







## Identity problem

Students of a government college in Rewa staged a protest alleging that the newly installed bust of Mahatma Gandhi on campus resembled Ben Kingsley

## IN BRIEF

### 25-foot-long dead whale found

**Bhubaneswar:** A 25-foot-long and 12-foot-wide carcass of a whale was on Thursday found at the Nandanandi Jangyadanda beach in front of Sanapatna village under Satapada forest range in Puri district. Some fishermen spotted the whale carcass lying on the beach in the morning. They then informed the villagers and Forest department officials about the matter. After receiving the information, a six-member team of Forest department officials led by Satapada Ranger Manas Ranjan Mohapatra visited the spot.

### Seven-foot-long python rescued

**Berhampur:** A 7-foot-long python was rescued from a staff quarter of Indian Rare Earths (IRE) near Chhatrapur in Ganjam district on Wednesday night. Sources said some employees first spotted the venomous snake inside the quarters near the Guard Room and immediately informed Berhampur forest Ranger. As per the direction of Forest Ranger Raja Rao, Snake Helpline members Swadhin Sahu and Srikant Nahak reached the spot and rescued the reptile. The snake-catchers later handed it over to the forest officials. On Thursday morning, the python was released into a local dense forest, said an official.

### Two wives of PLFI chief arrested

**New Delhi:** The NIA on Thursday arrested two women, the wives of banned Naxal outfit PLFI's absconding chief Dinesh Gope, in a terror financing case, an official said. Hira Devi and Shakuntala Kumari, wives of Gope — the chief of People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI), a proscribed Naxal organisation of Jharkhand — were arrested in connection with the terror funding of the outlawed organisation in Ranchi, an official of the premier investigation agency said. The NIA also conducted search at their houses in Kolkata and seized incriminating documents, the official said, adding that efforts were being made to arrest Gope. The case pertains to the seizure of ₹25.38 lakh cash which was being deposited in an SBI account in Ranchi on November 10, 2016. — PTI

### SC STAYS PROCEEDINGS IN PAUDWAL CASE

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed proceedings initiated in a Thiruvananthapuram court by a woman claiming to be the daughter of singer Anuradha Paudwal. A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde issued notice to the 46-year-old woman on a plea filed by Paudwal seeking transfer of the case to Mumbai. The woman had filed the petition in the Thiruvananthapuram court claiming that she was the daughter of the popular playback singer and had sought Rs 50 crore compensation from her biological parents for allegedly denying her the childhood and life she was entitled to. Karmala Modex, a city resident, had claimed that Paudwal had handed her over to her foster parents—Ponnachan and Agnes—in 1974 as the singer had a busy schedule and did not want to raise a child at the time. Paudwal, a recipient of the Padma Shri and the National Film Award, was married to music composer Arun Paudwal. Modex's lawyer had said they tried to get in touch with the singer before filing the case but never got any response. The district family court in Thiruvananthapuram had asked Paudwal and her two children to appear in person on January 27. Modex sought to be declared as Paudwal's legitimate daughter and claimed she is also entitled to one-fourth share of the assets and properties, her lawyer said, adding that she has also sought a compensation of Rs 50 crore for the loss caused to her. — PTI

# 600 Indians in contact with MEA

## MEA is hoping necessary approval from China will be granted soon for evacuation

From Page 1

The external affairs ministry said it established contact with over 600 Indians living in coronavirus-hit Hubei province in China and asked Indians whether they want to return. The MEA said it hoped the “necessary approval” from China will be granted “soon” to operate two flights evacuating Indian nationals from Hubei, with sources saying if the Chinese approval comes in by Thursday night, the evacuation flights would be operated on Friday itself.

The Indian embassy in Beijing has established contact with 600 Indian nationals in Hubei province and is trying to find out if they want to be evacuated. New Delhi is also apparently seeking logistical help from the Chinese side to get such Indian nationals to the airport at Wuhan city. India said there was “no delay” by the Chinese side in granting approval and that the process “takes time”, adding that it “appreciates the support” extended by the Chinese government.

New Delhi also said there were no restrictions imposed on the travel of Chinese nationals to India. “The Government of India has been conducting a regular review on the situation arising out of the outbreak of nCoronavirus in China. We have put out regular updates on the arrangements which are being made. You are aware that we have made a formal request to the Chinese government for bringing back Indian nationals from Hubei province in two flights. We are awaiting approval from the Chinese side. We hope this will be granted soon,” MEA spokesman Raveesh Kumar said.

The Chinese government has said it will cooperate with India to jointly



Indians wearing surgical masks walk out of the government general hospital where a student who had been in Wuhan is kept in isolation in Thrissur, Kerala. — AP

## India prepares to airlift first batch of its citizens

**Beijing, Jan. 30:** India was preparing to evacuate its citizens on Friday from China's Wuhan city, the epicentre of the deadly coronavirus that has killed 170 people, infected 7,711 others and spread to at least 17 countries.

India had requested China for permission to operate two flights to bring back its nationals from worst-affected central Hubei province. “We are preparing for air evacuation from Wuhan tomorrow in the evening,”

Indian Embassy in Beijing said.

The first flight will carry those Indian nationals who are in and around Wuhan and have conveyed consent for their evacuation, it said.

“There will be another flight subsequently which will carry those who are from other parts of Hubei province,” the mission said.

The nationwide death toll from novel coronavirus has jumped to 170 with 38 more fatalities

reported mainly from Hubei province, the government said on Thursday, while confirming more than 1,700 new infections.

China's National Health Commission said on Thursday that 7,711 confirmed cases of pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus had been reported in 31 provincial-level regions and in the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps by the end of Wednesday. — PTI

strengthen epidemic prevention and control the virus spread. Chinese embassy counsellor and spokesperson Ji Rong said in New Delhi said they were in close communication with the Indian government. “The Chinese side pays close attention to the report of the emer-

gence of one confirmed case of pneumonia caused by novel coronavirus in India and will cooperate with the Indian side to jointly strengthen the epidemic prevention and control.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to safeguarding the safety and health of

every foreign national in China, including the Indian people,” the spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, a health ministry advisory asked people to maintain utmost care. “If you have recently travelled to China, it is advised to stay in home isolation for 14 days.”

## MP BJP MLA death gets Cong simple majority

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 30**

BJP MLA from Agar in Madhya Pradesh Manohar Untwal on Thursday died after suffering brain hemorrhage. He was 53.

He died in a private hospital in Gurugram where he was admitted on January 6 after he suffered brain hemorrhage.

Untwal was four time MLA and a former MP.

His demise has reduced strength of BJP in MP assembly to 107 and the effective strength of MP assembly to 228.

The ruling Congress which has strength of 114 in the house has thus gained simple majority.

Kamal Nath government is currently supported from outside by four Independents, two Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MLAs, and one Samajwadi Party (SP) legislator.

Last month, sitting Congress MLA from Jaura in MP Banwarilal Sharma had passed reducing the effective strength of MP assembly from 230 to 229.

The death of Untwal has



Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath during a Hanuman Chalisa recitation programme on Thursday. — PTI

once again brought into focus ‘vaastu’ flaws in the MP assembly building.

In the outgoing winter session of MP assembly, leader of Opposition Gopal Bhargava had raised the issue saying that many sitting MLAs passed away after the assembly was shifted to the new building.

He feared that there might be ‘vaastu’ problem in the assembly building and demanded the speaker to initiate a move to remove the ‘vaastu’ flaws

## Kerala alert, 1,053 under observation

**DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN. 30**

With a student studying in China's Wuhan University being tested positive in Kerala for novel Coronavirus (nCoV), the state government has sounded high alert in all districts and stepped up surveillance and prevention activities.

This is the first case of novel Coronavirus in the country.

Health Minister K K Shailaja told reporters in Thiruvananthapuram that the medical student from China Wuhan University has been kept in an isolation ward in Thrissur general hospital. She will be shifted to Thrissur medical college hospital soon where a special ward has been set up. “She does not have severe symptoms. Her condition is stable,” the minister added.

Four persons, who were in contact with the infected student, have also been kept in isolation ward. Of the 20 samples sent to the National Institute of Virology, Pune, 15 were negative, one positive and results of four are awaited.

Health Minister, health secretary and senior officials have left for Thrissur for a high level meeting to review the situation.

At the moment 1053 persons are under observation and 15 are admitted in isolation ward across Kerala.

The preliminary report on the medical student had confirmed coronavirus. The second result is awaited. However, without waiting for that the

health department has put in place all precautionary measures. Earlier union health ministry had conveyed the confirmation of coronavirus during a video conference with Kerala chief secretary and principal secretary health.

Since coronavirus has affected more than 20 countries and the virus has been transmitted by people who arrived from China, the health authorities called for stepping up surveillance. There is a need to check the spread of virus in the society. In case of any suspected symptoms, the person should seek medical assistance to rule out the virus. They should not mingle with the family members or other people.

It is in this backdrop that the state government had called for monitoring of people coming from outside the country especially China. The health department had already issued a directive that those coming from China should voluntarily report to the respective district medical officers.

While some people have voluntarily reported to the health authorities, there are many who are yet to report.

Those who have returned from China should either report to district medical officers or call health department's emergency number Disha 1056.

The experts said the symptoms of coronavirus are similar to common viral fever.

The main symptoms include fever, cough, respiratory distress and breathing difficulty.

## 9-judge bench for women's rights case

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, JAN. 30**

The Supreme Court on Thursday said that a nine-judge Constitution Bench will on February 3 frame questions to adjudicate the larger issue of legality and essentially of religious belief and practices discriminatory to women.

The larger question to be addressed by the constitution bench will include the legality and essentiality of religious belief and practices prohibiting the entry of women in mosques and temples, genital mutilation in Dawoodi Bohras and the ban on the entry of Parsi woman in the fire temple after she has married outside the Parsi community.

The nine-judge bench of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde, Justices R. Banumathi,

■ **THE LARGER** question to be addressed by the bench will include the legality and essentiality of religious belief and practices prohibiting the entry of women in mosques and temples

Ashok Bhushan, L. Nageswara Rao, Mohan R. Shantanagoudar, Abdul Nazeer, R. Subhash Reddy, B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant on Thursday said also expressed disappointment over senior lawyers not been able to arrive at a consensus on the issues to be addressed. “We are little disappointed as you could not arrive at a consensus. Now a nine-judge bench will go through the questions submitted by some of you (advocates) and try to crystallise the issues on February 3,” the CJI said.

