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Queen grants Harry and Meghan's wish for an independent future

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Kohli's India takes on Finch's Australia in ODI series from today

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NEARBY



Congress goes past forward in Delhi

NEW DELHI

The Congress' three-pronged Assembly election campaign entails reminding voters of the work done during its 15-year run under Sheila Dikshit, a clear stand on CAA-NRC-NPR, and targeting AAP and BJP over their 'lies' on regularisation of unauthorised colonies.

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Anti-CAA stir in Gaya in its third week

GAYA

As the ongoing protest at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens grabs national media attention, a similar dharna at Shanti Bagh in Gaya district of Bihar entered its 16th day on Monday.

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JNU teachers, students boycott classes

NEW DELHI

The academic blocks of JNU wore a deserted look on Monday, the first day of the winter semester, as students and teachers boycotted classes. They said normalcy would return only after Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar was made to resign or was sacked.

CITY ► PAGE 4

## SC not to review Sabarimala case, to examine 'larger issues'

Nine-judge Bench to decide constitutional questions raised by religious practices

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

A nine-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde on Monday said its objective was not to review the Sabarimala women entry case but examine "larger issues" of law arising from practices such as the prohibition of women from entering mosques and temples, female genital mutilation among Dawoodi Bohras and the ban on Parsi women who married inter-faith from entering the fire temple.

The Bench, however, clarified that it would not go into the legality of issues such as the practice of polygamy and 'nikah-halala' in Islam.

Chief Justice Bobde explained that the basis of the Bench's judicial enquiry would be seven questions referred to a larger Bench by a five-judge Bench on November 14, 2019. He said the nine-judge Bench was only examining propositions of law raised about religious practices believed to be essential to various religions. The Bench would not go into the individual facts of the various petitions before it.

"We will decide questions of law on women's entry to mosques/temples, genital mutilation by Dawoodi Bohras, entry of Parsi women

### Points to ponder

Seven issues were framed by the five-judge Review Bench for the larger Bench. They form the crux but may be re-framed for future hearing before the nine-judge Bench. The 'broad' issues are:



Not restricting itself to the Sabarimala case, the Bench will examine larger issues of law.

■ What should be the interplay between freedom of religion under Articles 25 and 26 and the right to equality under Article 14?

■ Right to practice religion is subject to 'public order, morality and health' under Article 25(1). What do these terms actually mean?

■ Is constitutional morality the over-arching morality in reference to the Preamble or limited to religious beliefs or faith?

■ Should and, if so, how far can a court enquire into whether a

religious practice is essential to a particular faith?

■ What is the meaning of the expression 'sections of Hindus' appearing in Article 25(2)(b) of the Constitution?

■ Whether 'essential religious practices' deserve constitutional protection under Article 26?

■ What is the extent to which courts should entertain PILs questioning religious practices filed by a third person who is not a member of that faith?

who marry outside their community into fire temple. We will not decide individual facts of each case," Chief Justice Bobde told lawyers in the courtroom.

On November 14, the five-judge Bench led by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, instead of deciding the Sabarimala review entrusted to it, sought an "authoritative pronouncement" on the Court's power to decide the essentiality of religious practices. Framing seven questions, the Bench referred them to a seven-judge Bench. These referral questions included whether "essential religious practices" be afforded con-

stitutional protection under Article 26 (freedom to manage religious affairs).

Chief Justice Bobde, who succeeded Justice Gogoi, formed a Bench of nine, rather than seven judges, to examine these questions which concern multiple faiths.

On Monday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said the questions were too broad and needed fine-tuning.

#### Directive to lawyers

The CJI asked the lawyers involved in the case to hold a conference on January 17 to reframe/add issues to be examined by the nine-judge

Bench. The court posted the case for hearing after three weeks.

When lawyers sought to remind the court that the case challenging the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was scheduled for January 22 and the hearing before the nine-judge Bench ought to be heard without a break, the CJI said cases were being heard "chronologically".

But senior lawyers, like Indira Jaising and Rajeev Dhavan, said the Court cannot decide on the essentiality of religious practices. It was outside its jurisdiction.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

## Retail inflation at 5-year high of 7.3% in December

Food inflation up to 14.12%; shortage of onions drives spike

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Retail inflation soared to a five-and-a-half year high of 7.35% in December 2019, with the shortage of onions driving the surge.

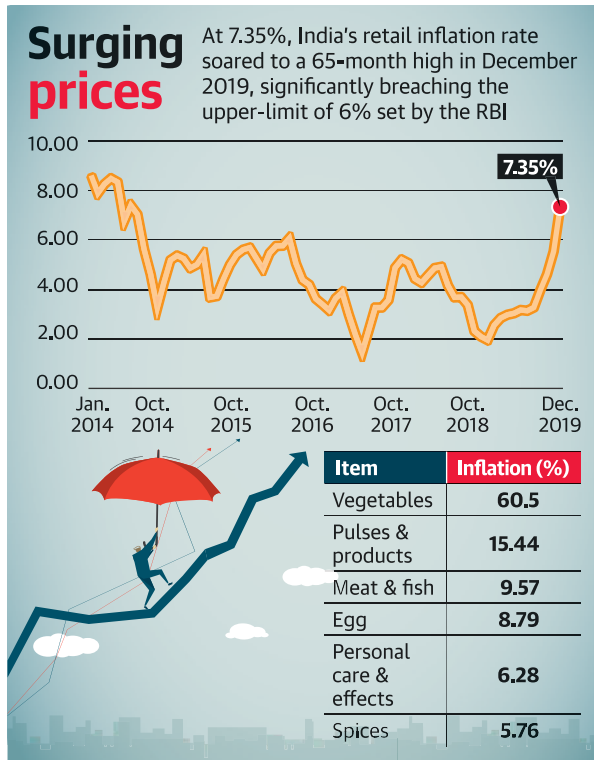
According to information released by the National Statistical Office on Monday, retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index was only 2.11% in December 2018 and 5.54% in November 2019.

The last time retail inflation touched 7.39% was in July 2014, just after Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his first term in office.

The hike in inflation in the vegetables category was at 60.5% last month in comparison to December 2018. Onion prices were above the ₹100 per kg mark in many major cities due to a 26% fall in production.

Overall, food inflation rose to 14.12% in December as against a negative rate of -2.65% in the same month of the previous year. It was also significantly higher than the 10.01% recorded in November 2019.

Along with vegetables, high prices of pulses, meat and fish also contributed to last month's spike. The inflation in pulses and products was recorded at 15.44%,



while for meat and fish it was nearly 10%.

The Centre has mandated the Reserve Bank of India to keep inflation in the range of 2-6%. The RBI is scheduled to announce its next bi-monthly monetary policy on February 6.

In its December policy, the central bank had kept the repo rate unchanged, cit-

ing inflationary concerns.

Independent credit rating agency ICRA's principal economist Aditi Nayar said the revision in rail fares, rise in prices of some categories of automobiles and an unfavourable base effect may contribute to a further increase in core inflation to around 4% this month.

(With inputs from PTI)

### Feeling special!



**Rewarding excellence:** Cricketer Smriti Mandhana, left, receives the Sportsman of the Year award from actor Sharmila Tagore during the Sportstar Aces Awards in Mumbai as Mel Jones, Cricket Australia Director, looks on. ■ R. RAGU (REPORT ON PAGE 18)

## HC rules Musharraf trial illegal

MEHMAL SARFRAZ

LAHORE

In huge relief for Pakistan's self-exiled former dictator, the Lahore High Court on Monday declared Pervez Musharraf's trial in the high treason case as "unconstitutional".

A special court had given death sentence to the ex-Army chief on December 17 for holding the Constitution in abeyance.

Lawyer Usama Malik said the High Court pointed out that Cabinet approval wasn't given for the formation of the special court and it was only constituted by the Prime Minister's Office and the Interior Ministry, which is illegal.

(With inputs from PTI)

## Hizb ultras led police to rogue officer

Top commanders were tracked from Shopian to DSP's house

VIJAJTA SINGH  
PEERZADA ASHIQ

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

The police had been on the trail of Jammu and Kashmir DSP Davinder Singh for at least two days before his arrest on Saturday, a senior government official said on Monday.

Singh was arrested while travelling in a vehicle with two wanted Hizb-ul Mujahideen militants and a lawyer.

Preliminary questioning of the DSP has suggested that he had been sheltering militants in lieu of money and wanted top Hizb-ul Mujahideen commander Syed Naveed Mush-taq alias Babu and his accomplices did stay in his house located next to the 15 Corps headquarters in Srinagar's high security Badamibagh area on Friday.

Officers of the country's



Buildings damaged during a fidayeen attack in Pulwama in August 2017. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

top intelligence gathering agencies – the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) – also questioned Singh in Kashmir.

Official sources said the agencies were looking into his connections within Kashmir and outside, especially across the border in Pakistan.

"So far, the investigations could not establish his links with any other police officer

or colleague within the Police Department or him being in touch directly with people in Pakistan or Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). However, investigations are still on and the operation is being widened," an official said.

The police officer came under the security agencies' radar after two top Hizb-ul Mujahideen militants, including cop-turned-militant commander Babu and Rafi Ahmad and lawyer Irfan Shafi left south Kashmir on Friday and headed towards Srinagar. They also made several phone calls on the way.

According to police sources, the officer arranged for the trio to move from Shopian to Srinagar. The three militants headed straight for Singh's Srinagar house.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

## Oppn. appeals to non-BJP CMs to suspend NPR enumeration

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

Leaders of Opposition parties on Monday demanded the immediate withdrawal of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and appealed to non-BJP Chief Ministers, who had earlier announced not to carry out a proposed nation-wide National Register of Citizens (NRC), to suspend the exercise of enumeration of the National Population Register (NPR) as it is "a prelude to a nation-wide NRC."

A joint resolution was adopted after a meeting – convened by Congress president Sonia Gandhi and attended by leaders of 20 Opposition parties – discussed the current political situation arising out of the widespread protests against the amended citizenship law and the violence on campuses.

#### 'Centre exposed'

Ms. Gandhi asserted that the "Modi-Shah government stands exposed for its inability to govern and provide security to the people."

However, cracks in the Opposition unity were visible as the Trinamool Congress, the Samajwadi Party (SP), the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) stayed away from the meeting.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Congress's all-weather ally, surprised everyone by boycotting the meet as it was upset over a reported remark by a Tamil Nadu Congress leader.

The Shiv Sena too talked of a "miscommunication" to explain its absence from the group of "like-minded parties."

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

## Nitish against NRC, open to CAA debate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said on Monday that a countrywide National Register of Citizens (NRC) was "needless" and had "no jus-

tification" but he was open to a debate on issues that have created "turmoil", including the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Speaking in the Assembly, Mr. Kumar said his govern-

ment agreed in principle to the National Population Register like it did 10 years ago when the exercise was last undertaken.

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'CAN'T BE PUNISHED' ► PAGE 14



# After LS poll fillip, Cong. goes past forward in Delhi

The party's three-pronged Assembly election campaign entails reminding voters of the work done during its 15-year run under Sheila Dikshit, a clear stand on CAA-NRC-NPR, and targeting AAP and BJP over their 'lies' on regularisation of illegal colonies

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ  
NEW DELHI

The third player in the triangular contest for power in Delhi, the Indian National Congress, is looking forward to launching a campaign focused on a range of national and local issues and is promising to continue the development it brought to Delhi during its 15-year rule with Sheila Dikshit as Chief Minister.

Enthused by its results in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when it managed to increase its vote share considerably and was placed second in five out of the seven seats, the party leadership is confident of turning around its performance in the Assembly polls. In 2013 Delhi Assembly elections, the Congress had won eight out of 70 seats and in the 2015 polls, it failed to win even a single seat.

After a leadership crisis arose in the Delhi Congress following the death of Dikshit in July last year, the party relied on old warhorse Shubhash Chopra to become the State unit chief and put up a united front against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Mr. Chopra said that the party through its campaign will not only remind Delhiites of how the Congress party in its 15-year rule brought a positive transformation to the Capital, but also debunk the lies and misinformation that both BJP and AAP have been spreading on regularisation of unauthorised colonies and the development they claim they have brought.

"Both parties are making promises ahead of the elections but are yet to deliver and we will show voters that it is only the Congress party that has work to show," he said. The Congress is



(From left) Congress MP Shashi Tharoor with Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra during a demonstration against the amended citizenship Act outside Jamia Millia Islamia ; Sheila Dikshit, along with Subhash Chopra (left), at a public meeting in New Delhi; ( below) a file photo of L-G Vijai Kapoor administering the oath of office to Sheila Dikshit as the sixth Chief Minister of Delhi. ■ HINDU ARCHIVES/ PTI



not start the process. Two agencies were appointed to map them and both tenders were cancelled and for four-and-a-half years, Kejriwal was in deep slumber. Only before the elections did he wake up to it. We will go to unauthorised colonies and tell them the truth about this," Mr. Azad said.

With respect to the BJP's "regularisation" of unauthorised colonies, he said that the Congress will hold rallies in unauthorised colonies and show how a majority of them would not be regularised as they fall in zones like the Yamuna riverbed, near ASI monuments, forest areas and near high-tension cables, because of which, according to the government's rules, they cannot be regularised.

### Power 'relief'

Other promises that the Congress has made ahead of the election is to give relief package up to 600 units of power to the consumers besides increasing the pension amount to ₹5,000 per month under the 'Sheila Dikshit Pension Scheme'.

The party has also set up a social media unit to "debunk falsehood and lies" that they said the BJP and AAP have been spreading.

Several Delhi Congress workers said that unlike in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha election, where there was a lot of ambiguity until the last day of filing nominations as to whether the party would tie-up with AAP to counter the BJP, this time the preparations are much more organised.

"Last year, there was a division within the party on a tie-up and therefore, we started our campaign very late. Even then, we managed to improve our performance. The ground-level workers are positive and are looking to rebuild the party and win back our vote base. Successful campaigns in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have also brought a new vigour," a party worker said.



looking to field young candidates in the upcoming polls, Mr. Chopra added.

