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NEARBY



NPR will serve as database for NRC: Roy

NEW DELHI Acclaimed author Arundhati Roy on Wednesday said that the NPR would serve as a database for the NRC and asked people to oppose it by furnishing wrong names and addresses. She was addressing students during a protest at the Arts Faculty on North Campus.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

JJP vice-president resigns from party post

GURUGRAM

Indicating that all was not well within the Jananyak Janta Party, the party's national vice-president Ram Kumar Gautam on Wednesday resigned from the post, accusing Dushyant Chautala of "not thinking about party MLAs".

NORTH ▶ PAGE 5

CBI launches probe into YEIDA land scam

NEW DELHI

The CBI has taken over the probe into an alleged ₹126-crore scam in the acquisition of land in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura for the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA). Its former Chief Executive Officer P.C. Gupta and 20 others are accused in the case.

NATIONAL ▶ PAGE 9

U.P. tense as PM calls for introspection

State government issues notices to people in Meerut for damage to property during protests

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday denounced the damage to public property in Uttar Pradesh during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and asked those who indulged in vandalism "in the name of protest" to introspect if their path was right.

Stressing that the rights and duties of citizens go hand in hand, Mr. Modi said while getting a safe environment was the right of a citizen, it "is the duty of every citizen" to honour the work of the police responsible for security.

In Uttar Pradesh, some people, in the name of protests, indulged in violence, damaged government property ... sitting at home they should ask themselves, was their path right? All that was torched and destroyed, was it not going to come to the use of their children," Mr. Modi asked.

He was addressing a gathering after unveiling a statue of the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary at the Lok Bhawan here.

Mr. Modi's words against vandalism and arson in Uttar Pradesh came days after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said his government would "take revenge" on those involved in the violence in Lucknow and seize

and auction their property as compensation for damage to public property.

Over 900 people held
The State government has been issuing notices to such people and formed a four-member panel in Lucknow to estimate the damage. Over 925 persons have been arrested and about 5,500 detained across Uttar Pradesh for protests against the CAA.

Violent protests across the State against the CAA led to the death of at least 18 persons and damage to public and private property, including that of media personnel.

While no new incident was reported on Wednesday, parts of the State, in particular western districts, continue to be tense. In the State capital, Internet services were restored only at 8 p.m. on Wednesday.

Mr. Modi appealed to those "coming under false rumours and engaging in violence and destroying government property" to remember that better roads, transport system and sewer lines were their right, but to protect and keep them clean was the duty of the citizens.

The Prime Minister asked people to think about what those who died in the violence, and the citizens and policemen who got injured must have gone through. He said the decades-old issues of Article 370 and the Babri Masjid dispute had been re-



Homage to a giant: PM Narendra Modi unveiling a statue of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Lucknow on Wednesday. ANI

solved peacefully.

"What an old disease Article 370 was. How tough it appeared," Mr. Modi said.

Another issue solved by the 130 crore Indians was the citizenship of lakhs of oppressed people who came to India from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh "to save their dharma and honour their daughters," Mr. Modi said of the CAA.

Meanwhile, the Meerut district administration has issued notices to 517 arms licence holders and 148 persons named in the FIR to compensate for the damage to property during protests.

In Bijnor, 43 persons have been issued notices to pay for the damage after being identified as "vandals".

It was a brutal attack, say AMU students

University authorities say police action was required to restore normalcy on the campus

SIDHARTH RAVI
ALIGARH

Stun grenades, rubber bullets and tear-gas shells have all become part of student parlance at Aligarh Muslim University following a crackdown by the police on December 15, leaving several of them severely injured. One had his hand amputated.

While most students have since left the campus, those residing in Aligarh, some of whom continue to stage protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, demanded answers from the police over the use of "excessive force" and from the administration for letting it happen.

"Why was it so brutal?" asked Tuba, a final-year degree student. Even if the pol-



AMU students taking out a march in Aligarh. PTI

ice were needed to disperse the crowd, why did they cross the line? Why were they given permission to do so," she asked.

Following rumours that some students had been killed during a police crackdown at Jamia Millia Islamia on the evening of December 15, students reportedly began

ed a lathi-charge along with the firing of several rounds of tear-gas shells.

"Some Kashmiri students brought out some salt and water to help protect us from it but it didn't really help me," said Nadim, a 19-year-old B.A. first-year student who was hit on the head by a tear-gas shell. Others such as Mohamed Aasim, also a B.A. first-year student, said that he was hit by a rubber bullet.

Rubber bullets

"They used rubber bullets in Maoist areas," alleged Nadeem Usmail, a former student union leader. "Some students are said to have run into a guest house near the gate. There, they were reportedly threatened and beaten up by the police," he said.

The police launched an attack again, with both parties

throwing stones. In a statement, the university's PRO highlighted various instances in the past when students were even killed in police firing.

In this context, officials argued that allowing the police in was necessary.

'Closure order' sends coaching hub into tailspin

Mukherjee Nagar starts emptying out even as police deny issuing directive

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar area, a hub of private hostels and coaching centres, has been witnessing a gradual exodus of students since Tuesday. The police, claimed several owners of coaching centres and paying guest accommodations, had ordered them to shut up shop from December 25 to January 2.

The police appealed to everyone on Wednesday not to believe "rumours and fake videos" about the closure of PGs/hostels in the area. "We have registered a case against a fake video being circulated on social media and are also writing to the social media platform to remove it as the contents have been edited so as to place it out of context," said DCP (North West) Vi-



Students outside a coaching centre in Mukherjee Nagar.

■ SAURABH TRIVEDI

The message has, however, spread and coaching centres and PG accommodations are closing for the year one after the other. A coaching centre owner, on condition of anonymity, said he was instructed by a local policeman citing "orders from top" to down shutters from

December 25 to January 2.

Eateries and hang-outs near Batra Cinema were agog with discussions about the "police order".

Students disappointed

Renu, a student from Haryana, said she came to know that policemen had landed up at her coaching centre on Tuesday evening and ordered it to close for a week from Wednesday. "It will be my loss. I don't know why it has been done but surely it is not good," she said.

Ms. Renu is staying put in Delhi, but another student, Chandra Mohan from Rajasthan, is returning home. "Even the private library in Mukherjee Nagar will remain closed for a week because of orders. My landlord has asked me to leave citing pol-

ice orders," he said.

Amit, who is preparing for SSC exam, said there are around 4,000 students in his batch and the coaching centre has told everyone not to come until January 2. "The staff said extra classes will be taken to make up for the loss," he said.

A police officer said there are around 3.5 lakh students staying in localities in and around Mukherjee Nagar and enrolled in various coaching centres in the area. "The exercise was done to prevent students from getting involved in any kind of antisocial activity during New Year celebrations," the officer said, claiming that the police had a tough time on New Year's Eve both last year and in 2017 because of the ruckus created by revellers.

Ajit Pawar tipped to be Deputy CM

SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

A much-awaited expansion of the Maharashtra Cabinet due at the end of the year will most likely see Nationalist Congress Party leader Ajit Pawar play a prominent role in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

Senior NCP leaders said the Home Department may go to the party's Dilip Walse Patil, while Mr. Pawar could be again appointed Deputy Chief Minister along with charge of two Ministries. "Any expansion of the MVA government is not possible without including Ajit Pawar in it," said NCP leader and Cabinet Minister Jayant Patil.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 12

NPR form images spark confusion

VIJAYITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

Confusion prevailed after images of forms of 'National Population Register (NPR) 2020' seeking details on "place of birth of father and mother" started doing the rounds on social media, even though Home Minister Amit Shah clarified a day ago that there was "no link between NPR and NRC."

A Ministry of Home Af-

fairs (MHA) spokesperson told *The Hindu* that the form or the schedule to collect data for the NPR had not been finalised yet.

Congress leader Manish Tewari tweeted an image of 'NPR-2020', saying that "NPR will be raw Data of NRC." A senior official said the pre-test form is used during the trial stage and the final schedule is prepared after taking feedback from the

respondents.

"HM @AmitShah says NPR is register of population, NRC is register of citizens. If that is so how is it relevant to ask whether my parents were born in India or abroad? See encircled red box. Nothing but elements of NRC being smuggled into NPR. NPR will be raw Data of NRC," Mr. Tewari said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

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SR DELHI

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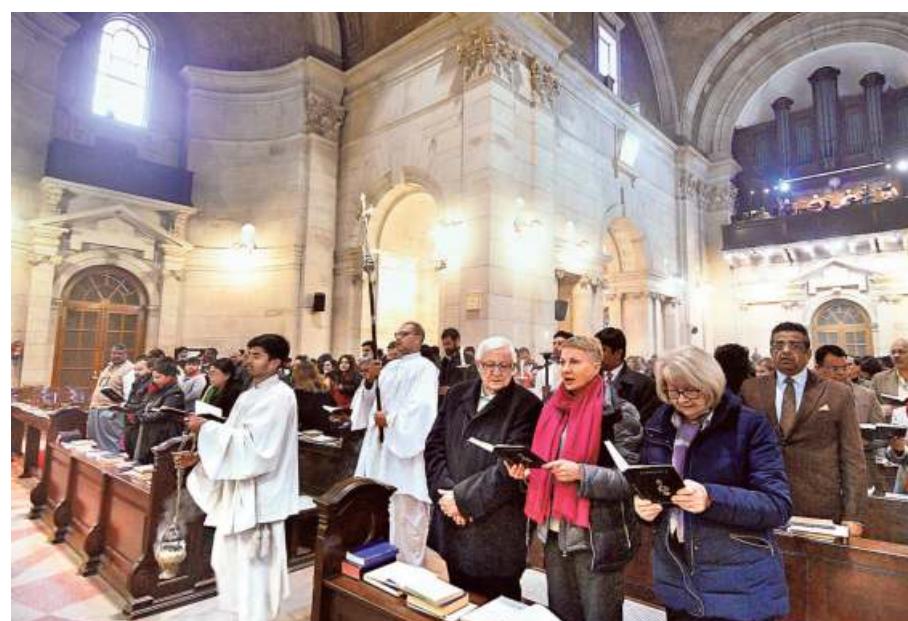
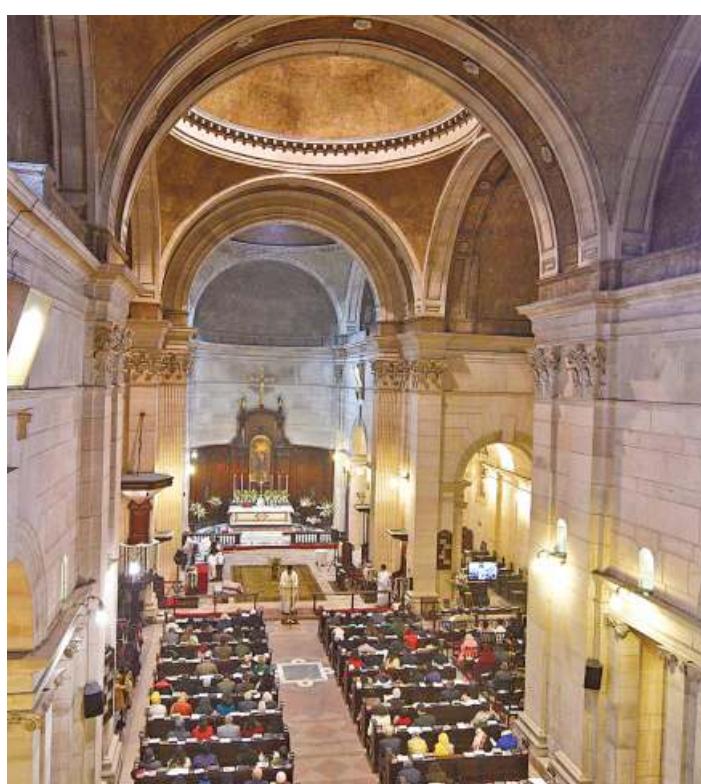
29

December 2019

Starting 29th December 2019

Santa-stic!

People throng Delhi's churches, markets and other areas to celebrate Christmas, with some continuing to protest against the CAA



(Anti-clockwise from left) People attending an anti-CAA demonstration outside Jamia Millia Islamia; children take part in Christmas celebrations at Sacred Heart Cathedral Church; mass prayer sessions in progress at Cathedral Church of Redemption; people lighting candles at Sacred Heart Cathedral; Christmas paraphernalia on sale at Khan Market

■ SHIV KUMAR
PUSHPAKAR,
R.V. MOORTHY

IN BRIEF



'There is dissatisfaction over city's water quality'

NEW DELHI

Hitting out at the AAP government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that there is dissatisfaction among people in the Capital over "unclean" drinking water and added that this is a worrisome issue. This is the second time this week that the Prime Minister has attacked the AAP government over water quality in Delhi. At a rally on Sunday, he said that the Delhi government had kept its eyes closed towards the biggest problem of the city which is drinking water. PTI

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Discussion on the book titled "The Tibetan Suitcase" authored by Tsering Namgyal. The book deals with the Tibetan community in exile in a fictional form at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Sands of Time", a solo art show by Rashmi Khurana at Art Konsult, 3, Ground Floor, Hauz Khas Village, 10:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Exhibition: "India: A Mapful Story", an exhibition of unseen historical maps and other important engravings (circa 18th Century to 1946) by Anubhav Nath, Curatorial Director of Ojas Art Gallery at 1AQ, Qutab Minar Roundabout, Mehrauli Road, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Realms of Peace-IV", a solo show of paintings by Bhaskar Singh at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

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

Will ensure 24-hour water supply in Delhi in next five years, says Kejriwal

Chief Minister inaugurates 18-lakh-litre underground reservoir in Kishangarh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurated underground reservoir with the capacity of 18 lakh litre in Kishangarh here on Wednesday.

Water from the underground reservoir, constructed at a cost of ₹16 crore, will help water reach many areas of Mehrauli and Kishangarh, Mr. Kejriwal said.

"I have provided water in every household of Delhi in the last five years by laying pipelines. We have a plan for the next five years. We will ensure 24-hour water service to the entire city in the next five years. Moreover, the water will be so clean that you will be able to drink with the spout," Mr. Kejriwal said at the event.

"There was only one tank in this area, with a capacity of 6 lakh litre, due to which water could not reach all areas. In many areas, water reached in four to five days. After the commissioning of



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Mehrauli MLA Naresh Yadav after the inauguration in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■PTI

this reservoir, drinking water will be available in most of the surrounding areas. Two more reservoirs are yet to be built in this area. About 80% work on both has been completed," Mr. Kejriwal said further.

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IN BRIEF

'Protests at Shaheen Bagh continue to cause jams'

NEW DELHI
People commuting between Delhi and Noida via Kalindi Kunji will have to suffer huge traffic jams as long as protests against the amended Citizenship Act continue at Shaheen Bagh, the police said on Wednesday. "The Shaheen Bagh protests started on December 15, which forced us to divert traffic," said Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic) A.K. Singh.

'Over 350 calls received about violent protests'

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI
The Delhi Police received over 350 PCR calls between December 15 and 22 in connection with violence during protests against the amended Citizenship Act and the National Register of Citizens.

A police officer said that maximum calls were received on December 15 when violence broke out in Jamia Nagar. Over 170 calls were received from New Friends Colony and premises of Jamia Millia Islamia.

Over 100 calls were received on December 17 when violence broke out during protests in northeast Delhi's Seelampur. "Many of the calls were from motorists who got stuck in stone pelting incidents," the officer added. Another flurry of calls, around 150, were received on December 20 when violence broke out in Daryaganj. During the same period, several calls related to rumour-mongering were also received.

NPR will serve as database for NRC, must oppose it, says Roy

Author-activist asks people to furnish wrong names and addresses

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A protest was organised at the Arts Faculty on North Campus on Wednesday against the amended Citizenship Act, the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Speaking at the protest venue, author Arundhati Roy claimed that the NPR would serve as a database for the NRC and asked people to oppose it by furnishing wrong names and addresses.

She claimed that NCR was against the Muslims of the country and that those conducting the survey would visit the homes of people in the garb of taking names for the NPR and then use the data to create a database for the NCR. "We need to fight it [NPR]. When they visit your home for NPR and ask for your name, give them some different name, and your address as 7, Race Course Road [the PM's residence]. A lot of subversion will be needed," Ms. Roy said.

Protesters read out the Preamble of the Constitution and said that they would fight against any attempts to change it. Students also raised slogans against the BJP government, and said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah were issuing different statements on NCR and could not be trusted.

The gathering also condemned police brutality to suppress peaceful protests. The protest call was given by



Arundhati Roy addressing students during a protest against the citizenship law on North Campus; students raising slogans on Wednesday.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

the Joint Committee For Action Against CAA/NRC.

The Union Cabinet had on Tuesday approved ₹3,941.35 crore for updating the NPR, which is a list of "usual residents" of the country. A "usual resident" is defined for the purposes of NPR as a person who has resided in a local area for the last six months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months or more.

The data for NPR was collected in 2010 along with the house-listing phase of Census of India 2011. The data was updated in 2015.

Ms. Roy also accused PM Modi of telling a "lie" at his



Ramlila Ground rally on Sunday that his government never said anything about the NRC process and that there are no detention camps in the country.

"He told the lie knowing that it will be caught but still he lied because he has the media with him, which will not question him," she added.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

quality monitoring stations of the DPCC," a DPCC official told *The Hindu*.

Reserved ₹4 crore

"The Delhi government has reserved ₹4 crore for the project and we might increase it if needed," the official added.

Currently, noise levels exceed accepted levels at many spots in the city and the new network will provide more data to authorities to frame policies and take proper ac-

tion, said officials.

The tender is for supply, installation, commissioning, and operation and maintenance (O&M) for 10 years of real-time ambient Noise Monitoring Station network, which will comprise 26 noise monitoring stations and a central server. "Equipment/instruments, including central server under the 'Noise Project' shall be supplied, installed and commissioned within 60 days," read the tender document.

The central server will be at the DPCC office and it will have real-time data of all the stations. Real-time noise levels will be displayed on its website and displayed at selected spots across the city.

During the O&M period, in case of any NMS failure, penalty of ₹2,000 per day per will be levied on the operator – after a grace period of seven continuous non-working days. The grace period will be allowed only once in three months.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Twenty six ambient Noise Monitoring Stations (NMS)

are expected to come up across the city by March. The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has floated a tender for setting up the stations, which will provide real-time data on noise levels.

The move comes after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) pulled up the DPCC in November and asked them

Real-time monitoring of noise levels by March

The move comes after NGT pulled up pollution control board and asked it to set up monitoring stations

■ NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

Twenty six ambient Noise Monitoring Stations (NMS)

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The move comes after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) pulled up the DPCC in November and asked them

to set up the stations by January 31, 2020.

The tender, which will be opened on January 2, has a deadline of two months for the company who wins the bid to set up the 26 stations, as per the tender document.

"Last date of tender is January 2 and we will process both technical and financial bids within 10 days. The monitoring stations will come up in the next two months. Most of the stations will come up at existing air

quality monitoring stations of the DPCC," a DPCC official told *The Hindu*.

Reserved ₹4 crore
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■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Morning meeting



Pigeons assemble near a traffic signal on a cold Wednesday morning. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

A chance to taste the street food of India

11th edition of the National Street Food Festival begins at JLN Stadium

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The 11th edition of the National Street Food Festival began in the Capital on Wednesday. The event will see street vendors from 26 States cooking up over 500 regional delicacies.

The festival, which is being held at JLN Stadium, has been divided into four regions: North, South, East and West. The stalls have been categorised based on

origin so that foodies can better navigate through the plethora of options.

Ahead of the festival, the vendors were trained in food hygiene and safety standards. Sessions were also organised for them so that they could develop a better business sense.

The participating vendors have undergone their training on safety and hygiene and every one of them received a kit containing

aprons, gloves etc, to ensure that food safety standards are maintained," said the organisers.

"With our main focus being the food the vendors are offering, we have taken steps to ensure that it is a wholesome experience by including fun-filled activities during the day, and music and dance performances later in the evening," they added.

Visitors will also be able to see street vendors showcasing

ing live preparations.

Some of the dishes on offer include Rajkot ki Tandoori Chai, Puducherry Peri-Peri Chicken, Assamese Bamboo Chicken, Raagi Idli, Raagi Baal, Mahua ke Phool ki Bhaja, Ayodhya ki Kulhad Dahi Jalebi, Kashmiri se Tabak Maaz, Kerala ka Malabar Parotta, Naryaal Gravy, Pokka Vada, Karnataka ka Chicken 65 and Jabalpuri Mava Jalebi.

The festival is on till December 29.

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Visitors will also be able to see street vendors showcasing

We are helping detainees as it is our duty, say lawyers

Collective consciousness made them come out in large numbers

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

NEW DELHI

Many of the lawyers who had gathered at Daryaganj police station last week to help people detained during protests against the amended Citizenship Act, said they had gone as it was their duty as an officer of the court of law.

The lawyers stayed on the sidelines of protest sites and kept a lookout for any human rights violations. The names and numbers of the lawyers who were helping detainees pro bono (without charge), were shared on WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms so that people could have easy access to them.

Advocate Mishika Singh said she and other lawyers had gone to the Daryaganj police station after the anti-CAA protests. "We were there to give the detainees legal counsel. Initially, the police were not allowing us to meet the detainees," said Ms. Mishika.



Lawyers helping relatives of detainees by filling up relevant forms. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

■ Any detained person has a right to a lawyer. Besides, I feel that the right to peaceful protest is sacrosanct

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Chilly ride



Farmers carrying their produce on a tractor-trolley in Maham Tehsil of Rohtak, Haryana, on a cold morning. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

BJP accuses AAP of being 'anti-women'**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Wednesday accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of being "anti-women" even as it sought to criticise it for its "negative politics".

Speaking to party workers and local residents at Kranti Chowk, the president of the party's national Mahila Morcha Vijaya Rathakar said, "The BJP has always worked towards the holistic development of women... such as Beti Bachao movement and Triple Talaq Bill... on the other hand AAP Ministers are involved in serious crimes (against women)."

Court halves fine for convict as he is sole breadwinner of BPL family

Jail sentence also reduced in cheque bounce case

NIRNIMESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court reduced time in prison and halved the ₹16-lakh fine imposed on a man convicted in a cheque bounce case as he is the sole breadwinner of a Below Poverty Line (BPL) family.

Lack of evidence

A Magistrate court had convicted and awarded one-year jail sentence to the accused while dismissing his defence that he had issued a cheque for ₹8 lakh to the complainant as a security for an agreement to sell a piece of land to him.

The court dismissed the argument as the accused could not produce any evidence in support of it.

Trial on since 2016

"If it is the defence of the accused that the cheque in question was handed over as security in respect of an agreement to sell (land), it was incumbent upon the accused to have led evidence... No such agreement was produced," the court said.

The Magistrate court took a lenient view while considering his sentence and fine since he belonged to a BPL family, as per his ra-

tion card. Additional Sessions Judge Neelofer Abida Perveen upheld the conviction but modified the sentence order: "Taking into consideration that the accused is facing trial since 2016 and that he is the sole breadwinner of his BPL family comprising three children, wife and elderly mother, he is ordered to be released on sentence already undergone."

In regards to the compensation, the Judge stated: "The compensation to the complainant is also reduced to the cheque amount i.e. ₹8 lakh."

Delhi's first transit-oriented hub to come up in Karkardooma

Project to be kicked off today; aims to make urban development sustainable

**DAMINI NATH
SHINJINI GHOSH**
NEW DELHI

With goals to reduce the need to commute for work or recreation, and making urban development more sustainable, work on the Capital's first transit-oriented development (TOD) – the east Delhi hub at Karkardooma – will be kicked off on Thursday.

The foundation stone for the first project under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry and Delhi Development Authority's TOD policy will be laid by Home Minister Amit Shah, the Ministry said on Wednesday.

To be completed by 2023 The integrated development of the hub, which will bring together metro stations, residences and workplaces; and recreational spaces such as museums, is expected to be completed by 2023, said Dikshu C. Kukreja, managing principal of CP Kukreja Architects, which is designing the 60-acre site.

"The way we have been talking about our cities, the way they have been ill-planned or unplanned, will need to change as sustainability becomes more important.

A new paradigm will be imperative," he said, adding that



An artist's impression of what the hub will look like.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the east Delhi hub would serve as a "smart city" in itself. The project will be the first step towards that new paradigm for urban planning, where people will not have to travel much for work or recreation.

The location has two metro stations and is near a railway station and an inter-State bus terminal. One of the challenges will be to ensure that the hub does not end up becoming an energy guzzler, for which infrastructure like solar power and water recycling will be incorporated, he said.

In September this year, the land-owning agency had approved the much-awaited TOD policy, which consists of a variety of "high-density, mixed-use, mixed-income buildings within a short dis-

tance of a rapid public transport network".

Public transport

Senior DDA officials connected to the project said that the TOD policy primarily aims to encourage the use of public transport.

"The policy mandates that residential, commercial, civic or institutional establishments have to be in close proximity to allow locals to access facilities like plazas and shared parks. This would also enable people to walk, cycle and use public transportation over personal modes of transport," the official said.

According to the TOD policy for Delhi, development along or around transit corridors can have higher floor area ratio (FAR) to accommodate people to walk, cycle and use public transportation over personal modes of transport," the official said.

The DDA on December 19, also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Railways for development and redevelopment of the Anand Vihar station. Officials said that the TOD policy to be kicked off in Karkardooma will also be linked to the Anand Vihar station.

Plea in NGT flags issue with Noida rainwater harvesters

look into the matter and file a report within a month.

Joint panel constituted

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel constituted a joint committee and directed it to furnish a factual and action taken report.

The panel will comprise officials from the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB), Central Pollution Control Board, District Magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar, Noida Authority and the Central Ground Water Authority. The UPPCB will be the nodal agency.



THE HINDU GROUP

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Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, DEC. 26
RISE 07:12 SET 17:32
RISE 07:07 SET 17:43
FRIDAY, DEC. 27
RISE 07:12 SET 17:32
RISE 08:03 SET 18:37
SATURDAY, DEC. 28
RISE 07:13 SET 17:33
RISE 08:54 SET 19:34

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 13 06
Safdarjung 13 06
Palam 11 05

Delhi Palam Today
14°C Morning will remain chilly with dense fog. Cold winds are likely to blow during afternoon with a partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
14°C A cold morning with moderate fog is being forecast. Wind chill will prevail during the day. Sky remains sunny.

