

ED questions Chidambaram on aircraft purchase page 12



India condemns vandalism at Nankana Sahib gurdwara in Pak.



Ratan Tata moves SC against NCLAT order to reinstate Cyrus Mistry

Labuschagne puts Australia in control in final Test against NZ



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Queer groups protest against CAA, NRC

NEW DELHI Protesters representing different genders along with other marginalised groups as well as sex workers gathered at Jantar Mantar on Friday against the three instruments of citizenship - the National Population Register, the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019. CITY ▶ PAGE 2

U.S. kills top Iranian General in air strike

President Trump authorised drone attack on Major-General Qassem Soleimani near Baghdad airport

The U.S. on Friday killed Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani, head of the elite Quds Force, in an air strike near Baghdad airport, the Pentagon and Iran said.

Top Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, an adviser to Gen. Soleimani, was also killed in the attack authorised by U.S. President Donald Trump.

U.S. officials said Gen. Soleimani had been killed in a drone strike while Iran's Revolutionary Guards said he was killed in an attack by American helicopters. Pictures showed burning debris on a road near the airport.

The killing of Gen. Soleimani, considered the archiAn influential commander

■ General Qassem Soleimani, who was killed on Friday in a U.S. air strike in Baghdad, was the commander of the Quds Force, the external operations wing of Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

■ For over 20 years, Soleimani directed Iran's foreign operations, which included building networks and proxies across West Asia that extended Iran's influence across

■ The pro-Iran Shia militias that were formed under Soleimani's watch played key roles in the Syrian civil war and the wa against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

■ In April last year, the U.S. designated the IRGC as a "terrorist" group and blacklisted

On Friday, the U.S. said the air strikes on the Quds Force chief was carried out on orders of President Donald Trump

the killing.

tect of Tehran's spreading military influence in West Asia, marks a dramatic escalation in the regional "shadow war" between Iran and the U.S. and its allies, principally Israel and Saudi Arabia, which could quickly ratchet up tit-for-tat attacks.

March of hope

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed harsh revenge.

Iran has been locked in a long conflict with the U.S. that escalated last week with an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Iraq by pro-Iranian militiamen after a U.S. air raid on the Kataib Hezbollah militia, founded by Muhandis. Oil prices shot up by nearly \$3 a barrel after news of

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 14 GOLD PRICE SHOOTS UP. **RUPEE PLUNGES** ▶ PAGE 15

India expresses concern, calls for restraint

India has expressed concern over the situation arising from the killing of General Qassem Soleimani. "The increase in tension has alarmed the world. Peace, stability and security in this region are of utmost importance to India. It is vital that the situation does not escalate further. India has consistently advocated restraint and continues to do so," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement. ▶ PAGE 12

Pinarayi writes to 11 CMs on CAA

'Pass Assembly resolution against Act'

The Act has triggered apprehensions among large sections of society, and the need of the hour is unity among all Indians who wish to protect the country's cherished democratic and secular values PINARAYI VIJAYAN



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has written to 11 Chief Ministers, urging them to emulate the model set by the Kerala Assembly in passing a resolution demanding that the Centre scrap the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) 2019.

Mr. Vijayan's move to elicit the cooperation of 11 States in the fight against the CAA comes in the wake of BJP leader G.V.L. Narasimha Rao filing a petition with the Rajya Sabha Chairman for initiating breach of privilege proceedings against him for passing the resolution.

Mr. Vijayan, in his letter, said the Act had triggered apprehensions among large sections of society and the need of the hour was unity among all Indians who wished to protect the country's democratic and secular values. People from different sections, irrespective of their different opinions, should unite to preserve the basic tenets of the polity which form the cornerstone of democracy, he said.

'NPR put on hold'

Kerala had decided to address the apprehensions about the National Register of Citizens (NRC). Preparation of the National Population Register (NPR) would eventually lead to the NRC. The government had stayed all activities related to the

Punjab backs Kerala govt.

Punjab Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh has come out in support of the resolution passed by the Kerala Assembly seeking the withdrawal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, terming it the voice of the people and urging the Centre to heed it. PAGE 13

Mamata slams Modi

Whenever an issue is raised by an Indian citizen, Prime Minister Narendra Modi advises the person to go to Pakistan so as to divert attention from the growing economic crisis, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee said, adding "This is our motherland, all of us were born here." → PAGE 11

NPR in the State, he said.

The letter has been forwarded to the Chief Ministers of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Delhi, Maharashtra, Bihar, Puducherry, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Andhra Odisha.

MISSING THE WOOD ▶ EDITORIAL NO GOING BACK: SHAH > PAGE 13 MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 8 & 13

PM asks students to innovate, patent

'New India' needs technology, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday called upon students to "innovate, patent, produce and prosper", in his inaugural speech at the 107th Indian Science Congress here.

"New India" needed technology and a "logical temperament" to invent and disseminate technological Cost-effective solutions. agriculture was critical to benefit farmers, he said at function themed 'Science and Technology: Rural Development.'

Mr. Modi emphasised that digitalisation, e-commerce, Internet banking and mobile banking services were assisting the rural population significantly. "Technology can be harnessed for several rural development initiatives, particularly in the area of costeffective agriculture and farm-to-consumer supply chain network," he said.

He urged everyone to find technological solutions for stubble burning (a cause of

winter pollution in north Inmaintaining the groundwater table, preventing communicable diseases, and undertaking environment-friendly transportation. He stressed that science and technology had a major role in contributing to making India a \$5 trillion economy.

At the event in the University of Agriculture Sciences (UAS), GKVK campus, he was accompanied on stage by Union Science Minister Harsh Vardhan, UAS Vice-Chancellor Rajendra Prasad and Indian Science Congress Association general president K.S. Rangappa.

Mr. Rangappa, in his address, asked Mr. Modi to "turn his attention a little more on science and technology" for the country to scale newer heights.

A highlight of the event is a Farmers' Congress, which is expected to see 110 "innovative" farmers discussing climate change and novel practices.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12



Sensing the future: Delegates looking at an exhibit at the 'Pride of India' expo in Bengaluru on Friday. • K. MURALI KUMAR



Rising up: Accredited social health activists (ASHAs) taking part in a rally in Bengaluru on Friday, seeking higher wages and

Special provisions likely for J&K residents in jobs, land rights

Govt. mulls Himachal model to regulate land ownership

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Centre is all set to provide protection to domiciles of Jammu and Kashmir in government jobs, educational institutions and land rights, a senior government official said on Friday.

The Centre is exploring the option of implementing the mandatory requirement of continuous stay in the region for a minimum of 15 years before applying for a job in the government sector

and for admissions in schools and colleges in the Union Territory of J&K.

On August 6, the Centre revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 and Article 35A of the Constitution and downgraded and bifurcated the State into two Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.

The two provisions of the Constitution that were revoked let the J&K legislature decide the "permanent residents" of the State, prohibiting a non-J&K resident from buying property in the State and ensuring job reservation for its residents.

The official said special provisions were being examined on the lines of those in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The provisions pertain to regulating ownership and transfer of land to conserve the limited resources available for deve-

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Nobel winner's prescription: put money in the hands of the poor

Corporate tax cuts haven't boosted demand, says Abhijit Banerjee

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

Economics Nobel Prize winner Abhijit Banerjee said instead of cutting corporate taxes, the government should be putting it in the hands of poorer people who will spend it immediately and kick-start demand in the economy. He was speaking at the launch of his book, Good Economics for Hard Times, on Friday, along with his coauthor and fellow prize winner Esther Duflo.

With the annual budget coming up in less than a month and the country in the midst of an economic cri-



Esther Duflo in New Delhi

sis, Dr. Banerjee was asked what the Finance Minister should be doing in order to boost demand and revive the economy. "I would say, first, no more cuts in corporate taxes," he said, to loud applause from a packed audience.

He noted that the corporate sector is not acting to boost demand. "The clear fact is that the corporate sector is actually sitting on cash and is not investing. Why is it not investing? Because every sign of a demand problem is there," said Dr. Banerjee.

Dr. Banerjee also weighed in on the CAA. Apart from the issue of religious discrimination, he noted that local officials in border districts would have the power to extort large sums from people whose lives hang in the balance. "The governance problem is a frightening one," he

Care for the Hindus in India first, says Kejriwal

'CAA will impact Hindus and Muslims'

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Friday that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was an "unnecessary" legislation which will impact both Hindus and Muslims. Speaking at a town hall meeting, the CM said, "We don't need this law. It is completely unnecessary. Where will we accommodate two crore Hindus from Pakistan? The government is showing so much love for the Hindus in Pakistan. They should first care for the Hindus in India and fix the problems in our country. If they

bring two crore Hindus from

Pakistan, where will they give them homes and provide them jobs?"

Saying he and his Aam Aadmi Party were against it, Mr. Kejriwal said that there were more pressing pro-

blems at hand in India. The CM also said that the time to discuss the NRC was now. He cited the case of a person he had met recently in Burari who did not have his birth certificate. "It is surprising that the government is willing to give citizenship to those coming from Pakistan, but Indians who do not have a birth certificate will have to leave the country," he said.

IN BRIEF



Delhi University teachers hold candlelight vigil

Several teachers of Delhi University who have been on indefinite strike for nearly a month now, demanding absorbtion of ad-hoc teachers, on Friday held a candlelight vigil. "The discontentment of teachers is palpable as over 4,000 teachers have been denied career progression for more than a decade in many cases," said Delhi University Teachers'Association. The union reiterated its demand that the MHRD, the UGC and the V-C initiate dialogue with the union to resolve longstanding issues.

Congress opens social media control room

Delhi Congress on Friday inaugurated a social media control room ahead of the Assembly elections at the DPCC office. Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra said the Congress party in the run-up to the election would aggressively mount campaigns to counter the false propaganda by the BJP and the AAP governments.



Anti-CAA stir: queer groups, sex workers take centre stage

Common refrain among them was the inability to furnish birth certificate, proof of residence among others

JAGRITI CHANDRA

Protesters from all genders, sexual and caste minorities along with other marginalised groups of migrant as well as sex workers gathered at Jantar Mantar on Friday against the three instruments of citizenship - the National Population Register (NPR), the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The event was organised on the birth anniversary of social reformist Savitrabai Phule, who is also known as the first woman educationalist in India.

As many as 45 different groups from a cross-section of society were present, including the All India Network of Sex Workers, Telangana Hijra Intersex Trans Samiti, The Queer Muslim Project, Pink List, TransNow Collective, Birsa Ambedkar Phule Students' Association (BAPSA), National Federation of Indian Women, National Hawker Federation, Basti Suraksha Manch, among others.

The common refrain among these groups was that the inability to furnish evidence in the form of birth certificate, proof of residence, land records, etc. that will likely result in their harassment.

Sex workers

"The biggest problem for sex workers is to prove their work and the other is a lack of documents to prove their



Protesters walk with placards during a stir against the CAA, NRC and NPR; (below) people from all genders, sexual and caste minorities gathered at Jantar Mantar on Friday.

identity. When I have no proof of where I was born, who is the father of my child, then the NRC will completely erase my identity. Often sex workers migrate from one city to another and in the process, they lose these documents. The NRC is yet another example of a patriarchal society where children will be required to prove their father's identity. Is then the government turning a blind eye to a mother's relationship with her children," said President of All India Network of Sex Workers, Kusum.

Queer groups

"A family is often a cite of violence for the queer people. Many of us are not even in touch with our families as we have been thrown out and ostracised. So, asking for our

documents is not even an option. How are then we supposed to come under the NRC? This is how the queer people are put at risk. The CAA anyway excludes Muslims and when you are a queer too, you are doubly marginalised", says Syeda

Lameeya Parveen of The

Oueer Muslim Project.

She added that both NRC and NPR deny the sexual and gender minorities their right to self-determination. "NRC and NPR say that you are not who you are until you have proven it, until the government considers you worthy of being a citizen. Historically, the State has been violent towards trans, queer groups

groups and with the CAA and NRC there will be more power in the hands of the police".

Migrant workers

"We have seen in Guwahati that the urban poor and migrant workers have been excluded from NRC because they did not have different documents. Further, just like demonetisation, many daily wagers will be forced to appear before Foreign Tribunals and skip work. Moreover, while many migrant workers are not legal owners of land occupied by them, such as in slums, they are their legitimate owners because they have lived there for long and have developed the area but the NRC or NPR exercise will not take those rights into account," said Ankit Jha from National Hawkers' Federation.

