



Big crisis

Yashwant Sinha termed the passing of anti-CAA resolutions by non-BJP states a constitutional crisis

SHORT TAKES

CONGRESS KNOCKS ON NHRC DOORS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 27

The Congress on Monday approached the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) over the issue of “atrocities” committed by the Uttar Pradesh police on people protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the proposed National Register of Citizens in the state.

A high-profile Congress delegation, led by former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, his sister and the party’s general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh Priyanka Gandhi and senior lawyer and MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi presented a detailed 31-page representation which included videos and photographs as “evidence” of the alleged atrocities and human rights violations.

The representation demanded action against alleged police atrocities on anti-CAA protesters in Uttar Pradesh, alleging that victims have been made accused in case-related FIRs while no police officer has been named.

Mr. Gandhi tweeted: “A delegation of Congress leaders presented the NHRC with evidence of the atrocities against the citizens of UP by the state government, which has gone to war against its own people. The NHRC must act decisively to protect the idea of India & the Constitutional rights of our citizens.”

ANTI-CAA RALLIES IN U.S.

Washington, Jan. 27: India’s 71st Republic Day celebrations in the US on Sunday were marred by some peaceful protests and marches by a large number of Indian Americans in various cities of the country against the recent changes in the citizenship law.

The CAA protests however also had a fair share of supporters who sought to counter protesters by asserting that India cares for neighbouring minorities and CAA won’t impact Indian citizens.

The supporters, however, appeared to be outnumbered by protesters, who held peaceful rallies and marches in various US cities, carrying anti-CAA banners and raising slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and demanding CAA’s repeal and revocation of the proposed National Register for Citizens (NRC).

They raised the demand ruling that India’s secular fabric is under threat. In some of the cities, particularly New York, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta and San Francisco having Indian consulates, and at the Indian Embassy in Washington DC, the protesters shouted slogans like ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ and ‘Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Isai: Aapas Mein Sab Bhai Bhai.’

The largest gathering of anti-CAA protesters was reported from Chicago.

PROTESTS CONTINUE IN KOLKATA

Kolkata, Jan. 27: About 60 Muslim women, who have been carrying out their demonstration against the CAA, and the proposed nationwide NRC at the Park Circus Maidan here, continued their agitation and took the pledge to save the Constitution on the occasion of the 71st Republic Day.

The sit-in by the women, ranging from homemakers to professionals, against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) on the lines of the Shaheen Bagh protest in Delhi, entered its 20th day on Sunday.

Nausreen, one of the 60 women and a homemaker, said “this is a different Republic Day” for her, unlike past years. “This is a new feeling. There is a new spirit of bonhomie among all of us - the men and women of different communities - as we all take oath to remain united to save the Constitution,” Nausreen said.

As one of the participants suddenly started singing the national anthem, all others present on the occasion at the ground, joined her. The gathering swelled during afternoon as students of different college and universities gathered to express their solidarity with the women.



Muslim women protesters display placards during an anti-CAA and NRC demonstration near Ghantaagar in Lucknow on Monday.

— PTI

EU move casts shadow on PM’s Brussels visit

A debate on CAA is scheduled for January 29 in the European Parliament

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 27

The debate in the European Parliament on India’s Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), scheduled for January 29 followed by a vote the next day, may trigger uncertainty over Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s proposed visit to the Belgian capital Brussels for the India-European Union (EU) Summit later this year, sources hinted on Monday.

The sources also sought to highlight that individually, European nations like France strongly back the Indian government’s stand that the CAA is an internal matter of India. According to reports, a total of six resolutions have been tabled by six groups comprising 559 members in the 751-member European Parliament.

Most of the resolutions are critical of the CAA, while some also criticise the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam and the security lockdown and detentions in Jammu and Kashmir.

The most critical reportedly is the resolution moved by the S&D Group, the second largest group with 154 MEPs, which states that the CAA has the potential to “create the largest statelessness crisis in the world.”

The resolution by the EPP Group, the largest with 182 MEPs, says the law could have negative consequences for “India’s international image and internal stability.”

French diplomatic sources in Delhi said France — a founding member of



Trinamul Mohila Congress activists celebrate after a resolution was passed against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in its Assembly in Kolkata on Monday.

— PTI

the EU — is of the view that the CAA is “India’s internal matter” and that the “European Parliament is an institution independent of member states and the European Commission,” indicating that there may be a rift within the European Bloc on the matter. The European Parliament is the legislative wing of the EU while the European Commission is the EU’s executive wing.

Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad indicated on Monday that the ministry of external affairs (MEA) will explain to the members of European Parliament about the CAA but also took a jibe at it, asking why its members hadn’t raised the issue of victimisation of Hindus in Pakistan.

Though no dates have

been announced, it had been speculated that PM Modi may visit Brussels in March this year, but the anti-CAA resolution in the European Parliament may put a spanner in the works.

With reports that the European Parliament is set to debate and vote on the resolutions, some of which state that the CAA marks a “dangerous shift” in the India’s citizenship regime and has “created the legal grounds to strip millions of Muslims of the fundamental right of equal access to citizenship,” Indian government sources had said on Sunday that, “The European Union Parliament should not take actions that call into question the rights and authority of democratically elected legislatures in other

regions of the world.”

Hoping that “sponsors and supporters of the draft will engage with us to get a full and accurate assessment of the facts before they proceed further,” Indian government sources had further said that “every society that fashions a pathway to naturalisation, contemplates both a context and criteria (and that) this is not discrimination,” further claiming that “European societies have followed the same approach.”

Government sources had further said that the CAA is a “matter entirely internal to India” and that this legislation has been adopted by due process and through democratic means after a public debate in both Houses of Parliament.

CONG ALLEGES BJP GLOBALISED CAA ISSUE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 27

As the European Union is set to debate a batch of resolutions against India’s amended citizenship law, the Congress on Monday accused the government of having internationalised the issue. The ruling BJP questioned the objectivity of members of European Union (EU) Parliament who have backed resolutions against the CAA, asking if they ever raised their voices over “victimisation” of minority Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan.

“The fact that the EU is debating the CAA, this government has internationalised the issue of citizenship law,” senior Congress leader Mr. Kapil Sibal said. The powerful bloc of 28 nations is set to debate and vote on a motion tabled by a large chunk of its members against India’s new citizenship law, which it allegedly marks as a “dangerous shift” in the country’s citizenship regime. Meanwhile, addressing a gathering after a book launch event, Vice President Mr. M Venkaiah Naidu said he was concerned at the trend of foreign bodies interfering in matters that are “completely within the purview of Indian Parliament and government.” There was no scope for outside interference, he said.

WB too passes resolution against citizenship law

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, JAN. 27

Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee Monday called upon all Opposition parties, including the Congress and the Left, to bury their “narrow differences” and build a united movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) even as West Bengal became the fourth state in the country after Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan to pass an anti-CAA resolution in the state Assembly.

She also slammed senior BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya’s for his controversial comments on Poha saying, “a single colour can not run the country.”

Earlier in the day, state parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee moved the anti-CAA resolution under rule 169 in the house, where it was adopted and passed with support from the Left Front and Congress parties amid the BJP’s opposition.

The MLAs of the Congress and Left, which on January 9 pressed for an anti-CAA resolution which was rejected by the Trinamul government,

demanding amendments in the government’s resolution. Ms. Banerjee said, “The time has come to shun narrow differences and put up a fight together to protect the country. The CAA is anti-people. It should be immediately abolished.”

She elaborated, “Let us stay united and raise our voices against the central government on the CAA, National Register of Citizens and National Population Register. The protest against the CAA is not only of the minorities but of all. I thank my Hindu brothers for spearheading the agitation from the front. We will not allow the CAA and NRC and NPR. But we will fight it out peacefully against those who try to destroy the Constitution.”

Before the passage of the anti-CAA resolution, Ms. Banerjee at the Trinamul student-youth workshop at Netaji Indoor Stadium said, “A single colour cannot run a country. A colour stands for the harmony of all castes, creeds and religions, and the rich and poor: Labourers are our assets, like farmers. They are our pride also.”



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses during a workshop for students in Kolkata on Monday.

— PTI

LDF undecided on move to recall Guv

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN. 27

The ruling CPM-led Left Democratic Front in Kerala is in a dilemma over Opposition move to bring a resolution in Assembly requesting President to recall Governor Arif Mohammad Khan.

A section of CPM leaders said that they would wait for Governor’s stand on the policy address that is to be delivered on the opening day of the budget session of Assembly on January 29. The Governor had earlier sought clarification from government on including portions related to CAA stating that remarks on a law passed by Parliament and that too which comes under union government, should be avoided. The government, on the other hand, is firm on retaining the CAA portion in policy address.

It now remains to be seen what stand Mr. Khan will take. LDF convenor A. Vijayaraghavan said that the matter related to opposition resolution for recall of governor had not been discussed by them yet. “Let the time come we will take a decision on the issue,” he said.

The ruling party alleged that the opposition decid-

ed to bring the resolution without consulting the ruling front and termed it as premeditated move. Meanwhile, opposition leader Mr. Ramesh Chennithala stuck to his decision to bring resolution against Governor. He slammed Chief Minister Mr. Pinarayi Vijayan for remaining silent on the Governor’s tirade against the resolution passed by Assembly against CAA.

“The Chief Minister’s silence has forced me to step in to move the resolution. He should realise that Mr. Khan has come here as the representative of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. I have been forced to step in as the Chief Minister has failed in his duty to protect the dignity of Assembl,” he said. Chennithala reminded the Chief Minister that opposition had wholeheartedly supported the resolution moved by him in assembly against CAA.

STERN | ACTION

Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur file cases against anti-CAA activist

Sharjeel’s house raided in Bihar

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, JAN. 27

The RJD and Congress have urged the Centre as well as the state government to initiate strict action against activist and JNU student Sharjeel Imam for giving provocative speeches against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and NRC.

Talking to reporters Congress leader Rajesh Rathod said that, “all those who are provoking people through their inflammatory speeches including Sharjeel Imam should be severely punished. We will not allow anyone to take even an inch of our country’s land.”

The RJD also reacted in a

similar way and said that “the police should trace his whereabouts and arrest him immediately for giving inflammatory speeches.”

Leaders from both the parties gave the statement after a joint team from Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar conducted raids on the ancestral house of Sharjeel Imam at Kako in Jehanabad district late Saturday night.

While Sharjeel was not found at his house, few of his relatives were detained for questioning and released later. His relative’s house was also raided in Patna’s Sabzibagh locality on Monday.

Sources said that “the police had received information that he has been

living in Patna but during the raid, they couldn’t trace him here. A separate police team from Delhi and UP is also presently camping in Jehanabad area”. Sharjeel Imam, a post-graduate in computer science from IIT Mumbai is currently doing research in Modern India history at JNU.

Reports suggest that a sedition case was slapped against him after his alleged speech went viral recently. In the video, he is seen urging protesters to “cut off Assam from India’s chicken neck”.

“He was concerned about CAA and NRC and I don’t think he gave the speech to provoke people. Our family believes in the constitution and has full

faith in the law of the land. His speeches have been twisted for political gains”, Sharjeel Imam’s uncle told reporters in Jehanabad.

Police in two northeastern states — Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh — also lodged FIRs against Imam.

He had been booked in Assam and Uttar Pradesh earlier. The Arunachal Pradesh Police has registered a case against Sharjeel Imam for his alleged inflammatory speeches, a senior police officer said here on Monday.

A case against Imam under IPC sections 124 A (an offence by words, either spoken or written causes disaffection against Government

established by law), 153 A (promoting enmity between different religious groups with an intent to create disharmony) and 153 B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national-integration) has been registered on Sunday. Special Investigation Team (SIT) SP Dr Navdeep Singh Brar said.

Meanwhile, Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu has slammed Imam for his “Break India” remark. “This kind of provocation inciting secession of Assam & other NE states from rest of India, creating communal disharmony, hampering sovereignty will not be tolerated,” Khandu tweeted.



Gentle reminder

Monica Lewinsky offers a ‘Gentle Reminder’ not to use her name in 1998 impeachment comparisons

IN BRIEF

Abbas rejects US peace moves

Ramallah: Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has rejected multiple approaches by Donald Trump to discuss the US president's upcoming proposal for peace with Israel, three officials said on Monday. The Trump administration reached out several times in recent months, including via third parties, but Abbas rejected the proposals, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "There will be no discussion with the Americans until they recognise the two-state solution," one senior official said, adding that Abbas had refused to engage with Washington over what the official called Trump's pro-Israel bias.