## Thakur, Parvesh banned by ECI

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 30**

Union minister of state for finance Anurag Thakur and BJP's West Delhi MP Parvesh Verma were banned by the Election Commission

from campaigning in the Delhi Assembly polls for 72 hours and 96 hours respectively for making controversial speeches. The ban came into force from 5 pm on Thursday. It has also granted permission to the Union home ministry to extend by one month the services of Delhi police commissioner Amulya Patnaik, who was due to retire on Friday.

The EC said the BJP leaders had made undesirable and objectionable statements which had the potential to aggravate existing differences. The EC orders barred Mr

Thakur and Mr Verma from holding any public meetings, processions, rallies, roadshows and interviews, public utterances in the media in connection with the ongoing Delhi polls.

At a recent public meeting in Rithala, Mr Thakur had shouted “desh ke gaddaron ko”, to which the crowd responded “goli maaro saalo ko (sic)” (shoot down the traitors). Mr Verma had claimed that those who mounted over a month-long sit-in protest at Shaheen Bagh against the controversial citizenship law “will enter your houses, rape your sisters and daughters”. In his defence to the showcase notice, Mr Thakur told the EC he had only said “desh ke gaddaron ko” (traitors to the country), and it was the crowd which responded.

## RAISING VOICE

### Kunal Kamra was banned for 6 months for ‘heckling’ Arnab

## Pilot objects to comedian's flight ban

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JAN. 30**

The pilot of the IndiGo Mumbai-Lucknow flight in which standup comedian Kunal Kamra allegedly “heckled” journalist Arnab Goswami on Tuesday has written to his airline objecting to the ban on Kamra, saying that at no point was he unruly and had obeyed the instructions of the pilot. The aircraft captain added that Kamra had never endangered safety or dis-

obeyed any instructions, leading to questions about the way IndiGo had banned him, without any formal inquiry.

Under the Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR), only a temporary 30-day ban can be imposed on passengers pending an inquiry by a committee. For offensive behaviour designed to provoke and create a disturbance, also seen as disruptive behaviour, a passenger can be banned for a maximum of three months, while “physically

abusive behaviour” and “endangering the aircraft and passengers” carry bans of six months and two years respectively.

IndiGo announced a ban of six months while other airlines — Air India, SpiceJet and GoAir — did not give any timeframe for the ban. Vistara has said that its internal committee is examining matters.

Capt. Rohit Mateti is learnt to have written to IndiGo's management, saying: “I was disheartened to learn that my air-

line has taken action in this case solely on the basis of social media posts with no consultation whatsoever with pilot-in-command. This is somewhat unprecedented in my nine years of airline flying. Moving forward, am I to understand that the bar for interpretation of a disruptive passenger is lower/different when it comes to a high-profile case? I would like a clarification from the airline as it leaves a lot of room for ambiguity.”

Capt. Mateti has in his letter also given out details of the flight and the incident, saying that “while Kamra's behaviour was unacceptable and verbally abusive, at no point of time he did not comply with crew instructions”. He added Kamra went back to his seat every time an announcement was made and he had later apologised to him about his conduct. He added that Arnab Goswami had been asked if he wanted to lodge any complaint.





Last breath

Paul Farnes, one of the last remaining Battle of Britain fighter pilots during World War II, dies at 101

IN BRIEF

Lanka extends ultras' remand

Colombo: The remand of 61 Muslim extremists, arrested in connection with Sri Lanka's worst attack on Easter Sunday, has been extended till February 12 by a court on Thursday. Nine suicide bombers on April 21 last year carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many high-end hotels, killing 258 people, including eight Indians, in Lanka's deadliest violence since the brutal civil war ended in 2009. The 61 suspects are members of the National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ), police said. The Batticaloa High Court extended their remand till February 12, they said. The Islamic State had claimed the responsibility for the Easter attacks, but the government blamed the NTJ for the bombings. The Lankan government on April 27 banned the NTJ and designated it as a terrorist organisation. Nearly 300 suspects have been arrested so far.

Akihito collapses at residence

Tokyo: Japan's former emperor Akihito, who abdicated last year, temporarily lost consciousness and collapsed at his residence this week, but medical checkups found "no abnormalities", the government said Thursday. The 86-year-old was examined by court doctors after Wednesday's incident, an official at the Imperial Household Agency said. Akihito "had an MRI examination Thursday morning but doctors found no abnormalities", the official said, adding doctors would continue to monitor his condition. In July, Akihito suffered temporary cerebral anaemia, a condition involving insufficient blood supply to the brain. The former monarch has previously had surgery for prostate cancer and heart problems.

Longest smuggling tunnel found

San Diego: US authorities have announced the discovery of the longest smuggling tunnel ever found on the Southwest border, stretching more than three-quarters of a mile from an industrial site in Tijuana, Mexico, to the San Diego area. The tunnel featured an extensive rail cart system, forced air ventilation, high voltage electrical cables and panels, an elevator at the tunnel entrance and a drainage system. While there were no arrests, no drugs found at the site and no confirmed exit point in the US, the length — more than 14 football fields — stunned authorities. "This one blows past (the second-longest)," said Lance LeNoir, a Border Patrol operations supervisor. "We never really thought they had the moxie to go that far. They continue to surprise me."

WEINSTEIN'S RAPE TRIAL SHIFTS GEARS

New York: After a day of intense testimony at Harvey Weinstein's rape trial, prosecutors were expected to shift gears Thursday with a slate of ancillary witnesses. Two aspiring actresses testified Wednesday that Weinstein preyed on their vulnerabilities while pushing the notion that sex could lead to film roles. Tarale Wulff choked back tears as she testified Weinstein raped her at his New York City apartment in 2005 during what was supposed to be a film audition. The casting director for that film was expected to testify on Thursday, along with the manager of the Manhattan hot spot where Wulff worked as a cocktail waitress and met Weinstein. She alleges that on one occasion there before the alleged rape, Weinstein masturbated in front of her. Dawn Dunning testified Wednesday that in 2004, Weinstein put his hand up her skirt and fondled her genitals during a meeting in his hotel suite about her fledgling acting career. At another meeting, Dunning said, Weinstein tried trading movie roles for sex, claiming the lewd offer was the kind of thing that happened all the time in the film business. Dunning's fiancé at the time is expected to testify Thursday. — AP

WH bars Bolton book

Former NSA told his book contains top secret level information

Washington, Jan. 30: The White House told former national security adviser John Bolton that a book reportedly containing damaging evidence for President Donald Trump cannot be published because it breaks secrecy laws. The warning was made in a letter to Bolton's lawyer dated January 23 but only made public on Wednesday as Trump's impeachment trial intensified in the Senate. The National Security Council said after preliminary review of the manuscript - a vetting process applied to any White House employees writing books - that it contained "significant amounts of classified information."

"Some of this information is at the TOP SECRET level," the NSC said in a letter to Bolton's lawyer Charles Cooper, adding that "the manuscript may not be published or otherwise disclosed without the deletion of this classified information."

Democrats are pressing for the Senate to subpoena Bolton after reports that his White House memoir *The Room Where it Happened* corroborates the abuse-of-power impeachment charge against Trump. Bolton reportedly writes that the president personally told him in August a freeze in military aid to Ukraine was directly linked to Trump's demand that Kiev announce investigations into Joe Biden, the frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination. Several hours before the letter went public, Trump lashed out at Bolton on Twitter, saying he had written a "nasty & untrue book. All Classified National Security."



Demonstrators protest outside the Capitol during the impeachment trial of President Donald Trump in Washington — AP

GOP hopeful Senate will acquit Prez

Washington, Jan. 30: A Democratic push to force Republicans to accept witnesses at President Donald Trump's impeachment trial in the US Senate appeared to be flagging on Wednesday, raising the possibility he could be acquitted as early as Friday.

As senators questioned both the Trump legal team and the Democratic managers of the trial, Trump lawyer Alan Dershowitz offered an expansive defense of presidential power that provoked astonishment among Democrats.

"If a president does something which he believes will help him get elected in the public interest, that cannot be the kind of quid pro quo that results in an impeachment," Dershowitz said, referring to the charge that Trump abused his power by using congressionally approved security aid as leverage to get a foreign power to smear his political rival, Joe Biden.

Democratic Senator Mazie Hirono told reporters: "That was one of the most bizarre things

I've ever heard as a response." Senator John Barrasso, the third-most senior Republican, said it was possible the trial could end on Friday without witnesses being called, as Democrats want. "The momentum is clearly in the direction of moving to final judgment on Friday. That vote will be Friday. We still have a couple of members who said they want to listen to the answers to questions, but that's where the momentum is," Barrasso said.

Asked when the vote might take place to settle the debate over witnesses and move to either acquit or convict Trump, Barrasso said probably Friday afternoon or late that day. Other Republican senators were predicting a similar outcome in conversations with reporters during breaks in Wednesday's proceedings. The Democratic-led House of Representatives approved the two articles of impeachment being heard in the Republican-controlled Senate in December. — Reuters

US ups troops, jets at Saudi base

Prince Sultan Air Base (Saudi Arabia), Jan. 30: Across the vast expanse of this desert air base, hundreds of tents have popped up and a newly arrived squadron of US Air Force F-15E fighters is lined up on the tarmac, flying daily missions over Iraq and Syria.

Off in the distance, two American Patriot missile batteries are scanning the skies, prepared to knock down any Iranian attack against the Saudi kingdom.

The US troop presence here has grown to roughly 2,500 since last summer, when the US announced it had begun deploying forces to what once was a major US military hub.

The return of the US forces to Prince Sultan Air Base is one of the more dramatic signs of America's decision to beef up troops in the Middle East in response to threats from Iran.

On Wednesday, the top US commander in the Middle East spent a few hours meeting with his commanders and troops here, assessing what he called a "sweet spot" of the US force projection in the region.

Prince Sultan Air Base, said Marine General Frank McKenzie, pres-

ents a complicated target for Iran to hit and provides a remote location for US troops, fighter jets and other assets. It also provides greater security for Saudi Arabia, which asked for US help in the wake of an Iranian drone and missile attack on oil facilities in the kingdom last September. Right now, the large white tents that flap in the stiff winds give a temporary feel to the mission. But according to Air Force Colonel Jason King, vice commander of the 378th Air Expeditionary Wing here, there is "prudent planning" underway that could lead to the tents being replaced with trailers and other more permanent structures. Saudi Arabia is a decades-long American ally, a relationship initially built on America's dependence on Middle East oil. — AP

A new opportunity: Bibi to Putin

Moscow, Jan. 30: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday hailed US President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan as a new opportunity after flying to Moscow to discuss it with President Vladimir Putin.