The government is yet to announce the NRCbut as per the rules inserted in 2003 to the Citizenship Act, 1955, the NRC will flow from data gather under the NPR. The Ministry of Home Affairs maintains that individuals will not be asked to produce physical copies of different documents but that information provided by individuals will be accepted. As per the trial form prepared by the MHA, information will be collected across 21 parameteres which include "place of birth of father and mother, the last place of residence", along with Aadhaar (optional), voter ID card, mobile phone and driving licence numbers.



Women from Shaheen Bagh address a press conference on

Don't believe in rumours, say Shaheen Bagh protesters

'Stir will go on till January 22 at least'

STAFF REPORTER

Dispelling rumours that the indefinite demonstration against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act at Shaheen Bagh had been called off, the protesters on Friday held a press confe-

rence. Women from the area and other social activists. addressed media persons to condemn "rumours and propaganda" being spread by certain "anti-social elements". They appealed to the media not to take statements made by these persons, claiming themselves to be holding "official positions of the movement". While particular individuals had identified themselves as the "Chief Organiser" of the movement, the protesters here stressed that no single person could "assert themselves as organiser of the mass move-

ment". The protesters said those spreading rumours were part of the stir for a short time and also engaged in attempting to communalise the movement. Meraj Khan of Shaheen Bagh Coordination Committee said some persons also tried to scare the crowd by claiming that "BIP goons" were going to "infiltrate" the gathering.

The protesters said they will continue the stir at least till the Supreme Court hearing on the Act scheduled for January 22.

On Friday, the demonstration at the Noida Kalindi Kunj Highway, which has been shut down for over two weeks now, saw a large number of people. Speakers at the stir condemned the government. They appealed to those present to keep "their spirits up as victory was near-

Haryana govt. told to consult experts after plea seeks remedies to control flooding

Compliance report to be filed before March 3, orders NGT

STAFF REPORTER

Following a plea seeking remedial action to control flooding in Gurugram, the National Green Tribunal has directed the Haryana State government to consult experts and furnish a compliance report on the

rainwater harvesting

The plea had also sought increased rainwater harvesting measures which were "adversely affected due to the concretization of the Badshahpur drain".

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel took note of an October 2019 report furnished by the Haryana State Pollution Control Board that stated: "concretization reduces groundwater recharge".

"However, there is no adequate consideration of the problem of an increased potential for flooding. During the hearing, it is prayed that the concretization was done five years back. The fact remains that even if the concretization is not to be undone, abatement measures need to be adopted to ensure that rainwater harvesting and groundwa-

ter recharge are not affect-

ed and flooding is avoided," the Bench observed.

The Bench said, "On these aspects, Haryana needs to take further steps after consultation with the concerned experts on the subject. Let the same be done and the compliance report filed before March

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

Chandra and others. Earlier, the NGT had sought a joint report from the Gurugram civic body, State Pollution Control Board and the Irrigation Department.

NGT seeks report on two separate petitions

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought action taken reports from the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Delhi related to two separate pleas one claimed illegal dumping of garbage while the other alleged operation of a ready mix concrete plant in Rajokri protected forest.

One-month time given

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel directed the PCCF. Delhi to look into the allegations and furnish action taken reports in the pleas within one month.

While the Mall Road, Vasant Kunj Resident Welfare

Association had moved the Tribunal with allegations of a ready mix concrete plant operating in violation of environmental norms in Rajokri protected forest area, another petitioner had alleged unscientific dumping of garbage.

"Present application is that throwing and burning of waste or garbage in open area are continuing. The garbage is being dumped in the forest as depicted by photographs...," the Bench said while hearing the plea moved by petitioner Dhiren Chhikara.

A report filed by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee and SDM, Rajokri earlier, had however, said that "no garbage was being

Man awarded two-year jail term in seven cheque bounce cases

Court orders accused to pay ₹18 lakh to complainant

NIRNIMESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has upheld two years' simple imprisonment to a man in seven cases of cheque bounce. It has also directed him to pay ₹18 lakh to the complainant.

Dismissing seven appeals against as many judgments passed by a Metropolitan Magistrate, Additional Sessions Judge Ajay Gupta said: "Since the appellant/accused failed to repay the amount of the cheques [₹15.95 lakh] despite service of legal notice, thus, he is guilty of commission of offence under Section 138 of the

Negotiable Instruments

The complainant had extended a loan of ₹22.5 lakh to the accused. The accused had ap-

proached the complainant for a loan after he came to know that he had not invested ₹23 lakh in his business, which he had borrowed from a bank.

Further, the accused was able to persuade the complainant to pay EMI of his bank loan for one year, saying that he was facing financial difficulties.

However, the accused failed to repay this amount after the EMI period was

But with the intervention of friends and relatives, the accused handed + over his car to the complainant in lieu of it which was valued at ₹3 lakh.

He also issued 10 cheques in his favour for repayment of the other

'Insufficient money'

complainant alleged.

attempting to kill wife

NIRNIMESH KUMAR

A Delhi court has acquitted

a man in a case of attempt-

ing to kill his wife as the lat-

ter went back on her charg-

es submitted to the police.

man alleged that his hus-

band used to beat him, tried

to kill him and also prevent-

ed her from going to her pa-

rents' house. She also said

her in-laws instigated him to

hit her. The victim alleged

that she had also filed a

domestic violence case against him in the Crime

Against Women Cell. Ho-

wever, she later returned to

his home but her mental

and physical cruelties in-

creased, the complaint read. As no evidence was

found against the in-laws,

In her complaint, the wo-

man of

Court acquits

All the cheques were disho noured when the complainant presented them to his bank, some due to insufficient money in the accused's accounts while the others on instruction not to make the payment and deliberate overwriting, the

'Got to know about Baliyan's death much later'

Brother-in-law of victim was at the spot but unaware that he was stuck under debris

STAFF REPORTER

Delhi Fire Service (DFS) personnel Amit Pawar, brotherin-law of Amit Baliyan who lost his life during a rescue operation in Peeragarhi, was about to enter the building to rescue people trapped under the debris but was stopped by his senior as the condition of the structure was not good, his family said on Friday.

Initially, Mr. Pawar was unaware that his brother-in-law was among the three fire service personnel trapped under the debris. Only after he checked the batch number of the DFS personnel, he got to

DELHI TODAY

itat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

show by Chandar Panjre at Triveni Gal

lery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Exhibition: Rita Jhunjhunwala and

Shreekant Somany collaborate for a

two-person show of paintings and photographs titled "Shunya - A Jour-

ey", at Bikaner House, 10.30 a.m.

. (Mail your listings for this column at

citveditordelhi@thehindu.co.in)



know about Baliyan.

The victim's younger brother-in-law Ankur, who morning, the DFS staff paid



works in Gurugram, said he got to know about the incident around 2 p.m. on Thursday. Meanwhile, on Friday

Baliyan was very happy after being selected in DFS. I spoke to him a couple of days ago and asked him about his job. He said he was

performing well

tributes to Baliyan at the Fire Safety Management Academy in Rohini.

Several people visited the victim's home to console the family. His wife Shivani said: "I last spoke to him around midnight. I took an off on

Thursday as he had told me that he will take me out for some work. Later, I came to know that there was a fire incident. Initially, I thought it was a normal fire call. When I realised that he was stuck inside, I got scared and everyone assured me that he will be fine. The moment I heard the news of his death, I got numb.'

Rohit, Baliyan's cousin, said, "Baliyan was very happy after being selected in DFS. I spoke to him a couple of days ago and asked him about his job. He said everything was fine and he was performing

Farmers' day out



A field day: Farmers tend to their crop in New Delhi on Friday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

CM promises job to slain firefighter's kin

Kejriwal had earlier announced ₹1 crore ex gratia to his family

Exhibition: A paintings show by Dipnarayan Paul and Moinudin Mullick at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habita Contact (ILIC) 11 September 11 September 11 September 11 September 12 Septemb SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT Exhibition: "Katha". a solo painting

NEW DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday promised a job to one of the family members of firefighter Amit Baliyan, who died during a rescue operation in Peeragarhi a day ago.

Exhibition: "Shelter" a solo show of sculptures by Pintu Sikder at Shridhar-ani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. This comes a day after Mr. Kejriwal announced an ex **Exhibition:** "Truth", a solo show of oil paintings by Shafali R. Anand at All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS), 1, Rafi Marg, 11 a.m. - 7 gratia of ₹1 crore to the family of Baliyan.

Twenty-eight-year-old Baliyan died during a rescue operation after a fire broke



out at a building that housed a manufacturing unit of batteries. A portion of the building collapsed and Balibuilding for hours.

yan was trapped inside the "Baliyan sacrificed his life of others; the entire country, especially Delhi, is thankful to him," the Chief Minister said. "I have just met his family... everyone is shocked and

while trying to save the lives

in grief due to his death. It is because of the courage and bravery of people like him that our Delhi is safe...We see the courage of our firefighters, who put their lives at risk every time when there is a fire in the city," he added.

SDMC's new park to have replicas of monuments from across the country

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday laid the foundation for the South Delhi Municipal Corporation's (SDMC) 'Bharat Darshan Park' in Punjabi Bagh on Friday.

Similar to the 'Waste to Wonder' park installed by the SDMC earlier, this park will have replicas of prominent monuments from across India made out of waste and scrap material, the civic body said.

Theme of park

The theme of the park would be 'Unity in Diversity', it

The park will be developed over a six-acre plot and will host monuments such as Char Minar, Gateway generation.

of India, Konark Temple, Nalanda Monuments and severothers, Commissioner Gyanesh Bharti said.

the police only chargesheeted her husband under Section 307 (attempt to murder) of IPC. In the trial, the

woman turned hostile. During her cross-examination, she could not say anything At a cost of ₹20 crore against the accused. "Since He added that the park, no iota of evidence has which was to come up at a come on record to connect cost of approximately ₹20 the accused with the ofcrore, would be eco-friendly fence(s) with which he has and self-sustainable with its own solar and wind power

been charged, the accused stands acquitted of the charge(s)," said Judge.

Man jumps to death at metro station

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

A 42-year-old man allegedly jumped to death at Ghitorni metro station on Friday morning, the police said. No note left behind by the deceased has been recovered, they said.

A senior police officer said that a call was received at 11.55 a.m. regarding the incident. The man was shifted to a hospital where he was declared dead. "The man used to live in Saket and had recently shifted to Gurugram," the officer said.

The police said that a post-mortem will be conducted on Saturday. He is survived by his wife, son and daughter.

Due to the incident, services were breiefly delayed on the Sultanpur-Huda City Centre section of the Yellow Line, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation officials

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health: 011-4076 9002 (Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -7.30 p.m.).

Puri hands over property deeds to 20 illegal colony residents

'More applicants will be given documents and dedicated server to be put in place to speed up process'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

In a first, the registry and conveyance deeds for their properties in two unauthorised colonies of Delhi were handed over to 20 applicants for ownership rights by Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs (Independent Charge) Hardeep S. Puri here on Friday.

This comes in the backdrop of the coming Delhi Assembly election.

But Mr. Puri said the grant of ownership rights had "no relationship with elections", adding that the work had been pending with the Delhi government since 2008.

The grant of rights would benefit 40 lakh residents of 1,731 unauthorised colonies, he said.

The 20 applicants from Raja Vihar and Suraj Park in the Rohini Assembly constituency became the first to get ownership rights to property in unauthorised colonies as part of the government's decision to grant rights in 1,731 colonies.

At an event attended by Lieutenant-Governor Anil



A view of an unauthorised colony in New Ashok Nagar. ■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

Baijal and officials of the Ministry and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Mr. Puri said the 20 applicants had completed their documentation on the DDA

portal, paid the fees, been

given a conveyance deed by

the DDA and completed the

registry process at a registrar's office of the Delhi government. Minister launched the DDA's portal for registration of applicants and submission of applications in December. A total of 57,000 people had regis-

tered so far, and 3,500 had

completed their applica-

He said more applicants would be given documents in the coming days and a dedicated server would be put in place to speed up the Referring to the ruling

Aam Aadmi Party's criticism that the Centre was misleading the people about regularisation of these colonies, Mr. Puri said the "old way of regularisation would have taken 10 years", so the Union Cabinet had taken a decision and passed a law in Parliament to facilitate the grant

I have decided not to spend any time on commenting on government or what they are Centre.

of rights.

"The more I deal with the Delhi government – I'm not talking about the institution but some eminent representatives who are occupying public office – I continue to be amazed at their capacity to derail matters... I have decided not to spend any time on commenting on the Delhi government or what they are doing. Because their actions speak for themselves and the people of Delhi will have to judge," he said.

