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Shah, Modi to lead BJP's poll campaign in Delhi

BJP president Amit Shah on Sunday signalled that the campaign for the Delhi Assembly election will be held under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He was addressing the party's booth-level workers here. Highlighting his involvement in the campaign, Mr. Shah said he would start group meetings and reach out to individual households. CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Artists paint CP in protest against CAA, NRC

Artists gathered at Connaught Place to write slogans and paint the pavements to protest against the CAA and the NRC on Sunday. The artists wrote various slogans like "Hum Bh Dekhenge", "Bol Ke Labh Azaad Hain Tere' and "Save the Constitution of India" in addition to "Reject CAA and NRC" near Gate 6 of the Rajiv Chowk metro station.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

After denials, police admit they did open fire

Nearly three weeks after the police fired tear-gas shells in the city and thrashed students inside the Jamia Millia Islamia library, a senior police officer confirmed that they had opened fire during the anti-CAA protests here. He said a Special Investigation Team would probe all incidents of violence, including the use of firearms by the police.

CAPITAL ▶ PAGE 2

Bengal station collapse: one succumbs to injuries

One of the two persons injured in a partial collapse of the Bardhaman railway station building in West Bengal succumbed to his injuries early on Sunday, said Minister Swapan Debnath. He said that the man, who suffered serious injuries when a chunk of concrete fell on his head, could not be saved despite efforts by doctors of Bardhaman Medical College

Hospital. NATION ▶ PAGE 9

EDUCATIONPLUS PAGES 18 & 19

Iraqi MPs vote to expel U.S. troops

Resolution comes amid mounting backlash against killing of Iranian Commander

REUTERS

The Iraqi Parliament on Sunday called on the government to work to end all foreign troop presence in the country as the backlash grew against the killing of top Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in a U.S. strike in Baghdad.

A resolution passed by a special session of Parliament said the government should cancel its request for assistance from a U.S.-led coalition. Parliament resolutions, unlike laws, are non-binding. But this one is likely to be heeded: Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi had earlier called on Parliament to end foreign troop presence as soon as possible.

Coalition halts action

The U.S.-led coalition battling the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria said it had halted most of its operations against the militants for now to focus on protecting coalition forces and bases, amid soaring tensions with Iran.

Since the killings, rival Shia political leaders have called for U.S. troops to be expelled in an unusual show of unity among factions. "There is no need for the presence of American forces after defeating Da'esh (the Is-



Paying their respects: People attending a funeral procession for Iranian Major-General Qassem Soleimani in Ahvaz, Iran, on Sunday. • REUTERS

lamic State)," said Ammar al-Shibli, a Shia lawmaker.

"We have our own armed forces which are capable of protecting the country," he told Reuters.

Around 5,000 U.S. troops remain in Iraq, most of them in an advisory capacity. Many Iraqis, including opponents of Soleimani, have expressed anger at Washington for killing Soleimani and Muhandis on Iraqi soil and potentially dragging their country into another conflict.

INDIAN, IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS HOLD TALKS > PAGE 12

ATTACK IN KENYA ▶ PAGE 14

President Trump warns Iran of attacks

President Donald Trump said the U.S. would hit dozens of targets in the Islamic Republic if it retaliated for the killing of the head of the Qods Force Qassem Soleimani in Iraq.

In a series of tweets, he said Iran "is talking very boldly about targeting certain USA assets".

The U.S. has identified

"52 Iranian sites", some of them "at a very high level & important to Iran & the Iranian culture, and those targets, and Iran itself, WILL BE HIT VERY FAST AND VERY HARD."

"The USA wants no more threats!" Mr. Trump

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 14

Masked goons thrash students, staff in JNU

35 students and teachers injured during violence

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Scores of students, including JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh, and several teachers were beaten up on the JNU

campus on Sunday evening. Masked men and women, armed with sticks and stones, went around the campus, entering hostels, beating up students and teachers and smashing cars.

A video of a bleeding Ms. Ghosh was posted on Twitter. The JNUSU claimed in a statement that a large number of ABVP activists entered the campus with iron rods and singled out students' representatives.

Several teachers said ABVP activists had entered the campus and indulged in violence. "Female students have locked themselves up inside the girls' wing in Sabarmati Hostel. These attackers are roaming the corridors armed with rods and sticks... we are under attack," the JNUSU said, calling for help and sharing videos of the violence on campus.

"Professors who were trying to protect us have been beaten up. These are unknown ABVP goons, not all are students, they have covered their faces, and are moving towards the...West



Masked persons armed with sticks roaming around the JNU campus. ■PTI

Gate. Stay alert. Make human chains. Protect each other," another tweet from the Union added.

Sources at AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital said that over 35 students and teachers were treated for injuries sustained during the violence.

"You can judge how scary a situation it was from the videos and photos that are being shared. I was in my hostel room when people with their faces covered entered and started breaking things with sticks and metal rods. I did not recognise any of them but they were on a mission to spread fear," a BA student of the university said.

Ayesha Kidwai, a professor teaching at JNU, told The Hindu that one of her colleagues, Sucharita Sen, had been beaten up and suffered head injuries. "She is being treated at the trauma centre," Dr. Kidwai said. Joint Commissioner of Pol-

ice Anand Mohan said two groups of students had clashed on the campus, and the police were called in by the administration.

"We conducted a flag march. The situation is under control. The injured have been moved to AIIMS," Mr. Mohan said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12 SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 2

India condemns killing of Sikh youth in Pak.

Asks Imran Khan to ensure security of minorities after Peshawar murder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

India on Sunday strongly condemned the murder of a Sikh citizen of Pakistan in Peshawar and urged the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan to stop attacks on religious minorities.

A statement from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) pointed to Islamabad's inaction in several cases of violence against Sikhs and urged Pakistan to punish the perpetrators.

"India strongly condemns the targeted killing of a minority Sikh community member in Peshawar that follows the recent despicable vandalism and desecration of the holy Gurudwara Sri Ianam Asthan at Nankana Sahib. The Government of



Seeking action: Sikhs in Hyderabad staging a protest against the attack on Gurudwara Nankana Sahib in Pakistan. • K.V.S. GIRI

Pakistan should act in defence of their own minorities instead of preaching sermons about it to other countries," the MEA said.

The statement also highlighted the case of Sikh girl, Jagjit Kaur of Nankana Sahib, who was allegedly abducted and forcibly married.

came soon after Ravinder Singh was killed by miscreants in Peshawar.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

It is against my vision: Imran

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said the vandalism at Gurdwara Nankana Sahib went against his "vision" and the government would not tolerate such acts. He said there was a "major difference between the condemnable Nankana incident and the ongoing attacks across India on Muslims and other minorities". "The former is against my vision & will find zero tolerance & protection from the govt incl police &judiciary (sic)," he tweeted.

219 infants died at two Gujarat civil hospitals in December

134 deaths in Rajkot alone and 85 in Ahmedabad

MAHESH LANGA AHMEDABAD

The number of infant deaths at the civil hospitals in Guiarat's Rajkot and Ahmedabad is markedly higher than over 100 deaths reported from the government hospital at Kota in Rajasthan.

The two hospitals in Gujarat have reported 219 deaths in December. In Rajkot alone, 134 infants died and 85 deaths were reported from Ahmedabad. In the last three months, 253 infants have died in the Ahmedabad hospital, Gujarat's largest. "In December, 455 chil



Worse outcomes: 1,235 infants died during 2019 at the Rajkot civil hospital. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

dren were admitted and 85 lost their lives during treatment," Superintendent of Ahmedabad Civil Hospital G.S. Rathod said. At the Rajkot civil hospital, 1,235 infants died during 2019. The highest number of

newborn deaths in 2019 was

reported in December, and the second highest, 131, in October. According to Manish Mehta, head of Rajkot Civil Hospital, 269 children died in October, November and December.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Karnataka's Challakere to be ISRO's astronaut training hub

Plan ready for Space Flight Centre to come up at Chitradurga

MADHUMATHI D.S.

India's world-class facility for training astronauts will come up not in the space headquarters in Bengaluru, nor in any glitzy metropolis. It will be established in three years at Challakere, a shrubby, arid oilseeds town on the Bengaluru-Pune NH4 in Chidistrict Karnataka.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has proposed a ₹ 2,700crore master plan to create top infrastructure that will house its young Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC).

K. Sivan, ISRO Chairman and Secretary, Department of Space, told The Hindu, ing in Russia for the Gaga-



ISRO and DRDO facilities will be set up at Challakere.

"Everything connected with events and planning of the HSP [Human Spaceflight Programme] will shift to our campus at Challakere. We want to establish a self-contained facility there so that in future, whatever training

and activities we are now do-

nyaan crew can all be done by us here." When ready, the 400-acre ISRO land at Challakere will be the single-stop consolidating infrastructure and activities related to space travellers.

The country pays a hefty, unnamed sum to use such facilities abroad. The first set of four astronaut candidates for the first Gaganyaan mission of 2022 are to train in Russia. The amount sought for the HSFC is over and above the ₹10,000-crore approved budget of Gaganyaan. Pending its approval, the centre may take 2-3 years at the earliest to be set up, but would come up after the first Indian crewed flight.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

Our kin were framed in riots, say Lucknow residents

Police have arrested more than 1,200 people across U.P.

OMAR RASHID

A Lucknow court on Saturday granted bail to more than a dozen persons accused in the violence that took place in the city during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on December 19. However, many like Yasmin Siddiqui still await relief for her son Osama, 20, a third-year B.Com. student. He has been in jail for more than two weeks and his bail plea is expected to come up only on Monday.

Ms. Siddiqui is concerned about her son's well-being and anxious about his academic future. Osama has his exams on January 7 and 8 and is likely to miss them. "He is anxious and wants

to return home. He is tense about the examination. He didn't get to study for so many days. They should understand our situation. It's about his future. He will waste a full year," she said.

Like the kin of several persons who were arrested for the violence, Osama's family claims he had nothing to do with the protests. Till 2 p.m. on December 19, he was playing with his friends in the lane outside his house, his family said, adding that they have CCTV footage to prove

After that, he was going to a stationery shop, unaware of the violence some distance away, Ms. Siddiqui said.

"Nobody from our locality had gone to the protest. He

must have moved further out and encountered the stampede. He ran and took shelter in someone's house. The protesters also ran into the same compound," she said, based on what he told her in

"But since they were being chased by the police, many of the protesters escaped climbing over rooftops. But Osama sat quietly in one corner, hoping that the police would not touch him as he didn't do anything. But it was him the police caught," she

Osama is among more than 500 people in U.P. who have been issued notices to pay for damage to public and private property during the arson and vandalism.

Ajit Pawar will also look after Planning SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Finance portfolios

NCP gets crucial Home,

Five days after the Cabinet expansion, the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra on Sunday assigned portfolios, with senior NCP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar getting Finance and Planning.

The Home Ministry was allocated to his party colleague Anil Deshmukh.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will look after General Administration, IT, Information and Public Relations, Law & Judiciary.

While Mr. Thackeray will lead the Cabinet, the Sena has 11 Cabinet Ministers and three MoS. The NCP has the largest number of Ministers, with 12 Cabinet Ministers



and four MoS. The Congress has 10 Cabinet Ministers and "This is one of the most

experienced Cabinets the State has ever got. There are no issues with any party," said Housing Minister from the NCP, Jitendra Awhad. The Congress attempt to get either the Agriculture or Rural Development departments from the Shiv Sena and the NCP respectively did not succeed. **CONTINUED ON ▶** PAGE 12





(From left) A group of people protest outside the Delhi Police Headquarters; ABVP members and JNU students raise slogans against each other; policemen outside JNU main gate on Sunday evening. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

'Students wanting registration beaten up by those opposing it'

Complaint filed, says JNU administration

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) administration on Sunday strongly condemned the violent incident that took place inside the campus.

Registrar of the university, Pramod Kumar, said since afternoon, the campus witnessed scuffles at the Schools as well as inside the hostel premises between the groups of students who wanted to stop the registration and those who wanted to register and continue their studies. "At 4.30 p.m., a group of students, who are against the registration process moved aggressively from the admin block and reached the hostels. The administration immediately contacted the police. However, by the time the police reached the university, the group of students opposing the registration beat up those who were in favour of it," said Mr. Kumar.

He added that a few men

with their faces covered also entered the Perivar hostel rooms and attacked the students with sticks and rods. "It is unfortunate that a group of students with their violent means of protests is preventing thousands of non-agitating students from

pursuing their academic ac-

tivities," he said, adding that

the administration stands by

every student who wants to

continue their academic pro-

grammes peacefully.

"The JNU administration feels great pain and anguish for the students who have been injured in the incident. The university is always known for peaceful and democratic protests. The administration will not tolerate any form of violence on the campus. A complaint is being filed against the culprits," a statement issued by the university read.

It also appealed to all the stakeholders of the university to maintain peace and not

Faces covered, rods in hand, mob creates ruckus outside JNU gate

ABVP member says violence inside campus launched by 'Leftists'; Yogendra Yadav attacked

SIDHARTH RAVI

Several men with faces covered, who identified themselves as "nationalists and supporters of ABVP", gathered outside the North Gate of Jawaharlal Nehru University on Sunday evening, holding sticks and rods, and raising "Bharat Mata ki Jai" slogans.

The group present there attacked activist Yogendra Yadav, while he was making an attempt to speak to the teachers.

"They [teachers] were telling me about the situation inside the campus when the police dragged me from there. All these goondas joined the police in assaulting me. This happened in front of the camera," Mr. Yadav alleged.

Mob threatens scribes

Later, he was taken out of the area amid heavy police presence even as the mob



Activist Yogendra Yadav alleged that he was attacked by a mob and the police outside the campus. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

continued to heckle him. The mob also threatened journalists present at the spot among others.

Police stood guard

After reports of a mob on rampage, stone-pelting and violence from inside the campus, it was closed and the police stood guard at the university's North Gate.

Meanwhile, all street lights leading up to the gate were disconnected, leaving the area in darkness.

Delhi Social Media Coordinator (ABVP) Anurag Gautam, a student of Delhi University, said people had gathered in support of injured ABVP students inside the campus, who he alleged had been at the receiving end of "unprecedented violence and stone-pelting by

"Are they students or Naxalites?" he asked.

The mob also attacked an ambulance, carrying nine doctors, while it tried to enter the campus to provide medical assistance to the injured students. Some of the accused deflated the tyres of the vehicle.

'Don't click pictures'

The mob also asked individuals not to click pictures or take videos of the incident. They attacked those who refused to listen to

The ABVP supporters here blamed the "leftists" for the stone-pelting at Periyar hostel. The mob chanted "Vande Mataram", "Jai Shree Ram", "Delhi Police Zindabad", "Desh ke gadaron ko goli maron salon ko". Some of them even called the students "Naxalites".

Doctors attacked by mob outside university campus

'They surrounded ambulance, threw stones'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH NEW DELHI

A group of nine doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and other hospitals was attacked by a mob outside Jawaharlal Nehru University's main entrance gate on Sunday night.

The doctors, who had come in an ambulance with medical supplies to help the injured students, were not allowed to enter the campus.

"Around 100 masked goons attacked our ambulance with stones and lathis when we tried to enter the campus," said Praveen, a general surgeon at Maharishi Valmiki Hospital.

Another doctor, who had come on his own as a volunteer to treat the students, said: "The police remained a mute spectator while our ambulance was being surrounded and attacked by the

Dr. Praveen added that the mob broke a window of The mob even tried to drag and pull one of the doctors out of the ambulance's

window

the ambulance. "The mob even tried to drag and pull one of the doctors out of the ambulance's window," he said, pointing towards the doctor, who had received A visibly rattled woman

doctor in the group said, "The goons were wearing masks and helmets. I could smell that they were drunk. They even tried to take our mobile phones as we were taking videos."

"There is no safety even for ambulance and doctors," another doctor.

After some policemen intervened, the ambulance was allowed to leave the pre-

After denials, police admit they did open fire on December 15

SIT to probe all incidents of violence, including use of firearms

STAFF REPORTER

Nearly three weeks after the police fired tear-gas shells in the city and thrashed students inside the Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) library, a senior officer confirmed that they had opened fire during the anti-CAA protests here.

Confirming reports in NDTV and The Indian Express, the police officer, who preferred not to go on record, said a Special Investigation Team (SIT) would probe all incidents of violence, including the use of firearms by the police.