"I think there's a new and perhaps unique opportunity here," said the Israeli premier, who stood alongside Trump at the White House when the plan was announced Tuesday and called it a victory for Israel.

Trump's plan angered Palestinians by proposing Israel retain control over Jerusalem as its "undivided capital" and giving the green light to annex Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

"I'd like to speak to you and hear your insights and see how we can combine all our forces for security and peace," Netanyahu told Putin at the start of their Kremlin meeting.

"You're actually the first leader I'm speaking with after my visit to Washington about President Trump's Deal of the Century," he added.

The Russian leader did not mention the peace plan in his public remarks.

Netanyahu, facing graft charges, is contesting March elections and hoping the proposal will boost his re-election chances.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) shakes hands with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during their meeting at Kremlin in Moscow on Thursday — AP

The March 2 vote is Israel's third in less than a year, with polls suggesting the prime minister's rightwing Likud is again neck-and-neck with the centrist Blue and White party led by ex-military chief Benny Gantz. Netanyahu was visiting Russia on the same day that it released a young US-Israeli woman jailed for drug trafficking over a small amount of cannabis found in her luggage as she transited a Moscow airport. Her case caused an outcry in Israel and her release came after Netanyahu pleaded her case with Putin, who issued a pardon. — AFP

Palestinian prez to submit draft to UNSC

United Nations: Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas will visit the UN within two weeks to address the Security Council on his rejection of the new US Mideast plan, his ambassador to the body has said.

At that time a draft resolution will be submitted to the council, Riyadh Mansour told reporters, without specifying a date for the visit.

He said Abbas would take part in an Arab League meeting on

US: China party central threat

London, Jan. 30: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday called China's ruling Communist Party "the central threat of our times" that challenges Western principles.

"The Chinese Communist Party presents the central threat of our times," Washington's top diplomat said at a joint appearance with Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab.

He added that Western allies must "ensure that the next century is governed by these Western democratic principles".

Pompeo's remarks came as Washington presses Britain and other European states to exclude China's Huawei tech giant from their next-generation 5G mobile networks.

Britain on Tuesday decided to allow Huawei to build "non-core" elements of 5G that do not handle sensitive personal data. It also capped Huawei's market share to 35 percent and promised to lower it in the future.

Brussels adopted a similar policy for EU member states on Wednesday.

US officials have warned that Washington



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrives at 10 Downing Street in London on Thursday — AP

might have to stop sharing intelligence with London if it included any elements of the Chinese company in its new network because of the security risk. But Pompeo appeared to walk back that threat on Thursday. The US-UK intelligence sharing "relationship is deep, it is strong, it will remain," Pompeo said. He added that he was "confident ... as we move forward together to make sure the next generation of technology is secure". — AFP

Pompeo trumpets Brexit benefits

London, Jan. 30: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo predicted on Thursday that Brexit would bring "enormous benefits" to the United States and the UK, during a visit to Britain on the eve of its historic departure from the European Union. Ahead of talks with Prime Minister Boris Johnson about a post-Brexit trade deal and

other key issues, Pompeo said he was optimistic about Britain's nearly half a century of EU membership ending late Friday. "There were things that the United Kingdom was required to do as part of being a member of the EU, and they'll be able to do them differently now," Pompeo told a think-tank audience in London. — AFP

Pak authorities seek Sharif's medical report

Lahore, Jan. 30: Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who is in London on bail on medical grounds, has been given three days by the Punjab government to submit the required reports as it deliberates on his application seeking an extension of his stay abroad.

The 69-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo is undergoing treatment in London for coronary artery disease. Sharif, who left for the British capital on November 19 in an air ambulance a month after he was released on bail from a seven-year prison sentence for corruption, has sought an extension in his stay abroad from the Punjab government - which suspects that the illness is a ruse to escape jail. The provincial home department, an letter to Sharif, said that a medical board had found the reports submitted by his counsel Khawaja Haris to be insufficient. The letter warns Sharif that if he fails to provide the required reports, then the competent authority will decide on the stay matter "as per the available facts brought on record". — PTI

PERSONAL | INSIGHT

French journalist Anne-Isabelle Tollet's book *Enfin libre!* on Bibi's life has been released

‘Finally free!’ Asia Bibi on Pak prison, life in exile



Asia Bibi was sentenced to death on blasphemy charges by a Pakistani court in 2010 but then dramatically acquitted in 2018. — AFP

Paris, Jan. 30: Recounting the hellish conditions of eight years spent on death row on blasphemy charges but also the pain of exile, Pakistani Christian Asia Bibi has broken her silence to give her first personal insight into an ordeal that caused international outrage. Bibi was sentenced to death on blasphemy charges by a Pakistani court in 2010 but then dramatically acquitted in 2018. She now lives in Canada at an undisclosed location. French journalist Anne-Isabelle Tollet, who has co-written a book

about her, was once based in the country where she led a support campaign for her. She is the only reporter to have met Bibi during her stay in Canada. In the book *Enfin libre! (Finally Free)* - published in French on Wednesday with an English version due out in September - Bibi recounts her arrest, the conditions of prison, the relief of her release but also the difficulty of adjusting to a new life. "You already know my story through the media," she said in the book. "But you are far from understanding my daily

I became a prisoner of fanaticism. In prison, tears were the only companion in the cell... My wrists are burning me, it is hard to breathe. My neck... is encased in an iron collar that the guard can tighten with a huge nut. — ASIA BIBI

life in prison or my new life," she said. "I became a prisoner of fanaticism," she said. In prison, "tears were the only companions in the cell". She described the horrendous conditions

in squalid jails in Pakistan where she was kept chained and jeered at by other detainees. "My wrists are burning me, it is hard to breathe. My neck... is encased in an iron collar that the guard can tighten with a huge nut," she wrote. "A long chain drags along on the filthy ground. This connects my neck to the handcuffed hand who pulls me like a dog on a lead. "Deep within me, a dull fear takes me towards the depths of darkness. A lacerating fear that will never leave me." Many other prisoners showed her no

pity. "I am startled by the cry of a woman. 'To death!' The other women join in. 'Hanged!' Hanged!" Blasphemy is an incendiary charge in Muslim-majority Pakistan, where even the whiff of an unsubstantiated allegation of insulting Islam can spark death at the hands of mobs. Her acquittal on the charges, which stemmed from an incident in 2009 when she argued with a Muslim co-labourer, resulted in violent protests that paralysed the country led by firebrand cleric, Khadim Hussain Rizvi. — AFP





## Big heart

Alibaba founder Jack Ma pledges \$14.5 million to help fight coronavirus

## IN BRIEF

### 2 defunct satellites in near collision

**New York:** Two defunct satellites travelling at roughly 33,000 mph had an “alarming” chance of colliding in orbit in the skies above the skies on Pittsburgh, but narrowly missed each other. On Monday, LeoLabs, a California company that tracks space debris in low earth orbit, announced it was tracking the two decommissioned spacecraft. It said there was a chance they could hit at 6.39pm local time on Wednesday. One was the Infrared Astronomical Satellite (IRAS), a space telescope that was a joint mission between Nasa, the Netherlands and the UK. It ran out of fuel in November 1983. The second, GGSE-4, was an experimental US payload launched in May 1967 by the US Air Force. If there had been a collision they could potentially create thousands of pieces of new space debris.

### Pluck tyre off croc neck for reward!

**Jakarta:** Indonesian authorities are offering a reward to anyone who can rescue a salt-water crocodile with a motor-bike tyre stuck around its neck — and survive. The contest will see one brave croc hunter land an unspecified amount of cash, but it will mean coming face to face with the 13-foot (4-metre) reptile Palu, the capital of Central Sulawesi. Local conservation authorities have been trying — and failing — for several years to find a way to untangle the croc after video showed it gasping for air. That sparked worries the tyre was slowly killing the beast. After a recent sighting, the province’s governor instructed his resource-strapped conservation agency to figure out how to end years of fruitless attempts.

### Fugitive giraffe found dead in canal

**Bangkok:** A giraffe whose daring escape from convoy en route to a Thai breeding station won hearts online was found dead in a lotus-clogged canal on Thursday after a two-day search using drones and hang gliders. Two giraffes made a bid for freedom from the back of a poorly secured truck as it slowed in highway traffic after leaving Bangkok’s main airport on Tuesday. The animals had been imported from an unnamed African country and destined for Safari World, a popular attraction outside Bangkok which describes itself as “an open zoo”. Rescuers caught one of the creatures after stunning it with a tranquiliser gun, but the other escaped into scrubland — cheered on by hundreds of thousands of people on social media. The story took a tragic turn, however, after it was found dead in a lotus swamp near a main road, according to Safari World. Vets will determine the cause of death.

### RECORD HEAT FORECAST FOR COMING 5 YRS

**London, Jan. 30:** The coming five years are anticipated to be warmest period on record, Britain’s Met Office said Thursday, warning of an outside chance of Earth breaching the Paris deal 1.5C temperature rise cap before 2024. In a regular “decadal forecast” looking at predicted near-term climate trends, it said that each year between 2020-2024 is set to be 1.06-1.62C hotter than historical averages. The Met Office forecast it “likely” that the hottest year on record, 2016, will be beaten in that time frame. “The latest five-year forecast suggests continued warming, consistent with sustained high levels of greenhouse gases,” said Doug Smith, a Met Office fellow and decadal prediction expert. “Uncertainties exist within the forecast, but most regions are expected to be warmer and forecast patterns suggest enhanced warming over land, especially northern parts of Europe, Asia and North America — extending the ongoing trend.” The forecast said that barring a large volcanic eruption that could dent global heating with Sun-blocking debris, average five-year temperatures are expected to be between 1.15-1.46C above pre-industrial levels. That compares with an average warming in 2015-2019 of 1.09C. All years in that period were among the hottest on record.

# Toll 170 as more nations hit

## Locally spread Coronavirus cases outside China worrying health officials globally

**Beijing, Jan. 30:** China counted 170 deaths from a new virus Thursday and more countries reported infections, including some spread locally, as foreign evacuees from China’s worst-hit region returned home to medical observation and even isolation. Locally spread cases outside China have been a worrying concern among global health officials, as potential signs of the virus spreading more easily and the difficulty of containing it. The World Health Organisation is reconvening experts on Thursday to assess whether the outbreak should be declared a global emergency.

The virus has infected more people in China than were sickened there during the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak, another type of coronavirus. Thursday’s figures for mainland China cover the previous 24 hours and represent an increase of 38 deaths and 1,737 cases for a total of 7,711. Of the new deaths, 37 were in Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital, and one in the southwestern province of Sichuan.

