least

- The average utilisation in the country is 29.97%
- 32 States and UTs have utilised less than half of the funds released between 2017 and October 21, 2019
- The three States which received the most funds between 2017 and October 31, 2019, are Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar



share will be ₹2,849.54 crore. With the three-year period drawing to a close, an analysis of the funds utilised

paints a grim picture. According to the information given by Minister for Women and Child Develop-

ment Smriti Irani in the recent session of Parliament, a total of ₹4,283 crore was disbursed by the Centre to diffe-

rent States and Union Territories. Of this, ₹1,283.89 crore, or only 29.97% of the funds granted, were utilised until October 31, 2019. Figures were not available for 2017-2018 as the scheme was launched at the fag end of the fiscal.

Mizoram on top

The five best performers were Mizoram (65.12%), Lakshadweep (61.08%), Bihar (55.17%), Himachal Pradesh (53.29%) and Meghalaya (48.37%). The worst five performers were Punjab (0.45%), Karnataka (0.74%), Kerala (8.75%), Jharkhand (13.94%) and Assam (23.01%). During 2019-20, funds were released for 19 States, though 12 of them had used less than a third of the funds released in the previous two years.

"The programme was conceptualised as one to be implemented in phases. It is, thus, expected that utilisation will increase over years. A number of activities had a slow start but are now picking up. These include the Integrated Child Development Services-Common Application Software meant to monitor anganwadis... However, given the stiff targets, translating the activities into outcomes will be critical," says Avani Kapur, Fellow of the Centre for Policy Research and Director at the Accountability Initiative. The CNNS, released by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in October, showed that 35% of children under the age of 5 are stunted and in this age group, 17% are wasted (low weight for height) and 33% underweight (low weight for age).

More work to do: Bachchan

Veteran actor presented with Dada Saheb Phalke Award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Dada Saheb Phalke Award recipient and megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Sunday said he was looking forward to doing more work.

The 77-year-old actor, who was presented the award by President Ram Nath Kovind here at Rashtrapati Bhawan in a special ceremony, quipped that initially when he was announced as the 2018 recipient, he wondered if it was an "indication" for him to hang up his boots.

"When this award was announced, a doubt arose in my mind: if this is an indication for me to sit at home and relax after working for so many years? There is some more work I have to finish and certain possibilities are coming up where I may get a chance to do some work. I just wanted some



In conversation: Union Minister Prakash Javadekar, left, with Jaya and Abhishek Bachchan. ■ ANI

clarification on this," Mr. Bachchan said on a lighter note.

The Bollywood veteran thanked the government, the I&B Ministry and the jury members of the National Film Awards for naming him the Dada Saheb Phalke Award recipient.

"God has been kind, there have been blessings of my parents... but I'm most indebted to the love and con-

stant encouragement by the Indian audience. That's the reason I'm standing here," he added.

Mr. Bachchan was supposed to receive the honour at the National Film Awards ceremony last Monday, but was unable to attend the event due to ill health. He was accompanied by his wife and veteran actor-MP Jaya Bachchan and son and actor Abhishek.

CRPF jawans will get 100 days' leave: Shah

'Their families will get health cards'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the government would take care of the families of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel while they take care of the borders, adding that electronic health cards for their kin and at least 100 days off a year for the forces would be implemented by August-September 2020.

Speaking at the foundation laying ceremony of the CRPF's new headquarters in Delhi, Mr. Shah said the force had played a vital role in rooting out terrorism from Punjab and Tripura and in restoring peace in the States.

He said the CRPF jawans were always at the forefront, whether it was tackling Naxals or riots or providing security to Amarnath Yatra

pilgrims or Parliament House.

Medical facilities

He said various welfare schemes for paramilitary forces would be finalised by August-September 2020.

The Narendra Modi government has also decided to enhance housing satisfaction for jawans and officials of the central armed police forces, and steps will be taken in the upcoming Budget to allocate funds for this subject, said Mr. Shah.

The new headquarters of the force would be built at a cost of ₹280 crore by the Central Public Works Department.

The building will have a control and command system with modern training modules for the 3.5 lakh-strong CRPF force. (With PTI inputs)

Sasikala prison 'letter' ground for I-T raids

It was allegedly addressed to a relative

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

The Income Tax Department has based its claim of V.K. Sasikala, a close aide of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, having purchased several properties using ₹1,674.50 crore in demonetised notes, not just on documents and statements of witnesses, but also on a 'letter' purportedly written by her.

According to the I-T sleuths, a search at the residence of Vivek Jayaraman, son of Sasikala's sister-in-law Ilavarasi, as part of a larger raid in November 2017, led to the recovery of a loose sheet. Penned in Tamil, the sheet supposedly contained details of the approximate amount paid towards the acquisition of various assets using the illegal tender in 2016.

The Centre had demonetised the old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes on November 8, 2016 but had permitted the holders of such currency notes to deposit them into their bank accounts before December 30, 2016. This window was reportedly used by many businesspeople to sell their high-value properties at attractive prices and deposit the money by faking their business transactions.

When the I-T officials confronted Mr. Jayaraman with the loose sheet, he was said



V.K. Sasikala

to have told them that it was inside a sealed cover, which an anonymous person had handed over to the security guard at his residence about two months ago.

'No knowledge'

Asked to name the security guard who gave the cover to him, Mr. Jayaraman had said: "Two security persons are working in my residence (in Chennai). I don't exactly remember who gave it to me," adding that he does not remember the date and day on which it was handed over to him.

The letter was suspected to have been written from the Parappana Agrahara central prison in Bengaluru, where she had been lodged since February 2017 after being convicted in a disproportionate assets case.

