

SHORT TAKES

SC: NO CLAIM FOR QUOTA IN PROMOTIONS

New Delhi, Feb. 9: The Supreme Court has held that states are not bound to provide reservation in appointments and there is no fundamental right to claim quota in promotions.

"In view of the law laid down by this court, there is no doubt that the state government is not bound to make reservations. There is no fundamental right which inheres in an individual to claim reservation in promotions," a bench of justices L Nageswara Rao and Hemant Gupta said.

"No mandamus can be issued by the court directing the state government to provide reservations," the bench said in its verdict.

The apex court said this while dealing with pleas regarding Uttarakhand government's September 5, 2012 decision to fill up all posts in public services in the state without providing reservations to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes.

2 COPS DIE AT B'LURU AIRPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU, FEB. 9

Traffic cops on duty on the ever busy Bengaluru International Airport (BIA) road, to check over speeding or any other traffic violation, are at grave risk all the time which became evident when a traffic head constable was killed and a constable was injured when an over speeding car hit them on the airport flyover recently.

After the tragic incident, Bengalureans are calling for smart measures to check such violations and also for better traffic rule enforcement to instil fear in motorists.

Traffic Head Constable Dhananjaya lost his life in the line of duty while Constable Uma Maheshwara was injured when the car hit them in an incident which shook the city.

MP GOVT MULLS OVER RTI QUERY

Bhopal, Feb. 9: The Madhya Pradesh government has asked over 100 multi-national companies and other private firms whether details of their investment proposals can be made public, according to official documents.

The move comes after social activist Ajay Dubey filed an RTI query seeking details from the Madhya Pradesh Industrial Development Corporation (MPIDC) of the decisions taken by the Cabinet Committee for Investment Promotion (CCIP), headed by Chief Minister Kamal Nath, on promotion of investment in the state.

The activist also sought details of implementation of CCIP decisions clearing investment proposals of private companies.

"The proceedings of CCIP and decisions taken therein must be available online for the people. The government should proactively share details of investment made by companies in the state and other steps being taken by it to promote investment," Dubey said.

Following this, the MPIDC, a state government undertaking, wrote to around 120 companies, including MNCs.

MAHA TOURIST DIES IN GOA

Panaji, Feb. 9: A 40 year old tourist from Maharashtra died at Baga beach in Goa after falling on his head while attempting a somersault on Sunday, police said. The deceased, Balu Shinde, was playing on the beach with his colleagues in the morning when the incident took place, police said. "He fell on his head while performing a somersault and suffered critical injuries to his neck and spine. He fell unconscious after that. Lifeguards present there tried to provide medical aid to him, but it failed to provide any help," an official from Calangute Police Station said.

"Shinde was then rushed to the state-run Azilo Hospital in Mapusa town, where he was declared brought dead," he added.



In this handout photo provided by Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Indian nationals who were airlifted from coronavirus-hit Hubei province of Chinas Wuhan, play carrom inside a quarantine facility set up by ITBP at Chhawla area of New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Modi offers India's help to China in fight against virus

Screening of passengers on at 21 airports, seaports and border crossings

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 9

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday expressed solidarity with China in the wake of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak that has left over 800 people dead (811 as of Sunday evening) and over 37,000 infected in that country. In a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping, Mr. Modi offered India's assistance in tackling the 2019-nCoV outbreak. He also thanked Mr. Xi for facilitating the evacuation of around 650 Indian citizens from China's Hubei province.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed solidarity with Chinese President and the people of China over the outbreak of n-coronavirus in China. In a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping, PM offered India's assistance to face the challenge. PM offered condolences at the unfortunate loss of lives due to the outbreak. PM also conveyed appreciation for the facilitation provided by the Government of China for evacuation of Indian citizens from Hubei province," a source said.

However, no details of the "assistance" offered was available as of now. Sources said the Indian embassy in Beijing will follow up with the Chinese foreign office and work out things if China desires any help.

Meanwhile, in India universal screening for all flights from Singapore and Thailand, besides Hong Kong and China, is ongoing at the earmarked aerobridges.

The screening of passengers is going on at 21 airports, international seaports and land border crossings. The Union health ministry has said that so far 1,818 flights and 1,97,192 passengers have been screened at 21 airports across the country.

In Kerala, 1,510 samples have been tested, of which three that tested

positive are undergoing treatment in the state.

"We are extending all possible support to the states/UTs in order to combat the situation arising due to novel coronavirus. As on date, 9,452 persons are presently under community surveillance in 32 states/UTs. The containment and prevention activities are being taken up on utmost priority. All the states are continually strengthening their rapid response teams to counter any eventuality," the health ministry said in a statement.

The number of confirmed infections in China's coronavirus outbreak has reached 37,198, with more than 2,600 new cases reported, the National Health Commission of China said Sunday.

In its daily update, the commission said there had been 89 new deaths from the virus — with 81 in the hardest-hit Hubei province, and the rest in other regions — bringing the national toll to 811.

More than 1000 yoga teachers/instructors/trainers from Mysuru teaching yoga in China, are also reportedly stuck in the virus-hit country

students including those from China are studying in Mysuru and have been asked by officers of the health department to postpone their visit to their respective countries. With three Corona virus cases confirmed in neighbouring Kerala, students from Kerala who are pursuing nursing and medical education courses here have also been asked to postpone their journey to their homes in Kerala.

"All the foreign students studying in University of Mysuru, and those learning yoga in Mysuru are asymptomatic so far. Still, two places have been identified to isolate and treat patients in case we detect any positive case", Mysuru district surveillance officer, Dr Shashidhar said.

of Kerala's four airports during the next 15 days in the wake of the deadly novel coronavirus outbreak.

The breathalyzer (BA) test measures whether a person is drunk or not. "The mandatory BA test for flight crew who are operating out of Kerala's airports has been stopped for the next 15 days in light of coronavirus situation," a senior official of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said. He, however, added that the crew working in flights departing from any one of Kerala's four airports — Calicut, Kannur, Trivandrum and Cochin — will compulsorily undergo post-flight BA tests at the next immediate city where they land.

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The DGCA had stated on Saturday that foreigners who have been to China on or after January 15 won't be allowed to enter India. —PTI

DGCA suspends pre-flight BA test

New Delhi, Feb. 9: Aviation regulator DGCA has stopped the pre-flight breathalyzer (BA) test for the aircrew operating out of Kerala's four airports during the next 15 days in the wake of the deadly novel coronavirus outbreak.

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Yoga students told to postpone return journey

SHILPA P | DC MYSURU, FEB. 9

With the Corona virus threat looming large and Mysuru, the international yoga capital, having several foreigners including those from China taking up short-term yoga courses at over 500 centres in the city, health department officials are taking no chances and are asking foreigners to postpone their return journey to their respective countries especially to China.

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students including those from China are studying in Mysuru and have been asked by officers of the health department to postpone their visit to their respective countries. With three Corona virus cases confirmed in neighbouring Kerala, students from Kerala who are pursuing nursing and medical education courses here have also been asked to postpone their journey to their homes in Kerala.

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VET JOURNAL

First of its kind surgery performed in India

Cocker spaniel gets pacemaker

New Delhi, Feb. 9: In a novel development in the country's veterinary annals, a seven-and-a-half-year-old cocker spaniel has undergone a pacemaker implant surgery which vet surgeons claim to be the first in India.

An imported pediatric pacemaker was implanted in the female dog, Khushi, who had developed a complete heart block that led to her heart rate dropping to 20 beats per minute at 20 beats per minute as against the normal 60-120.

"Her heart was not able to conduct impulses necessary for normal cardiac functioning. The amount of blood which flows out of the heart

had reduced significantly and the dog was having frequent episodes of syncope. "Khushi's heart rate was dangerously low at 20 beats per minute compared to normal 60-120 beats per minute," Dr Bhanu Dev Sharma, interventional cardiologist for small animals at Max Vets Hospital, Greater Kailash, said.

Sharma said according to her owners Khushi was a lazy dog. "During an emergency

ear operation in February last year she had collapsed but the surgeons managed to revive her. It was then when we realised that she has a much more serious issue," said Sharma, who holds a Master's degree in small animal cardiology from the University of Luxembourg.

Once Khushi recovered from her ear surgery, doctors evaluated her and a holter ECG showed a complete heart block.

A team at Max Vets super speciality hospital led by Dr Bhanu and Dr Kunal Dev Sharma discussed the case with their European colleagues and planned the pacemaker surgery which was never done before for a dog in India.

The dog was operated on December 15 and the pacemaker was implanted after an one-and-a-half hour long surgery. "Post the pacemaker implantation surgery, Khushi who used to be extremely lethargic and lifeless before the surgery is back to her normal active self, feels as if she is back to puppyhood," said its owner Manu, a resident of Gurgaon. —PTI

9 electrocuted, 27 hurt in bus mishap

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BERHAMPUR (ODISHA), FEB. 9

At least nine passengers were on Sunday reportedly electrocuted and 27 others sustained critical burn injuries, many of them seriously, when the bus in which they were travelling came into contact with 11KV live wire at Melapaturu village under Golanthara police limits near Berhampur city in Odisha's Ganjam district.

The injured were rushed to MKCG Medical College and Hospital, Berhampur.

The death was likely to rise as some of the seriously injured persons have sustained more than 60 per cent burns.

Berhampur superintendent of police Pinak Mishra confirmed nine deaths due to electrocution.

Expressing deep grief over deaths in bus tragedy, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced ₹2 lakh each ex-gratia for kin of the deceased persons.

Dambaru Reddy, a resident of Melapaturu, said as soon as the villagers heard the shouting the passengers for help, they tried to rescue them. However, it took them 30 minutes to disconnect the

live wire. Ganjam district officials said fires services personnel and five ambulances were engaged in rescue work.

Sukanta Sethi, Chief Fire Officer, Odisha, said deputy fire officer from Berhampur along with other staff rushed to the spot immediately and shifted all the passengers to MKCG Medical College and Hospital.

"As soon as we got the information, our officers along with rescuers rushed to the spot. All the injured persons were rushed to the hospital in our vehicles. The villagers who had reached spot had done a tremendous work by disconnecting the live wire from the bus and getting most of the passengers out of the bus," said Mr Sethi.

The passengers, reports added, were returning to their village after attending a marriage feast at Berhampur.

In another mishap, another bus carried 60 passengers also came in contact with 11KV live electric wire. There were no reports of the passengers sustaining any injuries, though four tyres of the bus were gutted. The driver of the bus was missing at the spot.

India likely to get 1st deaf-mute sarpanch

Indore, Feb. 9: A 27-year-old speech and hearing-impaired man is likely to become the sarpanch of Dansari village panchayat in Madhya Pradesh.

If this happens, he would be the first deaf and mute person to get elected to the post in the country, a social activist claimed on Sunday.

Dansari village, having a population of nearly 1,000 and located about 40 km from Indore, was recently given the status of gram panchayat, sub-divisional magistrate Pratul Sinha said. The post of sarpanch in the newly-constituted Dansari panchayat has been reserved for candidates

from the Scheduled Tribes (ST) category, after taking out draw of lots on the rotational method basis, he said.

This reservation process has suddenly changed the fate of Lalu, the speech and hearing-impaired ST resident of the village.

While the gram panchayat polls schedule in the state has not yet been announced, residents of Dansari say it is almost certain that Lalu will get elected unopposed as sarpanch in the elections as he is the only voter from ST category in the village. Lalu, whose parents died when he was a child, has also made up his mind to take the poll plunge. —PTI

Department of Atomic Energy
Hyderabad Regional Purchase Unit

Corrigendum to e-Tender Notice

1. Last Date for Submission of Online Bid against NIT No.: **DPS/HRPU/NFC/PT/TPT/CAP/11055** is extended upto **17/02/2020 @ 2.00 PM**. visit <https://etenders.dpsdae.gov.in> for details

[DPS/HRPU/NFC/1920/28C4]

Department of Atomic Energy
Hyderabad Regional Purchase Unit

e-TENDER NOTICE

Regional Director (P&S), HRPSU, Nuclear Fuel Complex, ECIL Post, Hyderabad 500062 invites online tenders as given below:

1. (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPU/NFC/PT/ECON/2425**
(b) Description : **Supply & Installation of Large Screen Display Systems (i) Size 98 Inch (Nominal) – qty 1 No. and (ii) Size 65 Inches (Nominal) – qty 4 Nos.** details as per tender specifications (c) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online : **26/02/2020 upto 2.00 PM** (d) Tender Fee: **Nil** (e) EMD: **₹ 1,12,119/-**.

2. (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPU/NFC/PT/ELE/15035**
(b) Description : **Supply & Installation of Servers (i) Dual Socket Server with Two CPUs Populated, each CPU with 16 Core in 2U Rack Form Factor – qty 1 No. and (ii) Dual Socket Server with Two CPUs Populated, each CPU with 10 Core in 2U Rack Form Factor – qty 8 Nos.** details as per tender specifications (c) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online : **20/03/2020 upto 2.00 PM** (d) Tender Fee: **Nil** (e) EMD: **₹ 1,03,940/-**.

Visit <https://etenders.dpsdae.gov.in> for details.

[DPS/HRPU/NFC/1920/36]

Government of India
Department of Atomic Energy
Bhabha Atomic Research Centre
BARC Facilities, Visakhapatnam
Administration (General)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

The Regional Director, BARC, Vizag, on behalf of the President of India, invites Offline / Manual Sealed Tender in Two Parts, viz : Part - A (Technical / Commercial Bid) & Part - B (Financial / Price Bid), from Reputed / Registered / Government Transport Contractors for the following work :-

(i) NIT / Tender Notice No. : **BARCF(V)/VSP/TRP/2019/05 Dated 03.02.2020.**
(ii) Name of the Work : **Providing 07 Nos. Diesel driven seven seater Light Vehicles (Non-AC & AC) (Mahindra Scorpio / Mahindra Xylo or equivalent) for commuting Officers & Staff of BARC, Vizag (including visitors) in and around Visakhapatnam for minimum 12 hrs in a day on all seven days in a week and also other vehicles on "As and when required basis".**
(iii) Estimated Cost : **Rs. 1,06,16,400/-** (Rupees One Crore Six Lakhs Sixteen Thousand Four Hundred Only) (inclusive of GST).
(iv) EMD (Refundable / Adjustable) : **Rs. 2,12,500/-** (Rupees Two Lakh Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Only).
(v) Cost of Tender Document : **Rs. 1,000/-** (Rupees One Thousand Only). (Non-refundable)
(vi) Period of Contract / Work Order : **Two years** from the date of issue of and Work Order and extendable by one year based on satisfactory performance and on the same rate, terms & conditions.

The detailed NIT (including Tender Document) shall be made available for free view / download in BARC website at www.barc.gov.in/tenders from 10.02.2020 (1000 hrs) to 24.02.2020 (1300 hrs). For any information regarding the tender / assistance / clarification, please contact Asstt Personnel Officer (G), BARC, Vizag, on Tel No. 0891-283 8048 on all working days (Mon - Fri from 1000 hrs to 1600 hrs).

