



NEARBY



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

**NEW 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.

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Artists paint CP in protest against CAA, NRC

**NEW DELHI**  
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 Bhi 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

**NEW DELHI**  
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

**KOLKATA**  
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.

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## Iraqi MPs vote to expel U.S. troops

Resolution comes amid mounting backlash against killing of Iranian Commander

REUTERS  
BEIRUT

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 said.

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## India condemns killing of Sikh youth in Pak.

Asks Imran Khan to ensure security of minorities after Peshawar murder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

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 Janam 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.

India's condemnation came soon after Ravinder Singh was killed by miscreants in Peshawar.

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## It is against my vision: Imran

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD

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.

## 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 Police 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.

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## 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 Gujarat'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.  
BENGALURU

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 Chitradurga district of Karnataka.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has proposed a ₹ 2,700-crore 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*,



A view of the area where ISRO and DRDO facilities will be set up at Challakere. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

"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 doing in Russia for the Gaga-

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.

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## Our kin were framed in riots, say Lucknow residents

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

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

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 it.

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 jail.

"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 said.

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.

## NCP gets crucial Home, Finance portfolios

Ajit Pawar will also look after Planning

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

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



Anil Deshmukh

and four MoS. The Congress has 10 Cabinet Ministers and two MoS.

"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.

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# 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**  
NEW DELHI

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. Shah.

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 door-to-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 asked.

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 hospi-

tals 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” them.

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 *pakka* 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 from 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 celebrations.

# Other than abuse, nothing in speech: CM

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

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

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 said.

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-



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and others at the inauguration 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 colonies. “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 providing registration of 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. Kejriwal said.

# 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 Red Fort.

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



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,

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

Sachin’s first student was 16-year-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 amass around 50-odd students.

### Hurdles crossed

Running the school comes at

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 things.

At the school, the youngest is a 2-year-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 tobacco.

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 sharpened - 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 kids.

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.”

### Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	407	Gurgaon	404
Ghaziabad	417	Faridabad	415
Noida	403	Greater Noida	414
Legend: 0-50 (Good), 51-100 (Satisfactory), 101-200 (Moderate), 201-300 (Poor), 301-400 (Very poor), >401 (Severe)			
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]			

### DELHI TODAY

**Talk:** Lecture on “Solving the Grand Challenges of Humanity” by Prof. Vivek Wadhwa, Distinguished Fellow at Harvard Law School and Carnegie Mellon University’s College of Engineering at Silicon Valley, at C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC) 6 p.m.

**Talk:** “The Geopolitics of Climate Change” a lecture by Dr. Nitin Desai, economist, will explore the geopolitics of climate change by examining the current state of climate diplomacy, at IIC, 6.30 p.m.

**Exhibition:** A paintings show by Dipnarayan Paul and Moinudin Mullick at Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

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

**Exhibition:** “Truth”, a solo show of oil paintings by Shafali R. Anand at All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, 1, Rafi Marg, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at cityed@delhi@thehindu.co.in)

# Overflowing sewage on National Highway-19 sparks safety concerns

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

**ASHOK KUMAR**  
FARIDABAD

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 Panchayat, 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 water-borne 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 said.



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 carriage-way 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 the 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 *pucca*.

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 water-logging 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

drain. He said he had made requests to the Block Development and Panchayat Officer and NHA officials in this regard.

Delhi Agra Toll Road official P.K. Singh said the water-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. NHA, 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.

# 150 Mohalla Clinics inaugurated

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government inaugurated 150 Mohalla Clinics on Sunday taking the total number of such clinics in the Capital to 450. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, 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 voted to power: Congress

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Sunday said that if it was elected to power in Delhi, it would not implement the National Population Register (NPR), National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the amended Citizenship Act in its present form.

The State unit of the 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 included in the manifesto.

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 and caste.





(Clockwise from top left) Homeless people sleeping on a pavement near 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.

■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA / SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR



CITY TEAM  
NEW DELHI

Past 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. 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.

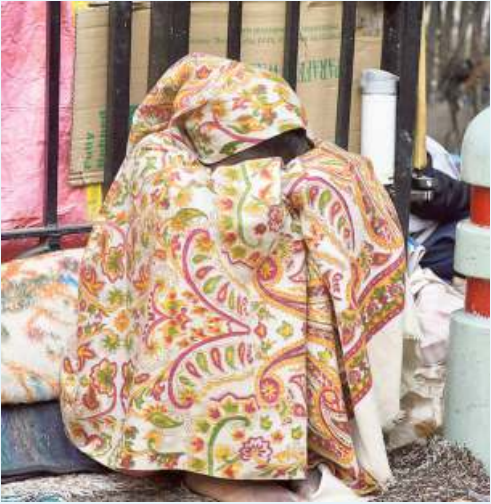
In over an hour spent in the area, at least three different groups had come to distribute blankets and some to distribute food, like the people who gave Phoolvati an apple. Some of them sleeping outside were seen tucking the blankets they had got under their belongings and rushing for another one.

To protect herself from the chilling weather, 11-year-old Sita was seen wearing an oversized brown sweater with a torn woolen 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. 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 zadda thand to kabhi zadda 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 Revda 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 bonfire 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)



Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, JAN. 06		
RISE	07:15	SET 17:39
RISE	14:06	SET 02:42
TUESDAY, JAN. 07		
RISE	07:15	SET 17:40
RISE	14:45	SET 03:40
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 thunder-showers would occur.

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THE HINDU

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Villagers attack police station in Rajasthan

JAIPUR

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 region.

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**  
JODHPUR

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 intensive 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**  
PANCHKULA

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 provisions 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**  
LUCKNOW

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  
GUWAHATI

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 representing as may tribes.