In his statement to the I-T department, Sasikala's legal adviser S. Senthil confirmed her handwriting in the letter.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 16.30 HRS)
Forecast for Monday: Cold day conditions and fog likely in many pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and west Madhya Pradesh. Dense fog likely over some pockets in Assam, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...	25.0	11.0	Kozhikode	...	34.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	...	25.0	14.0	Kurnool	...	30.0	20.0
Aizawl	...	17.0	5.0	Lucknow	...	34.0	6.0
Allahabad	...	14.0	7.0	Madurai	...	31.0	23.0
Bengaluru	...	29.0	17.0	Mangaluru	...	34.0	23.0
Bhopal	...	23.0	7.0	Mumbai	...	32.0	22.0
Bhubaneswar	...	26.0	11.0	Mysuru	...	30.0	17.0
Chandigarh	...	11.0	3.0	New Delhi	...	16.0	3.0
Chennai	...	31.0	22.0	Patna	...	16.0	7.0
Coimbatore	...	30.0	20.0	Port Blair	...	30.0	24.0
Dehradun	...	20.0	4.0	Puducherry	...	30.0	20.0
Gangtok	...	14.0	5.0	Pune	...	29.0	15.0
Goa	...	34.0	24.0	Raipur	...	24.0	10.0
Guwahati	...	24.0	8.0	Ranchi	...	21.0	6.0
Hubballi	...	29.0	20.0	Shillong	...	15.0	3.0
Hyderabad	...	27.0	15.0	Shimla	...	14.0	3.0
Imphal	...	21.0	3.0	Srinagar	...	9.0	-6.0
Jaipur	...	20.0	2.0	Thiruvananthapuram	...	33.0	23.0
Kochi	...	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	...	30.0	21.0
Kohima	...	15.0	3.0	Vijayawada	...	30.0	20.0
Kolkata	...	22.0	11.0	Visakhapatnam	...	27.0	20.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)
Pollutants in the air you are breathing
CITIES: SO₂, NO₂, CO, PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀, AQI, CODE
Ahmedabad: 57, 53, 36, 76, 77
Bengaluru: 8, 37, 45
Chennai: 16, 41, 57, 152
Delhi: 17, 61, 94, 476, 451
Hyderabad: 24, 43, 47, 239
Kolkata: 20, 75, 29, 292, 194
Lucknow: 41, 24, 29, 396
Mumbai: 13, 44, 47, 190, 159
Pune: 81, 32, 81, 142, 112
Visakhapatnam: ...
In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 456 indicating a severe level of pollution. In contrast, Chikkaballapur, Karnataka recorded a moderate AQI score of 57.

Navy plans 24 submarines to strengthen fleet

18 conventional and 6 nuclear attack submarines are on the cards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

To strengthen its underwater fleet, the Navy plans to build 24 submarines, including six nuclear attack submarines, a parliamentary panel was told.

The Navy also told the panel that Medium Refit Life Certification (MRLC) of submarine Sindhuraj was held up since the Russian side had not been able to submit bank guarantees and the integrity pact due to sanctions imposed by the U.S.

In its report tabled this month, the Navy said that there are presently 15 conventional submarines and

two nuclear submarines in its fleet. The Navy has two nuclear submarines INS Arihant and INS Chakra, with the latter being leased from Russia.

Over 25 years old

A majority of the conventional submarines are over 25 years old. Thirteen submarines age between 17 and 32 years, it said.

"Eighteen [conventional] + six SSN [nuclear attack submarines] are planned..." it stated.

The Indian Ocean Region, the area of operations of the Navy, has witnessed rising activities of the Chinese Na-

vy. On its part, the Indian Navy has been revamping its infrastructure, including procuring new ships.

Due to the delay in the submarine construction projects, including the Six Project 75 submarines at Mazgaon Docks, Mumbai, the Defence Ministry has approved Medium Refit cum Life Certification or MRLC of six older submarines, the report stated.

With regards to the MRLC of the first submarine, work has already commenced in Russia on July 16 and is on schedule.

"Contract conclusion for MRLC of second submarine,

Sindhuraj, is held up since the Russian side has not been able to submit requisite bank guarantees and integrity pact as a result of the sanctions imposed by the U.S. government on them," it said.

The U.S. has imposed sanctions on Moscow citing several reasons ranging from annexation of the Crimea region of Ukraine to Russia with the recent one being the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. "The Russian side indicated L&T as their preferred partner for undertaking MRLC of the third Submarine Sindhuratna in India," the Navy added.

Canine bravehearts keep vigil on LoC

Rain or shine, 'man's most loyal friend' is always there, says Lt. Gen. Dhillon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

Marching slowly along with his buddy on a thick sheet of snow in North Kashmir, 'Buzo', a double-coat German Shepherd, gets a hero's welcome after successfully pushing back infiltrators from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) recently.

"Buzo", a silent sentinel of the Army, is among the more than 150 expert dogs with the military that maintain a tight vigil along the Line of Control (LoC) as well as in the hinterland.

Special skills

The dogs are specialised in three wings - assault (who attack the enemy), tracker (who track movements of the enemy) and explosive detection (who sniff explosives).

The canines posted along the LoC in the heights of North Kashmir are generally 'double-coat German Shepherds' which are best suit-



Best friends: Army personnel with their dog 'Buzo' returning to the base camp in North Kashmir along the LoC, on December 23, 2019. ■ PTI

ed for the climate, while Labrador are used in the hinterland.

Part of family

"Man's most loyal friend is always there with the soldiers during rain, snow or any weather... they go for all operations with the troops like patrolling and ambush and are especially there during emergencies like avalanche rescue," said Lt. Gen.

Kanwal Jeet Singh Dhillon.