Since the incident, the Delhi police had maintained that no gunshots were fired on protesters.

Even a protester undergoing treatment at Safdurjung Hospital is suspected to have received gunshot injury but later it was claimed that injury was from shards of tear-gas can-



Policemen fire tear gas during a stir by JMI students against the CAA in New Delhi. • FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

isters. In a video shot by a resident and uploaded on social media, three policemen were seen using a wall as a shield while stones were being pelted at them.

Two policemen pulled out their service pistols and fired three shots in the direction of the protesters and they ran away. The video was shot at Mathura

Road on December 15.

"We won't be able to confirm it as the investigation is with SIT. If it was done, then it was an act of self-defence. No separate inquiry is required," said

A senior officer who was at the spot, saw the policemen firing, had mentioned it in police diary.

Shaheen Bagh agitation: police put rumours to bed

'We went there to resolve argument'

Amidst reports that security personnel were trying to remove those protesting against the amended Citizenship Act from Shaheen Bagh, the police on Sunday clarified that they had gone to the area to resolve an argument, which had ensued between a group of protes-

ters and shopkeepers. The police said they make regular visits to the spot to ensure law and order remain intact. They said they were informed by one of the shopkeepers on Sunday that some protesters were not allowing them to open their showrooms.

On reaching the spot, the police saw that an argument had ensued between a few protestors and the shop owner over the issue.

"We tried to pacify them. After the dispute was resolved, the man opened his showroom and later the barricades were again put in place," an officer said



Protesters in Shaheen Bagh on Sunday SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

A protester, Sajid Mojib, said the police had removed barricades and the locals to keep the stir in control in Shaheen Bagh. "The rumours were that

the police will launch a crackdown during 3 a.m.-8 a.m. at Shaheen Bagh. We will continue to protest peacefully and ready to face any kind of situation. For any mishap, the administration will be held responsible," he said.

The protestors, including women, have been camping in Shaheen Bagh, near Jamia Millia Islamia for over 20 days now.

High Court orders CBI inquiry over continued custody parole

Probe against jail, police officials begins; seeks explanation from Judge

STAFF REPORTER

The Delhi High Court has ordered CBI inquiry against jail and police officials here over the continued custody parole, for over five months, of an undertrial facing trial in three different cases.

A Bench of Justice Manmohan and Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal also sought explanation from an Additional Sessions Judge at Tis Hazari Court here for "his conduct in granting the custody parole" and extending it through subsequent orders.

Not more than 6 hours

As per Rule 1203 of the Delhi Prison Rules, 2018, an undertrial prisoner can be granted custody parole by a trial court in case of an exigency for a period of not more than six hours, excluding the time taken to reach the destination and return to the prison.

The High Court's direction came on a criminal reference made by Special Judge Kiran

Bansal at Rouse Avenue District Courts here seeking clarity on whether an accused, who is in custody in more than one case is required to obtain custody parole from each and every court concerned or the accused can move to anyone court of his choice for seeking custody

Special Judge Bansal submitted that one accused Sukesh alias Sukash Chandrashekhar, who is facing trial in three different cases, in three different courts, including her's, was not produced before her court on the date fixed.

The Judge submitted that the accused was granted custody parole by the order of an Additional Sessions Judge at Tis Hazari Court but he failed to seek permission from her court. She further said no such information was received either from the accused or from the Jail Superintendent concerned.

The High Court said: "The

the pretext of buying toys

for her on Friday night.

When she did not return

home, the family began to

After a few hours, the ac-

cused came with the girl,

who was bleeding, to drop

her back. When the girl's

grandmother questioned

him about her condition, he

punched her on the face

and tried to escape.

Locals protest

accused in the present case, astonishingly has been on custody parole from July 05, 2019, which was in gross violation of the Delhi Prison Rules, 2018 and law pertaining to the custody parole. Strangely enough, the State failed to challenge the order dated July 05, 2019, and the subsequent orders...and no action was taken by the concerned authorities.

It noted that if one court had issued an order of custody parole, it was incumbent on the Director-General Prison or Jail Superintendent to inform the other two courts about the absence of the accused, obtain the next date production of the accused.

Next hearing on Jan. 20

The High Court directed the State government to take the accused in custody forthwith and sent him to the concerned jail and posted the case for further hearing on January 20.

Artists paint CP pavements in protest against CAA, NRC



Artists during a protest against the CAA at Connaught Place in New Delhi on Sunday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ELISHA VERMANI NEW DELHI

Several artists gathered at Connaught Place to write slogans and paint the pavements to protest against the amended Citizenship Act and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) on Sunday.

The artists wrote down various slogans like "Hum Bhi Dekhenge", "Bol Ke Labh Azaad Hain Tere' and " Save the Constitution of India" in addition to "Reject CAA and NRC" near gate number 6 of Rajiv Chowk metro station.

They were joined by several passers-by who contributed by writing slogans

"Dharm Nishpeksh

Police ask group raising slogans in support of the Act to disperse like "Secular India" and

A few erase words

A few of the passers-by asked others not to pay attention to these "gimmicks". Some of them even began to erase the word "secular" written on the ground while chanting "Jai Shree Ram". In response, the protesters sang the National Anthem and also protected their artworks.

The police present at the site also asked a group, raising slogans in support of CAA, to disperse.

A 56-year-old filmmaker,

Rahul Roy, one of the organisers of the event said: "It is important for people to express what they are feeling at this point of time." A 22-year-old student of Ambedkar University, Jasmine Yadav, said: "We are against the kind of hatred and intolerance that the current government is pushing us forward to...this is a peaceful protest." Calling the CAA "inhu-

man" and "anti-India", Zeenat Nyazi (52), a social activist, said: "I have always believed that this country is for everyone. We have always stood with our arms open for everybody."

Man held for raping toddler

15-month-old girl is said to be critical

ASHOK KUMAR GURUGRAM

A 22-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly raping a 15-month-old girl in Sector 58 here, the police said on Sunday.

The toddler is undergoing treatment at Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi and her condition is said to be criti-

The accused was arrested on Saturday under the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

He was produced before the court on Sunday and sent to judicial custody. He allegedly took the girl

away from her mother on

look for her.

However, the neighbours nabbed him. Following the incident, the locals held a protest on Saturday, seeking exemplary punishment for the accused.

Man robbed of cash; 2 arrested

STAFF REPORTER

Two men were arrested for allegedly robbing a man after offering him a lift near Gurugram's Shankar Chowk, the police said on

Alim Khan and Faizel were nabbed on Friday from Mahipalpur. The case came to the fore when a man complained that he was robbed off ₹8,000, mobile phone and other valuables by three to four men inside a cab. A manhunt is on for three others, said DCP (South-West) Devender Arya, adding that all items have been recovered.

Shah, Modi to lead BJP's poll campaign in the Capital

BJP leader says he will start group meetings and reach out to households

SIDHARTH RAVI

Addressing Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) booth-level workers in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections here on Sunday, party president Amit Shah signalled a campaign to be run under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

BJP's government will be formed in Delhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said Mr.

Highlighting his involvement in the campaign, Mr. Shah told party workers that he, as their president, would start group meetings in the neighbourhoods of Delhi and reach out to individual households. He also appealed to the workers to do the same and said that the election was not only to be fought only through rallies and posters, but also through the outreach programme. He asked party workers to highlight the work carried out in the city by the Central government and to "expose the false promises" made by the Kejriwal government. Later in the evening, Mr. Shah, along with party working president J.P. Nadda, went doorto-door and kicked off the campaign.

Mr. Shah attacked the Kejriwal government on multiple fronts, saying that the Aam Admi Party (AAP) had managed to fool the people of Delhi once during the 2015 Assembly elections, but were wiped out in the subse-



Senior BJP leaders Amit Shah and J.P. Nadda at a rally of booth-level workers in New Delhi on Sunday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

quent municipal and Lok Sabha elections.

Mr. Shah condemned the AAP government for spending public money on advertisements "congratulating" people for having begun various schemes. "What work have you [AAP government] completed in five years?" he

He also attacked the Chief Minister for denying permission to prosecute JNU students in a sedition case, arguing that through this, the Kejriwal government was supporting the 'tukde tukde gang'. Mr. Shah also said that various promises made by AAP, such as opening new schools, colleges and hospitals had not materialised, adding that the State government did not allow various Central schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat Yojana to be implemented here. He alleged that nearly ₹10,000 crore funds had not been given to the municipal bodies in an attempt to "cripple"

Highlighting some of the works carried out by the Centre in Delhi, Mr. Shah said that the long-standing demand to regularise unauthorised colonies was being met by the government with registrations having been started. He said that the promise of allotting pak*ka* houses to people living in 35,000 jhuggi jhopris was fulfilled by the Prime Minister, adding that surveys of up to 160 such JJ clusters had started. He went on to highlight the DDA's land pooling policy.

Apart form this, he highlighted developmental works such as construction of parks, cycle tracks, extension of metro lines and spoke of developing a "Yamuna river front" along the lines of Sabarmati river front. With such a river front.

Mr. Shah added, the purvanchali people would not have to go anywhere else to carry out Chaath puja cele-

Other than abuse, nothing in speech: CM

'If BJP has suggestions, AAP will implement it in next 5 years'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Reacting to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's speech on Sunday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that Mr. Shah chose to "abuse" him instead of talking about development and pointing out shortcomings of the AAP-led government.

Mr. Shah had in his speech accused Mr. Kejriwal of "wasting" public money on advertisements and "misleading" people.

"I heard the entire speech of the Home Minister, Amit Shah ji. I thought he would point out the shortcomings of our work and talk about the development of Delhi. He did not say anything else except abusing me [sic]," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted.

"If they [BJP] have suggestions for Delhi, then they should tell us and we will implement them in the next five years," Mr. Kejriwal

Speaking at a town hall meeting in north-west Delhi where he was presenting a report card of his government's five-year term, Mr. Kejriwal said that Delhi's healthcare schemes are better than the Centre's Ayushman Bharat Yojana.

"In Delhi, healthcare is completely free for all irrespective of rich or poor. Ayushman Bharat Yojana assures insurance for people, but those who own scooter, fridge, and cellphones and have an income of ₹10,000 are excluded. With these criteria applied, hardly anyone will be eligible for the scheme. Therefore, we have decided not to implement it," Mr. Kerjiwal said. He ad-



of a Mohalla Clinic. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ded that if the Delhi government wants, Ayushman Bharat can be implemented right away, adding that the scheme, however, will not simply work in Delhi.

The Chief Minister also said that earlier, people had to spend their entire savings or sell their properties to save their lives in case of any kind of serious illness but that the healthcare infrastructure in Delhi's government hospitals has been significantly improved now. 'People can avail of treatment, surgery and various tests free of cost. Delhi government provides support of up to ₹15 lakh for the treatment of severe illness at private hospitals in Delhi," he said.

'Fake registration'

He also hits out at the BJP government, saying that they were providing "fake registration" to people from unauthorised "How can a property be registered on agricultural land? You have to change the land use first. They said they are regularising the colonies, but instead of regularising them, they are providregistration properties on agricultural lands. The change in land use and mapping should be done first for the registration process to take place," Mr. Kejriwal said.

He said that all was not well in today's politics in the country and that there was a lot to change. "In the last five years, irrespective of manifold difficulties, we tried our best to ensure that people get the best from the government. There is an increasing trust between the people of Delhi and the Delhi government because they know that taxpayers' money will not be wasted, "Mr. Kejriwal said.

New schemes

Responding to a question on what new schemes his government would reintroduce if voted back to power, he said that they would continue working with the same dedication.

"Cleaning up the Yamuna, cleaning up Delhi, redesigning roads, reducing air pollution, resolving traffic congestion and parking issues and providing 24-hour tap water facility to the people of Delhi are some of the key steps that we will take in the next five years," Mr. Kej-

150 Mohalla Clinics inaugurated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Delhi government inaugurated 150 Mohalla Clinics on Sunday taking the total number of such clinics in the Capital to 450. Chief Minister Arvind Keiriwal. speaking at the inaugural function, said that it was for the first time that expansion of healthcare facilities on such a large scale was happening in the country.

"People of Delhi flagged off a new bandwagon of development in the previous elections. Now it runs at a speed of 100 km per hour. Don't press brake; you should accelerate its speed to 200 km per hour", Mr. Kejriwal said while making a pitch for the upcoming elections.

"When we came to power in 2015, we observed that there is no lack of big hospitals in Delhi. But for the common people, it was difficult to access these hospitals for the treatment of small illnesses. Due to this these hospitals used to see a huge rush. So we realised that if we start smaller clinics, people can avail the services without having to travel a lot and that also reduced the rush in bigger hospitals in the city," Mr. Kejriwal said.

The Chief Minister added that his government was not only building Mohalla Clinics for enhancing healthcare facilities, but also constructing world-class hospitals.

Will not

implement

NRC, CAA if

Congress

NEW DELHI

voted to power: _

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Delhi Congress on Sun-

day said that if it was elect-

ed to power in Delhi. it

would not implement the

National Population Regis

ter (NPR), National Register

of Citizens (NRC) and the

amended Citizenship Act in

Congress said that the issue

has been raised at the first

meeting of the Manifesto Committee ahead of the

Delhi Assembly election

and it was decided that the

party's stand would be in-

cluded in the manifesto.

The State unit of the

its present form.

School for have-nots: a Delhi Police constable's effort to educate 50 children

This makeshift school inside Red Fort battled many financial troubles to teach them good touch vs bad touch, and more life lessons

HEMANI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI Four years ago, a chance encounter between Sachin - an IAS aspirant - and a Delhi Police Constable changed the lives of several children of labourers working inside the

Mr. Singh has been running the makeshift school inside the fort for a few years now. He joined the police force 10 years ago on January 5. It was his third year in a Delhi University college when he cleared the examination after three attempts. His parents –Vasudev and Shashi – used to iron clothes for a living, he said, adding that he did the same till Class 11 before he started selling corn.

Importance of education Growing up in a JJ Colony in Meera Bagh, he said, he understood the importance of education. Sharing an instance, he said once he and his siblings tried to watch TV at their neighbour's house

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Ghaziabad 417 Faridabad 415

Good Satisfactory Moderate

51-100

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Lecture on "Solving the Grand Challenges of Humanity" by Prof. Vivek Wadhwa, Distinguished Fellow

at Harvard Law School and Carnegi Mellon University's College of Engin

eering at Silicon Valley, at C.D. Desh

Talk: "The Geopolitics of Climate Change" a lecture by Dr. Nitin Desai

economist, will explore the geopolit-

ics of climate change by examining the current state of climate dip-

Exhibition: A paintings show by

Dipnarayan Paul and Moinudin Mul-

lick at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7

Exhibition: "Katha", a solo painting show by Chandar Panjre at Triveni

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

Exhibition: "Shelter" a solo show of

sculptures by Pintu Sikder at Shrid-harani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam,

205, Tansen Marg, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Exhibition: "Truth". a solo show of

All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, 1, Rafi Marg, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Mail your listings for this column

at cityeditordelhi@thehindu.co.in)

lomacy, at IIC, 6.30 p.m.

mukh Auditorium, In International Centre (IIC) 6 p.m.

Noida 403 Greater Noida 414

Delhi 407 Gurugram 404



Ankita Sharma, the first student of the makeshift school inside Red Fort, now teaches around 50-odd students. • R.V. MOORTHY

when the latter shooed them away. The neighbours treated them differently because they didn't "look educated", he believes. Mr. Singh said when he met Sachin at Red Fort in 2016, he saw a reflection of his childhood.

On their first meet, Mr. Singh had asked Sachin to leave the premises as he thought the boy was a wanderer. He continued telling Sachin the same for the next three days until the latter broke down. "I asked him what was he doing inside the fort? He told me that he had

come from Maharashtra and was in the city to study for UPSC exams. He could not afford coaching classes so he was studying all by himself. He used to study here all day and would then go to a gurdwara nearby to sleep," recalled the Constable.

Sachin cleared two written examinations that year but got stuck in the interview round. He then left, said Mr. Singh. After a few days, Mr. Singh called him when Sachin told him: "I won't show you my face till I become an IAS".