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IN BRIEF

'5 antique idols stolen'

BANDA/U.P.
Five 'ashthadhatu' idols worth crores were stolen from a 500-year-old temple in a village in Mahoba district, police said. PTI

Freezing point



A Kashmiri boatman breaks the ice of a partially frozen section of the Dal Lake during a cold Wednesday morning in Srinagar. The city recorded the coldest night of the season on Tuesday as the minimum temperature settled at -4 degrees Celsius, leading to freezing of water supply lines at several places. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Madhya Pradesh's cleanliness drive spells trouble for officials

Administration to 'name and shame' erring officials

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
GWALIOR

The administration here in Madhya Pradesh, which has some of the cleanest cities like Indore, has taken a strict stand and will "name and shame" officials found not up to their mark in maintaining cleanliness in their zone.

Many districts have been vying for better position in the cleanliness ranking. In Gwalior, the responsibility of the cleanliness drive has been entrusted to other offi-

cials besides the Municipal Corporation.

It has also been decided that notices will be pasted outside the homes of officials who do not discharge their responsibilities properly. The entire administration has been engaged to get Gwalior a better spot on the 'swachhata' table.

When District Magistrate Anurag Chaudhary reviewed the progress made, then it came to light that many officials were not taking interest in the campaign.

According to official information, Mr. Chaudhary while reviewing cleanliness work at the Inter-Departmental Coordination Committee meeting on Tuesday said that "monitoring of cleanliness work is everyone's responsibility".

"District officers of all the departments are assigned with regular area visits. They have to submit their report regularly. Officers who are not inspecting their zone will face penalty," he said.

Mr. Chouhan said that the Congress and other Opposition parties were misinforming and misleading the people of the country.

Mr. Chouhan said that the Congress and other Opposition parties were misinforming and misleading the people of the country.

Cong. misleading people on CAA, claims Chouhan

'Why didn't it say a word in Parliament?'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday hit out at Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party's former president Rahul Gandhi on the issues of the new Citizenship law, National Register of Citizens and National Population Register, accusing them of "misleading the people" of the country.

Mr. Chouhan said that the Congress and other Opposition parties were misinforming and misleading the people of the country.

ple of the country to spread hate, violence and unrest in the country.

"The Act was passed in Parliament with due process and diligence after a debate. Sonia Gandhi or Rahul Gandhi did not participate in the debate and never said a word when this Act was being discussed in Parliament. While Ms. Sonia along with her family is leading protests against CAA at Rajghat, why was she and Rahul silent about this when it was being discussed in Parliament," asked Mr. Chouhan.

Railways starts vistadome train on Kalka-Shimla route

It has a seating capacity of over 100; tourists can experience snow and rain through glass-enclosed coaches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

The Railways on Wednesday started a seven-coach glass-enclosed vistadome train on the heritage Kalka-Shimla route.

The red-coloured train, which was decorated with balloons, chugged off from the Kalka railway station in Haryana around 7 a.m., a railway official at the station said.

The 'Him Darshan' train has a seating capacity of over 100 passengers and the bookings are full over the next few days in view of the peak tourist season and New Year being round the



The Him Darshan Express chugging off on the Shimla-Kalka Heritage route on Wednesday. Bookings are full over the next few days in view of the peak tourist season. ■ PTI

corner, the official said.

Earlier this year, the Railways had put only one see-through vistadome

coach on the narrow-gauge route, but in view of the huge response, now the entire train has such

coaches, he said.

Along the route, one of the few heritage railways in the world, tourists headed to

Oppn. turns up the heat after Punjab Governor seeks clarifications on Bill

SAD demands govt. shelve bid to amend disqualification law

VIKAS VASUDEVA

CHANDIGARH

With Punjab Governor V.P. Singh Badnore seeking from the State government certain clarifications on the Punjab State Legislative (Prevention of Disqualification) Amendment Bill, 2019 – relating to conflict of interest in the case of appointment of six MLAs as advisers to the Chief Minister – the politics surrounding the issue has started gaining momentum as the Opposition has turned up the heat against the ruling Congress government, demanding it to withdraw the Bill.

JJP spokesperson Deep Kamal Saharan said the party was yet to receive the formal resignation of Mr. Gautam.

He denied the allegations of any agreement having been reached in the Ambience Mall saying that it was all hearsay and Mr. Chautala had never been to the shopping mall post the election result.

Besides, Mr. Chautala, JJP

Ukiana MLA Anoop Dhanak

is an MoS in the Council of

Ministers. The party has a

quota for three Ministers in

all and one more MLA could

be inducted during the next

expansion.

reports that the Bill has been returned by the Governor.

The Minister-officers concerned had been directed to clarify the issues raised by the Governor so that a suitable response could be shared with the latter at the earliest, to pave the way for inclusion of MLAs in the exempted category covered under conflict of interest provision of the Prevention of Disqualification legislation.

"The Governor's letter had been forwarded to the Chief Minister's Office and the necessary response would be submitted soon," the spokesperson added.

The Congress government had in September this year appointed four MLAs as advisers (political), while Kuljeet Singh Nagra of Fatehgarh Sahib, was appointed adviser (planning), in the Cabinet rank and status. Tarsem Singh DC of Attari was designated adviser (planning) with the rank of Minis-

ter of State.

The Opposition, meanwhile has hit out hard at the Congress government, asking it to immediately withdraw the Bill.

Shirohani Akali Dal leader and former Minister Janmeja Singh Sekhon said: "The Governor has posed thirteen queries to the government clearly indicating that the Bill does not stand Constitutional scrutiny. It would be better for the Congress government to withdraw the Bill and apologise to Punjabis for riding roughshod with the Constitution by acting against the 91st amendment which clearly states that the strength of the Ministry cannot be more than 15% of the strength of the members of the Vidhan Sabha."

He added that the nature of queries indicated that the Governor was prima facie not satisfied with the amendments.

BSP: probe deaths during anti-CAA stir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

BSP supreme Mayawati on Wednesday asked the Uttar Pradesh government to conduct a thorough probe into the deaths during anti-citizenship law protests and help the innocent victims.

"The maximum number of deaths during CAA/NRC protests were in U.P. The State government should conduct a probe into these deaths accurately and come forward to help the [families of] innocent ones," Mayawati said in a tweet in Hindi.

Mayawati had on Tuesday said the Centre should allay concerns of Muslims over the CAA and the proposed nationwide National Register of Citizens.

"...it will be better if the Centre allays all apprehensions of Muslims on CAA/NRC to their satisfaction," she had said.



Ashok Gehlot

Director General of Police

Bhupendra Yadav said gangs involved in blackmailing through social media platforms and blackmailing by lodging fake cases were also active in the State.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has asked the police to strengthen the Special Operations Group (SOG) and CID-CB in order to tighten the noose around organised mafias.

At a high-level meeting of the Home Department and police officers here on Tuesday, he said officials of special teams, to be headed by police inspectors, should be given training separately.

Mr. Gehlot said the State

government would not tolerate any kind of carelessness in the control of organised crimes. The police officers present at the meeting pointed out that while the SOG units were being formed in all the districts, the recent establishment of special fraud investigation and cyber crime investigation units in SOG had facilitated probe into these offences.

"If the involvement of any police officer or official of any government department in the crime comes to light, strict action should be taken against him," Mr. Gehlot said.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice

E-Tender Notice No.: CE/2019/16, Date : 23.12.2019 (e-Open tender No.: 02196453 SP) to be closed on 14.01.2020 at 11:30 AM.

SL. No. : 01, Name of the work with its location : Manufacture and Supply of Fish Bolts & Nuts of 25 x 140 mm size to RDSO's Drawing No.: T-1899 and Specification IRS-T-23-67 with Corrigendum No.: 05 of October 1987, Quantity : 222.70 MT.

Location - Office of Principal Chief Engineer, East Central Railway, Hajipur.

SL. No.: 02, Approx. cost of the work : Rs. 15725918.19, SL. No.: 03, Earnest Money to be deposited : Rs. 314520.00, SL. No.: 04, Date & Time for closing of tender : 11.30 AM. on 14.01.2020, SL. No.: 05, Website particulars, where complete details of tender can be seen : Related tender documents can be seen or downloaded from website: http://www.irops.gov.in

Dy. CE/TSP, ECR, Hajipur

PR/1918/HQ/ENGG/T/19-20/28

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Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India

Nalanda, Bihar, INDIA

Advt.-1/2019

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(OSD to Vice Chancellor)

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INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

No: PW-DPD-CB-Tender-2019/21937-39 Dated: 23/12/2019

The Executive Engineer, Dharampur Division, HPWD Dharampur, Dist: Mandi (H.P.) on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the item rate bids, in electronic tendering systems from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPWD for the work as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (In Rs.)	Starting Date for down-loading Bid	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Deadline for submission of Bid
1.	C/O Govt. High School building at Rakhera in Tehsil Dharampur Dist. Mandi (H.P.) (SH: C/O 04 Nos Rooms)	31,52,103/-	20/01/2020	55,000/-	30/01/2020
2.	Construction of Govt. Senior Secondary School building at Dharampur in Tehsil Dharampur Dist. Mandi (H.P.) (SH: C/o Additional 04 Rooms).	31,52,103/-	20/01/2020	55,000/-	30/01/2020
3.	Construction of 04 Nos. Type II Quarterer for HP PWD staff at Dharampur in Tehsil Dharampur Dist. Mandi (H.P.) (SH: Building portion & W.S. & S.I.)	30,98,001/-	20/01/2020	54,000/-	30/01/2020
4.	C/O Science Block at Govt. Senior Secondary School at Samour (SH: Building portion, Water Supply, Rain Harvesting Tank and Site Development)	1,21,50,066/-	20/01/2020	1,54,000/-	30/01/2020

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Dharampur Division, HPWD Dharampur, Dist: Mandi (H.P.)

on behalf of Governor of H.P.

HIM SUCHANA AVAN JAN SAMPAK on behalf of Governor of H.P.

HP/3754/19-20

SPORTSTAR

READ
FRONTLINE
EVERY FORTNIGHT

Hindu Jagran Manch worker murdered in Nadia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KALYANI (WEST BENGAL)

The body of a 27-year-old man, who his family claimed was a worker of the Hindu Jagran Manch, with injuries on his head and neck was found a little distance away from his home, the police said on Wednesday.

The man's body and his motorcycle were found at the spot around 11 p.m. on Tuesday at Kalyani in West Bengal's Nadia district, the police said.

The man had left his home in a hurry after receiving a phone call. Later, his family was informed that his body was lying

near the local primary school. They rushed to the spot and found him dead, said the police.

'Pre-planned murder'
The victim's elder brother alleged that the murder was pre-planned.

He said the victim was a

worker of the Hindu Jagran Manch and had been asked by local Trinamool Congress workers to join their party. When he had refused to comply, he was murdered, the brother alleged.

The police said an investigation into the death has been launched.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

HOMAGE TO OUR BELOVED FOUNDER Thiru. AR.RAMASWAMY CHETTIAR 40th ANNIVERSARY



Born :
29.12.1924

Expired :
26.12.1979

Former Managing Director : Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.,
Former Director : The Nellai Finance (P) Ltd.,
Former Director : Aruna Chemicals & Farms (P) Ltd.,
Former Trustee : Sree Visalam Charitable Trust

IN MEMORIAM "YOUR LIFE OUR INSPIRATION"

INSERTED BY

AR. Viswanathan AR. Meenakshi

Managing Director Director

AR. Umapathy

Director

Family Members, Relatives, Friends and
Employees of Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.,

THIRD ANNIVERSARY



Aug
24, 1948

Dec
26, 2016

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Expired
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W/o. Mr. S. Sethu Madhavan, Rtd. SR. Lecturer (Civil Engg.) S.I.P. Sankar Nagar.
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SHUBA SWEEKARAM ON 30-12-2019

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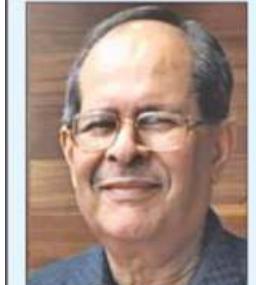
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Ref:- Administrative Department Communication No.HME/HRM/83/2019 dated 11.12.2019.

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Whereas, following doctors applied for study leave in their favour of undergoing various courses within or outside state.

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S. No.	Name of Doctor with parentage and residential address	Designation
1.	Dr.Parveen Sharma S/o Sh. Raj Kumar Sharma R/o Doongi Brahmama Tehsil and District, Rajouri	Consultant Physician
2.	Dr.Sushil Sharma S/o Sh. Krishan Lal Sharma R/o Village Bana Chak Tehsil Bishnath District, Jammu	Consultant Paediatric
3.	Dr.Ajaz Ul Haq S/o Haz. Wazir Hussain R/o Village Naka Manjhar Tehsil Mendarh District, Poonch	Consultant ENT
4.	Dr.Mukesh Kumar Sharma S/o Sh.Rumal Chand Sharma R/o Village Bhagwah Tehsil & District, Doda	Medical Officer
5.	Dr.Iram Shakot D/o Sh. Shoket Ali R/o H.No.128, Green Colony, Bhaderwah, District Doda	Medical Officer
6.	Dr.Ravinder Singh S/o Sh. Hardeep Singh R/o Village Nagali Tehsil, Havelli District, Poonch	Medical Officer
7.	Dr.Bharat Bushan Bassan S/o Sh. Yog. Raj R/o village Darso Pura Tehsil R.S.Pura Distt, Jammu	Medical Officer
8.	Dr.Jahangir Ahmed Naseem S/o Mohd. Hanif R/o Village Shahpur Tehsil Havelli District Poonch	Medical Officer
9.	Dr.Inima Bukhari D/o Syed Mushtaq Ahmed Bukhari R/o 7-B, Govt. Quarter, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu	Medical Officer
10.	Dr.Rakesh Bhat S/o Sh. Manohar Lal Bhat R/o H.No.106 Lane 2/5 Block B Roop Nagar endave, Jammu	Medical Officer
11.	Dr.Deepak Bhat S/o Sh.Ram Lal R/o 18 Dogra Hall, Jammu	Medical Officer
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18.	Dr.Zulfiqar Ali S/o Ch. Reham Din R/o 183 MCJ, Gujjar Nagar Jammu	Medical Officer
19.	Dr.Anil Kumar Parikh S/o Sh.Munshi Ram Parikh R/o Village Ram Palmar Tehsil & District, Kishtwar	Medical Officer
20.	Dr.Sajan Bijay S/o Sh. Sham Bijay R/o Village Ganika P.O- Bhagwan Doda A/P Laley-Da-Bagh Nand Baba Colony Muthi, Jammu	Medical Officer

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After concession of up to ₹2 lakh, complete farm loan waiver is coming soon, promises Uddhav

CM shares stage with Congress, NCP leaders; showers praises on Sharad Pawar; to set up panel of agricultural scientists

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government will stand by the farmers through thick and thin, Chief Minister and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray declared on Wednesday, reiterating his government's commitment to total farm loan waiver. He said his government was actively working towards this and could be rolled out in the coming days.

"We have already announced an immediate waiver of loans totalling ₹2 lakh per farmer as immediate relief to cultivators. While we are certainly going to do this, we are also taking steps to ensure that their entire crop loan [above ₹2 lakh] is waived," Mr. Thackeray said in his address at the 43rd Annual General Meeting of the Vasantdada Sugar Institute (VSI), whose chairman is Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar.

The Chief Minister shared the dais with Mr. Pawar and other politicians, sugar barons and cooperative sector heavyweights across the political spectrum including senior NCP leaders Jayant Patil and Ajit Pawar, Balasaheb Thorat of the Congress, NCP 'rebel' and former Deputy Chief Minister Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil, and Harshawhan Patil of BJP among others.

"The cooperative sector and politics of Maharashtra are inseparable. This sector has bequeathed several tall leaders to the State. The rural



Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray with (from left) NCP leader Ajit Pawar, State Congress president Balasaheb Thorat, Cabinet Minister Jayant Patil, and NCP chief Sharad Pawar at the Vasantdada Sugar Institute in Pune on Wednesday. ■ JIGNESH MISTRY

economy is dependent on this sector. As a result, it is incumbent upon us to ensure the well-being of the farmer, who is the fulcrum of this sector," Mr. Thackeray said.

Praising Mr. Pawar's vision behind setting up the VSI, Mr. Thackeray announced his government's intention of establishing another branch of the institute in the Marathwada region.

"I am proud that such a concern [VSI] which delves into the technical problems of agriculture and disseminates its researches is in my State...so, their work, which has contributed so much to well-being of farmers while enhancing knowledge about best agricultural practices, must expand across the State," Mr. Thackeray said.

Indicating that the ideologically opposed coalition of the Sena and the Congress-NCP was working in harmony, the Chief Minister said that he deferred to the knowledge and experience of Mr.

Adviser (CEA) Arvind Subramanian had spoken of the Indian economy heading towards an "intensive care unit".

"At a time when we are in such economic doldrums, we have to ensure security for farmers' livelihoods. While a number of problems ail the cooperative sector today, we will set a committee comprising of technical experts and agricultural scientists to come with suggestions and most importantly, act upon them to resolve problems in this sector," Mr. Thackeray said.

Indicating that the ideologically opposed coalition of the Sena and the Congress-NCP was working in harmony, the Chief Minister said that he deferred to the knowledge and experience of Mr.

Pawar and other leaders in the government on issues pertaining to agriculture and revenue.

"We have a wealth of experience on these issues, be it Mr. Pawar's knowledge or the experience of Ajit Pawar, Jayant Patil and Balasaheb Thorat," Mr. Thackeray said.

This is the first time that the Chief Minister addressed the VSI meet since becoming Chief Minister. While Maharashtra's cooperative sector has been overwhelmingly dominated by politicians from the NCP and the Congress, the BJP has only managed to secure a marginal foothold in recent times, mainly by acquiring NCP and Congress leaders who defected to their side.

In contrast, the Shiv Sena has had a minimal presence in sugar cooperatives. A sense of this awareness was reflected in Mr. Thackeray's speech, in which the Sena chief continually deferred to the expertise of Mr. Pawar.

Earlier, eyebrows were raised when senior NCP Ajit Pawar changed his seating arrangement to be close to his *bete noire* ex-Congressman turned BJP leader Harshawhan Patil, who had quit the Congress ahead of the Assembly polls.

A bitter Mr. Patil, a former Minister in the Congress-NCP government, had exited the Congress ahead of the Assembly polls while openly blaming the Pawar clan for their 'duplicity' in not leaving the Indapur Assembly seat for him.

Just before the Lok Sabha polls in May this year, Mr. Ajit Pawar had personally conferred with Mr. Patil to ensure that he campaigned for his cousin, Supriya Sule's win in the Baramatik Lok Sabha constituency, of which Indapur is a part.

Harshawhan on stage

Mr. Ajit Pawar was seen amiably chatting with Mr. Patil prior to the VSI meet.

"There was no political talk...we discussed issues pertaining to agriculture," Mr. Patil said later.

Similarly, former NCP stalwart Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil, whose relations with the Pawar clan soured after a bitter tiff over ticket allocation during the Lok Sabha polls, was seen in conversation with Mr. Sharad Pawar ahead of the event.

"I have not gone anywhere...I am still with the NCP and Sharad Pawar. I had even met him a number of times after the Lok Sabha polls,"

was Mr. Mohite-Patil's cryptic remark when asked whether he had indeed gone over to the BJP.

Mr. Mohite-Patil's son Ranjitsinh Mohite-Patil joined the BJP after the NCP brass allegedly refused the Mohite-Patil's ticket for the Madha Lok Sabha seat in Solapur. The elder Mohite-Patil had subsequently gone out to ensure the BJP's victory in Madha and had shared the dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the latter's rally in Solapur ahead of the general elections.



Anna Hazare with Anusaya Mapari, one of the residents of Ralegan Siddhi on Wednesday, the sixth day of his vow of silence to condemn the string of crimes against women across the country. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Nothing wrong with Anna Hazare's health'

Veteran activist's agitation enters Day 6

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Veteran activist Anna Hazare's *maun-vrat* to protest the Centre's tardy delivery of justice in atrocities against women entered its sixth day on Wednesday as the anti-graft crusader's office quashed rumours about Mr. Hazare's allegedly deteriorating health.

"However, as he has taken a vow of silence, he communicates with them in writing," said the statement.

The 82-year-old anti-graft activist is on a 'silent agitation' since December 20 at the Yadav Baba Temple in Ralegan Siddhi village (in Ahmednagar district) to condemn the string of recent crimes against women in the country and protest the Centre's failure in delay in capital punishment to those convicted in the Nirbhaya gang rape case.

However, even after six days, social media has been full of rumours regarding Anna's health, prompting a string of inquiries from his well-wishers. We want to assure them that his [Mr. Hazare's] condition is absolutely fine. There is nothing wrong with his health and consequently, no cause for alarm. We urge people not to believe these rumours...Such speculation is deliberately being spread by anti-social elements and individuals ill-disposed towards Anna," read a statement issued by his office.

Mr. Hazare's office further said that several social activists as well as students were regularly meeting the

veteran activist to express their solidarity in his protest.

"However, as he has taken a vow of silence, he communicates with them in writing," said the statement.

Backstage theatre



Before the show: School children, aged less than 14 years, getting ready for a Bal-Dashavtar competition at Kendrahshala Pat Varchawada at Kudal to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the school. This competition is being held for the first time in Sindhudurg district to encourage students to develop an interest in traditional theatre. ■ RAJENDRA GAWANKAR

Two labourers held for rape of 12-year-old

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Two labourers allegedly raped a 12-year-old girl in a village in South Goa, the police said on Wednesday.

The accused, who hail from Bihar, were arrested on Tuesday evening, hours after they committed the alleged crime in the village under Queemep taluka, an official said.

Queemep police inspector Santosh Desai said the duo, working as casual labourers in South Goa, were taken into custody after a complaint by the victim's father.

He said the accused raped the girl when she was sleeping in her house.

One of the accused is 18 years old, while his accomplice was identified as Jitendra Chowdhury (20).

21-year-old woman concocts own kidnapping story

Did not want family to know she had gone out with boyfriend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

A young woman from Nagpur concocted a story about her own abduction to hide the fact from her family that she had gone out with her boyfriend, the police said on Wednesday.

Soon after, the police swung into action and took the woman to the spot from where she was ostensibly taken. Nagpur Crime Branch team also joined the probe and rushed to the spot.

However, the police grew suspicious after finding contradiction in her statements.

The police then checked CCTV footage from near her college and noticed the woman, who is a B.A. second year student, going with a young man on a motorcycle, Monday.

The parents alleged that four men forced their daughter into a four-wheeler while she was on way to college, and took her to a secluded place, from where she somehow managed to cook-

escape, he said, quoting from the complaint.

After attending classes, she came out of college and left with her boyfriend for Waki, a place on the outskirts of Nagpur city, police said.

Her boyfriend later dropped her near her house in the Seminary Hill area, they said.

Realising she would be scolded by family members for going out without informing them, the girl came up with the fake kidnapping story, the police said.

She thought the matter would end with the parents believing her story. However, her parents approached the police.

Car rams auto, four of family among five killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AURANGABAD

Five persons, including four of a family, died after a car collided with an autorickshaw at Shekta near Aurangabad on Wednesday, the police said.

While one of the deceased is a nine-year-old boy, a six-month-old child is critically injured, a police official said. The driver of the car, which was heading towards Akola, lost control and rammed into the autorickshaw that was going to Aurangabad. The mishap occurred around 10 a.m., he said.

Dinesh Ramal Jadhav (32), his wife Renuka, Vandana Jadhav (27) and their son Soham (9) – all residents of Jalna district, died.

obtained under the Right to Information indicates, people are approaching Lokayukta hoping that their complaints will be addressed. But there has hardly been any action as the present set-up has no power at all," said Mr. Ghadge.

"Although the new Lokpal and Lokayukta Act 2013 was passed years ago, the state of affairs with the Maharashtra Lokayukta remains the same. As the information

not satisfied with the action, Section 12(5) of the Lokayukta Act has the provision to send special reports to the government to express dissatisfaction with the action taken by the government after Lokayukta's orders.

The total number of such reports stands at 683, of which 572 are from 2015 alone.

The figures for such reports in 2016 was 70, for 2017 (six) and in 2018 (27).

"There is no record about what happens to the special report or how many corrupt officers have been suspended so far. The whole process, and the information indicates that the current Lokayukta is toothless and successive governments have failed to implement the new act," he said, adding that the Lokayukta has no power except to send such reports.

CAA a ray of hope, says Sindhi migrant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AURANGABAD

A member of the Sindhi community who migrated from Pakistan in the 1990s and settled down in Aurangabad is hopeful that he and others like him would get Indian citizenship soon with the passage of the new amendment.

The controversial Citizen-

ship (Amendment) Act provides for grant of citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhists and Christians who migrated from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh before 2015 due to persecution.

"We are expecting grant of citizenship with less paperwork now," said Vikram Tal-

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IN BRIEF



Jagan inaugurates sports academy in Kadapa

KADAPA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has indicated the government's resolve to transform his constituency, Pulivendula, into an educational and sports hub. On the concluding day of his three-day tour of the district on Wednesday, Mr. Reddy inaugurated a sports academy at Dhyani Chand playground on Government Junior College campus and an outdoor gymnasium. The academy will impart training to aspirants in hockey and wrestling.

2 Indian students killed in Dubai road accident

DUBAI

Two Indian students were killed in a road accident in Dubai on Wednesday, according to media reports. Rohit Krishnakumar, 19, and Sharat Kumar, 21, both from Kerala, were returning from a Christmas party when they met with the accident, *The Khaleej Times* reported. Both died on the spot, the paper said. While Mr. Krishnakumar was pursuing higher studies in the U.K., Mr. Sharat Kumar was studying in the U.S., the report said. They were spending their university break in Dubai with family.

Wild elephant killed after being hit by train

PALAKKAD

A wild elephant, which was crossing a railway track here, was killed after being hit by a train, railway sources said on Wednesday. The incident occurred around 10.30 p.m. on Tuesday, they said. However, train services were not disrupted. PTI

Yediyurappa does a U-turn on solatium

'Compensation will not be paid until probe into Mangaluru incident proves 2 deceased are innocent'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MANGALURU/MOODYBIDRI

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday backtracked on his promise that the kin of the two persons killed in police firing in Mangaluru on December 19 would be paid a compensation of ₹10 lakh each.

Speaking to presspersons in Mangaluru, he said compensation could not be paid until the investigation into the violent incidents proved that the two were innocent. The government had announced a CID as well as a ministerial inquiry into the violence.

Mr. Yediyurappa on Sunday announced an immediate compensation of ₹10 lakh each to the kin of the two killed in police firing – Nausin, 23, and Jalil Kudroli,



Violent protest: People hurling stones at the police during a demonstration against the CAA in Mangaluru on December 19. ■ AFP

49. They were killed in the course of a protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens. Defending his U-turn on

paying compensation, the Chief Minister argued that the First Information Report (FIR) had named the two dead as the "accused" and there were allegations of

their possible involvement. "Everyone has felt that at this point it is not proper to give compensation," he said, adding that it would be a "an unpardonable crime" to

KCR urged to stay work on update of NPR

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

The United Muslim Action Committee has urged the Telangana government to stay any work taken up on the update of the National Population Register (NPR) after holding consultations with the Kerala government and experts.

