



Will execute nothing in MP that divides society: Kamal Nath

MANOJ CGG

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

STATING THAT the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) cannot be “segregated” from one another or viewed in “isolation”, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath said on Sunday that his government would not “execute” anything which “divides society or has the potential to divide”.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, he said there was no crying need to amend the citizenship law or bring a nationwide NRC. The cry in the country, he said, was to get India out of economic distress. The overwhelming demand is for jobs and ensuring a fair price to farmers for their agricultural produce, he said. But the BJP government chose to amend the citizenship law and is talking about NRC to “divide society”, said Nath.



‘CAA, NPR, NRC can’t be segregated’

His remarks came a day after the Congress Working Committee (CWC) asked the central government to stop the NPR updation exercise and withdraw the contentious CAA. Congress president Sonia Gandhi had described NPR 2020 as a disguised NRC, in form and content. “As a party in government in several states, we must take a wise and uniform decision on NPR,” she had said.

The Left government in Kerala and the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal have already decided not to carry out the NPR exercise in their states.

Asked about NPR, Nath said: “All these things have to be taken

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Belur Math in West Bengal on Sunday. *Express*

PM on CAA: Pak will now have to answer for oppressing minorities

Won’t comment, we are apolitical, inclusive: Ramakrishna Mission

ATRIMITRA

KOLKATA, JANUARY 12

AMID THE ongoing protests, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said some sections were trying to “misguide” the youth on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) which, he said, is “a law to provide citizenship, not snatch it away”.

Addressing a gathering at Belur Math, the headquarters of Ramakrishna Mission, on the second day of his visit here, Modi

said: “Aaj rashtriya yuva divas pe main phir se desh ke navjawanon ko, Paschim Bangal ke naujawanon ko, North-East ke naujawanon ko... zaroor kuch kehna chahti hun. Aisa nahin hain ke desh ki nagarikatwa dene ki liye raaton raat koi naya kanoon banaya gaya hain. Hub sabko pata hona chahiye ke doosre desh se kisi bhi dharam ke, koi bhi vyakti, jo Bharat mein aastha rakhta hai, Bharat ke samvidhan ko maanta hain, Bharat ke nagarikatwa le sakta hain, koi dudhda nahin hain is mein.”

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

On balance, Didi is more helpful than Deepika.



MORE REPORTS

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DySP GOT GALLANTRY AWARD LAST YEAR

Decorated J&K cop with anti-hijack unit held with militants

Heinous crime, treating him like a militant, being interrogated: IGP (Kashmir)

BASHAARAT MASOOD

& ADIL AKHZER

SRINAGAR, KULGAM, JAN 12

AFTER A day’s silence, the J&K Police admitted on Sunday that one of its decorated officers, posted with its anti-hijacking unit at Srinagar airport, was with top Hizbul Mujahideen commander Syed Naveed Mushtaq and his associates when they were arrested from a private vehicle, at a checkpoint on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway, on Saturday evening.

The police officer has been identified as Deputy Superintendent of Police Davinder Singh, who was awarded the President’s medal for gallantry last year. On Thursday, when a team of 15 foreign envoys arrived in Srinagar on a two-day visit to J&K, Singh was among those who welcomed them at the Srinagar airport.

Besides Mushtaq and Singh, there were two others in the vehicle — Rafi Rather, a resident of Batpora, Shopian, who joined militancy in July last year, and Irfan Shafi, an advocate and resident of Diaroo Shopian, who was reportedly driving the vehicle when it was stopped at Wampoh, in Kulgam district. All the four have been arrested.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Inspector General of Police (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said: “There was a very big operation yesterday. SP (Shopian) had an input that an i10 (car) with two militants had left from Shopian and was heading towards Jammu-Srinagar

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IGP (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar (centre) addresses a press conference in Srinagar on Sunday. *PTI*

Parliament attack, Afzal Guru shadow back to haunt J&K Police officer

MUZAMIL JALEEL & BASHAARAT MASOOD

NEW DELHI, SRINAGAR, JAN 12

WHEN J&K Police arrested Deputy Superintendent of Police Davinder Singh, a decorated counter-insurgency officer who is currently posted with the security and anti-hijacking unit of J&K Police at Srinagar airport, along with two “most wanted” militants in a car in South Kashmir on Saturday, it brought back questions about his alleged role in the 2001 Parliament attack case and other big cases in Jammu and Kashmir.

In 2004, in a letter to his lawyer Sushil Kumar, Afzal Guru, then lodged in Tihar Jail for his involvement in the Parliament attack, had said that “DSP Davinder Singh”, then posted with J&K Police’s Special Operations Group at Humhama, had asked him to “take Mohammad”, a Pakistani national identified as one of those who carried out the Parliament attack, “to Delhi, rent a flat for his stay and purchase a car for him”.



Afzal Guru alleged Davinder Singh asked him to take co-accused to Delhi

Afzal had also named another police officer, Shanty Singh, who, along with Davinder Singh, reportedly tortured him at Humhama STF camp. He had also mentioned “Altaf Hussain, who is brother-in-law of SSP Ashaq Hussain (Bukhari) of Budgam”, who first “brokered” his release with Davinder Singh, and later took him to the DySP.

Afzal was convicted and hanged on February 9, 2013.

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NEPAL TO BAR NGOS FROM ANTI-INDIA PROGRAMMES
QUEEN CALLS PRINCE HARRY FOR CRISIS MEETING
PAGE 13

PAGE 1 ANCHOR
RALPH ALEX ARAKAL
MYSORE, JANUARY 12

FOR YEARS, this government school in Mysore struggled to survive, operating from rooms inside a railway colony, its strength down to 60 students. This weekend, it got two permanent classrooms designed to draw the envy of schools across the country.



One coach will hold classes, the other will be an activity area. *Express*

rooms in Ashokapuram are a first in India.

“The school was operating from buildings and rooms of the railway quarters in the premises for over two decades. The coaches, which were officially

declared unfit for use, were refurbished to provide the students a fun and conducive atmosphere for learning,” says P Srinivasu, chief manager, Railway workshop, Ashokapuram.

“The school has seen a major drop in strength over the years as we lacked good infrastructure and permanent buildings. At present, we have 60 students from classes 1 to 7, mostly from families below the poverty line,



At an anti-CAA protest in Prayagraj on Sunday. *Express* PAGE 7

Sheena Bora case: Software used by CBI to match skull raises eyebrows at trial

SADAF MODAK

MUMBAI, JANUARY 12

THE WEBSITE of FantaMorph states that it is an easy-to-use software for the creation of “fantastic photo morphing pictures and sophisticated morph animation effects”. There is a morphed image of a woman and a cheetah, and another of eight Hollywood stars, including Jennifer Lopez and Halle Berry.

The website claims that the software, available for use with a 30-day free trial or for US \$30-\$100 (Rs 2000-Rs 7000) for different versions, can be used to create screensavers, web graphics, music videos, movies, advertisements, even greeting cards.



FantaMorph used in screensavers, greeting cards

But it doesn’t claim anywhere that FantaMorph can be used as a forensic tool — for facial superimposition.

And yet, the CBI is relying on this software, along with other forensic evidence, to claim in a Mumbai court that a skeleton

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In Mysuru, old railway coaches signal new journey for struggling government school



and four teachers. Now, we hope to attract more students,” says Jayalakshmi S, the headmistress.

Of the two coaches, one has been divided into two classrooms — for classes IV and V — and the other is a meeting and activity area for the students.

According to officials, a chunk of the budget of Rs 50,000 for this SWR initiative, was used for the “major challenge” — get cranes to lift the coaches across to the school. “Everything else, including painting, designing, getting fans, lights, books and stationery, was done with the help of donations raised from Railway staff and other like-minded citizens,” says Srinivasu.

Bio-toilets have also been installed outside. The next step: Remodel metal scrap from coaches to provide a roof for the entire school premises.

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WEB EXCLUSIVE



CES 2020: THE BEST GADGETS AND TECH YOU CAN BUY THIS YEAR

The biggest tech event of the year, CES, is now over. Over the past few years, the show has become more about futuristic ideas and concept devices. However, many of the products that debuted at CES actually never make it to the market.

VIDEO OF THE DAY



IDEA EXCHANGE WITH BIMAL PATEL

The architect speaks on the modernisation of the Parliament

EXPRESS EXPLAINED



WHO WAS TANAJI MALUSARE?

The 'Unsung Warrior' is known for his role in the Battle of Sinhagad

EXPRESS AUDIO
Decoding the 2018 NCRB Report
NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Today on the 3 Things podcast, we analyse the latest NCRB report and discuss what it reveals about the state of crime in India.

FROM PAGE ONE

J&K cop held

national highway. He informed me, and I asked DIG (South Kashmir) to set up checkpoints... On searching a vehicle, we found two wanted militants. We also found a DySP and an advocate with them. They have all been arrested."

Identifying the DySP, Kumar said: "As you know, he (Singh) is a senior police officer. He has worked on several anti-militancy operations in J&K. But the way he was caught yesterday... (with) two, three militants in a car to Jammu... that is a heinous crime. And that is why we treated him like a militant. He has been taken on remand and interrogation is going on."

Sources said two rifles were recovered from Singh's residence during a search after his arrest.

On Saturday, police had not named the officer. "Police, army, CRPF, IB, R&AW — all the agencies — were brought together and interrogation was carried out jointly," said the IGP.

According to sources, when the vehicle was intercepted, DySP Singh was sitting in the front with Shafi, while the two militants were in the back seat. Police sources said DIG (South Kashmir) Atul Goel was at the checkpoint. "The DIG lost his cool when he saw the DySP. They were put in a police vehicle and taken to the Joint Interrogation Centre (JIC) in Kulgam," said sources.

A senior police officer said they had also recovered arms and ammunition. "They didn't attempt to flee when they were stopped by the police," said a police officer.

According to IGP Kumar, Naveed Mushtaq was the second-in-command of the Hizbul Mujahideen's operational chief in the Valley, Riyaz Naikoo. Earlier a police constable, he had decamped with four rifles from Budgam in 2017. "He is involved in the killings of civilians, policemen and truck-drivers. Last year, many orchards were damaged and people were threatened by him. Till today, 17 FIRs are registered against him. He was the most wanted for us. He was the Hizbul district commander of Shopian," said Kumar.

Police sources said investigators were trying to trace the link between Naveed Mushtaq and DySP Singh. "What was their motive, where they were going — this is being investigated. According to preliminary investigations, they were on their way to Jammu. The investigations indicate that the police officer was acting as a 'carrier' for the militants," said sources.

Afzal shadow

Davinder Singh's alleged role in the Parliament attack case was not probed. Asked about this on Sunday, IGP (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said: "There is nothing as such in our records nor do I know anything about it... We will question him on this."

A senior J&K Police officer said "his (Davinder Singh's) deeds are finally catching up with him. This time, I don't think anybody can save him".

"There will be many questions asked. Where was he taking these two wanted militants? They were leaving the Valley, as they were nabbed on the way to Jammu. What plan did they

have," said the officer. "Almost every operation where he (Davinder Singh) or his associates were involved has become suspect".

The officer said Singh was posted across Kashmir on counter-insurgency duty. "He was DySP DR in Pulwama too," the officer said. "He can open a can of worms once he starts talking".

Meanwhile, while Shanty Singh's alleged role in the Afzal Guru case could not be ascertained, he was jailed in 2003, after an investigation by J&K Police's Crime Branch found him involved in "torturing a civilian Mohammad Ayoub Dar of Sholipora, Pakharpore to death" in "police custody" and then "firing at his body", dubbing him as a "militant who was killed in an encounter".

The Crime Branch investigation had been initiated after instructions from the State Human Rights Commission. The Crime Branch had registered a case (FIR 77/2003) to probe Shanty Singh's role in the custodial killing. According to police records, "during the intervening night of June 1 and 2, 1999, Ishpal Singh alias Shanty Singh along with Inspector Waris Shah picked up Mohammad Ayoub Dar Son of Abdul Rehman Dar from his home at Sholipora in Pakharpora. Dar had died while Shanty Singh was interrogating him. He had then opened fire at his body and planted some arms and ammunition on his body to pass him off as a militant who was killed in an encounter at Dalwan village".

Cars to watches

January 2020 continues to be subdued as well.

Alongside, auto companies have reported truncated shipments and supply disruptions that have impacted inventory levels at dealerships at impacted locations, although stocking numbers were not available.

Restaurant owners, represented by the National Restaurant Association of India, have pointed to the street violence in urban centres such as Delhi, Lucknow and Kolkata, alongside prohibitory orders imposed by state administrations, having a direct impact on the food business.

Travel industry players have signalled that inbound foreign tourist arrivals are seeing a slide in growth, with places such as the North East seeing cancellation in view of the protests and advisories from foreign governments. Russia, the US, Canada, the UK and Israel are among the countries that have issued advisories to their citizens to exercise caution while visiting India, especially the North East.

"There has been a decline in customers visiting the showrooms since the protests began in December. In times of social unrest there is a decline in purchase of cars and as 2020 has also started on the same note, I don't see a quick revival in car sales amidst the tide of protest and social unrest," said the India chief of a leading car manufacturer.

For automobile manufacturers, a source of relief is that highways have not been shut by protestors and transportation has not been impacted much. "We have not witnessed a hit on transportation, else the impact would have been much worse," said an official with another leading car manufacturer, adding that shipments to dealerships are being truncated as a precautionary measure.

The travel industry is bracing for impact if the protests continue for longer. Subhash Goyal, chairman STIC Travels Group, and past president of IATO, said that since it is the peak season and most of the bookings were done two to three months back

CAA about giving citizenship: PM

(On the occasion of national youth day, I want to tell the youth of the country, the youth of West Bengal, the youth of North-East that the law to grant citizenship was not changed overnight. We should all know that any person from any country, of any religion, who believes in India and its Constitution, can be granted Indian citizenship. There's no doubt about this.)

"Main phir kahoonga CAA nagarikatwa cheen lene ke liye nahin, yeh nagarikatwa dene ki kanoon hain... Hum badalaav yeh kiya hain, Bharat ki nagarikatwa lene ki sahuliyat aur bada diya dain. Yeh sahuliyat kis ke liye badai hain? Un logon ke liye badai hain jin par batwareen ke baad bane Pakistan main unki dharam aastha ke wajay se atyachar hui," said Modi.

(I will reiterate that CAA is not about taking away citizenship, but about granting it... The change that we have brought is that we have made the process to get Indian citizenship easier. Who have we done this for? It is for those people who, after Partition, had to face persecution due to their religion, faith, in Pakistan.)

The Prime Minister said the dispute that has arisen over CAA has made the world take notice of the persecution of minorities in Pakistan. "Had we not amended the citizenship law, this "vivaad" (dispute) would not have arisen. Had this dispute not arisen, the world would not have known about the kind of atrocities that were perpetrated on the (religious) minorities in Pakistan... It's the result of our initiative that Pakistan will have to answer for its acts of oppression against the minorities there," he said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who said she had asked him to repeal CAA during a "courtesy meeting" with him on Saturday, was not present at any of Modi's programmes on Sunday.

"We've only done what Mahatma Gandhi had said decades ago. Should we send these refugees back to die? Are they our responsibility or not? Should we make them our citizens or not?" said Modi.

He said some sections with political interests were deliberately spreading rumours about the new citizenship law,

despite "complete clarity" on the CAA. Seeking the help of the youth to spread awareness on CAA, he said: "The youth have understood the issue, but those who want to indulge in politics over it will not... What is there in this Act? Why was it needed? There are many questions in the minds of people, which has been fuelled by various sections. Most of the youth have understood it. But there are some who are victims of misconception and rumours. It is our responsibility to make these people understand. It is our duty to satisfy them on this issue."

Seeking to assuage the concerns of the people of the North-East, Modi called the region "our pride". "Their culture, traditions and demography remain untouched by this amended law," he said.

Meanwhile, waving black flags and chanting anti-Modi slogans, a group of protesters gathered outside Netaji Indoor Stadium, where Modi addressed a function to mark 150 years of Kolkata Port Trust and renamed it after Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee. They were quickly

bundled into police vehicles and whisked away.

Modi, who spent the night at Belur Math, paid tribute to Swami Vivekananda on his birth anniversary, and spent some time in his room.

[PTI adds: Soon after Modi left the premises, the monastic order distanced itself from his speech, saying it is an apolitical organisation where people of all religious faiths live like "brothers of same parents". "Ramakrishna Mission will not comment on PM's speech. We are strictly an apolitical body. We cannot comment on the PM's speech on CAA. We have come here after leaving our homes to answer to eternal call. We do not respond to ephemeral call," Ramakrishna Math and Mission general secretary Swami Suvirananda, told reporters.

"We are above politics. To us Narendra Modi is the leader of India and Mamata Banerjee is the leader of West Bengal," he said, adding "we are inclusive as an organisation which has monks from Hindu, Islam, Christian (faiths). We live like more than brothers of same parents".]

there was no issue regarding the party leadership. Asked whether a non-Gandhi would take over as Congress president, he said: "Let's not digress. Where is the need for it? Everybody in the party has unequivocally said that they want Mr Rahul Gandhi to take over."

Saying that the Congress faces a bright future, he said: "In five months, the people of the country are feeling that they are being betrayed by the BJP. You have seen the Maharashtra and Haryana results, compare this with the Lok Sabha results."

Asked whether he feels the tide is turning, he said: "It is not a question of tide turning. The tide has turned."

counts of farmers within 48 hours of purchase."

In Punjab, there are about 48,000 licensed arhatiyas, of whom around 28,000 are active. They provide platforms outside their shops where the produce of farmers is unloaded, cleaned, auctioned, weighed and bagged, before being loaded and moved from the mandi premises. For these services, they are given a 2.5 per cent commission over and above the MSP. MSP payments, too, are made into the accounts of these market intermediaries, who pay farmers in cash or cheque.

"We have been nudging Punjab and Haryana to do away with the system of routing MSP payments through intermediaries, with the Minister (Ram Vilas Paswan) himself writing letters to the Chief Ministers. Punjab agreed to implement it from this KMS by issuing directions to all arhatiyas, who deal with anywhere from 20 to 200 farmers each," said the senior official.

The effort did not make much headway, though, till a meeting that took place on November 21 in New Delhi between officials of the Union Ministry and Punjab government.

"They (state officials) were told that we will not release the 2.5 per cent commission payments to arhatiyas till the names of farmers with their bank accounts are uploaded on the

tered about 7.8 lakh out of their total 14-15 lakh farmers. They have committed to link the details of all these farmers to the PFMS before the coming RMS," said the Ministry official.

Paddy procurement from Haryana in the 2019-20 KMS, at 64.23 lt, was worth Rs 11,786 crore at the MSP value. During the last 2019-20 RMS, 129.12 lt of wheat from Punjab and 93.20 lt from Haryana also got procured, with their respective MSP values at Rs 23,758 crore and Rs 17,149 crore. The total annual MSP value of foodgrain procurement from the two states alone would be roughly Rs 85,000 crore.

The central government's calculation is that once a system to ensure MSP payments go only to genuine farmers is in place, it will bring in greater transparency and lead to subsidy savings. In fertilisers, subsidy disbursement to companies only after Aadhaar authentication and actual sales at retail point getting captured in POS machines is seen to have substantially curbed diversion of material to non-farmers.

Further, the fertiliser department's new "e-Urvarak" direct benefit transfer platform has generated a database that allows for restricting the subsidy to small and marginal farmers or capping the number of subsidised bags sold per holding.

A similar possibility for using PFMS data to limit the MSP entitlement in future to genuine and deserving beneficiaries also exists vis-à-vis the food subsidy, whose budgeted bill for 2019-20, at Rs 184,220 crore, exceeded the Rs 79,996 crore of fertiliser.

The NDA government has also barred states such as Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, currently Congress-ruled, from announcing bonuses on paddy and wheat in addition to the Centre's MSPs.

But these "brick-by-brick" rationalisation moves have faced resistance. The Punjab Arhatiya Association has filed a High Court petition against PFMS. "Farmers take money as cash advance from us, which they repay after sale of crop. If MSP payments are deposited directly into their accounts, how will we ensure repayment of the same loans? Secondly, many farmers cultivate land taken on lease. Whose bank account do we, then, upload — the owner's or the lessee cultivator's?" said Ravinder Singh Cheema, who heads the association.

Sheena Bora

recovered in Maharashtra's Raigad district in 2015, belongs to Sheena Bora. According to the prosecution, 25-year old Bora was murdered in 2012 allegedly by her mother Indrani Mukerjea and her former husband Sanjeev Khanna in what it claims was a conspiracy that also involved her then husband Peter Mukerjea.

With the software coming under the scanner during proceedings over four days last week in courtroom No. 51 of the special CBI court, where the high-profile murder trial is underway, the defence lawyer for Peter Mukerjea, Shrikant Shivade, has asserted that this is the first and last time that it will be used in any court in the country. The CBI, however, has claimed that the software confirms that photographs of Bora matched photographs of the skull, and that they "belong to each other". For the analysis, it relied on its witness Dr Sunil Kumar Tripathi, a 72-year-old retired professor from the Institute of Medical Sciences in Banaras Hindu University.

Tripathi told the court that he had submitted analysis on facial superimposition in four previous cases, but had never used FantaMorph before. He said he was called upon by the CBI for

this case in 2015, and that he used FantaMorph for the first time in this trial after he took over four years to practice and perfect its use.

Listed as the 60th witness in the trial, Tripathi admitted that he had not come across anyone using FantaMorph for superimposition or read any journal on it. "I have not purchased the software after expiry of free trial of 30 days. After the free trial would end, I would load it in another computer, having done this 3-4 times," he told the court.

Tripathi also told the court that he had attended a workshop in 2004 in Panjab University on "facial reconstruction from skull" organised by international expert Mehmet Yasar Iscan.

Shivade, who cross-examined Tripathi, referred to one of the books authored by Iscan, "Forensic Analysis of the Skull", and said that the software does not find mention in it as a tool of expertise for superimposition.

The defence also claimed that out of the four photographs of Bora used for the software, one has only 50 per cent of her face, covered with sunglasses and a fringe on her forehead and eyebrows, to which Tripathi said it was only 35 per cent.

While the website of FantaMorph has detailed information about the product, it provides a link to www.abrosoft.com under contact details. The link was not accessible.

Experts told *The Indian Express* that in criminal investigations, police often rely on a combination of facial reconstruction and superimposition to find the identity of an unknown victim from a recovered skeleton. In this method, initially, negatives of photographs of the deceased victim, and a photograph of the skull, would be superimposed on each other to see if they match.

Other methods include reconstruction of the face after measuring the skull, forensic odontology and other forensic measures.

Dating back to the 19th century, facial superimposition and reconstruction through cranial remains is a debated topic in terms of legal admissibility, with many countries not allowing prosecuting agencies to rely completely on the technique without independent forensic evidence.

In India, there have been cases where facial superimposition was considered, including in the murder of a 22-year old New Zealand national Diana Routley, whose skeletal remains were found after over a year in Varanasi in 1998. Her identity was established through DNA evidence and the superimposition technique.

The defence lawyers in the Bora case have claimed during cross-examination that though advanced methods were available, they were deliberately not used and FantaMorph chosen to arrive at a "tampered" conclusion, using an expert "hand-picked" to meet the CBI's requirements.

Tripathi, however, has claimed that while his first choice of analysis was through negatives of photographs, he went ahead with the software since the CBI could not provide him with a darkroom.

During the trial, the use of FantaMorph became so contentious that when a cat entered the courtroom during one of the hearings, an exasperated Shivade claimed that the software would even show a match between the cat's skull and the one recovered by the agency. "It can show a match between any personality in history, say Mona Lisa and anyone you want because it is only a morphing software," he said.

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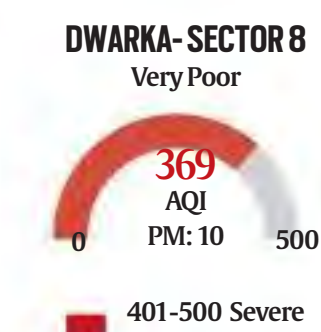
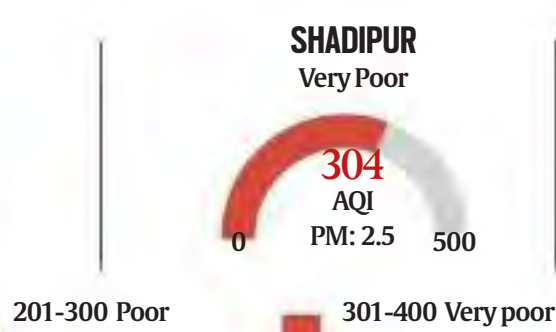
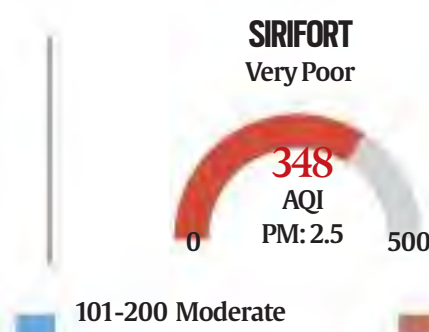
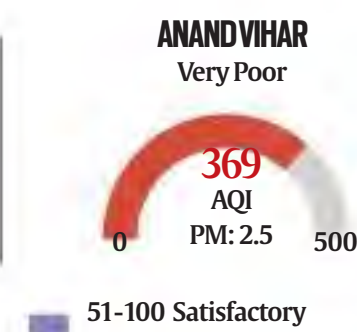








0-50 Good



With desks and books, sisters protest at Jamia

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12



Hita (6) and Ahra (11)

SIX-YEAR-OLD Hita cannot pronounce the word 'religion'. She struggles and lisps her way through her explanation for why people gather outside Jamia everyday: "CAA and NRC are very dangerous. They can be bad in the future. The country may be divided on the basis of religion".

She and her sister, Ahra (11), are at Jamia Millia Islamia every day in a unique protest. They sit on the pavement outside the varsity with a little desk and study while their father, Imran ul Hafiz, an engineer from Batla House, stands besides them.

The sisters are students of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Andrews Ganj. Ahra's exams will begin on the 18th. On Friday, she sat on the pavement with her science notebook, preparing for her first paper. She said the chanting and sloganeering do not distract her from studies. "I only get disturbed when people start talking to me," she said, giggling.

The girls sit with their desk

every afternoon, and stay till after 6 pm. Friday was the 27th day of their pavement study sessions.

With the protest outside Jamia continuing for over a month, it has developed a number of different parts and players, such as the two sisters.

In the last week, new enterprises have begun next to the protest site. Manzoor Ahmed, a shopkeeper from Sadar Bazar, started selling tricolour items to people. Adeeba (20), a resident of Ghafoor Nagar, makes posters for protesters everyday from 2 pm to 7 pm. "I leave for Shaheen Bagh after 7 pm to join the women there and return home after 10 pm," she said.

V-C behind JNU violence: Cong report

New Delhi: The Congress Sunday alleged JNU Vice-Chancellor M Jagadeesh Kumar was the "mastermind" behind the January 5 violence at the varsity, and demanded he be dismissed and a criminal investigation initiated against him.

The claim was part of a report by a fact-finding committee set up by Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

The report, submitted by a team led by Sushmita Dev, claimed the violence was premeditated and aimed at intimidating students and faculty. "There is every reason to believe the mob... was from Right-wing factions," the report alleged, and claimed "the role of the V-C... points to connivance and complicity with attackers." **ENS**

'WILL SEND HER A LEGAL NOTICE'

JNU violence: Police identify masked woman in video as DU student

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

A SPECIAL investigation team of the Delhi Police Crime Branch has identified a woman who was allegedly involved in the violence at Jawaharlal Nehru University on January 5, when groups of masked men and women with sticks had barged into Periyar and Sabarmati hostels and assaulted students and faculty, leaving 34 injured.

In one of the videos of the incident, a masked woman is seen

wielding a stick and threatening students along with two other men inside Sabarmati hostel. Police said the woman has been identified as a student of Delhi University, but did not name her. It is learnt that the woman is from the ABVP, and her photos were widely shared by Left outfits following the violence.

In the video, the woman is seen wearing a check shirt and a blue scarf to cover her face. While the mob tries to push students, the person who shot the video points the camera at the masked woman and says, "She's the girl



In a video, the woman is seen wearing a check shirt and a blue scarf

who said she is a JNU student but she's not... *piche ja* (go back)." The woman and the two

men then threaten students. When the students scream for help, the masked woman says, "Kya bolegi?" The two-minute video was shot in a corridor, where pieces of glass and broken furniture can also be seen.

A senior officer said, "The woman was identified through one of the videos of the incident. She lives in North Campus area. We approached her during the day but she was not home; her phone is switched off. We will send her a legal notice and ask her to come for questioning." As reported by *The Indian*

Quran, Kirtan & Bible as thousands gather at Shaheen Bagh protest, Tharoor drops by to lend support

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

Verses from the *Quran* and the *Bible* were read out as notes of a *shabad kirtan* were heard in the background and a *havan* was performed alongside. A woman stood next to the four groups, holding a photograph of B R Ambedkar, as the inter-faith prayer meeting also saw some reading out the Preamble to the Constitution. Shaheen Bagh, where women, children and men have been protesting for a month now, saw thousands of people coming together in solidarity to register their protest against the new citizenship law and proposed NRC on Sunday.

The slogan that has now become associated with the movement at Shaheen Bagh — *Awaaz do, hum ek hain* — rang out over

and over again as women and men took a *tiranga* march through the lanes of the colony.

"Many people have been trying to dismiss the movement as a Muslim issue. The presence of so many people here, the Tiranga march, and the interfaith prayer shows those people that out fight is not about a religion but about the country and its values," said Mariam Iqbal, a resident of Chhatrapur who participated in Sunday's protest.

According to those associated with the protest since the beginning, Sunday evening was when they saw the highest number of people gathering at the site.

Congress MP, Shashi Tharoor, with Delhi Congress president Subhash Chopra, also visited Shaheen Bagh Sunday evening.

Delayed by close to two hours, Tharoor addressed a packed gathering, telling the women of



Shaheen Bagh that they were the pride of the nation.

Tharoor also visited Jamia Millia Islamia and Jawaharlal Nehru University, where he called the violent events in JNU campus in the previous week "one of the greatest blots on our country".

"The worst thing is that it reminded history students like me of events in Nazi Germany... when young stormtroopers of the ruling party marched into campuses and attacked students and teachers," he said.

At all three places, he criti-



At Shaheen Bagh, Sunday; Cong MP Shashi Tharoor addresses the crowd.
Gajendra Yadav


cised the CAA, NRC and NPR. "The reason for my party and my opposition to the Act is because it is wrong in principle. It is the first time that a religious test has been introduced in Indian citizenship... Even today, we have Amit Shah asking if one can name anything

in this law that takes away anybody's citizenship? That is the wrong question to be asking. The current question is to be asking why it only mentions certain religions," he said.

At the gates of Jamia, speaking to the residents of neighbouring areas who have been on protest for the last month, he referred to it as "an undemocratic, discriminatory effort by the government to marginalise one community".

Speaking on the persistence of the Jamia struggle, he said, "Jamia must fight on. If it needs money, I will go out with a begging bowl to save Jamia... Today the greatest thing about Jamia is its spirit. You are an inspiration to the country."


Tharoor also called the hostel fee hike, which is at the centre of JNU students' protests over the last two months, "shocking".



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4 HARDLOOK DELHI ASSEMBLY POLLS



Amul Mehta

BATTLE FOR DELHI

Bijli-paani or CAA, small improvements or big-ticket announcements — the upcoming polls will be a test for three parties with barely any promise in common.

What is common, though, is a realisation that mega rallies need to give way for a more personal, door-to-door outreach.

SOURAV ROY BARMAN, ABHINAV RAJPUT & ASTHA SAXENA report on the AAP, BJP and Congress campaigns

ONE HAD a disruptor trying to regain the trust of people, the other projected a universally admired icon, and the third attempted to rekindle sentiments, reminding people of the “good old days”. That, in a nutshell, captures the defining features of the 2015 Assembly poll campaigns of the AAP, BJP and Congress. The AAP would go on to win 67 of 70 seats, leaving BJP with three and demolishing the Congress.

Five years on, with the parties battling it out at the hustings once again, *The Indian Express* takes a look at campaign strategies adopted by the three players, its key faces, the continuities and the differences from last time. Delhi goes to polls on February 8.

The AAP's 2015 Assembly poll campaign was centred around Arvind Kejriwal's street-fighter image. “Accept money from the BJP and Congress if they pay you, but vote for us,” he appealed to people, drawing loud cheers at public rallies. While Kejriwal was the focal point of AAP's campaign even then, the party also had under its umbrella intellectuals and activists including Yogendra Yadav, Prashant Bhushan and Ashutosh to smooth out the rough edges.