Sd/- (D.Venkateswarlu)
Regional Director, BARC(V)
For and on behalf of the President of India

SHORT TAKES

GANDHI'S STATUE VANDALISED

Hazaribag: A statue of Mahatma Gandhi, erected here in 1948, has been desecrated by unidentified miscreants 10 days after Bapu's death anniversary, officials said on Sunday. The statue was built at the Gandhi Ghat by the bank of the Konar river where ashes of Gandhi were immersed. "The statue at Kumhartoli locality of the town has been damaged in the night of February 8. A new statue will be erected there soon, as the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is being celebrated," Hazaribag Deputy Commissioner Bhuvanesh Pratap Singh said. He said an inquiry has been ordered to identify the culprits and a magistrate along with policemen deployed at the spot. "A new statue will be placed there," Singh said. An FIR has been filed against unknown persons in connection with the desecration, SP Mayur Patel said. The officer said he would request Hazaribag MP Jayant Sinha to provide funds for installing of CCTV at the site.

ANCIENT TUNNEL FOUND IN WB

Burdwan (WB): A tunnel, believed to be centuries-old, was unearthed while digging a plot of land for building the foundation of a house in West Bengal's East Burdwan district, officials said on Sunday. During foundation work on the land of Jiarul Mullick in Mahata village under Bhatar block on Saturday, a seven feet by four feet opening of the tunnel was found, the district officials said. A team of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is expected to visit the village on Sunday, they said. Historian Sarbjit Yash said that the tunnel is likely to be 250-300 years old and some portions of it have similarities with Jain architecture. However, the tunnel could also be of any aristocratic family built during the early days of the British rule, he said. The area has been cordoned off and a police contingent deployed as a large number of people have come to Mahata village to take a look at the tunnel," a police officer said.

EXIT POLLS WILL FAIL: BJP LEADERS

From page 1

BJP leaders, however, said the exit poll results will "fail" as they did not take into account the votes polled in the evening. A BJP leader said voting had continued beyond the stipulated time of 6 pm while exit poll results started coming just after that. "How can it be representative?" he asked. Also, the BJP leader said, the voting was "sluggish" in the initial hours and picked up only in the late afternoon when BJP workers actively urged voters to reach polling stations. About 15 per cent of voters had turned up in the first three hours of voting. By 3 pm, the voter turnout had touched only the 30 per cent mark.

REVOKE CAA: GOA ARCHBISHOP

Panaji: Archbishop of Goa and Daman, Rev Filipe Neri Ferrao, has urged the central government to "immediately and unconditionally revoke the Citizenship Amendment Act" and stop quashing the "right to dissent". He also appealed to the government not to implement the proposed countrywide National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR). However, Goa BJP's general secretary Narendra Sawaikar asked why the Archbishop was opposing CAA when "crores of people including Goans" were supporting the new law. Diocesan Centre for Social Communications Media, a wing of the Goa Church, in a statement on Saturday said, "The Archbishop and the Catholic community of Goa would like to appeal to the government to listen to the voice of millions in India, to stop quashing the right to dissent and, above all, to unconditionally revoke the CAA and desist from implementing the NRC."

Chill is back



People walk on a snow-laden road in Lahual-Spiti of Himachal Pradesh on Sunday.

— PTI

Dossier cites Omar's clout

Mehbooba accused of making anti-national remarks: PSA report

Srinagar, Feb. 9: Former chief minister Omar Abdullah's "considerable influence" over people, including the ability to attract voters to polling booths despite poll boycott calls and the potential for channelling energies of public for any cause, has been cited in support of his detention under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA).

His political opponent and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader Mehbooba Mufti has been accused of making anti-national statements and extending support to organisations such as the Jamaat-e-Islamia of the state, which has been banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

The PSA dossier prepared by the police against the 49-year-old Omar, who had served as minister of state for external affairs as well as commerce and industries, states his ability to convince electorates to vote in huge numbers even during the peak of militancy and poll boycott calls by separatists and militants.

The grounds of detention against Omar, who was chief minister of the state from 2009-14, state that on the eve of reorganisation of the state he had made attempts to provoke general masses against the revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A.

The grounds also mention his comments on social networking sites to instigate common people against the decisions on Articles 370 and 35-A which had the potential of disturbing public order.

However, the police have

Kashmir Valley shuts on Afzal Guru's death anniversary

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, FEB. 9

A partial to complete shutdown was observed amid renewed tensions in Kashmir Valley on Sunday to commemorate the seventh death anniversary of Parliament attack convict Muhammad Afzal Guru. Guru, a resident of Doabgah, suburb of Kashmir's north-western town of Sopore, was hanged in Delhi's Tihar jail on February 9, 2013.

While shops and other businesses including weekly fleet market, popularly known as 'Sunday Market', in Srinagar remained closed, public transport services were badly affected here and elsewhere in the Valley in



Afzal Guru

response to the strike call issued by Mirwaiz Umar-led faction of the separatist Hurriyat Conference and outlawed Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). However, private cars and other vehicles and autorickshaws were seen plying as usual across the

Valley. Also, shops, mainly groceries and pharmacies, were open at places, reports pouring in here said. The security across the Valley was beefed up further on the eve of Guru and Bhat anniversaries. The authorities said that the day passed off peacefully and claimed the strike calls were largely ignored by the people. DGP Dilbag Singh had earlier said that the police and other security forces were fully prepared to foil any attempt at disturbing peace. It was for the first time since August 5 last year when J&K was stripped of its special status and split up into two Union Territories — that separatist organisations issued strike calls.

PAK SHELLING CONTINUES FOR SECOND DAY

Jammu, Feb. 9: The Pakistan Army fired mortar bombs at forward posts along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district for the second day on Sunday, a defence spokesperson said. No casualty was reported in the Pakistani firing, he said. The latest ceasefire violation by the neighbouring nation took place in Balakot and Mendhar sectors, prompting a befitting retaliation from the Indian Army, he said. The firing and shelling with mortars from across the border in the two sectors started at around 12.50 pm and was going on when last reports were received. On Saturday, an Indian soldier was killed and three injured in heavy firing from Pakistan. — PTI

neither mentioned any of Omar's social media posts in the dossier nor in the order for grounds of his detention. "To the people of Kashmir, we don't know



Omar Abdullah

what is in store for us.....stay safe and above all please stay calm," was the last few tweets of Omar before he was taken to Hari Nivas for preventive detention.

Restrictions have been put on communication links since August 5 last year. These were subsequently eased. Internet is functional at a few places through leased lines. Mobile internet facility has been made functional but with a speed of 2G with special instructions that it would not be used to access social media sites.

Omar and the 60-year-old Mehbooba Mufti had been

under preventive detention since August 5 last year, when the Centre announced abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution granting a special status and bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two union territories - Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir.

They were booked under the PSA on the night of February 6, barely a few hours before their preventive detention was to end.

According to rules, preventive detention can be extended beyond six months only if an advisory board, constituted two weeks before the comple-

tion of the 180-day period, recommends for that.

Mehbooba has been slapped with the PSA for her remarks which included challenging accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India in case the Article 370 was abrogated.

The statements of the former chief minister, whose party PDP was an ally of the BJP till June 2018, on security forces killing militants was also made a part of the PSA dossier against her.

Her support to Jamaat-e-Islamia group of Jammu and Kashmir, a banned organisation also figures in the dossier. — PTI

Delhi college girls allege groping during festival

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 9

Students of Delhi's Gargi College have alleged that a large group of "drunken men" barged into their college premises on February 6 during a college festival and molested and harassed the female students. The students have said that the men, who were outsiders, broke into the college and groped the students, locked them in washrooms and misbehaved with them. The incident took place during the 3-day college festival "Reverie".

However, a police official said that neither they have received any complaint nor any PCR call was made by the students or the college authorities regarding the incident. The principal also didn't inform us about any such incident. If any complaint will come we will take action accordingly, police said. The students further alleged that the outsiders who barged into the col-

lege were participating in a pro-CAA rally nearby when they entered the college and harassed the students. In a social media post that has gone viral, the students of Gargi College have said: "There were drunk, middle-aged men harassing us, molesting us and masturbating at us... I was groped thrice by a group of men inside that crowd and when I screamed they laughed..."

One of the students said: "The men came in trucks and entered the campus around 4:30 pm during the festival. They continued to harass the girls for several hours and the ordeal continued till around 9 pm." In another social media

post it has been said: "Girls were groped, locked in washrooms, stalked to the nearby Green Park Metro, cat-called, eve-teased and misbehaved with during the festival."

Gargi College authorities are yet to lodge a police complaint. The college authorities said: "The event was open for boys studying in other DU colleges. We had police, commandos and bouncers on campus, and staff was also on duty. There was an arena in the campus meant only for girls. If they were outside that, it was their personal choice."

Meanwhile, another student said: "I can't confirm the allegations of molestation but a large group of drunken men had dropped in and manhandled students. We will hold a discussion and stage a protest." The student also said that when they went to the college authorities on the day of the incident, they were told not to attend college festivals if they are so scared.

DELHI POLLS: 62.59 % FINAL VOTER TURNOUT

New Delhi, Feb. 9: The final voter turnout in the Delhi polls was 62.59 per cent, senior officials said on Sunday.

Elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly were held on Saturday. "The final voter turnout was recorded at 62.59 per cent," Delhi Chief Electoral Officer Rambir Singh said. In the 2015 Assembly polls, Delhi had recorded a voter turnout of 67.47 per cent.

Singh said there is a shortfall of five per cent with respect to the previous assembly elections.

He further informed that the highest voting of 71.6 per cent was reported from the Ballimaran constituency, while the lowest turnout was in Delhi cantonment, which reported 45.4 per cent polling.

Exit polls on Saturday predicted an easy win for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which sought to retain power on development plank, against the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Priyanka visits Ravidas temple on Modi's turf

Lucknow, Feb. 9: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday said 14th century saint Ravidas dreamt of a society where there is no discrimination on the basis of caste and religion, and everyone should work towards fulfilling it.

Speaking at a function in Varanasi on the occasion of Ravidas Jayanti, she urged the audience to take the teachings of the saint to the masses.

"He (Sant Ravidas) had dreamt of a society, where there is no discrimination and where every person is respected. You all should take forward his teachings to the masses, especially at a time, when there is so much violence and hatred in the society. His teachings are need of the hour," Priyanka Gandhi said.

"Sant Ravidas used to say in his teachings that Ram and Rahim are one. We are all part of one god. We must learn from his teachings," she said. Before attending the function, the Congress

Vindhyachal state demand stirs row

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 9

BJP MLA Narayan Tripathy, who had taken his party by surprise by backing a bill tabled by the treasury bench in the state assembly recently, on Sunday stirred a political row by demanding a separate Vindhyachal state, carved out Madhya Pradesh.

The 'rebel' BJP legislator told reporters here that Vindhyachal region in Madhya Pradesh has been neglected by successive governments in the state leading to backwardness of the area.

He said development of the region could be ensured if it was made a separate state.

"Chhattisgarh, carved out of Madhya Pradesh in 2000, was a backward region when it was part of undivided MP. Chhattisgarh has witnessed development in all fields after it was made a separate state", he said.

He was talking to reporters on the sideline of a meeting of Vindhyachal council here where he took part.

Mr Tripathy said he would place his demand in the ensuing budget session of the state assembly and also write letters to chief minister Kamal Nath and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to draw their attention to the demand.

"I would appeal to leaders of all political parties from Vindhyachal to join a common platform to demand for separate state of Vindhyachal and build a movement for it", he added.

REBEL BJP MLA Narayan Tripathy said that Vindhyachal region in Madhya Pradesh has been neglected by successive governments in the state leading to backwardness of the area.

State ministers P.C. Sharma and Kamlesh Patel besides senior BJP leader and former minister Viswas Sarang also attended the meeting.

Mr Patel however slammed Mr Tripathy for demanding a separate Vindhyachal state saying that the region has witnessed development along with other areas of the state. He dismissed the charges that Vindhyachal has been neglected by successive government in the state, saying "There is absolutely no basis in the allegation".

Opposition BJP however refused to react to Mr Tripathy's demand, saying that "The statement (by Mr Tripathy) does not merit reaction". Sources described Mr Tripathy's statement as publicity stunt aimed at catching media attention.

"He is no longer taken seriously either by BJP or Congress", a senior Congress leader here said. Mr Tripathy had stirred hornet's nest last when he supported a bill tabled by the treasury bench in the state assembly and dared his party to initiate action against him for this. He however a few weeks later made a U-turn saying that he was and would be with BJP.

No TikTok videos in Golden Temple

Chandigarh, Feb. 9: The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has prohibited making TikTok videos inside the Golden Temple in the wake of such videos showing the visitors dancing and playing songs, going viral on social media.

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the apex religious body of Sikhs, on Saturday pasted posters inside the Golden Temple complex, warning devotees not to shoot TikTok videos inside the Harmandir Sahib.

"TikTok is prohibited here," read one such poster.

The move comes a day after Giani Harpreet Singh, head priest of the Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of Sikhs, had said banning mobile phones inside the Golden Temple complex would have to be "thought over" if visitors continued to shoot TikTok videos inside the holiest Sikh

shrine. TikTok is a short-video platform which is extremely popular among youngsters globally, including India. Owned by China-based ByteDance, it has about 200 million users in India.

"We want all devotees to visit the Golden Temple without any hassle and are not in favour of imposing any such (mobile) ban, but the way the incidents of TikTok are surfacing, I think imposing the ban on carrying mobile phones inside (Golden Temple) will have to be pondered over in the future," Jathedar had told reporters in Amritsar on Friday.

The Jathedar (head priest) had also pointed out that some of the devotees even argued with 'sewadars' (workers) upon being stopped from clicking photos inside the premises. Photography and videography in the Golden Temple have already been banned. — PTI



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi at Ravidas temple on the occasion of his birth anniversary at Govardhanpur in Varanasi on Sunday.

— PTI

leader offered prayers at the Gurdwara Janamsthan Mandir, and also participated in 'langar' (community lunch).

She arrived in Varanasi, the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on a day-long visit to take part in Ravidas Jayanti programmes, and was greeted by senior Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders,

including state unit president Ajay Kumar Lallu, and other party workers.

State Congress president Lallu said the teachings of Sant Ravidas for setting up a society based on equality and brotherhood are relevant even today.

A 14th century saint, Ravidas is revered in Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism. He was born in Varanasi.

DECCAN Chronicle

10 FEBRUARY 2020

Has New Delhi run out of ideas on J&K?

The government's decision last week to bring two of the already-detained former chief ministers, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, and a clutch of other prominent mainstream politicians of Kashmir Valley, under the mischief of the Public Safety Act, a draconian preventive detention measure, is a sure sign that New Delhi has run out of ideas on what to do with J&K. The PSA is to be used against those who are deemed a threat to the security of the state or to public order. Detained persons can be put away for up to two years, unless they are re-arrested.

The third former CM that the Centre moved against when it attacked the state's constitutional status on August 5 last, the elderly and ailing Farooq Abdullah, a MP in the ninth decade of his life, has already spent four months as a PSA prisoner.

The only other living former CM of the former state, the senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, has been repeatedly turned back from Srinagar airport except on one occasion last October, when the Supreme Court permitted him under stringent conditions to visit the Valley for a very limited period.

