

**SHORT TAKES**

## COP SHOTS DEAD WIFE, THREE OTHERS

**Moga (Punjab):** A head constable of Moga Police on Sunday allegedly shot dead his wife and three other members of his in-laws family with his service rifle and later surrendered before police.

Police said Kulwinder Singh, who is in his early 50s, had entered into an argument with his in-laws family over a dispute and in a fit of rage committed the crime. His wife had gone to her parent's house a few days ago.

Singh shot dead his wife, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and mother-in-law at Said Jalalpur village in Dharamkot sub-division of Moga district, police said. In the firing incident, the 10-year-old daughter of his brother-in-law also sustained injuries, police said.

Later, he surrendered before police and deposited his AK 47 service rifle, which he had got released on Saturday evening from police lines as he had to proceed on official duty.

The accused was subsequently arrested and a case registered against him under relevant provisions of law, police said.

## NC TO TAKE PART IN J-K CIVIC POLLS

**Jammu, Feb 16:** The National Conference, one of the main political parties in Jammu and Kashmir, has expressed willingness to participate in next month's Panchayat polls but wants "roadblocks" placed in its way to be removed so that it can campaign freely.

The party, which had stayed away from the 2018 Panchayat polls, said the detention of its top leaders will hamper the process of candidate selection and campaign.

It has expressed its willingness to take part in the election process this time as the election will be held on party lines.

In a letter to Jammu and Kashmir Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Shailendra Kumar, NC central secretary Rattan Lal Gupta said the party is a strong votary of democratic process and wishes to participate in the eight-phase elections starting March 5 in over 11,000 seats.

## MAN KILLS 19-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER

**Mahasamund, (Chhattisgarh) Feb. 16:** A man allegedly killed his 19-year-old daughter after being suspicious of her 'character' and objecting to her use of mobile phone in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district, police said on Sunday.

The accused, Santosh Diwan (42), was arrested from his residence at Kanekara under Kotwali police station limits here on Saturday.

Superintendent of Police Jitendra Shukla said.

His daughter Sulochana Diwan was found dead, with multiple head injuries, near a drain in Kanekera area on the city's outskirts on February 1. The police launched an investigation after registering a case of murder, he said. During the probe, one Chovaram, believed to be a close friend of the deceased, revealed to police that the victim's father doubted her character and was against her use of mobile phone, the official said.

## STUDENT STABBED TO DEATH IN TN

**Coimbatore, Feb. 16:** A 20-year old engineering student was stabbed to death by a three-member gang for resisting their attempt to rob him of his mobile phone near Sulur on the outskirts, police said on Sunday.

Tami Selvan, a third year mechanical engineering student was returning home when three men on two bikes approached him from behind and tried to snatch his mobile phone, at KM Patty on Saturday, they said.

When the victim resisted and raised an alarm, one of the gang members stabbed him on the chest with a knife and fled the scene, they added.

The profusely bleeding student rushed to his house and his father took him to a nearby private hospital, where he was declared brought dead.

A search is on for the suspects, they said.

## Protest continues



Women wave Tricolours during their ongoing protest against the CAA and NRC at Shaheen Bagh in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

# CDS to see proposals on weapons purchase

### Chiefs of Army, Navy, Air Force will discuss it with CDS

**PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 16**

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh will from now on take up proposals for purchase of arms and ammunition only as prioritised by the Chief of Defence Staff. In other words, chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force will have to coordinate and discuss their proposals with CDS who, in consultation with them, will prioritise which arms or ammunition are needed and should be acquired.

Interestingly, as per the new rules, capital acquisitions still come under

defence secretary Ajay Kumar and revenue comes under the department of military affairs headed by CDS. Even then, it is the CDS, who will set the priority for capital acquisitions.

"In the last DAC meeting, which was also attended by CDS, the old proposals on which some work had been done were cleared. However, from now on, proposals prioritised by the CDS will be taken," said a senior official. The last DAC had met on January 21 and accorded approval for procurement of equipment worth over ₹5,100 crore from indigenous sources.

CDS General Bipin Rawat has already indicated that he may not be in favour of Indian Navy's proposal to have a 3rd aircraft carrier or Air Force buying another 100 fighter jets at one go.

Based on changing battlefield dynamics, CDS is expected to cancel approvals granted for acquisition of equipment that are now obsolete, said the official. "The technology is changing fast. The old Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs), which do not meet the changed battlefield dynamics, will be cancelled. Anyway, AoNs last only for two years after which they

expire," pointed out the official. An AoN clears the way for commencement of tendering process for acquisitions. The next step is issuance of the Request for Proposal (RFP).

CDS is the permanent member of DAC and Defence Planning Committee chaired by the National Security Adviser (NSA).

CDS has been mandated to implement the five-year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan (DCAP) and two-year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans (AAP), as a follow up of Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP).