N. Korea, US stare at confrontation

Seoul: While a North Korean deadline for the United States to soften its stand on denuclearisation talks passed uneventfully over the New Year, state media and propaganda efforts have been focussing on the prospect of a long confrontation with the United States. Optimism that two years of contacts between leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump would usher in a new age, and related hopes for economic improvement after decades of deprivation, appear to have faded. Instead, the government has been hard at work in recent weeks using state media, propaganda posters, and performances to warn the public of a bumpy road ahead under U.S. and international pressure. The propaganda effort has included calls for North Koreans to "break through barriers" and strengthen the country.

UK unveils new fast-track visa

London: The UK government on Monday unveiled what it termed as an "unlimited" fast-track visa offer to attract the world's top scientists, researchers and mathematicians, set to kick in from next month. The bespoke "Global Talent" route will have no cap on the number of people able to come to the UK from around the world, including India, and will provide an accelerated path to settlement for all scientists and researchers who are endorsed on the route. The immigration rules to bring the visa changes into effect will be set out this Thursday and come into effect on February 20. "The UK has a proud history of scientific discovery, but to lead the field and face the challenges of the future we need to continue to invest in talent and cutting edge research," British PM Boris Johnson said. "That is why as we leave the EU I want to send a message that the UK is open to the most talented minds in the world, and stand ready to support them to turn their ideas into reality," he said. Indian-origin Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan was among those lobbying for a more flexible and talent-based visa system for scientists in his capacity as President of the UK's Royal Society and he welcomed the changes as a "positive message".

EU WANTS LAW ON CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Colombo, Jan 27: The European Union has called on Sri Lanka to enact a law on campaign finance to improve transparency in the election process and prevent the biased poll coverage by private and state media. Sri Lanka has no laws to restrict campaign finances. The independent election monitors have been calling for a law to do so. Presenting its final report on Sri Lanka's November 16 presidential election, the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) called for a law on campaign finance among its main recommendations. The EU's chief election observer Maria Matias commended the country's Elections Commission (EC) for its "credible and professional work" in the recent presidential election. "The electoral process was well managed by the Elections Commission, and we noted that campaigning on the ground was peaceful and the atmosphere calm despite a small number of violent incidents," Matias said.

—PTI

Trump tied Ukraine funds to Biden probe

NYT says Bolton's description of his exchange with Trump appears in drafts of his forthcoming book

Washington, Jan. 27: President Donald Trump told his national security adviser he wanted to maintain a freeze on military assistance to Ukraine until it aided political investigations into his Democratic rivals, according to a report in *The New York Times* on Sunday. The newspaper said John Bolton's description of his exchange with Trump appears in drafts of his forthcoming book. The revelation challenges the defence offered up by Trump and his attor-

neys in his Senate impeachment trial and raises the stakes as the chamber decided this week whether to seek sworn testimony from Bolton and other witnesses. Bolton, who acrimoniously left the White House a day before Trump ultimately released the Ukraine aid on Sept. 11, has already told lawmakers that he is willing to testify, despite the president's order barring aides from cooperating in the probe. The White House did not respond to a request for

comment Sunday night. Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani, who has played a prominent role in the Ukraine affair, replied to a request for comment with a text: "I used to like and respect John and tell people they were wrong about how irresponsible he was. I was wrong." Democrats need at least four Republicans to vote with them to seek witness testimony. Those prospects looked unlikely in recent days and it's unclear if the new



Donald Trump

revelations about Bolton's book will sway any GOP senators.

Democrats quickly sought to ramp up the pressure on their Republican counterparts. "John Bolton has the evidence," tweeted Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. "It's up to four Senate Republicans to ensure that John Bolton, Mick Mulvaney, and the others with direct knowledge of President Trump's actions testify in the Senate trial." Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell had no immediate comment, according to his office. The

Associated Press has not confirmed the content of Bolton's draft book. A person familiar with the matter told the *AP* the book had been submitted to the White House for pre-publication review, which is standard for the work of former officials with security clearances. The person insisted on anonymity to discuss the sensitive subject. The book's publisher, Simon & Schuster, declined to comment. Sarah Tinsley, an adviser to Bolton, said: "The

ambassador's manuscript was transmitted to the White House in hard copy several weeks ago for pre-publication review by the NSC. The ambassador has not passed the draft manuscript to anyone else. Period." Bolton attorney Charles J. Cooper said in a statement that the pre-publication review process had been "corrupted and that information has been disclosed by persons other than those properly involved in reviewing the manuscript." —AP

U.S. EMBASSY VEHICLE HITS CAR IN PAK

Islamabad, Jan. 27: A US embassy vehicle in Pakistan rammed into a car here, killing a woman and injuring five of her family members, according to a media report. The Pakistani driver of the embassy vehicle has been arrested and booked, police said. The incident happened on Sunday at Islamabad's Margalla Road when the speeding Toyota Land Cruiser of the US embassy hit the Suzuki Khyber car from behind, killing the woman on the spot, the Express Tribune reported on Sunday. The police said that one of vehicles involved in the accident might have driven through a red light.

The injured were driven to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Hospital, where medics said one of the injured was in a critical condition. The deceased woman has been identified as Nadia, the paper reported.

Accidents involving vehicles of the diplomatic missions are common in Pakistan.

In April 2018, a motorcyclist was killed after being hit by a vehicle driven by the military attaché at the US Embassy in Islamabad, the paper reported.

Similarly, in February 2013, an SUV driven by an administrative assistant at the US Embassy hit two motorcyclists near Kohsar Complex on Margalla Avenue, killing one of them and injuring the other, the report said. —Agencies



A US embassy vehicle that rammed into a car in Islamabad. — Twitter

Billie Eilish sweeps Grammy Awards with top four prizes

Los Angeles, Jan. 27: Teen sensation Billie Eilish swept the Grammy Awards, winning all four top prizes — album, song, record of the year and best new artist — in a rare feat at the music industry's highest honors.

Eilish, an 18-year-old newcomer with a unique sound, won for her debut studio album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* while her hit single *Bad Guy* was named record of the year and song of the year. In all, she took home five awards. She is only the second person, and the youngest, to win all four top Grammys on the same night.

Eilish, distinguished by her green hair and baggy clothes, recorded the album with her brother Finneas in the bedroom of their Los Angeles home. Finneas also won the Grammy for non-classical producer of the year.

They seemed taken aback by their Grammy haul, which saw them triumph over established stars including Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande and rapper Post Malone. "We didn't make this album to win a Grammy. We wrote about depression and suicidal thoughts and environmental change," Finneas said as the pair accepted the awards. "We stand up here confused and grateful."

R&B star Lizzo won three of her eight nominations, while gay black country rapper Lil Nas X took two for his viral *Old Town Road* collaboration with Billy Ray Cyrus. The Grammy winners are chosen by members of the Recording Academy. — Reuters



Lizzo poses in the press room with the awards for best solo performance for *Truth Hurts*, best urban contemporary album for *Cuz I Love You* and best traditional R&B performance for *Jerome* at the 62nd annual Grammy Awards on Monday. — AP



US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish (L) and Finneas O'Connell with the awards in Los Angeles. — AFP

MUSIC TO MY EARS

■ RECORD OF THE YEAR Bad Guy Billie Eilish	■ ALBUM OF THE YEAR When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go? Billie Eilish	■ BEST NEW ARTIST Billie Eilish
■ BEST RAP/SUNG PERFORMANCE Higher DJ Khaled Featuring Nipsey Hussle & John Legend	■ SONG OF THE YEAR Bad Guy Billie Eilish	■ BEST RAP ALBUM Igor Tyler, The Creator
■ BEST COUNTRY DUO/GROUP PERFORMANCE Speechless Dan + Shay	■ PRODUCER OF THE YEAR, NON-CLASSICAL Finneas	■ BEST POP SOLO PERFORMANCE Truth Hurts Lizzo
■ BEST POP VOCAL ALBUM When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go? Billie Eilish	■ BEST TRADITIONAL POP VOCAL ALBUM Look Now Elvis Costello & The Imposters	■ BEST POP DUO/GROUP PERFORMANCE Old Town Road Lil Nas X Featuring Billy Ray Cyrus
Rosalia, winner of Best Latin Rock, Urban Or Alternative Album, during the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP		■ BEST POP VOCAL ALBUM Look Now Elvis Costello & The Imposters



US musician Gary Clark Jr. poses with the awards for Best Rock Song, Best Rock Performance and Best Contemporary Blues Album.

Rocket attack on US embassy

Baghdad, Jan. 27: A nighttime rocket attack on the US Embassy in Baghdad injured at least one embassy personnel member, staffers there said on Monday. The two staff members, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media, did not specify the injured person's nationality or the severity of their wounds. They said the rocket slammed into a restaurant inside the embassy compound. Violence between Iraqi security forces and anti-government protesters also continued to seethe overnight, with one protester shot dead in a violent crackdown in the country's south. Unrest was also ongoing in the capital Baghdad with fresh clashes near the central Khilani Square. The US Embassy is within the Iraqi capital's Green Zone, and has been a flashpoint amid wider regional tensions

Germany resumes training Iraqis

Berlin, Jan. 27: The German military resumed training Iraqi troops in the country's Kurdish north on Sunday, about three weeks after it was suspended following the U.S. killing of a top Iranian general in Baghdad. The military said the commander of the international operation fighting the Islamic State group lifted the suspension. Germany resumed training in Irbil on Sunday morning together with its partners.

between the US and Iran, which have played out inside Iraq in recent weeks. Iraqi supporters of an Iran-backed militia stormed the embassy compound on December 31, smashing the main door and setting fire to the reception area. —PTI

MEMORIAL | HEADSTONES

■ 1.1 million were murdered by Nazi German forces

Holocaust survivors mark 75 years

Oswiecim, Poland Jan. 27: Survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp gathered Monday for commemorations marking the 75th anniversary of its liberation, returning to the place where they lost entire families and warning about the ominous growth of anti-Semitism and hatred in the world. In all, some 200 survivors of the camp were expected, many of them elderly Jews and non-Jews who have traveled from Israel, the United States, Australia, Peru, Russia, Slovenia and elsewhere. Many lost parents and grandparents in Auschwitz or other Nazi death camps, but were being joined by children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren. Some visited the site, now a memorial museum, on the eve of the anniversary. When asked by reporters for their reflections, they were eager to share their stories, hopeful that their message will spread.



Survivors carry a wreath at Auschwitz Nazi death camp in Oswiecim, Poland. —AP

"We would like that the next generation know what we went through, and it should never happen again," said 91-year-old David Marks, his voice cracking. He lost 35 members of his immediate and extended family after they

all arrived in Auschwitz from their village in Romania. "A dictator doesn't come up from one day to the other," Marks said, saying it happens in "micro steps." "If we don't watch it, one day you wake up

and it's too late," he added. Most of the 1.1 million people murdered by the Nazi German forces at the camp were Jewish, but other Poles, Russians and Roma, or Gypsies, were imprisoned there. Some of the Polish survivors

walked with Polish President Andrzej Duda through the camp's gate Monday wearing striped scarves that recalled the prison garb they wore more than 75 years ago. Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet army on Jan. 27, 1945. World leaders gathered in Jerusalem last week to mark the anniversary in what many saw as a competing observance. Among them were Russian President Vladimir Putin, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, French President Emmanuel Macron and Britain's Prince Charles. Politics intruded on that event, with Duda boycotting it in protest after Putin claimed that Poland played a role in triggering World War II. Duda had wanted a chance to speak before or after Putin to defend his nation's record in face of those false accusations, but he was not given a speaking slot in Jerusalem. —AP





Pixel 4a

XDA Developers found the mention of 'pixel_20_mid_range' in the code of a new update for the Google Camera app

SHORT TAKES



OPPO, IIT-H INK MoU ON EMERGING TECH

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 27

Chinese smartphone brand, Oppo, in its bid to promote collaborative research in the field of emerging technologies, has signed an MoU with the Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad, a press release said on Monday. The MoU will facilitate exchange of ideas and carry out state-of-the-art research in the development of advanced and emerging technologies. It envisages joint research and development for multiple projects over a period of two years for the development of new technologies in areas specific to camera and image processing, battery, networks (5G), system performance and Artificial Intelligence, among other areas, the release said. The partnership is aimed at developing solutions and bridging the gap between academic excellence and business requirements and help create an industry-ready workforce, it added.