Other Army officials recalled the work of 'Roma', a tracker dog, who alerted her companions and got a temporary camp evacuated earlier this year. An avalanche damaged the field within a few hours.

Earlier this year, 'Meena', a Labrador, had alerted the troops about a possible Improvised Explosive Device, planted on the national high-

way. The warning from the specialised 'explosive detection' dog helped defuse 25 kg of IEDs planted on the highway to target an Army patrol, preventing a Pulwama-like situation.

Another German Shepherd named "Devil", who has been trained as an assault dog, keeps "anti-national" elements on their heels. "He does not spare any of his enemies," says his handler.



Arms and the man

General Rawat crossed the lines of military propriety in making political comments

If a diplomat should think twice before saying nothing, an army general should not think of saying anything at all. The Chief of Army Staff, General Bipin Rawat, should have known better than to offer his views on political controversies and agitations of the day. In making thinly veiled comments on the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, the General crossed the line of military propriety. The egregious remarks on student protests and leadership of agitations constitute a serious error in judgment. If the task of a leader is to lead by example, and in the 'right direction', as he himself put it, then Gen. Rawat, who heads nearly fifteen lakh men in uniform, sent out all the wrong signals. The Army Chief's remarks could have been discounted as an unfortunate slip of the tongue or a one-off instance, if it were not for the frequency with which he weighed in on matters he ought to have been extremely circumspect about, in public at least. Berating students from a seminar podium is bad enough but last year, Gen. Rawat felt compelled to point out, at yet another seminar, that the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) – led by Badrudin Ajmal – had grown much faster than the BJP in Assam. "Finally, what will be the state of Assam, we have to take a call," he had said, throwing in the politically incorrect word "lebensraum" into the mix for good measure, while referring to migration in the region. On matters such as education in Kashmir too, the General's unsolicited views have stirred controversies.

It is possible to argue that since the Army is so heavily and continually deployed in these areas, the north east and Kashmir, where the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act operates, the Army Chief can make comments on other aspects of governance and politics as well. The argument that the Army has a political voice in these States will not travel far, though. Among other things, it reflects the failure of the political class to keep the Army confined to duties that they are meant to carry out. If what Gen. Rawat said was deplorable, what V.K. Singh, the Minister of State for Road Transport, spoke in his support was most unfortunate. Especially since he himself was the Army Chief not so long ago. It is likely to encourage soldiers in the making and those in uniform to move in wrong directions. But it is also notable that not many others have flocked to Gen. Rawat's defence. Allowing chiefs of the three services to make political statements undermines the civil leadership in the long run. It is to be hoped the government makes the lines clear to them so that such incidents do not recur.

Governance Index

Marking States on different parameters can incentivise performance

The nation-wide comparative study of States on governance carried out by the Government of India, as seen in the Good Governance Index (GGI), is a welcome exercise to incentivise States to competitively deliver on public services to the citizens. This is not the first time that benchmarking of States has been carried out. Different agencies including NITI Aayog, the government's policy think-tank, are evaluating the States on different parameters. The findings of the GGI's inaugural edition are significant in many respects. Although Tamil Nadu has always had the reputation of being a better-run State, it is only now that it is ranked first in any study of this kind. Its strength has been the ability to ensure stable and smooth delivery of services without much ado. But it is not the only southern State to have put up an impressive performance. Three of its neighbours are among the top 10 of the big 18 States, one of the three groups formed for the study with the north-east and hill States and Union Territories being the other two. Of course, traditionally, the south has been ahead of others in several parameters of development. What is more significant about the GGI is that the dubiously-labelled "BIMARU" States are seeking to catch up with others in development. Of the nine sectors, Rajasthan, a "BIMARU" State, has finished within the top 10 in five sectors, Madhya Pradesh in four and Uttar Pradesh in three. In agriculture and allied sectors, almost all the "BIMARU" States are within the top 10 category and in human resources development, U.P. and Bihar figure. In the composite ranking, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are ranked fourth and ninth, respectively. The key message is that these northern States can catch up with others in due course of time, if the political leadership shows the will to overcome historical obstacles and stays focused on development.

Any index of this nature is bound to have some shortcomings, at least in the first round, a feature that the framers of the GGI have acknowledged. Some indicators – farmers' income, prevalence of micro irrigation or water conservation systems and inflow of industrial investment – have been left out. The indicator, "ease of doing business", has been given disproportionate weight in the sector of commerce and industries, to the virtual exclusion of growth rate of major and micro, small and medium enterprises. Moreover, there will always be an unending debate over which indicators – process-based or outcome-based – should get more importance in the design of such a study. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, what is noteworthy is that the Centre has made an attempt to address the problem of the absence of a credible and uniform index for an objective evaluation of the States and Union Territories. It goes without saying that the GGI requires fine-tuning and improvement. But that does not take away the inherent strength of the work that has been accomplished, keeping in mind India's size and complexity.

A dangerous new low in state-sponsored hate

In Uttar Pradesh, police bias and the scale of violence against the minorities are plumbing new depths



HARSH MANDER

Uttar Pradesh is in the throes of what is fast becoming a gravely culpable crime against humanity. It may not be an exaggeration to say that the Chief Minister has declared war on the minority communities of his State, inciting and encouraging his police forces to unleash upon them an unlawful and brutal reign of terror.

It is not as though police bias and violence against the minorities is unusual in communal violence. On the contrary, as I have often maintained, communal violence cannot sustain for more than a few hours unless it is actively encouraged by the state and the police. But it accomplishes this, most of all, by culpable inaction; by deliberately standing by as mobs attack minorities. Often the police inflict grievous hurt on a disproportionately large number of minorities, in firing while dispersing mobs.

