



You don't need CAA to grant citizenship, says Ashok Gehlot

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Iran makes first arrests over downing of Ukrainian airliner

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State Bank of India cuts fixed deposit rates by 15 bps

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Warner, Finch power Australia to 10-wicket win in first ODI against India

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NEARBY



J&K Internet links partially restored

NEW DELHI
The Jammu and Kashmir administration issued an order late on Tuesday to partially restore broadband Internet facilities in Kashmir Valley and 2G mobile connectivity in five districts in Jammu region. The order said there will be complete restriction on social media applications that may facilitate "peer to peer communication".

NEWS ▶ PAGE 12

JNU violence: court orders seizure of phones

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the police to summon and seize the phones of the members of the WhatsApp groups "United Against Left" and "Friends of RSS" in connection with the January 5 violence on JNU campus.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 13



THE HINDU wishes its readers a Happy Pongal
There will be no issue of The Hindu dated January 16, 2020 as Pongal is a holiday
Readers can access the online edition at www.thehindu.com



OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 15

After Modi's call, Trump likely to visit Delhi in late February

President keen on trip but impeachment process could influence the dates

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Security and logistics teams from Washington are expected in Delhi this week to prepare for a possible visit by U.S. President Donald Trump, multiple sources have confirmed to *The Hindu*.

The visit, which has not yet been announced, would bring Mr. Trump to India a year after he declined an invitation to be the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations, and will go ahead at the end of February as long as dates don't need to be changed to accommodate the impeachment process in the Senate.

The sources said the decision to visit India, at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation, was discussed during a telephone call between the leaders on January 7. Ac-



Strong ties: U.S. President Donald Trump with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New York City, in this file photo. • REUTERS

cording to the sources, Mr. Trump is "keen" to visit early in the year, ahead of elections in November, and both sides are working towards a visit in the last week of February. India's Ambassador to Washington, who is now the Foreign Secretary-designate,

Harsh Shringla met Mr. Trump before returning to Delhi, and will begin preparations for the visit.

With just weeks to go to the proposed visit, New Delhi is understood to have intimated its choice of Mr. Shringla's replacement and

Washington is expected to expedite its 'agreement' for his appointment.

Trade deal

Among the agreements the leaders hope to wrap up is a trade deal that has been pending since November 2018, when talks went into a standstill.

In June 2019, the U.S. cancelled India's preferential export 'GSP' status, and the government hopes Mr. Trump will announce a revocation of that decision during the visit.

India is also expected to announce further investments in the U.S., and a substantial increase in American oil imports. In particular, a major deal on civil aviation is being discussed, officials said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

SC rejects curative pleas of 2 Nirbhaya death row convicts

No merit in their appeals to spare them the gallows: Bench

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The curative petitions of Vinay Sharma, 26, and Mukesh Singh, 32, who were sentenced to death in the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case, were rejected by a five-judge Supreme Court Bench, led by Justice N.V. Ramana, on Tuesday.

In a three-page order, the Bench concluded, after an in-chamber consideration that began about 1.45 p.m., that there was no merit in their pleas to spare them from the gallows.

"We have gone through the curative petitions and relevant documents. In our opinion, no case is made out within the parameters indicated in the decision of this court in *Rupa Ashok Hurra versus Ashok Hurra*. Hence, the curative petitions are dismissed," the Bench held. Curative is a rare remedy



The mother of the victim flashes the victory sign outside the SC. • PTI

devised by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in its judgment in the *Rupa Ashok Hurra* case in 2002.

A party can take only two limited grounds in a curative petition – one, he was not heard by the court before the adverse judgment was passed, and two, the judge was biased.

A curative plea, which follows the dismissal of review petition, is the last legal avenue open for convicts in the

Supreme Court. Sharma was the first among the four convicts to file a curative.

The Bench also rejected their pleas to stay the execution of their death sentence and for oral hearing in open court.

Besides Justice Ramana, the Bench comprised Arun Mishra, Rohinton Nariman, R. Banumathi and Ashok Bhushan.

Mercy plea

Shortly after the Supreme Court ruling, Mukesh filed a mercy plea before the President, Tihar jail authorities said.

Mukesh, Sharma, Akshay Kumar Singh, 31, and Pawan Gupta, 25, are scheduled to be hanged at 7 a.m. on January 22 in Tihar jail. A Delhi court issued their death warrants on January 7.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Who says you cannot protest, asks judge

She was hearing bail plea of Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Additional sessions judge Kamini Lau, while hearing the bail plea of Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad in connection with the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act in Daryaganj last month, observed on Tuesday that the prosecution was behaving as if Jama Masjid was Pakistan.

When the prosecutor, representing the Delhi police, read out some social media posts of Mr. Azad to allege that he had incited violence, Dr. Lau said: "Where is the violence? What is wrong with any of these posts? Who says you cannot protest? Have



Chandrashekhar Azad

you read the Constitution?"

The judge said: "You are behaving as if Jama Masjid is Pakistan. Even if it was Pakistan, you can go there and protest. Pakistan was a part of undivided India."

The police pointed out that no prior permission had been taken for the protests, to which the court said: "What permission? SC [Supreme Court] has said re-

peated use of [Section] 144 is abuse [referring to the recent decision in a case related to Kashmir]."

When the prosecution said it had only drone images of the gathering in which Mr. Azad allegedly gave inflammatory speeches, the court said: "Do you think our Delhi police is so backward that they have no recorded evidence? In small matters, Delhi police have recorded evidence, why not in this incident?"

Mr. Azad's lawyer, Mehmood Pracha, said he [Mr. Azad] had only been reading the Constitution and speaking against the CAA-NRC.

(With PTI inputs)

AAP releases full list of 70 candidates for Delhi

24 new faces in the party list while 15 sitting legislators have been denied tickets

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday released its full list of 70 candidates for the Delhi Assembly elections due on February 8.

All seven AAP Ministers got party tickets and three of its 2019 Delhi Lok Sabha election candidates – Atishi, Dilip Pandey, and Raghav Chadha – made it to the list. Also, leaders who joined the party in the last one week – Ram Singh Netaji, Vinay Mishra and Shoaib Iqbal – got tickets.

The party has announced 24 new faces while 15 sitting MLAs have been dropped.



Arvind Kejriwal

The other two parties – the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party – have not yet announced their candidates for the elections.

"Best wishes to all. Don't

be complacent. Work v hard. People have lot of faith in AAP and u. God bless [sic]," AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said in a tweet.

46 MLAs retained

Of the existing 61 MLAs, 46 have made it to the list and the party has fielded eight women candidates, compared with six in 2015, said senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia.

In the 2015 Assembly elections, AAP had swept 67 of the 70 seats in Delhi. Later, the BJP won the Rajouri Garden bypoll after AAP legislator Jarnail Singh vacat-

ed the seat to contest the Punjab Assembly elections in 2017.

In 2019, after the Lok Sabha election, five AAP MLAs were disqualified by Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel under the anti-defection law.

AAP is also expected to come out with its election manifesto later this week.

The last date for filing of nominations is January 21 while January 24 is the last date for withdrawal of candidature.

The elections results will be out on February 11.

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 4

Kerala govt. challenges CAA in Supreme Court

Suit has been filed under Article 131

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Kerala became the first State to join citizens across the country to challenge in the Supreme Court the constitutionality of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, which fast-tracks grant of citizenship on the basis of religion.

The State has approached the Supreme Court nearly 15 days after the Assembly unanimously requested the Centre to abrogate the law on December 31, 2019.

And it comes just three days after the CAA came into effect on January 10.

'Original' jurisdiction

The original suit has been filed under Article 131 of the Constitution. The SC has "original" jurisdiction in disputes between States or the Centre and State(s). The Article allows it to directly take cognisance of such a dispute.

Kerala said in its suit that it would be compelled under Article 256 to comply with the CAA, which was "manifestly arbitrary, unreasonable, irrational and violative of fundamental rights".

The suit, represented by senior advocate Jaideep Gupta and G. Prakash, submitted, "Thus, there exists a dispute, involving questions of law and fact, between the State of Kerala and the Union of India, re-



Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan

garding the enforcement of legal rights as a State and as well for the enforcement of the fundamental, statutory constitutional and other legal rights of the inhabitants of the State of Kerala."

However, there have been two conflicting judgments from the SC by coordinate Benches on whether a State can file an original suit under Article 131 to challenge the constitutionality of a central law.

The first judgment reported in 2012 – *State of Madhya Pradesh vs Union of India* – held that States cannot challenge a Central law under Article 131.

The second judgment – *State of Jharkhand vs State of Bihar* – took the opposite view in 2015 and referred the question of law to a larger Bench of the Supreme Court for final determination.

The Centre may object to the maintainability of the Kerala suit when it comes up for hearing.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Hallmarking made must for gold jewellery

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

No jeweller will be allowed to sell gold jewellery or artefacts without hallmark from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) from January 15, 2021,

onwards, Consumer Affairs Minister Ramvilas Paswan announced on Tuesday.

If jewellery or artefacts made of 14, 18 and 22 carat gold are sold without a BIS hallmark, then the jeweller

could be charged penalty five times the cost of the object or even given imprisonment up to one year. Gold hallmarking is a purity certification and is voluntary in nature now.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Timings

DELHI

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

FRIDAY, JAN. 17

RISE 07:15 SET 17:48

RISE 00:00 SET 12:00

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	18	10
Safdarjang	18	10
Palam	16	09

Delhi Palam Today
17°C A cold and foggy morning is likely. There are chances of light rain/thundershower towards night.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
14°C Fall in day temperature is expected. Few spells of rain or thundershower are likely to occur.

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IN BRIEF

Two pump employees looted of ₹5 lakh
GHAZIABAD (U.P.)
Two employees of a petrol pump were allegedly attacked and looted of ₹5 lakh by car-borne miscreants on Tuesday, an official said. The incident took place around 3.30 p.m. in Niwari. Kapil and Ram Naresh left the fuel station to deposit the money in a bank in Modinagar when they were attacked by two miscreants. They snatched their bag containing the money and fired four rounds in the air while fleeing, owner of the fuel pump Ajay Tyagi said. PTI

Women protesters at Shaheen Bagh on Tuesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

‘Why has no govt. official come to meet us?’

Protesters say they respect HC order

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
Protesters at Shaheen Bagh on Tuesday said they respected the High Court’s position that law and order must be maintained but asked why no government official had come to meet them till now.
“We are talking to lawyers to plan our future course of action,” said Shaheen Kausar, a social activist who has been part of the anti-citizenship law protest at the site since it began on December 15. Ms. Kausar condemned the Centre for failing to take cognizance of the demands of the protesters.
“There has been no representation from the government,” she said, while demanding that a roll back of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens must be announced in writing.

On Monday, the area Station House Officer had appealed to protesters to leave one side of the road open but to no avail.
Meraj Khan, one of the organisers of the protest, said that such as move would cause safety issues.
“On multiple occasions outsiders have tried to cause trouble. Right now we keep a check on who is coming by checking ID cards, if one side is opened up, who will take that responsibility?” he said. Protesters also pointed out that the HC had not issued any directions to have the demonstrators removed.
Shortly after the HC’s direction were reported by the media, panicked protesters called up more supporters to come to Shaheen Bagh.
The situation, however, remained peaceful with the sit-in entering its 30th day on Wednesday.