Social infrastructure

He said the money collected in the form of fees would go to a special development fund that would be used to create social infrastructure and roads.

DDA vice-chairperson Ta-

run Kapoor said the work on creating layout plans - a step towards regularising the colonies - would start soon in accordance with the regulations laid down by the

One of the applicants given the documents, Pinki Sharma, of Suraj Park, said the registry would enable her family to take loans.

Sisodia's reaction

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday, questioned the validity and authenticity of the papers and called them "fake."

"Today the BJP and Mr. Puri distributed conveyance deeds which are worthless without the official notification change of land use. You cannot give property right or permanent ownership to a family, whose home is built on government or agricultural land, without first regularising these unauthorised colonies. The BJP's claim that they are giving legal property and ownership rights to a home built on unauthorised land is fraudulent," said Mr. Sisodia.

Fear of getting uprooted is now a thing of the past

Residents heave a sigh of relief

STAFF REPORTER

"This is the biggest dream of my parents. Our house is not even fully built. But our family has been living here for around 25 years in the same condition as we are scared to invest. We could not risk building the house as there is always a fear that civic body officials will come and raze it down," said Kiran Maurya, a resident of Raja Vihar.

Maurya's mother Asha is one of the 20 residents of unauthorised colonies who received registry papers from Union Minister Hardeep S. Puri on Thursday.

Sixty two-year-old Inder Singh Bisht, a resident of Suraj Park since 1980, said seeing "false promises" of political parties turn into a "reality" is a big relief.

"Governments and political parties constantly make promises which ultimately turn out to be false. But see-

ing this turn into a reality is a big deal for us," said Bisht.

Rajeshwar, a courier boy and son of Sangeeta who is one of the residents to have received the papers, said: "For over two decades we had been living in constant fear of getting uprooted as we had no documents to show. Authorities could have turned up at any moment and razed our homes. Finally we will get to live a life without fear of being displaced."

Uncertainty ends For Pratap Choudhary, the

"uncertain life" has come to an end with the handing over of papers.

"We are a family of eight living here since 1982. With us finally getting the papers, we no longer need to be apprehensive of uncertainty. We no longer need to fear the DDA or the municipal corporation," said Mr. Chaudhury.

Under cover



Pavement dwellers near Bangla Sahib Gurdwara in the city on a cold Friday morning. The minimum temperature on Friday settled at 7.6 degrees Celsius. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

All India Judicial Service no panacea, says study

Vidhi report points out several issues in pitching AIJS as a solution to judicial vacancies

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

Most of the reasons for creation of an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) for appointing lower court judges "no longer exist or have been resolved through changes in rules, regulations and practices", a report by Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy said.

Currently, the appointments of District Judges and Subordinate Judiciary are done by the respective State governments. But in recent years, there have been an invigorated push for creation of a unified pan-India judicial service for appointing

AIJS has been pitched as a solution to judicial vacancies, lack of representation for the marginalised and the failure to attract the best

Vidhi in its report titled, 'A primer on the All India Judicial Service - A solution in search of a problem?' demonstrated that many of these issues have been "incorrectly diagnosed".

The idea for AIJS was first proposed by the 14th Report of the Law Commission of India in 1958, aimed at creating a centralised cadre of District Judges that would draw better talent.

One of the recent justifications for creation of AIJS has been that a centralised service would help fill the approximately 5,000 vacancies across the District and Subordinate Judiciary in India.

The report, however, said it is only certain High Courts which account for a majority of the approximately 5,000

"In our opinion, rather than proposing an AIJS as a solution for judicial vacancies, it may be more prudent to investigate the reasons and causes for the large number of vacancies in the poorly performing States," the report authored by Prashant Reddy T., Ameen Jauhar and Reshma Sekhar

The report also highlighted that many of the communities who currently benefit from the State quotas, may oppose the creation of AIJS. This is because the communities recognised as Other Backward Classes (OBC) by State governments may or may not be classified as OBCs by the Central

government. While AIJS has been

pitched as a solution to lack of representation for the marginalised on the Bench, the report said many States are already reserving posts for marginalised communities and women.

Another argument made against creation of AIJS is judges recruited through this process will not know the local languages of the States in which they are posted. This becomes important considering that the proceedings of civil and criminal courts are to be conducted in a language prescribed by the respective State governments.

"The issues of local language and customs are issues that deserve serious consideration before moving ahead with the creation of the AIJS," the report said.

amount to buyer, NDCRC tells builder STAFF REPORTER

Refund booking

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) has held a builder responsible for unilaterally changing the loan plan without issuing "sufficient notice" to a flat buyer.

It directed the builder to refund within four weeks the booking amount to the buyer. "We also award cost of ₹50,000 to be paid by the

developer...," it said. The order came on a plea by Abhinav Gupta who + booked an apartment in Gold Souk Golf Links, a group housing complex at Sector 17 Sohna, Haryana, built by Gold Souk Infras-

tructure Pvt. Ltd. (GSIPL). As per an agreement, 10% of the total price of the flat was to be paid at the time of booking, 80% by the bank as loan and 10% by the buyer at the time of possession. The advocate representing Mr. Gupta said as per the agreement, if the buyer is unable to make the balance payment, then the developer is liable to refund Dewan Housing Finance Corpora-

tion Limited (DHFCL). The DHFCL said that initially, it had agreed to disburse ₹80 lakh, but a revised amount of about ₹70 lakh was allotted. GSIPL argued that the buyer had failed to secure the loan of ₹80 lakh and since it had no connection with the reduction of the loan amount, it cannot be held liable.

goals in its 2020-21 budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Making areas garbage binfree, setting up 100 charging stations for electric cars besides an intensive plantation drive to mitigate air pollution are among the top tasks underlined by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in its 2020-21

The civic body chairman Dharmendra presented his maiden budget on Friday with a financial projection of ₹4,372.40 crore and said an Integrated Command and Control System will be made live by March this

"We plan to remove roadside garbage iron bin trolleys in a phased manner to make NDMC bin free city," said Mr. Dharmendra

He said the body has already established 55 charging stations of 15KW capacity for electric cars.

NDMC outlines Police issue tender for procurement of drones Five arrested for killing

They are in the process of buying software tools to strengthen cyber forensic lab

SAURABH TRIVEDI NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has issued a tender for the procurement of two UAV drones for Mobile Control Room, purchase of image/video enhancement software and purchase of mobile phone forensic/analysis software tools. These tools will further strengthen the cyber forensic laboratory of the department, said a police officer.

"We have written for procurement of five drones in the North East district as it was much required given the current law and order situation here. At present, we deploy policemen with video cameras during a procession or a march. Now with the help of drones we will be able to cover a larger area with no police deployment for the task," said a senior police officer.

Another officer, meanwhile, mentioned that he has also written for procure-



During the protests held in the city against the amended Citizenship Act, the police had hired drones at ₹4,000 per day. • FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

ment of five drones in the

During the protests held in the national capital against the amended Citizenship Act, the city police had hired drones on a charge of ₹4,000 per day. Later, it was decided that the department would buy drones as it would help police personnel

assess the crowd and deter any person for breaching a peaceful environment. The drones will have the capabil-

ity to work with Google Maps, the State police said Cyber Prevention Awareness and Detection (CyPAD) Centre and the National Cyb-

er Forensic Lab (NCFL) in

Dwarka will soon be getting image/video enhancement software. The software will be able to recover formatted. deleted and partially overwritten videos. In a similar pattern, mobile phone forensic software will help policemen search for and find similar images throughout the selected device using PhotoDNA.

"We will be purchasing these software tools that will help us extract all the data from a phone with only a few clicks. This data would include deleted data, call history, contacts, text messages, multimedia messages, files, events, notes, passwords for Wi-Fi networks, reminders and application data from apps such as from Skype, Dropbox, Ever note, Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber and many others. The device should be able to extract data from smartwatches as well," the police officer also

in unauthorised colonies

could not undertake any

construction or make altera-

tions to their dwelling units,

without first paying a hefty

bribe to corrupt BJP council-

lors and said that the

schools and hospitals under

driver on Christmas Eve

Victim resisted a robbery attempt

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Five persons have been arrested for allegedly killing a man after he resisted a robbery attempt in Dwarka's Dabri on Christmas Eve, the police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said that the accused have been identified as Ritvik (20), Saurabh alias Bahta (27), Gaurav Singh (20), Vikas Paswan alias Mota (21) and Saurabh alias Bihari (20) who allegedly stabbed to death Vipin Kumar Yadav, a driver who hailed from Bihar, in the early hours of December

The police said that a they received a call regarding a man who had sustained multiple wounds. When reached the spot, it was found that one of the victims' mobile phone was missing, while another was in his pocket. He was then identified and a case was

During investigation, the police found a CCTV footage in which the five suspects were seen near the place where the victim was found dead. The missing mobile phone's technical surveillance got the police a lead. "They were traced on Thursday when they were out to commit another robbery. The robbed mobile was recovered and the knife used in the commission of the crime was seized," Mr. Alphonse said.

The police said that Bahta is a resident of Ghaziabad and has been working as a water tanker driver. He was arrested earlier in an attempt-to-murder case and later in a snatching case. He has spent a year in jail.

Irani launches BJP's outreach campaign, flags off 49 video raths

'Purpose of campaign is to collect suggestions for manifesto'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Union Minister Smriti Irani launched BJP's outreach campaign 'Meri Dilli Mera Sujhav, Delhi Ke Dil Ki Baat, Aao Karein Bhajapa Ke Saath' here on Friday.

Ms. Irani flagged off 49 "video raths" which intend to collect suggestions from the people of Delhi across each of its 70 Assembly segments over the next 15 days,

from the party's State leadership. The purpose of the cam-

along with senior leaders

paign, the party said in a statement, is to collect people's suggestions in 1,600 boxes and include them in the BJP manifesto. Two video clips were also shown

before the media. "All the MPs and party office-bearers of Delhi call upon the people through the media to come forward and give their valuable suggestions for preparing Delhi BJP's sankalp patra," Ms. Irani said.

"Under this programme, people may send their suggestions through video raths...Workers will have 20 suggestion boxes to collect suggestions of people. Such boxes will also be placed on the video *raths*," she said further.

AAP reacts to BJP campaign He alleged that people living

STAFF REPORTER

In response to the BIP's 'Meri Dilli Mera Sujhav' campaign, AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Friday said that the BJP's long reign of 12 years in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has shown its incompetence, lack of innovation and utter disdain for efficient and honest civic

run the State government.

the jurisdiction of MCD were in a pathetic condition. He also reminded the BJP of its promise of a 'garbage-Mr. Singh said that the free Delhi ' and suggested BJP should concentrate on that they first focus on fuldelivering basic responsibilfilling this promise as visiities of a municipal body betors to Delhi are greeted by fore pitching a manifesto to

heaps of garbage when entering by road.

DELHI							
SATURDAY, JAN. 04							
RISI	E 07:1	5 SET	17:38				
□ RISI	E 13:0	0 SET	00:56				
SUNDAY, JAN. 05							
RISI	E 07:1	5 SET	17:39				
□ RISI	E 13:3	2 SET	01:48				

MONDAY, JAN. 06 RISE 07:15 SET 17:39 RISE 14:06 SET 02:42

Delhi Weather Safdarjang

Delhi Palam Today 22°C Moderate fog will prevail during the cold morning. A

mainly sunny sky will prevail. **Delhi Palam Tomorrow**

22°C Dense fog will prevail in

the morning. A mainly clear

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019

sky lies ahead

THE HINDU

Students will continue protests, says AMUSU

Students' union reacts to extension of winter vacation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Students would continue civil resistance against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act when the campus resumes academic activity, a statement issued by Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union (2018-19) said. The statement came after the AMU administration extended the winter vacations.

The AMUSU appreciated the people for mounting a massive resistance to the CAA and condemned the Uttar Pradesh government for using excessive force against civilians.

'CM Yogi should go'

"After killing 20 innocent protesters, jailing over 6,000 people, and damaging public property, (Chief Minister) Yogi Adityanath has no right to continue in



AMU. FILE PHOTO

office," said the statement.

M. Salman Imtiaz, AMU-SU president (2018-19), has also petitioned the Allahabad High Court challenging the forceful entry of police into the university campus and unleashing of violence on innocent and unarmed students with tear-gas shells, stun grenades, chillibased explosives, rubber

The court has reserved its order for January 7.

Mr. Imtiaz described the letter written by Vice Chancellor Tariq Mansoor to students as a gross misrepresentation of facts and an attempt to hide the administrative failures.