Three of Japan’s confirmed cases were among a group of evacuees who returned on a government-chartered flight from Wuhan on Wednesday. Japan’s foreign ministry said a second flight carrying 210 Japanese evacuees landed Thursday at Tokyo’s Haneda airport. Reports said nine of those aboard the flight showed signs of cough and fever.

Philippine health officials say a woman who travelled to the country from Wuhan via Hong Kong had tested positive.

A flight arranged between the European Union and China departed Portugal en route to China to bring back 350 Europeans from the affected area. The US said additional flights were planned for around Monday, after it evacuated 195 Americans from Wuhan on Wednesday.

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● Three of Japan’s confirmed cases were among a group of evacuees who returned on a government-chartered flight from Wuhan on Wednesday.

● Over 6,000 tourists were blocked on a cruise ship in Italy on Thursday after the vast liner was placed on lockdown over two suspected cases.

● Philippine health officials say a woman who travelled from Wuhan via Hong Kong had tested positive.

● Israel’s El Al, Spain’s Iberia and Korean Air joined the list of airlines suspending or reducing service to China.

They are being tested and monitored at a Southern California military base.

New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and other countries are also trying to get out their citizens. Taiwan, the self-governing republic China considers its own territory, has also asked to be able to repatriate its passport holders from Wuhan, but it and the United Kingdom said they were awaiting approval from Beijing.

Israel’s El Al, Spain’s Iberia and Korean Air joined the growing list of airlines suspending or reducing service to China.

Chinese authorities are “stepping up efforts to ensure continuous supply and stable prices,” Xinhua reported.



Travellers wearing face masks line up to check in for a flight at Beijing Capital International Airport, in Beijing on Thursday. — AP

## China orders increased food production

**Beijing, Jan. 30:** China ordered its farmers to ramp up food production Thursday following days of rising prices, with agricultural supplies disrupted by a deadly viral outbreak. The government in Beijing has taken extraordinary steps to combat the spread of the new coronavirus, restricting transport across the country and effectively locking down more than 50 million people in Hubei province, the epicentre of the disease.

But officials said some local initiatives, such as roadblocks to stop travel between provinces, had also obstructed produce

supply chains. “This has caused vegetables and other products... to be unable to leave the villages and reach cities, as well as difficulty in replenishing the feed for livestock and poultry in time,” the agriculture, transport and public security ministries said in a joint statement. It said feed producers should “speed up” production to meet demand for animal feed, and slaughterhouses needed to “increase the effective supply of livestock and poultry products”.

The notice came as the China Shouguang vegetable price index, a daily benchmark of national produce

## Foreigners in Wuhan cry for help

**Wuhan, Jan. 30:** Pregnant, newly-wed and now trapped at the Chinese epicentre of a global health crisis, Thai national Aphinya is among thousands of foreigners desperate to escape — and watching helplessly as the US and Japan fly their citizens home.

“I feel hurt that they don’t care about us,” Aphinya Thasripech, 32, said.

“Either I could starve or I’ll get infected and die,” said the factory worker, who is two months pregnant. “Sooner or later, it will get to us,” she said. Thai medical student Badeephak Kaosala has barricaded himself in his dorm room with a dwindling supply of food and water. “China has given permission to so many other countries... so

we feel really down,” Kaosala, 23, said.

“Fear, frustration and panic” is mounting among those still trapped, said Pakistani Ruqia Shaikh, 33. Fadil, an Indonesian doctoral student in Wuhan, said he and his friends are desperate to leave. “The key thing is that we want to get out of here,” he said. — AFP

## Wary of irking China, Trump offers rosy take

**Washington, Jan. 30:** President Donald Trump had plenty to talk about during his latest big campaign rally, regaling a friendly crowd in New Jersey with his thoughts about impeachment, the economy, the border wall, local politics and much more.

But he was conspicuously quiet about one big issue that has much of the globe on pins and needles: The spread of a deadly new type of coronavirus. A self-described germaphobe, Trump has had little to say in public about the new virus that so far has killed more than 170 people in China, sickened thousands more there and led to a handful of confirmed cases in the US. And he speaks in broad terms when he does talk about it. “We’re very much involved with them, right now, on the virus that’s going around,” Trump said of China before signing a trade

## CPEC work stopped

SHAFQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, JAN. 30

Work on the project under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan’s South Punjab was Thursday stopped in wake of growing coronavirus.

Officials said the screening process of 71 Chinese engineers and their security personnel was underway to diagnose any kind of virus in their bodies.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office said that all measures were being taken for

the assistance, safety and welfare of Pakistani nationals in China ever since the outbreak of coronavirus there.

At her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Foreign Office spokesperson Aisha Farooqui said, “Our embassy and consulates in China have reached out to all the Pakistani students. She said we are also in touch with the Chinese officials who have assured us about the safety and wellbeing of our nationals.”

ade deal at the White House on Wednesday.

He said he had discussed the situation with Chinese President Xi Jinping and added, “We’re working closely with China.” Aides say Trump’s careful

approach is part of a political strategy to avoid upsetting the stock market or angering China by calling too much attention to the virus or blaming Beijing for not managing the situation better. — AP

## AUSTRALIA DEFENDS PLAN TO CREATE QUARANTINE CAMP

**Canberra, Jan. 30:** Australia’s government on Thursday defended its plan to send citizens evacuated from the epicentre of China’s novel coronavirus emergency to a remote island used to banish asylum seekers and convicted criminals, despite warnings that that some Australians would prefer to stay in China.

Australia is preparing to send citizens rescued from Hubei province to a quarantine camp on remote Christmas Island. The Indian Ocean island has been used by the government in a widely condemned policy of banishing asylum seekers who attempt to arrive by boat to offshore camps. Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton said notorious Christmas Island struck the right balance between supporting Australians stranded in China and protecting the wider population. — AP

## Russia to shut China border amid outbreak

**Moscow, Jan. 30:** Russia said on Thursday it was closing its border with China to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus and would stop issuing electronic visas to Chinese nationals.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin told a government meeting that the order had been signed “to take measures to close the border (with China) in the Far East”.

“We have to do everything to protect our people,” he said. The Russian foreign ministry said that as of Thursday it would stop issuing Chinese citizens with electronic visas, which can be used to cross into parts of the Far East and western Russia. The foreign ministry also advised Russians to refrain from travelling to China and for those in China to get in touch with the Russian embassy. — AFP



Picture for representation.

■ **THE TIBETAN** government-in-exile raised doubts over China’s intent behind the decision to shut Dalai Lama’s official home as part of its efforts to prevent the spread of coronavirus, describing it as a political move to stop Tibetans from celebrating their upcoming New Year. “China is playing politics over His Holiness’ palace. The Potala Palace is not just under the Chinese government but also a UNESCO World Heritage site. So, they should be careful in handling a holy place like Potala Palace,” said Yeshe Phuntsok, Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament.

## PIO succumbs to volcano injury

**Wellington, Jan. 30:** An Indian-American businessman has become the latest victim of a massive volcanic eruption in New Zealand after he succumbed to his burn injuries, over a month after his wife died in the same tragedy, leaving their three children orphaned.

Pratap Singh and his wife Mayuuri were visiting the popular White Island in New Zealand when the volcano erupted on December 9. Mayuuri died on December 22, Atlanta Journal-Constitution media reported. Police in New Zealand on Wednesday confirmed that another victim died of his injuries in Middlemore Hospital. Singh also

known as Paul had suffered burns to more than half of his body and had remained in the hospital in New Zealand’s Auckland, where he died this week, New Zealand Herald reported.

The Stone Mountain couple’s three children and Mayuuri’s mother stayed on the ship and were not injured in the eruption, Atlanta-based WSBTV reported.

Forty-seven people from a Royal Caribbean cruise ship were visiting the tourist destination when the volcano erupted, killing 13 initially and leaving more than two dozen hospitalised with severe burns.

Twenty-one people have now died as a result of the eruption. — PTI

## TAKING ACTION

### ■ Eco-warrior goes for trademarks to prevent their hijack

## Greta patents own, movement’s names

**Stockholm, Jan. 30:** Teen eco warrior Greta Thunberg said on Wednesday she has registered both her own name and her “Fridays For Future” global protest movement as trademarks in order to prevent them from being hijacked for fraudulent purposes.

“My name and the #FridaysForFuture movement are constantly being used for commercial purposes without any consent whatsoever,” the 17-year-old Swede wrote on her Instagram account.

“I assure you, I and the other school strikers have absolutely no interests in trademarks. But unfortunately it needs to be done.” She complained that “there are still people who are trying to impersonate

me or falsely claim that they ‘represent’ me in order to communicate with high profile people, politicians, media, artists etc.” There had also been instances of marketing, product selling and people collecting money “in my and the movement’s name,” she wrote.

“That is why I’ve applied to register my name, Fridays For Future... as trademarks. This action is to protect the movement



Greta Thunberg

and its activities.”

Thunberg, whose protests have attracted millions of young people across the globe, also said she was setting up a non-profit making foundation to handle the financial

■ **THUNBERG’S** CLIMATE struggle began quietly in August 2018 when she skipped school for the first three weeks, and then on Fridays to spend the day outside Sweden’s parliament with a sign labelled “School strike for climate”

side of “Fridays for Future”, such as book royalties, donations and prize money.

She insisted that the foundation would be “completely transparent,” for example, with regard to

the taxes it has to pay. “The foundation’s aim will be to promote ecological, climatic and social sustainability, as well as mental health,” the campaigner wrote.

Thunberg’s climate struggle began quietly in August 2018 when she skipped school for the first three weeks, and then on Fridays to spend the day outside Sweden’s parliament with a sign labelled “School strike for climate”. Since then, she has become the face behind the global protest movement, particularly for young people.

Thunberg has also come under ferocious attack from climate change deniers, who accuse her of being manipulated by a “green lobby”. — AFP



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40,913.82	-0.69
Nifty 50	12,035.80	-0.77
S&P 500*	3,248.13	-0.77
Dollar (₹)	71.19	-0.22
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.71	-0.14
Euro (₹)	79.20	0.53
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	41,524	400 0.96
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	58.85	-0.96
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.558	-0.010
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.574	-0.020

\* As of 9:30 pm IST

## US Fed, BoE keep interest rates steady

The US Federal Reserve held interest rates steady on Wednesday while the Bank of England on Thursday opted against cutting interest rates after economic data eased fears about a dramatic slowdown in the British economy. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said, "We believe the current stance of monetary policy is appropriate to support sustained economic growth."

