

**SHORT TAKES**

**KERALA MULLS LAW AGAINST SUPERSTITION**

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 14

Kerala government has been contemplating to bring a Bill for effectively curbing superstition, practices like sorcery and exorcism. The draft recommendations are currently under consideration of Law Reforms Commission. The Kerala Exploitation by Superstition (Prevention) Act drafted and proposed by home department, warranted stringent punishment against those responsible for spreading superstition and putting people's lives in danger.

The punishment ranges from three years to capital punishment. The CPI which is second biggest ally in ruling LDF, wants the process to be expedited and the law passed this year itself. Karnataka and Maharashtra had passed similar legislation earlier.

Though the Left parties had promised to bring the law after coming to power in 2016, four years have passed and things have not moved at the desired pace. CPI state secretary Kanam Rajendran said the demand will be raised on February 20, which is also the martyrdom day of Gobind Pansare. The party will launch the campaign secularism protection meet.

**SURRENDERED MILITANTS UNDER LENS**

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, FEB. 14

In a significant move the state government in consultation with ministry of home affairs has decided that surrendered militants indulging in any unlawful and anti-social activities will be excluded from the proposed comprehensive relief and rehabilitation policy of the government.

Pointing out that government has already started the process of framing a comprehensive relief and rehabilitation policy for more than 1,600 surrendered cadres of the four factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, security sources said that the proposed policy would be formulated by the state home department in consultation with Assam police and leaders of all the four factions of NDFB and other stakeholders.

Admitting that even after surrender of NDFB cadres in large number, there is apprehension in the security circle that surrendered militants are holding back illegal arms, security sources said that police have been asked to keep a close watch on the activities of surrendered militants. Referring to past instance, "We have made it clear that surrendered militants indulging in anti-social activities would not be eligible for getting the benefit of the comprehensive relief rehabilitation scheme of the government."

**SHARAD MAY BE FACE OF BIHAR'S GRAND ALLIANCE**

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, FEB. 14

With Bihar Assembly elections slated to be held later this year, the grand alliance in the state faces a daunting task of resolving the leadership issue.

Three political parties Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP), Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) and Vikasheel Insan Party (VIP) have created a flutter in the political circle by proposing the name of veteran socialist leader Sharad Yadav as the face of the grand alliance for the elections.

Leaders aware of the development told this newspaper that both RJD and Congress were not invited for the meeting which was attended by Upendra Kushwaha, Jitan Ram Manjhi and Mukesh Sahani on Friday. "In the absence of Lalu Yadav, the grand alliance has been facing a leadership crisis. It would be beneficial for all of us if we project veteran socialist leader Sharad Yadav as the face of the coalition," RLSP leaders in Patna said.

The proposal made by these political parties is being seen as a major setback for the RJD which leads the grand alliance in Bihar.

Sources said that Upendra Kushwaha, Jitan Ram Manjhi, and Mukesh Sahani have been miffed over Rashtriya Janata Dal's decision to declare Tejashwi Yadav as the Chief Ministerial candidate without consulting grand alliance partners.

**Remembering martyrs**



Students pay tribute to the martyred CRPF jawans, who lost their lives in a suicide bomber attack in Pulwama last year at a school in Jammu on Friday. On February 14 last year, Jaish-e-Mohammed suicide bomber Adeel Ahmed Dar drove an explosive-laden car into a convoy of security forces, killing 40 personnel.

**STUDENTS MADE TO STRIP IN GUJARAT COLLEGE**

New Delhi, Feb. 14: The National Commission for Women has set up an inquiry committee which will meet the students of a college in Gujarat who were reportedly forced to strip to prove that they were not menstruating.

According to media reports, 68 undergraduate hostelers were paraded through the college into the restroom and forced to individually remove their undergarments to prove that they were not menstruating.

The Commission has also sought an explanation from the trustee of Sahjanand Girls' Institute College, Pravin Pindora and the principal Rita Raniga for this "shameful exercise", an NCW statement said.

The NCW has set up an inquiry team, which will meet the girls of the institute and inquire about the incident.

"NCW has also appraised the Kutch University in-charge Vice Chancellor Darshna Dholakia and the DGP of Gujarat, Shivanand Jha (IPS) to look into the matter thoroughly and report to the Commission at the earliest on their action taken report," the statement added.

68 UNDERGRADUATE hostelers were forced to individually remove their undergarments to prove that they were not menstruating

**SNUBBING | POLICY**

**SC clears way for execution of Vinay**

Dismisses petition against rejection of mercy plea

New Delhi, Feb. 14: Clearing the way for execution of Vinay Sharma, one of the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case, the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed his plea against the rejection of his mercy petition by the President.

The top court refused to accept Sharma's contention that the President did not apply his mind while rejecting the mercy plea and it was done in a "mala fide" manner.

"When the highest constitutional authority, upon perusal of the note and the various documents placed along with mercy petition, has taken a decision to reject the mercy petition, it cannot be contended that the highest constitutional authority had not applied its mind to the documents," it said.

A bench of Justices R Banumathi, Ashok Bhushan and A S Bopanna said, "In the result, we do not find any ground for exercise of judicial review of the order of the President of India rejecting the petitioner's mercy petition and this writ petition is liable to be dismissed. The writ petition is dismissed accordingly."

The apex court had earlier dismissed a similar plea filed by another

**SC judge faints in courtroom**

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 14

Supreme Court judge Justice R. Banumathi on Friday momentarily fainted in her chair while she was dictating an order adjourning the hearing on the Centre's plea seeking separate hanging of three death row convicts in Nirbhaya case who have exhausted all their legal remedies and mercy petitions.

While dictating the order adjourning the hearing till February 20, Justice Banumathi became motionless and tilted towards her right but regained her composure as court staff escorted her to chamber.

The bench headed by Justice Banumathi is holding repeated hearing of the Nirbhaya case on one ground or the other. After the rejection of the curative petitions by the convicts, the court is now, one after the other, is hearing challenge to the rejection of mercy petitions by the President.

The court is also hearing Centre and Delhi gov-

ernment's plea for the separate hanging of the Nirbhaya convicts who have exhausted all their legal remedies.

Justice Banumathi and Justice Bhushan were also part of the bench then headed by Justice Dipak Misra (who later became CJI and since retired) which had heard and upheld the Delhi High Court verdict confirming the award of death sentence by the trial court.

The court adjourned the hearing for February 20 after it was informed that the trial court has fixed February 17 for hearing Centre and Delhi government's application seeking issuance of fresh death warrants.

The bench comprising Justice Banumathi, Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice A.S.Bopanna later passed the order in chamber. While deferring further hearing to Feb. 20, it made it clear that "the pendency of the petitions (before it) may not be treated as an impediment for the trial court to consider the matter on its own merit."

**400-metre-long, 7-foot-high wall being built in Ahmedabad**

**Another wall comes up for Trump**

Ahmedabad, Feb. 14: U.S. President Donald Trump will be shielded from the sight of slums by a newly built wall when he visits the city of Ahmedabad during a visit to India later this month.

Construction workers build a wall along a slum area as part of a beautification drive along a route that U.S. President and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be taking during Trump's visit later this month.

A senior government official said the wall was being built for security reasons, not to conceal the slum district.

But the contractor building it said the government "did not want the slum to be seen" when Trump passes by on the ride in from Ahmedabad's airport.

"I've been ordered to build a wall as soon as possible, over 150 masons



Workers construct a wall in front of a slum ahead of Donald Trump's visit to Ahmedabad.

are working round-the-clock to finish the project," the contractor said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The government official conceded that the wall was part of a "beautification and cleanliness" drive.

Whatever the reason, the 400-metre-long and seven-foot-high wall will prevent the U.S. leader

from getting a glimpse of a slum district that houses an estimated 800 families.

Trump, who has made his pledge to build a wall along the United States' border with Mexico a feature of his presidency, will visit India on Feb. 24-25 to reaffirm strategic ties that have been buffeted by trade disputes.

He is expected to attend an event dubbed "Kem Chho Trump" (How are you, Trump?) at a stadium in Ahmedabad along the lines of the "Howdy Modi" extravaganzas he hosted for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Houston last September.

Speaking at the White House on Tuesday, Trump quoted Modi as saying "millions and millions of people" would attend the rally.

**Kanhaiya's convoy attacked in Bihar**

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, FEB. 14

Former JNUSU President Kanhaiya Kumar's convoy was attacked while he was travelling from Buxar to Arrah in Bihar on Friday. This was the eighth attack in two weeks against Kanhaiya Kumar, who is leading a massive state-wide 'Jan Gan Man Yatra' against the CAA, NPR, and NRC.

Sources said prior to reaching the venue in Arrah a group of youth chanting pro-CAA slogans began pelting stones at his convoy. However, no one is said to be injured in the attack. Activists travelling with Kanhaiya said that slogans raised by the mob during the attack indicate that they belong to a particular ideology.

"We are not bothered by such attacks and Kanhaiya Kumar will continue with his tour. It is clear that the BJP is rattled by the response Kanhaiya has been receiving from people of Bihar," activists travelling

with Kanhaiya Kumar said. The state-wide 'Jan Gan Man Yatra' which began on December 30 from Bhittharwa Gandhi Ashram in West Champaran is scheduled to conclude with a rally on the theme "nagrikta bachao, desh bachao" (save citizenship, save the country) in Patna on Feb. 29.

"We had met the state administration but nothing was done to prevent such attacks. Kanhaiya Kumar's car was vandalised but he somehow escaped unhurt," Social activist Nivedita Jha told this newspaper. Left leaders in Patna on Friday condemned continuous attacks on Kanhaiya Kumar's anti-CAA tour. Earlier, his convoy was attacked in Gaya, Nawada, Katihar, Supaul, Begusarai, Sitamarhi and Bhagalpur.

During his tour, Kanhaiya has been holding public meetings and criticising the BJP led government at the Centre for the "divisive" Citizenship Act, NPR and the NRC.

**Kejriwal invites PM to his swearing-in**

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 14

Aam Aadmi Party supremo Arvind Kejriwal has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his swearing-in ceremony on Sunday at the Ramlila Grounds where the former will take oath as Delhi Chief Minister for the third time. Preparations for the swearing-in ceremony are afoot at the historic Ramlila Maidan which served as the battleground for the 51-year-old bureaucrat-turned-politician during the Anna Hazare-led India Against Corruption movement.

The sprawling Ramlila Maidan, where socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan had addressed a massive gathering during the "Total Revolution" movement in 1970s, has a capacity of about 1.25 lakh people. In 2013 after the AAP's first poll victory, Kejriwal's

swearing-in ceremony was held at Ramlila Maidan. In 2015 too, his oath-taking ceremony had taken place at the same venue on Feb. 14.

Though an invitation has been sent to the Prime Minister, it is, however, not clear whether Modi would attend the swearing-in ceremony as he is travelling to his parliamentary constituency Varanasi on Sunday to inaugurate over 30 projects.

Invitations for the swearing-in ceremony have also been sent to BJP's newly elected eight legislators and the party's seven sitting local MPs.

In a near-repeat performance of 2015, the Kejriwal-led AAP retained power with a scintillating win in the just-concluded Delhi Assembly polls, dealing a body blow to the main rival BJP and completely decimating the Congress in a keenly-watched battle.

**KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD.**  
(A Government of India Undertaking)

**NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER**

Chief Commercial Manager, Konkan Railway Corporation Limited, invites open tender in Single Bid System through E-tendering on IREPS portal from eligible contractors for the following work. Name of Work: Leasing out space in Parcel Cargo Express Train (PCET) from registered lease holders of KRCL and others having average annual turnover of ₹ 10 Crores during last three financial years. Tender Notice No.: KR/CO/PCET/01-2020 dated 14/02/2020. Estimated Cost: ₹ 89.50 Crores (Excluding DC&GST). Closing Date and Time: 09/03/2020 up to 14:00 hrs. for submission of online offers/bids. Opening Date and Time: 09/03/2020 at 15:30 hrs. Contract Period: Six years. Manual offers shall not be accepted. Please visit <https://ireps.gov.in> website for details and participation. Corrigendum/addendum will be hosted in this website only.

**MAXIMUS ARC LIMITED**  
Registered & Corporate Office: # 59A-18/1-5A, 3rd Floor, Sri Plaza, Teachers Colony, Patamata, Vijayawada-520008. Tel: 0856-24573344, 990661876 email: [coo@maximusarc.com](mailto:coo@maximusarc.com)

**CORRIGENDUM TO PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION**  
M/s. S.K.M. TECHNOLOGIES PVT LTD. PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 12, 2020, IN "DECCAN CHRONICLE" & "ANDHRA JYOTHI" - HYDERABAD EDITION

Notice is hereby given that the auction of the assets of M/s. S.K.M. Technologies Pvt Ltd, scheduled on February 19, 2020 is now rescheduled as under:

- Date of E-Auction Sale: 10.03.2020 between 11.00 AM to 12.00 Noon.
- Last date for the submission of Bid: On or before 5.00 PM on 09.03.2020.

Whereas all the other terms and conditions along with contents mentioned in the said notice remain unchanged.