## SHAH PAYS HOMAGE TO SLAIN COPS

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In his speech, he also paid homage to the official. An AoN clears the way for commencement of tendering process for acquisitions. The next step is issuance of the Request for Proposal (RFP). CDS is the permanent member of DAC and Defence Planning Committee chaired by the National Security Adviser (NSA). CDS has been mandated to implement the five-year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan (DCAP) and two-year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans (AAP), as a follow up of Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP).

# Kashmiri students not arrested: Police

**VITTAL SHASTRI | DC HUBBALLI, FEB. 16**

Hubballi-Dharwad police commissioner R. Dilip has clarified that the three Kashmiri engineering students, who are facing sedition charges for allegedly raising 'Pro-Pakistan' slogans on the anniversary of the Pulwama massacre, are being questioned but are yet to be formally arrested which will be done only if the cops are prima facie convinced about the offence.

A video in which the students allegedly raised pro-Pakistan slogans had gone viral, leading to protests from Hindutva outfits.

The video became public when the college held a function to pay homage to the martyrs of the Pulwama attack on Friday (February 14).

The police chief rebutted media reports that the youth were arrested and released on a bond under Section 169 of the CrPC.

"It is a very sensitive case and we have to conduct a thorough investigation from all angles. We will initiate appropriate action to detain them only if the charge of sedition is proved. We will not be influenced by any political pressure as an impartial and independent inquiry is going on. We rescued them from the mob on Friday as they would have been harmed," Mr Dilip told Deccan Chronicle.

The students, who were identified as Ameer, Basit and Talib from Shopian district of Kashmir, were booked under Section 124 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) on a complaint filed by KLE Institute of Technology where they study, for attempting to disturb communal harmony by raising anti-national slogans.



The three engineering college students from Kashmir

## LAWYERS MAY NOT TAKE UP STUDENTS' CASE

**M.K. ASHOKA | DC BENGALURU, FEB. 16**

Amid rumours that the three Kashmiri students who were detained for shouting pro-Pakistan slogans on the anniversary of the Pulwama massacre in Hubballi, right-wing outfits and Young Advocates Association have strongly objected to any such move.

The students studying engineering at Hubballi's KLE College were detained by the police after the release of a video in which they are allegedly heard singing a song which says 'Pakistan zindabad.' The college authorities then lodged a complaint against them and the Gokul Road police in Hubballi detained them. Bajrang Dal activists even tried to attack the students while the police were taking them into custody.

Ashok Anvekar, president of the Advocate's Association youth wing explained that a group of advocates are visiting Gokul Road police station to seek clarity on the issue as rumours are doing the rounds. "Non-bailable sections have been slapped on them and the students cannot get bail," he said asserting that no one will represent those who go against the nation, in court.

Gokul Road police station cops stated that the investigation is under progress and the students have not been released yet. The police have registered an FIR and slapped charges under IPC 124A, 153B, 153C, 505 (2) read with 34 on them.

## Srijan scam: 6 babus likely to face action

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 16**

In a significant development in the multi-crore Srijan scam in Bihar, the CBI is all set to recommend departmental action against at least 6 senior public servants, including IAS officers, who are suspects or accused in the case.

According to sources investigations by the CBI have revealed that several cheques issued by the nationalised banks were allegedly transferred to different accounts of the accused NGO, Srijan Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti Limited of Bhagalpur district by the state government officials without verifying account details. These suspected public servants allegedly played crucial role in diverting government funds to the accounts of Srijan,

sources said adding that the agency will soon recommend departmental action against such officials, including IAS officers posted in the state.

The CBI has so far registered around 25 cases in connection with Srijan scam in which government funds worth several crores were allegedly embezzled by an NGO. Sources said, "Investigators have collected material evidence against at least six senior officials of several departments, including social welfare department, of the state government". The agency is also probing the role of some more officials of nationalised banks as part of investigation into the recently registered FIRs, sources said. The CBI is also planning to seek fresh clarifications from the family members of the president and secretary of the accused NGO.

# Jamia students seen with stones

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Later in the day, two new CCTV videos emerged which shows the events before the police action inside the Jamia library. In one video, some students standing in the balcony could be seen holding stones in their hands during the violence. The CCTV time stamp shows this happened almost four minutes before the police attacked the students in the library.

The video was released by the JCC, a group comprising Jamia students and alumni. The group was formed after the alleged police brutality on December 15.

Special commissioner of police (intelligence) Praveer Ranjan said the video had come to their knowledge and it would investigate it as part of the ongoing probe. The Jamia Coordination Committee said it received the video from an "anonymous" source. It also said

but the policeman is continuing to attack him with batons," she said in a tweet in Hindi. "Home minister and Delhi Police lied when they said students were not beaten up in the library," Ms Vadra said in another tweet. "If no action is taken even after watching this Jamia video, the government's intentions would stand exposed before the whole country," she added.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the police's action was "unconscionable" and "unacceptable". Mr Yechury tweeted: "Every defence of the police action on students in universities, offered by Amit Shah, is untrue, misleading and politically motivated. The Delhi police comes directly under Modi-Shah and this is how it treats young students studying in a library. Shame!"