But what we are witnessing in Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's Uttar Pradesh is the police force itself becoming the riotous lynch mob. I have handled, as district officer, the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom and the violence resulting from the movement to demolish the Babri Masjid. Since I left the civil service, I worked closely with the survivors of the Gujarat and Muzaffarnagar (U.P.) carnages, and the earlier communal massacres of Nellie (Assam) and Bha-

galpur (Bihar). What is unfolding in U.P. is on a scale and with a methodological deliberateness which I have not witnessed so far outside Kashmir and the North-East – touching a highly dangerous new low.

Devastation in minutes

I walk through many Muslim homes in U.P., my eyes clouding, my heart sinking in shame, witness to their ruin after a rampage of hate by men in uniform. Cars and scooters are overturned and burned, television screens and washing machines smashed, cash and jewellery looted, crockery, even toys shattered, a lifetime of a family's belongings devastated in minutes, the family inconsolable. I have borne painful witness to these scenes too many times, in 1984, 2002, 2013. The difference in U.P. is that the marauding mob which mercilessly wrecked home after home of its Muslim residents was police personnel in uniform.

The accounts of the families were chillingly similar. Homes of relatively wealthy families were typically selected for the police carnage; probably led there by police informers. Hordes of policepersons would descend on the house, sometimes 40 or even 60 in number. Some included civilians, others did not. They banged and broke down doors. They beat with their batons old people, women, even children, if they tried to block their way, pleading for mercy. They shouted the most vulgar slurs. A frequent taunt was: Here, take the Azadi you ask for.

It is with the same communal war cries that armed policepersons attacked students in Aligarh Muslim University, vandalised mosques, raided a madrasa in



Muzaffarnagar, and set fire to shops and businesses owned by Muslim persons.

Thread from the CAA

Many households reported that policepersons said their houses were now "ours", because the law will ensure that they leave for Pakistan. It was evident that the policepersons commonly believed that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, or CAA, 2019, would complete what the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh regards to be the "unfinished tasks" of Partition – namely forcing Indian Muslims to exit to Pakistan. A senior police official in Meerut is caught on camera asking Muslims to go to Pakistan, and questioning their loyalty to India.

Women and children showed us their baton wounds. Even the very old were not spared. Teenaged boys were among those rounded up by the police and held illegally for days. Government hospitals were unwilling to treat them if they reported that the injuries were inflicted on them by policepersons.

As in most corners of the country, people spilled onto the streets to protest the CAA. It is only in U.P. and coastal Karnataka that these protests have turned violent. At the time of writing, nearly 20 peo-

ple have died in these protests in U.P. There are reports that in some places, protesters turned violent, although they claim that the rage of the rioters was spurred by police attitude and action.

But the violence by the police against the rioters is entirely disproportionate, without following the prescribed protocol of warning, and gradual escalation of violence. Instead, videos show police shooting above the waist, often in hot pursuit through narrow lanes where there are no protests or crowds.

Most of those who bear the brunt of the attacks are very poor working-class men, whose families insist had nothing to do even with peaceful protests.

Deep scars

The police registers literally thousands of "unnamed" police complaints in several cities with high Muslim populations. They use this to detain Muslim people at will, and as a weapon to silence anyone who may complain or testify against the police. People are scared to speak to anyone holding a camera, and if they do, they cover their faces. There is an intense sense of terror among the entire Muslim population in urban U.P., the men dreading being charged with grave crimes; the women of attacks to their homes. Large parts of Muslim settlements have emptied out.

Through all of this, there is call for revenge, from the highest political levels, followed by even more brutal police raids and assaults. Muslim people have received notices to pay high damages for alleged destruction of public property (which includes even police batons broken while beating peo-

ple) – without any judicial finding, as required by law, to prove their responsibility for destroying the properties.

Disturbing complicity

And as news begins filtering in of the outrage of police rampaging in U.P., the unrepentant Chief Minister issues a triumphalist message of self-congratulation from his official Twitter account: "Every rioter is shocked. Every demonstrator is stunned. Everyone has been silenced after seeing Yogi Adityanath government's strict actions."

What U.P. is witnessing is the utter debasement of high public office. Senior civil servants, of the police and magistracy, have most shamefully abdicated their constitutional duties in service to a war of hate launched by the Chief Minister. The war of hate against the minorities in U.P. has shades of what the Kashmiri people have endured for three decades, with security forces raiding and rampaging their homes and beating and rounding up innocents. The Chief Minister hand-picked to lead India's most populous State, is emerging as a mascot of hate. He is guilty of nothing short of crimes against humanity – acts deliberately committed as part of a widespread systematic attack directed by a government against an identifiable part of a civilian population.

As the rest of the country is heady with protests against laws and policies which divide people based on their religious identity, the Muslim people of Uttar Pradesh are today wounded – this time almost beyond healing.

Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher

For a humane and autonomous police

During strife, the focus needs to be on improving the quality of policing in the field than on 'politician management'



R.K. RAGHAVAN

These are tumultuous times for the Indian police, especially the Delhi police, in their bid to maintain law and order. After losing the debate inside Parliament, certain elements have regrettably chosen to take some contentious issues out to the streets. Consequently, the floor has been unwittingly yielded to the police – and for them to act in the manner they deem fit, and in the interests of public peace.

Binary picture

Protests and demonstrations no doubt form the core of democracy and are unexceptionable as long as they do not disrupt the life of the common man or cause damage to public property. In an ideal world, we may expect this clear-cut theoretical proposition to work perfectly. But in the raw, emotion-ridden and violence-prone streets of the present times, this clinical allocation of respective space has, however, repeatedly proved to be mere pontification. This is established by events of the past few days in the national capital. Some media reporting has tended to be one-sided, tending to

portray the police as the villain of the piece and the protesters as harmless and pacifist. This binary picture is deceptive and misleading, because it is blind to the truism that the police do enjoy a measure of operational autonomy, free from the dictates of other state agencies.