Administration flayed

"The AMU administration, which was aware of the ongoing peaceful protests but chose to be partners in crime with the U.P. police and permitted them to invade the campus despite their horrible record against minorities, played an ugly role on the night of December 15," he said.

"The VC preferred to sit in his office and did not even bother to call deans or professors of the university to engage with protesters," he

SP promises pension for citizenship law protesters

It's in the DNA of that party to honour rioters: BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Samajwadi Party on Friday promised pension for anti-CAA protesters if voted to power, drawing a sharp reaction from the ruling BJP which said it was in the "DNA of that party to honour rioters and anti-social elements".

Leader of the Opposition in the UP Legislative Assembly, Ram Goving Chaudhary, said their party would also give compensation to the kin of those jailed or killed during anti-CAA protests in the

"If our party comes to power at the Centre and in U.P., they (protesters) will be given pension as they have struggled to save the Constitution and the democracy," said Mr. Chaudhary responding to a question.

He said they protect all those who seek refuge from



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav in Lucknow on Friday. •PTI

them.

"Jo humari sharan mein aa gaye woh humari sharan mein hain. Hum sabki raksha karney wale log hain," the senior SP leader told mediapersons here.

Referring to remarks of State BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh that SP chief Akhilesh Yadav should stay in Pakistan for a month to understand atrocities being on Hindus, the senior SP leader said the Narendra Modi-led Union government was out to divert people's attention

Later, Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma lashed out at the Samjawadi Party, saying, "It is in the DNA of that party to honour the rioters and anti-socials.'

"They had also tried to withdraw cases against terrorists in the past and the court had to intervene. It is unfortunate that SP leaders are speaking about giving citizenship rights to the Bangladeshis and Rohangiyas," Mr. Sharma alleged.

Commenting on SP chief Akhilesh Yadav's statement that he would not fill form for the National Population Register, the Deputy Chief Minister said, "perhaps, he is not aware that the NPR is the basis of all development schemes. He is conspiring to deprive people of welfare

U.P. Police threatens scribe to reveal source

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

In yet another case of highhandedness of the Uttar Pradesh police, a senior journalist was allegedly threatened to reveal his source of an objectionable video of Noida SSP Vaibhav Krishna that had gone viral. When he refused, the Noida police tried to pick him up for questioning.

Piyush Rai, a senior correspondent of Times of India in Meerut, has lodged a complaint with IG Meerut Zone in which he said that on Thursday when he was about to leave the office of the Meerut SSP with a fellow reporter, he was stopped by members of the Noida police in plain clothes.

"First they asked for the source of the video and then threatened to pick me up. They stepped back only when the fellow reporter indicated to them that they were in a CCTV zone," said Mr. Rai in the complaint.

He further said that on Thursday morning, Mr. Krishna called him up to know about the video and its source which he refused to share.

Alok Singh, IG Meerut Zone, told *The Hindu* that an explanation had been sought from Mr. Krishna and the Meerut SSP asked to investigate the sequence of events. "When Piyush told me about the videos, it was I who advised Mr. Krishna and him to talk to each other," said Mr. Singh. When asked whether Mr. Krishna betrayed his trust, Mr. Singh said that was why his explanation had been sought. As for the veracity of the videos which have created an upheaval in the department, Mr. Singh said the cyber team was looking into it.

Earlier, Prashant Kumar, ADG Meerut Zone, told reporters, "As soon as we got to know, we took action. We have received the complaint and action will be taken against guilty," he said.

Mr. Krishna could not be reached despite repeated

Haryana CM plays down differences with Anil Vij

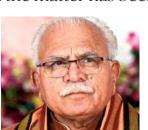
We have spoken and the matter has been resolved: Khattar

VIKAS VASUDEVA

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday sought to play down reports of differences with State's Home Minister Anil Vij over the recent transfers of IPS officers, saying the issue has been resolved. "We have spoken, there's

no problem and the matter has been resolved. Speculations are being made as there's no tax on speculation," Mr. Khattar told journalists in response to a question on the dissent note sent by Mr. Vij to the Chief Minister over transfer of 9 IPS officers without taking him into

Last week, the State government had transferred 9 IPS officers even when Mr. Vij had mentioned his dissent against the transfers. The Home Minister later stated



CM Manohar Lal Khattar

that even though the Chief Minister has the power to overrule him, but in the wake of the dissent note, before taking a final decision he should had been kept in the

Mr. Vij had not only expressed his displeasure over the transfers of IPS officers, but had also pointed fingers over the functioning of the State's intelligence agency the CID – and had sought an explanation from the senior officers for not responding to his queries.

Amid the 'tug of war', which is being seen as an embarrassment in the political circles, sources said that Mr. Khattar recently met party's central leadership to discuss the matter among other is-

Meeting with Nadda

He met the BJP's working president J.P. Nadda in New Delhi. "I met Mr. Nadda to discuss Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and forthcoming elections in Delhi," said Mr. Khattar, adding that "any other inference about the deliberations during the meeting were mere speculations."

Party's Haryana in-charge Anil Jain, meanwhile said that the matter is being projected out of proportions. "I have spoken to the Chief Minister and the Home Minister. It's not such a big matter," he

'Air show'



Siberian gulls do aerial manoeuvres on a cold morning at Sangam, in Prayagraj on Friday. • PTI

SAD issues ultimatum to Punjab government

'Arrest killers of two Akali leaders'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Shiromani Akali Dal on Friday issued a one-week ultimatum to the Punjab government to arrest the killers of two party leaders and threatened to launch an agitation to ensure justice in "political murder cases". Former Akali sarpanches Gurdeeep Singh and Dalbir Singh Dhilwan were recently killed in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts, respectively, which the SAD described as "political murders."

At a meeting presided over by SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal here, the party's core committee said the spate of "political assassinations of Akali leaders by gangsters with alleged links to Congress leaders and Ministers are unprecedented".

It said the party was committed to breaking the "gangster-minister nexus" in Punjab and would take all necessary steps in this regard, be it going to the people or the courts, a statement issued by the SAD said.

Power hike flayed

The core committee also announced that it would agitate to ensure withdrawal of the "unjust and unprecedented power tariff hike" in Punjab, saying it had put an unbearable burden on the common man and made industries unsustainable.

Mr. Badal announced that his party would hold districtlevel dharnas across the State to demand withdrawal of the power hike.

Parminder Dhindsa resigns as leader of SAD legislature party

His father had recently rebelled against party leadership

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Senior Akali Dal leader and former Punjab Finance Minister Parminder Singh Dhindsa on Friday quit the post of the leader of the Shiromani Akali Dal legislature party, a move seen as a setback to the party.

Mr. Dhindsa's father and Rajya Sabha MP Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa had recently rebelled against the top party leadership, demanding Sukhbir Badal's resignation as the party president to "restore party's lost glory".

Mr. Sukhdev, who distanced himself from the party president election held last month, had claimed that his son Parminder Dhindsa was also with him in his fight



leadership.

Dhillon to take post Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal accepted the resignation of Parminder Singh Dhindsa from the post of its legislature party leader and announced that former Cabinet Minister Sharanjit Singh Dhillon will assume this responsibility now.

Party spokesperson Daljit Singh Cheema said while accepting Parminder Dhindsa's resignation the SAD president has decided to give the responsibility of leading the party's legislature wing to Sharanjit Singh Dhillon after taking the view of party legislators.

"All party legislators unanimously suggested that Mr. Dhillon be bestowed with this responsibility keeping in view his long selfless service to the party as well as his experience as a parliamentarian and Cabinet Minister," he said.

Haryana Cabinet approves creation of new department

It will work for implementation of govt. schemes for citizens

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

The Haryana Cabinet on Friday approved the creation of a new department named Citizen Resources Information Department. It will deal with various subjects like family identity document, Parivar Pehchan Patra, towards preparing a common database to implement government schemes and delivery of government services through the digital medium. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar here.

"The new department will be dealing with various subjects namely, Parivar Pehchan Patra, development of citizen resources in-

ventory as a common database with the use of informatics and information infrastructure, promotion and development of common database across departments, common networks and informatics for delivery of government's citizen services," said an official statement.

Linked database

The statement added that the new department will also work to establish a linked database connecting individual, family and property data for utilisation by other government departments and agencies in the delivery

of government services. The Cabinet also approved the proposal of

bringing an amendment to the Haryana Official Language Act, 1969 to get Hindi language authorised as the language for the purposes of proceedings, any judgment, decree or orders passed or made by the courts and tribunals subordinate to the High Court of Punjab and Haryana.

"To spread the propagation of Hindi as the language of the people of the State, it is necessary that this language should be used in dayto-day work. The purpose of justice in a democracy is that the plaintiff should get justice quickly in his own language and should not remain speechless during the proceedings," said the

Passport office asks police to check if 'Nepali-looking' sisters are Indians

Santosh, Heena have been issued passports 'provisionally'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH The Regional Passport Office here on Friday said it has asked the Ambala police to check if the two sisters from Haryana, who were allegedly denied passports for their "Nepalese appearance", are

Santosh and Heena have been issued passports "provisionally" on the request of the Ambala Deputy Commis-

sioner, Chandigarh Regional Passport Officer Sibash Kabiraj said.

The sisters, who had applied for passports, were allegedly refused the same and it was written on their documents that "applicant seems to be Nepali".

'Standard comment' However, Mr. Kabiraj, an IPS officer, clarified that the passports were not denied to them, but were kept on hold, and said officers have been asked to write "Citizenship Questionable" as a standard comment on official documents rather than about the "appearance" of an appli-

The sisters' citizenship is still "questionable", he said, adding, "we have ordered an inquiry to the Ambala SSP (to find out) whether these girls are Indian citizens or not".

A pistol and some cartridges have been recovered, further investigations are on, says DM PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

An undertrial prisoner was upon learning of the incident. shot dead inside the district The deceased was identijail here in Vaishali district on Friday while at least five other inmates were injured in a clash that followed, an official

It is suspected that he was killed by one of the five in-

"A pistol and some cartridges have been recovered. Further investigations are on," said District Magistrate

Udita Singh who reached the jail along with police officials

fied as Manish Teliya who is in his early 20s and was brought to the jail less than a year ago after he was arrested in a case of loot, police sources said.

Inmates went berserk

The inmates went berserk after the incident and five inmates were injured in the clash that ensued.

The five were admitted to a

hospital, the sources said.

Prisoner shot dead inside Bihar jail, 5 inmates hurt in clash

Officials are awaiting clearance from the doctors to record statements of the injured to get a clue about how the weapon found its way inside the jail, who procured it and what was the provocation behind the attack.

Meanwhile, Hindustani Awam Morcha president Jitan Ram Manjhi and State RJD spokesman Chitaranian Gagan came out with statements expressing alarm over the incident.



Policemen outside the Hajipur jail on Friday. • PTI

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Vehicles of anti-CAA leaders attacked

No evidence yet to establish the incidents were related to the anti-CAA stir: police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

Unidentified miscreants attacked two leaders of the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act movement about 220 km apart on Thursday night in Assam.

The police said they were probing the attacks and that there was no evidence yet to establish these were related to the anti-CAA stir.

Shots alerted people

In the first of these incidents, a gunman fired at the car of Binoy Barua at Ganakpukhuri near Dergaon in eastern Assam's Golaghat district. Mr. Barua had gone to the house of an acquaintance Pranjal Rajkonwar and the car was parked outside his house when the shots were

"The gunman fled after



AASU activists participating in a torchlight rally in Guwahati on Friday against the amended Citizenship Act. • PTI

the shots alerted the neighbours... the attack could be related to the anti-CAA protests I have been organising," to political or personal enmi-Mr. Barua said.

Golaghat SP Pushpraj Singh said seven empty cartridges were recovered from the site of the incident. "The man who was attacked is

politically active. We are investigating, so it is difficult to say at this point of time whether the incident is due

reason," he told *The Hindu*. The local police said the incident happened around 9 p.m., almost 12 hours after

ty or if there is some other

Mr. Barua had organised an anti-CAA Ganakpukhuri.

Almost simultaneously, some miscreants pelted stones at the car of Entajul Islam, a former leader of the All Assam Students' Union leader, when he was travelling from Udalguri town to Paneri in north-central Assam's Udalguri district.

The AASU has been spearheading the anti-CAA movement in Assam which began violently and claimed six lives in December 2019.

The district police said the attack could have been carried out by two unidentified men riding a two-wheeler.

"We suspect a force aided by former extremists desperate to start a communal conflict was behind the attack," local AASU leader Jayanta Bhattacharya said.