BYTE VOWS TO FIX ITS SPAM PROBLEM

San Francisco, Jan. 27: Finally, Vine developers have launched a successor to the short-video app on Friday. However, the new app, Byte, already seems to be a major hit. Yet, the app has a problem of comment spam in its hands. As new users look to to profit on the new platform's upcoming monetisation, they are engaging in fishing of followers. Byte is on top of the issue, however, and has promised to do something about it. "We're aware of the issues with comment spam and more widely with certain types of comments," founder Dom Hofman wrote in a community post. "This is our top priority and we're working very hard to address it. It should be noticeably better than it was 24 hours ago and should continue to improve over the next little while." —Agencies

NEW DEEPAKE METHOD CAN PUT WORDS IN ANYONE'S MOUTH

■ Researchers from Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, the National Laboratory of Pattern Recognition in China, and artificial intelligence software company SenseTime developed the method for creating deepfakes from audio sources. ■ Basically, the AI takes an audio clip of someone speaking, and a video of another person (or the same person), and generates realistic footage of the person saying the words from the source audio. The person in the video becomes a puppet for the original voice. ■ Researchers first create a three-dimensional face model on every frame of the target video to extract the geometry, pose, and expressions of the face, according to the paper, "Everybody's Talkin': Let Me Talk as You Want," published this month to the arxiv preprint server. ■ From there, they draw 2D landmarks of the face, focusing especially on mouth movements. That way, instead of requiring the algorithm to train on the entire scene, it's only training on the facial features.



■ They then reconstruct a 3D face mesh to match lip movements that match source audio phonemes, or individual sounds—similar to how recent text-to-video methods work.



■ Since 2007, the International Data Privacy Day is observed on January 28. The purpose is to raise awareness and promote the best privacy and data protection practices. It is currently observed in the United States, Canada, Israel and 47 European countries.

■ The Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data was opened for signature by the Council of Europe on January 28, 1981. This convention is currently in the process of being updated in order to reflect new legal challenges caused by technological development. ■ The Convention on Cybercrime is also protecting the integrity of data systems and thus of privacy in cyberspace. Privacy including data protection is also protected by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. ■ Yet, millions are

unaware of and uninformed about how their personal info is being used, collected or shared in our digital society. Data Privacy Day aims to inspire dialogue and empower individuals and companies to take action. ■ The worst privacy settings to leave turned on include geotagging pictures, access to your phone's microphone and location history on Facebook. ■ Want to know everything Apple knows about you? It's actually fairly simple to check it out. Simply submit a data request and follow a few steps to verify your Apple ID. ■ Understand the basics of accessing Facebook privacy controls. ■ SET UP A VPN As data travels from your

the time to understand how different services and apps use your data, and what steps you can take to limit their access. ■ The worst privacy settings to leave turned on include geotagging pictures, access to your phone's microphone and location history on Facebook. ■ Want to know everything Apple knows about you? It's actually fairly simple to check it out. Simply submit a data request and follow a few steps to verify your Apple ID. ■ Understand the basics of accessing Facebook privacy controls. ■ SET UP A VPN As data travels from your

phone, via the internet, and onwards to its destination, it is vulnerable to interference from your ISPs, government or hackers. ■ BE UPDATED It is of utmost importance that you update the OS of your devices as each new update brings in new features that tighten the security on your phone, laptops and other machines. The next time you feel like ignoring an update suggestion, remind yourself what all is at risk here! ■ KNOW YOUR RIGHTS The protection of personal information is legislated on an industry by industry basis and is therefore not a blanket guarantee. Understand what's at risk and make informed decisions.

Break encryption to help fight child porn: Panel

ISPs will be asked to "proactively" monitor & remove content

New Delhi, Jan. 27: Indian enforcement agencies should be able to break end-to-end encryption to hunt down distributors of child pornography online, a parliamentary panel has urged as the south Asian nation looks to regulate social media. ■ THE CALL comes as India finalises other rules to force social media giants to deploy automated tools against unlawful content, fanning industry fears that more regulation could boost compliance requirements. ■ Facebook's WhatsApp has already been at odds with the government, which has been pushing it to reveal the originators of messages on its platform, amid reports that rumours spread via WhatsApp have led to mob lynchings in recent years. ■ WhatsApp, which counts India as its biggest market with more than 400 million users, says it provides end-to-end encryption to help protect user privacy, and messages cannot be deciphered by the company or others. "If a company offers breaking such encryption for child porn, then it will be asked by all agencies," an industry source who sought anonymity said of the panel recommendation. "It's like opening secure borders." ■ Between 1998 and 2017, about 3.8 million reports of online child sexual abuse imagery originated from India, the world's highest such figure, says the US National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. ■ The panel also recommended mandating Internet service providers to "proactively" monitor, remove and report such content to the authorities. Online search websites should also block searches for child pornography sites, it added. ■ Adult sections denying entry to underage children should also be incorporated into streaming platforms such as Netflix and social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, the panel added. —Reuters

YOUTUBE MODERATORS ARE FORCED TO SIGN A STATEMENT ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE JOB CAN GIVE PTSD

■ In yet another investigation about moderators' mental health, The Verge has found out that content moderators for Youtube are being ordered to sign a statement acknowledging the performing the job can cause Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) ■ Accenture, which operates a moderation site for YouTube in Austin, Texas, distributed the document to workers on December 20 — four days after The Verge published an investigation into PTSD among workers at the facility. ■ The PTSD statement comes at the end of the two-page acknowledgment form, and it is surrounded by a thick black border to signify its importance. It may be the most explicit acknowledgment yet from a content moderation company that the job now being done by tens of thousands of people around the world can come with severe mental health consequences. ■ Accenture said it shares information about potentially disturbing content with all of the moderators it employs, including those who work on its contracts with FB and Twitter. ■ In a statement, Facebook said it did not review or approve forms like the one Accenture sent. A Twitter spokeswoman said that both full-time and contract Twitter employees receive information when they join the company that acknowledges they might have to view sensitive material as part of their jobs



Amazon workers criticise company's climate stance

San Francisco, Jan. 27: Hundreds of Amazon employees Sunday openly criticised the online retail giant's environmental record, in violation of the company's communications policy. ■ More than 300 signed a Medium blog post by Amazon Employees for Climate Justice (AECJ), which is pushing the company to go further in its climate change mitigation plan which was announced with great publicity in September. ■ Group members have publicly criticised the company, and some have been warned that they could be fired. "The protest is the largest action by employees since Amazon began threatening to fire workers for speaking out about Amazon's role in the climate crisis," the AECJ said. ■ "As Amazon workers, we are responsible for not only the success of the company, but its impact as well. It's our moral responsibility to speak up, and the changes to the communications policy are censoring us from exercising that responsibility," said Sarah Tracy, a software development engineer at Amazon. ■ It is common for companies to demand restraint from employees when it comes to publicly discussing the firm's activities and even more so when openly questioning them. ■ Amazon had nearly 650,000 permanent employees at the end of 2018, according to the company's annual report. ■ While the environment and climate change was the focus of many of the posts on Sunday, Amazon was also criticised for other activities such as providing artificial intelligence capabilities to companies in the oil sector. ■ Amazon is often criticised over its carbon footprint because of the high

MICROSOFT SPONSORS OIL CONFERENCE AFTER PLEDGE

■ Last week, Microsoft made a splash when it announced its intention to become a "carbon negative" company—one that pulls more climate-warming carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere than it puts in—by 2030. ■ Yet, a day earlier, a conference on petroleum technology drew to a close in Saudi Arabia. This year, Microsoft received special billing as the event's "Digital Transformation Partner," meaning it hosted all of the online sessions according to the Saudi Gazette. ■ Tech giants like Microsoft, Amazon, and Google are currently in a race to unleash Industry 4.0 on the fossil fuel industry—and in doing so, they are helping ensure that oil continues to flow profitably for years to come. ■ Microsoft's consideration of the knock-on effects of its products and services also brings us to the company's oil contracts, which threaten to undo a lot of its climate pledge.



energy consumption of its huge server farms for its lucrative cloud computing activities. ■ And it has built its success on the back of a huge road transport logistics network to ensure speedy deliveries, which generates a lot of greenhouse gases, the main culprit of climate change. ■ Amazon founder Jeff Bezos on September 19 last year made public environmental commitments, promising in particular that the firm would be carbon neutral by 2040. ■ The AECJ said this was insufficient and Amazon should be aiming for a 2030 target. "This is not

Bezos' phone hacking shows anyone can be a target

Providence, R.I., Jan. 27: You may not think you're in the same league as Jeff Bezos when it comes to being a hacking target. Probably not, but you — and just about anyone else, potentially including senior US government figures — could still be vulnerable to an attack similar to one the Amazon founder and Washington Post owner apparently experienced. ■ Two UN experts this week called for the US to investigate a likely hack of Bezos' phone that could have involved Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. A commissioned forensic report found with "medium to high confidence" that Bezos' iPhone X was compromised by a video MP4 file he received from the prince in May 2018. ■ Bezos later went public about the hack after the National Enquirer tabloid threatened to publish Bezos' private photos if he didn't call off a private investigation into the hacking of his phone. It's not clear if those two events are related. The Saudis have denied any involvement in the purported hack. ■ The events could potentially affect US-Saudi relations. On Friday, Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, said he is asking the National Security Agency to look into the security of White House officials who may have messaged the crown prince, particularly on personal devices. ■ Jared Kushner, a White House aide and President Donald Trump's son-in-law, is known to have done so using WhatsApp. ■ Wyden called reports of the Bezos hack "extraordinarily ominous" and said they may have "startling repercussions for national security." ■ But they could resonate at the personal level as well. As the cost of hacking falls while opportunities to dig into peoples' online lives multiply, more and more people are likely to end up as targets, even if they're not the richest individuals in the world. ■ Ultimately, that boils down to a simple lesson: Be careful who you talk to — and what you're using to chat with them. ■ "People need to get out of the mindset that nobody would hack them," said



Katie Moussouris, founder and CEO of Luta Security. "You don't have to be a specific target or a big fish to find yourself at the mercy of an opportunistic attacker." ■ WhatsApp, owned by Facebook, is generally considered a secure way of trading private online messages due to the fact that it scrambles messages and calls with encryption so that only senders and recipients can understand them. What many people may not have realized is

that it, like almost any messaging service, can act as a conduit for malware. ■ That encryption, however, is no help if a trusted contact finds a way to use that connection to break into the phone's operating system. In fact, an infected attachment can't be detected by security software while it's encrypted, and apps like WhatsApp don't scan for malware even once files are decrypted. ■ WhatsApp users can disable the automatic downloading of photos, videos and other media, which happens by default unless the user takes action. ■ Other messaging apps are likely also vulnerable. "It just so happens that this one was a vulnerability in WhatsApp," said JT Keating, of security firm Zimperium. "It could have been in any one of a number of apps." ■ Prince Mohammed exchanged numbers with Bezos during a US trip in spring 2018. On the same visit, the prince also met with other tech executives, including the CEOs of Google, Apple and Palantir, as well as sports and entertainment celebrities and academic leaders. Virgin

Group founder Richard Branson gave the Saudi delegation a tour of the Mojave Air and Space Port in the desert north of Los Angeles. ■ Google and Apple didn't respond to emailed requests for comment this week on whether their executives shared personal contacts after that trip. Palantir Technologies confirmed that its CEO Alex Karp met with the prince but said they never shared personal messages. Virgin Group said it was looking into it. ■ UC Berkeley cybersecurity researcher Bill Marczak cautioned that there's still no conclusive evidence that the Saudi video was malicious, adding that it might be premature to jump to broader conclusions about it. ■ Many other security experts have also questioned the forensics report upon which UN officials are basing their conclusions. ■ But Marczak said it is generally good advice to "always be on the lookout for suspicious links or messages that sound too good to be true." —AP



Resignation

Slovenia's PM Marjan Sarec announces resignation after finance minister quits from minority government

IN BRIEF

Global cocaine racket busted

Lisbon: An international drug operation involving authorities from six countries captured a yacht carrying almost 2 metric tons of cocaine in the middle of an Atlantic storm. Portugal's navy and air force took part in the seizure, with a street value of more than 70 million euros (\$77 million), amid "very difficult weather conditions," a Portuguese police statement said Monday. The Portuguese operation was supported by police in Brazil, the U.S., Britain, France and Spain. Intelligence-gathering that helped locate and intercept the yacht was coordinated by the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre Narcotics, based in Lisbon. Two foreign men aged 51 and 53 were arrested in the operation, Portuguese police said.

Catalan leader stripped of seat

Madrid: The Catalan regional parliament is stripping the president of the prosperous but troubled northeastern region of his lawmaker's seat because he disobeyed Spain's strict rules on election propaganda. Monday's move is likely to fuel anger among die-hard pro-independence supporters, who see in the decision by the electoral board of Catalonia's parliament yet another grievance with Spanish judicial decisions. Quim Torra, a fervent separatist, is allowed to remain as the head of Catalonia's regional government. He has threatened to call a new regional election. Spain's electoral board ruled that Torra should be stripped from his lawmaker's seat after a Catalan court barred him last month from public office for 18 months for disobedience. Torra was found guilty of refusing to remove from public buildings yellow ribbons used by separatists to call for freeing several imprisoned politicians.