“Political revolution in India has begun, *Bharat jaldi badlega*,” said Kejriwal's Twitter bio then. The AAP's promise to usher in structural changes in education, health and discounted power and water tariffs caught the public imagination.

But that wasn't all — a key aspect of Kejriwal's campaign that largely slipped under the radar were his attempts to counter the label of someone who abandoned office after just 49 days in power. “I owe an apology to the people of Delhi,” said Kejriwal, a line he repeated in almost every public rally, covering all 70 constituencies. And the scale and margin of the AAP victory made it clear people had forgiven him.

The BJP, on the other hand, was riding high on its stupendous performance in the 2014 general elections, followed by a string of wins in the Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly polls. Back then, nothing, it seemed, could go wrong for the party. Throwing a major surprise, the party fielded former IPS officer Kiran Bedi, a prominent face of the India Against Corruption movement scripted by Kejriwal, as its Chief Ministerial candidate.

The decision backfired. “It was all fine till Bedi was declared CM candidate. Once it was done, the RSS pulled back, senior leaders were miffed,” a BJP leader, who was a part of the media campaign in 2015, admitted.

The Congress, then being led by former Union Minister Ajay Maken, was banking on the work done by three-term CM Sheila Dikshit between 1998 and 2013, pitting the “stability” the party provided in Delhi over 15 long years against AAP and its chief's volatile nature.

Fast forward

Over the last five years, a lot has changed within AAP, including Kejriwal's Twitter bio, which now reads: “Every human is equal, irrespective of religion or community. We want to build a country where people of every religion and community live together in harmony, away from any kind of enmity.”

Asked recently if he plans to once again urge people to accept bribes from the Opposition, Kejriwal said with a smile, “*Woh issue toh court mein hai* (the matter is in court).”

Most backroom strategists who led the charge in 2015 have either left the party or distanced themselves from it. This time around, the party has taken on board private political consultancy firm I-PAC, which



Abhinav Saha



Prem Nath Pandey

(From top) CM Kejriwal at the launch of the AAP's report card; a BJP bike rally led by Delhi chief Manoj Tiwari and MP Vijay Goel; Delhi Cong chief Subhash Chopra and party MP Shashi Tharoor at the campaign launch

shot to fame for propelling Prime Minister Narendra Modi to office in 2014.

The BJP has announced it will fight the polls in Modi's name, having battled months of intense infighting among its leaders, all vying for the post of the CM candidate. The Congress's plank is its vocal opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which has been termed “dangerous” by the AAP as well, but from a distance, with the party keeping away from street protests.

Compared to 2015, AAP's approach in the run-up to 2020 is in many ways starkly different, even as a few common threads stand out such as the party's emphasis on a door-to-door campaign.

“In the first phase, we covered around 25 lakh households and presented our report card to people. After the launch of the manifesto, scheduled between January 15-20, we will launch another round of door-to-door campaigning, where we plan to cover as many households,” said AAP national secretary Pankaj Gupta.

The BJP, in fact, appears to have taken a leaf out of AAP's book. Unlike 2015, when its campaign was designed around big rallies of PM Modi, Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, the party will focus more on street-corner meetings, mohalla sabhas and a door-to-door campaign.

While Modi did address a rally in Ramlila Maidan in December, Shah, now the country's Home Minister, cautioned party workers last week against being too

1.46 cr voters, 70 seats: Delhi election office has task cut out

MALLICA JOSHI

SEVENTY CONSTITUENCIES, 1.46 crore voters, 8,000 government school teachers and 13,750 polling booths — the keenly fought Assembly polls that will decide who governs the city from the Player's Building will see 9.96 lakh more voters than those that voted in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The usually quiet office of the Chief Election Officer, Delhi, housed in the Old St Stephen's Building, meanwhile, is buzzing. Officials on deputation, daily meetings and press briefings, and meetings of the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) has made the compound at a crowded traffic junction in Kashmir Gate among the busiest government offices in the city, considering the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is in force.

Among the most challenging, and fairly new duty, of the local Election Commission office is to track social media as part of its MCMC. “Till very recently, there were no clear guidelines on what constitutes an advertisement, what is permissible and what has to be pulled down from social media. Rules for print media are very clear as they have been in place for several years now. On television, there is much better clarity now than there was 20 years ago. But social media is so new and so participative that checking what constitutes as a violation or an advertisement is a big task. The

scale of multiple entities on social media also means that what we decide to penalise will be scrutinised on a global scale,” said a senior official working on deputation with the CEO office.

The commission has already completed the first phase of the electoral roll updation process, with registrations closing on January 11. Of the 1.46 crore registered voters, 80,55,686 are men, 66,35,635 women and 815 identifying as the third gender.

The office has also identified 72 vulnerable polling stations. Security at these booths is stricter than at others, have webcasting services, more observers, and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF). The number of critical polling stations is 3,209. These booths are termed critical or vulnerable based on previous communal tensions and violent political rivalry.

“The names of these areas will not be disclosed right now. Adequate arrangements for these areas will be made,” said Delhi CEO Ranbir Singh.

Within the first day of the MCC being enforced, the MCMC committee had received two complaints against a news channel for running an opinion poll which showed that the Aam Aadmi Party had an edge in the city. “For all three parties, a lot is at stake. In such a situation, the MCMC will have to be extra vigilant. We have already started to look into the complaints and any appeals will be looked into by a team which includes the CEO himself,” said a senior official.

THREE-WAY CONTEST



70

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES

POLL DATE FEBRUARY 8

RESULTS FEBRUARY 11

1.46 crore

VOTERS



80,55,686

Men



66,35,635

Women

815

Third gender

2,08,883

18-19 years old

2,05,035

80 Years+

11,556

Service voters

489

Overseas voters

55,823

Differently abled



72

Vulnerable

13,750

POLLING BOOTHS

3,209

Critical

dependent on big rallies.

BJP Delhi in-charge Shyam Jaju said, “Our main focus is to reach out to people and tell them, through group meetings and mohalla sabhas, how Kejriwal has stopped schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, through which they can get treatment up to Rs 5 lakh in top hospitals.”

Senior leaders said the BJP will be projecting the Ayushman Bharat scheme — which has not been implemented by the AAP government — to puncture its narrative of reforming the primary healthcare sector through mohalla clinics, around 525 of which are currently operational.

“We will also take to the people our role in building highways and peripheral expressways. And, of course, the decision to accord ownership rights to residents of unauthorised colonies will figure prominently,” said a BJP leader.

Meanwhile, the AAP's double-phase campaign at the grassroots, Gupta said, is markedly different from 2015. “The report card was about what all we achieved in office. That's what we have conveyed so far. Now, we will go knocking on doors with what more we promise to do, or people stand to gain,” Gupta, who unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from Chandni Chowk, said.

The report card, a multi-coloured slim pamphlet conceptualised and produced by the AAP, lists major achievements of its government under 10 sections.

Kejriwal addressed seven town hall sessions at carefully selected locations frequented by the middle class to present its findings, which were also telecast live with the party tying up with television channels.

Asked if Kejriwal will address as many mass rallies as he did last time, Gupta said the party is still in the process of firming up

the structure of the campaign, which will follow the release of its list of candidates and the manifesto. “By this week, we hope to release both the list of candidates and the manifesto. Proper distribution of tickets is paramount for us. Subsequently, we will finalise the number of jan sabhas, road-shows,” said Gupta. During the 2019 Lok Sabha campaign, Kejriwal had primarily focused on roadshows.

“Learning” from its failures, the Congress says it will also focus more on door-to-door campaigns, where it seeks to highlight the issues that both AAP and BJP have failed to address. Slogans like ‘Metro wali Dilli, khushaal Dilli’, ‘Hospital wali Dilli, khushaal Dilli’, ‘Flyovers wali Dilli, khushaal Dilli’, etc are going to be displayed across the capital, to serve as a reminder about its accomplishments during Dikshit's term.

Kirti Azad, campaign committee chairman, said, “Both AAP and BJP have fooled people of Delhi on the issue of unauthorised colonies. We will keep highlighting the flaws and show people how both parties are giving false hopes. Congress doesn't work like that; we deliver what we say.” Gupta emphasised that the standout factor in AAP's 2020 campaign is its ability to showcase a host of accomplishments. “In 2015, we were still establishing ourselves. Now people are aware of our capabilities. They know we can deliver. This is why the CM is going around urging people to vote for AAP only if they think that we have delivered. This is something no party has attempted before,” he said.

The party is also using its achievements to raise funds. Last week, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia managed to raise Rs 28 lakh, the official campaign expenditure ceiling for every candidate, within two days. Gupta said more candidates are expected to opt for the crowdfunding route, while the party has also started hosting fundraising dinners.

On the ground, the party plans to depute 50 volunteers per booth during campaigning, while 1.3 lakh volunteers — 10 per booth — will be activated three days before the polls, said a senior AAP leader.

BJP's media co-in-charge for Vidhan Sabha polls Virender Sachdeva said “over-confidence” did hurt the party in the 2015 polls, but now the focus is back on workers, with BJP working president J P Nadra himself holding meetings to take stock of each Assembly segment.

Spelling out the peculiar dynamic in Delhi, a senior BJP MP joked, “The BJP wants Congress to do well; their revival might just help us. The Congress taking a clear stand against CAA and AAP trying to maintain a balance might just play a role, who knows.”

Asked whether CAA would have an impact during the polls, Jaju said, “Local issues are important but CAA is a matter of national importance. We are explaining how our Sikh and Dalit brothers who came from Pakistan, Afghanistan are living in inhumane conditions and we need to give them citizenship because they have been subjected to religious violence.”

Azad countered Jaju, saying that unlike the BJP, for which Pakistan seems to be a solution to every problem, the Congress will focus more on grassroot issues: “If the Congress comes to power, the government under us will launch a separate website for the public to register their grievances.”

Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra identified AAP's promise of power subsidy — which the party has delivered on — as a major factor behind the 2015 result. The Congress has now promised to extend the subsidy mark from 200 units to 600 units.

BRIEFLY

5 detained for sloganeering

New Delhi: Five men from a theatre group were detained for allegedly shouting anti-NRC slogans at Pragati Maidan Sunday. Police said several people opposed the sloganeering as it disturbed them. They were released later. **ENS**

BJP issues defamation notice to AAP

New Delhi: The Delhi BJP Sunday issued a defamation notice to CM Arvind Kejriwal for using their unit chief Manoj Tiwari's photos in their theme song "Lage Raho Kejriwal". The party also approached the Election Commission. "Who has given the right to AAP to broadcast my photos in their theme song?" said Tiwari in a statement released by BJP. AAP leader Sanjay Singh said: "If we start filing defamation cases against BJP leaders for the language they use against AAP and Kejriwal, BJP will lose all its money." **ENS**

200 academics write to PM

New Delhi: Over 200 academics, including vice-chancellors of universities, wrote to PM Narendra Modi Sunday, blaming a "small coterie of left-wing activists" for a deteriorating academic environment in the country. **PTI**

Man held with cannabis

New Delhi: A 24-year-old man has been arrested from New Delhi Railway Station for allegedly carrying 96 kg of cannabis. **ENS**

JAL BOARD VICE-CHAIRMAN LINKS IT TO POLLS

Haryana hits back as DJB says state releasing dirty water

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

DELHI Jal Board vice-chairperson Dinesh Mohaniya alleged that Haryana was deliberately releasing dirty water to Delhi since dates for the Assembly polls were announced last week. "The water supplied in Delhi comes from other states, of which Haryana is the largest source. Since the announcement of elections, the amount of ammonia in the water coming from Haryana has increased a lot. This has affected water supply in many parts. As Haryana is ruled by the BJP, these developments during the polls seem to be a political conspiracy," claimed Mohaniya. Calling Mohaniya's statement false, Amit Arya, media advisor to the Haryana Chief Minister, said it was an attempt to malign the state's image. Arya also said that similar allegations made earlier by DJB were found baseless by CPCB. High ammonia content can stall functioning of water treatment plants as they are unable



Mohaniya said it has affected water production. *Archive*

to treat water with more than 0.7 ppm ammonia. Increased presence of ammonia in water is a recurrent issue between the two states, especially between January and March as the amount of water flowing in the river is much lower than the ecological flow that is required. As per several reports and experts, a large load of pollutants is added to the river from the Panipat Industrial Area. Officials said two water treatment plants — Chandrawal and Wazirabad — were able to pro-

duce half the amount of treated water that they produce because of pollutants. The decrease was around 100 million gallons daily. DJB supplies 940 MGD of water as opposed to a demand of around 1,200 MGD. Mohaniya said, "The level of ammonia steadily increased from 1.2 ppm on January 8, to 1.8 ppm on January 9, to 2.7 ppm on January 10. Due to this, DJB was able to produce 100 MGD less compared to normal production." "The BJP often accuses the Delhi Jal Board of supplying dirty



water in the city. I want to tell everyone that the water being supplied in Delhi comes from the BJP-ruled states," he added. In November, controversy over Delhi's water quality broke out with a Bureau of Indian Standards report saying that all 11 water samples from different locations in Delhi — including that from Krishna Bhawan and the house of Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan — did not pass its tests. The Delhi government responded with its own survey of over 4,000 samples, wherein it said more than 98% had passed. On the survey, Mohaniya said: "The reason for this suspicion is that on one hand, Paswan accused DJB of supplying dirty water, and on the other hand contaminated water is supplied from BJP-ruled Haryana."

Chandni Chowk to Burari, women join BJP's CAA march

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

HUNDREDS OF women Sunday marched from the BJP's Delhi unit office at Pandit Pant Marg to Connaught Place to support the new citizenship law, and highlight the "lies" spread by the Opposition and "anti-national" groups. Raising slogans such as 'Long Live Mother India' and 'Vande Mataram', the march, led by BJP national spokesperson and MP Meenakshi Lekhi, went around Central Park before heading back. BJP women's wing president Poonam Parashar Jha was also present. Coming from areas such as Chandni Chowk, Keshavpuram, Burari and Mayur Vihar, the women marched past the Gole Dak Khana, Sacred Heart Cathedral and Bangla Sahib Gurdwara and made their way to CP. They were denied entry to Central Park, a police officer said. Lekhi justified the Citizenship Amendment Act and spoke on the National Population Register. She also slammed actor Deepika Padukone's support to JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh. "Those left in the three countries were treated unjustly. There are kidnappings, rapes and forceful marriages of young women.



BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi led the protest to Connaught Place Sunday. *Gajendra Yadav*

Hindu marriage is not recognised, and so they come to India seeking refuge. What is astonishing is that those who have been here for decades have not got Indian citizenship yet," said Lekhi. Instead of making them wait 10-12 years for citizenship, the Act gives citizenship to those who have been in India before December 31, 2014, she said. Pointing out that Dalits make up 66% of refugees, Lekhi said, "During Partition, when Liaquat Ali Khan was in talks with (Jawaharlal) Nehru, the complete swapping of population was stopped saying that if these people went to India, then who would clean the streets of Lahore. This is why CAA is needed." Talking about NPR, Lekhi said, "When P Chidambaram was Home Minister in 2008-09, MMS (Manmohan Singh) gave Rs 350 crore for the project... It was implemented in 2010 and 2015, and was supposed to be implemented in 2020." Slamming Padukone, Lekhi said, "Despite Congress being in power for long, it was Modi government which came up with Article 326A for acid attack victims. It also worked for the Nirbhaya fund." Jha said "lies are being spread" to malign the party. Rama Manchanda, a BJP supporter, said, "The country needs CAA to remove terrorists and others who are coming with an intention to hurt this country."

AAP, DDA spar over price of EWS flats

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

AAP RAJYA Sabha MP Sanjay Singh Sunday alleged that the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and Union Housing Minister Hardeep Puri had pushed up the cost of flats built under the EWS scheme in the city. "In 2014, DDA rolled out a flat scheme for the EWS category and promised that flats will be given at the cost of Rs 6.90 lakh. Around 772 people were to be given flats under this scheme. But, with the consent of the BJP-led Centre, DDA secretly increased the flat rate to Rs 19-24 lakh..." said Singh. He has also

written to the CBI and Central Vigilance Commissioner, asking them to take action. DDA officials said the allegations were wrong and that the price mentioned in the 2014 brochure was "tentative". Puri said, "They (AAP) are talking unadulterated nonsense. At no stage did this come to the Ministry." Singh also alleged that people were given possession of flats after an "intentional" delay even though they were ready in 2014. "The scheme stated that all those whose annual income would be less than Rs 1 lakh would fall under the EWS category and such people would get flats built in partnership with

DLF and DDA from Rs 6.90 lakh — Rs 11 lakh on easy installments. It was clearly written in that leaflet that the flats were ready. Even if allocation of flats took some time, then there would not have been any increase in price," he said. He said DDA decided to charge Rs 19 lakh-Rs 24 lakh for flats later: "DDA, under Puri, asked for three times more amount. When people protested against this scam and staged a sit-in at the L-G's residence, the price was reduced to Rs 15 lakh-Rs 19 lakh." The DDA in a statement said: "The EWS flats being referred to by AAP MP Sanjay Singh have been built by DLF.. Private developers have to

build EWS flats mandatorily whenever they develop a housing colony. 50% of EWS flats developed by private developers are transferred to DDA at a price linked with CPWD index. Thereafter, these flats are offered by DDA to eligible beneficiaries. The price charged by DDA is based on actual cost and the formula is approved by the authority. The price indicated in the brochure in 2014 was tentative. Thereafter, detailed calculation was done in 2019 and the cost worked out was communicated to beneficiaries. Thereafter, on request of beneficiaries, DDA decided not to charge interest and price was reduced... Most beneficiaries have taken the flats."



CATCHING UP

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal talks to his college friends through video conference during the reunion of IIT-Kharagpur's 1985 batch, which was held in Hyderabad Sunday.

With memes, videos, 23-yr-old livens up AAP's social media

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

THE VIDEO clip, lasting a little over three minutes, leads with the caption "watch, how a child exposes Arvind Kejriwal". Another clip exclaims, "Just what did Delhi say about Kejriwal?". The clip bears the thumbnail of a woman with a bewildered expression. The campaign song 'Lage Raho Kejriwal' is so good that even Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari is grooving to its beats, says the caption accompanying another clip, while another tweet — 'Kejriwal', a play on a popular cement ad — depicts the BJP and the Congress trying in vain to bring down the AAP chief. Their captions notwithstanding, the content of the videos convey all the good things achieved by the Kejriwal government in the areas of education, health, power, transport. Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, the AAP is dishing out catchy one-liners, parody clips and memes on social media. And the man behind the transformation is a 23-year-old from Pune — Abhijeet Dipke. On Sunday, the party posted a series of stills from the movie *Gully Boy*, mocking the BJP on the question of fielding a CM candidate to counter Kejriwal. Another meme created by the team features screen grabs from



One of the memes posted on AAP's Twitter handle

the Shah Rukh Khan starrer 'Main Hoon Na'. The collage of images and the accompanying text is a play on one of the famous dialogues of the blockbuster, released in 2004, when the target audience of the meme had not yet reached the voting age. "We are trying to connect better with millennials, first-time voters. Putting out content with heavy political jargon serves no purpose. We have to break down our messages in simple terms, while retaining substance. Memes, short video clips are among the ways that can be achieved," said Dipke. Dipke, who reports to AAP IT media head Ankit Lal, said his long association with the party helps him think on the feet. "Most

of us have been with the party for some time now. Naturally, we know where to draw the line, not to overstep. That, along with the non-hierarchical structure of the party cells, also helps," he said. Lal, who has been heading the AAP's IT team since 2013, said in the current social media landscape, videos are drawing most of the audience, unlike 2013 and 2015, when news clips and images saw maximum engagements. "The three major elements of our social media campaign this time are live videos, creative video clips and memes. The CM's town hall interactions that were live streamed were seen live by 25,000-30,000 people, while eventually they were viewed between three to five million times," said Lal. The AAP has presence on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Sharechat among others. Lal said the party does not treat "social media in isolation" of its other activities and campaigns. "We have around 3,000 ground volunteers specifically tasked with spreading our centrally generated content down to the booth level. In fact, in some cases, people are voluntarily contributing. For example, the Tiwari video was forwarded to us by a volunteer. We don't even know who actually created it," said Lal.

2012 rape: Tihar carries out 'dummy execution'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

DAYS BEFORE the execution of the four convicts, sentenced to death in the gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman in December 2012, prison officials at Tihar conducted a "dummy execution". On Tuesday, a Delhi court had issued a death warrant to the four convicts — Mukesh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar Singh (31) — and said they will be hanged on January 22 at 7 am. Sandeep Goel, director general, Tihar, said, "The trial was done with a dummy, using ropes that we recently bought from Bihar. This is done to test the ropes and the system before the actual execution on January 22." Tihar officials used four dummy made of wheat sacks filled with sand, soil and stones to match the weight of each convict. DG Goel also said the convicts have been shifted to isolated cells in Jail No 3 and 4. The execution will take place in Jail No 3. Prison officials have approached UP prison for a hangman and have confirmed that Pawan Jallad from Meerut will be conducting the execution. "We are making sure to check their diet, health and security daily," said Goel.

Days after man's murder, residents accuse Noida police of inaction; 4 cops suspended


EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NOIDA, JANUARY 12

DAYS AFTER 42-year-old Gaurav Chandel was found dead by the side of a road in Noida, over 500 people from Gaur City, including his family, protested against local police for not taking "appropriate action" in the case. Though police initially denied the family's allegations, they have suspended four policemen for their negligence in the case. Ranvijay Singh, Superintendent of Noida Police,


said, "We have been trying to locate the man's belongings and are tracing the accused. Four officers including the SHO of Bistrakh police station, two sub-inspectors and Kotwali Garhi station's in-charge have been suspended. We are looking at several angles, including duping and criminal intimidation." Gaurav went missing from Parthala Chowk on the night of January 6 when he was returning home from his Gurgaon office. His body was found the next morning near a ditch, with severe head injuries. Police said he was

robbed of his car, wallet, mobile, laptop and other valuables. Siddharth Chandel, Gaurav's brother, claimed, "We went to two police stations. But officers did not deploy personnel to look for my brother. It was my sister-in-law and her neighbours who searched for and found him." Family members and friends gathered outside Gaur City and staged a two-hour protest. "There are CCTVs at every junction. Why can't police nab the accused?" said Shilpa, who lives near Chandel's house. Police said they suspect that a


group of three-four men was behind the crime. A senior officer said, "We suspect the gang stopped Gaurav when he was near a shop to smoke and tried to steal his wallet. When he resisted, one of the accused beat him with a baton and another shot him in the head. We have found a bullet injury on the back of his head." Police also suspect the accused were car-jackers who posed as policemen and stopped Gaurav. Meanwhile, UP CM Yogi Adityanath has promised a compensation of Rs 20 lakh to Gaurav's family.




DELHI POLICE
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

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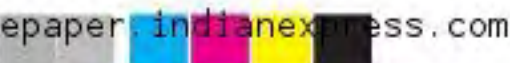
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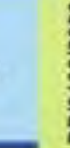
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6 GOVT & POLITICS



CAUSE FOR CONCERN

DURING HIS press conference on the eve of his first Army Day as Army chief, General M M Naravane mentioned how empowering the service chiefs has helped the Army, Navy and Air Force. However, he did not mention that it has been over a week since he took over as Army Chief on January 1 but the position he left behind, vice-chief of the Army, has since been vacant — one of the longest periods when India has not had a vice-chief of the Army. There is growing concern in the Army brass, since the vice-chief is responsible for planning and acquisitions, as well as day-to-day handling. Sources said that ideally the government should have started preparing the day Naravane's name was announced as the next chief on December 16, as the file with potential names was sent to the government immediately, but there is no word on the vice-chief's appointment yet.

SPECIAL INTEREST

ON THURSDAY, the Chinese embassy hosted the second youth dialogue, which was the first event in a series to follow to mark 70 years of the India-China relationship. During the inauguration of the event, the Chinese ambassador to India, Sun Weidong, was asked whether he watched Bollywood films and if he had a favourite. He said that Raj Kapoor's Awaraz was the first Hindi film he watched, and that Dangal and Secret Superstar, both produced by Aamir Khan, are among his favourites.

MEETING LINE-UP

A SERIES of meetings of the Council of Ministers may conclude next week. According to the initial plan, the Council was scheduled to meet on the 13th, 17th and 20th of this month. While three groups of secretaries made their presentations at the last meeting on Wednesday, two such groups are yet to present their draft recommendations. It is, however, learnt that the group of secretaries on finance will not make its presentation to the Council. Which means that the remaining group will make a presentation at the last meeting on January 17.

Kishor pats Cong for resolution against CAA, JDU colleague takes swipe

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, JANUARY 12



Prashant Kishor

JD(U) NATIONAL vice-president Prashant Kishor on Sunday took to Twitter to thank the Congress after the party's Working Committee passed a resolution asking the government to stop the process to update the National Population Register and withdraw the new citizenship law. He also said CAA and NRC would not be implemented in Bihar.

Shortly after Kishor's tweet, senior JD(U) leader Ajay Alok said all states were bound to implement the new law and also sought to know the "punishment for speaking the language of sedition".

Kishor tweeted, "I join my voice with all to thank #Congress leadership for their formal and unequivocal rejection of #CAA, NRC. Both @rahulgandhi & @priyankagandhi deserves special thanks for their efforts on this count. Also would like to reassure to all - Bihar me CAA-NRC laagu nahi hoga (CAA-NRC would not be implemented in Bihar)." Soon after, Alok tweeted, "CAA

has become a law from January 10, 2020 and is in effect in the entire country. All states have to follow it or else the President can take action under Article 365 (of the Constitution). But the question is: What is the punishment for speaking the language of sedition. There must be not be a state of confusion in the NDA."

Taking a swipe at Kishore, Alok tweeted that that there are "some who cannot digest love and respect bestowed upon them by the leadership".

Bihar BJP spokesperson Nikhil Anand told *The Indian Express* that "over-intelligent people are creating propaganda on NRC".

"But the fact is that there is no initiative by Central Government on the issue... We appreciate the support of our NDA allies for supporting CAB in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha... The Bihar government has already notified to start NPR in May 2020."

EXPERTS WANT STUDY ON ECOLOGICAL IMPACT OF CUTTING LARGE NUMBER OF TREES

J&K admin to fell 21 lakh trees to 'reclaim' Wular Lake

BASHAARAT MASOOD
GUND JEHangIR (BARAMULLA), JANUARY 12

THE JAMMU and Kashmir administration has embarked on a project to cut over 20 lakh trees to "reclaim" the shrinking Wular Lake spread across north Kashmir's Bandipore and Baramulla districts. With the cutting of 2 lakh trees already underway in the first phase, experts advise caution.

The Wular Conservation and Management Authority (WUCMA) has started cutting trees on the Ramsar wetland — an area of international importance and once Asia's largest freshwater lake. The project was started on the basis of a 2007 report by Wetlands International South-

EXPLAINED

Freshwater lake shrinking over decades

THE LARGEST freshwater lake in Jammu and Kashmir, Wular has considerably shrunk over the past eight decades. Officials records show that 27 sq m of the lake has silted up and turned into a land mass. In the 1980s, the central government proposed to dam the water by constructing Wular barrage. The project, however, was shelved after rise in militancy in the state.

Asia, a non-profit organisation that works to sustain and restore wetlands. Experts, however, call for a study on the ecological impact of cutting trees in such large numbers.

"We have to cut around 21.84

'ANTI-NATIONAL SLOGANEERS SHOULD BE IN JAIL'

Won't rest until all refugees from Pak made citizens: Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JABALPUR, JANUARY 12

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said that how-ever much the Congress opposes the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the government "will not rest" until all the refugees from minority communities in Pakistan are given Indian citizenship.

He challenged Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to show him any provision in the new legislation that will snatch the citizenship of any citizen in the country.

"I am saying it loudly. You Congress leaders, listen carefully... Oppose it as much as you can, but we will rest only after giving citizenship to all these people. No one can stop us from doing so. Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Christian refugees from Pakistan have as much right over India as you and I have. They are the sons and daughters of India. The country will embrace them," Shah said, addressing a public



Home Minister Amit Shah and former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Jabalpur on Sunday. PTI

meeting here in support of the new citizenship law.

His statements came a day after the Congress demanded immediate withdrawal of the CAA and stopping the process of National Population Register (NPR), accusing the government of using brute majority to impose its "divisive" and "discriminatory" agenda.

Shah also accused Rahul,

Banerjee and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of misguiding people over the CAA. "I challenge Rahul Baba and Mamata Banerjee, tell me if there is a single provision in the CAA that is meant for snatching anybody's citizenship," he said. "There is no provision for taking away anyone's citizenship. The Act in fact is meant for giving citizenship,"



A protest in Kolkata on Sunday against PM Narendra Modi's visit. Partha Paul

In Kolkata, protests against CAA, Modi continue overnight

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JANUARY 12

PROTESTS BY students, mostly affiliated to the Congress and Left Front parties, against the new citizenship law and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who came to Kolkata on Saturday on a two-day visit, continued overnight and went on through Sunday till he left for New Delhi.

Several Youth Congress workers protested against Modi, shouting "go back" and showing black flags at the Race Course helipad and Netaji Indoor Stadium, where the Prime Minister attended the 150th anniversary celebrations of Kolkata Port Trust. Police rounded up the demonstrators and took them to the city police headquarters at Lalbazar.

Protesters, who hit the streets on Saturday with placards that read 'Modi go back', continued their sit-in all night at Esplanade area of central Kolkata, protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), proposed National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register.

They continued their dharna overnight with music and slogans, besides playing chess, football and badminton among other activities.

On Sunday, several CPI(M) and Congress leaders also joined them.

Replying to Modi's claim that some political parties were fuelling misconception about the CAA, CPI(M) leader Md Salim said, "Basically Narendra Modi and (Home Minister) Amit Shah are misleading the people."

Congress leader Somen Mitra said they started the movement, along with the Left Front, and would continue with it.

On Saturday evening, a group of students affiliated to

the Left parties reached the Trinamool Congress Chatra Parishad (TMCP) protest venue nearby on Rani Rasmoni Road, where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had arrived after attending the Millennium Park programme, and shouted slogans against her. They demanded an explanation from Banerjee for meeting the Prime Minister.

Banerjee tried to pacify the students and said she had gone there to meet the Prime Minister as Chief Minister. "Show me one leader who has the guts to say it on the face of Narendra Modi that we are opposing the CAA. We (TMC, Left and Congress) are protesting against the same issue, so please don't deviate from it. I would request you all to protest in a democratic way," she had said.

The Prime Minister said that it is the youth who are leading the country today. "India is moving ahead with confidence. Who is leading the innovation, equations

was not our mandate whether trees should be cut or not. Our mandate was to see what would be its effect on the water body. Our study was a rapid one based on secondary data. We were of the opinion that carbon is sequestered in these trees and if they are cut, it would be added to the atmosphere. Secondly, what do they want to achieve? If they cut trees, do they think water will reach there?"

Another study by Wildlife Trust of India, while recommending the cutting of trees, has called for proper studies to assess the impact. The WTI report says that on an average, 33 kg of carbon dioxide is trapped by each tree annually, making it over 72,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide by 21.84 lakh trees.

While WUCMA officials cite a draft study by Kashmir University on the impact assessment of Wular restoration as a green signal for felling trees, experts caution that proper studies should be conducted in this regard.

Professor Zafar Reshi, who led the team that conducted the Kashmir University study, said, "It

the minister said.

"I want to tell the human rights champions the world over that scores of people have faced atrocities in Pakistan they were raped, killed and converted. You did not see their human rights. Don't they have human rights?" he asked.

During the Assembly polls in Rajasthan, the Congress had promised in its manifesto that Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan would be given Indian citizenship. "But now they are opposing the BJP... (Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok) Gehlotji, check your manifesto," he said.

Referring to the attack in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Shah said, "Some boys raised anti-national slogans like 'Bharat tere tukde honge ek hazar, inshallah, inshallah'. But Rahul Baba and Kejriwal are saying 'save them'... Are they your cousins? Such people deserve to be put behind bars."

The BJP chief also said that Ram temple will be built in Ayodhya in four months. "The complex will be so high that it will touch the sky," Shah said.



(From left) Governor Jagdeep Dhandkhar, PM Narendra Modi and Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya at the 150th anniversary celebrations of Kolkata Port Trust. Partha Paul

PM renames Kolkata Port Trust after Syama Prasad

Mamata skips event; CPM slams Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JANUARY 12

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday renamed Kolkata Port Trust (KoPT) after Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee, prompting the CPI (M) to call his government a "name changer" as against the expectation of being a "game changer".

Speaking at the 150th anniversary celebrations of Kolkata Port Trust at Netaji Indoor Stadium, Modi said the Mamata Banerjee-led state government did not implement Central welfare projects like Ayushman Bharat and PM Kisan Yojana because there was no 'cut' money or syndicate involved.

