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### NEARBY



#### Jamia reopens library months after vandalism

**NEW DELHI**  
 The main library of Jamia Millia Islamia, which was vandalised on December 15 last year after the police entered it following anti-CAA protests, was reopened after renovation on Wednesday. Dr. Zakir Husain Library has undergone extensive renovation, the university said in a statement.

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#### Assembly to discuss NPR, NRC, COVID-19

**NEW DELHI**  
 The Delhi Assembly will hold a one-day session on Friday to discuss the NPR, the NRC and COVID-19. Party leaders said that AAP may push for a stand against the NPR.

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## COVID-19 now a pandemic, says WHO; India confirms 60 cases

Over 1.18,000 positive cases have been reported globally across 114 countries

**BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN**  
**NEW DELHI**  
 The World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday said that according to its assessment, COVID-19 "can be characterised as a pandemic."

"WHO has been assessing this outbreak round-the-clock and we are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction," it said.

According to the WHO, a pandemic is declared when a new disease for which people do not have immunity spreads around the world beyond expectations. It noted with concern that 1,18,000 positive cases had been reported in 114 countries, and more than 90% of cases were in just four.

#### Visas suspended

With 60 confirmed cases in India, the Central government on Wednesday issued a travel advisory stating that all existing visas, except di-



**Growing concern:** People enquiring at a COVID-19 helpdesk in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. • S. MAHINSHA

plomatic, official, UN/international organisations, employment and project visas, stand suspended till April 15, and this order will come into effect from March 13 at the port of departure.

The new advisory, issued following a meeting of the Group of Ministers, noted that visa-free travel facility granted to OCI card holders would be kept in abeyance till April 15. It added that any foreign national who intends to travel to India for compell-

ing reason may contact the nearest Indian mission and all incoming travellers, including Indian nationals arriving from or having visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany after February 15 shall be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days. "Provision for testing primarily for students/compassionate cases in Italy to be made and collection for samples to be organised accordingly. Those tested negative

will be allowed to travel and will be quarantined on arrival in India for 14 days," the release added.

It also noted that international traffic through land borders would be restricted.

#### Fresh cases

The number of confirmed cases in India is 60 with two fresh cases — one each from Delhi and Rajasthan being reported — according to a release issued by the Union Health Ministry.

However, as per health officials from the States, the number of cases may be up to 65, but they are yet to be confirmed by the Centre. "There are now 60 positive cases [including the 3 cases from Kerala discharged earlier]," noted the Health Ministry, which confirmed cases from Kerala (8), Karnataka and Maharashtra reported earlier this week by the State governments.

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## Jyotiraditya Scindia joins BJP, says Congress is in denial

He praised the leadership of PM Narendra Modi

**NISTULA HEBBAR**  
**NEW DELHI**

Former Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Wednesday formally joined the BJP after resigning from the primary membership of the Congress on Tuesday. He lauded the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said the Congress was in "denial" about reality.

At a press conference at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi, Mr. Scindia, 49, joined the party in the presence of its president, J.P. Nadda, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Madhya Pradesh unit chief Vishnu Datt Sharma, general secretaries Anil Jain and Arun Singh as well as spokespersons Jay Panda and Zafar Islam.

Mr. Islam, a friend of Mr. Scindia from the latter's days as an investment banker, was involved in him crossing over to the BJP.

Welcoming Mr. Scindia into the BJP, Mr. Nadda recalled the party's founder and the



**New start:** Jyotiraditya Scindia being welcomed by BJP chief J.P. Nadda in New Delhi on Wednesday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

former's grandmother, the late Vijaya Rajee Scindia, and said, "He [Scindia] is joining his family and we welcome him."

Mr. Nadda assured Mr. Scindia that he was now in a "democratically run party" and he would be heard.

Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was absent at the induction. But at a presser in Bhopal, flanked by Mr. Scindia's paternal aunt and BJP leader Yashodhara Rajee, he said he welcomed Mr. Scindia into the party.

A senior source in the BJP said, "He has stayed in Bho-

pal as the situation is delicate with regard to the Kamal Nath government."

Mr. Scindia spoke rather emotionally about his move. He said there were two dates that had a profound impact on his life — September 30, 2001, the day his father, the late Madhavrao Scindia, passed away in a plane crash; and March 10, 2020, also the 75th birth anniversary of his father, when he decided to leave the Congress after finding himself at a "crossroads".

