



ED attaches assets of Kochhar couple worth ₹78 crore

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Police name Aishe Ghosh, ABVP cadre as suspects in JNU violence

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Infosys CEO Salil Parikh absolved of financial impropriety charge

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India seals series with a thumping win in final T20I against Sri Lanka

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AAP likely to announce candidates next week

NEW DELHI
The Aam Aadmi Party is likely to announce all its candidates for the Delhi Assembly election in a single list next week, said a senior leader. Also, three Lok Sabha candidates of AAP – Atishi, Dilip Pandey and Raghav Chadha – will contest the election from Kalkaji, Timarpur and Rajinder Nagar respectively, said sources.

CITY ► PAGE 2

SC tells govt. to review orders curbing basic rights in J&K

It asks for publication of all orders on restrictions and review of Net suspension

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered the government to review “forthwith” any existing orders that restrict basic rights and free movement in Jammu and Kashmir. The court upheld the freedoms of free speech, expression and trade or business on the Internet as fundamental rights to be constitutionally protected. It, however, refused to express any views on whether the very access to the Internet is a fundamental right or not. The top court directed the government to review orders suspending Internet services in the erstwhile State instantly. Any order suspending the Internet found to violate the law should be



Life offline: Students waiting to use the Internet at the Divisional Commissioner's office in Srinagar recently. • AFP

revoked at once, it ordered. It further instructed the government to consider restoring government websites, localised/limited e-banking facilities, hospital services and other essential services in areas in the Union Territory, where it was otherwise not thinking to do so immediately.

Ripping into the veil of secrecy shrouding the months-long restrictions imposed across J&K, a three-judge Bench, led by Justice N.V. Rama

mana, on Friday made it mandatory for the government to publish each and every one of its orders that crippled the fundamental freedoms of over seven million Kashmiris, including the suspension of telecom and Internet services in the Valley since August 5 following the abrogation of special status of the erstwhile State under Article 370. Publication of these orders would now enable the affected persons to challenge their legality in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court or before any other appropriate forum.

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ELOQUENTLY RETICENT
► EDITORIAL
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SC stays NCLAT order reinstating Cyrus Mistry

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed a decision of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) to reinstate Cyrus Mistry as chairman of the multi-billion salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Sons. A three-judge Bench of CJI Sharad A. Bobde and

Justices B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant issued a formal notice to respondents, including Cyrus Investments Pvt. Ltd. and others, on appeals separately filed by Tata Sons Pvt. Ltd. and its chairman emeritus, Ratan Tata, among others, against the December 18 decision.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Judge's bail condition: attend CAA session

12 violence accused told to visit Seemapuri police station on January 19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

All the 12 accused of “violence” during the recent anti-CAA protests in Seemapuri, who were granted bail by a city judge on Friday, have been asked to appear at the local police station where police officers could “remove their doubts” about the contentious law.

Additional Sessions Judge

Sanjeev Kumar Malhotra of the Karkardooma Court granted bail to the accused persons subject to certain conditions. Among the conditions are that the accused will join the probe as and when directed; they will not do any act to disturb public peace; and that they will visit the Seemapuri police station on January 19, between 2 and 4 p.m., where the in-

vestigating officer or the SHO will “make endeavour to remove the doubts of the applicants in respect of CAA”.

The Seemapuri police had registered the FIR on December 20 after violence during the anti-CAA protest in the area. They submitted in court that two accused, Mohammed Shoib and Mohammed Amir, were arrest-

ed after they were identified through CCTV footage. However, the footage did not show them pelting stones or causing any damage to public property.

Another accused, Hazi Mehraj, produced CCTV footage in support of his claim that he was at his residence till 4 p.m. on the day of the incident.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Union Home Ministry notifies CAA provisions

CAA rules are yet to be notified

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued a notification on Friday that the provisions of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, came into force from January 10.

The CAA, passed by Parliament on December 11, pro-

vides citizenship to six undocumented non-Muslim communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who entered India on or before December 31, 2014. The Act got the President's assent on December 12. The CAA rules are yet to be notified.

ASSAM'S APPEAL ► PAGE 13



It is not possible to climb or cut the new fence, according to an official.

tem. The unique quality of the new fence is that it cannot be snipped and nobody can climb it. There are many pockets along the border where the old barbed wires are so fragile that they can be destroyed with a mild push,” the official said. Union Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed the functioning of the BSF on December 14, where various technological solutions to plug the porous stretches of the border were discussed.

IIP reverses slump, grows by 1.8% in Nov.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Having contracted for three months in a row, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) recorded a growth of 1.8% in November, mainly on account of an improvement in the manufacturing sector, official data showed on Friday. The IIP growth in November 2018 was 0.2%. According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) data, the growth in the manufacturing sector was 2.7% as against a contraction of 0.7% in the same month last year. Electricity generation shrank by 5%, as against a growth of 5.1% in November 2018. The IIP growth during April-November in the current fiscal came in at 0.6%, far slower than the 5% in the same period of 2018-19.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

BJP announces
15-member
poll committee

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The State unit of the BJP on Friday announced its 15-member election committee for the upcoming Assembly polls, to be held here on February 8.

The panel comprises party president Manoj Tiwari, all the seven BJP MPs from Delhi, national office-bearers Anil Jain, Dushyant Gautam and R.P. Singh, former Delhi BJP presidents – Vijay Goel and Satish Upadhyay – organisation secretary Sidharthan, Delhi BJP Mahila Morcha chief Poonam Jha and LoP Vijender Gupta, the BJP said. The committee in its first meeting on Friday reviewed the tasks assigned to those in charge of 35 committees in relation to the elections.

BJP’s education model ruining
children’s future, says Sisodia

He juxtaposes it with AAP govt.’s schemes such as Happiness Curriculum

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday said its government’s education model is one of building the path for the prosperity of children and also the nation, while the BJP’s education model is aimed at ruining their future.

Education Minister Manish Sisodia, at a press conference, talked about two of the government’s educational schemes – Happiness and Entrepreneurship curriculum – and challenged the BJP to present its models.

“Delhi Assembly election not just between two parties but between two models of shaping the country’s future. Under the Kejriwal govern-

ment’s education model, the Happiness Curriculum was launched for students from nursery-Class VIII of government schools. Such was the visible impact of the curriculum on the psyche of the children within a year of its launch that several private schools of Delhi also launched this curriculum,” he said, adding that education models of the BJP and Congress stand out only for its absence of any vision on the quality of education.

“They are caught between whether to include references to *Gandhiji* and Nehru in the syllabus. The BJP has now introduced a course in ‘Bhoot Vidya’ in universities, which focusses on training in curing

mental illnesses through primitive methods. Their education model is pondering on questions like whether the Internet existed in the age of Mahabharata or if ducks swimming creates oxygen in water,” said Mr. Sisodia.

Allegations on Shoaib

Responding to statements allegedly made by the BJP that Shoaib Iqbal, who joined AAP on Thursday, is a murder accused, Mr. Sisodia said: “If any AAP leader or anyone joining the AAP is a murder accused then BJP should be ashamed that he is outside the jail. For six years, the police have been under you...you could have got him arrested. If you can’t run the police

then leave it. We will run it. If there is any murderer in our party or your party, we will put him behind bars.”

Comments on Chhapaak

“You [BJP] are scared of a film, which has been made on an acid attack victim? You are scared of a film? You are scared of films, you are scared of education,” Mr. Sisodia said about BJP leaders allegedly protesting against Bollywood movie *Chhapaak*, which released on Friday. Actor Deepika Padukone has been facing backlash from right-wingers since her visit to Jawaharlal Nehru University. The AAP leader added that he will watch the movie with his children if he gets time.

Deputy CM crowdfunds
₹28 lakh in just 48 hours

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia’s crowdfunding campaign for the election reached the target of ₹28 lakh within 48 hours, said the Aam Aadmi Party on Friday.

“In an attempt to raise funds for the upcoming Delhi Assembly election, Mr. Sisodia had launched an online crowdfunding campaign. People have participated in the campaign from day one and have helped him attain the target within 48 hours,” an official statement read.

than Mr. Sisodia said: “People are deeply impressed by the honest governance of the government. I am happy to say



Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia at a press meet in the city on Friday.

that we have reached the target. Nearly 1,300 people have donated online and 75% of the donors have paid ₹1,000 or less. These small amounts have played an important role. I am grateful to all those who have supported us.”

Govt. cautions
officials
against breach
of poll code

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, the government on Friday cautioned all its department heads to ensure that neither the proposals sent by them breach the model code of conduct nor the compliance of court orders are delayed due to the fear of their breach.

The government’s Services Department has issued a circular to all Secretaries and Principal Secretaries, saying the proposals where the model code of conduct provisions are attracted, should be submitted to a screening committee constituted for examining the same.

“All departments of the government of NCT of Delhi, while forwarding the proposals to the Chief Secretary for consideration or approval, should clearly mention that provisions of the model code of conduct are not attracted,” it stated.

AAP may announce all
candidates next week

Party to focus on roadshows

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party is likely to announce all its candidates for the Delhi election in a single list next week, said a senior leader.

“Now there is no time for us to come out with different lists. We will have to do the campaigning also,” the leader said.

Lok Sabha candidates

Also, three Lok Sabha candidates of AAP – Atishi, Dilip Pandey, and Raghav Chadha – will contest the Assembly election from Kalkaji, Timarpur and Rajinder Nagar respectively, said sources.

“The party will focus on roadshows. We will also carry out buzz campaigns at metro stations and major areas such as Connaught Place. AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal and other leaders will start campaigning after the list is announced. There will be about 50 volunteers per booth campaigning for the election and 1.3 lakh volunteers, 10 in each booth,

working on the last three days before the poll and on the day of voting,” the leader said.

Party volunteers from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh will also start coming to Delhi in the coming weeks to help with the campaign.

On December 24, the party had launched “AAP ka report card”, which describes the top 10 achievements of the government in the past five years and has taken it to over 30 lakh households, the party said.

From December 26, the party has been taking the report cards to households and mohalla sabhas held in all Assembly constituencies. Also, Mr. Kejriwal has held seven “town hall” meetings across the city. The party had won 67 out of 70 seats in the Delhi Assembly election in 2015. However, in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, it lost all the seven seats and finished third behind Congress in five seats.

The Capital goes to poll on February 8.

Apprise voters about achievements of
Modi govt., Nadda tells party workers

‘All parties doing politics in the name of regularising illegal colonies’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

BJP national working president J.P. Nadda on Friday asked party workers to apprise voters about the achievements and policies of the Modi government framed for changing the present and future of Delhi,” Mr. Nadda said.

He added that the Centre has done all such works for the people of Delhi, which has not been possible by the AAP government till date.

“The BJP workers have to give the message of Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas to every household,” he said.

Mr. Tiwari said “all the political parties had been doing politics” in the name of regularising unauthorized colonies. “Previously, Congress misled the people for 15 years and after that

number of dedicated workers and it will register a victory in the Delhi poll. You have to apprise the voters about the achievements and policies of the Modi government framed for changing the present and future of Delhi,” Mr. Nadda said.

He added that the Centre has done all such works for the people of Delhi, which has not been possible by the AAP government till date.

“The BJP workers have to give the message of Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas to every household,” he said.

Mr. Tiwari said “all the political parties had been doing politics” in the name of regularising unauthorized colonies. “Previously, Congress misled the people for 15 years and after that

Cong. launches
campaign to
get inputs
for manifesto

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Friday launched a campaign to seek suggestions from the people of Delhi to draft its manifesto for the upcoming Assembly polls.