Shadow of politics

Public opinion has been built around a few gross misconceptions about modern policing. It is too simplistic and facile to look upon the police as merely an agency that has been caught in the crossfire between the establishment and protesters. Gone are the halcyon days when life was more orderly and civilised, and the police just received orders from above to be executed as faithfully as they could/can and not necessarily at the speed of lightning. The vicissitudes of politics over the decades have deprived the guardians of law the luxury of resting on the statute book and responding to a developing situation.

They will now have to be proactive and react – and react within split seconds to an incendiary situation arising from contentious political situations. While doing so they are bound to overstep the contours of law. This reminds a reader of the classic situation summed up as: (You're) damned if you do and damned if you don't.

It is fallacy to argue that the police cannot enter campuses unless



they are invited to do so by heads of institutions. Nothing can be a greater incentive to violence. I am happy that the Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University has been honest enough to admit that he permitted the police to enter his campus to prevent an already ugly situation from becoming worse.

In Jamia Millia, Delhi, the police appeared to have taken the initiative when no such invitation was forthcoming. There is no law that prohibits such police entry on their own, and any attempt to frame such a law will be preposterous to the core. The police are obligated under law to intervene wherever and whenever they apprehend danger to lives. Imagine the not-so-imaginary and improbable situation where the vice-chancellor is himself besieged and threatened by a mob of students and others and is unable to communicate with the police. Can the police wait for a nod from those facing danger? If they did and if the VC was attacked or grievously

hurt, the police would be hauled over the coals.

I am reminded here of the statement of the English jurist, Lord Denning, in *Regina v Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis* (1968): "... (it) is for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, or the chief constable, as the case may be,to decide on the disposition of his force and the concentration of his resources on any particular crime or area. No court can or should give him direction on such a matter... And 'No Minister of the Crown can tell him that he must, or must not, keep observation on this place or that... The responsibility for law enforcement is on him. He is answerable to the law and to the law alone."

I do not think the position is different in India. If some police leaders have surrendered their autonomy to the Executive, it is their fault and not of the Executive.

On the measure of force

Another bone of contention relates to the quantum of force that the police can use in quelling disorder. Some astonishing statements have been made in this context. There is no scientific formula that applies to explosive scenes that have become routine in the national capital.

"How much is too much?" is a question that is impossible to answer. The amount of force used in such situations can vary significantly, and will be related mainly

to the strength of the mob, its composition, its mood and the kind of weapons it has at its command. Use of stones has become the most favourite, because of ease of availability and potency. To say that the police or any security agency should not overreact to this kind of barbarity is grossly unfair. Ultimately, it is the decision of the police commander in the field.

Mob control techniques are a part of the police curriculum in major training institutions. Their impact depends on the imaginative nature of the instruction. In the wake of violence across the country, the police leadership would do well to concentrate on this important aspect of policing, even if it means according a lower priority to other areas of routine.

In a democracy such as ours we certainly need a civilised and humane police. This should not, however, dilute the need to have a potent force that will not hesitate to use the resources at its command in order to re-emphasise the dictum that democracy can flourish only when violence is checked and not allowed to hold sway. There is a crucial need for senior police officers to devote time to improving the quality of policing in the field, instead of frittering away their energies in concentrating on "politician management".

R.K. Raghavan is a former Director, Central Bureau of Investigation and a former High Commissioner of India

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.

Midnight knock

Under the present regime at the Centre, arrests are being made without any rhyme or reason (Page 1, "Arrest of septuagenarians leaves families distraught", December 29). One wonders whether this is the great democratic country which obtained its hard-fought Independence about 70 years ago. It is disturbing to hear that just the news that there is to go to be a gathering to protest is enough for the Uttar Pradesh government to round up and imprison people irrespective of whether they participated or not in the protest. Is it not an arrogance of authority to charge the aged and those who are innocuous with rioting? The current regime needs to realise that various anti-people schemes are only destroying India's democracy.

MANOHARAN MUTHUSWAMY, Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

Let judiciary prevail

A number of opinion writers should be aware that Muslims in India have all the freedom and liberty as anyone or other communities in the country have. They run educational institutions in this country. They also have their representatives in local Assemblies and in Parliament. One does not think that they are being treated as second-class citizens. The repeated assurances by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister that no Indian Muslims will be affected by the enactment of the new pieces of legislation are being conveniently glossed over. We must be patient to let the judiciary pronounce its verdict on the legality of the recent legislation as numerous petitions have been filed by political parties. Let us not vitiate the atmosphere by offering all sorts of opinion on the

matter, however knowledgeable we are (Editorial page, "In CAA narrative, finding the judiciary's lost voice", December 28).

SURYANARAYANAN S., Chennai

The discourse today

Today, over a billion Indians are divided over two narratives: in the first to believe that the Union Government is doing the right thing by implementing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Register of Citizens, and the National Population Register. The second is to believe that these exercises are unconstitutional and have many a malicious agenda behind them. This is painful. We Indians have suffered a lot throughout colonial rule and it was only after Independence that we believed in harmony, equality and brotherhood prevailing,

making India prosperous in being together. 'Unity in Diversity' reflected the beauty of India but what I observe today is very disturbing. Most people are completely divided and are unable to listen to the other's point of view. Often the furious counter-attack is made more dangerous by using the term 'anti-national'. Where is the compassion and empathy that India gave to the world? Expressing dissent in a peaceful way is a basic part of democracy. India's freedom struggle was successful because of this.