## PSU bank staff on 2-day strike from today



Operations of public sector banks are expected to be hit from today as unions will go on a two-day nationwide strike following the failure of wage revision talks with managements. However, private sector lenders like ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank would be operational. Many banks, including SBI, have informed customers that operations may be impacted.

## EVs to be cheaper than ICE vehicles in 3 years: Kant

Electric vehicles will become cheaper than combustion vehicles in three years as the price of battery packs is expected to fall by almost 51 per cent per unit, NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said. The price of battery packs of EVs is expected to fall to \$76 per kilowatt hour (or unit) in three years, down from the present-day \$156 per unit," he said at an event.

## Govt rolls back duty sops on apparel exports

The commerce ministry said it has rolled back duty incentives to apparel and made-ups exports following the introduction of taxes and levies rebate scheme RoSCTL. The DGFT, in a notification, said that "on account of introduction of RoSCTL, MEIS for items of the apparel and made-ups sector for exports made with effective from March 7, 2019, stands withdrawn".

■ CEO Alan Jope says all options are on the table

## Unilever reviewing global tea business

**The Hague, Jan. 30:** British-Dutch consumer giant Unilever said on Thursday it is reviewing its global tea business including Lipton and PG Tips after sales went off the boil, while eyeing the "unknown" impact of the new coronavirus outbreak. Sales of black tea have dipped in the developed world as consumers instead lap up fruit and herbal teas, the firm said as it released its annual results.

Chief executive Alan Jope, marking a year at the helm of the company, said Unilever had launched a "strategic review of our global tea business", adding that "all options remain on the table" including a possible sale. "You're really talking here about consumer trends, there's a really quite dramatic shift from black tea to initially green tea, and now we're seeing more and more herbal teas and infusions," Jope said in a call with investors.

Unilever says it is the world's biggest tea company with brands that also include Brooke Bond,



Bushells and the premium brand Pukka.

"The harsh reality is that two-thirds of our business remains core black tea, which is declining. It's not a short-term thing it's a long-term trend, over a decade," said Jope.

Asked if some of the tea business could be sold, Jope replied: "This strategic review means we want to investigate how we can best create value for stakeholders, we have not reached a conclusion, all options remain on the table."

The firm reported a 38.4 per cent slump in profits to six billion euros in 2019 after a disappointing

fourth quarter.

The firm said there had been a "significant slowdown during 2019 in South Asia" and "some market softening" in China.

"The impact of the coronavirus outbreak is unknown at this time," the Unilever statement said.

In food, the firm said it was also pushing plant-based and vegan options, including for Magnum ice cream, Knorr foods and Hellmann's mayonnaise.

Unilever finance chief Graeme Pitkethly said tea is a good performer in emerging markets and in the premium category but all regions and all parts of the business would be con-

sidered for review. Options include a partial or full sale of the business, he said without giving a time-frame.

Black tea is the dominant part of Unilever's tea business, Pitkethly said, selling in 60 countries and generating 3 billion euros (\$3.3 billion) in annual sales.

Unilever has been suffering elsewhere, too, with stuttering growth in India and China, two of its biggest emerging markets, while intense competition in North America and Europe has also hampered efforts to hit full-year growth targets.

The food and refreshment business, which includes tea, contributes 40 per cent to group sales, has been hit particularly hard in North America and Europe as consumers reach for healthier options.

"We are pleased to see some progress on the disposals strategy," Liberum analyst Anubhav Malhotra said, while Jefferies analysts said it could kickstart moves to unlock value in the food and refreshment division. — Agencies

## Kotak Bank and RBI smoke peace pipe

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, JAN. 30

Private lender Kotak Mahindra Bank on Thursday said that it would be withdrawing a writ petition filed a year ago in the Bombay High Court against the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) direction on dilution of promoter shareholding in the bank.

In a stock exchange filing, Kotak Bank said the RBI has given an in-principle acceptance for reducing the promoter shareholding to 26 per cent of the paid-up voting equity share capital (PUVESC) of the bank within six months from the date of the final approval. This brings to end a year-long battle over a decade-old issue between the two on promoter shareholding in the bank.

"With respect to our proposal vide our letters dated August 19, 2019 and January 10, 2020 relating to dilution of promoters shareholding in the bank, RBI vide its letter dated January 29, 2020 has conveyed its in-principle acceptance for the following: (a) Promoters voting rights in the bank to be capped to 20 per cent of paid-up voting equity share capital until March

## New Range Rover Evoque drives in at ₹54.9 cr

Jaguar Land Rover launched the second-generation Range Rover Evoque SUV in the Indian market. With a price tag starting at ₹54.94 lakh at pan-India showroom for the petrol and diesel models, the new Range Rover Evoque will compete with the Mercedes-Benz GLC, BMW X3 and Audi Q5. This smallest Range Rover comes in two variants – S and R-Dynamic SE – and two engine options.



31,2020; (b) Promoters' voting rights in the bank to be capped to 15 per cent of PUVESC from April 1, 2020 onwards."

"(c) Promoters' shareholding in the bank to be reduced to 26 per cent of PUVESC of the bank within six months from the date of final approval of the RBI; (d) Thereafter, the promoters will not purchase any further paid-up voting equity shares' of the bank till the percentage of promoters' shareholding reaches 15 per cent of PUVESC of the bank or such higher percentage as may be permitted by RBI from time to time; (e) The promoters will be entitled to purchase paid-up voting equity shares of the bank up to 15 per cent of the PUVESC of the bank or such higher percentage as

## Gold demand falls below 700t, recycling rises 37% last year

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JAN. 30

Higher prices and weak rural economy brought down gold demand below 700 tonnes in 2019. Recycling went up 37 per cent, while import dropped 14 per cent during the year and the grey market continued to be robust.

In 2019, the gold demand stood at 690.4 tonnes compared to 760.4 tonnes in 2018 – a drop of 9 per cent, as per the World Gold Council data. The market saw the demand coming below 700 tonnes last time in 2016 to 666 tonnes when the excise duty hike and demonetization hit the sentiments. Before that,

the demand fell to 642 tonnes a decade back in 2009. Usually, India's gold demand hovers around 800 tonnes.

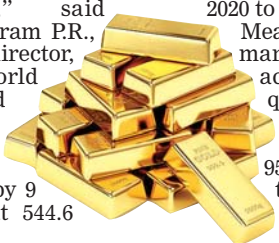
"The gold price hike in the second half of the year saw demand coming down by 22 per cent against 7 per cent increase in the first half. Besides, the rural economy was down and slower income growth hit the buying capacity of the consumers," said Somasundaram P.R., managing director, India, World Gold Council.

Jewellery demand was down by 54.6

tonnes as compared to 598 tonnes and investment demand declined by 10 per cent to 145.8 tonnes in comparison to 162.4 tonnes in 2018.

In fact, demand in all the key gold consuming markets were down except Egypt and Turkey and China saw the demand falling by 15 per cent, he added.

However, WGC expects the demand to rebound in 2020 to 700 – 800 tonnes. Meanwhile, the grey market remained active and the quantum of smuggled gold went up from 90-95 tonnes in 2018 to 115-120 tonnes in 2019.



## Rahul Bajaj, JLR's Speth to retire

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JAN. 30

Two leading lights of India's automobile sector are retiring from their executive roles this year. While Bajaj Auto said its long serving chairman Rahul Bajaj will step down in April to become a non-executive director, Tata Motors said Ralf Speth, executive director and CEO at Jaguar Land Rover, will retire in September but would continue as a non-executive vice chairman at JLR.

Bajaj, 75, who has been a director of the company since April 1, 1970, was last reappointed by the board for a five-year term with effect from April 1, 2015,

and his term as executive chairman is expiring on March 31, 2020, the company said in a regulatory filing.

Under his stewardship Pune-based Bajaj Auto saw its turnover grow to Rs 12,000 crore from just Rs 7.2 crore, with the firm's scooters becoming the mainstay. In 2005, Rahul Bajaj started passing the baton of the company to son Rajiv Bajaj, who became the MD of Bajaj Auto and led it to become a global automobile player.

Speth developed JLR from a niche, UK-centric manufacturer to a respected, technological leading, global premium company. N. Chandrasekaran, chairman at Tata Sons and

JLR, said.

Tata Motors also announced its December quarter results on Thursday. It net profit stood at Rs 1,738.3 crore in Q3 compared with a record loss of Rs 26,993 crore a year ago, the company said in an exchange filing. Revenue fell 6.8 per cent to Rs 71,676 crore, and operating profit rose 20.68 per cent to Rs 7,393.2 crore.

Similarly, Bajaj Auto's net profit jumped 15 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,262 crore in Q3FY20 against Rs 1,102 crore a year ago, in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year. Total revenue from operations grew 2.74 per cent at Rs 7,639.66 crore.

## Centre may offer imported onion at ₹20/kg to states

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 30

Sensing rotting of perishable kitchen item at various ports in the country due to no takers for the government-imported onions at the current prices of Rs 58/kg, the Centre is likely to offer it at a highly subsidised rate of Rs 20-23/kg, down over 60-65 per cent from the current offered rate. The prices of these onions will also be fixed depending upon the demand and consumption at various states.

As per a government source, "Despite persistent requests made by the government to lift the imported onions at an affordable price, many states with-

drew their orders due to lack of perspective retailers who can sell off in mandis. As there were no prospective takers, MMTC, which had placed orders for import of 40,000 tonnes, finally purchased only 14,000 tonnes, while there are also large quantities of imported onions still lying unsold at various ports."

"Maharashtra state among all other states also did not show interest to lift the commodity at high rates at a time when retail prices started cooling down on arrival of fresh crop. The retailers also claimed that consumers don't like the taste of these onions much as compared with homegrown ones," the source added.

"The government is also luring Nafed, Mother Dairy and other state governments to lift the imported onions at Rs 20-23/kg for distribution in several mandis," the source said.

The government was forced to import onion in a bid to contain prices, which have cooled down now to around Rs 58-60/kg from the peak of over Rs 160/kg in the last few months.

To check spiralling onion prices, the government had in November 2019 decided to import 1.2 lakh tonnes of onion through state-run MMTC. Since then, MMTC has been able to purchase 14,000 tonnes of onion from the overseas market.

## IOC net triples on inventory gains

FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 30

With better operating income, India's largest oil retailer Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), on Thursday, posted a 315 per cent jump in its third quarter standalone net profit at Rs 2,339 crore against Rs 563.4 crore in the previous quarter and Rs 716.82 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Announcing the results, IOC chairman Sanjiv Singh told reporters that inventory gains offset lower refinery margins and forex losses.