The campaign was launched by Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Subhash Chopra and former Union Minister Shashi Tharoor.

Mr. Tharoor said: “We believe that the time has come to consult the people for their direct participation.”He added that the party has decided to have a personal interaction with people ranging from women, youth, students, street vendors, small and medium shopkeepers and traders, e-rickshaw and auto drivers, to take their suggestions.

He blamed the Modi government for bringing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act as a deliberate attempt to divert people’s attention from pressing issues like economic distress, unemployment and price rise.

Season’s greetings



Artistes perform during the Chinese New Year celebrations at Siri Fort Auditorium in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

JD(U) and BJP in fix over Delhi Assembly polls

While the Bihar allies will contest separately, JD(U)’s Prashant Kishor is helping AAP

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

The ruling alliance partners in Bihar – Janata Dal (United) and BJP – are seemingly caught in a strange situation over the upcoming Delhi assembly elections, voting for which is scheduled on February 8.

I-PAC and AAP

The JD(U) has announced to contest poll in Delhi while its national vice-president Prashant Kishor’s political consultancy firm I-PAC has been reaped in by AAP.

The Opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal, though, has taken a swipe over JD(U) and Mr.

Kishor’s “fixed match to defeat BJP in Delhi elections”. However, JD(U) leader and Information and Public Relations Department Minister Neeraj Kumar said: “We don’t care who says and does what but for us, the party has always been bigger and important than an individual.”

The third NDA partner in Bihar – Lok Janshakti Party – too is likely to throw its ring in Delhi poll. However, JD(U) and LJP are yet to announce how many seats they would contest in the poll. In the recently concluded Jharkhand Assembly elections, JD(U) and LJP had contested sepa-

rately but failed to win even a single seat. “It is strange that JD(U) is contesting Delhi Assembly poll against BJP and AAP but its own national vice-president is working hard for AAP to win the poll...I think, both JD(U) and Mr. Kishor are playing a fixed match to defeat BJP”, senior RJD leader Shivanand Tiwari told *The Hindu*. He added that it was quite obvious JD(U) would cut into the vote bank of who else but the BJP.

However, the BJP leader and party MLC Sanjay Paswan said: “Mr. Kishor has no knowledge about politics...he is only a poll manager of Chief Minister Nitish

Kumar.” Mr. Paswan has been reiterating that “this time people of Bihar want a BJP CM” which on Thursday had prompted JD(U) to tell alliance partner BJP to “rein in party’s motor mouth leaders”. Meanwhile, former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi-led Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) too is said to be mulling over contesting Delhi elections. Mr. Manjhi could announce the number of seats, the party would contest in the next 3-4 days, said sources. “We have identified 10-15 seats but it will be decided and announced by our party chief soon,” said a party leader preferring anonymity.

JNU compromise formula back on the table

Students should end protests as basic demands now met, says HRD Secretary who met JNUSU leaders and the V-C

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI
The compromise formula currently under discussion between agitating students of the Jawaharlal Nehru University and its Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar is the same as the agreement that was under discussion a month ago and led to the transfer of then Higher Education Secretary R. Subrahmanyam.

On December 11, following talks between both sides, Higher Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank took the decision to give the V-C an ultimatum to implement the agreement or resign, according to a senior government official. However, neither side implemented the terms of the agreement.

On December 13, Mr. Subrahmanyam, who had been coordinating the talks, was transferred, and the students' agitation resumed.

On Friday, current HRD Secretary Amit Khare separately met the V-C and the leaders of the students union. This is the Ministry's latest attempt to broker peace in the two and a half month long standoff, initially sparked by a hostel fee hike, that has led to mass street protests and attacks against students and teachers on campus last weekend.

Following the discussions,



Human Resource Development Secretary Amit Khare holding a meeting with JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh and other student leaders; (right) JNU Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar after meeting the HRD Secretary on Friday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Mr. Khare told reporters that as the JNU administration has met the basic demands of students with regards to hostel fees, they should withdraw the agitation and return to classes. He pointed out that the cost of service and utility charges are not being charged to students and would be borne by the University Grants Commission instead, although students will still pay a higher room rent.

However, Mr. Khare was non-committal on students demand for notification of their elected Union, only saying that "while many other

demands may be there, the basic demand has been met."

Hostel fee
The hostel fee compromise as well as the notification of the Union were both part of the agreement which had been worked out on December 11. It had also stated that students would call off their protest while the JNU administration would "take a lenient view" of incidents that occurred during the agitation. Students had demanded that all FIRs filed against them and proctorial investigations be withdrawn.

On Friday, the V-C told the

The HRD Ministry has listened to our issues... They will send us a circular. Once we have discussed with our office-bearers, we will decide whether to call off the protests or not

AISHE GHOSH
JNUSU president

Ministry that he was "taking all steps to implement the decisions arrived at" as per the December 11 agreement. However, so far, action has only been taken on the issue



of hostel fees. Student leaders said they would take the Ministry's proposal back to the Union office-bearers and counselors for further discussion. "The HRD Ministry has listened to our issues. We have conveyed our demands, and they are trying in their way. They will send us a circular. Once we have discussed with our office-bearers, we will decide whether to call off the protests or not," said JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh, who was injured in the attacks on Sunday. She added that the cases against students must be withdrawn, speaking

even as Delhi Police named her as a suspect in their probe into Sunday's attacks. Contrasting the dialogue with the HRD Ministry with the accusations being made by the Delhi Police, **'V-C must go'** JNUSU vice-president Saket Moon said, "You can infer that we have faith in the HRD Ministry, not in the Home Ministry." On one point, the students remained adamant. "We have lost all faith in the vice-chancellor. We will not budge from our demand that the V-C must go," said Ms. Ghosh.

ABVP activist claims on camera to have mobilised mobs

Police to add videos aired on TV channel to ongoing SIT probe

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
Two JNU students claiming to be Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad members were seen admitting to their role in the JNU violence in 'sting' videos aired on India Today TV.

Reacting to the exposé, Delhi police spokesperson Mandeep Singh Randhawa said they will obtain these tapes from the television channel and include it in the ongoing probe being conducted by a Special Investigation Team. "The role of the people caught on camera will be verified and their presence on campus during the violence will be checked," he said.

Akshat Awasthi, a first-year student of the French degree programme at Jawaharlal Nehru University, was seen on camera saying that he mobilised mobs for the attack on campus on January 5 from within and outside the campus. He claimed to be an ABVP activist. "After we were attacked, I immediately mobilised a large number of

students and attacked Sabarmati Hostel," he was heard saying in a video. Another student, Rohit Shah, was also heard on camera saying that he gave his helmet to Awasthi before the latter set out for Sabarmati Hostel. In another tape, Left activist Geeta Kumari was seen saying that she was involved in shutting down the university servers. Justifying her action, she said Vice Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar was communicating with the students only online and avoiding meeting them, so they decided to target the server room in order to force the administration's hand. Responding subsequently to the 'sting operation', she tweeted: "JNU VC increases our fee a thousand times. He sends punishment letters for demanding right to education. I myself have received countless such letters. We are fighting for our rights. We are in civil disobedience. That's what I have said. Nothing to hide."



(Left) ABVP members hold a peace march; women students form a human chain condemning the ABVP and violence on campus, on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR, PTI



Students hold silent protests on university campus

JNUSU calls police claims a 'litany of distortions' while ABVP says 'truth of Left violence exposed'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
As Delhi Police held a press conference on Friday regarding its probe into the violence that broke out on Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on January 5, women students of the university as well as members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad held separate demonstrations on campus condemning the attacks.

Policemen were deployed in large numbers in the university area as ABVP members held a silent 'peace march' – holding up posters condemning 'Red Terror', referring to Left groups – from Sabarmati T point to the JNU main gate.

During the peace march, a human chain of women students stood on the sidelines holding up posters condemning the ABVP. Several of them had tied black bands across their heads and held up posters such as "Here to watch the march of shame" and "ABVP go back".

Among those participating in the peace march was Pranav Kumar, a teacher in the School of Social Studies, who said that the rally was an appeal to start classes with a cool head, and that it was not to "blame any side". Calling the claims made



Massive police deployment outside JNU campus on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

by the police on Friday "a litany of distortions, half truths and outright lies", the JNU Students' Union accused the force of carrying out a "political investigation". Meanwhile, the ABVP said that the "truth of Left-perpetrated violence in JNU stands exposed". In a statement, the JNUSU stated: "The police named all Left outfits but the name of the ABVP was curiously missing... the ploy to implicate the Left in the violence is an indication that this probe is a political investigation with a clear agenda to

placate [Home Minister] Amit Shah and the ABVP, which can employ violence with impunity on the basis of its State backing." **'Sinister motives'** It added that the "sinister motives" of the police is revealed in the fact that it has implicated JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh, "upon whom a murder attempt took place" in the January 5 violence. The JNUSU also condemned the police for not taking action on various incidences of violence, allegedly perpetrated by ABVP mem-

bers on January 4, a day before violent mobs went on a rampage on campus. It alleged that "ABVP members thrashed the JNUSU general secretary, broke the leg of women students, and injured several others... complaints were filed but there has been no FIR registered". The union added that the police press conference on Friday was carried out to "save the ABVP and deflect attention from the spine-chilling horrors perpetrated by right-wing hooligans". "It is regrettable but not surprising given their past

record that the police has flushed integrity and honesty down the drain and is undertaking this exercise to defend the V-C and the ABVP." The union also pointed out that various media reports had made it clear that the violence was perpetrated by the ABVP, with the joint secretary of the students' body admitting that its members were carrying lathis. "The police has done a shoddy job as evidenced by the alleged incorrect identification of one of the accused, all of which it said were based on videos from ABVP-leaning pages," it added.

'Impartial probe' Meanwhile, the ABVP termed the police probe "impartial" and said that "in several universities Left organisations are continuously and violently targeting students who dare to disagree with them". It added that those who disagreed with "the communist ideology are discriminated against by Left-wing professors". The group said it was hopeful that strict action would be taken against those found guilty. In an appeal to the public, the JNUSU said it hoped that all would "see through this malicious propaganda being spread against JNU".

Three JNU professors move HC to preserve CCTV footage, evidence

Petitioners say they apprehend that data may be damaged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
Three Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) professors approached the Delhi High Court on Friday seeking directions to preserve data, CCTV footage and other evidence relating to the January 5 violence at the university campus.

The petition also sought directions for preservation and retrieval of all material/evidence available with WhatsApp, Google and Apple, specifically data of WhatsApp groups 'Unity Against Left' and 'Friends of RSS', including messages, pictures, videos and phone numbers of the members.



The petition has been listed for hearing before Justice Brijesh Sethi on January 13. The petition was filed by JNU professors Ameet Parameswaran, Atul Sood and Shukla Vinayak Sawant seeking necessary directions to the Delhi Police Commissioner and the Delhi government. The petition also sought a direction to Delhi Police to

retrieve all CCTV footage of JNU campus. On January 5, a group of masked attackers had stormed the JNU campus and targeted students in three hostels, unleashing mayhem with sticks, stones and iron rods. The plea said the petitioners apprehend that in the absence of a direction from the court or the police commissioner, the relevant evidence may not be properly preserved. It claimed that as per the knowledge of the petitioners as well as news reports, the police has not yet retrieved CCTV footage, which is crucial evidence.