(A. Narayana Prasad)  
Authorized Officer  
Place: Vijayawada  
[narayanaprasad@maximusarc.com](mailto:narayanaprasad@maximusarc.com)

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE**

Open E-Tender Notice No. 13SEE 19-20, The DRM (Engg.)/SEE for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open E-Tenders for the following works. The last date of online E-tendering is 11.03.2020 up to 13:00 hrs. All information and tender documents related to E-tender is available on website - [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

**Name of Work with Item no. 1.** Hajipur - Chhapra Kachehri - Ancillary work i.e. Reconditioning of Worn out CMS Crossing, Togue rails, Removing of seized/broken/ corroded rail screw/plate screw, greasing of ERC etc. against sanctioned TR work "TWR-23.03 Km, TTR (CS + CMSC) - 7 Sets & SEJ Renewal - 38 Sets. Approx Cost (In Rs.): 41,79,423,00/- Earnest Money (In Rs.): 83,600/- Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.) (Non refundable): 3,000/-

**Name of Work with Item no. 2.** Samastipur (ex) - Muzaffarpur Section : Dismantling and vacation of site of abandoned quarter no. E/17, E/16, T/10, T/11, T/12 & T/13 at Khudiram Bose Pusa, quarter no. E/10, E/9, T/11, T/12 & ST/1 at Dholi, quarter No. T/10, T/6, T/5, T/9, G/11 at Silaut, quarter No. G/236, G/237, G/238, G/239, G/240 & G/267 at Brahmapura Colony/Muzaffarpur, and quarter no. G/127, G/128, G/269 & G/270 at Bibiganj Colony/Muzaffarpur under jurisdiction of SSE/W/Line/Muzaffarpur in Sonpur Division. Approx Cost (In Rs.): 18,04,221,00/- Earnest Money (In Rs.): 36,100/- Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.) (Non refundable): 2,000/- Name of Work with Item no. 3. At Dubaha : Provision of Additional loop. Approx Cost (In Rs.): 2,82,90,856.28/- Earnest Money (In Rs.): 2,81,500/- Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.) (Non refundable): 10,000/- Name of Work with Item no. 4. Hiring of One (01) Non-AC Four Wheeler Vehicle (MUV) (Mahindra, Xylo, Tavera, Innova, Sumo, Scorpio etc. of similar or latest model) on 24 hours basis under Engineering Contract, Sonpur for a period of 731 days (02 years). Approx Cost (In Rs.): 14,09,667,71/- Earnest Money (In Rs.): 28,200/- Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.) (Non refundable): 2,000/- Name of Work with Item no. 5. Between Muzaffarpur - Hajipur Section : Dismantling and vacation of site of abandoned Qtr. No. (O/H) E/72, T/6-2, T/6-1, T/2, E/22, E/21, E/20, E/12, M/60 at Imli Road, Qtr. No. E/1-1, E/1-2, B. No. 13, E/3-2 at Litchi bagan colony, Qtr. No. L/64, L/85, L/295, L/296 at Loco Colony, Qtr. No. E/92 & Pump House at Chakkur Colony in Muzaffarpur, Qtr. No. T/5 & T/4 at Turki, Qtr. No. T/1 at Kurhani, Qtr. No. T/3 at Gorouli, Qtr. No. T/1 at Bithauli Hall, Qtr. No. T/4 & T/5 at Sarai and Qtr. No. E/1 at LC No. 47 under jurisdiction of SSE/W/MFP in Sonpur Division. Approx Cost (In Rs.): 21,51,388/- Earnest Money (In Rs.): 43,000/- Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.) (Non refundable): 3,000/- Name of Work with Item no. 6. Rehabilitation of minor bridges by grouting of abutment, piers, repairs to wing wall, cleaning of waterway, repairs to inspection steps etc. in Barauni - Samastipur - Muzaffarpur - Hajipur section. (Balance work). Approx Cost (In Rs.): 59,75,041.35/- Earnest Money (In Rs.): 1,19,500/- Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.) (Non refundable): 5,000/- Name of Work with Item no. 7. Replacement of corroded/pitted/perforated members of bridge No. 78 UP (1 x 8 x 76.2 m) including provision of special type X-Girder protection screen at Br. No. 78 UP & DN (2 x 8 x 76.2 m), 10 (1 x 15 x 61.0 m) and 16 DN (1 x 7 x 30.5 m) under SSE/Br./SEE of Sonpur. Approx Cost (In Rs.): 79,77,517.64/- Earnest Money (In Rs.): 1,59,500/- Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.) (Non refundable): 5,000/- The above tender notice is available on website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). RIGHT OF RAILWAY TO DEAL WITH TENDER: Railway Administration reserves the right to postpone/modify or to cancel any one or all the tenders without assigning any reasons.

PR/2239/SEE/ENGG/T/19-20/120 Divisional Railway Manager/Engg. E.C.R. Sonpur

## SHORT TAKES

### BANGLADESHI NATIONALS ARRESTED

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 14

Three Bangladeshi nationals including two women were on Friday arrested in Indore on charges of forgery and staying in India illegally. The identity was revealed following their detention by police in connection with abduction of one Anil Pal, a staff of a local school in Indore.

"Three of the four people arrested by police were found to be Bangladeshis who have been staying in India illegally. We have reported the matter to the Centre," deputy inspector general of police, Indore range, Ruchi Vardhan Mishra told reporters.

Police investigation has revealed that Begum Khatoun alias Megha Verma, a Bangladeshi national, was staying illegally in Indore by making passport with the help of a forged school mark sheet.

She had married one Kishore Khandale, who hailed from Maharashtra, and the couple was living in Indore for the past several years. She made her new Indian passport in the name of Megha Verma.

Police also arrested two other Bangladeshis, Roni Sheikh and Lima.

### TOP BOMBAY HC JUDGE RESIGNS

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, FEB. 14

The senior-most judge of the Bombay high court has resigned from his post. Justice Satyaranjan Chandrashekar Dharmadhikari has tendered his resignation before the President of India on Thursday evening, which is yet to be approved. Justice Dharmadhikari told media persons that he has quit due to family and personal issues.

According to him, he had been elevated as Chief Justice of some other state where he does not want to go. He wants to remain in Mumbai because he has some personal responsibilities here.

The higher authorities were not ready to elevate him as Chief Justice of the Bombay high court.

"I had to resign due to purely personal and family issues... I did not want to leave Mumbai and they were not ready to elevate me as the Chief Justice of the Bombay high court," Justice Dharmadhikari told reporters.

While hearing his scheduled petitions on Friday, Justice Dharmadhikari told lawyers that he would not be available next week as Friday is his last day. Advocate Mathew Nedumpara had mentioned a petition seeking for the court to hear it next week.

"When the judge said he has resigned, I initially thought that he said it in a lighter vein... He is a very senior judge and his resignation comes as a shock," Nedumpara later said.

### VILLAGER KILLED ALONG LoC

Jammu, Feb. 14: A villager was killed and four others were injured on Friday when Pakistani troops engaged in heavy mortar shelling and firing on civilian areas and forward posts along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said.

Pakistan Army troops launched mortar shells and fired from small arms on villages and forward posts in Shahpur and Kerni areas of the district in violation of a ceasefire agreement, they said. Pakistani troops used 120-mm mortars to target the villages, they said.

In the firing and shelling, one civilian was killed and four other villagers were injured, they said.

The injured have been taken to a hospital, they said. Indian troops guarding the border retaliated befittingly resulting in an exchange of fire, which continued till reports last came in, they said.

Meanwhile, officials said on Friday that terror-related violence in Jammu and Kashmir has come down by 60 per cent in less than one and a half months in the beginning of 2020, in comparison to the same period last year.

The information was conveyed by director general of police, Jammu and Kashmir, Dilbagh Singh who called on Union Minister Jitendra Singh in the national capital.

## Up in arms



Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union president Aishe Ghosh raises slogans during her visit to show solidarity to Muslim women and their family members, who have been protesting against CAA, NRC and NPR for over a month, at Park Circus Maidan in Kolkata on Friday. — PTI

## SC notice to J&K on Omar's detention

Top court fixes Mar. 2 for next hearing on plea by Sara

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 14

The Supreme Court on Friday sought response from J&K government on a plea by Sara Abdullah Pilot challenging invoking of Public Safety Act for the continued detention of her brother and former J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

Omar Abdullah was detained on August 4, 2019, shortly before the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and subsequent bifurcation of the J&K into Union Territories.

Issuing notice to the J&K government, a bench of Justice Arun Mishra and Justice Indira Banerjee directed the further hearing of the matter on March 2 even as senior counsel Kapil Sibal urged the court that it was a habeas corpus plea and an early date may be given.

Not acceding to the request by Sibal, Justice Mishra said that "you are coming after so long after being detained."

It is Sara Abdullah — the sister of Omar Abdullah — who has moved the habeas corpus petition and has challenged the invoking of PSA against former Chief Minister, Sibal told the court.

Sibal clarified that the petitioner Sara Abdullah has challenged the further detaining Omar Abdullah under the PSA and prior to the invoking of the Public Safety Act, the former Chief Minister was detained

under Section 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Section 107 of the CrPC provides for steps to be taken by magistrate for keeping peace.

In response to a poser from the court whether any matter relating to Omar Abdullah's detention was pending before the J&K High Court, Sibal said that there was none relating Omar Abdullah.

The matter on Friday came before the bench of Justice Mishra and Justice Banerjee as Justice Mohan M. Shantanahoudar who was part of the bench comprising Justice N.V. Ramana and Justice Sanjiv Khanna had earlier recused himself from participating in the matter on Wednesday.

Omar Abdullah, his father and former J&K Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and other senior Kashmiri leaders are under detention since August 4-5.

Sara Abdullah in her petition has contended that there could not be any material for further detaining a person who is already under detention for last six months.

She has also sought quashing of the February 5, 2020, order detaining Omar Abdullah under the PSA.

Describing detention as "illegal", Sara Abdullah in her petition has said, "The grounds for the detention order are wholly lacking any material facts or particulars which are imperative for

an order of detention."

Recounting the public service rendered by Omar Abdullah both in the J&K as Chief Minister and as a Central minister, the petition says, "It is rare that those who have served the nation as members of Parliaments, Chief Ministers of state, ministers in the union and have also stood by the national aspirations of India are now perceived as a threat to the state."

It further says that "It is therefore of the utmost importance and of the utmost urgency that this court protects not only the individual's Right to Life and Liberty but also protects the essence of Article 21 which is the cornerstone of Part III of the Constitution, a violation of which is anathema to all that a democratic nation stands for."

It said that at no point of time in his "prolific political career", he has resorted to or indulged in conduct unbecoming of a "conscientious public figure".

The grounds of detention against Omar claim that on the eve of reorganisation of the state, he had allegedly made attempts to provoke general masses against the revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A.

Omar, who has been junior foreign minister and commerce minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led Cabinet in 2000, was served with a three-page dossier in which he was alleged to have made statements in the past which were "subversive" in nature.

### RESTRICTIONS SHOULD BE LIFTED: EU

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 14

A day after a group of 25 foreign envoys concluded a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, the European Union (EU) said "the visit confirmed that the Government of India has taken positive steps to restore normalcy" but added that it is important that the remaining restrictions be lifted swiftly.

The EU also said that it "recognises the serious security concerns" of Indian authorities, and that "the visit presented a welcome opportunity to see the situation on the ground and to interact with local interlocutors."

The EU's statement is being seen as setting the stage for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's expected visit to the Belgian capital Brussels next month for the 15th India-EU Summit.

About half of the 25 foreign envoys who formed the second batch of foreign envoys visiting Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday and Thursday had significantly belonged to the European Union member nations including EU powerhouses Germany and France.

The envoys had visited Srinagar on Wednesday and Jammu on Thursday.

## Senior BJP leaders in K'taka upset

B. ARAVINDA SHETTY | DC BENGALURU, FEB. 14

Cabinet expansion and the allocation of portfolios to newly appointed ministers has upset many BJP oldtimers and senior ministers in the B.S.Yediyurappa government. The new ministers were all earlier in the Congress and JD(S) and had played a pivotal role in toppling the previous H.D. Kumaraswamy government.

To placate the sulking ministers and party loyalists who are MLAs, Chief Minister B.S.Yediyurappa and party state president Nalin Kumar Kattel have called a legislature party meeting on February 16. However the party maintains that the meeting has been called in view

of the joint session which will commence from Monday, to discuss floor management and other important issues coming up in the session. Senior leaders including MLAs like Umesh Katti, S.A. Ramdas, Tippeneswamy and S. Angara have openly expressed their anger against the chief minister for not inducting them into the Cabinet. Some party functionaries are also upset with the CM for allotting plum portfolios to the new ministers, sources said.

At the legislature party meeting, the upset MLAs are likely to raise the neglect of party loyalists while forming the government and will insist on accommodating long-time BJP workers in the boards and corporations.

## Brawl over seating in train leaves 1 dead

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, FEB. 14

A group of over 12 persons beat up a 26-year-old to death inside an express train headed to Bidar from Mumbai after the two sides fought over seating in the train, railway police officials said. The incident took place between Pune and Daund when the group rained kicks and punches on the youth.

Railway police officials said that the incident occurred early Thursday after Sagar Markand and his wife Jyoti, along with their two-year-old daughter, boarded the train at Kalyan in the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. The family stays at Kalyan and was headed Bidar. "There were no seats

in the general compartment and hence, Markand requested some women to adjust so that his wife could sit with their toddler in her arms. The women were however enraged and hence began hurling abuses at him," said a railway police officer.

The squabble turned wild soon after and around 12 men joined it and started raining blows, kicking and punching Markand. His wife tried to intervene and requested to spare her husband, however her pleas fell on deaf ears.

The railway police was informed and they intervened at Daund station and rescued Markand. Markand was rushed to the civic hospital where he was declared dead on arrival.

## Coronavirus: 3rd Indian on ship tests positive

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 14

Aviation regulator DGCA has asked airports and airlines on Friday that passengers arriving in flights from Japan and South Korea must be screened once they step out of aerobridges in order to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus infection. Till date, only passengers arriving from four countries — China, Hong Kong, Thailand and Singapore — were being screened for possible exposure to the respiratory virus at 21 identified airports in India.

Meanwhile, the Indian Embassy in Japan said on Friday that a third Indian crew on board a cruise ship off the Japanese coast has tested positive for the novel coronavirus as authorities confirmed that total 218 people have been infected with the deadly virus on the quarantined ship.