### 'No CAA, NPR, NRC'

One of the first announcements that the Delhi Congress made regarding its preparations for the elections was to come out with a clear stand on the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC). The chairman of the Manifesto Committee, Ajay Maken, said that the party if elected to power in Delhi, will not implement the CAA, NPR and NRC.

"While the manifesto commit-

tee is still working on it, one of the main points included in the document would be the party's stand that there is a vast difference in the NPR of 2010 and the NPR of 2020 as the Modi government has added six new illegal clauses in violation of Article 14 of the Constitution," Mr. Maken said. The party has also asked AAP to clear its stand on the issue and not stay on the fences.

Congress leaders have been reaching out to those protesting against the CAA-NPR-NRC and have even shown solidarity with students' movement against the exercise.

Launching an initiative to listen to the people of Delhi on what should be included in the manifesto, the Congress has started a conversation with Delhiites. Kicking off the initiative, senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said, "The stifling of dissent and attacks on university



campuses in the Capital has given us the sense that the government is trying to silence the voice of the people of Delhi and therefore, we are going to welcome the voices and consult them on what they think should be the key issues in this election," Mr. Tharoor said.

He said that in every election the BJP fights, its intent is to polarise voters and hoped that in Delhi any such attempt, like the

attack on students of JNU, will be resisted by voters who are aware and educated. "The Congress will ensure that any attempt to take the public's attention away from the failures of the government with regard to economy, unemployment, pollution and every single aspect of improving the life of the people will not be tolerated," Mr. Tharoor said.

### Campaign slogan

The chairman of the Campaign Committee of the Delhi Congress, Kirti Azad, said that the campaign slogans which have been finalised are – 'Congress wali Dilli Khushal Dilli' and 'Congress ke 15 saal vikas hue bemisaal', which is a throwback to the 15-year rule of the Congress in Delhi when it completely changed the face of the city.

"We are fighting a war and we will have an aggressive strategy. We will have posters reminding

people that it was the Congress that built the metro, new hospitals, flyovers and schools and these development works will be compared to the work that AAP has done in terms of numbers to show how it has not done any development," Mr. Azad said. To counter the BJP, he said the strategy would be simple, "we will get them to talk about issues facing Delhi and not about Pakistan".

### Regularisation 'truth'

Mr. Azad said that one of the main strategies to target the BJP and AAP would be unauthorised colonies as both parties have "fooled" the people of Delhi. "There was a notification by the Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi on October 2, 2013 saying that the mapping of the unauthorised colonies should start. Unfortunately after that we lost the elections and the Kejriwal government did

## IN BRIEF

### AAP, BJP get notices over model code violation

**NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi Chief Election Officer's office has sent three notices over alleged violations of the model code of conduct, a spokesperson said on Monday. While two notices were sent to AAP, one notice was sent to the BJP. The parties are given a day to respond to the notice and place their comments on the matter based on which the further course of action would be decided, a senior election official said.

### Over 3 lakh hoardings, posters removed

**NEW DELHI**  
The civic bodies removed over 3 lakh hoardings and posters here following the declaration of the model code of conduct in view of the upcoming elections, read a statement issued by the Delhi CEO's office on Monday.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	366	Gurgaon	308
Ghaziabad	393	Faridabad	374
Noida	387	Greater Noida	389
Good 0-50 Satisfactory 51-100 Moderate 101-200 Poor 201-300 Very poor 301-400 Severe >401			
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS)   SOURCE: CPCB			

## DELHI TODAY

**Talk:** Dr. C.D. Deshmukh Memorial Lecture 2020: "Handcrafting a Sustainable Future - Challenge and Opportunity in a New Millennium", by Prof. Ashoke Chatterjee, former Executive Director, National Institute of Design at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), 6 p.m.

**Dance:** Traditional Margam, a Bharatanatyam presentation by Shreya Iyer, a disciple of The Dhananjayans and Divya Shiva Sundar, at The Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

**Exhibition:** "Portraits of Automobiles", a solo painting exhibition by Murali Sharma at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

**Exhibition:** "Clay My Canvas" ceramics exhibition by Indu Rao at Triveni Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

**Exhibition:** "Thread through Asia" by French artist Guyseika at Galerie Romain Rolland, Alliance Française de Delhi, 72 Lodhi Estate, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Mail your listings for this column at cityeditor@thehindu.co.in)

## Minister lying on scam in EWS house pricing: AAP

Misinformation campaign, says Puri

**STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI**

AAP leader Sanjay Singh on Monday reiterated that there was a "scam" in the price of houses for economically weaker section (EWS), which was increased by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

He said Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri was "lying" about it.

"Yesterday, I highlighted the large scale scam done by the DDA with respect to the construction and sale of flats for people under the EWS category. After my statement, Puri commented on this matter and the DDA also issued a statement from their Twitter handle, which is a big lie in itself. This statement just adds to the severity of this corruption that has been going on and there is a dire need of a proper investigation," said Mr. Singh.

He said Mr. Puri had said he has no information about the 772 EWS category flats and had dismissed the

AAP's accusations as baseless. "A legal notice was sent to that the allottees of DDA's EWS category and was sent to a number of other people also. The notice was sent out on July 13, 2019, and this legal notice has been also been sent to Puri too as clearly indicated in the list," Mr. Singh said.

Terming the allegations as "misinformation", the DDA said that DLF had constructed 772 houses which have all been allotted. "The DDA meeting on December 21, 2017 on this subject was attended by representatives of the Govt. of NCT of Delhi. They had no problem with the cost. Raising the issue at this time is not clear," DDA said in a statement.

Responding to the allegation, Mr. Puri in a tweet said, "If they had a problem with the costing why did they not raise it then? Were you waiting for the elections? And now you begin with this misinformation campaign, without doing your bit in it."

## Two-time MLA, son of Mahabal Mishra join AAP

**STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI**

Congress leader and former MLA Ram Singh Netaji and Vinay Kumar Mishra, son of former Congress MP Mahabal Mishra and a few other Congress leaders have joined the Aam Aadmi Party on Monday, said senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia.

Addressing a press conference, AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said: "We are welcoming them to the party with open hearts. And I am sure that a day will come when two crore people of Delhi will become members of AAP. That day is not too far."

Mr. Netaji was twice an MLA – once as a BSP candidate and second time as an Independent after which he joined the Congress. "I have joined AAP as a worker and not for a ticket. I have resigned from the Congress along with my followers," he told the media.

Also, Congress leader Deepu Chaudhary and many others joined AAP and were inducted into party.

## BJP finalises 45-50 names for Delhi Assembly elections

First list of party's candidates expected by January 17

**JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI**

After three marathon meetings over the weekend, the BJP has finalised the names of 45 to 50 candidates it intends to field in the Assembly constituencies in the Capital, party sources aware of the proceedings said here on Monday.

At least three meetings revolving around the exercise had taken place, including one that began at 8 p.m. on Sunday evening and concluded around 2 a.m. on

Sunday at BJP national president Amit Shah's residence. The first list of the party's candidates is expected latest by January 17.

Besides Mr. Shah, working national president J.P. Nadda and Delhi election in-charge Prakash Javadekar were also present in these meetings, according to party sources.

"There were two to three potential candidates whose names were finalised by the party's Delhi Assembly Elections Committee for around 45 seats. The candidature of

these individuals was discussed and one name per seat was arrived upon," said a party source.

"Over the weekend, the thrust of the exercise was mainly to assess the winnability of potential candidates based on grassroots surveys related to their popularity. The finalised names will be assessed by the Central Election Committee, headed by Mr. Shah, which will then take a final call on the allotment of tickets," the source said.



# Why FIR not filed in Dec. 15 case, JMI students ask V-C

‘Varsity will explore the possibility of approaching court for it’

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Several students of Jamia Millia Islamia on Monday ghe-raoed Vice-Chancellor Najma Akhtar’s office, asking why an FIR had not been registered in the December 15, 2019 incident when the police entered the campus and carried out a crackdown.

The V-C told the students that the police had not received their complaint as yet. The university had written an e-mail to the area SHO, DCP, and the Police Commissioner, demanding action against police personnel responsible for the crack-down in which several students had been injured.

“Despite who we are, we have sent objections to that government of which we are employees and also followed it up multiple times. Now, we will even go to court,” she said. In a statement, the university said a decision had



JMI V-C Najma Akhtar speaks to students on Monday.  
• SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

been taken to “explore the possibility of moving the court for the registration of FIR in the December 15, 2019 police brutality in university library case at the earliest”.

The students also sought postponement of the semester examinations that are currently under way. On this, the university said following consultations with the Deans, HODs and other officials, the exams stand

cancelled till further notice and a new schedule would be declared later. The university also said the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which had earlier sent a team to the campus, would be sending another team on Tuesday to record statements of the victims. The university added that it has handed over all evidence related to the incident to the NHRC.

# Shaheen Bagh’s children learn lessons in revolution

Initiative started by JMI scholar helps youngsters understand CAA, Preamble through discussions

SIDHARTH RAVI  
NEW DELHI

A closed-off space, on the landing outside a shuttered showroom, overlooking the site that has been the spot of an indefinite protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Shaheen Bagh, has been seeing a large group of people of all ages sit and draw, tell stories, and discuss various ideas.

The project was started by research scholar at Jamia Millia Islamia Usama Zakir on January 1. He said: “The idea is to pay a practical tribute to these women.”

He said: “Since the protesters’ children have been out of school for nearly a month, them raising slogans may be harmful to their mental growth. We had decided that we will start our new year by engaging young energy around this protest into something constructive.”

With mattresses laid out in the space, volunteers



Youngsters stand near posters put up in Shaheen Bagh on Monday. • SIDHARTH RAVI

who include people like Delhi University student Samridhi Khandelwaal, help the children draw posters, talk to them about the protest, and engage with them in some form of “mindfulness”, he said.

## ‘Who was Inquilab?’

The adults present at the spot said the children do not understand the CAA and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) clearly and often ask questions related to it. “The other day, an 11-year-old asked me who was

Inquilab?” said Mr. Usama. With about 50-70 children, including young adults, turning up daily at the spot, Mr. Usama said he is overwhelmed by the response.

“I never expected so many children to come and respond to these things in a rational manner,” he said. Among the host of activities carried out here, students read the Preamble and the draft of the CAA to try and understand it.

The walls in this passage are filled with posters made by the children and some

**The children and others here pay tribute to an individual or group who positively add energy to these protests nationwide by putting up posters**

USAMA ZAKIR  
Research scholar at Jamia Millia Islamia

artists. The children and others here pay tribute to an individual or group who “positively add energy to these protests nationwide” by putting up posters.

A poster reading “We Love You” is dedicated to TV anchor Ravish Kumar and Jawaharlal Nehru University Students’ Union president Aishe Ghosh. On Monday, the participants put up a poster reading: “Fearless Journalists”.

He said he hopes the children understand that their mothers are protesting

against injustice, “which could make them someone who is not conveniently deceived by power structures, who cannot be conveniently fooled, whose circle of empathy is global, who empathise with issues not only here but everywhere. That is how great people are born out of such situations”.

He termed the present situation “a transformative moment for Jamia Nagar where it all had silently started through sloganeering and candlelight marches, which is a language that the area had to effectively learn to speak through these protests”.

With women leading the protests, he said: “The gender binary had melted.” Mr. Usama believed that these transformations would make it better for the children. “They [children] have a limitless scope of flourishing into real change-makers,” he added.



IN BRIEF



**HC to hear plea against Kalindi Kunj road closure**  
NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court will on Tuesday hear a petition seeking to open the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch, which has been closed since December 15 due to ongoing protests against the amended Citizenship Act. Advocate and social activist Amit Sahni, in his petition, claimed the closure was causing huge inconvenience to lakhs of commuters who have been taking alternate routes for a month.

**Workshop held on surgery trends**  
NEW DELHI  
The Department of Burns, Plastic and Maxillofacial Surgery, VMMC and Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi, organised a CME programme and workshop on "Current trends in Cranio-Maxillofacial surgery" for nurses and doctors on January 10 and 11.

Delhi will be no-fly zone ahead of R-Day

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI  
Delhi will turn into a no-fly zone for nearly two hours for a period of seven days ahead of the Republic Day parade here.  
This will also mean that the Indira Gandhi International Airport in the city will see no flights within this time frame. The Airports Authority of India has issued a NOTAM (notice to airmen) barring landings or take-offs between 10.35 a.m. and 12.15 p.m. on January 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 26.  
Nearly 140 flights will have to be suspended per day, as the airport sees nearly 70 flight movements per hour.  
"Since this is an annual ritual, airlines are aware of this requirement and plan their schedule accordingly," an airport official said.

Academic blocks deserted on first day of winter semester at JNU

Students and teachers say removal of Vice-Chancellor can restore normalcy

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The academic blocks at JNU wore a deserted look on Monday, the first day of the winter semester, as students boycotted classes responding to a call given by the JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) and the JNU Teachers' Association (JNUTA).  
The students and teachers have continued their stand that normalcy could be brought back on the campus only if Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadeh Kumar was made to resign or was sacked. They blamed him and his administration for failing to provide security on campus as well as imposing a fee hike and other measures without following due procedure.  
JNUTA president D.K. Lobiya, who led a five-member delegation to meet senior HRD Ministry officials, said: "There can be no security, no normalcy on the campus with the V-C present. If the government wants to restore normalcy, they must remove him."  
He said neither students nor teachers feel safe any-



The winter semester began on Monday. ■JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ

more, and that students who left after the violence are still afraid to return. "We have told the Ministry that this is not the right environment for us to resume academic activities. We stand with the students," he said.  
"Students are living in fear. The person who is partly responsible for the violence still there and not be-

ing held accountable," said Shukla Sawant, a professor at the School of Arts and Aesthetics who was a part of the delegation. She said many professors continued to be in touch with students, especially research scholars, so that their work continues even if classes were not held. "We are continuing to support the academic needs of

our students. It is the V-C who has blocked the registration of 300 students. What kind of a signal does that send?" she added.  
Earlier in the day, the JNU administration sent an advisory to the teachers, saying if they went ahead with their "non-cooperation", then it would go against the administration that was making efforts to restore normalcy on the campus.  
The administration added that a "non-cooperation" call violated the service contracts of the teachers and all faculty members were advised to resume their classes and other academic activities in the interest of the students.  
An appeal by 12 deans and seven chairpersons of special centres stated that with over 5,000 students having registered, it was evident that students wanted to participate in their academic pursuits without delay.  
They appealed to students and teachers to refrain from any activity that would hinder the conducive atmosphere in the functioning of the university.