None of the above suggests a state of "normality", although this is the message that a group of Union ministers and some three dozen ruling party MPs, who were sent to Kashmir last month on an out and out propaganda mission, sought to convey to the public on their return.

It is amazing how thick-skinned the government can get. After placing more than 400 Kashmiri politicians behind bars, and refusing Indian MPs permission to visit the Valley to assess the situation, New Delhi took some right-wing and far right members of the European Parliament on a sight-seeing trip to Kashmir. Evidently, the world remained unimpressed.

Then it was the turn of a handful of New Delhi-based ambassadors. The EU group refused to take the bait. The US ambassador did go, but the state department subsequently urged India to take specific ameliorative steps. The communications lockdown has been maintained, effectively speaking, although under Supreme Court direction slow Internet speed has been permitted to let people access bank and hospital portals.

Meanwhile, the economy of Kashmir is a shambles. The communication and transportation blockage killed the apple and tourism trade, which sustain the Valley. The especially harsh winter this year with mounds of snow has put paid to even the most notional development activity. There is acute electricity shortage. The only activity which is alive in Kashmir is the Centre's attempt to create a "new politics" for a "New Kashmir".

The aim is to somehow create a cadre of obscure elements and convert them overnight into politicians under the leadership of a few relatively better known individuals, greedy for power and pelf, who have been tasked to guide this flock under New Delhi's patronage.

For this venture to succeed, it is evidently necessary to pack away the top politicians of the pre-August 5 era. This is apparently best done by jailing them under the PSA. This law provides for no bail or legal representation. Meanwhile, terrorist incidents continue to be reported on a frequent basis.

Romney's courageous stand

In an act of rare moral courage, Senator Mitt Romney voted last week to convict President Donald Trump of abuse of power for his pressure campaign on Ukraine to investigate his political rivals. There will no doubt be a place in posterity for the former Massachusetts governor and Republican candidate for President against Barack Obama in 2012 as he became the first senator in three impeachments in American history to vote against a President from his own party.

Till now thought of as a fickle politician without core beliefs, Mr Romney changed the perception with a vote of deep moral conviction against a President he accused of acting with "a personal and political purpose". The populist demagogue, who is now likely to win another four-year White House term, acted true to form in hate-tweeting an ad attacking Mr Romney within hours of the Senate vote.

Politicians rarely act against their own interests. If something is in your personal best interest, the mind rationalises that as the right thing to do, Mr Romney, 72, said while explaining the difficulty of casting a conscience vote. His forceful speech condemning the President was sufficient for Mr Trump's son to seek his expulsion from the Senate Republican conference. The party will, no doubt, hound Mr Romney much more as his vote was more symbolic than significant as the Republicans otherwise held ranks to acquit Mr Trump on both charges.

Mr Romney may have voted with his party against the second article of impeachment — obstruction of Congress — as he believed the Democrats hadn't presented the case well enough. However, he acted courageously in sticking his neck out though the US Senate, disappointingly, seemed to impeach the very concept of democracy by exonerating Mr Trump. The party won over the country and the very principles of constitutional justice. But at least one politician had the courage to say "no".

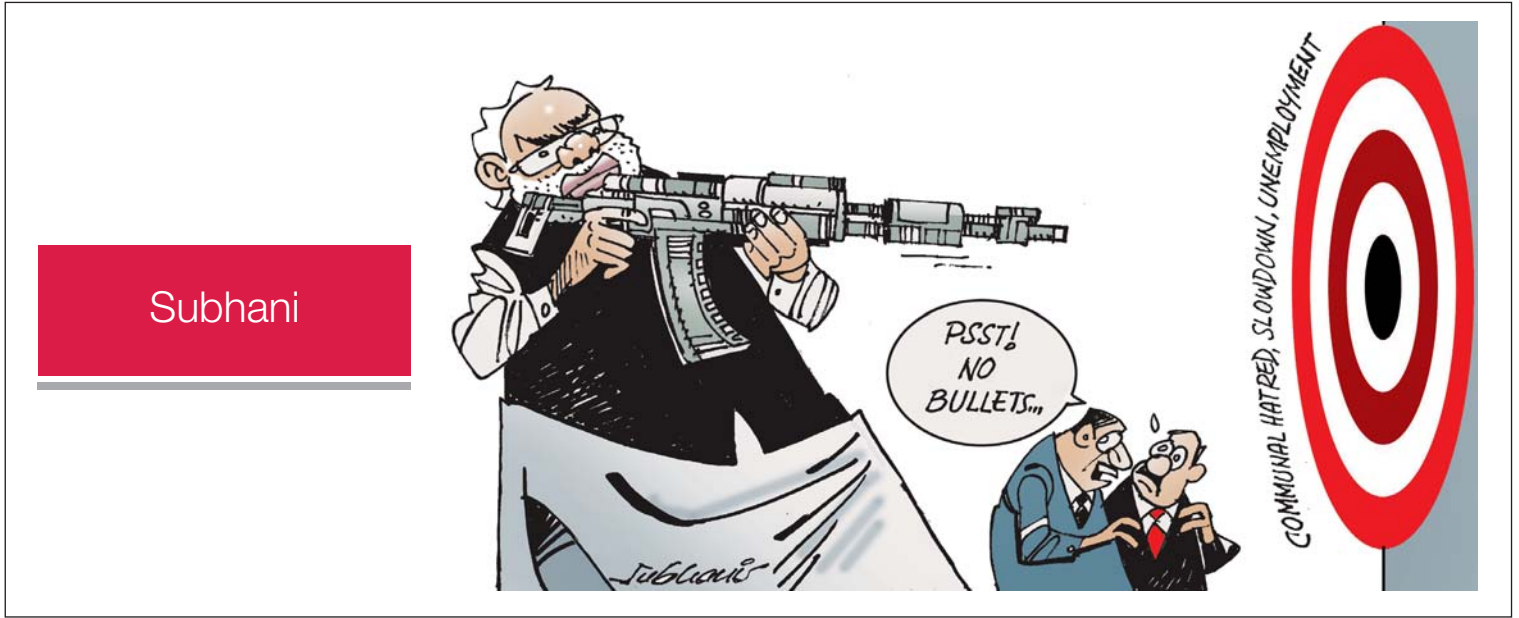
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Subhani

Can crisis-hit India get back to inclusive track?



K.C. Singh

A month into 2020, many significant events are underway that would affect India, the region and beyond. One, the coronavirus pandemic, still coursing mostly through China and with lower intensity in its Asean neighbourhood. Second, US President Donald Trump escaping impeachment and removal due to the Senate Republican majority uniting to acquit him. With his popularity ratings up, he is preparing to make his first visit to India this month. Third, the likely domestic impact of the BJP's performance in the Delhi election, which the exit polls predict will be a rout.

The new pandemic made China belatedly order a complete lockdown at its epicentre at Wuhan and neighbouring cities, at the crossroads of China's global supply chains that may soon be impacted. When the SARS pandemic occurred in 2002-03, China's share of global trade was under five per cent. It's thrice that now and thus can be more disruptive. The barring of Chinese air connectivity and its citizens by many nations has begun to hit Chinese tourism-dependent countries like Thailand, Singapore, etc. Even Myanmar, which Chinese President Xi Jinping visited in mid-January to sign high-profile infrastructure projects, including a Belt and Road Initiative project named China Myanmar Economic Corridor, is reacting to the scare. The United Wa State army, a rebel group and de facto buffer between Myanmar and China, shut down the border with China. Anti-Chinese racism has mushroomed across the region.

The pandemic is unlikely to abate till temperatures rise with onset of summer. Till then it threatens Chinese connectivity-based outreach to the world and its export prowess, as trading partners start seeking alternative supply chains, if the disruption persists. Unless quickly controlled, questions will arise over President Xi Jinping's governance model and centralised power. As *The Economist* has reported: "While Chinese infrastructure has developed, healthcare has lagged. It has 2.6 doctors per 1,000 people, of whom many are under-qualified. That may be exacerbating the health crisis in Hubei province."

India can't remain smug as the virus is easily transmitted, though maybe not as lethal as SARS, as even a two per cent fatality rate can be lethal as the deaths in China near 1,000. This is despite China's deeper pockets and ability to build a 1,000-bed hospital in two weeks. India could face a nightmare scenario with the deficiencies of the medical coverage of its vast population. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has announced a \$100 million grant for creating a vaccine. Many nations are rushing to do likewise, but the results may take months as vaccines are created and tested for safety before release.

Pakistan and Nepal have vast land links with China and possibly lax medical scrutiny at their borders. The virus is suspected to be communicated by carriers not yet showing full-blown symptoms. This makes border checks anyway tricky. With the current state of India-Pakistan relations any outbreak there can probably be quickly countered by sealing the border. With Nepal, that would be impossible to replicate as the Nepal-India border is porous and the movement of tourists, workers and pilgrims is huge. How prepared is India to deal with this is unclear.

President Trump, before his proposed India visit, has authorised a number of destabilising

decisions for West Asia and the Gulf. On January 3, the US killed Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Quds Force, in a drone attack that also eliminated the deputy chairman of Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Force. Iraq now has a new Prime Minister, a more assertive Mottada al Sadr, and more Iranian forces visible in Syria in the Syrian Army's attack on Idlib. If this wasn't destabilising enough, President Trump unfurled with much fanfare his new Mideast peace plan in Washington, in the presence of beleaguered Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, on January 28. It is a one-sided proposal conceding most Israeli demands while negating the UN Security Council resolutions dating back to 1976 as indeed the Oslo Accords, on which has traditionally rested the US approach to a two-nation solution. Palestinians and Arab nations, that still have independent voices, rejected the proposal publicly. Certainly, most would have condemned it in private.

With this developing legacy, Mr Trump will visit an India that is divided over the sectarian and divisive agenda of the BJP government. While Mr Trump is unlikely to be troubled over that, he would have his wishlist of a trade deal, to extract a mix of cosmetic and real concessions, defence deals that he can brandish in an election year, etc. He would also want to wean India away from Russian arms deals, Chinese wireless 5G technology (India having allowed Huawei to join 5G trials) and Iran. He would expect an Indian counterpart to the Houston "Howdy Modi" *tamasha*, hoping to capitalise on Mr

Modi's connect with segments of the Indian diaspora. India in turn wants Mr Trump focussed on joint battle against terror and Pakistani perfidy while seeking clarity on the US endgame in Afghanistan. India would defend its balancing outreach to Russia and Iran. All told, it would be a deft diplomatic dance with subtle trade-offs while each side protects its core interests.

But lingering in the backdrop will be the domestic politics of both nations. In America, it is a presidential election year and any excessive wooing of Mr Trump would be noted by the Democrats, who want to rejig the Trumpian foreign policy excesses. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren want "fair", not "better" trade deals that Mr Trump seeks, introducing elements like labour standards, equity, etc. Joe Biden even supports organising in his presidency's first year a "Global Summit for Democracy" to renew global democratic ethos. However, Mr Sanders and Ms Warren are both neo-isolationists who would want to lower the US military profile abroad. The Trump hoopla will be a good distraction from the domestic travails of the BJP, but popular resentment over the CAA is unlikely to abate unless the BJP offers a compromise. The Trump itinerary may be conditioned by this worry. Space for pure diplomatic theatre, which Prime Minister Modi covets, is unavailable any longer. Pandemics, Islamic ire, the Shia-Sunni contestation to India's west and falling popularity are a dangerous setting for the BJP's shortsighted sectarian agenda at home. Mr Trump's visit won't change that. Only Mr Modi can do so by reversing gears and getting India back on the track he had marketed in 2014: an inclusive and growing India.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh

Pandemics, Islamic ire, the Shia-Sunni contestation to India's west and falling popularity are a dangerous setting for the BJP's shortsighted sectarian agenda at home

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LETTERS

INHUMAN ACT

There are many people who wish to ensure that stray cats and dogs are dead (*Stray cats killed in gated colony kills, DC, Feb. 9*). They do not understand the importance of flora and fauna. Further, they do not believe in non-violence. At the same time, animal welfare organisations must come forward to sterilise these animals at low cost.

Kamala Menon Cochran
Secunderabad

It is unfortunate that the residents of a gated community in Toli Chowki killed stray cats entering their premises in search of food. I was pained to read the report. I request the authorities concerned to ensure that the persons involved in this ghastly act are booked as per the Animals Protection Act, penalised heavily and given a severe warning.

Syed Amjad Ali
Secunderabad

DISHA APP ALERT

It was really heartening to read about the launch of the Disha app (*Women can shake phone with Disha app, alert cops, DC, Feb. 9*). The determination of the government can definitely combat and root out the crimes against women in society. Let all governments throughout the country follow and work in the spirited approach of the AP government. Surely, we will see a society devoid of crimes against women in India.

P.V.R. Sekhar
Hyderabad

Email your letters to info@deccanmail.com, editor@deccanmail.com. You can also send them to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.

Indo-UK sea link to end

Bombay, Feb. 7.

The direct and regular sea link between India and the United Kingdom, established over a century ago, will be snapped tomorrow when P and O's luxury liner HMS 'Chusan' leaves Bombay after paying her last visit.

Vice-Admiral S.M. Nanda, chief of the Western Naval Command, will make an official call on the skipper of the ship tomorrow when the Indian Naval Band will play the liner out. On board 'Chusan' will be the 'Femina' fashion show sponsored by the P and O lines with the operation of the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council and the Central Silk Board. The fashion show consisting of three models will visit Australia and Asian countries.

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle



Anita Katyal
Political Gup-Shup

Exotic spreads at MP's bash; Derek, too, is 'entertaining'

Winter in Delhi is a season for political parties and weddings. After former Haryana chief minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda's Lohri lunch, it was Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot's turn to host his annual Kisan lunch for media-persons last week. Then there was Bharatiya Janata Party MP Prabhat Jha's son's wedding reception, which was nothing short of a mela. The five-star hotel where it was held was packed with party workers and leaders, making it virtually impossible to reach the stage to greet the bride and groom. Though the food served was vegetarian, there was a sumptuous spread including a variety of exotic imported fruits and salads. BJP's Rajya Sabha member C.M. Ramesh's son's wedding reception being hosted at a Delhi five-star hotel also promises to be a lavish affair. He presented silk shawls to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah when he went to invite them for the reception. In comparison, RSP Lok Sabha member N.K. Premachandran's son's wedding reception at the

Western Court was low-key and the décor simple. There were no flashy invitation cards either, only a note on his official letterhead asking people to attend the reception.

Though the high-profile Trinamul Congress MP Derek O'Brien did make his presence felt in the Rajya Sabha during the ongoing Budget Session, he did not participate in the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address and will not be participating in the discussion on the Budget. This is unusual as O'Brien has always been his party's leader speaker in the Upper House. His detractors maintain that Trinamul chief and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has ticked him off for hogging all the limelight and directed that others be given an opportunity to take the floor in Parliament. O'Brien, however, insists he has not fallen out of favour with his leader and that he is actually preoccupied with his niece's wedding. At present, he is more concerned about entertaining the family's guests, especially at

Bhagalpur, the venue of the Hindu wedding ceremony. This poses a big problem as Bihar is a dry state.