Police to hold dialogue with protesters

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
The Delhi Police will hold a dialogue session with residents and traders to initiate the process of clearing the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch in Delhi which has been blocked for a month by people protesting against the amended citizenship law, officials said on Tuesday.
The move comes after the Delhi High Court directed the police to look into traffic restrictions on the stretch.
“The police has initiated the process of clearing a road at Shaheen Bagh near Jamia Millia Islamia. The police is following the policy of persuasion rather than force to clear the busy arterial road,” a government official said.
Officials said that the police will talk to the traders’ body, religious leaders and community elders to end the blockade.
Lakhs of commuters have faced inconvenience due to the closure of the road that links Delhi to Noida.

Shaheen Bagh stir: HC asks police to look into traffic restrictions

Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch has been closed since December 15

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the police to take a call on traffic restrictions on the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch, which has been closed since December 15 due to protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.
Whenever any agitation or protest is going on, the situation is fluid... it keeps on changing with the temperament of the protesters and resistance by other people, the HC noted, adding: “As police has to maintain law and order... it has all power, jurisdiction and authority to control traffic – whenever protests or agitations are going on – in the larger public interest”.
A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar said the court cannot issue any direction as to how to handle the agitation or protest or the place of

The stretch connects Delhi, Faridabad (Haryana) and Noida (Uttar Pradesh). ■ FILE PHOTO

protest and the traffic. “It all depends upon ground reality and the wisdom of the police, where situation may keep changing every 10 minutes,” it said.
The order came on plea by advocate and social activist Amit Sahni who contended that the road closure was causing huge inconvenience and hardship to lakhs of commuters everyday who have been compelled to take different routes for the last one month.

The plea said that the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch was crucial as it connects Delhi, Faridabad (Haryana) and Noida (Uttar Pradesh). It added that commuters are forced to take alternative routes such as the Delhi-Noida-Delhi (DND) Expressway and Ashram, which is causing massive traffic jams.
The plea said that the temporary closure of the stretch and the Okhla underpass has been extended repeatedly.

“Apart from the temporary road closures, traffic has also been affected as part of Mathura Road is dug up for the construction of an underpass, which is expected to ease the congestion at Ashram Chowk, Mathura Road and the adjoining arteries by connecting Nizamuddin to New Friends Colony,” the plea added.
The plea further contended that children who used the blocked stretch to reach their schools are now compelled to leave their homes two hours early in order to reach in time. It added that the authorities have failed to take appropriate action to give relief to the residents of the locality and lakhs of commuters of Delhi, U.P. and Haryana.
On January 10, the HC had refused to entertain a separate plea seeking directions for removal of demonstrators protesting against CAA at Shaheen Bagh.

NHRC team talks to Jamia students

V-C meets police chief, MHRD Secretary

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
A four-member team of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) visited Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) on Tuesday and recorded statements of students who were injured or witnessed police brutality inside the university library on December 15.
Written statements of 25 out of 40 students were recorded. The team, headed by a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP)-rank officer, will visit the university again on Wednesday to record statements of the remaining students as well as of university employees and security personnel.
Before taking written statements, the team interacted with all the students,

said a university official. The students then narrated the events of the police action.
The team is expected to visit the university on January 16 and 17 as well. Earlier, the university had said that all relevant evidence had been submitted to the NHRC for its perusal.
Meanwhile, JMI Vice-Chancellor Najma Akhtar met Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik and urged him to lodge an FIR in connection with the December 15 incident, said a senior police officer. Ms. Akhtar also met Ministry of Human Resource Development Secretary Amit Khare and requested him to set up an inquiry into the police action that had taken place in the university library.

Protesters converge at Jantar Mantar, assert their identity

This was to challenge Prime Minister’s remark on agitators

ELISHA VERMANI
NEW DELHI
Hundreds of people gathered at Jantar Mantar to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR) besides the “categorical mistreatment” of Muslim community at the hands of the police across the country.

The protesters said that the idea behind asserting their Muslim identity while registering dissent against the government is to challenge Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s remark that “those protesting can be identified by their clothes”.
Iqra Raza (20), a student of Delhi University, alleged that a policeman yelled “*in burqa walon ko pakdo*” at her during an anti-CAA protest. She said: “Policemen have constantly been using Islamophobic slurs while dealing with Muslim protesters, especially burqa-clad women, and that is extremely problematic. They justify their violence by saying that

Women protest under the banner of Jamia Coordination Committee at Jantar Mantar on Tuesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

they have been ordered to disperse the crowd but who has ordered them to mistreat us who are dressed differently.”

Songs of resistance
The protesters raised slogans like “*Ye desh humara aap ka, nahi kisi ke baap ka*”, “Inquilab Zindabad” and “Aazadi”. Many of them also sang songs of resistance and read out poems as an ode to Muslim women who have been at the helm of anti-CAA protests.

Addressing the crowd, Aamir Aziz (30), an alumna of Jamia Millia Islamia, said: “Pluralism is the very essence of India and that is what we are trying to protect by protesting against CAA and NRC.”
The protesters alleged that a stark difference could be seen in the way the police have been ordered to treat Muslim protesters as compared to non-Muslims and raised questions regarding the “brutal crackdown” in Jamia and Aligarh.

IN BRIEF

Student dies after fainting in school

NEW DELHI
A Class 2 student of Kendriya Vidyalaya died on Tuesday allegedly after he fell unconscious at the school during lunch time. The seven-year-old boy was standing in front of a canteen when he fainted. He was taken to Fortis Hospital where he was declared dead, said police.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	283	Gurugram	168
Ghaziabad	363	Faridabad	307
Noida	358	Greater Noida	360
Good Satisfactory Moderate			
0-50 51-100 101-200			
Poor Very poor Severe			
201-300 301-400 >401			
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB			

Minor among 4 hurt in fire

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
Four persons, including a minor girl, suffered injuries when a fire broke out at a house in Uttam Nagar on Tuesday, Delhi Fire Service (DFS) officials said.
DFS Director Atul Garg said the injured have been identified as Arti (14), Rajinder (40), Pappu (42) and Babu Lal (40). While Arti suffered 10% burns and Babu Lal 25% burns, the others suffered over 40% burns.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Panel discussion on “Is the Arab Spring Dawning Again?”. Panelists: Prof. Gulshan Dieltl, former Professor, Centre for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, JNU; Prof. Bansidhar Pradhan, Professor, Centre for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, JNU; and Dr. John Cherian, Foreign Editor, Frontline at Conference Room – I, India International Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.
Talk: “Doyens of the Instrumental Gharanas in North Indian Music” an illustrated lecture by Shailaja Khanna, a fifth generation amateur musician who writes on classical music. The presentation will focus on the performers following an anecdotal format at Lecture Room – II, Basement Annex, India International Centre (IIC), 6 p.m.
Talk: “Revisiting Classics with Trans-

Police team in U.K. for extradition hearing of bookie Sanjeev Chawla

He was allegedly involved in a match-fixing racket that was busted in 2000

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI
A team of the Delhi police has gone to London to attend a court hearing on the extradition case of bookie Sanjeev Chawla, said a police officer on Tuesday.
Sanjeev was allegedly involved in a match-fixing racket that was busted by the Delhi police in 2000, and involved South African cricket captain late Hansie Cronje.
The team comprises a De-

puty Commissioner of Police-rank officer and an Inspector-rank officer who is also the investigating officer in the case. They left for London on Tuesday night and will be back on January 20.
In March last year, UK’s Home Secretary had ordered the extradition of Sanjeev, but he moved a court against the order.
The Delhi Police Crime Branch was investigating the case and they had filed a 70-

page chargesheet in 2013. Hansie and Sanjeev were named as accused in the report.
A police officer confirmed that the hearing in London would be the final one and any decision on extradition of Sanjeev would be binding. The officer added that the team would present a strong case against Sanjeev to ensure his extradition.
“Two officers are going to attend the court hearing and

put forward the side of the Delhi police. If London’s court rejects Sanjeev’s appeal then they will immediately initiate procedure for his extradition,” the officer said. The Delhi police had filed the FIR in March 2000 after they intercepted a conversation between blacklisted bookie Sanjeev and Hansie. In the conversation, Hansie was striking a deal in return for losing matches against India.

Police personnel under scanner for getting jobs with fake documents

They have been working for over 10 years; probe initiated

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
A few Delhi police personnel have been found to be employed in the force on fake documents and working for over 10 years. The police have launched a probe into the findings.
A senior police officer said that a complaint was submitted by the Establishment Unit stating that two police officers were found to have

submitted forged documents for getting the job. The inquiry into the complaint was initiated by the Crime Branch which gathered the facts and on their basis an FIR was registered at the Ashok Vihar police station.
During the probe, it was found that 8-10 other personnel were also employed in the same manner. They are working as drivers in different units of the Delhi police.

Sources said that they had provided fake driving licence issued by the Mathura authority in 2007. It was further found that document verification was done at the time of employment and a letter was received from Mathura authority stating that the documents were genuine.
Police suspect that the policemen “managed” the verification at the time and it is being probed.

27-year-old run over by truck in Patparganj

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
A 27-year-old man was killed after he was run over by a truck in east Delhi’s Patparganj Industrial Area on Monday night. The accused has been arrested, the police said.
A senior police officer said that the victim, Manish, was a resident of Krishna Nagar and worked as a data entry opera-

tor in the Income Tax Department on a contract basis. The accused Veer Pal is a resident of Uttar Pradesh’s Etah. Manish had gone to meet a friend and was returning home when the incident happened.
Police said that a man who was riding a bike with his brother saw the incident and informed them. The man told the police that Manish was on

his bike when a speeding truck hit him. He was rushed to the hospital where he was declared brought dead.
Police said that the public caught the accused and handed him over to the police. A case under Section 304A (causing death by negligence) and 279 (rash driving) of the IPC has been lodged and further probe is under way.

JNU violence: police quiz 2 more suspects

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
Two more suspects were questioned by the Delhi police SIT on Tuesday in connection with the violence on JNU campus on January 5.

A team of cyber-forensic experts also visited the university to retrieve relevant data from its server.
Sucheta Talukdar and Priya Ranjan were questioned for two hours each in connection with the attack by a masked mob, said the police. Four persons who were injured in the attack were also examined. Th police are also trying to contact people who had made PCR calls during the violence.
The cyber-forensic team will visit the university again on Wednesday, said Assistant Director (Crime Scene Division) Sanjeev Gupta.

Forensic Science Laboratory director Deepa Verma said, “The data are voluminous and work is ongoing. After the data is submitted to the lab, it will be seen as to what has to be retrieved and what is already available.”
A senior police official said that three students: Akshat Awasthi, Rohit Shah and Komal Sharma are absconding. Akshat and Rohit, both first-year students of JNU, were featured in a sting operation conducted by a TV news channel.
The police had identified Komal, a student of Daulat Ram College, as the masked woman who was purportedly seen in the videos of violence shared on social media wearing a check-shirt, a light blue scarf and carrying a stick. Her phone has been switched off since Saturday night. When police had contacted Akshat and Rohit, they said they would join the probe but their phones were later switched off. All the three have been sent notices to join the investigation.

