

NEARBY



Modi gov't. in denial of slowdown: Manmohan

NEW DELHI
Former PM Manmohan Singh on Wednesday said the Narendra Modi government was in denial of the economic slowdown and its target of making India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 was "wishful thinking". He was speaking at the release of a book authored by former Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 5

Arvind Kejriwal calls on Union Home Minister

NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence here on Wednesday and discussed various development issues pertaining to Delhi, the State government said in a statement. Various issues and matters concerning the people of Delhi were discussed, Mr. Kejriwal said at a press conference later.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Trade agreement with U.S. only delayed & not stuck, says govt.

It points to grand scale of Trump-Modi Motera rally as 'key deliverable' of visit

SUHASINI HAIDAR
SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON DC

An Indo-U.S. trade deal has been delayed but is not "stuck", the government said on Wednesday, hours after President Donald Trump confirmed that negotiations will not be completed in time for his visit next week.

However, government sources said expectations on trade would not overshadow the larger context of the visit, which will be a massive roadshow for Mr. Trump and his wife Melania from the Ahmedabad airport to Motera as well as a joint rally with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the stadium (billed as the world's biggest cricket stadium), the "key deliverable" of the visit.

"From the moment of their arrival at the airport, [Mr. and Mrs. Trump] will be treated to a display of famed Indian hospitality and India's Unity in Diversity," Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla told reporters.

'Big deal later'
Speaking in Washington DC, Mr. Trump spoke in a similar vein. "We can have a trade deal with India but I am saving the big deal for later on. We're doing a very big trade deal with India...we'll have



Welcome sign: A hoarding featuring U.S. President Donald Trump, wife Melania and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. • VIJAY SONEJI

it. I don't know if it'll be done before the elections but we'll have a very big deal with India," he told reporters on Tuesday.

The comments come days after U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer cancelled a trip to India — as reported in *The Hindu* — to finalise a mini-trade deal that the two countries were hoping to finalise during the visit.

"We're not treated very well by India but I happen to like Prime Minister Modi a lot. And he told me we'll have seven million people

between the airport and the event. And the stadium, I understand, is sort of semi under-construction but it's going to be the largest stadium in the world. So it's going to be very exciting," Mr. Trump said.

Performing arts
"The route of their travel to the stadium is expected to have tens of thousands of ordinary citizens as well as artists showcasing the performing arts from different States and Union Territories," Mr. Shringla said, adding that Mr. Trump's motor-

cade would pass through an "India roadshow" along the way, with 28 stages representing various parts of the country on display.

The figures represent a considerable contrast to the U.S. President's repeated reference to crowds of "7 million" that he expects will come out to greet him but the government feels that rather than the figure being taken literally, the "spirit" of the grandness of the event is important.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 12

'No one was killed by police bullets in anti-CAA protests'

U.P. CM says 'rioters were killed by the bullets of rioters'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Not a single person was killed by police bullets during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on December 19 and 20, 2019, and those who died were killed by the "bullets of rioters", Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said in the Assembly on Wednesday.

At least 23 people died in the violence during the protests, most of them of bullet injuries.

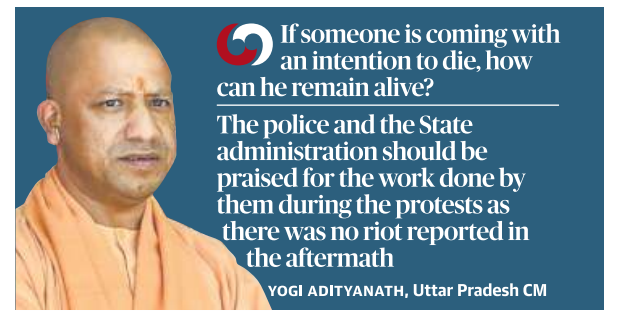
"Agar koi marne ke liye aa hi raha hai toh woh zinda kahan se jaega? [If someone is coming with an intention to die, how can he remain alive?]" Mr. Adityanath said.

"Upadravi upadraviyo ki goliyon se hi mare hai [the rioters died from the bullets fired by other rioters]," he claimed.

The police and the State administration "should be praised" for the work done by them during the protests as there was no riot reported in the aftermath, he said.

While Mr. Adityanath claimed that not a single death occurred due to police firing, the district police in Bijnor had in December admitted that a youth, Suleiman, died after a constable fired at him in self-defence.

Mr. Adityanath accused the Congress and the Samaj-



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YOGI ADITYANATH, Uttar Pradesh CM

wadi Party (SP) of supporting and sympathising with the outfits that participated in the protests. These outfits "do not believe" in the Constitution and they received "terror funding", he alleged.