A number of Congress members, who were sending text and WhatsApp messages to Rahul Gandhi for the past several months were in despair when they did not get any response from him. Pratap Singh Bajwa, Rajya Sabha member from Punjab, who was among those whose messages had gone unanswered, finally got a chance to check with Rahul Gandhi when he met him in Parliament recently. The former Congress chief then revealed that he had changed his phone number and that Bajwa's messages had obviously been sent to his earlier one. Apparently, Rahul Gandhi was extremely reluctant to share his new number with Bajwa and did so only when the party MP assured him that he would not bombard him with messages. It appears not many in the party have the Congress leader's new phone number, resulting in stiff competition among Congress members over who has access to Rahul Gandhi.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's marathon budget speech exhausted her and listeners. Even former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was left speechless. When asked for his reaction by a media-person, he said the speech was so long that it was difficult for him to absorb everything. Several Lok Sabha members left midway as they had made prior travel plans. Others poked fun at the finance minister with a senior BJP leader insisting that Nirmala Sitharaman was in no hurry to wind up her speech as she had been told that she would be divested of her portfolio after she finished presenting the budget. And when Ms Sitharaman did take her seat without reading the last two pages of her speech as she was feeling unwell, it prompted another BJP leader to remark that she cut short her speech after she learned she had been served an income tax notice.

Recent advertisements, released by the Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh governments clearly reflect the con-

trasting personalities of the chief ministers of the two states. The advertisements put out by the Chhattisgarh government, headed by the earthy Bhupesh Baghel, focus on farmers and tribal communities. The Madhya Pradesh ads are all about hard-selling its wildlife and culture to international tourists and also inviting them to sample the cuisines from the royal houses of the state. Unlike Baghel, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath is reputed to be an international jet-setter. As a central minister, he travelled across the world where he fraternised with international leaders and made powerful friends. A regular at Davos, Kamal Nath lost no time in organising an investors' summit in Madhya Pradesh on coming to power. Next on the list is this year's International Indian Film Academy awards function, which is being held in Madhya Pradesh for the first time.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

Never in history has a man aspiring for excessive possessions or a woman losing her temper too much lived happily. This is a rough translation of one of the numerous 'punch dialogues' delivered with panache by actor Rajinikanth on screen and re-delivered with glee by the millions of fans everywhere. Whether the line has any punch in it or not it sure smacks of abject misogyny. The words are spoken by the hero with a view to pooh-pooing a strong woman character in the film, Padayappa.

But that hero is not an exemption in the wide array of protagonists in his repertoire of over 160 films, wherein most flaunt their male chauvinism, showing women their place with such misogynistic remarks. This is just one of the many pitfalls that Rajinikanth, who proposes to invoke the name of MGR, the late M G Ramachandran, when he goes to the people for votes, may encounter in his political career.

Yes, Superstar, as Rajinikanth is popularly known, has been grabbing news headlines of late by adroitly courting controversies through his unpopular uttering with a view to preparing for the plunge into the murky political waters. Many are upbeat about it and are hopeful of his success as they ask: 'So what, if MGR can do it, why not he. After all Rajini is as popular or perhaps more popular than MGR was as an actor?'

MGR, as everyone knows, ruled Tamil Nadu like a colossus from 1977 to '87 as Chief Minister after having a vice-like grip over the celluloid world, acting in 136 films in a career spanning four decades and earning the sobriquet, 'People's King' (Makkal Thilagam).

Rajinikanth and those backing him in his ambitious political project hope that he too has acquired a charm similar to MGR's through the 160 films he has acted in the last 45 years and wants to fully make use of it in the political arena, in which he has been a reluctant interloper since 1996.

So, can the superstar do an MGR in Tamil Nadu politics? To put it succinctly, of course he cannot. Not only have the times changed since 1972 when MGR launched his own Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which later on became All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and now holds the reins of the state government, MGR was of a different league, altogether.

Of the many things that made MGR succeed as a politician, one was the overwhelming women's support that he enjoyed. Subaltern women for various reasons - one of them is their falling flat for the image he created for himself through his celluloid characters - believed that he was their saviour in those days when misogyny was glossed over in all walks of life. Still in MGR's film, women were shown in a better light. Heroines chose the men of their liking (played by MGR) without much hassle from society and the hero was every woman's dream son.

The manner in which MGR ostensibly revered the 'mother', every woman, particularly those from the rural subaltern communities for whom cinema was the major entertainer, educator and informer in those years, craved for a son like the characters played by MGR. The 'thai' (mother) title series of films that MGR came out with was remarkable. *Thaiku Pin Thaaram* (Wife after mother), *Thai Sollai Thathathe* (Never disobey your mother), *Thaiyakkatha Thanian* (The son who saved the mother), *Thaiva Thai* (Godly mother), *Thavin Madiyil* (In the lap of mother) and *Thaiku Thaimagam* (First son for the mother) are among the films that glorified maternity sentimentally.

Comparing that with the open seething misogyny in Rajinikanth films - of course he, too, has acted in a few films that portray his love and respect of the mother - it is doubtful if he enjoys the kind of women following that MGR did. And when it comes to votes, women form 50 per cent of the electorate. In fact, it was a well known fact that in homes where the men voted for MGR's rival party, the DMK, they could not restrain their mothers, wives and sisters from favouring MGR. Rajinikanth definitely lacks such an advantage.

TOO LARGE SHOES. OR ARE THEY?

Matinee idols have gone on to play larger than life roles in Tamil Nadu. Is it Rajini's turn now?

G. Babu Jayakumar

One of the major reasons for subaltern women's love for MGR was his good looks and dapper turnout. MGR never smoked or drank in the films and also in real life, driving home the point that he was indeed a teetotaler who took care of himself, something which went down well with women of that era in which smoking and drinking were predominantly manly things.

Not only was MGR well dressed on the screen, irrespective of the character he donned, off screen, too, he was always clean shaven in spotless white dhoti and shirt wearing his quintessential fur cap and dark glasses. Then of course his fair skin was a matter of great appeal to all. He was unanimously considered as a 'handsome man' both in reel and real life.

Though Rajinikanth may not lag behind in looks and dresses well in films, he cannot match MGR in his fairness and consistent dapper turnout in real life. How much his dishevelled, candid unshaven, bald public appearances can go well with rural women who idolise fair skin in a society of dark people is anybody's guess.

More than fair-skinned, MGR came across as a fair-minded, honest human being, fighting for the underdog and driven by lofty political ideals. Such an image was built through a calculated well planned scheme, starting from the early years of his film career, say 1954 when the film *Malai Kallan* was released with the help of scriptwriters, lyricists and directors. It was in that image trap that a sizeable population of Tamil Nadu fell, enabling MGR's political success.

Starting from *Malai Kallan*, MGR consistently donned the role of a swashbuckling hero, fighting rich and powerful villains, saving damsels in distress, helping the exploited and oppressed, bringing succour to the poor, ensuring social justice and even pardoning the evil if they reformed.

The Dravidian movement was capturing the imagination of the people and the DMK, with many scriptwriters like C N Annadurai and M Karunanidhi, was propagating its ideology through the silver screen, which was captivating the masses all over the State. MGR was one major actor for whom stories and dialogues were written not only to build a clean positive image of him but also to take across the Dravidian ideology.

So, MGR played along with the trend and became part of the political movement that was sweeping through Tamil Nadu and was seen as an actor and a politician. He was indeed a member of the DMK since 1953, becoming a member of the legislative council in 1962 and a member so the legislative assembly in 1967. He also grew in the party hierarchy and was the treasurer in 1972 when he was thrown out of the party.

It was the political credentials than his film popularity that stood him in good stead when he launched his party and the sympathy he invoked

due to his dismissal from the DMK, purportedly because he, a clean man by nature, asked for the submission of accounts. MGR never faced charges of tax evasion or any such illegalities, which helped him to build the reputation as a clean politician.

Besides, since MGR was straddling the twin worlds of cinema and politics, his fans were also adherents of the Dravidian ideology that he subscribed to. It means that most of his fans were also political activists who worked for the DMK and had sound knowledge of grassroots politics. So when he launched his own party he did not have to train his followers in political nitty-gritty.

His acceptance as a popular leader by the masses outside the party was also because of his track record as a politician with a clean image, built assiduously. Ordinary people saw in him an alternative to the DMK then.

Rajinikanth does not have a similar image as a solid politician to lure the common people and it is doubtful even if his fan base will stand by him fully. For, the fans will be supporters, members and even functionaries of diverse political parties now and it is a big question is if they would switch just because their celluloid icon has launched a new outfit.

So even if his films are drawing crowds for the 'first day first show' with fans going agog by worshipping him, it is not clear how many of them will vote for him and how many of them will campaign for him. Above all, his latest comments on Periyar, CAA and NPR have distanced himself from the people of Tamil Nadu in general.

True he enjoys the support of the elite classes that are looking for an alternative to the DMK and AIADMK but that class may not help with the numbers required in an election. When he came MGR had the support of that elite class as well as the subaltern masses.

Like many youth before him, MGR had started with the Congress on being influenced by Gandhian ideals. A succession of chief ministers with connections to the celluloid world after the landmark 1967 general elections in which M. Bhaktavatsalam's Congress government was dethroned was stretched controversially as those who were shadow ministers in MGR's absence in US (for medical treatment) picked his wife to be placed on the throne.

The filmy sequence was not broken as Jayalalitha



THE RAJINI MYSTIQUE

Now known as a superstar whose films even wow the Japanese, Rajinikanth had a humble beginning in Kollywood, initially donning villainous roles. But right from the beginning he captured the imagination of the youth with his antics -like throwing the cigarette in the air and catching it between his lips and so on - that came to be popularly known as 'Rajini style'. 'Style' alone cannot carry forward a career. Style alone cannot carry that in a society with a craze for fair skin the new comers with a funny Tamil diction cannot survive. But he did, initially pairing with the then up and coming hero Kamal Hassan till one day the duo decided not to act together. He was not the swashbuckling hero even after that. He emerged as one, perhaps after Muratu Kalai (1980) that turned him into an action hero. Soon he was an angry young man in Hindi remakes, donning the roles played by Amitabh Bachchan, impelling the movie-goer to go gaga over his action, style and persona.

Yet, he never cultivated an image, both on screen or off screen, though he built a strong fan club in view of his popularity. Then came the 'punch dialogues.' Some of them went like 'if I say once, it is like saying a 100 times' or 'my path is a separate path' and so on, giving scope fans to exult and whistle.

Release of his films became red-lettered days, at least in the calendar of fans, whose numbers had swelled beyond imagination, though the star was rarely in touch with them. They just adored him and he only entertained them without bothering to propagate any ideology.

Off screen he was seen as publicity shy and as abhorring politics. But in 1996 when he spoke about a prevalent 'bomb culture' in the state, earning the wrath of the then Chief Minister, J Jayalalitha, he found himself in the thick of politics. Since then he has not taken the plunge despite several invitations.

— GBJ

THE STARS OF FORT ST GEORGE

APART FROM MGR, TAMIL NADU HAS HAD FOUR CHIEF MINISTERS WITH LINKS TO THE TINSEL WORLD

C N ANNADURAI
Chief minister from 1967 to 1969, first CM of Tamil Nadu and last CM of Madras

M KARUNANIDHI
'Kalaignar' was a 5-term CM who had the longest tenure of nearly two decades in 6,863 days in office

JANAKI MGR
Was chief minister for 24 controversial days in an interregnum

JAYALALITHA
Served as CM in six terms covering nearly 14 years

HITS & MISSES OF KOLLYWOOD

R. Mohan

Star power has a completely different meaning in Tamil Nadu. The State has had five chief ministers with a cinema connection, beginning with C.N. Annadurai (play script writer), M. Karunanidhi (script writer), Mrs Janaki Ramachandran (actress) and Ms J. Jayalalitha (actress).

Fantasy-as-reality, as portrayed in MGR's catchy '*Nallai namadhe, nadum namadhe*' (Tomorrow is ours, the country is ours), was a musical prelude to the weaving of a heady combination of films, politics and power. MGR's emergence in 1977 seemed to set a trend and even the US, thought of as a more evolved society, soon plumped for Ronald Reagan as President in 1980.

Reagan was the real trend setter of an actor in politics as he was elected Governor of California as early as in 1967. In his film career he was as active in union work as president of the Screen Actors Guild. Arnold Schwarzenegger was also elected governor or of California.

Reagan is considered today, in the light of history, as the best Republican President of the modern age and in the top drawer of American Presidents. Coincidentally, he began his career with the Democratic Party, much as MGR began his serious political innings in the Annadurai-led DMK as the Dravidian movement

picked up steam towards political power. Like many youth before him, MGR had started with the Congress on being influenced by Gandhian ideals. A succession of chief ministers with connections to the celluloid world after the landmark 1967 general elections in which M. Bhaktavatsalam's Congress government was dethroned was stretched controversially as those who were shadow ministers in MGR's absence in US (for medical treatment) picked his wife to be placed on the throne.

The filmy sequence was not broken as Jayalalitha fought back from the ignominy of being ousted from the gun carriage bearing MGR's bier. Claiming the MGR legacy was a tricky proposition as greed for power raged but Jaya, with her charismatic personality, staged the ultimate coup for a woman in politics, by rallying the party around her and kicking the grandees out, Mrs Indira Gandhi style.

As she evolved from a fledgling politician in her days as Rajya Sabha MP under MGR's tutelage, her intelligence guided her long before she was catapulted to power in 1991 by the strong sympathy factor in the wake of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. Only in her second stint as CM

from 2001 did she assume certain Reaganesque characteristics in handling sweeping authority. It must also be said that misandry played a large part in her authoritarian avatar seen in her second and third terms.

The sequence of stars as leaders did not come about without others with equal ambition falling by the wayside. The irony of the thespian Sivaji Ganesan not making it in politics stood in stark contrast to the runaway success of MGR. The different fates of virtual contemporaries in the thespian Sivaji and the people's champion MGR had obviously nothing to do with histrionic ability, of which Sivaji had oodles. Sivaji also played the idealistic young man, the angry young man and people's champion in scores of films and with greater screen rhetoric than MGR and with the powerful rhetoric from the mighty pen of M. Karunanidhi (as in Parashakti, an unforgettable characterisation by the actor). But none of it seemed to click.

injured innocent in front of the media when the release of Viswaroopam was blocked and he even threatened to leave India. It is no secret that Jaya enjoyed reducing men to putty when she wished.

The big question in the void she left is whether Rajini and Kamal can make it, in tandem or individually. The people's champion versus the thespian with great histrionic ability as we saw in the Sivaji versus MGR scene incidentally applies to them too. The phenomenal success of MGR and Jayalalitha in the minds of the people where they were saviours may be hard to attain as they were charismatic personalities.

Charimsa is something Rajini and Kamal have in plenty too but can they cash in on it to ascend the gaddi?

IN BRIEF

Mom, 6 kids die in US house fire

Clinton: A mother and her six children died when a fire destroyed their home early Saturday in central Mississippi, authorities said. The father was the lone survivor of the 12:30 a.m. blaze in Clinton, a city of about 26,500 people just outside the capital city of Jackson. He tried unsuccessfully to save family members and suffered smoke inhalation, burns, cuts and bruises, city spokesman Mark Jones said. He was taken to a local hospital but "wanted to stay at the scene," Jones said. Officials later released a list of those killed: Brittany Presley and her children Landon Brookshire, 15; Lane Presley, 13; Lawson Presley, 12; Grayson Presley, 6; Malcom Presley, 4; and Felicity Presley, 1. Brittany Presley was an elementary school teacher, the Canton Public School District said in a statement on Facebook.