Two crew members, out of total 138 Indians on board the cruise ship Diamond Princess, were tested positive for the virus earlier.

In a circular, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) was quoted by news agencies, as stating, "Universal screening of all the passengers coming in flights directly from Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Singapore besides the flights from China and Hong Kong shall be ensured immediately once they step out of the specific identified aerobridge."

The DGCA circular was further quoted as stating, "It is advised to place the suitable signages at strategic locations at all the airports and getting the self-declaration form filled by the passengers as per the instructions of the ministry of health and family welfare."

So far, India has reported three confirmed cases of nCoV, all from Kerala.

**BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS**  
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# DECCAN Chronicle

15 FEBRUARY 2020

## Denial, obfuscation by BJP after Delhi rout

Obfuscation is part of military science, as the *Mahabharata* story about Ashwathama informs us. Recent observations of the top tier of the ruling party appear to have extended this to the electoral battlefield and the wider ambit of politics. This is evident from observations of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah not so long ago in the context of the CAA-NRC, and the recently held election to the Delhi Assembly. Indeed, the two appear to have been closely linked since the BJP campaign for the Assembly election in Delhi was focused on the specific issue of CAA-NRC and punishing the peaceful protesters of Shaheen Bagh.

Of the PM's memorable statements made at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan in the wake of the CAA-NRC protests that have shaken up the country, one is recalled with particular emphasis by ruling party spokesmen and cadres — that the National Register of Citizens (which is so intrinsically tied to the CAA in a particular "chronology", to quote the home minister) has not once been considered officially by his government, thus suggesting that the protests against NRC are an artifice, a low tactic of the BJP's opponents to rally public opinion on a false premise.

Fact-checkers immediately set about the relatively easy task of showing this was not the case. President Ram Nath Kovind's address to a joint session of the two Houses of Parliament was fished out. It revealed the government's intention to make the NRC a reality. When the NRC comes up for discussion now, BJP-RSS spokesmen have found a new technique to play their hand. They say this is not "yet" on the menu. They no longer deny it outright.

Just like his leader, the home minister resorted to outright denial in order to get out of an unenviable situation at a media event in the national capital on Thursday. In the recent poll campaign in Delhi, he asserted — in response to a question — that no one had spoken of "bahu-bettyon ka bal-atar" or the "rape of women" (in Hindu homes by those protesting at Shaheen Bagh). Such an observation by one of BJP's most significant leaders in a generation is apt to cause surprise as millions of Indians have seen on their television screens the BJP's MP from West Delhi rant exactly on those lines at a poll meeting. He was castigating Muslims by implication and seeking to demonise the Shaheen Bagh protesters.

It is noteworthy that after such an execrable remark he was not detersed by the BJP as its lead speaker in the debate on the motion of thanks on the President's address in the Lok Sabha. It is no less remarkable that the home minister, who conceived and led his party's failed Delhi campaign, did not see it fit to have the man arrested for his inflammatory ravings, causing enmity amongst the people.

It is evident that Mr Shah was obliged to fudge about his MP's words precisely because this MP was chosen to expound on the BJP's ideology in Parliament. The gold standard of leadership is met when top bracket politicians are true to responsibilities set by their office. Seeking the softer way out is for lesser beings.

## Not by fiat alone

The order of the Supreme Court on Thursday directing political parties to upload the details of the criminal antecedents of their candidates on their websites should be seen as yet another attempt by the court to help cleanse a system which refuses to change. Its impact, however, is doubtful; and the suggestion that parties give reasons for selecting candidates with criminal cases pending against them is more problematic as it is hardly justiciable.

As it stands today, the affidavits candidates file when submitting their nominations as candidates in elections must contain details of the criminal cases they face. These details can now be accessed through the route provided by the Right to Information Act, and there are non-governmental organisations which regularly collect this information and publish it. The latest order will only make this process simpler.

It was in 2013 that the Supreme Court scrapped Section 8 (4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which protected MLAs and MPs against losing their positions even if convicted in a case and sentenced to more than two years in jail. As a result, netas today stand stripped of their stature immediately on conviction. The Supreme Court has also ordered the setting up of special courts to try cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs. Despite all the efforts by the Election Commission and the courts, we have politicians facing serious charges, including rape and attempt to murder, getting elected to legislatures and even becoming ministers.

The latest was in Karnataka where an MLA who faces as many as 15 cases, some under the Forest Act, has been appointed forest minister. The ground reality is that the state and its arms are pretty helpless if political parties choose to field candidates who can win an election by hook or by crook. It's a political issue that the polity as a whole must address; the judiciary can do only so much in this regard.

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# Seismic changes haunt BJP after Delhi shock



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

On top of the BJP's rudderless leadership to get the national economy out of a rut, or very possibly because of it, comes a humiliating political defeat in the Delhi Assembly elections with Arvind Kejriwal's broom sweeping the Congress completely out of the capital's politics and limiting the BJP to single digits in the 70-member Delhi Assembly.

The dynamic Gujarati Narendra Modi-Amit Shah duo who rule India from Delhi must be feeling the pinch of the thumbs-down they got from 54 per cent of 10 million Delhiites (out of 15 million) potential voters who cast their votes on February 8.

Coming as it does, despite desperate efforts to play divisive politics — the signature, winning political tune perfected since L.K. Advani's 1990 rathayatra to build a Ram Mandir — surely points to the need for a considerable rethink, especially now as Ram Lalla rests easy in Ayodhya.

Admittedly, Delhi is an outlier. It ties with Goa for the highest per capita income in the country; has high literacy levels and is a grab bag of domestic high achievers attracted to the capital by the opportunities offered — ranging from abundant well-paid, low skilled daily work to highly overpaid, top echelon professionals and savvy business folk.

Performance counts in Delhi. On that parameter, the BJP has little to show while the AAP merely points to the "positive lived experience" of Delhi citizens in public services — electricity, water, the management of sewage, education and health services.

The BJP rules at the municipality level, but it has nothing much to show for it. More impor-

tant, land management and the police, which are under the lieutenant-governor and through him the Union government, have remained pools of public dissatisfaction and discontent, with none of the spiffy governance anticipated when Narendra Modi became Prime minister in 2014.

To be sure the city of Delhi — a cosseted child of emperors starting with the Great Mughals — is spoilt silly. It expects the earth from those who rule without cooperating in the least to give something back to the city. But it is an international and a national bellwether purely because of its strategic location at the political and economic crossroads of domestic and global matters.

If the BJP is to recover from the series of recent body blows — Rajasthan, Jharkhand and now Delhi — some directional changes are needed over the next four years till 2024.

First, the BJP has retained around 39 per cent of the votes cast. But reliance on the "Modi magic" to get past the post without a second line of credible and competent North Indian leaders has cost it heavily.

Delhi is used to a long line of emperors who conquer and then choose to settle down here and adopt it as their own. The BJP has anticipated this need now by appointing J.P. Nadda as party president — a Himachali born and brought up in Bihar. But this is little more than a palliative in the face of an absent layer of high ranking North Indian leaders — beyond Rajnath Singh — in key Cabinet positions.

Second, the abnormal delay in firing on all three engines — private consumption, public investment and exports — is felt keenly in Delhi

where new projects, high consumption and exports drive the economy. The Budget for 2021 failed to provide the lift so eagerly awaited by urban India — jobs, cheaper loans and incentives for investment.

The Reserve Bank has erred in not bringing the repo rate below the psychological five per cent level. The initiative to free investment loans for specified purposes from the CRR requirement are welcome, but too timid. Between the Statutory Liquidity Ratio and Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), 22.25 per cent of a bank's assets are compulsorily sequestered in low-return government debt, which earns barely two percentage points more than the cost of bank term deposit rates. The State Bank of India has reduced its deposit rates now to lower its cost of funds. Sadly, no thought was spared for the hapless lower middle class for whom a bank deposit is also a saving instrument.

For profits, banks look to private lending at usurious rates ranging between nine (house loan) to 15 per cent (car or commercial loan). This is far too high to encourage spending unless accompanied by high inflation to deflate the real interest rate to a bearable 1.5 per cent per annum — which has not been the case since 2015.

Pulling the plug on fiscal restraint was the only way to go. But Arun Jaitley's legacy of "fiscal propriety" — as defined by the Washington Consensus — still rules like a staid aunt.

Third, L.K. Advani's rathayatra gambit seems to have come to its end. Divide and rule makes sense only if you retain a core group of supporters

**Divide and rule makes sense only if you retain a core group of supporters who stand to benefit from you. This group has rapidly shrunk. Industry and business — once the rally boys of the BJP — now look a worried lot...**

who stand to benefit from you. This group has rapidly shrunk. Industry and business — once the rally boys of the BJP — now look a worried lot as Delhi acquires undertones of imperious Beijing. Indian entrepreneurs are... well Indian, in their rambunctiousness. They dislike too much restraint, unless it is aimed at their competitors.

The governance style emerging out of Delhi is far too authoritarian to assuage the average businessperson long used to a laidback, wink-wink, nod-nod, non-competitive environment. This explains the overtures made recently by the government to raise tariff walls for the import of a range of goods.

Expect many more similar actions to reach out to the core base of the BJP — Hindu voters from the upper and middle castes in the belt stretching from Rajasthan to Bihar across north and central India, with a focus on urban and peri-urban areas. Dalits, rural India and contested territories in the South and East are likely to be reduced to collateral political reserves to be accessed on a transactional basis when beneficial.

This does not augur well in the immediate future for strategic fiscal reforms in inter-state governance — devolution, decentralisation and enhanced federalism or for structural reforms in labour, land management and agriculture.

Consequently, growth will remain sluggish till the financial sector outgrows the drag of its stressed assets; public debt levels may breach prudential levels and government allocations are likely to become even more skewed to benefit specific interest groups — like big farmers — as the BJP gears up for state elections in predominantly agricultural Bihar in October this year, and later in Uttar Pradesh in February 2022.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

### LETTERS

#### MISUSE OF SEC. 124

For decades, the sedition provision under Section 124 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has been blatantly abused to suppress freedom of speech and expression. The reasons are politically motivated. Misuse of the sedition law and arbitrary slapping of charges are inconsistent with India's international commitments. Our leaders must take steps to ensure that despite their political beliefs everyone is entitled to practice freedom of speech — in a peaceful manner.

Rudra Krishna  
Hyderabad

#### GARBAGE CHARGES

Even though the taxpayers are paying twice for garbage disposal, in our locality, Simhadrinagar behind DAV Public School, garbage collectors don't come regularly, i.e. twice a week (*Greater Hyderabad residents are paying twice for garbage*, DC, Feb. 13). Complaints lodged on the GHMC app vanish without resolved. They behave as if we have committed a crime if we complain. I hope the GHMC officials clarify how much is to be paid for garbage disposal.

Pooja Dinakar  
Hyderabad

#### HELMETLESS DRIVING

The government has blood on its hands for not enforcing the amended Motor Vehicles Act (*Little Daredevils*, DC, Feb. 14). Seldom does a day pass without someone dying due to disobeying traffic rules. What will it take the dispensation to wake up? Maybe we should start celebrating the death of so many young lives at their funerals to highlight the indifference shown by the traffic police who ignore violations right in front of their eyes.

Wg. Cdr. Satinder Singh (ret'd)  
Hyderabad

#### CHEATING FARMERS

It is unfortunate that the state government is unable to pay farmers and seems to be fast running into a deficit from being a financial surplus state a few years ago when it was formed (*Debt-hit Telangana defaults on Rythu Bandhu to 12 L farmers yet to get aid under plan*, DC, Feb. 14). Most political leaders don't seem to understand the repercussions of schemes to sway voters during elections and struggle later to come out of the web.

K. Ganesh  
Hyderabad

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



F.S. Aijazuddin

## Lear's lessons for our times: Should armies be retired?

William Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear* is not to be watched on an empty stomach. It is a gut-wrenching story of betrayal, inhuman blinding, unnatural patricide, and grey-haired hubris that ends with broken-hearted remorse. It is an indictment of those who all too often declare their "fast intent to shake all cares and business" of governance, and then refuse to relinquish authority.

Adaptation of Shakespeare's plays, whether in a modern setting or in a foreign language, is no longer a heresy. Shakespeare's archaic language may sound unfamiliar to our ears, yet his plots are timeless, relevant to every age, which is why they can withstand translation and transposition. After all, didn't Shakespeare himself borrow his ideas from others' works? He took Romeo and Juliet and also Much Ado About Nothing from the mind of the Italian Giovanni Boccaccio, his plays about Rome came from the pen of Plutarch, and his sagas of English history from

the chroniclers Edward Hall and Holinshed. To each he added his own genius, leaving pearls long after their oysters have been forgotten.

Zia Mohyeddin's latest production *King Lear* was performed in Lahore by the National Academy of Performing Arts, after an earlier run in Karachi. Zia is the last of an endangered species — a genus of Shakespearean actors who understands the playwright, who has declaimed his words on the London stage, and who still possesses the skill to present Shakespeare to an audience of Pakistanis who may never visit the Globe theatre or Stratford-upon-Avon. Zia dared to use an Urdu translation. It was a risk. For any translation to succeed, the translator must understand the original: its syntax, its subtleties, its inbuilt nuances, and then transmute that into a sibling of the original but with its own features, its own idioms, its own personality.

Mr Mohyeddin the producer could not have found a more perfect translator than the seasoned actor Khalid

Ahmad. Mr Ahmad had applied his alchemy earlier on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His translation was faultless, at times lyrically independent of Shakespeare's original. Khalid Ahmad not only translated *King Lear*, he acted and became King Lear.

Mr Mohyeddin used bare props — a throne, a table as a catafalque, and a small mound as a hilltop. He melded his performers with their disparate experience into one seamless team. Memorable were Fawad Khan (Kent) well-known as a dastango; Paras Masroor (Gloucester's illegitimate son Edmund) and Mira Sethi (Goneril) who have a television background; and Raheel Siddiqui as Dr Buddha/the wise Fool. Every play is as strong as its weakest actor. King Lear may have been let down by his daughters; Zia's audience had no reason to be disappointed by his choice of cast.