Dad slams Meghan, Harry

London: Meghan Markle's estranged father Thomas said on Monday that he was prepared to face his daughter in court and that she and her husband Prince Harry had hurt Queen Elizabeth by abruptly stepping back from royal duties. Harry, the British monarch's grandson, and Meghan, duchess of Sussex, agreed with the queen this month that they would no longer work as royals after their surprise announcement that they wanted to carve out "a progressive new role" which they hope to finance themselves. "I think they've hurt the queen, I think they've hurt the royals, and it just doesn't work," Markle told ITV's Good Morning Britain programme. "I'm a little embarrassed for them and feeling really sorry for the queen."

ALABAMA FIRE LEAVES SEVERAL DEAD

Scottsboro (US), Jan 27: Boaters leaped into the water to escape a fire that consumed at least 35 vessels docked along the Tennessee River early Monday. Authorities said there were fatalities as 7 people were sent to hospitals and 7 others were initially reported missing. The blaze was reported shortly after midnight as people living in the riverboat community were sleeping, and consumed the wooden dock and an aluminum roof that covered many of the vessels, cutting off escape routes and raining debris into the water. "There were numerous people rescued from the water who had escaped by going into the water," Jackson County Chief Sheriff's Deputy Rocky Harnen told The Associated Press. "We're trying to get divers down here to search for possible victims in the water." "We have some confirmed fatalities, but we don't have an exact number yet," Harnen added. "We have several people who were taken to the hospital from being in the water, and some had minor burns." Scottsboro Fire Chief Gene Necklaus said earlier that 7 people were hospitalized and 7 others were missing as the fire destroyed at least 35 boats docked in Jackson County Park. Harnen said officials are trying to account for about seven people who had places on the dock. "They had slips here," Harnen. "That doesn't mean they're in the water and it doesn't mean they're dead."

China's Li in virus-hit Wuhan, toll 81

Chinese health authorities confirm 2,744 cases, US reports 5 cases of coronavirus

Beijing, Jan. 27: Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited the coronavirus hit Wuhan city on Monday, the first such trip by a top leader as the death toll climbed to 81 with 2,744 confirmed cases. Li arrived in Wuhan to inspect the epidemic control and prevention work, state-run *China Daily* reported. He heads the high-powered group of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) officials empowered to deal with the rapidly spreading virus on war footing. Ahead of his visit, Chinese health authorities announced the death toll due to coronavirus has sharply increased to 80 with 2,744 confirmed cases. The confirmed cases of pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus officially described as 2019-nCoV included 461 patients who are in critical condition. Sunday saw 769 new confirmed cases, 3,806 new suspected cases and 24 deaths, all in Hubei province of which Wuhan is the provincial capital, the National Health Commission (NHC) said. The NHC on Sunday said the new coronavirus is contagious even in its incubation period, which lasts up to 14 days, and that the virus' ability to spread is getting stronger. By the end of Sunday, the pneumonia situation resulted in 80 deaths. As many as 51 people have recovered while there were currently 5,794 suspected cases, it said. A total of 32,799 close contacts have been traced, the commission said, adding that among them 583 were discharged from medical observation on Sunday, with 30,453 others remaining under medical observation. The figures also showed that 17 confirmed cases had been reported in Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan, with eight in Hong Kong, five in Macao and four in Taiwan. Overseas, confirmed cases were reported in Thailand (7), Japan (3), South Korea



Paramilitary police wear face masks as they stand guard at Tiananmen Gate adjacent to Tiananmen Square in Beijing on Monday.

— AP

SHARES TUMBLLED in Europe and Asia after China announced sharp increases in the number of people infected with the potentially deadly virus.

(3), the United States (3), Vietnam (2), Singapore (4), Malaysia (3), Nepal (1), France (3) and Australia (4). China has announced the extension of the Spring Festival holiday for three days to Sunday, February 2, amidst efforts to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. There are signs showing the virus is becoming more transmissible. China extended its Lunar New Year holiday

three more days to discourage people from traveling as it tries to contain the spread of the viral illness, the government said Monday. Tens of millions of Chinese who visited their hometowns or tourist spots were due to return home this week in the world's largest movement of humanity, raising the risk the virus might spread in crowded trains and planes. The official end of the holiday will be postponed to Sunday from Friday to "effectively reduce mass gatherings" and "block the spread of the epidemic," a Cabinet statement said. Schools will postpone reopening after the holiday until further notice, the statement said. Amid reports of coun-

THE HEAD of the World Health Organisation will hold a special meeting with officials in Beijing to discuss steps on how to contain the coronavirus

tries contacting the Chinese government to evacuate patients with coronavirus, Japan's prime minister Shinzo Abe said all nationals will be taken out of Wuhan "by every means including a chartered flight". According to reports, several hundred Japanese are in Hubei province. Abe said his office is coordinating with the Chinese government for swift implementation of the

plan. The French government announced it would fly its citizens out of the virus-hit city. China has put Wuhan and adjoining areas in a lockdown with several hundred citizens from various countries who are almost trapped inside. US health authorities said there are now five confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the United States and more are expected. Nancy Messonnier, head of the respiratory disease section at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said around 100 people in 26 states are being investigated for the virus, which originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Of the confirmed cases, all five people had travelled to Wuhan. — Agencies

Indians are searching for 'Corona beer virus'

New Delhi, Jan. 27: As 80 people have died and thousands of cases have been reported in China due to the Novel Coronavirus outbreak, people from all over the world are curious about what exactly Coronavirus is. As expected, search terms like 'What Coronavirus is', 'Symptoms of Coronavirus', 'How Coronavirus spread', started trending. But apart from these regular search terms, it may surprise you but terms like, 'Coronavirus beer', 'Corona virus beer' and 'Virus corona beer' have

been trending in the last few days. According to Google trends, there is a shocking spike in these search terms and people are connecting this virus with a popular beer brand. According to data revealed, web searches are primarily from Australia, India, Canada, and America. The conclusion for the searches reveals that people are confused between Corona beer and the coronavirus, as they have similarities in names. However, there is no connection between Corona beer and this lethal virus.

Turkey quake toll climbs to 41

Ankara, Turkey, Jan. 27: Turkish emergency teams on Monday recovered the bodies of the last two missing quake victims from the rubble of a collapsed building, raising the death toll from the powerful tremor that hit eastern Turkey to 41. The magnitude 6.8 earthquake that struck Friday night also injured more than 1,600 others, authorities said. At least 45 survivors have been pulled out of the rubble alive. Rescue teams on Monday drilled through the rubble in the eastern city of Elazig, trying to reach a missing 75-year-old woman and another person, as relatives waited nearby. Interior Minister Sulayman Soyulu and Mehmet Gulluoglu, the head of the Turkish disaster management agency, later announced that their bodies were pulled out from the debris. The

SOCIAL MEDIA UNDER SCANNER

Istanbul, Jan. 27: Turkish prosecutors are investigating dozens of people for "provocative" social media messages about the deadly earthquake in eastern Turkey, reports said Monday. The Ankara prosecutor's office is checking 50 individuals on suspicion of "spreading fear and panic" and "insulting the Turkish people and the Turkish republic".

body of a third missing person was pulled out of the same collapsed structure overnight. Television footage showed scores of emergency workers gathered in a circle near the rubble to pray for the victims, before the search-and-rescue mission was formally called off. —AFP



Rescue workers continue to look for people trapped under debris following a strong earthquake that destroyed several buildings in Elazig, eastern Turkey.

—PTI

NATURE | THREAT

Study maps over 100 locations of tropical forests, coral reefs

Biodiversity collapse due to climate change

London, Jan. 27: Climate change and pressure from human activity is causing a collapse in global biodiversity and ecosystems across the tropics, according to a study published on Monday. Researchers, including those from Lancaster University in the UK, mapped over 100 locations worldwide where tropical forests and coral reefs have been affected by climate extremes such as hurricanes, floods, heatwaves, droughts and fires. The study, published in the journal *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal*

Society B, provides an overview of how these diverse ecosystems are being threatened by a combination of climate change, increasingly extreme weather, and damaging local human activities. The researchers noted that only international action to decrease carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions can reverse this trend. "Tropical forests and coral reefs are very important for global biodiversity, so it is extremely worrying that they are increasingly affected by both climate disturbances and human activities," lead



Image for representation

researcher Filipe Franca from the Embrapa Amazonia Oriental in Brazil. "Many local threats to tropical forests and coral reefs, such as deforesta-

tion, overfishing, and pollution, reduce the diversity and functioning of these ecosystems," Franca said. This in turn, he said, can make the ecosystems less

3 Tropical forests and coral reefs are very important for global biodiversity, so it is extremely worrying that they are increasingly affected by both climate disturbances and human activities — **FILIPE FRANCA** Lead researcher

able to withstand or recover from extreme weather. The researchers noted that climate change is causing more intense and frequent storms and marine heatwaves. "For coral reefs, such

extreme events reduce live coral cover and cause long-lasting changes to both coral and fish communities, compounding local threats from poor water quality and overfishing," said Cassandra E. Benkwitt, a marine ecologist from Lancaster University. "Although the long-term trajectory for reefs will depend on how extreme events interact with these local stressors, even relatively pristine reefs are vulnerable to both climate change and extreme weather," Benkwitt said. —PTI



Image for representation

OZ WOMAN DIES IN CAKE-EATING CONTEST

Sydney, Jan. 27: A woman died while taking part in a cake-eating competition to celebrate Australia Day, local media reported Monday. Paramedics were called to a pub in the state of Queensland on Sunday afternoon after a woman was involved in a "medical incident". Public broadcaster ABC reported the 60-year-old had a seizure after she "shovelled a lamington into her mouth". Lamingtons, a traditional Australian dessert, are cube-shaped sponge cakes dipped in chocolate and covered in grated coconut. The woman was rushed to hospital in the coastal town of Hervey Bay but later died, ABC reported. She was a contestant in the Beach House Hotel's annual Australia Day lamington and meat pie eating contest. In a post on Facebook, management and staff offered their "deepest condolences" to the woman's friends and family. "We acknowledge and thank our supportive patrons, staff, and the Queensland Ambulance Service for their prompt and professional response while this tragic incident was unfolding," the post said. "The hotel staff have been offered professional support while our thoughts firmly remain with the family at this challenging time." —AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	41,155.12	-1.10
Nifty 50	12,119	-1.06
S&P 500*	3,246.96	-1.47
Dollar (₹)	71.50	0.23
Pound Sterling (₹)	93.90	-0.01
Euro (₹)	78.84	0.10
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	41,292.133	0.32
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	58.93	-1.76
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.551	-0.027
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.625	-0.055

* As of 9:30 pm IST

Maruti hikes model prices by up to ₹10,000

Maruti Suzuki said it has hiked prices of select models by up to Rs 10,000 with immediate effect to offset the impact of rising input costs. The price of Alto models has gone up by Rs 6,000-9,000, S-Presso by Rs 1,500-8,000 and WagonR by Rs 1,500-4,000. The price of Eriga has gone up by Rs 4,000-10,000, Baleno by Rs 3,000-8,000 and XL6 by Rs 5,000.

Traders urged to promote swadeshi



Commerce minister Piyush Goyal asked the traders to promote swadeshi by selling and consuming local products, as it will boost economic growth to double digits. He urged traders to pay heed to the PM's call to promote swadeshi products. "If traders start using swadeshi goods...promote those items, the economic growth will boom," he said at a CAIT event.

Bank unions threaten strike from Jan. 31

Bank unions have threatened to go on a two-day nationwide strike from January 31 to press for early wage revision. The strike call has been given by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body of the nine bank unions, AIBOC, AIBEA and NOBW. The unions meeting before Chief Labour Commissioner on Monday remained inconclusive.

Divi's Lab seeks nod for Kiran re-appointment

Divi's Laboratories said it has sought shareholders' approval for the re-appointment of Kiran S Divi as the company's CEO. "The board of directors, at its meeting held on January 4, has decided to seek approval of shareholders by postal ballot for...re-appointment of Kiran S Divi as whole-time director and chief executive officer," the firm said.

Budget focus could be on lighter rules, tax relief Farmers may not get big package this time

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JAN. 27

The Budget 2020-21 is likely to provide more relief to India Inc and small business houses by relaxing several strict laws. The middle-class is expected to get some tax relief but sops for farmers look unlikely this time.

The government aims to ally corporate India's fears about harsh laws that lead to heavy penalties and years of jail for violations, and encourage companies to invest more to help the economy achieve the \$5-trillion target by 2024, a top source said.