UN-brokered Libya talks inconclusive

Cairo: Libya's warring sides ended several days of UN-brokered talks without reaching a deal to consolidate a provisional cease-fire in and around the capital, the UN said. Another round of talks was proposed for later this month "as both sides agreed to the need to continue the negotiations," according to a statement from the UN support mission in Libya released Saturday. The current cease-fire was brokered by Russia and Turkey on Jan. 12. It marked the first break in fighting in months, but there have been repeated violations from both sides. Oil-rich Libya is split between rival governments, each backed by an array of foreign countries apparently jockeying for influence in order to control Libya's resources. A UN-supported but weak administration, led by PM Fayez Sarraj, holds only a shrinking area of western Libya, including the capital Tripoli.

NYPD: Officer shot, wounded

New York: Two New York City police officers narrowly escaped with their lives when a gunman fired into their patrol van Saturday night, wounding one of them in an attack officials called an attempted assassination. The ambush, which Police Commissioner Dermot Shea said "should outrage all New Yorkers," happened just before 8:30 pm in the South Bronx. The officer at the wheel of the van was grazed in the chin and neck, but he avoided serious injury, Shea said. He was expected to be released from the hospital Sunday. "He is lucky to be alive," Shea said. "He is expected to make a full recovery and it is a miracle." Shea recalled other unprovoked assaults on police officers sitting in their patrol vehicles.

Egypt researcher faces charges

Cairo: An Egyptian researcher and activist was arrested on arrival from Italy and charged with "harming national security" and "broadcasting false news," lawyers and his employer have confirmed. Patrick Zaky, who is a graduate student at Bologna University, was detained at Cairo airport late on Friday as he arrived to visit his family. He was held on a warrant that had been issued in September after he left to pursue his studies, according to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights a prominent rights organisation where he is a researcher. The NGO said he was questioned about his research and activism. He appeared before the public prosecutor on Saturday in his hometown of Mansoura, 130 kilometres north of Cairo in the Delta region, security and judicial sources said.

US Prez hopeful Biden fading out

After Iowa, Joe concedes he'll lose in NH

Trump acquittal gives US presidency more power

Manchester, Feb. 9: After suffering a drubbing in Iowa and bizarrely conceding he will likely lose New Hampshire's Democratic primary next Tuesday, Joe Biden is under immense pressure to turn his floundering US presidential campaign around.

The popular former US vice president has been the national frontrunner for more than a year, but his enviable position is increasingly under threat, and rivals - including a socialist-leaning senator and a small-city mayor - smell blood in the water. The 77-year-old moderate is being eclipsed by the campaign trail by mostly younger candidates with sharper stump speeches, more hustle, and telegenic debate performances.

An average of polling in New Hampshire, which votes Tuesday in the first-in-the-nation primary (following Iowa's troubled caucuses this past week), shows Biden plunging from first place to third, behind Bernie Sanders and Pete Buttigieg.

"To not be concerned I think would be foolish," acknowledged Biden-backer Will Johnson, a 23-year-old law student from northern Pittsburgh, said in one of several conversations voters had with AFP about the candidate. "Hopefully a more concerted effort is made by the campaign to really push out the vote and get people to support Biden."

He said, adding Biden was "the best shot we have" at defeating President Donald Trump in November. The big crowds, however, are going to Buttigieg, 38, and Sanders, 78, the two candidates who won the most votes in Iowa and are leading in New Hampshire.

Biden took a day off the trail Thursday, five days before the primary, to huddle with top advisors about the path forward. But instead of coming out swinging at the start

Washington, Feb. 9: President Donald Trump's impeachment acquittal has delivered the White House a fresh coat of power, sparking worries over the rise of an "imperial presidency."

His victory in the Senate trial on Wednesday accelerated a decades-long shift in the US government in which Congress has steadily ceded authority to the Oval Office. The presidency hit a low in the 1970s, after Congress wrested authority away following Richard Nixon's Watergate abuses. Since then, each successive US leader has sought to further dominate the legislature.

Trump, though, has sparked anxiety: he flaunts his power, and has an attorney general who favors a strong presidency and a Republican Party unwilling to restrain him. One of his impeachment lawyers claimed Trump is free to do whatever he wants - even cheat in elections - if he believes it is in the national interest.

Trump himself says, citing the US Constitution: "I have the right to do whatever I want as president." "It is now arguable... that Donald Trump may well have become the most powerful president in American history," historian Jon Meacham said after Trump's trial closed.

"President Trump is functionally a monarch at this point. If the king does it, it's okay." —AFP

of the next day's debate, Biden committed a glaring error. "I took a hit in Iowa, and I'll probably take one here," Biden said on stage, startling Johnson and other supporters who are looking for him to grab the reins, not admit defeat.

Biden, who passed a 2016 presidential run after his son Beau's death, has seen his path to this year's nomination transform into a rocky road. —AFP



Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden leans in while answering questions from members of the media during his visit at the Biden for President Manchester Field Office in Manchester, New Hampshire. —AP



Armed soldiers carry a person out of Terminal 21 Korat mall in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand, Sunday — AP

Thai soldier went on shooting spree over debt dispute; toll 30

Survivors tracked killer via CCTV

Nakhon Ratchasima (Thailand), Feb. 9: A Thai soldier who killed at least 30 people before being shot dead in a mall by commandos went on the rampage because of a debt dispute, the kingdom's premier said on Sunday, offering the first official speculation for the motive of an "unprecedented" shooting spree.

After a night which saw exchanges of gunfire and terrifying dashes for mall exits by trapped shoppers, sharpshooters brought an end to the 17-hour ordeal when they killed the gunman on Sunday morning in Nakhon Ratchasima, also known as Korat. Twenty-six people including civilians - the youngest a 13-year-old boy - and security forces were killed by the rogue soldier, Thailand's prime minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha said. "It is unprecedented in Thailand, and I want this to be the last time this crisis happens," he said outside a hospital where two victims, including at least two undergoing brain surgery, were being treated.

Prayut, a gruff former army chief, blamed a "personal problem" over the sale of the house for the soldier's rampage, which began on Saturday afternoon near an army barracks and was for several hours relayed by the gunman via Facebook posts. The attacker, a junior army officer identified as Sergeant-Major Jakrapanth Thomma, used a stolen M60 machine gun, rifles and ammunition from one of Thailand's largest barracks as well as a military humvee to carry out the attack.

Prayut said he overpowered security at the barracks' arsenal. Most of the dead were killed in and around the mall. Volleys of gunfire rang out as the siege ran into dawn hours after Thai security services stormed the ground floor and freed scores of stunned, terrified shoppers from a bloody rampage.

A Filipina teacher Aldrin Baliquing said he was ushered into a store-room by staff as the shooting began. "We were there for six gruelling hours... I'm in shock," she said. Scores of people made a dash for it as police and soldiers in masks and wielding assault rifles took control of the ground floor following a gun battle. —AFP

I'M GRATEFUL I SURVIVED: EVACUEE

Nakhon Ratchasima (Thailand), Feb. 9: Frightened shoppers sent cascades of messages to friends and family on social media from cupboards, toilets and under tables as the gunman stalked the mall. Shocked evacuees recounted how an ordinary Saturday at the busy shopping centre descended into horror as the gunman entered, sparking an hours long ordeal. "It was like a dream... I'm grateful I survived," Sottiyane Unchalee, 48, said, explaining she hid in the toilet of a gym inside the mall as she heard the gunfire.

A Filipina teacher Aldrin Baliquing said he was ushered into a store-room by staff as the shooting began. "We were there for six gruelling hours... I'm in shock," she said. Scores of people made a dash for it as police and soldiers in masks and wielding assault rifles took control of the ground floor following a gun battle. —AFP

Israel blocks Palestinian export in trade crisis

GAZA STRUCK BY ISRAELI FIGHTER JETS

Jerusalem, Feb. 9: The Israeli military blocked Palestinian agricultural exports on Sunday in the latest escalation of a monthslong trade war that comes amid fears of renewed violence as well. Following Defense Minister Naftali Bennett's instruction, the military said it would not allow the Palestinians to transfer their products through their land crossing to Jordan, the West Bank's only direct export route to the outside world. The Western-backed Palestinian Authority said Israeli forces at checkpoints blocked vegetable shipments that were in their way to export abroad.

The Ministry of Agriculture statement said vegetable exports to Israel were worth USD 88 million last year, comprising 68 per cent of the West Bank's overall vegetable exports. The crisis erupted in September, when the Palestinians decided to stop importing beef from Israel. The Palestinian Authority claimed most of the 120,000 head of cattle they imported monthly from Israel was itself imported and that they therefore preferred to import directly from abroad. The move appeared aimed at reducing the Palestinians' economic dependence on Israel. Shortly after the September announcement, Israeli cattle ranchers saw a drop in their market and pressured Israeli authorities to take action. Bennett retaliated with a ban on Palestinian beef and other products, triggering the Palestinians to expand their boycott, and stop importing Israeli vegetables, fruits, beverages and mineral water. The Palestinians say their actions are aided at pressuring Israel into revoking its ban, while Israel says normal trade will be restored the moment the Palestinian reverse the cattle ban that started the crisis in the first place. The trade crisis comes amid a surge in violence following the release of President Trump's Mideast plan, which the Palestinians have rejected. —AFP

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties from the Israeli attack. The projectile from Gaza had activated an alert "for open areas only," according to the army, while a spokeswoman for the regional council in Shaar Hanegev, next to northeast Gaza, said it apparently hit an open field, causing no damage or casualties. —AFP



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, second right, chairs the weekly cabinet meeting, in Jerusalem on Sunday. —AP

AFGHAN SOLDIER GUNS DOWN 2 U.S. PERSONNEL

Kabul, Feb. 9: Two American troops were killed and six others wounded when an Afghan soldier armed with a machine gun opened fire, the US military confirmed Sunday. The deaths come at a sensitive time in the 18-year-old war, with President Donald Trump eager to bring troops home and end the longest conflict in US history.

The incident occurred late Saturday in Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan when US and Afghan commandos were conducting a "key-leader engagement" at a base in Sherzad district. "Current reports indicate an individual in an Afghan uniform opened fire on the combined US and Afghan force with a machine gun," US Forces-Afghanistan spokesman Sonny Leggett said. Provincial governor Shah Mahmood Meyakhil said in an audio message to reporters that three Afghan commandos were wounded. He said it was not immediately clear if the incident was a deliberate act by an "infiltrator" or an accident. "It was not a clash between the forces. We are investigating," Meyakhil said. Leggett also stressed the cause or motive behind the attack were not immediately known. In a tweet, the US Army's 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) said "several" of its soldiers had been killed or injured during combat operations in Afghanistan. —AFP

Iran starts countdown for satellite launch

Tehran, Feb. 9: Iran started counting down Sunday to the launch of a new scientific observation satellite scheduled within hours, the country's telecommunications minister said. The United States has raised concerns in the past about Iran's satellite programme, describing the launch of a carrier rocket in Jan. 2019 as a "provocation". "Beginning countdown to launch #Zafar_Satellite in the next few hours... In the Name of God," Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi wrote on Twitter.



gramme Zafar — Victory in Farsi — would be launched into orbit 530 kilometres (329 miles) above Earth by a Simorgh rocket. Its "primary mission" would be collecting imagery, Morteza Berari said, adding that Iran needed such data to study earthquakes, deal with natural disasters and develop its agriculture. —AFP

NEW LAW Most political parties, barring rightwing SVP, back the law

Swiss vote against homophobia

Geneva, Feb. 9: Switzerland votes in a referendum on Sunday on a new law against homophobia that is opposed by the populist rightwing Swiss People's Party (SVP). The new law would widen existing legislation against discrimination or incitement to hatred on ethnic or religious grounds to include sexual orientation. Campaigner Jean-Pierre Sigrist, founder of an association of gay teachers, said it might have stopped him getting beaten up outside a bar in Geneva four decades ago.

"And maybe I would not have been laughed at when I went to the police," the 71-year-old said. The change was passed by the Swiss parliament in 2018 but critics, who believe it will end up censoring free speech, have forced a referendum on the issue. Polls close at noon (1100 GMT) and results are expected in the early afternoon. Eric Bertinat, an SVP local lawmaker in Geneva, said, that he believed the law was "part of an LGBT plan to slowly move towards same-sex marriage and medically assisted reproduction" for gay couples. Marc Frueh, head of the Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland (EDU), a small party based



Swiss billboards on the referendum in Geneva Switzerland — AFP

on Christian values, has called it a "censorship law". But Sigrist said it would help counter growing levels of intolerance against gay people. Sigrist said he supports freedom of expression, "but not the freedom to say anything at all". All of Switzerland's major parties except the SVP, the biggest political force in parliament, support the law. Under the new law, homophobic comments made in a family setting or among friends would not be criminalised. But publicly denigrating

or discriminating against someone for being gay or inciting hatred against that person in text, speech, images or gestures, would be banned.

The government has said it will still be possible to have opinionated debates on issues such as same-sex marriage, and the new law does not ban jokes — however off-colour. "Incitement to hatred needs to reach a certain level of intensity in order to be considered criminal in Switzerland," Alexandre Curchod, a media lawyer, said. —AFP

IN BRIEF

6.2 magnitude quake hits Papua

Sydney: A 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck Papua New Guinea on Sunday, the US Geological Survey said, but no tsunami warning was issued and there were no immediate reports of damage. The quake hit just after 4pm local time at a depth of 31 kilometres south of Kokopo, the capital of PNG's East New Britain province, the USGS said. Geoscience Australia senior seismologist Trevor Allen said coastal communities near the epicentre would have felt "quite strong ground shaking" as the tremor was close to the shore. He said, the area was relatively populated and flexible building design locally helped limit exposure to damage from quakes. "The East New Britain region is one of the most seismically active regions in the world and would generally tend to get an earthquake of this size once or twice a year," he told AFP.

Lightning kills 4 gorillas in Uganda

Kampala: Four endangered mountain gorillas, including three adult females, have been killed by an apparent lightning strike in a Ugandan national park, a conservation group has said. A post-mortem examination has been performed on the four, including a male infant, who died on February 3 in Mgahinga National Park in southwest Uganda. "Based on the gross lesions from the post-mortem... the tentative cause of death for all four individuals is likely to be electrocution by lightning," the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration said in a statement Saturday, although laboratory confirmation will take two to three weeks. The four were members of a group of 17 known as the Hirwa family which had crossed into the Mgahinga National Park in August last year from Volcanoes National Park in neighbouring Rwanda. "This was extremely sad," GVTC executive secretary Andrew Seguya told the BBC.