Violence on campus: SIT sleuths question Aishe Ghosh, two others

Sucheta will be questioned today, 2 more tomorrow: police

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

A special investigation team of the Delhi police visited JNU on Monday and questioned three students, including JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh, in connection with the January 5 violence on the university campus, officials said.  
Pankaj Mishra, Vasker Vijay Mech and Ms. Ghosh were questioned by the Crime Branch officers. Ms. Ghosh was questioned for around an hour while other two were questioned for around 40 minutes. Ms. Ghosh was questioned in Teflas, which houses the students' union office.  
The police asked them where they were on January 3, 4 and 5 when the violence unfolded.  
The trio is among the nine suspects whose pictures were recently released by the police following the January 5

violence in which 35 students, including Ms. Ghosh, sustained injuries.  
Sucheta Talukdar will be questioned on Tuesday while Chunchun Kumar and Dolan Samanta will be questioned on Wednesday, the police said.  
Last week, the Delhi police claimed that the violence at JNU was a fallout of tensions brimming on the campus since January 1 over the registration process.  
Ms. Ghosh is among the seven out of the total nine suspects, who are from Left-leaning students' organisations and the other two suspects are from the the RSS-affiliated Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).  
Besides Ms. Ghosh, Mr. Mishra and Mr. Mech, Ms. Samanta, Priya Ranjan, Ms. Talukdar and Mr. Kumar, an alumni, had been named as suspects by the police. Vikas

Patel and Yogendra Bhara-dwaj, both from ABVP, are among the nine suspects in the case.  
**Notices served**  
The police said that Akshat Awasthi and Rohit Shah, who featured in a sting operation conducted by a TV news channel, have also been served notices to join the investigation, but were absconding.  
The police have also identified the masked woman, seen in the purported videos of the violence, shared on social media, as Komal Sharma, who was wearing a check shirt, light blue scarf and was carrying a stick. Ms. Sharma, who is a student of Daulat Ram College, has also been sent a notice to join the probe, the police said, adding that her phone was found to be switched off since Saturday night.

ABVP releases eight videos of January 5 campus violence

'Clips show Left body members hitting students with sticks'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The ABVP on Monday released eight videos taken on January 5 at JNU's Periyar Hostel that allegedly show members of Left organisations "carrying sticks and hitting students". The ABVP said that they had submitted the footage to the police for investigation along with the names of students that they had identified.  
The outfit demanded that the police should not only probe the violence on the campus between January 3 and 5 but also all incidents that have taken place since October 28 last year, which was when the agitation against the hostel fee hike had begun.  
"The JNU campus was already simmering with ten-

sion and acrimony since October 28, 2019, the day the new hostel manual was released. The Left parties abused the sentiments of the students and disrupted all the academic activities in the university. For two-and-a-half months now, classes are not being held and exams are not being allowed to be held by the Left. It is most unfortunate that the students were attacked when they tried to register themselves from the next semester," the ABVP said.  
It added that it had submitted all the raw video evidence to the police and demanded a fair and detailed inquiry. It also alleged that students who wanted to register for the next semester were being targeted by the JNUSU. Nidhi Tripathi, ABVP national general

secretary, said: "The members of Left organisations are torturing students and teachers who have wanted to partake in academic activities on JNU campus. They are asking for social boycott through their Kangaroo courts. This clearly shows the ideological untouchability being practised by such organisations."  
The ABVP, however, did not release any video shot on the campus after sundown on January 5, when the JNUTA peace gathering was allegedly attacked by masked miscreants causing severe injuries to students and teachers including, JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh.  
The JNUTA and JNUSU has accused the ABVP for the attacking the peace rally and entering hostels to attack students.

JNU protests no longer justified: HRD Minister

Administration is not fulfilling its end of the bargain, charges JNUSU

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The students' agitation at JNU "is no longer justified" as their key demand related to the hostel fee hike has been dealt with, Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said on Monday, calling for an end to the protests which began almost three months ago.  
"After rounds of discussions, the JNU has issued a statement that the students are not being asked to bear the cost of service and utility charges proposed for the winter session which was their basic demand," said an official statement from the HRD Ministry. "Therefore, the JNU fee hike issue stands resolved since this was the main demand of the students," he said.  
Mr. Nishank also appealed that institutions of higher education "should not be

**JNU has issued a statement that the students are not being asked to bear the cost of service and utility charges proposed for the winter session which was their basic demand**

RAMESH POKHRIYAL NISHANK  
HRD Minister

converted into a political arena", adding that over 5,000 students have already registered for the winter session.  
Students and faculty members have pointed out that other demands, including those which were mutually agreed upon during negotiations helmed by the Ministry last month, have still not been met.  
Responding to the statement by the Minister, JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh said that the incident that took

place on January 5 had shocked not only the campus but the conscience of the nation as to how "goons imported from outside with the collusion of the V-C" can wreck havoc and carnage and not be punished. "The HRD Ministry, instead of removing a violence promoter who allowed rod-wielding goons to create carnage, is asking why the students are agitated. Students are agitated as they were beaten, assaulted, nearly killed and forced to hide and continue to live in fear in their own university."  
Ms. Ghosh said that the JNUSU, on January 11, had given a call for registration at old rates but the administration was not allowing students to register until they paid the revised fee. "The administration has released a circular which says utility and service charge will not be imposed in current registration which is a clear insinua-

tion that they might do so at the very next opportunity. The record of discussion with the HRD Ministry says that any fee hike will be first brought back to a new IHA, but the fee hike was imposed beforehand," she said.  
She added that the record of discussion stated that a lenient view will be taken regarding the agitation, but that the administration had blocked the registration of a lot of students on the ground of proctorial enquiries.  
The JNUSU president also said that the record of discussion was a framework for agreement, which no party had signed but was a framework with certain changes that the JNUSU was willing to consider. "However, a discussion involves two sides and both sides have to fulfil their side of the bargain. It is clear that the admin is not fulfilling its side of the bargain," Ms. Ghosh said.

Economist gives up JNU emeritus prof. position

Amit Bhaduri says returning the honour was a symbolic act of protest

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

As a sign of protest against the "throttling of dissent" at JNU, economist Amit Bhaduri has given up his status as professor emeritus. His move comes in the wake of attacks on students and teachers at the premier institution.  
In an open letter on Monday, Mr. Bhaduri said he had learnt with "increasing disgust" how V-C

M. Jagadeh Kumar's handling of situations at JNU had "led to its steady deterioration paving the way to its intellectual disintegration".  
"It would be immoral on my part without registering my protest to remain a silent observer in this larger, sinister scheme of throttling dissent which is unfolding now at the University," he said.  
Mr. Bhaduri, who joined

JNU as a young professor in 1973 and left in 2001, noted that he had witnessed many instances of student unrest and even a temporary shut-down of teaching during his tenure.  
"What is different now is not only incompetence of handling of situations by the authorities, but also a deliberate attempt to throttle the free and lively atmosphere of debate and discussion for which JNU

was known all over the country," he said. "You seem determined on imprinting your administration's narrow-minded world view and shut all other windows of ideas to the students," he added.  
Dr. Bhaduri noted that returning the honour bestowed on him was largely a symbolic act of protest as the administration had already evicted him from his room in JNU.

LSR Dramatics Society cancels theatre events

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Dramatics Society of Lady Shri Ram (LSR) College on Monday announced that in view of the "current state our country is in", theatre events – Yavnik and Nukkad – , part of the institution's fest Tarang, stand cancelled.  
Extending solidarity with all those "raising their voices against the fascist re-

gime" – JMI, JNU, AMU, Kashmir, Assam, and others, the LSR Dramatics Society said: "As citizens and students, it is important to show solidarity. In these times, we need to come together and to do our best to support the struggle. We cannot choose to ignore the socio-political situation of this country and the fact that democracy is in danger," the statement read.

Air quality likely to improve this week

Capital witnesses scattered rain

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The air quality of the city was in the 'very poor' category on Monday and is expected to improve over the week, said government-run monitoring agency SAFAR.  
The Capital witnessed scattered rain and a drop in the maximum temperature on Monday, the weather department said. The city recorded a low of 8 degrees Celsius, a notch above normal, and a maximum of 19.9 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of year, the IMD said. The maximum temperature dropped by 3.5 degrees Celsius as against that recorded on Sunday.  
The city's AQI on Monday was 366, according to the 4 p.m. bulletin of the CPCB.

"On January 14, AQI is likely to improve to the 'poor' category and on January 15, a marginal deterioration from the upper end of 'poor' to lower end of the 'very poor' category is expected. A fresh western disturbance is likely on January 16 and the AQI is likely to improve," SAFAR said.  
**Tuesday's forecast**  
Partly cloudy skies are expected on Tuesday and the maximum and minimum temperatures will hover around 18 and 9 degrees Celsius respectively.  
Weather experts said rainfall is likely in Delhi on January 16 and 17 due to a fresh western disturbance, adding that intense spells of rain are likely on January 16.  
(With inputs from PTI)

Nirbhaya convicts to meet their families last on Jan. 20

All 4 to be hanged on Jan. 22 at 7 a.m.

**SAURABH TRIVEDI**  
NEW DELHI

The convicts in the Nirbhaya case will meet their family members for the last time on January 20, two days before their scheduled hanging, said an officer with the Tihar jail on Monday.  
The convicts – Mukesh Singh, Pawan Gupta, Vinay Sharma, and Akshay Kumar Singh – who are currently under the close watch of doctors and psychiatrists in isolation wards, will be executed together at 7 a.m. in Tihar jail, said another officer.  
All the preparations related to the hanging are over, he added. "We asked the convicts about the day and time when they would want to meet their families but they did not reply. In this case, we have scheduled the meetings on January 20," the officer said. The meeting will be held in separate rooms in

the presence of Tihar jail officials. "We have stopped giving newspapers to the convicts and they are on regular diets. Their medical reports are normal with no signs of 'abnormality' seen during their psychological screenings," said the officer.  
He added that after the court issued death warrants on January 7, family members of Mukesh, Pawan and Vinay had come to meet them. "Akshay's family members came to meet him in November last. At present, family members can meet prisoners two times in a week. Mukesh's mother visited him on Friday," the officer said.  
On Sunday, a team of prison officials performed dummy execution of the convicts. The dummies were created using sacks filled with debris and stones as per the weight of the convicts.

'Treat plea on VVPAT as representation'

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Election Commission to treat as a representation a petition for inspection of the voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) slips of electronic voting machines (EVMs) used in all constituencies for the 2019 Lok Sabha election.  
A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar disposed of the petition following the direction. The petition, filed by Hans Raj Jain, a Delhi resident, sought inspection of VVPAT slips of the EVMs, alleging "a great discrepancy" in the number of votes polled and that of counted in 373 constituencies. This, he argued, "creates doubt" in the minds of voters that the EVMs were tampered with.



Timings			
DELHI			
TUESDAY, JAN. 14			
RISE	07:16	SET	17:46
RISE	21:41	SET	10:05
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 15			
RISE	07:16	SET	17:46
RISE	22:46	SET	10:45
THURSDAY, JAN. 16			
RISE	07:15	SET	17:47
RISE	23:49	SET	11:23

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	20	08
Safdarjang	20	08
Palam	21	10

**Delhi Palam Today**  
**19°C** Dry weather with moderate fog/mist during cold morning is likely. Day will be pleasant with partly cloudy sky.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
**20°C** A cold and foggy morning is likely. There are chances of rain during late night.

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IN BRIEF

**Elephant kills mahout in U.P.'s Gorakhpur**  
GORAKHPUR  
A 35-year-old mahout of an elephant was trampled to death by the pachyderm in a village here on Monday, police said. Locals said the elephant belonged to Gorakhpur (Rural) MLA Vipin Singh. ■

# From Shaheen Bagh to Shanti Bagh, anti-CAA stir spreads

Hundreds of protesters have been sitting on a dharna at the Gaya venue since December 29 to raise their voice against the contentious Act

**AMARNATH TEWARY**  
GAYA  
As the ongoing protest at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh against Citizenship (Amendment) Act and National Register of Citizens grabs national media attention, a similar dharna at Shanti Bagh in Gaya district of Bihar enters 16th day, with hundreds of protesters from all sections raising their voice against the law and the proposed exercise. Like Shaheen Bagh, the protesters here speak fearlessly, enlivening the bitter winter chill with a spring of dissent.

Under the banner of 'Samvidhan Bachao Morcha (Save Constitution Forum)', the protesters have pitched a large tent on an open ground at Katari Hill Road in Shanti Bagh. Huge cut-outs of Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar have been put up on both ends of banners hung at the front and the rear side of the venue. On the right, a wooden platform has been erected and a microphone has been installed on the podium along with a Tricolour. Pos-

ters with slogans like "we need humanity, not brutality", "we're Indians, don't divide us", "we reject CAA, NRC and NPR" adorn the venue. A copy of the Constitution and a donation box have been put up near the stage. Red plastic chairs are arranged neatly for those visiting the venue in the evening and at night – all under CCTV surveillance. The cameras have been installed by the protesters to prevent any untoward or uncalled for activities by unidentified troublemakers.