Plea against Shaheen Bagh protesters dismissed

Petitioners told HC lakhs of people being affected due to traffic congestion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea seeking directions for removal of demonstrators protesting against the amended citizenship law at Shaheen Bagh in order to clear road blockages that are causing traffic congestions.

Thousands of people, including women and children, are protesting at Shaheen Bagh and nearby Jamia Millia Islamia to oppose the Act as well as the NRC. The application, in the form of a letter, was mentioned before a Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar,

which declined to give any relief. The letter, written by Tushar Sehdev and Raman Kalra, said the routes from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh, Delhi to Uttarakhand, Delhi to Noida hospitals, Ashram and Badarpur were unavailable due to the protest as the roads around Shaheen Bagh are

blocked and vehicles are being diverted to the DND flyway. The protest, which began on December 14, is affecting lakhs of people due to road closures. It further said that the protesters have put up barricades and heavy stones on the sides of the roads and are not allowing even pedestrians to pass.

IN BRIEF

Man cooks up story after looting employer, held

NOIDA
A private firm employee, who had claimed that he was robbed of his company's ₹38 lakh, has been arrested for the crime, the police said on Friday. The accused has been identified as Hemprakash (34). Two of his relatives have been arrested for their involvement in the robbery. On Wednesday, his colleague had reported to the police that Mr. Hemprakash was robbed of the money at Sector 88 here. An investigation was launched and Hemprakash and two others were subsequently arrested. Hemprakash was "unhappy" with his job and had planned to dupe his employer with the help of his relatives. PTI

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	292	Gurgaon	196
Ghaziabad	298	Faridabad	236
Noida	290	Greater Noida	291
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			

Dip in occupancy rate brings no relief to overcrowded Tihar jail

Occupancy in the prison has lowered by over 70% since 2015: NCRB report

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The occupancy rate in Tihar jail has lowered by over 70% since 2015, but the issue of overcrowding in the prison is a problem that persists, Prison Statistics released by the National Crime Records Bureau has stated.

According to the data, in 2018, the capacity of Tihar jail was 10,026 and the number of inmates was 15,468 that led to the occupancy rate of 154.3% with 16 jail. In 2015, the occupancy rate was 226.9% with 10 jails, the capacity being 6,250 and the number of inmates being 14,183.

The situation got better in 2016 after Mandoli Prison Complex was inaugurated and the number of prisons increased from 10 to 12. The occupancy rate lowered to



In 2018, the capacity of Tihar jail was 10,026 and the number of inmates was 15,468. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

179.8% in 2016 with 14,058 inmates and a capacity of 7,818.

In 2017, the number of prisons increased to 16 and the capacity increased to 10,026. The occupancy rate also lowered to 151.2% with 15,161 inmates.

However, like in 2017, Delhi recorded the third highest occupancy rate in the country in 2018 as well and also

had the most overcrowded jail among the Union Territories. Among the States, prisons in Uttar Pradesh were the most overcrowded (176.5%) followed by Sikkim (157.3%) and Chhattisgarh (153.3%), the report said.

Responding to the issue of overcrowding, Tihar Director General Sandeep Goel admitted that overcrowding is a persistent problem and

as on January 10, the occupancy rate was 175%. A few remedies, including building a new prison complex, however, are being considered. "To increase the lodging capacity, it is being considered that land be procured in Narela and a new prison complex be built there. Another plan that is being considered for future is that existing jails with single storey be turned into double and triple storey," he said.

Overcrowding in prisons leads to issues like poor hygiene, lack of sleep, among others. Keeping in view the human rights of the prisoners, it is essential that they are given reasonable space and facilities in jails, the report noted. In the recent years, overcrowding is one of the biggest problems being faced by prison inmates.

CBI Deputy Director's wife killed in accident

Rider of bike which hit her arrested

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 51-year-old woman, who was the wife of Central Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director, has been killed after she was hit by a speeding bike in north-west Delhi's Keshavpuram, the police said on Friday. The rider of the bike has been arrested, they said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North West) Vijayanta Arya said that the victim has been identified as Sandhya, the wife of Deputy Director of CBI's Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Rakesh Bisht. She was a resident of Keshavpuram.

The arrested person has been identified as Vijay, a resident of Wazirpur JJ Colony, Ms. Arya said.

The police said they received a call on Thursday evening regarding an accident. Subsequently, another

call was received and the police were informed that a woman was declared brought dead at Deep Chand Bandhu Hospital.

When police reached the spot, the victim was identified and they were informed that Sandhya was walking on a road near a gurdwara when the arrested speeding bike being driven by Mr. Vijay hit her. Mr. Vijay fled the spot and the injured was rushed to the hospital.

The police identified the offending bike and reached traced the accused after which he was arrested and his two-wheeler was seized.

"A case under Sections 279 [rash driving] and 304A [causing death by negligence] of the Indian Penal Code has been registered and further investigation into the matter is under way," Ms. Arya said.

NGT orders status quo on construction of high-rise near DU

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed status quo on the construction of a high-rise near Vishwavidyalaya metro station. The green panel constituted a committee comprising Union Environment Ministry and Central Pollution Control Board officials to undertake a carrying capacity study of the area.

An NGT Bench said, "Applying the Precautionary Principle of the environmental law, we consider it necessary to require an evaluation of relevant data and not the old database by a joint committee comprising representatives of the CPCB, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and IIT-Delhi."

"Meanwhile, no further construction activity may be undertaken and status quo as on today may be maintained. It will be permissible for the applicant as well as the project proponent to furnish their viewpoint to the Member Secretary, CPCB, for consideration by the Committee within two weeks," the Bench said.

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by University of Delhi challenging the environmental clearance granted to the project.

"The project is in 'Silence Zone' being within 100 metres from DU and Patel Chest Institute. The area is in water scarcity zone. Traffic plans or congestion filed by the project proponent with the application is based on the statistics of July 2011," the Bench observed while noting the allegations made in the plea.

The project in question is a group housing complex proposed to be built on an area of 20,000 sqm, the plea had said.

15-cm piece of arrow removed from 12-year-old archer

The arrow, shot accidentally, pierced her shoulder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Friday successfully removed a part of an arrow measuring around 15-cm from the shoulder of Shivangini Gohain, a 12-year-old archer from Assam who was injured earlier this week when she was accidentally hit by the arrow. The incident happened during a training session and the arrow pierced her shoulder.

Ms. Gohain was airlifted from Assam and brought to AIIMS on Thursday night. She was training at Dakha Devi Rasiwasia College at Chabua on Wednesday when the incident happened.

Shivangini Gohain is stable after having undergone a very complex surgery... The arrow had damaged a part of her neck, vertebra and the left lung. She has now been shifted to the ICU for observation

SENIOR DOCTOR AT AIIMS

"Ms. Gohain is stable after having undergone a very complex surgery. She was brought to AIIMS from Dibrugarh in Assam on Thursday night. The arrow had damaged a part of her neck, vertebra and the left lung. She has now been shifted to

the ICU for observation," said a senior doctor at AIIMS.

The arrow, he explained, was touching the vertebral artery which supplies blood to the brain stem. A part of the arrow measuring about 15 cm was removed from her upper body. "Around 0.5 cm of the arrow was stuck in front of the spinal cord. It was a very complex surgery," he said.

The operation, which lasted three-and-half hours, was performed by a team led by Deepak Gupta, a neurosurgery professor at AIIMS.

Dakha Devi Rasiwasia College serves as an extension centre under the Sports Authority of India Regional Centre in Guwahati.

Chhapaak gets good response on Day 1

Most viewers express indifference to the 'unnecessary' outrage over the movie

ELISHA VERMANI
NEW DELHI

Amid calls for a boycott by some a faction of right-wing supporters, Bollywood movie *Chhapaak* that hit the screens on Friday, garnered good response from viewers.

The film was embroiled in a controversy after actor Deepika Padukone went to Jawaharlal Nehru University to express solidarity with its students and faculty.

However, the opening of the film seemed largely unaffected by it.

Free screening

Rishi Verma, a 32-year-old businessman, who was at the theatres to watch the film said: "It's an important film that highlights the issues faced by an acid attack survivor and it was worth watching... We are not involved in



People wait outside Delite Cinema theatre for the Deepika Padukone-starrer *Chhapaak*, which is based on the life of Laxmi Agarwal, an acid attack survivor. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

politics. These calls for boycotts are irrelevant."

A free screening of the movie was organised by former MLA Alka Lamba for college students in Daryaganj. "After Deepika's visit to JNU, a group started campaigning against this film and I felt that

the film. She said: "If you can ask others to boycott a film based on such a sensitive issue then it just shows what kind of a person you are."

Most viewers expressed indifference to the "unnecessary" outrage over the movie. Vineeta Singh, a 28-year-old homemaker, said she did not understand how anyone, driven by political opinions, could stand against a film on acid attack survivors.

"It was a thought-provoking film," she said.

The film also received significant support online with hashtags – #ISupportDeepika and #HumDekhenge – trending with users posting photos of their tickets on social media platforms. A tweet reading: "People who carried acid in JNU are boycotting Chapak", are doing the rounds on social media.

Preparing for the big day



(Clockwise from left) Indian Air Force personnel rehearse for the upcoming Republic Day parade, at Rajpath; a contingent of Delhi Police personnel; a police checkpoint near India Gate. ■ PTI, SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA.



ED charges Fortis promoters in money laundering case

Delhi court issues production warrant against Shivinder Singh, his brother and one more for Jan. 20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday filed a chargesheet against former Fortis Healthcare promoters Shivinder Singh and his brother Malvinder before a Delhi court in a case related to alleged misappropriation of funds at Religare Finvest Ltd. (RFL).

The final report, filed before Additional Sessions Judge Sandeep Yadav, also named former CMD of Religare Enterprises Ltd. (REL) Sunil Godhwani (58) as an accused.

In the chargesheet, filed by the ED's Special Public

Prosecutor Nitesh Rana, the probe agency has accused all three of money laundering, punishable under Sections 3 and 4 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The court took cognisance of the chargesheet and issued production warrant against them for January 20. All the three accused are currently in judicial custody.

The ED also named RHC Holdings Pvt. Ltd. as an accused in its chargesheet.

It said the accused had acquired proceeds of crime to the tune of ₹150 crore through Star Artworks Pvt. Ltd., derived out of criminal activities and utilised the

amount in repayment of its existing liability towards RFL by projecting it as untainted.

"Therefore, accused persons were involved in acquisition and utilisation of proceeds of crime generated out of criminal activities and its projection as untainted property, thereby have committed the offence of money laundering as defined under Sections of PMLA," said the chargesheet, filed through advocate A.R. Aditya.

The ED had alleged that both the brothers, along with others, transferred an amount of about ₹1,000 crore to various persons from entities linked to the

corporate loan book and finally, the money was siphoned off.

The EOW registered an FIR after it received a complaint from RFL's Manpreet Suri against Shivinder, Godhwani and others, alleging that loans were taken by them while managing the firm but the money was invested in other companies.

"They put RFL in a poor financial condition by disbursing loans to companies with no financial standing and controlled by them. The companies to which the loans were disbursed willfully defaulted in repayments and caused a loss to RFL to

the tune of ₹2,397 crore," the police had alleged.

The RFL said in a press release that since the time the offence took place, the company has undergone a complete revamp of its Board of Directors.

"All efforts continue to be made to rebuild the business, mobilise fresh capital and correct the transgression and legacy issues of the past. The management and internal controls at the Group and all subsidiaries' level have also been revamped, bringing in much-needed assurance to employees about a stable and action-oriented management," it said.