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.

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-the-soil), 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. PTI

## Man arrested for posing as Maoist in Odisha

Releases nephew after extorting ₹2 lakh

STAFF REPORTER  
BERHAMPUR

A youth was arrested in Odisha’s Gajapati district for 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 headquarters 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 also seized 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  
KOLKATA

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 said.

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.













**IN BRIEF**  
**Police inspect Lalu's ward at hospital**

**RANCHI**  
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," said an officer. PTI

**Navy kicks off 'Maha-Navy Connect'**

**MUMBAI**  
The Navy on Sunday launched a first-ever three-dimensional 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**

**GUWAHATI**  
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



**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 PHOTO

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 and 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 said.

On a five-day tour of ISRO

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

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

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 govern-

ment's UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik), since it has the capacity to operate in "ill-equipped", "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.

# Army to sign MoU for 7.5 lakh AK-203 assault rifles

They will be manufactured by an Indo-Russian joint venture



About 1 lakh rifles will be manufactured in Russia and the remaining in India.

**DINAKAR PERI**  
**NEW DELHI**  
The Army is likely to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in a month for the procurement of over 7.5 lakh AK-203 assault rifles, which are to be manufactured locally by an India-Russia joint venture (JV), a Defence source said. The Defence Ministry has already floated a Request For Proposal for the supply of 6.71 lakh rifles.

"About 1 lakh rifles will come directly from Russia and the remaining will be manufactured by the JV in India. The MoU should be

signed in a month," an official said.

The rifles will be manufactured by the Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited

(IRRPL) at Korwa in Uttar Pradesh. The facility is being set up by the Ordnance Factories Board from the Indian side, and Rosoboron Exports and Kalashnikov on the Russian side.

The Army has appointed Major General Sanjeev Senger as the Chief Executive Officer of IRRPL.

In addition to the AK-203, the Army recently began inducting the first batch of 10,000 SIG-716 assault rifles.

The force has been looking to replace the indigenous INSAS rifles, which are currently in use, with modern rifles.

# CIC website inaccessible again outside India

**PRISCILLA JEBARAJ**  
**NEW DELHI**

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 decisions.

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."

# 'Investors wary of uncertain tax administration in India'

Association flags existence of multiple tax regimes

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI**

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 at 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 63<sup>rd</sup> 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 "uncertainty in tax administration". The association told the members that there are

multiple tax regimes within a 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 said.

India was on the 63<sup>rd</sup> 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**  
**KOLKATA**

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-



A part of the station's roof collapsed near the enquiry counter on Saturday.

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

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

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

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
**NEW DELHI**

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 Sahaj 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 indi-

viduals who have deposited more than ₹1 crore in bank account or have incurred ₹2 lakh or ₹1 lakh on foreign travel or electricity respectively.

Such taxpayers will have 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 Navneen Wadhwa of Taxmann.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for 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, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana Chandigarh, Delhi and east Rajasthan.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala.....	23.0	13.0		Kozhikode.....	34.0	25.0	
Ahmedabad.....	25.0	12.0		Kurnool.....	33.0	22.0	
Aizawl.....				Lucknow.....	21.0	11.0	
Allahabad.....	18.0	10.0		Madurai.....	34.0	23.0	
Bengaluru.....	31.0	19.0		Mangaluru.....	32.0	20.0	
Bhopal.....	20.0	13.0		Mumbai.....	30.0	16.0	
Bhubaneswar.....	26.0	13.0		Mysuru.....	32.0	18.0	
Chandigarh.....	18.0	6.0		New Delhi.....	21.0	7.0	
Chennai.....	32.0	25.0		Patna.....	18.0	13.0	
Coimbatore.....	33.0	23.0		Port Blair.....	31.0	26.0	
Dehradun.....	8.8	19.0	4.0	Puducherry.....	31.0	23.0	
Gangtok.....	3.3	8.0	4.0	Pune.....	26.0	12.0	
Goa.....		30.0	19.0	Raipur.....	0.5	24.0	15.0
Guwahati.....				Ranchi.....	20.0	9.0	
Hubballi.....	29.0	17.0		Shillong.....			
Hyderabad.....				Shimla.....	6.4	10.0	-1.0
Imphal.....				Srinagar.....			
Jaipur.....	21.0	10.0		Thiruvananthapuram.....	71.6	32.0	25.0
Kochi.....	33.0	26.0		Tiruchi.....	33.0	25.0	
Kohima.....				Vijayawada.....	27.0	22.0	
Kolkata.....	21.0	13.0		Visakhapatnam.....	27.0	21.0	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing						Yesterday
CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad.....	57	22	36	120	113	■
Bengaluru.....	11	55	19	97	104	■
Chennai.....	5	18	96	34		■
Delhi.....		206	80	395	336	■
Hyderabad.....	3	66	44	166	126	■
Kolkata.....	24	75	26	254	241	■
Lucknow.....	8	33	92	242		■
Mumbai.....	7	71	20	232	166	■
Pune.....	68	26	79	188	130	■
Visakhapatnam	11	23	44	27	43	■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO<sub>2</sub>**: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
**NO<sub>2</sub>**: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
**CO**: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.  
**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

# Centre bats for science outreach programmes

It moots Scientific Social Responsibility

**STAFF REPORTER**  
**BENGALURU**

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 responsibility (SSR).

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

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

up a list of activities which could be taken up under the Scientific Social Responsibility programme, that was similar to Corporate Social Responsibility.

**Part of outcome report**

"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**  
**BENGALURU**

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-



**At the forefront:** Tessy Thomas and Trilochan Mohapatra at 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 remain in science 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.