Chief Minister Banerjee, who was invited to the event, and her party leaders were conspicuous by their absence.

Modi hailed Mookerjee for being at the forefront of industrialisation in the country. "Dr Mookerjee set the ball rolling for industrialisation in India... Chittaranjan Locomotive Factory, Hindustan Aircraft Factory, Damodar Valley Corporation and several other projects saw active participation from him.

Mookerjee is a living legend who fought for the idea of 'One Nation, One Constitution'," he said.

Targeting Banerjee, the PM said her government had deprived the poor of benefits from the Centre's schemes. He iterated his government's flagship projects and how they had benefited the poor and underprivileged.

"As soon as the state government gives its approval for Ayushman Bharat Yojana and PM Kisan Yojana... I don't know whether it will give its nod to it or not, but if it does, then the people of West Bengal will also start receiving the benefits of these schemes," Modi stressed.

Referring to the 'cut money' controversy in the state, he said, "There was no cut (money), no syndicate (while implementing both schemes across the country). When it (both schemes) reaches people directly without any cut or syndicate, then why would anyone want to implement such schemes? I pray to God that he instills good sense into policymakers so that the poor receive benefits of Ayushman Bharat and PM Kisan Yojana."

The CPM criticised the Centre for its decision to rename KoPT. "When Modi came to power, we thought the government will be a game changer. Now, we see the government is a name changer," CPI(M) leader and former MP Mohd Salim said.

Country moving in direction of yuva soch, says Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 12

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday praised the youth of the country, saying the country is moving in the direction of their thinking — "yuva soch".

Addressing the five-day National Youth Festival in Lucknow through video-conferencing, he said, "Youth have wonderful capabilities — to solve problems in a new way. This way of thinking of the youth has helped us take decisions that would seem impossible to do. Their thinking tells us to face problems, and solve them. The country is also moving on their thinking. Today, in Jammu and Kashmir, Article 370 has been removed. The Ram Janmabhoomi dispute that had been going on for hundreds of years has ended, a law has been made on triple talaq. The CAA has become a reality today. After a terror attack, you see surgical and airstrikes... Our government is with the youth."

The Prime Minister said that it is the youth who are leading the country today. "India is moving ahead with confidence. Who is leading the innovation, equations

and start-ups in India today? It is you, the youth who is doing it. Today, in the world's start-up ecosystem, India is among the top three countries... The youth is behind this," Modi added.

Speaking on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, the PM said, "In the form of Swami Vivekananda, India got such energy this day that is still keeping our country energetic. Swami Vivekananda saw India's youth power as a strong link to its glorious past and future."

Urging the youth to buy only local products, Modi said, "Till 2022, as much as possible can we only buy local products. Through this, knowingly or unknowingly, we will help a fellow Indian."

Speaking at the event, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath criticised the protests on campuses, saying that slogans raised in "select" higher educational institutions warn about the centres of conspiracy. "The people who thrive on the resources of the country are trying to throw India in the cauldron of terrorism, Naxalism and extremism. This is confirmed by their statements," he said.

'Resolve to fulfil Constitutional goals summed up in Preamble'

New Delhi: Eight eminent personalities, including former SC judge J Chelameswar and former chief election commissioner S Y Quraishi, appealed to people on Sunday to "introspect and audit" the working of the Constitution.

"Is the Constitution a mere administrative manual which enables elected governments to claim legitimacy for abuse of power, and allows the citizens to convert liberty into license disregarding rights of others? Is it sim-

ply another text penned by ink, or a sacred text written in the blood of innumerable martyrs who transcended barriers of caste, religion, region, ethnicity and language?" they asked in a letter.

"We appeal to citizens to utilise this solemn occasion to celebrate our success, reflect on our current concerns... and resolve to fulfil the Constitutional goals envisaged by Dr Ambedkar and our forefathers as summed up in the Preamble," they wrote. **PTI**

PROTEST WATCH

GUJARAT



Yashwant Sinha with other leaders in Surat. *Express*

Yashwant's yatra against CAA reaches Surat

Surat: The yatra to protest against the CAA and the NRC led by former BJP leader Yashwant Sinha reached Surat on Sunday. Sinha on Sunday said enactment of the “unconstitutional and unnecessary” law was a ploy by the Centre to “divert attention” from its “failure” to prevent the economic slowdown. “All sections of society are disenchanted... Those in government are great experts at diverting attention. The Act was brought because

the economic condition of the country is in great danger,” Sinha said. “We have started this yatra to save the Constitution. We will not allow anybody to divide the country on the basis of religion. We have three demands — repeal CAA, no implementation of NRC and judicial inquiry into the attack in JNU,” he said. The yatra will traverse through Rajasthan, UP and Haryana and culminate in Delhi on January 30.

ENS

BIHAR



Women protest against CAA, NRC in Gaya Sunday. *PTI*

MAHARASHTRA

Thousands join anti-CAA protest in Mumbai

Mumbai: Thousands of citizens on Sunday gathered in Mumbai's Jogeshwari to oppose the new citizenship law, the proposed NRC and NPR. They also condemned last Sunday's attack on the JNU campus. Former TISS general secretary Fahad Ahmed told PTI they assembled under the aegis of 'Hum Bharat Ke Log' in Millat Nagar area. “Why the PM is not talking to us? Why is he not communicating? Even Britishers used

to talk to Indians whom they ruled, but our PM is not talking to poor people,” he alleged. “Prime Minister Narendra Modi should call 56 students from across the country to debate on the CAA, NRC and NPR,” Ahmed said in an apparent jibe at Modi's “56 inch chest” remark. Actor Sushant Singh also spoke on the occasion. “...such Acts (CAA) are tarnishing the image of our country,” he said.

PTI

Women begin sit-in at Prayagraj park: If Delhi women can sit in cold, why can't we?

ASAD REHMAN

LUCKNOW, JANUARY 12

EMULATING THE ongoing protest at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh, a group of women began a sit-in against the new citizenship law (CAA) and proposed NRC at Prayagraj's Mansoor Ali Park on Sunday afternoon.

“We are against this unconstitutional (citizenship) law and the NRC. We, mostly the women, are sitting here as Indians. There are people from all age groups and religions here. We will make this sit-in like the one at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh. If women of Delhi can sit outside in the cold, why can't we? We will sit here for 24 hours and continue our protest in the coming days. It will not stop,” said 26-year-old Sara Ahmed, who works at a private firm and is one of the organisers of the protest.

“I feel it is the women who suffer the most and, therefore,



Protesters at Mansoor Ali Park on Sunday. *Express*

we will lead from the front in the fight for the rights of people,” she added.

Nineteen-year-old Laiba Shamim, who is preparing for NEET, said people of all age groups are part of the protest. “Anyone who visits this protest can see that people ranging from

five to 70 years old are here. Most are women and children. We are against CAA-NRC and are going to make our voices heard,” Shamim said.

Another protester, 62-year-old Gayatri Ganguly (62), said, “I am here to show my solidarity with the protest. I will sit here all

night because if these women can, so can I.”

A mother of teenage children, 40-year-old Tarannum Khan, said that the protest is for the rights of people. “We are here for our rights. There are people from all communities here. It is not about religion but about our Constitution,” said Khan, who has two children aged 14 and 16 years.

Meanwhile, police said that they are urging the protesters to call off their dharna. “A group of women have gathered at the park. Senior police officers are at the spot. They are talking to women. They are protesting against the CAA, NRC. We don't know about their plan, but we are holding talks with them. We are telling them that people in the city have already protested. We told them that it is pointless to sit in the cold. Things are under control and we are keeping a watch,” said SSP (Prayagraj) Satyarth Aniruddha Pankaj.

Will give land, houses to 25 Hindu families from Pak, says BJP MLA

AMIT SHARMA

MEERUT, JANUARY 12

BJP MLA from Khatauli, Vikram Saini, on Sunday said he would resettle at least 25 Hindu migrant families from Pakistan, now living in Delhi, in his native village Kawal in Muzzafarnagar district by giving them land and building houses for them.

Saini, who is an accused in the 2013 Muzzafarnagar riots cases, had earlier that said Pakistan should enact a law on the lines the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) so “persecuted Muslims from India can go there”.

Around eight members of a Hindu family from Pakistan's Sindh province, who had come to

India in 2013 on a Pakistani visa, had met Saini on Saturday. “I will ensure that at least 25 families of Hindu refugees from Pakistan not only get land but houses built for them at my native Kawal and in other areas in my constituency,” Saini told *The Indian Express*.

The 2013 Muzzafarnagar riots in which 62 people were killed and nearly 5,000 displaced, began from Kawal over an altercation between a Hindu and Muslim youngster on August 27, 2013.

Welcoming the MLA's assurance, a member of the Hindu refugee family said the enactment of the new citizenship law has rekindled hope in them. “Since we came here in India in 2013, we have been running from pillar to post for getting Indian cit-

izenship. But were told by officials that to become a citizen, we have to live in India for at least seven years.”

On Friday, Saini had said CAA was necessary for Hindus. “The CAA is a necessary law for the Hindus. I think Pakistan should enact a similar law for Muslims. While India will accept all the Hindus from there, a (Pakistani) law like India's CAA will encourage Muslims of India to go there. The two countries should exchange persecuted Hindus and Muslims from each other's territory,” he had said.

Meanwhile, speaking at an event in Muzzafarnagar on Sunday, BJP MP and Union Minister Sanjeev Baliyan called the CAA “a historic step”.

Stones hurled at BJP's pro-CAA rally in Jharkhand, police use teargas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GIRIDIH, JANUARY 12

STONES WERE hurled at a pro-CAA rally organised by the BJP here on Sunday, prompting police to lob teargas shells to control the situation, officials said.

The incident occurred at Padam Chowk area when BJP workers from six Assembly constituencies of the district took out a procession in support of

the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

Superintendent of Police Surendra Jha said, “Some anti-social elements pelted stones on a procession of the BJP. Few policemen and some of those participating suffered minor injuries, forcing police to use teargas to bring the situation under control.”

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rahul Kumar Sinha reached the spot and is camping there, along

with the SP. Taking part in the rally, former BJP state unit president Ravindra Rai told reporters that CAA is not against any Indian citizen.

“The CAA is for the minorities of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who have taken refuge in the country after fleeing persecution. They should be given citizenship. But the opposition is spreading confusion over the issue. No Indian should be worried,” he said.

Bengaluru Police book 17 in terror case

JOHNSON TA

BENGALURU, JANUARY 12

FOLLOWING AN investigation by the Tamil Nadu police into the activities of Khaja Moideen (52) — alleged to have links to the Islamic State — the Bengaluru crime branch lodged a terrorism case against Moideen and 16 others, including two youths accused of murdering a police officer in Tamil Nadu last week. Moideen was arrested by Delhi Police last week.

According to the FIR, south Bengaluru resident Mehaboob Pasha and his nephews allegedly facilitated meetings at his home for Moideen to radicalise youths from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and to attract them to Islamic State ideology. A group led by Moideen was being assisted by a group from Bengaluru, including nephews of Pasha, in procuring guns, finding training sites and men, a Bengaluru crime branch official has alleged in a complaint.

“A few accused in Bengaluru along with accused in Chennai were in direct contact with a foreign handler and were planning to create disturbance. They were also procuring weapons for this. The Chennai accused are already involved in such cases in Tamil Nadu. A few accused are in the custody of Chennai and Delhi police. Further investigations are on,” Joint Commissioner of Police (crime) Sandeep Patil said.

Among the youths named in the Bengaluru case under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) are Abdul Shameem and Toufiq, who have been

named prime suspects in the shooting of a police officer in Kanyakumari on January 8. Police in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are investigating if the officer was shot with a gun that was part of a consignment of arms recovered from a suspect arrested in Bengaluru by Tamil Nadu police.

According to sources, days before they allegedly shot the officer, Shameem and Toufiq were in Bengaluru and they got a brother of one of the men arrested by Tamil Nadu police to withdraw Rs 15,000 from an ATM.

On Sunday, Bengaluru police anti-terrorism cell and the state Internal Security Division carried out searches at multiple places in Karnataka as part of its investigation into the UAPA case. Several youths named in the case are reported to be absconding. Six of the 17 named are from Tamil Nadu and the others are from Bengaluru and others parts of Karnataka.

The alleged IS-linked radicalisation plot emerged in December 2019 after Tamil Nadu police began a hunt for the Moideen who disappeared despite being an undertrial in two terrorism cases pertaining to the murder of a right-wing Hindu leader and recruitment of youths on behalf of Islamic State.

Moideen has also been accused by NIA in a 2017 terror recruitment case along with Haja Fakkurudeen, a Tamil Nadu man who allegedly travelled to Syria in 2014 to join the Islamic State. In a chargesheet filed in March 2018, the NIA said Moideen “wilfully assisted Haja Fakkurudeen in joining the ISIS/ISIL/Daish in Syria”.

Those creating horror show on CAA given supari: Naqvi

Hyderabad: Stressing that the government was firm on the new citizenship law and there was no going back on it, Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Sunday alleged that those creating confusion and a “horror show” on the issue had been given a “*supari*” (contract) to mislead the people.

Speaking to reporters after inaugurating a ‘Hunar Haat’ here, the senior BJP leader said the CAA would not take away the citizenship of any Indian and the law was to provide citizenship for persecuted minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

“We want to make it clear that those who are misleading any section of society on the CAA are in a way enemies of the country's unity and harmony. They are the biggest enemies of the nation's minorities and particularly, enemies of Indian Muslims... This horror show has to stop,” he said.

The minority affairs minister said the government would not make any changes in the law. “Those who are opposing it through the ‘horror show’ need to understand clearly that there is no rethinking this,” he said.

PTI

HC stays probe against man booked for post on toll-free CAA number

Agartala: The High Court of Tripura has stayed investigation on a FIR accusing one Arindam Bhattacharjee of posting misinformation about the toll-free number released by the Centre for people to extend support to CAA and has asked authorities not to arrest him for the time being.

On January 4, Bhattacharjee

allegedly wrote, “By mistake if you make a call on 8866288662, all of your saved data in the mobile would go to hackers. Be alert...”

BJP state media in-charge Victor Shome filed accused Bhattacharjee of spreading misinformation, and repeatedly trying to disturb communal harmony.

ENS

‘AAJ KE SHIVAJI - NARENDRA MODI’

Shivaji Maharaj can't be compared with anyone: Maharashtra govt to BJP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 12

A DAY after BJP's Delhi unit released a book titled ‘Aaj Ke Shivaji - Narendra Modi’, ruling parties Shiv Sena, Congress and NCP on Sunday said that being compared to Prime Minister Narendra Modi was an insult to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

On Saturday, the BJP Delhi unit had organised a religious and cultural convention, where the book, written by party leader Jai Bhagwan Goyal, was launched.

Asking the state BJP to clarify its stand, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said: “Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj cannot be compared with anybody in the world. There is only one Shivaji Maharaj like the sun and the moon.”

“Is Modi's comparison with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj ac-

ceptable to Udayanraje (Bhosale) and Sambhaji Raje, the descendants of Chhatrapati Shivaji?” Raut asked.

While BJP had nominated Raje to the Rajya Sabha in 2016, in September 2019, Bhosale, a former Lok Sabha MP from Satara, had left NCP to join the party.

Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant said: “It shows BJP's mentality. Earlier, the Uttar Pradesh CM had also compared Modi with Chhatrapati Shivaji. It is an insult to Shivaji's work.”

Dhananjay Munde, NCP leader and Minister for Social Justice, said the state will not forgive the saffron party. “BJP leaders have hurt the feelings of Marathi people by publishing such a book. Nobody can be compared with Maharaj.” Meanwhile, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Sambhaji Raje demanded that BJP chief Amit Shah withdraw the book.

GUJARAT FACTORY BLAST

Victims’ families
slam management
for lack of safety

AISHWARYA MOHANTY
VADODARA, JANUARY 12

GULABSINH RATHOD (62), a resident of Padra in Gujarat’s Vadodara district, told his family on Friday that he won’t be returning home that night. “He told us he would return on Saturday night. This happened often. We did not know that this time, he would not return at all,” said Rathod’s son Raju (35). Rathod was among six people killed in a blast at the factory of Aims Industries Pvt Ltd on Saturday morning.

Raju, who works as a driver for the city bus service, said, “He (Rathod) often worked double shifts or for days at a stretch. He was one of the seniormost employees there. He continued after retirement because the company insisted.”

Another victim of the incident is Waghabhai Bharwad (45). A driver, Waghabhai visited the company for the first time on Saturday to take oxygen cylinders to another unit in Ankleshwar. His brother Gagan said, “He had just entered the premises when the blast took place. His job was to drive safely, which he was doing. The management’s job was to ensure safety on the premises, which they did not.”

The victims’ relatives had ini-

tially refused to take the bodies unless they were given a written assurance of compensation. They agreed to take the bodies Sunday evening after police arrested three persons and the families were given a cheque of Rs 21 lakh each.

“My brother has a wife and two children. His son quit studies and is not employed yet. Who will look after the family? The compensation will at least help the family survive,” said Mahindra Parmar, brother of Mafat Parmar, one of the victims.

Villagers from Gavasad, where the unit is located, had gathered to receive the body of Sanjay Vaghre (30). Sanjay’s brother Mukesh said, “They were not given any safety gear. Strict action should be taken against those responsible.” Sanjay is survived by his wife and two children.

3 out of 5 accused held

Police have arrested three of the five accused in connection with the blast. A director of the firm, Satya Bal Nayar, plant manager Akash Agarwal and operator and supervisor Raju Rathwa have been arrested. Owner and chairman of the company Siddharth Patel and his son Shwetanshu Patel, also one of the directors, are yet to be arrested. They are on the run, said police.

MAHARASHTRA CHEMICAL FACTORY BLAST

Day after, toll climbs to eight

SRINATH RAO
& NIRAJ RAUT
TARAPUR, JANUARY 12

SURENDRA KUMAR Yadav had news for his wife and children on Saturday evening. Having spent six years in a building that also housed a chemical company, it was time they moved to a proper home.

The 40-year-old, who works as a tailoring instructor at a textile firm, recalled, “By 7 pm, when my taxi reached the building that housed the chemical plant of ANK Pharma Private Limited, my home had disappeared.”

An explosion triggered by a chemical reaction had destroyed a part of the building and an adjacent underconstruction building in Tarapur Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) area in Boisar. Eight people have been killed in the incident so far.

The bodies of Yadav’s wife Rajmatidevi (40), son Golu (19) and daughter Khushi (13) were found in the rubble. Khushi’s body was retrieved on Sunday. His nephew Sachin, who lives in Bihar and was visiting them, is severely injured, said police.

According to Industries Minister Subhash Desai, the Yadavs were one of two families who had been staying illegally on the first floor of the three-storey building. Desai, who inspected the structure, said Chief Minister Uddhav



Prachi and Rutika Singh survived the collapse of their home by crawling under their bed. While they escaped with a few scratches, the blast claimed their mother Nishu. Deepak Joshi

Thackeray would chair a meeting on Monday to discuss steps to safeguard civilians living in industrial units. He said an inquiry would reveal how Natwarlal Patel, who owns ANK Pharma, built two additional floors when MIDC permitted only a single-storey facility.

The other family, who like the Yadavs served as caretakers of the premises, was that of Rahul Singh. The 27-year-old had a narrow escape as he walked across the road to a shop to buy *guthka* minutes before the explosion. Rahul’s wife Nishu (26) and mother Madhuri (46) were killed in the incident.

His daughters Prachi (6) and Rutika (3) had crawled under the bed and survived with minor injuries. Rahul’s brother Rohit (19) is in the ICU at Thunga Hospital.

At the town’s primary health centre, friends of dead security guard Ilyas Ansari (54) said he was set to leave for home when the blast took place. “At 6.45 pm, Ilyas had called his wife Asma to ask what was for dinner. She told him she was planning to cook *mirchi ki sabzi* and *jowari roti*. Ilyas asked her to cook daal *gusht* instead,” said his friend Raza Ahmad. Besides Asma, Ilyas is survived by

two sons and a daughter. Mohan Ingale is another employee to be killed in the blast.

Also among the victims is Trinath Dasari (40), whose body was recovered on Sunday. His uncle M P Naidu said Dasari, a lift mechanic, was at the factory to collect his pay. “He worked for a company that takes contracts to install lifts. Trinath finished some minor work in the lift shaft and was waiting for his payment.”

Among those injured is ANK Pharma owner Patel, who is undergoing treatment for stomach injuries. Other factory owners and police said Patel, a mechanical engineer, is experienced in handling chemicals. His two-year-old firm received permission to operate and manufacture chemicals from Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) on January 2.

Mukesh Patel, a member of Tarapur Panchayat Samiti, said Saturday was Patel’s second trial run after a failed effort on Friday. “The first time he used 100 kg of a chemical and thick fumes came out of the reactor. On Saturday, he put 350 kg of a chemical into the reactor,” he said.

Palghar SP Gaurav Singh said the chemical Patel used and intended to manufacture would be identified once MPCB and Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health submitted reports. “Surprisingly, for a pharmaceutical firm, there was no other machinery apart from a metal reactor.”

Tirumala TV
chairman told
to resign for
‘harassment’

REENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, JANUARY 12

THE CHAIRMAN and director of Sri Venkateshwara Bhakti Channel (SVBC) of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), Balireddy Prudhviraj, was asked to resign by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy for alleged inappropriate behaviour towards a woman employee.

The recording of a phone conversation, in which Prudhviraj purportedly makes sexual remarks, was leaked to media houses on Sunday. After conducting an inquiry, the TTD, which manages the Lord Venkateshwara temple at Tirumala, decided to ask Prudhviraj, an actor and comedian, to resign.

TTD Chairman Y V Subba Reddy told *The Indian Express*, “We don’t tolerate this, and the reputation of TTD was at stake, so I sought an inquiry by the vigilance department of TTD.”

He added, “Before ordering the inquiry, I called up Prudhviraj. He claimed the audio was doctored by his enemies. I asked the Vigilance Department to conduct a fair probe. The report was submitted in the evening. After consulting the CM we decided to seek Prudhviraj’s resignation.”

Prudhviraj had last week incensed the CM after he described protesting farmers of Amaravati as paid artistes enacting a drama. After he was given a warning by senior YSRCP leaders, he apologised to the farmers who are protesting against shifting of the capital.

3 Hizbul militants shot in Tral

ADIL AKHZER
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 12

THREE HIZBUL Mujahideen militants, including a commander of the outfit, were gunned down by security forces during a cordon-and-search operation at Tral in Jammu and Kashmir’s Pulwama district on Sunday. The operation was launched on Saturday late night after policeman-turned-Hizbul commander Syed Naveed Mushtaq alias Naveed Babu was arrested along with a top J&K Police officer and two others.

Kashmir IGP Vijay Kumar said on Sunday, “Yesterday, we got an input that three militants are hiding in Gulshanpora village of Tral. One of them was Hamad Khan, a most wanted terrorist who was involved in several civilian and policemen killings in the past two years.”

“When our party, including personnel from Army, police and CRPF, prepared a cordon and asked him to surrender, he fired and we retaliated. Two militants were killed. The third shifted to another house and was eventually killed in the exchange of

fire,” he said.

A J&K Police spokesman said bodies of the three militants had been retrieved. They have been identified as Umer Fayaz Lone alias Hamad Khan from Seer Tral, Faizan Hamid from Mandoora Tral and Adil Bashir Mir from Monghama Tral.

“As per police records, the terrorists were affiliated with the proscribed terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen and wanted by law for their complicity in terror crimes, including attack on security establishments and civilian atrocities,” the spokesman said.



The Jain Coral Cove apartment building being demolished in Maradu, Kochi, on Sunday. ANI

All 4 illegal Maradu
buildings demolished

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOCHI, JANUARY 12

THE DEMOLITION of four apartment buildings constructed in violation of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms at Maradu municipality was completed on Sunday with the razing of two buildings — Jain Coral Cove and Golden Kavaloram.

The other two buildings — Holy Faith H2O and Alfa Serene — were taken down on Saturday.

The two-day demolition was the result of a Supreme Court order issued on May 8, 2018.

All four structures were taken down using a technique of implosion wherein the structures caved in within their own compounds. No damage to any other structures nearby was reported.

All the flats caved in on themselves within their compounds

as envisaged by the demolishers — Mumbai-based Edifice and Chennai-based Vijaya Steels.

On Sunday, Jain Coral Cove collapsed in seven seconds after the implosion was triggered. With 128 living units over 17 storeys, it was the biggest of the four buildings to be demolished.

The CRZ violations had come to the government’s notice in 2007 — a year after the Maradu local self-governing body issued building permits to the four builders. But construction continued between the interim court orders due to a lack of action from governments.

Around 270 families had moved into the buildings over the years. The families were forced to vacate after the court issued an ultimatum to the state government to implement its demolition order. Around 250 families have been given an interim relief of Rs 25 lakh each.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

THE US State Department has described the recent visit of envoys of 15 countries to Jammu and Kashmir as an “important step” but expressed concern over the continued detention of political leaders and restrictions on internet in the region.

The restrictions were imposed on August 5, when India scrapped the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the state into two Union Territories.

In the first such trip by foreign diplomats since August 5, envoys of 15 countries, including

the US, visited Jammu and Kashmir last week and interacted with select political representatives, civil society members as well as top military brass, with the Indian government rejecting criticism that it was a “guided tour”.


Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells, who will be travelling to South Asia this week, expressed on Saturday hope that the region would return to normalcy.

“Closely following @USAmblndia & other foreign diplomats’ recent trip to Jammu & Kashmir. Important step. We remain concerned by detention of political leaders and residents,

and Internet restrictions. We look forward to a return to normalcy,” she said in a tweet.

Wells will travel to New Delhi from January 15-18 to attend the Raisina Dialogue. She will also meet senior government officials to advance the US-India strategic global partnership following the success of the 2019 US-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, and will discuss topics of mutual interest with members of the business community and civil society.

From New Delhi, Wells will fly to Islamabad, where she will meet Pakistan’s top officials and members of civil society to discuss issues of bilateral and regional concern.



Prayagraj Smart City Limited (PSCL)
1st Floor, Galaxy Building, Near Civil Lines Bus Stand,
Prayagraj-211001 Uttar Pradesh

P No.:/ASCL/19....., Date: 10.01.2020

Prayagraj Smart City Limited invites online item rate tender for “Design, Fabrication, Transportation, Installation and Commissioning of Prepaid Booth in Prayagraj” from the bidder’s, meeting the basic eligibility criteria as stated in the RFP document (Second Call).

1. Start Date & Time for Tender Download

2. Document Fees (Non-refundable)

3. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)

4. Last date to submit the Pre-Bid Queries

● 10.01.2020 from 14:00 hrs

● Rs 5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand Only). Applicable GST @ 18%

● 66,000/- (Rupees Sixty Six Thousand Only)

● Bidders shall have to post queries by email to missionmanager.ascl@gmail.com on or before 17.01.2020 till 17:00 hrs.

5. Last date of Bid Submission

● Online through eProcurement system at <https://etender.up.nic.in> up to 25.01.2020 up to 15:00 hrs.

● 25.01.2020 at 15:30 hrs

6. Last date of Submission of Hard copy

7. Bid opening date

8. Period for completion

9. Contact Details for queries (if any)

● 25.01.2020 at 16:30 hrs

● 6 months

Mission Manager (Technical), Prayagraj Smart City Limited, 1st Floor, Galaxy Building, Near Civil Lines Bus Stand, Prayagraj- 211001 Uttar Pradesh. email to missionmanager.ascl@gmail.com Contact No.: 9415191331

Sd/-
(Ravi Ranjan)
CEO
Prayagraj Smart City Limited

Heavy snowfall in Uttarakhand,
tourist footfall up in Mussoorie

LALMANI VERMA
DEHRADUN, JANUARY 12

WITH THE higher reaches of Himalayan regions in Uttarakhand receiving heavy snowfall in the first few days of the new year, environment experts and the state government are hoping this would be good for the ecosystem and the upcoming monsoon.

According to the data of the Meteorological Centre in Dehradun, 7.5 inches of snowfall was recorded in the first 10 days of this year by the snow gauge at the observatory in Mukteshwar. There are four observatories in the state — the others are at Dehradun, Pantnagar and Tehri — but only the facility at Mukteshwar at an altitude of 2,171 m has a snow gauge.

Compared to the 7.5 inches of snowfall in the first 10 days of January this year, the snowfall recorded for the whole of January 2019 was 5.8 inches. In 2018, 2.5 inches of snowfall was recorded in January. In the past

EXPLAINED Good for the ecosystem, say experts

Experts have pointed out that if the Western Disturbance is good in winters, there would be a better monsoon during July-August-September. Higher snowfall during winters replenishes the ground storage of water, which would be beneficial for downstream habitat and agriculture.

20 years, the highest snowfall in January was recorded in 2005 — 25.3 inches.

According to officials, if snowfall in Mukteshwar increases, it means an increase in snowfall at the higher reaches of the state. Many places in the state have received snowfall after more than a decade. Tyuni block in Dehradun district recorded snowfall after four

decades. Kalsi block and Hanol area in the same district witnessed snowfall after almost two decades.

Prominent tourist destination Mussoorie received snowfall twice in January, increasing tourist footfall during what is considered an off-season. In 2019, Mussoorie did not receive snowfall.

Speaking to mediapersons about the snowfall, Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said, “I take it in positive way and this will be very good for our future.”

Director of Meteorological Centre, Dehradun, Bikram Singh, said snowfall has increased because Western Disturbance is more active this time. Singh said there is possibility of snowfall again on January 13 and 14 in the higher reaches of Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudraprayag and Pithoragarh districts.

Professor A P Dimri of JNU’s School of Environmental Sciences said the activity of Western Disturbance in some years leads to an increase in snowfall.

NORTH

SP leader shot, cops suspect
link with panchayat polls

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party leader and former head of Shikwalya village, Bijli Yadav (42), was shot dead while he was out for a morning walk in Mohammadabad police station area of Mau district on Sunday. The incident came to light when a local spotted his body lying in a field. An FIR has been lodged

against unidentified persons. No one has been arrested so far. Police said the upcoming panchayat election could be a reason behind the killing. He is survived by wife and five daughters. “Assailant had shot victim from point blank range at his temple,” said Circle Officer, Mau, Abhinav Kannaujia. **ENS**

Trained dogs from across the world took part in the 70th Dog Show Championship in Jamshedpur, Sunday. PTI

EAST

Official in Bengal issues
notice on NPR, suspended

Kolkata: Kamarhati Municipality Executive Officer Rabindranath Shaw has been suspended for issuing a notice regarding National Population Register (NPR), the process for which has been stayed by the state government. The Vice-Chairman of the municipality, Tushar Chatterjee, said Shaw misled the chairman

and took his signature for the notice. “It is a criminal offence. That’s why he has been suspended. An inquiry has been started against him,” he said. Kamarhati Municipality sources said he recently circulated a notice to all the schools in the area to submit the names of teachers who can be engaged in the NPR survey. **ENS**

WEST

Goa Cong workers protest
over Mahadayi dispute

Panaji: Congress workers from Goa protested on Sunday in Degaon, the site from where the Mahadayi river originates, in neighbouring Karnataka’s Belgaum district. Goa and Karnataka are embroiled in a dispute over the sharing of Mahadayi river water and the two states have also sparred over the latter going ahead with the Kalsa

Banduri drinking water project on the river. Sunday’s protest was led by Congress’ Bicholim taluka chief Meghashyam Raut. Raut had also protested on the issue when Union Minister Prakash Javadekar was delivering a speech at the inauguration of International Film Festival of India in Goa in November. **PTI**

SOUTH

ASI commits suicide at
police station in Kerala

Kollam: A 47-year old Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police allegedly committed suicide in a police station here, police said on Sunday. Stalin, who reported for night shift on Friday, was found hanging from the ceiling at the verandah of the police station at Ezhukone on Saturday, they

said. His colleagues on their return from night patrol found the ASI hanging and immediately rushed him to a hospital, where he was declared brought dead. The official, who had been promoted only a month ago, was reportedly facing some financial problems, police said. **PTI**

‘ASSAULT’ AT BOOK FAIR

Journalist held in Chennai,
Oppn says targeted for
anti-government writing

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, JANUARY 12

A CHENNAI-BASED journalist, V Anbazhagan, was arrested on Sunday for allegedly assaulting members of the Book Sellers and Publishers Association (BAPASI) — organisers of the on going Chennai Book Fair.

The alleged assault was after organisers asked Anbazhagan to remove a stall at the fair, which he had been occupying to exhibit some of his self-published pamphlets— mostly compilations of political corruption.

He also runs an organisation called Makkal Seithi Maiyam.

Sources close to him alleged that the reason for his arrest was one of the pamphlets he self-published recently about alleged political corruption of the AIADMK government.