But before leaving the city,

start a makeshift school to educate the needy. The Constable had told him that while studying, Sachin could also teach the children inside the

Sachin's first student was 16-vear-old Ankita Sharma. She now is a teacher at this school, which is attended by labourers' children from 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. inside a temple in the Red Fort premises.

"The school had started with two-three kids. Then I went to the jhuggis and forced the labourers them to send the kids to the school. Most of these children go to schools in their villages but they are here for months. Therefore, it is important that they don't spend their time in bad activities," Mr. Singh said.

In the next four years, the open school managed to around 50-odd amass students.

Hurdles crossed Running the school comes at

Mr. Singh had made Sachin a cost. Mr. Singh, who has to take care of his own two children, has received flak from his wife for spending a chunk of his meagre salary on the education of many.

"Initially, she fought with me but later she understood. In 2018, because of finances, the school was also shut for 10-15 days but with some help, I started it again.

The school provides the children with notebooks, pens and pencils. Out in the open courtyard, stands a green board against a temple wall, while the children sit on cloth sheets given to them by the school.

Mr. Singh has procured halogen lights over many years from the numerous events that Red Fort has been a venue for. Not only do they cover the school's premises, but also the kids' way back to their jhuggis.

"Their safety and security, especially of little girls, is very important," he said. In running the school, senior police

officers have helped Mr. Singh time and again with stationary and money among other

At the school, the youngest is a 2-vear-old and the oldest is a 15-year-old. They are taught alphabets, numbers and tables, the difference between good and bad touch, the importance of hygiene and the dangers of chewing

Two boys and a girl - all aged between five and eight years - raised their hands in the class of 50, when Ankita asked: "How many of you have quit chewing tobacco?"

Six-year-old Pooja, who studies in Class IV in a school in her village in Ranchi, said she has learnt "ABCD, ginti [counting], pahade [tables], vowels in this school." She had come to Delhi over a month ago and will return in the next 10 days.

Fourteen-year-old Sakshi is said to be among the brightest here. This is the only school that she attends and is proud

to have added fruits and vegetables to her vocabulary. Two years ago, when Shah-

nawaz Khan was all of three, his parents made him sit in the school, which he was not too fond of. However, he seems to love it now. Even though he doesn't like studying too much, he sits here with due diligence - his notebook opened and pencil shar pened - looking at Ankita.

For Ankita, whose parents also reside in the jhuggis inside the monument, teaching these children started casually. Her mother used to teach

She said her teacher in a private school once told her that teaching is a rewarding experience. A student of commerce, she either wants to become a mathematics teacher or a bank manager, she said.

When the class ended and the kids started to leave, Mr. Singh reminisced about the Delhi Police's motto and said: "This is also Shanti Seva Nyaya for me.'

Chairman of the Manifesto Committee, Ajay Maken, said that there was a huge difference in the NPR of 2010 and the one of 2020 as the Modi government at the Centre has added six new "illegal" questions and was in violation of Article 14 in the Constitution.

"The BJP has done an illegal act by dividing people. Details collected from the fresh questions included in the NPR are linked to the NRC, and are part of a conspiracy by the BJP-led Central government to push citizens' list in the garb of the NPR," Mr. Maken said.

Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra alleged that the Centre was trying to divert people's attention from issues like economic distress, price rise, unemployment, and using policies to divide the country on the basis of community

Overflowing sewage on National Highway-19 sparks safety concerns

Locals, commuters fume as complaints go unheard; authorities, Panchayat pass the buck

ASHOK KUMAR

> For more than six months, sewage from Seekri village has been overflowing onto the service road and a stretch of the Delhi-Agra highway, causing a major nuisance to locals and motorists.

The authorities and the Panchavat, however, shift the blame on the matter. The flooded road hampers the movement of the vehicles, put the pedestrians to inconvenience, emanates foul smell, and also causes waterborne diseases and accidents

on the National Highway. Running a kiosk off the highway for over a decade, Majlis from Nuh, said the sewage from the village earlier flowed down a drain. However, the trouble began six months back when the highway was widened to six-lanes and a service road was constructed over the drain, he



The flooded road on Delhi-Agra highway near Seekri village. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

Though pipelines have been laid under the service road to allow the sewage to reach the storm water drain along the highway, but the pipelines and the drain get frequently choked due to indiscriminate dumping of the garbage, including plastic waste, in an open nallah along the highway.

The small drains from the village fall into this *nallah*, which in turn is connected to the storm water drain with the pipelines. The choked pipelines and storm water drain lead to overflow of the sewage to the service road and the Agra-Delhi carriageway of the highway.

Dotted with vendors, kiosks and tea stalls, the nallah, close to the local market, remains full with garbage. A waste dumping site has also come up near the *nallah* and the garbage often ends up in it.

Local resident Ranjit, who also runs a makeshift kiosk, said he had complained to Sarpanch on several occasions but was told that it was

the responsibility of the highways authority. He said highway authorities came to clear the water but not before it had entered their kiosks. The kiosk owners had put sandbags to prevent the water from entering their premises. Ranjit's mother recalled that it was the worst near Rakshabandan festival and then Diwali, adding that the water was not cleared for the over a month this time around.

Breeding ground

The overflowed water has also affected his business, said Majlis. "Customers find it difficult to reach my shop due to water all around," he said. Local villager Siddhu Khan said the stagnant sewage was a breeding ground for the mosquitoes and water-borne diseases. He suggested the nallah be covered and made рисса.

Prahlad, who runs an eggs-stall, said the water overflowing onto the high-

way led to frequent accidents. Not expecting sewage on the highway, the motorists, coming at a high speed, took sharp turn fearing potholes and met accidents. "A portion of the road is damaged due to constant waterlogging and a truck overturned a month ago. The highway authorities then closed the right turn near the spot to the road passing through Seekri and connecting a dozen villages," said Prahlad.

Auto-rickshaw driver Lal Singh said the road passing through Seekri connecting to other villages also remained waterlogged due to overflowing of sewage and crates had appeared on it. Sarpanch Anil Kumar alleged the drain to discharge the sewage was demolished by the agency that constructed the highway with a promise to make it again but did not do so. He said he was aware of the situation but the Panchayat did not have funds to make a

lopment and Panchayat Officer and NHAI officials in this regard. Delhi Agra Toll Road official P.K. Singh said the water-

drain. He said he had made

requests to the Block Deve-

logging was caused due to the choking of the pipelines and the storm water drain. Mr. Singh said the Municipal Corporation of Faridabad had made drains in many villages along the highway to discharge sewage, but Seekri was outside the municipal limits causing the problem. He added the road was also damaged due to constant water-logging. NHAI, project director, Badarpur, Mohammad Safi told *The Hindu* that a notice was served to the Panchayat a month back to regularly clean the *nallah* to prevent the choking of the pipelines and the storm water drain. He added that a proposal for a drain to carry the sewage of the village was being considered as a lasting solution.

(Clockwise from top left) Homeless people sleeping on a pavement nea Jama Masjid; a vendor waiting for customers at a makeshift shop in Old Delhi; people at a night shelter near Jama Masjid; patients taking a nap outside AIIMS; homeless people near AIIMS.

• SLISHII KLIMAR VERMA (SHIV KLIMAR PILISHPAKAR









CITY TEAM

ast 10 p.m. on New Year's Day, Phoolkumari (22) covered herself in a blanket as she, along with her mother, were getting ready to sleep on the pavement outside AIIMS. She had undergone chemotherapy a few hours ago at the hospital. "Whatever I eat, I vomit... Due to weakness I feel colder," she said. The minimum temperature that night was 2.4 degrees celsius.

The 22-year-old from Kaimur district in Bihar, a 12-year-old boy who had come from Uttar Pradesh for a check-up after being operated and a 50-year-old woman waiting for heart surgery were among those huddled up on the pavement outside the hospital on the cold January night. Over 100 others gave them company with flattened cardboard boxes doubling up as mattresses and a few with the luxury of plastic sheets as roofs. For those without a roof over their head, it was not only cold winter nights with single-digit temperatures that they had to deal with but also one of the coldest winters in over a century. The Capital recorded its coldest winter day with the maximum temperature falling to 9.4 degrees Celsius on December 30. December also saw 18 consecutive cold days and the MeT department has forecast a cold wave again after January 8.

Over occupancy

Finding shelter for those stranded in the city due to cancellations of trains due to fog or medical treatment is not an easy task. A Delhi government-run free temporary night shelter at gate number 2 of AIIMS with a capacity of 15 beds had 30 people for the night. The one on the opposite side with a capacity of 46 beds had 60 people by 10.45 p.m.

"People are sharing a bed and we were full last night also. Most of the tents [temporary night shelters] near AIIMS are full. They will find space in the ones a little away," said Ved Pal, caretaker of the second night shelter

taker of the second night shelter.
Sooraj Kumar (12) and his
father, who had come from Uttar

Rising against the odds

For those without a roof over their head, it was not only cold winter nights with single-digit temperatures that they had to deal with but also one of the coldest winters in over a century



Pradesh for a check-up and were sleeping next to Phoolkumari, said that they were not aware of the free night shelter. Many others sleeping in the open reiterated the same.

Free blankets

Anil Sharma, care taker of the tent at gate number 2 said that many sleep outside as they get free blankets which they then sell for a price. "Most of them stuff the blankets in sacks and sell it later. They would not come and stay in the tent even if we ask them to," he said.

The 12-year-old lifted a quilt they had got from their village to show the three blankets they got from people distributing them outside the hospital.

"About an hour ago someone came and asked us to sell the blanket we had got for a mere ₹100, but we did not give it," the boy said.

In over an hour spent in the area, at least three different groups had come to distribute blankets and some to distribute food, like the people who gave *Phoolvati* an apple. Some of them sleeping outside were seen tucking the blankets they had got under their belongings and rushing for another one.

To protect herself from the chilling weather, 11-year-old Sita was seen wearing an oversized brown sweater with a torn woollen bottom and a beanie cap. Sita and her mother Rajjo spend their day at the traffic light in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar; nights are spent outside a temple in the area. The father is a drunkard whose whereabouts the mother-daughter duo is unaware of.







"The last few days were very cold. An uncle gave me this sweater a few days ago. He was very nice," smiled Sita sitting next to a bonfire. Before she was

given a sweater, she managed with two undersized sweaters.

with two undersized sweaters.

Other who spend the day with
Sita said that she is the chirpiest

among the lot. She smiles





More than 100 people are sleeping outside AIIMS with flattened cardboard boxes doubling up as mattresses and a few with the luxury of plastic sheets as roofs. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

through adversity, they said. "Hamare liye kya hai... kabhi zada thand to kabhi zada garmi... kabhi paani ko taraste hain to kabhi kambal ko [What about us... we bear with extreme cold and extreme hot... in one season we crave for water and in another, a blanket]," they said.

The homeless people , said the nights are unbearable but blankets provided by temple officials and locals come in handy. The bonfire of course helps.

Rohit (14) sells pens to motorists. His parents stay at a different red light in the area. They don't visit him often. Sometimes, he also cleans the cars' mirrors when the signal is red.

He recalled a night four days ago. "I had to beg people to give me something to wear on top of two thin sweaters I was wearing. No one helped. I had fought with one from the bunch so I didn't

ask them for help. I slept

shivering."
For 24-year-old Rinku, who stays at a permanent night shelter at Sarai Kale Khan along with his wife and a three-month-old child, this has been a challenging winter. Rinku himself has been staying at the night shelter for the fourth consecutive year now and with the addition of a child he does want a better home for his family. However, even after doing a 12-hour shift at a local canteen, he still cannot afford a rented house.

"There are so many expenses. I want my family to have a home of their own, but that is not possible now. This time the winter is very cold, but the night shelter has been a blessings for us," said Rinku.

"We cook our own food here and get blankets and mattress at night. What else can we ask for," said Ricky, who hails from Reva district of Madhya Pradesh.

Around 9.30 p.m. on New Year day, 49- year-old Rajani and a couple of women and young boys were sitting around a bon-fire at the entrance of the night shelter.

Livelihood issue

Rajni, whose husband worked as an engineer in the Railways, has been staying at the night shelter for the last eight months. Asked how she ended up staying at the place, Rajni said that she has been fighting a protracted battle against the Railways for pension

after the death of her husband.

A resident of Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, Rajni said she has been working as a maid at a house in Govindpuri to support her and her 27-year-old son who does the running around the Railways office for the pension.

This winter was particularly difficult for her as this was the first time that she has been forced to leave the comfort of her home and reside besides 60 to 70 people inside a single dorm in a new city.

"Everything else is fine. I have no issues on the facilities at the shelter. I hope to get back home soon as the pension work is almost complete," she said.

(With inputs from Soibam Rocky Singh, Nikhil M Babu and Hemani Bhandari)



A ND-NE

THE HINDU DELINI
MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2020

NORTH 5

TUESDAY, JAN. 07

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

RISE 07:15 SET 17:40
RISE 14:45 SET 03:40
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 08

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 08

■ RISE 07:16 SET 17:41

■ RISE 15:30 SET 04:38

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	21	07
Safdarjang	21	07
Palam	21	07

Delhi Palam Today 19°C Moderate fog will prevail in the morning. A cloudy sky rain will prevail likely in parts.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow 18°C A pleasant morning lies ahead. A cloudy sky will prevail. Rain and thundershowers would occur.

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THEMOTHINDU

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Villagers attack police station in Rajasthan

Some villagers on Sunday pelted stones at the Khoh police station in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district and gheraoed the staff on duty after the police personnel could not catch alleged cow smugglers, an officer said. The police had to fire tear gas to disperse the agitating crowd, the officer said, adding that no casualty was reported. As the alleged cow smugglers escaped, SHO Prem Bhaskar and a constable have been taken off duty, Bharatpur SP Haidar Ali Zaidi said. The villagers had informed the police about a vehicle in which cows were being allegedly smuggled. A police team chased the vehicle but could not catch it. the SP said. PTI

Ensure safety of Indians in Gulf: Amarinder to Centre

India cannot afford to simply wait and watch, says Punjab CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

Amid escalating U.S.-Iran tension, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Sunday urged the Central government to take urgent steps to ensure the safety and security of the 10 million Indians in the Gulf

India could not afford to simply wait and watch, or to just monitor the situation, given the rising stakes in view of the threats and counter-threats between the U.S. and Iran, said Capt. Amarinder, in the context of the Ministry of External Affairs' statement that it was keeping a close watch on the situation.

The Chief Minister emphasised that the Indian go-



Amarinder Singh. • FILE PHOTO

vernment should immediately direct their embassies in the region to connect with the Indians settled there, and provide all possible help to them in this hour of crisis.

Pointing out that besides the U.S., other countries like Britain were preparing to evacuate their citizens, if

needed, Capt. Amarinder asked the Centre to also prepare and initiate plans to evacuate all Indians seeking to return to India in the current circumstances.

'Without delay'

The close proximity of the Gulf region to the Indian border made it imperative for the Centre to intervene without delay, and issue the necessary directions to its missions in the West Asian countries, as well as the Indian population there, the Chief Minister stressed.

With the conflict showing no signs of easing, the situation was evidently grave and it would be in the interest of the Indians to leave the Gulf region immediately, he added.

Over 100 infants died in two Jodhpur hospitals: report

The report was prepared by S.N. Medical College

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Over 100 infants died in two government hospitals in Jodhpur in December last year, a report has found amid growing outrage over infant deaths in a Kota hospital.

While a total of 146 children died in Umaid and MDM hospitals in Jodhpur in December, 102 deaths were reported in the neo-natal interview gare unit

tensive care unit.

The figures of infant deaths in Jodhpur were given in a report prepared by the S.N. Medical College in the light of casualties in Kota's J.K. Lon Hospital.

Over 100 infants have died in the government-run hospital in Kota.

S.N. Medical College principal S.S. Rathore, however, said the figure is in the range of international standards of infant mortality.

"A total of 47,815 children had been admitted to the hospitals in 2019 and of this, 754 children died," said Dr. Rathore.

In December, 4,689 children had been admitted to the hospitals of which 3,002 had been admitted to NICU and ICU and 146 of them died. Dr. Rathore said most of the children who died were those referred from

other surrounding districts in a critical condition.

The hospitals here have to bear the load of patients from entire western Rajasthan and children were also referred from hospitals like AIIMS, he said.