3 hurt as youth open fire during Lohri celebration

Accused damaged cars during escape

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM
Three persons sustained bullet injuries when five young men gatecrashed into Lohri celebration at Sector 40 here late on Monday night and opened indiscriminate fire. The accused also hit the cars parked outside in their attempt to escape.
One of the accused, Jai Narayan, 28, a resident of Madhya Pradesh, was arrested from Sector 22 on Tuesday. A pistol, two live cartridges and the vehicle used in the commission of crime were seized. The police claimed that Jai was previously involved in several cases of robbery and was arrested on four occasions.



Haryana police inspect the crime spot on Tuesday.
• ASHOK KUMAR

Jai purportedly told the police that he was drunk the previous night and was driving around aimlessly with his friends when they spotted a tent set up for Lohri celebration and gatecrashed into it. However, they opened fire on the guests after they were identified as outsiders.
The accused, in an SUV,

had gatecrashed into a Lohri celebration organised by Ajay Vats, a Sector 40 resident, around 11 p.m. The young men asked the photographer to click their pictures and one of them then walked to the drinks table. When Mr. Vats enquired the young man about his identity, he pushed him off and tried to escape. But Ajay’s brother Vinay caught him. At this, one of the accused allegedly took out a pistol and fired two shots hitting Mr. Vinay in his right shoulder. Surrounded by guests, the five, in a bid to escape, opened indiscriminate fire hitting Pawan and Vineet on their legs.

AAP campaign gets a head start with declaration of candidates

Several nominees release videos appealing to voters; Cong., BJP yet to release lists

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

With the Aam Aadmi Party releasing its full list of 70 candidates for the Delhi Assembly elections, the party's campaign has got a head start over the Congress and the BJP which are yet to release their lists.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will fight the election from the New Delhi Assembly seat and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia from Patparganj, same as 2015 elections. In the last Assembly elections, AAP had registered a landslide victory by winning 67 of 70 seats.

"The tickets were allotted after surveys by the party in all constituencies," AAP leader and Social Welfare Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam said. Asked about protests by MLAs who have not got tickets, he told *The Hindu*, "This happens in all parties. AAP has calculated all these things while taking the decision. We will win with more majority this time."

Mr. Gautam said that in his constituency, apart from the main issues in the manifesto, he will focus on decon-



Raghav Chadha

gesting footpaths and take measures to prevent drug addiction among youth.

AAP's Timarpur MLA Pan-kaj Pushkar, who has been dropped, said he will continue to be with the party and campaign for it in the elections. "The party did not communicate to me earlier that I won't get a ticket. I have been consistent and honest and there was no negative feedback against me."

Three of the seven AAP candidates who contested the 2019 Lok Sabha election from Delhi – Atishi, Dilip Pandey and Raghav Chadha – have been included in the list. Mr. Pandey has replaced Mr. Pushkar in Timarpur, Ms. Atishi replaced Avtar



Dilip Pandey

Singh in Kalkaji, and Mr. Chadha has been fielded in place of Vijendra Garg in Rajinder Nagar.

New faces

Among the leaders who joined AAP in the past one week, senior Congress leader Mahabal Mishra's son Vinay Kumar Singh will fight from Dwarka, replacing sitting MLA Adarsh Shastri, five-time MLA Shoaib Iqbal will replace Asim Ahmad Khan in Matia Mahal and two-time MLA Ram Singh Netaji will replace Narayan Dutt Sharma in Badarpur.

Other MLAs who did not get a ticket are party's chief whip in the Assembly Jag-deep Singh (Hari Nagar), Su-

render Singh (Delhi Cantt.), Haji Ishraq Khan (Seelampur), Ram Chander (Bawana), Sukhbir Singh Dalal (Mundka), Hazari Lal Chauhan (Patel Nagar). Also, Raju Dthingan (Trilokpur), Manoj Kumar (Kondli), Choudhary Fateh Singh (Gokulpur) have been dropped.

"Thank you @ArvindKejriwal and AAP for expressing faith in me and giving me the opportunity to contest from Kalkaji. Am committed to putting AAP's best foot forward and taking our govt's stellar work to the people of Kalkaji," Atishi said in a tweet.

Many AAP candidates also released videos on social media asking for votes. "For the first time election will be fought on work done, votes will be cast on work done... I have full confidence that we will once again elect Kejriwal government, because for Delhi Kejriwal is needed," Mr. Chadha said in a video message.

Multiple programmes have been scheduled for Wednesday and AAP is likely to bring out its manifesto later this week.

Battle lines drawn

AAP's 70 candidates for the upcoming Delhi Assembly Elections

AC NO	CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATE
1	Narela	Sharad Chauhan
2	Burari	Sanjeev Jha
3	Timarpur	Dilip Pandey
4	Adarsh Nagar	Pawan Sharma
5	Badli	Ajesh Yadav
6	Rithala	Mahinder Goyal
7	Bawana	Jai Bhagwan Upkar
8	Mundka	Dharampal Lakra
9	Kirari	Rituraj Jha
10	Sultan Pur Majra	Mukesh Kumar Ahlawat
11	Nangloi Jat	Raghuvinder Shokeen
12	Mongol Puri	Rakhi Bidlan
13	Rohini	Rajesh Nama Bansiwala
14	Shalimar Bagh	Bandana Kumari
15	Shakur Basti	Satyendar Jain
16	Tri Nagar	Jitender Tomar
17	Wazirpur	Rajesh Gupta
18	Model Town	Akhilesh Pati Tripathi
19	Sadar Bazar	Som Dutt
20	Chandni Chowk	Parlad Singh Sawhney
21	Matia Mahal	Shoaib Iqbal
22	Ballimaran	Imran Hussain
23	Karol Bagh	Vishesh Ravi
24	Patel Nagar	Raaj Kumar Anand
25	Moti Nagar	Shiv Charan Goel
26	Madipur	Girish Soni
27	Rajouri Garden	Dhanwati Chandela
28	Hari Nagar	Rajkumari Dhillon
29	Tilak Nagar	Jarnail Singh
30	Janakpuri	Rajesh Rishi
31	Vikasपुरी	Mahinder Yadav
32	Uttam Nagar	Naresh Balyan
33	Dwarka	Vinay Kumar Mishra
34	Matiala	Gulab Singh Yadav
35	Najafgarh	Kailash Gahlot

Best wishes to all. Don't be complacent. Work v hard. People have lot of faith in AAP and u. God bless [sic.]

ARVIND KEJRIWAL, Chief Minister

Thank you @ArvindKejriwal and AAP for expressing faith in me and giving me the opportunity to contest from Kalkaji [sic.]

ATISHI, AAP leader

AC NO	CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATE
36	Bijwasan	B.S. Joon
37	Palam	Bhavna Gaur
38	Delhi Cantonment	Virender Singh Kadian
39	Rajinder Nagar	Raghav Chadha
40	New Delhi	Arvind Kejriwal
41	Jangpura	Praveen Kumar
42	Kasturba Nagar	Madan Lal
43	Malviya Nagar	Somnath Bharti
44	R.K. Puram	Parmila Tokas
45	Mehrauli	Naresh Yadav
46	Chhatarpur	Kartar Singh Tanwar
47	Deoli	Prakash Jarwal
48	Ambedkar Nagar	Ajay Dutt
49	Sangam Vihar	Dinesh Mohaniya
50	Greater Kailash	Saurabh Bharadwaj
51	Kalkaji	Atishi
52	Tughlakabad	Sahi Ram Pehlwan
53	Badarpur	Ram Singh Netaji
54	Okhla	Amanatullah Khan
55	Trilokpur	Rohit Kumar Mehraulia
56	Kondli	Kuldeep Kumar (Monu)
57	Patparganj	Manish Sisodia
58	Laxmi Nagar	Nitin Tyagi
59	Vishwas Nagar	Deepak Singla
60	Krishna Nagar	S.K. Bagga
61	Gandhi Nagar	Naveen Choudhary (Deepu)
62	Shahdara	Ram Niwas Goel
63	Seemapuri	Rajendra Pal Gautam
64	Rohtas Nagar	Sarita Singh
65	Seelampur	Abdul Rehman
66	Ghonda	S.D. Sharma
67	Babarpur	Gopal Rai
68	Gokalpur	Ch. Surendra Kumar
69	Mustafabad	Haji Yunus
70	Karawal Nagar	Durgesh Pathak

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES | SOURCE: AAM AADMI PARTY

Metro, railway staff to get postal ballot for first time

Northern Railway workers and mediapersons covering the elections can also avail of the facility

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

When the Capital's residents cast their votes in the Delhi Assembly elections on February 8, several categories of electors may have already voted through postal ballots, with employees of the Delhi Metro and Northern Railways and mediapersons covering polling being extended the postal facility for the first time.

Also, in a first for Delhi, the postal ballot facility extended to senior citizens aged over

80 years and persons with disabilities (PwD) in the 2019 Jharkhand Assembly elections would be implemented in the national capital as well, as per a January 8 notification by the Election Commission of India.

The ECI, on January 10, notified those employed by the Delhi Metro and Northern Railway Transportation (passenger and freight) Services in Delhi as well as mediapersons who have been authorised to cover polling by the ECI as "essential services".

These electors, "who on account of being on duty on the day of poll in the current general election to Legislative Assembly of NCT (National Capital Territory) of Delhi...will not be able to be present in their respective polling station", will be allowed to vote by postal ballot, the notification said.

On January 10, the ECI wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer of Delhi to inform Delhi Metro and Northern Railway about the postal ballot facility and instruct them to

nominate nodal officers for the same.

The ECI had on September 2, 2019, recommended to the Union Law and Justice Ministry to extend the postal ballot facility to absentee voters – electors who are unable to reach polling stations due to different degrees of disability, as well as those discharging essential services.

The Ministry had issued the relevant notification on October 22, 2019, after which postal ballots were given to those above 80 years and

PwD in seven constituencies as a pilot in the Jharkhand polls in December.

Briefing for observers

Meanwhile, the ECI held a briefing on Tuesday for officers to be deployed as observers for the elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly. In a statement, the ECI said that over 150 officers from the IAS, IPS, IRS and other Central services were called to attend the briefing for general, police and expenditure observers.

BJP blames AAP for deaths during winter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday held the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government responsible for the deaths of 10 homeless people every day during the last 40 days of cold wave in the Capital.

Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari alleged that during the last one year, 3,623 homeless people had died in Delhi but their bodies were not identified.

"Homeless people are dying in Delhi but Kejriwal is not allowing the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna to be implemented...Kejriwal has no moral rights to continue in power," Mr. Tiwari alleged.

Each vote for BJP will be for inflation: AAP

Sisodia points to NSO data, backs claim

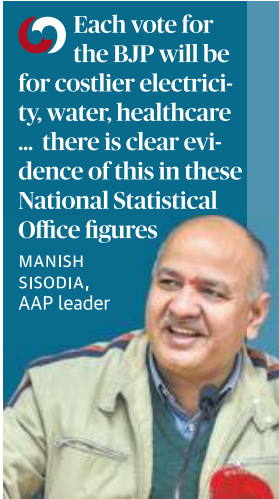
STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday attacked the BJP over retail inflation, which is at a five-and-a-half year high, according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Monday.

Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia said: "Each vote for the BJP will be for costlier electricity, water, healthcare and there is clear evidence for these in the NSO figures that the BJP is responsible for rising inflation across India. It has now become a part of their politics, their governance model. Each vote for the BJP will be for inflation."

He said that while high inflation under the BJP government is making it difficult for people to meet daily expenses, the AAP government's policies are helping people to run households.

"Just as we prepare for elections, some very worrying figures on inflation have been released by NSO. They are worrying not just from the perspective of economic slowdown or unemployment, but most importantly because it has become difficult for the common man to meet even basic household expenses. This is the BJP's gift to the people in the last six years with data clearly showing that inflation is at



its highest in six years."

He said that prices have been constantly rising since the BJP has come to power with inflation increasing from 2.1% to 7.4% in just one year and the prices of vegetables increasing by 60% across the nation in just one year.

"The abject failure of the BJP government in devising economic policy and their inability to contain inflation is breaking all records, especially in the last one year," said Mr. Sisodia.

Files complaint

Meanwhile, AAP has also filed a complaint with the Chief Electoral Officer (Delhi) about a "morphed" video shared from the official handle of Delhi Congress "disparaging" the party.

AAP will lose polls over pollution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party will lose the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections over issues of air pollution and contaminated water, the BJP claimed on Tuesday.

Former Union Minister and Rajya Sabha MP Vijay Goel attacked the AAP government for pursuing "dirty politics" over the issues. "Every year, the AAP government assured the people of Delhi that it would provide clean water and bring tap water to every household, but these claims proved to be hollow. The AAP government is doing politics and is accusing the Haryana government of releasing dirty water to Delhi," Mr. Goel said.

"The Delhi government did not do any work to clean the water for five years and kept accusing others. Even after Delhi's water sample failed BIS standards, the Kejriwal-led government did not take the issue seriously," he added.

The MP further accused Mr. Kejriwal of forgetting his manifesto promise to clean the Yamuna. "The CM has not constituted a joint panel to deal with pollution or set up 14 treatment plants required for it... meanwhile, the air in Delhi has become so toxic that air purifiers have to be installed and people are drinking RO water," he said.

Builder told to pay ₹68.51 lakh for violating environmental norms

Realtor carried out construction on area meant for green space

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed an environmental compensation of ₹68.51 lakh on a builder for construction in the green area of a Gurugram housing complex.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel directed the developer to deposit the amount with the Central Pollution Control Board within one month.

"Powers of regulatory authorities were required to be exercised in accordance with these principles. Environmental Impact Assessment procedure was required to be duly followed. The Deed of Declaration

filed by the builder in 2009 showed the spot to be an open area which was the basis on which the flats were allotted prior to 2010," the Bench observed.

Noting that out of a 10.98 acre land meant for the project, construction took place on a 3.05 acre land, the Bench said, "[space meant for] open area was converted into covered area for a commercial tower, irreversibly taking away the rights to ecological services of the persons to whom the flats were allotted."

The directions came following a report furnished by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) recommending environmental

compensation to be paid by the builder.

The Tribunal was hearing a plea moved by petitioner Anil Uppal and others who alleged that a housing complex in Gurugram developed by the Ambience Developers and Infrastructure Private Limited had carried out construction on an area meant for green space.

"Open areas in the colony are shrinking. Groundwater extraction was excessive. The builder had undertaken construction on designed open spaces, blocking fresh air and sunlight. The approved zoning plans are required maintaining at least 15% of the total areas as open space," the plea had said.

Report from pollution control bodies sought on encroachment of waterbodies

NGT forms joint committee comprising CPCB, UPPCB

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea alleging encroachment of waterbodies in Ghaziabad, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has constituted a joint committee and sought a factual status report within one month.

A Bench headed by NGT Chief Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said that the joint committee will comprise officials from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Uttar Pradesh State Pollution Control Board (UPPCB).

Violations continue

Noting that despite previous directions of the Tribunal, violations are continuing, the Bench said:



"While disposing the application in October 2019, the Tribunal directed that apart from remedial action already taken, it is necessary to ensure such violations are not repeated and continuous vigilance be maintained in the area. The authorities concerned must prepare a plan for the purpose."

"It is stated that in spite of the [directions], violations are still continuing," the Bench observed.

Directing authorities to furnish a report, the Bench said, "Let the factual status be ascertained and furnished to this Tribunal by a joint committee comprising CPCB and UPPCB. The UPPCB will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance."

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by petitioner Om Tyagi alleging encroachment of waterbodies in Ghaziabad district by "illegal constructions in the form of farmhouses, parking and marriage halls by private respondents".

'Look into plea on illegal operation of dyeing units'

NGT tells Haryana govt., CPCB to file report

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Haryana government and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to look into a plea alleging illegal operation of dyeing industries in Faridabad and furnish a report on the same.

A Bench headed by NGT Chief Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "Let a joint committee comprising representatives of CPCB, District Magistrate of Faridabad, and Haryana State Pollution Control Board furnish a factual and action-taken report in the matter within one month."

The directions came when the green panel was hearing a plea moved by

Varun Sheokand and others alleging violation of environmental norms in Faridabad by dyeing industries.

"Grievance in the application is that dyeing industries are being allowed to illegally operate in Faridabad without complying with the environmental norms of the Haryana State Pollution Control Board in violation of order of this Tribunal, dated September 2016," the Bench observed while noting the allegations made by the petitioner.

During the hearing, the Tribunal also specified that the State pollution control board will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance of the orders.

Punjab Assembly to take a call on CAA, NRC, NPR

Matter to be raised during the two-day special session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH
The Punjab government on Tuesday decided to go by the will of the House on the way forward with respect to the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register.

The decision was taken on Tuesday by the Council of Ministers during an informal discussion after the Cabinet meeting. An official statement said the Council of Ministers expressed concern over implications of the CAA and the NRC, as well as the NPR and was of the view that the matter was bound to be raised during the two-day special session of the Assembly on January 16-17.

The statement said it was



Amarinder Singh. ■ FILE PHOTO

decided that the government should accept the will of the House and go by the same. The government will plan its strategy in accordance with the recommendation of the House, it added.

The Cabinet also gave the go-ahead for bringing the Punjab Right to Business Act, 2020, in the special session.

The Act is aimed at easing

the regulatory burden on the newly incorporated Micro Small and Medium Enterprises by enabling provision of self-declaration, besides exemption from certain approvals and inspections, an official statement said.

The Cabinet also decided to place a resolution to ratify the Constitutional 126th Amendment and enactment of the Goods and Services Act. The Constitution (126th Amendment) Bill, 2019, seeks to extend the reservation for the Scheduled Castes in the State for another 10 years from January 25, 2020.

It was also decided to fill as many as 3,186 posts of various cadres in teaching and non-teaching staff in schools.

CAA will fix unresolved issues of Assam Accord, says Minister

Oppn. parties lodge plaints for a Facebook live from the House

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI
Assam Health and Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, has been implemented to address the unresolved issues of the Assam Accord of 1985.

The government had no intention to go against the spirit of the accord, he said at a special session of the Assembly on Monday.

“The Act was amended not to dilute the spirit of the Assam Accord but to address some of its unresolved issues,” he said.

Pointing out certain “gaps” left while amending the Citizenship Act in 1983, 1997 and 2003, he said the cut-off date for the detection and deportation of illegal migrants was 1966 and not 1971



Himanta Biswa Sarma.

■ FILE PHOTO

according to the “only four-page” accord.

“The accord did not incorporate many issues that evolved gradually... The cut-off date of 1971 was just a provision for those who came to Assam after 1967 and declared before foreigners’ registration officers that they were from Bangladesh,” he said.

The accord was violated

when a provision was added that the names of the 1967-1971 stream of foreigners would be kept out of the electoral rolls for 10 years and later regularised. The fear that the CAA would bring in millions of people needed to be dispelled, he said.

AASU chief advisor Samujal Bhattacharyya said, “Assam cannot be burdened with even one illegal migrant from 1971 to 2014. Clause 6 of the Accord was thought of for providing constitutional safeguards to the indigenous people.”

The Opposition parties lodged complaints with Assembly Speaker Hitendra Nath Goswami for the Facebook live from the House during the special session and Mr. Goswami has ordered a probe.

Tripura BJP to get new chief

SYED SAJJAD ALI
AGARTALA

Tripura BJP will have a new president with the nomination process ending on Tuesday. Manik Saha, a dental surgeon, emerged as the lone candidate and a consensus aspirant for the top job.

A formal announcement would be made tomorrow.

Party sources said Dr. Saha, 62, submitted his nomi-

nation papers on Saturday. West Tripura MP Pratima Bhowmik and State vice-president Rajib Bhattacharjee were also expected to contest, but they backed out.

Party insiders said Dr. Saha’s nomination was finalised following a consensus reached in consultation with the central leadership. Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has also endorsed his candidature.

‘Conduct survey to find out number of refugees’

Arunachal is exempted from the CAA: students’ union president

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI
The All Arunachal Pradesh Students’ Union has asked the Pema Khandu government to conduct a comprehensive survey to ascertain the number of refugees in the State.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, made such a survey necessary though the government had claimed that the State was exempted from the purview of the amended law, the union said.

Arunachal Pradesh has three sets of refugees – the Bangladesh-origin Buddhist Chakmas and Hindu Hajongs who stay together and the Buddhist Tibetans.

“We welcome Chief Minister Pema Khandu’s statement in the Assembly that the government would fight

a legal battle against granting of citizenship to the Chakma-Hajong refugees. We have also taken note of his assertion that neither the refugees can apply for citizenship nor the government can process their applications as Arunachal Pradesh is exempted from the CAA,” AAPSU president Hawa Bagang said.

‘Creating confusion’

But the union underlined the ‘discrepancy’ about the number of refugees that the authorities had been providing. “A comprehensive survey is thus required to clear the confusion,” one of its spokespersons said.

On January 8, Mr. Khandu told the 60-member Assembly that the State government had challenged the Supreme Court’s judgement on September 17, 2015, granting citizenship to the Chakma-Hajongs. But the apex court dismissed the government’s review petition on October 26 that year.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Ministers on Tuesday demanded disciplinary action by the Congress leadership against party leader and Rajya Sabha MP Partap Singh Bajwa for raising a banner of revolt against Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on public platforms.

Ahead of the Cabinet meeting here on Tuesday, senior party leaders pointed

out that despite repeated pleas asking Mr. Bajwa to express his opinions within the party forum, he continued to criticise Capt. Amarinder and his government in media and other platforms.

‘Wrong message’

The Ministers also accused Mr. Bajwa of playing into the hands of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Aam Aadmi

Party by pitching himself against his own party leadership.

A statement on behalf of the Ministers, which included Rana Gurmeet Singh Sodhi, Charanjit Singh Channi, Brahm Mohindra and Manpreet Singh Badal among others, said that such rebellion, if not nipped in the bud, could send the wrong message down the rank and file of the Punjab

Congress.