LOCUSTS BULK UP IN SOMALIA

Garowe, Feb. 9: At a glance, the desert locusts in this arid patch of northern Somalia look less ominous than the billion-member swarms infesting East Africa in the worst outbreak some places have seen in 70 years. But their time will come. Small and wingless, the hopping young locusts are the next wave in the outbreak that threatens more than 10 million people across the region with a severe hunger crisis. And they are growing up in one of the most inaccessible places on the planet. Large parts of Somalia south of this semi-autonomous Puntland region are under threat, or held by the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group. That makes it difficult or impossible to conduct the aerial spraying of the locusts that experts say is the only effective control. Somalia has declared the outbreak a national emergency. Across the region, it has the potential "to be the most devastating plague of locusts in any of our living memories if we don't reduce the problem faster than we're doing at the moment," UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock said.

China toll reaches 811, surpasses SARS

More than 37,000 people confirmed as being infected with virus that has spread to over 25 countries

Beijing, Feb. 9: The toll in China's coronavirus outbreak rose to 811 on Sunday, surpassing the number of fatalities in the 2002-03 SARS epidemic, while over 37,000 people have been confirmed as being infected with the deadly virus that has spread to more than 25 countries. Eighty-nine deaths were reported on Saturday — the highest single-day toll — and there were 2,656 new confirmed cases of the deadly infection, China's National Health Commission said in its daily report on Sunday.

A total of 811 people have died of the disease so far and 37,198 confirmed cases have been reported in 31 provincial-level regions in China, according to the commission. The toll surpassed the number of fatalities in the 2002-2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS epidemic that started in southern China and killed more than 700 people in the mainland, Hong Kong and elsewhere. Among the 89 deaths, 81 were from Hubei province, the epicentre of the virus outbreak, two in Henan, and one each in Hebei, Heilongjiang, Anhui, Shandong, Hunan and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, it said.

On Saturday, 600 people, including 324 in Hubei province, recovered and walked out of the hospitals, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. As per the data released by the commission, confirmed cases in Hubei, the ground zero of the epidemic, showed a drop perhaps for the first time since the virulent virus first emerged in the province in December.

By Saturday, 26 cases and a death were reported in Hong Kong, 10 cases in Macao and 17 in Taiwan. A patient each in Macao and Taiwan were discharged from hospital.

UN team for China
WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the UN health agency will send an international mission to China as it received a response from Beijing. — PTI

Over 70 exhibitors, including US aerospace giant Lockheed Martin and 12 Chinese companies, have pulled out of Asia's biggest aviation and defence event Singapore Airshow amid mounting concerns over the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The companies that have pulled out represent about 8 per cent of participants.

Over 930 companies will be exhibiting and 45,000 trade attendees are still expected.

BANGLADESH SCRAPS PLAN TO BRING BACK 171 STUCK IN CHINA

Dhaka, Feb. 9: Bangladesh has scrapped plans to bring back its 171 nationals stuck in coronavirus-hit China after it failed to arrange a flight following refusal from crew members to fly to the affected country, according to media reports on Sunday. State-run Biman Airlines' Boeing 777-300 ER aircraft on February 1 brought back 312 Bangladeshis, including 12 children and three infants in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak in China. "We can't send any flight. No crew member agrees to go there either. So, we've told them [stranded Bangladeshis] to wait," Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen was quoted as saying by bdnews24.com. He said that the Bangladesh Embassy in Beijing was maintaining contact with them. — PTI

We can't send any flight. No crew member agrees to go there either. So, we've told them [stranded Bangladeshis] to wait.

A.K. ABDUL MOMEN
Bangladesh Foreign Minister



A medical worker monitors patients in the isolated intensive care unit at a hospital in Wuhan of central China's Hubei province. — AP

Thousands from cruise ship in HK freed
Border towns welcome controls

Hong Kong, Feb. 9: Thousands of people stranded aboard a cruise ship in Hong Kong for five days were allowed to disembark on Sunday after its 1,800 crew tested negative for the new coronavirus.

Health authorities in the Asian financial hub said the crew and a similar number of passengers had been released from a quarantine imposed because of fears some staff could have contracted the deadly virus on a previous voyage and passed it on. The *World Dream* carried three Chinese passengers to Vietnam between January 19 and 24 who were later found to be infected with the SARS-like coronavirus, which has killed more

than 800 people in China since it emerged in December. The government grounded the ship on its arrival in Hong Kong Wednesday

Year, reaching 50 percent once the borders started closing. But he said he understood the need to curb mainland arrivals. "Maybe the government should have done it earlier," he said. "Because the sooner it contains the epidemic, the sooner our business can revive."

A PHARMACIST who gave his surname as Shing said the government should have curbed mainland arrivals earlier because the sooner the epidemic is contained, the sooner business can revive.

masks in recent weeks, a commodity snapped up across the city, including by parallel traders. She supported a complete closure of Hong Kong's border. "What can matter more than human lives?" she asked. "I am feeling more comfortable on streets and less worried about infections after the checkpoint was closed." — AFP

while tests were carried out on the crew, but said the passengers need not undergo examination as they had no contact with

the three sick holidaymakers on the January trip. The passengers and crew isolated on the vessel had been expecting to stay

aboard until Tuesday after Hong Kong authorities said testing would take at least four days. — AFP

Where are they who had left prior to quarantine?

Shanghai, Feb. 9: For weeks after the first reports of a mysterious new virus in Wuhan, millions of people poured out of the central Chinese city, cramping onto buses, trains and planes as the first wave of China's great Lunar New Year migration broke across the nation. Some carried with them the new virus that has since claimed over 800 lives and sickened over 37,000 people. Officials began to seal borders on January 23. Speaking to reporters a few days after the city was put under quarantine, the mayor estimated that five million had already left.

Where did they go?
An Associated Press analysis of domestic travel patterns using map location data from Chinese tech giant Baidu shows that in the two weeks before Wuhan's lockdown, nearly 70% of trips out of the central

Chinese city were within Hubei province. Baidu has a map app that is similar to Google Maps, which is blocked in China.

Another 14% of the trips went to the neighbouring provinces of Henan, Hunan, Anhui and Jiangxi. Nearly 2% slipped down

to Guangdong province, the coastal manufacturing powerhouse across from Hong Kong, and the rest fanned out across China. The cities that were top destinations for trips from Wuhan were Chongqing, Beijing and Shanghai. — AP

SPAIN HAS confirmed its second case of the new virus from China. Spain's National Microbiology Center said the case was detected in Mallorca.

FIVE PERSONS with symptoms of coronavirus were rushed to hospital after they arrived in Pakistan from a flight from China.

A PLANE evacuating over 200 people from Wuhan landed at at RAF Brize Norton, Britain on Sunday. It had 105 British, 95 European citizens, 13 staff and medics.

TWO NEW cases of coronavirus were detected in the UAE, bringing the total number of people diagnosed to seven.

VIRUS FAKE NEWS NETWORK BUSTED IN HUNGARY

Budapest, Feb. 9: Hungarian police said Saturday it has busted a network of "fake news" websites that reported alleged coronavirus-related deaths in Hungary, so far free of reported infections from the deadly virus.

A man and woman are suspected of "operating dozens of fake news portals and linked Facebook pages" claiming that several people have been infected and died from coronavirus, said a statement on the police website. The sites, whose articles carried sensational headlines, were aimed at increasing traffic and boosting advertisement revenue, said the police.

"A 37-year-old Hungarian woman has collapsed and died in Budapest, probably from coronavirus," read a site headline displayed by police. Computer equipment was seized at several locations during raids, said the statement. — AFP

Scientists race to find vaccine for coronavirus

Singapore, Feb. 9: Scientists from the United States to Australia are using new technology in an ambitious, multi-million-dollar drive to develop a vaccine in record time to tackle China's coronavirus outbreak. The new virus has spread rapidly since emerging late last year in China, killing more than 800 people in the mainland and infecting over 37,000.

Cases have been reported in two dozen other countries. Coming up with any vaccine typically takes years, and involves a lengthy process of testing on animals, clinical trials on humans and regulatory approvals.

But several teams of experts are racing to develop one quicker, backed by an international coalition that aims to combat emerging diseases, and Australian scientists hope their's could be ready in six months.



An epidemic prevention worker about to get on board the cruise ship SuperStar Aquarius docked at Keelung port in New Taipei City, Taiwan. — AP

"It is a high-pressure situation and there is a lot of weight on us," said senior researcher Keith Chappell, part of the group from Australia's University of Queensland. But the scientist added he took "some solace" knowing several teams around the world were engaged in the same mission. "The hope is that one of these will be successful and can contain this outbreak," he said. — AFP

The hope is that one of these will be successful and can contain this outbreak.

KEITH CHAPPELL
Senior researcher, University of Queensland

Cyclones, storms lash Australia

Sydney, Feb. 9: Weakening tropical cyclone Damien battered northwestern Australia's resource-rich Pilbara region on Sunday, as storms brought heavy rains and flooding to the country's bushfire-ravaged east. The cyclone was downgraded to a Category One storm Sunday after making landfall late Saturday as a Category Three, when it brought winds of 195 kilometres per hour at its peak and forced residents to hunker down indoors under a code red emergency warning. The Bureau of Meteorology said Damien was weakening as it moved southeast through the sparsely populated central Pilbara on Sunday, bringing winds of 100 kilometres an hour and rain that was likely to cause flooding. "Tropical Cyclone

BRITAIN AND Ireland hunkered down Sunday for a powerful storm expected to disrupt air, rail and sea links, cut electrical power and damage property. Forecasters said Ciara would also hit France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany.

Damien will continue to weaken as it moves inland," the bureau said. The storm downed trees, ripped roofs off sheds and knocked out power in Dampier and Karratha. — AFP

NEW FINDING Researchers say influx of cold water can alter Western Europe's weather
Arctic ice melt disrupting ocean current



A lonely penguin appears in Antarctica during the southern hemisphere's summer season. The temperature in northern Antarctica hit nearly 18.3°C on February 5, a likely heat record on the continent best known for snow, ice, and penguins. — AP

Los Angeles, Feb. 9: Researchers have unravelled how an ocean water current, which plays a key role in keeping Western Europe warm, could be altered by an influx of unprecedented amounts of cold, fresh water from melting ice in the Arctic.

According to the scientists, including those from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in the US, an seawater current called the Beaufort Gyre keeps the polar environment in balance by storing fresh water near the surface of the Arctic ocean. Wind blows the gyre in a clockwise direction around the western Arctic Ocean, north of Canada, where it naturally

DUE TO this decline of the Arctic's summertime ice cover, the Beaufort Gyre is more exposed to the wind that has spun the gyre faster, trapping the fresh water in its current.

collects fresh water from the melting of glaciers, and river runoff, the study, published in Nature Communications, noted. They said this fresh water is important in the Arctic since it floats above the warmer, salty water, and helps protect the sea ice from melting — in turn regulating the Earth's climate.

As the fresh water is slowly released by the gyre

into the Atlantic Ocean over a period of decades, it allows the Atlantic Ocean currents to carry it away in small amounts. However, since the 1990s, the gyre has accumulated a large amount of fresh water — 8,000 cubic kilometres — or almost twice the volume of Lake Michigan in the US. According to the study, the cause of this gain in freshwater concentration is the loss of sea ice in summer and autumn. Due to this decades-long decline of the Arctic's summertime ice cover, the Beaufort Gyre is more exposed to the wind, which has spun the gyre faster, trapping the fresh water in its current. — PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	41,141.85 -0.40
Nifty 50	12,098.40 -0.33
S&P 500*	3,327.71 -0.54
Dollar (₹)	71.40 0.28
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.56 0.09
Euro (₹)	78.23 -0.08
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	41,249.112 0.27
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	54.47 -0.84
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.439 -0.007
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.580 -0.060

* As of Friday/Saturday

Thakur: Govt open to further consolidation

The government is open to further consolidation of banks depending on needs, MoS (finance) Anurag Singh Thakur has said. Last year, the government announced mega amalgamation of 10 public sector banks into four to cater to the needs of the aspirational and New India. This exercise will create six global sized banks, effective April, and will bring down the number of public sector banks to 12.

Maruti focuses on petrol to make up BS-VI loss



Maruti Suzuki is banking on petrol variants of its models, besides exploring CNG options to make up for lost numbers as it discontinues diesel options to meet BS-VI emission norms. Maruti, which introduced the petrol version of Vitara Brezza, is working on a petrol version of S-Cross. "We have the optimism to recover what we are losing in diesel through this increase in petrol," Maruti Suzuki ED (marketing & sales) Shashank Srivastava said.

I-T finds ₹470 cr TDS default by Delhi firms

The Income Tax Department has detected Rs 470 crore TDS (tax deducted at source) default by big Delhi-based corporate houses, officials said. I-T's TDS wing in Delhi visited the premises of a guest house aggregator and found it had not cut TDS on about Rs 280 crore payments made on rentals over seven years. Similarly, an airline was found defaulting on Rs 115 crore TDS and some realty firms were in default of Rs 75 crore.

FPIs pull out over 1,170 cr from equities

Foreign portfolio investors remained net buyers in the capital markets for a sixth month in February, putting in a net amount of Rs 5,177 crore, mainly in the debt segment, so far, according to depositories data. FPIs put in Rs 6,350 crore in the debt segment between February 3-7, but they pulled out Rs 1,172.56 crore from equities during the period, resulting in a total net investment of Rs 5,177.44 crore.

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District-level data sought on goods exported GSTIN made mandatory in export, import papers

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEB. 9

In a move to strengthen surveillance on evaders and plug revenue leakage in the goods and services tax (GST), the government has enhanced disclosure norms for exporters and importers from next week.

Importers and exporters will have to mandatorily declare GSTIN in documents from February 15 while exporters will need to mention additional information, including district of origin of goods, to the customs department from next Sunday.

The government, however, said it would fine-tune its existing policies to increase outward shipments while also examine the loopholes of revenue leakage in the system.

According to a circular by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), certain cases have come to notice where the importer or exporter did not declare their GSTIN in the bill of entry/shipping bill despite being registered with GSTIN.

GSTIN is a 15-digit PAN-based unique identification number allotted to every registered person under GST. While importers have to fill bill



of entry with the customs department when importing goods, exporters have to file shipping bill.

"With effect from February 15, 2020, the declaration of GSTIN shall also be mandatory in import/export documents for the importers and exporters registered as GST taxpayers," the circular said.

Data analytics by the revenue authorities have detected rampant tax evasion through black market and under-valuing of imports. It has come to light that although importers are paying GST, they are supplying the goods without bill.

Importers typically pay integrated goods and services tax, or IGST, on goods they bring into the country. This tax is supposed to be set off against the actual GST paid by the final consumer, or claimed as

refund. But this is not happening in many cases.

A similar situation has been witnessed on cess charged on luxury and sin goods with companies paying it at the time of imports but not claiming credit or setting it off from final GST paid by consumers.

EY tax partner Abhishek Jain said the requirement to provide GSTIN in bill of entry/shipping bill will help plug GST revenue leakage and ensure that imports/export data is reconciled with GST data.

Further, exporters will also have to furnish details like the state of origin of goods, details of preferential agreements under which the goods are being exported, wherever applicable, and the standard unit quantity code or SQC. The data will be used for district-level plans for promoting exports as the

commerce ministry has initiated a process to prepare a district export plan specific to every state and Union territory to boost exports.

"With effect from February 15, 2020, apart from the data/information required to be furnished in the present electronic form of electronic integrated declaration mentioned in Regulation 3 of Shipping Bill (Electronic Integrated Declaration and Paperless Processing) Regulations 2019," the circular said.