The government should take steps to ensure that citizens in the State were protected from "arbitrary and discriminatory" measures such as National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC). Measures should be initiated to ensure that conduct of public services was in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and not contrary to them," the committee said.

A delegation of the com-



Seeking assurance: MIM president Asaduddin Owaisi speaking to the media in Hyderabad on Wednesday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

mittee headed by MIM president and MP Asaduddin Owaisi called on Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao to represent their objections to the exercise launched by the Central government with regard to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), NPR and NRIC. During the meeting, the delegation expressed concern that the CAA had incorporated a religious qualification for the first time and, when seen in the light of the NRC, it would

create the possibility of an avoidable humanitarian disaster. The delegation said the link between the NPR and NRIC should be clearly understood as the exercise would cause disproportionate hardship to the most marginalised communities, besides imposing unnecessary and excessive burden on government employees and civil servants. The Constitution placed the power and responsibility of public order on the State governments. Burdening citizens, especially from poor and marginalised sections, with the arbitrary procedure under the provisions of the CAA, NPR and NRC was likely to deepen the fissures and empower miscreants to disrupt public order.

Anti-CAA carols sung in Kerala

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Christmas celebrations in Kerala at some places witnessed some colours of the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests.

Kerala has been one of the States at the forefront of the anti-CAA protests. This theme was used by a musical troupe in the St. Thomas Marthoma Church in Kozhikode.

Wearing Muslim costume, the group sang Carols in Muslim style, expressing solidarity with the community, who have been protesting against the CAA and the National Citizens Register (NRC).



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat addressing a gathering in Hyderabad on Wednesday. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

'130 crore Indians are Hindu society'

RSS chief lists 3 features of a Hindu

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) considered the 130 crore people in the country a Hindu society, said Sangh's chief Mohan Bhagwat, delivering a speech at the Sangh's Sarvajana Utsav of Vijay Sankalp Sibiram, organised at Sa-rooragan Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

He listed three features that made a person Hindu – a person who considered 'Bharat' (India) his or her motherland, worshipped it, and loved its land and water.

"Any person, regardless of the region he is from, language he speaks, regardless of the method of prayer followed or whether he does not pray, such son of Bharat is a Hindu," said Mr. Bhagwat.

Chief guest B.V.R. Mohan Reddy, who is chairman of Cyient Technologies, spoke on the importance of values, women power, and technology.

achieved victory, which would ultimately cause destruction of everything. And those belonging to the second category did things that were self-centred. They used others to gain riches and pride for themselves.

Mr. Bhagwat said the Sangh and India believed in Dharma victory where people lived for the happiness and well-being of others, and did not want heaven, kingdom or anything for themselves.

Mr. Bhagwat said though the English ('angrez') had wished that Hindus and Muslims would fight each other, it would not happen.

"Amid the struggle, society will come up with a solution to live together. And that solution will definitely be a Hindu 'upaya' (solution). These are Rabindranath Tagore's words," said Mr. Bhagwat.

Chief guest B.V.R. Mohan Reddy, who is chairman of Cyient Technologies, spoke on the importance of values, women power, and technology.

Tight police security in A.P. capital area

Crucial Cabinet meet will be held tomorrow

RAJULAPUDI SRINIVAS
VIJAYAWADA

Additional police forces have been deployed in the Capital region here ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for December 27 in the wake of ongoing protests against the proposal to make Visakhapatnam the executive capital. The Andhra Pradesh government is likely to announce its decision on decentralisation of the capital after the Cabinet meeting.

Farmers, villagers and advocates have been taking to the streets for the last seven days, and have decided to step up protests in the next few days.

Police have taken the measure following intelligence inputs on the protests at Velagapudi, Thullur, Undavalli, Nelapadu, Mandam, Penumaka, Tadepalli,



Upset over plan: Farmers standing in Krishna river to protest against the A.P. government's proposal of three capitals.

In all, about 3,000 personnel would be deployed for the Cabinet meeting, Mr. Ayannar said.

"SDRF and NDRF teams will be deployed at Prakasam Barrage and on either sides of the river as a precautionary measure," the Additional DG said.

The Guntur district police said protests were banned on Friday as Section 144 and Section 30 were in force and urged villagers not to provide shelter to outsiders.

Proposal to develop three capitals unwise'

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana said the proposed shifting of the Capital city from Amaravati was not just the problem of farmers who gave their fertile land but of the five crore people of Andhra Pradesh who believed that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy would do better than his predecessor N. Chandrababu Naidu. But, by seeking to develop three capital cities, Mr. Jagan had proved that he was only inexperienced but also unwise.

"The credibility of the entire Andhra Pradesh is at stake now as the farmers are staring at an uncertain future," Mr. Lakshminarayana said.

Earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India found in A.P.

Saptamatrika cult evidence dates back to 207 A.D. in Satavahana king Vijaya's era

R. KRISHNA KUMAR
MYSURU

In a significant find, the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India has discovered the earliest epigraphic evidence so far for the Saptamatrika cult. It is also the earliest Sanskrit inscription to have been discovered in South India as on date.

Saptamatrikas are a group of seven female deities worshipped in Hinduism as personifying the energy of their respective consorts. The inscription is in Sanskrit and in Brahmi characters and was issued by Satavahana king Vijaya in 207 A.D.

Dr. K. Muniratnam, Director, Epigraphy branch,

ASI, Mysuru told *The Hindu* that it was discovered in Chebrolu village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh earlier this month.

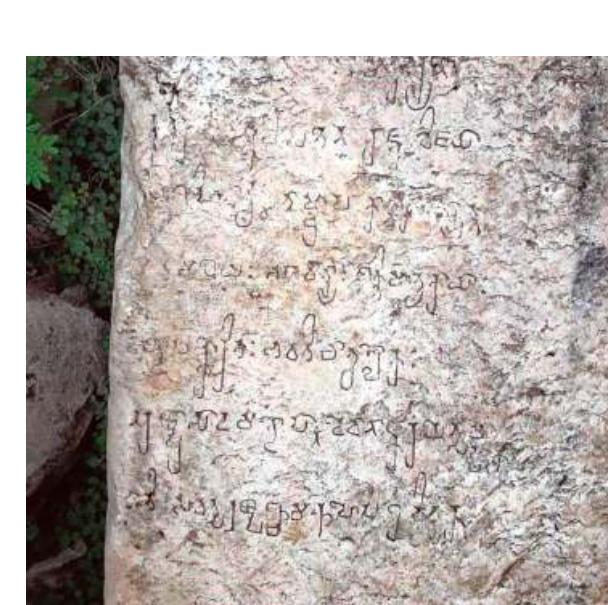
The inscription came to light when some local villagers informed the authorities of the presence of a pillar with some engravings when they were restoring and repairing the local Bheemeshwara temple.

The inscription was first copied and studied and it transpired that it records the construction of a prasada (temple), a mandapa and consecration of images on the southern side of the temple by a person named Kartika for the merit of the king at the temple of Bhagavathi (Goddess)

Vijaya is the 28th king of the Satavahana dynasty and ruled for 6 years.

So far the Nagarjunakonda inscription of Iksavaku king Ehavala Chantamula issued in his 11th regnal year corresponding to the 4th century A.D. was considered the earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India, he added.

Calling for conservation and preservation of the pillar given its historical importance, he pointed out that there were many such ancient monuments and structures across the country that lacked protection but could contain a treasure trove of information.



The inscription on Saptamatrikas discovered by the ASI near Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Three held in Kollam on charge of moral policing

They tried to misbehave with a woman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLLAM

In a case of moral policing, five men hurled abuses and allegedly assaulted a couple waiting in their car along with two other friends at Kannanad in Kollam, the police said on Wednesday.

The police have arrested three men in this connection.

The incident occurred on Tuesday night as the couple was waiting in the car along with two other friends to collect a bag from a person, the police said.

Lewd remarks
The men, who were standing nearby, made lewd remarks and one of them put his head inside the car and

allegedly tried to misbehave with the woman.

When her husband, an IT employee in Kochi, who was inside the car, questioned them, they hurled abuses and a scuffle ensued.

As the woman tried to take pictures on her mobile phone, the men, who were inebriated, abused her and tried to misbehave, the police said.

The Kerala police have registered cases against the accused under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code, including for causing grievous hurt, assaulting woman with intent to outrage her modesty, singing obscene song in public place and wrongful restraint.

IN BRIEF



Haryana orders closure of schools due to cold

CHANDIGARH
Government and private schools in Haryana will remain closed on Thursday due to intense cold, according to an official statement. Day temperatures have been hovering between 11 and 15 degrees Celsius at most places in the State. PTI

Migrant worker thrown out of moving train

CUDDALORE
Four persons were arrested by the Government Railway Police in Vriddachalam on Tuesday for killing a migrant labourer by throwing him out of a moving train following an argument. The accused were identified as Jiththan Giri, Anil Kumar, Sukdev Kadaiya and Sottu Badaik, all hailing from Rourkela in Odisha. The accused were produced before a local court in Panruti and remanded in judicial custody.

Army officer, civilian killed in firing in Uri

SRINAGAR
An Army officer and a civilian were killed as Pakistan violated ceasefire agreement and opened fire along the Line of Control in north Kashmir's Uri sector in Baramulla on Wednesday. An official said the Junior Commissioned Officer and a woman were hit by bullets and splinters and civilian areas were shelled with mortars in the attack.

Allow us to quit without notice period: AI pilots

NEW DELHI
Flagging concerns over unpaid dues, the Indian Commercial Pilots' Association, an Air India pilots' union representing nearly 800 pilots, has urged the government to allow its members to quit the debt-laden carrier without serving the notice period. The union has warned that they are in no position to work amid uncertainty over the airline's future.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



Forecast for Thursday: Cold day conditions likely in many pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, north Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. Dense fog likely over Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam and Meghalaya.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-22.0	12.0	-	Kozhikode	...-36.0	25.0	-
Ahmedabad	...-28.0	16.0	-	Kurnool	...-31.0	20.0	-
Aizawl	...-19.0	6.0	-	Lucknow	...-16.0	6.0	-
Allahabad	...-19.0	10.0	-	Madurai	...-29.0	23.0	-
Bangalore	...-25.0	19.0	-	Mangaluru	...-37.0	24.0	-
Bhopal	...-26.0	13.0	-	Mumbai	...-32.0	24.0	-
Bhubaneswar	...-28.0	15.0	-	Mysuru	...-28.0	19.0	-
Chandigarh	...-10.0	7.0	-	New Delhi	...-13.0	6.0	-
Coimbatore	...-27.0	23.0	-	Patna	...-19.0	10.0	-
Dehradun	...-21.0	4.0	-	Port Blair	...-29.0	22.0	-
Gangtok	...-11.0	6.0	-	Puducherry	...-16.0	20.0	-
Goa	...-34.0	23.0	-	Pune	...-31.0	21.0	-
Guwahati	...-23.0	11.0	-	Raipur	...-29.0	17.0	-
Hubballi	...-30.0	20.0	-	Ranchi	...-19.0	12.0	-
Hyderabad	...-29.0	19.0	-	Shillong	...-15.0	5.0	-
Imphal	...-22.0	4.0	-	Shimla	...-12.0	2.0	-
Jaipur	...-20.0	6.0	-	Srinagar	...-9.0	4.0	-
Kochi	...-33.0	25.0	-	Thiruvananthapuram	...-33.0	24.0	-
Kohima	...-16.0	5.0	-	Tiruchirappalli	...-27.0	22.0	-
Kolkata	...-25.0	14.0	-	Vijayawada	...-29.0	20.0	-
Mumbai	...-7.4	4.5	-32.1	Visakhapatnam	...-28.0	21.0	-
Pune	...-83.3	32.1	107.1				
Visakhapatnam	10.56	4.6	19.9				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	70	27	0.50	.91	99	GREEN
Bengaluru	12	35	.51	.61	.79	GREEN
Chennai	21	33	.62	.123	—	RED
Delhi	10	173	.85	.403	.313	RED
Hyderabad	15	39	.35	.185	—	ORANGE
Kolkata	10	105	.49	.293	.197	ORANGE
Lucknow	76	1	.68	.44	—	ORANGE
Mumbai	7	.47	.45	.32	.173	ORANGE
Pune	83	.32	.107	.197	.134	ORANGE
Visakhapatnam	10	.56	4.6	19.9	—	ORANGE

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI; SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.)

NO_x: 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.

Study warns of growing cancer burden across India

Fastest epidemiological transition recorded in Kerala, lowest in U.P.

SHYAMA RAJAGOPAL
KOCHI

A study tracing the growing burden of cancer in India states that most of the increase in cancer incidences are attributable to its epidemiological transition and improvement in the use of cancer diagnostics.

The country's cancer burden will continue to increase as a result of the ongoing ageing of India and improving access to cancer diagnostics in rural India, said Mohandas K. Mallath of the Tata Medical Centre, Kolkata, and Robert Smith from Kings College, London, in a recent paper: *History of Growing burden of Cancer in India: From Antiquity to 21st century*.

The paper was published in the *Journal of Global Oncology* which promoted by the American Society of Clin-

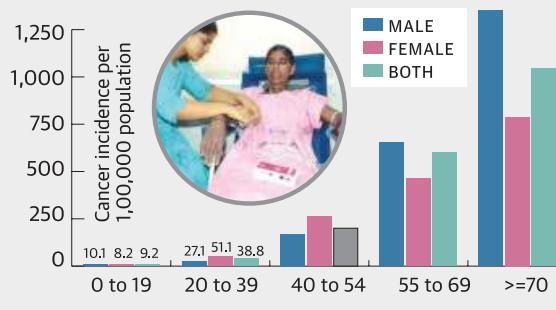
ical Oncology. The study has stated that while cancer-like diseases were documented since antiquity, recording of cancer in India began in the 19th century when the Western practices of biopsy and pathological examination came to India during the colonial British regime.

Cancer is primarily a disease of older people, hence, as life expectancy went up, cancer incidences too went up, said Dr. Mallath, a senior consultant of Digestive Oncology. Maximum increases will occur in the most populous and least developed States, where the facilities for cancer diagnostics and treatment are inadequate.

According to Dr. Mallath, the present study offers lessons for planning cancer care in States as well as other countries experiencing epi-

Killer cells

While cancer incidence among women aged between 20 and 54 was higher than in men, the trend reversed for patients aged 55 and above in 2018



demological transition. In India the fastest epidemiological transition happened in Kerala, whereas Uttar Pradesh remained in the slowest group, he said.

Kerala vs U.P.

A direct comparison of the demographic and social variables, available health care facilities and leading causes of mortality in these two

States shows how the low incidences of infectious diseases in Kerala has given rise to more cancer compared to U.P., which is still battling high mortality from communicable diseases.

The types of cancers in India are also undergoing a transition, similar to a report from Japan five decades ago.

There has been a decline of cancers caused by infec-

tions, such as cervical, stomach, and penile cancer, and an increase in cancers associated with energy intake, physical activity imbalance and ageing, such as breast, colorectal and prostate cancers.

Cancer transitions can influence the requirements for site-specialized cancer surgeons, the study says. For example Kerala will need more breast oncologists and U.P. will need more gynaecological oncologists, said Dr. Mallath.

The association of tobacco chewing with cancer were published over a century ago. But the habit is now estimated to cause a fifth of all cancers in India, the study says.

Out-of-pocket expenditure is three times higher for private inpatient cancer care in India. Approximately 40%

of cancer costs are met through borrowing and contributions from friends and relatives.

No evidence of cancer in Indus Valley sites

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

Evidence of cancer in early humans were found in a review of 154 paleopathological studies dating back to 1.8 million years in historic Egyptian and German sites.

However, the study, "History of Growing Burden of Cancer in India from Antiquity to 21st century", published recently in the *Journal of Global Oncology*, states that no comprehensive historical review could be gathered scanning through voluminous data on medical literature from prehistoric times.

Dr. Mohandas Mallath, the co-author of the study states that no paleo-oncology reports of cancer have been recorded at the Indus

Valley civilization or Deccan Chalcolithic sites except for mention of some benign osteomas. Fewer samples and poor preservation were some of the limitations of these studies, he said.

The study says, there are references to cancer-like symptoms in many ancient texts including the 'Atharva Veda' and two ancient medical systems, Ayurveda and Siddha, which have been in use for more than 2,500 years. These texts mention the use of surgery and herbal medications for these diseases. The ancient medical classics of India have devoted little attention to cancer-like illnesses, suggesting a low prevalence of cancer in those times perhaps, said Dr. Mallath.

CBI probes Yamuna Expressway scam in U.P.

Land allegedly bought at twice the rate

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has taken over the probe into an alleged ₹126-crore scam in the acquisition of land in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura for the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA). Its former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) P.C. Gupta and 20 others are accused in the case.

Over 57 hectares of land has been acquired in the seven villages of Mathura for ₹85.49 crore.

An internal probe revealed that months ahead of the acquisition, the associates and relatives of YEIDA officials had purchased the land parcels from villagers.

Sham companies were also used to buy the land.



Over 57 hectares of land has been acquired in seven villages of Mathura.

It is alleged that as part of a conspiracy, the land was acquired for YEIDA projects at more than two times the authorised rates.

The case was initially registered at the Kasna police station in Uttar Pradesh on June 3, 2018, after an internal inquiry was conducted into the allegations of financial irregularities.

The demand for a national

wide ban comes months after the Tamil Nadu government to protect their human rights.

The demand for a nationwide ban comes months after the Tamil Nadu government banned normative surgeries on infants and children except in life-threatening situations after a historic judgment of the Madras High Court on April 22.

If adopted nationally, India could become only the third country after Malta and Taiwan, to have a legal regime which protects the rights of intersex children.

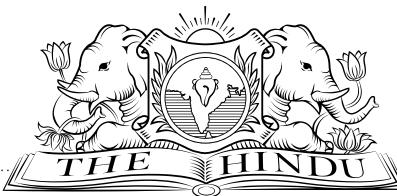
The demand for a nationwide legislation emerged at the first national conference

on intersex human rights organised by Srishti Madurai in partnership with Intersex Asia on Sunday in New Delhi.

While the term intersex is confused with transgender, the two in fact have very different meanings.

Individuals who identify as transgender or transexual have a gender that is different from the one traditionally associated with the sex they were assigned at birth, while intersex refers to people born with biological or physical characteristics that are more diverse than stereotypical male or female bodies.

For intersex children, parents



Dangerous doublespeak

The government's position on the NRC appears designed to create confusion

The Centre appears to have marginally mellowed its position on rolling out a National Register of Citizens (NRC), going by the statements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah this week. But the Prime Minister's contention that the widespread concerns about the NRC are merely fear-mongering by his political opponents is disingenuous and lame. The Prime Minister said no discussion on NRC had taken place in the government, which may be a clever statement but is certainly not reassuring. The plans for a countrywide NRC were announced repeatedly by senior functionaries of the government including Mr. Shah, even in Parliament. The concern that such an exercise, in combination with the recently enacted Citizenship (Amendment) Act, or CAA, could lead to disenfranchisement and harassment of the poor and undocumented segments of the population was not born out of anyone's imagination. Such a link has been stated by the ruling dispensation. The political thought behind the CAA-NRC fusion is the distinction that Mr. Modi makes between "infiltrators" and "refugees", as if they could be separated on the basis of their religion. This argument was advanced in the 2014 campaign and it is ironical that the Prime Minister reiterated it in the same speech in which he accused the Opposition of spreading misinformation on the NRC. If the government has a rethink on its strident position on the NRC, it must say so upfront, and at any rate desist from denigrating critics. So far, what has come as clarification has only added to the confusion.

In fact, the government must seriously reevaluate its position. India has a host of serious national challenges to tackle, the economy being the most critical. In his first Independence Day speech as Prime Minister, Mr. Modi had in 2014 called for a 10-year moratorium on communal and caste conflicts. He also promised to run the country on the basis of consensus and not of legislative majority. It is time he redeemed that pledge, and worked to heal the deep wounds inflicted by his misguided policy priorities. The intolerance towards opposing views and political opponents is expressed in horrifying terms down the ladder. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, vowed to take "revenge" against CAA-NRC protesters who turned violent. The Uttar Pradesh police have not explained satisfactorily how several people died of bullet injuries, while claiming that their personnel did not fire a single bullet. A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA threatened to "wipe out" critics of CAA-NRC. Several other BJP functionaries have continued to make menacing statements regarding the NRC, even after the Prime Minister blamed the Opposition. The Prime Minister must demonstrate he is a man of his word, and that his writ runs in the party and the government.

Mind the gap

A rounded approach is necessary to ensure women's access to resources, opportunities

Assessing women's access to equal opportunity and resources against the access that men have would be a scientific way of evaluating a nation's commitment to the advancement of its citizens. But going by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020, released last week, questions can easily be raised about whether this government is doing the right thing by the country's women. India has dropped four points from 2018, to take the 112th rank on the Index. The Index measures the extent of gender-based gaps on four key parameters – economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Notably, it measures gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities in countries, rather than the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities. Despite a small score improvement, India has lost four positions as some countries ranked lower than India have shown better improvement. The country has reportedly closed two thirds of its overall gender gap, with a score of 66.8%, but the report notes with concern that the condition of women in large fringes of Indian society is 'precarious'. Of significant concern is the economic gender gap, with a score of 35.4%, at the 149th place, among 153 countries, and down seven places since the previous edition, indicating only a third of the gap has been bridged. The participation of women in the labour force is also among the lowest in the world, and the female estimated earned income is only one-fifth of male income. An alarming statistic is India's position (150th rank) on the very bottom of the Health and Survival subindex, determined largely by the skewed sex ratio at birth, violence, forced marriage and discrimination in access to health. It is on the educational attainment (112th rank) and political empowerment (18th rank) fronts that the relative good news is buried.

There is no question that the Gender Gap Index presents India with an opportunity to make the necessary amends forthwith. Doing what the government is currently doing is clearly not going to be sufficient; it needs to engage intimately with all aspects indicated by the Index to improve the score, and set targets to reduce the gender gap in the foreseeable future. It will have to drastically scale up efforts it has introduced to encourage women's participation, and increase opportunities for them. To do so it also needs to make sure there is actual implementation at the ground level. While a good score on any global index is a target worth pursuing, what is being questioned here is basic – is the state negating on its commitment to half its population? A commitment to ameliorate the conditions for women is a non-negotiable duty of any state.

The Musharraf verdict was a long time coming

But in their silence in the High Treason case, Pakistan's political parties are only strengthening the military's hands



S. AKBAR ZAIDI

Many of those who have supported democracy in Pakistan since its inception in 1970 and after the Constitution of Pakistan was promulgated in 1973, have demanded that the two military generals who undertook coups and abrogated the Constitution, be held accountable. Both General Zia-ul-Haq (1977) and General Pervez Musharraf (1999) were able to convince the superior judiciary that their coups to dismiss elected governments were in the "national interest", with both coups being validated by the superior judiciary, and neither of the two coup-makers held accountable for his actions. In fact, provisions were subsequently introduced into the Constitution on both occasions, which ratified such action through Parliament granting impunity for numerous unconstitutional acts.

Last Tuesday, on December 17, 2019, a Special Court of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, held the now retired Gen. Pervez Musharraf guilty (in absentia) of the offence of high treason and to be hanged to death, not for undertaking the coup against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October 1999, but for imposing an Emergency on November 3, 2007. The term used to applaud this sentence, that the judgment is "unprecedented" – given Pakistan's political economy with the dominance of the military and which Gen. Musharraf himself led of the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG) himself fled as Chief of the Army Staff from 1998 to 2007 – is itself severely understated.

Since the first of three major coups, in 1958, with generals ruling Pakistan collectively directly for more than three decades, and also determining political processes for a further two decades, such a judgment has been a long time coming. Even those who are against capital punishment have endorsed the decision in principle, hoping that if ever it is implemented, it would be converted into life imprisonment.

A verdict's ripple effects

Clearly, former President General (retired) Pervez Musharraf is not going to be hanged. Nor, will Paragraph 66 of the judgment which states that even if found dead, "his corpse be dragged to the D-Chowk, Islamabad, Pakistan and be hanged for 03 days", be applied to him if he were to pass away. Such dramatic language notwithstanding (which was a minority view which is not part of the official judgment), the fact that the Supreme Court of Pakistan could take such an extraordinary decision has major repercussions and consequences.

Before one begins to interpret the nature of the consequences of this particular judgment, it is worth citing a few recent instances in the nature of decisions by the Supreme Court. In 2007, through a Lawyers' Movement which rallied thousands of lawyers against the decision of the then President Musharraf to dismiss the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the legal fraternity reinvented itself as an institution which wanted to be seen as democratic, impartial and independent. By taking on Gen. Musharraf with the critical support of the three main political parties lead by Nawaz Sharif, Asif Ali Zardari and including the incumbent Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan himself, the La-



wyers' Movement changed from one of protecting the legal community's specific self-interests into one of a broader anti-Musharraf, pro-democracy movement, eventually leading to Gen. Musharraf's resignation as President of Pakistan in 2008 in order to avoid an impeachment process initiated by Parliament.

Since 2008, the judiciary has had Pakistan's former Prime Minister imprisoned, found a sitting Prime Minister to be ineligible to hold office resulting in his resignation, and along with the National Accountability Bureau opened trials against numerous ministers. It has also been involved in prosecuting a former civilian President of Pakistan. Numerous former Ministers and one former Prime Minister of Pakistan are currently in captivity. Some have still not been charged. The courts have been particularly active in dispensing judgments and justice against numerous civilian representatives. They have also passed two critical judgments against the military.

In November 2017, a sit-in took place near Islamabad by a newly formed religious political party called the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). A suo motu case was taken up by the Supreme Court and in its judgment in 2018 it ordered "action against army officers who engaged in political activity" supporting the TLP in the sit-in. The judgment cast aspersions on the Pakistan military's se-

cret Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) wing and felt that there was a perception that the ISI might have been involved in the sit-in. It also felt that the Director General (DG) of the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) had "taken to commenting on political matters". Clearly, the military and its leadership could not have been pleased by such new-found judgments.

However, the subsequent involvement of the superior judiciary in military affairs was an even bigger surprise and a reflection of an attempt to assert a new sense of its power and independence. Just a three weeks before the high treason judgment against Gen. Musharraf by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, it suspended the three-year extension in the services of the current Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Bajwa – it was to have taken place smoothly, as it has in the past, on November 29, 2019, the day he was to retire. The court extended his tenure by a mere six months, asking Parliament to find constitutional means to deal with such extensions.