While the Congress was run on democratic principles, where every member had a say, such public display of difference of opinion and mutinous declarations from a senior member were detrimental to the interest of the party, said the Ministers, adding that under no circumstances could this kind of behaviour be tolerated or allowed to continue.

IN BRIEF



Harivarasanam award for Ilaiyaraaja
PATHANAMTHITTA
Renowned music composer Ilaiyaraaja has been selected for this year's Harivarasanam award, jointly instituted by the Kerala government and the Travancore Devaswom Board. Devaswom Minister Kadakampally Surendran will present the award, which comprises a purse of ₹1,00,000, citation and memento, to Ilaiyaraaja at a function at the Sabarimala Sannidhanam on Wednesday.

Sabarimala set to witness 'Makaravilakku'
SABARIMALA
Ayyappa devotees have begun to camp at Sabarimala to worship the 'Makarajyoti' on 'Makaravilakku' day on Wednesday. The Sannidhanam and the surrounding areas have been occupied by pilgrims awaiting the sighting of the 'celestial star' that appears on the eastern horizon at Ponnambalamedu facing the Ayyappa temple.

'Don't see him with 1962 lens'

Krishna Menon's contributions were remarkable, says Jairam Ramesh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI
Former Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon was often "seen with the lens of 1962" [war with China], while there was more to him before 1946 and during the 1950s, said senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Jairam Ramesh here on Tuesday. Menon's contributions in the drafting of the Constitution before 1946 and his actions during the 1950s were remarkable.

During a public discussion on 'The Making of Independent India and V.K. Krishna Menon' organised by The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy at the Music Academy, Mr. Ramesh recalled incidents from Menon's life since his college days until his death to capture various phases – both personal and political. In his conversation with former West Bengal Governor Gopalakrishna Gandhi, Mr. Ramesh said it was Menon who first came up with the idea of 'Make in India'. When India had options



Jairam Ramesh in conversation with former West Bengal Governor Gopalakrishna Gandhi in Chennai. ■ K.V. SRINIVASAN

from the United States of America and the United Kingdom from whom it had to purchase fighter aircraft, he wanted the purchase to be from a country that allowed eventual manufacturing of aircraft in India. "That was how fighter jet MiG-21 came to be manufactured in India," pointed out Mr. Ramesh, who authored *A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of V.K. Krishna Menon*. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) came about during Menon's tenure. Though Menon enjoyed proximity with then Prime

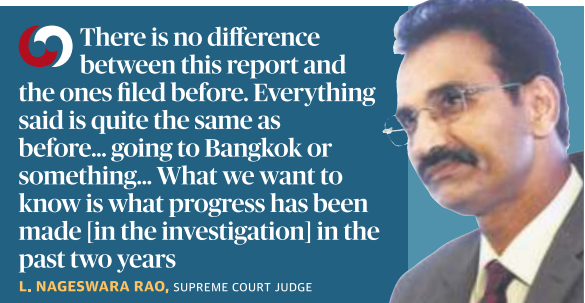
Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the latter too believed in the former's judgment, the Council of Ministers did not approve of Menon's ideas, Mr. Ramesh pointed out. Even a few years before the war with China, Menon was for a settlement with the neighbouring country, but did not enjoy support from the Cabinet, the opposition and the media. "But, eventually Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2003 put in place a boundary talk mechanism with China," Mr. Ramesh said. Recalling an incident in the United Nations, Mr. Gandhi said when the Fo-

reign Minister of Pakistan repeatedly insisted on a plebiscite in Kashmir, a witty Menon had asked whether Pakistan had seen a ballot box recently. Notwithstanding the criticism that he was a leftist, Mr. Ramesh said he was "not at all a Communist" but supported the Communist Party of Great Britain only because it supported full freedom for India. Mr. Ramesh said Menon was against creating Kerala from the then Madras Presidency, arguing with Nehru it would become a "bastion of communists".

Madras connection
President of the All India Home Rule League Annie Besant discovered the talent in him during his days in then Madras when he went to the Presidency College. Even after his resignation in December 1962, it was Madras which hosted him. At a public meeting on the Marina beach front, noted lyricist Kannadasan lauded the qualities of Menon, Mr. Gandhi recalled.

'Respond to Odisha's plea on Polavaram'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Tuesday gave the Andhra Pradesh government two weeks to respond with complete details on a plea made by Odisha on the construction of the Indira-sagar Polavaram multi-purpose project. Odisha has raised concerns about the project and the conduct of the Centre in not informing the State on the issue of 'stop work order' being kept in abeyance periodically leading to the unhindered continuation of the project work. The State is apprehensive that the construction of the dam by neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and the spillway would result in the submergence of considerable amount of its territory, including protected tribal areas. It fears that proper environmental assessment and studies were not conducted on the backwater extent in the Sabari and Sileru parts of Odisha.



Rajiv Gandhi case: SC unhappy at CBI report on larger conspiracy

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed its unhappiness about the CBI's status report on the probe into the larger conspiracy behind the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu in 1991. Instead of revealing the progress made to unearth the truth, the report filed in the Supreme Court by the investigating agency merely parroted its past reports over the years. "We are not happy with the report," a Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Hemant Gupta said. The court called for the presence of a senior law officer, an Additional Solicitor General, to appear, and kept the case on hold to be taken up later.

After half-an-hour, the case came up again. This time, Justice Rao expressed the court's dissatisfaction without mincing words. "There is no difference between this report and the ones filed before. Everything said is quite the same as before... going to Bangkok or something... What we want to know is what progress has been made [in the investigation] in the past two years at least," Justice Rao observed. Senior advocate Gopal

Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Rajiv Gandhi assassination convict A.G. Perarivalan, submitted that the CBI's Multi Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA), probing the larger conspiracy behind the killing, was yet to conclude its investigation pertaining to the origin and make of the bomb. The Bench allowed Perarivalan's lawyers to peruse the CBI report in the courtroom. The report was filed in a sealed cover. The court finally ordered the CBI to file a fresh report detailing the work done. The case is listed on January 28. Perarivalan, who is in his mid-forties now, has spent about a quarter of a century inside jail serving life imprisonment. He was 19 at the time of his arrest. Perarivalan has sought an order from the court to stay his life sentence till the MDMA probe is completed. He has argued that the CBI has still not been able to question Nixon alias Suren, one among the 21 suspects the MDMA is waiting to investigate, who allegedly knows about the making of the bomb. He contended that his role in the alleged crime taken to the maximum would be that of supplying two nine-volt batteries without the knowledge of what it was going to be used for.

Will get you arrested, pilot tells passenger seeking help

IndiGo de-rosters captain who threatened woman seeking wheelchair assistance for her mother at Bengaluru airport

STAFF REPORTER CHENNAI
An IndiGo pilot, who reportedly harassed and threatened to get arrested two women passengers for seeking wheelchair assistance, has been taken off duty, pending an enquiry by aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday. Supriya Unni Nair, a resident of Bengaluru, had posted a harrowing account on social media of the "harass-

ment" meted out to her and her mother late on Monday. Ms. Nair and her 75-year-old mother Vijayalakshmi had taken an IndiGo flight from Chennai to Bengaluru and sought wheelchair assistance in advance. The ordeal began after the flight landed. Recounting her experience, Ms. Nair said, "Our flight was late and when we landed at 9.15 p.m., I tried calling the assistance bell and when the crew did not respond, I walked up for help."

The airline staff allegedly claimed that they didn't have access to a wheelchair. "When I pointed this out, the captain Jayakrishna came barging out [of the cockpit] and yells at me for pressing the assistance button and annoying him and his crew," she said in her post. Ms. Nair said the captain then prevented the staff from bringing a wheelchair to help her mother out of the aircraft. He allegedly threatened them, saying that he would get them arrested. "He prevents the wheel-

chair people from taking my mom out of the aircraft threatening us that he will ensure we are detained and spend a night in jail. Disbelievingly I ask him whether he is serious. 'Shut up. Who do you think I am? I'll get my CEO to make sure you spend a night in jail; we will teach you some manners, he says,'" Ms. Nair said in her post. "We reach the bus and the captain is meanwhile ranting and stops it from moving forward," Ms. Nair said, adding that it was the on-ground se-

curity and IndiGo staff who came to their rescue. Speaking to *The Hindu*, Ms. Nair said the entire experience was traumatic. "I felt the need to put it out on social media because this shouldn't happen to anyone else. No one, especially, a senior citizen should have to endure what my mother did. She was nervous and shivering." On seeing the post, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri tweeted: "I requested my office to contact @IndiGo6E as soon as I saw the tweet by Ms

@SupriyaUnniNair about the pilot's behaviour.... The airline has informed @MoCA_Gol that the pilot has been off-rostered..." Ms. Nair said she was happy that the Minister had responded quickly to the complaint. A statement from IndiGo said it was aware of the complaint raised by the passenger, and the matter was "under internal review", and that necessary action would be taken. (With inputs from Bengaluru, Mumbai and Delhi)

Shrine in Harihar now a Minor Basilica

GIRISH PATTANASHETTI HUBBALLI
The town of Harihar in Davangere district of Karnataka is all set to witness a historical event of sorts on Wednesday as the centuries-old Our Lady of Health Shrine in the town, which has been proclaimed as Minor Basilica by the Vatican, will be dedicated at 9 a.m. in the presence of president of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India Most Rev. Filipe Neri Ferrao, Sri Shivamurthy Murugha Sharanaru of Chitradurga Brihan Mutt, Archbishop Most Rev. Peter Machado and 13 Bishops. Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa will participate in the programme. With the proclamation by the Vatican, the shrine has become the 25th Minor Basilica in the country. The history of the Shrine dates back to the 18th century.

Ritual bonfire



Students lighting cow dung cakes as part of Makara Sankranti festivities organised by the Amaravati Utsav Samiti in Vijayawada on Tuesday. ■ V. RAJU

Consensus eludes Congress on Karnataka unit chief

It is a toss-up between D.K. Shivakumar and M.B. Patil

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU
The Congress high command was unable to arrive at a consensus on a new Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president on Tuesday, as former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah reportedly favoured former Minister and Lingayat leader M.B. Patil while the party's Central leaders backed former Minister and Vokkaliga leader D.K. Shivakumar.

Mr. Siddaramaiah held discussions with the party's interim president Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi. During the meeting, which lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, Ms. Gandhi is believed to have turned down Mr. Siddaramaiah's nominee, Mr. Patil, for the post. However, she told Mr. Siddaramaiah to continue in his post of Lead-



D. K. Shivakumar



M.B. Patil

er of the Opposition (LoP), sources said. **To meet Rahul**
On December 9, 2019, Dinesh Gundu Rao and Mr. Siddaramaiah resigned from their posts of KPCC president and LoP, respectively, following the party's drubbing in the byelections to 15 Assembly seats.

According to sources, Mr. Siddaramaiah is expected to hold another round of talks on Wednesday, this time with former Congress national president Rahul Gandhi. But the party is unlikely to announce the new KPCC president in the next few days as Ms. Gandhi is expected to go abroad this weekend.