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## Suspension of seven Cong. MPs revoked

Need to preserve dignity of House: Birla

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

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed a resolution revoking the suspension of seven Congress members with immediate effect. The resolution was moved by Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal and passed by a voice vote.

With this, the MPs — Gaurav Gogoi, T.N. Prathan, Dean Kuriakose, R. Unnithan, Manickam Tagore, Benny Behannan and Gurjeet Singh Aujla — who were suspended on March 5 for the remaining sittings of the Budget session, returned to the House.

"This House is the temple of democracy and dialogue and dispute are important aspects of it. We need to preserve the dignity of the House," Speaker Om Birla said in his remarks revoking the suspension. "I appreciate the fact that many floor leaders have denounced the habit of rushing to the Well of the House," he added.

Mr. Birla, who had been



Speaker Om Birla

keeping away from the Lok Sabha for the last three working days of the House and was reportedly very upset with the disruptions, held an all-party meeting just before the suspension was revoked. He later returned to preside over the House.

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said his party never wanted to dishonour the Chair or disturb the functioning of the House, as he sought revocation of suspension of the members. Noting that it is the responsibility of both the Opposition and the Treasury Benches to maintain the dignity of the House, he said, "You don't give life sentence to someone for just killing a pigeon." (With PTI inputs)

## SC to hear Uttar Pradesh plea on Lucknow banners today

Allahabad High Court had ordered removal of the posters

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court will hear on Thursday an appeal filed by the Uttar Pradesh government challenging an Allahabad High Court order to the district and police authorities in Lucknow to "forthwith" remove roadside banners displaying the personal details of select persons accused of "vandalism" during the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests in December 2019.

A Vacation Bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and Aniruddha Bose is scheduled to hear the State's special leave petition. The petition is against the finding of a Bench led by Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Govind Mathur that had *suo motu* taken cognisance of the issue.

The High Court had summoned the Lucknow District Magistrate and police chief for an explanation and held that the wayside posters were a violation of individual privacy, a fundamental

right which globally "underpins human dignity and key values of a democracy".

In a 14-page order on March 9, it said, "This fundamental right provides lungs to the edifice of our entire constitutional system... Slightest injury to it is impermissible as that may be fatal for our values designed and depicted in the Preamble of the Constitution".

#### HC erred, says State

The State has argued that the HC erred in invoking public interest jurisdiction, saying it was available only to address the problems plaguing the underprivileged lot. The persons whose personal details were displayed on the banners were "capable enough to agitate their grievance, if any, at their own".

In its order, the High Court had addressed this line of argument, saying the "economic status of the persons directly affected in such matters is not material. The prime consideration before

the Court is to prevent the assault on fundamental rights". The State has challenged the jurisdiction of the Allahabad Bench of the High Court to *suo motu* take cognisance of the banners in Lucknow. There is a separate Bench in Lucknow.

The State has argued that the object of displaying personal details of the individuals is to deter the mischief mongers from causing damage to public and private property. Courts should not interfere in *bona fide* action by invoking the public interest jurisdiction.

The High Court had justified its *suo motu* intervention, saying public display of the personal details of citizens on roadside banners is "undemocratic functioning of government agencies which are supposed to treat all members of public with respect and courtesy and at all time should behave in manner that upholds constitutional and democratic values".

## Role of L-G and govt. intertwined: Madras HC

"They are expected to act in unison"

**MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.**  
**CHENNAI**

The Madras High Court on Wednesday said a government is "a trustee for the little man who should not have a perception that the running of the government is a gigantic conspiracy".

It held that the role of Puducherry's Lieutenant Governor and that of an elected government in the Union Territory were intertwined as per law, and therefore they were expected to act in unison and not in division.

#### Judgment set aside

Chief Justice Amreshwar Pratap Sahi and Justice Subramonium Prasad gave the ruling, setting aside the judgment of a single judge who, according to the Bench, had delivered a verdict in favour of the elected government and held that the L-G could not interfere with its day-to-day functioning by fostering a "basically incorrect" opinion that the legislature of the Union Territory was on a par with that of a State.



Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi

"The view of the learned single judge suffers from a basic fallacy of drawing a parallel on the basis of expected notions of democracy and republicanism vis-à-vis the status of elected legislature of a Union Territory and that of a State. This cannot be done by a judicial pronouncement and has to be through a legislative process by the appropriate legislature. For the time being, there is no such law that may equate or put them at par," the Bench said.