City court frees DJB engineer and contractor in graft case

'CBI has not brought on record unimpeachable evidence'

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has acquitted a Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Junior Engineer and a director of a private company in a corruption case, saying that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has not been able to bring on record unimpeachable evidence against them.

The probe agency had charged them with entering into a conspiracy for allegedly embezzling a portion of the money released for boring a tube well.

It alleged that the Junior Engineer fraudulently certified that the company director, who was given the contract for boring the tube well, carried out the work as per

the agreement by using pipes of a particular company.

It further alleged that the payment amounting to ₹2.13 lakh was made to the contractor on a forged invoice submitted by the private accused person.

Additional Sessions Judge Anjurag Sain, however, dismissed the charges as the investigating agency was not able to produce sustainable evidence before the court.

"The court is of the opinion that since it was the duty of the Finance Department of the DJB to verify the genuineness of invoice, accused Junior Engineer Priyam Singh Meena, who has personally supervised the material and work and issued the satisfaction certificate

qua installation of Johnson Pipes in the borewell in question that has also been signed, checked and cross-checked by the officers of the DJB, cannot be held criminally liable for the commission of alleged act of criminal conspiracy in the present case," the judge said.

"It is apparent that no substantive evidence has come on record to show that the accused persons have committed the charged offences. Thus, the court holds that the prosecution has not been able to prove its case against both accused persons beyond shadow of all reasonable doubts. I accordingly, acquit both the accused persons," Mr. Sain said in his judgment.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Seminar on "Sharing of Hopes for a Peaceful Co-existence" by Radha Bhatt, veteran Gandhian activist; Fr. Joseph Kalathil S. J. priest; Swami Agnivesh, activist; and Kavita Srivastava, activist in Right to Food at Seminar Rooms II & III, Kamaladevi Complex, India International Centre (IIC), 6 p.m.

Talk: "Acupuncture - Use, Benefits and Risks" by Dr. Anil Kumar, a visually challenged acupuncturist at Casuarina Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Music: Sitar recital by Mayank Raina, accompanied by Bivakar Choudhury on the tabla and Hindustani classical vocal recital by Rahul Prakash, accompanied by Anand Kumar on the tabla and Lalit Sisodia on the harmonium at Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Music: Students of Pravaha, an academy of Indian classical music and dance, will showcase their talent in a dance presentation titled "Katha Kathak - The Journey of Kathak" at Triveni Auditorium, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 5:30 p.m.

Exhibition: A group art show by Kushala Vora, Sangita Maity and Shruti Mahajan at Shrine Empire Gallery, D 395, Defence Colony, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

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

Timings

DELHI

SATURDAY, JAN. 11

RISE

07:16

SET

17:43

RISE

18:21

SET

07:38

SUNDAY, JAN. 12

RISE

07:16

SET

17:44

RISE

19:28

SET

08:32

MONDAY, JAN. 13

RISE

07:16

SET

17:45

RISE

20:35

SET

09:21

Delhi Weather

max

min

Delhi City

17

05

Safdarjang

17

05

Palam

16

05

Delhi Palam Today

17°C

Moderate to dense fog is likely. Chilly cool moderate winds are likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

18°C

A marginal change in day/night temperature is likely. Dry cool day with partly cloudy sky is likely.

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THE HINDU

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CM Khattar counters his Home Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday said the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) remained under the CM's charge during the terms of Bansil Lal and Devi Lal, an assertion that appears to counter the Home Minister's claim over the department.

Mr. Khattar, however, sought to play down the row. "It is not a big issue. It is a technical issue," he told reporters in Panchkula.

BJP's minority cell members in M.P. consider quitting en masse

165 members quit party in Khargone district over CAA, NRC

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Members of the BJP's minority cell in Madhya Pradesh have invited party workers to a meeting on Saturday to decide whether they should quit en masse over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC).

"Whenever there is something wrong, you should speak up," said Javed Baig, the cell's media in-charge. "The party has ignored us and the community has threatened boycott for supporting it. Where should we

Over two dozen AMU students booked for 'inappropriate slogans'

Student claims the slogans at a solidarity march for JNU were generic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Over two dozen unidentified students of Aligarh Muslim University were booked on Thursday for allegedly raising inappropriate slogans against U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The students had formed a human chain in solidarity with JNU students and teachers who were attacked by masked men on Sunday.

Anil Kumar, SHO, Civil Lines, said 25-30 unnamed students have been booked under Section 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion). He said the police had collected video evidence.

A student requesting anonymity said the slogans were generic and didn't make any personal comment on any



AMU students during a protest against the CAA. ■ FILE PHOTO

political figure.

In another development, citing a Allahabad High Court ruling, the university authorities have issued notices that disallow any protest within 100 metres of the Administrative Block and Vice Chancellor's lodge. It effectively means the university administration doesn't want students to protest at the university gate.

"From a protest against the CAA and NRC, it is becoming a protest against the VC and the Registrar. We could see the involvement of

vested interests among students. The students could protest at Duck Point, the designated spot for such protests," said an official source. Duck Point is situated near the canteen and is well inside the campus. A section of teachers who are protesting against the CAA assemble at this spot.

'Assessing situation'

Student leaders said they are assessing the situation and would take a call on how to take the protests forward. "Right now, we are protesting at Bab-e-Syed, but there is no sit-in protest right now," said a student who is actively involved in the protest.

On Friday, a section of students organised a candle march in the memory of Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani.

No screening of Padukone's film in Aligarh

Hindutva organisation puts up posters warning theatres not to show *Chhapaak*

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

After a Hindutva organisation put posters on hoardings in front of theatres, Deepika Padukone-starrer *Chhapaak* was not screened in theatres across Aligarh on Friday.

The posters written in big font with *chetavani* (caution) written on top said that those who would try to screen *Chhapaak* should get their "insurance" done. "*Na dekhunga, na dekhnedunga*" (won't watch, won't allow anybody to watch) it declared. The poster further criticised Ms. Padukone for

showing concern for only one side affected by violence in Jawaharlal Nehru University on January 5.

With names and photos of Pankaj Pandit and Deepak Sharma of Akhand Bharat Hindu Sena printed at the bottom, the poster said Ms. Padukone had thrown acid on the face of nationalism.

Anil Samania, Circle Officer III, Aligarh, told reporters that security was provided to the theatres. "But theatre owners have decided against screening the film. If they decide to screen, we will provide security," he said.

Aligarh has four prominent theatres and at least two, Meenakshi and Great Value Mall had put posters of the film. However, according to local sources, they were replaced with *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*.

SP protest

Samajwadi Party members protested against the move. Ranjeet Chaudhary, district president, Chhatra Sabha, the student wing of the party, said, "The film is about an acid attack victim. On one hand this government talks of 'beti bachao, beti padhao',

BJP's Raj Bala Malik is new Chandigarh Mayor

Defeats Cong. candidate Gurbax Rawat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Raj Bala Malik of the Bharatiya Janata Party was elected as the new Mayor of Chandigarh Municipal Corporation after she defeated Congress councillor Gurbax Rawat on Friday.

While elections to the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation are held every five years, but election to the post of Mayor is held every year.

Out of the total 27 votes, Ms. Malik secured 22 to win the post. Mr. Rawat got five votes, the Returning Officer said.

The Chandigarh Municipal Corporation has 26 elected councillors and nine nominated members. Out of the elected members, 20 are of the BJP, which has a majority in the corporation. The Congress has five councillors while one councillor is from the Shiromani Akali Dal and the other is an Inde-



Raj Bala Malik

pendent. The nominated members do not vote in a mayoral election. Member of Parliament Kirron Kher also has a vote being an ex-officio member of the House.

Mayor's priority list

Ms. Malik, who had been a Mayor in 2012 as well, said that upgrading the city's old sewage and water lines were on her priority list.

BJP's Ravi Kant Sharma was elected as Senior Deputy Mayor while Jagtar Singh, also of the BJP, was elected as Deputy Mayor.

AAP protests against tariff hike

Punjab has the highest power rates in the country: Mann

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Chandigarh police used water cannons to disperse Aam Aadmi Party leaders and workers who were marching towards the Punjab Chief Minister's residence to protest against the "high" power tariffs in the State on Friday.

The protesters wanted to meet the Chief Minister and submit a memorandum, demanding a rollback of the hiked power tariffs. As protesters marched towards the Chief Minister's official residence, they were stopped at



AAP protest in Chandigarh on Friday. ■ AKHILESH KUMAR

the barricades by the police using water cannons. The police said the protesters attempted to jump over the barricades to reach near the CM's residence.

Power tariffs for domestic

Call for Punjab bandh against CAA, NRC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Sikh radical outfit Dal Khalsa and Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) have given a call for a complete "shutdown" in Punjab on January 25, against the BJP government at the Centre for implementing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed National Register for Citizens.

'RSS agenda'

"Dal Khalsa and Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) have called for a complete shutdown in Punjab on the occasion of India's 70th Republic Day. Punjab will remain shut on January 25 (as January 26 is a Sunday) to register its protest against the RSS agenda of Hindu Rashtra," said Simranjit Singh Mann and Harpal Singh Cheema, chief's of SAD (Amritsar) and Dal Khalsa respectively, at a joint press conference in Jalandhar on Friday.

No tree will be cut for memorial, says CM

Uddhav says more trees will be planted at Thackeray memorial site in Aurangabad instead

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE
Not a single tree will be felled at the site of the proposed memorial to Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray in Aurangabad, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said on Friday.

Speaking on the concluding day of his tour of Marathwada, Mr. Thackeray said, "Let me make it clear that not a single tree will be cut in the [in the 17-acre Priyadarshini garden] where the memorial is to come up. This park has a variety of important tree species like eucalyptus ... Instead, we shall be planting more trees like jambul and magnolia to enrich the biodiversity of this place," said the CM, who visited the garden and surveyed the site of the memorial and its plans.

Tweet triggers uproar
Last month, the garden became a hotbed of controversy after Amruta Fadnavis, the wife of former chief mi-



Site visit: Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Industries Minister Subhash Desai and officials survey the plan of the proposed memorial in Aurangabad on Friday. • TWITTER

nister Devendra Fadnavis, tweeted about media reports that the memorial would necessitate the felling of 1,000-odd trees.

Priyadarshini garden, located in the heart of the city's CIDCO area, is a popular 'green zone' for residents and home to several species

of birds and rare insects. This habitat consists of more than 8,700 trees. Ms. Fadnavis's tweet triggered protests by local resi-

dents and environmental organisations, who vociferously opposed any tree-felling action and accused the Sena of "doublespeak" on environment.

Aarey opposition
The Sena had vehemently opposed the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government's decision to remove trees at Mumbai's Aarey colony to make way for a Metro car shed. One of the first decisions Mr. Thackeray took on becoming Chief Minister was to halt work on the Metro car shed at Aarey. Hence, the Sena, which controls the Aurangabad Municipal Corporation, was accused of hypocrisy after reports of felling trees for the Thackeray memorial surfaced. This had prompted Sena leaders in the city, including former MP Chandrakant Khaire and Nandkumar Ghodele, to issue hasty assurances that Mr. Thackeray had instructed them that not a single tree was to be cut.

Programme at Raj Bhavan by sacked office-bearers irks govt.

Can't call it govt. event, says Minority Development Minister

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI
An invitation printed by the Punjabi Sahitya Academy (PSA) for a Gurbani recitation at Raj Bhavan has upset the State Minority Development Department, which has removed all office-bearers of the academy.