Known for writing consistently against Minister S P Velumani, the journalist has faced cases in the past for similar publi-

cations targeting top politicians. A BAPASI office-bearer said Anbazhagan’s stall went against a clause that strictly bans anti-government material or propaganda. “We asked him to vacate the stall as he violated it. Refusing to follow the demand, he attacked us and that forced us to file a police complaint,” he said.

Based on the complaint, Anbazhagan was booked under non-bailable sections including 341 (Wrongful restraint), 294(b) (sings, recites or utters any obscene song, ballad or words, in or near any public place) and 506 (2)(Punishment for criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). He was remanded in judicial custody by afternoon.

Opposition parties alleged that Anbazhagan was arrested for writing against the government. DMK Chief M K Stalin demanded the immediate release of Anbazhagan and senior Tamil leader Vaiko called it a fascist act by the police against a journalist who exposed political corruption.

epaper.indianexpress.com

TELLING NUMBERS

Prison space grows, but prisoner count grows faster, data show

17.6% OVER CAPACITY

Year	Prisons	Capacity	Prisoners	Occupancy rate
2016	1,412	3,80,876	4,33,003	113.7%
2017	1,361	3,91,574	4,50,696	115.1%
2018	1,339	3,96,223	4,66,084	117.6%

SINCE 2016, Indian prisons have increased their capacity but this has not kept pace with the growth in the number of prisoners, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data show. The capacity of prisons has increased from 3,80,876 in 2016 to 3,96,223 in 2018 (as of December 31), or by 4.03% during 2016-2018, according to the newly released report NCRB Prison Statistics India 2018. Over the same period, the number of prisoners lodged in these jails has increased from 4,33,003 to 4,66,084, or by 7.64%. As a result, the occupancy rate in prisons has grown from 113.7% to 117.6%. Uttar Pradesh has reported the highest occupancy rate (176.5%) followed by Sikkim (157.3%) and Delhi (154.3%).

While the capacity of prisons has increased, the number of prisons has decreased by 5%, from 1,412 in 2016 to 1,339 in 2018. The 2018 count includes 628 sub-jails, 404 district jails, 144 central jails, 77 open jails, 41 special jails, 24 women jails, and 19 borstal schools. The remaining two jails are in the category "other than the above".

2,000 kids & their mothers

Nearly 2,000 children were living in jails in India along with their imprisoned mothers, as of December 31, 2018. Out of 1,999 children (1,732 women prisoners), Uttar Pradesh accounted for one-fourth (509 children) while four more states accounted for another one-third. Together, jails in these five states — UP, along with Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh — had 1,201 children, or 60% of the total 1,999.

While 1,732 women prisoners had children with them, the total number of women prisoners in India was 19,242. Among them, 3,243 were in the 24 women jails and 15,999 were in other jails. In women jails, the number of prisoners was below capacity (58% of a capacity of 5,593). In other jails, which have a combined capacity of 21,668 women inmates, the 15,999 inmates represented an occupancy rate of 73.8%.

Prisoner categories

Of the 4,66,084 prisoners as of December 31, 2018, 1,39,488 (30%) were convicts and over 69% (3,23,537) were undertrials. Less than 1% comprised detainees and other inmates.

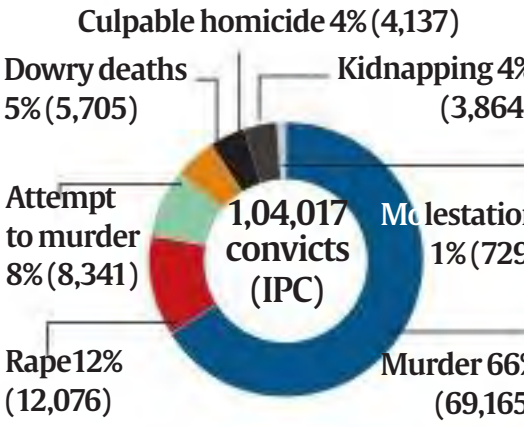
The number of convicted prisoners had increased by 2.8% from 1,35,683 in 2016. Among the states, UP had the highest number of convicts, at 28,660 or 20.5% of the total in 2018. It was followed by Madhya Pradesh (18,626) and Maharashtra (8,908).

The number of undertrial prisoners increased from 2,93,058 in 2016 to

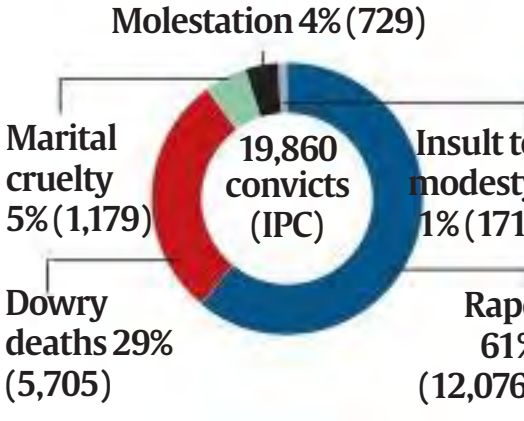
CHILDREN WITH JAILED MOTHERS

State	Women with children	Children
All India	1,732	1,999
Uttar Pradesh	451	509
Bihar	158	196
West Bengal	147	192
Jharkhand	125	156
Madhya Pradesh	124	148
Maharashtra	97	117
Chhattisgarh	90	114

OFFENCES AGAINST HUMAN BODY



CRIME AGAINST WOMEN



All graphics, tables based on NCRB data

3,23,537 in 2018, or 10.4%. Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of undertrials at 75,206, followed by Bihar (31,488) and Maharashtra (26,898) at the end of 2018.

Offences

Among the convicts were 1,22,441 who were serving terms for IPC offences. Among them, in turn, 1,04,017 (85%) had committed various offences affecting the human body while over 12,939 (10%) had committed offences against property.

Among those convicted of offences against the human body, the highest number of inmates were convicted of murder (66%, 69,165 convicts) followed by convicts of rape (12%, 12,076) and convicts of attempt to murder (8%, 8,341).

Nearly 20,000 convicts had committed offences against women. These offences include rape, which is also included among offences against the human body. In the category for offences against women, the 12,076 rape convicts represented 61%.

ANJALI MARAR & AMITABH SINHA

PUNE, JANUARY 12

LAST WEEK, 2019 was declared as the second warmest year ever by the European weather agency's Copernicus climate change programme. Only 2016 has been measured to be warmer. Just two days earlier, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had said 2019 was the seventh warmest year on record for India. With Australia witnessing perhaps the worst spate of forest fires in its history, attributable to global warming, 2020 has started with a series of grim news on the climate change front.

How warm was 2019, globally?

The Copernicus programme, run by the European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting, said the average annual global surface temperature in 2019 was 0.59°C higher than the average of the 30-year period 1981-2010, which is taken to be normal in current assessments. Compared to pre-industrial times, a reference to the 1850-1900 period, which is considered the baseline in climate change debates, 2019 was 1.2°C warmer. Within 2019, December clocked its own record. With temperatures 0.74°C above average, 2019 had the warmest December ever, alongside the 2015 December which was similarly warm.

Only 2016 has recorded marginally higher annual temperatures. That year was 0.63°C warmer than the 1981-2010 average. 2017 has been the third warmest year till now, with a temperature of 0.54°C above average.

The extent of sea ice, both in the Arctic and the Antarctic, is often taken as an important indicator of the impact that global warming was causing. The Copernicus programme said the Antarctic sea ice extent was the third lowest ever in December 2019 since the start of satellite observations in 1979. The Antarctic sea ice extent was 9.3 million square km on an average, which was about 15% lower than the 1981-2010 average for the month. In the Arctic, the sea ice was 11.8 million square km, about 8% below the average. The lowest December sea ice near the Arctic was recorded in 2010 when it was 11% below the average.

What are the findings of the climate report on India?

The IMD, in its climate report for 2019, said India had warmed by 0.61°C in the last

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS

PUNE, JANUARY 12

INDIAN SCIENTISTS have detected the country's first case of infection with a rare variant of the virus that causes avian influenza, or bird flu. In the December 2019 issue of the *Emerging Infectious Diseases* journal of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), scientists of the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, have reported avian influenza A(H9N2) virus infection in a 17-month-old boy in Maharashtra. What is this virus, and is there any cause for serious concern?

The A(H9N2) virus

H9N2 is a subtype of the influenza A virus, which causes human influenza as well as bird flu. The H9N2 subtype was isolated for the first time in Wisconsin, US in 1966 from turkey flocks. According to the US National Centre for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), H9N2 viruses are found worldwide in wild birds and are endemic in poultry in many areas. However, they are somewhat neglected.



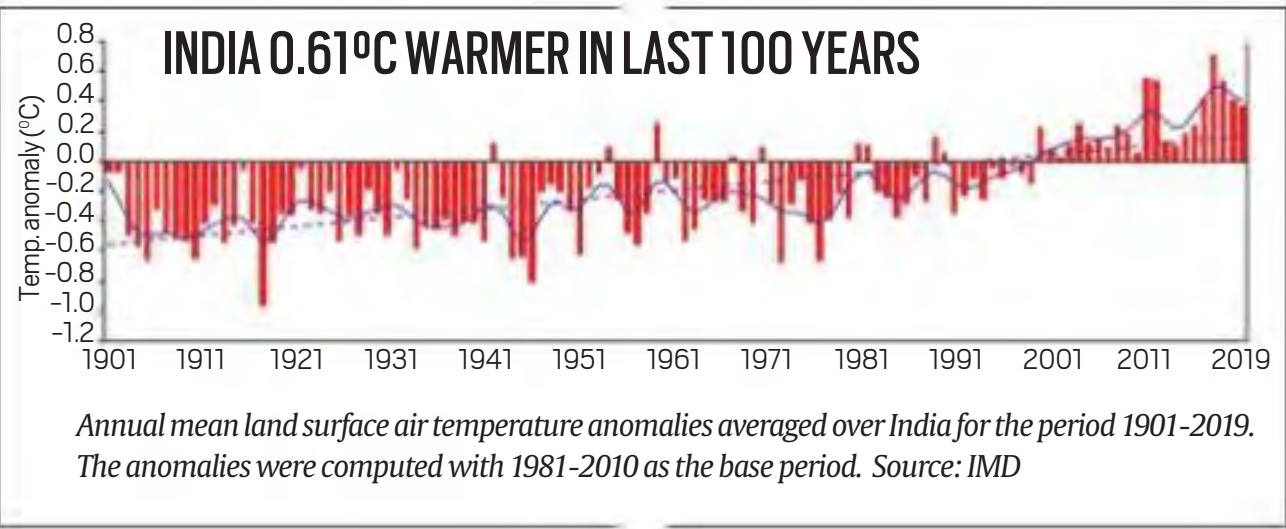
Qaani at Soleimani's funeral. AP

Qaani, before joining Quds

Qaani was born in 1957 in Mashhad and joined the IRGC a year after the Islamic revolution that toppled the US-backed monarchy of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1979. This is also when Soleimani joined the Revolutionary Guards. Qaani and Soleimani were subsequently part of the force that was sent to



April 2019 in Pune. That month, India's mean monthly temperature was 0.77°C over the average for April with 1981-2010 as base. Pavan Khengre



100 years. The IMD maintains weather records since 1901. During last year, the annual mean surface air temperature averaged over the country was 0.36°C higher than the 1981-2010 average. For India too, 2016 has been the warmest ever, with temperatures 0.71°C above average. This is followed by 2009 (+0.541°C), 2017 (+0.539°C), 2010 (+0.54°C) and 2015 (+0.42°C).

Annual temperatures have remained high despite the winters being one of the coldest in recent decades. The winter season extending from November 2018 to February 2019 was colder than average, globally. Meteorologists attributed it to be the effect of a phenomenon called the Arctic vortex. Generally, cold winds blow from west to east

around the North Pole. But due to global warming, warming over the Poles happens at a faster rate than other regions on the globe. As a result, these cold westerly winds, which otherwise remain restricted to the North Pole, were disturbed and started blowing to southern latitudes of the northern hemisphere.

During the last winter season, these winds even reached India in the form of cold blasts. All of north India recorded severe cold that triggered snow avalanche in higher reaches. According to Met officials, snow avalanches are common in the years when there is very severe snowfall leading to huge amounts of snow accumulation.

Despite the cold winter, the annual average temperatures were way higher than normal,

Surveillance for influenza viruses in poultry in Bangladesh during 2008-2011 found H9N2 virus to be the predominant subtype. The virus was also identified in poultry populations in surveillance studies in Myanmar during 2014-16 and Burkina Faso in 2017.

First case in India

The virus was picked up in February 2019 during a community-based surveillance study in 93 villages of Korku tribes in Melghat district of Maharashtra. NIV scientists were looking to determine the incidence of deaths associated with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) among children under age two. In the process, they identified A(H9N2) virus infection in one boy. The child had fever, cough, breathlessness, and difficulty in feeding for two days after illness onset on January 31, 2019, and was fully immunised with treatment. After a series of confirmatory tests, the findings were reported last month. Dr Varsha Potdar, senior scientist at NIV, is the lead author of the study along with Dr Pragya Yadav and Dr M S Chadha.

The child was not exposed to poultry. A

indicating the rest of the year was unusually warm. And it was indeed so. April 2019 was the seventh warmest April since 1901, with a mean monthly deviation of +0.77°C from the 1981-2010 average, June 2019 was the fourth warmest (+1.02°C), July 2019 was the warmest ever (+0.68°C), and November 2019 was the third warmest (+0.72°).

Why was India warmer in 2019?

Temperatures in India were in line with global trends in 2019. And though there could have been a variety of other local and regional reasons that contributed to the warming over India, scientists point out at least two that would have been responsible.

One of these was an El Niño that prevailed for a particularly long time. The other factor was the timing of the monsoon.

EL NIÑO: El Nino, the abnormal warming of the equatorial Pacific Ocean, was a low-intensity one in 2019, but its prevalence till July could have contributed to the warming, scientists said. Temperatures recorded during El Niño years and their subsequent years have usually been higher than normal. This has been noticed all along the El El Niño years during 1951-2019. These are 1951, 1953, 1957, 1963, 1965, 1969, 1972, 1982, 1987, 1991, 1997, 2002, 2004, 2009 and 2015.

"El Niño years are warmer usually, as they interfere with the monsoon, make both summer and winter warmer than normal. There is excess clouding experienced that pushes the temperatures. Last year, some effects of El Niño lasted till July," said D Sivanand Pai, head, Climate Research and Services, IMD, Pune.

In fact, the year could have been warmer had it not been for the two extreme cold months, recorded in January and December of 2019, said Pai.

DELAYED MONSOON: A week-long delay in the onset of the southwest monsoon in June last year contributed to the season being the warmest ever. "The rainfall gained momentum only from August and continued to linger on till mid-October," said Pai.

This delay, coupled with less rainfall recorded during June and July, led to a further increase in the season's average temperature. The June to September monsoon season saw a record warming in 119 years. The average seasonal temperature was +0.58°C higher than normal. This, despite the season producing excess rainfall, ending with 109 per cent of the Long Period Average.

week before showing the symptoms, he had travelled with his parents to a religious gathering. The father showed similar symptoms but could not undergo serologic testing.

A call for surveillance

NIV scientists said H9N2 viruses have been observed in poultry in India several times. Now, identification of the first clinical human case of H9N2 virus infection highlights the importance of systemic surveillance in humans and animals to monitor this threat to human health, they said.

The same concerns were expressed after the first reported case in Oman. "Despite the low pathogenicity of this subtype, the continuing emergence of the virus in unpredictable region and now rise in number of human cases pose a pandemic threat and the need to adopt a multi sector One Health approach," Zayid K Almayahi of the Directorate of Health at Oman has said. Almayahi is one of the scientists who authored a study in the *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* recently, reporting detection of H9N2 infection in a 14-month-old girl in Oman.

Esmail Qaani: his role in Quds Force, and task as Soleimani successor

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

FOLLOWING THE killing of top Iranian military commander General Qassem Soleimani in a US drone strike in Baghdad, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has chosen General Esmail Qaani to replace Soleimani as the head of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Khamenei overlooked several first-generation IRGC commanders such as Gholam Ali Rashid and Mohammed Kowsari. He instead chose Soleimani's long-time friend and number two in the Quds Force.

For the sake of continuity

Soleimani had been expected to shift to politics eventually, and Qaani was widely seen as the likely successor to ensure continuity in the functioning of the Quds Force.

Like Soleimani, Qaani too is close to Khamenei. The news agency IRNA quoted Khamenei as describing Qaani as "one of the

most prominent commanders in service to Iran", and as saying that under Qaani's command "Quds Force will remain unchanged". Qaani, for his part, promised to move ahead "with the same force" (as Soleimani) and seek to end US military presence in the Middle East.

The Quds Force is an elite wing of IRGC that reports only to Khamenei. While IRGC's responsibilities include Iran's ballistic missile programme, its naval forces including units that keep tabs on US presence around Iranian waters, and Basij which is a voluntary force tasked with internal security, its Quds Force wing functions as the foreign arm of Iran's security apparatus. Under Soleimani since 1998, Quds Force emerged as an organisation that combines foreign intelligence gathering with military operations that are most often run by paramilitary outfits not directly connected to the Iranian military. Over the last two decades, it mastered the use of proxy war to extend Iran's influence across the Muslim world, and help contain Israel's influence in Lebanon, and Saudis in Yemen.

crush the Kurdish uprising. This was followed by Saddam Hussein-led Iraq's invasion of Iran supported by the West. Soleimani and Qaani survived the eight-year war but its scars informed their beliefs and shaped their worldview. Both had been regularly talking about the sacrifice of thousands of young Iranians who were sent out as human-wave assaults on Iraqi positions.

A few reports on Qaani's early career suggest that he had been "selected, along with Nour-Ali Shoushtari and Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf, who later became mayor of Tehran, to form a Islamic Revolutionary Guards division from Khorasan province in December 1982". After joining the IRGC, Qaani rose through the ranks during the war with Iraq. He was subsequently elevated as the commander of IRGC's Nasr-5 division and later 21 Imam Reza Division. He also led the crack-down on anti-regime protestors in Mashhad in the early 1990s.

The Quds Force role

When Soleimani was appointed chief of

the Quds Force, he brought Qaani as his deputy and they worked together for the last two decades.

The sketchy details available in the public domain suggest that while Soleimani focused on the Quds Force's operations on Iran's western front, Qaani dealt with the eastern front that included Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their work often overlapped.

Some of the key assets of the Quds Force that were nurtured by Soleimani to contain the influence of the US and its allies, especially in Israel and Saudi Arabia, include the Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shia militias in Iraq, Houthi rebels in Yemen, Shia groups in Bahrain etc. The Quds Force is also seen close to Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestinian territories.

Qaani is seen as an important player in the creation of Shia militias in Afghanistan and Pakistan that were formed to help in the war against the ISIS in Syria. Liwa al-Fatimioun, a Shia militia from Afghanistan who are fighting in Syria and Yemen, was formed in 2014. A Shia militia called Liwa

Zainabiyoun was organised in Pakistan too to fight ISIS in Syria. Islamabad has viewed Qaani's efforts in both Afghanistan as well as Pakistan with suspicion, especially the formation of Shia battalions for fighting in the Middle East. The Quds Force, reports suggest, had lately been extending its influence over the Afghan Taliban. Qaani has also been leading a fight to control anti-Iran groups like Jundullah and Jaish al-Adl, that as per Tehran, operate and take shelter in bordering Pakistan territory. After a terror attack inside Iran last year, Soleimani had publicly castigated Islamabad. Quds Force has been close to the northern alliance in Afghanistan (Soleimani had a friendship with Ahmad Shah Masood) while Soleimani and Qaani are said to have had long and close relationships with Indian agencies too.

In 2012, the US government during Barak Obama's presidency designated Qaani as a specially designated terrorist, along with an Iranian cargo airliner and a Nigerian shipping agency, soon after a shipment of weapons and ammunition was found on its way to Syria.

THINK LONG TERM

Budget should be conservative in its growth and revenue assumptions, not claim immediate turnaround

EVEN AS THE next Union Budget is hardly three weeks away, one thing is clear: There's not much it can do to spur an economic recovery in the immediate term. The reason for that isn't just the limited fiscal and monetary space available for stepping up government spending (without putting public debt sustainability at risk) or further slashing interest rates (in a scenario of rising inflation expectations from higher food and fuel prices). But equally important is the state of private investment. Only a handful of Indian corporates today are really in a position to infuse promoters' equity in big-ticket projects costing, say Rs 10,000 crore or more. Nor are there many banks willing to finance the debt portion. This story — lack of confidence, if not ability, among both promoters and lenders — is the opposite of what it was during the investment boom of 2004-2011. And when consumers, too, are feeling the pinch and not opening their wallets, it adds to an overall dismal picture.

In short, far from projecting an imminent v-shaped recovery, the budget should be conservative in its growth and revenue assumptions, while coming clean on the actual deficit numbers. These would mean providing fully for unpaid food and fertiliser subsidy dues; not resorting to “off-balance sheet” expenditures through borrowings forced on the likes of National Highway Authority of India, Power Finance Corporation and Indian Railway Finance Corporation; and moving from a “cash” to “accrual-based” accounting of revenues and expenditures. Greater accounting transparency, along with focusing on the revenue as opposed to fiscal deficit, will do a lot to inspire market confidence. For investors, what matters is not the headline deficits as much as credible fiscal consolidation that frees up resources for the private sector. The same goes with grandiose plans such as investing Rs 102 lakh crore in infrastructure over the next five years. From a credibility standpoint, it is better to focus on completion, kick-starting or achieving financial closure on a few large projects — the Dedicated Freight Corridor, the Mumbai-Nagpur Super Communication Expressway and the Noida International Airport, for instance. It's when people actually “see” these get off the ground that confidence will truly return.

Linked to this is a related point. If the road to recovery is long, the Narendra Modi government has to recalibrate its political strategy as well accordingly. The obsession with winning every next election, big or small, makes the ruling party do things that may attract votes in the short term, including through communal polarisation. But these will not help the economy, which has already suffered shocks — whether from demonetisation, goods and services tax or the ongoing anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests — and cannot possibly take more. It is in both the Modi government's and the BJP's interest to bring the focus back on the economy, which will yield political dividends in 2024.

REMOTE CONTROL

Move to regulate drones tightly is reasonable, but over-regulation inspired by fears could also stall a nascent industry

DRONE ATTACKS IN Saudi Arabia and Iraq have raised concerns among Indian security agencies, and the government is tightening the regulatory grip on the infant sector. The newly-launched Digital Sky Platform, a registration portal for manufacturers and operators on the lines of the one operated by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), is likely to introduce more stringent requirements. The fears are not misplaced, since drones constitute a new means of surveillance and a novel attack vector, and must coexist with civil aviation safety requirements, besides military and public security imperatives. However, the government must take care not to stall the new industry on take-off by excessive or arbitrary regulation, which is often encouraged by diffuse anxieties.

Drones constitute a broad-spectrum enabling technology which could open up or broaden several sectors. While e-commerce platforms and fast food companies would like to use drones to service urban addresses like high-rise apartments more cost-effectively, development and environment agencies would use them to supply medicines in remote mountain areas, or to deliver seeds to reforest such regions. Drones bear comparison with communications and the internet, enabling technologies which have powered unprecedented growth across sectors as distinct as tourism and disaster management. However, communications remained government-controlled until the mid-Nineties because of security considerations, and spectrum was held exclusively by the government and the military. Recently, the opening up of retail and e-commerce has been needlessly slow and granular because of concerns about the economic security of traditional retail. It turned out that the fears were exaggerated. Retail as a whole benefited from the enlargement of the marketplace, and traditional sellers and distribution networks integrated quickly with e-commerce. Genetically modified Bt brinjal demonstrated a different phenomenon: Politicisation of the question of safety, conflated with concerns about intellectual property rights, caused regulation to be applied arbitrarily.

The apparent trigger for India's concern about drone policy is the killing of Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani. But in our region, historically, a fully loaded garland or a case of exploding mangoes has always been preferred over high technology. Other considerations of public security do demand consideration, though. The proposed restrictions are roughly on the lines of recent drone regulation under the FAA in the US. But the government should assess threat perceptions logically, and not expand on the theme of security without good cause. Reckless caution must not trammel a technology which has the potential to open up multiple markets.

FREEZE FRAME



E P UNNY



SANDEEP DWIVEDI

THERE ARE A worrying number of folded-hand emojis on the timelines of our sporting stars. We at *The Indian Express* sports desk, as part of our annual exercise to summarise the year gone by, did a social media forensic of the 2019's top performers. The idea was to revisit the ebbs and flows of the country's sporting stalwarts and audit the conversations they were having with their followers, mostly young adults for whom social media is the sole source of news and knowledge.

As expected, narcissism and bragging — the two human traits getting increasing acceptability in the new world — monopolised these famous handles. Envy-inducing selfies, filter-enhanced down-time pictures, those many “best-meal-ever” frames and the thick bunch of professionally-shot candid shots from exotic vacations got shared with religious regularity. There was also a generous sprinkle of the mandatory promotional tweets and posts for monetary gains. So far so good. It was just the nation's brightest acting their age.

The first unsettling finding of this intense social media scrutiny is the growing proximity of these sporting icons to the political class, and an overwhelming folded-hands endorsement of their policies, stands and speeches. While the high-value present day cricketers have been subtle in their sycophancy, the unabashed obeisance of the olympians — totally dependent on the sports ministry for their funding and training — is almost theatrical.

Sports and politics have cozied up for ages. Nehru, Indira, Rajiv, Vajpayee — none missed a chance to be in a frame that had an athlete with a medal around his neck or a cricketer with a cup. With time, the political class became greedy and pushy. What were once requests started to sound like orders. Social media has been the game-changer, or the spoilsport. These days, no one calls the multiple-brand endorsing sports stars “walking billboards”. That's so '90s. They have evolved into a more dynamic avatar. They are influencers. Their reach is much wider now. Virat Kohli has three times more twitter followers than the official BJP handle and six times more than the Congress account. You get the scale now and understand why politicians are piggybacking on them.

The year 2019 saw an exponential increase in the political content of the country's most-followed sportspersons. Each and every sport-

The obeisance of sporting heroes — often dependent on sports bureaucracy — verges on the theatrical

Sports and politics have cozied up for ages. Nehru, Indira, Rajiv, Vajpayee — none missed a chance to be in a frame that had an athlete with a medal around his neck or a cricketer with a cup. With time, the political class became greedy, and pushy too. What were once requests started to sound like orders. Social media has been the game-changer, or the spoilsport.



HAYAAT FATEMAH

BEING A STUDENT at Aligarh Muslim University, I have closely witnessed the sequence of events December 9, 2019, till the protestors were brutally assaulted. Nevertheless, the agitation in the country continued with redoubled fervour. Lately, there has been a divide among the protestors after the video where slogans like “Tera mera rishta kya, La Ilaha IlAllah” were raised, and especially after Shashi Tharoor's tweet condemning “Islamic extremism”.

In response to Irena Akbar's article ‘Why I protest as a Muslim’ (IE, January 3), I would argue that we can only expect to gain the support of the majority by making this a secular movement. Keeping the protests secular does not imply leaving my Muslim identity at home; it only means to fight as Indians and creating a space where a non-Muslim can raise the same slogans with the Muslims.

When we raise a slogan where we assert that there is no God but Allah, the verse that is the backbone of a Muslim's faith, and also the verse that a non-Muslim recites when he converts to Islam, we automatically alienate the people who do not believe in our Allah. The slogan does *not* threaten the pluralism and diversity of India but only excludes other communities who have been fighting with the Muslims, as Indians, against the current regime. The protests that were started by AMU

NOT JUST AS MUSLIMS

Slogans like ‘La Ilaha IlAllah’ narrow the scope of anti-CAA protests

IN GOOD FAITH

The CAA directly targets Indian Muslims. An Indian Muslim, in order to save his Indian identity, first calls the Act “unconstitutional”. When he does, it naturally becomes a nationwide crisis, for the Constitution belongs to all of India. Hence, the movement cannot be restricted to only Muslims. The pluralism of India will be restored when a Muslim woman wearing a hijab, a Sikh with his turban and a Christian with his cross walk together, *for* the Muslims.

Akbar cites Hannah Arendt's statement — “If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German.” I would argue that the citizenship of a Muslim is questioned, not his religious identity. Thus, the situation demands an *Indian Muslim's assertion of his Indian identity*, because the crux of the entire resistance is to protect secular India.

The assertion of Muslim identity is acceptable and needed, and slogans like “Allah-u Akbar” and “La Ilaha IlAllah” must be chanted when the state attacks the faith of Muslims. Islamophobia demands a Muslim empowerment movement, but now is not the right time for it. A rally where Muslims walk alone be-

ing high of India, anywhere in the world, triggered a scramble among politicians to be in the same frame as the winner or at least tag their best wishes to them. The incentive to be on those much-followed timelines was tempting. Even the most unsporting of leaders were magically transformed into fanboys on days India won medals. The athletes mostly obliged. The folded-hands-retweets of stars to acknowledge the VVIP congratulations was civility. But, inserting the same folded hands emoji inside some ill-disguised fawning tweet to celebrate an inane government statement exposed the servility. Even that wasn't too bad. It was the all-too-familiar flattery. Old fashioned mutual back-scratching was getting a new form.

The most appalling, and alarming social media trend in 2019 was the “copy-cat” posts. Around Diwali, at least six of the country's top sportswomen had exactly the same reaction to one particular government scheme for women. In an incredible coincidence, that is likely to occur once in a million lightyears, they all tweeted in unison: “I thank @narendramodi for his initiative to honour and empower women this Diwali. Acknowledgement motivates us to work harder and make India proud. #bharatkilaxmi”.

A few days later, some Indian cricketers, retired and regulars, once again showing snickering synchronicity, criticised Imran Khan's UN speech. Once again, there were identical posts, word for word, right down to the last full stop and hashtag. When questioned, the cricketers got defensive. Before taking a firm promise of never-ever attributing their quotes to them, they spoke about repeated calls from the nation's capital goading them to say things they didn't want or meant to. This wasn't true of all, not everyone was a reluctant mouthpiece. There were those who were more eager to get co-opted than the government's desire to co-opt them. They had their reasons. However short-lived, submissiveness to orders of the high and mighty does bring a sense of security.

Finally, it can be said, this wasn't kosher. It was scary. More so since the country's three most popular sports — cricket, badminton and wrestling — are now under the control of the ruling party that has a very active social media department to push its agenda and ideology. These irresponsible cut-paste tweets weren't

merely a subject of memes, but ominous signs of a deeper malice. A shoutout by the influencer had the power to provide a cloak of credibility to a rumour, a half-truth, and even a brazen lie. Once an influencer is suitably influenced, the job's done. Within minutes of a celebrity's post, the loyal army of digital natives — those with no recollection of the pre-internet era and for whom libraries are museums that display books — took over. These followers would dutifully carry the message far and wide, getting it to “trend” and making it go “viral”. Since Gen X banks on news from platforms that aren't known for their reporting rigour or legacy of integrity, the age of misinformation is right there, waiting at our doorsteps.

The most heart-breaking aspect of this gloomy forecast is the role played by sporting role models in this. But then, can they be blamed? The US basketball superstar, Charles Barkley, famously said, players never signed up to live a perfect life that others would aspire to emulate. “I am not a role model. Just because I can dunk a basketball, doesn't mean I should raise your kids,” he had said. It was a cool line, but it didn't sound right. Weren't we told that sports was meant to showcase all that was transcendent and inspirational about the human spirit? Maybe it wasn't true. It was all an illusion. There comes a moment in every fan's life when that myth shatters.

Mine came pretty early while covering the inter-railway athletics meet. Among the participants was an Asiad medalist whom I had diligently followed since school. On the final day, inspired by the athletes, the VIPs on dais, all railway executives, floated the idea of a 100-metre dash of their own. The dignitaries, in formal, lined up at the start, after taking off their shining leather shoes. The sports-quota athletes fussed around their bosses. As the race ended, I saw my childhood hero running towards the finish line with a pair of shining leather shoes in his hands. He would later stand with folded hands, praising the chief for his exhaustive effort on the track. It wasn't a pleasant sight. That disconcerting image has stayed with me. These days, scrolling down the famous timelines is gut-wrenching. The emojis remind me of the folded hands that held those shining leather shoes.

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and Jamia Millia Islamia, have become a nationwide movement. This is undeniably a Muslim front movement, but it should not and must not assume the shape of an all-Muslim movement.

The CAA directly targets Indian Muslims. An Indian Muslim, in order to save his Indian identity, first calls the Act “unconstitutional”. When he does, it naturally becomes a nationwide crisis, for the Constitution belongs to all of India. Hence, the movement cannot be restricted to only Muslims. The pluralism of India will be restored when a Muslim woman wearing a hijab, a Sikh with his turban and a Christian with his cross walk together, *for* the Muslims.