The military reacts

The Musharraf high treason judgment drew the wrath of the DG-ISPR who issued a press release immediately after, stating that the decision "has been received with a lot of pain and anguish by the rank and file of Pakistan Armed Forces". Gen. Musharraf, with his exemplary record, the press release stated "can surely never be a traitor". Clearly, the military and its establishment have not been pleased by the Supreme Court's judgment. Immediately after the announcement of the judgment, General Bajwa visited General Musharraf's former unit, the SSG, and was photographed raising a clenched fist.

While the military has ex-

pressed its displeasure and disappointment in this series of judgments by issuing press releases and holding press conferences, the military's B Team, the incumbent government of Prime Minister Imran Khan, has also risen to the defence of the military, perhaps trying to pay back much support that the military has provided to the civilian government. Since the civilian government has repeatedly stated that it is on the "same page" as the military, this was to be expected.

Jarring note

What has been surprising, however, has been the utter silence from the two main political parties on the Musharraf High Treason case – that of Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari. Perhaps the saddest aspect of the Supreme Court's independent stand in following its interpretation of the Constitution has been the absence of support by political parties which ought to have benefited the most by such a judgment. This judgment clearly enhances democracy in Pakistan, but if those who are supposedly democracy's champions are unable to celebrate a huge symbolic victory, it only reaffirms the perception that despite three civilian elected governments since 2008, the military continues to rule Pakistan. Without the support of democratic forces, it is improbable that even the Musharraf High Treason judgment would deter the military from taking any sort of political action it feels necessary in the "national interest". Yet another opportunity to strengthen democracy in Pakistan may have been lost.

S. Akbar Zaidi is a political economist based in Karachi. He teaches at Columbia University in New York, and at the IBA in Karachi

An Act that fails the constitutional test

The government needs to display an accommodative approach in its reaction to the protests against the Citizenship Act



ANMOLAM & FARHEEN AHMAD

After reading opinion page articles in this daily such as "Time to defend India's secularism", by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (December 18, 2019), and "A premature denunciation of the Citizenship Act", December 21, 2019, by Member of Parliament and former Union Minister Subramanian Swamy, one cannot avoid the feeling that the issues require more corroboration and expansion.

RESPONSE

Mr. Vijayan has argued that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, is violative of Article 14 of the Constitution and impinges on the very ideals of our freedom struggle. He tries to establish that the CAA, being divisive and discriminatory, manifestly violates human rights, and is an attempt to impose the politics and philosophy of Hindutva, to accomplish its vision of a "Hindu nation".

Dr. Swamy has attempted to rebut these arguments on three premises: that of the aims and objects of this piece of legislation passed by both Houses of Parliament with

a large majority; the historic context for the legislation; and the equation of "Hindutva" with "secularism". The arguments in the December 21 article appear hollow on multiple grounds and mandate rebuttal.

Quite often, conceivably discriminatory laws are camouflaged by language. What requires analysis is a reasonable scrutiny of the cumulative effects of the legislation, read not in isolated silos. Dr. Swamy argues that the need for this Bill arose partly because the Islamic theocratic nations, of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, have brutally persecuted non-Muslim minorities since 1947. However, India's official position on a number of occasions necessitated us to make a nuanced observation. While exercising its Right of Reply at the 38th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, in 2018, the Indian representative said of Pakistan's stand: "In its obsession with puritanism, it has unleashed systematic persecution against its own Muslim minorities including Shias, Ahmadis, Ismailia and Hazaras, who have been reduced to second class citizens."

It is about rights

In the course of justification, Dr. Swamy has argued that "no Muslims or Jews came to India over the last 70 years on grounds of religious persecution". It is devoid of constitutional logic because as per the Indian Constitution, even in



the absence of an actual claim, rights of an individual persist. The Supreme Court of India has held that "Article 14 was founded on a sound public policy recognised and valued all over the civilised world, its language was the language of command and it imposed an obligation on the State of which no person could, by his act or conduct, relieve it." It signifies that even if a Muslim or a Jew might not have approached for last 70 years, it cannot be considered as a ground for waiver of right to equality enshrined in Article 14. In order to vindicate the patently unreasonable classification under the CAA, Dr. Swamy appears to have misquoted the Congress Party Working Committee's resolution of 1947 and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's statement of 2003 in terms of intent. It is worth noting that their premise for a lenient and humane approach was not based on the specific ground of religion or persecution.

Defining persecution

Dr. Swamy's opinion that "on religious persecution, the Muslims of Pakistan, etc., are not similarly

placed" lacks academic rigour. Arriving at a concrete definition of "religious persecution" is a difficult task.

In the context of persecution, religion has to be understood not from the believer's point of view; rather it is about what it means to its adversaries. For instance, the treatment meted towards an atheist or agnostic gets completely ignored under the parochial understanding of the CAA. Even the agents of persecution can be of various types, including state agencies persecuting one or more religious communities, religious organisations persecuting other religious communities or, individual puritans enforcing conformity on their own people.

As an illustration, UN experts and special rapporteurs have reported, *inter alia*, that "the current legal requirement for a separate electoral list for the Ahmadis, who have to declare themselves as non-Muslims in order to vote, is of particular concern".

On the aspect of human rights, the words of statesman-philosopher Dr. Radhakrishnan should suffice: "This view of religious impartiality, of comprehension and forbearance, has a prophetic role to play within the national and international life. No group of citizens shall arrogate to itself rights and privileges which it denies to others. No person should suffer any form of disability or discrimination because of his religion but

all alike should be free to share to the fullest degree in the common life."

Basis of Partition

Drawing parallels between Hindutva and secularism appears to be a complete misadventure as minor incidental overlaps may exist between two diametrically opposite philosophies. Contrary to many misinformed, aggressive and irresponsible statements made by some parliamentarians on the issue of Partition and a Hindu Rashtra, let us remind ourselves that the Partition of 1947 did not take place on religious lines. Rather, it was based on a philosophical understanding of the nature of society citizens and leaders wanted. Pakistan opted for a theocratic nature of governance, but our founding fathers coveted a plural, inclusive and modern society based on democratic and secular credentials. The CAA has witnessed large-scale, non-violent protest by both the masses and intellectuals. It is hoped that the Government will display an accommodative approach. To conclude by paraphrasing Edmund Burke, "Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great democracy and little minds go ill together."

Anmolam is a lawyer, running a non-profit organisation BDLAAP. **Farheen Ahmad** is a research scholar at the South Asian University, New Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

NRC, NPR and more

When the country is already in turmoil over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the National Register of Citizens, not to speak of the reading down of Article 370 relating to Jammu and Kashmir's special status, the announcement of updating the National Population Register has to be viewed as the proverbial last straw (Page 1, "Cabinet clears NPR update, census", December 25). When the Home Minister tries to allay fears by saying there is no link between the NPR and the NRC, it is a tacit admission that the NRC is not an innocuous exercise as the government claims it to be.

AYYASERI RAVEENDRANATH,

Annamalai, Kerala

Party government at the Centre is requested to shelve, at least for a year, implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, the National Register of Citizens, and the National Population Register which do not need as much urgent attention as do these issues listed: economic decline, price rise and unemployment. We now see people in turmoil after large-scale protests and struggles against comparatively secondary issues which can be solved through discussion. Let us spend our energy in finding ways to improve our economic condition, and also achieving harmony.

M. VATHAPUREESWARAN,

Erode, Tamil Nadu

enable them to gain more bargaining power with the Sri Lankan Government (OpEd page, "Explainer", "Return to the homeland", December 25). But over and above safety and security, there are two important aspects which need to be addressed. First, the refugees on return should be able to have a decent livelihood to meet their ends. Many have lost properties and there are less job opportunities. The Indian Government should take up these issues with Sri Lanka so that repatriation is smooth. Second, political leaders in Tamil Nadu should desist from making provocative statements just to whip up Tamil sentiments for political gains.

Much water has flown down the Ganga since the call for Eelam, a separate statehood for Tamils. With all the bloodbath, loss of lives and

property, it would be preposterous on the part of Tamil Nadu politicians to continue to indulge in rhetoric about a separate state for Tamils and protest whenever leaders from the island nation come to India. The endeavour should be to create a conducive atmosphere for Tamils to live in peace with the locals.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,

Chennai

ironical that a German student should have been subjected to such a harsh treatment. After all, IIT Madras, founded in 1959 during the premiership of Jawaharlal Nehru, owes its very existence to technical and financial assistance from the former government of West Germany – the largest educational project sponsored by West Germany outside that country. His act in no way had the potential of even remotely causing any prejudice to our national interest. Yet, if

indeed there was violation of a visa condition, his apology should have been gracefully accepted and he should have been let off with a warning. Such disproportionate and a highly insensitive action betrays a sense of paranoia. Will the Prime Minister's Office intervene to undo this gross miscarriage of justice to a young student from a friendly nation?

S.K. CHOUDHURY,

Bengaluru

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

Two Sports page (Dec. 24, 2019) reports – "Memorable day for Pakistan" and "SL Skipper declares Pakistan 200% safe" – gave the year of the Lahore attack as 2006 and 2009, respectively. The year 2009 is correct.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; Email: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kast

The return of the secular

Young protesters across India have brought Gandhi's vision of the secular into the public discourse



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

It was both touching and comforting to hear the reply of Nikhil, a young student from Jamia Millia Islamia, to an unexpected question put to him last week by a TV anchor – "What does Jamia mean to you?" After a long pause, he said, "It has given me *tahzeeb* (refined civility), an understanding of the *samvidhaan* (Constitution) and taught me to read, write and think. When I joined Jamia, I had no understanding of India. This university has made me understand my country. I will work to the end of my life to realise Gandhi's vision. I want my secular India back," he affirmed.

Mentioning Mahatma Gandhi was entirely appropriate. For, Gandhi's contribution to an everyday understanding of secularism is massive, one different from at least three other understandings. First, the political secularism of Western Europe and North America in which some form of separation between church and state is required to defend equality and individual liberty but has no room for the idea of fraternity or community, crucial in deeply diverse societies. Second, the more legal and philosophical, constitutional secularism of India, one that is immensely complex, nuanced and comprehensive, cognisant of deep diversity as well as oppression within communities. Here, the state is required to maintain a principled distance from all religious communities. This is concerned with preventing inter-religious domination as much as fighting religiously grounded hierarchies and fanaticism within religions.

Finally, the secularism practised in recent times by most political parties in India, what I have called 'party-political secularism'. This secularism does not really deserve to be called so because it is unprincipled and opportunistic, plays footsie with the most orthodox, bigoted and regressive elements of all religions, is concerned solely with seeking and maintaining power, and is willing to engineer riots or capitalise on inter-communal estrangement.



A protest in New Delhi against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act earlier this week. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

In contrast, Gandhi made secularism simple. All religious communities inhabiting a particular territory must live with continuing ease and comfort with one another. This is a people-dependent notion, one that Gandhi believed was already part of popular Indian consciousness but jeopardised in modern times by communal politics. To counter it, he felt, support was needed from the state that is not partial to any one particular religion. Moreover, whenever any estrangement or hostility ensued, then the state must help restore communal harmony. To perform its primary duty of maintaining fraternity, to prevent political alienation, the state must distance itself equally from all religions.

Against discriminatory laws

It was heartening to find so many young women and men all fired up about this Gandhian vision of secular India, and be out on the streets to defend their idea of constitutional secularism. Four things about what they conveyed are noteworthy. First, the fundamental injustice of policies with unambiguous discriminatory intent. This is unconstitutional. And offends the dignity not only of those discriminated against but also of every citizen in the polity. In major nationwide protests in which countless people participated, it was made clear that any law or policy that discriminates on the basis of religion is not acceptable. Besides, the whole idea of proving one's citizenship by producing documents before government officials is abhorrent – anyone born in India must be presumed to be an Indian citizen and should not be compelled to demonstrate this. Many protesting students are con-

vinced that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) is discriminatory. Article 14 provides for equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. Suppose that a foreign national from Europe commits a grave crime in India. Should he be treated differently from other Indians? Would the law be differentially applied simply because he is, say, a European Christian? No. Analogously, suppose that illegal immigrants fleeing persecution in their own country enter Indian territory, need to be identified and investigated for possible deportation. A uniform criminal law should apply here too. Either all should be given refuge or all deported by due process of law. No one within the territory of India, Indian citizen or foreign national, must be treated differently. The students appeared to have imbibed this logic.

Second, a rejection of the politics of hate and revenge. Such policies, the peaceful protesters seemed to suggest, disrupt peace and stability by generating a vicious cycle of resentment and mutual hostility. To be sure, conflicts and skirmishes have not been uncommon between communities in the past, but a deep division between them occurred only when a pernicious ethno-nationalist ideology was imported into India in the 19th century, with tragic results in 1947. Young people appeared to have realised that leaders of the current government have not learned any lessons from those dark events and continue with policies aimed at consolidating a pan-Hindu identity defined by hostility to the 'other'.

Third, the public acknowledgement by young Hindus of the contribution of Muslims to Indian culture and civilisation, to constructions of

Indian notions of civility. Young women and men asserted that their religious identity is not defined against other religions. One can be Hindu without being anti-Muslim and vice versa. Indian citizens cohabit a shared social and public space not through mutual toleration but by actively accepting one another, and are committed to participating in each other's suffering and destiny. They conveyed that they shall not tolerate attempts to breach civic friendship.

Composite culture

Likewise, norms of public etiquette, civility and refinements in culture have been shaped in India by multiple religious traditions in which Muslims have played a prominent role. For example, the *qawwali* and the *ghazal* are as much a part of our culture as the *bhajan*. Are not some of the greatest *bhajans* in Hindi films written by Sahir Ludhianvi and Javed Akhtar, sung by Mohammad Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar and others to compositions by Naushad and A.R. Rehman? It is not for nothing that even a known Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) sympathiser, the actor Paresh Rawal, was compelled to remark that he was stunned by the 'idiocy' of the demand that Firoz Khan not be allowed to teach Sanskrit at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU). There is a whole tradition of such scholarship alive today that harks back to Dara Shikoh and Amir Khursro, and continues in Modern India with renowned Sanskrit scholars such as Mohammed Hanif Khan Shastri and Pandit Ghulam Dastagir. Finally, the protesters made it clear that an obsession with religious identity takes focus away from pressing issues of everyday life. No more divide and rule, as one of the posters averred; the business of government is to facilitate a better everyday life for all ordinary citizens, including Hindus and Muslims, not to destroy it.

The reappearance of secularism in Indian public discourse, initiated by young Indian students, is surely a matter of relief and joy to those who aspire to protect India's diverse cultural heritage, defend India's Constitution and wish every Indian to have a better standard of living.

Rajeev Bhargava is a political theorist with the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

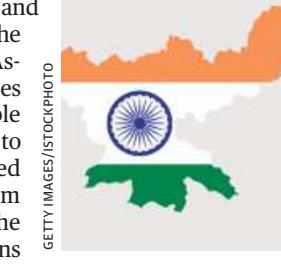
Indifferent State leadership caused BJP's Jharkhand loss

Issues like Ram temple and Article 370 had little appeal

HARISHWAR DAYAL

Seven months after winning a landslide victory in the parliamentary election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) suffered a humiliating defeat in the Jharkhand Assembly poll. The reasons can be deciphered by analysing the changes that took place in the State between these two elections.

One, the parliamentary election was contested in Jharkhand on the agenda of national security. The people, by and large, voted for the BJP, which had an alliance with the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) at that time, as they were convinced that only the BJP could promote national pride and ensure the safety and security of the nation. By the time the State went for Assembly polls, local grievances and demands of the people surfaced, but the BJP failed to realise this. It concentrated instead on issues like Ram mandir, Article 370 and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), which had little appeal for the Jharkhand voters.



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

The Jharkhand voters. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-Congress-Rashtriya Janata Dal alliance, on the other hand, succeeded in mobilising the voters by appealing to their local aspirations. True, in its five years at the helm, the BJP had implemented many welfare schemes, with support from the Centre. However, the saffron party failed to mobilise voters on these grounds this time.

An inaccessible Chief Minister

Further Raghuram Das, in his five years as Jharkhand Chief Minister, could not emerge as a very popular leader. He was perceived to be inaccessible and arrogant, a factor that alienated him both from the people of the State and the party workers of the BJP. So, when it came to be voting for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the parliamentary election earlier in the year, voters opted for the BJP, but when it came to giving a mandate again to Mr. Das in the Assembly election, they voted against the party.

Two, issues linked to ticket allocation further alienated the BJP's State leadership from both its workers and voters. While some of the sitting MLAs and popular party workers were denied tickets, some new entrants were given tickets. Many old party loyalists, as a result, either became indifferent or worked against the official candidates, contributing to the poor performance of the party.

Here, one of the worst miscalculations

made by the BJP was in denying ticket to senior leader Saryu Rai, who is known for his bold, honest and clean image. Mr. Rai, an old BJL loyalist and Minister in the erstwhile Cabinet, had his differences with Mr. Das because of his bold statements and uncompromising stand on some controversial issues. After having been kept waiting for party ticket for a long time, Mr. Rai contested as an independent and defeated Mr. Das in his home constituency, Jamshedpur (East).

This denial of ticket to Mr. Rai only added to the unpopularity of Mr. Das among party workers. This alienation was reflected in the form of poor booth management by the saffron party's officials.

On the other hand, while the BJP denied ticket to a leader known for his impeccable reputation, it gave tickets to some new entrants with allegations of corruption against them, dealing a severe blow to the party's image.

Further, the BJP's failure to forge an alliance with the AJSU hurt both the parties. The AJSU, whose voter base included the dominant OBC community of Mahtos, got more than 8% vote share, part of which could have helped the BJP in case the two parties had a pre-poll arrangement.

Seat-sharing arrangement

The JMM, the Congress and the RJD, on the other hand had a conflict-free seat sharing arrangement and kept their alliance strong. As a result, while the JMM was able to expand its reach, the Congress also improved its tally.

The results of the Assembly election could have some long-term implications for the State. Jharkhand, since its formation in 2000, has always been ruled by an alliance, usually post-poll coalitions of political parties and independents. But for the last government, none of the regimes could complete their full five-year terms. The winning alliance this time can possibly learn from history and provide stability. It should also try to address the unfulfilled demands and aspirations of the people. The most important challenge for the government will be to mobilise resources and to prepare a macro plan for their proper utilisation.

On its part, the BJP will need to analyse the reasons for its failures and strengthen its organisation at the grass-roots in the State.

Harishwar Dayal is a faculty member in St. Xavier's college, Ranchi

EXPLAINER

Detention, 'not linked to NRC'

A facility to hold foreigners ahead of their deportation is to become functional in Karnataka

K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ

A Foreigner Detention Centre (FDC) is all set to become functional from January 1, 2020, on the outskirts of Bengaluru, in a building that was meant to be a student hostel. While this is being linked by many to the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC), top Home Ministry officials have said that the facility will only be a 'transit home' for foreign nationals illegally in the country ahead of their deportation.

"The FDC coming up in the State is nationality-neutral and will act as a temporary detention home for foreign nationals illegally staying here and detained by police, till they are deported. The process to set up the facility began in 2009 following directions from the Union Government. There have also been directions from Karnataka High Court regarding this," said T.M. Vijay Bhaskar, Chief Secretary, Karnataka.

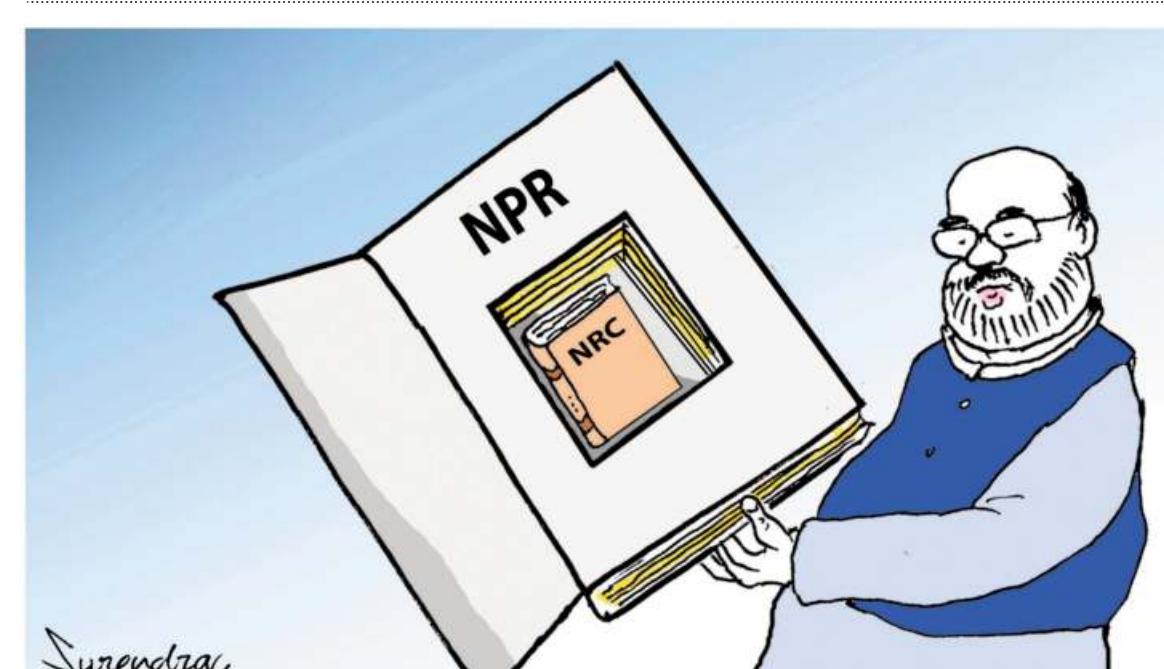
The topic of detention centres, and their possible connection with an NRC, has attracted multiple comments from top Central and State officials. While on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi flatly denied the news on the existence of any detention centre anywhere in the country, a few days later, Home Minister Amit Shah confirmed the existence of one such facility in Assam but said it had not yet become functional and had no connection with the Assam NRC. In Karnataka, while top officials and functionaries of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government said the facility is not connected to an NRC, no one was willing to speak on record for fear of attracting controversy.



Later, the Karnataka High Court, while hearing a bail petition of two Bangladeshi nationals in November 2019, pulled up the State government over the non-provision of FDC facility. On the court's directions, the State police submitted an affidavit listing around 35 facilities in the State that could act as temporary detention centres. "This has only added to the confusion, creating a perception that the State wants to build a detention centre in every district, again being linked to NRC. But these are only temporary, a sort of contingency plan till the FDC becomes operational as directed by the High Court. They will cease to be so on January 1, 2020. Not a single foreigner has been lodged in any of the 35 centres," said a senior police official. While there is no data on illegal immigrants in the state, FRRO data says 837 foreigners from 20 countries registered with them are overstaying their visa tenures in the State. Most of them are African nationals and less than 200 of them are from Bangladesh.

Two categories of inmates

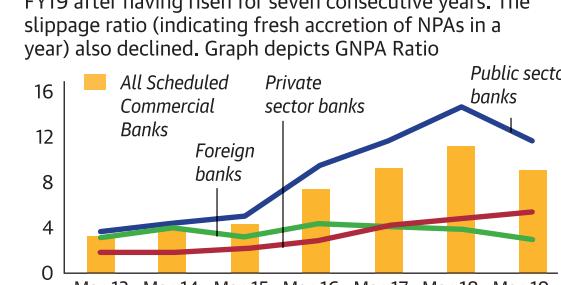
The Karnataka FDC is likely to host two categories of migrants: one, foreign nationals who have registered with Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) and have violated visa terms; and, two, those who do not have valid documents, are not registered with the FRRO and have been arrested for crimes. These migrants would be detained at the



DATA POINT

Present perfect, but future tense

1. Bad loans down... | The share of Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPAs) among total loans declined to 9.1% in FY19 after having risen for seven consecutive years. The slippage ratio (indicating fresh accretion of NPAs in a year) also declined. Graph depicts GNPA Ratio



■ The banks recovered ₹70,819 cr, worth stressed assets in FY19 under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, compared to ₹4,926 cr, in FY18. This played a part in the GNPA's decline

2. ...but stressed assets up | While GNPs are down, stress in large borrowing accounts (exposure of >₹5 cr.) rose in the first half of FY20. Special Mention Accounts-1 (loans overdue between 30 and 60 days) & Special Mention Accounts-2 (loans overdue between 60 and 90 days) rose in H1FY20. Simply put, SMA accounts are red flags which, if not addressed, can become NPAs in the next cycle



For instance, SMA-2 accounts grew from 0.7% to 2.2% in PSBs in H1FY20

■ The GNPA of private banks increased due to classification of IDBI bank (NPA ratio: 29.43) as a private bank

■ The banks recovered ₹70,819 cr, worth stressed assets in FY19 under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, compared to ₹4,926 cr, in FY18. This played a part in the GNPA's decline

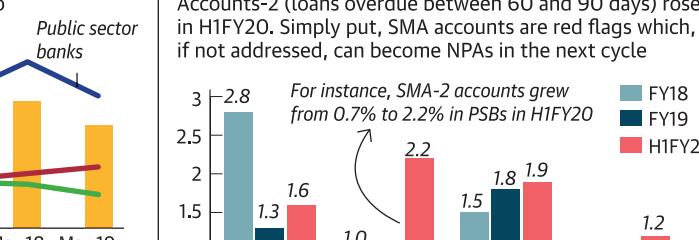
3. Worst among emerging economies | India's Non-Performing loans ratio (%) is the worst among emerging economies. Table lists the ratio between 2011 and 2019. In recent years, the ratio improved for Brazil while it deteriorated in Russia, South Africa and Turkey. India's NPA ratio saw a surge in 2016 after the RBI carried out an expansive Asset Quality Review in the year before. The review resulted in identification of many large loan accounts which had gone bad resulting in a huge jump in NPAs in India

■ The banks recovered ₹70,819 cr, worth stressed assets in FY19 under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, compared to ₹4,926 cr, in FY18. This played a part in the GNPA's decline

4. Trend and progress of banking in India, RBI

The Non-Performing Assets (loans overdue for >90 days) ratio for all commercial banks declined in FY19 after rising for seven consecutive years. However, in the first half of FY20, stressed assets (potential NPAs) inched up. Moreover, the NPA ratio of Indian banks is the poorest among emerging economies. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

5. Bad loans down... | The share of Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPAs) among total loans declined to 9.1% in FY19 after having risen for seven consecutive years. The slippage ratio (indicating fresh accretion of NPAs in a year) also declined. Graph depicts GNPA Ratio



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7. Trend and progress of banking in India, RBI

■ The GNPA of private banks increased due to classification of IDBI bank (NPA ratio: 29.43) as a private bank

FROM PAGE ONE

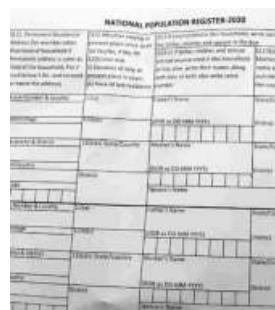
Media images of NPR forms spark confusion

The NPR exercise conducted first in 2010 and subsequently updated in 2015 collected details on the following 15 parameters – name of person, relationship to head of household, father's name, mother's name, spouse's name (if married), sex, date of birth, marital status, place of birth, nationality (as declared), present address of usual residence, duration of stay at present address, permanent residential address, occupation/activity and educational qualification.