"In a move to encourage Indian companies to invest more in both domestic as well as international firms without any fear, a slew of reforms, including in taxation, are being considered to be undertaken by the government in this budget," the source said.

It is, however, learnt that noteworthy sops for farmers are unlikely in the coming budget announcement. "As the government has hiked the minimum sup-



port price of kharif and other crops several times for farmers in its first term, they may not get any further relief this time. Besides, the government is mulling other mechanisms to increase their farm income," the source said.

But traders and businesses engaged in agricultural commodities may be spared harsh punishment for offences.

A complete dilution of several provisions, including the clause of imprisonment, of the Essential Commodities (EC) Act is on the cards, as recommended by a high-level government panel. This may be a move to alleviate fears among traders dealing

with essential goods.

As per the source, a high-level committee has already recommended doing away with imprisonment related provisions under Section 7 of the EC Act. By this section, if a person is found guilty of controlling production, supply and distribution of essential commodities, he will invite imprisonment of three months, extendable up to seven years.

The Budget may also provide relief on short-term and long-term capital gains (STCG & LTCG) tax on equity shares. At present, profits on equity shares sold within one year from the date of purchase attract STCG tax of 15 per

Six years & PMAY(Urban) still moves at snail's pace

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 27

Six years since its launch, the government's flagship Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), a programme to provide "Housing for All" by the year 2022, has met with limited success with only 31 per cent of the sanctioned houses getting completed and 27 per cent occupied. Of the investment in projects, the central government has sanctioned 26 per cent funds, but released only 10 per cent.

Under the PMAY(U), the central government has sanctioned 1.03 crore houses since 2014. Of this, 60.51 lakh houses, or 58.7 per cent, of the sanctioned houses, have been grounded for construction, as per the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs data. Of these sanctioned houses, construction of a meagre 31 per cent, or 32.07 lakh houses, have been completed. Of this, only 28.61 lakh houses have been occupied. This also included incomplete houses of the earlier Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

As for financial assistance to the scheme, of the Rs 6.16 lakh crore investment in PMAY(U) projects, the Centre has sanctioned Rs 1.63 lakh crore, but has released only Rs 64,000 crore.

House completion veloc-



ity under PMAY-U has been slower than initially envisaged, finds Icara. Low budgetary allocations and high reliance on non-budgetary funding sources have been some of the reasons behind the slower implementation of PMAY-U.

Moreover, given that a considerable part of the affordable housing being developed in the urban segment is under public-private partnership models, in which the construction of the associated project phases and common infrastructure typically takes around two-three years, the recording of house completions has remained low during the initial years of such projects, according to Icara.

"For successful and timely implementation of the mission, the overall ecosystem for project execution, particularly in terms of land availability and project approvals, needs to be strengthened

and access to credit facilities eased," said Shubham Jain, group head and senior vice president, corporate ratings, Icara.

The mission also has witnessed varying levels of progress from state-to-state, with the states of Andhra Pradesh, UP, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal achieving significantly higher house completions than other states.

Experts find that further impetus will be required to achieve PMAY's overall mission goals in a time-bound manner. These would mainly relate to release of idle government land to address the issue of land availability, especially near urban centers, development of social infrastructure and connectivity for peripheral land parcels, expedited clearance and approval process to further encourage private sector participation and eased availability of funding for project finance.

HDFC net up four-fold on Gruh merger

New Delhi, Jan. 27: HDFC on Monday reported a near four-fold growth in net profit at Rs 8,372.5 crore for the three months to December against Rs 2,113.8 crore in the same period last fiscal year. HDFC said the gain in bottomline is notional, as it is based on the valuation gain on its 9.9 per cent stake in Bandhan Bank following the merger of Gruh Finance effective last October.

Profit after tax came to Rs 8,372.5 crore compared to Rs 2,113.8 crore a year ago. —PTI

Interglobe posts rise in profit

Bengaluru, Jan. 27: IndiGo on Monday reported a rise in quarterly profit, helped by increased efficiencies and a boost from lower fuel costs. Revenue per available seat kilometre (RASK) rose 5.6 per cent for the December quarter. The higher the RASK, the more profitable an airline is. Fuel costs for the quarter dropped 2 per cent to Rs 3,342 crore. The airline's owner, Interglobe Aviation Ltd, said net profit for the quarter came in at Rs 490 crore, compared with Rs 191 crore in the same period last year. —

Dr Reddy's reports ₹570 cr loss

Hyderabad, Jan. 27: Dr Reddy's Laboratories suffered nearly ₹570 crore loss for the December quarter against ₹485 crore profit after tax during the year-ago quarter. Revenues for the quarter was up by 14 per cent to ₹4,384 crore against ₹3,850 crore YoY. Commenting on the results, co-chairman and managing director, G.V. Prasad said, "The profits were impacted due to trigger-based impairment charge taken on a few products including gNuvaring."



BhratBenz unveils BS-VI truck line-up

Daimler India Commercial Vehicles (DICV), which unveiled a range of BS-VI commercial vehicles after having invested Rs 500 crore on upgradation, plans to launch over three dozen vehicles this calendar year. India's biggest truck and bus brand unveiled over a dozen medium and heavy duty trucks and buses, which are now available for pre-bookings. While prices of these vehicles will be announced at the time of their launch, the company said prices would go up by 10-15 per cent.



Govt to sell 100% stake in Air India, AI Express

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, JAN. 27

Making a second attempt to sell off debt-laden Air India, the government on Monday approved 100 per cent stake sale in the national carrier, in place of 76 per cent earlier, and set March 17 as the deadline for receiving expression of interest from suitors.

Announcing this, the minister of state for civil aviation, Mr Hardeep Singh Puri, said all employees of the airlines will go to the new management and the new company will have to retain the Air India brand. Also, substantial ownership and effective control of the airline must remain with an Indian entity, he said.

The buyer would have to offer 3 per cent equity shares of the airline to the permanent employees of Air India as employee stock option. Air India has about 9,400 permanent employees and 3,600 fixed-term contract staff, including 1,850 pilots and 4,600 cabin crew.

The minister said the government has approved the release of preliminary information memorandum (PIM) for inviting expression of interest from bidders for the ₹strategic dis-



investment' of the airlines and unlike in 2018, when the government had proposed to offload 76 per cent equity share capital, this time the entire government stake in the carrier would be offered.

The whole disinvestment process is looked after by the Air India Specific Alternative Mechanism, headed by the home minister, Mr Amit Shah, and having ministers of commerce and industry, finance and corporate affairs and civil aviation as members.

While pointing out that Air India has coverage of 98 destinations, with 56 domestic and 42 international destinations, and a passenger load of roughly 26 million during 2018-19, Mr Puri said that even after infusion of about Rs.30,500 crore as per the

Turn Around Plan since 2012, Air India has been running into losses year after year.

"Due to its accumulated debt of about Rs 60,000 crore, its financial position is in a very fragile condition and Air India is currently under a debt trap. Any private investor can turn it around and make Air India a profitable venture by bringing operational as well as financial efficiencies," the minister said.

He added that the government has limited financial resources whereas the private investor can bring the required capital for its turnaround.

After drawing a blank during the government's first attempt to sell the airline in 2018, the minister said lessons have been learnt and critical areas have been analysed to make the current disinvestment bid more attractive. Among the key decisive parameters in the current PIM include decision to transfer of management control and sale of 100 per cent shares of Air India along with Air India's 100 per cent stake in its subsidiary, Air India Express Limited, and 50 per cent stake in joint venture, AISATS.

Crop cover premia near ₹6,200 cr in Apr.-Dec.

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JAN. 27

A steep revision in property premium rates by national reinsurer GIC Re and a revision in the mandatory motor third premium rates by the insurance regulator have helped the non-life insurance companies to beat the slowdown witnessed in other key segments such as motor own damage, engineering and marine, thereby clocking an overall growth of 15 per cent for the nine months of this fiscal.

The non-life insurance companies underwrote a gross premium of Rs 1.42 lakh crore during April to



December 31, 2019 compared to Rs 1.23 lakh crore during the same period a year ago. Surprisingly while private players such as ICICI Lombard, HDFC Ergo General, Tata AIG and Chola Mandalam stayed away from the risky crop insurance business, the four public sector general insurance companies, Agriculture Insurance

Company and the remaining private players aggressively wrote crop insurance to boost their topline which saw the segment seeing a 27 per cent growth during the nine months of this fiscal to Rs 26486 crore.

The four PSU insurers—New India Assurance, Oriental Insurance, National Insurance, United India—clocked 74 per cent growth in crop insurance to Rs 6,197 crore up to December 2019.

Mirroring the slowdown in auto sales, the motor own damage insurance portfolio grew by a mere 1 per cent to Rs 19,919 crore while the motor third party premium portfolio grew by 15 per cent Rs 31,166 crore.

The insurance regulator that regulates the rates the mandatory motor third party premium rates had increased the rates by 12 to 21 per cent for cars and bikes besides allowing insurers to float long-term policies which helped the business. The national reinsurer GIC Re in February 2019 had passed an endorsement stating that insurers wanting to use its treaty (an arrangement where capital is pooled by various reinsurers to support insurance firms) will have to quote higher premium rates from March 1 for providing covers to companies in 8 sectors that were reporting high claims.

Over 7% jump in onion crop, 6% rise in grains estimated

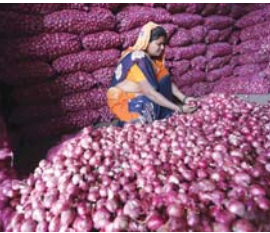
SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JAN. 27

Onion production is expected to rise 7 per cent in 2019-20, promising comfort on the price front. Horticulture production for the year may remain flat, though rabi food grain production might be 6 per cent higher.

Onion production is expected to be 24.45 million tonnes, up 7.17 per cent against 22.82 million tonnes in 2018-19, as per the first advance estimate of the Ministry of Agriculture. Higher price of the commodity in recent months led to higher acreage this time. Onion crop has been grown in 12.93 lakh hectares in the 2019-20 crop year (July-June), higher than 12.20 lakh in the previous year.

Potato production, too, is expected to be up by 3.49 per cent to 51.94 million tonnes compared to 50.19 million tonnes in 2018-19. Tomato production may remain almost flat at 19.33 million tonnes against 19.01 million tonnes in 2018-19. Overall, vegetable production is expected to be up by 2.64 per cent.

However, horticulture production may remain almost flat as fruit production is expected to be lower by 2.27 per cent in 2019-20 over 2018-19, mainly due to loss in production of grapes, banana, mango, citrus, papaya and



pomegranate.

Rabi food grain production is expected to be 6 per cent higher at 1,527 lakh tonnes against 1,432 lakh tonnes in the previous year on better cereal harvest. However, pulses and oil seeds may see some decline in output, according to the first estimate of National Collateral Management Services Limited (NCML).

"Bountiful rains received during the monsoon season have boosted the prospects of crop production in the ensuing rabi season. This year is likely to see a record food grain production led by the wheat crop along with corn and jowar. Oilseeds and pulses may end up lower than the previous year," said Siraj Chaudhry, MD & CEO, NCML.

Overall cereal production is forecast to increase by 7 per cent in the current rabi season. Wheat production during rabi 2019-20 is estimated at 1,090 lakh tonnes, which is 6.27 per cent higher than last year production of 1,021 lakh tonnes. Production of wheat is

expected to increase due to higher acreage, increase in minimum support price, and better yield on the back of prolonged cold waves and winter rainfall in key production states.

Production of rabi paddy is estimated to increase by 5 per cent compared to previous year. Maize production during rabi 2019-20 is estimated to be 89.2 lakh tonnes, which is higher by 8.25 per cent compared to last year. Jowar production during the current rabi season is estimated at 31.2 lakh tonnes as against 20.2 during rabi 2018, up by 35.2 per cent.

Pulses production may see a marginal decline to 144.8 lakh tonnes as against 148 lakh tonnes from the previous year. Production of gram during rabi is estimated at 95.82 lakh tonnes, lower by 5 per cent compared to last year production of 101.3 lakh tonnes.

Additionally, rabi moong bean crop is estimated to decline by 10 per cent to 4.62 lakh tonnes in 2019-20 from 5.10 lakh tonnes in the foregoing year due to decline in acreage.

Among oilseeds, mustard production is estimated at 85.79 lakh tonnes, lower by 8.8 per cent against 93.4 lakh tonnes last year. Production of groundnut during rabi will be similar to that of last year.

Ownership change helps Nippon India Mutual Fund

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JAN. 27

Ownership change has started reflecting in performance of Nippon India Mutual Fund, erstwhile Reliance Mutual Fund, as the third quarter results announced last week showed all-round improvement.