**'Peaceful protest'**  
"Today is the 16<sup>th</sup> day of our peaceful protest. It will continue until the government withdraws the CAA, NRC and NPR. On Sundays and Fri-

Women protest against CAA, NRC and NPR on the 16th day of their agitation at Shanti Bagh in Gaya on Monday.  
■ RANJEET KUMAR



days, the crowd crosses 10,000. All are coming voluntarily," said Omair Khan alias Tika Khan, the convener of the forum. On January 12, the ground was packed with people, mostly women, he added. Mr. Khan and his

friends Wasim Nayeem Ansari, Faiyaz Khan, Satish Kumar, Abdul Quadir, Manoj Kumar and Ishtiaque Ahmed formed the forum on December 14, 2019 to oppose the CAA, NRC and NPR and two weeks later, on December 29, they began their peaceful, indefinite protest

at Shanti Bagh. "On the first day, we were only seven-eight friends here, but as the days passed, the number of participants also rose. Now every day, more than 1,000 people, from children to senior citizens, turn up to express their solidarity," said Mr. Ansari.

"The CAA, NRC and NPR would divide us along religious lines. We will not stop our peaceful protest until the government rolls back these discriminatory policies," said Nusrat Hassan, a schoolteacher, and Fatima Khan, a cosmetics businesswoman, who have been sitting on dharna along with others.

**Funds from donations**  
How have they managed the 24X7 protest for so long? "We have put up a donation box and people coming here are giving money. On an average, we collect about ₹6,000 per day but the amount goes over ₹10,000-₹15,000 on Fridays and Sundays. It's increasing everyday," said Satish Kumar, a veteran social activist. At

night, they recite poems, azadi songs and engage in debates and discussions over CAA, NRC and NPR. Students stage plays to send across their message.

The protesters begin their day by reading the Preamble of the Constitution and end their day at 10 p.m. with the national anthem. "To avoid any inconvenience to the local people, we switch off our mic at 10 p.m.," they said.

"Several leaders from different parties, except BJP and JD(U), have come to express their solidarity with us. We have also invited former JNUSU president Kanhaiya Kumar, political activist Yogendra Yadav and others to address us in the coming days," said Mr. Khan.

What next? "We have planned to visit remote blocks and areas in a group to make people aware about these discriminatory and divisive policies. We have already visited Imamganj, Sherghati and Mohanpur blocks of the district and will cover Belahanj and Guraru in the coming days," said Mr. Ansari. "We will not quit," they asserted.

## Process to identify refugees has begun in U.P., says Minister

'Notification for CAA issued to all District Magistrates'

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
LUCKNOW

The State government has started the process to identify refugees for implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, said U.P. Minister Shrikant Sharma here on Monday.

"The notification for the CAA (by the Centre) has been issued and all District Magistrates in U.P. have been asked to collect data," Mr. Sharma told PTI.

"In the first list, over 32,000 refugees have been identified in 21 districts of the State and the exercise is going on in the entire State as per information I have from the State Home Department," he added.

There are 75 districts in



Minister Shrikant Sharma

the State.

When asked about the countries they belong to, Mr. Sharma said, "they are from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh."

The districts from where the first list has arrived included Sahranpur, Gorakhpur, Aligarh, Rampur, Pra-

tapgarh, Pilibhit, Lucknow, Varnaasi, Bahraich, Lakhimpur, Rampur, Meeru and Agra.

Sources said Pilibhit has the maximum number of refugees. However, the exact number is yet to be disclosed by the State government.

**'Will update figures'**

"The exercise is going on and as the data comes, we will update figures," the Minister said.

An NGO, Nagrik Adhikar Manch, has also prepared a 116-page report, "Uttar Pradesh Mein Aaye Pakistan, Afghanistan Evam Bangladesh ke Sharnarthiyon ki Aapbeeti (Unke Utpeedan ki Kahani)" and sent it to the State and the Centre.

## Akali Dal accuses Congress of bid to weaken the party

'Entire rank and file of SAD solidly behind Sukhbir Badal'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Monday hit out at the ruling Congress, accusing it of attempting to weaken the Akali Dal, a day after Congress Ministers had termed the party as personal fiefdom of the Badals.

SAD leaders Balwinder Singh Bhundur and Prem Singh Chandumajra, in a joint statement said the way in which Congress Ministers had jumped into the fray to help MP Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa and his son Parminder Dhindsa (both suspended from SAD) proved that they were being used as pawns by Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh in an attempt to weaken the 'Pan-



SAD chief Sukhbir Badal

thic' party after failing on all fronts.

The Shiromani Akali Dal last week had suspended rebel Rajiya Sabha MP Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa and his son former Finance Minister Parminder Singh Dhindsa for "anti party" activities.

"Now with Congress Mi-

nisters taking on the job of spokespersons for the Dhindsa family it is clear that they are working as per a fixed game plan in collusion with each other. The cat is out of the bag. The Dhindsa faction, which consists of Mr. Dhindsa, his son Parminder and son-in-law Tejinderpal Singh Sidhu only, are being supported by the Congress with the sole aim of splitting Panthic votes," said the leaders.

**'No one left SAD'**

They added that the entire rank and file of the SAD was solidly behind party president Sukhbir Singh Badal. "The truth is that no one had left the SAD to join the Dhindsa faction," they said.

## U.P. govt. gives more power to police

Nod for police commissioner system in Lucknow, Gautambuddha Nagar

**OMAR RASHID**  
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday passed a proposal to introduce the police commissioner system in two major cities under which IPS officers would get additional authority including magisterial powers.

This comes in the wake of violence during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and allegations of police brutality and use of excessive force against protesters.

The proposals were passed by the State Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The police commissioner system would be implemented in Lucknow and Gautambuddha Nagar.

Sujeet Pandey, a 1994-batch IPS officer and ADG Prayagraj, was appointed as the new and first ever police commissioner of Lucknow. I-G Naveen Arora will be joint commissioner (law and order) and Nilabja Chowdhury, also of the same rank, will be joint police commissioner (crime and headquarters) in Lucknow.

The system would be slightly different in Gautambuddha Nagar. While Alok Singh, 1995-batch IPS officer and ADG Meerut Range, will be the police commissioner Gautambuddha Nagar, the city would have two additional police commissioners, Sriparna Ganguly and Akhilesh Kumar, of the rank of DIG.

"In police commissioner system, police works as a



CM Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow on Monday. ■ PTI

team, under which the police commissioner has some magisterial powers in order to take forward smart and effective policing," Mr. Adityanath told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

As per an official statement, the government listed several reasons for introducing the police commissioner system including the hi-tech nature and complexity of

crimes, organised crime menace like drugs and human trafficking and cyber crimes. While the government does not directly link the introduction of the police commissioner system to the recent protests, it evaluates the present system of crowd control as inadequate to prevent damage to public property.

"Law and order challenges have become such that for crowd control and to effectively prevent vandalism of government and private property, the present system is proving to be weak," the government document said.

This point stands out as the State government recently issued notices to around 500 persons across U.P. asking them to pay hefty fines for the damage to public and private property in the violence that took place during the protests against the CAA.

## 'It undermines the position of DM'

**ANUJ KUMAR**  
GHAZIABAD

The implementation of the commissioner system has evoked mixed response from former officials and teachers of public administration. Considering many districts in the State are going through a law and order situation in the wake of anti-CAA-NRC protests, the decision acquires all the more significance.

Harsh Mander, who

worked in the Indian Administrative Service before turning to social activism, said it undermines the position of the District Magistrate, particularly in a law and order situation. "My experience as a District Magistrate suggests that the dual system provided for a check and balance at the district level," he told *The Hindu*.

Retired super cop Maxwell Pereira said the commissioner system is known

for providing "quickness of action" but it makes a single authority responsible for action, good or bad.

Mirza Asmer Beg, who teaches public administration at Aligarh Muslim University, said quickness of action is crucial when you are fighting a "foreign enemy" or providing civic amenities. "Not when you are up against your own people exercising their democratic right to dissent."

## Kamal Nath orders probe into questions on Bhil tribe

**STAFF REPORTER**  
BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath has initiated an inquiry into a series of contentious questions on the Bhil tribe asked in an examination conducted by the Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission on Sunday, including one presuming its criminal nature.

**'Respected tribals'**

"In my lifetime, I have always respected and honoured tribals and Bhils," the Chief Minister wrote on Twitter on Monday. "For this condemnable act, those responsible should surely be punished, so that it is not repeated in the future."

In the preliminary examination, one of the questions, based on a passage on the tribe, read: "The primary reason for the criminal nature of Bhils is", with the four options as "inability to pay liabilities", "working with honesty", "carrying out immoral work" and "migrating from villages".

"I have done several works for the betterment and uplift of this category," wrote Mr. Nath. "I have been connected to this category since the beginning. Even my government is committed to their uplift and has been continuously working for it."



Rajasthan lawyer alleges torture by U.P. police

Faisal spent 14 days in Kairana jail, was released on bail on January 7

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

A 25-year-old Muslim lawyer from Rajasthan's Kota district has accused the Uttar Pradesh police of falsely implicating him in a case of an anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protest and torturing him in their custody. The lawyer, Mohammed Faisal, spent 14 days in jail at Kairana in U.P. before he was released on bail on January 7.

Mr. Faisal, an advocate in Kota district courts, had gone to Kairana in Shamli district last month as a member of the National Confederation of Human Rights Organisations to offer legal aid to the protesters arrested during the agitation against the CAA. The police arrested him from the court premises when he was completing formalities for bail applications of some accused persons.

Mr. Faisal said at a press conference here on Monday that a team of U.P. Police's Special Operations Group forcibly took him, along with three others, to Kotwali



Mohammed Faisal in Jaipur on Monday. ■ROHIT JAIN PARAS

police station in Kairana on December 23. "I was outside the SDM court with a local lawyer doing the paper work for bail applications for some persons who were picked up from their houses five days ago," he said.

When Mr. Faisal told the policemen that he was a lawyer and showed them his identity card, they dismissed it as fake and claimed that he had come to Kairana to "incite violence". "They said I was speaking with a Bengali accent and alleged that I had come from West Bengal to provoke the people and help the rioters."

The lawyer alleged that the policemen abused him, thrashed him, beat him with sticks and tortured him by giving electric current on his back inside the police station. The police then put him in the lock-up and arrested him in a criminal case.

Call to burn CAA copies in Bihu bonfires in Assam

'We cannot let a law threaten our identity and festivals'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Assam's mid-January festival of feasting is expected to be a fiery political statement against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

Various organisations and individuals have appealed to revellers to burn copies of the Act at the Bhogali Bihu bonfires of *bhelaghar*, a temporary hay-and-bamboo structure.

"We cannot ignore our age-old festivals but at the same time we cannot let a piece of legislation that threatens our Assamese identity and our festivals. We appeal to the people to burn copies of CAA to register their protest," All Assam Students' Union general secretary Lurinjiyoti Gogoi said.

Organisations such as Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chhatra Parishad and Cotton University Students' Union have given similar calls.



Women preparing traditional food 'pitha' in Guwahati on Monday. ■PTI

Traditionally, *pithas* (rice cakes) and betel nuts are thrown into a *meji*, meaning bonfire, while wishing for a bountiful harvest for the farm season ahead. Copies of CAA would be a "political addition", community Bihu organisers said.

Anti-CAA sentiments have been all-pervading at Bhogali fairs and stalls that sell festival-related delicacies such as

jaggery, curd, *til pitha* (sticky rice cake with black sesame filling), *sunga pitha* (rice cake baked inside whole bamboo pieces), *ghila pitha* (fried rice cakes), *nari-kolor laaru* (sweet coconut balls) and *kol pitha* (banana pancakes). Most of these stalls have been displaying placards reading "No CAA", "Scrap CAA", and "CAA is anti-Assam".

AMU students boycott classes

They are demanding resignations of V-C, Registrar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GHAZIABAD

Aligarh Muslim University students boycotted classes as four faculties of the university reopened on Monday after an extended winter vacation. Students of Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Unani Medicine and Faculty of Management Sciences boycotted their classes. They demanded that the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar, taking responsibility for the police violence in AMU on December 15, 2019, should resign.

Classes in the engineering college remained officially suspended. End semester ex-

aminations are scheduled from January 16.

"Around 300 students gathered on the lawns of Kennedy Auditorium to decide the future course of action. It was resolved that all academic activities, including examinations, will be boycotted till the resignation of Vice-Chancellor and Registrar," said Qudratullah Faraz, a student of Electrical Engineering.

Official sources said only 30-40 % students have returned to the hostels after the vacation.

Four student activists – Snehashish, Sabah Maharaj,

Shayma S. and Sadat Hussain from JNU – visited AMU and addressed the students at Bab-e-Syed.

Targeting those who are labelling the protests as communal, Maharaj said, "Any marginalised community fighting for its rights is labelled as communal."

Referring to this history of 'otherisation' of Muslims in India, Shayma said, "Muslims are always treated as a suspect community".

Meanwhile, on the call of the AMUTA, faculty members took out a peaceful march against CAA/ NPR/ NRC.

Inscriptions confirm presence of two medieval monasteries at Moghalmari

'Two monasteries in a single compound is unique in this part'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

A study of inscriptions on clay tablets recovered from recent excavations at Moghalmari, a Buddhist monastic site of the early medieval period in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district, have confirmed the presence of two monasteries – Mugalayikaviharika and Yajñapindikamahavihara.

Details of the study of these inscriptions were published earlier this month in *PratnaSamiskha*, a leading peer-reviewed journal from Bengal on Indian Archaeology.

"The presence of two monasteries dating to the same period within a single compound is unique in eastern India. Earlier excavations had indicated the presence of two monasteries on the basis of the structural plan," Rajat Sanyal, who deciphered these inscriptions, and is the author of the paper, told *The Hindu*.

Prof. Sanyal, who is associated with the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta, was a member of all the six seasons of excavations carried out at the site by the university. The monasteries at Moghalmari date from 6th century CE and were functional till the 12th century CE.

Tiny fragments

During one of the later seasons of excavations by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, Government of West Bengal, six tiny fragments of inscribed seals were found. "Each of them contained a set of letters accompanied by the deer-dharmachakra symbols. We had to arrange them through different permuta-



The site where the excavations were carried out and (below) the seals which have been deciphered to reveal names of the Buddhist monasteries. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.

tions to read and make sense of names inscribed on these tablets," Prof. Sanyal said.