Places of parents

A "pre-test" form that was used to collect data from 30 lakh people in September this year sought details on additional columns like "place of birth of father and mother, last place of residence" along with details like Aadhaar number, voter ID card number, mobile phone number and driving licence number. "This form seeking details like place of birth of father and mother was used in the trial stage in September. Before we take the final exercise next year, we need to train the enumerators and also seek feedback from those surveyed. On this basis we will decide the contents of the final NPR form," said an official.

Congress leader Ajay Maken who was Minister of State for Home when the data for NPR was first collated in 2010 tweeted the images of the 2010 form and the one used in September to say, "As MoS Home in 2010, I supervised the NPR! But Modi-Shah 2020 NPR is Totally Different. Please see



An image of the 'pre-test' form for NPR. ■ TWITTER

2010 & 2020 NPR Forms. 2020 Version adds: 1) Date&Place of Birth of Parents 2)Last Place of Residence 3)Aadhaar ID 4)Driving Licence No. 5)Voter ID 6)Mobile No. Thus, NPR2020=NRC!!"

The Citizenship Rules, 2003, state clearly that the Centre, by issuing an order, can decide a date to prepare the NPR and also provide for the creation of NRC that will flow from data gathered in the NPR. No new law or rules are needed to conduct this exercise across the country.

According to the Rules, a person's citizenship status will be decided by local officials – whether or not the person will figure in the National Register of Indian Citizens.

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved ₹394.35 crore for updating the NPR.

The government has informed Parliament on multiple occasions since 2014 that the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) or NRC will be created based on the information collected under NPR by verifying the citizenship status of all individuals in the country.

Massive locust invasion threatens Gujarat farmers

Aerial pests

At their prime, locust swarms, which are usually found in the Horn of Africa, West Asia and the Indian subcontinent, have the potential to damage the livelihood of a tenth of the world's population. The current locust invasion in Gujarat is the highest in recent times.



A farmer from Tharad Village, Gujarat, holding up locusts. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Locust invasions usually occur in areas that receive less than 200 mm of rain annually. This is an area of about 16 million sq km, consisting of

about 30 countries

- Locusts travel at 16-19 kmph, and swarms can cover 130 km or more in a day. Usually, there are 40 million, and sometimes as many as 80 million locust adults in each sq km of a swarm

- The last major upsurge in India occurred in 1993, which saw the incursion of 172 locust swarms. India has only one locust breeding season – from July to October

- The primary method of controlling locust swarms is by spraying small amounts of concentrated insecticide using vehicle-mounted and aerial sprayers. A total of 3,10,584 hectares have been treated up to the December 15, 2019

The farmers under siege are hiring workers and using age-old techniques like beating drums and vessels to scare the locusts away without much success.

"It's a massive issue in Banskantha, Patan, Kutch and parts of Sabarkantha and Mehsana. We are trying to help farmers in containing damage to their crops," Gujarat's Agriculture Minister R.C. Faldu said, adding the "government also explored the possibility of sprinkling pesticides and chemicals through choppers in affected areas."

Pesticides sprayed

Rather late in the day, the authorities have stepped in to combat the voracious invasion.

The State administration along with the central teams has launched huge pesticide-spraying operations to kill the insects.

A massive swarm of locusts spread in approximately 10 square kilo metre area has arrived in Tharad, the last taluka before the In-

dia-Pakistan border," Banskantha District Collector Sandeep Sangle told *The Hindu*. "We have started spraying pesticides to tackle the menace."

According to the Agriculture Ministry's Locust Warning Organisation (LWO), locusts are flying in from Pakistan's Sindh province and spreading in villages in Rajasthan and Gujarat where south western monsoon was prolonged this year.

Originally, the locusts emerged in February this year from Sudan and Eritrea on Africa's Red Sea Coast and travelled through Saudi Arabia and Iran to enter Pakistan, where they invaded the Sindh province and from there they moved into Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The government has now assured farmers that the administration will carry out a survey to assess the damages and will accordingly compensate farmers. However, farmers feel that the government's efforts are too little, too late.

"As far as this whole effort to separate the National Population Register (NPR) and NRC too, let me explain how they are connected. If you

are connected, if you

Ajit Pawar tipped to be Deputy CM

NCP leaders say he is likely to get charge of two Ministries in the expanded Maharashtra Cabinet

SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

A much-awaited expansion of the Maharashtra Cabinet due at the end of the year will most likely see Nationalist Congress Party leader Ajit Pawar play a prominent role in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

Senior NCP leaders said the all-important Home Department may go to the party's Dilip Walse Patil, while Mr. Pawar could be again appointed Deputy Chief Minister along with charge of two Ministries.

Indispensable part

"Any expansion of the MVA government is not possible without including Mr. Ajit Pawar in it. He will definitely be part of the extended Cabinet of the MVA," senior NCP leader and Cabinet Minister Jayant Patil said.

On November 23, Mr. Pawar was sworn in as Deputy



Winning side: NCP leader Ajit Pawar after the Sena-led government won the floor test in Mumbai. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

Chief Minister along with Devendra Fadnavis of the Bharatiya Janata Party as Chief Minister. However, Mr. Pawar had, in a surprising turn of events, resigned from the government in less than 80 hours, resulting in the fall of the BJP-led government. "We are happy to

share some of these responsibilities as keeping so many portfolios has only resulted in extra work pressure on us," a Sena Minister said. Senior leaders in the government said key portfolios temporarily allotted as of now will be shuffled, with Mr. Patil tipped to be Home

Minister. Mr. Pawar may also be accommodated in a prominent role, said a MVA leader.

The tripartite government of the MVA will go in for a full-fledged expansion of its Cabinet.

The Cabinet currently has a strength of six while Maharashtra can have 43 Minis-

Former HC judge denies taking up BJP membership

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

Justice M. Jaichandren, a retired judge of the Madras High Court and now chairman of the Puducherry Human Rights Committee, on Wednesday denied having become a primary member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at a mega membership drive in the presence of Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on July 6.

In a press release, he refuted news reports of having taken up BJP membership.

"I make it clear, by this statement, that I had never intended to do so in the first place," the communiqué read.

When *The Hindu* contacted him, he explained that the five-month delay in explaining his stand was because he had initially considered it a non-issue. However, with every passing day, as acquaintances began inquiring about his reported affiliation with a political party, he thought he should make his stand clear.

He said he was social and active as a lawyer and lecturer of law before 2005. He was also an office-bearer of the Madras Bar Association.

"However, I suddenly turned into a caged bird since December 10, 2005 when I was appointed as a judge of the Madras High Court. When I retired from service after 12 years of judgeship, which I would call an exile, I began trying to get back to society and mingle with all," he said.

Modi launches Atal scheme on groundwater

Project to be implemented in 8,350 gram panchayats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday launched the Atal Bhujal scheme to strengthen the institutional framework for participatory groundwater management and bringing about behavioural changes at the community level for sustainable groundwater resource management in seven States.

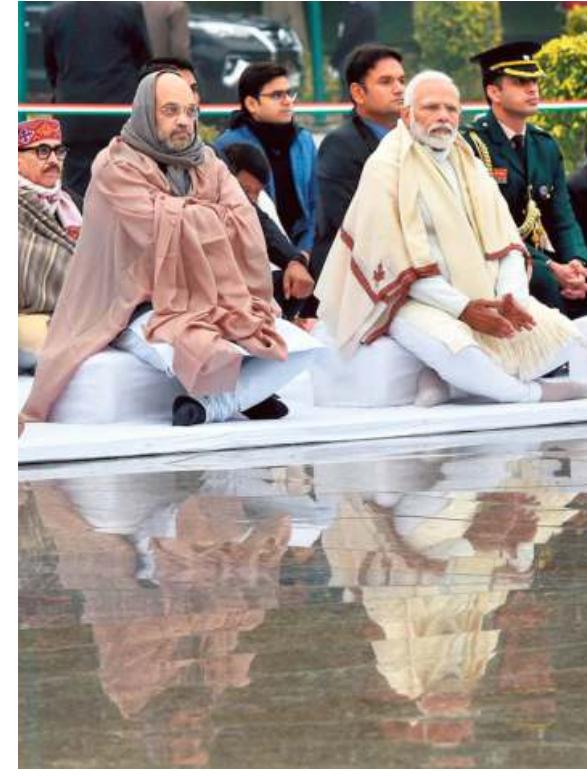
The scheme will be implemented in about 8,350 gram panchayats in 78 districts of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Of the total outlay of ₹6,000 crore to be provided from 2020-21 to 2024-25, 50% will be in the form of World Bank loan to be repaid by the Central government. The remaining part will be made available via Central assistance from regular budgetary support.

The entire World Bank's loan component and the Central assistance will be passed on to the States as grants. The Prime Minister said the scheme, or the guidelines related to the Jal Jeevan Mission, were big steps in proving the resolve to deliver water to every household in the country by 2024.

He said the country had to prepare itself for dealing with every situation of water crisis, for which the government had been working at five levels.

Mr. Modi said a comprehensive and holistic ap-



In reflection: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah at a prayer meeting at the memorial to former PM A.B. Vajpayee in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ PTI

proach had been adopted with the setting up of the Jal Shakti Ministry, which this monsoon made extensive efforts for water conservation.

He said the Jal Jeevan Mission would work towards delivering piped water supply to every house and Atal Bhujal scheme would pay special attention to those areas where groundwater was very low.

To incentivise gram panchayats, the Prime Minister said those with better performance would be given

more allocation under the scheme.

He said both the Central and State governments would spend ₹3.5 lakh crore on water related schemes in the next five years.

The Prime Minister also named the tunnel under the Rohtang Pass after Vajpayee. The tunnel connects Manali in Himachal Pradesh to Leh, Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Modi said the tunnel would help promote tourism in the region.

CDS will bring in synergy, say experts

'He has to take service chiefs along'

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The government's approval for the creation of the post of Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) is a welcome move to bring in synergy among the three Services at the higher level and optimise resource utilisation, say experts. However, it needs a change in the mindset of all stakeholders, and the CDS has to take the three Service Chiefs along to achieve the mandate, they observed.

The CDS will be a four-star General with salary and perquisites equivalent to a Service Chief. The CDS will head the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) to be created within the Defence Ministry and function as its Secretary and the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC).

Political trajectory
It has taken 18 years and a long political trajectory from Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Narendra Modi for the creation of the post, said Cmdr C. Uday Bhaskar (retd.), Director, Society for Policy Studies

cy will call for some deft give-and-take by all the principal stakeholders," he told *The Hindu*.

Lt. Gen. D.S. Hooda, former General Officer Commanding in Chief, Northern Command, said the government's intent seems to be the long-term restructuring as the responsibilities include establishment of theatre commands. Another positive step, he said, was the three-year time frame to the first CDS to bring about jointness in several areas including operations, logistics, transport and training. "If the CDS is able to do that, it will be a positive step and will lead to further integration," he said. "The Services will have to slightly change from a Service-oriented mindset to a more joint approach."

Lt. Gen. Vinod Bhatia (retd.), Director, Centre for Joint Warfare Studies, said the post has the requisite mandate and authority. He said the CDS should consolidate the headquarters of Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) and the charter and has to "carry the three Services along as the first among equals and ensure that the DMA is keyed into the apex decision making level."

Clear link connects CAA, NRC, NPR, says JD(U) leader

Prashant Kishor faults Congress leadership for not doing enough to repeal amendments when it was in power

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Janata Dal(U) vice-president Prashant Kishor termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement – on there being no discussions on the National Register of Citizens (NRC) within the government – a "tactical retreat" because of widespread protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the BJP's commitment to a nation-wide NRC.

Speaking exclusively to *The Hindu*, Mr. Kishor said, "I see it [Prime Minister Modi's statement] as a tactical retreat to douse the fire after the massive protests we are seeing across the country."

He said there was a straight connection between the CAA, the NRC and the National Population Register (NPR).

"As far as this whole effort to separate the National Population Register (NPR) and NRC too, let me explain how they are connected. If you

knead dough to make bread, you may say that the two – kneading and making bread – are separate processes; you may not finally bake the bread. But the kneading of the dough is an announcement of the intent to bake bread. So the whole idea of saying that the NPR process is not connected to NRC is useless. If you want to dispel doubts, say plainly that there will be no NRC after the NPR process. Currently the government has only said that there have been no discussions over the NRC. Neither Prime Minister Modi nor Home Minister Amit Shah has said there will not be any NRC, while the Cabinet has cleared a budget for NPR," he said.

The JD(U) leader was also sharply critical of the Congress for not going the whole hog on the CAA-NRC issue.

"Many Chief Ministers have said they will not implement the NRC. That is the only credible way to stop this. If you knead dough to make bread, you may say that the two – kneading and making bread – are separate processes; you may not finally bake the bread. But the kneading of the dough is an announcement of the intent to bake bread

PRASHANT KISHOR
JD(U) VICE-PRESIDENT

ping this. In fact, a couple of Chief Ministers, Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal and Pinarayi Vijayan in Kerala, have stopped the NRC process too, which is the starting point for NRC. Congress' Chief Ministers too say this, but there is a problem there.

While Banerjee, Jagan Mohan Reddy, Naveen Patnaik are Chief Ministers, they are also heads of their parties. In the case of the Congress, the CMs per se are not the head of their parties; the party's policy is decided by the Congress Working Committee (CWC) and the Congress pre-

sident... All I am saying is that if you are so opposed, what is stopping the Congress president from issuing a single line official statement that States under Congress rule will not implement NRC?" he asked.

'Roots lie in 2003'
On the current issues surrounding the CAA, he said the roots were in the 2003 amendments to the Act, which tasked the government with preparing an NRC. Mr. Kishor questioned why the Congress had not repealed the amendment.

when it held power between 2004 and 2014.

"Beyond 2014, in the last couple of days we are hearing from Congress leaders that Prime Minister Modi and Mr. Shah have contradicted their own stance, after having declared their intention of carrying through the NRC. Show me, even one occasion when the Congress has protested when Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah made these public statements of their intent to go through with the NRC. Yes, questions were asked in Parliament, to which the government has said that they are going to go forward with an NRC and NRC, what was Congress doing them? Did citizens hear any vociferous opposition from the Congress to even the statements of the government?"

On his own party's vote for the CAA in Parliament and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's declaration later that the NRC will not be im-

plemented in the State, Mr. Kishor said while the vote was a fact, "credit" should be given to Mr. Kumar for his stand on the NRC.

"I have personally said, together with many other colleagues, that this is not consistent with the party's stance in the past. After the vote though, consultation or pressure has had a bearing, and now Nitish Kumar ji has said on record that he is against the NRC and there will be no NRC exercise in Bihar. It is very important for your readers to also understand here that CAA per se, discriminatory as it is, is not as problematic as it is when clubbed with the NRC. Unless the process of NRC is completed there is no way that the government can discriminate against people, a provision that comes through the CAA. Thus even those who voted for the CAA in Parliament can stop the discrimination that the NRC will engender," he said.

A ND-NDE

Hemant Soren calls on Sonia and Rahul

Kin aghast as Meerut FIR names 3 dead

Post-mortem of a victim mentions bullet injury; family says doctors refused to treat gunshot wounds

JAGRITI CHANDRA

MEERUT

"I was offering *namaaz* around 3 p.m. on Friday when incessant firing in the vicinity interrupted me. I immediately rushed downstairs to enquire if my son Mohsin had returned home," Nafeesa Parveen says, recounting the events of last Friday.

An hour later, Mohammad Mohsin, 28, was found lying outside a local restaurant barely 300 m from home, bleeding profusely in Meerut's Lisari Gate area. He had allegedly sustained a bullet injury in the police crackdown on protesters against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Mohsin, a scrap collector, was rushed to a government hospital. But doctors there refused to attend to bullet injuries, citing orders from the administration. Soon the youth succumbed to injuries, according to his brother Mohammad Imran.

According to eyewitnesses



Ground zero: The Lisari police station in Meerut. Four protesters lost their lives in its jurisdiction. • JAGRITI CHANDRA

and residents of Lisari Gate, a large crowd had gathered outside the Baghwa mosque after Friday prayers to demonstrate against the CAA, when policemen lathi-charged them. The protesters retaliated by throwing stones at the police, who responded with rubber bullets, tear gas shells and subsequently live rounds of fire.

While the families of the

victims are unable to seek post-mortem reports or lodge police complaints, the police have lodged FIRs against at least three of the deceased and launched a search for thousands of unknown persons named in the complaint. Until Wednesday, Meerut reported six deaths in the police crackdown – the highest number of casualties across various districts in U.P. after the Friday crackdown. *The Hindu* met families of three of those killed – Mohammad Mohsin, Zahir Ahmed and Asif.

The Hindu has also accessed a copy of an FIR lodged at the Lisari Gate police station in which Zahir, Asif, and Mohsin have been charged with attempt to murder, rioting, and stopping a public servant from doing his duty among other sections. Police said the FIR was filed on the day of the incident and before the deaths were reported.

Police pressure

Mohsin was buried in a hurried funeral under police pressure in the darkness of dawn the following day. "We were bathing Mohsin's body and preparing for *namaaz* just before the funeral procession when there were loud knocks on our door, asking us to hurry up," recalls Ms. Parveen.

While the family shows

pictures of Mohsin with an alleged bullet injury and the local medical administration confirmed to *The Hindu* that there were deaths from gunfire, the police have refused to share the post-mortem report. SP (Meerut City) A.N. Singh confirmed that the post-mortem report showed bullet injuries. However, an SHO at one of the police stations said the deaths were due to "crossfire".

In the same neighbourhood, 32-year-old Asif also sustained bullet injuries during police action. He was rushed to four hospitals, which again turned him away. He, too, succumbed to injuries.

Zaheer, 40, had stepped out to buy cigarettes and was sitting outside a shop when he was shot. He died on the spot. "We can't ask for the post-mortem report. Zaheer is mentioned in the FIR. If I go, they say I was with the accused at the time of the incident," says his friend Nasim.

Assam govt. targeting Cong. workers: Debabrata Saikia

Opposition leader says sedition charge slapped on them

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

Ten days after Assam erupted in protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Assembly and Congress leader Debabrata Saikia on Wednesday accused the BJP-led government in the State of "deliberately targeting" Congress workers by slapping serious charges of "sedition and waging war against the Indian state".

"Students of Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University and Cotton University came out on the streets on their own because the CAA is unconstitutional and violates the Assam Accord," Mr. Saikia said in an interview with *The Hindu*.

"The protests started as a spontaneous people's movement and it must continue until the CAA is repealed. But the government selectively targeting the protesters. Young boys of Youth Congress and NSUI [National Students Union of India] have been booked under Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code which means waging war against India. They are targeting some and leaving others," he said.

Mr. Saikia also hinted that the State government was behind a few "safety valve" protests to manage people's anger", but did not name any particular group.

"All I want to say is that they should realise that they cannot play with people's emotions and self-respect. They will soon get exposed," Mr. Saikia said.



Debabrata Saikia

Sam government order warning its employees against putting any political posts on social media, Mr. Saikia said Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal should remember his past as a student leader and must not curb the freedom of expression.

"Mr. Sonowal has forgotten that he was an AASU product and is now totally in the fold of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. He has abandoned the interest of the indigenous Assamese people," he said.

Detention camps

Mr. Saikia took on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his statement that there were no detention camps in the country.

"As on July this year, there were 1,45 inmates in six detention camps. And as per data provided in the Assam Legislative Assembly, 28 inmates have died so far. Only three had cited that their permanent address was in Bangladesh, the remaining 25 were residents of various areas in Assam and they died in these camps after being labelled as Bangladeshis," he alleged.

Asked about the latest As-

NHRC seeks report on U.P. violence

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notice to the Director-General of Police of Uttar Pradesh over the violence during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Seeking a report within four weeks, the commission said a complainant had alleged many incidents of human rights violations by authorities in Uttar Pradesh.

"Youth have been killed, the Internet has been suspended and the police themselves are destroying public property. The right to peaceful assembly has also been violated. The complainant has requested for intervention of the Commission," the NHRC said.

"The complainant has alleged that in the last few days, numerous reports have come from all over the State that 19 deaths, mostly of young persons, primarily from bullet injuries have occurred."

West Bengal BJP chief takes a U-turn on NRC

Centre will think about it, says Ghosh

SUVODIT BAGCHI
KOLKATA



Dilip Ghosh

Central government will think about it," said the BJP MP.

Mr. Ghosh, a senior member of the RSS, always advocated the NRC in Bengal.

Even after last November's defeat in three Assembly by-elections, he had said it was 'premature' to hold the NRC responsible for the defeat. However, he changed his position within 24 hours after Home Minister Amit Shah said "there is no discussion" about a pan-India NRC, the

party said.

Asked about its implementation, Mr. Ghosh said, "When would it take place and what would happen is a matter of future."

"The NRC was implemented in Assam owing to a Supreme Court order. Rajiv Gandhi made the agreement saying they will do the NRC. The BJP did not make the agreement [and] it went to court. On the basis of the court order, it was implemented [in Assam], this has to be made clear," Mr. Ghosh told journalists in Jalpaiguri. "If there is a need for countrywide NRC, the

party will do it," he said.

Mr. Ghosh, a senior member of the RSS, always advocated the NRC in Bengal.

Even after last November's defeat in three Assembly by-elections, he had said it was 'premature' to hold the NRC responsible for the defeat. However, he changed his position within 24 hours after Home Minister Amit Shah said "there is no discussion" about a pan-India NRC, the

party said.

This is the first major bid to woo the industry at a time when the tourism industry is going through a rough patch.

Official figures suggest

J&K looks to revive tourism through Bollywood connect

Kashmir a paradise of tourism'

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The J&K administration used popular Bollywood singer Muhammad Rafi's 11th award ceremony to woo back filmmakers in its first such outreach post abrogation of special status on August 5.

"Kashmir is not a place of terrorism, but a paradise of tourism. Unfortunately a negative perception has been created to the outside world while the ground reality is entirely different. To see the reality, you will have to visit the place and I am sure you will find it as peaceful as any other part of the country," Farooq Khan, advisor to Lieutenant Governor of J&K, told audience, including directors, actors and producers, in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Mr. Khan was speaking at a function organised by 'Spandan Arts' in connection with the presentation of the awards.

This is the first major bid to woo the industry at a time when the tourism industry is going through a rough patch.

Official figures suggest



Kashmir was a popular Bollywood shooting location in the 1980s.

that Kashmir witnessed 87% dip in tourist footfall this year – from 2.49 lakh tourists visiting Valley in 2018.

Referring to Bollywood's frequent shootings in the 1980s, Mr. Khan said the film industry had a very cherished and affectionate relationship with Kashmir in the eighties and early nineties but due to various reasons that connection had been lost in the past few years.

"The film fraternity should renew that old connection by starting to explore the Union Territory with new dynamism by shooting films at virgin locations in and around Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government has warned its employees of disciplinary action for "indulging and participating in political activities" on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram.

The warning follows the strike by some four lakh Assam government employees on December 22 in protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The Sadiou Asom Karmachari Parishad had called the strike.

The office of the Director of Elementary Education, Assam, issued a letter to all district elementary educa-



tion officers on December 24 seeking action against government employees, including contractual workers, who violate the provisions of Assam Services (Discipline & Appeal) Rules, 1964, for taking to social media to express dissent.

One of Assam's oldest churches has curtailed Christmas celebrations as a mark of protest against the CAA.

The Nagaon Baptist Church in central Assam was established in 1846 by Miles Bronson, an American missionary who played a key role in conserving and promoting Assamese. "We did not take out the customary pre-Christmas cultural procession and curtailed all celebrations today (December 25) apart from the church service," a spokesperson of the church said.

The All India Bengali Organisation demanded indigenous status for Bengalis of Assam while slamming CAA as a design to convert Hindu Bengalis into refugees.

Will not implement CAA in M.P., says Kamal Nath

Chief Minister says BJP has combined NRC and NPR

STAFF REPORTER
BHOJPAL

Terming the Citizenship (Amendment) Act "anti-people", Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Wednesday said the law would not be implemented in the State, and the BJP had shown its "real intention" by clubbing together the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR).

Calling upon citizens to protect the Constitution, Mr. Nath told presspersons that the BJP was attempting to mislead people.

"Even we want the NPR, but Union Home Minister Amit Shah himself has said in Parliament that the NRC would be implemented across the country. By clubbing them together, he has made his intention clear."

Led by Mr. Nath, Congress workers from across Madhya Pradesh took part in a rally here against the Act and the proposed nationwide NRC.

"They are running a campaign to divert everyone's attention. Madhya Pradesh is the heart of the country, and from here we want to highlight the Centre's attempts at imperilling the future of generations," he said.



Leading from the front: Kamal Nath at a Congress rally against the CAA in Bhopal on Wednesday. • A.M. FAROOQI

Denied visa by Bangladesh, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal Minister and influential Muslim leader of the State Siddiquillah Chowdhury on Wednesday alleged that he has been denied visa by Bangladeshi authorities.

Mr. Chowdhury, who heads the State unit of the Jamaat-e-Ulama Hind, said that despite following due procedure, his application was rejected.

Mr. Chowdhury told *The Hindu* that he had got clearance both from the Chief Minister and the Union government.



SOUTHERN RAILWAY

(CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)

E-TENDER NOTICE No. DCE-CN-CLT-OT-10-2019

Dated: 24.12.2019

For and on behalf of The President of India, The Deputy Chief Engineer, Construction, Opposite Railway Station, Southern Railway, Kozhikode - 673 001 invites e-tender for the following work(s) as per Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) in our portal www.reps.gov.in. The tenderers/contractors intending to apply for the tender needs to get enrolled in the portal www.reps.gov.in and only online tenders will be accepted. The cost of the tender form and the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) should be made through online payment gateway in the website by the way of multiple bank's net-banking, debit card and credit card.