Nippon India MF reported asset under management (AUM) of Rs 3.1 lakh crore as of December 31, 2019. After the transaction which was concluded at the close of the second quarter, the company witnessed a reversal in AUM growth after four quarters of decline. MF AUM was up at Rs 2.04 lakh crore versus Rs 2.03 lakh crore as of September 30, 2019, up 0.8 per cent.

The share of equity AUM inched up to around 44 per cent in third quarter from 38 per cent a year ago and 43 per cent in Q2. The SIP book grew to 3.3 million folios from 3.2 million folios from September.

The management announced that around 170 corporates & SME clients, along with many HNIs, have again started investing in fixed income schemes, Centrum Institutional Research said.

BRILLIANT BRYANT

The son of former NBA player Joe Bryant, the Lakers legend was born in Philadelphia in 1978 while his father played for the 76ers. The elder Bryant played from 1984 to 1991 in Italy, giving Kobe a global view as he followed his dad.

From his 81-point game, the second-best scoring performance in NBA history, to five NBA titles in a career that began in 1996 straight out of a high school and lasted until his retirement in 2016, Kobe was a Los Angeles Lakers star.

He also was a two-time Olympic gold medalist, helping US squad of NBA stars to titles in 2008 in Beijing and 2012 in London.

Bryant finished with 33,643 points, 7,047 rebounds and 6,306 assists over 1,346 career NBA games. He was an 18-time NBA All-Star, the 2008 NBA Most Valuable Player, the NBA Finals 2009 and 2010 NBA MVP and matched a record as a four-time NBA All-Star Game MVP.

With Bryant paired with Shaquille O'Neal, the Lakers captured three NBA crowns in a row from 2000-2002. After retiring, Bryant became a children's book writer and wrote the movie *Dear Basketball* — 2018's Oscar Award winner for Best Animated Short Film.

I love everything about this game. For me, it's not a part of life, it is life, and it's a part of me, Kobe Bryant once famously said.



Kobe Bryant of Los Angeles Lakers jumps over a row of fans after saving the ball from going out of bounds during the Lakers' 107-101 win over the Houston Rockets in Houston in this December 20, 2001, file photo. — AP

THE WORLD REACTS

Kobe Bryant, despite being one of the truly great basketball players of all time, was just getting started in life. He loved his family so much, and had such strong passion for the future. The loss of his beautiful daughter, Gianna, makes this moment even more devastating....

— Donald Trump, US President

Kobe was a legend on the court and just getting started in what would have been just as meaningful a second act.

— Barack Obama, former US President

Saddened to hear about the tragic demise of Kobe Bryant, his daughter Gianna & others on-board the helicopter. My condolences to his family, friends and fans across the world. #KobeBryant.

— Sachin Tendulkar, Indian cricket legend

A true legend of the sporting world! Rest In Peace dear Kobe and his daughter. May the family have immense strength to overcome this sad time.

— Vivian Richards, West Indian cricketering great

The world lost a legend today, but the impact and legacy he leaves behind will last forever.

— Manny Pacquiao, Filipino boxing icon

The fire, He burned so competitively hot. He had such a desire to win. He brought it every night. Any time he was in the game he would take on their best player and shut him down for 40 minutes. I think that's one of the best things about him his whole career.

— Tiger Woods, US golf star

Gone much too soon, how devastating to hear of his passing, he gave joy to so many for so long - deep condolences to his family, his friends, his Laker family. RIP Kobe... #lifeis-tooshort.

— Martina Navratilova, Tennis great

Rest in peace Kobe. One of the best sportsmen/athletes that has ever lived. My heart goes out to his family and to all involved in this terrible accident.

— Jenson Button, Former Formula One world champion

My biggest sports idol is this man right here. Your work ethic and mentality inspired me so much from as soon i understood what it took to become a pro. You were enjoying your new chapter in your life and to leave us just like that is devastating.. i love you so much! You go goat.

— Romelu Lukaku, Inter Milan's Belgian footballer

We are all feeling sadness from this loss, but all i can think of is that it is a grain of sand compared to what Vanessa must going through right now. I am sending all of my love and praying for you, your children and the other families involved in today's tragic turn of events.

— Jennifer Lopez, Actor-singer

This is just so heartbreaking. The untimely death of #KobeBryant and his daughter is so devastating. He was one of the best basketball players who inspired millions of people.

— Madhuri Dixit, Bollywood actress

SHOCKWAVES THROUGH NBA AND BEYOND

Madison Square Garden, home of the New York Knicks, was washed in the Lakers colors of purple and gold, and so were the pylons that mark the entrance to Los Angeles International Airport.

Brazilian footballer Neymar dedicated his second goal in Paris Saint-Germain's 2-0 victory at Lille to Bryant, calling his death "deeply saddening for the world of sport and for all of us — not just for basketball fans but for everything he did for sport."

CONTROVERSY

It wasn't a smooth path to stardom for Kobe Bryant. In addition to nagging injuries that slowed his later seasons, he faced a major rape controversy that delivered a body blow to his endorsements image. Bryant faced his darkest hour in 2003 when he was arrested in Colorado over a sexual assault allegation filed by a 19-year-old employee of a hotel where Bryant was staying ahead of knee surgery.

Bryant was accused of rape. He admitted to adultery but said he did not commit rape.

In 2004, the case was dropped after the accuser refused to testify in a trial, and Bryant issued an apology saying he could understand how she might feel there was not consent. A separate civil suit was settled under terms kept private.

— Agencies

KOBE ON SONG AT GRAMMYS

The music community came together to pay tributes to NBA legend Kobe Bryant at the 2020 Grammy Awards, taking place at his stomping ground, the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Singer-songwriter Lizzo kick started the award ceremony with a shoutout to Bryant before her opening act. "Tonight is for Kobe!" she said.

It was followed by Grammy host Alicia Keys' special message honouring the basketball legend. Keys then performed a touching rendition of *It's so hard to say goodbye* with hip hop group Boyz II Men to commemorate Bryant's life.

Throughout the ceremony, Bryant's jersey appeared during performances. The Recording Academy, which presents the Grammys, said on Twitter, "Remembering Kobe Bryant tonight while we honour music in the house that he built."

A moment of silence was held for Bryant during the show's pre-tecast ceremony, where many of the awards are handed out.

— PTI

"There's no words to express the pain I'm going through with this tragedy of losing my niece Gigi & my brother @kobe-bryant I love u and u will be missed. My condolences goes out to the Bryant family and the families of the other passengers on board. IM SICK RIGHT NOW."

— Shaquille O'Neal, Bryant's former Lakers teammate.

"Most people will remember Kobe as the magnificent athlete who inspired a whole generation of basketball players. But I will always remember him as a man who was much more than an athlete."

— Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, six-time NBA champion and league's all-time scoring leader

Tribute

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BASKETBALL LEGEND BRYANT KILLED IN COPTER CRASH

KOBE'S LAST FLIGHT



Australia's Nick Kyrgios wears a Los Angeles Lakers jersey with Kobe Bryant's number as he warms up ahead of his match against Rafael Nadal at the Australian Open in Melbourne on Monday.

Gianna Maria-Onore Bryant sits on the shoulders of her father Kobe as they attend the women's football match between USA and China in San Diego in 2014.

— AFP, AP



Ruthless!

Former Pakistan speedster Shoaib Akhtar reckons that the Virat Kohli-led India are swiftly becoming a “ruthless” team as they proved their mettle once again

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Cricket

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SHORT TAKES

Punter predicts Pant's return to XI

Melbourne: Ricky Ponting has full faith in Rishabh Pant's match-winning abilities and is hopeful that the talented wicketkeeper-batsman will back in the Indian playing XI during the ongoing series against New Zealand. Pant, who suffered from concussion during India's first home series ODI against Australia in Mumbai, is now fit but KL Rahul has done well as his replacement in both ODIs as well as T20 Internationals. “Pant is a young man with a huge amount of talent. I'm looking forward to working with him again during the IPL and I'm sure he'll be back in the Indian team sooner rather than later,” Ponting said during a Q&A session with his twitter followers. — PTI

New selectors before SA series

New Delhi: The revamped selection committee with a new chairman at helm will pick the Indian squad for the three ODIs at home in March, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said on Monday. Laxman Sivaramakrishnan, Ajit Agarkar, Rajesh Chauhan and Venkatesh Prasad are some of the key contenders to replace outgoing chairman MSK Prasad (South zone) and Gagan Khoda (Central zone) in the five-member panel. “The Test squad for New Zealand has already been picked by the old committee and new committee's first meeting will be held before home ODI series against South Africa. The interviews for short-listed candidates will happen soon,” Ganguly said. He also said while Madan Lal and Sulakshana Naik are members of the Cricket Advisory Committee, Gautam Gambhir is being replaced as he cannot hold any position being a Member of Parliament. “We have decided on his replacement, an announcement will be made soon,” he said. — PTI

Addiya half-ton in drawn game

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JAN. 27

Hyderabad drew their South Zone Under 14 cricket match with Pondicherry at Alur near Bengaluru on Monday. Hyderabad bowled out their rivals for a mere 97 in their second innings for an 83 run lead and then were 102 for 6 in their second innings in their two-day match. Aditya Javvaji scored 63 to emerge the highest scorer in Hyderabad's second essay. **Brief scores (Day-2):** Hyderabad 180 in 82 overs & 102/6 in 37.5 overs (Aditya Javvaji 63, K. Jaswanth 4 for 25) drew with CA Pondicherry 97 in 55 overs (Vivek Gagan 2 for 13, P. Raghava 3 for 12)

Rival & role model

New Zealand wicket-keeper Seifert is in awe of Bumrah

Hamilton, Jan. 27: In awe of Jasprit Bumrah, New Zealand wicketkeeper Tim Seifert says the Indian speedster's subtle variations have been difficult to pick in the ongoing T20 series and his side needs to learn a thing or two about adapting from the visitors. India beat New Zealand by seven wickets in the second T20 International in Auckland on Sunday to grab a 2-0 lead in the five-match series. Bumrah returned with figures of 1-21 from his four overs as Indian skipper Virat Kohli changed his bowling plans from the first game. “Even in the first game, Bumrah bowled slower balls that were going wider. Normally, death bowlers get into straighter lines, plus yorkers and mix it with chest height. He kind of changes things a lot and is tougher to play,” Seifert said.

“...the ball was holding a lot more which made it tougher. So sometimes as a batsman you have to move away from the stumps and see if they bowl straight. I was backing myself to do something different instead of just standing there at the wicket,” said the stumper, who remained unbeaten on 33 off 26 balls. “It was tricky and the ball was holding a little bit. When Kane (Williamson) got out in the over against Yuzvendra Chahal, we knew it was the over to push because they had Bumrah coming back,” he added.

He said New Zealand batsmen need to take a cue from their Indian counterparts on how to adapt to different conditions quickly. “...Indian batsmen showed how to get under the ball and time it. They showed it a couple of times that and on the slower wickets you just have to keep it like that. Once you lose your shape, you are not in position,” he said. “Try to get them (bowlers) off line or off balance, try to get into that position to hit good balls. That's T20 cricket as well. Sometimes it's going 100 per cent but some times you have to take a breath and re-assess. Indian batters did that well.” Seifert believes New Zealand bowlers did reasonably well in the two games but they have been

outplayed by the Indian batsmen.

“To be honest, in the first game they were 110-1 and they had wickets in hand. We didn't bowl too badly in that first game. In the second game, we only got 130 and it is tough to bowl at Eden Park (with that total),” he said.

“170 was the target in mind but once you get 130 on the board, that was going to be very hard at Eden Park against a team that is very strong and playing really well. But our spinners were outstanding. Good balls have gone to boundary. He said coming into the T20 series on the back of a lost Test rubber in Australia also didn't help New Zealand's cause in the first two games. “Boys are coming off a Test series (in Australia) and a lot of them haven't played T20 cricket for a while,” he said.

“But for some like me, I have had the Super Smash for the last two months, so I have played a lot of T20 cricket. They have two games under their belt now so hopefully they will have a better understanding.”

Asked if New Zealand would want to play on India's strength of chasing, Seifert replied, “Even in ODI cricket, India have chased down big totals but I think on that wicket it was going to get slower and slower. “But with that small target on Eden Park, something special has to happen with top six (for a collapse). One batsman got fifty and the other was batting very well. We needed top five-six in the first 10 overs,” he said.

The Black Caps are still confident of bouncing back in the series. The third T20 will be played here on Wednesday before back-to-back matches



New Zealand wicket-keeper batsman Tim Seifert



Jasprit Bumrah

es in Wellington and Mt Maunganui. Seifert said they would like to replicate the 2019 tour of India, where New Zealand came out 2-1 victorious in the three-match series.