The inscriptions are in Sanskrit and the script is a transitional phase between later north Indian Brahmi and early Siddhamatrika.

The first name Yajñapindikamahavihara, implying etymologically 'a place of sacrificial offering' is of special significance. The second name on the seals, Mugalayikaviharika, bears a phonetic resemblance to the modern name of the site, Moghalmari.

In Xuanzang's travels

Archaeologists and historians point out that famous Chinese traveller Xuanzang (more widely identified as Huen Tsang), who visited India in the 7th century CE, referred to the existence of 'ten monasteries' within the limits of Tamralipta (modern day Tamluk in adjoining Purba Medinipur district). However, he did not refer to any specific name or location.

With the discovery of the site and the deciphering of the inscriptions, at least two of these monasteries are now identified, Prof. Sanyal said. He added that it was

known from Buddhist texts that Buddhist monasteries have a definite hierarchy – Mahavihara, Vihara and Viharika – which is reflected in the inscriptions found.

"The study provides the only contextual epigraphical proof for the existence of a viharika (Mugalayikaviharika in this case) as early as the 6th century in this part of the subcontinent," Prof. Sanyal said. The study of the inscribed seals suggests that the monastery was called Mugalayikaviharika. Its continuation in the modern name of the area "still remains a riddle which needs more careful inspection and study," he said. "Apparently, the name Mugalayika suggests a fair connection to the modern place-name Moghalmari," he added.

In his paper, Prof. Sanyal refers to L.S.S. O'Malley's gazetteer of 1911, where the name Moghalmari is said to trace its name to a medieval battle between the Mughals and Pathans, sometime in the 16th or early 17th century. "It is difficult to ascertain if the name written on the seals indeed represents an early toponym of the modern village of Moghalmari."

Organic turmeric to weed out marijuana in Malkangiri

STAFF REPORTER  
BERHAMPUR

Organic turmeric is all set to weed out illegal marijuana cultivation in remote areas of Swabhiman Anchal in Odisha's Malkangiri district.

The Malkangiri district administration has initiated a project to dissuade the region's tribals from illegal ganja cultivation by promoting organic turmeric as a profitable cash crop.

Lack of communication and poverty were the reasons behind illegal ganja cultivation. Drug mafias from outside are alleged to be financing ganja plantations in the area. Ganja also provides some easy money.

A survey in 2019 by the Malkangiri district administration revealed that almost all tribal families grow tur-



Turmeric being cultivated by a tribal family in Swabhiman Anchal. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

meric for their consumption. But it was not cultivated commercially despite suitable climate and geographical conditions. "So we thought organic turmeric can be the tool of economic development for poor tribals as well as cash crop alternative of ganja," said Malkangiri Collector Manish Agarwal. According to him, each acre of organic

turmeric can provide ₹70,000 to 80,000 income.

Horticulture and Agriculture departments are implementing the project. Interested farmers have already registered themselves for scientific training. Mr. Agarwal has interacted with the locals and felt people had high expectations from the project.

Woman raped in W.B.

DIGHA (W.B.)

A 42-year-old woman, waiting at Digha station in West Bengal after missing her train, was taken to a hotel and allegedly raped, the police said. A man working at a hotel in nearby Talshari, Odisha, approached her and she went with him, the police said. There she was given tea, laced with sedatives, and raped, the police said. She was then taken to a forest and raped again, they said.



# CM hits back at BJP’s ‘autorickshaw’ jibe

At Road Safety Week inauguration, Uddhav raises concern over number of accident fatalities

**AJEET MAHALE**  
MUMBAI

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday responded to jibes from the Bharatiya Janata Party, saying that more than the number of wheels on a vehicle, what mattered was the person driving it. The BJP had likened the three-party Maha Vikas Aghadi government to an unstable autorickshaw.

“More than whether a vehicle is a three-wheeler or four-wheeler, what is important is the person driving it. He is the one in control, as it is the steering wheel that controls all the wheels of the vehicle,” Mr. Thackeray said at the inauguration of the 31st Road Safety Week.

He said it was fine if his government was called a three-wheeler, as it was balanced and running well.

Speaking on road safety,



A policewoman pastes a sticker on traffic rules on a BEST bus in Mumbai to mark the start of Road Safety Week on Monday, and (right) Thane Police Commissioner Vivek Phansalkar admires the rangoli and posters in Thane. • VIJAY BATE • VIBHAV BIRWATKAR

Mr. Thackeray expressed concern over the number of fatalities in road accidents and said the country had regressed on that front compared to China. He said in 2005, there had been 94,000 and 98,000 accidents China and India respectively. Today, however, China has brought the number down to

45,000, while in India it has soared to nearly 1.5 lakh.

State Transport Minister Anil Parab said 12,556 people died in road accidents in Maharashtra in 2019, which was still a large number though it was 5.2% lower than the 2018 figure. In all, the number of road accidents fell by 8% from 2018 to



2019. “We will undertake programmes to ensure we reduce the number by 10% this year. We will work to achieve the target of zero accidents,” he said.

Satej Patil, Minister of State for Transport and Home, suggested the government provide a dedicated fund to civic bodies for traffic

signals. He said the Transport Department should be taken into confidence while drafting the development control rules.

The district road safety committees of Thane, Washim and Raigad were felicitated during the ceremony for reducing road accident fatalities by more than 20%.

## State forms committee to look into claims of irregularities at SARTHI

First probe by MVA into previous govt.

**ALOK DESHPANDE**  
MUMBAI

The State government has appointed a committee under Relief and Rehabilitation secretary Kishor Raje-Nimbalkar to inquire into the alleged irregularities in the Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj Research Training and Human Development Institute (SARTHI), Pune.

This is the first official probe launched by the Maha Vikas Aghadi government into the functioning of the previous government.

SARTHI is registered under the Companies Act, 2013, as a non-profit government company for research, policy advocacy and training for socio-economic and education development of Maratha, Maratha-Kunbi, Kunbi-Maratha, Kunbi communities and the families dependent on agriculture.

It was formed by the previous government on the lines of the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute aimed at providing opportunities to the youth from the Scheduled Caste community.

Rajya Sabha MP Chhatrapati Sambhaji Raje went on a one-day hunger strike in Pune last week, alleging attempts to cancel the autonomous status of SARTHI, and various other irregularities. Urban Development Minister Eknath Shinde had visited him, promising the removal of department secretary J.P. Gupta and swift action in the matter.

**CM, Pawar take review**

On Tuesday, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar met to review SARTHI. “Prima facie, the review has found several irregularities which have not been addressed in an official manner. It was found necessary to conduct a thorough probe into the functioning of SARTHI,” said an official privy to the developments.

Mr. Raje-Nimbalkar has been tasked with conducting the inquiry and submit a report to the government within 10 days. Mr. Pawar informed Chhatrapati Sambhaji Raje of the developments, said sources.

## Cow remarks: voiced feelings of farmers, says minister

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

Two days after her comment, that petting a cow drives away negativity, raised eyebrows, Women and Child Development Minister Yashomati Thakur on Monday said she had just voiced the feelings of farmers towards cattle.

After her comment sparked a controversy, Ms. Thakur, a Congress MLA from Amravati, defended her statement on Sunday, saying that touching any animal, including cows, fills one with compassion.

“I had gone to a village in my Assembly constituency (Teosa) to meet people where a cow temple already exists. While talking to people, I simply resonated their feelings towards the animal. Even I come from a farmer’s family, and like me, many people feel better by petting the animal,” she said in a statement on Monday.

Ms. Thakur dismissed any link between her statement and superstition. “I fail to understand why my remarks are taken in such a wrong way and I am being trolled,” she said.

## Last-minute purchases



**Colours of spring:** The kite market is bustling with activity and a festive crowd on the eve of Uttarayan, the kite-flying festival, in Ahmedabad on Monday. • PTI

## Officer who quit over CAA may be picked as Waqf board CEO

His name is on shortlist, say officials; no decision yet: Malik

**ALOK DESHPANDE**  
MUMBAI

The State Minority Development Department is considering appointing IPS officer Abdur Rahman, who had resigned to protest the Citizenship Amendment Act, as the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Waqf board.

“The board has no full-time chief executive officer since July 2017. It is important to have a dedicated officer on this post to ensure a disciplined dispatch of duties. The board is in possession of properties that need to be protected and used for the benefit of the community. We are shortlisting names for the post, and he is one of the top contenders,” an official from the department said.

Mr. Rahman had announced his resignation in December 2019, when the the Citizenship Amendment Bill was on its way to being approved in Parliament.

He had posted on social media, “This Bill is against the religious pluralism of India. I request all justice loving people to oppose the Bill in a democratic manner. It runs against the very basic feature of the Constitution.”

**Resignation not approved**

According to sources in the department, neither Mr. Rahman’s application for the voluntary retirement scheme, nor his resignation, have been approved by the government.

Mr. Rahman, an IPS officer of the Inspector General of Police rank, was posted as Special Inspector General

(State Human Rights Commission) in Mumbai.

Minority Development Minister Nawab Malik said no decision has yet been taken yet on the Waqf board CEO. “We will take a decision soon. This department was totally sidelined by the previous government, and we have to revamp the whole hierarchy. I am at present reviewing the department’s functioning over the last five years. We will soon make new appointments,” he said.

Mr. Rahman told *The Hindu* he has not received any communication from the government regarding the Waqf board post.

“I do not know anything about it, and therefore cannot tell you anything,” the IPS officer said.

Several farmers in Sangli district had to face hardships after their names were translated into English while enrolling for PM-Kisan.

A farmer named Uttam appeared in the online form as ‘Best’, the surname Sutar was changed to ‘Carpenter’, Bhagwan was translated as ‘Lord’, and a farmer with the surname Mali was included as ‘Gardener’.

The goof-ups came to light after the administration uploaded the list of beneficiaries. Under this scheme, farmers are given ₹6,000 per year in three instalments of ₹2,000 each.

Yasin Patel, the scheme coordinator in Sangli, said, “Last year, ground level officials like talathis and gram sevaks were tasked with enrolling farmers for the scheme. They were given a

## Lost in translation: tech trouble affects farmers

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
PUNE

list from the Revenue Department’s website, which was in Marathi. As the number of farmers was large, the ground staff used the Google translation tool.”

The input language for the PM-Kisan portal is English, he said. The scheme benefits were given using account numbers and Aadhaar, and many farmers got the money. “This was purely a data entry issue and is being rectified,” he said.

Uttam Maruti Talap said he received the instalments, but his name appeared as ‘Best’. “The fourth instalment did not come due to the change in the name. We have now rectified it.”

Popat Sutar, from Bawachi village said last year, he received instalments on time. “This time, as there was a mistake in my surname, I have not received my instalment,” he said.

## Fire at waste treatment plant in Goa

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
PANAJI

A fire broke out at a waste treatment plant run by the Corporation of the City of Panaji early on Monday, destroying several machines, a fire official said. No casualty was reported in the mishap.

The fire brigade got a call at 4.30 a.m. about the blaze at the plant, located near a bus stand on the outskirts of Panaji. “The earth moving machinery and some other machines used to treat garbage at the plant were gutted,” the official said. The fire was brought under control after about three hours.





**IN BRIEF**

**Yediyurappa to attend WEF meet in Davos**

BENGALURU  
Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, who was in a dilemma over his proposed visit to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual meeting being held from January 21 to 24, has finally decided to go ahead with the trip. He had earlier hinted that he may skip the meet to focus on ministerial expansion. Sources said the CM felt that skipping the meet would send a negative message.

**4 persons with alleged IS links arrested in A.P.**

VISAKHAPATNAM  
Four persons allegedly linked to an IS module was reportedly picked up by officers from special branch near Kanchili in Andhra Pradesh's Srikakulam district, on Monday. It is learnt that they have been taken to Visakhapatnam for questioning. Sources said the operation was undertaken based on a tip-off from the Central Intelligence agencies. The four were travelling in a lorry carrying vegetables from Odisha to Andhra Pradesh when they were arrested, the police said.

**'Suprabhata Seva' to be re-started at Tirumala**

TIRUMALA  
The 'Suprabhata Seva' ritual will be revived at the hill temple of Lord Venkateswara from the 15th of this month. The pre-dawn ritual was temporarily discontinued at the temple from December 17 owing to the onset of 'Dhanurmasam' and was replaced by Thirupuvai. With the month-long Dhanurmasam festival coming to an end on Tuesday, the temple administration said it would observe 'Suprabhata Seva' on a regular basis from January 15.

# Maradu demolition decision a painful duty: SC

Counsel for evictees say there's no sign of any legal action against officials liable for clearing the illegal projects

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said its decision to demolish four high-end luxury apartment complexes at Maradu municipality in Kochi for violating coastal regulation zone notifications was a "painful duty".

"It was a painful duty for us," Justice Arun Mishra, the lead judge on the Bench comprising Justice M.R. Shah, observed orally.

The judge's reaction came after perusing the report filed by the Kerala government about the successful demolition of the flats on January 11 and 12.

For the time being, the Bench preferred not to dispose the case. Justice Mishra said the court would like to keep an eye on the goings-on in the case, especially while the debris of the demolished structures is being cleared. Some of the debris had fallen into the backwaters.

**Court's assurance**

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for some of the evicted residents, said "ultimately the majesty of the law has prevailed" but pointed out that there was



**Huge task ahead:** Workers removing debris from the site of the demolished buildings at Maradu, near Kochi, on Monday. • H. VIBHU

no sign of any legal action against the officials liable for clearing the illegal building projects.

But Justice Mishra assured "something is indeed happening" in that front.

The court had ordered the Kerala government to disburse ₹25 lakh each to the displaced residents. On Monday, Mr. Dave acknowledged that the court's order had

served as an interim relief for the distressed flat owners.