He added the critical care unit of the hospitals have been adjudged best in the State for two consecutive years and attributed it to their best practices and care. Though Dr. Rathore denied any shortage of resources at the hospitals, there have been reports that many senior doctors have been running their own private hospitals.

BJP starts door-to-door campaign to garner support for CAA

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar visits houses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to garner support for the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday kicked-off the BJP's "Sampark Abhiyan" campaign here.

As a part of the campaign, the Chief Minister visited the houses of a few people and informed them about the CAA.

'Misinformation on Act'

Addressing a gathering, Mr. Khattar hit out at the Congress and other Opposition parties, accusing them of spreading misinformation on CAA.

"The CAA has been passed by Parliament with an aim to provide citizenship to the minorities coming to India from neighbouring countries that are being oppressed there in the name of religion. But a few Opposition parties are misguiding the people of the country by spreading false information without understanding the provi-

sions of the Act," he said. He said it is being propa-



Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar during the 'Sampark Abhiyan' in Jalandhar on Sunday. •PTI

gated among the Muslims that it is a law to take away the citizenship of the country from them, whereas in reality, it is to give citizenship.

Flays attack on devotees Condemning the incident of attack and stone-pelting on Sikh devotees at the historic Gurdwara Nankana Sahib in Pakistan, Mr. Khattar said that protest would be registered, if required, against Pakistan and other countries like Afghanistan

and Bangladesh to ensure

that the minorities there are not oppressed in the name of religion and their rights are protected.

Minister's visit

In Chandigarh, Union Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Thakur started the party's door-to-door campaign by meeting people in Sector 38.

He said that CAA would benefit scores of people and it was wrong to say that it would harm minority communities.

Putting protesters in jail shameful'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday asked the Uttar Pradesh government to seek an apology from the public for putting anti-citizenship law protesters behind bars without thorough investigation. She dubbed it as "highly shameful and condemnable".

"In Uttar Pradesh, especially in Bijnor, Sambhal, Meerut, Muzzafarnagar, Firozabad and other districts, innocent people have been sent to jail for protesting against the CAA/NRC without an investigation. This issue has also been raised by the media and is highly shameful and condemnable," Ms. Mayawati said in a tweet in Hindi.

'Seek apology'

Accusing the Yogi Adityanath-government of jailing anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protesters without proper investigation, she asked them to seek an apology from the public.

Ms. Mayawati also demanded financial assistance to those killed in the protests.

'Non-tribal communities can never claim to be indigenous'

Kochari samaj slams Assam govt. for destroying tribal history, culture

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Non-tribal communities living in Assam can never claim to be 'khilonjia' or indigenous, said the All-Assam Kochari Samaj that represents the earliest ethnic communities inhabiting the State.

Leaders of the samaj in a statement on Friday evening also slammed the Assam government and non-tribal people for destroying tribal history and cultures.

The Assam Sahitya Sabha and the All-Assam Students' Union have panned the statement as "immature" and "politically-motivated" to undermine the ongoing movement against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

The samaj's statement assumes significance ahead of a report to be submitted by a 15-member panel enlisting

the communities that qualify to be called 'khilonjia' for implementing Clause 6 of the Assam Accord of 1985. This Clause prescribes land and constitutional rights only for the indigenous in Assam

1881 census

The 1881 census recorded 19 groups within the Kochari classification but some got isolated from the parental stock. Today, it comprises communities such as Bodo, the largest plains tribe in the northeast, Deuri, Dimasa, Rabha, Sonowal Kachari, Thengal Kachari and Tiwa. Large swathes of Assam are under autonomous or development councils specifically for these communities.

"Kochari kings began ruling areas under present-day Assam and beyond 1,500 years before the Mahabharata era. But the non-tribal have pushed the tribal history aside despite the United Nations specifying that only the aborigines can be called indigenous," said the statement signed by the organisation's working president Manas Rabha, general secretary Pradip Sonowal and four others represent-

The samaj claimed many traits representative of mainstream Assamese culture today were appropriated from the tribes. These include the floral 'gamosa', or cloth-towel, that has become a symbol of the anti-CAA protest.

ing as may tribes.

The Kochari group also pointed out that the Ahoms, who came from Thailand some 800 years ago, were non-indigenous. The Ahoms are one of six communities demanding Scheduled Tribe

status, which the Kocharis enjoying ST status are opposed to.

'Baseless claim'

Advising the Assamese to stop making the "baseless claim" of being indigenous or 'bhumiputra' (son-of-thesoil), the Kochari Samaj said they would otherwise seek justice from the Supreme Court and approach the U.N. besides the Centre.

"The views of the organisation are utterly immature. I appeal to their leaders to come to our office with facts and discuss for establishing their claims and specify the communities they consider non-tribal. We should refrain from comments that divide the indigenous communities," said Paramanda Rajbongshi, former president of Assam Sahitya Sabha.

White blanket



A view of snow-covered Mechuka following heavy snowfall in Shi-Yomi district of Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday. PT

Man arrested for posing as Maoist in Odisha

Releases nephew after extorting ₹2 lakh

STAFF REPORTER

A youth was arrested in Odisha's Gajapati district for posing as a Maoist to kid-

posing as a Maoist to kidnap his eight-year-old nephew for ransom.

The arrested kidnapper

was identified as K. Chandra Rao (25), cousin of K. Dileswar Rao, the father of the kidnapped child. Both are residents of Paralakhemundi, district headquarter town of Gajapati district.

Demanded ₹20 lakh

The kidnapper initially demanded ₹20 lakh as ransom. But he released the child after extorting ₹2 lakh, said Bibekananda Swain, inspector in charge of Paralakhemundi police station Bibekananda Swain.

According to police sources, Chandra Rao was arrested on Saturday and ₹1,45,000 was seized from a new four wheeler he had recently bought. He had

paid up the remaining ₹55,000 of the ransom money as the first down payment of the vehicle, said Mr Swain.

The police have alsoseized the vehicle.

Kept him in Srikakulam According to the police, on

the morning of December 31, Chandra Rao had asked the child to come with him, and kept him at a village in adjoining Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh.

He then made calls from different mobile numbers posing as a Maoist leader to his cousin, the father of the child.

Police complaint

Police during his interaction with his parents after the release, the child said that he had spent the whole day with his uncle. This made the father suspicious, who filed a complaint at Paralakhemundi police station on January 3.

2 picnickers die after touching live wire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Two picnickers, including a child, died while another was critically injured after coming in contact with a high-tension electric wire at Usthi in South 24 Parganas district on Sunday, police said.

Six-year-old Rezaul Mollah and 32-year old Guffar Mollah died on the spot after accidentally touching the hanging live wire on the rooftop of a three-storey private school building in the area, a police officer said.

Mofizul Mollah, the father of Rezaul and uncle of Guffar, was seriously injured as he tried to save the two, the police officer said.

Mofizul was referred to a Kolkata hospital and his condition was very critical, the officer said.

The three were part of a picnic party from nearby Mograhat area in the district.

Two killed in freak mishap in Odisha

Paddy-cutting machine fell on them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BALASORE (ODISHA)

Two persons were killed on Sunday when a heavy paddy-cutting machine fell on them at a village in Balasore district, the police

The men were trying to mount machine on a tractor after completion of paddy-cutting operation at Khuada village, when it slipped and fell on them, they said.

Gopal Tudu (21) and Hamir Hansda (22) were taken to the district headquarters hospital at Balasore, where doctors declared them brought dead, hospital sources said.

Sena's choice of portfolios shows party's focus on urban areas

Congress, NCP go for rural departments

TANVI DESHPANDE

The portfolio distribution of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) announced on Sunday seems to indicate that the Shiv Sena is focusing on urban areas, while the Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) will concentrate on rural areas.

The Sena has primarily kept urban portfolios with itself, including the most important Urban Development Department, which controls all municipal corporations in the State. The Sena has allocated it to party heavyweight Eknath Shinde. Similarly, Subhash Desai's Industries portfolio and Uday Samant's Higher and Technical Education are departments primarily concerned with urban areas. Mr. Desai held the portfolio in the previous government with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as well, while Higher and Technical Education was with the BJP's Vinod Tawde.

Although the portfolios given to - environment and tourism – Aaditya Thackeray are neutral, Mr. Thackeray has largely worked in Mumbai so far. The other departments with the Sena are Agriculture, Forests, Water Supply and Sanitation, and Employment Guarantee.

"With the BMC elections coming in 2022, the Sena

Discontent in Cong. over 'raw deal'

The Maharashtra Congress is facing discontent over allocation of portfolios, with a section of leaders blaming State unit chief Balasaheb Thorat for the party getting a "raw deal" as compared to the Shiv Sena and NCP.

Their ire is also directed towards NCP chief Sharad Pawar, with a Congress leader claiming they need someone in the State unit who could stand up to the Maratha strongman.

Mr. Thorat, later in the day, brushed off the criticism claiming the portfolios given to the Congress were those connected to the "day-to-day issues" of the common man.

Some Congress leaders said they demanded at least two departments from Agriculture, Rural Development, Industries, Housing, Transport and Cooperation, but the Sena and NCP refused to pay heed. Instead, departments like Culture, Salt Pan and Port Develop-

its stronghold and expand its

base as a pan-Maharashtra

party through corporations.

It has kept Agriculture with

itself because of the exten-

sive tours the CM and Aadi-

tvaii took across the State be-

fore and after elections to

assess crop losses. The farm



Nitin Raut is said to be unhappy over his party colleagues getting better portfolios. • FILE PHOTO

ment, which were earlier with the Sena, have been handed over to the Congress. "The Congress has got a raw deal in powersharing among the three alliance partners. Thorat has not been able to put forth the Congress's interest during deliberations on power-sharing," a senior party leader said on the condition of anonymity.

According to sources, Congress leader Nitin Raut, who has been made the Energy minister, is unhappy over the Public Works Department being given to his senior col-

loan waiver was the party's

topmost priority and it has

[fulfilled it]. Besides, Forests

will compliment the Environ-

ment portfolio that is with

the Sena," said a senior party

While the Rural Develop-

functionary.

league Ashok Chavan and Mr. Thorat being allocated the Revenue department.

Citing how intense was the bitterness in the rank and file, a leader said vandalising the party office and burning effigies of a general secretary had never happened and "such acts of indiscipline need to be taken seriously".

Former Maharashtra Congress president Manikrao Thakre admitted that such outpouring of anger was earlier unheard of in the party. He, however, said MLAs Sangram Thopte and Praniti Shinde, whose supporters are unhappy, have said they are with the Congress. Meanwhile, a senior

party functionary has written to AICC general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal, claiming there is no discipline in the party. "Several Congress leaders and workers are unhappy because most decisions are being taken after discussion with Sharad Pawar. This is dangerous," the functionary wrote.

NCP's Hasan Mushrif, Water Resources is with Jayant Patil. In the Congress, Revenue is with Balasaheb Thorat, Tribal Development with K.C. Padavi, and Animal Husbandry with Sunil Kedar. Thus, the parties have firmly established their priorities.

Nine debutants entrusted with portfolios

Six first-time Ministers of State also get chance to be part of government

TANVI DESHPANDE MUMBAI

With nine first-timers in Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's Cabinet, including himself, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has given a chance to many senior legislators and party loyalists, allocating them important portfolios. The government also has six first-time ministers of State.

The MVA government announced its portfolio distribution on Sunday after it was approved by Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari. The Chief Minister himself is a Cabinet member for the first time, and will hold charge of the General Administration, IT, Information and Public Relations, and Law and Judiciary departments. His son Aaditva, also a first-time legislator, has been allocated the Tourism, Environment and Protocol portfolios.

Despite being newcomers, with a team of Shiv Sena veterans guiding them, the father and son are expected to match up to veterans like Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and former CM Ashok Chavan in Cabinet meetings.

Another first-timer is tribal leader K.C. Padavi, a seven-term MLA from Nandurbar. Despite his seniority. this is the first time the Congress leader has become a minister.

Paithan MLA Sandipan



Sweet success: Supporters of Karad North MLA Balasaheb Patil celebrate him becoming a first-time Minister by weighing him against a heap of peda in Karad on Sunday. • RAJU SANADI

Bhumre, who has been representing the constituency since 1995 (except from 2009-2014), is now Minister for Employment Guarantee and Horticulture. Independent MLA Shankarrao Gadakh from Nevasa had declared support to the Sena, and has been given the Soil and Water Conservation Department. Both are making their debut in the Cabinet.

MLC Anil Parab, who has been a strong presence in the Legislative Council for three terms, has landed a Cabinet berth for the first time.

A lawyer by profession,

Mr. Parab successfully pursued the Sena's plea in Supreme Court after the early morning swearing-in of Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar last year. Mr. Parab was also responsible for keeping party legislators under his watch at a Madh Island resort during the drama over

Apart from being a firsttimer in the Cabinet, Malad West MLA Aslam Shaikh representing the constituency for the third time – is the only minority community minister from his party. Karad North MLA Balasaheb

government formation.

Patil is also a newcomer to the Cabinet. The NCP leader is the chairman of the Sahva-Sugar Cooperative

NCP heavyweight Dhananjay Munde, who has steadily risen through the party ranks, has been given charge of the Social Justice and Special Assistance departments.

The first-time ministers of State are Independent MLAs Bachchu Kadu and Rajendra Patil-Yadravkar. Congress leader Vishwajeet Kadam, and the NCP's Sanjay Bansode, Prajakt Tanpure and

BJP would have won had it not gone with Sena, says Rane

Former CM says Uddhav lacks knowledge of State's issues

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

Remarking that the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) alliance with the Shiv Sena ahead of the Assembly polls was a mistake, former chief minister and the BJP leader Narayan Rane on Sunday targeted his nemesis, Chief Minister and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, yet again by saying that the new Chief Minister lacked "adequate knowledge" about issues of the State.

Speaking in Solapur, Mr. Rane asserted that the BJP would have swept the Assembly polls had it contested on its own strength.

"We [the BJP] put a lot of trust in the Sena and fought the Assembly elections with them ... but this proved to be a mistake. Had we gone it alone, today the BJP would have formed the government in Maharashtra," Mr.

The Konkan strongman, once a Shiv Sainik but now a bitter foe of his former party, said that the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government under Mr. Thackeray would not last for more than two



"Uddhav Thackeray has no proper knowledge nor has done adequate study of the pressing issues afflicting the State ... he is just a nominal Chief Minister," said Mr.

Mr. Rane had formally joined the BJP and merged his party, the Maharashtra Swabhiman Paksha, with it in October last year ahead of the elections. In September 2017, Mr. Rane had severed his decade-plus association with the Congress, which he had joined following his acri-

monious exit from the Sena. His exit from the Congress, equally laden with acrimony, was with the expectation that the BJP, which is weak in the Konkan belt. would welcome him with open arms. At the time of his exit, Mr. Rane had vowed to deplete the ranks of his former parties.

Since then, the Konkan strongman has repeatedly targeted the Sena. Ahead of the elections, Mr. Thackeray had warned his then ally, the BJP, that the Sena would exit the saffron coalition if the BIP inducted Mr. Rane.

As a result, the Kankavli Assembly segment in particular and the Konkan belt in general had turned out to be a major flashpoint between the erstwhile saffron allies where the BJP and the Sena, despite contesting together, had propped up their own

The BJP had fielded Mr. Rane's son, sitting MLA Nitesh Rane, from Kankavli. An irked Sena had in turn propped up its own nominee, Satish Sawant.

Mr. Rane had fielded his aides, Rajan Teli and Ranjit Desai, against Sena nominees Deepak Kesarkar and Vaibhav Naik for the Sawantwadi and Kudal seats, respectively. However, the BJP could win only two seats in the Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg belt, including Kankavli.



The bike of the balloon seller, whose cylinder exploded in Solapur on Sunday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Five hurt in cylinder blast before Solapur marathon

Man was filling balloons with gas

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

At least five people, including a woman and a teenager, were injured in what appeared to be a cylinder explosion in Solapur early on

The blast occurred at the start of the Solapur International Half-Marathon, said authorities.

According to the police, the incident occurred a little after 5:30 a.m., minutes before the inauguration of the third edition of the CNS Solapur International Marathon organised by the Solapur Runners' Association.

Authorities said a family was selling gas balloons at the spot before the commencement of the event, which saw the participation of more than 5,000 people. A man was filling the balloons with gas from a cylinder when it exploded, seinjuring those standing nearby, including a woman and a 14-year-old

The injured were rushed to nearby hospitals, and the man filling the balloons is said to be in a critical condition.