Minister, student spar over CAA

Babul Supriyo threatens to send youth 'to his own country'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOLKATA

A verbal spat has erupted between Union Minister Babul Supriyo and a Muslim college student in which he has threatened on social media to pack off the youth to "his own country" for his post seeking to know the BJP MP's "education level".

The student, Mustafizur Rahman, said on Friday that he wanted nothing but an "unconditional apology" in public from the BJP leader.

The Union Minister accused Mr. Rahman of being a "serial offender" and saying that he "does not need to apologize to fools". Mr. Supriyo also said that his comments had nothing to do with the student's religion.

The matter came to light on December 26 when Mr.



Babul Supriyo. • FILE PHOTO

Supriyo shared a post on the social media advocating Citizenship (Amendment) Act and criticised the act of a Jadavpur University's student, who tore up the first page of the contentious legislation at the annual convocation of the university while receiving her

gold medal on December 24. The next day Mr. Rahman commented on Mr. Supriyo's Facebook post and questioned the educational qualifications of Mr. Supriyo and BJP State president Dilip Ghosh. "Babul-da (dada) how

educated are people like you can be gauged from the fact that your mentor (State president) Dilip Ghosh spots gold in cow milk," Mr. Rahman wrote.

To this Mr. Supriyo retorted "Mustafizur Rahman let me first pack you off to your country, then will send the reply in post card". The comment triggered a wave of protests.

Mr. Rahman, a final year student at a Birbhum college in Birbhum district, said, "I am in possession of enough proof about my identity as an Indian and a Bengali. You don't know how to respect Bengalis and still you are the MP of the State..... Are you drinking cow urine regular-

The youth has received the support from a number of netizens and organisations.

Ex-DGP is Assam Sahitya Sabha chief

RAHUL KARMAKAR GUWAHATI

The Assam Sahitya Sabha on Thursday night elected former Director General of Police and writer Kuladhar Saikia as its president for the 2020-22 term. He bagged 269 of the total 619 votes polled, leaving six other contenders, including former Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta's writer-wife Jayashree Goswami Mahanta, far behind.

The election was held during a meeting of the Sabha in central Assam's Hojai district.

Among the other officebearers elected was Mrinalini Devi, the mother of Finance and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. She beat three contenders to become the vice-president.

State to present plan on women's cyber safety

Maharashtra to chair meeting of Western Zonal Council

SHARAD VYAS MUMBAI

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will co-chair the next meeting of the Western Zonal Council (WZC), which will have, among other issues, women safety on top of the agenda. The 25th meet of the council will be held this month under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Maharashtra, the lead coordinator this time, will present a roadmap for the safety of women online and ways to curb cyber bullying as its priority agenda, senior officials said.

The council, functioning under the aegis of the Ministry of Home Affairs' Inter-State Council Secretariat, comprises Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, the Union Territories of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

"This meeting will be coordinated by Maharashtra; all States take turns to chair it. We have finalised our agenda related to coastal security and other priority projects in the State," Chief Secretary Ajoy Mehta told The Hindu.

As part of the agenda, Maharashtra will present to the council a plan for making the internet safer for women. The Chief Minister has directed the government machinery to hold awareness campaigns in districts on cyber bullying of women, cyber frauds and internet child pornography, among other internet crimes.

"The entire State must participate in the drive, to be called 'Cyber Safe Women', to make the internet safe for women. While there are a lot of benefits of the internet, there are some evils of this



Security roadmap: Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will co-chair the meeting of the WZC under the chairmanship of Home Minister Amit Shah. ■ FILE РНОТО

world which we need to look at seriously. Our State has prepared a special plan to ensure these crimes against women and children in the online world are prevented, a small part of which is the 'Cyber Safe Women' programme," the Chief Minister announced on Friday.

Earlier meeting

The 24th meeting of the council in Goa had highlighted the need for Maharashtra to speedily investigate cases of sexual assault cases. The meeting had directed States to put in place a comprehensive security plan and improved security at railway stations. It had also discussed the implementation and mismanagement, if any, of the direct benefit transfer scheme as well as forest clearances pending for construction of the third line in the Wirpur-Sirpur section of major train projects. The next meeting could be held in Mumbai, officials said. The five zonal councils

created under the States Re-Organisation Act, 1956, are advisory bodies that discuss and make recommendations with regard to any matter of common interest for economic and social planning between the Centre and States, border disputes, linguistic minorities, inter-State transport or matters connected with the reorganisation of States under this Act. The Act provides for councils for each of the five zones: North, Central, Eastern, Southern and Western.

Fadnavis demands ban on Savarkar booklet

BJP leader mocks Sena for its dependence on Congress to stay in power in Maharashtra

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Devendra Fadnavis on Friday demanded a ban on a controversial booklet on V.D. Savarkar released by the Congress Seva Dal in Madhya Pradesh, and asked the Shiv Sena how many insults it would endure at the hands of the Congress to remain in power in Maharashtra.

Mr. Fadnavis, the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Assembly, lashed out at the claims made in the booklet distributed at a camp of the Seva Dal – the grassroots organisation of the Congress that Savarkar had a physical relationship with Nathuram Godse, Mahatma Gandhi's assassin.

"The Congress has continually insulted Veer Savarkar, who suffered untold atrocities in Andaman's Cellular Jail in the fight for Independence and who inspired several revolutionaries. But [Congress leader] Rahul Gandhi calls him a 'traitor'... the Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Sena should beware that the people of Maharashtra will never forgive them for insulting Savarkar in this crass fashion," he said, addressing public meetings in Nandurbar district to campaign for the zilla parishad elections.

He later tweeted, "SwatantryaVeer Savarkar ji is undoubtedly one of the greatest freedom fighters & inspiration for all of us! Congress party has shown its distorted mentality by distributing a book which uses extremely cheap,insulting words for Veer Savarkar ji .Congress shows its mental bankruptcy (sic)."

He also demanded that Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray immediately ban the booklet, while wondering how Sena founder Bal



Making a point: BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis addressing a rally in Nandurbar district on Friday. ■TWITTER/@DEV_FADNAVIS

vis further attacked the Ma-

ha Vikas Aghadi govern-

ment, saying that the Sena

had "betrayed the people's

mandate" and trust by form-

ing a government with the

the State's history that a par-

tv [BIP] has fought with its al-

ly [the Sena], but the latter is

setting up a government

with the opposition. This

[MVA] is a government by de-

ception," he said, adding

that in India's history, no go-

vernment formed by decep-

tion had lasted for more than

won 70% of the seats it had

contested in the Assembly

elections, the other three

parties had barely managed

to win in 40-45% of the con-

stituencies where they con-

tested."Despite the BJP com-

ing first in class by topping

the merit list, it is out of it ...

but the other three students

[the Sena, the NCP and Con-

gress] who secured 40%

came together and claimed

He said the 'tiger' (the Se-

na's mascot) had been re-

duced to a 'cat', and the par-

ty was politically impotent.

that they are in the merit."

He said while the BJP had

six months.

"This is the first time in

Congress and the NCP.

The people of Maharashtra will never forgive [Congress, NCP and Sena] for insulting Savarkar in this crass fashion

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS Leader of Opposition

Thackeray would have react-

The booklet, Veer Savarkar Kitney 'Veer'? (How 'brave' was Veer Savarkar?), claims that Savarkar encouraged sexual assault on women from the minority community and that he celebrated the deaths of Muslims. It also says he received money from the British after his release from Cel-

lular Jail. The Seva Dal has said that claims of Savarkar's alleged homosexual relationship with Godse were made in the bestseller Freedom at Midnight (1975) penned by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. The book details the events in the run-up to Independence and the immediate aftermath, including Gandhi's assassination.

In his address, Mr. Fadna-

Ex-CM calls on Khadse in Jalgaon BJP retains control of Jalgaon ZP SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

Former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday met disgruntled Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Eknath Khadse in Jalgaon, triggering speculation of rapprochement between the estranged leaders.

Also present was former minister Girish Mahajan, Mr. Khadse's bitter political foe in north Maharashtra. The three leaders met for breakfast and had a half-hour discussion, before Mr. Fadnavis left to address public meetings in Nandurbar and Dhule districts.

However, when questioned whether his friction with some BJP leaders remained constant Mr. Khadse evaded a direct answer, repeatedly stressing there had been no discussion among the three on anything other than the Jalgaon zilla parishad election.

"Mr. Fadnavis dropped by before proceeding to Nandurbar. We spoke about the Jalgaon ZP election and about the choice of candidates. There was no talk on any other issue," Mr. Khadse said.

After being denied a ticket in the Assembly polls and following the defeat of his daughter Rohini, Mr. Khadse has been vocal about his disenchantment with the BJP and is said to be in touch with the Shiv Sena.



Eknath Khadse

Earlier this week, Mr. Khadse had claimed that he had learnt from some BJP core committee members that Mr. Fadnavis and Mr. Mahajan had opposed the party's decision to give him a ticket from Muktainagar, his stronghold in Jalgaon district.

On his part, Mr. Mahajan said everything was "fine" within the party. "There was some friction owing to miscommunication ... but that has been resolved now," he said.

Despite Mr. Khadse's allegations against Mr. Mahajan, the two were seen working amicably prior to the Jalgaon ZP polls.

On Friday, the BJP retained its 30-year-old sway over the ZP, with its candidate Ranjana Patil being elected president with 34 votes against the Maha Vikas Aghadi's Rekha Rajput, who won 31 votes. "Though the Sena, the Congress and the NCP were ranged against us, we still beat them," Mr.

+ Bypolls to two Council seats announced; CM undecided

ALOK DESHPANDE

With by-elections to two 1e gislative Council seats in Maharashtra announced for the end of the month. speculations are rife as to whether Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will contest either one of them.

The Chief Minister's Office, however, has said no such decision has been taken yet, and that Mr. Thackeray has not decided if he will enter the Assembly or the Council.

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Dhananjay Munde's victory in the Assembly elections has left his Council seat empty, and the vacancy has to be filled. Mr. Munde was the Leader of Opposition in the Council.

Polling for the seat will take place on January 24, while the last date to file nominations is January 14. Counting will take place on the polling day, and the term of the new MLC will

last till July 7, 2022. Election to the Yavatmal Local Authorities' seat in the Council, vacated by Shiv Sena's Tanaji Sawant on being elected MLA from Bhoom-Paranda, will take place on January 31. Counting will take place on February 4, and the term for this seat will end on December 5, 2022.

Mr. Thackeray is currently not a member of either House of the legislature. According to the rules, it is mandatory for any minister to get elected to one of the Houses within six months of being sworn in. When asked about Mr. Thackeray's plans, a close aide said, "The issue will be discussed soon, but nothing has been finalised. We are also exploring the option of entering the State legislature via the Assembly. Nothing can be ruled out as of now."

Backing the Act



Support march: Hundreds of Goans in favour of the Citizenship Amendment Act participate in a rally organised by the Bharatiya Janata Party in Panaji on Friday. • ATISH POMBURFEKAR

Govt. tells Collectors, banks to ensure transparent loan waiver

Scheme declared for farmers, not by banks to settle NPAs: CM

ALOK DESHPANDE

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday instructed banks and District Collectors to ensure that only crop loans of farmers are waived under the Mahatma Phule farm loan waiver scheme and no other loan is added to the list.

According to sources within the Chief Minister's Office, the directions were issued to ensure transparency, anticipating the possibility of banks including other farm-related loans in the scheme to lower NPAs.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has asked Collectors to take action if information of non-crop loan accounts is submitted under

Mr. Thackeray, Mr. Pawar, Finance Minister Jayant Patil, and Shiv Sena minister video-conference. Anil Parab held a video-con ference with all District Collectors on Friday and a meeting with the State Level Bankers' Committee to discuss the loan waiver. According to sources, the government will spend ₹21,216 crore on the crop loan waiver, which is estimated to benefit 30.57 lakh farmers.

'Empathy needed'

"This loan waiver has been announced by the government for farmers and not by banks to settle their NPAs. It is the responsibility of the Revenue Department to enthis scheme successful. There is a possibility that beneficiaries raise questions. It is expected that every query is resolved with empathy," Mr. Thackeray said in the

Banks have also been in structed that farmers will not be asked to fill forms to avail benefits of the scheme, and it is the responsibility of the banks that all the information is filled correctly.

An official who attended the discussions on Friday said, "The list of farmers' accounts which are not linked to Aadhaar will be announced on January 7. Special buses will be arranged in every village to transport farmers to the government's Aaple Seva Kendra, where these formalities will be completed." The entire process is likely to be completed by May 2020.