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The assertion of Muslim identity is acceptable and needed, and slogans like “Allah-u Akbar” and “La Ilaha IlAllah” must be chanted when the state attacks the faith of Muslims. Islamophobia demands a Muslim empowerment movement, but now is not the right time for it. A rally where Muslims walk alone be-

comes an all-Muslim rally. Just as I, a Muslim woman, will prefer to not chant “Jai Shri Ram” or “Jesus, son of God”, even if I support their cause sincerely; we cannot expect them to chant “La ilaha IlAllah” even if they are against CAA.

Lastly, though Muslims are raising slogans with innocuous emotional fervour, we stand extremely vulnerable to violent communal resistance and we will end up facing it alone. Recent violence on students by the UP Police and Delhi Police are testimony to the fact that the state does not care for Muslim lives. If we are to struggle against the “othering” of Muslims, we should make sure that we do not further contribute to it and rather try to bridge the gap. Making the communal divide more prominent will only benefit the BJP and RSS that thrive on communal animosity.

The idea of a nation could never be drawn as an absolute idea in India. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's idea of a nation involved Muslim supremacy, the Congress advocated a social, democratic, civil libertarian society while Jinnah from being the greatest advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity turned to his two-nation theory. In the 21st century, India is what we make of it.

The writer studies history and literature at Aligarh Muslim University

JANUARY 13, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

SOVIET ASSURANCES INDIA'S AMBASSADOR TO the UN, Brajesh Chandra Mishra, said at the UN General Assembly's special session on Afghanistan that his country had no reason to doubt the Soviet Union's assurances that it was asked by the Afghan government for military assistance. He said, “We are against the presence of foreign troops and bases in any country. However, the Soviet government has assured our government that its troops went to Afghanistan at the request of the Afghan Government, first made by President Amin on December 28, 1979, and repeated by his successor on December 28, 1979.” He said, “India hopes that the Soviet Union will not

violate the independence of Afghanistan and that Soviet forces will not remain there a day longer than necessary.”

AFTER THE JOLT INFORMAL MOVES FOR the formation of a united, non-Communist opposition, in Parliament, continued. The underlying idea behind the efforts is to ensure effective functioning of the numerically depleted opposition and to get official recognition. Congress president Devaraj Urs, who has made known his desire to float a new party, has already initiated a dialogue with leaders of the Janata Party and the Lok Dal on this subject. After his prolonged discussions with Charan Singh,

Urs had a meeting with the Janata leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

JANATA, LOK DAL TALKS THE JANATA PARTY leadership is divided on the question of its cooperation with the Lok Dal. The party chief, Chandra Shekhar, favours the plea for cooperation with the Lok Dal advanced by the leaders of the erstwhile Jana Sangh as well as the former socialist faction of the party, Jagjivan Ram, on the other hand, favours the UP Janata legislature party leader, Raj Mangal Pande's line that there should be no truck with the Lok Dal and that the party should not try to save the Banarasi Das government.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Undermining the Republic

There is deliberate ambiguity regarding citizenship laws and policies, their implementation. These threaten to undermine the basic values of the Indian Constitution



PRASHANT BHUSHAN AND CHERYL D'SOUZA

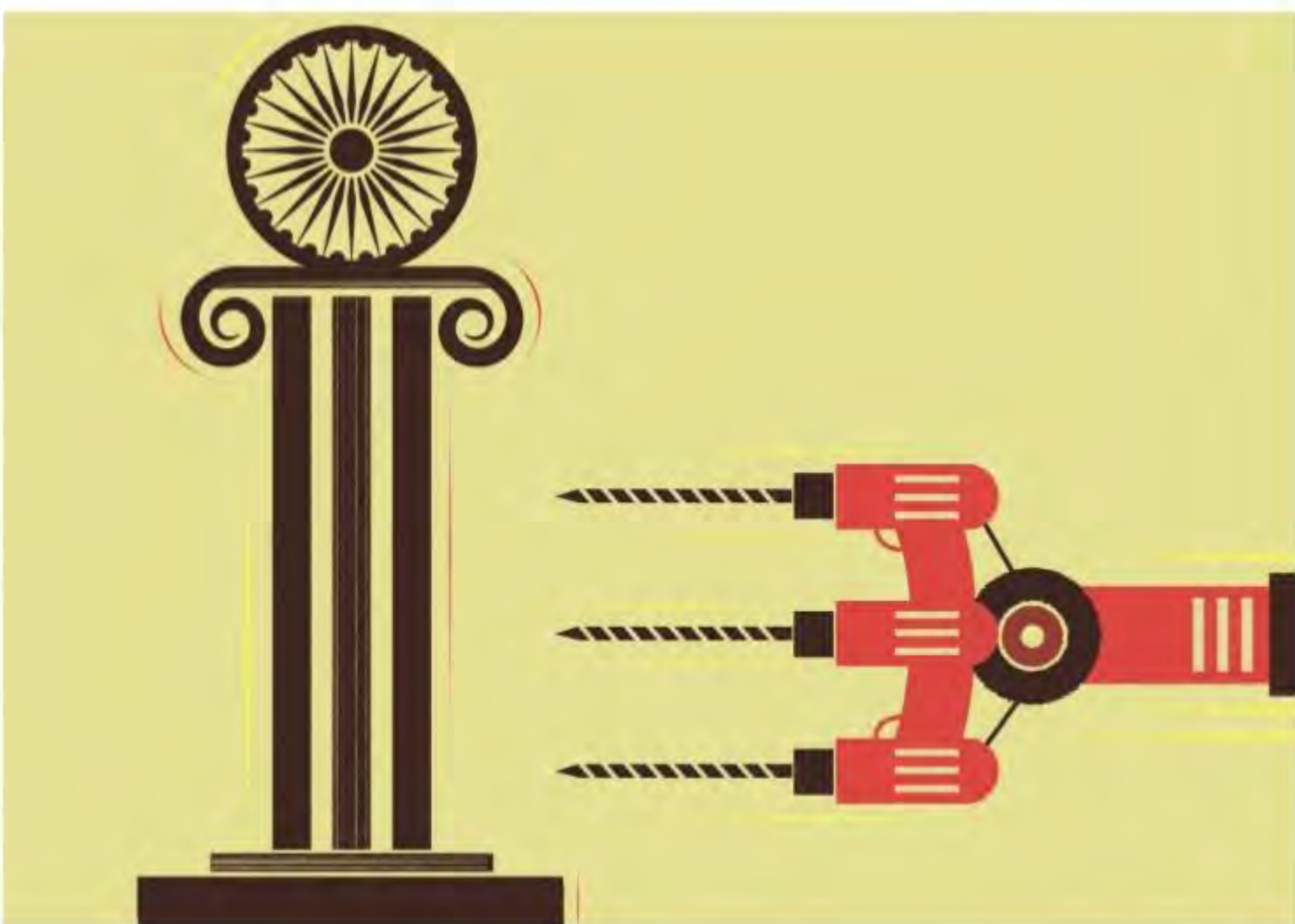
RATTLED BY THE widespread agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act, which, coupled with the National Register of Citizens, is rightly seen as the first concrete step to establish a Hindu Rashtra. Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed at Ramlila Maidan that there is no move by the government to prepare a countrywide NRC. He also claimed that there were no detention centres for detaining non-citizens in the country. His denials were clearly false, as Amit Shah had stated multiple times the decision of the government to implement a nationwide NRC. The government had also admitted in Parliament and elsewhere about the construction of detention centres. The fact is that many were being constructed in various states, particularly those ruled by the BJP.

Yet, Modi's denial may have been seen by some as stepping back from a nationwide NRC by a government rattled by the agitation against it. However, within two days of his denial, the cabinet decided to go ahead and prepare the National Population Register. Though the government denies the link between the NPR and the NRC, under the Citizenship Rules of 2003, the NPR would be the basis for preparing the NRC. Clearly, the government seems to be in no mood to backtrack.

There is deliberate ambiguity regarding the NPR/NRIC and its implementation. However, the modalities for the preparation of this register are contained in the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.

The scheme mandates the preparation of a population register from which after "due verification" a local register of Indian citizens will be prepared. A sub clause in the rules gives the local registrar the power to mark out individuals whose citizenship is "doubtful" in the population register and send them for further enquiry. Claims and objections are invited against names published in a draft register and after these are disposed, the district magistrate (DM) shall prepare the Local Register of Indian Citizens, to be transferred to the National Register of Indian Citizens. The appellate authority for those aggrieved by their exclusion is the DM himself, who is the final functionary responsible for publishing the register.

Under the Foreigners Tribunal (Amendment) Order, 2019, the power to refer a suspected foreigner to a tribunal has also been delegated to DMs. Those excluded will be left at the mercy of the quasi-judicial Foreigners Tribunals, to be set up across the country, the constitutionality and functioning of which in Assam have raised many questions. Its members have no judicial experience and are appointed on a yearly basis. Their extension depends on how many persons they have declared as foreigners. Their proceedings are rather arbitrary. Notices are rarely served and even when served give no reasons for suspecting the citizenship of the person. The result is that the majority (63,959) of persons have been declared foreigners through ex parte orders until February 2019. Persons declared foreigners



CR Sasikumar

can then be detained in sub-human conditions in detention centres and languish there, sometimes indefinitely.

This rather arbitrary procedure for weeding out the "doubtful", leaves us with the frightening prospect of administrative manipulation in creating a citizens register to further a divisive electoral and political agenda. This is clear from the CAA, which is designed to bring back non-Muslims (from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan) left out from the NRC by giving them citizenship as refugees.

The nationwide NRC is an amplification of the very flawed and inhuman process adopted in creating a NRC in Assam. In Assam, persons were asked to apply with documentary evidence of their birth, land ownership, school degrees, as well as documents to establish their ancestry from 1950 onwards. Many people, especially the poor, did not have such documents. Others had to spend enormous sums of money to collect such documents from offices of various registrars and issuing authorities. A lot of people lost their life savings in this process and many were still excluded because of minor discrepancies in the spellings of their names in different documents. The exercise spawned an enormous humanitarian crisis.

The cost of preparing the NRC in Assam was approximately Rs 400 per person. Apan India exercise of that kind would cost over Rs 50,000 crore. The expense for people in procuring the documents required for inclusion in the NRC would be many times over. This at a time when the country is reeling under the highest unemployment in the last 40 years.

In sum, the process for declaring persons as non-citizens through the NPR and NRIC is arbitrary and inhuman. It will come at an enormous cost to the poorest in our country who will be left to wade through complex procedures, having to scramble for documents, and still be left out. They would then face the prospect of being in detention centres. However, with the CAA, those excluded from the NRIC and who belong to the Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi, Jew or Christian

In such circumstances, it is the duty of the judiciary to step in against this brutal suppression of peaceful protests. However, we are yet to see any effective and strong action by the judiciary. The constitutional validity of the Citizenship Amendment Act has also been challenged in the Supreme Court. We hope that these petitions will be heard soon and the Court will rise to defend constitutional values and strike down this blatantly unconstitutional law.

community, can apply to becomes citizens by proving that they have fled religious persecution in either Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan. Ironically, these are the same individuals who would have produced documentation to prove that they are Indian citizens to be included in the NRIC, making them liable for prosecution for perjury.

Though agitation in the country has been sparked off by the passing of the communal and discriminatory CAA, a far more serious malaise lies behind the NRIC and the NPR. This exercise has however, finally lit the spark of a massive people's movement against this inhuman and communal regime. The government is trying to suppress the protests by brutal police action in BJP ruled states. There are many videos showing that in many towns in Uttar Pradesh the police have gone on a rampage, attacking peaceful citizens, battering cars and motorcycles and even ransacking homes. Many peaceful protestors, and even those who were not protesting have been arrested and charged. Shops of people unconnected with any violence, have been sealed on the grounds that these people have destroyed public property. All this is totally illegal. Most of the victims of police atrocities are Muslims, who are being specially targeted.

In such circumstances, it is the duty of the judiciary to step in against this brutal suppression of peaceful protests. However, we are yet to see any effective and strong action by the judiciary. The constitutional validity of the CAA has also been challenged in the Supreme Court. We hope that these petitions will be heard soon and the Court will rise to defend constitutional values and strike down this blatantly unconstitutional law. While the continuation of the protests is important, it is even more important that they remain non-violent, despite attempts to provoke violence.

Bhushan and D'souza are advocates practicing at the Supreme Court of India and involved in the cases on detention centres and the NRC in Assam

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The new Indian army chief might want to get a full briefing on the Balakot misadventure before issuing any more provocative and irresponsible statements."
— DAWN

Let's talk about menopause

Lack of a conversation in the mainstream about it is a symptom of sexism and ageism



APURVA PUROHIT

MY EARLIEST MEMORY of Viola Davis is from the award-winning 2011 film *The Help*, which chronicles a group of Mississippi women against the backdrop of racism. Last year, Davis enlightened popular American TV host Jimmy Kimmel, and possibly a majority of America too, about something that happens to half the world's population but is hardly ever spoken about — menopause. It was a short but telling conversation and one that caught global attention.

Sadly, this happened to be one of those rare occasions when a specific women-only issue was in the mainstream limelight. According to a study by the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), about 4 per cent of Indian women between the ages of 29 and 34 experience signs of menopause. The figure goes up to 8 per cent for women between the ages of 35 and 39. In the US, menopause affects 27 million women at work daily. To put it in perspective, that's 20 per cent of the American workforce. In the UK, "menopausal women are the fastest growing workforce demographic" as stated by the Office of National Statistics.

According to Wellbeing of Women Survey, 2016, one in four women in the UK considered leaving their jobs due to menopausal symptoms. Not surprising, given the extreme physical and psychological shifts women experience during this phase. A report by the Harvard Medical School states that up to 50 per cent perimenopausal women experience hot flashes and 40 per cent have sleep problems. According to another study by *The New York Times*, 60 per cent of women are likely to experience menopause-related cognitive impairment. Another survey by a US non-profit found that in 84 per cent of women these physical and psychological changes disrupted their daily lives, especially their work — in fact, 12 per cent termed these changes as "debilitating".

The lack of a mainstream dialogue on menopause compounds the problem — it results in women not even recognising the symptoms and thus suffering in silence. So silent is the world on menopause, that women feel constrained in even discussing their problems, especially at work. Forty-five per cent of the women surveyed by the British Menopause Society admitted to feeling their menopause symptoms affecting their work negatively, and 47 per cent of those who needed time off were supremely uncomfortable telling their employers or colleagues the reasons for the said absenteeism from work. In a study conducted by the British Occupational Health Research Foundation, 20 per cent of the women surveyed believed their managers and colleagues doubted their competence because of menopause. In such an unfortunate scenario, most women take the easier way out — they quit.

Which brings us to the million-dollar

question — why is there such a severe lack of conversation on something that affects half the global population at some point in their lives? Well, it boils down to the lethal concoction of sexism and ageism. The world, designed by men, for men, is by default programmed to make less of women's issues, especially that of ageing women. Men supposedly age like fine wine while we women are considered crinkly crones by 40 and positively irrelevant in our 50s. Added to that, of course, is the fact that ours will be the first generation of women where a significant number of us will be working when in our 40s and 50s.

Most workplaces are ill-equipped to deal with the grand menopause conundrum because they will be seeing its effects for the first time in India's corporate corridors. Needless to say, we can't hit the pause button on this anymore. In fact, menopause is slowly but surely being recognised as an emerging health crisis in India, and we will soon have a silent epidemic affecting a reasonably large chunk of our workforce.

So, if you are a woman reader, the most important piece of advice I have for you is to practise awareness and mind management. We have to recognise what is happening and link it to how we are feeling. Knowledge is empowering and critical in helping us make informed, reasoned choices instead of impulsive ones. Realisation precedes corrective action. So read upon it, talk to your GP and understand what is happening to your body. And once you know, you can ensure you do whatever is possible to alleviate the trauma. Meditate, exercise, use the power of the sisterhood, commiserate openly with your girlfriends and share your problems with your family.

From an organisational standpoint, we need proactive measures to support menopausal women because the physiological and psychological cocktail menopause subjects women to can be unpleasant at best and wrecking at worst. Educating the management and providing flexible work hours is a great place to start. Many firms have days and sessions dedicated to "wellness". Can some of them be structured around menopause? Taking this a step further would be to factor in health conditions arising out of menopause in benefit programmes handed to female employees.

The dialogue on menopause will only become mainstream when women realise their role in subverting age-old systems. According to studies, high-performing and already successful women often see their prospects improve under a female leadership. So much so that multiple senior women saw a marked improvement in their earnings when they worked for a female boss. According to another study, companies with higher number of female board members were likely to hire more women than companies with predominantly male ones. It's like a self-fulfilling prophecy — a wonderfully positive cycle of affairs which creates a domino effect, one that ensures more women are at the workplace, a workplace where menopause isn't a taboo and definitely not a silent epidemic.

Viola Davis called menopause "hell" and rightfully so. But now it's time we showed hell what we are made of.

The writer is president, Jagran Prakashan and author of recently released *Lady, You're the Boss*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ECONOMIC GROWTH

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Limited scope for sharp recovery' (IE, January 10). Any relief to the income taxpayers would impact a very small but significant section in the country, and, any increase in their disposable income would have a positive impact on consumption — which the reduction in corporate taxes could not achieve. The government could also consider restructuring the existing slabs in income tax rates: The rationalisation could begin with six tax slabs with minimum and maximum tax rates remaining unchanged, with an increase in 5 per cent tax per slab.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

WHO'S VIOLENT?

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'There's so much violence, the endeavour must be for peace, says CJ on CAA' (IE, January 10). The protests across India are by and large peaceful. Opposition leaders, activists and organisers against CAA and NRC have condemned the violence. On the other hand, BJP leaders and their supporters have been provocative — for instance, "goli maaro salon ko". It is worrying that such statements are becoming common, reflecting their disdain for law and the Constitution.

L R Murmu, Delhi

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

CAA, CONSTITUTION

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Living the Constitution' (IE, January 10). The CAA is in tune with the spirit of the Constitution which places protection of minorities, in this case minorities in our neighbourhood, persecuted on religious ground, on the highest pedestal. While invoking Gandhi and Ambedkar, the failure to condemn the violence, point to a vicious political design. All this in the name of our Constitution — which the comrades in their earlier avatars had sworn to destroy.

HN Bhagwat, Chiplun

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

BUILD BRIDGES

AASIM SAJJAD Akhtar, who teaches at the Qaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, has dealt with the "alter-ego of Pakistan" — the idea of India — in an article that is mature, reflective and without rancour. As such, he deserves to be listened to, across South Asia and beyond.

He assumes, writing in *Dawn* on January 10, that "India is burning". But also that it is at a crossroads: "In contrast to Pakistan, the modern Indian polity has been formally structured around the notion that the subcontinent is a rainbow of infinite colours, all of which are equal to any other. However contradicted it may have been, the idea of India as a secular republic has remained dominant for decades, both within officialdom and society at large."

Akhtar does not then delve into the many alleged attacks on the secular fabric by Hindutva forces, both formally and through their varied proxies. Instead, he outlines in these polarised times the ways in which Indians and Pakistanis can "make common cause together". For this, he writes, Pakistanis (and presumably Indians) must transcend

the narrow, sectarian nationalism of their government(s).

He asserts that both India and Pakistan are in "the throes of a demographic revolution" — the youth are more numerous and expressive than ever before. They are on social media, and they are looking to be heard.

The tech-savvy Modi machine has indeed tapped into this demographic, as have regressive forces in Pakistan. Yet, there is also hope in the youth. This hope, Akhtar says, was seen in the millions on the street that have faced down the government in India, reminiscent on the 1960s and 1970s.

He ends the article on the following note: "Rather than look on with glee at India's internal strife, fall into a typical lament for the plight of Muslims, or adopt any other passive-aggressive position, the situation across the border should compel us to action, to build bridges. If this emergent generation of young progressives in India, Pakistan and beyond come together, there is a chance yet that the universal principles they espouse can become a practicable, political reality, that future generations can save themselves and the planet from hate, war and, ultimately, total destruction."

JUSTICE IN NEPAL

The central government in Nepal has announced that it will revive the dormant "transitional justice" process by consulting all stakeholders, leading to the tabling of the Transitional Justice Act. Simply put, transitional justice refers to the process by which country would face up to and provide justice for the crimes and human rights violations that took place during its long civil war.

In its January 7 editorial, *The Kathmandu Post* is cautiously optimistic about the government's move: "On paper, this seems like positive news. Though already late, by nearly five full years, it is imperative that the two transitional justice bodies — the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons (CIEDP) — satisfactorily complete their task. And for the commissions to work acceptably, the laws governing them must be amended to align with international practices and the Supreme Court ruling of 2015. But such promises have been announced before, only to be left unfulfilled."

The editorial reminds the government and society at large of the deep scars left by

the conflict, and the need for the victims to find closure. It has already faced flak in the UN Human Rights Council — of which it currently a member — and must ensure the transitional justice process is completed in line with the principles the country stands for.

NARROWING ANTHEM

ON JANUARY 9, *The Island* takes exception to a decision by the Gotabaya government that is bound feed into fears that the new president will not be mindful of the concerns and rights of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority. It has decided to cease the practice of the national anthem being sung in both Sinhala and Tamil.

The article says: "What we wish to point out is that the cancellation of the Tamil Language National Anthem is not a mere procedural adjustment. It involves an important policy change carrying serious repercussions. Among other risks, the proposed wrong step will impinge seriously on the ongoing reconciliation effort which is something closely watched by the International Community. This, of course, will be fully exploited by the country's enemies, further weakening our stand at the next UNHRC sessions in Geneva."





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CONTAINING FOOD INFLATION IN WEST BENGAL

How WB govt has curbed food prices while providing better returns to farmers

The Sufal Bangla scheme, which was started in 2014, has rescued consumers in times of high inflation

SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, JANUARY 12

THE FAST-RISING prices of food articles, especially those of vegetables such as onions and potatoes, have been ruining household budgets across the country. But an effective scheme run by the West Bengal government has meant that many consumers, especially those belonging to the lower-income group, in Kolkata and some nearby cities have been shielded from the spike in food inflation.

The Sufal Bangla scheme, which involves fair-price stalls and counters across the city, allows people to procure vegetables at affordable prices. At a Sufal Bangla stall onions are retailing at Rs 59 per kg and potatoes for Rs 17 per kg. There are 144 such stalls in the state, 116 of which are in Kolkata, including both permanent and mobile ones.

Every time there is a crisis because of skyrocketing prices of vegetables and fruits, Sufal Bangla stalls help out the common people. "It's the brainchild of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and we are definitely focussing on expanding this to reach out to maximum people in Bengal," Tapan Dasgupta, Minister in Charge of Agriculture and Marketing Department, told *The Indian Express*.

The project was initiated in 2014 — with 14 mobile shops — to directly procure fruits and vegetables from farmers and sell them to consumers. The state government was committed to fair play in agricultural marketing practices in order to safeguard the interests of both the growers and the consumers, thus paving the way for Sufal Bangla, which is being run with the assistance of Safal (National Dairy Development Board, New Delhi), and the financial support of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, the implementing agency being Paschimbanga Agri Marketing Corporation Ltd.

At present, the state has 47 static counters and 97 mobile counters. Kolkata has the highest concentration of these counters; the city has 24 static counters and 92 mobile counters out of the total 144 counters. These counters are located all across the city.

With Sufal Bangla, the government aimed to aid to target groups: farmers (at the back end) and customers (at the front end).



A Sufal Bangla outlet at Kankurgachi in North Kolkata. Partha Paul

How Sufal Bangla contains inflation

THE MOST unfortunate aspect of high food price inflation, as is being witnessed these days across the country, is that the higher prices of food articles paid by the poor urban consumers never reach the poor rural farmers. High food inflation not only hits the pockets of consumers, it also rarely benefits the farmers as the bene-

EXPLAINED
E

fits are cornered by the middlemen. With the Sufal Bangla scheme, the state government plays the role of a benevolent middleman. It directly procures vegetables from farmers, paying them a higher price than what they would have received while selling the same at less than the prevailing market prices in urban markets.

A pricing committee, consisting of officials from the Directorate of Agricultural Marketing, was set up to analyse daily market prices and declare the Procurement Price and the Consumer Price to be followed by Sufal Bangla (see box).

"In 2014 the potato and onion prices had gone up to such an extent that it was out of reach of the common people. The state government started distributing these articles at a subsidised rate. But it was during this period that we realised that to fight inflation, we needed a permanent solution, not an ad-hoc system," said Goutam Mukherjee, Director of Sufal Bangla.

Responding to these complaints, the CEO has resorted to the use of a mobile application to rationalise voters and polling booths accorded to them. The mobile application uses Geographic Information System (or GIS) mapping.

The move comes after a successful pilot run during September and October where the polling booths awarded to over a thou-

Director of Sufal Bangla.

The government realised that to do this, the procurement of the vegetables had to be done by farmers directly for which it was important to enroll farmers.

"We thought of making the system organised. The purpose was not to kill the intermediaries but to register the government's presence at the middle level — between farmers and the customers — so that both groups benefit," added Mukherjee.

Soon a website, for notifying prices, was prepared. It not only spreads awareness about the prices among buyers and sellers

SUFAL BANGLA: A SNAPSHOT

PRODUCTS AVAILABLE:

Vegetables, fruits, food grains, edible oil etc.

BENEFITS TO FARMERS:

■ Financial transaction directly with them instead of intermediaries, thus providing them higher prices.

■ Local collection centres where they can sell their produce.

■ Extension of transport facilities to farmers (both individually and in groups)

■ Farmers are encouraged to visit the central processing hubs in Singur and several other outlets in Sontoshpur, Rajarhat and Howrah etc. to interact with customers and learn how best to satisfy changes in consumer demand

BENEFITS TO CUSTOMERS:

■ Prices lower than prevailing retail prices in the market; thus containing inflation

■ A wide variety of products are sold under one roof including non-perishable goods such as packed aromatic rice, pulses (dal), cooking oil, mango cakes (aamsatwa) and processed fruits such as jam, jelly, sauce etc.

but also brings about transparency in the whole operation.

To aggregate and store vegetables, Singur was designated as the main hub; now there are 20 such hubs. Alongside, more than sixty thousand farmers have been enrolled. The scheme has also generated a lot of new jobs, for instance, in order to run the stalls. Moreover, there is indirect employment as well.

By March the government will open 56 more Sufal Bangla counters and in the next two years, the total counters will reach 500. The plan is to expand the number of products as well.

'90 per cent of India's trade reforms agenda is domestic, such as labour law flexibility'

THE WORLD Bank recently came out with a report underscoring the importance of Global Value Chains (GVCs) and how countries can benefit from being part of them. Given that India has opted out of the RCEP agreement, UDIT MISRA talks to Aadiya Mattoo, Chief Economist for East Asia and Pacific Region, World Bank, and the report's chief author, to understand how India has performed on the trade front.

What are GVCs and what is their promise?

Global value chains or GVCs essentially break up the production process across countries. GVCs have powered the surge of international trade after 1990 and helped poor countries to grow faster. But this momentum has stalled after the 2008 global financial crisis.

When seen from the prism of GVCs, how has India performed?

Well, India has both underachieved and overachieved. Global value chains (GVCs) drove the increase in international trade after 1990, accounting for more than half of world trade in 2008. India's GVC trade also increased over this period, as it imported rough diamonds, components and computers, to export jewellery, cars and services. But its GVC linkages are about a quarter less than the global average, peaking at 38 per cent of trade in 2008. So in a way, India's participation has been a little bit stunted. And when the growth in GVC participation slowed down for the world, it slowed down for India as well.

So, where did India miss out? Why did it not gain as much as the rest of the world?

One interesting piece of evidence is that the big growth boost comes from the first developmental transition, that is from trading in commodities to basic manufacturing. That's the transition that Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Cambodia are making.

Subsequent transitions — into more advanced manufacturing and sophisticated services — eventually need to happen but typically lead to smaller growth increments.

In India's case, the story is that it did not fully exploit the benefits of the first transition. It is like getting a double promotion — you never spent enough time fully engaged in basic manufacturing which had the greatest potential for growth and job creation. But precociously jumped into the second stage of advanced goods and services, which brought growth but fewer jobs.

So at one level, you are the envy of the developing world — that India produces such sophisticated products — but the truth is that



THE POLICY INTERVIEW AADIYA MATTOO

Chief Economist (East Asia & Pacific), World Bank

you (India) are also envying the Vietnams and Bangladeshs of the world that have got the bigger growth bang and the associated bump in job creation.

Is it too late to remedy the underachievement? Moreover, India keep stressing on services trade, but will that alone cover for it?

The answer to both is 'no'. It is not too late and services trade alone would not cut it. The challenge is to remedy failings in manufacturing while consolidating achievements in services.

In fact, 90 per cent of the remedy lies with the domestic reform agenda. Just 10 per cent is an international co-operation agenda — though trade negotiations can help spur domestic reform and secure access to foreign markets.

The prescriptions for domestic reform are clear. One, domestic labour market reform can lead to substantial economies of scale and increased GVC participation, especially in the labour-intensive sectors. Second, improved infrastructure like roads and ports and liberalised transport services can help reduce logistics costs — which are three times higher in India than in China and two times higher than in Bangladesh. A day's delay reduces trade by more than 1 per cent.

Thirdly, India should relax its restrictive goods trade policy, which makes it harder for firms to import-to-export. For example, India imposes high tariffs on imports of yarn and fibre which, in turn, increases the cost of producing clothing.

Finally, reform of higher education is necessary for the Indian services sector to thrive in a world where technology is both disrupting old models and creating new opportunities for trade.

IN NUMBERS

INDIA CONTINUES TO LAG ON SEVERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

PARAMETER	TARGET	INDIA
Population below poverty line (in %)	11	22
Children under 5 years of age who are stunted (in %)	2.5	35
Children under 5 years of age who die (per 1,000 live births)	25	50
Students with the minimum proficiency level in language and mathematics (in %)	100	71
Women victims of crime (for every 1 lakh female population)	0	58

Source: Niti Aayog

FROM STATES REFORMS TRACKER

BIHAR

Population control policy to be tweaked

BIHAR IS one of the most populous states in the country and despite that, it continues to grow faster than the Indian average. The Total Fertility Rate (or the average number of children born per woman) for India was 2.2 in 2017 but for Bihar, it was 3.4. To address this, the state government has announced that it will soon come out with changes to its 2005 population control policy. Apart from raising awareness among both men and women, the new policy is expected to focus on incentivising the use of contraceptives, including injectable ones.

TAMIL NADU

Draft state child policy released

THE TAMIL NADU Commission for the Protection of Child Rights has released the draft of the Tamil Nadu State Child policy. The main objective of the policy is to provide a comprehensive development of all children in the state. The draft policy is publicly available and the government has asked for feedback from all and sundry in order to ensure there no unaddressed concerns.

JHARKHAND

White paper on the state economy soon

THE NEWLY-ELECTED chief minister of the state, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's Hemant Soren has announced that his government will soon release a whitepaper on the state's financial health. Soren and other political parties that were in opposition until last month have repeatedly alleged that the previous government did not maintain a balance between its expenditure and revenues.

IMPROVING LAW ENFORCEMENT

Isro's NavIC to feature in mobiles, aid fight against crime

JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, JANUARY 12

A HOMEGROWN satellite navigation system developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (or Isro) is set to find its way into mobile phone systems sold in India. This will facilitate the implementation of a key mandate from the Nirbhaya case verdict which required the installation of vehicle tracking systems and panic buttons in all commercial vehicles.

Isro's satellite navigation system NavIC is set to become the backbone of a public vehicle tracking system in India since it offers flexibility to local law enforcement agencies to monitor vehicles unlike international systems like the GPS, satellite navigation experts from ISRO said.

In April 2019, the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways made NavIC-based vehicle trackers mandatory for all commer-



Uttarakhand voters will no longer have to travel far to cast their vote Express

sand voters were rationalised along the Rajpur Road assembly constituency in Dehradun. During this exercise, officials visited 8,000 voter households belonging to 10

polling booths. Staff members recorded the geographical coordinates of the voters' house using the Google Maps app in their mobile phones. They took down the coordinates along with voters' details on a proforma.

"By checking these coordinates with Google application on the desktop, we went through the data of voters, households and polling booths there were assigned... A total of 1,009 such voters were rationalised and they were assigned to the nearest polling booth," said Mastu Das, Assistant Chief Electoral Officer, Uttarakhand.

Das said that such an exercise will be done in 11,235 polling booths across the state very soon but that exercise will be using a new specific mobile application that will record accurate data in a more convenient manner. For that exercise, a mobile application is being developed with technical support of NIC that will automatically register the co-ordinates of a voter's house.



One of the satellites that powers ISRO's NavIC system Express

cial vehicles in the country in accordance with the Nirbhaya case verdict.