A team of the Solapur police's bomb detection and disposal squad rushed to the spot to ascertain the precise cause of the blast. Investigations are on.

Pune to host fifth edition of global Drosophila conference

Event to help researchers on fruit fly interact with peers

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

The city is set to host the fifth edition of the Asia Pacific Drosophila Research Conference (APDRC5), which is being organised in the country for the first time by the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research

This biennial conference, which is to be held between January 6 and 10, aims to promote the interaction of Drosophila researchers in the Asia-Pacific region with their peers in the rest of the world. It will bring together scientists from all over the world who use the fruit fly, Drosophila, as a model organism to address basic and applied questions.

"Drosophila is one of the most widely-used and preferred model organisms in biological research across the world for the last 100 years. Several discoveries in biology have been made using this. Its genome is entirely sequenced and there is enormous information available about its biochemistry, physiology and behaviour," said professor (biology) Sutirth Dey of IISER.



SUTIRTH DEY Professor (biology), IISER

The event will feature 430 delegates: 330 Indian and 100 foreign. It will see the participation of two Nobel laureates, professors Eric Wieschaus and Michael Rosbash, known for their seminal contribution to the fields of development biology and chronobiology respectively.

"This event is one of the largest meetings of Drosophila researchers in the whole world and attracts scientists working in diverse disciplines ranging from cell and molecular biology to ecology and evolution," said

Prof. Dey. Explaining the choice by the APDRC board of IISER to organise the meet, he said the institute is one the premier scientific research institutes of the country and is very strong in Drosophila research, given that there are five professors and 30 Ph.D. scholars who were using

tions in developmental biology. A total 57 talks and 240

Drosophila to answer ques-

posters on topics ranging from gametogenesis and stem cells, morphogenesis and mechanobiology, hormones and physiology, cellular and behavioural neurobiology, infection and immunity and ecology and evolution are scheduled for the conference.

"One of the highlights of this conference is that we are explicitly encouraging undergraduates from various institutes of the world to participate in it. There is a pre-conference symposium called 'signals from the gut' in collaboration with the National Centre for Cell Science, as well as a pre-conference microscopy workshop on super-resolution microscopy. This will feature microscopes from fluorescence imaging to super resolution imaging (50 nm resolution) which are vital for certain kinds of fly work," Prof. Dev said.

The last four editions of this conference took place in Taipei, Seoul, Beijing and

Marble domes of Aurangabad's Bibi Ka Maqbara to get new glow

ASI to carry out scientific conservation of monument

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The marble domes of Bibi Ka Maqbara, the famous 17th century Mughal-era monument in the city, are set to

get a new shine. The domes and other marble parts of the mausoleum will undergo scientific conservation, an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) official said. The work is estimated to cost ₹45 lakh.

The structure, known as the 'Taj of the Deccan' because of its striking resemblance to the Taj Mahal, was commissioned by Emperor Aurangzeb in 1660 in the memory of his wife Dilras Banu Begum.

Deputy Superintending Archaeologist Shrikant Mishra said its domes and mina-



The Bibi Ka Maqbara was commissioned by Aurangzeb in 1660 in the memory of his wife. • FILE РНОТО

rets, which are built in marble, as well as the marble screens inside would undergo scientific conservation. The work, which will go on for six months, will involve

cleaning and and carrying out a chemical treatment to give it a new glow, he said. The paintings inside the entrance of the mausoleum, too, will undergo cleaning.

'Government should reveal how much money has been spent on airline subsidies' ADITYA ANAND ging doubt that airlines are

Need transparent UDAN: air passengers' association

The Air Passengers Association of India (APAI) wants the Connectivity Regional Scheme (RCS) - Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) - to be fine-tuned and recalibrated with details of money spent by the government in airline subsidies, the number of routes suspended. The air passengers' body said the details must be made public for the sake of transparency.

In his outlook for 2020, APAI president D. Sudhakara Reddy said there was a growing cacophony of claims by airlines about poor bottomlines and other difficulties being faced by them, which are unsubstantiated.

"The irony is that while this high-decibel lobbying is going on, elsewhere in the world, particularly in the U.S. and Europe, most of the



years or so. APAI is reiterating its stand that a forensic audit should be carried out by the relevant government agencies on airlines' balance sheets to know what exactly is happening," he said.

Mr. Reddy said the government was about to announce the auction for the fourth edition of UDAN to give a push to the scheme while making efforts to privatise

six airports to create the desired aviation infrastructure in the country. "Our considered view is

that the achievement of flying 35 lakh passengers under the scheme since its inception augurs well. Yet, to have the desired level of excellence, the scheme will have to be fine-tuned and recalibrated. APAI has been expressing concern that the scheme in the present form is opaque and there is a nagtaking advantage of the loopholes, deciding arbitrarily how many seats have to be allocated under the scheme," he said. The APAI president said

passengers have the right to know how much money has been spent by the government on subsidy to the airlines, how many routes have been suspended by the airlines after launching them, the reasons for this and so on. "Needless to say, such an exercise will make the scheme more transparent and enable objective assessment of the efficacy of UDAN," he said.

Mr. Reddy said the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has spent over ₹1,100 crore for revamping airports, but still the facilities and operations at these airports remained woefully inadequate. "While the rhetoric is high, traffic levels are low. Viability of the airports has to be established on a sound footing. Airlines are reluctant to include these airports in their network," Mr. Reddy said.

There are 449 airports in the country including helipads. A majority of the unserved and underserved airports are in this category, the APAI president said. Those with scheduled services, sometimes, see footfalls as few as 7,000, he said.

"There are indications that 75% of the airports owned by it are registering losses, most being regional airports. With the profitable airports being privatised, AAI will soon have a stable revenue stream, which should be deployed towards developing regional airports," Mr. Reddy said.





Only two-day 'Vaikuntha dwara darshanam'

TIRUMALA
The emergency meeting of
the TTD board of trustees on
Sunday resolved to confine
'Vaikuntha dwara darshanam'
at Tirumala for only two days

- Vaikunta Ekadasi (January 7).
The High Court had directed
the TTD to make known its
opinion on extending
'Vaikunta Dwara darshanam'
for 10 days, while hearing a
Public Interest Litigation
(PIL) plea filed by an
advocate, Tallapaka

Man kills daughter suspecting wife's fidelity

Raghavan, last week.

A man killed his three-monthold daughter, suspecting his wife's fidelity, in Andhra Pradesh's Kadapa district on Sunday. Rajendra, a resident of Raiiv Colony of Vempalle town, grew suspicious of his second wife Krishida, after she gave birth to the baby. On Friday, on not finding the baby, the mother lodged a complaint with the Vempalle police. On interrogation, Rajendra admitted to have killed the baby and buried it in the Papaghni river bed. The baby's body was exhumed and Raiendra was arrested.

Spurious toddy claims two lives in A.P.

MAREDUMILL Two tribal people of Boddumanu Veedhi hamlet in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh died after allegedly consuming spurious toddy on Sunday. Five others from the Kondareddi tribal community, including three women, who too consumed the intoxicant, are under treatment. The deceased have been identified as Palla Somireddy, 32, and Sadala Aswareddy, 30, natives of Chawadi Kota panchayat, Maredumilli mandal

States have to implement CAA: Minister

If they don't, President may take action citing 'breakdown of Constitutional machinery', says R.K. Singh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

"The President can take action against the States if they fail to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)," Union Minister of State for Power R.K. Singh said here on Sunday.

"As citizenship is a Central subject, the States are duty-bound to implement it," Mr. Singh said while addressing the media after releasing a brochure in connection with the 'Jana Jagaran Sampark Abhiyan', a people connect campaign on CAA.

'Spreading lies'

Accusing the Opposition of spreading falsehood on the Act, Mr. Singh clarified that it was meant to give citizenship to the Hindus and other minorities who were being driven out after persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Mr. Singh, a former IAS officer who had served as Un-



Counter attack: Union Minister R.K. Singh, centre, releasing a CAA brochure in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. •c.v. Subrahmanyam

ion Home Secretary, said that the CAA was not meant to take away citizenship of any person.

Referring to Kerala and West Bengal, where the governments vowed not to implement the CAA, Mr. Singh said they were bound by the Constitution. "If they don't implement, the President may come to the conclusion that there is a breakdown of Constitutional machinery," he observed.

Awareness drive

"The campaign is to educate people about the lies being spread by the Congress and other parties on the CAA. We have even launched a number, 8866288662, to which people can give a missed call

to express their support for the Act," the Union Minister said. Asked whether the government would provide citizenship to Shias and Ahmedis being persecuted in some countries, he said: "If they seek citizenship, we will certainly consider on a case-tocase basis."

'Fear psychosis'

Mr. Singh pointed out that the number of minorities in Pakistan after Partition in 1947 had come down from a little over 19% to 1.9% due to persecution and coercion.

"Do not to go by the fear psychosis being created by the Congress and other Opposition parties," he said, appealing to minorities.

BJP National Executive member K. Haribabu, city president M. Ravindra Reddy, former MLA P. Vishnu Kumar Raju, spokesperson Suhasini Anand and State vice-president Kasi Viswanath Raju were present.

Rijiju begins campaign in Kerala

Minister speaks to Archbishop, Muslims on CAA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday launched a campaign in Kerala to stave off mounting criticism that the recently enacted Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) was patently anti-Muslim.

Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Kiren Rijiju had arrived in the State with a mission to assuage the fears of the minorities about the law. Kerala had emerged as a hotbed of anti-CAA protests and the Assembly had recently passed a near-unanimous re-

solution seeking its repeal.

Mr. Rijiju met Thiruvananthapuram Archbishop (Latin rite) Soosa Pakiam M., writer George Onakkoor, leading Muslim businesspersons and other opinion leaders as part of the BJP's nationwide campaign to dampen the anti-CAA protests.

'People in fear'

The Archbishop reportedly told Mr. Rijiju that the Centre was speaking in different voices on the CAA. The legislation had caused a grave sense of insecurity among minorities. The people feared that the CAA, when implemented along with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) would render lakhs Stateless.



(iren Riiiiu

By depriving naturalised Muslim refugees and migrants the chance to acquire citizenship, the Centre had introduced a clause that empowered the law to discriminate against persons based on their religion. It had set off a ripple of fear among

other minority communities that they could become the target of similar discriminatory Parliamentary legislation in the future, the Archbishop said.

Mr. Onakoor reportedly told Mr. Rijiju that it was incumbent on the Centre to mitigate the fear the CAA had caused in minorities.

Mr. Rijiju told newspersons later that the law was not anti-Muslim. India had accorded citizenship to Pakistanis, including singer Adnan Sami. He said certain people had reservations about the CAA. They felt the Centre had not been able to convince a section of society. "If they are not convinced yet, then we are here to convince them." he added.

Yediyurappa visits houses with brochure

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday launched the BJP's door-to-door campaign in support of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 by visiting 10 houses, including those belonging to Muslims, in Bengaluru city.

"The CAA will not affect the interests of minorities. The Opposition parties are unnecessarily undertaking a false propaganda against it. Do not be misled," the CM told the residents.

Later, he told reporters that the Opposition should give examples with documents if minorities had been genuinely affected by the CAA. Claiming that there was no *mala fide* intent behind the CAA, he said the main intention of the campaign was to create awareness that the CAA would not affect minorities, as being alleged by the Opposition parties.

BJP leaders and party workers would visit three crore houses in the country, including 30 lakh in the State, under the campaign, he said. He distributed pamphlets with details on the CAA to houses during his visit.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan visited the houses of several prominent personalities, including that of Jnanpith Award winning writer Chandrashekar Kambar, and handed over pamphlets related to the CAA. Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi also visited the houses of several dignitaries.

UPSC to conduct separate exam for Railway Service

Part of overall restructuring of Dept.

V. GEETANATH
HYDERABAD

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) will conduct an exclusive examination for recruitment of officers to handle specialised services in the newly created Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS) following unification of eight different Railway services. The exam is expected to be held in the next recruitment circle of 2021.

Top sources in the Indian Railways stated that the UPSC will be given information about the requirement of cadre in various wings for the services, engineering etc. and the number of posts will be notified accordingly.

"For instance, we could convey to the UPSC that we need 200 officers with 20 each engineers in civil, electrical, mechanical/stores and electronics, and the fifth will be for general service for traffic, accounts and personnel wings. Candidates from engineering will have to take the main examination on their specialised domain course and not any other subject," sources said.

Reasons behind move

The objective behind the "historic" massive restructuring of the management of the Indian Railways is to remove the "departmentalism" culture which has seeped all the way up to the Railway Board and ensure there is "one service and officers from one batch should get promotion in on go" and not as has been happening thus far.

Chairman, Railway Board, Vinod Kumar Yadav, having just received a year's exten-



Vinod Kumar Yadav

sion, has asserted that the 350-odd officers joining the Railway service annually will all have an equal opportunity of reaching the top posts of Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs) and above, including General Managers, as well as to the Railway Board.

New benchmarks

"Till now, only those chosen to become 34 DRMs each year based on their UPSC marks and date of birth had opportunity to reach higher posts, with the rest not even evaluated.

For the IRMS, we will benchmark performance and personal integrity for all those joining service based on their 15-year tenure by a group of three senior officers," he explained.

The CRB has already clarified that existing officers would not be discriminated against in terms of promotions or posts as a Group of Ministers would be looking into the issue to make necessary adjustments even in creating new posts to accommodate performers.

Residents of Maradu to be moved to two rehab centres

Holy Faith and Alfa Serene will be demolished first

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Two temporary rehabilitation centres will be opened at Sacred Heart College, Thevara, and Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Panangad, to house local residents of Maradu when the four illegally built apartments will be demolished on January 11 and 12.

The Maradu municipality has asked local residents to move to the rehabilitation centres before 9 a.m. on the days of the blast as a precautionary measure.

The apartments H2O Holy Faith and Alfa Serene will be demolished on January 11 from 11 a.m. The original schedule was to trigger the first implosion by 11.30 a.m.

The district administration has marked 200-metre areas from the boundary of these buildings as exclusion



A resident of a locality near the Alfa Serene apartment in Maradu moving household items. •H. VIBHU

zones. The notification marking the exclusion zone will be in force from 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. In case of Jain Coral Cove, the notification will be in force from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on January 12.

Prohibitory orders will be imposed in the region under Section 144 of the Cr.PC. Wa-

terbodies around the flats will also come under the exclusion zone and hence entry into the area will be banned. Entry into exclusive zone and unauthorised parking in the region will be treated as illegal acts.

No-fly zone

The entire exclusive zone has been marked as no-fly zone and unauthorised operation of drones has been banned.

The police have drawn up a contingency plan for the demolition. Vehicular movement along major roads would be stopped for 10 minutes during the blast, said District Police Chief (Kochi City) Vijay Sakhare. Side roads in the exclusion zone will also remain out of

bounds during the time.

Around 500 police personnel will be deployed.

Art and life



Visitors at a stall at Chitra Santhe 2020, an art fair conducted by the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath on Kumara Krupa Road in Bengaluru on Sunday. Paintings of over 1,500 artists from across the country were displayed at the 17th edition of the fair, which was dedicated to farmers. • K. MURALI KUMAR

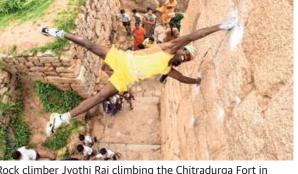
Kothi Raj' set to go high for biopic climax

He will climb the rock face along Venezuela's Angel Falls, the world's highest waterfalls

S. BHUVANESHWARI

Rock climber Jyothi Raj, often called 'Kothi Raj' for his amazing prowess of climbing rock faces, fort walls or tall buildings with his bare hands, is now set to scale new heights.

He plans to climb the rock face along Angel Falls, the world's highest waterfalls in Venezuela, in one go. This will constitute the climax of his biopic *Incredible Monkey Man*, which will be released worldwide this year. The movie is produced and directed by the Sydneybased Stanley Joseph, who is a native of Bengaluru. The shooting for *Incredible*



Rock climber Jyothi Raj climbing the Chitradurga Fort in Karnataka. *Special ARRANGEMENT

Monkey Man will take place in Chitradurga, Shivamogga, Bengaluru, and Venezuela.