The PSU had an inventory gain of Rs 1,608 crore in the December quarter compared to an inventory loss of Rs 8,523 crore in the year-ago quarter. Net refinery margin stood at \$2.15 per barrel.

## Foreign investors concerned of India story: UBS

FC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, JAN. 30

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) are concerned over the India story in the short to medium term, given the sharp growth slowdown and delayed policy response, though they are overweight on India, according to a report by foreign brokerage house UBS Securities.

"Markets are pricing in some expectations of a growth recovery at the headline level, though the broader markets also are reflecting increasing concerns that the growth decline might be more structural. While growth could be nearing the

trough, we believe the recovery cycle will be elongated and below market expectations," said Tanvee Gupta Jain, economist, UBS Securities India.

Wuhan Flu virus contagion reports contributed to FPIs worries though there are still many unknown aspects and uncertainties about the pneumonia. Potential similarities between the Wuhan virus/Coronavirus and SARS in 2003 have led many investors to question the extent of the impact on India's economy, UBS report said.

"Uncertainty on the eventual impact implies that India is not immune. India's tourism con-

tributed only 1 per cent to GDP in FY19. Share of tourist arrivals from China is also less than 3 per cent in total.

That said, China is India's third-largest goods export partner (\$17 billion, 5 per cent share in India's goods exports). Any likely slowdown in growth in affected Chinese cities could result in a further drag on raw material demand from India and thus could drag exports further," UBS said.

Higher inflation is another concern for the FPIs from Hong Kong and Singapore who interacted with UBS Securities recently as inflation could surprise on the upside

with further telecom tariff hike.

"Headline inflation could remain above the RBI's medium-term target for an extended period and a further telecom tariff hike continues to pose an upside risk," UBS said.

FPIs have been net buyers of Indian equities over the past five months, with cumulative net inflows of \$9.2 billion from September 2019 to January. Buying in 2020 year-to-date has been at \$2.2 billion, UBS said.

In January, foreign portfolio investors invested Rs 11,497 crore in equities and Rs 61,637 crore in debt as per data released by Depository NSDL.

## Personal income tax reduction tops budget wish list

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JAN. 30

The budget wish list this year is far more significant considering the state of the economy and the key stakeholders—the common man, farmers, market participants and corporates—high hopes.

Any disappointment on market expectations is likely to trigger profit taking in the equity market, which

has been trading at higher levels.

After the corporate tax cut, expectations of a reduction in personal income tax to ease the tax burden on the salaried class are very high this year, as this would create liquidity for industries that are cash-starved, like real estate and investment in infrastructure projects. It will also help in boosting consumption.

Raising the investment limit in the insurance sector from 49 per cent to 74 per cent also figures in wish lists, as this has the potential to bring in billions of dollars as investment, which can help in an economic turn around.

There is consensus among analysts about likely fiscal slippage and widening of fiscal deficit.

The budget target of fiscal deficit of 3.4 per cent of

GDP is likely to widen, mainly on likely lower personal income taxes, reduction in corporate taxes along with shortfall in duties and poor performance on the disinvestment front.

"Many foreign portfolio investors felt the credibility of fiscal deficit numbers is key. Considering the significant revenue shortfall on sub-par growth, many investors felt they would

welcome fiscal slippage in FY20 as long there is a commitment to return to a consolidation path in FY21 on realistic revenue and expenditure assumptions. Many equity investors seem to be hoping that government will dilute long-term capital gains tax (LTGC) on profits from the sale of equities. For debt investors, narrative around index inclusion/ FPI limits appeared to be key," said a

report by UBS Securities India based on interaction with foreign investors based in Hong Kong and Singapore.

"The government would most likely cut income tax rates and introduce new tax slabs to boost consumption in the market," said Devan Choksey, managing director, K. R. Choksey Shares & Securities.

"Long term capital gains tax, dividend distribution

tax (DDT), cut in personal income tax will be the key announcements investors are looking forward to in the budget," said Rahul Mishra, assistant vice-president (derivatives), Emkay Global Financial Services.

The markets are likely to be volatile in the next few sessions due to the Budget announcement on Saturday, said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities.





## Penalised!

Australia batsman Sam Fanning has been penalised with two demerit points for making a deliberate elbow contact with Indian pacer Akash Singh during their quarterfinal match of the ICC U-19 World Cup

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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# Games

PAGE  
13

## SHORT TAKES



### ICC appoints Anurag as CCO

**Dubai:** The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday appointed seasoned media professional Anurag Dahiya, who launched Star Cricket, as its Chief Commercial Officer (CCO). Dahiya brings more than two decades of commercial experience from the media industry, most recently as head of content and media sales at Singtel, Asia's leading telecommunications group. Prior to that, he spent 14 years with Fox International Channels as senior vice president, strategy and business development. His responsibilities there included cricket rights and content acquisition working on high profile, high value acquisition of sports rights, the ICC said in a statement. He also launched India's first international cricket-only channel Star Cricket. Commenting on the appointment, ICC CEO Manu Sawhney said: "He brings extensive experience across the commercial, content and media rights functions that are so important if we are to achieve our long-term ambition for global growth."

— PTI

### Avishek set to be CAB president

**Kolkata:** Avishek Dalmiya and Snehasish Ganguly are set to be elected unopposed as Cricket Association Bengal (CAB) president and secretary respectively on February 5. The 38-year-old Avishek will, thus, become the youngest chief of CAB, a position which was lying vacant after former India captain Sourav Ganguly took over as BCCI president. Ganguly's elder brother Snehasish will become secretary as the duo are expected to be elected unopposed at CAB's upcoming special general meeting after no one from the opposition camp filed nomination, the deadline for which got over Thursday. Son of legendary cricket administrator Jagmohan Dalmiya, Avishek will thus become the 18th president of CAB. H G Pearson was CAB's first president from 1928-30, while Dalmiya was at the helm for two terms — from 1992-93 to 2006 and then from 2008-09 till his demise on September 20, 2015. An astute businessman, Avishek, ran the back office for his father since 2013, after Dalmiya's personal secretary left for abroad. — PTI

## HYDERABAD U-14 ARE IN DRIVER SEAT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 30

Riding on brilliant performances from C. Siddharth Rao and Abhiram, Hyderabad were in the driver's seat at stumps on Day One of their Under-14 South Zone cricket match against Tamil Nadu being played in Bengaluru on Thursday. Siddharth's 3/14 and Abhiram's 3/21 helped Hyderabad bowl Tamil Nadu out for a lowly score of 97 in 41.4 overs.

However, the Tamil Nadu bowlers hit right back to take quick wickets, mainly through Jai Simha, who took 3 for 23. At the end of the day's play, Hyderabad were 83/5, trailing by 14 just runs. Raghava was batting on a well-made 34 and held hope for Hyderabad.

In another match, Hyderabad's under-16 girls lost to Tamil Nadu by five wickets on Day One of their South Zone match played at Puducherry on Thursday.

Chasing 114 for a win, Anuragini top-scored with 35 as Tamil Nadu reached the target in 23.4 overs. Earlier, Kranthi Reddy top-scored for Hyderabad with 55.

#### BRIEF SCORES

■ **South Zone U-14 boys (Day-1):** Tamil Nadu 97 in 41.4 overs (S. Shrenik 28, Imran Ghouri 2/12, Abhiram 3/21, C. Siddharth Rao 3/14) vs Hyderabad 83/5 in 57 overs (P. Raghava 34 batting, Jai Simha 3/23).

■ **South Zone U-16 girls (Day-1):** Hyderabad 113/7 in 25 overs (Kranthi Reddy 55, Anuragini 3/14) lost to Tamil Nadu 114/5 in 23.4 overs (Anuragini 35, Vrishti 2/20).

# Experiment time

Series sealed, India look to test their bench strength

**Wellington, Jan. 30:** An unassailable lead has opened up the window for experimentation but there will be no letup in India's intensity when they face a heartbroken New Zealand team in the fourth T20 International here on Friday.

Mohammed Shami and Rohit Sharma combined to pull off a thrilling win via a Super Over in the third game for a 3-0 lead and a maiden T20I series win on New Zealand soil. There is only a short turnaround time for the last two matches, back-to-back in Wellington and Mt. Maunganui on Friday and Sunday, respectively.

Both teams spent Thursday travelling from Hamilton to Wellington, and with a similar tight schedule for the final game of the series as well, there seems to be little chance of nets for either match. While a five-match T20I series is a rarity, India's early victory means both sides can contemplate various permutations in light of the T20 World Cup later in the year.

From an Indian perspective, need of the hour is to find a balance between experimentation and the winning desire. Both skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri pride themselves on a win-at-all-times mentality, and they have a rare chance to blank out a 5-0 sweep in this T20I series, thus etching out a slice of history.

Kohli even mentioned the same in the post-match presentation at Seddon Park on Wednesday night. India wouldn't need to change too much to retain a near full-strength playing eleven. There are obvious contenders for certain spots in both batting and bowling department should experimentation kick in.

Sanju Samson and Rishabh Pant are waiting for opportunities, with the former expected to get a look-in. Pant's call-up would depend on which batsman is left out, and whether KL Rahul will continue to keep wickets. While the top trio is assured of places, Shreyas Iyer has been in superb touch and can



(from left) Shreyas Iyer, Yuzvendra Chahal and Rishabh Pant hang out in Wellington ahead of the fourth T20I against New Zealand.

— INSTAGRAM

## LIVE on TV

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claim to pin down a spot on his own as well.

Both Manish Pandey and Shivam Dube need more game time as well. Any of the top four can be rested over the next two games. Indeed it wouldn't be a stretch of imagination if one of Kohli and Rohit were alternately rested in Wellington and Mt. Maunganui. Such a move would allow the youngsters to keep their spots whilst maintaining the experience in the side too.

More changes are to be expected in the bowling department. Sundar, Yadav and Saini are waiting in the wings. All three may not get a look-in immediately. Rest assured though, the team management is sure to rotate

a spinner and pacer each.

Sundar is part of Kohli's new-ball strategy on the big Australian grounds, so he can expect a run-in over the next two games. Saini could replace Shardul Thakur, especially if Sundar adds his batting depth to the lower order.

The final question would be over Jasprit Bumrah's inclusion. While he had an off night in Hamilton, there ought to be thoughts about his workload. He is part of both the ODI and Test

squads, and is a shoe-in for the T20 World Cup later on as well.

While there have been no concerns about any injury issues, the management needs to be wary of overplaying him in non-consequential bilateral matches. This was a previously prevalent practice in the build-up to the 2019 ODI World Cup, and the trio of Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Hardik Pandya all suffered major injuries in the aftermath of that tournament.