But Mr. Dave sought the court's permission for residents to move a competent lower court, preferably the Kerala High Court, to initiate legal proceedings for compensation and damages against builders, promoters, other persons and officials responsible for clearing and raising the constructions.

The residents said they wanted a judicial pronouncement on various issues such as the proportion of liability of each of these parties, from builders to officials responsible, and the freezing/de-freezing of accounts/properties of the builders, etc.

However, the Bench refrained from passing any orders and scheduled the case for hearing on February 10.

# Dust from debris leaves neighbours breathless

STAFF REPORTER  
KOCHI

After residents in the vicinity of H2O Holy Faith complained of recurrent troubles from the dust raised from debris, Fort Kochi RDO and officer in-charge of the demolition Snehil Kumar Singh has assured them that the area will be hosed down before the debris is moved.

Residents around the site gathered before the Maradu Municipality on Monday demanding its intervention.

"The dust has been causing breathing troubles and allergy, but the area has not been watered regularly since the implosion," said Jessy Raju, whose house fell within the 200-m evacuation zone around the flat. It was only after persistent complaints that firetenders were sent on Sunday and Monday evening, she said.

When heavy vehicles at the site began to separate some of the debris on Monday without spraying water,

raising huge plumes of dust, people in the area tried to prevent the work, Ms. Raju said.

Mr. Singh met residents on Monday evening, assuring them that the agencies handling the debris would spray water before it was removed.

"Edifice Engineering and Vijaya Steels, the two demolition agencies, will separate the steel from the debris, and will spray water around the sites before they begin

work on Tuesday," Mr. Singh said. Prompt Enterprises which will handle the debris removal, will take up spraying when they begin work, he added.

Maradu municipal chairperson T.H. Nadeera said that dust was an issue around the other demolished flats as well, but a few residents around Alfa Serene had moved to rented accommodations before the implosion, anticipating such issues.



Residents of Maradu wearing masks to escape dust. • H. VIBHU

# Ayyappa devotees throng Pandalam

Team carrying sacred jewellery to reach Sabarimala tomorrow for Makaravilakku

RADHAKRISHNAN KUTTOOR  
PATHANAMTHITTA

Thousands of Ayyappa devotees thronged Pandalam town here on Monday afternoon to witness the annual ceremonial procession carrying *Thiruvabharanam*, the sacred jewellery of Lord Ayyappa, from the Pandalam Valiyakoickal Sastha temple to Sabarimala for the Makaravilakku festival.

The *Thiruvabharanam* was shifted from the strongroom of the Srambickal Palace to the adjoining Valiyakoickal Sastha temple at 4.30 a.m. and devotees were allowed to have its darshan till noon.

The sacred jewellery were put in three wooden boxes to be carried on head by a 25-member team of devotees led by Guruswami Kulathinal Gangadharan Pillai all the way to Sabarimala.

The temple head priest performed special rituals and Neeranjanam aarati by 12.50 p.m. and a kite, which the devotees believe is the Sree Krishnaparunthu, was soon found hovering in the sky. The entire atmosphere was charged with devotion and 'Ayyappa Sarana' mantras rent the air.

P. Ramavarma Raja of the



The Thiruvabharanam procession sets off to Sabarimala from Pandalam on Monday. • LEJU KAMAL

Pandalam Palace handed over the ceremonial sword to the royal representative, R. Pradeepkumar Varma, who is escorting the jewellery.

N. Vasu, Travancore Devswom Board president; N. Vijayakumar and K.N. Hari, board members, P.B. Noohu, District Collector; and G. Jayadev, District Police Chief, were present.

Reminiscent of the royal days of the past, the palace representative was taken on a palanquin up to the Kaipuzha Palace on the opposite bank of the Achencoil

river to seek the blessings of the eldest female member of the royal family there, before proceeding to Sabarimala.

**Rousing reception**

Devotees accorded rousing reception to the procession at different places before it reached the Puthiyakavu Devi temple at Ayroor in the afternoon. The procession will resume the journey on Tuesday morning and will halt at the Laha Sathram, near Plappally, in the night.

The procession will reach Valiyanavattom near Pampa

on Wednesday afternoon.

The TDB authorities and Ayyappa Seva Sanghom volunteers will accord a reception to the Thiruvabharanam at Sabarimala Sannidhanam by 6.15 p.m. on Wednesday.

Tantri Kandararu Maheswararu Mohanarau, assisted by Melsanthi A.K. Sudheer Namboodiri, will adorn the deity with the jewellery. Another ritualistic deeparadhana, Makaravilakku, will be held at Ponnambalamedu, a hill facing Sabarimala, immediately after the deeparadhana at the temple.

# KCR, Jagan reach water sharing deal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

A six-hour meeting between Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and his Andhra Pradesh counterpart Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy on Monday ended in both of them reaching an understanding to divert water from Godavari river to ayacut in Krishna basin for optimal utilisation of river waters in the two riparian States.

It was decided that they will look in detail at the next meeting on the point from where Godavari will be diverted and places where the water will reach. How the water will be utilised and the model for the purpose will also be discussed, a release after the meeting said.

Mr. Rao and Mr. Reddy met at the former's camp office here and decided to adopt a give and take approach in all administrative matters. They asked the Chief Secretaries over phone from the meeting hall to meet shortly to resolve pending issues of bifurcation of institutions listed under Schedules 9 and 10 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act.

# Fight elections on Amaravati issue, Naidu dares Jagan

I will quit politics if YSRCP is voted back, says TDP chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PENUKONDA

Upping the ante on the contentious issue of shifting the State capital from Amravati, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president N. Chandrababu Naidu offered to quit politics if all 151 YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) MLAs resigned and contested elections successfully on the issue.

Throwing a challenge at the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government, Mr. Naidu asked the Chief Minister to hold elections again. If the people voted Mr. Reddy back to power, showing their support for the three-capital idea, he was ready to quit politics forever, Mr. Naidu said at a public meeting here on Monday afternoon.

As part of the campaign against the three-capital idea, Mr. Naidu began his rally from the Kodikonda checkpoint. YSRCP workers tried to stop the convoy, but the police preempted it, and also made preventive arrests. Accusing the government of getting "tailor-made" reports from the Boston Consulting Group and C.N. Rao committee, Mr.



TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu and CPI State secretary K. Ramakrishna join a rally in Anantapur. • R.V.S. PRASAD

# Panel seeks farmers' views

STAFF REPORTER  
VIJAYAWADA

A high-power committee has asked Amaravati farmers, who have been protesting against the A.P. government's proposal to set up three capitals, to convey their queries, opinions and views to the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) Commissioner by January 17. The 16-member panel will look into the views and consider their opinions before submitting its report to the government.

Naidu asked people to celebrate Bhogiby burning copies of the reports.

Mr. Naidu said he was not against the development of Rayalaseema, but favoured the 'One State One Capital' approach. He said Mr. Reddy

# Clear pending dues, private hospitals urge Centre

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

With several crores due from the Union and State governments for the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) and the Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS), hospitals have threatened to suspend cashless service under these two schemes citing financial constraints.

Hospitals claimed they were unable to bear day-to-day expenditure and pay salaries to their employees.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Devi Shetty, cardiac surgeon and founder of Narayana Health, said: "At least now the government will be aware of the health industry and give us the payment that is due, as well as the realistic tariffs. As of now, we will continue the scheme but after the first week of March we will take a decision and stop cashless treatment," he said.

**Deadline set**

He said they would give the governments a month's time before suspending the service. A press release by the hospital managements alleged that four insurance companies were dictating the reimbursement, which was less than what was incurred by the hospitals to render the services.

R. Ravindra, president of Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes' Association, said: "ECHS is for the armed forces. Every month, a certain amount of their salary is being cut for the health insurance, under which their family has to be covered. Thus, there is a special rate for them. The government has so much money but still hesitates to pay it to us."

# Hindu Jagarana Vedike takes out rally against proposed Jesus statue

K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ  
KANAKAPURA

The Hindu Jagarana Vedike (HJV) on Monday launched a campaign to prevent what it called "Christianisation" in Karnataka's Kapalabetta, where a 114-ft-tall statue of Jesus Christ is proposed to be installed. Controversial RSS ideologue Kalladka Prabhakar Bhat, who led a rally, alleged that the proposed statue was a "conspiracy for conversions."

Harobe village, where Kapalabetta is located, turned into a fortress, with the police barring entry of outsiders.

The rally saw nearly a 1,000 activists from Hindu right-wing organisations congregate at Kanakapura in Ramanagaram district. Activists were mobilised from Bengaluru, Mysuru, Channarayana and Kanakapura town. BJP leader Ashwath Narayan, party candidate in

the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, also took part in the rally.

Giving a new twist to the controversy, an HJV pamphlet and several speakers at the rally claimed that Kapalabetta was originally called "Muneeshwara Betta", a holy site of Hindus.

However, Kapalabetta and Muneeshwara Betta are two different hillocks, at least two km apart, in two villages, Harobe and Kadle Doddi respectively



Two-wheelers that were set on fire at Korbagalli in Bhainsa, Nirmal district, on Sunday night. • S. HARPAL SINGH

# Uneasy calm in Bhainsa after communal clash

S. HARPAL SINGH  
BHAINSA

Uneasy calm prevailed in the communally sensitive town of Bhainsa in Telangana's Nirmal district on Monday, after the communal violence on Sunday night. Sporadic incidents of stone throwing and one of arson disrupted the peace during the day.

Two groups belonging to different communities were involved in a bout of stone pelting, arson and rioting late on Sunday night. The town observed a bandh even as prohibitory orders were

imposed and Internet services withdrawn on Monday morning.

Violence took place in the narrow bylanes of Korbagalli and Bhoigalli which left 11 civilians injured. Also injured in the incident were Nirmal Superintendent of Police C. Shashidhar Raju, Bhainsa DSP Narsing Rao, Inspector Venugopal Rao and Mudhole SI Ashok among others.

The incident took place around 11 p.m. on Sunday when locals of Korbagalli allegedly objected to a trio belonging to one community

riding past on their noisy motorcycle repeatedly through the narrow bylane. The youths came back with scores of members of their community and indulged in stone pelting and arson leaving the residents of that locality scared, said an eyewitness, Dabulka Mohan of Bhoigalli, whose two motorcycles were burnt down by the attackers. Arson caused damage to 12 houses and 24 motorcycles, said Inspectors-General of Police Y. Nagi Reddy of North Zone region and P. Promod Kumar.





**Filmmaker Manmohan Mahapatra passes away**

**BHUBANESWAR**  
Manmohan Mahapatra, renowned Odia filmmaker and winner of eight consecutive national awards, passed away here on Monday. He was 69. He was suffering from multiple ailments. An alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), he had carved a niche for himself in parallel cinema. His film, *Seeta Raati*, had won the Rajat Kamal in the National Film Awards, 1982.

**Navy adopts fuel with higher specifications**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Indian Navy in collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) has adopted a new fuel with higher technical specifications, High Flash High Speed Diesel (HFHSD - IN 512), which was formally launched on Monday. "The new specification will not only ensure a better quality fuel but also result in a reduced carbon footprint," the Navy said in a statement.

**Four persons get life term for rape in T.N.**

**THANJAVUR**  
The mahila court in Thanjavur on Monday awarded life sentence till death to four persons found guilty of raping a woman in Kumbakonam on December 1, 2018. The victim, a 27-year-old woman from New Delhi, had arrived in the town at night to attend a training programme as part of her job. She was on her way to a lodge when she was gang-raped.

**Minor injured in firing by cousin while playing**

**SHIMLA**  
A four-year-old girl was injured after her five-year-old cousin shot her using her grandfather's licensed gun while playing in Himachal Pradesh's Shimla district on Monday, police said. The incident took place in Sharnal village under Rampur police station. The girl, Ninika, sustained a bullet injury on her right hand, Sub-Divisional Police Officer Abhimanju Verma said. PTI

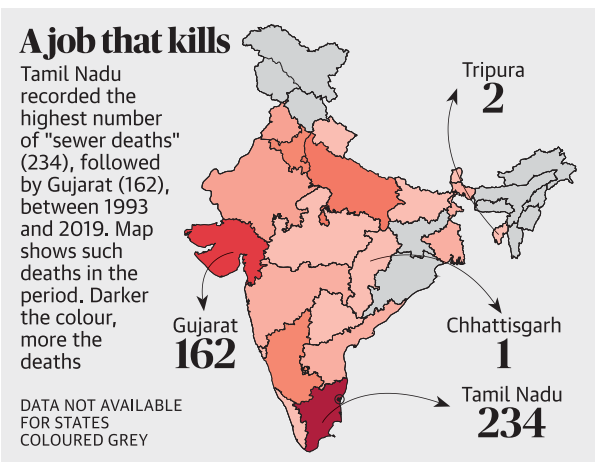
# Maharashtra, Gujarat lag behind in compensation for sewer deaths

Committee reviews implementation of manual scavenging prohibition law

**DAMINI NATH**  
NEW DELHI

Of the 926 deaths inside sewers in the country, from 1993 till December 31, 2019, families of 172 victims were yet to receive compensation, with Gujarat having the highest number of cases where the amount was not paid or the payment was unconfirmed (48), while Maharashtra was yet to pay or confirm payment of compensation in any of its 32 cases, according to data from the National Commission for Safai Karmacharis (NCSK).

**Lagging behind**  
During a meeting of the Central Monitoring Committee under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, which is meant to review the implementation of the law, on January 8, States that were found lagging behind in the rehabilitation of manual scavengers



were asked to comply soon, NCSK Chairperson and Member of the Committee Manhar Valjibhai Zala said on Monday. He added that in most of the sewer death cases since 1993, when the NCSK was established, compensation to the families of the victims had been paid.

Tamil Nadu, which had the highest number of such deaths, had paid compensa-

tion in all but seven of the 234 cases. Gujarat was yet to pay or confirm payment in 48 of the 162 sewer deaths recorded in the State, and in 31 of those cases, the legal heir could not be traced, the data showed.