The climax will be shot on February 26 or 27, and Mr. Raj is undergoing special training from an Praveen C.M., for it. Mr. Raj says two persons, as a team, have successfully climbed Angel Falls, and they took three days to do it. "I will make India and Karnataka

international climber,

proud by climbing Angel Falls," Mr. Raj said. Mr. Joseph said all

Mr. Joseph said all precautions would be taken for the climb. Mr. Raj, a native of Theni

Mr. Raj, a native of Theni
village in Madurai of Tamil
Nadu, was separated from
his parents at a fair at the
age of three and was
brought up by a couple from
Bagalkot.
The couple then moved

to Chitradurga, where Mr. Raj worked as a construction labourer. He was 18 when he first climbed the Chitradurga Fort. He earns ₹3,000 to ₹4,000 on weekends from tourists who want to see him climbing the fort. He also trains children in rock climbing.

SBI asks Telangana to pay dues in food credit account

Bank says these accounts are subject to NPA norms

M. RAJEEV HYDERABAD

The stalemate over the division of food credit advances from the State Bank of India by the Civil Supplies Corporations of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, has resulted in the bank asking the Telangana government to liquidate its outstanding dues with immediate effect.

The SBI, which holds the food credit accounts of the two States, said these accounts are subject to the NPA (non-performing assets) norms of the RBI and liable to be classified as NPA if they remained irregular or overdue for more than 90 days. "While the interest in res-

ing serviced, it is observed that the position of stocks and outstanding is running almost static for the past few years. The position revealed is not satisfactory as the account is overdue for liquidation now," the SBI said in a letter addressed to Telangana government.

pect of these accounts is be-

The Andhra Pradesh government had informed the bank that the apportioned amount due from it has been liquidated.

"As the outstanding in this account pertains to the share of Telangana State Civil Supplies Corporation as per the internal adjustment between the two corpora-

count need to be prioritised," the letter said.

tions, liquidation of this ac-

Future hurdlesThe food credit ac

The food credit accounts are to be liquidated before availing fresh loan for the subsequent season.

The tussle over the ownership of the food credit account has continued since the bifurcation of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh without any favourable resolution.

The delay in resolution was against the credit discipline and would also affect the State's future prospect of raising funds through market as any default may pose hurdles later.

Boston Consulting Group's Wiki page defaced

THARUN BODA
VIJAYAWADA

The Wikipedia page of U.S.-based global management consulting firm, Boston Consulting Group (BCG), has been reportedly defaced by users in an apparent attempt to spread misinformation about the company's credentials.

This came after BCG India representatives submitted their report 'Strengthening Andhra Pradesh through balanced and inclusive growth' to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on January 3 in line with the State's idea of three capitals for decentralised development. The edits have now been reverted by Wikipedia volunteers, but the edited content is being spread on social media platforms.

The company's page, which is open for users to "update" and "improve", had been edited at least 12 times on Friday and Saturday. Initially, an unidentified user changed the name of the company to 'Boston Buffoon Consulting Group', and added the names of Mr. Reddy and V. Vijaya Sai Reddy as founders of the 57-year-old company alongside its founder Bruce Henderson.

The text "Jagan Mohan Reddy has 50 per cent share in Boston Consulting Group" had been added to the Company Description section on the page. Though the current version of the page does not show the edits, the older versions available under the "view history" section

reveal the changes.

"Wikipedia seriously needs to protect the community standards. It has become a tool for such misinformation," said Brahma, a Twitter user who posted the changes made to the BCG page.

M K



Police inspect Lalu's ward at hospital

A team of senior police officers on Sunday inspected the ward where jailed Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad is undergoing treatment at the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences "It was a general inspection."

Navy kicks off 'Maha-Navy Connect'

said an officer. PTI

The Navy on Sunday launched a first-ever threedimensional expedition to promote the heritage of India and spread awareness on coastal security among the sea-side communities in Maharashtra, said an official spokesperson. The expedition extends from Arnala Fort, the northernmost fort in Palghar district, built by the then Portuguese rulers, to Sindhudurg Fort.

Police officer charged with sexual harassment

An IPS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, Gaurav Upadhyay, who is currently posted as SP in Karbi Anglong district, was charged with sexually assaulting a minor girl on December 31. A case was filed against him under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act on Friday, at Guwahati's all women's police station.

Puducherry CM 'quashes' **Governor Bedi's order**

PUDUCHERRY Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy has issued an order declaring as "illegal" and "null and void" an order of Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi annulling the appointment of State **Election Commissioner T.M.** Balakrishnan. He also directed Chief Secretary Ashwani Kumar to ignore Ms. Bedi's earlier order.

NAL wants govt. push for Saras takeoff

It says Centre should buy at least 50-60 Saras Mk2 aircraft to make production commercially viable

SOBHANA K. NAIR NEW DELHI

The government needs to be the "launch customer" to make Saras Mk2 commercially viable, the National Aerospace Laboratory (NAL), which has developed the first indigenous light transport aircraft, told the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science Technology.

The 19-seater aircraft, developed with a target cost of ₹50 crore, is at least 20-25% lower in cost than other aircraft in the similar category.

The aircraft has been in the making for long. The first prototype flew in 2004. But without the initial push from the government, the manufacturing capacity required for commercial production could not be set up, the NAL

On a five-day tour of ISRO

The Army is likely to sign a

Memorandum of Under-

standing (MoU) in a month

for the procurement of over

7.5 lakh AK-203 assault rifles,

which are to be manufac-

tured locally by an India-

Russia joint venture (JV), a

Defence source said. The De-

fence Ministry has already

floated a Request For Propo-

sal for the supply of 6.71 lakh

come directly from Russia

and the remaining will be

manufactured by the JV in

India. The MoU should be

"About 1 lakh rifles will



Taking wing: A Saras aircraft participating in the biennial AERO India show in February 2019. The 19-seater Mk2 will be the first indigenous light transport aircraft. • FILE РНОТО

facilities from December 25 to 30, the committee members visited the NAL on December 28 and were briefed about the aircraft. Later, NAL Director Jitendra J. Jadhav sent a report on the plan for commercial production. Committee chairperson and

7.5 lakh AK-203 assault rifles

They will be manufactured by an Indo-Russian joint venture

About 1 lakh rifles will be

the remaining in India.

manufactured in Russia and

signed in a month," an offi-

The rifles will be manu-

factured by the Indo-Russian

Army to sign MoU for

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh forwarded the report to Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu.

"Our job is to study and recommend. We cannot and should not step into the domain of the executive," Mr. Ramesh said, explaining why

(IRRPL) at Korwa in Uttar

Pradesh. The facility is being

set up by the Ordnance Fac-

tories Board from the Indian

side, and Rosoboron Ex-

ports and Kalashnikov on

Major General Sanjeev Sen-

ger as the Chief Executive Of-

In addition to the AK-203,

the Army recently began in-

ducting the first batch of

10,000 SIG-716 assault rifles.

ing to replace the indigenous

INSAS rifles, which are cur-

rently in use, with modern

The force has been look-

The Army has appointed

the Russian side.

ficer of IRRPL.

he forwarded the report to Mr. Naidu.

Presently, the NAL has only one order from the Indian Air Force for 15 aircraft.

Connectivity plans The NAL has been pitching Saras Mk-2 for the government's UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik), since it has the capacity to operate in "illequipped", "semi-prepared" and "unpaved airstrips". The scheme, launched in October 2016, is aimed at linking areas that have no air connectivity.

The NAL has said in its report to Mr. Ramesh that the government should be the "launch customer", and place an order for at least 50-60 aircraft, which can be used for VIP services or tackling emergencies in times of natural calamities.

"With the firm commitment for procurement from the government, industries will come forward to set up manufacturing infrastructure. This will also push the growth of the micro, small and medium enterprises and allied service sector," Mr. Jadhav said in his report.

CIC website inaccessible again outside India

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

While the website of the Central Information Commission (CIC) has been inaccessible in many countries since the beginning of the year, Chief Information Commissioner Sudhir Bhargava says there has been no policy decision to block the website outside India.

The CIC website, cic.gov.in, offers facilities to file appeals online, as well as a database of all appeals and

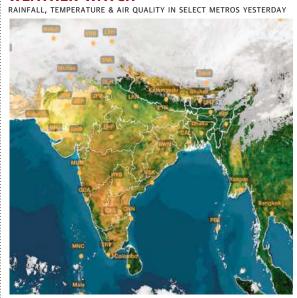
On Sunday, Indian citizens living in the United States, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Vietnam told The Hindu they could not access the site. RTI activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (retd),

currently in the U.S., said he had been unable to access the site when trying to file an appeal on New Year's Day, and had informed CIC officials as well as National Informatics Centre (NIC). .

However, Mr Bhargava told The Hindu, "It is just a glitch," adding that no specific decision has been taken to make the website inaccessible outside India.

Commodore Batra says after a similar instance in August 2018, he had filed an RTI request seeking the reasons behind the denial.

The response had merely said: "Due to some unknown technical error, the access to the CIC website through some of the channels was not available."



Forecast for Monday: Heavy rain/snow likely in isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir: heavy rain likely at isolated places over south Tamil Nadu. Thunderstorm accompanied with hail and lightning likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh. Uttarkhand, Punjab, Haryana Chandigarh, Delhi and east Rajasthan.

TY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
jartala		23.0	13.0	Kozhikode		34.0	25.0
ımedabad		25.0	12.0	Kurnool		33.0	22.0
zawl		–	–	Lucknow		21.0	11.0
lahabad		18.0	10.0	Madurai		34.0	23.0
ngaluru		31.0	19.0	Mangaluru		32.0	20.0
nopal		20.0	13.0	Mumbai		30.0	16.0
nubaneswar		26.0	13.0	Mysuru		32.0	18.0
nandigarh		18.0	6.0	New Delhi		21.0	7.0
iennai		32.0	25.0	Patna		18.0	13.0
imbatore		33.0	23.0	Port Blair		31.0	26.0
hradun	8.8	19.0	4.0	Puducherry		31.0	23.0
ngtok	3.3	8.0	4.0	Pune		26.0	12.0
oa		30.0	19.0	Raipur	0.5	24.0	15.0
ıwahati		–	–	Ranchi		20.0	9.0
ıbballi		29.0	17.0	Shillong		–	–
derabad		–	–	Shimla	6.4	10.0	1.0
nphal		–	–	Srinagar		–	–
ipur		21.0	10.0	Thiruvananthapuran	n 71.6	32.0	25.0
chi		33.0	26.0	Tiruchi		33.0	25.0
hima		–	–	Vijayawada		27.0	22.0
olkata		21.0	13.0	Visakhapatnam			
ainfall data in mm: temperature in Celsius)							

...97

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI) **SO2:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system,

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.

making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air

particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues

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

+ 'Investors wary of uncertain tax administration in India'

Association flags existence of multiple tax regimes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Uncertainty in tax administration is one of the key threats to private investments in the country, the Indian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association said in a presentation made a Parliamentary panel on Finance on Friday.

The presentation accessed by The Hindu lists five major threats to private investors in the country. The first is "increased frictional costs on capital mobility, including dividend distribution tax, buy-back tax and so on, which diminishes returns prospects," the association noted. A similar demand was recently made by



India was at 63rd position for Ease of Doing Business across the world in 2019.

Association of National Exchanges Members of India.

The second point raised by the association is "uncertainity in tax administration". The association told the members that there are multiple tax regimes within i single structure.

The group also pointed out that there is a "perception of India being unfriendly to foreign investors." While the government is busy patting its back for better "ease of doing business" rating, there is an "increasing risk perception about doing business in India", the group

India was on the 63rd rank in World Bank's list of countries rated on ease of doing business in 2019.

Finally, the association said that a slow down in growth has reduced opportunities. As per the latest data the GDP growth is down to 4.5%, a 26-quarter low.

One dead in Bengal station collapse

Another injured has suffered a fracture

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

One of the two persons injured in a partial collapse of the Bardhaman railway station building in West Bengal succumbed to his injuries early on Sunday, said Swapan Debnath, Minister in the State Cabinet.

He said that the man, who suffered serious injuries when a chunk of concrete fell on his head, could not be saved despite efforts by doctors of the Bardhaman Medical College Hospital.

A portion of the roof of the two-storey station building collapsed near the enquiry counter on Saturday evening.

The other injured person, who suffered a frac-



collapsed near the enquiry counter on Saturday.

ture in one of his legs, is being treated at the Staterun hospital, where Railway doctors had also rushed on Saturday evening to provide necessary assistance, an Eastern Railway spokesperson

I-T Dept. notifies new forms for filing income tax returns

Joint owner of house cannot avail ITR-1, ITR-4 forms

The government, which usually notifies forms for filing returns by individuals in April every year, on January 3 notified tax return forms for assessment year 2020-21 (income earning year April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020).

As per the notification, returns in ITR-1 Sahaj can be filed by an ordinary resident individual whose total income does not exceed ₹50 lakh, while form ITR-4 Sugam is meant for resident individuals, HUFs and firms (other than LLP) having a total income of up to ₹50 lakh and having presumptive income from business and profession.



The forms for filing returns are usually notified in April every year.

According to the notification, in two significant changes, an individual taxpayer cannot file return either in ITR-1 or ITR-4 if he is a joint-owner in house property, and the ITR-1 form is not valid for those indivi-

more than ti crore in bank account or have incurred ₹2 lakh or ₹1 lakh on foreign travel or electricity respective-Such taxpayers will have

duals who have deposited

to use different forms, which will be notified in due course. An individual who "owns

a house property in joint ownership with two or more persons" is required to furnish a return of income, the notification said.

"... A taxpayer, who is required to file the return before the previous year ends, cannot do so until the return filing facility is activated on the e-filing portal," said Naveen Wadhwa of Taxmann.

Centre bats for science outreach programmes

It moots Scientific Social Responsibility

STAFF REPORTER

Importance of communication and outreach programmes was on the agenda on the third day of the 107th Indian Science Congress here on Sunday.

Akhilesh Gupta, adviser and head, Climate Change Programme, Department of Science and Technology, spoke about the Centre's policy on implementing scientific social responsibili-

Under the programme, researchers who are working on a science project funded by any of the Ministries under the Central government will have to unactivities to dertake popularise science and make it more accessible to

the public. Speaking at the Science Communicators' Meet, Mr. Gupta said they would draw

Scientific Social Responsibility programme, that was similar to Corporate Social Responsibility. Part of outcome report

up a list of activities which could be taken up under the

"This could range from going to colleges delivering lectures, writing an article in a magazine or doing something beyond the curriculum," he said.

The science outreach would be mandatory and researchers had to include this as part of their outcome report, he added

Mr. Gupta said the move would not only bridge the gap between research institutes and the civilians, but also help scientists hone their communication skills.

"It will be implemented this year after a consultation meeting with all stakeholders," Mr. Gupta added.

Women scientists seek conducive workplaces

They want childcare facilities and safer laboratories

STAFF REPORTER

Better childcare facilities, safer laboratories and more funding for research projects were some of the issues that women scientists and researchers batted for to make the work environment more conducive.

Several scientists spoke to *The Hindu*, on the sidelines of the Women's Science Congress, as part of the Indian Science Congress, about how institutions and the government can ensure that not only more women choose science, but they remain in their field instead of dropping out.

Shyamala Subba Reddy, Department of Horticulture, Professor, University of Agricultural Sciences, said: "There is a need for more supportive system on cam-



the Women's Science Congress on Sunday.

• SUDHAKARA JAIN

puses for young women. Having child care facilities and creches will make a significant difference in ensuring that more women rescience and research."

Surekha Ramrao Gaikwad, Associate Professor of home science at SSSP College, Parbhani, spoke about the bureaucracy involved in getting approvals.

Men also have a huge role to play in the way our society inculcates women's aspirations, said Trilochan Mohapatra, Director-General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, at the inauguration of the Congress. Tessy Thomas, Director-

General of Aeronautical Systems, Defence Research and Development Organisation, was present at the event.