Who hasn't studied Shakespeare at school? His plays were as an inescapable as chicken pox. If one's diction was good enough, one per-

formed in them; if lucky, one saw it performed by the best. I studied *King Lear* for my 'A' levels in an English public school. Our class was taken to the Old Vic, where *King Lear* was played by the veteran actor Paul Rogers, his ungrateful daughters by Coral Browne and Barbara Jefford (soon to become famous). The following morning, our English teacher Mr Miller asked us what our reaction had been during the closing scene when Lear cradles the lifeless body of his youngest, faithful daughter Cordelia. Heartbroken, he shrieks: "How! How! How! O, you are men of stones! Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so/That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever."

Mr Miller asked whether any of us had cried. Sheepishly, I alone put up my hand. "You are the only one who had the right reaction." E.M. Forster's description fitted my Anglo-Saxon classmates, with their "well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds and underdeveloped hearts".

In the play, *King Lear* divides his

kingdom between his two obsequious daughters, on the understanding that he and 100 of his knights would be supported by each daughter in turn. The sisters, however, annoyed at the misbehaviour of his raucous entourage, demand a reduction in his knights from 100 to 50. Regan, the younger, goes further: "I'll receive him gladly, / But not one follower." Angered by their unconscionable in-hospitality, Lear curses them and leaves.

Some might see a parable between *King Lear's* predicament and that of the governments of India and Pakistan. An Indian newspaper recently carried a report that read: "For the first time ever, the [Indian] defence budget allocates more money for army pensions (₹1.13 lakh crore) than for army salaries (₹1.1 lakh crore). Both the salary and pension bills are bigger than Pakistan's total defence budget (₹1 lakh crore)." Shakespeare's Lear and his knights still abound.

By arrangement with Dawn

# Just shoot 'em...? UK must tackle jihadi cells in jails



Farrukh Dhondy  
**Cabbages & Kings**

*"The heathen in his blindness Bows down to wood and stone. The Colonial conceit was that The Brits knew God alone! The Heathen thinks that Christians Worship a wooden cross Which today would be an electric chair Or a noose to hang humans in the air..."*  
From *The Song of Khatribai Ghulamfaggot* by Bachchao

My father, the Indian Army veteran that he was, would read the daily headlines about various miscreants — hoarders of grain who caused shortages of food, child rapists, large-scale fraudsters — and would inevitably exclaim, in English or

Gujarati: "line the so-and-sos up against the wall and shoot them". The so-and-so expletive would vary with the language in which he framed this summary sentence. Dad wasn't given to the niceties of socio-political argument. In India recently, I read in several publications, vociferously argued cases for and against capital punishment — these in the context of the Nirbhaya rapist-murderers appealing for mercy against their hanging. The arguments were on the one side vengeful and, perhaps, karmic; on the other, a consideration that rapists and murderers were reared by the social circumstances, mentalities and morals of our society and these should be reformed. My father's pronouncements had no consideration for such subtleties. I can't say if his

reaction was inspired by the Zoroastrian theological contention that the universe and life are the battleground of good versus evil and that, being on the side of good, he was obliged to wipe out the perpetrators of evil. Perhaps his intolerance was more likely influenced by military morals and a view that summary justice was better than the namby-pamby of "due process". My wonderful, if hastily mistaken, dad's dictum came to mind this week in London when Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his dimwit home secretary Priti Patel put in train fast-track action and legislation on three fronts. Firstly, they deported 27 "Jamaican" criminals who had served their sentences for manslaughter, violent acts and even paedophilia back to their "home country". At least 50 other such criminals were listed for deportation on the same chartered aircraft but appealed against it on the grounds that they were not afforded contact with any legal representation because the jail in which they were serving sentences had wi-fi problems. The courts upheld the stay on deportation.

**Predatory Patel has initiated a bill to change the liberal rule governing the release of convicted terrorists who have served half their jail terms. This is seen by that same majority that supports deportation as eminently sensible.**

Liberal opinion in the country opposed this measure but, without any statistical evidence, I feel that a vast majority of the country would have cheered it on. The one argument against such a cheer is that very many of these individuals, while not having papers to prove that they were British, had lived from childhood in this country and had been socialised and perhaps criminalised by it. Nevertheless, technically they were not British and consequently subject to expulsion from the sceptred isle. The second measure which Predatory Patel has initiated is a bill in Parliament to change the liberal rule governing the release of convicted terrorists

who have served half their jail terms. This is seen by that same majority that supports deportation as eminently sensible. And it may be. In the recent past, two terrorists convicted of offences such as harbouring materials and recording messages of terror, rather than having bombed a place or killed anyone, were released from prison having served half the prescribed period. They went on to murder innocents in the name of jihad. Of course, this legislation can be seen as protective of the public, but there is the argument that spending six rather than three years in jail doesn't necessarily stop the offender when he is released from doing what he would have done after serving only half that time. There may be a case for the three extra years in jail being used to effectively deradicalise jihadis through rehabilitation and re-education programmes, but there is not much evidence that such programmes work. There is an outcry now by prison wardens and by commentators that prison is itself a radicalising hothouse. Jihadis in contact with each other rein-

force their determination to commit acts which will transport them to heaven and grant them 72, willing or reluctant, virgins. They also come in contact with petty criminals whom they sometimes succeed in converting into murderous terrorists. There is overwhelming evidence that points to these phenomena. What would *behsti Pappa* (dad) have said? "Line them up against the wall and shoot them." Even Predatory Patel, whatever her instincts, can't follow such advice in an avowedly civilised and democratic society. And while she contemplates a solution to this brewing of terror in the institution of prison, she should consider evidence from other countries where dispersing terrorists, isolating them or giving them longer sentences hasn't done anything to stop the movement which is dedicated to recruiting new members. If Prowly Patel can get the money off the new chancellor (after Sajju Javid's shock resignation from the Cabinet this week), her first move should be spending it on refurbishment of prisons. Today, there are 82,000 pris-

oners crammed into spaces designed for 60,000. There are 10,000 assaults on prison officers each year. Britain's prisons are markets for drugs, smuggled in by bribed warders or delivered by drones. The programmes of rehabilitation are laughable. Mullahs are sent in to preach Islamic values to those convicted of serious jihadi offences such as the making of bombs or the membership of cells with published plans for terrorist acts. There is no considered programme of rehabilitation and no supervision of what these mullahs say and no assessment of what effect their preaching has on determined death-cultists. A measure of discipline, compassion and supervision is the direction reform should take. These would, at the least, enable an assessment of the progress towards a solution. What they won't do is make the sort of headlines this government wants in order to appeal to their core voters. I wonder what dad would have said should be done to Cabinet ministers who pander to populism instead of implementing effective solutions.

# China's coronavirus epidemic: For India, a challenge and wake-up call



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

The deadly, undetected and symptomless epidemic coronavirus appears almost synonymous with China these days. The Chinese economy's rise and the dependence of at least 60 Third World countries on Chinese finance, and more than 50 developed countries coveting Chinese factory products — from small tools to computer software, heavy engineering apparatus to telecommunications gear — appear to be in peril. With lightning speed, the world has started (physically) distancing from China, fearing a contagious and fatal epidemic. At a time of China's national distress, foreigners should also sympathise with the People's Republic and think of solutions, but from a distance. The world media is exhaustively reporting the crisis situation in China, but the reporting in the Indian media is fairly low-key. It's important for everyone in India to get an accurate picture of what is happening in that country. In a first-hand account, reported by China Daily's Global Weekly (February 7-13, 2020): "Unlike any other, 2019-nCoV (new coronavirus) is more treacherous, hiding under the camouflage of flu and SARS symptoms...". The debilitating effects of the contours of the disease, as narrated by the Chinese, stand thus: "The pathogen is more noxiously evolved, embedded with murderous skills and savage velocity to spread faster and infect more furiously even during its incubation

period... This devil is also more evil... attacking the very basis of the global community: air travel and connectivity. It is unlucky that China has to withstand another wave of intensive pathogenic assault in less than two decades. The country is forced to pay heavy sacrifices. Apart from losing hundreds of lives, thousands more are hospitalised". This scenario, as reported by the Chinese media, speaks for itself. The reality that China faces today: If not controlled immediately, things are bound to get worse. The Chinese economy seems headed for a downhill slide — which China fears most. A report says: "It's understandable for each nation to apply self-protection in line with the World Health Organisation recommendations. But proposals of 'shutting the border' to maximise one member state's interests may not necessarily immunise itself but will certainly affect public health as a whole." This signals both a sense of fear of the Chinese, and a (veiled) warning by Beijing to all nations which are planning and trying to reduce, if not stop, though perhaps temporarily, the chance of virus contamination through cross-border physical contacts. The Chinese obviously have the Russians — their closest business and diplomatic partner — in mind. On January 30, the Russian Prime Minister announced that 16 Moscow-Beijing border crossings will be closed "to protect our people". Russia also halted the issue of e-visas to Chinese

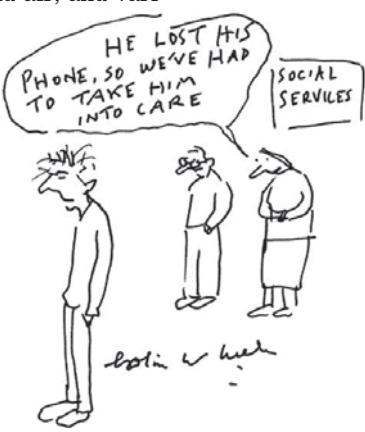
**Unless it is controlled fast, the coronavirus outbreak will not only lead to a prolonged slowdown in China, but also hit global growth, and disrupt mega-projects across continents. For the moment, international tourism is the first casualty.**

nationals and suspended the "special permit" allowing Chinese nationals short-term access to selected tourist destinations of the great Russian land mass. Thus the world's fifth-largest land border stands between the contagious Chinese coronavirus and Moscow's desire for "self-defence". In one stroke, the chemistry and economics of the Russia-China combine is in the line of virus fire. Unless it is controlled fast, the coronavirus outbreak will not only lead to a prolonged slowdown in China, but also hit global growth, and disrupt various mega-projects across continents. For the moment, international tourism is the first casualty. Aviation, transport, hotels, restaurants, retail stores and consumer markets already are staring at an emptiness in the high-profile destinations of the West. How does India stand in this situation? How does India try protect its populace from the coronavirus, which already appears to have entered this country. We have to ensure, above all, the good health of our vast population, to take every possible step to keep the nation disease-free, and not allow Indians to be guinea pigs in an experimental laboratory. As admitted by the Chinese themselves, the Wuhan-origin coronavirus of 2019 is far more dangerous and deadlier than the 2002-2003 Yunnan-origin SARS. It's contagion charac-

teristics, spreading through the air and physical proximity make all public gatherings highly avoidable. Our soldiers manning the Sino-Indian frontier need to be particularly alert in this regard, for if a single undetected coronavirus-afflicted Chinese border guard comes into contact with an Indian guard, the fallout could be severe. Similar is the situation at all international airports, where Indian personnel are pretty poorly equipped to deal with this deadly global virus of Chinese origin. India must take the latest WHO warning seriously: "The global virus spread is the tip of the iceberg." Around the globe, nations are waking up to the "Chinese threat", and India needs to resort to an immediate and urgent course correction. Whatever the pulls and pressures, the Indian government would do well to take its cue from the Russians, arguably the closest of all foreign countries to the Chinese. Close the borders. Reduce flights. Control Chinese goods as far as possible. Stop issuing visas to the Chinese. Help Indians first. China is four times more powerful economically than India. Yet China is struggling today due to its monumental miscalculations. It has already damaged a lot of its fertile land and air, and vari-

ous experimental centres. But China being a highly secretive state, several gullible people and impressionable tourists are getting hoodwinked by the glamour and glitz of the Communist superpower. If China's Wuhan-origin coronavirus becomes an epidemic in New Delhi or its hinterland, how will the Indian authorities tackle it? How much resources will India need? What will happen to the economy, which is yet to show any signs of buoyancy? The sluggish consumer market? The rising debt-ridden and stressed banking system? The distressed agrarian sector? The visibly rickety health system in semi-urban and rural belts? For the Indian State, the gravity of China's coronavirus epidemic has increased enormously. It's a challenge as well as an opportunity. We should help China in all possible ways, certainly, but not at the cost of the health of 1.3 billion Indians. "Health is wealth. Health is happiness". The so-called economic and financial globalisation now endangers the real health of the planet too.