“We have lost the first two games but we haven't

played badly. We definitely haven't played our best though while India has played very well. If we lose the series on Wednesday, it is not the end of the world. But if we can turn things around, and win, we will take things from there,” he said.

“We won the series 2-1 last time, so we have to treat it like a three match series again. But we have

to treat it like the first two are must-win games.”

Seifert said New Zealand have plenty of time and matches to prepare for the ICC T20 World Cup to be held in Australia later this year. “We are not playing our best at the moment. There are 20-odd games before the World Cup, and that tournament is the pinnacle, so we will get there (in preparation),” he said. — PTI

No change in IPL timings: Ganguly

New Delhi, Jan. 27: The title clash of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will be held in Mumbai on May 24 and the night matches will have usual 8pm start as the Governing Council decided against changing the timings, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly announced on Monday.

“There will be no change in the timing of IPL night games. It will start from 8 pm like earlier years,” Ganguly told reporters after the IPL Governing Council meeting. “We will have only five double headers (4pm and 8 pm) this time. We have decided to reduce the number of double headers,” Ganguly said adding that the “final will be held in Mumbai.”

Concussion subs & third umpire no ball

In a first, concussion substitute and ‘third umpire no ball’ will also be introduced in the upcoming edition of the popular T20 league, the former India captain informed.

“The concussion substitute and the no ball rule are new additions for the season,” he said. Players' safety has assumed significance of late with incidents of cricketers getting injured while batting increasing. New concussion rules were introduced in Test format as well last year.

Australian batsman Steve Smith was replaced by Marnus Labuschagne on Day 5 of the second Ashes

There will be no change in the timing. It will start from 8 pm like the earlier years. There was discussion about 7.30 pm start but it's not happening this year.

— SOURAV GANGULY

2019 Test at the Lord's under the rules. Recently young Indian batsman Rishabh Pant also suffered from concussion after being hit on his helmet by pat Cummins during the first ODI between India and Australia on January 14. K. L. Rahul had kept wickets in place of Pant. The third umpire will now make the exclusive ‘no ball’ call instead of the on-field umpires. It was trialled during the recent India and West Indies ODI series.

All-star game

In a noble gesture, the BCCI will have an All-stars game featuring all top international players before start of the IPL on March 29 for a charitable cause. The venue for the game, though, has not been decided as yet.

Ganguly said the BCCI will handover the proceeds to an appropriate forum. “It will be an IPL All Stars Game three days before start of IPL. The venue is not Ahmedabad as it is still not match ready. We have not decided on where we will make the donation,” he said. — PTI

Battle of wrist spinners as India meet Australia

Potchefstroom (South Africa), Jan. 27: Indian wrist spinner Ravi Bishnoi's repertoire of skills will meet a match in Australian Tanyveer Sangha's variations in a face-off between two talented tweakers during the quarterfinal of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Tuesday.

The white ball cricket in recent times has seen wrist spinners emerge as an important cog and junior cricket is no different where Bishnoi, easily the tournament's most impactful bowler, would like to give his team the advantage over the Australian side.

With 10 wickets from three games and game-changing 4 for 30 against a



Ravi Bishnoi

gritty New Zealand side, Bishnoi has proved why Kings XI Punjab has invested ₹2 crore on him during the auction.

Statistically, even Sangha has been at his best with 10 wickets with 5 for 14 against minnows Nigeria. But there's been a four-wicket haul against the West Indies and a wicket to show against England for the player of Indian origin. — PTI

England thump Proteas to clinch series 3-1



England's Mark Wood (second from left) celebrates with teammates after dismissing South Africa's Rassie van der Dussen on the fourth day of the fourth Test in Johannesburg on Monday. — AP

Johannesburg, Jan. 27: Ben Stokes and Mark Wood made a double strike shortly before tea, breaking stubborn South African resistance and setting up a 191-run win for England on the fourth day of the fourth and final Test at the Wanderers Stadium on Monday.

The win clinched a 3-1 series victory for England. Set to make a world record 466 to win, South Africa reached 181 for two before Stokes bowled home captain Faf du Plessis for 35. In the next over man-of-the-match Wood dismissed Rassie van der Dussen for 98. He went on to claim four for 54 to finish with match figures of nine for 100. Quinton de Kock and Temba Bavuma shone briefly but South Africa were bowled out for 274. Van der Dussen and Du Plessis batted for all but 13 minutes of an extended two-and-a-half hour afternoon session to give South Africa some hope, making the England bowlers toil on a hot afternoon.

But Stokes bowled a ball which hit a crack and kept low, deflecting off the toe of Du Plessis' bat into the stumps. Van der Dussen looked set for a maiden Test century but in the next over he fell to Wood two short of the landmark.

He had batted impressively, hitting 15 fours and two sixes in a 133-ball innings but both he and Du Plessis were given a torrid time by Wood, bowling at express pace on a pitch where the bounce was gradually

BRIEF SCORES

England 400 & 248 bt South Africa 183 & 274 in 77.1 overs (Van der Dussen 98, Q. de Kock 39, Mark Wood 4/54, Ben Stokes 2/47).

becoming more unpredictable. With tea looming, England set a field which suggested a short-pitched barrage was likely. But Wood then bowled a full-length delivery which Van der Dussen drove awkwardly to short cover where Stuart Broad held a good diving catch.

It was the second wicket for Stokes — both which came at crucial times shortly before an interval. His first victim was opening batsman Dean Elgar, who was caught and bowled playing an awkward pull shot in the penultimate over before lunch. Stokes finished with two for 47. De Kock and Bavuma batted brightly in a fifth wicket stand of 48 before Broad bowled a vicious bouncer which Bavuma gloved to wicketkeeper Jos Buttler. Broad had Dwaine Pretorius caught at fine leg in his next over and the rest followed.

Vernon Philander, playing in his last Test, struck a couple of beefy blows before falling to Wood who supplied the coup de grace, another lifting ball flicking Anrich Nortje's glove on its way through to Buttler down the legside. — AFP



Former Australia captain Steve Waugh photographs players at the Eden Gardens during his two-day visit to Kolkata. — PTI

Sarfraz's double ton rescues Mumbai after early collapse

Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh), Jan. 27: In-form Sarfraz Khan rescued Mumbai with an unbeaten double century, powering the visitors to a comfortable 372 for five after a top-order collapse on the opening day of their Group 'B' Ranji Trophy game against Himachal Pradesh here on Monday.

The 22-year-old Sarfraz, who had hit an unbeaten triple-hundred in the last game against Uttar Pradesh, took a listless HP attack to cleaners, hitting 32 fours and four sixes during his unbeaten 226-run knock. Electing to bowl, the home pacers exploited the windy conditions, grabbing three quick wickets to leave Mumbai reeling at 16

for three. Right-arm medium pacer Vaibhav Arora removed both the openers as he first trapped Jay Bista (12) and then bowled Bhupen Lalwani (1).

One-down Hardik Tamore (2) also fell cheaply after being trapped in front of the wicket by KD Singh. Sarfraz started the rescue act first by conjuring up a 55-run stand with 'crisis man' Siddhesh Lad (20), to steady Mumbai's ship.

Medium pacer Raghav Dhawan broke the partnership as he got the ball to move and it crashed into Lad's middle-stump. — PTI

BRIEF SCORES

■ **At Dharamsala:** Mumbai 372/5 (Sarfraz Khan 226 not out, Aditya Tare 62; Vaibhav Arora 2-28) vs HP.

■ **At Hyderabad:** Hyderabad 171 in 56 overs (Kolla Sumanth 51, B. Sandeep 38, C. V. Milind 34; Rituraj Singh 3/30, Aniket Choudhary 3 for 41) vs Rajasthan 2 for no loss in 4 overs.

■ **At Ongole:** Kerala 160 in 49.5 overs (Basil Thampi 42; Shoain Md Khan 5/62) vs Andhra 57 for 1 in 27 overs.

■ **At New Delhi:** Railways 98/6 (Arindam Ghosh 32 not out; Prateek Jain 4-14, Abhimanyu Mithun 2-18) vs Karnataka.

■ **At Kolkata:** Bengal 286/5 in 87 overs (Anustup Majumdar 94 batting, Shreevats Goswami 59, Koushik Ghosh 46; Vikas Mishra 3/78) vs Delhi.



Testing times

Former US Open champion Juan Martin del Potro to undergo a second operation on the right knee he fractured last year as the giant Argentine faces another career-defining crisis

SHORT TAKES

Praggnanandhaa pulls off upset win

Gibraltar: Young Indian Grand Master R. Praggnanandhaa pulled off a huge upset, beating former world champion Veselin Topalov in the sixth round of the 18th Gibraltar chess festival to record his fifth straight win here. The 14-year old Chennai lad needed just 33 moves to put it across the Bulgarian. He is in second spot on five points with six other players and will take on Chinese GM Wang Hao in the seventh round. Seventeen-year old Russian GM Andrey Esipenko jumped to sole lead with 5.5 points with a win over Georgia's Ivan Cheparinov with black pieces. A bunch of players including Indians — B. Adhiban, K. Sasikiran, Shardul Gagare, Karthikeyan Murali are in joint third place with 4.5 points. — PTI

Indian hockey girls go down to NZ

Auckland: The Indian women's hockey team lost 1-2 to New Zealand in their second match of the ongoing tour here on Monday. The Indians had earlier defeated New Zealand Development squad 4-0 in the opening match of the tour. New Zealand started the game on an attacking note and earned a penalty corner early in the first quarter and the chance was brilliantly converted by Megan Hull in the third minute of the match. India drew parity when young Salima Tete converted a penalty corner in the dying minutes of the first quarter. The visitors matched New Zealand in the second and third quarters but a defensive error in the final 15 minutes cost India dearly as they concede a penalty stroke, and Megan Hull made no mistake from the spot. India's chief coach Sjoerd Marijne was disappointed with the result. "We created enough scoring opportunities but we were not productive enough," he said. — PTI

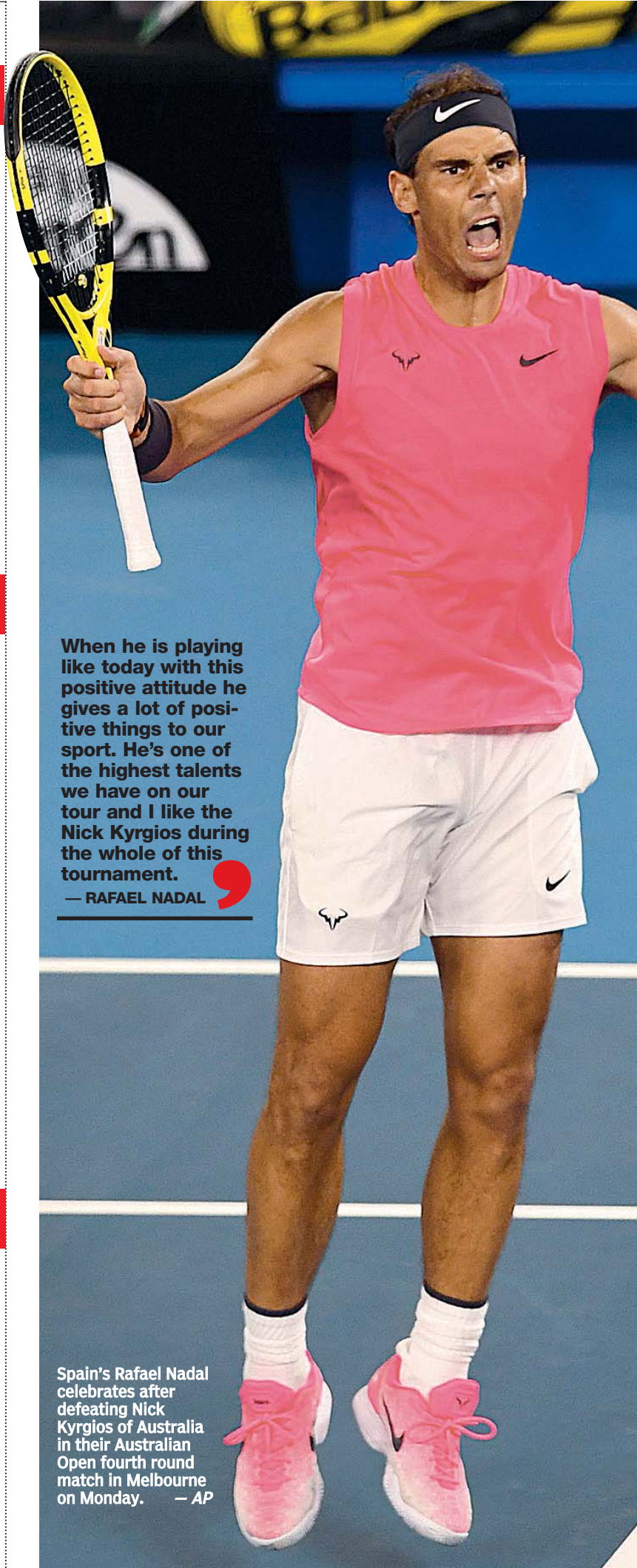
Ex hockey captain Sunita no more

Bhopal: Former Indian women's hockey team captain Sunita Chandra died here on Monday, her son said. Chandra, an Arjuna awardee, was 76 and is survived by her husband Yash Chandra and two sons. She had played for the Indian women's hockey team between 1956 to 1966 and served as skipper from 1963 to 1966, her son Gaurav Chandra said. Gaurav said his mother died in her sleep at their residence on Monday morning, and her last rites will be performed on Tuesday. Expressing grief, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath described Chandra as an "excellent player" and called her the "pride of the country". — PTI