Life of science

The Science Congress needs new ideas, and not a mix of myth and pseudoscience

The Indian Science Congress (ISC) – its 107th edition is under way in Bengaluru – has served as a reminder of the status accorded to science and technology in the early years of the Indian republic. Though the formation of the congress pre-dates the Indian republic, it was the intellectual nursery of modern science in the country. Early ideas of how science and technology could aid the development of the new nation were incubated at this coming together of scientists. It is for this reason that the congress, normally held in the first week of January, is inaugurated by the Prime Minister. The years since have seen the nature of the congress change: from one where scientists, in the era of postal communication, congregated to exchange scientific ideas to one today where it has become a 'science mela'. The prime purpose of the ISC now is to draw school and science college students to hear Nobel Laureates and Indian-origin scientists from abroad to lecture about their work and the future prospects of science. The other draws are science projects and innovations by schoolchildren and stalls showcasing scientific work being done in key national laboratories and

But there is an unmistakable decay, a choreographed ennui, that has set in. In recent years, the congress often makes news for becoming a forum for pseudoscience and less for interesting scientific ideas or demonstrations. Speakers - some holding distinguished positions in leading universities – have tended to mix mythology and science and publicise far-fetched assertions: that the Kauravas were born from stem-cell technology and the Vedas discussed avionics. While this has eroded the congress's public image, the government itself does not seem too keen to vitalise it. The exhibits at several scientific laboratories are re-runs from old congresses, or from similar and past science fairs. Many laboratories showcase their work as 'posters' rather than actually showing demonstrations or working inventions. Several luminaries of India's science establishments - the Principal Scientific Adviser, secretaries from several ministries, the chiefs of major organisations such as ISRO or the Department of Atomic Energy, who have been fixtures, or have at least had their organisation present a dedicated talk or session, were absent this year. It is inevitable that traditions change over time and the relative importance accorded to institutions wax and wane. However this must make way for inspiring new ideas, or new models of taking science to the public. A rising trend in science displays, at museums or exhibitions in many places, is to mix science and art as well as make interactive displays that encourage audience engagement. A rebirth, and not a creeping requiem, is what the congress needs.

Least surprise

The DMK remains the front runner in Tamil Nadu, but the AIADMK is fast catching up

The only surprise in the December 2019 elections to rural local bodies in Tamil Nadu was that there was no surprise. Held after eight years, the polls, which were due in October 2016, were relatively peaceful, with around 77% of voters – nearly two crore people – exercising their franchise in 27 of 36 districts to elect their representatives for village panchayats, panchayat unions and district panchayats. The results reaffirmed that much of the State's political space continues to remain with the DMK and the ruling AIADMK. Some churn was thought possible in the light of the debate on the perceived vacuum in political leadership in the State. The DMK-led front - it won 38 of the 39 Lok Sabha seats last year - has retained its lead over its arch rival with a higher tally of wards in panchayat unions and district panchayats, the elections to which are on political lines. However, the fact that the AIADMK, an important ally of the Bharatiya Janata Party, has been able to bridge some of the gap with the DMK was also in keeping with the results in the Assembly by-elections in October last. Clearly, both parties have reasons to believe that their prospects in the 2021 Assembly polls are good. Though the ruling party appears to have regained much of its support base lost during the parliamentary polls – this being the first State-wide electoral contest in the last seven months – the reality that it finished behind its key adversary in the overall tally of the local bodies' wards is a situation that will not be to the liking of its leadership; the perception is that the AIADMK is traditionally stronger in the rural areas. Finally, political mobilisation against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, is believed to be a factor that influenced voters against the ruling party.

The State Election Commission (SEC), which conducted itself reasonably well with new measures such as the use of flying squads and closed circuit television sets, should stick to its plan of holding the polls to urban local bodies including the Greater Chennai Corporation and abide by the Supreme Court's direction of completing the poll process for rural local bodies in the remaining nine districts within three months. It should note that the reason behind the Court granting more time is for carrying out fresh delimitation of wards in five new districts. The panel should also ensure that the poll process is always fair and credible. It would be in the fitness of things for the State government to assist the SEC in ensuring the early completion of the next round of polls. Any delay will not reflect well on the SEC and the ruling party. For the AIADMK, it will be an occasion for course correction. For the DMK, the message is that it cannot be complacent. It is the front runner, but

Scoring a foreign policy self-goal

The government's political expediency over the Citizenship Act has landed India in an unenviable diplomatic spot today



HAPPYMON JACOB

The frightening fall of a great nation has begun. Once a leading light of inclusiveness, democracy, and a major pole of stability in the comity of nations, despite occasional failings, India today is embarrassingly at the centre of attention for bad behaviour. While the present government's decisions on Jammu and Kashmir put the spotlight on New Delhi, the recently legislated Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, or CAA, 2019 pushed it over the edge. Not only has the Act deeply divided a communally sensitive country, its effect is bound to have long-term implications for India's foreign policy. India's global standing is ever more vulnerable today, and the chinks in India's diplomatic armour have never been so evi-

The essence of the CAA

But before we weigh the foreign policy implications, let us understand the CAA for what it really is. Shorn of the deliberate confusion and politically-convenient rhetoric, the CAA is neither about refugees nor about illegal immigrants, as the government would like to claim; it is about the Muslims in India. If you are an Indian Muslim with incontrovertible domicile documents, it is a message for you. If you do not have the requisite documents and you are Muslim, this is where you should be scared about your future.

Let us be clear: If the objective is to provide refuge to the persecuted, what we need is a proper refugee law with legally sound standard operating procedures on a par with global standards, and without discrimination. If it is about illegal immigration, the as-

sumption – when one reads the CAA and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) together – that only Muslims can be illegal immigrants is a deeply problematic one.

Regional fallout

The present government's zealous pursuit of the CAA citing human rights violations in the neighbourhood and illegal immigration from it is a foreign policy self-goal. Clearly, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) could not have, if it were to derive domestic political utility from it, talked about illegal immigration to India without castigating Bangladesh, nor could it have pontificated about the human rights violations of non-Muslims in the region without pointing fingers at Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It is such political expediency that has landed the government in an unenviable diplomatic spot today.

It would, however, be foolish of those of us who are outside the government to assume that the leadership did not foresee the negative fallout its policies and rhetoric on India's relations with two of its best friends in the region, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, at a time when it does not have many friends in the neighbourhood.

But that is not the point. That the BJP leadership would have, most likely, foreseen the serious loss of diplomatic capital with these countries and yet gone ahead with its anti-neighbour rhetoric given its domestic political utility is what makes it singularly worrying. Put differently: the political bosses of the Indian government decided to sacrifice the country's crucial foreign policy interests at the altar of domestic political contingencies.

This becomes a diplomatic double whammy given how India is already losing its traditional heft and influence in the region and at a time a China-led balance of power is emerging in the region. Once again, New Delhi is not unaware of it. On the contrary, South Block's



foreign policy mandarins are wary of the Chinese state's sure-footed engulfment of the neighbourhood. And yet, the political bosses have preferred domestic political gains over diplomatic benefits, relegating foreign policy to the whims of

electoral outcomes. That from a foreign policy point of view the CAA is short-sighted is obvious, and that it will adversely affect India's regional influence and standing is an unavoidable outcome; what is shocking is that the political leadership does not seem bothered by it. That is what should worry us.

Reputational costs

From Kashmir to the NRC to the CAA - one reckless action after another - New Delhi seems to have finally exhausted the goodwill of the international community. In December, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called the CAA "fundamentally discriminatory" - something unheard of in recent memory. Again in December, the United States, arguably India's best friend today, urged the country to "protect the rights of its religious minorities in keeping with India's Constitution and democratic values". The same month too, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) referred to CAA as not only "highly discriminatory and arbitrary" but also contrary to New Delhi's "obligations under international human rights laws".

New Delhi's attempts to reach out to the international community, albeit selectively, while assiduously avoiding those critical of its policies, have not met with much success. When India's External Affairs Minister pulled out of a meeting with senior members of the

U.S. Congress after U.S. lawmakers refused New Delhi's demands to exclude Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal – she has been critical of the Indian government's policies in Kashmir – the message that went out was that India is unable to justify its own policies. Or that it does not bother with what others think of it.

For a government that steadfastly shied away from internationalising domestic issues, its own actions have done precisely that thereby bringing lasting damage to the country's reputation. Now, one might ask as to why a state should worry about its reputation and whether it is not enough to use one's material power to achieve foreign policy outcomes. For one, the BJP has traditionally been more concerned about India's reputation, at least as a rhetorical plank, than anyone else. Second, India's traditional foreign policy pursuit has been a careful mix of soft power and material capability with the balance often tilting in favour of soft power. Finally, reputation, among other things, is critical in aiding India's quest for a place at the high table of international politics, such as acquiring a United Nations Securi-

ty Council (UNSC) seat. More so, status quo powers, as opposed to revisionist ones, are far more favoured by the international order. India was the region's quintessential status quo power that the world loved to engage and promote. This key characteristic of India may be undergoing a dramatic change, with many viewing India as a reckless power with revisionist ambitions – just as Pakistan has long been viewed.

Great power equations

India is a major power with great power ambitions and may even be an indispensable power in some respects. However, if India decides to shape its foreign policy based purely on domestic calculations, its indispensability and systemshaping abilities will take a serious

hit. A great power, among other things, is a state that is willing to live up to certain global expectations and has the ability and willingness to help with system main-

Great powers have traditionally been supportive of India's rise in the global order and have more or less stood by India in its pursuit of power and reputation. This is bound to change thanks to the government's domestic preoccupations. While the Trump White House may be indulgent towards New Delhi, at least for now, the patience of the Washington establishment is fast running out. If there is a Democratic government in Washington DC next year, things might get harder for New Delhi. Moscow's unequivocal support for New Delhi is now a thing of the past, and New Delhi's fall from grace suits Beijing more than

When was the last time we heard a mention of rising India? When was the last time someone 'seriously" argued that India should be part of the UNSC? Our sheen has come off and the world is beginning to see the ugly realities within.

Moreover, thanks to the heavy political fire-fighting that it needs to do on a daily basis on issues such as Kashmir, the NRC, and the CAA, much of New Delhi's diplomatic capital is spent on doing precisely that. Its focus on crucial regional and global issues seems to be waning fast. With little talk of renegotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, no appetite to be part of the Afghan peace process, and disinterest in the Indian Ocean's geopolitics, among others, the regime in New Delhi resembles a provincial capital today.

Meanwhile, the world is watching as we make a spectacle of our-

Happymon Jacob teaches national

Spotting an opportunity in changing fundamentals

Growing rivalry between the United States and China could spell a strategic moment for India



SUJAN R. CHINOY

The "Phase One" trade deal between the United States and China gives both sides a reprieve, especially since the U.S. stayed its hand in not imposing additional tariffs worth \$160-billion in mid-December. But the rift runs deep. Beyond trade, the chasm is growing. A technology war has erupted in the areas of artificial intelligence, digital space and 5G. Tensions have risen following the U.S.'s passing of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019 and the proposed Uighur

The slowdown in the global economy is compounded by the U.S.-China trade war. As more sectors get drawn in, costs are rising and disrupting global supply chains.

Energy concerns Slack demand for energy and surplus production mainly by the U.S. had lowered oil prices, which was good news for India, given its huge imports. Lower energy prices may help India address its current account deficit. It can also make India's export sector more competitive. But oil prices have surged more than 4% following the U.S. air strike killing Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, Commander of the Oods Force. An outbreak of hostilities would send oil prices soaring. Unlike India, China continues to buy Iranian crude oil and

is its largest buyer. Reports suggest that China will invest \$280-billion in developing Iran's oil, gas and petrochemicals sectors and even station Chinese security personnel to guard Chinese projects. Dependence on China prevents Iran from criticising China on its policies in Iran sees in China a sympathiser.

India's ramped up energy imports from the U.S. are likely to touch \$10-billion in 2019-2020. Meanwhile, China's interest in Saudi Aramco's initial public offering and interest in weakening the dollar in the global energy market has grown. It is forging closer ties with oil producers that are in the U.S.'s cross hairs on human rights and governance issues. This facilitates its naval presence in the western Indian Ocean, including the Strait of Hormuz.

On trade

According to a State Bank of India "Ecowrap" report of July 2019, India has scarcely benefited from U.S.-China trade. Of the \$35-billion dip in China's exports to the U.S. market in the first half of 2019, about \$21-billion (or 62%) was diverted to other countries. The rest, \$14-billion, was made good largely by the U.S. producers. Going by a UN Conference on Trade and Development report of November 2019, additional exports from India to the U.S. market in the first half of the year due to trade diversion amounted to only \$755-million. U.S. tariffs on China seem to have made some other players such as Taiwan, Mexico, Vietnam and the European Union even more competitive.

China is facing a great shortage



swine flu but India's meat exports. primarily buffalo meat, reach China indirectly through Vietnam and the Philippines, adding to costs and reducing market share. Besides, India's pork exports are meagre. China's ambitious thrust on artificial intelligence, robotics, autonomous vehicles and space technologies has goaded the Donald Trump administration into action. With tensions rising after the blacklisting of Huawei Technologies by the U.S., the spectre of a high-tech war looms large.

The big three Chinese high-tech companies, Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent, together poured in \$5-billion in Indian startups in 2018. India could use this opportunity to try and force China to pry open its market to India's IT and other tech exports. The U.S.-China high-tech war threatens India's strategic autonomy. Yet India has decided to allow all network equipment makers, including Huawei, to participate in 5G spectrum trials. The outcome is far from clear.

As U.S.-China tensions drive supply chains out of China, India could emerge as an alternative destination with the right policies, as Vietnam has done.

Any impact on clean energy targets in China due to U.S. technology restrictions in the nuclear field could be a setback to efforts to reduce emissions and mitigate climate change in the entire region. Denial regimes often spur dom-

estic research and development and if the development of India's own missile programme during years of U.S. sanctions is anything to go by, China may yet succeed in riding out the storm on the technology front.

China claims that the U.S. is behind the disturbances in Hong Kong. There is no sign of the protests abating. If things turn uglier, India may have to cater to refugees of Indian origin.

Key regional issues

The situation in the South China Sea is weighted in favour of China given its fait accompli in occupying several man-made islands. India has no role in negotiating the "Code of Conduct" with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, though it is a participant in the "Quad" dialogue on broader issues in the Indo-Pacific. India reserves the right to sail and fly unhindered through the South China Sea in accordance with the principles of freedom of navigation and

On connectivity, the U.S.'s position is helpful to India. Recently, the U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Alice G. Wells criticised the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which traverses Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, as eventually worsening Islamabad's economic troubles. India is neither part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) nor the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. It is absent from the

Indo-Pacific Business Forum created by the U.S., Japan and Australia

A future challenge lies in India having to reconcile its own regional connectivity initiatives with the BRI projects that have mushroomed in the neighbourhood. In the ideological battlefield,

as also from the Blue Dot network.

China's economic success has emboldened it such that it challenges the liberal democracy model and offers an alternative developmental model based on its own system.

Overall, the military advances by China notwithstanding, U.S. defence spending far outstrips China's budget. Its nuclear arsenal dwarfs that of China. With the creation of a U.S. Space Force as a separate arm under the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. will seek to increase its superiority in networkcentric warfare. As China's anxieties in the Asia-Pacific theatre grow, India may yet have to contend with a greater Chinese military presence on its periphery. The Western Theater Command created in 2016 is responsible for the border with India. It is the largest of China's military regions, and the Tibet Military Command under it has been accorded a higher status than other provincial commands to widen its scope for combat preparedness.

U.S.-China rivalry coincides with an upward trajectory in India-U.S. relations. This is important for equilibrium and multi-polarity in Asia, even as India and China try and build much-needed trust and cooperation.

Sujan R. Chinoy, a China-specialist and former Ambassador to Japan, is currently Director General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi. The views expressed are personal

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.