*The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College and is the author of China in India*



# Boris' power grab at Treasury his first big mistake?

Stephen Daisley

Has Boris Johnson made the first major error of his premiership? Choosing his adviser over his chancellor of the exchequer could be seen as a bold gamble of the sort that won him a sweeping election victory and got the UK out of the European Union. We of little faith in the commentariat have often misread this Prime Minister and have been left looking like chumps as a result. But where Boris has succeeded is in defying the rules of politics and the circumstances of Sajid Javid's departure have more to do with the rules of governance. Robert Peston says: "The PM and [Dominic] Cummings believe the success of the government in these challenging times require Downing Street and the Treasury to act, as far as possible, as one seamless unit." Boris, Peston is told, "admires how Cameron and Osborne acted as a two-headed single political monster". Javid walked out of government after refusing to agree to the sacking of his special advisers and the creation of what the *Financial Times* calls "a joint team of special advisers... to run both Number 10 and the Treasury". However, he has not rejected the Cameron-Osborne model because that is not really what Boris — let's do away with the pretence: what Cummings — was proposing. Cameron and Osborne worked in harmony because they were effective co-leaders of the Conservative Party and the government. Osborne could challenge his old friend's decisions and overall direction because that was the kind of relationship they had. Javid would not have enjoyed a relationship of equals with Boris and nor will Rishi Sunak. Sunak is five years older than I am and in the Cabinet for the first time. With the greatest respect to him, he will not be standing up to the Prime Minister (or Dominic Cummings) any time soon. He wasn't appointed to do so. Number 10 intends to pursue a political programme for the early years of Brexit Britain that will frustrate the institutional fiscal prudence of Number 11 (and the economic dogma of the Conservative Party). It cannot afford a chancellor who thinks fiscal policy should be set by the Treasury. The Prime Minister's "one seamless unit" is not a merger but an annexation. This might make the politics of what comes next much easier for Number 10, but politics is not the same thing as governance and good governance thrives on give and take, ideas proposed and tested, and compromises struck where necessary. Remove that dynamic and you're left with a Prime Minister who no one dares to

question — government by echo. The UK hasn't had meaningful Cabinet government since the James Callaghan years in the late 1970s (the only fights Margaret Thatcher's ministers won with her was their resignation statements) but the chancellor was the last office with something approaching parity with the Prime Minister. The money is what matters and you don't want a Prime Minister doing anything rash with it. Boris has swept all that away. He's not the first Prime Minister who thought of bringing the Treasury to heel but others ultimately decided against it. Life would have been so much easier for Tony Blair if he had just sacked Gordon Brown, but he was held back by more than concern about internal party factions: he understood that the divide between political will and economic realities was a load-bearing wall. In Australia, where the TB-GBs played out a decade earlier between Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, the Labour government could sometimes be crippled by a political stalemate between the Prime Minister and the treasurer, but more often their clashes powered a dynamic, reforming administration that transformed Labour's fortunes and that of the Australian economy. Where Hawke was too shy of conflict, Keating pushed him into major reforms. Where Keating was too impatient, Hawke moored his treasurer to the hard facts of public opinion. Hawke's widow and biographer Blanche D'Alpuget called it "a very creative tension" that "worked extremely well for the government and for the nation". Keating once wryly remarked: "Prime Ministers are very useful to a treasurer." Boris may well proceed from good intentions: we need to make Brexit work and sometimes hurdles have to be cleared roughly. But a Tory should grasp the perils of good intentions and understand that the hurdles were put in place, and kept there, for a reason. A Tory should appreciate that an imperial PM might "get things done" but the impulse to get things done, custom and convention be damned, is not that of a conservative. Politically, the PM has stamped his authority in vivid fashion and has earned himself a wicked smile at the latest meltdown from a commentator class that never learns. But I'm not so sure he hasn't done his government some longer-term structural mischief. Chancellors are very useful to a Prime Minister, and very useful to good governance. *By arrangement with the Spectator*

# We must rise above likes and dislikes



Swami Tejomayananda

A person's nature is built on personal likes and dislikes, some of which keep changing, while others are firmly rooted. As a result, it becomes difficult to understand people. Likes and dislikes being unpredictable, it becomes difficult to please either oneself or others. It is perhaps for this reason some people prefer animals to humans. This capacity to change is also the beauty of the human being. They can also change for the better. In the Gita,

Bhagavan reveals the means to bring about change. At first, we must become aware of the likes and dislikes which govern our nature. Since they can neither be wiped out completely nor neutralised immediately, convert them to become preferences. It is better not to come under their sway because then we are unable to live the knowledge we have understood from the scriptures. For example, if you are invited for a meal and do not like what is served, let the

mind not stir up a storm. Do not give way to your likes and dislikes, throw a tantrum, get upset or push the plate away. Make the best of whatever is available. The best way of overcoming likes and dislikes is to remain steadfast in the performance of one's own duty — *svadharma*. This is higher and nobler than doing the duties of another, even though one may not see great virtue or merit in the work assigned. Bhagavan tells Arjuna that his duty is to defend dharma. In performing duty there is no room for personal likes and dislikes. If we are lazy we will be guided by *raga* and *dvesha*. Prohibited and selfish actions are also

performed for the same reason. In performing duties we cannot be controlled by likes and dislikes. So the best way to neutralise them is to remain steadfast in the performance of obligatory duties, offered as worship of the Lord. When we perform obligatory duties and dedicate our actions to God, His heart is touched. His grace, which descends on us, purifies the mind and leaves us free of *raga* and *dvesha*. *Swami Tejomayananda is from Chinmaya Mission. To find out more about Chinmaya Mission and Swamiji, visit www.chinmayamission.com. © Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.*



## 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

### Ordinance to re-nationalise banks

NEW DELHI, FEB. 14. All the 14 major Indian banks with a deposit of over ₹50 crores, whose take-over was invalidated by the Supreme Court on Tuesday, were re-nationalised today by an Ordinance promulgated by President V.V. Giri. The Ordinance seeks to meet the two main objections voiced by the Supreme Court against the earlier Act — "hostile discrimination against the 14 banks and defective scheme of compensation to the expropriated shareholders." According to official sources, the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertaking) Ordinance 1970, has been issued in the national interest to remedy the situation created by the Supreme Court judgment as early as possible.

IN BRIEF

**Saudi, Israel have no plans to meet**

**Dubai:** Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said no meeting is planned between the kingdom's crown prince and Israel's prime minister, a statement apparently meant to quash reports circulating in Israeli media this week of an alleged summit between the two. "There is no meeting planned between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Saudi Arabia's policy has been very clear since the beginning of this conflict," Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud told the Saudi-owned Al Arabiya English news website in a report on Thursday.

**48 Rohingyas held at Myanmar coast**

**Patheingyi (Myanmar):** Nearly 50 Rohingya Muslims have been detained at sea by Myanmar's navy, a local official said on Friday, the latest from the persecuted minority to be caught trying to flee camps in Bangladesh and Myanmar's restive Rakhine state. It was not immediately clear where the group started their boat journey but they were likely aiming for Malaysia or Indonesia. Thousands of Rohingyas have taken to the sea over the years in high-risk attempts to escape sprawling refugee camps in Bangladesh and oppressive conditions in Rakhine. Village administrator Myint Thein told AFP by phone the navy had picked up 48 Rohingyas men, women and children, as well as five "traffickers", at sea on Wednesday evening.

**Man sentenced in Hisahito case**

**Tokyo:** A Japanese man who left two kitchen knives on the school desk of Japan's Prince Hisahito, who is second in line to the throne, was given a suspended sentence on Friday. The man was handed an 18-month sentence, suspended for four years, a Tokyo district court spokesman said. Kaoru Hasegawa was arrested in April on suspicion of illegally entering the premises of the junior high school that the prince attends. He was also accused of violating Japan's firearms law.

**Balloon attacks re-emerge in Gaza**

**Gaza:** As the bunch of brightly-coloured balloons floated into Gaza's evening sky, there was a piercing crackle of gunfire. Moments earlier, the balloons had been launched by a group of masked young Palestinian men huddled near the Al-Bureij refugee camp. They attached explosives to the weapon before setting it adrift towards Israel. Israeli troops along the border tried to down the device, but the balloons floated on. Explosives tied to balloons and kites first emerged as a weapon in Gaza, ruled by the Islamist group Hamas, during intense protests in 2018, when the devices drifted across the border daily, causing thousands of fires in Israeli farms and communities. Israel blamed Hamas for the balloon attacks, which eventually stopped after the two sides reached secret agreements to slightly ease the blockade in exchange for calm.

**LANKA OKAYS EXTENSION OF E-VISA FACILITY**

**Colombo, Feb. 14:** Sri Lanka has approved the extension of the free visa-on-arrival scheme until April 30 for the citizens of 48 countries, including India, a senior minister said, as the country's tourism sector took another hit due to the deadly coronavirus outbreak in China. In April, Sri Lanka suspended its plans to grant visa-on-arrival to citizens of 39 countries after the devastating Easter Sunday bombings that killed 258 people. In July, the island nation added more countries, including India and China after it relaunched the free visa on arrival scheme, which was implemented from August 1. "With the introduction of the free visa scheme, we saw an increase of 10 to 12 per cent in tourist arrivals after the Easter attacks but with the coronavirus onset, the sector is getting adversely affected once more and hence it is important to extend the facility for three more months," Ramesh Pathirana said.

# 11 passengers leave cruise ship

Those who test positive will be transferred to the hospital, says Japanese health min

**Yokohama, Feb. 14:** The first passengers began leaving a quarantined cruise ship off Japan's coast on Friday to finish their isolation in government-designated lodging after testing negative for the new coronavirus. Japan's government has given passengers aged 80 or older in poor health or confined to wheelchair inner cabins on the Diamond Princess cruise ship the chance to move from the ship to accommodation on land. But only those who test negative for the virus that has so far infected more than 200 people on board the ship have the option to move.

The first of them departed the massive cruise ship on Friday afternoon, travelling in buses with blacked out windows. At the wheel, one driver was dressed in a head-to-toe white protective suit, complete with goggles and mask. A government official said 11 people had left, but declined to say whether more would depart or offer further details.

The move comes a day after the number of infections diagnosed on the ship rose to 218.

Senior health ministry official Gaku Hashimoto boarded the ship Friday morning to announce that all passengers "who are considered to be high risk in general health" would now be tested for the virus.

"Those who test positive will be transferred to the hospital. Those who test negative will — at the request of the individual — disembark and be transferred to accommodation provided by the government," he said in a statement in English read out by the ship's captain in a public broadcast.

"We are aware that many people are worried and concerned about the situation. However, to improve the situation as much as possible, the government is making its best efforts," the statement said.

There were more than 3,700 people on the ship when it arrived off the Japanese coast last week, but those diagnosed with the virus have been taken off the boat, along with some people suffering other health conditions requiring medical attention.

Ten of those hospitalised are now in serious condition, Health minister Katsunobu Kato said on Friday. Excluding the cases on the ship, and an infected quarantine officer, Japanese authorities have so far diagnosed 33 people with the newly named COVID-19.

The newly diagnosed cases include a woman in her 80s whose positive test result emerged after she died in hospital.

The woman was reportedly the mother-in-law of a taxi driver in Tokyo who has also been diagnosed with the virus. A doctor in Wakayama prefecture and a patient treated in the hospital where the doctor worked have also been diagnosed.

Officials in the region said they were still not sure if the doctor had infected the patient. "It is difficult to trace the route of the infection", governor



A bus with a driver wearing protective gear departs from the dockside next to the Diamond Princess cruise ship at the Daikoku Pier Cruise Terminal in Yokohama port on Friday. — AFP

## Love in the time of Coronavirus

**Tokyo, Feb. 14:** "Cupid's avocado" for dinner, heart-shaped messages for the crew, but also painful separation: for those trapped on board the quarantined Diamond Princess cruise ship, Friday is no ordinary Valentine's Day.

Wearing a red dress and a red hair tie, the ship's entertainment manager Natalie posted a Valentine's Day video on Twitter to try to keep spirits up.

"I just wanted to check in with everybody and say that we are all hanging in there, doing fine and keeping together as a big family," she said, admitting with a smile: "This hasn't

been my regular attire for the last week or so." Passenger Matt Smith, 57, was marking Valentine's Day on board with his wife of 21 years, Katherine Codekas, also 57 — and admitted this was not their first-choice location for the special day.

"After 21 years of marriage, we don't make a big deal of it, but I usually get Katherine a card at least," he told AFP from the ship.

"I think she was a little disappointed with our setting," he added. "Facebook reminded me this morning that three years ago we were in Las Vegas. Way to rub it in!" Passengers on

board were being offered a "Valentine's Day" breakfast, Smith said. "We were reminded what day it was by the delivery of what the crew member said was a 'special' breakfast," he said.

"Not sure why hard-boiled eggs, sausage, and sauteed mushrooms are special." The dinner menu, on the other hand, promises several special treats in honour of the day. "Cupid's Avocado and Shrimp salad" to start, followed by "Shrimp Valentine Japanese style with rice and vegetables." The main course is the French classic Coq au Vin with

mashed potato and vegetables, and a "Valentine's Day surprise dessert of the day" is promised. "Coq au Vin, yes please," tweeted Yardley Wong, who has been posting her efforts to keep her young son entertained on the ship. "A special meal for Valentine's Day, a reserved bottle of red," she added, with her usual hashtag #hanginthereDiamondPrincess and a picture of a bottle of wine.

She also posted a drawing by her son for Valentine's Day, with the caption "Stay strong, we are with you Diamond Princess." — AFP

Yoshinobu Nisaka told reporters. He said officials were asking people in the area "to report suspicious cases of pneumonia so that we can immediately conduct tests". The hospital has been closed to visitors and medical staff are now being tested for the virus, Nisaka added.

Despite the new infections, government officials sought to play down concerns about the spread of the virus in Japan. "There is not enough epidemiological evidence to suggest that the epidemic is spreading inside Japan," government spokesman Yoshihide Suga told reporters. "We will keep collecting epidemiological information including on the routes of infection."

The Diamond Princess has been quarantined off Japan since early February after it emerged a former passenger who got off the boat in Hong Kong had tested positive for the virus.

The quarantine is due to end on Feb. 19 and those on the ship have been mostly confined to their cabins and asked to wear masks and keep their distance from other passengers during brief outings on open deck. — AFP



A jubilant passenger reacts as he disembarks from the Westerdam cruise ship in Sihanoukville, Cambodia on Friday. — AFP

## 121 new deaths from COVID-19 in China

**Beijing, Feb. 14:** The death toll in China's novel coronavirus outbreak has spiked to nearly 1,500 with 121 new fatalities reported mostly from the worst-affected Hubei province while the confirmed cases of infection jumped to nearly 65,000, health officials said on Friday.

The hard-hit Hubei province, the epicentre of the outbreak, has reported 116 new fatalities and reported 4,823 new confirmed cases on Thursday, the provincial health commission said on Friday.