"This is for the benefit of women, elderly citizens, children and for public safety. A mandate effective from April 1, 2019, says that vehicles must have a receiver which supports NavIC," an Isro scientist said. "This is a very critical point since we are talking of public safety and all other constellations that support vehicle locations — like the other mapping systems — are not in the control of our country. So we need an independent autonomous system that can be fully controlled by us," the Isro official said.

Since the NavIC system became operational two years ago, Isro has helped the industry develop and certify receivers for the indigenous navigation system. There are now around 100 products from 35 agencies.

The NavIC system has already been installed in over 2,000 trains in the country as part of a real-time information system for the Indian Railways on the movement of trains.

The biggest presence for the indigenous NavIC system in everyday life in India is however expected to be through mobile phones with mobile phone makers, chip makers and network service providers making provisions for NavIC in their emerging systems.

"The international body 3GPP (the mobile communications standards body) has approved our NavIC to be included in mobiles. So very soon all our mobiles are going to have NavIC along with GPS," the Isro chairman said at his 2020 New Year Day press conference. "The most used area for the NavIC system will be in mobile phones," said the Isro official.

Isro and the chipmaker Qualcomm have developed and tested chipset platform across their portfolio which can support NavIC. The initiative will help accelerate the adoption of NavIC and enhance the geo-location capabilities of mobile, automotive and the Internet of Things (IoT) solutions in the region, according to Isro.

TOPOF THE WORLD



Kenneth Roth

HONG KONG
Human Rights Watch chief says barred from entering HK

Hong Kong: Human Rights Watch chief Kenneth Roth said Sunday he had been denied entry into Hong Kong, where he had arrived to launch the watchdog's annual report after months of civil unrest in the city. Hong Kong has been battered by nearly seven months of protests, its biggest crisis in decades. Roth was to give a press conference on Wednesday to unveil his organisation's latest global survey, which accuses China of prosecuting "an intensive attack" on human rights agencies. "I had hoped to spotlight Beijing's deepening assault on international efforts to uphold human rights," Roth said.

CHINA
Beijing says no change in Taiwan position

Taipei: China will not change its position that Taiwan belongs to it, Beijing said on Sunday, after President Tsai Ing-wen won re-election and said she would not submit to China's threats, as state media warned she was courting disaster. The election campaign was dominated by China's efforts to get the democratic island to accept Beijing's rule under a "one country, two systems" model. While China says Taiwan is its territory, Taiwan maintains it is an independent country called the Republic of China, its formal name.

AUSTRALIA
Cardinal moved to new jail after drone incident

Melbourne: Jailed Australian Cardinal George Pell, convicted over child sex offences, was moved to another prison last week after a drone flew over the facility where he was being held, local media reported. Pell is the most senior Catholic official imprisoned for child sex offences. The former Vatican treasurer is serving a six-year sentence for sexually assaulting two choir boys. "Corrections Victoria can confirm that there was an incident involving a drone flying over the Melbourne Assessment Prison on Thursday," a government spokesperson said.

ANGER MOUNTS AFTER DOWNING OF UKRAINIAN AIRLINER

Iran protesters tell leaders to quit over shooting down plane

Demonstration held across the country for a second day

PARISA HAFEZI
DUBAI, JANUARY 12

PROTESTS ERUPTED across Iran for a second day on Sunday, piling pressure on the leadership after the military admitted it had mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian airliner at a time when Tehran had feared US airstrikes. "They are lying that our enemy is America, our enemy is right here," a group of protesters outside a university in Tehran chanted, according to video clips posted on Twitter.

Posts showed other demonstrators outside a second university and a group of protesters marching to Tehran's Azadi Square. The videos also showed protests in other cities.

"Apologise and resign," Iran's moderate *Etemad* daily wrote in a banner headline on Sunday, saying the "people's demand" was for those responsible for mishandling the plane crisis to quit.

Some state-run media carried reports of the protests, after demonstrations sparked by Iran's announcement that it mistakenly brought down the Ukrainian plane, killing 176 people.

US President Donald Trump tweeted: "To the leaders of Iran- DO NOT KILL YOUR PROTESTERS. Thousands have already



Iranians gather to show their sympathy to the victims of the plane crash, in Tehran on Saturday. *Reuters*

EXPLAINED
Iranians back on the streets as anger against govt intensifies

THE IRANIAN regime faced widespread mass protests last year, and was heavily criticised for the way in which it cracked down on protesters, with international agencies saying hundreds of people were killed in government action to quell the unrest. However, the US killing of Soleimani had brought a sense of unity in the country, with hundreds of thousands turning out, along with leaders of the regime, to mourn the general. But the accidental downing of the passenger jet has reignited anger against the regime, with large protests taking place soon after the military admitted responsibility. The US was also quick to a highlight the protests, seeking to put further pressure on Iran's leadership.

been killed or imprisoned by you, and the World is watching."

The Ukraine International Airlines plane was shot down min-

utes after taking off from Tehran Wednesday, when Iranian forces were on alert for US reprisals following tit-for-tat strikes. **REUTERS**

Rockets slam into Iraqi base hosting US troops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SAMARRA, JANUARY 12

FOUR ROCKETS slammed into an Iraqi airbase north of Baghdad where US troops are based, military sources said on Sunday, with security forces saying four Iraqi airmen were wounded.

A majority of US airmen stationed at the Al-Balad airbase

north of Baghdad had already left, the military sources said, following tensions between the US and Iran over the last two weeks.

Military bases hosting US troops have been subject to volleys of rocket and mortar attacks in recent months that have mostly wounded Iraqi forces, but also killed one American contractor last month.

UK envoy to Iran briefly detained over protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TEHRAN, JANUARY 12

BRITAIN'S AMBASSADOR to Tehran denied Sunday that he took part in a demonstration that broke out at a memorial for the 176 people killed when a plane was shot down.

Students held a gathering at Tehran's Amir Kabir University on Saturday evening to honour those killed hours after Iran admitted the Ukrainian airliner was downed by mistake.

Iran's Mehr news agency said the ambassador, Rob Macaire, was arrested for his alleged "involvement in provoking suspicious acts" at the gathering in front of the university.

The British government said Macaire was arrested and detained briefly in the Iranian capital in what it called a "flagrant violation of international law".

Iran's armed forces said on Saturday the Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737 was mistakenly shot down.

PHILIPPINES VOLCANO SPEWS ASH; THOUSANDS FLEE



The Taal volcano eruption seen from Tagaytay, Philippines. *Reuters*

■ A volcano near Manila spewed a massive cloud of ash that drifted across the Philippine capital on Sunday, forcing the cancellation of flights and closure of schools and government offices as authorities warned of a possible "explosive eruption".

■ Thousands of people were evacuated from the area near Taal volcano after it suddenly shot a column of ash and steam as high as 15 km into the sky.

■ Taal, one of the world's smallest active volcanoes, sits in the middle of a lake about 70 km south of Manila. Authorities said there was a risk that an eruption could cause a tsunami in the lake.

Nepal's new policy to bar NGOs running programmes opposed to India and China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, JANUARY 12

NEPAL IS drafting a new policy "to discourage" international NGOs from undertaking programmes with potential to hamper its relations with India and China, officials said on Sunday.

While cross-border terrorism and criminal activities continue to be the major causes of concern for India, China has in the past complained about the Tibetans' movement via Nepal.

Based on Nepal's foreign policy of keeping balanced relations, the projects that are opposed by either country will not be implemented, according to the draft of the strategy policy which is being prepared by the Social Welfare Council, *The Kathmandu Post* reported.

"Nepal is a land-locked country and has two large countries with large populations in the north and south," the draft said.

The policy will discourage organisations from running programmes that can hamper Nepal's relations with the neighbouring countries, it said.

Council officials said the policy is still in the draft stage and some of its provisions are expected to be addressed by a new law on the registration of NGOs.

Durga Prasad Bhattarai, an information officer at the council, said the proposed policy is aimed at addressing the concerns of the

Nepal's Social Welfare Council officials said the policy is still in the draft stage and some of its provisions are expected to be addressed by a new law on the registration of NGOs

neighbouring countries regarding the activities of NGOs, particularly in the bordering regions.

"The objective of the proposed policy is to reassert that Nepal government is concerned about the strategic mobilisation of international non-governmental organisations, particularly in the bordering regions, in the name of building madrasas and monasteries," Bhattarai was quoted by the *Post*. According to the council, madrasas in the regions bordering India are receiving funds from countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Rajendra Kumar Poudel, member secretary at the council, said India has raised concerns about the large presence of madrasas in the bordering region. "So we have stepped up the scrutiny of the source of funds and nature of programmes to be run in the madrasas while providing approval for foreign funding. We are in favour of addressing India's concerns, but we have not taken any opinion from the Indian embassy in Kathmandu," said Poudel.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II arrives to attend a church service in Sandringham, England, on Sunday. *AP*

Queen prepares for royal family summit over Harry, Meghan

JILL LAWLESS
LONDON, JANUARY 12

ENSCONCED WITH aides at her royal retreat, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II prepared Sunday for a crisis family meeting to work out a future for Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, after their dramatic decision to walk away from royal roles.

Well-wishers cheered the monarch as she made her weekly trip to a church at her Sandringham estate in eastern England. Meanwhile, supporters of the royal family's feuding factions used the British media to paint conflicting pictures of who was to blame for the rift.

Royal officials said the queen had summoned her grandson Harry, his elder brother Prince William and their father Prince Charles to Sandringham, 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of

London, for a meeting on Monday.

The summit reflects the queen's desire to contain the fallout from Harry and Meghan's decision to "step back" as senior royals, work to become financially independent and split their time between Britain and North America. The couple, also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, made the announcement Wednesday without telling the queen or other senior royals first.

William is expected to travel to Sandringham from London and Harry from his home in Windsor, west of the British capital. Charles will fly back from the Gulf nation of Oman, where he was attending a condolence ceremony Sunday following the death of Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

Meghan, who is in Canada with the couple's baby son Archie, is likely to join the meeting by phone. **AP**

Storms sweep US Midwest, South; 11 dead

JUAN A LOZANO
HOUSTON, JANUARY 12

SEVERE STORMS sweeping across southern portions of the US and up into the Midwest were blamed Saturday in the deaths of at least 11 people, including two first responders, as high winds, tornadoes and unrelenting rain battered large swaths of the country.

Storm-related fatalities were reported in Texas due to icy weather, in Alabama from a deadly tornado and in Louisiana, where winds were so strong that a trailer home was lifted off its foundation and carried several hundred feet. A man drowned in Oklahoma and the storms even



Emergency personnel survey the damage from toppled trees in Greenville, Mississippi on Saturday. *AP*

touched the Midwest with at least one death on an icy highway in Iowa. Hundreds of thousands of people were left without power from Texas to Ohio,

parts of highways were closed in Oklahoma and Arkansas due to flooding and hundreds of flights were canceled at Chicago's international airports.



A bulldozer is used to spread out burnt woodchip at the Eden Woodchip Mill in southern New South Wales, Australia, on Saturday. *Reuters*

the wildfires, joining many other tennis stars to pledge money, including Ash Barty, Nick Kyrgios, Novak Djokovic and Maria Sharapova.

Also on Sunday, news came that another firefighter had been killed. Bill Slade — one of the few professionals among mainly volunteer brigades battling blazes across southeast Australia — died after being hit by a falling tree on Saturday near Omeo in eastern Victoria state, Forest Fire Management Victoria Executive Director Chris Hardman said.

The 60-year-old married father of two was commended in

November for 40 years of service with the forestry agency.

"Although we do have enormous experience in identifying hazardous trees, sometimes these tree failures can't be predicted," Hardman said. "Working on the fire ground in a forest environment is a dynamic, high-risk environment and it carries with it significant risk."

The tragedy brings the death toll to at least 27 in a crisis that has destroyed more than 2,000 homes and scorched an area larger than the US state of Indiana since September. Four of the casualties have been firefighters.

The crisis has brought accusations that Prime Minister Scott Morrison's conservative government needs to take more action to counter climate change, which experts say has worsened the blazes. Thousands of protesters rallied Friday in Sydney and Melbourne, calling for Morrison to be fired.

The PM said Sunday his government was building resilience to the fire danger. He said the government was developing a national disaster risk reduction framework within the Department of Home Affairs that will deal with wildfires, cyclones, floods and drought. **AP**

COOLER TEMPERATURES, MILD WINDS FINALLY OFFER FIREFIGHTERS A CHANCE TO MAKE PROGRESS

As weather changes, Australia turns from defence to offence in wildfire battle

NICK PERRY
BODALLA, JANUARY 12

CREWS BATTLING Australia's wildfires said Sunday that they have been able to turn from defence to offence for the first time in weeks thanks to a break in the weather.

Dale McLean, who is helping manage the response to a fire near the town of Bodalla in New South Wales state, was part of team that was bulldozing down small trees and burning scrub ahead of the fire's projected path to try to stop it from reaching a major highway

by starving it of fuel.

"This fire took a major run about seven or eight days ago, and with the weather changing now, the weather settling down, the fire has settled down," he said. "The fire behaviour has changed. So we're able to get in front of the fire now, get on the offensive."

Other workers echoed McLean's comments, saying cooler temperatures and mild winds have finally offered them a chance to make progress. The weather is expected to remain benign for the next week, although any deterioration in conditions after that could see the

wildfires flare up again.

While battling the blazes, volunteer firefighting veteran Mick Stain found some moth larvae, or "witchetty grubs," and turned them into what's known in Australia as bush tucker by roasting them directly on the fire's burning coals.

"Bit creamy and nutty, but they're all right," Stain said. "They're not spew-worthy, so they're pretty good."

Meanwhile, US tennis star Serena Williams donated her \$43,000 winner's check from New Zealand's ASB Classic to the fundraising appeal for victims of



14ECONOMY

DELAYS BLAMED ON NETWORK ARCHITECTURE, MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS

As BharatNet flounders at last mile connectivity, DoT dials the private sector

AASHISH ARYAN & ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

THE CENTRAL government's flagship BharatNet scheme, which aims to provide last mile internet connectivity to all villages and gram panchayats (GP), has missed the targets set for phase one. With connectivity targets set for phase two of the project also likely to be missed owing to current delays, the government is now attempting to rope in the private sector to cover up for the failings of implementing agencies, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

As against the initial target for connecting all the 2.50 lakh GPs by end of March 2019, only 1.18 lakh had been connected till then. "With an estimated Rs 19,516.37 crore having been invested in the scheme so far, the utilisation status of the infrastructure created under this so far is discouraging," a senior official with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Of the 1.26 lakh GPs that have been made service ready so far, WiFi hotspots are functional only in 15,000. The plan to provide fibre to the home (FTTH) connectivity is operational only at 27,856 GPs till end-December, the official added.

To overcome the failings of

EXPLAINED

E. Involving private players could affect pricing

THE ENTRY of private players for the completion of projects of BharatNet under the PPP model could mean an increase in prices of services being offered nearly free of cost by the government as of now. WiFi services under BharatNet are free till March 2020.

If private players are allowed to complete projects, they are likely to look to recover their costs. It is yet to be seen if the upcoming projects will be completed on a sharing basis or the government would look to just facilitate the approvals while leaving infrastructure to the bidders.

nodal agencies involved in the implementation of the project, the Centre now plans to rope in the private sector and complete the phase one as well as phase two part of BharatNet under the public-private-partnership (PPP) model, the official said.

A meeting in this regard was held involving officials from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and NITI Aayog, where the government policy think tank suggested the PPP model.

A Cabinet note for the idea has been prepared, which will be put up for discussion soon, officials said.

Under the model, private sector will be invited to bid circle-wise for the BharatNet project and the maximum contract duration of the project is likely to be 25 years. The selection criteria for PSP will be their quote for viability gap funding, and the bidders will be expected to provide "on demand" internet connectivity with minimum speeds of 50 Mbps to at least five development institution in the area, the minutes of the meeting showed.

"The private service partner (PSP) will have the flexibility to re-locate the equipment installed at the BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited) exchanges and gram panchayats. It

PHASE ONE TARGETS REMAIN UNACHIEVED		
Item	Target	Achieved
OFC laid (in km)	623,420	368,773
GPs connected	200,000	138,529
Service ready GP	200,000	126,223

would also have the flexibility to create/upgrade the network," according to one of the officials present at the meeting.

In its defence, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) — the nodal agency for implementation of the project — has blamed the network architecture, the connectivity to old BSNL fibre in part of the network operation and maintenance through BSNL as some of the reasons which had held back optimal utilisation of the network. Queries sent to the DoT remained unanswered.

Though the NITI Aayog suggested the PPP model, it also flagged some likely challenges if the government opts to rope in private players.

One such challenge, the agency has said, is to ensure "affordable and fair pricing" which is likely to change if the private players have their way.

The financial reconciliation of work done so far under phase one of BharatNet, which is pending as final documents from central public sector units have not been received so far, is also likely to be a challenge, according to the presentation made in the meeting. *The Indian Express* has seen a copy of the presentation made.

Apart from these, the government think tank is learnt to have warned about the change in the outlook towards BharatNet, which, when envisaged, was mooted as a "national asset with non-discriminatory access to all service providers".

"The handling of Right of Way (RoW) for enhanced architecture and newly created network, along with integration of phase one and two of BharatNet was also flagged as a challenge. We also have to find a solution to termination of ongoing work under the scheme and handing it over to the private sector," an senior DoT official, present at the meeting said.

Under the BharatNet scheme, the Centre is for now providing free WiFi services to all villages and GPs till March 2020, post which Common Services Centres (CSCs) and village level entrepreneurs (VLEs) will be able to charge for the internet through a pre-paid coupon system.

Bank credit growth hits 2-yr low on weak demand in key sectors

Credit outstanding to the industrial and services sector contracts in the period between April and November 2019

SANDEEP SINGH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

FESTIVE SEASON and the announcement on cut in corporate tax rates notwithstanding, the gross bank credit growth declined to a two-year low of 7.3 per cent in November 2019, driven by weak credit demand by the industrial and services sector. The weakness in economic activity this fiscal has, in fact, resulted in a contraction in credit outstanding for the industrial and services sector for the period between April and November 2019.

Data released by the Reserve Bank of India shows that both these sectors have not witnessed any credit expansion in the last eight months. While the credit outstanding for the industry contracted 3.9 per cent from Rs 28.85 lakh crore in March 2019 to 27.72 lakh crore in November 2019, that for the services sector contracted by 2.2 per cent from Rs 24.15 lakh crore to Rs 23.62 lakh crore in the same period.

Data shows that the bank credit outstanding for the eight months of FY20 expanded by just 1 per cent. Credit outstanding for the non-food sector too expanded by a meagre 0.5 per cent during the eight month period from Rs 86.33 lakh crore at the end of March 2019 to Rs 86.73 lakh crore in November 2019, primarily on account of weak industrial and services sector demand.

CREDIT OUTSTANDING OF VARIOUS SECTORS				
	Mar 2019	Nov 2019	Change (%)	
Gross Bank Credit O/S	86,74,892	87,64,913	1.04	
Non-food credit	86,33,418	86,73,908	0.47	
Industry	28,85,778	27,72,248	-3.93	
Services	24,15,609	23,62,956	-2.18	
Personal Loan	22,20,732	24,04,701	8.28	

Figures in ₹ crore; Source: RBI

While the year-on-year (y-o-y) credit growth for the non-food sector expanded by 7.2 per cent in November 2019, the two key sectors — industry and services — that account for nearly 60 per cent of the credit outstanding by banks saw their credit expand by 2.4 per cent (lowest in 14 months) and 4.8 per cent (28-month low), respectively. The personal loan segment, however, witnessed credit outstanding grow by 16.4 per cent y-o-y in November, and for the eight month period it expanded by 8.3 per cent from Rs 22.24 lakh crore in March 2019 to Rs 24.04 lakh crore in November 2019.

Within the personal loan segment, the consumer durable segment witnessed a y-o-y expansion of 68 per cent from Rs 3,274 crore in November 2018 to Rs 5,499 crore in November 2019. However, for the eight month period between April and November, this segment saw a contraction in credit outstanding by 12.7 per cent.

The credit demand from the

housing segment expanded 18.3 per cent y-o-y in November and for the eight month period, it expanded by 9.9 per cent.

The recent decline in credit growth follows a sharp revival in credit seen in each of the months between April 2018 and July 2019 when it expanded in double digits. The services sector, which led the revival in credit growth and was witnessing the highest economic activity, has seen its credit growth come under 5 per cent for the first time in 28-months.

The Reserve Bank data is in line with the slowdown seen in factory output over the last three months. While gross bank credit growth had hit a low of 3 per cent in February 2017, following demonetisation in November 2016, it witnessed a slow but steady revival over the next two years to hit a 55-month high of 13.6 per cent in November 2018 (the highest since the Narendra Modi-led NDA came to power in May 2014). In November 2019, it came down to 7.3 per cent.

FEMA VIOLATIONS

Charges false, no relation with Capstone Forex: Edelweiss CEO

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

EDELWEISS GROUP chairman and CEO Rashesh Shah on Sunday said he has no relationship with Capstone Forex and all allegations of Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) violations against him were false.

"We appreciate that regulators and agencies have an obligation to investigate; if any information is sought from us, as a responsible corporate citizen, we will of course provide the same," Shah said in a statement.

Shah said while it is unfortunate that he was unable to go in person to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), "our senior authorised representative did attend in person with the requisite information. Needless to say, if in the future any assistance or support to the investigation is requested from us, we will cooperate fully".

The statement further said as per media reports, Sanjay Nathalal Shah, chartered accountant and an independent director of few of Edelweiss Group of companies, is alleged to be connected to Capstone.

"Let me reiterate that he has no other association with the Edelweiss Group, nor is he in any

"... our senior authorised representative did attend in person with the requisite information. Needless to say, if in the future any assistance or support to the investigation is requested from us, we will cooperate fully"

RASHESH SHAH
EDELWEISS GROUP CHAIRMAN & CEO

way related to me; you will appreciate that Shah is a common name," he said.

Shah blamed the media for sensationally reporting false allegations, conjecture and innuendo. "Several have done so without following the standard, responsible practice of first speaking with Edelweiss. Had they done so, you would have been presented with both sides of the story, equally and fairly. We are, therefore, compelled to take appropriate legal action against the concerned media group, in order to protect and reinforce the reputation of Edelweiss".

The statement further said "we remain committed to the highest governance standards built on a strong foundation of ethics". **FE**

Sebi likely to fine-tune disclosure norms soon

URVASHI VALECHA & CHIRAG MADIA
MUMBAI, JANUARY 12

CAPITAL MARKETS regulator Sebi is understood to be looking at better disclosures by companies after recent episodes where material information was not made available to exchanges and, in some instances, where development reports reported to the bourses did not take place.

The regulator is believed to be taking a relook at the regulations under the Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) and is understood to be working on guidelines that clearly define material and non-material events.

BSE MD and CEO Ashish Kumar Chauhan confirmed that discussions were on at various levels between the regulator, the government and the exchanges on the proposed nature, timing and mode of disclosures. "There is a debate about what to disclose because any person can write anything. If you don't disclose it's a problem, if you disclose it's even more of a problem. Because of social media, you tend to have consequences which are unintended," he said.

Discussions between the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and the exchanges began shortly after Infosys last year did not disclose to exchanges that it had received whistleblower complaints. In response to queries from the exchanges, Infosys had

BSE MD and CEO Ashish Kumar Chauhan confirmed that discussions were on at various levels between the regulator, the government and the exchanges on the proposed nature, timing and mode of disclosures

said: "Before conclusion of the investigation of the generalised allegations in the complaints, a disclosure under Regulation 30 of LODR Regulations was not required. The disclosure made on October 22, 2019, was to respond to multiple media inquiries and reports".

It has been learnt the proposed changes have been discussed at Sebi's Primary Market Advisory Committee (PMAC) and Secondary Market Advisory Committee (SMAC).

The Corporate Governance Report, submitted to Sebi by Uday Kotak in October 2017, says "high-quality information represents the basic input for governance because it reduces the twin problems of reliability and asymmetric information, which refer to the fact that professional managers, board members and auditors possess significantly greater information than the average investor in these companies". **FE**

₹300-CRORE FRAUDULENT CROP REINSURANCE DEAL

Irdai penalises brokers for cheating Tata AIG

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, JANUARY 12

THE INSURANCE Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has slapped curbs and penalised brokers and agents for their involvement in the Rs 300-crore fraudulent crop reinsurance deal in which Tata AIG General Insurance was cheated by multiple intermediaries including Unison Insurance Broking Services, an Indian composite insurance broker, Confiance, a Malaysia-based broker, and its Jaipur-based agents in India, Global Master Consultant (GMC).

In an order issued last week, Sujay Banarji, Member (Distribution), Irdai, barred Steven Chetty, MD, Confiance, from doing insurance/reinsurance business in India and Indian insurers and their offices overseas, as he had played an active and primary role in the fraudulent deal.

Mukesh Ranwan and Sachin Agarwal, directors of GMC who are representatives of Confiance in India, have also been barred from doing any insurance/reinsurance business in India, Indian insurers and their offices overseas. Indian reinsurers and their offices overseas, foreign reinsurance branches in India and insurance intermediaries were directed not to engage in any business activity with Ranwan and Agarwal.

The regulator has also fined Unison Brokers, which was the primary broker for Tata AIG General insurance in the deal, to

Tata AIG General made a complaint to Irdai against Unison Insurance Broking Services alleging fraud in reinsurance placement pertaining to crop insurance, with a premium of around ₹300 crore in Rajasthan cluster for Kharif 2018 season

the tune of Rs one crore.

Tata AIG, which was forced to exit the crop insurance business after losing money heavily in the reinsurance deal, made a complaint to Irdai against Unison Insurance Broking Services alleging fraud in reinsurance placement pertaining to crop insurance, with a premium of around Rs 300 crore in Rajasthan cluster for Kharif 2018 season.

Irdai had received an email from Tata AIG on December 21, 2018, informing the fraud committed against its company with regard to the placement of reinsurance protection through Unison Insurance Broking Services, a composite Baroda-based broker that had made facultative reinsurance arrangements to support the company's crop reinsurance risk cover in 2018-19, through Confiance International Reinsurance Broker LLC, a Malaysia-based broker involving their Indian representative GMC.

Chetty, the MD of Confiance in Malaysia, and Ranwan and Agarwal are the representatives of Confiance heading GMC in India. Confiance had provided the best terms for placement with two reinsurers, Tokio Marine Kiln Syndicate (TMK) and Best

Meridian Insurance (BMI).

The reinsurance placement was confirmed with copies of signed slips of the participating reinsurers. The broker remitted the reinsurance premium of Rs 1.13 crore and Rs 6.17 crore, respectively, to Confiance.

After deducting its brokerage in November 2018, it came to the knowledge of Tata AIG officials that TMK is not participating in the facultative placement of its crop business. Immediately, Tata AIG contacted the general counsel of TMK with a copy of the TMK signed reinsurance slip provided by Confiance. After checking internally, TMK confirmed it had not provided any support for the reinsurance and the slip purportedly signed by it was not issued by it.

Tata AIG contacted BMI and BMI confirmed that it is not on risk and BMI Global and its affiliates or subsidiaries have not quoted, underwritten, signed or executed any reinsurance involving Tata AIG. BMI also informed that it is opening an investigation regarding the original source of this document and confirmed that BMI does not accept or recognise being bound to this coverage.

Tata AIG took up the matter with the broker. After examining

the matter, the broker came to the conclusion that the slips provided by GMC, the Indian representative of Confiance, are fraudulent slips.

Chetty, in his email to Unison Insurance, expressed distress on the situation/ forged documents and informed the broker that Confiance is not aware or authorised such action.

He further informed the broker that the funds are sitting in the accounts of Confiance, for a risk which they did not officially place. Chetty arranged for transfer of funds to the broker and the broker in turn refunded the premium to Tata AIG General Insurance.

According to Irdai, considering the facts and the involvement of Confiance, foreign reinsurance broker in the chain of events and its implication in the reinsurance market in India, it is established that the cession of reinsurance premium, issuance of the forged reinsurance slip and subsequent refund of the reinsurance premium by Confiance constitutes a serious and grave offence.

Irdai said the actions of Confiance were deliberate and harmful. Such actions cannot under any circumstances be tolerated as it put the existence of general insurance companies in peril.

In the entire episode, Confiance made no efforts to clarify its stance and simply returned the premium, which, in turn, proves that it intentionally committed this act by not placing the risk with the foreign reinsurers and issued forged reinsurance slips to the Indian reinsurance broker.

DAVID LAWDER
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 12

CHINA'S COMMITMENTS in the Phase 1 trade deal with the US were not changed during a lengthy translation process and will be released this week as the document is signed in Washington, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Sunday.

Mnuchin told Fox News Channel that the deal reached on December 13 still calls for China to buy \$40 billion to \$50 billion worth of US agricultural products annually and a total of \$200 billion of US goods over two years.

"It wasn't changed in translation. I don't know where that rumor started," Mnuchin said on the "Sunday Morning Futures with Maria Bartiromo" show.

"We have been going through a translation process that I think we said was really a technical issue," Mnuchin said. "And the language will be released this week. So I think it is — the day of the sign-



The US Treasury Secretary said the deal calls for China to buy \$40 bn-\$50 bn of US agri products annually. AP file photo

ing, we will be releasing the English version." "And people can see. This is a very, very extensive agreement," he added.

White House officials had said as late as Friday that the final Chinese text was not yet completed, even as invitations went out to more than 200 people for a January 15 signing event at the White House.

Asked if he still expected China to purchase \$40 billion to \$50 bil-

lion in US farm products under the deal, Mnuchin said: "I do. Let me just say, it is \$200 billion of additional products across the board over the next two years, and, specifically in agriculture, \$40 billion to \$50 billion."

Thus far, Beijing has not confirmed those purchase commitments, and recent government actions in the agriculture industry have raised questions over the \$40 billion to \$50 billion target cited repeatedly by Trump administration officials.

Chinese officials have been careful not to publicly discuss details of the Phase 1 deal, because Washington has changed its position multiple times during negotiations, three Chinese officials with knowledge of the situation told Reuters last week.

Signing of the trade deal eases Trump's 18-month trade war aimed at altering China's trade and economic practices, but will leave in place tariffs on about \$370 billion worth of Chinese imports per year. **REUTERS**

A BURNING QUESTION

Why was Australia’s government so ill-prepared for the bushfires?

The hot dry season is getting longer and hotter than before

“AFEW bags and the cats” were all Brett Viewey could take when he fled his house in Kangaroo Valley, a small town in New South Wales. On January 4th he retreated to a bowling club in Nowra, a few hours south of Sydney, as a fire coursed towards his home. He is among tens of thousands of people who have moved out of the way of bushfires that are raging all across Australia, and especially in Victoria and New South Wales. So far the flames have burned across 11m hectares, larger than the area destroyed by recent fires in the Amazon and California combined. At least 26 people are dead and around 2,300 homes have been destroyed. And there are still several weeks of summer to go.

Fire-damaged towns have received Scott Morrison, the prime minister, with hostility. During a recent walk around Cobargo in New South Wales, angry locals called him an “idiot”. When two people refused to shake his hand, he forcibly took theirs. At a press conference on January 5th Mr Morrison said that “blame doesn’t help anybody” and that “over-analysis” is “not a productive exercise”. But Australians want to know how this extraordinary fire season could have been better handled. The rest of the world dares to wonder if it will prompt any acceleration of the country’s laggardly climate policies.

Bitter experience with seasonal conflagrations has left Australia with extensive codes related to wildfires, many introduced or expanded after the deaths of 173 people in fires in Victoria in 2009. Observers abroad say that fire-safety rules for housebuilders and home-fixers are perhaps the world’s most comprehensive. Whereas authorities had previously thought that well-prepared homes could be defended, Australians are now told to evacuate as fires bear down on them, nudged by emergency broadcasts, text messages and fire-watching mobile apps. To encourage them to do so, a new category of “catastrophic” or “code red” was added to risk warnings. All this has certainly saved lives this year.

Ross Bradstock, a bushfire expert at the University of Wollongong, notes that in recent years Australia has greatly expanded the use of preventive measures known as “hazard reduction”, in which controlled burns are carried out during the winter to reduce the amount of material available to ignite when temperatures rise. Some Australians grumble, without much evidence, that “greenies” worried about plants and wildlife have been holding this practice back. But the main obstacle is that the fire season is lengthening year by year, says Shane Fitzsimmons, a fire chief. This shrinks the amount of time available to carry out preventive work.

Many Australians think the government could have prepared better. Greg Mullins, the former fire commissioner of New South Wales, and other ex-chiefs warned authorities in April that extremely dry conditions in Eastern Australia were likely to lead to a very dangerous fire season. They wanted cash for water-bombing aircraft, but Mr Mullins says they were “fobbed off”. Money was eventually found, but not until December, when flames



Rural Fire Service volunteers and NSW Fire and Rescue officers fight a bushfire near Termeil, Australia, last month. Reuters

had already spread. Mr Morrison has since promised ongoing funding for firefighting planes and helicopters.