Nankana incident

While all right thinking people should condemn the attack on Nankana Sahib, it is quite amusing that political parties are using the incident to gain media attention. It is not surprising that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was quick to connect the incident with the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). The ruling party saw the incident as a godsend and used it target those agitating against the

CAA. Ideally, the

government should have asked the High Commissioner to visit the shrine and submit a report ("Amid fury over Nankana Sahib attack, BJP uses it to justify CAA," January 5). N. NAGARAJAN,

Modifying the CAA The Central government

can modify the wordings of the CAA, stating in general that all persecuted religious minorities from the three countries would get citizenship, and delete the

names of individual religions from the Act. The exclusion of Muslims from the provisions of the act has given rise to the protests. Notwithstanding its absolute majority, the BJP should have been alive to the sensitivity of the issue while drafting the Bill. V. RAGHAVAN,

A whimsical act While the world grapples

with the aftermath of a seemingly whimsical act by the U.S. in killing the

commander of another sovereign nation, it is easy to be pulled into unwanted situations, as far as India is concerned. The attempt by U.S. President Donald Trump to invoke India is one such situation which needs to be handled with great caution and adroit diplomacy. Statements by Mr. Trump blaming the slain commander for "terrorist acts and plots"

sound shallow without adequate proof. One sincerely hopes our diplomats know how to

steer clear of the baits and pitfalls arising out of the situation. Traditionally, India and Iran have had a long history of love-hate relationship and the present situation could also lead to a new low. It would be wise for both nations to keep their heads still. YOGANANDH T., Salem, Tamil Nadu

■ The U.S.'s misadventure can prove to be another strategic misstep by Washington in affairs of West Asia. This is nothing short of

declaring war on Iran. In the times of a global economic slowdown, the mindless act of the big brother would lead the world community to the brink by affecting the supply and price of hydrocarbon fuels. The slain commander was instrumental in fighting against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. A strong retaliation from Iran is in offing. India too would have to bear the brunt. D.V.G. SANKARARAO,

Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh



the AIADMK is regaining momentum.

Safeguarding the idea of India

The nation's current social and political predicament poses an existential challenge



Ominous clouds have gathered over India, casting shadows of divisiveness and hate, threatening to undermine civil society and halt or even reverse economic progress. There is today a risk of going over a precipice beyond which there may not be a

As the new decade dawned, the two of us decided to get together to write not on problems of economic theory or some immediate policy challenge, as we did in the past, but on the nation's social and political predicament, which poses an existential challenge. We have known each other for decades, and grown up in an India that was imperfect but seemed to possess an ideal of togetherness that created hope. We come from different backgrounds. One of us (as the reader may have guessed) is Bengali, one Punjabi; one of us is Hindu, one Sikh. What is common between us is a concern for human well-being and a belief in the fundamental importance of empathy, tolerance and compassion; the need to treat all human beings as equal; and to reach out to anybody in need - irrespective of religion, gender, and caste. We believe that judgments concerning what is morally good or fair must not depend on who is making the judgment or his or her religion or race. These are principles emphasised in the writings of John Rawls and go back to the Enlightenment philosophers. These are also principles that can be found in the writings of philosophers and religious thinkers on the Indian subcontinent. These are the moorings of the very idea of India.

India's composite culture

This is the time to remember the spirit of Guru Nanak, which led Guru Arjan to write, "No one is my enemy, no one is a stranger, I am connected with all," and Guru Gobind Singh to insist, "Recognise all of humanity as one." This is the time to remember Rabindranath Tagore's resonant verse: "Come Aryans, come non-Aryans, Hindus and Mussalmans/

Delhi, on August 15, 1947. Since Independence, the country has stood out as a beacon of hope, committed to democracy and secularism. • WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Come today, Englishmen, come Christians/ Come Brahmin, cleansing your mind/ Join hands with all."

It is the sharp erosion in these basic moral tenets in India that concerns us. India has had a turbulent history since its independence on that momentous midnight of August 1947. There have been dark times and events that we should all be ashamed of. Following the end of the Second World War, many new nations were born as peoples and lands shook off their colonial shackles and declared independence. These nations began with idealism, embracing democracy and equality, but military coups and religious captures felled the ideals of one nation after another. But India stood out as a beacon of hope, committed to democracy, freedom of speech and secularism. From the mid-1990s, it also began to see rapid economic growth.

There are still many challenges to contend with. There is poverty and discrimination, there is corruption and a growing environmental challenge, and there is pollution that, if left unchecked, will damage the cognitive powers of future generations. We have to attend to these urgently. The steady progress of the economy since the mid-1990s was raising hope that we would take on these challenges head on. The divisiveness being advocated has, however, caused a setback. This is affecting trust and cooperation in the nation. For example, the use of the state machinery in Uttar Pradesh to seek "revenge," and to promote the ring-fencing of people and silencing of voices is ethically

unacceptable and doing great dam-

Trust improves economy

age to India's standing globally.

What is not always appreciated, but for which there is a lot of evidence, is that societal trust and a sense of belonging improves economic outcomes, including growth. Economists Yann Algan and Pierre Cahuc have used rigorous statistical analysis to show that higher levels of trust can cause national income to increase dramatically: Africa, with Sweden's trust levels, would achieve six times its present per capita income. A recent study, published in Harvard Business Review, shows that if workers feel appreciated and have a sense of belonging to their company, they have a 56% higher job performance, there is a 50% drop in turnover risk, and a 75% reduction in sick days. "For a 10,000-person company, this would result in annual savings of more than \$52M". One has to extrapolate this to a nation to get a sense of how economically important this sense of belonging is.

Even before the turmoil of 2019, India's economy was already reeling, with industry, agriculture and exports all growing much slower than a decade earlier. But now, beyond the basic moral principles at stake, we argue that the promotion of hate and divisiveness is also hurting India's economy. We are at risk of a major downward spiral.

A call to reject partisanship

We must make this a moment to pause and ask ourselves what we as individuals must do. We write this to appeal not just to the young students, scientists and Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims who are already out there protesting against the doctrine of exclusion, but also to those who are preaching violence. We urge them to look into their own hearts, and drop their cudgels. We suggest to the police and functionaries of the state that to make people listen to and respect them, they must not just wield the baton, but also be bearers of ethical standards.

We take hope from the fact that so many students on our campuses understand this. We take hope from the fact that so many leading thinkers and scientists, unaffiliated to any political party, have begun to speak up. We take hope from the Sikhs who have refused to discriminate against other religious groups, from the Hindus who have stood with the Muslims and Christians to defend all minorities, to uphold India's commitment to democracy and secularism.

We are not suggesting that if we stand together and pull back from the brink of the precipice, all our challenges will disappear. India is a lower-middle income economy, with a great deal of injustice, unfairness and suffering that will not vanish in haste. Yet, if we resolve to reject the partisanship that is being preached and then strive to take on the many challenges, there can be hope, the hope of pulling back from the brink and building a society and an economy that will be exemplary for not just its own people but for the world.

Kaushik Basu, former chief economic adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University; Nirvikar Singh is Professor of Economics at the University of California, Santa Cruz

Making hope possible, not despair convincing

If Faiz Ahmed Faiz can help restore democracy in Nepal, he can do so in India too



Is it possible to retain hope when charlatans dictate our terms of engagement with the world of the arts and ideas? This was the question I had to encounter during a documentary film festival in Chennai where I paraphrased the Welsh writer and academic Raymond Williams and said that the mission of journalism and documentaries "is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing".

The participants of the film festival were concerned about many things, but they were particularly agitated about the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur's decision to form a panel to examine whether the poem, "Hum Dekhenge", by the celebrated poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz was indeed communal and hurt sentiments. This panel was formed after a temporary faculty member,

Vashimant Sharma, and 16 others complained against the students for reciting the poem in support of the students of Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi. If an exemplary artist of the stature of Faiz can be shoehorned into a narrow communal jacket, many tend to believe that despair is the reality of the moment.

However, when the media highlighted the absurdity of the complaint, the management was forced to retract its original position. Talking to this newspaper, the IIT's Deputy Director, Manindra Agrawal, said that the panel is not going to determine whether sentiments were hurt or not, but would only investigate if there was any "deliberate mischief". This climbdown in the present environment of impunity is a testimony to the power of journalism as a site of hope rather than as a megaphone of despair.

The power of Urdu

My linguistic skills are restricted to just two languages, English and Tamil. I have no knowledge of Urdu. But I was moved by the power of Urdu verses not once but twice in 2005. I was based in Kathmandu when Nepal was going through its worst political crisis, the royal coup. I watched as King Gyanendra dismissed the government and restored an absolute monarchy. He suspended the fundamental rights of Nepali citizens, including the freedom of opinion and expression, the freedom of the press and publications, the right to information, the right to constitutional remedy, and the right to property. Similar to what is happening in Kashmir now, a communication blackout was imposed across the country.

This did not deter senior journalists in Nepal from assembling at the Yalamaya Kendra in Patan to formulate ways and means to keep the public informed of what was happening

despite the draconian measures taken by the royalty. I was invited to join the deliberation and, unlike what is happening in India today, not seen as an alien poking his nose in the domestic affairs of a foreign country. Kanak Mani Dixit, a senior editor and regular contributor to this newspaper, invoked Faiz Ahmed Faiz in a moving manner. Armed with the brilliant multimedia production of Faiz's major poems by the Dawn group of publications, Mr. Dixit

rendered the poem "Bol (Speak)" and explained how Faiz made the blazing smithy a symbol of the freedom movement during colonial rule. Here is the English translation of the lines that moved me:

"Speak - your lips are free, Speak – your tongue is still yours Speak – your life is still yours Look inside the smithy -Leaping flames, red-hot iron. Padlocks open their jaws. Chains disintegrate. Speak - there is little time But it is enough Before the body perishes Before the tongue atrophies. Speak – truth still lives. Say what you have to say."

In a year when the resistance cascaded into what Nepalese political historians call the Jan Andolan-II, another brilliant poem of Faiz , "Soldier's elegy", was used to create a space for reconciliation after a decade of civil war. If Faiz can help restore democracy in our neighbourhood, he can do so here too.

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Theatre of the absurd

It is ironical that a poem denouncing Islamic fundamentalism should be condemned as anti-Hindu

MOHAMMED AYOOB

IIT-Kanpur's decision to set up an investigation committee in response to complaints that the reading of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poem, "Hum dekhenge (We are sure to witness)", at an anti-Citizenship Amedment Act rally on December 17 was an anti-national and anti-Hindu act is nothing short of a theatre of the absurd. The complaints registered by a temporary faculty member and 16 others demonstrate their ignorance of Urdu literary idiom, poetic metaphors, Faiz's political views, and, above all, the context in which the poem was written.

Against injustice

Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984) was arguably the greatest Urdu poet of his generation. The fact that he was a Pakistani national was purely an accident of birth. He was a native of Lahore, which fell to Pakistan's share. Additionally, Lahore had become a major centre of Urdu literature as well as progressive thought when he was growing up in pre-independence India and it was but natural that Faiz would find the literary and cultural atmosphere in that city conducive for the flowering of his poetic talent.

Faiz was a part of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association established in 1936. The goal of the association was to promote equality and social justice, and many of its leading lights belonged to the Communist movement. The ideals of social equality and opposition to injustice and authoritarian rule inspired much of Faiz's poetry.

His famous poem "Mujh se pehli si mohabbat mere mehboob na maang" (My beloved do not demand from me the earlier intensity of love)" is a classic embodying his quest for social justice. In it, Faiz tells his imaginary beloved not to expect the same intensity of love from him that existed earlier, now that he has become aware of the oppression inflicted on his people by an age-old system based on inequality and injustice. Consequently, he implies, his passion for his beloved is bound to be diluted because a major part of his energies has to be diverted to fighting oppression and injustice.

Faiz's anguish when Partition ac-

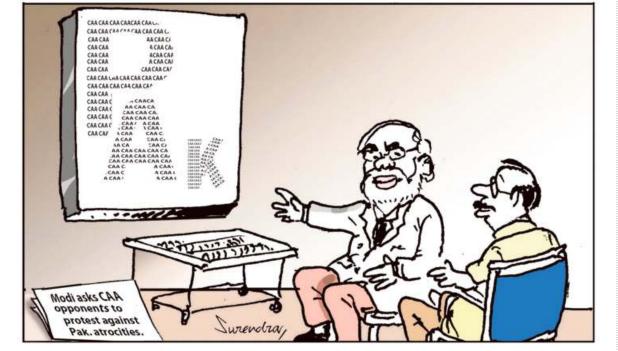
companied independence was embodied in his poem "Subh-e Azadi (The dawn of independence)". It begins with the couplet, "Yeh daagh daagh ujaalaa, yeh shab gazidaa seher; Woh intezaar tha jiska, yeh woh seher to nahin (This blemished light infused with the darkness of night; Surely, this isn't the dawn we waited for so eagerly)". This political statement cannot be surpassed in its intensity of feeling by political speeches denouncing Partition.

A clarion call

Faiz spent a few years in Pakistani jails in the 1950s for his revolutionary views and produced an anthology of poems titled Zindan Nama (Prison Musings) while incarcerated. He had to go into self-imposed exile from 1979 to 1982 because of persecution under the Zia-ul-Haq regime. His poem, "Hum dekhenge", written in 1979 was a clarion call for resistance against Zia's authoritarian and fundamentalist rule. Written for a predominantly Muslim audience it effectively used Islamic imagery to denounce the fundamentalism and authoritarianism that had become the hallmark of the regime. It uses the allegory of judgment day when all false gods (authoritarian rulers) will be overthrown and all thrones and crowns will be destroyed ("sab taaj uchhale jayenge; sab takht giraye jayenge") in order to project a democratic and egalitarian future for

It is ironical that a poem condemning authoritarianism and Islamic fundamentalism should be denounced as being anti-Hindu and anti-Indian. It demonstrates the cultural philistinism of those making the charge and their total lack of understanding of the poem's context. "Hum dekhenge" was written to inspire the masses not only in Pakistan but everywhere to take their destiny in their own hands and overthrow authoritarian and bigoted rulers. For, as Faiz posits, the day is bound to come when dictators who behave like gods will be toppled and the will of the people will prevail.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State



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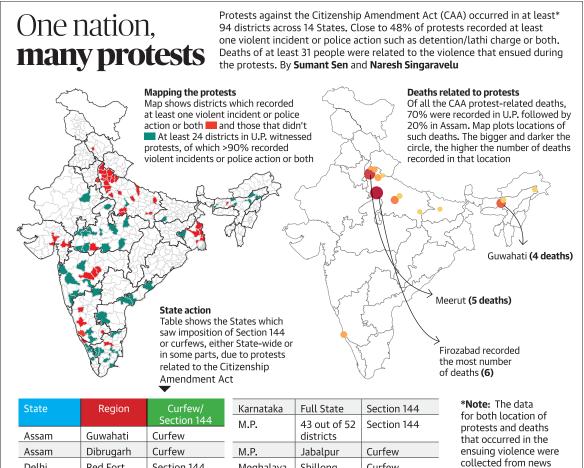
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Section 144

Delhi



Shillong

Full State

Curfew

Section 144

reported by The Hindu

and PTI

Meghalaya

The Man Kindu. FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 6, 1970

Suggestion to limit poll contests

A proposal was made at the conference of the Chief Electoral Officers to-day [January 5, Bombay] that in any election to the Lok Sabha or to a Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly), a person should not be allowed to stand as a candidate from more than two constituencies. It was also suggested that an employer should give on the polling day at least three hours' leave of absence to every employee to enable him to cast his vote. Any failure on the part of the employer would be an offence under the law. Similarly, if any employee avails himself of the leave granted to him, but does not intentionally exercise his franchise, he will also be liable for punishment. Another subject discussed was the use of vehicles for carrying voters to and from polling stations. A proposal was made that on the polling day, no vehicle should ply in any polling area till the close of the poll except under a permit obtained from the Returning Officer or some other specified officers. Some doubts were expressed by some Chief Electoral Officers that a stringent provision like this might cause some practical difficulties and inconvenience in big cities.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 6, 1920.

More Secret History.

London, January 2. – In further letters from the Ex-Kaiser to the Ex-Tsar dated September 26th and October 25th, 1895 published in the "Morning Post", the former indulges in a diatribe against the French, whom he accused of Chauvinism and imperialism, remarking: "God knows I have done all in my power to preserve European peace, but if France goes on violating all the rules of peace one fine day, Dearest Nisky, you will find yourself nolens volens embroiled in the most horrible war Europe has ever seen. If you are allied with the French, keep the damned rascals in order. The curse of God has stricken that people for ever." The Ex-Kaiser referring to the British Foreign policy says: - "The British seem to have some idea or other of changing their policy in the Mediterranean, for two days ago Malet paying a farewell visit to our Foreign Office used the most blustering words about Germany behaving badly to England in Africa saying England would not stand it any longer and that after buying off the French by concessions in Egypt they were at liberty to look after us. He was even so undiplomatic as to utter the word war, saying even that England would not shrink from making war upon me if we did not knock in Africa."