RATNARAJ JAIN, Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh

Reflections

In the context of altered perceptions in the new India, our opinion of who is the hero and who is the villain, is imprecise. Heroes have been honoured through many memorials by way of naming roads, localities, printing currency

and minting coins or erecting statues, some small, and some gargantuan, to name a few. Carved in stone or forged in metal, statues are designed to make a generation of people gaze upward in awe, and reflect on those who contributed to the evolution of a country or culture. Statues have attracted the admiration of the infatuated or the ire of the disenchanted. Post-Independence India has gone on a frenzy of statue building. Enormous sums are spent in erecting these statues for the dead, and, in recent times, even for the

living. Statues can also lead to unnecessary friction and social tensions which we can live without. The money spent on carving and erecting statues can be better utilised by building schools, hospitals and libraries. Political parties on a statue-spree can let the money come from party funds or the private resources of the person to be honoured ("Magazine" - "Open Page", "Statues call on stony ground", December 29, 2019).

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA, Bengaluru

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

The second paragraph of a report, "A divided State's capital conundrum", ("Ground Zero" page, December 28, 2019) cited the paying of "a ₹7,000-crore interest". The figure should have been ₹700 crore.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturba Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

India needs a bottom-up growth model

The country requires an employment and income strategy to guide its industry and trade policies



ARUN MAIRA

India's bold decision to stay out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) until the needs of the country's small enterprises, farmers, and poorest citizens are properly addressed dismayed many economists. The Indian government's fear was that the resulting increase in Chinese exports would harm small producers and farmers.

China and India, the two most populous countries in the world, both embarked on new journeys around the same time. More than 70 years later, China has progressed much faster. India, on the other hand, is yet to reach the development indicators that China attained back in the early 1990s.

People-centric policies

A Chinese thought leader said 15 years ago that both countries have the same vision: of prosperity for their citizens. To reach there, they must cross a turbulent stream by feeling the stones underfoot. But how do governments do that?

First, they need to make their policies people-centric rather than growth-centric. The Communist Party of China demands that local officials address the needs of citizens' effectively, as does Singapore's government. The Chinese government derives its legitimacy from citizens' satisfaction with their well-being, not from a vote in an election, Singapore Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam once said.

In the case of India, its constitutional structure enables its States to adopt different models of development. Thus, there is a 'Kerala model', a 'Gujarat model', and now a 'common man's model' implemented by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi. Local, participative governance has been a distinction of Kerala's model. and the State has been well ahead of the rest of the country, matching China in its Human Development Indicators in education, health, and women's inclusion.



A Mohalla clinic, at the Yamuna Bazar area in New Delhi. Such clinics have been set up to provide affordable health care to the poor people. -SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Delhi's AAP government has adopted a people-centric model of government. It has established School Management Committees with parental involvement. Teacher training budgets have increased five-fold. The performance of Delhi's government schools is not only higher than the national average, it now exceeds the performance of private schools in Delhi. Public health expenditures have more than doubled. 'Mohalla clinics' have been set up in poor colonies to provide accessible and affordable health care.

The share of unauthorised colonies provided with piped water has increased from 55% to 93% in just five years, reducing the need for poor people to pay for expensive tanker-delivered water. But despite water subsidies for the poor, the Delhi Jal Board's income has increased. Electricity supply has expanded to include 20% more consumers. Amongst Indian metros, Delhi provides the cheapest electricity. Yet, its distribution companies, all in the private sector, have improved their financial performance.

Increase in disposable incomes

The government has computed that its programmes for improving the 'ease of living' of citizens by improving the quality and accessibility, and reducing costs, of a range of public services has increased savings per family by ₹4,000 per month. The in-

crease in disposable incomes has resulted in additional consumer-buying power, estimated at ₹24,000 crore per annum.

This proves that growth must be bottom-up to be equitable and sustainable. India has climbed many rungs on the World Bank's 'Ease of Business' rankings. Yet, investments to expand production ventures have not increased much because consumer demand has slumped, even for basic items like packaged biscuits. It seems odd that democratically elected governments in many countries, including India, who should be focused on citizens' well-being, have become so focused on making it easy for global capital to do business in their countries. This has made citizens rise up against the globalisation paradigm promoted by an 'establishment' of policymakers and economists. Citizens want their governments to put jobs in their countries first, and to implement policies that increase incomes at the bottom of the pyramid rather than facilitating only further growth at the top.

India's complex, socio-economic environmental system is under even greater stress. The country must improve on many fronts simultaneously. India ranks very low in international comparisons of human development (education and health), even below its poorer sub-continental neighbours. It is the most water-stressed large economy

in the world; its cities are the most polluted. India's economic growth is not generating enough jobs for its burgeoning population of youth: the employment elasticity of India's growth (numbers of jobs created with growth) is amongst the worst in the world. Bold actions without an understanding of the whole system can cause great harm. The bold move to demonetise the currency notes in 2016 was an egregious example. Unemployment of persons with vocational education has gone up between 2011-12 and 2017-18, from 18.5% to 33%. India now has a larger number of frustrated youth.

More free trade not the answer

The RCEP decision shows that India is now standing up to pressure from a rump of Washington Consensus economists who continue to advocate that more free trade is the solution to India's economic problems, even when there is evidence that India has not benefited from the agreements it has entered into.

India's challenge now is to build an Indian ecosystem in which competitive enterprises will grow to create more opportunities for jobs for youth and for increasing citizens' incomes. Growth of incomes in India will make India more attractive for investors. A stronger industrial system will give India more headroom in trade negotiations too. India's industrial and entrepreneurial ecosystem's growth must be accompanied by an improvement in environment. Policies must be managed with a whole systems view. While 'Ease of doing Business' gauges health from a business perspective, 'ease of living' should become the measure of the health of the whole system.