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## SBI cuts fixed deposit, lending rates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
**MUMBAI**

The State Bank of India on Wednesday reduced its lending rate by 10-15 bps, and lowered fixed deposit and savings account interest rates. It also waived the minimum balance requirement for savings accounts.

SBI has reduced the one-year marginal cost of fund-based lending rate by 10 basis points to 7.75% with effect from March 10.

"This is the tenth consecutive cut in MCLR in FY 2019-20," the bank said. As a result, equated monthly instalments on eligible home loan accounts linked to MCLR will get cheaper by around ₹7 per 1 lakh on a 30-year loan. EMIs on car loans will also be reduced by ₹5 per 1 lakh on a 7-year loan.

The bank has reduced the retail term deposit rates by 10 bps for deposits with a maturity of one year and above while the rate has been cut by 50 bps for deposits up to 45 days.

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## Amit Shah lauds police for controlling Delhi riots

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

Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday lauded Delhi Police for "controlling the Delhi riots within 36 hours" and informed the Lok Sabha that the Centre plans to attach the properties of all those who indulged in arson and rioting.

Mr. Shah in his reply to the debate on Delhi riots, said the government would take such strict actions against the rioters "that they would serve as a lesson for future". None will be spared, irrespective of religion, caste or party affiliation, he said.



Amit Shah

Amidst a walkout by Congress members, the Home Minister targeted the party, pointing out that anti-CAA protests started in Shaheen Bagh a day after a 'provocative speech' by the Congress president at Ramlila Maidan.

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## Detentions spark fear among Chand Bagh residents

At least nine men have been picked up by Crime Branch officers since Monday

**HEMANI BHANDARI**  
**NEW DELHI**

"My brother was thrashed for hours before he was let off," alleged Haji Bhure, standing at his grocery store in the Chand Bagh area in north-east Delhi. Released on Wednesday morning, Mushahid's family sent him off immediately to their home town, Budaun in Uttar Pradesh.

The 35-year-old was picked up by police around 12 noon on Monday from the same store where his brother was attending to customers on Wednesday. "They came and

picked up Mushahid without giving any reason. When we asked, they said they will release him after questioning about riots," Mr. Bhure said. On Tuesday, another brother went to the Crime Branch office in Chanakyapuri and tried to reason with the officers that Mushahid was not in Delhi when the riots broke out (on February 23). "We made them talk to a relative in Budaun with whom Mushahid works. They finally released him," said Mr. Bhure.

When contacted, senior officers of Crime Branch re-



A street in Chand Bagh where multiple detentions have taken place in the last three days. • HEMANI BHANDARI

mained unavailable for comment on the incident.

Mr. Bhure alleged that his brother was beaten up in custody. "He told us that they continuously slapped him and asked him if he knew who all were involved in the rioting. They showed photographs and asked him to iden-

tify the rioters," he said. At least nine persons have been picked up by Crime Branch officers since Monday from different streets of Chand Bagh. *The Hindu* spoke to the families of five of them.

Among the detainees is a 50-year-old tailor, Abdul Kadir, who was picked up

around 11 a.m. on Wednesday. His daughter Rukhsar said the police were looking for her brother Shahnawaz. "We told them Shahnawaz wasn't at home. They took my father instead," she said.

"People here are living in fear, don't know whose door the policemen will knock next," said Shakeel Ahmed, a neighbour of Mr. Qadir.

In F Block's street no. 8, policemen picked up Mohammed Yunus on Tuesday around 5 p.m. They had already detained his brother Mohammed Ayub by then.

A relative of the brothers said their mother is inconsolable. "They say they'll release them after questioning but

they haven't."

Right opposite is street no. 8 of E-Block from where Aslam, 23, was picked up on Tuesday around 8 p.m. "Aslam sells vegetables in Azadpur Mandi. At least they should tell the family what his crime is," said his paternal uncle Haji Shah Jahan.

In the early hours of Monday, the police picked up three men — Habib, Usman and Yameen — from Nehru Vihar. Their lawyer, Abdul Gaffar, said the police have slapped sections of rioting, obstruction of duty and "mischief by fire with intent to destroy house" against them and they have been sent to judicial custody.