Each District Collector is being asked to set up a dashboard at the office which will be updated daily on the pro-

Malegaon blasts: NIA gives defence non-truncated witness statements

Purohit had sought details to ensure 'fair trial'

SONAM SAIGAL

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday handed over non-truncated copies of 122 witness statements to the defence in the 2008 Malegaon blasts trial.

The agency had earlier refused to share information about several "sensitive" witnesses with the accused – BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt. Col. Prasad Purohit, Sameer Kulkarni, Major (retd.) Ramesh Upadhyay, Sudhakar Chaturvedi and Ajay Rahilkar.

Mr. Purohit had filed an application in court seeking all the details for a "fair trial". The application said, "The documents supplied by NIA to him are without

furnishing the names of any witnesses and most ... are in the truncated form. The extent of truncation is so wide that it is impossible to construe the true import of the contents of the statements ... the prosecution has deprived him of his statutory right to prepare for cross-examination and his defence."

Appeal in HC

On November 21, 2018, the NIA court refused to share the witness names with him, after which he filed an appeal in the Bombay High

On February 2, 2019, the NIA told the HC it was willing to share statements of witnesses, but it would file an application in the trial court

seeking police protection for 38 sensitive prosecution witnesses. NIA counsel Sandesh Patil had told the HC that out of the 475 witnesses statements, 186 had been truncated. Of these, 38 witnesses were "sensitive" and would have to be given police protection. Their evidence would have to be recorded in-camera, he had said.

Defence lawyer Ranjeet Sangle told The Hindu, "Under NIA and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), names and other information was withheld from us. But ... we need a fair and reasonable chance to conduct the chief and cross-examination of all witnesses. Therefore, untruncated copies have been given."

Satara soldier cremated with military honours Hundreds gather

to pay tribute to Sandip Sawant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The last rites of Naik Sandip Raghunath Sawant, who was killed in a counter-insurgency operation in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, were performed at his village, Mundhe in Satara district, on Friday.

The funeral, held with military honours, was attended by hundreds, including locals and political leaders, who paid floral tributes to the soldier.

Sawant (29) and Rifleman Arjun Thapa Magar (25) were killed when the Army foiled a terrorist infiltration bid along the Line of Control at Nowshera in Rajouri district.

With slogans of 'Sandip Sawant Amar Rahe (Long live Sandip Sawant)', 'Vande



Naik Sandip Sawant's widow, Samita, breaks down during his funeral on Friday. • RAJU SANADI

Mataram' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', people bid adieu to the soldier, whose infant daughter was also present at the funeral.

Sawant and his wife recently had the baby girl, and he had come home for her naming ceremony and returned to his post just 15

days ago, a relative had said. District administration officials, Satara MP Srinivas Patil and local politicians attended the funeral.

IN BRIEF



Anti-graft probe against **DGP Jacob Thomas**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM The Kerala government has asked the Crime Branch to investigate Director General of Police Jacob Thomas on the charge of having acquired ill-gotten wealth in the name of other persons. In November last, the government had received a complaint from Sathyan Naravoor in Kannur that Mr. Thomas, the senior-most ranking police officer in Kerala, had acquired properties in the name of his nominees.

Leopard rescued from well in Wayanad

Forest Department personnel rescued a male leopard. which had fallen into an open well of a house at Vattavaval. near Vythiri in Kerala, on Friday. The well, which was about 35 ft deep, had about 5 ft of water. When Gopi, the house owner, discovered the leopard around 6.30 a.m., he alerted the Forest Department. The leopard was tranquillised and extricated from the well around 10 30 a.m. South Wayanad Forest divisional officer B. Ranjith said the leopard was healthy and not injured.

Pakistan to release 22 A.P. fishermen on Jan. 6

Pakistan has reportedly agreed to release 22 fishermen from Andhra Pradesh who are in its custody on January 6. They were arrested on charge of espionage. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, informed the Indian High Commission in Islamabad that the fishermen would be sent through the Wagah Border on January 6, a press release issued by the YSR Congress Party said on Friday.

Nothing unconstitutional: Kerala Speaker

Assembly has the right to respond when the Constitution is challenged, says Sreeramakrishnan

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

There is 'nothing unconstitutional' about the Kerala Assembly's special session passing a resolution recently, demanding that the Centre rescind the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan said on Friday.

"Nowhere in the Constitution is it mentioned that a State Assembly cannot move such a resolution," the Speaker said, responding to Governor Arif Mohammed Khan's comment that the resolution passed was "unconstitutional and insignificant".

The Speaker said the Assembly had upheld the Constitutional values and was duty-bound to intervene when the Constitution was under threat.

Like other democratic platforms, the Assembly had the right to respond when



Youth power: A march organised by Flashlight of Sulthan Bathery, a collective of youth, against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Wayanad on Friday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the Constitution was challenged. He described it as the moral duty of the Assembly.

Earlier instances

The Speaker said the Constitution was clear that there should not be any discrimination on the basis of religion. The Act violated Article 14 and 15 of the Constitution, he said.

The Assembly had passed resolutions earlier also against laws passed by Parliament, the Speaker said. In 1975, the Assembly asked for the repeal of Maintenance of Internal Security (MISA). In 2006, it sought the repeal of the Income Tax amendment that affected the cooperative department. Last year the Assembly passed a resolution to remove Section 194 of the IT Act.

On BJP Rajya Sabha MP G.V.L. Narasimha Rao seeking permission of the Rajya Sabha Chairman for a breach of privilege motion against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan for moving the resolution against a law passed by Parliament, the Speaker said one House cannot move a breach of privilege motion another elected against House.

"If they are insisting on the motion, they should move the privilege motion against the Speaker, the Leader of Opposition, and all the legislators who had spoken on the floor of the House during the special session. We are ready to face it," Mr. Sreeramakrishnan added.

To a query on whether the Governor was kept in the dark about the resolution, the Speaker said the special session was convened to ratify the amendment on SC/ST quota in the Lok Sabha and other assemblies. The Business Advisory Committee of the Assembly finalises the proceedings and there is no need to seek the Governor's sanction, he said

Kerala slams rejection of R-Day tableau

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM The Kerala government on Friday slammed the decision of the Central government to reject the State's design for a carnival float it had aspired to put on display at the prestigious Republic Day Parade in New Delhi on January 26.

Culture Minister A.K. Balan said the BJP-led Central government had sidelined Kerala and excluded it from the parade merely for "petty political reasons".

He said the model for the tableau, to have been mounted on a truck platform and exhibited at the cultural procession at Rajpath, represented Kerala's cultural uniqueness exceptionally well. The blueprint also highlighted the State's distinctive architectural splendour, its famed snake boats, spice trading past and flora and fauna, including wild elephants and tigers.

The trailer portion of the float would have had artists staging 'kalari' movements, Mohiniyattam dance and other art forms such as Theyyam, Padayani, Koodiyattam and Ottamthullal.

However, the Centre summarily rejected the proposal. "Why this hate towards Kerala and Malayalis?" he asked.

'No political dimension' Jaya Prabha Menon, a member of the screening committee under the Union Ministry of Defence, told a news channel in New Delhi that Kerala's design was repetitive. The committee had asked the State to re-submit a renewed concept with

new themes instead of "wearily recurrent motifs". However, the government drafters kept sending the same design. There was no political dimension to the decision to reject Kerala's proposal, she said.

India is a secular country and will remain one: Ram Madhav

He says CAA has nothing to do with Muslim citizens

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

National secretary of the BJP Ram Madhav on Friday swore by the Constitution which offers equal rights to all citizens irrespective of faith, caste, creed or colour. "India is a secular country, has been one, and will continue to be one. So, citizens of the country have nothing to fear about the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)," he

Further, "CAA is a humanitarian Act brought to resolve a long pending issue of providing justice to refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh



Ram Madhav

and Afghanistan. Therefore, to oppose it is most ridiculous," he said.

Mr. Madhav appealed to Muslims not to be "mislead by false propaganda". He said it is "unfortunate" when people say that Muslims are being discriminated when "people of all religions, including different strands of Islam, stay here.'

The BJP leader was delivering a talk on the CAA at a meeting organised by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of the RSS, at the Osmania University's Tagore auditorium here. "The CAA is meant for past refugees alone with a cut off date of December 2014. After that, even Hindus will not be allowed to get citizenship through CAA,"

Dance festival begins in Chennai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Renowned Bharatanatyam exponent Privadarshini Govind was given the Nritva Kalanidhi award at the 14th Dance Festival that was inaugurated at the Music Academy here on Friday.

Mark Van de Vreken, Consul General, Consulate General of the Kingdom of Belgium, Chennai, presented the title and inaugurated the festival that is on till January 9. He also released the dance brochure.

Drawing parallels between Belgian and Indian dance forms, he said they were fundamentally different. The Belgian dance form was contemporary dance. He also highlighted his efforts to bring Indian



Moment to cherish: Mark Van de Vreken, Consul General, Consulate General of the Kingdom of Belgium, presenting the Nritya Kalanidhi award on Bharatanatyam exponent Priyadarshini Govind at the inauguration of the fourteenth Dance Festival at the Music Academy in Chennai. Music Academy president N. Murali is also present. • K.V. SRINIVASAN

classical dance and Belgian contemporary dance together in Chennai.

We must attempt to take Indian classical dance to Belgium," he added.

Felicitating the recipient, N. Murali, president, Music Academy, said the award was being presented to Ms. Govind for her performances and efforts to propagate

the art form. She had given her debut performance in

Elaborating on the festival, he said it would have 32 performances, including Odissi and Yakshagana and panel discussions. This time, six more performances have been added, compared to last year. The interaction with senior artistes over tea may be an open-to-all event this year.

Accepting the award, Ms. Govind said in the fast-paced era, there is a need to reassert the crucial importance of arts. Such honours gave her the strength to commit to the cause of arts and be a weapon of change. She also underlined the Academy's pioneering role in preservation of art forms.

IN BRIEF



Modi likely to meet Mamata in Kolkata

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Baneriee are likely to meet on January 10-11 at the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Kolkata port. This is his first visit to the city following the 2019 Lok Sabha election

Woman files plea, claims she is singer's daughter

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM A 46-year-old woman, Karmala Modex, filed a petition in a Kerala court, claiming that she was the daughter of singer Anuradha Paudwal, and sought a ₹50 crore compensation from her biological parents, for allegedly "denying her the childhood and life she was entitled to." PT

Punjab MLA booked in chit fund cheating case

A case was filed against a Congress MLA from Puniab and two others after some residents of Jabalpur alleged irregularities in a chit fund scheme, police said on Friday. The investors claimed they had been cheated of ₹96 lakh, after which MLA Pritam Singh, director of the firm, and managers Rakesh and Kamal Kishore Sharma were

Centre approves 2,636 auto charging stations

booked, police said. PTI

NEW DELHI The Centre has approved setting up of 2,636 charging stations in 62 cities across the country under the FAME India scheme, which will encourage original equipment manufacturers to launch new electric vehicle models, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said on Friday. Of the 2,636 stations. 1.633 will be fast charging stations. About 14,000 chargers will be installed across the selected

NHRC tells Rajasthan to explain Kota deaths

Rights body wants State to file report within four weeks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Friday issued a notice to the Rajasthan government in connection with the deaths of over 100 children at the government-run J.K. Lon hospital in Kota in December.

Taking suo motu cognisance of media reports, the Commission issued a notice to the Chief Secretary, asking for a detailed report within four weeks.

'Human rights violated'

"The Commission has observed that the contents of the media reports, if true, raise serious issues of violation of human rights. The painful deaths of children in such a large number is a matter of concern for the Commission," an NHRC statement said. According to the reports, as many as 10 children died in just 48 hours between December 23 and 24, 2019 at the hospital.

Meanwhile, State Health Minister Raghu Sharma and



Awaiting relief: Sick children with their families at the

Protests erupt at hospital

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Protests erupted outside J.K. Lon Hospital here on Friday over infant deaths, leading to the detention of a few demonstrators. The action was taken as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order in the area, said Raiesh Kumar, Kota Additional Superintendent of Police.

Transport Minister Pratap Khachriya were on Friday given a "warm welcome" by hospital officials, who rolled out a carpet for their visit.

'Over 1,000 deaths in U.P.'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Friday said that over a thousand children have died in the last year in Gorakhpur. Slamming the Chief Minister, he said: "Yogi Adityanath is worried about Kota deaths. When will he be worried about the Gorakhpur deaths?"

However, a senior hospital employee said that the carpet was spread to "let it dry" and not to welcome the

Six Rajasthan BSP MLAs join Congress

Move follows Mayawati's Kota poser

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A day after Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati attacked the Congress over the infant deaths in a government hospital in Congress-ruled Rajasthan, six BSP lawmakers from the State formally joined the Congress after meeting party president Sonia Gandhi on Friday.