One of the most emotive issues is the pressure that is put on volunteer firefighters. On leave from their day jobs, volunteers are the primary defenders of most neighbourhoods. They often have to make do with limited kit. Brendon O’Connor, a volunteer firefighter in Balmoral, a village south of Sydney, recounts how his crew fought five fire fronts with two trucks before running out of water. Two of his team died. A challenge in the longer term is that, like the rest of Australia’s population, the volunteer fire service is ageing. It could become less effective, just as Australia’s fires are getting worse.

The underlying reason for the devastation

is the exceptionally hot and dry weather, which made the bush more flammable (2019 was Australia’s hottest year on record). Mr Morrison says that his government has never denied that there is a link between climate change and the extreme weather that has made this year’s bushfires so grave. That marks a shift from rhetoric heard earlier in the disaster, when politicians on the right of Mr Morrison’s Liberal Party dismissed people who saw a connection between bush fires and climate change as “inner-city lunatics” and “climate alarmists”. The prime minister has promised that the country is on track to “meet and beat” its greenhouse-gas emissions reduction goals.

It is not, and those goals are anyway too modest. Per head of population, Australia’s carbon emissions are among the highest in the

world. They have been rising since the Liberals came to power in 2013 and scrapped a carbon tax. Diplomats from other rich countries accused Australia of jeopardising international climate agreements at the UN’s climate conference in Madrid in December, even while the fires were raging. It wanted to meet its commitments under the Paris agreement by carrying over credits it earned from the 20-year-old Kyoto protocol. This fiddle would give much bigger emitters, such as China, a way to wriggle out of their promises too.

Last year 61% of Australians told pollsters that they thought climate change was a “serious and pressing” problem, up from 50% in 2015. Nevertheless, the government’s unambitious climate policies are one reason Mr Morrison clung onto his job at a general elec-

tion in May, when pundits had expected a big victory for the Labor Party. He hoovered up votes in Queensland, a state full of marginal constituencies with an economy dependent on exporting natural resources, especially coal. He would like to keep that support.

If this season’s fires do not change calculations “then nothing will,” says Lesley Hughes, a biologist at Macquarie University. Even people far away from the flames are breathing filthy air. The disaster will do huge damage to tourism, which employs about 5% of Australians, and to agriculture, though it is too early to guess how much. During this year’s election campaigns the Liberals convinced Australians that they were the safest stewards of the economy. But they will find it difficult to

hold that ground if more people decide that inaction on climate change has high and immediate direct costs, says Ian McAllister of the Australian National University.

Labor, still pulling itself together after its surprise defeat in May, has not applied much pressure. Its leader of seven months, Anthony Albanese, promises to do more to tackle climate change. But he disappointed green campaigners by touring Queensland in early December, a trip viewed by some as an effort to reassure big coal exporters. Australia’s two big parties are locked in a “hideous death dance”, reckons Sarah Maddison, a political scientist at the University of Melbourne. “This is the end result.”

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NOWHERE AND EVERYWHERE

The mastermind of Iranian expansion and destruction

Qassem Suleimani, 62, was assassinated on Jan 3

FOR A man whose reputation was shadowy and clandestine, Qassem Suleimani sometimes made himself startlingly visible. He climbed up on the flatbeds of army trucks in Syria, exhorting crowds of weary fighters. He posed smiling beside rocket-launchers in Iraq, finger on the trigger. He responded to Donald Trump’s Twitter threats against Iran by calling him a gambler and a bartender, urging him to come on and find out, the hard way, who the real men were in this showdown. His Instagram account showed him ordering a missile strike against the White House with the slogan, in English: “We will crush the USA under our feet.”

He had earned his shadow reputation in other ways. His habit of glancing downward, carefully, his eyes slightly hooded under thick brows, which could set his interlocutors trembling. His wish to sit alone at meetings, his silences in conversations, and his simple words, as if he was ordinary. That befitted him as a peasant’s son from the mountains near Afghanistan, whose most vivid childhood memory was straining his puny body on a building site to earn enough money to clear his father’s debts. And it befitted him, too, as the head after 1998 of the Quds Force, the elite arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, where he masterminded Iran’s ever-widening circle of influence, destruction and killing.

To him the job was still soldiering. That was his calling, even if he did most of it in black shirt and jacket from his desk. His eight-year service in the Iran-Iraq war, the Sacred Defence, in which he was wounded and near-choked by chemical weapons, did more than

battle-harden him. It taught him to slide between local militias, crossing borders, making alliances, that proved invaluable later. It taught him that neighbouring countries had to be controlled to keep Iran strong. Most of all he learned that the trenches and attrition of the Sacred Defence, the million deaths, were not a good way to wage war. He would deal out death by other means.

That weapon was his Quds Force: up to 20,000 men whose first purpose was to protect Iran’s Islamic revolution of 1979, and whose second was to reclaim Quds, Jerusalem. His passion for the revolution, which he had raced to serve in his 20s, grew into a determination to forge an Axis of Resistance—a Shia Crescent, as its detractors called it—against dominant Sunni powers, from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea. His men could be sent out to fight or to train fighters, to spy, to bribe, to negotiate contracts and to sow terror, all over the region and beyond. Thus, covertly, he could present the enemies all around with “many Irans”.

He could slip in himself, unseen, whenever needed. In Syria, where he was tilting the civil war in Bashar al-Assad’s favour, he worked out of an unremarkable building in Damascus. In Iraq, where he ensured that pro-Iran Shia loyalists filled the rickety governments, he might suddenly appear in a minister’s office, negotiate the use of airspace for weapons flights, kiss the minister’s forehead, and disappear. After visits in 2006 to Lebanon, where he directed and properly weaponised Hizbullah’s campaign of roadside bombs and targeted murders, he exulted to the Americans that he had been “busy in



Senior Revolutionary Guard Commander General Qassem Suleimani at a meeting in Tehran, in 2016. AP

Beirut”. He was nowhere and everywhere, smoothly declaring his innocence of killings, committing—like any good spymaster—absolutely nothing to paper.

The Quds Force, besides, was only part of his network. Most of it was composed of militant allies and proxies, Shia militias recruited

the world over whose ties to Iran were sometimes obvious, as with Hizbullah, but could often be denied. Such militias were quick to set up, quick to train, if the men were motivated enough. He had done it himself, joining up for the Sacred Defence as commander of a unit he had put together from his local

gym in Kerman. Far better to work with such a citizen unit, he thought, than with a useless regular army, such as Syria’s. Even where the Shia militias were multiple and unruly, as in Iraq, they gave him the flexibility and the manpower to strew along the roads enough sophisticated explosive devices,

made in Iran, to kill hundreds of Americans.

He could be flexible himself, if it suited his ends. He happily worked with Hamas, though it was Sunni, to target Israel. After 9/11 he even offered the Americans intelligence on the Taliban. He felt pleased to cooperate, though that evaporated in a minute when George W. Bush declared Iran to be part of the “Axis of Evil”. During the war against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, his forces worked in concert with American bombing raids. As long as the enemy were useful to him, he suspended his wish to drive them out.

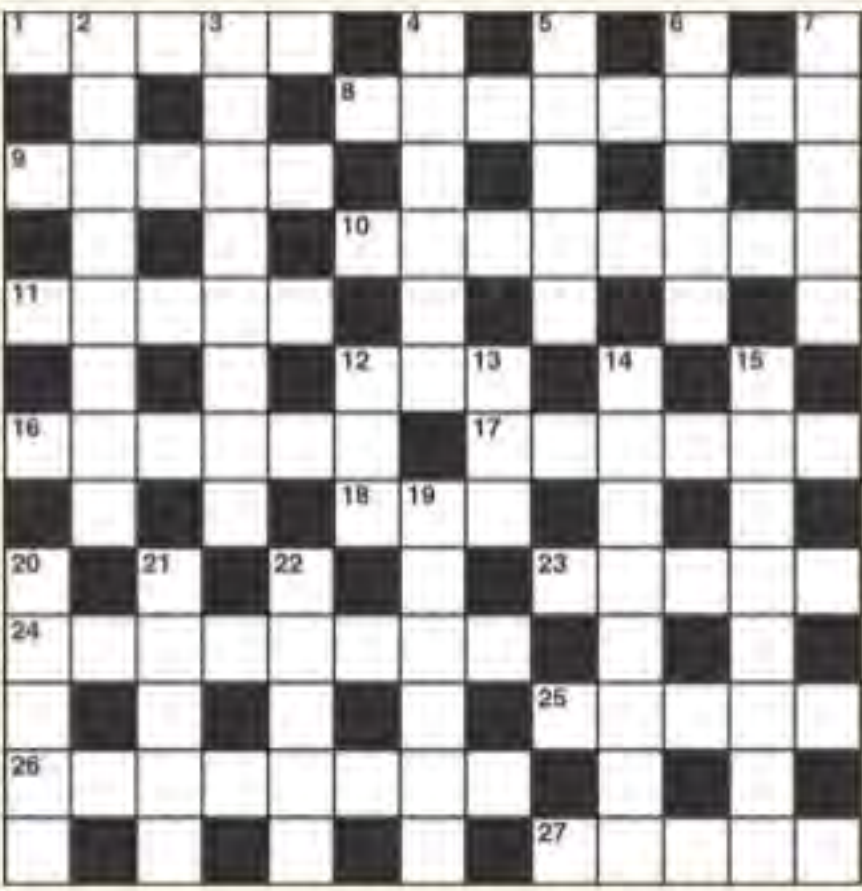
His critics in Tehran—for he had many, not least in the rival ministry of intelligence—claimed that his ruthless methods did not always serve Iran well. They also thought his reverent closeness to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, easing the supreme leader’s relations with the army, was a bid for presidential power. No, he insisted. He was just a soldier. The most beautiful place he knew was the battlefield, and martyrdom the highest calling. He would sometimes take veterans’ groups out to places, such as the Faw Peninsula, where he had been part of a desperate fight with no ground gained. But many who fought there had found paradise. He would read their names and weep that he was not among them. He would embrace their children, just to smell martyrdom on them.

So when he made himself blatantly visible—strolling in Baghdad without bodyguards, visiting battlefields without a flak jacket—it was not out of character. He could thus draw the bullet, or the drone, that might kill him. No true victory without that.

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CROSSWORD 4013



- ACROSS**
1 Writer never reviewed (5)
8 Missing persons in the family? (8)
9 Intriguing bunch of politicians (5)
10 Hat-maker badly taken in by a gold-digger (8)
11 To avoid it, make a stew hash (5)
12 She's not allowed in bed! (3)
16 Ship's mascot for the ancient mariner? (3,3)
17 Charm, possibly earned (6)
18 Go back to sea? (3)
23 Crouch, looking stocky (5)
24 They don't own the van so it turns out (4-4)
25 Club he joined for a swim (5)
26 Not all on this page? (8)
27 Depended on the French worker (5)
- DOWN**
2 Arose from having the call-up date wrong (8)
3 Need one tap repaired when the flow is minimal (4,4)
4 Dynamic proposition to be voted upon (6)
5 Speak when you're spoken to (5)
6 Soldier and worker combine in a big way (5)
7 It wasn't worn long during the Sixties (5)
12 Silver key period (3)
13 Sort of bill that upsets Ben (3)
14 Nowadays, treat it as comparable with plenty (8)
15 Battle remembered in the long run (8)
19 Cold tart (6)
20 He holds a title briefly (5)
21 Apparent reduction of overtime (5)
22 It may be cocked with the thumb - and nose! (5)

Solutions Crossword 4012: Across: 1 Pedestrian, 6 Graf, 10 Ripen, 11 Lassitude, 12 Engaging, 13 Ethic, 15 Elapses, 17 In touch, 19 Patella, 21 Fiddler, 22 Stunt, 24 Landsman, 27 Ascertain, 28 Erica, 29 Ever, 30 Sleep tight. Down: 1 Park, 2 Dependant, 3 Sonia, 4 Rallies, 5 Assegaal, 7 Rough, 8 French horn, 9 Directed, 14 Sea passage, 16 Solitary, 18 Unloading, 20 All hail, 21 Finance, 23 Uncle, 25 Spent, 26 Cast.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

It won't be long before you are completely free of financial worries, and the little crises along the way are just problems sent to annoy you. They are opportunities to get your act together so that next time round you make a huge profit. Listen to younger relations.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

The truth will come out, eventually. Stormy celestial relationships follow one another with great frequency. This is hardly a relaxing prospect and most Taureans will be caught up in one stressful situation or another this week. The trick is to come out smiling.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Your wit and intelligence will be in much demand this week. You'll be called upon to be the arbiter in all sorts of disagreements, some of them important, others utterly pointless and insignificant. What seems like a waste of time now may turn out to have its uses a little way down the line.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Not for about four months have the stars achieved such a welcoming formation, encouraging partners to offer you full support. Although you are due to take another stunning leap forward over the coming two months, what happens may relate back to the events of long ago.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

It's a busy month, but an imaginative one. You will soon be forced to take some fundamental measures affecting the very foundations of your life. Yet, while there will be a sense of urgency it is unlikely that arrangements made now will prove hard and fast.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

In spite of your need for certainty, it is very difficult to make firm predictions this week other than to say that any disruption that does take place must be seen as part of a larger and definitely positive pattern. Communication breakdowns are possibly the major hazard.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

An unusual number of planetary influences are jockeying for attention. Expect a busy week. In fact, I think you should actively take on more than you can handle in the knowledge that even unlikely new commitments will become central to your affairs in the near future.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Try to see the whole of the coming week in the round, reaching a peak around Wednesday or Thursday — or Friday. You should plan all your personal affairs with care and don't be alarmed if other people try to pull out of joint arrangements; it could be for the best.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

It's uncertain whether the main pressures on you this week will be completely illusory or, on the other hand, will be all too real. Therefore, you should take nothing for granted, but neither should you get too wound up over worries which may vanish when fresh light is shed on them.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Once again, your stars are moving towards a major alignment that is going to shake up the entire world. You may see the exciting events in your own life over the next few months as part of a marvellous larger pattern, leading you to much greater personal satisfaction.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Major moves are afoot at home this week. I suspect that your priorities may be challenged, either by other people or by your own tendency to over-commit yourself. Aquarians in the caring professions will do best at work, and if you put other people first then you will also gain.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You're not always as soft as astrologers pretend. In fact, you have the cutting edge that other people just seem to lack. You are also more accomplished than usual, but do please remember to read instructions and heed directions. It's easy to be too impatient for your own good.

JUMBLLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue.

There is no moral precept that does not have something ____ about it - Denis Diderot (12)

LPEEO



DOIIT



GIHNNN



OOYCNV



SOLUTION: LPEEO: LIPSE. GIHNNN: INNOCENT. DOIIT: IT. OOYCNV: CIVIL. There is no moral precept that does not have something inconvenient about it - Denis Diderot

SUDOKU 4088

Difficulty Level 1s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.



Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4087



SALUTE THE SOLDIER

MARTYR OF 205 COBRA



SI/GD RAUSHAN KUMAR

SI/GD, Raushan Kumar of 205 CoBRA made the supreme sacrifice during a counter-Maoist operation in the area of Vill- Pachrukiya, U/Ps- Madanpur, Distt- Aurangabad (Bihar) on 13th January, 2019. The CRPF proudly remembers the braveheart who laid down his life at the altar of duty while fighting with maoists. His courage and bravery would remain an abiding source of inspiration for the Force.

IG & ALL RANKS OF COBRA

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DIPR/338/Tender/2020

सार्वजनिक सूचना

ग्रेटर नोएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण क्षेत्र के अन्तर्गत M/s Nirala Housing Pvt. Ltd. के भूखण्ड संख्या-GH-03 सेक्टर-16 ग्रेटर नोएडा पर दिनांक 14.10.2016 को मानचित्र स्वीकृति प्रदान की गयी थी। तदोपरान्त बिन्दर द्वारा पुनरीक्षित मानचित्र स्वीकृति हेतु दिनांक 06.01.2020 को आवेदन किया गया है, जिसमें पूर्व स्वीकृत भवन के डिजाईन व अन्य कतिपय संशोधन किया जा रहा है। अतः प्रत्येक आवेदियों द्वारा अपनी consent दी गई है या नहीं के सम्बन्ध में अपार्टमेंट और अपनी आपत्ति दर्ज करवा सकते हैं। इस सम्बन्ध में बिन्दर द्वारा प्रस्तुत संशोधित declarations एवं मानचित्र का परीक्षण किसी भी कार्यदिवस में सुबह 9:30 से सांय 6:00 बजे के मध्य नियोजन विभाग के displayed में नक्शे में किया जा सकता है। मानचित्रों में 30 प्र0 अपार्टमेंट एक्ट-2010 के प्रावधानों के अन्तर्गत उक्त प्रस्तावित संशोधन की घोषणा के सम्बन्ध में अपार्टमेंट स्वामियों/संघ को नोटिस जारी करने के साथ 30 दिन के अन्दर आपत्तियां आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।

अतः उपरोक्त के निहाय अपनी आपत्तियां लिखित रूप से अपने आवेदन पत्र, नाम, पता एवं दूरभाष नम्बर के साथ कार्यालय समय व कार्यदिवस में ग्रेटर नोएडा प्राधिकरण के मुख्य प्रशासनिक कार्यालय, भूखण्ड संख्या-1, नॉलेज पार्क-04, ग्रेटर नोएडा में स्थित वॉरेंट प्रबन्धक (वास्तु0) विभाग में निर्धारित अवधि अर्थात् सूचना प्रकाशित होने के 30 दिवसों में प्राप्त करायी जा सकती है।

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TENDER FOR COLLECTION OF METAL SCRAP FROM POKARAN FIELD FIRING RANGES

1. Online bids (E-tenders) are invited by Station Commander, Station Headquarters Pokaran, PIN-900164 c/o 56 APO on behalf of the President of India from Government approved contractors of the appropriate class on the prescribed tender forms for a contract for retrieving collection and disposal of metal scrap of fired ammunition and used targets from Pokaran Field Firing Ranges (Sectors 'A', 'B' and 'C' Sectors only) Pokaran, District Jaisalmer on as is where is basis for the period from **01 Feb 2020 to 31 Jan 2021**. The tender can be viewed in Defence Procurement Portal www.defprocure.gov.in
2. **Details**
- | | |
|--|---|
| (a) Reference No | : 0605/6/GT (2019-20) (i) |
| (b) Title | : Retrieving collection and disposal of metal scrap |
| (c) Tender ID | : 2020_Army_312067_1 |
| (d) Bid Submission start | : 06 Jan 2020 at 0900 hrs |
| (e) Last date of Bid submission | : 20 Jan 2020 at 0900 hrs |
| (f) Last date of depositing physical docu | : 20 Jan 2020 at 0900 hrs |
| (g) Bid opening | : 20 Jan 2020 at 1000 hrs |
| (h) Tender fee | : Rs 5,000/- |
| (i) EMD | : Rs 25,00,000/- |
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0040527348-1
I, Bajinder Kaur W/o Manjinder Singh Puri R/o-A-803, Amba-G Residency, Ahinsa Khand-2, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, UP, have changed my name to Bajinder Kaur Dua.
0040527348-3
I, Rajat Tyagi R/o 773, Sector-A, Pocket-B&C, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070, have changed my minor daughter's name from Anushka Kaushik to Anushka Tyagi for all purposes vide affidavit certificate no. IN-DL04352821927228S.
0040526922-1
I, Pooja Gupta D/o Vijay Garg W/o Pardeep Kumar Gupta, R/o Gali Dr. Jagdish and Bachna Darji Mandi Harzi Ram Ward No-17 Malout, Sri Muktsar Sahib Punjab-152107, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Pooja Rani.
0070692374-1
I, Manjinder Singh S/o Surjit Singh R/o-A-803, Amba-G Residency, Ahinsa Khand-2, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, UP, have changed my name to Manjinder Singh Puri.
0040527348-2
I, Ashish Kumar Sinha S/o Ashok Kumar Singh R/o- Gangajala Ward No.18, Saharsa, Bihar-852201, have changed my name to Ashish Kumar Singh.
0040527375-12
I, Manish Yadav S/o Panna Lal Yadav R/o B-125/C, Lions Enclave, Vikas Nagar, Delhi-110059, have changed my name to Munesh.
0070692375-1
I, Shaili Shailendra S/o Santosh Anand Shukla R/o 547 Rana Apt. 3rd fl Gali no 2 kapasahera new delhi 110037 have changed my name to Shailly Shailesh Shukla.
0070692322-1
I, Ashok Kumar S/o Jeet Ram R/o Teh. Mukerian, Nangal Bihalan, Hoshiarpur, Punjab-144205, have changed my name to Ashokdeep Singh.
0070692373-1

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17 TALK

ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD

WEEK AHEAD



Art Expedition

FRENCH ARTIST Guyseika's solo exhibition "Thread through Asia" is the result of more than 20 years of exploration of Asian cultures. Taking cues from abstract expressionism, street art and punk rock, the artist reflects on different world views and questions existing realities in his works. On view till January 16, at Alliance Française de Delhi, Lodhi Estate.



Festive Feasting

WITH PONGAL around the corner, Zambar is offering a festive menu with diverse culinary offerings, including Kadamba Sambar, Kara Kozhambu, Vendakkai Mor Kuzhambu, Raw Banana Varuval and Semiya Sabudana Payasam. On January 15, 12.30 pm to 4.30 pm and 7 pm to 10.30 pm, at Ambience Mall, Gurugram. Cost per person: Rs 999 plus taxes.

Campus Theatrics

SATAN THEATRE Group is back with the fourth edition of its campus theatre festival at Akshara Theatre. It begins on January 13 with Keshav Mahavidyalaya's

production *Aur Batao, Kya Haal Hai?*, followed by Hindu College's *Rabi*, Miranda House's *File-2307*, IP College's *Sworno Shakha* and Hansraj College's *Thiru Nangai*, among others. The festival is on till January 30. Tickets on Bookmyshow.



Knitting Tales

An exhibition highlights the indigenous wool of Kutch and the pastoral lives of the wool-producing communities

PALLAVI CHATTOPADHYAY

STANDING TALL with his twirled moustache, a turban on his head, sporting baggy white trousers and a woolen shawl that protects him from the biting cold, Rana Bhai has travelled from the village of Ukheda in Gujarat to Delhi with a singular aim — to tell people about the Rabari community of nomadic pastoralists. At the Bikaner House, he is offering visitors lessons in spinning yarn out of a soft ball of sheep wool using a simple stone and a tiny wooden stick. Onlookers struggle to learn the skill, but Rana Bhai does not mind repeating the lesson. Comparing the country's native sheep wool to synthetic wool from the mills, the 55-year-old says, "Synthetic wool isn't as strong."

He has been invited to the Capital for the exhibition "Desi Oon", organised by Khamir, a platform formed after the 2001 Gujarat earthquake to preserve the crafts and heritage of Kutch. The exhibition delves into sheep pastoralism and the processes of producing indigenous wool. It acquaints visitors with the techniques of spinning, dyeing and weaving indigenous wool by bringing in weavers, spinners, dyers, designers and members from the herding community in Kutch to an urban setting. Having arrived with his range of shawls, stoles and bed covers made from native wool,

Vankar Shamji, one of the leading weavers of Kutch, believes it is important to hold such events to acquaint people with native sheep wool and the processes of generating it. He says, "The use of local sheep wool has dwindled and people have begun throwing it. It is compulsory to cut the hair of sheep every six months to save it from insects. If such events are held and people get to know the value of local sheep wool and the immense warmth it offers, only then this wool can be saved from being thrown away." Rana Bhai's biggest complaint is that giving land away to industries has resulted in no space for cattle to graze.

A weaver from Kandherai village, Babubhai Ladhubhai Padhiyar is displaying his signature Dhabda (traditional thick blankets), made from sheep wool. These are carried by herding men to cover themselves. Each takes at least 15 days to make and weighs four kg. Padhiyar tells us that these are also used by ethnic groups such as the Rabaris and Ahirs during marriages. "Before plastic became a norm, people also used these to cover themselves during rains, as water wouldn't seep through this blanket," he adds. Padhiyar is one of the few remaining weavers of Dhabda. He says, "Now there is little demand and there are very few Dhabda-weaving looms. My village only has two, compared to 22 looms that existed earlier." In Delhi, one of his Dhabdas, costing Rs 25,000, found a



The exhibition showcases the qualities of native Indian wool

buyer as soon as the show opened.

Vankar Murji Hamir is displaying an array of shawls, stoles and saris made from desi wool and natural dyes that chronicle the century-old relationship between the weavers and Maldhari, a tribe of herdsmen who utilise their textile products. He uses traditional motifs based on the surroundings of the Maldharis — trees, goats, sheep and village huts. Conscious about global warming, he says, "We continue to use natural dyes in place of chemical ones to help save the planet."

A 1970 Tangaliya textile — usually worn by women of the Bharwad shepherd community as a wraparound skirt — is also on display. With motifs of birds, trees and animals, Bharwad women usually wear it on the day of their mar-

riage and thereafter. There's also a woolen veil called Ludi, that covers the head of Rabari women and weavers.

Amit Vijaya and Richard Pandav, the designer duo behind Amrich, are exhibiting modern and contemporary pieces of clothing, including overcoats and jackets made from wool and kala cotton that is indigenous to India. With workshops on Desi Retiya (charkha), Takli (spindle) and Kutchi embroidery organised at the venue for better insights, Ghatit Laheru, director of Khamir, says, "We have tried to showcase the qualities of native wool. It is odour-resistant, biodegradable, stain-resistant and can even be used as a fertiliser."

The exhibition is on till January 13

SNAPSHOTS



Soul Songs

AMERICAN SINGER Selena Gomez, 27, released her new album — her third solo LP — *Rare* on Friday, through Interscope Records. Her last two albums were *Stars Dance* (2013) and *Revival* (2015). Gomez, who went through lupus trouble, kidney transplant and a string of relationship issues, said the album was "kind of a nightmare to deal with, but in the best way possible". *Rare*, a 13-track album, also includes her previously released singles *Lose you to love me* and *Look at her now*.



It's an Honour

GERMAN FILMMAKER Werner Herzog, best-known for movies such as *Aguirre*, *Wrath of God*, *Grizzly Man* and *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, will be felicitated with American Society of Cinematographers' (ASC) Board of Governors award on January 25 at Hollywood & Highland's Ray Dolby Ballroom. "Werner Herzog is truly a unique storyteller, and we are honored to recognise him for his prolific contributions to cinema," said ASC President Kees van Oostrum.



Then to Now

JOHN RIDLEY, screenwriter of *12 Years a Slave*, will write and direct a musical drama series that will have Grammy-winner Alicia Keys as its executive co-producer. The series traverses generations to tell an emotionally complex family story that interweaves modern-day and 1959 Detroit, centering on a mystery uncovered by a musician who moves back to her childhood home. The yet-to-be-titled series will have Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, the song-writing team behind *The Greatest Showman* and *La La Land*, contribute to the music.



Screen Change

SOUTH KOREAN director Bong Joon Ho's global hit *Parasite* will be converted into a limited series for HBO. The film had its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival last year, where it won the Palme d'Or, and was recently named the Best Foreign Language Film at the Golden Globes. It is expected to feature in the final list of nominations at the Oscars. The black comedy follows the Kim family, whose members infiltrate a wealthy household by posing as individuals unrelated to one another.

An Actor and Activist

More than three decades after Sudhanva Deshpande brought an injured Safdar Hashmi to a Delhi hospital, he writes a book on his comrade

DIPANITA NATH

THE GOONS came to the performance waving iron rods and oiled lathis. Their target, a theatre group presenting a street play in a workers' colony in Delhi, stood no chance. Two people died — a migrant worker from Nepal called Ram Bahadur and the charismatic performer and activist leader, Safdar Hashmi.

That New Year's Day, 1989, Sudhanva Deshpande was a first-year postgraduate student at Delhi University who was hanging out with Hashmi and the group, Jan Natya Manch (Janam), though he had no role in the play, *Halla Bol*. Deshpande managed to escape the attackers by running fast through winding lanes. When he saw Hashmi again, the latter was slumped on

the ground and covered in blood. Deshpande and a few others took Hashmi to a hospital.

"At that time, I took myself very seriously as an actor. I had an ambition that I would be known as one of the top theatre actors of India. I never thought that street theatre was good enough for me. I thought of myself as this exalted artiste," he says. Today, Deshpande, with a distinctive silver mop and a cycle he rides everywhere in Delhi, is one of the leading figures of street theatre as a senior member of Janam and a veteran of more than 4,000 shows of over 80 street plays.

In his first book, *Halla Bol*, released on January 1, the anniversary of the attack, Deshpande revisits Hashmi's death and places it in a wider context of politics, activism and street theatre. The book, pub-



Safdar Hashmi; (right) Sudhanva Deshpande

lished by LeftWord Books, is being translated in several Indian languages. In an interview, Deshpande talks about what he did



not write in it — the influence of Hashmi on his own transformation as an actor and activist.

How challenging was writing a book on a tragedy you were a part of?

Halla Bol is a book I have written in my head for many years. Initially, I wanted to write a conventional biography of Safdar, but it was not quite gelling in my head. Two years ago, I was struggling with the idea of personal voices. In the summer of 2019, the whole thing just came together in my head in one go. I realised that I would have to start with the attack and, once I realised that, the personal voice became easy. I decided to tell the attack as I had seen it, although there are elements of others' experiences as well. Once the architecture of the book made sense to me, writing did not take long.

How accurate are the minute details, such as what people said or wore, from an event that took place three decades ago?

It is quite extraordinary that I remember all of it. I even remember what happened in the months leading up to the attack — the process of creating *Halla Bol* and so on — which is part three of the book. Even in later years, there are some things I remember minutely, especially the making of plays — at what stage what decision we

took. I remember vivid details of most plays I have been involved in, either as a writer or an actor.

Did the attack change your attitude to theatre?

It took me a few years to realise what had happened. It wasn't as if the attack happened and the next day, I said, 'Chalo, I want to be a revolutionary'. What Safdar's killing did was that it woke me up and brought me back to earth. I started asking questions like, 'What's this country going to be? Why should we have been attacked in the first place?' This attack politicised me personally in a way that nothing else had until that point. Other things also heightened my political awareness. Avtar Singh Pash had been killed in 1988 and Shankar Guha Niyogi was killed in 1991. In 1989, right after Safdar was killed, there was the banning of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. The following year, LK Advani's Rath Yatra took place and Mandal Commission protests were spreading across the country. In 1992, Babri Masjid was demolished. There was a lot of ferment in the air. I became more concerned with the state of the country, our society, our culture and the growing cultural violence.

BRIEFLY

Warne, Ponting in bushfire fundraiser

Melbourne: Former Australian cricketing greats Ricky Ponting and Shane Warne will temporarily come out of retirement to play in a charity Twenty20 match next month as sports organisations and athletes seek ways to raise funds for bushfire relief. Since October, thousands of Australians have faced repeat evacuations as huge and unpredictable fires scorched more than 10.3 million hectares (25.5 million acres), an area roughly the size of South Korea. Current national coach Justin Langer will also play in the game on Feb. 8 along with former captain Michael Clarke and vice captain Adam Gilchrist. Cricket Australia (CA) said in a statement on Sunday, "I'm delighted to confirm the Bushfire Cricket Bash will be Cricket Australia's major fundraising initiative to support Australians impacted by the recent unprecedented bushfire emergency," CA Chief Executive Kevin Roberts said. The match will be played on the same day as a women's T20 between Australia and India in Melbourne and the men's domestic T20 Big Bash final. **REUTERS**

Stoinis slams highest individual score in BBL

Melbourne: Marcus Stoinis on Sunday scored the highest individual score in Big Bash League (BBL) history, a 79-ball 147 for Melbourne Stars. His sustained onslaught powered the Stars to a 44-run victory over Sydney Sixers at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Stoinis, who was released by Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore ahead of the auction for the 2020 season and was picked up by Delhi Capitals, smashed 13 fours and eight sixes during his blistering innings. He is not part of the Australia squad for the upcoming three-match ODI series in India. Stoinis broke the record held by D'Arcy Short, who made a 69-ball unbeaten 122 two years ago. Stoinis and Hilton Cartwright (59) propelled the Stars to 219 for one in the allotted 20 overs, sharing a 207-run partnership for the opening wicket. In reply, Sydney Sixers were stopped at 175 for seven. Stoinis and Hilton Cartwright (59) propelled the Stars to 219 for one in the allotted 20 overs, sharing a 207-run partnership for the opening wicket. In reply, Sydney Sixers scored 175 for seven. **AFP**

Buttler questions use of stump microphones

Port Elizabeth: England wicketkeeper Jos Buttler has apologised for his foul-mouthed verbal volley in the second test against South Africa, but questioned whether television viewers should have access to the audio from stump microphones. Buttler was fined 15 percent of match fee and handed one demerit point after swearing at South Africa all-rounder Vernon Philander. "I fully understand that as role models we have a duty to behave in a certain way. I would like to apologise and understand that is not the way to behave. I take the slap on the wrist," Buttler said on Sunday. "It was the heat of the moment and a bit of red mist. But it is all done and can now be swept under the carpet so we can move on." Asked whether he felt the audio from the stump mics should be available to the public, Buttler said most were against it. "In test cricket there is high emotion at times. There can be things said that don't mean anything, but for the viewers at home it can come across very poorly," he said. "It is a tough one, we understand that it adds to the viewer experience to have stump mics to hear a bit of what goes on. But I think the players like the thinking of what happens on the field, stays on the field, and isn't heard necessarily by everyone at home." **REUTERS**



HALFWAY DOWN THE TRACK

Rohit Sharma, Kuldeep Yadav, Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer walk the red carpet at the annual BCCI Awards. *BCCI*

- India spearhead Jasprit Bumrah won the Polly Umrigar award for best international cricketer as well as the Dilip Sardesai award for most Test wickets in the 2018-19 season
- Bumrah, who took 34 wickets in six Tests last year, became the first man from Asia to pick up five-wicket hauls in Australia, England, South Africa and the West Indies.
- Cheteshwar Pujara won the Dilip Sardesai award for most Test runs. Pujara scored 677 runs in 8 matches at an average of 52.07 with three centuries and two half centuries
- Poonam Yadav was adjudged the best women's cricketer. The leg-spinner, world's top ODI wicket-taker (39) for the last two years, also won an Arjuna award last year.