Policy decisions invariably require compromises between competing interests. Here, Mahatma Gandhi's talisman provides a good test. The government should think of the needs of the poorest citizens first. Reduced duties on imports benefit citizens as consumers. However, a citizen's more fundamental need is for a good job and source of income to buy the imported goods. India urgently requires an employment and income strategy to guide its industry and trade policies.

Arun Maira is a former member of Planning Commission

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

The importance of being the bearer of bad tidings

Newspapers need to perform this vital, democratic role



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

When I sought readers' responses about the impact of digitalisation, and what measures this newspaper should take to reach out to millions who access news through their hand-held devices, I had three sets of nagging questions which eluded answers on my mind. First, can legacy newspapers retain their original credo of remaining a 'newspaper of record' in an era where news is breaking every minute? Is it important to retain the idea of recording the present for the future or, in other words, of performing the role of being the first draft of history?

Second, when digital marketing ideas like targeting and distributing content, Search Engine Optimisation and framing tweets to trend a story have become major determinants, has the tried and tested inverted pyramid story structure that dominated the news industry become redundant? Do we need a new form of structuring a story that reflects the relentless nature of the 24x7 news cycle?

Third, in a heavily polarised environment, where does a readers' desire to get news end and where does the wish to have a confirmation bias begin? If closed encrypted platforms like WhatsApp attract more readers because of the lure of confirmation bias, what is the role of journalism whose primary objective is truth?

Giving print journalism its due

Vijay S. Raghavan, a reader from Navi Mumbai, came up with a 2,300 word response in which he touched upon a range of issues, including the spread of multiple print editions since liberalisation of the Indian economy, readers' perception of bias, and why print must be given its due even today.

He argued for more print editions that have a good mix of local and national stories rather than national editions which, in his opinion, fail to offer substantial reading fare. I am not sure whether the present economic reality will permit this newspaper to implement all his suggestions but one seems to be an immediate possibility: bundling the subscription for e-paper and the Internet edition into one.

V.N. Mukundarajan from Thiruvananthapuram

felt that the news industry was not nimble enough in the first two decades of the 21st century and it took time to understand the aspirations, preferences, attitudes and reading styles of the youth.

In his view, publications are trying to navigate two landscapes – the traditional print and the online. "No two worlds can be as different as these two. The nature of the medium dictates the format, content, and curation of news stories... The screen demands understanding visual cues. The appearance of the page is as important as its content. The print is conservative; the screen is liberal, especially in its comments section," he wrote.

He wanted to newspapers to follow the 'Carl Sagan Standard' to weed out fake news. The well-known astronomer came up with an aphorism, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence" (ECREE) and Mr. Mukundarajan felt that ECREE should not be restricted to science but test all claims.

Baloney Detection Kit

Let me share Carl Sagan's "Baloney Detection Kit" which was succinctly summarised by the ever-engaging reader from Kerala.

The tools which he wants journalists to use in defence of truth and to deduct fake news are: "1) confirm the facts; 2) encourage debate; 3) remember that authorities can be wrong; 4) develop more than one idea. 5) try not to get overly attached to a hypothesis just because it is yours; 6) quantify; 7) If there is a chain of argument, every link in the chain must work (including the premise), not just one of them; 8) Occam's razor – a rule of thumb. When faced with two hypotheses that explain the data equally well, choose the simpler one; 9) Always ask whether the hypothesis can at least in principle, be falsified."

The biggest challenge for a newspaper in a polarised environment is to create a public sphere where debate, doubt, argument and dissent lead to a more informed choices without being subjected to savage personal attack. While discernible vitriol flows from open sources, the quantitatively overwhelming maliciousness is generated in the encrypted messaging world. Is there an acceptable approach to deal with the encrypted world of toxic circulation without undermining the privacy of the individual? If a newspaper fails to be the bearer of impending bad tidings, who else will perform that democratic duty?

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

State results no indicator of decline in BJP's popularity

It is still going strong in North and Central India

SANJAY KUMAR

The political events in India during 2019 have left observers slightly confused. The year brought both good and bad news for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as well as for many non-BJP parties.

In the Lok Sabha elections, the saffron party not only got a massive mandate, it managed to improve upon its electoral performance of 2014, winning 303 Lok Sabha seats with 37% votes. This strong performance made some believe that the party was invincible. But, soon after that, the BJP lost power in Maharashtra and Jharkhand and failed to get a majority in Haryana.

Now, these defeats once again have started discussions on whether the party is on the decline or, at a minimum, whether this is the beginning of a decline. Questions are also being asked if the protests across the country against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) would lead to a shrinking of the party's Hindu support base.

Reduced appeal

The truth is that the verdicts at the State level do not give any indication of the BJP's declining popularity at the national level. A recent Lokniti-CSDS survey in Jharkhand did indicate that there was a reduction in the appeal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but that was limited to just one State – Jharkhand. It is also not clear if this decline could accelerate further or if it could be halted as the Central government might engage in some course correction in coming months. However, if the anti-CAA protests continue, they might have a negative impact, with even some favouring the CAA turning against the party.

Now, let's put the fact in a plain and simple manner – the BJP lost power in many big States during last one year, beginning November 2018. The party is in power either alone or in an alliance with other parties only in 16 States. It has a government of its own only in Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh and

Tripura, while it is part of the ruling coalition in nine other States. The BJP has also accepted the role of a junior partner of the coalition government in many States of North-East.

However, this alone does not suggest that the popularity of the BJP in general is falling at the national level. Take the case of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, where the party lost power last year. The party's fortunes saw a turnaround just six months later as it won 62 seats of the total 65 seats in these three States in the Lok Sabha elections.