**Practice continues**  
According to the NCSK, a total of 53,598 people, of which 29,923 were in Uttar

## SC asks for response to homebuyer's plea

Notice to govt. on Insolvency Ordinance

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the government to respond to a petition challenging the newly promulgated Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance of 2019, which retrospectively prohibits individual homebuyers from initiating insolvency proceedings against builders.

A Bench led by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman issued notice to the government and ordered status quo in the case of insolvency applications already filed by homebuyers in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). The order was based on a petition filed by a



homebuyer, Manish Kumar. Section 3 of the ordinance prescribes a minimum threshold for initiating insolvency proceedings before the NCLT. It required that NCLT need to take cognisance only if it receives an application for insolvency process jointly filed by 10% or 100 in number of the total allottees/homebuyers, whichever is lesser, from the same project.

## CBI books IRP, his accomplice on graft charge

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

In a first, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested an Interim Resolution Professional (IRP), along with the director of an asset reconstruction firm, for allegedly demanding and receiving a bribe from a former consultant to a Hyderabad company.

The accused have been identified as Arun Mohan, the IRP, and Paresh Kumar, the director and the chief executive officer of the Multimax Asset Reconstruction Private Limited. Provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act have been invoked against them. The case has been registered on the basis of a complaint filed by the victim's husband.

## Govt. launches road accident database

System will be piloted in six States

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The government on Monday launched a central accident database management system that will help in analysing causes of road crashes and in devising safety interventions to reduce such accidents in the country.

The IT tool, known as the Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD), has been developed by the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) and will be implemented by the National Informatics Centre. The project costs ₹258 crore and is being supported by the World Bank.

The system will be first piloted in the six States with

highest fatalities from road crashes - Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

The IRAD will be improved on the basis of the learnings from the trial, following which it will be rolled out across the country.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the IRAD at the road safety stakeholders' meet. Mr. Gadkari said that around 30,000 tablets would be distributed to police personnel across the country to record data on accidents.

## DGCA provides IndiGo relief, extends deadline

'Engines to be replaced in 4 months'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has provided relief to IndiGo and extended the deadline for replacing all snag-prone Pratt and Whitney (PW) engines in the airline's fleet by four months, though the engine maker recently identified a new problem.

In November 2019, the DGCA instructed IndiGo to replace 120 engines on its PW-powered A320neo planes by the end of January 2020, following four instances of mid-air engine shutdowns in the span of a week. However, on December 16, 2019, PW notified a new cause for glitches in the

low-pressure turbine in engines - "fracture of Mid Turbine Frame (MTF) Piston seal" - and advised boroscopic inspection of the engines. Following this, another 15 engines were identified for replacement. The watchdog has now said that the airline can replace all its engines by May 31, 2020.

In a statement, the DGCA said that IndiGo will be able to replace only 70% of these engines by the January 31 deadline. "The procurement of modified engines was adversely impacted due to holidays during Christmas and New Year at MRO [maintenance, repair and overhaul] facilities," the DGCA reasoned.

## Register your drones or face penalty: govt.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has asked all drone owners to voluntarily register their drones before January 31, failing which they would be penalised with a prison sentence of up to two years or a fine of up to ₹10 lakh.

As per the rules framed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), all drones in India must be registered on the Digital Sky portal and must have a unique identification number. All drone operators must also have an Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP). Both came into effect from December 1, 2018.

According to the rules, if a person operates a drone without registering it, he or she may be booked for endangering someone's life or for negligence with respect to machinery- both of which are crimes under the Indian Penal Code and carry a punishment of up to six months.

## The Hindu Young World Quiz to be held in 17 cities

It will be launched on January 18

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

The 20th edition of *The Hindu Young World Quiz* will be held in 17 cities across the country from January 18.

It is one of the longest running and largest live school quizzes as *The Hindu Young World* steps into the 30th year.

### Two categories

The competition is open to students in two categories - Juniors (classes 4 to 6) and Seniors (from classes 7 to 9). Each team must have two members and register online. Any number of teams can take part from the same school by paying a registration fee of ₹200 per team.

However, the team members must be from the same



school/branch and cross teams are not allowed. All entrants would get participation certificates and there would be audience prizes too.

The quiz would be held in Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kozhikode, Kochi, Vijayawada, Coimbatore, Hyderabad and Delhi on different dates from January 18.

For registration and further details, log on to [www.thehindu.com/yw-quiz](http://www.thehindu.com/yw-quiz).

### WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Tuesday:** Rain/Thundershowers observed at most places over Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and east Rajasthan and at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, north Haryana, Saurashtra and Kutch.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala.....	—	21.5	12.4	Kozhikode.....	—	33.0	22.4
Ahmedabad.....	—	29.5	17.5	Kurnool.....	—	33.1	18.2
Aizawl.....	—	18.6	—	Lucknow.....	—	16.0	6.2
Allahabad.....	—	22.9	7.2	Madurai.....	—	32.6	21.4
Bengaluru.....	—	27.4	17.4	Mangaluru.....	—	36.6	20.8
Bhopal.....	—	—	—	Mumbai.....	—	30.1	21.5
Bhubaneswar.....	—	26.0	11.4	Mysuru.....	—	28.5	15.2
Chandigarh.....	—	18.7	11.3	New Delhi.....	—	23.4	8.0
Chennai.....	—	29.2	21.2	Patna.....	—	15.2	8.2
Coimbatore.....	—	30.7	20.4	Port Blair.....	—	29.4	22.0
Dehradun.....	—	21.9	9.5	Puducherry.....	—	30.4	19.4
Gangtok.....	—	15.2	6.2	Pune.....	—	29.5	15.9
Goa.....	—	33.0	21.4	Raipur.....	—	29.0	11.8
Guwahati.....	—	25.0	9.6	Ranchi.....	—	25.2	7.2
Hubballi.....	—	29.0	17.0	Shillong.....	—	17.0	5.1
Hyderabad.....	—	32.0	14.8	Shimla.....	9.0	11.0	7.7
Imphal.....	—	—	4.8	Srinagar.....	—	—	—
Jaipur.....	—	23.2	11.4	Thiruvananthapuram.....	—	32.5	21.5
Kochi.....	—	31.6	21.6	Tiruchi.....	—	31.6	21.6
Kohima.....	—	16.0	6.2	Vijayawada.....	—	30.0	19.2
Kolkata.....	—	24.2	11.1	Visakhapatnam.....	—	27.1	18.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing						Yesterday
CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad.....	78	28	38	257	177	■ ■ ■
Bengaluru.....	11	68	53	90	99	■ ■ ■
Chennai.....	36	33	53	233	—	■ ■ ■
Delhi.....	15	72	48	436	379	■ ■ ■
Hyderabad.....	03	74	44	155	131	■ ■ ■
Kolkata.....	32	105	28	227	225	■ ■ ■
Lucknow.....	48	47	83	425	—	■ ■ ■
Mumbai.....	03	19	36	211	128	■ ■ ■
Pune.....	74	26	83	188	134	■ ■ ■
Visakhapatnam.....	19	82	62	193	193	■ ■ ■

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 437 indicating a dangerous level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 32

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO<sub>2</sub>**: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
**NO<sub>2</sub>**: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
**CO**: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.  
**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>**: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

### Schoolboy injured as javelin pierces skull

**HOWRAH**

A sports event turned into a nightmare as a student was injured when a javelin pierced his skull at Shyampur here on Monday, a police officer said. He was operated upon at the State-run SSKM Hospital in Kolkata, where he was admitted in a serious condition, sources said.

The Class VI student was kept under observation at the hospital after the javelin was taken out, which perforated a side of his skull, sources said. PTI

## Woman ostracised for going to court

Forced to migrate from village over her engagement as an anganwadi worker

**SATYASUNDAR BARIK**  
BHUBANESWAR

A woman and her family have allegedly been ostracised for seven years in Odisha's Puri district for defying her village's diktat and opting to go to court to settle a dispute over her engagement as an anganwadi worker.

Villagers, including her own parents staying in Bhatpada village under Brahmagiri block, have stopped talking to her in public due to an unwritten decree since 2013, said Bhanumati Pradhan, who along with her husband and children were forced to migrate from the village.

In 2007, the State govern-

ment had issued an advertisement for the vacant post of an anganwadi worker, offering a monthly remuneration of ₹1000. A government panel had found her suitable for the post among the short-listed candidates. Three months later, the government came up with revised guidelines for the post and due to the changes, Kanchanmani Jena, another candidate, was selected and issued an engagement letter.

Ms. Pradhan challenged the government order, both at the District Collector's office and the Orissa High Court, stating it was illegal to come up with guidelines when the selection process was almost complete. In



Bhanumati Pradhan

2012, the High Court ruled in her favour.

This did not go down well with the villagers who reportedly wanted Ms. Jena to continue. The villagers refused to receive food from Ms. Pradhan, as a result of which her engagement as an anganwadi worker did not

last long. The case is now pending before the Supreme Court after another candidate challenged the High Court order in the apex court.

"I was pressurised to withdraw my claim over the post. On failing to do so, my family would have faced social boycott. I had agreed to withdraw the case in lieu of the ₹60,000 I had spent for fighting court cases. But, the villagers wanted the case to be withdrawn immediately," Ms. Pradhan said.

"When the agreement collapsed, my in-laws were socially boycotted. Since 2013, we have not been getting any help from the villagers," she said.





## Unhelpful combativeness

PM Modi must address the concerns about the CAA instead of misinterpreting them

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, or CAA, 2019, intended only to grant citizenship to a certain class of people, and not to deny citizenship to anyone is factually accurate. But his extrapolation that hence the Act's critics are misinformed is unfounded and misleading. The concern expressed by many is not that it allows citizenship to people escaping persecution from neighbouring countries; on the contrary the fundamental opposition to the law is that it does so in a discriminatory and inadequate manner. The CAA introduces a religious test in classifying victims of persecution, and granting them citizenship in a secular republic. The one strand of opposition, among indigenous communities in the Northeastern States, is indeed against granting citizenship rights to anyone, regardless of religion. Mr. Modi appeared to be eager to pacify them, as he should be, by reiterating that safeguards are being included in the law to protect the cultural and linguistic rights of indigenous groups. When it comes to addressing the legitimate and well-founded concerns of constitutional experts, the Opposition and several State governments, he tends to turn unhelpfully combative.

If Mr. Modi and his colleagues are genuinely concerned that there is misinformation, they must reach out to the critics rather than disparage them. Instead, party functionaries have latched on to the situation as yet another opportunity for political propaganda, a communal one at that, and launched a marathon monologue. If the CAA's provisions reflect the BJP's Hindutva philosophy, the straw man argument further accentuates it. The suggestion is that the CAA's opponents are opposed to giving refuge to persecuted Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, and Christian minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, which they are not. The CAA's rationale is that these countries have a state religion, and religious minorities face persecution. But persecution need not be only religious in nature. In Sri Lanka, Tamils have suffered in the hands of the establishment and the dominant Sinhals. Moreover, Islamic sects, Shias and Ahmadiyyas, and non-believers that have come under attack in these three countries are denied the benefit under the CAA for no logical reason. The explanation that the current CAA is only remedying a grievance left over by Partition is unconvincing. Afghan refugees should not have qualified by that reasoning. In truth, the popular suspicion of the government's intent draws from its political rhetoric and the link between a National Register of Indian Citizens and the CAA that its functionaries repeatedly seek to forge. Critics have laid out their concerns regarding the CAA; it is the government that needs to explain its position. By repeatedly misinterpreting the concerns, the government betrays an unwillingness to engage on the issue.

### Vote for status quo

The ruling party's win in Taiwan will make the dispute with China more difficult to resolve

Taiwan's pro-democracy President Tsai Ing-wen's re-election, with a record mandate since the country's first direct elections of 1996, could further strain ties with China. Ms. Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) suffered major losses in the 2018 local elections, but on Saturday, she took over 57% of the vote against her challenger, Han Kuo-yu of the Kuomintang party, which once ruled in China before moving to Taiwan. Opposition to Beijing's one-country two-systems policy has long defined the ruling DPP. The Hong Kong protests have only served to bring into sharp relief the consolidation of democracy and sovereignty in Taiwan ahead of the weekend's elections. Indeed, the Opposition's landslide victory in Hong Kong's local elections in November added momentum to Ms. Tsai's own prospects. In a campaign marred by allegations of Chinese fake news and social media trolls on DPP candidates, she was subject to attacks on the authenticity of her degree from the London School of Economics, which the latter has confirmed. Also, the ruling party's consolidation has coincided with the emergence of an assertive China, and with attempts of U.S. President Trump to use Taipei as a bargaining chip in his trade war with China.

Taiwan's future remains unfinished business for China's President Xi Jinping, who, in October, presided over the 70th anniversary of the revolution. He has in the recent past declared his intention to use force to unify Taiwan with the mainland. For his part, Mr. Trump departed from protocol after his election when he received Ms. Tsai's congratulatory call. Recent U.S. legislation to promote Taipei relations did not go down well in Beijing. China has meanwhile leveraged its economic clout to influence much of Africa and Latin America to withhold recognition to Taiwan as a sovereign state. According formal recognition to the island nation's official name, the Republic of China, is among the DPP's conditions for initiating dialogue with Beijing. A ratcheting of the rhetoric by Taipei and Beijing is more likely now. But it is unlikely that Mr. Xi would want to risk global re-creation from any aggressive military display either against Taiwan or Hong Kong. Taiwan's zealous defence of its market economy and democratic freedoms may not seem compatible with the China model of state-sponsored capitalism and one-party rule. Yet, it may not be too fanciful to imagine the establishment of a possible *modus vivendi*, built on the mutual interest on either side to maintain the operation of market forces. A resolution of the historic dispute could be long-drawn. But a constructive and democratic international response would be for the big powers to desist from exploiting the situation to promote their own interests.