Bhainsa peaceful but normalcy yet to return

Telangana police arrest 40, conduct flag march

S. HARPAL SINGH BHAINSA
The communal conflict-ridden town of Bhainsa in the Nirmal district of Telangana remained peaceful on Tuesday though normalcy did not return completely. The local market was closed for a second day following the communal clashes of Sunday night and Monday morning, but the supply of fresh vegetables was hit only partially.

Tenuous peace
Peace descended upon the narrow lanes and bylanes after the police made their presence felt by arresting over 40 persons accused of participating in arson and



On alert: Rapid Action Force personnel staging a flag march in Bhainsa town on Tuesday. ■ S. HARPAL SINGH

rioting. "More arrests will be made based on video footage identification of the culprits," said Nirmal Superintendent of Police C. Shashidhar Raju. He led a marching contingent of policemen into the interiors of the old town. The peace, nevertheless,

seemed to be tenuous, also given the history of violence in this semi-urban town. The fact that people from both communities continue to harbour mutual distrust makes peace here fragile, according to locals. A three company strong Rapid Action Force (RAF)

staged a flag march in the violence hit areas of town in the morning, driving home the message that the government means business when it comes to restoring peace. Meanwhile, people moved around town freely making purchases of essentials. The area around the office of the local Deputy Superintendent of Police was abuzz with activity since morning as it lies at a crucial junction between two important sections of town inhabited by the two communities that are at loggerheads. The violence, however, looked to dampen the spirit of the Sankranti festival, which is usually celebrated with gusto locally. U. Chandrakanth, a seller of Sankranti muggu and colours, lamented that losses looked imminent as his colours remained unsold.

Planning body lists CRZ violations

1,657 breaches of law found within Kozhikode limits; house owners in grip of fear

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOZHIKODE
The fear of demolition of their houses is hanging over the residents with the Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) submitting the final list of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) violations in Kozhikode district on Tuesday. Nearly 4,000 CRZ violations, including 1,657 within Kozhikode Corporation limits, have been identified in the district based on a consolidated report from 35 local bodies as on January 14, 2020. Regional Town Planner P.A. Isha submitted the report to Collector Seeram Sambasiva Rao, who is also the chairman of the Coastal District Committee (CDC), following an order of the



A view of the Kozhikode shoreline. Nearly 4,000 CRZ violations have been identified in the district. ■ FILE PHOTO

State government. Such reports from all districts will be submitted to the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA), to be produced in the Supreme Court. A total of 3,916 violations have been found in 35 local bodies that come under the

purview of the CRZ. However, seven local bodies have reported no violations. The details of all the illegal constructions have been uploaded on the website of the Kozhikode district administration. The recent demolition of the five waterfront residen-

tial apartments at Maradu municipality has triggered a fear psychosis among the residents in Kozhikode. "Many people did not take the CRZ rules seriously during the construction of buildings. As of now, some buildings are occupied, some others unoccupied and many others are still under construction," Ms. Isha told *The Hindu*. Approval for construction of buildings should be taken from the Kerala State Coastal Zone Management Authority (KSCZMA) which is the empowered authority to deal with environmental issues related to the CRZ. No construction is allowed within 200 metres from the coast in CRZ-III area while works are allowed beyond 50 metres from the coast in CRZ-II zone.

IN BRIEF



Delhi HC rejects ED plea against bail to Ratul Puri

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) plea challenging the bail granted to businessman Ratul Puri, nephew of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath, in a money laundering case connected to the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam.

Tharoor apologises for remark on Kejriwal

NEW DELHI
Congress leader Shashi Tharoor apologised on Twitter after he was criticised for his remark that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal seeks power without responsibility, something which has been “the prerogative of eunuchs”. On Monday, he alleged that Mr. Kejriwal is making statements deploring the CAA and the NRC but has not taken any tangible action.

6 infants die in M.P. govt. hospital within 15 hours

BHOPAL
The Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday ordered a high-level inquiry into the deaths of six infants within 15 hours at the government hospital in Shahdol district. The infants, up to two-and-a-half-months old, died between 1 p.m. on Monday and 4 a.m. on Tuesday, said Dr. Rajesh Pandey, Chief Medical Health Officer.

Ritesh Pandey to be BSP chief in Lok Sabha

LUCKNOW
Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati appointed Ambedkar Nagar MP Ritesh Pandey as the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha, citing the need to maintain “social harmony”. He replaces Amroha MP Kunwar Danish Ali. Mr. Pandey belongs to the Brahmin community.

CRZ rules eased for ‘Blue Flag’ beaches

States can construct infrastructure to enable international recognition, says Environment Ministry

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI
The Environment Ministry has relaxed Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules that restrict construction near beaches to help States construct infrastructure and enable them to receive ‘Blue Flag’ certification.

Last year, the Ministry selected 13 beaches in India to vie for the certificate. This is an international recognition conferred on beaches that meet certain criteria of cleanliness and environmental propriety.

The earmarked beaches are – Ghoghala beach (Diu), Shivrampur beach (Gujarat), Bhogave beach (Maharashtra), Padubidri and Kasarkod beaches (Karnataka), Kappad beach (Kerala), Kovalam beach (Tamil Nadu), Eden beach (Puducherry), Rushikonda beach (Andhra Pradesh), Miramar beach (Goa),



Sea view: Tourists at Eden beach in Chinna Veerampattinam near Puducherry. The Ministry has selected 13 beaches in India to vie for the certificate. ■S.S. KUMAR

Golden beach (Odisha), Radhanagar beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) and Bangaram beach (Lakshadweep).

Gazette notification
The Blue Flag certification, however, requires beaches to create certain infrastructure – portable toilet blocks, grey water treatment plants, a solar power plant, seating

facilities, CCTV surveillance and the like. However, India's CRZ laws don't allow the construction of such infrastructure on beaches and islands. Via an order on January 9, the Environment Ministry eased these restrictions for the “purposes of Blue Flag certification”.

“...Central Government hereby declares that for the

purpose of Blue Flag Certification in such identified beaches, the following activities and facilities shall be permitted in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), including Islands, subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 meters from HTL (High Tide Line),” the gazette notification notes.

The certification is ac-

corded by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environment Education, with 33 stringent criteria under four major heads for the beaches, that is, (i) Environmental Education and Information (ii) Bathing Water Quality (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services.

‘Eco-tourism’

The ‘Blue Flag’ beach is an ‘eco-tourism model’ and marks out beaches as providing tourists and beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment, and sustainable development of the area.

The Blue Flag Programme started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.

Three V-Cs attend TMC’s anti-CAA demonstration

Oppn. raises questions on their conduct

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

The presence of Vice-Chancellors of State Universities at a sit-in demonstration against the amended citizenship law organised by the students’ wing of the Trinamool Congress on Tuesday triggered a controversy with the Opposition raising questions on their conduct.

Three Vice-Chancellors - Subiresb Bhattacharya of North Bengal University, Dipak Kar of Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University and Deb Kumar Mulhopadhyay of Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University - were present at the agitation organised by the Trinamool

Congress Chhatra Parishad, which entered its fifth day on Tuesday.

Later in the day, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also visited the demonstration site on Rani Rashmoni Avenue and said she was happy to receive inputs from experts on the protests against CAA.

The presence of the Vice-Chancellors at the protest raised eyebrows as only a day ago as they had given a meeting called by Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar a miss. Mr. Dhankhar, who was upset with the development, said educational institutions and universities were being dismantled “brick by brick”.

Muzaffarpur shelter home case judgment on Jan. 20

Accused claim witness statements are not reliable

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Judgment in the Muzaffarpur shelter home case is now expected on January 20, as the accused persons on Tuesday claimed that statements of the witnesses were not reliable. The court has sought a response from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the issue within two days.

During the proceedings on Tuesday, lawyers of the main accused, Brajesh Thakur, and the others, questioned the veracity of the testimony of prosecution witnesses.

The submission was made



A view of the Muzaffarpur shelter home. ■RANJEET KUMAR

in view of the CBI's statement in the Supreme Court that 35 girl inmates earlier believed to have been murdered had been found to be alive.

The murder allegations were made by some of the

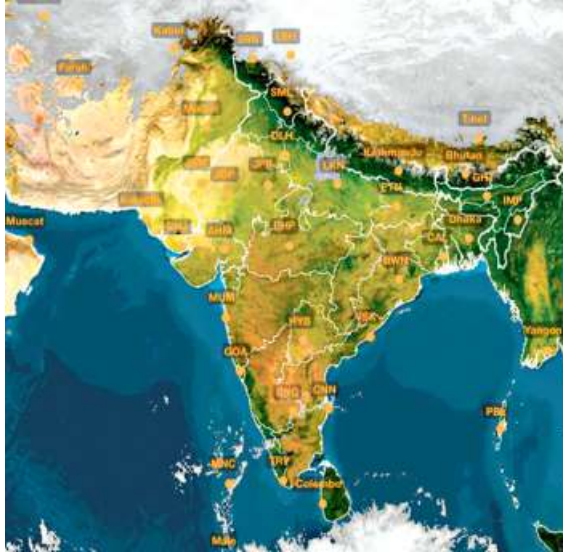
girls rescued from the shelter home.

This is the third time that the pronouncement of verdict has been deferred after it was reserved in October for mid-November last year. It was postponed the first time as the 20 accused could not be brought to the court premises due to a lawyers' strike. It was then rescheduled as the judge was on leave.

The case pertains to the allegation that at least 34 girl inmates of a shelter home in Muzaffarpur were sexually assaulted. The CBI took over the probe in 2018, following a Supreme Court directive.

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 Wednesday: Dense to very dense fog very likely at isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, north Rajasthan and Bihar; dense fog at isolated pockets over Uttar Pradesh, south Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala.....	22.9	12.6	—	Kozhikode.....	—	34.6	23.6
Ahmedabad.....	24.9	12.8	—	Kurnool.....	—	32.9	18.2
Aizawl.....	25.9	9.3	—	Lucknow.....	—	21.5	9.3
Allahabad.....	25.3	11.6	—	Madurai.....	—	31.4	20.7
Bengaluru.....	29.5	16.4	—	Mangaluru.....	—	34.1	21.0
Bhopal.....	—	—	—	Mumbai.....	—	—	17.4
Bhubaneswar.....	28.5	13.0	—	Mysuru.....	—	31.1	16.7
Chandigarh.....	10.9	17.5	8.6	New Delhi.....	0.8	17.7	10.5
Chennai.....	29.2	21.2	—	Patna.....	—	17.2	7.6
Coimbatore.....	30.9	19.8	—	Port Blair.....	—	29.6	22.5
Dehradun.....	17.2	16.3	9.0	Puducherry.....	—	30.0	18.2
Gangtok.....	—	13.7	6.0	Pune.....	—	29.3	15.8
Goa.....	32.0	21.4	—	Raipur.....	—	29.9	13.0
Guwahati.....	25.9	10.9	—	Ranchi.....	—	27.6	8.0
Hubballi.....	29.0	16.0	—	Shillong.....	—	15.3	6.1
Hyderabad.....	32.0	16.6	—	Shimla.....	17.7	12.0	1.3
Imphal.....	23.1	5.5	—	Srinagar.....	—	—	—
Jaipur.....	—	10.2	—	Thiruvananthapuram.....	—	33.1	22.8
Kochi.....	32.0	23.4	—	Tiruchi.....	—	31.7	19.4
Kohima.....	24.2	5.8	—	Vijayawada.....	—	29.4	20.4
Kolkata.....	23.0	12.1	—	Visakhapatnam.....	—	27.6	18.1

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing						Yesterday
CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad.....	32	23	30	—	—	■
Bengaluru.....	08	59	27	150	—	■
Chennai.....	81	44	50	185	—	■
Delhi.....	18	54	51	366	240	■
Hyderabad.....	03	87	50	160	142	■
Kolkata.....	13	123	42	325	266	■
Lucknow.....	24	47	64	39	73	117
Mumbai.....	06	28	39	73	117	■
Pune.....	72	22	23	111	97	■
Visakhapatnam.....	—	87	62	263	230	■

In observation made at 6.0 p.m., Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 371 indicating a dangerous level of pollution. In contrast, Gandhinagar, Gujarat recorded a healthy AQI score of 54

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh

recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 371 indicating a dangerous level of pollution. In contrast, Gandhinagar, Gujarat recorded a healthy AQI score of 54

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

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

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

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

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

‘Policy on rare diseases another piece of paper’

Nothing more than an illusion: patient groups

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN NEW DELHI

Calling it just another piece of paper that is far from reality, groups working in the area of rare diseases in India have said that the National Policy for Rare Diseases-2020, released recently by the Union Health Ministry, is nothing more than “an illusion”. It offers no clarity on long-term financial assistance, they said.