BALWANT'S HEADER SENDS ATK ON TOP

Kolkata: A last-gasp goal by super sub Balwant Singh helped two-time champions ATK earn a dramatic 1-0 win over NorthEast United FC and reclaim the top spot in the Indian Super League, here on Monday. The contest seemed to be heading towards a goalless draw but Singh, who was brought in place of Edu Garcia after the regulation 90 minutes, stole the victory with a free header from a Javier Hernandez's curling corner in the 90+5th minute. ATK now have 27 points from 14 matches. The loss extended the winless run for the Highlanders to eight matches as they remained ninth in the 10-team standings with 11 points from 12 outings. Earlier, a one-minute silence was observed as a tribute to 41-year-old NBA legend Kobe Bryant, who died in a helicopter crash under foggy conditions in Calabasas, California. After an even and goalless stalemate, the home side started the second-half slowly. NorthEast United FC had more of the ball possession at the beginning of the second half but were not able to take advantage. ATK FC too grew into confidence in the second half and started creating chances. — PTI

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When he is playing like today with this positive attitude he gives a lot of positive things to our sport. He's one of the highest talents we have on our tour and I like the Nick Kyrgios during the whole of this tournament.

— RAFAEL NADAL

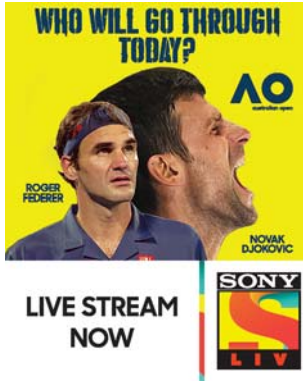
Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates after defeating Nick Kyrgios of Australia in their Australian Open fourth round match in Melbourne on Monday. — AP

Nadal rises in Nick of time

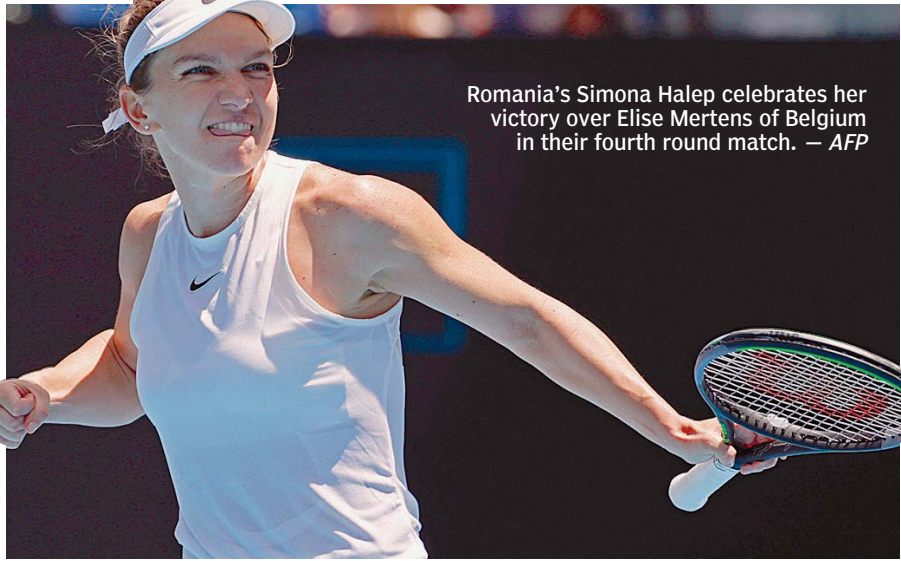
Rafael shows Kyrgios door as Muguruza, Halep enter last 8

Melbourne, Jan. 27: Rafael Nadal won a grudge match with Nick Kyrgios to reach the Australian Open quarter-finals and keep the heat on Roger Federer's record for Grand Slam titles on Monday.

The world number one, labelled "super salty" by Kyrgios after he criticised the Australian's behaviour last year, fought off a furious challenge to go through 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4). As the tennis world mourned the death of Kobe Bryant, Kyrgios arrived at Rod Laver Arena wearing an L.A. Lakers shirt, and 15-year-old Coco Gauff had tributes to the basketball great scrawled on her trainers during the doubles.



There was also controversy as Australia's Margaret Court, often criticised for her deeply conservative views, was honoured for her 1970 calendar-year Grand Slam. Nadal and Kyrgios had been feuding after some bad-tempered matches but the Spaniard said he was impressed by what he'd seen from the often-temperamental Australian at this tournament. Kyrgios fought back to



Romania's Simona Halep celebrates her victory over Elise Mertens of Belgium in their fourth round match. — AFP

THE RESULTS

MEN'S SINGLES 4TH ROUND

Dominic Thiem (AUT x5) bt Gael Monfils (FRA x10) 6-2, 6-4, 6-4; Stan Wawrinka (SUI x15) bt Daniil Medvedev (RUS x4) 6-2, 2-6, 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-2; Alexander Zverev (GER x7) bt Andrey Rublev (RUS x17) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4; Rafael Nadal (ESP x1) bt Nick Kyrgios (AUS x23) 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4).

WOMEN'S SINGLES 4TH ROUND

Anett Kontaveit (EST x28) bt Iga Swiatek (POL) 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 7-5; Simona Halep (ROU x4) bt Elise Mertens (BEL x16) 6-4, 6-4; Garbine Muguruza (ESP) bt Kiki Bertens (NED x9) 6-3, 6-3; Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS x30) bt Angelique Kerber (GER x17) 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4), 6-2.

The Wimbledon champion from Romania, who avoided an exodus of top seeds in the previous round, will next play Estonia's Anett Kontaveit, a 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 7-5 winner against Iga Swiatek of Poland. "She's strong. I'm here just to face any challenge I have. So I'm not thinking negative," Halep said of Kontaveit. "I just want to go there and to give my best." Angelique Kerber, the 2016 champion, was the latest big name to fall as she went down to Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4), 6-2. Pavlyuchenkova's quarter-final will be against Garbine Muguruza, the two-time Grand Slam champion who is resurgent since reuniting with coach Conchita Martinez, beating Kiki Bertens 6-3, 6-3. "It's like couples, we all want Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston to get back together, right?" joked Martinez, the 1994 Wimbledon champion. — AFP

Struggling Napoli humble Juventus

Milan, Jan. 27: Piotr Zielinski and Lorenzo Insigne scored in the second half as struggling Napoli shocked champions Juventus 2-1 to spoil coach Maurizio Sarri's return to the Stadio San Paolo on Sunday.

Sarri had not been back to Naples since being sacked in May 2018 after three successful campaigns, and before moving to Chelsea.

This season he has taken over eight-time reigning champions Juve, a move seen as a betrayal by his former team, the two-time Serie A runners-up.

Juve missed the chance to open up a six-point lead on Inter Milan at the top of the table, after Antonio Conte's side were earlier held 1-1 by Cagliari, their third consecutive draw.

Inter are three points behind Juve with Lazio a further two points adrift in third after Roma ended Simone Inzaghi's side's 11-match winning streak.

In Naples, Zielinski broke

THE RESULTS

Napoli (Zielinski 63, Insigne 86)	2
Juventus (Ronaldo 90)	1
Inter Milan (Martinez 29)	1
Cagliari (Nainggolan 78)	1
Roma (Dzeko 26)	1
Lazio (Acerbi 34)	1

the deadlock after 63 minutes. Insigne volleyed in a second after 86 minutes to an explosion of joy.

Cristiano Ronaldo pulled a goal back as the game headed into injury time for his 13th goal in nine consecutive games in all competitions. The visitors pushed for the equaliser but Alex Meret smothered Gonzalo Higuain's goal-bound effort, as Juve crashed to just their second defeat of the season. — AFP

SHREWS HOLD LIVERPOOL

London, Jan. 27: Liverpool let a 2-0 lead slip as League One Shrewsbury earned a FA Cup fourth round replay at Anfield thanks to a 2-2 draw, whilst Manchester United and Manchester City cruised into the fifth round on Sunday.

Jürgen Klopp showed his focus is very much on a first Premier League title for 30 years as he made 11 changes to the side that won at Wolves on Thursday.

United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was badly in need of a convincing performance after 0-2 defeats to Liverpool and Burnley over the past seven days and got a response with a 6-0 thrashing of third-tier Tranmere.

City manager Pep Guardiola had it easy at the Etihad Stadium as his side strolled 4-0 past Fulham. — AFP



Table Tennis Federation of India president and Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala plays a shot as he inaugurates the Senior National Table Tennis Championships at Sarooranagar Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad on Monday. Sports Authority of Telangana State chairman Allipram Venkateshwar Reddy, TTFI secretary M. P. Singh, TSSTA president A. Narasimha Reddy and secretary P. Prakash Raju are also seen.

Telangana teams begin well at table tennis Sr nationals

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, JAN. 27

The Telangana men's and women's teams won two team matches each on the opening day of the UTT 81st National Table Tennis Championships at the Saroonagar Indoor Stadium here on Monday.

The men defeated Meghalaya 3-0 and last edition's semifinalists Uttar Pradesh 3-1. They will play their final group match against Himachal Pradesh on Tuesday.

The women's team were too powerful for Puducherry, beating them 3-0. They then went on to beat Rajasthan 3-0. The women too are scheduled to play Himachal Pradesh in

their final group match. Meanwhile, reigning women champions Bengal 'A' held sway in Group 'A', winning both their matches. They first accounted for Uttar Pradesh 3-2 before subduing Goa 3-0 to occupy the top rung in the points table.

As for Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB), they had sufficient firepower and they did not miss the services of two important members of their squad — Madhurika Patkar and Archana Kamath — who are expected to arrive from Portugal on Tuesday. Meanwhile, they went ahead with Group 'B' programme against Uttarakhand and Andhra Pradesh, beating both

teams 3-0, respectively. That was the case in most other groups except in Group 'G', where leader Gujarat not only suffered a setback to their campaign when Assam, helped by young Trisha Gogoi, defeated them 3-2 in their first round group match.

However, for Gujarat, who finished among the quarterfinalists of the last edition at Cuttack, it must have come as a rude shock. The loss must have put in them a piquant situation as they have to win the remaining matches, particularly the one against Haryana, who will be strengthened by the return of Sutirtha Mukherjee from Portugal, to grab the second spot.

Praneeth, Tai Tzu shine for Raptors

Lucknow, Jan. 27: World Championships bronze medallist B. Sai Praneeth notched up his first win of the season while World No. 2 Tai Tzu Ying continued her winning streak as the Bengaluru Raptors met the Pune 7 Aces at the Premier Badminton League here on Monday.

Having never played Yew on the BWF World Tour, the World No. 11 Sai took some time to figure out the Singaporean. Yew was coming after the high of beating 2014 Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap in the Pune's first tie of the season.

Sai never relented and was able to maintain his aggression. The flurry of attacking shots from Sai's end took the wind out of Loh's sails as the Raptors star raced away to a 10-15, 15-7, 15-8 win.

In the women's singles clash between former World No. 1 Tai

Tzu and Pune's Rituparna Das turned out to be lopsided as the former Indian national champion really struggled to keep up with the Chinese Taipei ace. Tai was fully in control of every aspect of the game before pocketing the opener 15-3.

The scene completely changed in the second game as Das relied on some exquisite placement of the shuttle to put Tai in a spot of bother. Infusing her strokes with a lot of power, Das built a strong lead of 9-5 but her advantage soon got erased once Tai found her rhythm before finishing it off 15-3, 15-9 for her third win of the season.

Earlier, 22-year-old talent, Ansal Yadav gave a good account of himself on his debut against World No. 71 Kazumasa Sakai of the Aces. Showing oodles of determination, the Bengaluru player went down fighting to Sakai 14-15, 9-15. — Agencies



B. Sai Praneeth in action on Monday.