



NEARBY



BJP to fight Delhi polls on national, local issues

NEW DELHI  
In a major shift in its campaign strategy for the Delhi Assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party will rake up issues such as the new citizenship law and NRC and also focus on local issues plaguing the city.

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AAP's Bhagwant Mann booked for rioting

CHANDIGARH  
AAP's Punjab unit president Bhagwant Mann and some party legislators have been booked on charges of rioting during a protest here against power tariff hike.

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CAA meant to give citizenship, not take it away, says PM Modi

Those opposing amended law fuelling misconception among the youth, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was aimed at giving citizenship and not taking it away.

Addressing a gathering of youth at Belur Math, the headquarters of Ramakrishna Mission, in West Bengal's Howrah district, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, Mr. Modi accused those opposing the amended law of "playing political games" and "fuelling misconception among the youth".

'A lot of questions'

"What is there in this Act? Why was it needed? There are a lot of questions in the minds of the youth which have been fuelled by various people. Lot of youth have awareness. Yet, there are



Sharing views: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with monks of the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math on Sunday. • PTI

some who are victims of misconception, rumours. It is our responsibility to make them understand," he said.

Mr. Modi's remarks on the day, also observed as International Youth Day, assumes significance as there were widespread protests in Kolkata against the CAA during

his two-day visit, particularly by youth and students.

He asked the audience whether people who faced "religious persecution in neighbouring countries should be left to die".

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None can stop rollout of Act: Amit Shah

STAFF REPORTER

BHOPAL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said no matter how much the Congress opposed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the government would rest only after granting citizenship to members of six minority religions from three neighbouring countries, and no one could stop it.

"They are sons and daughters of the country too. Even they enjoy the same right over the country as you and I," he said at a rally to create awareness about the law in Jabalpur.

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J&K officer may have been ferrying Hizb ultras to Delhi

Officials suspect they were planning a hit on Republic Day

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

The Jammu & Kashmir police on Sunday said they are investigating the role of a gallantry award-winning senior police officer, Davinder Singh, who was ferrying two Hizbul Mujahideen militants, including wanted 'commander' Syed Naveed Mushtaq alias Babu, in a civilian car on Saturday.

They are suspected to have been headed to Delhi and may have been targeting the Republic Day function in the national capital.

"Based on an intelligence input provided by the Shopian police, two terrorists and one police officer were held during a search of a civilian car on the Srinagar-Jammu Highway. The police officer will be treated as a terrorist. The ongoing operation started on Saturday. Multiple agencies are questioning them," Inspector



Davinder Singh

General of Police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar, said.

House raided

Top police sources said the house of the Deputy Superintendent of Police in Srinagar's Indira Nagar was also raided and "one AK-47 and two pistols were recovered."

DSP Singh's house shares a boundary wall with the Army's 15 Corps headquarters at Badami Bagh.

Awarded the 'Police Medal for Gallantry' in August 2018, he is at present posted

with the anti-hijacking wing of the police at the Srinagar International Airport. Sources said Mr. Singh was the officer in-charge who provided security and received a 15-member foreign envoys' delegation on January 9 at the airport.

"Mr. Singh has applied for four days' leave," the police officer said. Preliminary reports suggest the officer and the militants were going to New Delhi, just two weeks ahead of the Republic Day.

The police officer, who worked with the special anti-militancy Special Operations Group in 2002, faced a controversy when Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru, in a letter, named him. Guru claimed Mr. Singh had asked him to take another Parliament attacker Mohammad "to Delhi and arrange for him a flat for his stay and also purchase a car for him".

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JNU attack state-sponsored: Congress panel

'Vice-Chancellor was the mastermind; he should be sacked immediately and put under probe'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The January 5 attack against students and faculty members of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) was "state-sponsored", a Congress fact-finding committee said on Sunday.

The four-member committee accused Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadeesh Kumar of being the "mastermind" of the attack, and demanded his immediate dismissal and a criminal investigation against him, faculty members who conspired with the attackers and the company charged with security on the campus. "This attack was state-sponsored. There is absolutely no doubt about it... The question is what did the administration and the Delhi police do to stop it," Mahila



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SUSHMITA DEV, MAHILA CONGRESS CHIEF

Congress chief Sushmita Dev, a member of the committee, said during the release of the report. She said there was sufficient evidence to prove that the perpetrators were from right-wing factions.