The death toll in China's coronavirus epidemic has gone up to 1,488, the health officials said on Friday.

The National Health Commission said, with 5,090 new cases the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases soared up to 64,894 as of Thursday.

The commission said it received reports of 121 deaths on Thursday with 5,090 new confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection from 31 provincial-level regions.

Among the deaths, 116 were in Hubei Province, two in Henan province, and one in Anhui, Henan and Chongqing respectively, the commission said.

The number of new cases in Hubei Province included 3,095 clinically diagnosed cases, which have been seen as con-

■ **ALREADY 15-MEMBER** advance WHO team has arrived in China on Monday.

■ **COMMISSION SAID** it received reports of 121 deaths on Thursday with 5,090 new confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection in China

firmed cases. The new deaths also include eight who were clinically diagnosed.

The latest report brought the total confirmed cases in Hubei province to 51,986, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The World Health Organisation on Thursday said a sharp rise of 254 cases of COVID-19 (official name for coronavirus) cases in China, due to a change in counting methods, did not represent a big shift in the epidemic.

Of the 254, Hubei and its provincial capital Wuhan reported 242 deaths, the single highest in a day so far. "This does not represent a significant change in the trajectory of the outbreak," Michael Ryan, head of WHO's health emergencies programme, told a press conference in Geneva.

"We're not dealing, from what we understand, with a spike in cases of 14,000 on one day," he said. — PTI

## Masks top V-day gift in Hong Kong

**Hong Kong, Feb. 14:** Hong Kong's flower markets are lamenting dismal Valentine's Day sales as the city battles the deadly coronavirus outbreak, with admirers joking that a box of face masks is a better way to say "I love you" than a bouquet.

A man Fong, an art director at a flower shop in the district of Mong Kok, says the usually bumper week leading up to Valentine's Day has been horrendous for business. "It's much worse than previous years, not many people are going out onto the streets because of the virus," he told AFP, estimating a 40 percent drop in sales.

The supply of flowers has "also dropped as many of our original suppliers on the Chinese mainland... are closed because of the coronavirus," he said, adding his company has had to import flowers from the Netherlands and Taiwan instead.

A manager at another store, who gave her name as Joyce, said her shop has had to reduce what they buy as customer interest wanes. "Fresh flowers could only keep for five to seven days. We don't want to order too much in case we can't sell them," she said. The hot commodity this year is instead face masks, an item in short supply,

■ **BUSINESSES ARE** bracing for a hit, knowing couples are less likely to leave their apartments but some are implementing measures to draw the intrepid out. Multiple cinema chains have said they will only sell tickets for every other row in a bid to widen the distance between customers

with lengthy queues popping up outside any pharmacies that announce a new delivery.

A third of respondents to a customer survey by local matchmaking service Hong Kong Romance Dating said surgical masks and hand sanitiser were the Valentine's Day gifts they were most hoping for.

Social media was full of pictures of alternative bouquets — of masks, rice, wet-wipes, toilet roll and other commodities disappearing from supermarket shelves.

Businesses are bracing for a hit, knowing couples are less likely to leave their apartments but some are implementing measures to draw the intrepid out. Multiple cinema chains have said they will only sell tickets for every other row in a bid to widen the distance between customers. — AFP

## BLAME | GAME Beijing has not acceded to requests by US to permit American specialists to visit the country

# China refutes charges on lack of transparency on patients

**Beijing, Feb. 14:** China on Friday rejected US allegations that it is not transparent enough in sharing the details about the coronavirus outbreak, saying it was working with the international community in an "open and highly responsible manner" to contain the global crisis.

China's comments came after Larry Kudlow, the director of President Donald Trump's Economic Council, said that the US is little disappointed over not being invited in the medical operations and the lack of transparency coming from the Chinese over coronavirus outbreak.

Stressing that unanswered questions were mounting and there was no sign of the promised cooperation, Kudlow said: "We're more than willing

to work with the WHO on this (coronavirus) and they won't let us".

"I don't know what their motives are. I do know that apparently more and more people are suffering over there," Kudlow said in Washington.

The death toll in China's novel coronavirus outbreak has spiked to nearly 1,500 with 121 new fatalities reported mostly from the worst-affected Hubei province while the confirmed cases of infection jumped to nearly 65,000, health officials said on Friday.

State-run CGTN reported that 505 cases of the virus were abroad, including 15 cases of the virus in the US. Ever since the coronavirus outbreak that shook China and the world, Beijing has not acceded to requests by the

US to permit American specialists to visit the country to take part in the medical operations to counter the virus. Instead, China has permitted a team of the WHO specialists to visit the country and assist it to contain the virus.

While a 15 member WHO advance team has arrived on Monday, the rest expected to reach here soon.

However, China's foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said that China has been working with the international community to tackle the epidemic in an open, transparent and highly responsible manner. China has been working with the international community to tackle the epidemic in an open, transparent and highly responsible manner for the sake of global public

health security and all people's health." Geng was quoted as saying during an online media briefing here by the AFP.

He also said that China has been active and open towards cooperation with the US. "China has been active and open towards cooperation with the US. Since the epidemic began, the health authorities of the two sides have been in close communication on policies, timely exchanging information on the epidemic, with the heads of the departments having talks through phone calls and messages," he said.

Geng stated that the Chinese and American departments of disease control, medical R&D and technology as well as scientists have also been engaging in various forms of exchanges. — PTI



A nurse looks at a baby as his parents speak to the media during after recovering from the COVID-19 coronavirus, at the Youan Hospital in Beijing on Friday. — AFP

IN BRIEF

Indian visits UAE, kills wife

Dubai: An Indian in the UAE has allegedly stabbed his wife to death with a sharp-edged weapon over suspected infidelity outside her office here, media reports said on Friday. She was stabbed three times with a knife in the UAE's most populous city, *Khaleej Times* reported. The 44-year-old man, who was in Dubai on a visit visa, killed his wife over suspicion that she was cheating on him, the Court of First Instance has heard.

Turkish novelist acquitted

Istanbul: A Turkish court on Friday acquitted renowned novelist Asli Erdogan on charges of membership of an armed terror organisation. The court in Istanbul also acquitted Erdogan, who is living in exile in Germany, of disrupting the unity of the state. Erdogan, whose books have been translated into various different languages, was an occasional columnist for pro-Kurdish newspaper *Ozgur Gundem* which was shut down after the failed 2016 coup against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Mali policeman escapes jihadists

Bamako: A Malian police officer captured by jihadists escaped and trekked 80 kilometres to freedom, officials said. Al-Qaeda-linked militants attacked a camp in Sokolo, central Mali, on January 26, killing 20 gendarmes and wounding five more. The Group to Support Islam and Muslims claimed responsibility and said it had also captured three gendarmes, members of a police force under military control. But one captive managed to slip away and walked 80 km south through arid terrain before reaching the town of Niono, a local gendarme said on Friday, speaking on condition of anonymity. The individual was identified as a non-commissioned officer but his name was not given.

Tractors snarl Valencia

Madrid: Thousands of Spanish farmers were out protesting on Friday, their tractors gridlocking the streets of Spain's third-largest city as they demanded "fair prices" for their products. Since the end of January, thousands of farmers and livestock breeders have joined a growing wave of protest over low prices and rising production costs which unions say have eroded profitability across the sector. During the late morning, thousands of demonstrators and hundreds of tractors brought the coastal city of Valencia to a halt, with tractors also blocking many roads in the southern Andalusia region. Other rallies were taking place in Asturias in the north as well as in the northeastern region of Catalonia.

APPEAL OVER PELL CONVICTION SET FOR MARCH

Sydney, Feb. 14: The final appeal by Cardinal George Pell against his child sex abuse convictions will be held by Australia's High Court on March 11-12, the court announced on Friday.

It is the final avenue for the 78-year-old — who is serving a six-year sentence for sexually assaulting two choirboys in a Melbourne cathedral in the 1990s — to get out of jail.

The former Vatican treasurer, who once helped elect popes, was found guilty by a jury in December 2018 of five charges of abusing the choirboys when he was the archbishop of Melbourne.

He was sentenced the following March and lost a first appeal in August in Victoria state's Court of Appeal in a landmark decision that saw the judges split in a 2-1 verdict.

That division — which saw two judges back the jury's verdict and the dissenting judge side with Pell — is at the forefront of his latest bid to overturn the convictions.

The case pitted the most senior convicted Catholic child molester against a former choirboy now in his 30s, who two of the judges found to be "very compelling" and someone who "was clearly not a liar, was not a fantasist and was a witness of truth".

The third judge, however, found the victim's account "contained discrepancies".

Turkey to help Pak against FATF action

A minimum of three votes are required for any country to escape the FATF blacklisting

Islamabad, Feb. 14: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said he would help Pakistan stay off a terrorism financing blacklist at a meeting of a global finance watchdog, a move he suggested would counter "political pressure" from Islamabad's critics.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which tackles money laundering, told Islamabad late last year that it could face blacklisting if it continued to apply inadequate controls over terrorism financing.

The FATF is meeting

next week in France, and support from Turkey and longtime allies like China, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia could help Pakistan remain off the blacklist.

A minimum of three votes are required for any country to escape the blacklisting.

If it joined the blacklist alongside Iran and North Korea, Islamabad would face sanctions and economic setbacks at a time when its economy is struggling with a balance of payment crisis.

"We will be supporting Pakistan at the Financial

Action Task Force meetings, where Pakistan is subject to political pressure," Erdogan told Pakistan's parliament a day after he arrived in Islamabad.

The FATF already has Pakistan on its "gray-list" of countries with inadequate controls over curbing money laundering and terrorism financing. But India, which came close to war with its nuclear-armed neighbour last year, wants Pakistan blacklisted.

Of 40 recommendations made by the watchdog, Pakistan had fully com-

plied with only one, largely complied with nine, partially complied with 26, and totally missed four parameters, which were mandatory if Islamabad wanted to be removed from the gray-list, a review by the group last year said.

The FATF says Pakistan should adequately identify, assess and understand risks associated with militant groups operating in Pakistan such as Islamic State group, al-Qaeda, Jamat-ud-Dawa, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, which continue to raise funds openly. Pakistan says it has

made a significant improvement on the requirements since the last review.

Islamabad says it has seized the groups' assets and put the militants on trials, like the entire leadership of the JuD, including its chief Hafiz Saeed, the alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks in India, which killed 166 people.

In a move praised by Washington as an important step forward, Saeed was jailed for 11 years on Wednesday on terrorism financing charges.

— Reuters



Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan receives Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the Parliament in Islamabad on Friday.

PROSECUTORS GET FINAL WORD AT HARVEY TRIAL

New York, Feb. 14: By the time prosecutors at Harvey Weinstein's rape trial give their closing argument on Saturday, it will have been more than a week since jurors heard one of his accusers recount what prosecutors describe as a vile sexual encounter with the disgraced Hollywood mogul.

In the days since, Weinstein's lawyers have called witnesses who raised doubts about the accusers' testimony, brought in an expert who spoke about memories getting fuzzy over time and offered an epic, hours-long closing argument painting the prosecution's case as a "sinner tale" and the allegations as "regret renamed as rape."

Now, prosecutors look to focus the jury's attention back on the accusers who testified and their harrowing accounts alleging rapes, forced oral sex, groping, masturbation, lewd propositions and casting couch experiences.

Several women testified that Weinstein ignored pleas of "no, no, no" as he assaulted them.

The woman Weinstein is charged with raping said he would turn violent when he couldn't get his way and that, "If he heard the word 'no,' it was like a trigger for him."

Another woman recalled Weinstein sneering, "You'll never make it in this business, this is how this industry works," when she laughed off his advances. Having the last word before jurors hear instructions and start deliberating Tuesday, prosecutors must also answer some of the defense's knocks on their case. Chief among them: that the two women Weinstein is charged with attacking were opportunists who willingly latched on to the once-powerful producer.



Harvey Weinstein

MEMORY | POWER

Mom 'reunites' with dead daughter in VR show

Seoul, Feb. 14: A tearful reunion between a mother and her dead daughter via advanced virtual reality for a South Korean television has become an online hit, triggering fierce debate about voyeurism and exploitation.

The footage began with the girl — who died of leukaemia in 2016 — emerging from behind a pile of wood in a park, as if playing hide-and-seek.

"Mum, where have you been," she asks. "I've missed you a lot. Have you missed me?"

Tears streaming down her face, Jang Ji-sung reached out towards her, wracked with emotion. "I have missed you Na-

Mammoth task



Adine Roode, founder of the Hoedspruit Elephant Rehabilitation and Development center, tries to feed Khansya, a five-month-old albino elephant in Hoedspruit, South Africa. Khansya was severely wounded by a manmade snare set by a poacher in the lower Kruger park. She was found days later severely dehydrated and brought to the Hoedspruit elephant rehab center.

UAE's first temple not to have steel, ferrous materials

Dubai, Feb. 14: The first Hindu temple in the UAE's capital Abu Dhabi will not use any steel or ferrous materials and will be built adopting the traditional temple architecture in India, temple committee officials have said.

Two years after the groundbreaking ceremony, the Swaminarayan temple of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) witnessed a major construction milestone as first fly ash concrete pouring for its raft foundation took place on Thursday.

A large number of expatriates from the Indian diaspora gathered at the site of the temple to witness the major construction milestone.

Describing the ceremony as UAE's largest single pouring of fly ash concrete in 3,000 cubic meters, Ashok Kotecha, spokesperson of the temple committee, told *Gulf News*: Usually, (building) foundations have a mix of concrete and steel. However, as per traditional temple architecture in

India, no steel or iron reinforcements will be used. "Fly ash will be used to reinforce the concrete in the foundation. Throughout the (whole structure of the) temple, the architecture is like several pieces of jigsaw put together without any steel or ferrous materials.