Item No.	Name of the Work
1	Shoranur - Mangalore Section - (1) Proposed reconstruction of Br. No. 1087 (exg. 3x18.26m Steel Girder) at Km.736/100-200 as 3x18.0m PSC-I Girder with deck slab between Tellicherry and Etakot stations. (2) Proposed reconstruction of Br. No. 1144 (exg. 2x12.20m + 3x18.30m Steel Girder) at Km. 783/700-800 as 2x12.20 PSC Slab + 3x18.30m PSC-I Girder with deck slab between Ezhilmala and Payannur stations - Proposed soil stabilization of weak formation at approaches of bridges.

Item No.	Approximate cash value ₹	Earnest Money Deposit ₹	Cost of tender Form ₹	Period of Completion in month(s)	Closing/Opening Date @ 11.00 hrs J 11.30 hrs.
1	3,23,89,160/-	3,12,000/-	10,000/-	SIX Month	20.01.2020

GST: It may please be noted that the supplier for goods and / or Service for the tender/agreement, would be subject to GST Act and Rules as applicable from time to time.

For other details, please refer to website portal www.reps.gov.in or contact office of the Deputy Chief Engineer, Construction, Opposite Railway Station, Southern Railway, Kozhikode - 673 001.

ELSEWHERE



Anti-Putin activist 'forcibly drafted'

MOSCOW Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny said one of his allies had been forcibly conscripted and sent to serve at a remote Arctic base, in a move his supporters said amounted to kidnapping. Ruslan Shaveddinov went missing on Monday after authorities broke into his Moscow flat. On Tuesday, he resurfaced at an air defence base on an island in the Arctic Ocean, Mr. Navalny said. AFP

Japan lawmaker arrested over alleged casino bribes

TOKYO A Japanese lawmaker was arrested on suspicion of accepting bribes from a company that wanted to build a casino, prosecutors said. Tsukasa Akimoto, a former member of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling party, received three million yen in cash in 2017 (\$27,400 at the current rate), they said. AFP

Pope Francis appeals for peace in global flashpoints

Injustice spurring migration, says 83-year-old pontiff

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

VATICAN CITY Pope Francis appealed for peace in many of the world's hotspots, singling out the crises in the Middle East, Venezuela and Lebanon as well as armed conflicts ravaging many African countries.

"May Christ bring his light to the many children suffering from war and conflicts in the Middle East and in various countries of the world," the 83-year-old pontiff said in his traditional Christmas message at the Vatican.

"May he bring comfort to

Activists continue Hong Kong protests despite Christmas

They marched through shopping malls, chanting pro-democracy slogans

REUTERS

HONG KONG

Hong Kong anti-government protesters marched through Christmas-decorated shopping centres on Wednesday, chanting pro-democracy slogans and forcing one mall to close early, as the police fired tear gas to disperse crowds gathering on nearby streets.

The protests have turned more confrontational over the festive season, though earlier in December they had been largely peaceful after pro-democracy candidates overwhelmingly won district council elections.

Despite the embarrassing results, Hong Kong's pro-Beijing leaders have made no new concessions.

"Confrontation is expected, it doesn't matter if it's Christmas," said Chan, a 28-year-old restaurant worker who was part of a crowd



Pinned down: Riot police detaining a protester during a demonstration in Hong Kong on Wednesday. • AP

which exchanged insults with the police outside a shopping centre in the Mong Kok district.

"I'm disappointed the government still didn't respond to any of our ... demands. We continue to come out even if we don't have much hope," said Mr. Chan, who only gave his surname.

The riot police patrolled several neighbourhoods while tourists and shoppers,

many wearing Santa hats or reindeer antlers, strolled past. There were no major clashes, but with impromptu crowds forming to shout expletives at the unpopular officers, who have been accused of using excessive force, the police briefly fired tear gas in Mong Kok, a popular protest area.

Hundreds of protesters, dressed in black and wearing face masks, descended on

shopping malls around the Chinese-ruled city, shouting popular slogans such as "Liberate Hong Kong! Revolution of our times!"

The police arrested several people in a shopping mall in the Sha Tin district after pepper-spraying them. The mall closed early.

Christmas ruined: Lam

Baton-wielding police fired tear gas on Tuesday at thousands of protesters who barricaded roads and trashed a Starbucks cafe and an HSBC branch.

The city's leader Carrie Lam said in a Facebook post on Wednesday that many Hong Kongers and tourists were disappointed that their "Christmas Eve celebrations have been ruined".

"Such illegal acts have not only dampened the festive mood but also adversely affected local businesses."

Typhoon Phanfone batters Philippines, thousands hit

Tropical storm blacks out many cities and towns, say officials

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MANILA

Typhoon Phanfone pummeled the central Philippines on Christmas Day, bringing a wet, miserable and terrifying holiday to millions in the mainly Catholic nation.

The police said six people



Moving to safety: Residents wading through a flooded highway in Ormoc City in Philippines on Wednesday. • AFP

were missing as the typhoon leapt from one small island to another for the second day – crumpling houses, toppling trees and blacking out cities and towns, including in popular resorts like Boracay.

The police said six people were missing as the typhoon leapt from one small island to another for the second day – crumpling houses, toppling trees and blacking out cities and towns, including in popular resorts like Boracay.

At the height of the festive season on Wednesday, tens of thousands were stranded at shuttered ports or evacuation centres, while the rest of the region's population cowered in rain-soaked homes.

Though weaker, Phanfone was tracking a similar path to Super Typhoon Haiyan, the country's deadliest

cyclone on record which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

More than 16,000 people spent the night in improvised shelters in schools, gyms and government buildings as the typhoon first made landfall on Tuesday, civil defence officials said.

"It was frightening. The glass windows shattered and we took cover by the stairs," Ailyn Metran said after she has so far been spared.

35 civilians killed in terrorist attack in Burkina Faso

80 extremists and seven soldiers also died in double attack

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

OUAGADOUGOU

Burkina Faso was in mourning on Wednesday after jihadists killed 35 civilians, almost all of them women, in double attacks in the north, in one of the deadliest assaults in nearly five years of violence in the West African country.

Seven soldiers and 80 jihadis also died in Tuesday's simultaneous attacks on the town of Arbinda and its military base in Soun province, which lasted "several hours" and was of a

rare intensity", the army said.

Burkina Faso, bordering Mali and Niger, has seen regular jihadist attacks which have left hundreds dead since 2015 when militant violence began to spread across the Sahel region.

A large group of terrorists simultaneously attacked the military base and the civilian population in Arbinda," the army Chief of Staff said in a statement.

"This barbaric attack resulted in the deaths of 35 civilian victims, most of them

women," President Roch Marc Christian Kabore said on Twitter, praising the "bravery and commitment" of the defence forces.

Government spokesman Remis Dandjinou later said 31 of the civilian victims were women, adding around 20 soldiers and six civilians were wounded.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but jihadist violence in Burkina Faso has been blamed on militants linked to both the Al-Qaeda

and the Islamic State groups.

Iran clamps down on Net ahead of commemorations

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEHRAN A wave of Internet outages was imposed in Iran on Wednesday, ILNA news agency reported, a day before commemorations called for on social media for those killed in unrest last month.

The cut came on the orders of security bodies, the news agency said, citing what it called an informed source at Iran's Information and Communications Technology Ministry.

"This restriction on Internet access solely includes international traffic of mobile phone lines," the source was quoted as saying. It also ex-

cluded what the source called "internal traffic", indicating only domestic websites would be accessible.

The outages come ahead of planned commemorations for people killed in street violence that erupted last month during demonstrations against fuel price hikes. At the time, authorities imposed a week-long Internet blackout as police stations were attacked, shops looted and banks and petrol stations torched.

Officials in Iran have yet to issue an overall death toll for the unrest, but human rights group Amnesty International has put the number at more than 300.

No let up in anti-govt. protests in Iraq

Demonstrators have been demanding the ouster of the entire political class

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DIWANIYAH

Iraqi anti-government protesters again hit the streets on Wednesday, angered by an activist's death and an attempt on the life of a popular TV satirist.

The latest rallies in Baghdad and cities, including Basra and Karbala, came after a night of unrest that saw protesters torch the headquarters of two pro-Iran militias in the country's south.

The demonstrators have rallied for almost three months to demand the ouster of the entire political class that has run the oil-rich yet poverty-ridden country



Mourners carrying the coffin of a civil activist during the funeral on Wednesday.

in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion which overthrew dictator Saddam Hussein.

The mostly youthful acti-

vists accuse Iraq's leaders of enriching themselves, mismanaging the economy and being beholden to Iran, an influential actor in Iraqi politics.

'Bid to silence us'

Passions were inflamed when popular TV satirist Aws Fadhl was targeted on Tuesday by unknown assailants, with three bullets hitting his car.

Mr. Fadhl posted footage of the bullet holes on social media and declared: "They are targeting those who support the revolution, to silence them ... But we are continuing our revolution."

He added that "we have already achieved a goal", referring to a parliamentary vote on Tuesday to approve an electoral reform law, in line with the demands of the protesters. Lawmakers will now be elected in first-past-the-post contests within electoral districts, rather than through a complex system using provincial party lists and proportional representation.

Despite the reform steps, protesters again rallied on Wednesday – including in the city of Diwaniyah, where they marched under a large Iraqi flag to mourn a prominent activist, Thaer al-Tayeb.

Massoud Bakhtawar, the Deputy Governor of Farah, said the activists were travelling in six cars from Herat to Farah on Tuesday evening when their convoy was stopped by the Taliban on a highway and taken to an unknown location.

Bismillah Watandost, a member of the group, said the activists had planned to travel to various parts of Fa-

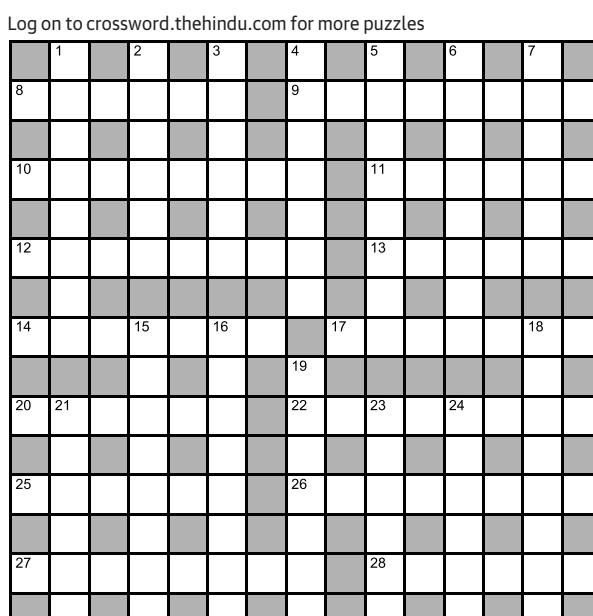
rah to call for peace and a ceasefire between the warring parties in Afghanistan.

The group, People's Peace Movement, was formed to protest against violent attacks after a car bomb exploded at a sport stadium in Helmand province last year killing 17 civilians. The activists have travelled to various parts of the country, often marching through Taliban-controlled areas to demand a ceasefire between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

The Taliban has previously accused the activists of being financed by the Kabul government, which the group has denied.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12816

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



ACROSS

- 8 Bond's interest in money? (6)
- 9 Discounted off or as on-going stock (3,1,4)
- 10 Save second professor at Hogwarts? Not quite! (8)
- 11 Drop inhaler in between work-out (6)

(set by Hypatia)

- 3 Either of two articles on top of kid's jacket (6)
- 4 Nile's not connected? (3-4)
- 5 Project advertisement by a student about healthy cooking method (8)
- 6 So, came up with naughty clue about a time to kiss (8)
- 7 Kept near India Gate, helmet's tribute taken from the top soldier (6)
- 15 Gradually trim down shape (8)
- 16 Outstanding lady in Greek architecture? (8)
- 18 Stretch the tag – no length secured when pulled up (8)
- 19 As he had assumed, graduate was shy (7)
- 21 Animal raised at emergency ward perhaps, rose (6)
- 23 Once again, smelt garbage (6)
- 24 Favourite student lacking courage (6)

SUDOKU

2			3		4
5	3		7	8	
4	1	2			9
7	1	2			6
	8				
			6	3	5
	5	7		2	9
6		5			4

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12815

C	E	R	E	A	L	P	O	R	B	A	Y
A	O	N	C	I	U	A	E				
P	U	B	L	S	H	O	N	T			
T	E	M	A	E	L	I	L				
U	P	S	T	A	R	I	S				
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NCLAT rejects tax dept. plea against Jio

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The NCLAT has dismissed petitions filed by the Income Tax Department, against the approval for Reliance Jio Infocomm's scheme to hive off its fibre and tower businesses into two separate units.

The Ahmedabad-bench of the National Company Law Tribunal had earlier this year granted permission for the demerger. The I-T department challenged it before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal, claiming that by this arrangement, Reliance Jio Infocomm had sought to convert redeemable preference shares into loans, which would cause a revenue loss to the Department. The NCLAT dismissed it, saying the NCLT had already dealt with the issue. "The mere fact that a scheme may result in reduction of tax liability does not furnish a basis for challenging," its validity.

NITI member bats for 2 GST slabs

Frequent rate changes cause problems, annual review okay, says Ramesh Chand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Government think-tank NITI Aayog Member Ramesh Chand on Wednesday made a case for only two slabs under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime as against the current multiple slabs, and said rates should be revised annually, if required.

The GST, which replaced almost all the indirect taxes, came into force on July 1, 2017 and the tax rates have been revised several times since then.

Currently, there are four GST rate slabs – 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%. Several items fall in the exempt or nil duty category. Besides, cess is also levied on five goods.

Teething problems

Mr. Chand said that when a large taxation reform such as GST is brought in, there are always 'teething problems' but soon they stabilise. He said most of the countries took a long time for GST stabilisation.



Bigger picture: GST issues are much larger than merely asking for rates, according to Ramesh Chand. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

The NITI Aayog Member, who looks after the agriculture sector, is also strictly against frequent changes in GST rates as it leads to problems.

The GST Council, presided over by the Union Finance Minister and comprising State Finance Ministers, decides the rates for particular goods and services.

Besides frequent demand for reduction in the rates on various goods and services, there has also been a clamour for a slash in the number of tax slabs.

"It has become a tendency of every sector to ask for lower GST. I feel GST issues are much larger than asking for rates," Mr. Chand said.

And, "we should not fiddle with rates or change rates frequently... We should not have many rates. Have only two rates," he said.

Mr. Chand said the focus should be on steady increase in revenue collection from the new indirect tax regime

rather than tinkering with rates. He prescribed that if at all rates needed to be changed, it should be done annually.

On demands for lower GST on processed food such as dairy products, Mr. Chand, an agr-economist, said the 5% GST on such products was "very, very reasonable."

Mr. Chand said that while every sector was demanding a lower rate, they should also understand governments need revenue to spend on development works.

"We always ask from the government and forget to give back. This trend is not good. From where will the government get the money to spend for development?" asked Mr. Chand, who is also a member of the 15th Finance Commission.

He said in the agriculture sector alone, the Central government was providing a subsidy of ₹1.2 lakh crore and the States, put together, spend about ₹1 lakh crore.

NTPC to invest ₹50,000 cr. for 10 GW solar capacity

Power major eyes 2022 deadline; green bonds to fund plans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

State-owned power giant NTPC is planning to add 10 GW of solar energy generation capacity by 2022, which entails an investment of around ₹50,000 crore, to be funded mainly by green bonds, a source has said.

At present, NTPC has installed renewable energy capacity of 920 MW, which constitutes mainly solar energy. It has formulated a long-term plan to become a 130 GW company by 2032 with 30% non-fossil fuel or renewable energy capacity.

"The company will complete tendering of 2,300 MW of solar energy capacity by the end of this fiscal. Thereafter, it has planned to add 4 GW each in 2020-21 and 2021-22," the source said.

The source added that NTPC was "open to any borrowing option in the market, which is economical. However,



projects under a scheme where it gets viability gap funding to keep the tariff below the ₹3-per-unit level.

Besides, the company will also set up solar energy projects without long-term (25 years) power purchase agreements as it aims to sell the electricity to industrial as well as commercial consumers and also at energy exchanges, the source said.

The Central Electricity Regulatory Authority has already approved the real-time power market, which is expected to kick in by April 1, 2020. There would be 48 sessions of half an hour each in a day, to allow consumers to get the desired power supply within an hour of buying at the exchanges. Power is now traded for two hours in a day from 10 a.m. to 12 a.m., where a consumer can schedule delivery a day in advance.

Mid- and small-cap stocks may shine in 2020

Surge in benchmark indices have come amid weak macroeconomic factors

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
MUMBAI

While the current year has seen the benchmark indices – Sensex and Nifty – touch record levels, the coming year could see the side counters finally coming into the limelight after staying low for two consecutive years.

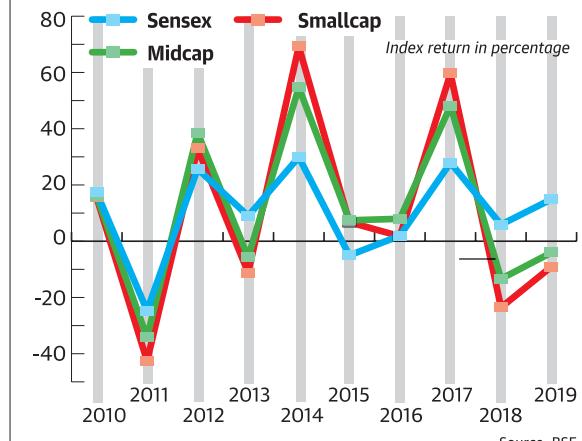
Most market participants are ready to bet on mid-cap and small-cap stocks at a time when the surge in the benchmarks have been witnessed amid weak macroeconomic factors, including growth numbers at multi-year lows.

"Valuations have turned expensive thanks to the recent run-up in equities making the time ripe for increasing allocation in quality mid-cap companies," said Sharekhan, in its outlook report for 2020.

"After the recent run-up, the benchmark indices are not cheap any more and India trades at substantial premium to the MSCI Emerging Market Index. Consequently, there is a case for increasing

Too much money chasing too few stocks?

Though the Sensex gained nearly 15% in 2019, the BSE Midcap and BSE Smallcap indices have fallen 4% and 9%, respectively



allocation in quality mid-cap companies for relatively better returns in the next 12-24 months," it added.

While the 30-share Sensex has gained nearly 15% in the current calendar year till date, the BSE Midcap and BSE Smallcap indices have fallen 4% and 9% respectively.

A similar trend was seen

in 2018 when the Sensex gained nearly 6% and the broader indices lost between 13% and 24%.

"The valuation risk should not divert us from the core bottom-up issue in India, however – that of sharp polarisation in valuations between 'high-quality' stocks and the rest – reflected in the huge valuation dis-

count that Indian small-caps are trading at," highlighted BNP Paribas in its outlook report for 2020.

'Sensex may hit 44,500' The French financial major is currently overweight on India and has a target of 44,500 for the Sensex in 2020 as it plans to focus on "quality and select attractively-valued turnaround candidates among consumer and consumer proxies."

In a similar context, ICICI Securities expects "small-/micro-caps to outperform mid-caps as the former asset classes have much higher margin of safety in terms of the risk-spread over large-caps."

"Widening of risk-spreads is a result of significant underperformance of small- and micro-caps to large-caps since the peak of January 2018. Risk spreads for micro-caps over large-caps in particular have risen considerably and become very attractive," it had said in an earlier note.

Centre promises free Wi-Fi to 48,000 villages till March 2020

2.5 lakh gram panchayats to be connected via optical fibre

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
REWAR

To promote uptake of the Internet in rural areas, Telecom and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Wednesday promised free Wi-Fi to about 48,000 villages, which are connected through the government's flagship BharatNet project, for the next three months.

"We have already connected 1.3 lakh gram panchayats through BharatNet... Our target is to take this to 2.5 lakh gram panchayats... To promote utilisation of BharatNet services, we will provide Wi-Fi for free in all villages connected through BharatNet till March 2020," the Minister said. With the BharatNet initiative, the Centre aims to connect all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats through optical fibre. Till now, about 48,000 villages have been connected to Wi-Fi using BharatNet.

He was speaking at the in-



Ravi Shankar Prasad

auguration of Digital Village Gurawara in Rewari (Haryana). Mr. Prasad added that the government is aiming to convert at least 15% of the total villages to digital village in the next 3-4 years.

Digital Village, which was

conceptualised by the Common Service Centre (CSC) SPV under the Ministry of Electronics and IT, is a village where citizens can avail various e-services of the central and the State govern-

GST watchdog fines J&J ₹230 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA) has asked Johnson & Johnson (J&J) India to deposit a little over ₹230 crore with the Centre and States for making profits by not passing the GST benefits to consumers. J&J has been asked to deposit the amount in three months.

The NAA said that the methodology adopted by J&J to pass on GST rate cut benefits to consumers was "unreasonable, arbitrary and incorrect and thus cannot be accepted."

As per the order, when GST rates were reduced from 28% to 18% on products sold by J&J from November 2017, the company did not fully pass on the financial benefits to customers. NAA said the benefits of input tax credit should have been passed on to the recipients by way of commensurate reduction in prices.

Soap-makers' body urges tech adoption

Convenes meet on modern methods

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Small Scale Soap & Detergent Manufacturers Association (TANSDMA) is educating its micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) members to adopt modern technologies in a bid to combat competition from larger corporates.

"Unlike other industries, we don't face any problem from the unorganised sector. Every region has a specific brand."

"We urge them to use modern technology and the latest equipment so that they also thrive and the industry gets bigger. It is our way of combating large corporates," said V. S. Manimaran, member, executive committee, TANSDMA.

"We represent MSMEs, having currently about 600 members," said K. Dhana pal, president, TANSDMA. "The total revenue of our members from Tamil Nadu is about ₹1,500 crore to ₹1,700 crore," he added.

Market share

According to him, member-companies of the association command a cumulative market share of 60% in detergent cakes in Tamil Nadu, while the rest is held by the large corporates.

In the case of detergent powder and liquid, it is the reverse.

To combat competition, the association, as a first step, has convened a nation-



V. S. Manimaran

India eyes 60% share of global ship recycling business, says Minister

Contribution from such activities to GDP will reach \$2.2 bn'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

With the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019, the likes of Japan, U.S., Europe could send their ships for recycling to India

lion, almost double compared to the current level.

According to Mr. Mandaviya, Gujarat's Alang, the world's biggest shipyard, was ready to cater to the projected increase in the number of ships for recycling.

Currently, India recycles

around 300 of the 1,000 ships which are demolished per annum globally.

However, the likes of Japan, the United States and Europe were not sending their ships for recycling to India in the absence of ratification of a global convention. That scenario is set to change with the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019.

The Act ratifies the Hong Kong convention and would facilitate an environment-friendly process of recycling ships and adequate safety for yard workers.

market share in pallets and foldable large containers (FLC), is planning to deploy a bulk of it, said.

Leap's network comprises 22 warehouses, 25 contract manufacturing centres and a team of 450 employees serving over 550 customers at over 7,000 touch points in India. This comes on the back of increased demand for warehousing coming from FMCG, beverages, auto parts, food, e-commerce and large logistics entities that prefer palletised cargo for efficient handling and storage as well as distribution of consignments.

The demand for pallets-on-lease is estimated to go up to four million pieces last year, an increase from the three million deployed last year. LEAP India, with 70%

the demand for storing and transporting goods in pallets, it said.

Sunu Mathew, MD, Leap India, said, "Achieving the milestone of three million pallets is very encouraging. With this, we have become a leader in bringing palletisation to the country and are happy to work with each and every leading brand from FMCG, beverages, automobiles, food, e-commerce and large logistic players in the country."

"We see enough opportunity in both pallets and FLCs. We are all geared up to tap this huge opportunity as we are well positioned to expand our pallets base," he added.

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Travelling eastward

Film-maker Mike Pandey speaks about his new series on the Northeast and why conservation in the area is paramount

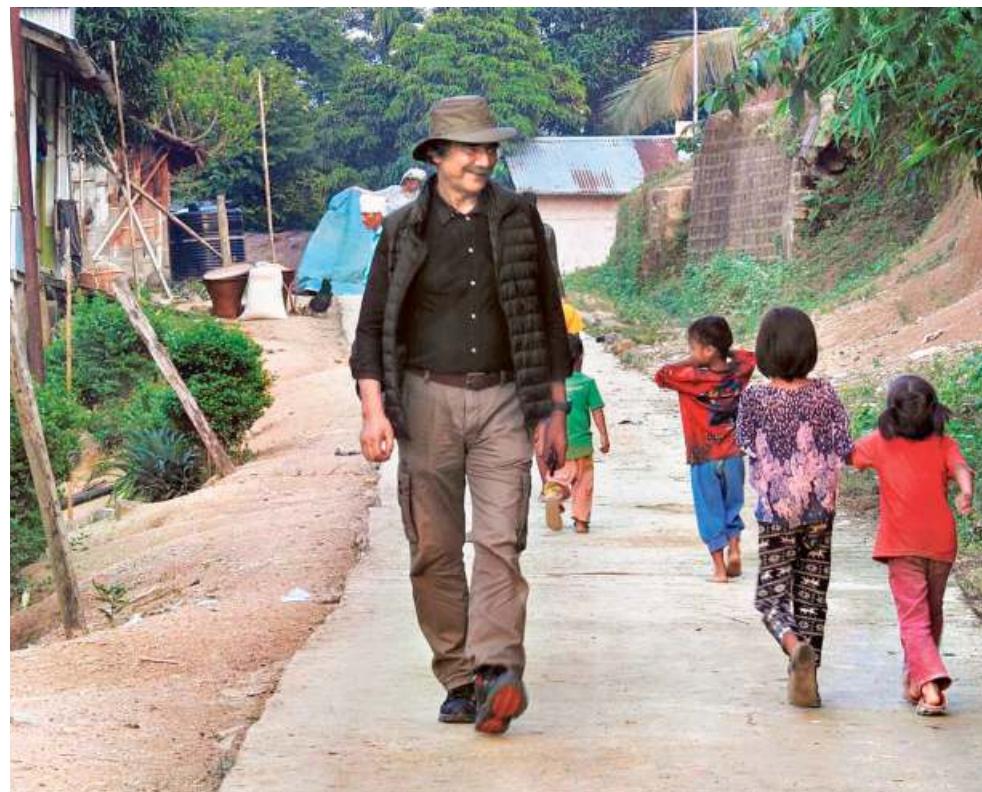
MADHUR TANKHA

With his baritone, tall frame and ability to face the dangers of the wild, Mike Pandey is probably India's answer to Bear Grylls. However, Mike, who saunters into jungles like we do malls, sporting his beret, did set the benchmark in wildlife filmmaking in the 1990s, with the documentary *Earth Matters*. His friends with Jane Goodall, and like her, can carry on a light-hearted conversation with an ape or two.