It remains to be seen if the powers that be will mitigate this risk factor in their planning and preparation for the challenges ahead.

— PTI

## NZ call up lanky Kyle for ODIs

**Wellington, Jan. 30:** Injuries to frontline fast bowlers have forced New Zealand to opt for fresh blood in their pace attack, including the country's tallest cricketer Kyle Jamieson, for the upcoming three-match ODI series against India.

The 6'8" tall uncapped Jamieson could be in for a potential debut in the series starting February 5 in Hamilton, while Scott Kugeleijn and Hamish Bennett return to the squad after a long absence.

Injury has meant the likes of Trent Boult, Lockie Ferguson and Matt Henry are unavailable for the series. Nicknamed Killa, the towering Jamieson has been using his height to good effect in the domestic circuit, bouncing out batsmen.

Born in Auckland and brought up in Canterbury, the 25-year-old has of late sparked for New Zealand A, including against the touring India A side recently. He is taller than New Zealand's batting coach Peter Fulton, nicknamed 'Two-metre Peter'.

While he was coming through the ranks following an impressive performance in the 2014 U-19 World Cup, the Black Caps tweeted in 2016: "Move over Two Metre Peter! Meet NZ's new tallest cricketer Kyle Jamieson 2.03 metres (6'8) in jandals".

Coach Gary Stead said his team was aware of the task at hand and looked up to his batsmen to step up. "We've seen from the Twenty20 series (India) are clearly as strong as ever," Stead said.

"While the bowling line-up has a fresh look, the batting is very settled and we'll likely have the same top eight batsmen from the World Cup finals."

"Tim Southee has an important job leading our new look pace attack."

— PTI



(from left) Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur, her Australian counterpart Meg Lanning and England's skipper Heather Knight pose with the Commonwealth Bank T20 International Tri-series Trophy on Thursday. — BCCI

## India women to take on England

**Canberra, Jan. 30:** India will take on England in the women's triangular series opener here on Friday, hoping to put the finishing touches to their T20 World Cup preparations.

Matches against England and hosts Australia, two of the world's top teams, will be an ideal opportunity for India to plug the gaps as they continue their search for an ICC tournament silverware despite boasting a team full of talented players.

They came close to winning it in the 2017 ODI World Cup, only to lose by nine runs to England in the title clash. A year later, their campaign ended in the semifinals of the World T20 in the West Indies, going down to England again. Looking at the reverses in the final stages of ICC events, captain Harmanpreet Kaur recently

concluded that India lacked when it came to handling pressure.

This is an area India will have to work on if they are to triumph in a big tournament. "We were quite close in the last two World Cups, the only thing is we have to keep in mind how to handle pressure in the tournaments, last two World Cups we lacked in handling pressure," Harmanpreet said before departing for Australia earlier this month.

The plan is to not get bogged down by the thought of playing under pressure against big teams. "This time we want to enjoy rather than taking more pressure on ourselves, thinking that it is a big tournament. We have to avoid thinking like that and focus on giving our best," she had said.

— PTI

## Rakib's fifer puts Bangla in semis

**Potchefstroom (SA), Jan. 30:** Bangladesh dished out a clinical all-round performance to beat hosts South Africa by 104 runs and enter the semifinals of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Thursday.

Sent in to bat, Bangladesh rode on half-centuries from opener Tanzid Hasan (80 off 84 balls), Shahadat Hossain (74 off 76) and Towhid Hridoy (51 off 73) to post a competitive 261 for 5.

The South Africans were below-par with the ball as two out of five Bangladesh wickets came off run-outs. Off-spinner Pheko Moletsane (2/41) and Tiaan van Vuuren (1/46) were the only wicket-takers for the home team.

South Africa were no better with the bat also as left-arm orthodox bowler Rakibul Hasan returned

with impressive figures of 5/19 while Tanzim Hasan Sakib (2/41) scalped two wickets to bowl the hosts out for 157 in 42.3 overs.

— Agencies

#### BRIEF SCORES

■ **Bangladesh 261/5 in 50 overs** (Tanzid Hasan 80, Shahadat Hossain 74 not out; Pheko Moletsane 2/42) **bt South Africa 157 in 42.3 overs** (Luke Beaufort 60, Luke Beaufort 35; Rakibul Hasan 5/19, Tanzim Hasan Sakib 2/41).  
■ **Sri Lanka 277/6 in 50 overs** (Nipun Dananjaya 66, Ahan Wickramasinghe 59; Jasper Davidson 2/31, Charlie Peet 2/44) **bt Scotland 149/8 in 40 overs** (Angus Guy 31; Chamindu Wijesinghe 3/31, Dilshan Madushanka 2-26) (SL won by DLS Method).

## Man U beat City but lose

**Manchester, Jan. 30:** Pep Guardiola called on Manchester City to learn the lessons of a 1-0 home defeat to Manchester United on Wednesday despite progressing to a third successive League Cup final 3-2 on aggregate.

The holders enjoyed the vast majority of the chances but could not find a way past the inspired David de Gea and went behind to United's first attempt on goal 10 minutes before half-time when Nemanja Matic fired home.

United's hopes of completing a miraculous comeback were extinguished when Matic was then sent-off 15 minutes from time and City held on to face Aston Villa at Wembley on March 1.

"In 180 minutes we were better than United," said Guardiola. "We created chances to score a lot of goals and didn't convert. We need to learn to be more clinical."

City started like they did in racing into a 3-0 lead within 38 minutes of the first leg at Old Trafford as they swarmed all over the visitors, who had De Gea to thank for keeping them in the tie.

"I can't really comprehend how we lost this game," said City midfielder Kevin de Bruyne. "I think we got sloppy."

"For me Manchester United didn't have one



Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne (left) vies for the ball with Fred of Manchester United in their League Cup semifinal second leg match on Wednesday. — AP

chance today."

Sergio Aguero was first to threaten with a diving header that the Spaniard parried to safety before using his legs to repel Riyad Mahrez's effort.

Bernardo Silva flashed a shot across goal before more De Gea acrobatics denied Aguero again at his near post.

United had not even mustered a shot in anger for the first 35 minutes,

but suddenly the tie was back in the balance when Matic connected sweetly from the edge of the box after City failed to clear a free-kick into the box. The hosts did have the ball in the net before half-time when Raheem Sterling finished off a flowing team move, but the England international was denied his first ever goal against United by an offside flag. — AFP

## LIVERPOOL NAIL HAMMERS TO EXTEND LEAD

**London, Jan. 30:** Jurgen Klopp insisted Liverpool are not motivated by making history after the runaway leaders took another step towards the Premier League title with a 2-0 win at West Ham on Wednesday.

Klopp's side have turned the title race into a procession and they moved 19 points clear at the top with their 23rd victory from 24 league games this season.

Mohamed Salah opened the scoring with a first half penalty at the London Stadium and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain wrapped up Liverpool's 15th successive league win after the interval.

Second placed Manchester City are now so far behind Liverpool that the question is not if but when the Reds clinch their first English league title since 1990. The Reds have won 31 of their past 32 league fixtures, only dropping points in a 1-1 draw at Manchester United in October.

With 14 games left, Liverpool's incredible run has given historic overtones. — AFP



Officials pose at the Aman Sanghi shooting range in Sanghi Nagar after the inauguration of the Telangana State Shooting Competitions in Big Bore Events on Thursday.

## Stage set at Sanghi Range for TS Big Bore shooting

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 30

As many as 100 shooters from all over Telangana State will be in action during the 1st Telangana State Shooting Competitions in Big Bore events at the certified Aman Sanghi 300m Big Bore Shooting Range at Sanghi Nagar in Ranga Reddy District that was inaugurated on Thursday by Telangana Rifle Association president Amit

Sanghi and TFA vice-president and president of Rifle Association of Ranga Reddy District Gusti Noria.

Located 25km from Hyderabad, it is the first private 300m Big Bore Range in India and is constructed as per the prescribed standards and guidelines of the National Rifle Association of India, Mr Sanghi stated.

The Range has 12 operational lanes, pitt system, viewers gallery and is

equipped with CCTV cameras, Mr Sanghi added.

The event will provide enough training and confidence to the participants for the upcoming South Zone Shooting Competitions in Big Bore Events to be held from February 13 to 15 at the same venue. The Zonal event will also serve as the qualifying round for the 63rd National Shooting Competitions in Big Bore Events, the release read.





## Down but not out

Roger Federer says he had no plans to retire and insists he is still in good enough shape to win Grand Slams after crashing out of Australian Open

DECCAN CHRONICLE

FRIDAY | 31 JANUARY 2020 | HYDERABAD

# Games

PAGE  
14

## SHORT TAKES

### Madrid put up a Real show in Cup

**Madrid:** Real Madrid made it 20 games unbeaten by thrashing Real Zaragoza 4-0 on Wednesday to ease into the quarterfinals of the Copa del Rey. Raphael Varane, Lucas Vazquez, Vinicius Junior and Karim Benzema all scored at La Romareda, where Madrid were again without injured duo Gareth Bale and Eden Hazard, while Benzema only came on as a late substitute. Benzema will almost certainly start the Madrid derby against Atletico Madrid on Saturday, when Real will be hoping to at least preserve their three-point lead over Barcelona at the top of La Liga.

After their victory over Real Valladolid on Sunday, Zinedine Zidane said his team's strong run had been built on its defence and this clean sheet against Zaragoza means they have now conceded only three goals in nine games. Their stubbornness should stand them in good stead in the Champions League, with a last-16 tie against Manchester City next month. — AFP

### Bala Devi signs for Rangers FC

**New Delhi:** Star striker Ngangom Bala Devi has joined Scottish club Rangers FC to become India's first female player to sign a professional contract. The 29-year-old, who joins from Manipur Police Sports Club after trials in Glasgow in November, signed an 18-month contract with the club subject to international clearance, Rangers said Wednesday. "It was always my dream to play at that level and it is amazing," Devi, who is one of the 14 players to join Rangers, told reporters. She told the club website, "I hope my move to Rangers serves as an example to all the women footballers back home in India who dream of taking up the sport professionally." — AFP

## 185 GOALS! CHRISTINE IS TOP SCORER

**Los Angeles:** Canada's Christine Sinclair became the all-time leading scorer in international soccer history on Wednesday as Canada crushed St. Kitts and Nevis 11-0 at the CONCACAF Olympic qualifying tournament in Brownsville, Texas. Sinclair scored her 185th career goal to surpass American Abby Wambach's previous record for men or women. "Christine has been amongst the upper echelon of Canadian athletes. What she has done to sports for Canadians is given us memories that we'll never ever forget," said Sinclair's former women's national teammate Carmelina Moscato. Sinclair scored two goals on six shots as Canada outshot the tiny island nation with a population of just 50,000 people 31-2. The now retired Wambach finished her stellar career with 184 goals, a mark she reached in 2015. — AFP



Christine Sinclair

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20

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# Federer!