Coming to Maharashtra and Haryana, though the BJP failed to form a government, it still emerged as the single-largest party. In Jharkhand, it managed to win 33% of votes.

Still strong at the national level

These results show that the BJP, and to a greater extent Mr. Modi, still remain a popular choice for voters in the Northern and Central parts of the country. But what could be safely concluded from the somewhat contrasting pictures presented by the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections is that voters' choices are diverging in the two scenarios. The verdicts in the last one year indicate that the BJP is no more the only choice of voters when it comes to choosing a State government. In that regard alone, Mr. Modi's ability to pull votes for the BJP has been challenged.

The Delhi Assembly elections due in early 2020 would be a significant test of Mr. Modi's ability to mobilise votes for the party against a popular State government. Further, the party would face another challenge when Bihar goes to poll in late 2020. Finally, the BJP's CAA narrative would be tested when Assam and West Bengal go to the polls in mid-2021. However, at the moment, the saffron party is certainly stronger than its political opponents at the national level.

Sanjay Kumar is currently the Director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. Views are personal

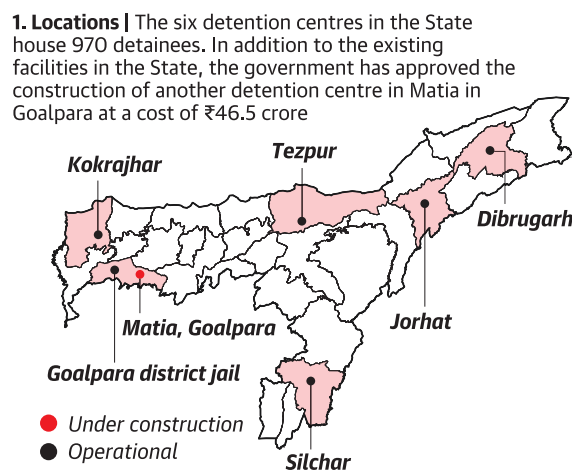


DATA POINT

Kept in detention

The Ministry of Home Affairs in the Parliament revealed that, there are six operational detention centres in Assam as on November 28, 2019. The construction of another facility, which can hold 3,000 inmates, is nearing completion. Over 98% of the detainees in Assam are from Bangladesh, while the rest are from Myanmar.

By Naresh Singaravelu & Sumant Sen



Name	Male	Female	Total
Goalpara	186	15	201
Kokrajhar	9	131	140
Silchar	57	14	71
Dibrugarh	38	2	40
Jorhat	132	64	196
Tezpur	224	98	322
Total	646	324	970

*There is a report that the plan has been scrapped
*CM Mamata Banerjee has said she won't allow any detention centre in W.B.

Name	Bangladesh	Myanmar
Goalpara	99.1	0.9
Kokrajhar	100	0
Silchar	91.9	8.8
Dibrugarh	100	0
Jorhat	100	0
Tezpur	97.1	3
Total	98.3	1.8

4. A bigger picture | A total of 10 detention centres are operational in the country out of which four are outside Assam. The government has approved construction of three others in Assam, Punjab and Karnataka

Centre	State	Status
Goalpara district jail	Assam	Operational
Kokrajhar	Assam	Operational
Silchar	Assam	Operational
Dibrugarh	Assam	Operational
Jorhat	Assam	Operational
Tezpur	Assam	Operational
Lampur	Delhi	Operational
Mapusa	Goa	Operational
Alwar Central jail	Rajasthan	Operational
Amritsar Central jail	Punjab	Operational
Goalpara	Assam	Under construction
Tarn Taran	Punjab	Under construction
Bengaluru	Karnataka	Under construction
Nerul	Maharashtra	Location identified*
New Town	West Bengal	Location identified*
Bongaon	West Bengal	Location identified*

Source: Parliamentary Q&A

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 30, 1969

India-made equipment on Moon

Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, here [Trivandrum] today [December 29] disclosed a move to have one of the Apollo missions carry and leave on the moon Indian-made equipment capable of carrying out important experiments. He hoped this proposal, communicated by the Indian scientific groups to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States, would be accepted, so that India too could collaborate in the lunar research programme. Dr. Sarabhai said data could be received by the ground based telemetry system if the Indian-made equipment was placed on the moon. India, he said, was specially interested in the study of solar wind, cosmic rays and gamma ray astronomy. The moon surface would be the best space platform for such studies as it was unimpeded by any atmosphere. Dr. Sarabhai, who also heads the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), was delivering the "Dr. Homi Bhabha Memorial Lecture" at a symposium on "Space engineering and technology". The meeting is attended by about 300 space scientists.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DEC. 30, 1919

The Reform Act.

From an Editorial

We Publish elsewhere extracts from the address of Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Iyer as President of the Moderates' Conference and a fuller report of the portion of Pandit Motilal Nehru's address as President of the Congress, relating to the Reform Act. It will be noticed that one fundamental difference of opinion is that relating to the Declaration of Rights. Pandit Motilal Nehru attaches the greatest importance to such a declaration, while Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Iyer assigns a very subordinate place to it and dismisses it in a few words stating that there is no precedent for it in the Empire. The question of the absence of precedent is examined clearly by Pandit Motilal Nehru. In the first place, it is not the fact that there is no precedent. The latest pre-war Irish Home Rule Act contained provisions which were in the nature of a declaration of rights and which guaranteed that the civil liberties of the subject would not be unjustly interfered with. If there is any one feature of that British constitution which is more striking than another, it is the extraordinary power of adaptability that it exhibits; it is the least rigid of constitutions; and wherever a necessity for change based on experience is patent, its tendency is to invite that change and not to resist it.