Stepping up her attack on Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, Ms. Mayawati had demanded his resignation for making insensitive remarks on the issue.

'Shameful remarks'

Charging Mr. Gehlot with making political statements that were irresponsible and unsympathetic, Ms. Mayawati tweeted: "This is highly shameful." The BSP chief added that "Mr. Gehlot be dismissed and replaced by a new dispensation otherwise more women will lose their children.

On Thursday, Ms. Mayawati also attacked Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for being silent on the infant deaths and not visiting the mothers who lost their children.

Though the Congress

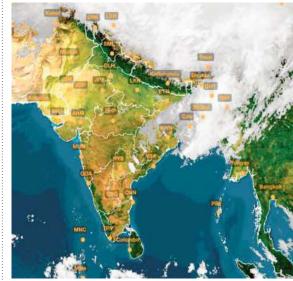


Mayawati

didn't get into a war of words, it seems to have reacted by making all the six BSP legislators join the par-

"The six MLAs met the Congress president and formally took the Congress membership. They also told the Congress president that they would support the party unconditionally," said All India Congress Committee general secretary in-charge for Raiasthan Avinash Pande. Earlier too, the six BSP legislators had extended their 'unconditional support' to the Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan.

At least 100 infants have died at the government-run J.K. Lon hospital in Kota in the past month.



RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY

Forecast for Saturday: Cold wave conditions and ground frost likely in some parts over Punjab, Saurashtra, Kutch and north Madhya Pradesh. Thunderstorm accompanied with hail and lightning likely at isolated places over sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

Υ	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MI	
artala	4.9	20.0	16.0	Kozhikode		35.0	25.	
medabad		25.0	11.0	Kurnool		32.0	20.	
awl		–	–	Lucknow	1.8	20.0	13.	
ahabad	4.0	23.0	14.0	Madurai		32.0	23.	
ngaluru		28.0	18.0	Mangaluru		33.0	22.	
opal		20.0	13.0	Mumbai		–		
ubaneswar	8.0	23.0	18.0	Mysuru		30.0	20.	
andigarh	–	23.0	7.0	New Delhi		23.0	8.	
ennai	–	31.0	24.0	Patna		23.0	12.	
imbatore	–	32.0	23.0	Port Blair		30.0	26.	
hradun	0.1	19.0	5.0	Puducherry		32.0	22.	
ngtok	–	11.0	5.0	Pune				
a				Raipur				
wahati	–	–	–	Ranchi	16.6	21.0	12.	
bballi	–	29.0	19.0	Shillong		–		
derabad	–	–	–	Shimla		–		
phal	–	–	–	Srinagar		7.0	3.	
pur	–	22.0	10.0	Thiruvananthapuram.		33.0	24.	
chi	–	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi				
hima	–	–	–	Vijayawada		28.0	21.	
lkata				Visakhapatnam				
ainfall data in mm, temperature in Colsius)								

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

			-			_	
:	CITIES	SO ₂	NO_2	co	PM2.5	PM10	COD
:	Ahmedabad	43	.16	41	133	.118	
:	Bengaluru	10	.40	19	36	56	
:	Chennai	8	.29	91	66		
	Delhi						
:	Hyderabad	16	.44	51	69		
	Kolkata						
:	Lucknow	13	.33	58	385		
:	Mumbai	8	.60	31	246	.133	
:	Pune	81	.32	78	108	97	
:	Vicakhanatnam	q	37	55	92	94	

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 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 prematur death in people with heart or lung disease

Don't punish a child for marrying a female adult: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

The anti-child marriage law does not intend to punish a male aged between 18 and 21 years for marrying a "female adult," the Supreme Court has held judgment.

A Bench led by Justice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar was interpreting Section 9 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, which says: "whoever, being a male adult above 18 years of age, contracts a child marriage shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees or with

The court said neither does the provision punish a child for marrying a woman nor a woman for marrying a male child. The latter because "in a society like ours, decisions regarding mar-



riage are usually taken by the family members of the bride and groom, and women generally have little say in the

The sole objective of the provision is to punish a man for marrying a minor girl. "The intention behind punishing only male adults contracting child marriages is to protect minor girls," the court reasoned.

It said the 2006 Act also gives an option for prospective grooms who are between 18 and 21 years old to opt out of marriages.

The case at hand concerned a boy who married a 21-year-old woman when he was 17 years old. The Punjab and Haryana

High Court had set aside its own order providing protection to the couple, and initiated prosecution against the boy for contracting a child marriage, in which he himself was the child.

The Supreme Court set aside the HC order, saying the intent behind Section 9 was not to punish a child for contracting a child marriage.

STAFF REPORTER

An assistant sub-inspector of police was arrested for allegedly sexually harassing a woman during the course of the investigation into a complaint by her in

police station following a complaint lodged against him by the woman with the sub-divisional police

The incident allegedly

year, said Arun Kumar Jena, Additional Superinten-

"As per the process, a medical examination of the victim will be conducted and her statement under Section 164 of the CrPC will be recorded," he said.

President accepts Allahabad University V-C's resignation

Rattan Lal Hangloo faced allegations of misconduct

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind accepted the resignation of Allahabad University Vice-Chancellor Rattan Lal Hangloo and ordered an enquiry into allegations of financial, academic and administrative irregularities against him, said officials of Ministry of Human Resource Development on Friday.

Mr. Hangloo had resigned on Wednesday.

"The President has directed to conduct an enquiry into the allegations of finan-

academic and administrative irregularities, including the recommendations contained in the interim report of the National Commission for Women regarding alleged misconduct against Mr. Hangloo," an HRD Ministry official said.

Mr. Hangloo has been under the scanner since 2016 for alleged financial and academic irregularities. He was also summoned by the National Commission for Women last week over allegations of improper handling of sexual harassment complaints and lack of grievance redress mechanism for women students.

"I resigned because baseless enquiries were initiated against me. On several occasions it was proved that there was no substance in the complaints," Mr. Hangloo said in a statement.

He had earlier served as Vice-Chancellor of Kalyani University in West Bengal.

However, Mr. Hangloo quit the post following a series of spats with the State government and university employees.

Odisha police officer arrested for sexually harassing complainant

BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's Puri district.

The official, identified as Chittaranjan Das, ASI at the Balanga police station, was detained by the Pipili

The woman has alleged that the investigating officer had taken her to his official quarters, where she was subjected to sexual harassment.

took place in April last

dent of Police.

Das would be presented in court, said the State police in a statement.



Missing the wood

Rather than denounce Kerala's CAA resolution, Centre must seek to understand the objections

The Kerala Assembly's resolution calling upon the Centre to repeal the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, reflects the widespread unease and disquiet the legislation has caused. Rather than treat it as a controversy over the question whether a State Assembly is competent to question the law on a matter under the Union government's domain, the Centre should reflect on the core issue: that the CAA may be in violation of the equality norm and secular principles enshrined in the Constitution. Given how deeply the country is divided on the changes in the law, Kerala's example may set the stage for a wider confrontation between the Centre and States that have expressed their disinclination to give effect to the Centre's policy in this regard. The resolution reflects a legitimate concern that in enacting the CAA, the Centre has written a patently discriminatory norm into the law. There is justified opposition across India on the amendment's implications, especially in combination with the expected follow-up action in the form of establishing a citizenship register. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is among several CMs who have spoken out against the CAA's discriminatory nature, but his has been the first regime to adopt a formal resolution for repeal. The Centre must make an effort to understand the underpinnings of the ongoing protests against its amendments, of which the Kerala resolution is surely a part.

Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan have denounced the adoption of such a resolution, the former arguing that all States had a constitutional duty to implement central laws. However, the principal objection – that citizenship being a matter concerning the Union, it is not open to State Assemblies to give their opinion on it – is not valid. To the extent that a State government believes that a parliamentary law is not constitutional, it is entirely in order for the State legislature to call for its repeal. Further, a resolution is not legislation, and is not governed by the principle of legislative competence. It is only an expression of a political opinion. Tamil Nadu, for instance, has passed several resolutions concerning India's foreign policy – such as asking for a war crimes probe against Sri Lanka and even a referendum on 'Tamil Eelam'. There is a technical problem on the resolution's admissibility. Kerala Assembly rules say matters pending before a court or those that do not concern the State should not be admitted in the form of a resolution. However, these are minor issues. Ultimately, the House Speaker decides on admitting a resolution, and it is an internal matter. Voicing support for the CAA and disapproval of Kerala's resolution are also valid political opinions, but these should not translate into any ill-advised action such as hauling up the Chief Minister before the Privileges Committee of Parliament.

An act of war

In an election year, an impeached American President is provoking a war with Iran

Triday's assassination of Major General Qassem So-→ leimani, the commander of Iran's Qods Force for over two decades, in Baghdad, is a reckless and unilateral act of provocation by the U.S. that could trigger another full-scale war in West Asia. The strike against Mr. Soleimani and several Iraqi Shia militia members when they were leaving the airport, was apparently in retaliation for the storming of the American Embassy in Baghdad by protesters earlier this week. Mr. Soleimani, who had celebrity status among Iran's military leaders, was highly popular among the hardliners. He was reportedly very close to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who once called him a "living martyr of the revolution". Mr. Soleimani was also the main architect of Iran's recent foreign operations, mainly in Syria and Iraq, which were crucial in saving the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and defeating the Islamic State (IS) in both countries. It was under his leadership that Iran founded and trained Shia militias and despatched them to the battlefields there. The militias fought alongside Kurdish paramilitaries and the Iraqi Army, with U.S. air support, against the IS in northern Iraq, from Amirli to Mosul. Ironically, the soldier who helped the U.S. and the Iraqi government defeat the IS has been assassinated inside Iraq by the Americans.

This was a crisis foretold by many, and U.S. President Donald Trump is squarely responsible for where U.S.-Iran ties stand today. He single-handedly destroyed the détente between the two nations established by the 2015 Iran nuclear deal by unilaterally pulling the U.S. out of the agreement in 2018 and reimposing sanctions on Iran. Now, with the assassination, Mr. Trump has escalated the crisis to the levels not seen in the past; not even during the siege in 1979 of the American Embassy in Tehran by the revolutionaries. It might help an impeached President in an election year to divert attention from his domestic woes and mobilise political support, but for a region already struggling to cope with multiple conflicts and external interventions, it could be dangerously consequential. The attack has already killed off even the possibility of renegotiating the nuclear deal. Iran might see this as an act of war like any sovereign country would do. A full-scale war would be totally different from the wars the U.S. has fought in West Asia. It could trigger multiple attacks across the region, destabilising it further, cause heavy casualties and help the jihadist al-Qaeda and the IS regroup and reemerge. It is unfortunate that the U.S., which is struggling to get out of Afghanistan after 18 years of war, which destroyed the Iraqi state 17 years ago, turning parts of the country into fertile ground for jihadists, is triggering another conflict in the Muslim world.

Defying the legalisation of the unjustifiable

The Citizenship Act protests are a reminder that civil liberties and rights apply to even those whom the state may hate



SATISH DESHPANDE

7idespread against the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, or CAA, 2019, have severely dented the image of the Narendra Modi government, Trying to repair the damage while pushing ahead with their divisive agenda, the regime's spokespersons have repeatedly asserted that the recently approved National Population Register (NPR) is not new, not related to the NRC, and not something to worry about. Only the first of these three claims is partially true, and only in a literal sense.

A powerful instrument

It is indeed true that the NPR is envisioned in the Citizenship Act of 1955, and that it was revived by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government when it amended the citizenship Act and rules in 2003. It is also true that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) first implemented it in 2010 along with the 2011 Census. However, to say that there is nothing new about the NPR in today's transformed context is to speak in bad faith. The addition of unnecessary intrusive questions – on the place and date of birth of each parent, place of last residence, and Aadhaar, PAN (Permanent Account Number), driving licence, voter

makes it far more potent as an instrument of surveillance and harassment. Add the statements linking it to the NRC made in the recent past by representatives of the present government, and it is obvious why, unlike its first incarnation, the 2020 avatar of the NPR is being seen as a rudra or terrifying avatar.

Violation of norms

Modern governance requires states to collect two broad kinds of data based on individuation and aggregation. Individuating data provides information on specific individuals, while aggregating data profiles groups or collectivities. Group-oriented data also begins with particular persons, but aggregation masks or "anonymises" them, thus yielding information only on collectivities such as illiterate persons or tax payers. Individual-oriented data is also pooled and consolidated, but the specific persons it covers remain identifiable. Norms of good governance dictate that the scope of individuating data be restricted, and that, on the other hand, databases with universal or wide coverage be confined to aggregated data that cannot identify individuals. The government's relentless effort to push for maximum individuation along with maximum coverage violates and reverses established norms regulating the collection of social statistics.