He singled out the Popular Front of India and accused it of terror funding.

The Chief Minister said he would support any protest if it was done in a democratic manner and even provide it security. However, in the garb of democracy, anyone "tears the Constitution to shreds", attacked innocent persons, dishonoured women or participated in arson, "then we will explain it to them in the language they understand".

Mr. Adityanath evoked the 1990 firing on Ram Janmabhoomi activists or *kar sevaks* to target the Opposition, especially the SP, which was in power then, for questioning his government on the action taken against alleged vandals

during the anti-CAA protests. "Those who ordered firing on *Ram bhakts* and tried to pollute the esteem of Ayodhya are today seeking answers from us," he said.

The Supreme Court, which ruled in favour of building a Ram temple at the disputed site, had put a stamp of approval on the claim of "*Ram bhakts*". "The *Ram bhakts* who were demanding a Ram mandir were right. And those who fired at them were wrong," he said. Mocking former CM Mulayam Singh Yadav for his famous comments that even a *parinda* (bird) would be able to breach the security in Ayodhya in 1990, Mr. Adityanath said: "There was not a *parinda* but lakhs of *Ram bhakts*. But U.P. proved on November 9, 2019 that even a *parinda* cannot move its wings under law and order."

AMU STUDENTS CONDEMN STATEMENT ▶ PAGE 5

Here to find a solution: mediators

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court-appointed interlocutors, Sanjay Hegde and Sadhana Ramachandran, on Wednesday made their first direct contact with the women protesters of Shaheen Bagh, who have been on a sit-in against the CAA-NRC-NPR regime since December 16.

"This was our first interaction with the women and *dadis* (grandmothers)

of Shaheen Bagh, apart from other citizens. We heard their grievances and concerns. They want us to come again as we could not speak to all of them. They have expressed their pain and sorrow," Ms. Ramachandran told reporters after a nearly two-hour interaction with the protesters.

Initiating a conversation with the protesters, Mr. Hegde said, "We are here to listen to all and speak to you all."

Ms. Ramachandran, while explaining the court order to the protesters, said: "It is your right to protest but like us, there are other citizens also who use the roads, like shopkeepers and doctors. Do we want to take away the rights of others? So the Supreme Court has sent us. We want to find a solution along with you all."

WOMEN STAND THEIR GROUND ▶ PAGE 2

Muralidhar among 3 HC judges to be transferred

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the transfer of Justice S. Muralidhar, who is third in the order of seniority in the Delhi High Court, along with two other transfer recommendations of judges.

The Collegium, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, has recommend-

ed that Justice Muralidhar be shifted to the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The Collegium's resolution, dated February 12, was uploaded on the court website on Wednesday. Two other HC judges have also been recommended for transfer.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12
BAR ASSOCIATION CONDEMNNS JUDGE'S TRANSFER ▶ PAGE 4

Ram temple trust elects chairman

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust, set up to oversee the construction of the Ram temple in

Ayodhya, held its first meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday, and elected Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas's Mahant Nriyaya Gopal Das as chairman and Champat Rai, de-

scribed as a social activist and also associated with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, as general secretary.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

President to inaugurate The Huddle on Feb. 22

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The fourth edition of The Huddle, *The Hindu's* annual thought conclave, will be held at the ITC Gardenia in Bengaluru on February 22 and 23.

President Ram Nath Kovind will address the audience as the Chief Guest and inaugurate the conclave on February 22. The keynote address will be delivered by the former Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Over the two days, The Huddle features 15 sessions and 32 speakers, showcasing some of the best minds from the world of politics, business, academics, sports, entertainment and the arts. The sessions are designed to be interactive, and they take place before an invited audience.

From its launch in 2017, The Huddle has been designed to expand the space for democratic debate and provide an opportunity for speakers and members of the audience to interact formally and informally.

This year, The Huddle is powered by Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd.



(HCCB), in association with the Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan governments.

Kamlesh Sharma, chief communications officer of HCCB, said: "Although a young event, the platform is already a 'festival of ideas' for the new India. HCCB is rooted to the idea of India and given that The Huddle is convened in Bengaluru, which is also HCCB's headquarters, we think of ourselves as a natural ally with such a forum."

Among The Huddle's other sponsors are Life Insurance Corporation of India (Associate Sponsor), Royaloak (Comfort Partner), NTPC and SSVM (Session Sponsors), Anand Prakash (Gift Partner), SpiceJet (Travel Partner) and WION TV (International News Partner).