Fly ash is used as a reinforcement in concrete. In some cases, fly ash can add to the concrete's final strength and increase its chemical resistance and durability. Fly ash can significantly improve the workability of concrete.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for BAPS temple in the capi-

tal of the UAE, home to over three million people of Indian origin, in 2018 via video conferencing from the Dubai Opera House.

Over 3,000 craftsmen are working tirelessly in India, carving icons and statues with 5,000 tonnes of Italian Carrara Marble and the exteriors will be made of 12,250 tonnes of pink sandstone.

India's ambassador to UAE Pavan Kapoor, and Indian Consul General in Dubai Vipul were present along with several prominent members of the Indian business community and members of the Community Development Authority (CDA), Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the *Gulf News* reported.

Addressing the audience, Kapoor thanked the UAE government and said, it was a great privilege and honour to visit the temple site for the first time.

The ceremony was conducted by Brahmavihari Das, the senior most saint of the BAPS Swaminarayan Temple group.

ISRAELI ATTACK ON DAMASCUS KILLS 7 FIGHTERS

Beirut, Feb. 14: Israeli strikes on Damascus airport killed seven fighters, a war monitor said on Friday, the latest in a string of attacks targeting Iran's military presence in Syria.

Syrian state media said only that its air defences intercepted missiles over the capital overnight while Israel did not immediately comment on the strikes.

Israel routinely fires missiles at what it says are Iranian targets in Syria, where elite Iranian forces and allied militia play a key role.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the strikes launched on late Thursday hit military targets in the area of the international airport.

Rami Abdel Rahman, the director of the Britain-based Observatory, said the dead were three Syrian soldiers and four members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

A Syrian army source quoted by SANA said the attack took place at 11:45 pm.

Fat cat candidates shake up race to be US president

Washington, Feb. 14: They're flooding the airwaves with campaign ads targeting Donald Trump. And they're paying for them with their own money.

Billionaires Mike Bloomberg and Tom Steyer have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in their efforts to win the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. And so far, it seems like that strategy is working.

Bloomberg — who skipped the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary — is mounting in nationwide polls, while Steyer is gaining ground in South Carolina, a key state that votes later this month.

But some of their rivals are crying foul, accusing them of corrupting the party's contest for the right to take on Trump in November.

"He's part of the problem," frontrunner Bernie Sanders said in an interview with SiriusXM radio.

"Look: Bloomberg — anybody else in America — has the right to run for president, but I think in a democracy, you do not have the right to buy the presidency."

From when he entered the White House race in November until end of 2019, the 77-year-old Bloomberg, a media mogul and former New York mayor, spent about \$200 million of his own money on ads, his campaign said.

According to tracking firm Advertising Analytics, he spent more than \$300 million through early February.

"It's completely unique. There's been nothing like this in the history of American politics," said Bill Sweeney, an expert on politics at American University.

Bloomberg — the ninth richest person in the world, according to *Forbes* with a net worth of more than \$55 billion — has shaken up the Democratic presidential campaign.

While most other contenders have been on the trail for more than a year meeting voters, the ad blitz by the one-time Republican has already had a serious impact.

Bloomberg is now running third in nationwide polls behind Sanders and former vice-president Joe Biden, according to an average compiled by RealClearPolitics.

Of course, polls at this stage of the game are to be taken with a grain of salt, because the race really is a state-by-state affair.

But even on that level, Bloomberg is investing, building a vast grassroots staff and setting up campaign offices. Some of his rivals cannot afford to match such a presence.

Bloomberg is looking ahead to Super Tuesday on March 3, when voters in 14 states will cast their ballots. He will also formally skip the Nevada caucuses and the South Carolina primary.

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INDIAN SENTENCED FOR FERRYING PEOPLE WHO ILLEGALLY ENTERED U.S.

New York, Feb. 14: A 30-year-old Indian citizen, who worked as an Uber driver, has been sentenced to a year in prison for knowingly transporting individuals who had entered the US illegally in exchange for money.

Jaswinder Singh recently resided in Philadelphia. He was sentenced on Friday to 12 months in prison for knowingly transporting illegal aliens within the United States for the purpose of financial gain, US Attorney Grant Jaquith said.

Singh, who worked as an Uber driver, admitted that between January 1, 2019 and May 20, 2019,

he picked up several aliens whom he knew had crossed illegally into the United States and transported them into the interior of the country, in exchange for payment.

On May 20, 2019, the day he was arrested for this offense, Singh drove to a location in New York State to pick up two aliens — including a child — who had illegally crossed into the US from Canada.

The aliens paid Singh USD 2,200 after he picked them up. Singh, who previously sought and received asylum in the United States, faces possible deportation as a result of this offence.

BABY AMONG 87 RESCUED OFF CANARY ISLANDS

Madrid, Feb. 14: A baby born on a rickety boat bound for the Canary Islands was one of 87 migrants picked up by rescuers overnight, Spanish rescuers said on Friday.

The migrants, all of them from sub-Saharan Africa, were travelling on three boats which were picked up just south of the island of Gran Canaria, a spokeswoman for the Salvamento Maritimo rescue service said.

"A new-born baby was rescued and it seems that the mother gave birth in the boat just beforehand," she said.



The documentary showcasing advanced virtual reality technology by engineering an encounter between a mother and her dead daughter, has triggering an outpouring of sympathy and debate over the issue.

Park Sang-hyun said the documentary amounted to exploitation of personal pain.

"It's understandable a grief-stricken mother would wish to meet her late daughter. I would do the same," he said.

"The problem lies in that the broadcaster has taken advantage of a vulnerable mother who lost a child for sake of the viewer ratings."

"If the mother had been counselled before the filming," he added, "I wonder what kind of a psychiatrist would approve this."

It took eight months of filming and programming to create the virtual Na-yeon, but the makers of

## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	41,257.74	-0.49
Nifty 50	12,113.50	-0.50
S&P 500*	3,378.56	0.14
Dollar (₹)	71.39	0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	93.06	0.36
Euro (₹)	77.50	-0.25
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	41,481.75	0.18
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	57.06	1.28
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.369	-0.864
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.585	-1.979

\* As of 9:30 pm IST

### SpiceJet posts ₹73 crore net profit in Q3

SpiceJet reported a net profit of Rs 73.2 crore in the third quarter against Rs 55.1 crore a year ago and said Boeing has offered an interim compensation over the grounding of MAX planes. SpiceJet expects to take a decision on Boeing compensation before March-end, CFO Kiran Koteswar said. Total income rose to Rs 3,917.34 crore from Rs 2,530.84 crore. Standalone profit from air transport services (airline) was Rs 115 crore.

### Forex reserves soar to record \$473 billion



The country's foreign exchange reserves rose by \$1.701 billion to a record high of \$473 billion in the week to February 7 on account of an increase in foreign currency assets. In the previous week, the forex reserves had swollen by \$4.607 billion to \$471.3 billion. Foreign currency assets, a major component of the overall reserves, rose by \$1.938 billion to \$439.186 billion. Gold reserves declined by \$218 million to \$28.779 billion.

### Forms for lower corporate taxes notified

The Income Tax Department has notified forms for companies to avail of the reduced corporate tax rates that were announced in September last year. The Central Board of Direct Taxes has notified Forms 10-IC and 10-ID for existing companies that want to avail of lower I-T rate and new manufacturing firms, respectively. In Sept., the Centre announced a cut in base corporate tax for existing companies.

### Srei Infra's consolidated net falls 34% to ₹60 cr

Srei Infrastructure Finance reported a 34.4 per cent fall in consolidated net profit at Rs 60 crore for the December quarter from Rs 91.41 crore in the year-ago period. Total consolidated income was down at Rs 1,402.81 crore from Rs 1,722.52 crore. Hemant Kanoria, chairman, Srei, said: "For last few years, our focus has been to grow our equipment finance portfolio, where we are witnessing a silent recovery in demand."

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## Finance ministry to give details of Vivad se Vishwas scheme soon Ready to go beyond Budget to boost growth: Sitharaman

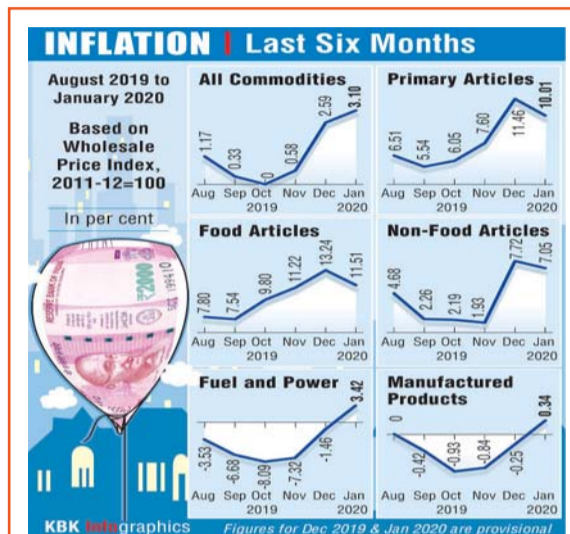
New Delhi, Feb. 14: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said that if required, the government would take more steps beyond the Budget announcements to boost economic activities.

At an interactive session on 'Budget and Beyond' with professionals from asset management, wealth advisory, tax consultancy and other related industries, the minister also said Budget 2020-21's impact on equity, bond and currency markets would be positive.

"If more has to be done beyond the Budget 2020, we are willing to do that," Sitharaman said at the session, where the participants made several suggestions to boost economic activities in the country.

The government announced a host of steps in the budget, to expand the economic activities at a time when the country is faced with a demand slowdown.

During the interactive session, participants made suggestions for increasing consumption, giving more money into the hands of consumers, measures required to boost liquidity and hosts of suggestions for the capital markets.



### WPI inflation rises to 3.1%

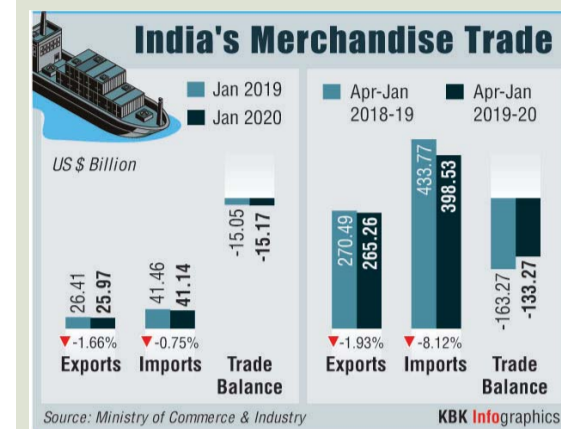
New Delhi, Feb. 14: With a sharp rise in the prices of food articles like onion and potato, the wholesale price inflation, or WPI, for January rose to 3.1 per cent, from 2.59 per cent in December and 2.76 per cent in January

2019. The food articles saw an 11.51 per cent jump in prices in January from 2.41 per cent a month earlier. Vegetable prices surged by 52.72 per cent, mainly over onion, which saw a 293.37 per cent jump in prices. —FC

Several suggestions were also made on the 'Vivad se

Vishwas' scheme to deal with the disputes related to

### Exports contract by 1.6%



New Delhi, Feb. 14: The country's exports dropped 1.66 per cent to \$25.97 billion in January, the sixth straight month of contraction, owing to a significant fall in shipments of petroleum, plastic, carpet, gems and jewellery, and leather products. Imports also fell for the eighth consecutive months, down

0.75 per cent to \$41.14 billion, widening the trade deficit to a seven-month high of \$15.17 billion. Gold imports shrunk by about 9 per cent to \$1.58 billion in January. Of the 30 key sectors, 18 segments showed negative growth in exports last month. —FC Bureau

the direct taxes. She said the finance ministry will

provide details of the scheme soon. —PTI

## Amazon gets stay against CCI investigation

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 14

The Karnataka High Court has ordered a stay on the competition watchdog's investigations against e-commerce biggies Amazon and Flipkart.

The court felt that the ongoing investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) should be first completed before the Competition Commission of India could initiate a probe. Last year, the ED had initiated an investigation against Amazon and Flipkart for alleged violation of foreign direct investment (FDI) laws. The court opined that FDI violations

being in the realm of the ED and the adjudicating authority under the Fema, the case of CCI vs Bharti Airtel would apply to this case as well and the ED would have to give its report before the CCI could proceed with the matter.

The HC also noted that while the CCI had asked Amazon for its comments in a previous case filed by All-India Online Vendors' Association, it should have also called the parties in the current case.

Amazon had filed a writ petition in the court on Monday against the probe ordered by CCI in January. The Competition

Commission had ordered the probe against both Amazon and Flipkart in a complaint filed by the Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM), representing small businesses. The petitioner had alleged that the e-commerce companies were violating the competition laws.

In its plea, Amazon had sought "quashing and setting aside" of the CCI's probe order dated January 13, claiming that the fair competition watchdog passed orders against the company without applying mind and caused serious loss to its reputation.

Commenting on the stay, Amazon said: "while we

welcome and respect the decision of the Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka, this is just a step in the legal process. We are confident about our compliance."

Both Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh and Confederation of All India Traders (Cait), which had impleaded as a party to the case, have decided to file an appeal against the order of the High Court soon. Meanwhile, Cait said it will ask the Union government to speed up the ED investigation.

The court has asked the respondents in the matter, including CCI and Cait to file their responses within eight weeks.

## SC raps telcos over AGR dues, warns of contempt

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 14

The Supreme Court on Friday threatened contempt proceedings against top executives of telecom giants like Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and others for failing to comply with its directive to pay an estimated ₹1.47 lakh crores in past dues. In a judgment which will have far-reaching implications for the telecom sector, the court also expressed its displeasure at the "temerity" of a desk officer in the department of telecom for "scuttling" its order by issuing a written directive to not take any coercive action against firms for not depositing dues by the January 23, 2020 deadline.