The probable consequences of this reversal are illustrated by the contrary example of the Indian census, where the assurance of anonymity balances the coercive legal force of the state. The Census Act, 1948 requires all persons re-

fully answer the schedules canvassed by the enumerators of the Census of India – failure to do so is punishable with a fine. However, most Indians may not be aware that Section 11 of the same Act imposes even higher penalties on officials who falsify or disclose census data - they may also be jailed for three years. In fact, unpublished census data cannot be accessed by government departments, and Section 15 of the Census Act exempts it from the Indian Evidence Act so that it cannot

be used in courts of law. Weakening of anonymity

To appreciate the full significance of this commitment to anonymity. consider the fact that the 2011 Census revealed that, between 2007 and 2011 74 lakh Indians were married below the legal age of 18. Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, those responsible are liable to be fined up to ₹1 lakh and/or imprisoned for up to two years. And yet the Census data cannot be used to identify them it can only tell us, at best, that the incidence of under-age marriages is the highest in districts like Bhilwara and Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. In sharp contrast, the NPR, and esity while collecting actionable personal data, but nevertheless impose coercive, census-like un-

To be sure, states do need to collect individuating data, which is usually justified by invoking national security or the efficient targeting of welfare benefits. We also know that throughout history, states have collected information on groups such as criminals or political rivals. However, such exercises are of limited scope; they do not compulsorily include the entire population. They also have internal safeguards and/or offer clear benefits for respondents. It is noteworthy that the NPR and the NRC include none of these features. Actually, the NPR is nothing like the Census - it is only logistical efficiency that makes the former use the proven field machinery of the latter. It is also a logically, practically and politically necessary precondition for the NRC, without which it is pointless.

Faith in the state

Ultimately, the key question is that of the people's faith in the state. In ex-colonies such as India that have won their independence through a freedom struggle, the post-colonial state gains a priceless inheritance of popular trust. After all, most people are unaware of the safeguards for anonymity built into the census; and yet they freely provide information because they trust the government. It is this trust that the present government seems determined to squander.

What is all this for? Imagine that the NPR-NRC exercise has been completed successfully, and has identified 'x' lakh "non-citizens". What then? The only "plan" the

government seems to have is to convert these 'x'lakh self-supporting persons, who have presumably contributed to their local economies, into permanent inmates of detention centres and eternal wards of the state. Since such a plan clearly makes no sense as policy, we have to turn to alternative explanations.

As Kautilya, Machiavelli and Foucault remind us in their various ways, the point of the law is to exercise power. Laws are not necessarily meant to abolish whatever they render illegal; they are meant to trap particular subjects and practices in zones of illegality where they will be most susceptible to power. Graded or hierarchical citizenship has been unjustifiable in our republic, though it has been integral to our social practice. The NPR-NRC and CAA initiatives seem designed to coerce us into legalising the unjustifiable and normalising indefensible prejudices.

And once the forces behind these initiatives have tasted victory, why will they stop? For there is no end to prejudices in our hierarchy-saturated culture.

But the nation-wide protests tell us that the story is far from finished. They remind those who think they are our rulers of two crucial truths. First, that civil liberties and democratic rights are defined by the inconvenient fact that they must also be granted to those whom we may fear, hate or despise. And second, that the most rudra of rudraavatars are a people who have lost faith in their state.

Satish Deshpande teaches Sociology at Delhi University. The views expressed are

Bracing for global impact after Soleimani's assassination

There are apprehensions that the Iranian commander's death may be avenged by a thousand cuts



MAHESH SACHDEV

esterday's targeted assassination of Major General Qassem Soleimani, Commander of Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), bears two important differences from recent targets of similar U.S. operations. Unlike Abu Musaib al-Zargawi (leader of the al-Qaeda in Iraq), Osama bin Laden (founder of the al-Qaeda) and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, (founder of the Islamic State, or the IS), Gen. Soleimani, 62, was a state actor. Second, unlike the previous three, he was not past his prime. Both these factors could lead to more substantive

The U.S. has sought to link the operation to a surge in attacks on its assets and personnel in Iraq. America proscribed the Oods Force and Gen. Qassem Soleimani more than 12 years ago for terrorism, but has not acted. In fact, during 2017-18, the U.S. indirectly collaborated with the Hashd Al-Shabi created by Gen. Soleimani, to defeat the IS. Gen. Soleimani was a frequent visitor to Iraq, and these visits were hardly secret.

Moreover, had the U.S. wished to avoid a direct confrontation, it could have steered clear of taking public responsibility for the operation. But, presumably for domestic political reasons, it decided otherwise, thereby throwing down a risky "double-or-quit" gauntlet, at Tehran. Yet, unlike the targeted assassination of the IS chief in October, the U.S. President has, uncharacteristically avoided taking personal credit. Therefore, the handling of this operation raises more questions than it answers.

Pivotal figure

Gen. Soleimani hailed from a modest background in Kerman, far from the country's traditional power centres. He was a child of the revolution, fought with distinction as a member of the IRGC in the Iraq-Iran war and was from 1998 the founder-commander of its Qods Force, formed for extraterritorial operations. During the past decade, he managed to leverage the disarray to enhance Iranian influence in Arab countries with a significant Shia population such as Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and

He astutely created a network of local sympathisers and proxies and waged effective asymmetric wars. Unlike many Iranian public figures, he was untainted by corruption. His accomplishments



gional proxies. The U.S. and its Sunni allies saw his successes being at their cost. In an unguarded comment in 2017 that caused much alarm, he claimed that four Arab capitals were under Iranian

Iranian authorities have reacted with predictable vehemence at Gen. Soleimani's "martyrdom" and vowed vengeance. This tit-fortat between the U.S. and Iran could easily go out of hand and lead to a major confrontation in a pyretic and fragile region, with unpredictable consequences. Both the antagonists have their respective domestic compulsions: Mr. Trump faces a Senate impeachment and re-election and Iran has its parliamentary elections next month. These factors would, hopefully, limit their options to low-intensity skirmishes. Iran has in the past used its foreign proxies, many of which were created and fostered by Gen. Soleimani, and they may now be itching to avenge his loss. Moving concentrically,

Gen. Soleimani's assassination in situation Baghdad is one incident most Iraqis could do without. It is likely to queer the pitch for Iraq, a hapless country with a caretaker government convulsed by nearly three months of youth protests, inter alia, against undue foreign interference by both Iran and the U.S.

The event is likely to re-polarise Iraqi society along sectarian lines and intensify the Iran-U.S. competition for influence. In a worst case scenario, Iraq could turn into the new Syria. The popular Iraqi clamour for political reforms and transparency may be eclipsed by the demand for eviction of the U.S. presence itself.

Oil sector as target

At a regional level, anxiety may rise about Gen. Soleimani's death being avenged by a thousand cuts at the interests of the U.S. and its allies. This may involve resumed attacks on oil tankers and other low hanging but high value economic targets, particularly in the oil sector. Global oil prices have already seen a 4% rise within hours of the incident due to the "fear premium"; unless de-escalated, jittery commodity speculators may spin out of control

The urge for a riposte runs deep in the Iranian psyche. The U.S. has a global presence but that also brings in vulnerabilities. All that can be safely predicted is that the

remains unpredictable.

Potential fallout, on India

India has already had considerable difficulties in meandering through the obstacle course created by the U.S.-Iran cold war. While we need to be on the right side of the U.S., our ties with Iran, apart from being "civilisational", have their own geostrategic logic. Now that the conflict has turned hot, its adverse impact on India could magnify. Apart from a rise in our oil import bill and difficulties in supplies, the safety of an estimated eight million expatriates in the Gulf may be affected. Iran has the capacity to influence the U.S.-Taliban peace process in Afghanistan, a neighbouring country. Last but not the least, after Iran, India has perhaps the largest number of the world's Shia population and the possibility of some of them being radicalised by this event cannot be ruled out. It can be argued that had the U.S. not invaded Iraq in 2003 creating the mother of all chaos, Oassem Soleimani and his Qods Force would have largely remained a sideshow in Lebanon. So his targeted assassination yesterday completes the circle.

Mahesh Sachdev is a retired IFS officer who handled India-Gulf ties for over a decade. He is currently President of Eco-Diplomacy and Strategies, New Delhi

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

U.S.-Iran tensions

The killing of Oassem Soleimani has raised the spectre of military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran. With the U.S. terming the killing a preemptive strike and Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowing to retaliate harshly, the stage is set for heightened tensions. The ascension of Donald Trump as the President of the U.S. saw the collapse of the muchacclaimed nuclear deal signed by his predecessor and also the imposition of fresh sanctions on Iran with an intent to usher in regime change. However, the strategy of weakening Tehran through punitive economic sanctions and force has its own limits and would hardly serve the cause of peace and stability. M. JEYARAM,

Modi's protest call The Prime Minister has called for protests against Pakistan's atrocities on its

minorities, ignoring that

people from the largest minority community in his own country are oppressed, humiliated, jailed and even lynched on flimsy grounds (Front page, "Modi asks CAA opponents to protest against Pak. 'atrocities'," January 3). In a democracy, people have every right to protest, oppose and question such flawed and ill-conceived policies that affect their fundamental rights. M.Y. SHARIFF,

■ If Pakistan has persecuted its minorities, as alleged by the Prime Minister, it certainly can be termed a crime against humanity -India need not and must not remain a mute spectator. However, it is unclear how protests in India, by those who are opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), against Islamabad will yield any tangible results. Instead, India has the option of taking the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), like Gambia has done against Myanmar, to expose

the atrocities carried out by Pakistan. A. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu

■ Mr. Modi went to Tumakuru to pay his respect at the 'Gadduge' (final resting place) of Shivakumara Swamiji at Siddaganga Mutt, and not to carry out his party's outreach campaign in support of the CAA. It is unclear why the Prime Minister used the occasion, attended by thousands of students and seers of various Mutts, to make a political speech. He seems to be so much immersed in politics that he treats every forum as a platform to attack prime opponents. If the Congress Party is 'dead', as claimed by many of Mr. Modi's supporters, why does the Prime Minister have to invoke its ghost so often? Moreover, those agitating against the CAA are not opposing the offer of citizenship to persecuted minorities from neighbouring nations; what

they oppose is a law that has

been given a religious colour

by the Central government. N. NAGARAJAN, Secunderabad

The Centre decides

It is saddening that the CAA has evoked dissent and that the Opposition parties have not appealed for restraint. Providing citizenship and asylum is the prerogative of the government and there is no sign of any malice on the part of the ruling party in bringing out the law. Secularism is indeed part of the Indian Constitution. However, those who face persecution in other countries must have the right to seek refuge in the country of their ancestors' origin The Opposition can here rightfully demand that the rules are made public and are fair and proper. Same applies to the National Register of Citizens. T.V. LAKSHMINARAYANAN,

The hegemony endures Events such as negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan, muted reaction to Iran's provocations and

by the President Donald Trump (Editorial page, "In the ruins of unilateralism, January 3). As Mr. Trump came to power by promising to recall/withdraw American forces fighting wars abroad, he is unwilling to risk sending more forces for any new wars and is also pushing for a quicker withdrawal from Afghanistan. Though the phenomenal rise of China and signs of a comeback of Russia are a reality, the strength of the U.S. to shape the global politics remains as potent as ever as it is still the world's mightiest military power. In spite of the flip-flops of Mr. Trump on the foreign policy front, the U.S. remains the only global power that has overarching influence over the global politics. China is still far away from reaching that position of influence and

Russia is still farther away. It

is true that "hegemony of a

single power is temporary",

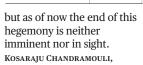
Turkey's invasion of eastern

Syria's Kurdish held regions

declining ability but due to

conscious policy path taken

are not due to the U.S.'s



■ True, the Taliban has been a difficult negotiating partner, Iran is becoming more reckless by the day and Turkey is causing tensions within NATO. But these are not reasons enough to predict the end of American hegemony. The U.S. still wields enormous clout and has the power to shape and influence events anywhere in the world. Unrest within NATO is not likely to cause any major fault-lines within the organisation. China poses a threat to U.S. in the economic front, but it has to go a long way before it can dream of supplanting Washington from its preeminent status. Any prognosis of the U.S. losing its significance is premature for at least the next two decades. PRASANNA ADITYA A.,

New Delhi