Raised in Kenya's Nairobi National Park, Mike's father worked in the forensic department of Scotland Yard in Kenya, and would often take him into the jungles. "Once I witnessed two silver back gorillas fighting and tearing at each other," he recalls. Today, he works

for its preservation with the locals. He is right now making a film on marsh lions in Kenya. His current project explores the rich biodiversity in India's Northeast through a 13-part series *Explorer of Mystery Mountains* on DD National and DD Arun Prabha (newly launched Northeast channel) that will air in January. The hope is that this will lead to a conservation effort.

Mike believes that the region is home to varieties of herbs and shrubs that can be a big source of medicine for people across the country. "Foxtail millet is being revived in Nagaland. I savoured this gluten-free millet, in porridge a couple of times," he says, talking about various delicacies from the area. "We ate the local rice, mostly sticky rice, beans, cauli-



flower and peeli dal as people have altered their diet a bit. The non-vegetarians kept their bellies full with fish cooked in banana leaves."

Excerpts from an interview:
What kind of research study did you undertake before exploring the Northeast?

Dr. Chander Mohan, a professor working as an adviser at JNU, is our key resource person. He connects me with other scientists. Facts collected by our in-house research team get authenticated by the professor. For the past four years, we have been making a film on snow leopards only in Ladakh and Sikkim. It is one of the rarest and most endangered cats that is found in the Himalayan belt extending from Ladakh to Kazakhstan. We also have researchers with experience in working for National Geographic.

What was the brief given to you by DD for the series?

The film should be awareness generating and empower people so that they can become partners in protection. So we are making the film by involving the people. When people's lives improve they automatically get interested in chipping in-

The falcons and gibbons
■ The tailless Hoolock Gibbon is the only ape in India, of which the crew discovered 13 families living near Jorhat in Assam. Its powerful arms are twice the size of its limbs, and while the gorilla is more powerful, the gibbon is the most powerful in the Himalayan region. The primate will be featured in episodes on Assam and Meghalaya.

■ Amur Falcons that come to Nagaland from Mongolia and go to South Africa, come in thousands. These smaller falcons feed on insects. Farmers have realised that these migratory birds are important for protecting their livelihood. These birds will be showcased in an episode on Nagaland.

to conservation. Conservation cannot be done in isolation. So we are encouraging people to directly come forward to preserve their biodiversity and heritage. The locals have begun to realise the value of natural heritage like herbs, shrubs. Hunter-gathering communities

have respect for nature and take only what they need. In Manipur, rare herbs are being protected. The old Chizami weave is being revived by Seno Tsuhah of North East Network.

Would you say the Northeast is richer in biodiversity compared to other parts of India?

The North East is the home of one of the oldest, primordial jungles and diverse eco-systems in the world. Its diversity has no parallel. It has the largest number of rare and endangered orchids found anywhere in the world. The rarest is Lady Slippers that became extinct but are now being revived by scientists and concerned citizens. If we need a stable world we need to protect our diversity. The medicines of the future will come from our forests. The world is tired of antibiotics, which cure one disease but give rise to other medical concerns. Medicines have to come from natural sources.

What kind of challenges did you encounter?

For this series, we faced financial constraints, yet did not compromise. We used drones where needed to capture the treasures of the impenetrable



Discovering Seven Sisters
(Clockwise from extreme left) Mike Pandey at Damparengpui village, Mizoram; rowing at Loktak Lake, Manipur; in Siju Caves, Meghalaya; with a forest guard at Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Napier grass and lure crops like banana plants to divert the attention of rampaging elephants. He discontinued rice cultivation. Earlier, pachyderms would destroy crops and kill members of the Karbi tribe. This year, a number of lives got saved and people thanked Pradip. In Sikkim, I loved to visit their kitchens and the way ladies sat on the floor. Home stays are affordable. A couple can stay for a day with all meals within ₹1,500.

Some would say tourism is the beginning of degrading the environment. Would you agree?

It is heartening that the Northeast is slowly opening up. One of the agendas of this project is that when tourists visit the Seven Sisters the economic status of locals improves. We are making this film in a way that the viewers in Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and other metros understand that the North East is an important part of India. They will get a feel of this rich biodiversity and if they believe in sustainability then they will definitely visit it. I agree that uncontrolled tourism can devastate any place and can even erode it. Commercialisation can change the demographics of any place. In Sikkim, there is restricted tourism. Like in Bhutan, only a certain number of tourists are allowed. Locals run their own taxis. Tourism is slowly being now controlled and monitored.



IN OUR BACKYARD

A tale of two Champas

The Frangipani and White Frangipani are two very different Champa flowers — and only one of these has flowers through December

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

One of the most well known trees in India is the Champa, which is rife with symbolism for the Hindu, Jain and Buddhist cultures. Featuring heavily in movies, literature and pop culture, it is no wonder that this flower is well recognised by adults and children alike.

While growing up, I would immediately recognise this tree because of its round blunt leaves and the fragrant flowers. However, I would also see very similar looking flowers with pointed leaves and try and figure out what they were. There was definitely some family



resemblance. It was only when I became a naturalist, did I realise that there were two kinds of Champa trees in Delhi-NCR, one called Frangipani, the other, White Frangipani (Safed Champa).

Both have served as avenue trees and were brought by travellers from the Atlantic islands and other tropical regions. Pradip Krishen's



book *Trees of Delhi* tells us it prefers hot, coastal regions. Though they belong to the same family, they have subtle differences. The Safed Champa is the one with rounded leaves, with the other's pointed but both have leaves of the same texture. They mostly have white flowers with yellow centres, though hybrid varieties bearing coloured flowers.

Champa (*Plumeria rubra*) is a small deciduous tree that sheds its leaves in winter (beginning December), and the Safed Champa is a

small nearly evergreen tree that remains green throughout the year. In botany and horticulture, the term deciduous means 'falling off'. It is a function carried out to conserve water and to survive better in winter conditions.

There are two forms of the Safed Champa found in the city, *Plumeria obtusa* and *plumeria sericeifolia*. In late February, the leaves of this tree might blacken and fall off if there is an extreme winter wave. The tree mostly flowers in April, then again in the rains but it is quite common

to see flowers even in late December.

The flowers mostly have five petals with the petals narrow and hardly overlapping. The tree fruits in May, with each fruit looking like a pair of dark, shiny pods joined at the centre.

The writer is the founder of NINOX - Owl About Nature, a nature-awareness initiative. He is a Cornell-NCR reviewer for Ebird, a Cornell University initiative, monitoring rare sightings of birds. He formerly led a programme of WWF India

Pristine white
(Clockwise from left) Plumeria obtusa; Plumeria rubra

■ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

PRODUCTS

Pet-friendly

Over nine NGOs, like the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations, People of Animals, and the World Wildlife Fund will participate at the Pet Fed, a pet festival happening in Delhi this weekend. The two-day event will have a pet fashion show, cosplay, and an agility ring display. Akshay Gupta, founder of the festival, says that over their six-year-run so far, the crowds have been most attracted to the Police Dog Show. "This year we are doing the Police Dog Show with the Delhi police's crime branch," he says, adding that "there will be 12 dogs and 22 officers on the stage for a 30-minute-long demonstration. Edited excerpts from an interview.

What brands will be participating?

We have about 150 brands [of the pet food industry] coming in from different parts of the country and abroad. [These include] Nestle and Mars International. From Thailand, we have Goodies, Jerhigh, SmartHeart, from Germany we have Heiniger. There are pet-grooming brands like Himalaya, Captain Zack, and Petlogic which are into health and hygiene of a pet.

There's an adoption camp at the festival. What's the process or criteria to adopt?

The process involves filling a questionnaire, from which the NGO understands what you are as a pet owner and how comfortable your household is with a pet. After the event, the NGOs each have a screening process, during which they visit your house to determine whether you can keep the pet. This takes about two weeks, and only after this is the pet sent over.

Pet Fed, from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on 28th and 29th December, at NSIC grounds Okhla. For tickets, petfed.org/events; upwards of ₹399

SUPRIYA RAMESH

Contact us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



EXHIBITION

Mixed-media
Anant Art has organised a solo exhibition titled *Family is Plural*, which showcases the recent works by artist Probir Gupta. Curated by Shaheen Merali, the paintings, sculptures and installation works on display depict the artist's attempt to repair the existing social, environmental and structural distortions.

VENUE: Bikar House, Pandara Road

TIME: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.



PERFORMANCE

Dance
IHC is hosting 12th Guru Debaprasad Nritya Parampara, a festival of Indian classical dance and music. This two-day event, which begins today, will feature a Odissi recital by Dr. Gajendra Panda & group, a Kuchipudi recital by Guru Jayaram Rao & group, and a Kathak recital by Pt. Birju Maharaj & Kalashram group.

VENUE: Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre

TIME: 7 p.m.



FOOD

Festive menu
Monkey Bar has launched Jolly Good Fellows, a festive menu which offers plates and desserts inspired by the dishes from Anglo-Indian homes across the country. The menu includes Panko Fried Crepes filled with chicken mince, Maka Pao De, bread and butter with a Portuguese twist, and Pain Perdu Toast, a French-inspired dessert.

VENUE: Local Shopping Complex, Vasant Kunj

TIME: 12 noon - 12:30 a.m.



FESTIVAL

Art and music
DLF Cyberhub is hosting Hub Fest, a two-day event to celebrate art and music, which begins today. The festival features a live painting demo by doodle artist Santanu Hazarika, sand art by Rajat Kumar, ghatam and sarod music by Ujjwal Kumar and Rohan Prasanna, besides a workshop conducted by chef Anchal Bhalla.

VENUE: DLF Phase 2, Gurugram

TIME: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.



RETAIL

Festive offer
Premium lifestyle & food store, Foodhall has come up with a wide range of Christmas goodies and treats, chocolates, candies, for the holiday season. Valid till 31st December, the food section offers Plum Cake, Christmas Cupcakes, Nutella Babka, while the vegetable section has coco strawberry parfaits, and strawberry desserts.

VENUE: Available at all outlets in Delhi/NCR

TIME: 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.



Reykjavik, Iceland

Icelanders take their bonfire parties, a tradition that has been on since 1791, very seriously. On New Year's Eve, Reykjavik witnesses at least 10 such events, where locals and travellers can huddle around a crackling fire to enjoy a drink or two, and watch around 500 tonnes of firecrackers light up the night sky. "Iceland has a ban on fireworks except for this one time of the year. It is allowed from December 28 to January 6," says Sigríður Dögg Guðmundsdóttir, manager, Visit Iceland & Creative Industries. People also gather around the iconic Hallgrímskirkja church or go up to Perlan (a futuristic-looking museum atop the Öskjuhlíð hill) to partake in the festivities. Temperature dipping down to -10 degrees Celsius is hardly a deterrent. In case it is, there are bus tours and sea cruises that arm revellers with Champagne, and take them on bonfire excursions across the capital. The bars open right after midnight, and the party continues. Sigríður says that over the years, there has been an increase in the number of passenger airplanes landing on December 31. "From 16 in 2014, it went up to around 56 in 2018," she adds. Other than the Viking-inspired celebrations, there is always the lure of the awe-inspiring northern lights that traipse across the black sky this time of the year.

Tick tock! It's party o' clock

Berlin, Germany

The German capital is one of the coolest places to be on the midnight of New Year's Eve, or Silvester as the Germans call it (December 31 is observed as Saint Sylvester's Day).

The highlight is the "party mile" – extending between two Prussian-era monuments in the Brandenburg Gate and the Victory Column – were over a million dancing people let their hair loose and indulge in fun and booze. "The most popular (club) is the Berghain, but there is an abundance of other good clubs in the neighbourhoods of Kreuzberg, Neukölln and Mitte," says Peter Hermann, an architect who resides in Berlin, adding, "Berlin is probably among the top three centres for sub-culture, party and gay life in the West."

The Germans have a strange Silvester tradition – watching an English comedy sketch from the 1960s (titled *Dinner for One*). "For some reason, it has become a cult thing to watch on TV on Silvester. It is also televised in many bars," says Hermann. But before the corks come off the bottles, try a bit of raclette, Ragout fin and Swiss fondue, keeping in line with the tradition. Hermann also recommends a stroll down the shopping avenues of Kurfürstendamm, Tauenzienstrasse and Friedrichstraße, sneaking into stores for street food and hot wine. Germany is also one of the few European Union nations which permits citizens to light firecrackers. And Germans have been known to indulge (over €130 million was spent on fireworks last year by private individuals). "Germans are crazy for it.

Especially at midnight, the city is literally drowned in [sounds] and smoke. You either love it or hate it. There is no in-between," Hermann adds.



Edinburgh, Scotland

At midnight, 19 pyro-technicians take their positions. Three... two... one... and they get to work, shooting fireworks 300 metres into the Edinburgh sky. "There is a nine-kilometre-long wire connecting up to 136 modules, delivering 3.5 tonnes of fireworks," says Kate Bouchier-Hayes, senior publicist, The Corner Shop PR, a UK-based agency dedicated primarily to the arts.

That is not all. There are more than 4,200 fireworks containing over 16,500 shots and hundreds of thousands of stars in a gamut of colours. "Nearly 13 tonnes of equipment in four lorries and five vans will be used," she adds. This is just a sneak peek of what is expected at the Hogmanay festival this year.

Spread over three days, the event takes place at various venues in the city, including a massive street party that turns the venues into a showcase for street performers from around the globe. It also has four stages showcasing a mix of international and local artistes – like the popular *ceilidh* (a social gathering where people dance to traditional folk music) – all under the watchful eyes of the imposing Edinburgh castle that is seated grandly on a hill. This year, the fireworks at midnight have been specially choreographed to go with DJ Mark Ronson's (the headliner) new soundtrack.

An evening earlier, on December 30, people convoke on the streets for the torchlight procession. It makes for great photographs. "Its origins reach back to the celebration of the winter solstice among the Vikings, with wild parties in late December," says Kate.

On New Year's Day, an intrepid lot takes the party to the Firth of Forth (an estuary). Dressed in



mostly outrageous outfits, they march through the streets led by bagpipers and drummers, before plunging into the freezing waters. That is Loony Dook for you. "The tradition was conceived in a pub during the Christmas of 1986 by a group of locals, as a novel way to cure their inevitable Hogmanay hangovers," explains Kate.

A bucket list favourite, last year, Hogmanay saw 1.60 lakh participants from different parts of the globe. And if you are wondering, 'what of the mess on the streets after all the intense revelry?', Kate has an answer. "Once 2020 has arrived, a team of over 30 people from Titanium Fireworks and Historic Environment Scotland will work through the night to clear in eight hours what took five days to set up."

Samoa

Imagine having bragging rights for the whole year just because you celebrated New Year before your friends and family back home in India, or New Zealand, or Australia and Japan. Given its geographical location in the South Pacific, the independent state of Samoa is one of the first in the world to usher in the New Year. Add to that parties, a firework show that debuts this year, and the pristine settings, and you have a lot for Instagram too. Even though December is monsoon here, the temperature is a comfortable 29°C. "The peak season is normally May to October but it has changed recently due to high influx of visitors," says Iulai Lesa of Samoa Travel. "In 2017/18 alone, we welcomed 1.72 lakh visitors whereas the population of Samoa is 1.96 lakh," he notes.

If you are feeling adventurous, celebrate the New Year twice by hopping on a flight to American Samoa, 45 minutes away. "Even though nearby, Samoa is 24 hours ahead of American Samoa," says Iulai.



Rio, Brazil

For La réveillon (how Brazilians refer to New Year's Eve) last year, over two million people turned up to party at the Copacabana beach, says Hari Ganapathy, co-founder of PickYourTrail. "One tradition is to dress in white on the day," he says. It was popularised by Afro-Brazilian religious groups, who give a spiritual offering of white flowers and candles to the goddess of the sea, Yemanjá. "Also, at midnight, jump seven waves at the sea. The locals believe it brings good luck," he adds. If you stay longer, there are many trails to explore. "You can also head towards Ilha Grande, an island with beaches and hillsides concealed in lush tropical forests," says Ashish Dhruba, vice president, ClearTrip. Further, Ganapathy adds that "Rio is also the place to go for a gastronomic experience." The Pão de queijo, made of tapioca, is an example. Dhruva recommends the local churrascaria (barbecue restaurants) for meat lovers. With Brazil proposing a visa-free regime for Indians, it's time to pack.

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER

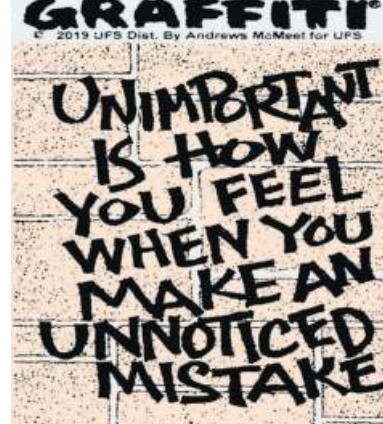


THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13260

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8		9				
10				11		
13			14			
16		17			18	
20		19			21	
22						

- 2 Very little (4,2,7)
- 3 Boulder's state (8)
- 4 On the whole (6)
- 5 Absent (4)
- 6 Unrestrained in showing feelings (13)
- 7 Decoration made of ribbons (7)
- 12 Realised (anag) – relating to the stars (8)
- 13 Embarrassing blunder (with consequences that may reverberate) (7)
- 15 Goodbye (2,4)
- 18 Correspond (5)
- 19 Fierce wind (4)

WUMO



Across	pigment (6)
16	Female singing voice (4)
8	Slack (3)
9	Capital of Gran Canaria (3,6)
10	Wholly (8)
11	Make woolen garments (4)
12	Second-largest country in the world by area (6)
13	Tribe (anag) – water-soluble brownish-yellow
14	Author of The Picture of Dorian Gray (5)
15	Health Capsules (by Bron Smith)
16	Reishi mushroom (2,2)
17	Prediction (8)
18	Act independently (2,2,5)
19	Unwell (3)
20	Collection of photographs of known criminals (6,7)
21	Second-largest country in the world by area (6)
22	Water-soluble brownish-yellow

Solution will appear in The Hindu dated December 27, 2019. Solution No. 13259

PEARS BEFORE SWINE



A	S	O	F	T	E	N	A	S	N	O	T
S	P	A	R	M	A	U					
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Boult's return adds teeth to Kiwi attack

Smith looks to get back to form after falling to short deliveries in his last two innings

NZ IN AUSTRALIA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

New Zealand made two changes on Wednesday for the Boxing Day Test against Australia with fast bowler Trent Boult back from injury and Tom Blundell replacing Jeet Raval at the top of the order.

The dangerous Boult missed the first Test in Perth, where his team crashed by 296 runs, with a rib injury that also kept him out of the Kiwis' final clash against England.

But he has worked his way back to fitness, desperate to play in the Black Caps' first Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground since 1987, with a crowd of more than 75,000 expected on day one.

Blundell likely to open

Williamson also confirmed Blundell, usually a middle-order batsman, would open alongside Tom Latham in place of the out-of-form Raval.

"He's a positive player and a smart cricketer so it's just trying to adapt to the conditions. It's important he goes out and plays his natural game," Williamson told reporters of Blundell.

New Zealand has had 10 days to recover from its Perth day-night Test thrashing, which saw it being shot out for 166 and 171.

Williamson said they had learned from their mistakes. "Perth was tough and Aus-



Ready for it: Skipper Tim Paine may bat at No. 6 if Australia decides to play five bowlers in the Boxing Day Test. ■ AFP

tralia are very good and tactically sound," he said after his team were put through their paces in the nets on Christmas Day.

Sense of romance

"I guess there's a sense of romance about being involved in the Boxing Day Test... at the same time it's about removing a little bit of that and bringing the focus back to the cricket and making those improvements we need to."

South Africa hopes to end year on a high

The home team is short of experience, especially in the batting department

ENGLAND IN SA

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
CENTURION

South Africa will seek a happy ending to what has been a miserable year when it plays England in the first match of a World Test Championship series, starting here on Thursday.

Fortress

South Africa will be playing at a ground which has been its fortress – winning 19 of the 24 Tests.

England, though, has bucked the trend, being involved in four of the five matches at the ground which have not ended in victory for South Africa – a win, albeit in contrived circumstances, and three draws.

South Africa has not vanquished England in a home series since 1999-2000.

The team is short of experience, especially in batting, while the bowling stocks

have been hit by injuries and the decision of several good players to take up Kolpak contracts in England.

Meanwhile, James Anderson is set to become only the second England player after Alastair Cook to appear in 150 Test matches. Having recovered from a calf injury,

he will look to improve on a modest Test record in South Africa – 25 wickets in eight matches at 39.92.

The likely teams:

South Africa: Faf du Plessis (Capt.), Dean Elgar, Aiden Markram, Zubayr Hamza, Rassie van der Dussen, Quinton de Kock (wk), Dwayne Pretorius or

Andile Phehlukwayo, Vernon Philander, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje.

England: Joe Root (Capt.), Rory Burns, Dom Sibley, Joe Denly, Ben Stokes, Ollie Pope, Jos Buttler (wk), Chris Woakes or Sam Curran or Jack Leach, Jofra Archer, Stuart Broad, James Anderson.

Longevity: James Anderson is set to become the second Englishman after Cook to appear in 150 Tests. ■ STU FORSTER/GETTY IMAGES

Longevity: James Anderson is set to become the second Englishman after Cook to appear in 150 Tests. ■ STU FORSTER/GETTY IMAGES

Longevity: James Anderson is set to become the second Englishman after Cook to appear in 150 Tests. ■ STU FORSTER/GETTY IMAGES

Williams helps ATK beat BFC for the first time

The Kolkata side now shares the top spot with FC Goa

ISL

AMITABH DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

enabled ATK beat Bengaluru for the first time in the league and saw the Kolkata side share the top spot with FC Goa (18 points) though it has played one match more.

In the opening half, ATK had the better of the exchanges as it came up with quite a few moves.

It had its first opportunity in the second minute when Williams sent a perfect lob to fellow striker Roy Krishna.

The latter, who had broken free of the Bengaluru defence, was ruled on-side but the Fijian forward made the mistake of running too deep.

ATK continued to make inroads and had another chance in the 17th minute when Jayesh Rane was set up inside the Bengaluru box by another chip from Williams. But the former failed to beat BFC goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

Rane's contribution

Even before Bheke could clear, Rane took possession of the ball and released Williams on the right with a diagonal pass. The Australian unleashed a powerful angular drive that found its way past the far post, beating Sandhu's desperate dive.

Bengaluru had a chance to equalise at the hour-mark but Dimas Morgado's volley, followed by a Harmanjot Khabra cross, went wide. Though Bengaluru coach Carles Cuadrat brought in fresh legs in attack, introducing Ashique Kuruniyam and Thongkhosiem Haokip midway through the second half, the visitors failed to alter the scoreline.

The result: ATK 1 (David Williams 47) bt Bengaluru FC 0.



Joy unbound: David Williams' goal proved the difference for ATK against BFC. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

Selectors' input forces Gujarat to not play Bumrah in Ranji match

Don't make him bowl extended spells was the request

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SURAT

Jasprit Bumrah was expected to test his match fitness in the Ranji Trophy game between Kerala and Gujarat that got underway at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium here on Wednesday. That was not to be.

If they go down this route on Thursday, Nesan is set to line up alongside Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon, with James Pattinson replacing the injured Josh Hazlewood.

Travis Head is expected to be the fall guy, with wicket-keeper Paine moving up the batting order to six.

Good record

Australia heads into the Test on the back of three wins at home this summer – two against Pakistan before its 296-run thrashing of New Zealand.

Marnus Labuschagne has been its star batsman, smashing his third century in a row at Perth before a second-innings 50.

In contrast Steve Smith, its hero during the Ashes against England this year, has managed only 43 and 16 in his last two innings, out twice to short balls from Neil Wagner.

"I've been facing a fair bit of short stuff in the nets because I'm expecting a bit (in Melbourne)," Smith said.



Game time: Jasprit Bumrah is expected to play 'some cricket' before joining the Men in Blue for the T20I series against Sri Lanka. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

management wasn't happy with the National selectors' request that he should not be made to bowl extended spells.

"We felt that making him bowl just six overs per

day would have helped neither him nor us," said a source in the Gujarat team.

"He, of course, would have been an asset for us in this match, and it was a tough decision to take."

Stokes rejoins England team



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
CENTURION

All-rounder Ben Stokes practised with the England team on Wednesday ahead of the first Test against South Africa, starting at SuperSport Park on Thursday.

A statement from the England and Wales Cricket Board said that Stokes' father, Ged, remained in intensive care in a Johannesburg hospital but had responded positively to treatment and was in a stable condition.

Ged Stokes, who had travelled to South Africa to watch the cricket, was admitted to hospital on Monday with what was described as a serious illness. Ben missed practice on Tuesday to be at his father's bedside.

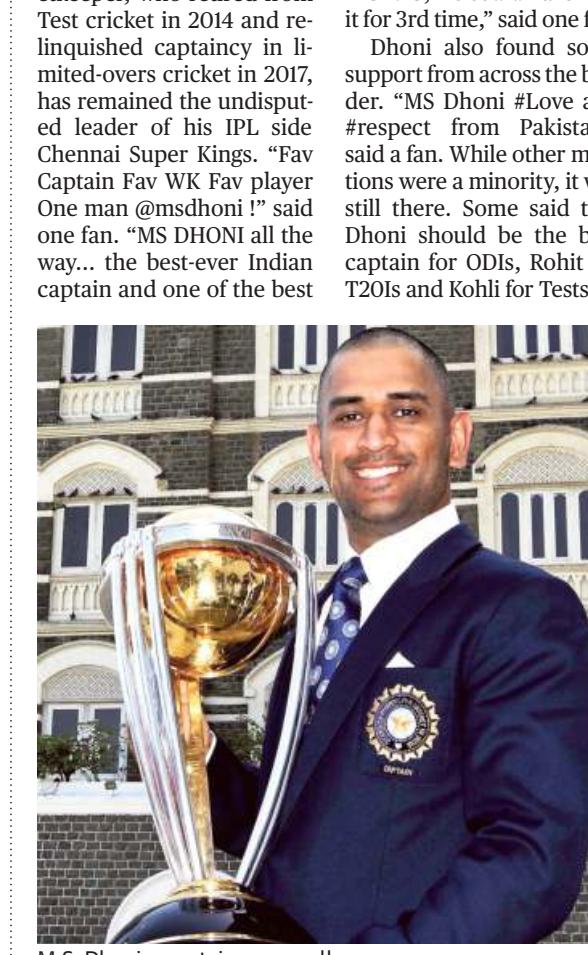
The statement said the Stokes family thanked people for their support of the family and the medical practitioners who had treated Ged.

Everybody loves MS!