A bench of Justices Arun Mishra, S. Abdul Nazeer and M.R. Shah said the companies have violated its order and asked them to clear the dues before the next date of hearing on March 17.

"In spite of the dismissal of the review application (filed by the telcos), they have not deposited any amount so far. It appears the way in which things are happening that they have scant respect for the directions issued by this court," they said in the judgment.

Separate petitions filed by non-telecom firms such as gas utility GAIL and power transmission firm PowerGrid, who were slapped with a demand of ₹2.65 lakh crores by the DoT, were withdrawn by the applicants after the court said they can represent their case at appropriate forums.

The court on Friday issued showcause notices to the managing directors/directors of the telecom service providers, asking why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against them for not complying with its 2019 order to pay the government ₹92,000 crores in dues.

The court order said: "It is made clear that in case the order passed by this court is not complied with, the above persons shall remain personally present in court on the next date of hearing."

Besides this, the court also took a serious view of the "temerity" of a DoT desk officer in directing the accountant-general, a constitutional authority, "not to insist for any pay-

## SC rejects plea for more time to sell BS-IV vehicles

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, FEB. 14

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations' (FADA) appeal to extend the deadline for sales of BS-IV vehicles beyond March 31.

The new and stringent BS-VI emission norms are mandated to be implemented from April 1 all over the country.

FADA had asked for a one-month extension of the deadline, which was rejected by the apex court. The FADA appeal was based on the fact that the auto industry is facing a significant slowdown in both wholesale and retail.

At present, the overall sales for the auto industry in January was 1,739,975 units, down 13.83 per cent, with passenger vehicles at 262,714 units, down 6.2 per cent, commercial vehicles at 75,289 units, down 14.4 per cent, three-wheelers at 60,903 units, up 12.69 per cent and two-wheelers at 1,341,005 units, down 16.06 per cent.

The auto dealers lobby had filed the application in Supreme Court on December 18, seeking

modification of its October 2018 order, where the apex court ordered that no BS-IV vehicles can be sold after March 31, 2020.

Automobile dealers had previously said that they might fail to liquidate the BS-IV inventory before this timeline.

With the new emission norms set to be implemented in less than two months time, several automakers, including market leader Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors, Hyundai and Mahindra, have already transitioned a major chunk of their product portfolio to BS-VI from BS-IV.

Earlier on Monday, Mahindra had said that it was stuck with some 3,000 BS-IV vehicles, as a couple of couple of electronic components were in short-supply over the China lockdown, and might move the apex court for a relaxation of the March 31 deadline to sell the units.

FADA represents over 15,000 automobile dealers having 25,000 dealerships across India and employ over 2.5 million directly and another 2.5 million indirectly.

### SC stance jolts several stocks

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, FEB. 14

Telecom stocks and their lenders were impacted after Supreme Court came down heavily on telecom companies and government officials for non-compliance of its October 24 order to pay dues and refused any relief in payment of AGR dues and directed them to pay up by March 16.

The telecom firms, Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel and Tata Teleservices and Hughes, had sought a modification of the court order in the light of the financial distress.

The Supreme Court, however, made it clear that they will have to cough up ₹1.47 lakh crore in adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues.

Shares of Vodafone Idea fell over 27 per cent to touch a low of ₹3.25 on the BSE and later closed 23.21 per cent down at ₹3.44. Vodafone Idea posted over ₹6,400 crore loss in the third quarter, as

reported by the company on Thursday.

Bharti Airtel shares rose 4.69 per cent to close at a new high of ₹565. However, shares of another Bharti Group company, Bharti Infratel, fell 4.04 per cent to ₹235.25.

RIL, which owns Jio, gained 0.86 per cent closing at ₹1486.65. Shares of lenders like SBI and IndusInd Bank, which have big exposure to the telecom companies facing AGR dues, also fell by 2.41 per cent and 4.38 per cent, respectively.

Non-telecom PSUs saddled with AGR dues also fell as the apex court also dismissed similar pleas by non-telecom PSUs, asking them to challenge the government demand notices in appropriate fora. Non-telecom PSUs losers included Gail India (-5.91 per cent), Power Grid (-3.26 per cent) and Oil India (-2.87 per cent). The apex court's strong words means end of the road on any further extension of AGR dues, analyst said.

## Trump set to woo Indian executives during visit

New Delhi, Feb. 14: US President Donald Trump will meet executives of large Indian companies with interests in the US as he looks to drum up investments during his visit to New Delhi this month.

Executives of some of the companies expected to attend the meeting include Indian oil & gas company RIL, diversified group Tata Sons and auto sector companies such as Bharat Forge, Mahindra and Mahindra and Motherson, industry and business sources told Reuters.

Trump is scheduled to make his first visit as president to India on Feb. 24-25 during which he will travel to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat followed by talks in New Delhi. The two countries are trying to sign a trade deal during his visit.

On Feb. 25, a meeting is

being planned between Trump and Indian executives, especially those focussing on job creation and manufacturing in the US, the sources said.

The meeting, which will be held in New Delhi, is unlikely to include executives of US companies, they said.

Creating new jobs and boosting manufacturing is critical for Trump in his re-election bid later this year. U.S. factory activity rebounded in January but only after it contracted for five straight months. "President (Trump) is keen on acknowledging Indian companies which are focussing on manufacturing in the United States," said a Washington-based source aware of the plans.

US is a key market for several Indian firms.

Mahindra last year said it will invest another \$1 billion in the United States and was committed

to creating American jobs, while Bharat Forge has announced plans to invest \$56 million to set up a new plant in North Carolina.

The \$100-billion Tata Group says it is one of the largest Indian-headquartered multinationals in North America, with 13 companies and more than 35,000 employees.

The Confederation of Indian Industries and US-India trade groups have suggested several Indian executives for the Trump meeting and the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi was reviewing that, one source said, adding the final list was yet to be finalised.

Other than his meeting with Indian business leaders and Modi, Trump is expected to attend an event at a stadium in Gujarat along the lines of the "Howdy Modi" extravaganza held in Houston last September. —Reuters

### Urgent need for more reforms: IMF

LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, FEB. 14

India urgently needs more ambitious structural and financial sector reform measures and a medium-term fiscal consolidation strategy due to the rising debt levels while ensuring a more accommodative fiscal stance in the budget, the IMF has said.

Responding to a question on India's budget, International Monetary Fund (IMF) spokesperson Gerry Rice said the economic environment in India is weaker than what the organisation had forecast earlier.

"While the budget touches on ongoing sectoral efforts, there remains an urgent need for more ambitious structural and financial sector reform measures," Rice said. —PTI

## Modi trying to pull all stops for Trump's first visit

From Page 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to pull all the stops for the US president's Feb. 24-25 visit, aimed at rebuilding bonds between the world's largest democracies.

In 2019, Trump suspended India's special trade designation that dated back to 1970s, after Modi put price caps on medical devices, such as cardiac stents and knee implants, and introduced new data localization requirements and e-

commerce restrictions.

Trump's trip to India has raised hopes that he would restore some of the country's US trade preferences, in exchange for tariff reductions and other concessions.

The US is India's second-largest trade partner after China, and bilateral goods and services trade climbed to a record \$142.6 billion in 2018. The United States had a \$23.2 billion goods trade deficit in 2019 with India, its 9th largest trading partner in goods.

India has offered to allow imports of US chicken legs, turkey and produce such as blueberries and cherries, Indian government sources said, and has offered to cut tariffs on chicken legs from 100 per cent to 25 per cent. US negotiators want that tariff cut to 10 per cent. The Modi government is also offering to allow some access to India's dairy market, but with a 5 per cent tariff and quotas, the sources said. But dairy imports would need a certificate they are not derived

from animals that have consumed feeds that include internal organs, blood meal or tissues of ruminants.

New Delhi has also offered to lower its 50 per cent tariffs on very large motorcycles made by Harley-Davidson, a tax that was a particular irritant for Trump, who has labelled India the "tariff king."

The change would be largely symbolic because few such motorcycles are sold in India.

Trump will be feted in Modi's home state of Gujarat, then

hold talks in New Delhi and attend a reception that the hosts have promised will be bigger than the one organised for former president Barack Obama in 2015.

But it is far from clear whether India's offers will be enough to satisfy US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, who cancelled plans for a trip to India this week. Instead, he has held telephone talks with Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. —Agencies







SHORT TAKES



Pranavi Chandra

## Pranavi to lead Hyderabad U-19

Hyderabad: Pranavi Chandra will lead the Hyderabad cricket team for the Women's Under-19 one-day tournament to be held at Gwalior from February 19.

**The team:** Pranavi Chandra (captain), Mamtha (wicketkeeper), Chandra Smitha (vice-captain), Manjula (wicketkeeper), Merlyn John, Bhavishya, Kranthi Reddy, Suvartha P, Tehniyath Fatima, T. Chandana, Tanuja Reddy, Shivani Goud, G. Lavanya, Likitha Nandani, Sindhuja, K. Ishita.

**Support staff:** Abdul Bari Wahab (head coach), Nayyar Fatima (assistant coach), T. Swapnadeep (manager), Manasa (physio), Naveen Reddy (trainer).

## Liverpool look to extend EPL lead

London: Liverpool are expected to take another step towards clinching a long-awaited Premier League title at bottom-of-the-table Norwich, while behind the runaway leaders the battle for Champions League places takes centre stage this weekend.

The Reds can extend their mammoth 22-point lead over Manchester City at Carrow Road on Saturday as they aim to not only win the league for the first time in 30 years, but smash the record books in the process.

Jürgen Klopp's men have dropped just two points all season and are on a run of 16 consecutive league wins. An injury to Alisson Becker was the one big concern of that victory for Klopp as the Brazilian was sidelined for two months. After taking some time to get to his best form, Alisson has saved 26 of the last 27 shots he has faced, with Liverpool racking up an aggregate score of 23-1.

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# Ron's rescue act

## Cristiano penalty helps Juve draw at Milan

Milan, Feb. 14: Cristiano Ronaldo's injury-time penalty grabbed Juventus a 1-1 draw at AC Milan in their Italian Cup semi-final, first leg on Thursday as his incredible scoring run continued.

The 35-year-old has now scored 12 goals in his last eight games in all competitions after the Portuguese ultimately got the better of old rival Zlatan Ibrahimovic despite being largely anonymous for much of the match.

Milan paid for Theo Hernandez's 71st-minute red card as they failed to close out a game they had dominated for long periods and led through Ante Rebic.

Juve will now be favourites to finish the job in the second leg at the Allianz Stadium next month, with a final against either Inter Milan or Napoli up for grabs.

The hosts started strongly, with Ibrahimovic heading over the crossbar inside the first minute.

He continued to be a threat to his former club early on, but could only direct an ambitious backheel flick beyond the far post, before picking up a booking which will see him miss the second leg through suspension.

Juventus finally produced their first shot in anger nine minutes before half-time, as Juan



Cristiano Ronaldo (left) of Juventus celebrates after scoring a penalty against AC Milan in their Italian Cup semi-final first leg match at the San Siro Stadium in Milan on Thursday. — AFP

Cuadrado saw his low strike well saved by Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Milan started the second half as they did the first, on the front foot, but Rebic was denied an opening goal by Gianluigi Buffon. Samu Castillejo also called Buffon into action seven minutes after the break, with the 42-year-old goalkeeper able to make a comfortable save.

Stefano Pioli's side finally made the breakthrough in the 61st minute, though, as Castillejo's clipped cross was volleyed home at the

back post by Rebic.

Juventus were gifted a way back into the game with 18 minutes remaining as Hernandez was handed a second yellow card for a late challenge on Paulo Dybala.

Dybala curled wide with five minutes remaining, but Juve were awarded a spot-kick in the final minute of normal time as VAR spotted a handball by Davide Calabria.

Ronaldo stepped up and slammed the ball down the middle to score his 24th goal of the season. — AFP

CAIRNS CUP CHESS

## Humpy is joint leader

St Louis (USA), Feb. 14: India's Koneru Humpy defeated former world champion Alexandra Kosteniuk of Russia in 61 moves in the sixth round of the Cairns Cup chess tournament here to move into joint lead with Chinese ace Wenjun Ju.

Dronavalli Harika, the other Indian in the fray, shared points with the world champion Wenjun Ju of China in 40 moves on Thursday.

With four points in her kitty, Humpy shares the lead with Wenjun Ju. Harika, on the other hand, is on three points



Koneru Humpy

after six rounds and is in joint third spot with two other players.

Humpy, the reigning world rapid champion and the country's number one, played the

Nimzo-Indian against the experienced Kosteniuk and took advantage of a mistake on the 50th move to record her second win in the tournament.

Harika, playing with black pieces, opted for King's Indian and equalised rather easily against Wenjun Ju.

American youngster Carissa Yip posted her second straight win after four losses, beating Valentina Gunina in the only other decisive game of the day. In the seventh round, Humpy will take on American Irina Krush. — PTI

# India pip Thailand to enter semifinals

Manila, Feb. 14: The Indian men's team is assured of a medal after making the semifinals with a 3-2 win over Thailand at the Badminton Asia Team Championships on Friday.

B. Sai Praneeth lost 14-21, 21-14, 12-21 to Kantaphon Wangcharoen; Kidambi Srikanth went down 20-22, 14-21 to Kunlavut Vitidsarn.

M.R. Arjun & Dhruv Kapila kept India in the hunt with a 21-18, 22-20 win over Kittinupong Kedren and Tanupat Viriyangkura in the first doubles. Lakshya Sen then beat Suppanyu Avihingsanon 21-19, 21-18 before Chirag Shetty & Srikanth beat Manepong Jongjit & Nipitphon Phuangphuet 21-15, 16-21, 21-15.

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