EY's Jain said the data on district/state of origin of goods will help the government take measures to facilitate and promote exports. "The requirement to provide details of preferential agreements under which goods are exported will help the government track the effectiveness these agreements," he said.

The commerce ministry said a budgetary support would be provided to make outreach at the district level and prepare a plan, which includes strategy to enhance logistics and infrastructure at the district level and better utilisation of the Market Access Initiative (MAI) scheme of the ministry for inviting foreign buyers.

Dumping probe against 24 Chinese products

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 9

The government is conducting 24 anti-dumping investigations against alleged dumping of goods from China. It has already taken anti-dumping measures on 90 products.

The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is conducting investigations on 24 products imported from China. These include flax fabric, electronic calculators, sheet glass, nylon filament yarn, viscose spun yarn, dye intermediates like 1-phenyl, 3-methyl and 5-pyrazolone.

Complaints against dumping food additives like sodium citrate, drugs like ciprofloxacin and several other chemicals are in the process of investigation. Among the 43 complaints being investigated by DGTR, China is one of the key nations at the receiving end.

Currently, anti-dumping measures are in force on 90 products imported from the People's Republic of China, including two pharmaceutical products.

"Due to the sluggish global economy, huge inventory is lying in China and the country is trying to dump in different markets, including



India. We have to be careful and take measures to safeguard domestic production," said Ajay Sahai, director general and chief executive officer of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

DGTR, the investigation arm of the commerce ministry, conducts anti-dumping investigations on the basis of a substantiated application filed by the domestic industry alleging dumping of goods into the country, causing injury to the domestic industry.

"The basic intent of anti-dumping measures is to eliminate injury caused to the domestic industry by the unfair trade practice of dumping and to create a level-playing field for the

domestic industry," a government release said.

The DGTR is also investigating alleged dumping of toluene di-isocyanate, a chemical used in flexible foam making, from the European Union, Saudi Arabia, Chinese Taipei, and the United Arab Emirates, following a complaint filed by Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilisers and Chemicals Ltd.

In a notification, the DGTR said that on the basis of the prima facie evidence submitted by the domestic industry about dumping of the product, it has initiated the investigations.

"The authority hereby initiates an investigation to determine the existence, degree and effect of any alleged dumping," it said.

New e-form cuts procedures for registering firms

New Delhi, Feb. 9: Continuing efforts to improve ease of doing business in India, the government will introduce an integrated electronic form for incorporating new companies from February 15, wherein EPFO and ESIC registration numbers will also be allotted at the same time.

The corporate affairs ministry would introduce the form — SPICE+ — to offer 10 services.

Currently, the ministry has the electronic form SPICE (Simplified Proforma for Incorporating Company Electronically) and that would be replaced with SPICE+.

The 10 services offered through the new form would help save many procedures, time and cost for starting a business in India, the ministry said in a public notice.

The labour ministry, the Department of Revenue in the finance ministry and the Maharashtra government would be offering certain services through the form.

Registration for EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) and ESIC (Employees' State Insurance Corporation) would be mandatory for all new companies incorporated from February 15.

EPFO and ESIC registration numbers would not be separately issued by the respective agencies, the notice said.

Further, registration for profession tax would be compulsory for companies incorporated

Maharashtra from February 15.

Besides name reservation and incorporation of a company, EPFO and ESIC registration numbers would be issued.

Mandatory issuance of PAN (Permanent Account Number), TAN (Tax Deduction and Collection Account Number), Profession Tax Registration (Maharashtra) and opening of bank account for the company concerned would be done through the form.

Director Identification Number (DIN) and GSTIN, if applied, would also be allotted.

GSTIN is the goods and services tax identification number.

The corporate affairs ministry is implementing the Companies Act and all required filings under the law as well as incorporation of companies are made through its portal MCA21.

The new form would be available on this portal. "All new companies incorporated through SPICE+... would also be mandatory required to apply for opening the company's bank account through the AGILE-PRO linked web form," the notice said.

There are more than 11.5 lakh active registered companies in the country and thousands of companies are getting incorporated every month. Generally, active companies are those which comply with all regulatory requirements, including timely submission of filings. —PTI

FM pitches for GST rationalisation once a yr

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, FEB. 9

In an attempt to ease the GST-related uncertainties for India Inc, Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday, said that the Union government is planning to reduce the frequency of rate rationalisation to once a year from the existing every three months.

Ms Sitharaman, who met with top industrialists in the city, said: "We have discussed it in the GST Council. We literally proposed to the GST Council to consider a situation where we would do any rate rationalisation, increase or decrease, once a year alone and not every three months. We will do it because if the rate change happens in every three months, both business and government will

remain uncertain."

She went on: "In GST, when you have a certain level of rate, periodical change leads to an inversion problem like refund issues. Therefore, when suddenly one product's rate of taxation is brought down, a whole lot of ripple effect is created. With the ripple effect, either refunds get affected or businesses cannot plan how much they have to keep aside for taxation in the whole year."

She added: "Similarly, the government, both state and Central, is not able to make an assessment of what it will earn through GST yearly. So rate cuts or increases every three months, when the GST Council meets, are periodically bringing in a certain level of uncertainty. The businesses do

not understand and they cannot (assess) how much it is going to hit them."

"The government cannot make an assessment of how much revenue generation is going to happen in view of the constant change of rates every three months," the finance minister said.

Ms Sitharaman, who urged all states to raise their concerns via their finance ministers at the GST Council, claimed that Budget has laid the foundation of India becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2025.

She also rejected West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's complaint that her state had been deprived in the Budget. Ms Sitharaman argued her focus was on the nation's economic growth, and not on "which state got what".



Tissue culture gives hope to tea firms

RITWIK MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA, FEB. 9

It promises to bring on table the cuppa that cheers! A young scientist of Tocklai Tea Research Institute of Tea Research Association Jorhat, a 109-year-old research institute of the tea industry, claims to have come up with a solution to some of the key challenges the tea industry is facing, like increasing cost of production, decline of yield and quality.

Price realisation has remained stagnant for the last several years and the industry is also facing an oversupply situation. For instance, Assam's tea production

in 2019 reached a record 715.79 million kg, which was 51.5 per cent of the all India production of 1,389.7 million kg.

Indian Tea Association (ITA) chairman Vivek Goenka recently said the industry won't be able to survive at the current price levels as costs of production has increased whereas prices have remained stagnant over the past five years. The majority of tea estates in Assam and West Bengal are selling their products well below the cost of production. In the past few months distress levels have resulted in sales, closures, and references to the insolvency tribunals, he said.

And now Pranita Hazarika, a young scientist of TRA Tocklai, has cracked some of these problems and transferred



true tissue cultured tea plants from the flask to the field. The plants have completed one year of luxuriant growth and received the first prune on January 20.

India Inc foreign borrowings down 45% in December

Mumbai, Feb. 9: Foreign borrowings of Indian companies fell over 45 per cent to \$2.09 billion in December 2019 as compared to the year-ago period, according to the Reserve Bank data.

Indian firms had raised \$3.81 billion in December 2018, which included \$37 million through issuance of masala bonds. Of the total money borrowed by domestic companies during December 2019, \$1.2 bn was through the automatic route of external commercial borrowing (ECB) and \$840 mn via approval route of ECB. —PTI

12% tax revenue growth achievable, says revenue secretary

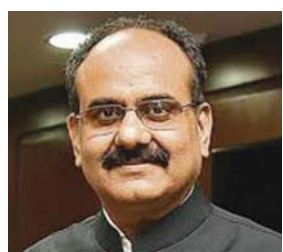
New Delhi, Feb. 9: A 12 per cent growth in tax collections next fiscal may look ambitious to some but for revenue secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey believes it is achievable in an economy that is projected to clock a 10 per cent nominal GDP growth.

The economic slowdown together with a cut in corporate tax rates led to the government missing its tax collection target by a wide margin in the current fiscal. The tax shortfall also led to missing the fiscal deficit target for the third year in a row.

In an interview to PTI, Mr Pandey exuded confidence of meeting the tax collection target of Rs 24.23 lakh crore for 2020-21.

"In 2020-21 the nominal growth that has been projected is 10 per cent. So on a 10 per cent (GDP) growth, getting a 12 per cent growth in tax revenue is achievable," he said.

The budget has pegged gross tax revenues for 2020-21 at Rs 24.23 lakh crore, up 12 per cent from Rs 21.63 lakh crore in the current fiscal. Of this, around Rs 6.38 lakh crore is expected to come from



Ajay Bhushan Pandey

personal income tax, a 14.13 per cent increase over Rs 5.59 lakh crore earned in 2019-20. Besides, corporate tax revenue is budgeted to increase by 11.63 per cent

to Rs 6.81 lakh crore in 2020-21, from Rs 6.10 lakh crore in current fiscal.

For current fiscal, the government has revised downwards the tax collection projections from budgeted Rs 24.61 lakh crore to Rs 21.63 lakh crore in the revised estimates.

Mr Pandey said the revenue growth budgeted for the current fiscal was calculated assuming a 12 per cent nominal GDP growth. However, the nominal GDP growth came in at 7.5 per cent.

He said in the current fiscal, the gross tax revenue

is 4 per cent higher than Rs 20.80 lakh crore collected in 2018-19 fiscal. However, the government had estimated an 11 per cent gross tax revenue growth in 2019-20.

Explaining further, Mr Pandey said, "This year we have shown a tax revenue growth of 4 per cent (as) 7 per cent growth we had to forego on account of corporate tax (cut). So, 4 per cent (growth) means actually 11 per cent achievement. On 7.5 per cent nominal growth if you are achieving 11 per cent (tax revenue) growth, we can't

say that this is unrealistic".

In September 2019, the government cut the base corporate tax for existing companies to 22 per cent from current 30 per cent; and for new manufacturing firms, incorporated after October 1, 2019 and starting operations before March 31, 2023, to 15 per cent from 25 per cent.

The effective tax rate for existing units, after considering surcharges and cess such as Swachh Bharat cess and education cess, which are levied on top of the income and cor-

porate tax rates, will be 25.17 per cent as compared to 34.94 per cent now. For new units, it will be 17.01 per cent as against 29.12 per cent now.

The new tax structure cost the exchequer Rs 1.45 lakh crore in revenue foregone annually.

The economy is projected to grow at 5 per cent in the current fiscal -- its slowest pace in 11 years. Fiscal deficit in 2019-20 is estimated to come in at 3.8 per cent as against 3.3 per cent estimated in the budget for this year. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Gill's 107* guides India 'A' to 234/1

Lincoln, New Zealand: Shubman Gill struck an unbeaten 107 as India 'A' made 234 for one in their first innings in reply to New Zealand 'A's 386 for nine declared on the third day of their four-day unofficial Test here on Sunday. Opening the batting along side skipper Hanuma Vihari (59), Gill scored his runs off 153 balls with the help of 13 boundaries and one six to help India 'A' pile up 234/1 in 53 overs. Middle-order mainstay Chesterwar Pujara was giving Gill company at the crease on 52 off 99 balls at the draw of stumps. Earlier, New Zealand declared their innings at 386 for nine in 131.5 overs after the second day's play was washed out on Saturday. — PTI

Brief scores: New Zealand 'A' 386/9 in 131.5 overs (Daryl Mitchell 103, Glenn Phillips 65; Sandeep Warrier 2/50) vs India 'A' 234/1 in 53 overs (Shubman Gill 107 not out, Cheteshwar Pujara 52 not out; Blair Tuckner 1/71).



Naseem Shah

Shah is youngest to take a hat-trick

Rawalpindi: Teenage paceman Naseem Shah became the youngest player to record a Test hat-trick as Pakistan closed in on victory against Bangladesh in Rawalpindi on Sunday. Just when Bangladesh seemed to have fought their way back into the match at 124-2 minutes before the close on the third day, Naseem destroyed them with three wickets off successive deliveries. Aged 16 years and 359 days, he becomes the youngest player to record a Test hat-trick, besting Bangladesh's Alok Kapali who achieved the feat aged 19 in 2003. Naseem trapped Najmul Hossain Shanto leg before off the fourth ball of his seventh over for 38, then followed up with dismissals of Tajjul Islam (lbw) and Mahmudullah (caught) with the next two deliveries. Naseem had figures of 4-26 before he left the field with a shoulder injury. — AFP

Brief scores: Bangladesh 233 & 126/6 in 45 overs (Najmul Hossain Shanto 38, Mominul 37 (batting); Naseem Shah 4/26) vs Pakistan 445.



Duje Tomasovic (right) director of Tennis Klub Split in Croatia met Telangana State sports secretary Burra Venkatesham (IAS) in connection with a summer camp to be organised by Academia Sports Village at the Hyderabad Polo and Riding Club.

Stage is set for Sam basketball

Hyderabad: A week of high octane basketball action is on the cards as 16 teams clash for honours in the 3rd Samuel Vasanth Kumar Memorial Basketball Tournament which kicks off at the YMCA Secunderabad at 5 pm on Monday. The six-day tournament is organised by Sports Writers Association of Telangana (SWAT) in association with Hyderabad District Basketball Association (HDBA) in memory of late E. A. Samuel Vasanth Kumar, sports journalist and Basketball Federation of India (BFI) referee. On the opening day of action, Secunderabad YMCA take on Kings Basketball Club in the first game and Sanathnagar Playground will then clash with Rovers. Sanathnagar Playground hoopsters are in good form as they are fresh from a title triumph. Sanathnagar Playground had beaten Airborne Club in a tournament on Saturday and will be eager to add another crown to their swelling kitty.



Bangladesh celebrate after winning the U-19 World Cup. They beat India by three wickets (D/L method) in the final on Sunday.

— ICC

Tiger cubs roar

Bangladesh pull off stunning win over India to clinch maiden U-19 World Cup

Potchefstroom, Feb. 9: A sprightly bunch of Bangladesh boys created history by winning their country's first global cricket title, shocking defending champions India by three wickets in the summit clash of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Sunday.

In a low-scoring final, Bangladesh first choked India to a meagre 177 in 47.2 overs and then did well enough to score revised target of 170 in 42.1 overs under Duckworth-Lewis method.

Once play resumed after rain, target was revised to 170 and with seven runs to get and three wickets in hand, it became a cakewalk for the 'Tiger Cubs' as they scripted a golden chapter in their country's cricket history.

India's cricketers battles with Bangladesh have been filled with acrimony since 2015 World Cup quarter-final at the MCG and it had only amplified with the kind of boorish behaviour that some of the Bangladeshi players displayed.

On Sunday also, a few players from both sides nearly came to blows at the end of the game and it was India coach Paras Mhambrey, who was seen

urging his boys to keep calm as opposition leading pacer Shoriful Islam was seen swearing expletives on camera.

Even then, credit should go to Bangladesh's 18-year-old captain Akbar Ali, who showed nerves of steel with a patient 43 not out off 77 balls, which negated more fancied opponent Yashasvi Jaiswal's 88 off 121 balls.

Akbar's cool quotient was there for everyone to see as he marshalled his resources brilliantly and then batted responsibly, seeing out India's threats from leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi and fast bowler Kartik Tyagi's spells before reaching the finishing line with ease. There were two things that cost India dearly.