Department secretary Shyam Tagde has written to Raj Bhavan officials, saying the academy has not sought government permission for the January 20 programme. The letter, which said the event has not been organised by the PSA, comes after office-bearers of the organisation refused to acknowledge the new government's decision to remove them from their positions, to which they were appointed by the previous government. According to the invitation, Rajan Khanna, executive chairman, PSA, the State government has organised

The government has cancelled all the appointments made by the previous government to all academies

NAWAB MALIK
Minority Development Minister

the programme at Raj Bhavan. Minority Development minister Nawab Malik, when asked about the letter, said, "[Mr. Khanna] has been removed from the position by the department. How can he conduct the event at the Raj Bhavan and call it a government programme? When this came to our notice, we informed Raj Bhavan about it." He said they were left with no option but to send the letter. "The government has cancelled all the appointments made by the previous government to all

academies, including Urdu, Hindi, Sindhi and Gujarati. There will be fresh appointments. Therefore, we thought it was important to inform Raj Bhavan," he said. The PSA was set up by the previous government in October 2018. Mr. Khanna said he has not received any communication regarding his removal from the academy. "We have all the permissions from the previous government and former minority development minister. The programme was fixed a long time ago. Whether it is a government programme or not, we will go ahead with it," he told *The Hindu*. He said Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari will also attend the event. Sources in the Raj Bhavan said they will have to check whether they have received any communication from the department.



Ekbote refuses to depose before inquiry commission

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE

Right-wing leader Milind Ekbote, an accused in the Bhima-Koregaon violence case, appeared before an inquiry commission here on Friday but did not depose, citing changed political circumstances, among other things. A commission headed by Justice (retired) Jai Narayan Patel is conducting an inquiry into the violence that broke out on January 1, 2018.

Following his plea, Mr. Ekbote was discharged by the commission. He submitted an application saying the police investigation was yet to be over and the charge sheet had not been filed, hence he would not like to depose. "One of the accusations against me is spreading communal disharmony ... which is a false and politically motivated allegation," the application said. Further, "recent political developments in Maharashtra have indicated that whatever honest and impartial investigations carried out ... by police authorities are likely to be "obliterated and /revisited" to ensure "safe passage for different hues of Marxists," he said. He was apparently referring to the BJP losing power in the State to a coalition of the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress.

Pune's Shia community stages protest against U.S. drone strike

Protesters condemn Iranian general Soleimani's killing

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

The city's Shia community, along with other minority community outfits and political organisations, staged an anti-U.S. demonstration on Friday, protesting the death of Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq on January 3. The demonstration, condemning the killing of the 62-year-old head of Iran's Quds Force, was also backed by the Bhim Army. While a rally was scheduled, it was cancelled owing to the Pune Police denying organisers permission. "Our request for a rally was turned down by the Bund Garden police on grounds of law and order. The police said that Section 144 of the CrPC was in force," said Anjum Inamdar, founder of the Mulinvasi Muslim Manch. The protest was instead held on the pre-

mises of Imambara, a century-old Shia shrine in Pune Cantonment. **'Unlawful assassination'** Hundreds of demonstrators, including minority community members and Shia clerics, carried placards condemning the "unlawful and cowardly assassination of Gen. Soleimani by the Trump administration". Shouts of 'Long Live Qasem Soleimani' rent the air, along with slogans denouncing the U.S. "The Shia and Sunni communities stand united in the protest against Soleimani's unlawful murder by the American administration of President Donald Trump. The protest saw the participation of local Iranians in Pune, the Shia community and people from different religious faiths and communities who collectively expressed their sorrow at Maj. Gen. Soleimani's

death," Mr. Inamdar said. Claiming that Soleimani had helped India on a number of occasions, Yusuf Baig, president of the Shia Brothers of Pune, said the commander had led an attack on Daesh/IS militants in Tikrit in Iraq and had helped free 40 Indian nurses held captive by the terrorists. "Furthermore, he had raised his voice against Kulbhusan Jadhav's indictment on espionage and illegal confinement in Pakistan. Today, not only Iran, Iraq and Syria, but the western world ought to be indebted to Gen. Soleimani for being the scourge of IS ... his murder is a setback to Indo-Iranian ties and has made the Middle East and the world a more volatile place, thanks to the recklessness of the Trump administration," Mr. Baig said. He said the protest was to strengthen ties between India and Iran.



Protesters listen to a speech during a gathering in Pune condemning the U.S. drone strike that killed Irani commander Qasem Soleimani, on Friday. • JIGNESH MISTRY

Flocking to Goa



Winter visitors: Migratory seagulls are seen arriving along the Mandovi river at Betim in Goa on Thursday. • ATISH POMBURFEKAR

Sulking Congress minister takes charge

Wadettiwar gets Relief and Rehabilitation Department in addition to other portfolios

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Five days after being unreachable, and amid rumours about his displeasure over the portfolios allocated to him, senior Congress minister Vijay Wadettiwar took charge of his departments on Friday saying he has no complaints. To pacify him, he will now also be given charge of the Relief and Rehabilitation Department, which was allocated earlier to the Congress but later given to a Sena minister. Mr. Wadettiwar was assigned the OBC, SEBC, VJNT Welfare Department and other smaller departments, and was said to be unhappy with the portfolios. He had



Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar at the swearing in ceremony in Mumbai last month. • FILE PHOTO

neither taken charge of the departments nor had he attended the one-day special Assembly session. State Congress president Balasaheb Thorat visited

handed over to him. The Minister said, "I was never upset with my party. I was absent in the Assembly session because I had family commitments. I had informed Thoratji about it." In the previous Assembly, Mr. Wadettiwar was chosen as the Leader of Opposition in the last term after erstwhile LoP Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil quit the Congress to join Bharatiya Janata Party. He was instrumental in ensuring the victory of the lone Congress MP from Maharashtra, in the Chandrapur Lok Sabha constituency. Known to be a mass leader in Chandrapur district, Mr. Wadettiwar was earlier not even on the initial list of ministers prepared by the Congress.

Will seek info on man held in Lankesh murder case: Deshmukh

Home Minister says will look for links to the killings of rationalists Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Police will seek information from its Karnataka counterpart whether Rushikesh Devdikar, arrested in the Gauri Lankesh murder case, was also linked to the killings of rationalists Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said here on Friday. Personnel of the Karnataka Special Investigation Team, set up to probe Lankesh's killing, arrested Mr. Devdikar alias Murali (44), from Katras near Dhanbad in Jharkhand, on Thursday evening. Mr. Devdikar is accused number 18 in the case, according to the Karnataka police. An official of the SIT said Devdikar was



Rushikesh Devdikar was arrested in the Gauri Lankesh murder case by the Karnataka Police on Thursday. • FILE PHOTO

suspected to be part of the conspiracy to kill the journalist. "We will seek information from the Karnataka government on whether Devdikar has any links with the murders of Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare," Mr. Deshmukh



said here. While Lankesh was killed on September 5, 2017 in front of her house in Bengaluru, Dabholkar was shot dead on August 20, 2013 in Pune while he was on a morning walk. Pansare was shot at on February 16, 2015 in

Kolhapur and succumbed to his injuries on February 20. The Dabholkar case is being probed by the CBI, while a Maharashtra Police SIT is investigating the killing of Pansare. Meanwhile, the owner of the shop in Aurangabad, which Devdikar had taken on rent for a couple of years, said he used to sell Ayurveda products there. **'Sold Patanjali products'** Jagdish Kulkarni, owner of the shop located in Aurangabad's M2 area, said, "Devdikar used to sell Patanjali products in the shop. He ran the business for about two years between 2014 and 2016 and would pay his rent on time. Beyond that we had no interaction," he said. Yeshwant Shukla, who had

rented his house in Aurangabad to Mr. Devdikar, remembers him as a man of few words. "We rented the house to Devdikar in February 2016. He wanted a house on the ground floor for his elderly parents. At the time of finalising the deal, he stayed here for about one-and-a-half months at a stretch, his longest at this place," he said. "Devdikar then shifted to Solapur, but his parents continued to stay at the house till April 2019. He used to visit his parents once in a while just for a day," Mr. Shukla said. Mr. Devdikar's parents later shifted to Mumbai, where another son resided. "Rushikesh's involvement in the Gauri Lankesh case has come as a shock to all of us," he said.

Violence no solution, peace required for progress: Naidu

Burn ideas, not physical things, says Vice President

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu said on Friday that peace is a prerequisite for achieving progress as it has been proven that violence does not bring any solutions. He also disapproved of arson and damage to property and vehicles, saying that if someone wants to oppose any measure, they should "burn the idea" behind it instead of engaging in physical violence. His statements come in the wake of violent protests in the country against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). He was speaking at the inauguration of the 100th All India Oriental Conference being hosted by Kavikula-

guru Kalidas Sanskrit University here. "We have to see to it that we as a nation develop positive attitude, leave negativism, stop affliction, destruction and move towards construction ... that should be the attitude of everybody," he said. "After all it is your own country. Burning a bus, burning a train and burning vehicles ... you will have to burn the idea not the physical things. And violence cannot bring any solution, it has been proven," he said. "Peace is very much required for progress and if we have tension, then you cannot pay attention. So we must all come together to create a peaceful co-existence, peaceful country and peaceful world so that the entire humanity can live happily, not only with prosperity," he said.



IN BRIEF

A.P CM Jagan appears before CBI court

HYDERABAD
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy, who is facing a batch of quid pro quo cases, appeared before the CBI special court here on Friday. This was the first time Mr. Reddy appeared before the CBI court in his capacity as Chief Minister of A.P.

Koran consignment to be auctioned in Kochi

KOCHI
A consignment of the Holy Koran weighing 25 tonnes sent from Saudi Arabia six months ago is going to be auctioned at the International Transshipment Container Terminal here after the importer, a College in Malappuram, expressed inability to pay ₹8 lakh customs duty, sources said. PTI

SC rejects appeal against demolition of resorts

It upheld 2013 Kerala High Court ban on construction

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed appeals by Kapico Kerala Resorts Private Limited against a Kerala High Court decision banning the construction of resorts and removal of structures on backwater islands on Vembanad lake in Alappuzha district of the State.

A Bench of Justices Rohinton F. Nariman, Aniruddha Bose and V. Ramasubramanian confirmed the High Court decision that the constructions violated coastal and environmental regulations.

The 35-page judgment was authored by Justice Ramasubramanian. The case concerned the development of resorts, including 54 villas, on two



The Kapico Kerala Resorts Limited's property in Vembanad Lake built violating coastal guidelines. • THULASI KAKKAT

backwater islands of Vettilla Thuruthu and Nedyathuruthu on Vembanad lake. In 2013, the High Court allowed petitions filed by conservationists, societies, trade unions and fishermen against the resort.

It held that the action initiated by the authorities under the Land Conservancy Act for removal of encroachments should continue.

The court had then ordered the Centre or the coastal authorities to ensure that the encroachments are removed in three months.

The High Court had also

decided that the project proponent for Nedyathuruthu, Kapico, and that for Vettilla Thuruthu, Vaamika, should not carry out any further constructions.

The court had also ordered the government to remove the unauthorised structures put by Vaamika and take action in regard to the unnumbered buildings on Vettilla Thuruthu.

The High Court had later dismissed review petitions filed against the 2013 judgment and, instead, ordered the demolition of the unauthorised constructions.