## Djokovic powers past injury-hit Swiss into Australian Open final

**Melbourne, Jan. 30:** Novak Djokovic paid "huge respect" to old rival Roger Federer Thursday after he swept past the ailing star and into a record eighth Australian Open final to move closer to his 17th Grand Slam crown.

In the 50th instalment of one of sport's greatest rivalries, the Serb shrugged off a tentative start to reinforce his recent dominance, showing no mercy to the injury-hit Swiss maestro in a 7-6 (7/1), 6-4, 6-3 win.

He will play either fifth seed Dominic Thiem or seventh-ranked German Alexander Zverev in

Sunday's final, but it will take a monumental effort to prise another title from the 32-year-old.

Of the seven Melbourne Djokovic has made,

### SEMIFINALS RESULTS

#### MEN'S SINGLES

► Novak Djokovic (SRB x2) bt Roger Federer (SUI x3) 7-6 (7/1), 6-4, 6-3

#### WOMEN'S SINGLES

► Sofia Kenin (USA x14) bt Ashleigh Barty (AUS x1) 7-6 (8/6), 7-5

► Garbine Muguruza (ESP) bt Simona Halep (ROM x4) 7-6 (10/8), 7-5

he has won them all.

If any extra motivation was needed, winning on Sunday will see the Serb reclaim the number one ranking after Thiem sent Rafael Nadal packing in the last eight.

"It's never easy to play Roger. I mean, obviously he was hurting. You could see it in his movement. Respect to him for trying his best," said defending champion Djokovic, who is into his 26th Grand Slam final.

"After losing the first set, he got a medical (timeout). He came back and played all the way through. It's unfortunate that he was not at his best."

It was the fourth time Djokovic had beaten Federer at the semi-final stage in Melbourne after

doing the same in 2008, 2011 and 2016.

Federer, the 2018 champion, came into the match carrying a groin injury that he picked up in his five-set, come-from-behind quarterfinal win against Tennys Sandgren. He was seen around Melbourne Park before the match with tape on his upper right leg and there were even rumours that he might pull out. But that is not in the 38-year-old's nature — he has only ever given up four walkovers in his long career and has never retired in more than 1,500 matches, facts that Djokovic said were "amazing" and deserved "huge respect".

### POWER AND FINESSE

Djokovic was clear favourite after beating the third seed in every Grand Slam meeting since Wimbledon 2012, but in their 50th career clash it was Federer who initially set Rod Laver Arena alight.

The opening game, on Federer's serve, lasted six minutes in an indication of what might be in store. Then against the odds the 38-year-old, the oldest man in a Grand Slam semi since Jimmy Connors in 1991, broke Djokovic on his first service game.

— AFP

## Upsets roll as Kenin, Muguruza reach final

**Melbourne, Jan. 30:** Unseeded Garbine Muguruza fought back from behind in both sets to defeat racket-smashing fourth seed Simona Halep on Thursday and set up an Australian Open final with surprise-package Sofia Kenin.

The Spaniard, a two-time Grand Slam champion, reached her first Melbourne final with a tough 7-6 (10/8), 7-5 victory at a steamy Rod Laver Arena. The 26-year-old, who suf-

fered a calamitous drop in form last season, is the first unseeded player to reach the women's final since Belgium's Justine Henin in 2010.

Kenin, the feisty American 14th seed, earlier stunned world number one and home hope Ashleigh Barty 7-6 (8/6), 7-5 to reach her first Grand Slam final.

Moscow-born Kenin, 21, the last American left in Melbourne, was the party pooper once more.

She had already brought the fairytale run of 15-year-old Coco Gauff to an end in the fourth round. — AFP

# Railways, PSPB are champions

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JAN. 30

Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB), as expected, beat Delhi 3-0 to lift the men's team trophy for the 24th occasion, while Railways defeated Bengal 'A' 3-0 to take the women's crown in the UTT 81st Senior National Table Tennis Championships at the Saroornagar Indoor Stadium here on Thursday.

The Delhi squad that had reached the final after 37 years had to settle for silver. On the other hand, last year's trophy holders Bengal would be disappointed for failing to measure up against a young Railways team. Railways women had won the title last at the Chennai Nationals in 1998.

With Sharath Kamal having been rested, the PSPB paddlers opened with Harmeet Desai. However, the international player was a little rusty and Sudhanshu Grover took advantage of it to go 2-0 up. But Harmeet got into the groove to put PSPB on the path to victory.

Top-ranked Indian G. Sathiyam began well against Parth Virman, another youngster from Delhi, but it was no cakewalk. Parth stretched the world No.30 in the rubber and an under pressure Sathiyam dropped two games before overcoming his opponent in the decider.



The Railway Sports Promotion Board team that won the women's title at the UTT Senior National Table Tennis Championships at the Saroornagar Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad on Thursday. Also seen in the photo is eight-time national champion and UTT director Kamlesh Mehta (front row, right).

Manav Thakkar, the World No.1 youth player, struggled against junior champion Payas Jain despite a comfortable 2-1 lead. He conceded the fourth game but turned up heat in the deciding game.

The Railways were in a position of strength going into the final. However, their top player Sagarika Mukherjee was taken the full distance by a junior, Prapti Sen before the former's experience and a

cool head held her in good stead in the decider.

With a 1-0 cushion, it was for Takeme Sarkar to take on a normally consistent Mousumi Paul. But the latter, despite stretching her rival, could not win the first game. She was up to the task in the next and restored parity before Takeme going up using predominantly her powerful forehands with clever use of both flanks. At 1-2, Mousumi had to look for some miracles to

stop the rampaging Takeme as she raced to a sizeable lead and maintained it throughout to put Railways in the lead (2-0).

In the third, Moumita Datta shed her usual inhibitions and, for a change, attacked to put Surbhi under tremendous pressure. Though the Bengal girl did manage to take a game off her, the dice was heavily loaded against last year's champions and top-seeds.

### THE RESULTS

■ **Men's final:** PSPB bt Delhi 3-0 (Harmeet Desai bt Sudhanshu Grover 7-11, 8-11, 11-5, 11-4, 11-6; G. Sathiyam bt Parth Virmani 11-8, 9-11, 11-5, 6-11, 12-10; Manav Thakkar bt Payas Jain 9-11, 11-6, 11-6, 11-13, 11-4).

■ **Women's final:** RSPB bt Bengal 'A' 3-0 (Sagarika Mukherjee bt Prapti Sen 11-8, 8-11, 11-9, 9-11, 11-6; Takeme Sarkar bt Mousumi Paul 13-11, 7-11, 11-8, 11-4; Moumita Datta bt Surbhi Patwari 11-4, 9-11, 11-6, 12-10).

## WORLD GAMES

## Athlete of the year award for Rampal

**New Delhi, Jan. 30:** Indian women's team captain Rani Rampal on Thursday became the first-ever hockey player worldwide to win the prestigious 'World Games Athlete of the Year' award.

The World Games announced the winner on Thursday after 20 days of polling by sports fans world-wide.

"Indian hockey superstar Rani is The World Games Athlete of the Year 2019! Huge congratulations!" the World Games said in a statement.

"With an impressive number of votes, 199,477, Rani is the clear winner of the Athlete of the Year race, where sports fans all over the world have voted for their favourite during 20 days of polling in January. All in all, over 705,610 votes were cast during the poll," it added.

Last year, India won the FIH Series Finals, and Rani was named the Player of the Tournament. Under Rani's leadership, the Indian women's team qualified for just the third Olympic Games in its history.

"I dedicate this award to the entire hockey fraternity, my team and my country. This success has only become possible with the love and support from hockey lovers, fans, my team, coaches, Hockey India, my government, friends from Bollywood, fellow sportspersons and my countrymen who have continuously voted for me," said Rani, who was recently named among the Padma Shri awardees. "Special thanks to FIH for nominating me for this prestigious award. Thank you to The World Games Federation for this recognition," she added.



Rani Rampal

A total of 25 athletes have been nominated for this award. The FIH has recommended Rani's name for her outstanding performances and her ability to lead by example.

Second in the race with over 92,000 votes was Karate star Stanislav Horuna of Ukraine and Canadian powerlifting world champion Rhaea Stinn. — PTI



Pune 7 Aces duo Hendra Setiawan (left) and Chirag Shetty after their win in a PBL tie on Thursday.

## Pune 7 Aces snap Superstarz's run

**Hyderabad, Jan. 30:** Chirag Shetty beat Satwiksairaj Rankireddy in a highly-anticipated clash as Pune 7 Aces snapped the winning streak of Chennai Superstarz with a 5-2 victory in the first double header of the Premier Badminton League here on Thursday.

This was the third consecutive win for the high-flying Aces who won four matches in the tie to start the final leg of the league with a bang.

The win also enabled Pune (14 points) to climb up to the second spot right behind Chennai Superstarz in the league standings.

The highlight of the day was the showdown between Rankireddy and Shetty, who partnered each other to a historic Thailand Open title win last year. Rankireddy paired with Sumeeth Reddy for Chennai and Shetty partnered with men's doubles world champion Hendra Setiawan for the Aces.

What gave the match an extra edge was the fact that it was the fourth rubber of the tie and happened when the two teams were locked at 2-2. Playing the Trump for Pune was a huge responsibility for Shetty

● **Michelle Li had stunned world champion P.V. Sindhu a day ago when the Warriors clashed with the Hyderabad Hunters.**

and Setiawan and right from the first point, they showed they were up for the challenge.

### WARRIORS WIN

A day after losing to Hyderabad Hunters, North Eastern Warriors bounced back to beat the Mumbai Rockets in the second tie of the day. The Warriors were in control of the tie right from the start with Michelle Li, Lee Cheuk Yiu and the mixed doubles pair of Lee Yong Dae and Kim Ha Na each fetching a win for the team.

The result meant Rockets are on a four-match losing streak and are yet to open their account in the fifth edition of the PBL.

Michelle had stunned P.V. Sindhu a day ago when the Warriors clashed with the Hyderabad Hunters. It wasn't much different today as well as the former Commonwealth Games gold medalist stayed off a challenge from Shrivanshi Pardeshi to win the Trump match, 15-9, 15-11. — PTI