While batting, India lost their last seven wickets for 23 runs. And then while defending, the number of extras (33) bowled did matter in the final context of the game. Bangladesh's chase started in earnest with Parvez Hossain Emon (47 off 79 balls) and Tanzim Hasan (17) adding 50 in quick time, primarily due to former's impressive off-side play.

However, things changed once leg-spinner Bishnoi (4/30 in 10 overs) came into

SCORECARD

India: Yashasvi Jaiswal c Tanzim Hasan b Shoriful Islam 88, Divyaansh Saxena c Mahmudul Hasan Joy b Avishek Das 2, Tilak Varma c Shoriful Islam b Tanzim Hasan Sakib 38, Priyam Garg c Tanzim Hasan b Rakibul Hasan 7, Dhruv Jurel run out (Shamim Hossain/Akbar Ali) 22, Siddhesh Veer lbw b Shoriful Islam 0, Atharva Ankekar b Avishek Das 3, Ravi Bishnoi run out (Shoriful Islam) 2, Sushant Mishra c Akbar Ali b Avishek Das 0, Akash Singh (not out) 1. Extras (lb 1, w 10) 11. Total (in 47.2 overs) 177. FoW: 1-9, 2-103, 3-114, 4-156, 5-156, 6-168, 7-170, 8-170, 9-172.

Bowling: Shoriful Islam 10-1-31-2, Tanzim Hasan Sakib 8.2-2-28-2, Avishek Das 9-0-40-3, Shamim Hossain 6-0-36-0, Rakibul Hasan 10-1-29-1, Towhid Hridoy 4-0-12-0.

Bangladesh: Parvez Hossain Emon c Akash Singh b Jaiswal 47, Tanzim Hasan c Kartik Tyagi b Ravi Bishnoi 17, Mahmudul Hasan Joy b Ravi Bishnoi 8, Towhid Hridoy lbw b Ravi Bishnoi 0, Shahadat Hossain st Jurel b Ravi Bishnoi 1, Akbar Ali (not out) 43, Shamim Hossain c Jaiswal b Mishra 7, Avishek Das c Kartik Tyagi b Mishra 5, Rakibul Hasan (not out) 9. Extras (b 8, lb 4, nb 2, w 19) 33. Total (for seven wickets in 42.1 overs) 170. (D/L method) FoW: 1-50, 2-62, 3-62, 4-65, 5-85, 6-102, 7-143.

Bowling: Kartik Tyagi 10-2-33-0, Sushant Mishra 7-0-25-2, Akash Singh 8-1-33-0, Ravi Bishnoi 10-3-30-4, Atharva Ankekar 4.1-0-22-0, Yashasvi Jaiswal 3-0-15-1.

the attack and started bowling his googlies. First he got Tanzid holed out in the deep and then had Mahmudul Hassan Joy (8) played on with another wrong 'un and Towhid Hridoy was also rapped on the pads and Dhruv Jurel effected a smart stumping to make it 65 for 4.

With Emon back in the hut due to hamstringing injury, it was on skipper Akbar to show composure in the hour of crisis even as left-arm seamer

Sushant Singh in his second and third spell got a couple of wickets. Then, it was Emon who again came back at 102 for 6 as Akbar finally got hold of Bishnoi's googlies as there was one slog sweep for six. With Bishnoi not having an effective leg-break, he was taken out of the attack.

Emon, despite hamstringing issues, fought gamely before Jaiswal bowled his part-time leg-breaks and Garg's gamble paid off

with the opener being caught in the extra cover region to make it 143 for 7.

Earlier, India's batting wilted under pressure as a superb Bangladesh bowling attack shot the defending champions out for a paltry 177 in 47.2 overs. Jaiswal (88 off 121 balls) was once again a standout performer but not for once did he look like dominating the Bangladesh bowling unit whose new ball bowlers Shoriful Islam (2/31 in 10 overs) and Tanzim Hasan Shakib (2/28 in 8.2 overs) literally stifled the Indians for runs.

The third seamer Avishek Das (3/40 in 9 overs) was the most successful bowler in terms of figures but it was Shoriful's first spell with channelised aggression that put the Indians on the back-foot from the onset. Only 23 came off the first 10 overs and India never recovered from the slow start despite a sedate 93-run stand between Jaiswal and NT Tilak Varma (38 off 65 balls) in 23.2 overs. Shoriful and Shakib were not afraid of sledging the Indian batsmen as they bowled full and

got the ball to swing away from the left-handers.

The fielding was also agile and top-notch, making it difficult throughout the Indian innings.

Once Jaiswal was out, the distinct lack of match-time for other Indian batsmen was evident as seven wickets fell for only 23 runs.

— PTI

Ugly scenes mar gripping showdown

Potchefstroom, Feb. 9: Bangladesh captain Akbar Ali regretted the unwanted aggression from his players which nearly resulted into a free for all after his team won the U-19 ICC World Cup.

Bangladesh pacer Shoriful Islam sledged the Indian batsmen after every delivery. In fact as Bangladesh approached the winning runs, Shoriful was seen swearing on camera. "Some of our bowlers were emotional. What happened after the game was unfortunate. I would like to congratulate India," skipper Akbar said.

As the match ended, it became tense with Bangladesh players rushing to the ground, most of them still displaying aggressive body language. In fact, one India player rushed to confront and pushed a Bangladeshi player who had allegedly said uncharitable things, but coach Paras Mhambrey calmed his boys. — PTI



India's Ravi Bishnoi bowled a brilliant spell.

Sachin, Lara turn back clock in charity match

Melbourne, Feb. 9: Never was an innings break so anticipated in a game of cricket. It lasted for five-odd minutes but for Sachin Tendulkar devotees, even that was good enough time if their 'God' is out there on the 22 yards in a country where he is revered no less than his own.

And those five minutes of just putting bat to ball for raising funds for Bushfire charity was achieved with much care as much as his hundred international hundreds. With a dodgy shoulder, Tendulkar didn't take part in the charity game but was played an over from Australia's superstar woman cricketer Ellyse Perry during the break.

Perry had challenged Tendulkar to face her for an over in a video message on social media which the Indian legend had accepted. Used to seeing him either in spotless whites or the light blue India colours, the fans at the Junction Oval ground in Melbourne must have been chuffed watching him come out in Australian yellow.



Sachin Tendulkar signs on Brian Lara's jersey during the Australian bushfire relief charity match at Melbourne's Junction Oval on Sunday. — TWITTER

Tendulkar shared a few pictures on Twitter in which legends of the game can be seen signing each other's shirt. He captioned the post as: "Competitors on the field, friends off it! I had a lot of fun coming together for a cause like the Bushfire Relief. Happy to have contributed towards the #BigAppeal".

VINTAGE LARA

Brian Lara showed he still has what it takes with a stylish 90 not out as cricketers royalty helped raise

money to aid Australian bushfire relief in a charity match Sunday.

The West Indian legend stroked a series of lofted cover drives and straight drives, including two sixes, before retiring to give another batsman a chance in a star-studded Bushfire Bash at Melbourne's Junction Oval. His captain Ricky Ponting, coming in after Justin Langer was out, also hit 26 as his team made 104 for five from their 10 overs. — Agencies

WORLD KABADDI CHAMPIONSHIPS

Federation not aware of team

New Delhi, Feb. 9: The arrival of an 'Indian team' in Pakistan for the World Kabaddi Championship has kicked up a controversy with the sports ministry and the national federation claiming that they have not given clearance to any athlete for competing in the neighbouring country.

A contingent from India reached Lahore on Saturday via the Wagah Border to take part in the championship, being hosted by Pakistan for the first time. The pictures and footage of the Indians arriving in Lahore have surfaced in social media.

The tournament opens on Monday in Lahore. A sport ministry source said the government has not granted permission to any athlete to travel to Pakistan for the event. "The sports ministry and the ministry of external affairs have not granted any permission to any team, which is mandatory while representing the country at any international event," a sports

ministry source said. The administrator of Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India Justice (Retd) S.P. Garg also said that the national body has not cleared any such team.

"We have no information about any kabaddi team which has gone to Pakistan. No permission was ever granted by AKFI to any team to go to Pakistan and play any Kabaddi match there," he said.

"We came to know about it only after information was sought. AKFI does not support any such activity. Legal action may be taken against the defaulters," he added. The procedure for participation at overseas events is that the national federation will communicate to the sports ministry which in turn will write to the MEA for political clearance and Home Ministry for security clearance, irrespective of whether the government is funding the contingent or not. — PTI



Armand Duplantis of Sweden clears the bar at 6.17 metres to set a pole vault world record at the Orlen Copernicus Cup World Athletics Indoor meeting in Torun, Poland, on Saturday. — AFP

Duplantis takes up record flight

Paris, Feb. 9: Armand Duplantis of Sweden set a world pole vault record of 6.17 metres at an indoor meeting in Poland on Saturday.

Duplantis, the US-born 20-year-old who won silver at last year's world championships in Doha, cleared the bar on his second attempt in Torun to break the previous record of 6.16m set by French vaulter Renaud Lavillenie in February 2014.

"It's something that I wanted since I was three years old. It's a big year, but it's a good way to start it," Duplantis told the website of World Athletics.

Lavillenie, the 2012 Olympic champion, said he was not surprised his record had been eclipsed.

"It's not a surprise. For two years now I knew he had the potential," the 33-year-old Frenchman told RMC Sports after competing at a meeting in Rouen.

"Records are made to be beaten. He has got time

on his side to definitely do even better and that's a great thing," he added.

Duplantis had almost broken the record at a meeting in Duesseldorf on Tuesday.

His performance marks him out as a clear favourite for the Olympic title in Tokyo this year.

Long considered the man most likely to push the event forward, Duplantis began breaking age group records aged seven. He announced his prodigious talent to a wider audience when he won the European outdoor title in Berlin in 2018 with a vault of 6.05m, a world junior record.

Coached by his American father Greg — himself a former pole vaulter who cleared 5.80m — Duplantis was a product of a track and field-crazy family which had their own vaulting apparatus in the garden. He competed for Louisiana State University in the US last year. — AFP

RAPTUROUS END

Bengaluru Raptors win Premier Badminton league

GANDHARV KAMALA | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 9

Defending champions Bengaluru Raptors, popularly known as Rowdy Raptors by fans, become the first team to retain their title, with a 4-2 win over the North Eastern Warriors in the final of the Premier Badminton League at the Gachibowli Stadium here on Sunday.

With all to play for in the mixed doubles, Chan Peng Soon and Eom Hye Won of the Raptors played out of their skins to win their trump match 15-14, 14-15, 15-12 over Krishna Prasad Garaga and Kim Ha Na of

the Warriors, thus becoming the first side to win two league titles.

Earlier, World No.2 Tai Tzu Ying once again proved her worth with a clinical 15-9, 15-12 win over Michelle Li of the Warriors in the women's singles match. Tai Tzu needed just 32 minutes on court to maintain her unbeaten run in the League.

In the men's doubles, Bodin Isara and Lee Yong Dae got the better of Arun George and Rian Agung Saputro of the Raports in a closely-contested three-game affair 15-11, 13-15, 15-14. The tie was level at 2-2.

In the first game, the World

No.43 ran out of the court to get a new racquet as his strings broke — in the middle of a rally — came back in and managed to win a point for the Warriors. In a match that went on for 51 minutes, the Warriors held onto their nerves to win their trump match and make it 2-1 in favour of the Warriors.

In the first match of the evening, B. Sai Praneech of the Bengaluru Raptors rallied from a game down to beat Lee Cheuk Yiu 14-15, 15-9, 15-3 in one of the most scintillating rubbers in the fifth edition of the league.

The first game was a closely contested affair as it went

down to the wire with Lee Cheuk finally taking it at 15-14. At 14 all, both Sai and Cheuk caressed the shuttle close to the net for six exchanges. As Lee finally won the point, there was a stare down from World No.18, showcasing the intensity.

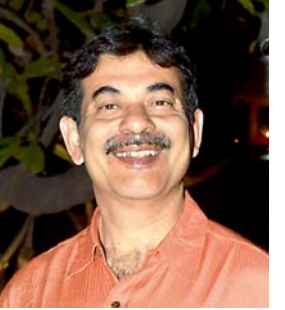
In the second and third games, the Indian had the answers to all shots that Lee Cheuk had to offer. In the third match, Sai went into the break with a score of 8-0 — an unprecedented scoreline in the fifth edition of the PBL — eventually winning it 15-3 to help the defending champions start the final on a winning note.



Bengaluru Raptors celebrate with the trophy after winning the Premier Badminton League at the Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad on Sunday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Jayesh is elected TOA president

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 9



Jayesh Ranjan

In an interesting turn of events IAS officer Jayesh Ranjan was elected president of the Telangana Olympic Association at the polls held at Lal Bahadur Stadium on Sunday.

However, most of the candidates on his panel suffered crushing defeats, casting doubts on the smooth functioning of the perpetually troubled state body.

Jayesh, who is the principal secretary of the industries & commerce (I&C) and information technology (IT) departments of the Telangana state government, was disqualified at the nomination stage due to a technical flaw. However, he moved the High Court to overturn the Returning Officer's judgement and contested against veteran K. Ranga Rao, whom he defeated 46 votes to 33.

In a tight contest for General Secretary, incumbent K. Jagadishwar Yadav defeated A. Jagan Mohan Rao (of Jayesh Ranjan panel) by two votes. The Kabaddi official polled 41 votes as against the Handball administrator's 39.

Jagan Mohan Rao cried conspiracy though, and vowed legal action. "The

voter list was altered after the AGM. The Khammam Olympic Association's vote was misrepresented. I will take this matter up with the courts as well as the Indian Olympic Association," he said.

K. Maheshwar of Ranga Rao panel was elected Treasurer, beating Kunta Pani Rao.

Dr. Mohammad Ali Rafath, S. R. Premraj, Saral Talwar and Dr S. Venugopala Chary were elected vice-presidents while table tennis official P. Prakash Raju lost.

For the four joint secretaries' posts, Norman Isaac (63 votes), P. Malla Reddy (49), M. Rama Krishna (45) from Ranga Rao's panel emerged victors while only A. Sureshwar (40) from the Jayesh panel won.

Fifteen others were elected as executive committee members.

TELANGANA OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION

- **President:** Jayesh Ranjan.
- **Vice-presidents (four):** Dr S. Venugopala Chary, Dr Mohammad Ali Rafath, S. R. Premraj, Saral Talwar.
- **General Secretary:** K. Jagadishwar Yadav.
- **Joint Secretaries (four):** Norman Isaac, P. Malla Reddy, M. Rama Krishna, A. Sureshwar.
- **Treasurer:** K. Maheshwar.
- **Executive Committee members from District Olympic Associations (five):** G. Rajendra Prasad, Mohd Azeez Khan, G. Janardhan Reddy, A. Lingaiah, J. Manohar Kumar.
- **Executive Committee members from Sports Associations (10):** S. Abbas R. Kirmani, K. Dattatreya, M. Mahender Reddy, Purushottam Modani, M. Ramakoteswar Rao, Major T. Swamy, K. Ramakrishna, Ismail Baig, Hamza Bin Omer, Mohammed Khaja Khan.

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