Star-studded dilemma

With both Dhawan and Rahul in good form, who opens with Rohit is a happy conundrum for the think tank

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

JANUARY 12

THE OTHER night in Pune, after blasting 52 off 36 balls, Shikhar Dhawan likened India's problem of plenty in the opening department to a movie. "Main bhi aa gaya hu picture mein, aj maine bhi achcha kar diya. Toh picture achchi ban rahi hai. Khair ye sirdardi meri nahi hai." (Now I've also entered the frame with my performance in this match but thankfully, that is not my headache). He then threw in a disclaimer: "I like batting with both of them and we are good friends." A happy headache is how India's batting Vikram Rathour addressed the dilemma on Sunday, having three quality openers to choose from - besides Dhawan, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul. "It's a good dilemma to have. Rohit is an obvious choice, of course. Both of them (Dhawan and Rahul) are playing well. Shikhar has done well in one-dayers and Rahul is in great form. So we'll deal with it when we have to. There are still a couple of days to go. The management will sit down and make the choice," he said at a press conference.

Dhawan and Rahul were terrific in the T20I series against Sri Lanka, as were Sharma and Rahul against the West Indies. So like in the pre-World Cup days, the three familiar faces — and admittedly good friends — are jostling for two spots. One is undroppable, the other two not quite, but have still done enough to stake their claims.

A reunion of Sharma and Dhawan looks the most straightforward possibility. After all, they're the fourth-most prolific opening pair in the history of the 50-over game (4,708 runs at 45.26) and arguably the most destructive pair around, each capable of piling on daddy hundreds at breakneck speed. If Sharma was the highest run-getter last year,



Australia fast bowler Kane Richardson, an IPL regular, is no stranger to Indian conditions. *Nirmal Harindran*

Dhawan had chimed in with precious knocks in an injury-ravaged year, such as the stroke-laden 117 against Australia in the World Cup and the whirlwind 143 against the same opposition at Mohali before that. And as recently as the Sri Lanka series, the left-hander demonstrated that he's far from a spent force. A week before that, he had scored a counter-punching 140 on a fast-bowler friendly surface at the Ferozeshah Kotla, and said he's in as "good a batting space as I have ever been."

With hopes of reclaiming Test stripes fading,

Dhawan would channelise all his attention to the limited-over versions. It wouldn't help Rahul's cause that he has struggled against quality seamers in the first 10 overs, and Australia have landed full-strength with Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc in tow. It's unlikely that Rahul would be exposed to them.

But the Sharma-Dhawan opening combination would imperil Rahul's spot. It's unlikely that he would be pushed to No 3, where walks in skipper Virat Kohli. He could definitely bat

A reunion of Sharma and Dhawan looks the most straightforward possibility. After all, they're the fourth-most prolific opening pair in the history of the 50-over game (4,708 runs at 45.26) and arguably the most destructive pair around

down the order, and has been open to that suggestion as well, but hasn't quite prospered at No 4 or lower, where his inability to rotate the strike has often stalled him. Moreover, India are quietly auditioning and building a middle order. Rathour admitted as much: "Middle order is not a weakness. A few innings back, we scored 383. We've been scoring runs, our batters have done well. Shreyas (Iyer) is batting really well. (Rishabh) Pant has played a couple of useful innings."

They have more or less zeroed in on Iyer as the future No 4, and to his credit, the Mumbai batsman has responded with solid performances. Against the West Indies, he scored two half-centuries distinct in rendition, demonstrating flexibility of approach the best No. 4s show. The 70 in Chennai on a slow surface and the side reeling was built on patience and vigilance, while the 53 in Vizag was enterprising and thrilling, smoothly shifting gears and smacking 31 runs in one over. Rahul too can modulate the tempo of his knocks, as he has shown several times in the IPL, but displacing Iyer from that spot will be harsh. Making him bat at No 5 will be under-utilising him. Making him bat anywhere other than the top-three is wasting his redoubtable potential.

India's strength in bowling and it wouldn't change much on the bouncy Australian tracks.

"We are looking for more spinners in our side and we have got that. Now the only thing is how we are going to use their strengths. They are very good and always give us breakthroughs. Our strength is spin and we have to stick to that and whenever we need them they will perform for us," Harmanpreet exuded confidence.

She is well aware that 2019 didn't start off well for them but they picked up the pieces by the end of the year.

"See, it is always about how you execute yourself. We did not execute on what we were expecting from ourselves (in the first half in 2019). But against South Africa and West Indies, we played to our potential and that is the reason we were able to get positive result," she said.

The presence of coach WV Raman and his tactical acumen has also helped the team.

Rohit, Shami back, Samson dropped from T20 squad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JANUARY 12

VICE-CAPTAIN ROHIT Sharma on Sunday returned to India's 16-member T20 squad for the tour of New Zealand as the selectors dropped Kerala batsman Sanju Samson. The five-man selection panel also brought back pacer Mohammed Shami, who like Rohit, was rested for the T20 series against Sri Lanka.

Wicket-keeper batsman Samson had played the third T20 against Sri Lanka in Pune, scoring six runs. There were no major surprises with most of the players picking themselves. The five-match T20 series against New Zealand will begin on January 24 in Auckland. The selection committee under outgoing chairman MSK Prasad kept the ODI and Test squads on hold for the time being. Interestingly, the Test and the ODI squads were not announced and it is believed that Hardik Pandya's latest fitness drama could be the reason. A BCCI release mentioned that Hardik Pandya's rehabilitation process is taking "longer than expected".

Vijay Shankar had replaced Pandya in the India A squad for New Zealand shadow tour.

"Hardik Pandya was boarding the flight to New Zealand for A team without playing a Ranji match. If we go by media reports, his trainer has said that there are workload issues with regards to his bowling. That itself implies that he is not fit. I think the BCCI will instruct Hardik to first play Ranji Trophy for Baroda and prove his fitness," another senior board source said.

T20 SQUAD: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, Lokesh Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant (wicketkeeper), Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Navdeep Saini, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur

The idea of deploying Rahul as a wicket-keeper-batsman too was floated, only for Rathour to laugh it off: "We haven't really started thinking on those lines yet. Rahul can keep, that's the skill that he has. So that will depend if the team management feels at any stage we require that," he said. After all, India aren't treading through calamitous times to play him as a wicketkeeper-batsman.

Furthermore, Pant has shouldered more responsibilities in recent times. "He's working hard on his fitness. He's played some useful innings lately. So, lot of work. He's practising hard, so hoping he comes good, becomes more consistent," he said.

So to continue the Dhawan's movie refrain, he has not only entered the fray but knocked Rahul out of it. Like a main actor would a stunt double.

Richardson wants to tame batsmen and pitches

Australia fast bowler Kane Richardson, an IPL regular, is no stranger to Indian conditions. "India in India is always the biggest challenge and after what happened last year they will be ready for it. Confidence is up but the home team is always favourite. We are the under dogs," he said. He termed it as the biggest challenge in white-ball cricket "It's the biggest challenge in white-ball cricket, coming over here and playing against India on the surfaces over here. It's a lot different than Australia. The ground sizes are a lot smaller than Australia, (and) mis-hits can often go for six."

"It's something we have spoken a lot about. I think everyone in the team has played here before, so it's nothing new. Starting today, we will figure out a plan to stop some of those guys. It will be a high-scoring contest I'm sure," and added the right-arm medium-pacer.

"He is a very experienced cricketer and now he is coaching us. He is someone who always helps us on how to calm ourselves in pressure situations and help each other and he is doing a good job for us and we are happy to have him in the side. His experience will help in the World Cup," she said.

WORLD T20 SQUAD: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodriguez, Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Veda Krishnamurthy, Richa Ghosh, Tania Bhatia, Poonam Yadav, Radha Yadav, Rajeshwari Gaikwad, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy.

TRI-SERIES (16 MEMBER) SQUAD: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodriguez, Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Veda Krishnamurthy, Richa Ghosh, Tania Bhatia, Poonam Yadav, Radha Yadav, Rajeshwari Gaikwad, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Nuzhat Parveen

T20 WORLD CUP

Captain Harmanpreet counting on spinners, BBL experience in Australia



Harmanpreet will lead the 15-member India squad for the T20 World Cup in Australia, starting February 21.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI, JANUARY 12

BENGAL'S ROOKIE batswoman Richa Ghosh was the only new face in a 15-member Harmanpreet Kaur-led India squad for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in Australia, starting February 21. The team, announced on Sunday, has no other surprises.

The 15-year-old Haryana schoolgirl Shafali Verma will be playing her first global meet following some good performances at the international level in her first season.

Richa, 16, has been rewarded for her exploits in the recent women's Challenger Trophy, scoring 36 off 26 balls in one of the games with four boundaries and a six.

"See, in the past one year, we have taken five to six debutants. Earlier, the same team used to play but after the 2017 ODI World Cup, a lot of new prospects have emerged. We feel we have nurtured five or six new

players, who are playing now," chairman of women's selection committee Hemlatha Kala told reporters at the press conference "Richa Ghosh is a new player and here the role of selectors increases."

Source close to the women's team told PTI that Richa has been picked since she can lend solidity to India's middle order.

"Richa was the most impressive player during Challenger trophy. People questioned us when we picked 15 year old Shafali and she repaid the faith and I am pretty certain Richa will be on the same path," the source said.

"While shafali is the X factor at the top, Richa will provide the much needed firepower in the middle order. We had to give her the chance now. Anyway in women's cricket there are not many players to choose from in comparison to the vast talent in men's cricket."

The selectors also announced a 16-member squad for a tri-series in Australia prior to the T20 World Cup, with Nuzhat Parveen be-

ing added as the 16th member. That tournament starts on January 31 and also features England. Skipper Harmanpreet feels that playing the tri-series before the big event will be advantageous for the team.

"Before the World Cup, this series is going to be a big one for us and we will look for our best combination and with that we will give chances to newcomer also.

"As (Hemlata) ma'am mentioned, we have Richa, who did well in the Challenger Trophy and domestic cricket, so we will stick to our best XI. Before the World Cup, we will be able to decide our best XI," Harmanpreet said.

The skipper has had the experience of playing in the Women's Big Bash League and that will help her plan better.

"I think that experience will definitely help and we know how the wickets are over there and that definitely give us extra boost (over) there," said the skipper, who has played for Sydney Thunders in WBBL.

She also agreed that spinners have been

Madan Lal, Gambhir set to be named as CAC members

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

THE BCCI is all set to appoint World Cup winning former India players Madan Lal and Gautam Gambhir as members of the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) which will pick selection committees for the next four-year cycle starting 2020.

The third member of the panel is likely to be Mumbai-based woman international Sulakshana Naik, who has played two Tests and 46 ODIs for the country.

"Madan Lal and Gautam Gambhir are all set to be the CAC members," a senior BCCI official told PTI.

Hero of 1983 World Cup-winning India team, Lal, by virtue of being the senior-most member will head the committee while 2011 World Cup hero Gambhir will assist him along with the third member.

"I don't know if it's fair on my part to make a formal comment or not as BCCI has not announced," said Madan Lal when his comments were sought on the development.

The CAC needs to find replacements for the outgoing chairman MSK Prasad and Gagan Khoda.

Lal played 39 Tests and 67 ODIs between 1974 and 1987 with three wickets in the 83 World Cup final being the highlight of his career.

Asked about the Conflict of Interest clause since he has a contract with a TV channel as cricket expert, the former India all-rounder said, "Let me first get my appointment letter and obviously there will be terms of reference and guidelines."

A source close to the cricketer confirmed that he was approached by the BCCI for the role and he has accepted the offer.

"Yes, they did ask Madan for his consent and he had told them it will be an honour to be on CAC. It doesn't matter if it's one meeting or half a meeting," said the source.

In all likelihood, the committee will meet just once as only two changes are required in the senior selection panel.

The committee has to find replacements for outgoing chairman MSK Prasad (South) and Gagan Khoda (Central), Sarandeep Singh (North), Devang Gandhi (East) and Jatin Paranjpe (West) still have a year left in their respective four-year terms.

Railways platform for Delhi boys

Sangwan, Mor & Tyagi, who represented capital at U-19 level, are showcasing their talent after switching sides

VISHAL MENON
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

HARSH TYAGI, Dinesh Mor and Himanshu Sangwan have a few things in common. All of them represented Delhi at the U-19 level with a fair degree of success, but failed to break into the Ranji Trophy squad. However, instead of getting bogged down, they realised their dream of playing first-class cricket by moving to the Railways and getting through the sports quota. During the off-season, one can spot these three talented cricketers working as ticket examiners.

Tyagi and Sangwan are posted at the New Delhi station, while Mor operates at Delhi Cantonment. These ticket examiners have given the Railways team plenty to celebrate this Ranji season so far. With their vital contributions with bat and ball, the trio has bailed their team out of trouble on several occasions.

A similar narrative has played out at the Karnail Singh Stadium against Madhya Pradesh. On Day 1, Sangwan's six wickets broke the back of the visitors, dismissing them for a paltry 124. In reply, Railways were under some pressure at 105/4, with a fiery Avesh Khan threatening to topple them over. However, a common-sense approach from Mor and Tyagi helped them forge a 73-run sixth-wicket alliance that not only neutralised the threat posed by Khan, but also helped Railways post 244 and garner a 120-run first-innings lead.

Neither player reached a half-century. Mor departed for 45, while Tyagi looked composed before being trapped by pacer Kuldeep Sen moments after the tea interval for 36. In an otherwise dour day's cricket, it was their resourceful batsmanship that stood out. At stumps on the second day, Madhya Pradesh were precariously placed at 47/2, still 73 runs adrift.

Growing up, Daniel Vettori was one of Tyagi's idols. He had two sensational seasons for Delhi in the Cooch Behar Trophy — 2016 and 2017 — when he took 94 wickets from 14 matches. During a match against Jharkhand in 2017, Tyagi finished with scarcely-believable figures of 7/7. At that stage, he looked poised to make the big leap into Delhi's Ranji Trophy squad. But the competition was intense, and Delhi already had a host of left-arm spinners such as Manan Sharma and Vikas Mishra in their ranks. The youngster took the opening that Railways provided. Two years later, Tyagi is not complaining. He is playing first-class cricket and also has a stable job.

In the interim, he did miss out on India's 2018 U-19 World Cup squad that triumphed in New Zealand under Prithvi Shaw. But whenever an opportunity with the Indian junior team came along, Tyagi did not disappoint. His 14 scalps from four games proved to be instrumental in the



Pacer Himanshu Sangwan (right) has been a revelation for Railways this season.



Harsh Tyagi.

Harsh Tyagi and Himanshu Sangwan are posted at the New Delhi station, while Dinesh Mor operates at Delhi Cantonment.

colts' winning the Youth Asia Cup in Bangladesh in October 2018.

It was this consistency in performances that helped him make his first-class debut for Railways last season. But things have not been so easy for the 19-year-old in 2019-20. The ample grass cover on pitches and the presence of three in-form pacers meant Tyagi would be relegated to ferrying drinks in the first four matches. But when he finally got an opportunity at home, he came to the fore with the bat. Tyagi displayed astute game sense, showcased a rock solid defence, and also unfurled two effortless sixes.

Mor has quickly earned the tag of his

team's crisis manager. He had a stunning initiation into first-class cricket, slamming scores of an unbeaten 91 and 102 on debut against Uttar Pradesh in Meerut. The wicketkeeper-batsman has struggled since then, accruing scores of 0, 2, 9, 26 and 7* in the next three matches. But when the chips were down on Sunday, Mor displayed maturity and application.

The word 'transition' is often used with regard to the Railways team. A few seniors have been shown the door and there has been a complete overhaul of personnel. A new coaching staff and a bevy of relatively fresh and unknown faces, most of them rejects from their respective state associations, have made their mark. The journeys of Sangwan, Tyagi and More are suitable examples. Maybe, Delhi's loss is Railways gain.

BRIEF SCORES: Madhya Pradesh 124 (Himanshu Sangwan 6/33) and 47/2 (Pradeep Poojar 1/6) trail Railways 244 (Dinesh Mor 45, Harsh Tyagi 36; Avesh Khan 2/28) by 73 runs.

Sarwate and Wakhare, spinning arms in Vidarbha's success



Aditya Sarwate took six wickets in the second innings. PTI

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
JANUARY 12

AFTER ACHIEVING his second 10-wicket match haul in first-class cricket, Aditya Sarwate said, "I don't need another hero". He dedicated the feat to his mother, Anusree. Sarwate's father, Anand, became wheelchair-bound after meeting with an accident 27 years ago.

"My mother faced a lot of hardships. She was working in a bank when my father's accident happened. She had to look after my father and she raised me also. Her struggle reflects in my game. I take the field every game thinking it's my last. That keeps me going," Sarwate told *The Indian Express*.

Sarwate was the wrecker-in-chief, as defending champions Vidarbha rolled over Bengal inside two days in their Ranji Trophy match at Nagpur. After taking 4/53 in the first innings, Sarwate returned with

6/47 in the second, with the visitors collapsing to 99 all out.

At the Vidarbha dressing-room, coach Chandrakant Pandit was still not happy. "I thought he should have got eight wickets on this track. I, and also Wasim Jaffer, keep telling them — Sarwate and his spin-bowling partner Akshay Wakhare — that on a turning track, a five-wicket haul is not a very good performance. If you are getting five wickets, you try and take seven wickets. You compete with yourself," Pandit told *The Indian Express*, quietly slipping the information that he does it two keep the two spinners motivated.

Motivation can become an issue when performances in domestic cricket are not rewarded. Sarwate and Wakhare accounted for 17 wickets in the match — the latter had a five-for in the first innings. They have been doing this season after season.

Last term, as Vidarbha had retained the title, Sarwate returned with an 11-wicket

match haul in the final against Cheteshwar Pujara's Saurashtra. He had finished the season with 55 scalps, while Wakhare had 34. The season before that, when Vidarbha won their maiden Ranji title, the left-arm spinner had 29 wickets from just six matches. Wakhare, the offie, had accounted for 34 wickets from eight matches. The India A team's series against Sri Lanka last year remains Sarwate's tenuous link to international cricket. Wakhare, surprisingly, has never been considered even for India A.

"To be honest, on this point I have no idea (about) what's going around. Definitely it hurts. After performing that much, if you aren't getting (picked) for India A also — I haven't played a single match for India A — it definitely hurts. But I can't do anything for that," Wakhare told this paper.

At 34 years of age, international cricket now is probably beyond the off-spinner, but Sarwate is still not old for a spinner.

"Yes, it hurts. I was expecting at least two-three matches against the Sri Lanka. One match is not sufficient. I have to perform in the Ranji Trophy so that I can get another opportunity," said Sarwate.

Pandit has an advice for both.

"Keep knocking the door. Knock it so hard that the selectors open it for you." He rubbished the perception that Sarwate and Wakhare thrive on turning pitches and they need improvement, when the surface is placid.

Wakhare's got emotional to that query. "I have been playing for 15 years. You can take out my records."

BRIEF SCORES (IN NAGPUR): Bengal 170 all out and 99 all out in 26.1 overs (Anustup Majumdar 29; Aditya Sarwate 6 for 47, Akshay Wakhare 2-23) lost to Vidarbha 212 in 74 overs (Faiz Fazal 51, Akshay Vadkar 49; Arnan Nandi 3/51) & 61/1 in 13.5 overs by nine wickets.

Points: Vidarbha 6, Bengal 0

[SPORTS BAR]



Ibrahimovic scores in Milan win but Inter held

Veteran Swedish star Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored on his first AC Milan start since his return to the club in a 2-0 win over Cagliari but city rivals Inter's position on top of Serie A is at risk after a 1-1 draw against Atalanta. Lautaro Martinez put Inter ahead after four minutes in the San Siro only for Robin Gosens to pull Atalanta level on 76 minutes. Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic saved a Luis Muriel penalty two minutes from time to hold onto a point. Inter are just one point clear of champions Juventus who have a game in hand and play Roma in the Stadio Olimpico next. Lazio consolidated third position, four points behind Inter, with the league's top scorer Ciro Immobile grabbing the only goal against Napoli to stretch his side's winning streak to 10 games.

Anand starts with a draw at Wijk Aan Zee

Five-time World Champion Viswanathan Anand was held to a draw by Russian Grandmaster Vladislav Artemiev in the first round of Tata Steel Masters at Wijk Aan Zee in the The Netherlands on Sunday. Anand, playing the major event for the 18th time, faced the Caro Kann defence by Artemiev. Going for the ultra-sharp Advance, Anand made his intentions clear but Artemiev was up to the task. On Move 31, the draw was agreed. Reigning World Champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway played Anish Giri of Holland and the result was a draw. Carlsen has never beaten Giri in Wijk Aan Zee in eight meetings now.

India end 2019 as No. 1 in the world in shooting

On the back of its sparkling show through 2019, India finished the year as the top shooting nation in the world, leapfrogging Olympic heavyweights China and the USA in the ISSF's overall rankings for the year. In terms of overall medals, the tally stood at 21 gold, six silver and three bronze as India topped all the Rifle-Pistol World Cups and Finals in a unforgettable year. While India leads the standings with 30 medals overall, China is second with 11 gold, 15 silver and 18 bronze for a total of 44 podium finishes. The United States is placed third with 15 medals (six gold six silver and three bronze).



Portland Trail Blazers' Carmelo Anthony (left) and Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo in action in an NBA game at Portland on Saturday. AP

Milwaukee Bucks too strong for Trail Blazers

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points and 17 rebounds, Khris Middleton scored 30 points and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Portland Trail Blazers 122-101 on Saturday. Eric Bledsoe added 29 points for the Bucks, who made 14 3-pointers led by Middleton's 4-for-4 performance. Antetokounmpo had 13 points and seven rebounds in the first quarter alone and Milwaukee went on to its third straight win. The Bucks led 32-24 after the first quarter as Damian Lillard did his best to keep Portland within range, scoring 12 points in the first quarter. Lillard finished with 26 points while CJ McCollum scored 20 and Carmelo Anthony had 19 points and 11 rebounds, but Portland lost for the eighth time in 10 games. The Blazers shot just 10 for 36 from the 3-point line. The Bucks pushed their lead to as high as 17 multiple times in the third quarter and held a 97-80 lead after the period thanks to a tip-in by Pat Connaughton before the buzzer. A three-point play by Bledsoe pushed the Bucks lead to 116-94, their biggest of the game.

Indian GM Karthik in joint lead at Delhi chess

Indian Grandmaster Karthik Venkatraman continued his winning ways as he defeated Hose Martinez Eduardo of Peru to share the lead with Aleksey Aleksandrov of Belarus at the end of the fifth round in the Delhi International Open chess tournament on Sunday. Venkataraman, who is having the run of his life, registered an emphatic win with black pieces against the Peruvian player. He was tested by Eduardo but the Indian managed to come up trumps in 55 moves. Aleksandrov defeated seasoned Bangladeshi Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman in a tense battle. CRG Krishna is joint second with three others on 4.5 points.

Rashid sixth as Ormsby wins Hong Kong Open

Rashid Khan was the best-placed Indian with a tied sixth-place finish while three of his compatriots slipped on the back nine at the Hong Kong Open on Sunday. Australia's Wade Ormsby cruised to victory with a four-under-par 66 in the final round at the Hong Kong Golf Club. Ormsby totalled 17-under 263 for a wire-to-wire victory while Rashid (70) was nine-under 271. SSP Chawrasia, who seemed to be in with a chance at one point in the tournament, made two bogeys and a double bogey in last 10 holes to finish T-22, while Shiv Kapur (71) also had three bogeys in last eight holes and finished T-18 at six-under.

ROUND-UP

Pujara smacks 13th first-class double

Rajkot: Karnataka might be the most decorated domestic side of the last decade, having completed the treble twice, but it's often against them that Cheteshwar Pujara is at his best. With his 248, his 50th three-figure score in first-class cricket, Pujara has now amassed 1,193 runs, including his highest score of 352, in only 14 innings against Karnataka, at a Bradmanesque average of 96. The double hundred wouldn't have been timelier as he had gone without a hundred since the epic series in Australia a year ago. Pujara was ably supported by Sheldon Jackson, who helped himself to 161, as Saurashtra declared their first innings at 581/7 declared.

BRIEF SCORES: Saurashtra 581/7 declared in 166 overs vs Karnataka 131/1 in 8 overs

Tare's 154 rescues Mumbai at Chepauk

Chennai: With the skipper and man-in-form Suryakumar Yadav away on India A duty, there wouldn't have been a better time for stand-in captain Aditya Tare to strike form. All Tare had managed in his previous six outings were 55 runs, but with his side reeling at 5/129, the wicketkeeper-batsman summoned his resolve to score 154 and shepherded the lower order to help Mumbai put on 488 on the board. After stitching a 155-run stand with Shams Mulani, Tare added 153 runs with No. 9 Shashank Attarde. Tare's knock was a masterclass in calculated aggression, as he targeted specific phases of the game to attack the bowlers. In reply, Tamil Nadu openers put on 66 without any damage.

BRIEF SCORES: Mumbai 488 (Aditya Tare 154, Shams Mulani 87, Shashank Attarde 58; R Sai Kishore 4/124) vs Tamil Nadu 66 without loss (Abhinav Mukund 52 batting)

Nidheesh takes 7, but Punjab fight back

Thiruvananthapuram: Medium-pacer MD Nidheesh produced his career-best of 7/88, as Kerala eked out a narrow nine-run lead over table-toppers Punjab. Nidheesh, a disciplined rather than a tearaway bowler, maximised the little assistance the pitch offered and nipped out the top three cheaply, before returning to nail Gurkeerat Singh Mann and Anmolpreet Singh in the space of four deliveries. Though he had made his debut in 2015, after impressing at the now-defunct IPL franchise Kerala Tuskers nets, Nidheesh had featured in only 18 first-class games, despite consistent performances. Even in this match, he played only because of Sandeep Warrier getting picked for the India A tour to New Zealand. However, Punjab fought back, reducing Kerala to 88/5 in the second innings

BRIEF SCORES: Kerala 227 & 88/5 in 29 overs lead Punjab 218 in 65.4 overs (Mandeep Singh 71; MD Nidheesh 88/7) by 97 runs.

UP in Saif hands at Green Park

Kanpur: Mohammad Saif, the 23-year-old left-handed batsman, enhanced the reputation as Uttar Pradesh's mainstay with his second hundred in four games. Riding his 123 and wicketkeeper Upendra Yadav's 100, Uttar Pradesh posted 431 against Baroda.

BRIEF SCORES: Uttar Pradesh 431 in 124.2 overs (Mohammad Saif 123, Upendra Yadav 100) vs Baroda 82/1 in 25 overs (Aditya Waghmode 34 not out, Vishnu Solanki 34 not out)



Steele's big finish puts him 3 ahead in Hawaii

Brendan Steele went from lagging behind to seizing control on Saturday in the Sony Open when he birdied his last three holes for a 6-under 64 to take a three-shot lead into the final round. Steele had a share of the lead to start the day, with 23 players separated by four shots. Now he's at 12-under 198, and only Cameron Smith (66) is within three of the lead. Steele will be going for his fourth PGA Tour victory, and first since repeating at the Safeway Open in the fall of 2017. Steel, Kevin Kisner and Mark Anderson each shot 64. Kisner was tied for the lead when he finished his round. Steele went from a share of the lead to two shots behind when he went long of the green on the third and fourth holes, both times making bogey. He was still trailing when his round turned on the par-5 ninth with a second shot into 8 feet for eagle. He added two birdies early on the front nine, and then had his big finish.



Djokovic wins his ninth consecutive hard-court clash against Nadal with a straight-set win in ATP Cup; Serbia win title

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SYDNEY, JANUARY 12

Cars leader Carlos Sainz won his third stage and extended his lead to 10 minutes over second-placed defending champion Nasser Al-Attiyah. The rally ends on Friday.

Djokovic has won nine straight against Nadal on hardcourts, and 19 consecutive sets, since losing the 2013 U.S. Open final. Nadal withdrew from the doubles, citing fatigue, saying he had confidence in his teammate Lopez, a four-time Davis Cup champion. "I have been playing a lot of tennis the last couple of days. My level of energy is a little bit lower than usual," Nadal said. "So is a team decision, and we believe in our team. That's why we had success in the past."

Novak Djokovic has not lost to Rafael Nadal on hard courts since 2013 US Open final. On Sunday, the Serb won 6-2, 7-6 (4). *Reuters*

After playing six singles matches and two doubles matches in 10 days — on both the west and east coasts of Australia — less than two months after guiding Spain to the Davis Cup title in Madrid, Nadal urged the International Tennis Federation and the ATP to negotiate to form one world team championship.

Sania to partner Bopanna

Hobart: Sania Mirza will pair with Rohan Bopanna at the Australian Open as Rajeev Rani, with whom she had originally planned to play, the first Grand Slam of the season, pulled out. The duo last played in the 2016 Olympics. Meanwhile, Sania and Nadiia Kichenok have been drawn to meet Oksana Kalashnikova of Georgia and Miyu Kato of Japan in their opening round at the Hobart International, the first tournament Sania will compete in her comeback bid. They may run into Spanish fourth seeds Georgina Garcia Perez and Sara Sorribes Tormo in the quarterfinals.

On the final day, certain members in the crowd carried 'air horns' and blew it after each winning point – much to the annoyance of all others in the stands. Messages trickled in on social media regarding the noisy Serbian fans, but one decided to post a message hoping an air horn user might just read it. "If the stupid f----- t--- who keeps blowing the horn anytime Djokovic wins a point tonight is reading this tweet, please stop blowing that stupid f----- air horn every time Djokovic wins a point." Apparently, that person didn't see the message. ("B)een hearing this air horn for five hours straight."

The last time Nadal won a set against Djokovic on hard court came during a four set win at the US Open final in 2013. Since then, the pair have met on hard courts (indoor and outdoor) nine times, and Djokovic has won each of the 19 sets they have played. During that time, they've played each other eight times on clay, with both players winning four matches each, and Djokovic winning the only grass court match – the 2018 Wimbledon semi-final – the pair have met in. Djokovic has won seven titles at the year's first major – more than any other male singles player in all time (his seventh title actually came with a win over Nadal in the final last year).

But once she found her range there was never any doubt about the final result, which Williams greeted by raising her arms in triumph while her husband Alexis Ohanian and two-year-old daughter Olympia looked on. "It's been a long time, I think you could see the relief on my face," she said, adding she could feel her game sharpening up. Pegula had stunned former world number one Caroline Wozniacki — a close friend of Williams' — in a three-set semi-final, winning every game in the deciding set. The 25-year-old continued in the same fearless vein at the start of the final, seemingly untroubled by her heavily bandaged left thigh as she chased down everything Williams delivered and even broke Williams' first serve.

Roberto Firmino, who scored Liverpool's winner in the 37th minute, celebrates after full time as Tottenham's Son Heung-Min sits dejected. *Reuters*

At the current rate, they could win the title – the club's first since 1990 – before the end of March.

Barca were beaten 3-2 by Atletico Madrid on Thursday in the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia.

"I respect Barcelona, I respect Valverde and I respect my club and I'm doing my job here," Xavi said on Saturday. But he added: "I cannot hide that it's my dream to coach Barcelona. I said it many times."

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