Fishers' fight ends on a happy note

SAM PAUL A.
ALAPPUZHA

The family of Sailan K.K. was among several people who were making a living by fishing with stake nets near Nedyathuruthu island in Vembanad lake till 2007. In 2007, the 11.5-acre island was bought by Kapico Kerala Resort Pvt Ltd. It soon started constructing villas there.

The project, however, changed the life of fisher families in the area after 13 licensed stake nets were removed for the construction of the resort.

"We used to fish using stake nets before the construction of the resort. For several decades, it was our main source of income. We lost our livelihood after the nets were dislodged for

the resort. We are delighted our fight against the illegal resort ended on a happy note," says Mr. Sailan.

After the families lost their livelihood, K.R. Ratheesh, a relative of Sailan, moved the Cherthala munsif court in 2008, demanding that the villas constructed in violation of the Coastal Zone Regulation (CRZ) Act on the island be demolished. However, the court dismissed the petition.

After the Cherthala sub court issued a stop-memo to Kapico in 2010, the legal battle reached the Kerala High Court.

First, the High Court ordered the demolition in 2013. On Friday, the Supreme Court upheld the High Court verdict.

'Congress pursuing vote-bank politics'

It is misleading the country: Bhyrappa

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MYSURU

Kannada litterateur and Saraswati Samman winner S.L. Bhyrappa has accused the Congress and other Opposition parties of pursuing "vote-bank politics" over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and "misleading" the country on the issue.

Speaking to presspersons at his residence in the city on Friday, Mr. Bhyrappa said the Congress was adopting the "divide and rule policy of the British", who had created a rift between Hindus and Muslims during the freedom struggle. Mr. Bhyrappa accused former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of following the British policy of dividing the Hindu society on caste basis and consolidating Muslim votes.

'Illegal migration'
"The Congress allowed and encouraged the illegal migration of Muslims from the



S.L. Bhyrappa

then East Pakistan into Assam. This did not stop even after the creation of Bangladesh, and even the Left parties, which ruled West Bengal for 23 years, allowed illegal migration to their State, from where the migrants dispersed to the rest of India," Mr. Bhyrappa alleged.

He claimed that the enactment of CAA had rattled the Congress and the Left parties. On Muslims being left out of the CAA, Mr. Bhyrappa said there were many Muslim-majority countries "where they [Muslim migrants] can go".

Capital issue: women lead massive protest in Vijayawada

Police accused of misbehaving with protesters

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Tension prevailed on M.G. Road in Vijayawada on Friday with the police swooping down on women who were protesting against the Andhra Pradesh government's plans to shift the capital to Visakhapatnam.

In response to a call given by the Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti JAC, women gathered in huge numbers near PWD Grounds and tried to proceed towards the Benz Circle. The police took them into preventive custody saying that Section 144, which prohibits the assembly of



In it together: Women protesting against the government's proposal to shift the capital out of Amaravati. • V. RAJU

four or more people in an area, was in vogue.

The women, wearing black saris and dress, assembled near Sub Collector's of-

fice, Civil Courts and other places located close to Bandar Road. Despite restrictions, the women took out procession and squatted on

NCW takes cognisance of protesters' 'shabby' treatment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA

The simmering issue of the proposed shifting of the capital out of Amaravati to Visakhapatnam has evoked strong reactions from various quarters.

Responding to the situation, Chairperson of the National Commission for Women Rekha Sharma

tweeted that the Commission had taken *suo motu* cognisance of the alleged reports of women brutally beaten and throttled by the police during their protest in Vijayawada.

Ms. Sharma said the commission would deput a fact-finding team to probe the incident.

medians and rope parties of the police to proceed towards Benz Circle.

The police had a tough time in handling the situa-

tion. The vehicles lined up to shift the women who were taken into preventive custody were not adequate. A couple of them tried to deflate the tyres of a police van. The women also tried to take away the ignition keys of the vehicles. At a point of time, the women jumped from the police vans and rejoined the protests.

'No respect for women'
TDP leaders Gadde Anuradha, Divya Vani and others were arrested.

Ms. Divyavani alleged that the police misbehaved with her. The police did not show any respect for the women. They bundled the women into buses and vans forcibly. She had a wordy duel with the police on duty.

Colourful start



Song and dance: People taking out a procession to mark the beginning of the three-day education arts festival of the Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. • S. GOPAKUMAR

Maradu demolition to go down as record for future

Implosion will be recorded live; engineers will monitor all aspects on a minute by minute basis

K.A. MARTIN
KOCHI

All aspects of the demolition of the four residential apartment complexes at Maradu will be recorded minutely for future generations to study and learn from.

"It will not be a simple act of bringing down massive structures, but an exercise that will profit future generations," R. Venugopal, Deputy Chief Controller of Explosives, Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), said here on Friday.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on the eve of the first-ever such exercise in Kerala, he said the process would be recorded live and sent to the control room in the Maradu municipal office complex, where engineers from various agencies would moni-



Ready to go down: The two towers of Alfa Serene and H2O Holy Faith, which will be demolished on January 11. • H. VIBHU

tor every aspect minute by minute.

The recordings are being done with unmanned cameras installed by the PESO on the premises of Le Meridien Hotel and BPCL's Kochi office. They will be in action from two hours before the

blasts and until one hour after the event.

The cameras will catch every aspect of the blasts, the most significant being the angle of pull or the angle at which the buildings will collapse. The timing of the blasts, flying debris, the

height of debris pile, and dust accumulation will be recorded and scrutinised. Scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras will study tremors from the blasts. Pollution Control Board (PCB) scientists will examine the environmental impact.

'Exemplary cooperation'
Mr. Venugopal said engineers worked 24 hours a day for a month to see that everything was ready. It was a great example of cooperation, he said. The Central and State agencies worked closely. Cadre services and engineers of agencies as different as local self-governments, the Public Works Department, and Kochi Metro put their heads together.

Lakhs of tonnes of explo-

sives had been detonated under the PESO's supervision, but bringing down massive building complexes would be the first-of-its-kind operation taken up by the agency, he said.

"We have gone through the plan several times. The emergency plans, explosives calculations, ensuring four-layer fencing of the pillars, pre-weakening of all no-load-bearing walls, fixtures, plumbing, and stairways were part of the work. Four-layered fencing, with chain-link fencing, including the covering with geotextile fabric to contain fragments scattered by the blasts, and the covering of the surrounding buildings to prevent damage from flying fragments, have been ensured," he said.

Lakhs of tonnes of explo-

All set for waterbird census in A.P.

Migratory and resident birds in Godavari mangroves to be documented

T. APPALA NAIDU
KAKINADA

The annual bird census will commence in the Corniga Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS) and surrounding wetlands in the Godavari mangrove cover on the east coast from Saturday.

The wildlife management authorities are all set to carry out the two-day census of the avian species, assessing the threats and challenges being faced by the water birds.

"Indian Skimmer, a waterbird species, has started visiting the Godavari mangroves for three years. The species can be sighted only in three places in the country, including the Chambal river in Central India. The census will document such incredible findings of the avian life surviving in the Godavari mangroves," Divisional Forest Officer (Kakinada-Territorial) Nandan Salariya told *The Hindu*.



Safe habitat: Indian Skimmers in the Godavari mangroves in East Godavari. • FILE PHOTO

The conservation status of the Indian Skimmer is 'vulnerable', according to the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

Ms. Salariya said: "The census aims at documentation of migratory and resident birds to be able to prepare a better management plan of the complex ecosystem that supports the waterbird spe-

cies. It will give us a picture of its present state and results of the conservation being done in the wildlife sanctuary and outside."

According to Forest department authorities, at least 50 personnel – research scholars, volunteers, and bird watchers – will conduct the census. The prime focus will be on the 235.7 sq km area under the CWL and Kumbabhisekham site in the

Godavari mangroves that serves as the safe habitat for many bird species.

Bird count

Indian Bird Conservation Network State co-ordinator (Andhra Pradesh) K. Mrutyunjaya Rao is the leading ornithologist coordinating the census.

The entire crew will be divided into the 14 groups for carrying out the bird count.

Government college students in Karnataka to get free laptops

More than one lakh first-year students will benefit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has decided to give free laptops to over a lakh students of first grade government colleges from Sunday.

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa will launch the free laptop distribution programme on the day of Swami Vivekananda Jayanthi at the Sri Kanteerava Jayanthi Stadium, Bengaluru, by symbolically presenting laptops to a few students.

Later, laptops will be distributed to all first-year degree students at government first grade colleges.

Addressing presspersons on Friday, Deputy Chief Mi-

nister C.N. Ashwath Narayan, who also holds the Higher Education and IT/BT portfolios, said a total of 1.09 lakh students would get laptops. The estimated expenditure is ₹300 crore.

Empowerment centres
He said youth empowerment centres, one in each district, would be established in lead government first grade colleges.

The centres will function under the guidance of a committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner and with senior officers of 21 government departments as members.

These centres will disse-

minate information on job openings, opportunities in higher education, scholarships, education loans, schemes for the youth, hostel facilities, and employability-related issues.

Mr. Yediyurappa will inaugurate the Bengaluru centre on Sunday. The other district centres will be inaugurated on the same day.

In the second phase, centres will be established in all 224 Assembly constituencies, he said.

The Chief Minister will also inaugurate the programme 'Arivina Daari' on career and skill development, which will be telecast on DD Chandana.

IN BRIEF



'Environmentalism must be a political passion'

BHOPAL
Congress MP and former Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh on Friday said environmentalism must be a political passion. Speaking at the Bhopal Literature Festival, Mr. Ramesh said: "Of course, we need faster economic growth, but the matter of environment was a matter of livelihoods."

Teacher jailed for making Dalit student clean waste

NAMAKKAL
A government schoolteacher, R.Vijayalakshmi, who made a class II Dalit student clean human waste in 2015, was on Friday sentenced to five years' imprisonment under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, by a special court in Namakkal. The judge also imposed a penalty of ₹1,000 on her.

Akhil Gogoi remanded in judicial custody

GUWAHATI
A special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday remanded activist Akhil Gogoi in judicial custody for 14 days. The police arrested him at Jorhat in eastern Assam soon after the violent protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in December 2019. He was handed over to the NIA after a case was filed for his alleged links with the CPI(M).

Punjab police seize Chinese-made drones

CHANDIGARH
The Punjab police on Friday seized two highly sophisticated Chinese-made drones, and arrested an Army naik and two smugglers, allegedly a part of a narco-terror module, involved in smuggling weapons and narcotics across the Indo-Pakistan border.

ED attaches assets of Kochhar couple

Flat, cash and assets worth ₹74.54 cr. seized in money laundering case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹78 crore of ICICI Bank's former chief executive officer and managing director Chanda Kochhar, and that of her husband Deepak Kochhar's companies in connection with a money laundering case. The properties include a Mumbai flat, some seized cash and assets valued at ₹74.54 crore, held in the name of Mr. Kochhar's company Nupower Renewables Private Limited [earlier known as NuPower Renewables Limited (NRL)] and its subsidiaries, including Windfarm Projects, located

in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

The ED alleged that Ms. Kochhar and her family acquired the apartment in Mumbai, owned by one of the Videocon Group companies, by taking over the company through her family trust, at a nominal price by creating book entries.

The agency's probe is based on an FIR registered by the CBI to probe allegations of quid pro quo in sanctioning loans amounting to ₹1,875 crore to the companies of Videocon Group chief Venugopal Dhoot.

It was alleged that Mr. Dhoot paid ₹64 crore to NRL. The amount, paid out of a loan of ₹300 crore sanc-



Long probe: In March 2019, the ED had conducted searches in Mumbai and Aurangabad in connection with the case. ■PTI

tioned to Videocon International Electronics Limited, was transferred by Videocon Industries Limited on September 8, 2009, just one day after the disbursement, the ED said.

The ED had recorded the statements of Ms. Kochhar, Mr. Dhoot and several others involved in the case. In March 2019, it had conducted searches in Mumbai and Aurangabad.

MoD approves rules of business for DMA

General Bipin Rawat will head the newly-constituted department

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has approved the rules of business for the newly created Department of Military Affairs (DMA), headed by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), defence sources said on Friday.

"The DMA, headed by Gen. Bipin Rawat, will have two Joint Secretaries, 13 Deputy Secretaries, 25 Under Secretaries and 22 Section officers," a defence source said.

The rules of business have been approved by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and would be notified as a gazette, another official added.

The training policy, most of the training establishments and cadre management of the Services would be under the purview of the DMA, another official said,



General Bipin Rawat

adding that defence diplomacy of the neighbourhood countries would also be under the CDS.

Similarly, deputations to the training establishments, such as the National Defence Academy, the Indian Military Academy, the Officers Training Academy and the Defence Services Staff College would also be under the

CDS. "Cadre review of Junior Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks will be looked after by the CDS," the official said.

Two studies on the cadre review of officers and JCOs and ORs were carried out by the Army when Gen. Rawat was its chief.

However, they were awaiting necessary approvals from the government for implementation.

On December 30, the government notified the DMA creation, with the CDS also as a Secretary in the MoD.

The DMA is the fifth department in the MoD – the others being the Department of Defence, the Department of Defence Production, the Department of Defence Research and Development and the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare.

The Services have been

brought under the ambit of the DMA, in addition to the Territorial Army and works relating to the three Services and procurement exclusive to the Services, except capital acquisitions.

The mandate

Defence imports and procurements would be under the the Department of Defence headed by the Defence Secretary, officials stated.

The DMA's mandate includes promoting jointness in procurement, training and staffing for the Services; facilitating a restructuring of the military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands, and promoting the use of indigenous equipment.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Saturday: Cold day conditions likely over west Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, east Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim. Dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim, Odisha, Assam & Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.6	25.0	12.0	Kozhikode	—	34.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	—	24.0	12.0	Kurnool	—	33.0	21.0
Aizawl	—	17.0	9.0	Lucknow	—	18.0	7.0
Allahabad	—	21.0	8.0	Madurai	—	32.0	21.0
Bengaluru	—	29.0	18.0	Mangaluru	—	34.0	22.0
Bhopal	—	—	—	Mumbai	—	32.0	19.0
Bhubaneswar	—	26.0	16.0	Mysuru	—	30.0	18.0
Chandigarh	—	17.0	5.0	New Delhi	—	17.0	5.0
Chennai	—	30.0	20.0	Patna	—	17.0	13.0
Coimbatore	—	31.0	20.0	Port Blair	—	30.0	24.0
Dehradun	—	21.0	5.0	Puducherry	—	31.0	19.0
Gangtok	—	10.0	5.0	Pune	—	26.0	13.0
Goa	—	33.0	22.0	Raipur	—	23.0	13.0
Guwahati	1.6	24.0	11.0	Ranchi	—	20.0	7.0
Hubballi	—	28.0	20.0	Shillong	—	15.0	5.0
Hyderabad	—	27.0	19.0	Shimla	—	18.0	-1.0
Imphal	—	19.0	9.0	Srinagar	—	7.0	-3.0
Jaipur	—	20.0	5.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.0	22.0
Kochi	—	32.0	24.0	Tiruchi	—	32.0	21.0
Kohima	—	15.0	5.0	Vijayawada	—	30.0	20.0
Kolkata	0.5	22.0	13.0	Visakhapatnam	—	29.0	20.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	29	15	38	—	98	103
Bengaluru	9	69	49	107	—	—
Chennai	31	38	38	110	—	—
Delhi	13	169	82	350	217	—
Hyderabad	3	57	40	168	131	—
Kolkata	26	85	22	257	205	—
Lucknow	—	48	75	313	48	—
Mumbai	18	57	23	123	114	—
Pune	89	29	83	172	129	—
Visakhapatnam	9	30	61	—	73	86

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease



Up in flames: The Jaipur-bound bus collided with a truck near Chibbramau late on Friday. ■PTI

Several feared dead as U.P. bus catches fire after collision

At least 43 people were on board; 21 manage to escape

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT LUCKNOW

Several people were feared dead after a bus collided with a truck and caught fire in Kannauj district of Uttar Pradesh late on Friday.

While officials are yet to declare the number of dead, at least 43 persons were said to be travelling in the bus bound for Jaipur, when the

accident occurred near Chibbramau.

Twenty-one passengers escaped from the bus, and were rushed to hospital, District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar said.

"The bus collided with a truck and caught fire. Some managed to escape but others were [trapped] inside," he said.

The fire was brought under control, he said.

Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation Managing Director Raj Shekhar said the vehicle was a private bus.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has rushed his Cabinet colleague Ram Naresh Agnihotri to the spot.

(With PTI inputs)

Centre gets notice on plea for population control

Petition calls for measures like two-child norm

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from the government to a petition for population control measures, including a two-child norm.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, issued notice to the government on the petition filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay challenging the Delhi High Court's



Equal opportunities: The plea noted that without population control, citizens cannot be guaranteed their rights. ■REUTERS

dismissal of his PIL petition seeking urgent steps to control the country's rising population.

The petition said, "Population explosion is more

dangerous than bomb explosion".

The High Court in September 2019, refused to intervene, saying it was up to the legislature to enact laws.

Panna miners get ₹1.89 cr. for two diamonds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA PANNA

Two miners, Brajesh Upadhyay and Radheshyam, who found a diamond each in the Panna mines of Madhya Pradesh, have auctioned it at a price of ₹1.89 crore in a State-organised auction, an official said.

The 29.46 and 18 carat diamonds found by the duo were auctioned for ₹1.16 crore and ₹72.61 lakh respectively, said Panna diamond officer R.K. Pandey.

Nirbhaya case: plea calls for organ donation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday dismissed a plea by an NGO, RACO, requesting a meeting with the four death row convicts in the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case, to persuade them to donate their organs.

Additional Sessions Judge Satish Kumar Arora dismissed the plea on the grounds of "being devoid of any merit" and the the applicants having no locus to meet the convicts. The court also noted: "As per record available, two of the four accused have moved petitions before SC."



Eloquently reticent

While ruling against indefinite Internet bans, SC fails to decide on the validity of J&K curbs

If enunciating the law and laying down norms for the exercise of executive power were the only functions of a constitutional court, the Supreme Court’s verdict on the prolonged lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is indeed admirable. However, the apex court is also a court of justice, one duty-bound to enforce fundamental rights. It cannot limit itself to opinions on the extent to which those rights can be restricted. It has to give effect to the principles it enunciates and rule whether the state violated the fundamental rights of its citizens. The disappointing aspect of the verdict is the court’s failure to give a ruling on the validity of the government’s actions. It fails to hold the government to account for the manner in which it exercised its powers. It states categorically that an indefinite ban on the Internet is impermissible, but fails to direct the restoration of services. When it says Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure “cannot be used as a tool to prevent the legitimate expression of opinion or grievance or exercise of any democratic rights”, it makes a comment worthy of being treasured in these times of frequent resort to that section. Yet, the court does not go beyond directing the authorities to review all their orders and restrictions forthwith.

There are indeed valuable takeaways from the judgment. A key holding is that the use of the Internet as a medium for free speech as well as for trade and commerce is constitutionally protected. It also lays down that any reasonable restriction on fundamental rights, be it an Internet ban or a Section 144 order, will have to survive the test of proportionality, that is, the restriction should be proportionate to the necessity for such a measure. At the same time, it cautions against the “excessive utility” of the proportionality doctrine in matters of national security. Of great value to future challenges to executive action is the principle that there can be no ‘secret orders’. The government is bound to publish all orders it passes regarding such restrictions so that they can be challenged in a court of law. It is here that the verdict acquires another unusual character. Having rejected the government’s stand that it could not produce all the orders on the restrictions imposed since August 4, 2019, the court fails to strike them down on that ground. After all, it concurrently says every order imposing a restriction should state the reason, the exigency that necessitated it and the features that make it clear that it is the least intrusive measure. The absence of such order in the public domain is evidence that the state failed to demonstrate its necessity. It is a sign of the success of the ‘national security’ narrative that undergirds the government’s position on J&K that an apex court judgment in a fundamental rights case appears to have the character of an advisory opinion.

A health emergency

Polio remains a concern despite concerted efforts across the world

Based on the risk of international spread of poliovirus, the World Health Organization announced on January 7 that polio will continue to remain a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) for three months. The decision was taken based on the recommendation of the emergency committee under the international health regulations that assessed the situation last month. The committee arrived at the unanimous decision based on the “rising risk” of international spread of wild poliovirus type-1. Polio was declared as PHEIC in 2014 and has continued to remain one since then. There were 156 cases of wild polio type-1 cases in 2019 compared with 28 in 2018. With 128 cases, Pakistan accounted for the most number of cases, while Afghanistan reported 28 cases. Besides the four-fold increase in cases, there were instances of the wild type-1 virus getting exported from Pakistan to Iran and Afghanistan, as also on the spread from Afghanistan to Pakistan. In addition to the virus causing polio in children, it was found in the environment in Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, in Afghanistan. This is particularly a concern as the number of children not vaccinated in Afghanistan has been increasing. In 2018, a total of 8,60,000 children in Afghanistan did not receive polio vaccine due to security threats. The situation did not improve in 2019 and, as a result, a large cohort of children in the southern region of the country remains unprotected. Therefore, even other parts of the country that have been free of the virus in the past are at risk of outbreaks.

An equally disturbing development is on the outbreak of vaccine-derived poliovirus cases in 16 countries; in all, there were 249 vaccine-derived poliovirus cases in 2019. Surprisingly, of them, only 30 were in countries where vaccine-derived poliovirus is endemic. “The rapid emergence of multiple circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type-2 strains in several countries is unprecedented and very concerning, and not yet fully understood,” the committee noted. But, not a single case of vaccine-derived poliovirus was reported from Afghanistan, while Pakistan had just 12 cases. In comparison, the number of cases in Angola was 86 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo was 63. While Nigeria reported 18 cases of vaccine-derived poliovirus, not a single case of wild poliovirus type-1 has been reported from the country for over three years; the last reported case was in August 2016. A country is said to have eradicated polio when no new case of wild poliovirus is reported for three successive years. Nigeria is all set to be declared as having eradicated polio this year, and in turn, the entire African region will become free of wild poliovirus.

Human rights are not solely an ‘internal matter’

With the evolution of international law in the last 100 years, the concept of unrestricted sovereignty has weakened



RAVINDRAN DANIEL

The human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) following the dilution of Article 370 and the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) have brought renewed international focus on India’s human rights practice. Responding to criticism made by the United Nations agencies and others, the Indian state asserted that both J&K and CAA are entirely internal matters and there cannot be any interference in such sovereign decisions.

What is remarkable about modern international human rights law is its recognition of individuals as subjects. Classic international law governed the conduct between states and did not recognise the rights of individuals. Countries made agreements on the premise that a sovereign state had the exclusive right to take any action it thought fit to deal with its nationals. Such a notion of absolute sovereignty was challenged in 19th century with the emergence of humanitarian intervention to protect minorities living in other states. Later, in 1919, the evolution of labour standards led to the establishment of the International Labour Office (ILO). In 1926, the Slavery Convention adopted by the League of Nations prohibiting slave trade heralded the first human rights treaty based on the principle of dignity of a human being. The Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by the United Nations, was the first comprehensive international human rights document. The Universal Declaration has acquired the force of law as part of the customary law of nations. It has provided the basis for binding human rights treaties and non-binding guidelines/principles that constitute a distinct body of law known as international human rights law.

Unsustainable claim

This progress of international law in the last 100 years makes the Indian state’s assertion of its sovereign right unsustainable. The evolution of international human rights law is also about the gradual weakening of the concept of unrestricted sovereignty. The Indian government has ratified several international human rights treaties and submits periodic reports to the respective treaty bodies. By doing so, it has acknowledged the principle that the treatment of its citizens is not entirely an internal matter, and such measures do not enjoy an absolute sovereignty.

The Indian government’s response to concerns about its human rights practice has always been that international scrutiny is unwarranted since the country is the largest democracy in the world with an independent judiciary, free media, and an active civil society. These claims sound less credible after the recent developments in J&K and the passage of the CAA.

Non-discrimination is a fundamental principle of human rights. Discrimination in various forms occurs in all societies, but what is of concern is institutionalised discrimination. Apartheid was pro-



A PROTEST IN SRINAGAR IN DECEMBER 2016.

nounced as a crime against humanity since it institutionalised discrimination based on race. Similarly, for the first time in post-Independence India, a religious group has been excluded from the purview of a law dealing with citizenship.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which is the lead agency within the UN system on all aspects related to human rights, has expressed its concern stating that the CAA “is fundamentally discriminatory in nature”. It has also said that “although India’s broader naturalization laws remain in place, these amendments will have a discriminatory effect on people’s access to nationality.”

International human rights law includes safeguards against unwarranted foreign intervention and stresses the exhaustion of domestic remedies before an issue is considered by an international body. The Indian state always assured the international community that the judiciary, mainly its Su-

preme Court, would provide adequate remedies to victims of human rights violations. However, of late, the faith of the common people in the higher judiciary has been weakened. In the face of serious allegations about human rights violations in J&K, the Supreme Court has “ducked, evaded and adjourned”, as put across by advocate Gautam Bhatia.

Weakening of civil society

While responding to criticism against its human rights practices, the Indian government also refers to the role of free media and civil society in protecting the human rights of vulnerable groups. However, in the context of J&K and the ongoing struggle against the CAA, the media has not come out any better. As for civil society organisations, the government since 2014 has systematically targeted them, including by making it difficult for them to receive funds from foreign donors. Since 2014, the government has cancelled the registration of about 14,000 NGOs un-

der the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). It has also mainly targeted its own critics.

Indian and international human rights groups are getting increasingly concerned about the actions of people associated with the ruling party who are engaged in the intimidation of critics, attacks against minorities, and restrictions on the freedoms of artistes. The brazen attack on JNU students on January 5 by armed goons and the total lack of response by the police is emblematic of free reign given to non-state actors in various parts of the country.

The international community is sympathetic to governments that are committed to upholding human rights but lack human and other resources to pursue it. In the case of India, it is not a question of resources but an unwillingness to uphold human rights. The government’s action in J&K, the passage of the CAA, and its response to protests on the CAA demonstrate that the present regime is not fully committed to upholding human rights and does not respect international human rights standards. Of course, it is possible for the Indian government, due to its diplomatic clout, to avoid robust intervention by the UN Human Rights Council and other UN human rights mechanisms. However, it would not be able to avoid scrutiny by the international community, which would complement the struggle of the Indian civil society to reclaim the Indian Constitution and advance human rights.

Ravindran Daniel is a human rights lawyer who has served as Director with the UN peacekeeping missions in East Timor, Libya and Sudan

Taking a holistic approach to dengue

Apart from vaccination, this has to involve efficient vector control and proper case management



DHILEEPAN SELVARAJAN

The advent of a new tetravalent vaccine against the dengue virus has thrown new light into the evidence-based management of dengue. An article recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* revealed that this vaccine confers about 80% protection to children vaccinated between 4 and 16 years of age without any major side effects. It was a double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomised, multi-centre trial which included 20,017 participants from the dengue-endemic countries. However, apart from promoting the use of the vaccine, gaining control over dengue will also require a holistic approach that has to include within its ambit vector control and proper case management.

Dengue is essentially a tropical disease that occurs in the countries around the Equator; hot weather and intermittent rainfall favour the sustenance of Aedes aegypti – the vector transmitting the dengue virus – and Aedes albopictus, a minor contributor. Aedes eggs can remain dormant for more than a year and will hatch once they come in contact with water. Urbanisation, poor town planning, and improper sanitation are

the major risk factors for the multiplication of such mosquitoes. Aedes mosquitoes cannot fly beyond a hundred metres. Hence, keeping the ambience clean can help prevent their breeding. Further, these mosquitoes bite during the daytime, so keeping the windows shut in the day hours is also useful.

Shortage of skilled manpower

Many other source reduction activities can be undertaken, including preventing water stagnation and using chemical larvicides and adulticides. These chemicals need to be applied in periodic cycles to kill the larvae that remain even after the first spray.

Unfortunately, the number of skilled workers available for such measures is low; many posts in government departments remain vacant despite there being a dire public health need. Due to this deficiency of manpower, active surveillance is not being done in India, says the National Vector Borne Disease Control Program.

Also, dengue cases are often under-reported due to political reasons and also to avoid spreading panic among the common people. Further, there is a lack of coordination between the local bodies and health departments in the delivery of public health measures. A comprehensive mechanism is required to address these issues.

Moreover, epidemiological measures are essential in the management of any communicable disease. Singapore uses one suc-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

cessful model of mapping and analysing data on dengue, using Geographical Information System (GIS). This involves mapping the streets with dengue cases for vector densities.

Dengue is mostly an asymptomatic infection, and only a very few develop severe disease. Those very young or very old and those who have a chronic ailment are at a greater risk of developing severe disease. But the worldwide case fatality rate is as low as 0.3%. The dengue virus has four serotypes and only a second infection with a different serotype will cause a severe disease.

Fluid management is the cornerstone in the management of severe diseases like dengue hemorrhagic fever and dengue shock

syndrome. Here, the role of platelet depletion in exacerbating the condition of a patient is overemphasised even by many medical personnel. Contrary to the common belief, platelet transfusions are not needed even in cases of active bleeding, as per the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO). Coagulation abnormalities are not due to a reduction in the number of platelets alone. This is why the WHO recommends fresh whole blood or packed cell transfusion in the event of bleeding. The platelet count will increase automatically as fever subsides.

Alternative medicine drugs

Finally, despite the adequate and well-formed guidelines for the management of dengue cases by the WHO and the Indian government, the usage of complementary medicines like *Nilavembu kudineer* (a Siddha medicine) and papaya leaf extract are rampant among the people. *Nilavembu sooranam*, which reportedly contains about nine different substances, has been widely promoted for use to treat dengue fever despite the safety of and complex interactions among its different constituents not having been tested.

The efficacy of *Nilavembu kudineer* in the management of several other diseases is based on very primitive forms of research like case reports, in-vitro studies, and animal studies. There are case reports where *Andrographis paniculata*, an active constituent of *Nilavembu sooranam*, showed

anti-fertility effects in animal models, causing abortion. Even meta-analysis of various studies has shown that there is no credible evidence for the use of papaya extract in dengue fever. However, for unknown reasons, even some pharmaceutical companies are being allowed to market papaya extract pills.

In Tamil Nadu, complementary medicine practitioners often argue that a proper double-blind, randomised, placebo-controlled trial cannot be conducted as it involves huge money and manpower. Though this argument is partially correct, patients cannot be treated as guinea pigs. For any medicine, safety is more important than efficacy. Every modern medicine drug has come out after rigorous safety and efficacy studies for around 10 years, with an informed declaration of the side effects. Hence, instead of carrying out distribution of medicines like *Nilavembu kudineer*, the government can concentrate its energies on other public health activities.

Modern medicine is not against any complementary medicine; when such a medicine is approved after rigorous testing, modern medicine will absorb it, and there are many examples of that. However, in the absence of evidence, the efficacy of such medicines remains in the realm of belief instead of science.

Dhileepan Selvarajan is a consultant physician and cardiologist based in Thiruvavur, Tamil Nadu

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.

Welcome verdict

The Supreme Court’s verdict on Internet and communication blackout and indefinite restrictions on movement under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure came as a whiff of fresh air. This marked a welcome deviation from the pattern of a slew of judgments delivered in recent days catering to the wishes of the ruling dispensation. The ruling is sure to restore some of the lost credibility to the country’s top court. Implicit in the verdict are the paramountcy of civil liberties and the precedence they should get over political exigencies. The judgment represents a setback to the Narendra Modi government in that it has held curbs on

communication and movement as violative of the constitutionally guaranteed rights to unfettered communication and free movement. Post this judgment, the Central government cannot always invoke or cite ‘national security’ to justify whatever it does. The verdict will hopefully bring some reprieve to the residents of Jammu and Kashmir whose day-to-day life has become hell due to the crippling Internet shutdown in place for more than 160 days.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthanadcode, Tamil Nadu

■ Given the times we are living in, the Supreme Court’s order on Friday that called an indefinite shutdown of Internet as “abuse of power” has to be

appreciated. This comes as a breather. However, as such actions are draconian, the apex court, instead of asking the government to review all orders of restrictions within a week, should have gone the whole hog and directed the state to restore facilities immediately as they are in the nature of a fundamental right. The Supreme Court should not leave the impression that it is willing to strike but unable to wound.

N.G.R. PRASAD,
K.K. RAM SIDDHARTHA,
Chennai

Majoritarian state

Kanak Mani Dixit has succinctly brought out the democratic decline in the country through the political ascendancy of the dominant majoritarian ruling

dispensation (Editorial page, “A nation losing democratic steam,” Jan. 10). The strong inclination towards the centralisation of powers by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been a huge setback to India’s pluralism. The enactment of Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) is surely going to affect the healthy relationship of India with that of neighbouring nations, especially Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The BJP is using the selectivity in the CAA as a political instrument to push the country further towards a monolithic religious identity. While measures like the Goods and Services Tax (GST) have reduced the sources of revenue for the Central government, the dilution of Article 370 is a mark of greater political

centralisation. The BJP’s turn towards a centralised state is coming at the irrevocable cost of democracy and economic liberalism.

NAYAKARA VEERESHA,
Bengaluru

Wrong inference

Mr. Dixit has made some sweeping statements while trying to take potshots at the BJP for its alleged majoritarian agenda. Time and again, it has been confirmed by the government that the CAA will not take away the rights of those Muslims who are bona-fide citizens of India. The wrong inference by the writer on Indian Muslims is highly condemnable. Such hyped up statements will in no way help defuse the situation. It would be in order to leave the issue to the

wisdom of the court, which is seized of the matter. The revocation of Jammu and Kashmir’s autonomy was long overdue though one may find fault with the way it was done. The Ayodhya verdict was a unanimous one delivered by the highest court and accepted even by many Muslim bodies. The BJP did not have any hand in this judgment and the writer cannot make an indirect inference that the judiciary was influenced by those in power on this issue. There is a lesson to be learnt for the BJP too, that a multi-religious country like India needs consensus on sensitive issues to keep the country’s secular credentials flying.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai



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