# Sparkling people, a spiritless Opposition

The streets are in ferment over the Citizenship Act, but the political Opposition is still to catch up



VIDYA SUBRAHMANIAM

The long wall along the Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) University in Delhi is plastered with posters affirming Hindu-Muslim unity, portraits of Bhagat Singh and Bhim Rao Ambedkar and – no surprises here – charcoal scrawls against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, or CAA, 2019, and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The Central Government has stepped back for now on the NRC, clearly in response to civil protests that have shown no signs of giving over, instead growing bigger and wider and taking the shape of a people's movement covering large swathes of urban India.

### Flag as the pivot

The most striking thing on the JMI wall is the national flag, hundreds of which are strung together in such a way that the tricolour runs parallel with the road. It is a beautiful, moving sight, offering scope for multiple interpretations. The flag as an act of both patriotism and protest. The flag as a symbol of citizenship as well as the citizens' ownership of the country. It is known by now that in combination, the CAA and the NRC could be lethal for Muslims. The CAA offers priority citizenship to non-Muslim illegal migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, while the NRC, when implemented, will demand citizenship proof from India's own citizens. Though anyone from any

religion could be left out of the NRC for lack of proper documentation, the fear is that unlike Hindus and other religionists who will be protected via the CAA, Muslims stand the risk of losing their citizenship. Muslim anxieties have been stoked by Home Minister Amit Shah's unceasing threats to pluck out and evict the *ghuspetiye* (Muslim infiltrators)

It is against this backdrop that JMI erupted in protest on December 15, 2019. However, the police crackdown that followed was so brutal that it set off a cascading reaction beyond anyone's expectation and certainly beyond the control of a government that arrogantly believed that the people would acquiesce in its every unjust decision. Jamia's answer to civil police action was the flag and the Constitution. In an instant, the message communicated itself to other secular-spirited Indians. A lot more in numbers than previously believed, these were men and women who understood that there can be no India without Muslims. The young, assumed to be apolitical or coopted, emerged from their universities in swarms, proving that they carried in their blood India's founding values of equality and inclusion.

Since then the waving of the flag and the reading of the preamble to the Constitution have spread like a contagion, but one that is lovely to behold. Indeed, the preamble seems to have become an anthem in itself as spaces in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and other smaller towns have filled up to resounding recitals of its inspirational content. Equally significant has been the emergence of women in leadership roles and from within conservative homes. They have taken the lead whether in college assemblies



G. RAMAKRISHNA

or in protest marches, raising slogans loud enough to be heard above the din of the city, or as in the case of Delhi's Shaheen Bagh, simply assembling to show off their strength. Shaheen Bagh is a Muslim-majority neighbourhood and conventionally, women here have been home bound. Yet since the day of the Jamia crackdown, they have stayed put, day and night, in a make-shift pandal, waving the tricolour and energetically singing along patriotic songs. The flag can be seen imprinted on the cheeks of little children as also on the wrists of their mothers. Many here are uneducated but know what is at stake: They are fighting for the country and their place in it. And hence the symbolism of the flag which has now become a matter-of-fact part of their protests, their lives and their collective Indian identity.

The irony is unmissable. All these years, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its right-wing allies had used the flag as a weapon against Muslims and secular Indians. Between 2016 and 2017, scores of BJP volunteers took out tiranga yatras ostensibly to instil feelings of pride in the country but in actual fact to taunt Muslims and liberal Indians.

The then Human Resource Development Minister, Smriti Irani, decreed that each of India's Central Universities will fly the flag

atop a 207-foot high mast. Four years later, the Narendra Modi government has been rendered speechless by the sight of thousands of flags flying in all corners of India. The BJP used the flag as a threat, as an instrument of coercion, as a test of loyalty for alleged "anti-nationals", and finally as a symbol of the Prime Minister's New India.

### A new India

Today, a different version of New India confronts the rulers, one that has turned the "anti-national" slur on its head. Unlike in the case of the BJP, those waving the flag now are not threatening anyone but are reading the preamble alongside and asserting the inviolability of the Constitution's basic tenets. They are the patriots, not the pseudo-patriots populating the BJP.

The largely peaceful rebellion and the beauty of the spirit on show are as compelling as the message they radiate: that there exist people in India who will not be cowed down by the aggression of Hindutva, who believe in the essential unity of Indians and who have the courage of their convictions. Some questions nonetheless arise. How long can the protesters withstand the might of the state? The Prime Minister continues to be immensely popular and electorally saleable. The anti-CAA-NRC protests have also consolidated his majoritarian base.

### Of and by the people

The most obvious questions, though, concern India's political Opposition. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been outspoken and has matched wit and word with Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah. The Congress has expressed

its opposition to the CAA-NRC architecture. But no politician till now has shown the leadership quality essential to take the protests forward -- from colleges and the buzzing streets of cities and towns into the farthest villages. Partly the reason for this is the people-driven nature of the protests. The movement has been of and by the people with the participants apparently keen to keep it that way. It is a wariness born of apprehension that the presence of political parties will politicise the protests and dilute their impact, which in turn will give a handle to the rulers to condemn the phenomenon as a whole as agenda-driven.

It is also evident that the political parties have lived so long in fear of a Hindu-Muslim polarisation that they have started to shy away from doing anything that could be seen as favouring Muslims. The Prime Minister knows this. In his rallies he has been asking whether the Opposition would offer citizenship to all Muslims from the neighbourhood. The question is intended as a trap and deliberately avoids nuances. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is an example of the secular dilemma. He has the right instincts but he has refrained from showing up at the protests because he has an election to fight next month.

There has not been a more opportune time than now for India's Opposition to prove that they are in the fight. The ferment on the streets can remain citizen-driven. But surely a strong-willed Opposition can lend outside support, ensuring the fight does not fade away and India is rescued from those who want to change its character.

Vidya Subrahmaniam is a Delhi-based journalist



ABHAY DATAR

In Maharashtra, the three-party coalition government, of the Shiv Sena, the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), under the leadership of Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray, seems to have stabilised after a bumpy start. Though negotiations over Ministry composition and portfolio allocations were long-drawn, the issue has settled. All this has led to talk of an ideological realignment in Maharashtra politics. More significantly, commentators have spoken of a tempering of the Sena's long-standing Hindutva positions. So has the tiger really changed its stripes?

To answer this, one needs answers to one other question. Why did the Sena on one hand and the Congress-NCP on the other come together in the first place? The answer lies in how the BJP treated its allies and political opponents, at the Central level and in the State. The opponents were treated harshly; inquiries were ordered with investigations by central agencies. A number of heavyweights from the Congress and the NCP joined the BJP. It would be foolish to say that this exodus was

sparked by ideological considerations. If some realised that they had no future in their local political sphere because of the Congress-NCP alliance, many were more concerned about the maintenance of support networks that they had carefully nurtured over decades. The BJP too wooed those it thought would strengthen the party in areas where it was weak.

### The binding factor

The case with the Sena is similar yet distinct. The BJP appears tired of its allies and, ideally, would like a state of affairs where it could win elections without them. It tried doing so in the 2017 municipal elections in Mumbai. The stresses and strains in the BJP-Sena alliance during the tenure of the last government emerged primarily because of these efforts of the BJP. The Sena started to believe that the BJP was out to render it politically nugatory, prompting it to adopt a tough negotiating stance during seat-sharing talks and then later when efforts were being made to form a government. Thus, the three-party coalition has come about because all concerned were worried about their sheer political existence. An anti-BJP stance is the only common factor here.

The Congress's central leadership had misgivings about an alliance with the Sena given its stand on Hindutva. But the Sena played down these very positions. The party's opposition to the Citizen-



VIVEK BENDRE

ship (Amendment) Act, 2019-National Register of Citizens (NRC), alongwith with the statement of the Chief Minister and Sena head, Uddhav Thackeray, that he would not allow students to be assaulted in the State and the relatively mild handling of the anti-CAA-NRC protests is cited as evidence of this de-emphasising. Moreover, such positions are being taken to mean that the ideological transformation of the Shiv Sena is on the anvil, or indeed has taken place. This naturally leads to the proposition that the coalition would last long since there are no ideological contradictions among them. This is indeed wishful thinking.

### On ideology

The hollowness of such analyses necessitates a look at the Sena's ideological positions which till date would demonstrate what it stands for. Though it began its journey as a party primarily asserting a regional identity, and that too in the Mumbai-Thane belt, its positions always had strong elements of Hindutva in them. The party's spread in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra in the late

1980s occurred primarily because of this positioning. Content analysis of the speeches of the Sena founder, Bal Thackeray from that period and even later would make this clear. It was this ideological complementarity that led the BJP to strike an alliance with it in the late 1980s and early 1990s which benefited both the parties. Thus the Sena till recently was not only the BJP's oldest ally but also its closest one ideologically. The party's stand during the Ram Janmabhoomi agitations and the subsequent communal riots is well-known – and which it has not retracted. Thus, one can reasonably conclude the sum and substance of its positions.

One could argue that all this was in the past and much has changed. But there are many who would remember that the previous Congress-NCP government had provided for reservations for Muslims – and stridently opposed by the BJP and the Sena. The demand to rename the city of Aurangabad to 'Sambhajanagar' has been a long-standing Sena demand. These two issues may now have been forgotten for the time being.

### Civic poll test

But what if there is communal conflict somewhere in Maharashtra? Or what if the Congress and the NCP raise a demand for minority reservations? Or what if the BJP launches a campaign on an issue where the Sena would find itself at

odds with its coalition partners? The seeming stability of the coalition is not a consequence of the Sena's ideological transformation; rather it is more about the partners having chosen to ignore contradictions by pretending they did not exist in the first place. But events could simply blow the coalition off course. The first such event where stability would be tested would be the next major round of civic body elections, in 2022. Elections to urban bodies (Mumbai and Pune) would certainly strain the coalition, whether or not the three arrive at a seat-sharing formula. This would more be so because in many places the partners would be fighting each other and not the BJP.

Besides, the BJP, now in search of an ally, has been making overtures to the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), headed by Raj Thackeray, the Chief Minister's cousin. There are enough indications that the alliance might be based on a common ideological positioning, namely Hindutva, with the MNS combining it with its regionalist politics. So the Sena would find itself competing for the same ideological constituency. It might then realise that the BJP, similar to what Sir Robert Peel did more than a century ago to the Whigs, has stolen its ideological clothes.

Dr. Abhay Datar teaches Political Science at People's College, Nanded, Maharashtra

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Bringing CAA into force

It is ironic that Prime Minister Narendra Modi bothers much about people from minority communities in the neighbouring countries who face religious persecution but ignores the ill-treatment of minorities in his own backyard (Front page, "CAA meant to give citizenship, not take it away, says PM Modi," Jan. 13). If he is keen on giving citizenship to persecuted minorities, why not draft a Refugees' Citizenship Act instead of the CAA? Further, the stubbornness of Home Minister Amit Shah in enforcing the CAA with scant regard for the sentiments of the people is highly deplorable. Instead of trying to take common Indian citizens into confidence, the Modi-Shah duo is beating around the bush. Here, it is unfortunate that though the Opposition parties are all sailing in the same boat,

some of them like the Trinamool Congress and the Bahujan Samaj Party have failed to join hands with the Congress to devise a joint strategy against the CAA-NRC combine.

A. JAINULABDEEN,  
Chennai

■ There is no doubt whatsoever that the CAA is indeed about "giving citizenship". The problem is not with the letter of the law, it is with its spirit and the intention behind formulating it, which pertains to the exclusion of one specific community from the Act's provisions. If the government truly believes in constitutional values, it should show equal compassion towards all persecuted communities.

SHAFAR,  
Hyderabad

■ There is widespread opposition to the CAA and the NRC across the country.

Even leaders attached to the ruling National Democratic Alliance have openly aired their dissent against an arbitrary imposition of the two. More than 20 lives have been lost in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. Amidst these agitations and protests, Mr. Shah's determination to implement the Act signals political arrogance. It is becoming obvious that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has mistaken its majority to be a mandate to implement a communal agenda without caring either for the concerns of the people or the sinking economy.

A.G. RAJMOHAN,  
Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

### Demolition report

Demolition of illegal structures alone is no solution since these buildings would not have come up had those responsible for implementing rules not turned a blind eye to

violations by builders. The active connivance of the builder-bureaucrat lobby is integral to the construction of such high rises. Those who ultimately buy these apartments end up paying a heavy price for no fault of theirs ("Two more Maradu towers brought down with precision," Jan. 13).

P. PRASANTHAMPY,  
Thiruvalla, Kerala

### Security over rights

Given a choice between legality and rights, the Supreme Court has opted for the former and ignored the untold hardships faced by the common man due to shutdown of Net services in the Kashmir Valley for more than five months (Op-Ed page, "Favouring public order over justice," Jan. 13). The decision will not help distraught Kashmiris to resume normal life anytime soon. The ruling has left a lot of scope for interpretation and the affected people may

now be at the mercy of bureaucrats and High Courts to get relief on a piecemeal and case-by-case basis. Periodic reviews would only be manipulated to maintain the status quo and the aggrieved citizens may not have the wherewithal, time and energy to pursue their case to a logical conclusion.

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:**  
The opening sentence and the headline of the story on a citizen's right to own private property (Jan. 13, 2020) were wrong. Both said that "right to private property" is a fundamental right. Right to private property is a human right, as explained later on in the story.

A clarification regarding "SC has no views on if 'access to Internet' is a fundamental right" (Jan. 11, 2020): The report is correct. It was initially misreported online that access to Internet was a fundamental right. The confusion is because the Supreme Court says quite categorically that the use of the medium of Internet for speech and expression (Article 19(1)(a)) and for trade and business (Article 19(1)(g)) are fundamental rights. However, on the question whether access to the Internet is a fundamental right, the Court said this had not been specifically argued and that it was not expressing any opinion on it. The distinction is between Internet as a technology and the use of Internet as a medium for exercising fundamental rights.

In the OpEd page article titled "Amidst a tragedy, an opportunity" (Jan. 8, 2020) the reference to writer David Horne in the opening sentence should be corrected to say Donald Horne.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in



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The court could have walked the extra mile and delved deeper into the question whether Internet is a fundamental right. It has missed the opportunity to set a historic precedent.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai