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NEARBY



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

REUTERS
BAGHDAD

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 archi-

An 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 its borders

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



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

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

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.

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 the killing.

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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

PM asks students to innovate, patent

'New India' needs technology, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

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 solutions. Cost-effective agriculture was critical to benefit farmers, he said at the 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 cost-effective 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 India), maintaining 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

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

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

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

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 co-author and fellow prize winner Esther Dufo.

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



Abhijit Banerjee with Esther Dufo 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 said.

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

Govt. mulls Himachal model to regulate land ownership

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

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, prohibit-

ing 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 development.

CONTINUED ON > PAGE 12

March of hope



Rising up: Accredited social health activists (ASHAs) taking part in a rally in Bengaluru on Friday, seeking higher wages and permanent jobs. They plan to continue their strike till the Karnataka government meets their demands. > V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

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
Kerala Chief Minister



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 Pradesh and Odisha.

MISSING THE WOOD > EDITORIAL

NO GOING BACK: SHAH > PAGE 13

MORE REPORTS > PAGES 8 & 13



IN BRIEF
Delhi University teachers hold candlelight vigil

NEW DELHI
Several teachers of Delhi University who have been on indefinite strike for nearly a month now, demanding absorption 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 long-standing issues.

Congress opens social media control room

NEW DELHI
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.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	352	Gurugram	318
Ghaziabad	316	Faridabad	339
Noida	340	Greater Noida	336
Good	0-50	Satisfactory	51-100
Moderate	101-200	Poor	201-300
Very poor	301-400	Severe	>401

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY
(COVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]

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
NEW DELHI
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 Savitribai 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, Birsu 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. • R.V. MOORTHY

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 Queer 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

and other marginalised 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 NRC but as per the rules inserted in 2003 to the Citizenship Act, 1955, the NRC will flow from data gathered 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 parameters 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 Friday. • SIDHARTH RAVI

Don't believe in rumours, say Shaheen Bagh protesters

'Stir will go on till January 22 at least'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
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 conference.

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 "BJP 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-by".

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
NEW DELHI

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 same.

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 the 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 groundwater 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 3."

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

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

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 two 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 burnt."

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 has 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 Act."

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

The accused had approached 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 over.

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 loan.

'Insufficient money'

All the cheques were dishonoured 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 complainant alleged.

'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
NEW DELHI

Delhi Fire Service (DFS) personnel Amit Pawar, brother-in-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



Amit Baliyan

know about Baliyan.

The victim's younger brother-in-law Ankur, who works in Gurugram, said he got to know about the incident around 2 p.m. on Thursday. Meanwhile, on Friday morning, the DFS staff paid

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

ROHIT
Amit Baliyan's cousin

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 well."



Arvind Kejriwal

CM promises job to slain firefighter's kin

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

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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.

This comes a day after Mr. Kejriwal announced an ex gratia of ₹1 crore to the family of Baliyan.

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

while trying to save the lives 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 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.

Farmers' day out



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

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 promi-

nent 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 added.

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

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

At a cost of ₹20 crore

He added that the park, which was to come up at a cost of approximately ₹20 crore, would be eco-friendly and self-sustainable with its own solar and wind power generation.

Court acquits man of attempting to kill wife

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has acquitted a man in a case of attempting to kill his wife as the latter went back on her charges submitted to the police.

In her complaint, the woman alleged that his husband used to beat him, tried to kill him and also prevented her from going to her parents' 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. However, she later returned to his home but her mental and physical cruelties increased, the complaint read. As no evidence was found against the in-laws, 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 against the accused. "Since no iota of evidence has come on record to connect the accused with the offence(s) with which he has 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 Ghitori 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 briefly delayed on the Sultanpur-Huda City Centre section of the Yellow Line, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation officials said.

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
NEW DELHI

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.

The Minister had launched the DDA’s portal for registration of applicants and submission of applications in December. A total of 57,000 people had registered so far, and 3,500 had

completed their applications.

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 process.

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 the Delhi government or what they are doing

HARDEEP PURI
Union Minister

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 Centre.

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
NEW DELHI

“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 PUSHKAR

NDMC outlines goals in its 2020-21 budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Making areas garbage bin-free, 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 budget.

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 year.

“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.

Police issue tender for procurement of drones

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 district.

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 capability to work with Google Maps, the State police said further.

Cyber Prevention Awareness and Detection (CyPAD) Centre and the National Cyber 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 said.

AAP reacts to BJP campaign

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In response to the BJP’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 delivery.

Mr. Singh said that the BJP should concentrate on delivering basic responsibilities of a municipal body before pitching a manifesto to run the State government.

He alleged that people living in unauthorised colonies could not undertake any construction or make alterations to their dwelling units, without first paying a hefty bribe to corrupt BJP councillors and said that the schools and hospitals under the jurisdiction of MCD were in a pathetic condition.

He also reminded the BJP of its promise of a ‘garbage-free Delhi’ and suggested that they first focus on fulfilling this promise as visitors to Delhi are greeted by heaps of garbage when entering by road.

Five arrested for killing 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 25.

The police said that a they received a call regarding a man who had sustained multiple stab wounds. When they reached the spot, it was found that one of the vic-

tims’ mobile phone was missing, while another was in his pocket. He was then identified and a case was registered.

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 Bahata 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.

Refund booking amount to buyer, NDCRC tells builder

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

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 Infrastructure 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 Corporation 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.

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

‘Purpose of campaign is to collect suggestions for manifesto’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

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,

along with senior leaders from the party’s State leadership.

The purpose of the campaign, 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.

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 fired.
“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,” 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 to political or personal enmity or if there is some other reason,” he told *The Hindu*.
The local police said the incident happened around 9 p.m., almost 12 hours after

Mr. Barua had organised an anti-CAA rally in 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 regularly?”
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 office-bearers elected was Mrinalini Devi, the mother of Finance and Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. She beat three contenders to become the vice-president.

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

KALPETTA
Forest Department personnel rescued a male leopard, which had fallen into an open well of a house at Vattavayal, 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

VIJAYAWADA
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

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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 Vi-

jayan for moving the resolution against a law passed by Parliament, the Speaker said one House cannot move a breach of privilege motion against another elected 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

G. ANAND
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
HYDERABAD

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 said.

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,” he said.

Dance festival begins in Chennai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Renowned Bharatanatyam exponent Priyadarshini Govind was given the Nritya 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 1974.

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.



Modi likely to meet Mamata in Kolkata
KOLKATA
Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee 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 victory.

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." PTI

Punjab MLA booked in chit fund cheating case
JABALPUR
A case was filed against a Congress MLA from Punjab 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 booked, police said. PTI

Centre approves 2,636 auto charging stations
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 cities. PTI

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 government-run J.K. Lon Hospital in Kota on Friday. •PTI

Protests erupt at hospital

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL
KOTA
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 Rajesh 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
LUCKNOW
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 ministers.

Six Rajasthan BSP MLAs join Congress

Move follows Mayawati's Kota poser

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

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



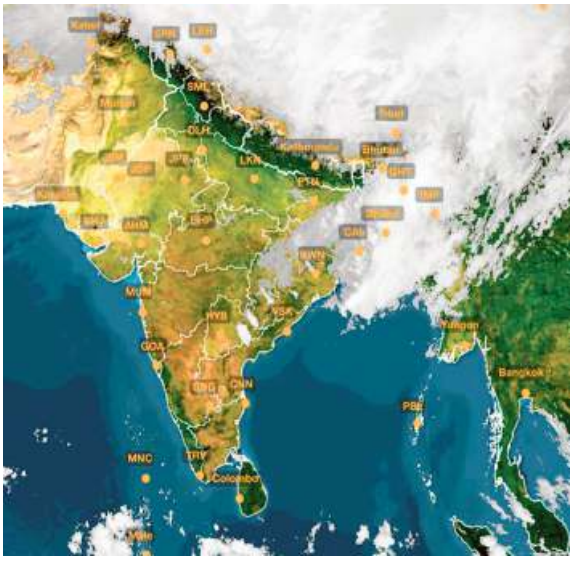
Mayawati

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

“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 Rajasthan 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.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for 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.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	4.9	20.0	16.0	Kozhikode	—	35.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	—	25.0	11.0	Kurnool	—	32.0	20.0
Aizawl	—	—	—	Lucknow	1.8	20.0	13.0
Allahabad	4.0	23.0	14.0	Madurai	—	32.0	23.0
Bengaluru	—	28.0	18.0	Mangaluru	—	33.0	22.0
Bhopal	—	20.0	13.0	Mumbai	—	—	—
Bhubaneswar	8.0	23.0	18.0	Mysuru	—	30.0	20.0
Chandigarh	—	23.0	7.0	New Delhi	—	23.0	8.0
Chennai	—	31.0	24.0	Patna	—	23.0	12.0
Coimbatore	—	32.0	23.0	Port Blair	—	30.0	26.0
Dehradun	0.1	19.0	5.0	Puducherry	—	32.0	22.0
Gangtok	—	11.0	5.0	Pune	—	27.0	14.0
Goa	—	32.0	21.0	Rajpur	0.5	21.0	14.0
Guwahati	—	—	—	Ranchi	16.6	21.0	12.0
Hubballi	—	29.0	19.0	Shillong	—	—	—
Hyderabad	—	—	—	Shimla	—	—	—
Imphal	—	—	—	Srinagar	—	7.0	-3.0
Jaipur	—	22.0	10.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.0	24.0
Kochi	—	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	—	33.0	24.0
Kohima	—	—	—	Vijayawada	—	28.0	21.0
Kolkata	9.3	20.0	15.0	Visakhapatnam	0.8	26.0	22.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	43	16	41	133	118	■
Bengaluru	10	40	19	36	56	■
Chennai	8	29	91	66	—	■
Delhi	25	143	46	460	405	■
Hyderabad	16	44	51	69	—	■
Kolkata	9	77	25	204	142	■
Lucknow	13	33	58	385	—	■
Mumbai	8	60	31	246	133	■
Pune	81	32	78	108	97	■
Visakhapatnam	9	37	55	92	94	■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Muzaffarpur, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 418 indicating a severe level of pollution. In contrast, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 33.

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

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

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

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

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

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-

cial, 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 com-

plaints 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 spat with the State government and university employees.

Odisha police officer arrested for sexually harassing complainant

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

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 Odisha's Puri district. The official, identified as Chittaranjan Das, ASI at the Balanga police station, was detained by the Pipili

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

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

The incident allegedly took place in April last

year, said Arun Kumar Jena, Additional Superintendent of Police.

“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.

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

Friday's assassination of Major General Qassem Soleimani, 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 re-emerge. 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

Widespread protests 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 card and mobile phone numbers –

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 residing on Indian territory to truth-



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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 especially the NRC offer no anonym-

ity while collecting actionable personal data, but nevertheless impose coercive, census-like universal coverage.

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 personal

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

Yesterday'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-Zarqawi (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 fallout.

The U.S. has sought to link the operation to a surge in attacks on its assets and personnel in Iraq. America proscribed the Qods 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 extra-territorial 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 Yemen.

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



V.A. REUTERS

earned him a cult-like following among most Iranians and their regional 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 sway.

Iranian authorities have reacted with predictable vehemence at Gen. Soleimani's "martyrdom" and vowed vengeance. This tit-for-tat 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 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

situation remains highly 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, Qassem Soleimani and his Qods Force would have largely remained a sideshow in Lebanon. So his targeted assassination yesterday completes the circle.

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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 Qassem Soleimani has raised the spectre of military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran. With the U.S. terming the killing a pre-emptive 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 much-acclaimed 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,
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

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,
Chennai

■ 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,
Bengaluru

The hegemony endures

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

Turkey's invasion of eastern Syria's Kurdish held regions are not due to the U.S.'s declining ability but due to conscious policy path taken 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",

but as of now the end of this hegemony is neither imminent nor in sight.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

■ 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 pre-eminent status. Any prognosis of the U.S. losing its significance is premature for at least the next two decades.

PRASANNA ADITYA A.,
New Delhi