The government, in its policy paper, has proposed financial support of up to ₹15 lakh under an umbrella scheme of the Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi for rare diseases that require one-time treatment. Beneficiaries for such financial assistance would not be limited to Below the Poverty Line (BPL) families, but extended to 40% of the population eligible as per the norms of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, for their treatment in government tertiary hospitals only.

‘Alternate funding’

It has also proposed that the Government will “endeavour to create alternate funding mechanism through setting up a digital platform for voluntary individual and corporate donors to contribute to the treatment cost of patients of rare diseases”.

For prevention and control, the Ministry has noted that it will work at encouraging people to seek pre-marital genetic counselling, identification of high risk couples, and create awareness about early detection rare diseases. “The 2017 policy on rare diseases had proposed a ₹100 crore corpus fund allocation for the treatment of patients with rare diseases, which was a Centre-State partnership of 60:40, with each State forming a technical committee to evaluate patients’ applications. That has come down to ₹15 lakh support for diseases needing one-time treatment. Clearly, now, after a major lag, the policy has come with no hope in sight,” noted a release from the Lysosomal Storage Disorders Support Society.

The society’s president Manjit Singh said, “Policy 2020 is far from reality and lacks genuine interest in providing much-needed treatment to ‘treatable’ Rare Diseases.” Prasanna Shirol, founder of the Organization for Rare Diseases India (ORDI), said that the policy is a “plain mockery of the situation of patients”, and that proposed solutions such as the creation of a digital platform for crowd funding were not reliable. “The policy is just another document without much substance,” he said.

PM must prove his charge or apologise: IMA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Tuesday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to deny or prove his alleged statement that top pharmaceutical companies bribed doctors with women escorts. The country's largest doctors body demanded that the PM should apologise if he fails to do so.

“Reports have appeared in the media regarding the purported statement by Hon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi that top pharmaceutical companies bribed doctors with women escorts. IMA takes strong exception to the statement if it has been really made by the Prime Minister,” a media release from IMA said.

The PM reportedly spoke about ethical marketing practices during a meeting with top pharmaceutical companies earlier this month. “IMA wants to know if the government had details about companies involved in supplying women to doctors why it chose to invite them for a meeting in PMO rather than initiate criminal proceedings,” the IMA statement said.

In November, a study published by Pune-based Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives revealed that doctors accept incentives from pharmaceutical companies in the form of leisure trips, tablets, gold jewellery and petrol cards.

Railways to offer content on demand by 2022

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA NEW DELHI

Train journeys could soon become a more entertaining with the Indian Railways planning to offer access to “high quality, buffer free” video content to passengers. The project, to be implemented by PSU RailTel, is expected to be rolled out fully in the next two years. RailTel has selected Margo Network, a subsidiary of Zee Entertainment, as the digital entertainment service provider for providing content-on-demand (CoD) on trains and at railway stations, a statement said.



Theological thicket

SC must mark limits of religious freedom, against which legality of practices can be tested

The opening hearing before a nine-judge Supreme Court Bench, constituted to give an authoritative pronouncement on the nature of religious freedom under the Constitution, has revealed the conceptual confusion over the reference made to it. The Bench, headed by the Chief Justice of India, S.A. Bobde, has asked lawyers to “re-frame” the issues, or add to them, following submissions that the questions framed by a Bench of five judges were too broad. Further, the CJI has clarified that the Court will not be deciding the petitions seeking a review of the verdict in the Sabarimala temple case. Instead, it would limit itself to “larger questions” such as the interplay between freedom of religion and other fundamental rights; and the extent to which courts can probe whether a particular practice is essential to that religion or not. At the same time, he has said, “We will decide questions of law on women’s entry into mosques/temples, genital mutilation among Dawoodi Bohras, entry of Parsi women who marry outside the community into the fire temple. We will not decide the individual facts of each case.” It would be prudent if this approach means that the Bench would set out the limits of the freedom of religion, against which such practices can be tested and their legality determined. However, it would be unwise if the examination of every discriminatory practice becomes a fresh treatise on Articles 25 and 26, instead of being subjected to a simple test whether the particular practice is protected by the freedom of religion, or can be curbed on the grounds of “public order, morality and health”.

A signal flaw in the reference is that it did not emanate from Benches before which these matters were pending. Normally, such issues are referred to a larger Bench only if the Court is faced with apparently contradictory precedents, or feels that the settled law requires reconsideration. A five-judge Bench, while hearing the Sabarimala review petitions, had referred a set of questions to a larger Bench. But two dissenting judges had pointed out that it was up to Benches before which such cases came up to decide whether they should go by existing precedent, or refer the matter to larger Benches for fresh consideration. That the strength of the Bench was fixed at nine may indicate that the court is leaving scope for revisiting the 1954 seven-judge Bench decision in the Shirur Mutt case, holding that religious denominations had the autonomy to decide what religious practices were essential to them. A reconsideration of this “essentiality doctrine” will be useful only if it is a means to rid the court of the burden of entering the theological thicket. However, even without revisiting the judgment, courts have often given verdicts that protect individual rights, and uphold equality and dignity over regressive religious practices.

Inflation shocker

With growth sagging and prices rising, the economy is entering a difficult phase

The inflation devil is back and at the wrong time. The 7.35% rise in consumer price inflation in December is a shocker even to those who were prepared for an elevated level of inflation in the backdrop of the rise in prices of food commodities in general, and the astronomical rise in the price of onions, in particular. The disturbing December print has set off fears over whether India is entering a period of slow growth accompanied by high inflation, in other words, stagflation. Such fears have to be weighed against a few facts. First, the headline inflation number is driven mainly by food inflation at 14.12% – it was 10.01% in November and 2.65% in December 2018. While onion was the prime villain pushing up price inflation in vegetables to a huge 60.50% compared to December 2018, prices of other food items such as meat and fish (up 9.57%), milk (up 4.22%), eggs (up 8.79%) and some pulses were also on the upswing. These are a largely seasonal rise in prices and are driven mainly by supply-side factors and the prices will reverse once the supply shortfall is addressed. An analysis by State Bank of India’s research team shows that minus the increase in prices of onion, potato and ginger, headline CPI inflation would be just 4.48%. Second, core inflation, which is the one that should be of concern, has only inched up marginally from 3.5% in November to 3.7% in December. That said, it would be worrisome indeed if core inflation were to shoot up or if food inflation does not cool down in the next couple of months. Also, the effects of the increase in telecom tariffs, rail tickets and in fuel prices need to be closely watched.

The sharp jump in the CPI has queered the pitch for the Reserve Bank of India’s monetary policy review in February. The central bank stood pat on rates in the December policy precisely due to fears of inflation and had even revised upwards its inflation projection for the second half of the fiscal to 4.7-5.1%. The December print is way above the monetary policy committee’s (MPC) mandated limit of 6% (4% plus 2%) which means that a rate cut is pretty much off the table for now. Yet, with growth sagging, there is pressure on the central bank to cut rates at least one more time to stimulate growth. It would be interesting to watch the deliberations of the MPC in February. While the market may be prepared to accept a standstill policy for now, any change in the RBI’s stance from accommodative to neutral may not go down well. A lot would also depend on the fiscal arithmetic that would emerge from the budget to be presented on February 1. Meanwhile, the government should engage all levers to address the supply-side issues that are behind the rise in food inflation. A calming down of food prices will help the bank do what the government and markets want – lower rates.

The long wait for empowered mayors

Mayors in many global cities go on to lead their country; in India it is the opposite story, with politics to be blamed



G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

As he attempts to repeat the overwhelming 2015 victory of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the Delhi Assembly election, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is challenging political Goliaths on just one plank: his government’s performance.

The face of changes

The iconoclast who overran Delhi’s established political trenches with an anti-corruption campaign is pinning his hopes on the unprecedented fiscal measures he has taken to change the paradigm of education, health and urban development in the National Capital. In office, he has pressed on even in the face of non-cooperation from the Central Government, which controls important departments providing civic services mainly through the Urban Development and Home Ministries.

The AAP’s annual budget five years ago raised the outlay for education by 106% over the previous year’s plan of ₹2,219 crore, and focused on building 20,000 additional classrooms. It sent government teacher-mentors abroad for training to modernise the system. Shiny classrooms, new teaching tools and eager students changed the public view of government schools as decrepit dungeons.

Delhi’s ambitious budgets for development stand apart from those of other cities, and built the Chief Minister’s reputation more as a super Mayor in a city-State. The 2015 education outlay was no flash in the pan. Four years later, it was 27.8%, says an analysis by PRS Legislative Research, and continues to tower over the States that average 15.8%. For health, the allocation of 13.8% dwarfs the 5.2% that others spend on average, and Delhi’s Mohalla Clinics – to provide coverage to all within a range of 1 km – are seen by public health researchers as a good model for a national universal health coverage programme. In budget 2019-20, the highest increase was for transport, at 38%, raising hopes of reduced pollution partly through support for electric vehicles. Municipal budgets for 2014-15 analysed by Open Budgets India reflect a similar trend for urban education expenditure *vis-à-vis* Delhi. On the income side, cities collect far less property tax than they should due to undervaluation and lack of scientific assessment.

Although he is criticised for his style of functioning, the AAP leader does not have his back to the wall and is pushing to extend his authority, fighting the Central Government’s attempts to clip his wings. This is not the situation in other big metropolitan cities, which cannot aspire to have strong leadership due to the prevailing system.

Hardly empowered; a ‘threat’

Metros have been deprived of empowered Mayors who can raise efficiency, productivity and liveability. Mayors in many global cities go on to lead their country, which possibly explains why they have been reduced to obscure, ceremonial figures by national parties in India.