"I have no doubt that what happened on January 5 is pre-planned, pre-mediated and a criminal conspiracy," Ms. Dev said.

She pointed to the disconnection of power supply and

the role of the police during the attack and the aftermath, including the failure to file attempt-to-murder charges against the perpetrators, despite the head injuries to victims.

Noting that there was "overwhelming *prima facie* evidence that [police officers] facilitated the criminal elements on the campus," the report said their negligence and complicity brought the Home Ministry

also under suspicion. "The remarks by the Home Minister on the CAA-NRC agitations and punishing of *tukde tukde* gang also emboldened the perpetrators of violence on the JNU campus," the report said.

'Roll back fee hike'

The committee called for an independent judicial inquiry and an immediate roll-back of the hostel fee increase, the issue that had led to protests by students.

The Vice-Chancellor's role "points to connivance and complicity with the attackers," said the panel, noting that Dr. Kumar did not allow the police to enter the campus until 7.45 p.m. despite calls for help from students.

The report raises the issue of Internet shutdown on the

campus. While the FIR registered by the police says students disconnected the servers on January 3 and 4, the Vice-Chancellor's press statement said the servers were functioning on January 4 and many students registered themselves for the winter semester that day. The failure of the servers on January 5 raised questions about deliberate prevention of CCTV coverage to shield the attackers, it said.

"If you can reinstate the Internet connection and the CIS system on the 4th morning, why did not you reinstate that connection on 5th morning? Did you know there was going to be a violent attack because of which you wanted to ensure no CCTV coverage?" Ms. Dev asked.

STAFF REPORTER

AGARTALA

In a landmark order, the Tripura High Court has ordered the police to refrain from prosecuting a man who was earlier arrested over a social media post. Chief Justice Akil Kureshi also barred the police from making any further arrests in connection with the case.

The Chief Justice passed the order on Friday after lawyers moved the court against the arrest and harassment of Youth Congress activist Arindam Bhattacharjee over his post on a social media platform.

Mr. Bhattacharjee had in his Facebook page criticised the Bharatiya Janata Party's

online campaign in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and warned people to not dial a given phone number even by mistake.

"If you call 8866288662, all your data would go to hackers," he had commented in his post, inviting the ire of the BJP's IT Cell, which responded with a police complaint.

Govt. staff included

The Chief Justice in his order remarked that posting on social media was tantamount to a "fundamental right" applicable to all citizens, including government employees.

In compliance with the court's order, the police have

now erased Sections 120(B) and 153(A) of the Indian Penal Code from the First Information Report.

Subal Bhowmik, senior Congress leader, who had unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Lok Sabha election from the West Tripura constituency, hailed the order. Mr. Bhowmik had organised protests outside the West Agartala police station after Mr. Bhattacharjee was detained.

"The order has been in line with the very essence of the Constitution. We hope police officers will henceforth adhere to the rule book and not try to act as henchmen of their political bosses," Mr. Bhowmik, himself a lawyer, told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

Pongal spells peril for Salem's foxes

VIGNESH VIJAYAKUMAR

SALEM

With Kaanum Pongal, the fourth and final day of the harvest festival, less than a week away, Forest Department officials in Salem are gearing up to prevent an unusual *jallikattu* – one that uses foxes instead of bulls.

The *jallikattu*-like event using foxes, or *vanga nari* in Tamil, is usually organised on Kaanum Pongal on the outskirts of the district as villagers believe it will bring bountiful rain and good fortune.

According to Forest officials, villagers, mostly from Ranganoor, Chinnamanaikenpalayam and Vadugathampatti in Vazhapadi taluk, trap the foxes and bring them to the village temple.

Regular feature

The animals are muzzled and their hind legs tied with rope. After special rituals are conducted, the hapless animals are chased through the streets, much like bulls in the more conventional *jallikattu*. After the event, the animals are released into the forest.



A 2018 photo shows a fox trussed up ahead of the race.

Despite a ban, the event has been organised for decades now. District Forest Officer A. Periasamy said, "We have fined the violators earlier for organising the event and trespassing into forest areas and this year too, we will take stern action." Officials said foxes are a protected species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and hunting or capturing them is prohibited.

V. Gokul, president of the Salem Nature Society, said, "The medium-sized Bengal foxes are generally found near agricultural areas. The animal undergoes cruel treatment in the name of this festival. The animal is gagged and the hind legs are tied. Capturing a wild animal itself is an offence, and this helpless animal is tortured in the name of the festival."