IANS
NEW DELHI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) decided to leave it to the fans to pick their favourite captain of the decade. And the fans made it clear – Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

The veteran Indian wicketkeeper, who retired from Test cricket in 2014 and relinquished captaincy in limited-overs cricket in 2017, has remained the undisputed leader of his IPL side Chennai Super Kings. "Fav Captain Fav WK Fav player One man @msdhoni" said one fan. "MS DHONI all the way... the best-ever Indian captain and one of the best



M.S. Dhoni... captain par excellence. ■ FILE PHOTO

2020 Sportstar ACES Awards

Readers will have a chance to pick their favourites for the 10 Popular

Choice Awards. The top two contenders from each category, based on popular vote, will be sent to a jury, which will decide the winner

THE NOMINEES

SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR (INDIVIDUAL SPORTS)



V. JYOTHI SUREKHA (ARCHERY)

Compound archer V. Jyothi Surekha cornered a rare double at the World Championships in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands, by securing bronze medals in the individual and women's team events. The 23-year-old joined hands with Muskan Kiran and Raj Kaur to help India beat Yesim Bostan, Gizem Elmagacli and Ipek Tomruk of Turkey in the team bronze medal match. Later, she defeated World No. 2 Yesim to claim the individual bronze, as well.

Bengaluru had a chance to equalise at the hour-mark but Dimas Morgado's volley, followed by a Harmanjot Khabra cross, went wide. Though Bengaluru coach Carles Cuadrat brought in fresh legs in attack, introducing Ashique Kuruniyam and Thongkhosiem Haokip midway through the second half, the visitors failed to alter the scoreline.

The result: ATK 1 (David Williams 47) bt Bengaluru FC 0.



VINESH PHOGAT (WRESTLING)

Vinesh Phogat's double delight after securing an Olympic quota place and her maiden World Championships medal, a bronze, in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, was the outcome of her sheer determination. The 25-year-old, who switched from 50kg to 53kg earlier this year, won gold medals at the Grand Prix of Spain, the Yasar Dogu event in Turkey and the Poland Open, plus a bronze at the Asian Championships. Phogat's World Championships medal made her the fifth Indian woman to do so, joining her cousins Geeta and Babita to form a unique family club of Worlds medallists.

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Late start due to solar eclipse

The solar eclipse on Thursday morning has pushed the start of the second day's play of most of the Ranji Trophy matches.

The Tamil Nadu-Madhya Pradesh game at Indore, being telecast live on Star Sports, will start at 11.30 a.m. The first session will last till 1 p.m. while the second and third sessions will be from 1.40 to 3.10 p.m. and 3.30 to 5.30 p.m. There will be only 75 overs during the day.

The Karnataka-Himachal Pradesh match at Mysuru will begin at 11.15 a.m. (Revised timings: Morning: 11.15 to 12.00; Post-lunch: 12.40 to 15.10; Post-tea: 15.30 to 17.30).

The other Ranji matches, too, will start late following a communication from the BCCI.

TV PICKS

Australia v New Zealand: 2nd Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m.

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 & 9 a.m.

Ranji Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 a.m.

I-League: DSport, 12 p.m.

Big Bash League: Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.

South Africa v England: 1st Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 p.m. onwards; SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 8.30 p.m. onwards

ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Hafeez suspended from bowling in all ECB competitions

LONDON Pakistan and Middlesex all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez has been suspended from bowling in all English cricket's domestic competition after his action was found to be illegal following an independent bowling-action assessment. Hafeez, who had signed on mid-season as a replacement for AB de Villiers, had his action reported on August 30 after the T20 Blast match in Taunton between Somerset and Middlesex following which he underwent independent assessment at Loughborough University. IANS



Jorge Jesus to stay on as Flamengo boss

Flamengo head coach Jorge Jesus has confirmed that he will see out his contract with the Rio de Janeiro club amid reports linking him with a return to Europe. Jesus guided Flamengo to the Brazilian Serie A and Copa Libertadores titles in 2019, less than six months after taking charge of the Rio de Janeiro club, reports Xinhua news agency. "I'm staying. I have a contract and I'm going to honour it. I'm going back to Brazil on January 24," the 65-year-old told reporters in Lisbon, where he arrived on Tuesday to begin a month-long vacation in his homeland. IANS

Mandzukic to join Qatari side Al Duhail

Former Croatian forward Mario Mandzukic has left Italian giants Juventus to join Qatari side Al Duhail. Juventus is yet to confirm the move, but a post on the Qatari club's official Twitter account showed Mandzukic putting pen to paper on his new contract. IANS

Dhawan's unbeaten ton props up Delhi

Hyderabad bowlers make good use of the conditions to rattle the host

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Shikhar Dhawan single-handedly wrested the initiative from Hyderabad with an unbeaten 137 and placed Delhi in a position of comfort on a cold and breezy opening day of their Ranji Trophy match at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground here.

Tottering at 128 for five, Delhi recovered to 269 for six at stumps. Dhawan, who hit two sixes and 19 boundaries, stitched two half-century stands in the second half of the day..

Early strikes

Put in, after bad light forced a one-hour delay to the start, Delhi struggled in conditions that assisted swing bowling. After Siraj Mohammad sent back opener Kunal Chandela and Dhruv Shorey with just four runs on the board, Dhawan was constantly engaged in the repair job for the rest of the day, with the other batsmen playing second fiddle.

In fact, had medium pacer Ravi Kiran been a shade less unlucky, Hyderabad would have ended the day in a better position.

He managed to 'dismiss' Nitish Rana and Dhawan, on



Captain's knock: Shikhar Dhawan led from the front with a disciplined innings to bail Delhi out after a stuttering start. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

14 and 67 respectively, but off no-balls. In between, he had to leave the field after being hurt in his attempt to take a return catch offered by Jonty Sidhu.

On this day, Dhawan's attitude batting sense pushed into the background the lack of

application or poor stroke-selection of some of his young teammates.

He saw off the difficult first session and played far more freely in the second. He curbed his flamboyance and refrained from driving away from the body.

In fact, Dhawan moved from 69 to 110 off just 29 balls, hitting two sixes and five boundaries in the process.

The over before tea produced 16 runs as Dhawan reached his century with a couple and then scored nine

more runs in celebration.

Importantly, what kept Hyderabad at bay were the useful, two-digit partnerships that all added up to help Delhi breath a bit easy.

Dhawan added 45 with Rana, 51 with Jonty Sidhu, 84 with Anuj Rawat and another unbeaten 57 with Kunwar Bidhuri until bad light halted play 51 minutes before re-scheduled close.

Later, former cricketer Sunil Chaturvedi was honoured to mark his 100 First Class match as a Match Referee. Dhawan, Ishant Sharma and Hyderabad skipper Tanmay Agarwal were among those who felicitated Mr. Chaturvedi.

The scores:

Delhi –1st innings: Kunal Chanda 166 in 67.2 overs (Karan Nair 81, Kanwar Abhinay 5/37) vs Himachal 29/3 in 17 overs.

Toss: Karnataka.
GROUP B
Mysore: Karnataka 166 in 67.2 overs (Karan Nair 81, Kanwar Abhinay 5/37) vs Himachal 29/3 in 17 overs.

Toss: Karnataka.
Indore: Tamil Nadu 149 in 59 overs (V. Ganga Sridhar Raju 43, B. Aparajith 61 n.o., Ishwar Pandey 6/26) vs Madhya Pradesh 56/3 in 20 overs.

Toss: MP.

Mumbai: Mumbai 114 in 28.3 overs (T. Pradeep 6/37) vs Railways 116/5 in 37 overs (Arindam Ghosh 52 batting).

Toss: Railways.

Rajkot: Saurashtra 322/8 in 90 overs (Harvik Desai 54, Cheteshwar Pujara 57, Sheldon Jackson 57, Saurabh Kumar 4/79) vs Uttar Pradesh.

Toss: Saurashtra.

GROUP C
Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir 59/1 in 18 overs vs Assam.

Toss: Nagaland.

RANJI SCORES: ROUND 3, DAY 1

GROUP A

At Kolkata: Bengal 241/4 in 83 overs (Abhishek Raman 110, Chaitanya Bishnoi 75 retd. hurt, Shivam Chauhan 53, Harshal Patel 44 batting) vs Jharkhand.

Toss: Haryana.
Jamshedpur: Haryana 274/6 in 87 overs (Ankit Kumar 53, Chaitanya Bishnoi 75 retd. hurt, Shivam Chauhan 53, Harshal Patel 44 batting) vs Jharkhand.

Toss: Haryana.

Pune: Maharashtra 238/6 in 78 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 108, Vishant More 49 batting, Veer Pratap Singh 4/56) vs Chhattisgarh.

Toss: Maharashtra.

Cuttack: Uttarakhand 117 in 48.4 overs (Basant Mohanty 6/17) vs Odisha 98/3 in 39 overs.

Toss: Odisha.

Delhi: Tripura 126 in 48.4 overs (Nirupam Sen 54, Diwesh Pathania 5/36) vs Services 23/2 in 8 overs.

Toss: Services.

PLATE
Dibrugarh: Manipur 196 in 87 overs (AL Bashid Muhammed 40, K. Priyobjit 43, Karkir Taye 4/25) vs Arunachal Pradesh 10/0 in 4 overs.

Toss: Arunachal Pradesh.

Patna: Bihar 260/5 in 85 overs (Babul Kumar 131 batting, Shasheen Rathour 69) vs Goa.

Toss: Goa.

Kolkata: Mizoram 73 in 27.4 overs (Sagar Udeshi 4/6) vs Pondicherry 286/3 in 58 overs (Paras Dogra 135 batting, K.B. Arun Karthick 86 batting).

Toss: Pondicherry.

Bhubaneswar: Sikkim 274 in 74.4 overs (Iqbal Abdulla 94) vs Nagaland 45/1 in 11 overs.

Toss: Nagaland.

Dinda suspended for misconduct

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

Bengal veteran Ashoke Dinda was the notable absentee in the Bengal team that took field against Andhra in the Ranji Trophy match here on Wednesday. Dinda, who has claimed 420 wickets from 116 First Class matches, was dropped from the team on disciplinary grounds. The veteran was hauled up for "misconduct" against the team bowling coach Ranadeb Bose during an incident in the dressing room after the home side had its pre-match practice on Tuesday.

Dinda had a run-in with the team management a

few months back when he was dropped from the Bengal team announced for the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. According to the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) officials, the player this time abused Bose, apparently unhappy with the coach having a private chat with captain Abhimanyu Easwaran.

After the incident was reported officially, the CAB convened a meeting to hear Dinda's "misconduct" and decided to axe the player on disciplinary grounds. According to sources, CAB officials approached Dinda and asked him to apologise after the incident but the player remained adamant.



Ashore Dinda... in the line of fire ■ FILE PHOTO: PRASHANT NAKWANE

AIFF invites clubs for Futsal Club Championship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation has invited clubs from the Indian Super League, I-League and Second Division League to confirm their participation in the inaugural edition of AIFF Futsal Club Championship.

Das said that the AIFF is planning to start the tournament in July/August next year.

"The players could be from the Senior, Reserve or Under 18 teams of your Club," Das said in the letter.

The decision comes after the AIFF Executive Committee meeting on December 10, which decided to introduce a Futsal Club Championship in the calendar.

football for player development. There could be an opportunity for the champion club of this tournament to represent India for the subsequent AFC Futsal Club Championship."

Das said that the AIFF is planning to start the tournament in July/August next year. "The players could be from the Senior, Reserve or Under 18 teams of your Club," Das said in the letter.

The decision comes after the AIFF Executive Committee meeting on December 10, which decided to introduce a Futsal Club Championship in the calendar.

U-19 WC: Ijaz wants Naseem to join squad

ANI
LONDON

Pakistan under-19 head coach Ijaz Ahmed wants Naseem Shah to join the World Cup squad as he is the first-choice bowler for the side.

"He is important not just because he played Test cricket, but he was always the first-choice bowler for us in the World Cup. He was named in the squad and even the PCB chairman had given him the clearance.

"Having him will give our squad a major boost and having him around us will motivate the other boys," ESPNcricinfo quoted Ijaz as saying.

Vardy dilemma for Leicester

Champion-elect Liverpool lies in wait

PREMIER LEAGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

Leicester City faces runaway Premier League leader Liverpool on Boxing Day knowing its own title hopes are very much in the balance.

Thursday's match will see the second-placed Foxes, the shock 2015/16 champions, kick off 10 points adrift of Liverpool, which will arrive in the East Midlands fresh from winning a maiden Club World Cup title following a 1-0 victory over Brazilian side Flamengo in Qatar.

One of the more remarkable statistics in English football is that it is nearly 30 years since Liverpool was last crowned domestic champion in what was then the First Division.

But Premier League silverware is now in sight following a successful 2019 that has also seen Liverpool take the Champions League and UEFA Super Cup trophies back to Anfield as well as the Club World Cup.

One of the enduring peculiarities of the English game that has not changed, however, is the packed programme of matches that take place during the Christmas and New Year holiday period. The congested schedule is again causing headaches for managers, with Foxes boss Brendan Rodgers saying the fixture list is a "nonsense."

Leicester kicks off against Liverpool on Thursday before it plays West Ham on Saturday.

Game about money now' It then completes four games in 10 days with a trip to Newcastle on New Year's Day, be-



Tight-rope act: With a congested schedule ahead, Foxes boss Brendan Rodgers wonders how often he can field Jamie Vardy, the league's leading scorer so far this season. ■ AP

fore hosting Wigan in the FA Cup on January 4.

This presents Rodgers with a problem about how often to field Jamie Vardy, the league's leading scorer so far this season, given the striker is now aged 32.

"The game is about money now. You can't say it's about the welfare of players," insisted Rodgers, himself a former Liverpool manager who added that Vardy, for all he has scored 16 goals this term, had "no chance" of being involved throughout the festive period.

This season sees the Premier League experimenting with a 'winter break' that will see all teams get a weekend off in February.

But that pales into insignificance compared to the Bundesliga's long-established winter break. Mikel Arteta's reign as Arsenal manager starts away to Bournemouth, while new Everton boss Carlo Ancelotti is in charge at home to Burnley.

Chelsea wants to keep Willian faith against Saints

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Willian's performance at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium last weekend highlighted just why Frank Lampard is keen to see the Brazilian's future at Chelsea resolved.

While much of the focus this season has been trained on the outstanding contribution of the youngsters in Blues manager Lampard's squad, Willian's performances on the right of a front three have been consistently excellent.

The winger appeared to have lost his way in recent seasons, particularly last term when he struggled for consistency under Maurizio Sarri and appeared in danger of leaving the London club.

This campaign has been different, though, and Lampard will hope the player can inspire a return to form when Southampton visits Stamford Bridge on Thursday following Chelsea's impressive 2-



Long run: Leander Paes, who is the most successful doubles player in the history of Davis Cup with 44 wins, recently dropped out of top-100 for the first time in 19 years. ■ REUTERS

Committed to host C'wealth shooting event before 2022 CWG: NRAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The National Rifle Association of India has expressed its commitment to host a separate Commonwealth Shooting Championships in 2022 and endorsed the Indian Olympic Association's idea of adding medals won in that event to the Birmingham Games tally.

NRAI president Raninder Singh was part of a recent meeting, held in Munich on December 5, between the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) and Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF). The meeting had discussed ways to make up for the sport's exclusion from the roster of the 2022 Birmingham Games.

Having got an encouraging response to its proposal to host a separate shooting event just before the 2022 CWG, Raninder wrote to IOA president Narinder Batra, assuring its full commitment to hosting the tournament and seeking the apex body's cooperation in helping it submit a "formal proposal" to the CGF.

"The NRAI is willing to host a Commonwealth Shooting Event in India at an appropriate venue commencing on the 14th of March 2022, to coincide with the occasion of Com-

monwealth Day," Raninder said in the letter.

Brief outline
Making a brief outline of the proposal, he wrote, "...this offer is made to the CGF... that upon completion of its regulatory and administrative review process, the competent authority of CGF accords its approval & acceptance to medals awarded at this proposed event being accorded equal protocol as any medals won by a competing nation at the main event conducted later in the Birmingham CWG.

"In essence, these medals would be treated in nature as an opening balance for each competing nation to build upon by competing in those other events in Birmingham. Thus affording nations the capability to maximise their medal potential at the CWG, an issue central & so established by the IOA to the CGF," he added.

The NRAI chief said the organisational committee of the Birmingham CWG will be, in no way, involved in financing the shooting tournament in India, even though by implication (of medals won there are proposed to be added to the final tally) may be considered a part or extension of the 2022 CWG.

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Real Kashmir all set for its first home game this season

Faces holder Chennai City which has made a slow start



Ready to roll: Real Kashmir coach David Robertson, centre, will be keen to upset Akbar Nawas' Chennai City FC. ■ PTI

I-LEAGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SRINAGAR

Real Kashmir FC takes on defending champion Chennai City FC in its first I-League home match of the season here on Thursday in the first big sporting event in the valley since it became a Union Territory.

Two draws

Real Kashmir has played only two matches this season, both away and ending in draws, against East Bengal and Tiddim Road Athletic Union (TRAU) of Imphal.

The Snow Leopards have let a one-goal advantage slip in the final 13 minutes of both their matches, conceding an equaliser in the 77th and 78th minutes against

East Bengal and TRAU respectively. Although TRAU went 2-1 up against Real Kashmir later, Mason Robertson scored a quick equaliser to snatch a point.

Assessing his team's last outing, Real Kashmir head coach David Robertson said: "In the second-half, TRAU had a go at us and we defended well. We had a great chance when Krizo was one on one with the goalkeeper and we could have killed the game. In football, these things happen. I am proud of my players and we could have scored more."

Mason's impressive outing in Imphal asserted the value he brings to the squad.

His two-goal show featured a clinical finish that went in off the inside of the woodwork for his first and a textbook header that le-

velled the scores for his second.

Asked about his son's performance, David Robertson said: "Mason is a valuable player. He is very versatile. We are lucky to have him at Real Kashmir. As a father, I am delighted for him plus it makes it easier to pick your son if he is doing well."

Chennai City, on the other hand, has made a slow start. It has just five points from four games, with the only victory coming against TRAU in its opener at Coimbatore.

Captain Roberto Eslava said: "We have shown intensity, so the points that we have dropped, have not been for the lack of it.

"We have shown this desire (to fight) in every game, and the next against Kashmir won't be any different."

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"We have shown this desire (to fight) in every game, and the next against Kashmir won't be any different."

The Kerela men beat Rajasthan 62-59 to advance to

the pre-quarterfinals while Karnataka defeated Haryana 97-74, forcing the latter to compete in the pre-quarterfinals.

Kerala and Karnataka will meet Chandigarh and Uttar Pradesh which progressed to the pre-quarterfinals from the lower groups.

The results:

Men: Punjab 68 (Amritpal Singh 16, Arshpreet Singh 12) bt Haryana 37.

Karnataka 97 (Aravind Arumugam 22, Issac Thomas 18, Abhishek Gowda 13, Jitendra Singh 12, Anil Kumar 11, S. Karthikeyan 11, M. Harish 10) bt Haryana 74 (Yudhvir Singh 24, Abhishek 18, Vikas Kumar 14).

Services 64 (Nikhil Kumar 31, Joginder Singh 23, Hemant Sheoran 15, Mahipal Singh 11) bt Railways 81 (Gangadeep Singh 18, Rajan Sharma 16, Lovneet Singh 13).

Women: Delhi 73 (Nishita Sarawali 13, Aparna Saini 13, Sushanthika Chakraborty 12) bt Chhattisgarh 44 (Sangeetha Kaur 23).

Telangana 69 (Divya 31, Gulbasha Ali 18) bt Maharashtra 39 (Shreya Dekhdar 17).

Karnataka 64 (Lopamudra Timmaiah 18, Varsha Nandini 17, Vinaya Josep 13, Anusha 10) bt Tamil Nadu 57 (S. Rakeshwar 23).

Kerala 70 (P.S. Jeena 21, P.G. Anjana 20, Stephy Nixon 12, Kavitha Jose 11) bt Punjab 30 (Anmolpreet Kaur 12).

Support for Pochettino

The former Argentina international, who had 73 caps

Leander Paes to retire in 2020

Prepares for one last roar in a farewell year

TENNIS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Indian tennis icon Leander Paes on Wednesday announced that he will bring the curtains down on his illustrious career in 2020, which will be his farewell season on the Pro-circuit.

His cupboard overflowing with hundreds of trophies, that include 18 Grand Slam doubles titles, the 46-year-old has been enduring a lean patch for some time.

Paes, who is the most successful doubles player in the history of Davis Cup with 44 wins, recently dropped out of top-100 for the first time

in 19 years.

"I want to announce 2020 as my farewell year as a pro tennis player," Paes wrote in a statement, which he posted on his Twitter handle.

Select tournaments

"I am looking forward to the 2020 tennis calendar where I will be playing a few select tournaments, travelling with my team and celebrating with all my friends and fans around the world," the statement read further.

"It is all of you who have inspired me to become me and I want to take this year to say 'Thank You' to you."

Paes is targeting to be the only tennis player in the his-

tory of the sport to play eight successive Olympics.

In a career spanning nearly three decades, during which he also overcame a brain tumour, Tokyo Olympic Games (provided he qualifies) is expected to be his swansong.

He is the only tennis player from the country to have won a singles Olympic medal as he grabbed a historic bronze at the 1996 Atlanta Games, beating Argentina's Fernando Meligeni in

the play-off.

With compatriot Mahesh Bhupathi, he created an awe-inspiring partnership during which they dominated the circuit in late 1990s, winning three Grand Slam titles together and claiming the number one rank.

In their partnership, they also weaved a record 24-match unbeaten streak before splitting as a team due to difference of opinion.

India's Davis Cup hero thanked his parents Dr Vece Paes and Jennifer, both of whom represented India at the highest level, for giving him sports genes.

"I want to thank my parents for their genetics, guidance, discipline, environ-

ment they created and unconditional love they've always shown me throughout my life, I would not be who I am without your unstinting support and belief in me, I love you."

He also thanked his two elder sisters and daughter Aiana.

Favourite memories

Paes asked fans to share their favourite memories of him over the years using #one last roar.

"2020 is going to be an emotional one and I look forward to seeing all of you out there rolling with me."

"It has been an honour being your lionheart," he concluded.

BCB firm on not playing Tests in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA

Refusing to budge from its stand, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) said it was ready to play only T20 Internationals in Pakistan, preferring a neutral venue for the planned Test series. The message was conveyed by BCB chief executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury on Tuesday.

His comments come a day after Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Ehsan Mani asserted that there was "absolutely no doubt" they would play all home series in the country.

"We stand firm on our ground. We only want to play T20Is in Pakistan. The stakeholders related to the series do not want us to play longer-version cricket in Pakistan," Nizamuddin was quoted by *The Daily Star*. "Actually, we have no other option here. We can play the T20Is but if we are to play Tests then it should be in a neutral venue."

In an e-mail to the BCB, Mani asked the Bangladesh Board to give "acceptable reasons" for refusing to send its team to Pakistan for the two matches of the ICC World Test Championship, scheduled from January 18, 2020.

Abhishek-Yashaswini duo finishes on top

Haryana shooters on the prowl in mixed air pistol, clinch all three gold



Delightful day: The mixed air pistol medallists – Harshada Nithave and Aniket (silver), Abhishek Verma and Yashaswini Deswal (gold), and Deepak Sharma and Annu Raj Singh (bronze). ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SHOOTING

SPORTS BUREAU
BHOPAL

Haryana dominated the mixed air pistol competition, winning all the three gold medals in the 63rd National shooting championship on Wednesday.

The Olympic quota winners Abhishek Verma and Yashaswini Singh Deswal bagged the gold, beating Harshada Nithave and Aniket of Maharashtra 16-10.

Problem of plenty
It was a problem of plenty for Haryana as it also had Manu Bhaker, who had won all

the four World Cup gold medals this season, with Sauvabh Chaudhary. Manu had won the Asian championship gold with Abhishek Verma, and won the World Cup Finals gold as well with Russian Artem Chersounov.

Manu had to, however, be content competing in the junior section of the mixed air pistol, and clinched the gold with Sarabjit Singh. The duo defeated Punjab's Khushbeerat and Arshdeep Banga 16-8.

Manu had earlier won the air pistol gold medals in both the women's and junior sections of the National championship, apart from the silver in the 25-metre sports pistol and the junior gold.

Haryana completed its domination as Shiva Narwal and Shikha claimed the youth gold in mixed air pistol, beating Maharashtra's Ajinkya Chavan and Janhavi Deshmukh 16-10.

Anjum dominates again

In the women's rifle 3-position event, Anjum Moudgil continued her domination as she beat Gaayathri Nithyanandam to the gold by a 2.6 point margin after topping qualification with 1172. Nischal won the bronze, ahead of Bhakti Bhaskar Khamkar, Kajal Saini, Shriyanka Sadangi, Raj Chaudhary and Meghna Sajjanar.



The final three: Anjum Moudgil, flanked by Gaayathri Nithyanandam and Nischal, the women's rifle 3-position medallists. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

3. Uttar Pradesh (Sharvan Kumar, Himanshi) 16 (379, 567); 4. Rajasthan (Aadhya, Aman) 12 (380, 557).

Youth: 1. Haryana (Shiva Narwal, Shikha) 16 (383, 568); 2. Maharashtra (Ajinkya Chavan, Janhavi Deshmukh) 10 (381, 556); 3. Uttar Pradesh (Monu Kumar, Devanshi) 16 (376, 575); 4. Punjab (Rajikanwar, Navdeep Kaur) 6 (374, 556).

50m rifle 3-position: Women: 1. Anjum Moudgil 449.0 (1172); 2. Gaayathri Nithyanandam 447.3 (1161); 3. Nischal 434.3 (1160); **Team:** 1. Punjab 3467; 2. Haryana 3465; 3. Maharashtra 3462.

Juniors: 1. Nischal 451.9 (1160); 2. Ayushi Podder 451.1 (1159); 3. Prasiddhi 436.1 (1158); **Team:** 1. Madhya Pradesh 3446; 2. Maharashtra 3414; 3. Punjab 3413.

Railways and Kerala women remain unbeaten

Make last-eight stage along with Telangana, Delhi, MP and Punjab

NATL. BASKETBALL

SPORTS BUREAU
LUDHIANA

Railways and Kerala women reached the quarterfinals, staying unbeaten in their groups in the 70th National basketball championship at the Guru Nanak Dev Stadium on Wednesday.

The two were joined by Telangana and Delhi from Group A while Madhya Pradesh and Punjab qualified from Group B.

The Karnataka women sneaked into the pre-quarterfinals beating Tamil Nadu which failed to win a match. The Maharashtra women, too, made the grade with a win over Madhya Pradesh.

From the lower groups, Chandigar