The Economic Survey of 2017-18 notes that a third of the population now lives in urban areas which produce three-fifths of the GDP. But India’s overflowing cities lack capacity, infrastructure and leadership. The Survey acknowledges this, attributing it to the absence of a single city government in charge, and low spending on infrastructure. State governments amass the large economic output from urban agglomerations, but are averse to a strong Mayoral system.

Chief Ministers see a potential threat from a charismatic and empowered Mayor with progressive policies. Some of them have used the excuse of poor performance of urban local bodies as a justifica-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

tion to replace direct election of Mayors with an indirect system. The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government in Tamil Nadu issued an ordinance last year to amend the law, and remove any possibility of prominent Opposition politicians becoming the face of any big city. The memory of M.K. Stalin, son of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam leader M. Karunanidhi as a high-profile Mayor in Chennai even after a quarter century is obviously still fresh. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi refreshingly promised ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha poll that he would support directly-elected Mayors, since smart cities depend on good leaders.

Weakening governance

In some States, elections to urban local bodies have not been held for years, defeating the lofty goal of decentralised governance. Tamil Nadu is a prominent example. The idea of giving more authority to the third tier of governance has suffered serious stunting, in spite of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act of 1992 identifying 18 local level functions to be devolved, including planning for economic and social development, regulation of land, construction of buildings, urban planning and public health. The average of subjects devolved in all these years is nine, and does not include the major municipal services which continue to be run by parastatal authorities that answer to State governments. Newer devices used to bypass local bodies and priorities are styled as special schemes, such as urban renewal and smart cities, directly supervised by the Central

Chalk and cheese in private vs. government schools

The Annual Status of Education Report findings make a clear case for strengthening early childhood education centres



WILIMA WADHWA

One of the big debates in early childhood education is on children’s “school readiness” and whether early childhood education provides them with the requisite skills to cope with the school curriculum. A vast literature exists on the importance of certain cognitive abilities that are supposed to be developed during the years children spend in pre-school, so that they are “ready” when they enter school in grade one.

Home and other factors

In terms of what children learn in school, one of the big debates is whether children in private schools perform better than those in government schools. In the Indian context, the consensus seems to be that a large proportion of the differences in the learning levels of children enrolled in private and government schools can be attributed to “home factors”. And, while the private school effect remains positive, even after taking into account the child’s home environment, learning outcomes in private schools are nowhere near

grade competency. But, when do these differences start to manifest themselves? Do children who start grade one in private schools have a learning advantage? Let us look at the case of language. According to the grade 1 curriculum, children are supposed to be able to identify and read words and simple sentences. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2019, 21% children in grade one of government schools could read words compared to 46.7% in private schools – an advantage of 122%. How is this possible? Is this a fair comparison? Are we comparing apples with apples? The answer is clearly no.

First, the age distribution in grade one of government schools is very different from that in private schools. The Right to Education and national policy mandates that children enter grade one at age six. However, 26.1% children in grade one of government schools are four or five years old compared to 15.7% in private schools. At the other end of the spectrum, 30.4% children in grade one of government schools are seven-eight years old compared to 45.4% in private schools. Therefore, comparing learning levels in grade one between government and private schools becomes problematic. The higher learning levels in grade one, in private schools, may be partly due to the fact that grade one in those schools has a higher



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proportion of older children.

Second, it is well known that children who go to private schools come from relatively affluent backgrounds. They also tend to have more educated parents. This affords them certain advantages which are not available to children who are from less advantaged families and are more likely to attend government schools. For instance, 30% of government school grade one children, in the ASER 2019 sample, had mothers who had never been to school compared to only 12% of grade one private school children. Further, 27.3% of grade one children in private schools had private tutors compared to 19.5% in government schools.

Third, early childhood education is supposed to prepare children for school. Children are supposed to be exposed to activities that build their cognitive abilities and early literacy and numeracy skills. For instance, the National Early Childhood Care and Education curriculum framework talks about developing skills related to sequential thinking, predicting

government and partnered by State governments.

Several States are averse to directly-elected Mayors even for their biggest cities, in spite of the Mayor being deprived of any significant powers. The appointment of the executive in-charge, the Municipal Commissioner is a good example. Empowered Mayors, such as those in New York, Paris, London or even Shanghai, could steal the limelight through spectacular successes, leaving Chief Ministers and legislators with little direct connect with urban voters.

Even on a salient issue such as climate change, Mayors are much in demand. The Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, assumed the leadership of the climate movement in iconic ways, with a move to prescribe green roofs in the vast French capital capturing the public imagination worldwide. Mr. Kejriwal is alert to the global traction that climate change is getting, and addressed Mayors gathered in Copenhagen via video link last year, because the Central government refused him permission to attend. The AAP Health Minister was similarly denied permission to go to Australia to explain the working of Mohalla Clinics.

The present system, of course, does not help directly-elected Mayors. They have not been able to raise service delivery standards, regardless of long or short tenure, and the poor outcomes are quite evident, as the Economic Survey points out. Ironically, because powerless Mayors have running battles with municipal councillors, States such as Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, to name just two, abandoned direct elections to the post.

The Annual Survey of India’s City-Systems (ASICS) 2017 covering 23 cities across 20 States published by Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy found 33% of medium and large cities with a provision for directly-elected Mayors, but none in the mega cities. A tenure of five years for Mayors is available only in a fifth of the biggest cities, and half of ur-

ban Indians live in cities where Mayors can be in office for just two-and-a-half years, ASICS found.

Unified governance and empowerment through elected municipal systems is a distant prospect, but the Central government glibly claimed at the UN Habitat Conference in Quito, Ecuador, in 2016, that the 74th Amendment had made Indian cities self-governing entities with adequate powers and financial autonomy. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth, but then the statement was made by the Secretary to the Union Ministry of Housing. At the conference plenary, the Indian statement did not contain any reference to Mayors.

Hampering development

Much hard work must be done, before cities can progress beyond John Kenneth Galbraith’s famous description of India as a “functioning anarchy”. Government departments will feel accountable for urban services and infrastructure only under the watch of an empowered leader, who enjoys the mandate of the city’s residents.

A lot of time has been lost, as recalcitrant State leaders, who often have remote rural bases of support, stymie the pace of orderly urban development. Lack of coherence in government is hindering better productivity, and causing losses through pollution, congestion and poor outcomes on infrastructure investments. The priorities are flawed, the administration is fragmented and the capacity of city governments is low.

In the coming decade, progress on Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the UN Habitat New Urban Agenda will come under close international scrutiny. India’s cities need a new deal, one that is focused on development. Only elected, empowered and accountable Mayors can deliver on that.

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patterns, observing, reasoning and problem solving in the pre-school stage. These cognitive and early language skills are highly correlated with the child’s ability to acquire further language skills. Therefore, children who enter grade one better prepared with these skills are likely to perform better. For instance, among the cognitive tasks administered in ASER 2019 (seriation, pattern recognition and puzzle) only 23.8% children of grade one in government schools could do all three tasks compared to 43.1% in private schools.

Once we take into account all these factors – age distribution in grade one, home factors such as affluence, mother’s education, home learning environment, and some baseline abilities that children enter grade one with, private schools still have a learning advantage. Where is this coming from? Since we are talking about grade one, this difference cannot be attributed to an accumulated effect of better teaching practices in private schools.

Pre-school learning

What private pre-schools are doing is to start children on the school-based curriculum in pre-school itself. In other words, the private sector keeps children longer in pre-school and exposes them to school-like curricula even before they have entered school.

For instance, 14% children in anganwadis could recognise letters or more compared to 52.9% in private pre-schools; and 12.9% children in these private pre-schools were already reading words (something they are supposed to learn in grade one) compared to 2.9% in anganwadis. It is not surprising, therefore, that children from private pre-schools perform better in school.

Finally, children in anganwadis do worse than private pre-school children on cognitive as well as early language tasks such as picture description. For instance, while 23.4% of private pre-school children could do all three cognitive tasks, only about half (12%) of the children in anganwadis could do them.

India has a huge investment in its early childhood programme, administered through 1.2 million anganwadis under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme. The findings of ASER 2019 make a clear case for strengthening these early childhood education centres so that they implement appropriate “school-readiness” activities. A case can also be made for streamlining the curriculum at the pre-school stage so that all pre-schools focus on activities that build cognitive and early literacy and numeracy skills. These will aid further learning.

Wilima Wadhwa is Director, ASER Centre

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Shape of a movement

We ought to have realised by now that an inclusive ethos is too deeply ingrained in the Indian mind. The CAA is being seen in the perspective of the National Population Register-National Register of Citizens, and there is not much to find fault with this perception. The fact is that the common man is truly apprehensive. This policy-troika now under way appears to delineate differences where none should exist. And this is precisely what has fuelled the peoples’ agitation. The government is yet to proceed beyond parsing a conciliatory sentence, much less open a dialogue. The deterioration in the

economy and employment is only adding to the angst.

R. NARAYANAN,
Navi Mumbai

■ The writer, in her eagerness to romanticise the anti-CAA protests as a massive popular uprising against the government, has glossed over the unfolding silent backlash against the perceived excesses of the protests (Editorial page, “Sparkling people, a spiritless Opposition”, January 14). That the pro-CAA support has been muted does not mean the silent majority has endorsed the streak of intolerance that permeated the street protests in the initial phase. The Opposition has developed cold feet after

going overboard in fanning the flames of discord because the milking of political capital is an exercise fraught with electoral risks. There is no denying the fact that the anti-CAA protests have gained a sectarian streak. The neutral observers who have been following the anti-CAA bandwagon see the waving of the national flag not as a spontaneous outburst of the pluralist sentiment; they consider it as a belated attempt to blunt the growing perception that opposition to a law is a mere front for spewing hatred against an elected government. The attempt to depict the protests as the fight between a community and the government was a dangerous narrative that

upset those who seem willing to accept the articulation of the CAA as positive discrimination in favour of persecuted people who have cultural links with the nation.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

The Taiwan win

The extraordinary comeback of Taiwan President’s Tsai Ing-wen for a second term might arguably humble China’s ‘President-for-life’, Xi Jinping, most especially after the serious muscle-flexing in Hong Kong. Taiwan has reaffirmed the victory of democratic engagement. It is expected that the international community is ‘unlikely to continue adhering to the One China

principle’. Taiwan has never been under the jurisdiction of the People’s Republic of China though Beijing regards it as a renegade province which must return to its fold. China’s desire has been ignored by the electorate.

S.S. PAUL,
Nadia, West Bengal

Demolition and beyond

Most certainly, the law of the land has to be followed. But do we realise how resources (which are continually depleting) are being wasted? Can we not come up with a

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the front-page story titled “CAA meant to give citizenship, not take it away, says PM Modi” (Jan. 13, 2020), there was an erroneous reference to the Prime Minister’s remarks made on the international youth day. It should have been national youth day.

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model wherein illegal buildings can be put to better use instead of literally being bombed to dust? So much of energy wasted. Such a loss of resources, and so much pollution. We certainly need to rethink laws and penalties (Inside pages, “Maradu demolition decision a painful duty: SC” and “Dust from debris leaves neighbours breathless”, both January 14).

PURVA MHATRE,
Mumbai