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) also criticised the Delhi police for its use of force in the university and accused them of allowing "terrorists" to barge inside JNU on January 5.

BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya, however, claimed the video of the purported police brutality at Jamia in December also showed that students in the library were actually "stone pelters". In a tweet, Mr Malviya tagged the video and claimed that students in the library were wearing masks and reading shut books. They were "looking anxiously towards the entrance rather than being relaxed and immersed in studies, which is what a library is meant for", he said.

"Anatomy of Jamia rioters who tried hiding in the library after a stone-pelting session?" Mr Malviya asked. "Good of Jamia rioters to self identify themselves. Agencies must use the video as evidence."

■ **THE VIDEO** was released by the JCC, a group comprising Jamia students and alumni. The group was formed after the alleged police brutality on December 15.

Sharing the video on Twitter, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said if no action was taken even after the video, then the government's intentions would be exposed.

She also accused Union home minister Amit Shah and the Delhi police of "lying" that Jamia students were not beaten up inside the library.

"Look at how Delhi Police is blindly assaulting students in the library. A boy is flashing his book

but the policeman is continuing to attack him with batons," she said in a tweet in Hindi. "Home minister and Delhi Police lied when they said students were not beaten up in the library," Ms Vadra said in another tweet. "If no action is taken even after watching this Jamia video, the government's intentions would stand exposed before the whole country," she added.

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## PM LAUNCHES 50 PROJECTS WORTH ₹1,254 CRORE

From Page 1

The Prime Minister earlier launched or laid foundation of 50 projects worth ₹1,254 crore in his Lok Sabha constituency. He also flagged off IRCTC's 'Maha Kaal Express' through video link during his day-long visit to the city. It will be the first overnight privately-run train in the country to connect three Jyotirling pilgrimage centres of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, and Ujjain and Omkareshwar in Madhya Pradesh.

The Prime Minister dedicated to the nation the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Memorial Centre and unveiled a 63-foot statue of the RSS ideologue, the tallest statue of the leader in the country. He also inaugurated a 430-bed super-speciality government hospital here.

## INSIDER | OUTSIDER MHA-appointed committee recommends introduction of Inner Line Permit system in state

# Panel for 1951 as cut-off yr to identify indigenous Assamese

**MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, FEB. 16**

The high-powered committee appointed by the Union home ministry on the implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord has recommended taking 1951 as the base year to identify and grant "indigenous Assamese" status to those who should be given constitutional protection.

Clause 6 promises constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve and promote the culture, social, linguistic identity

and heritage of the "Assamese" people.

Saying that there was a difference of opinion among the members of the committee on the percentage of seats to be kept reserved for indigenous people in elected bodies, sources in the committee said representatives of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) in the committee were demanding hundred per cent reservations, while other members were of the view that the committee should recommend 67 per cent reservations in addition to the existing

reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. As the members could not reach a consensus on the issue, both views were included in the report. On job reservations too, two views were included in the report, the sources said.

Asserting that there was a complete consensus that 1951 should be the cut-off year for identification of Assamese people who will be eligible for constitutional safeguards under the provisions of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, sources said the commit-

tee also suggested measures for protection of Assamese and other tribal and ethnic languages of the state, along with protection of the cultural heritage of all communities.

The 91-page report was prepared by the committee led by Justice Biplab Sarma (Retd), which met various stakeholders before finalising its recommendation to the Union home ministry. Clause 6 of the Assam Accord was not implemented as successive governments failed to create a consensus on the defini-

tion of "indigenous Assamese". "If the ministry of home affairs accept the recommendations, only people having linkage prior to 1951 would be considered as indigenous Assamese," said a source in the committee, adding that the committee also advised implementation of all clauses of the Assam Accord and asked the Centre to take a diplomatic initiative to deport foreign nationals as suggested by the Supreme Court.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during

his recent visit to Kokrajhar, said the Centre would implement Clause 6 as soon as it receives the committee report. "Immediately after the committee submits its final report, our government will expedite the process to implement the recommendations," he had said. The MHA constituted the committee in July last year. In the past seven months, it met representatives of organisations and individuals and took the views of the Centre and state government to prepare the report.



## DECCAN Chronicle

17 FEBRUARY 2020

### Telecom order: Wrong signal sent to investors

The Supreme Court's order rejecting review petitions by the telecom companies challenging its verdict in the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) case and a threat to initiate contempt proceedings against their top executives was unfortunate. Notwithstanding the legal merits, the 17-year-old litigation across four different governments at the Centre — one led by Atal Behari Vajpayee, two by Dr Manmohan Singh and two by Narendra Modi — sends the wrong signals to the global investor community. This order, coming weeks after the government delivered a public snub to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos during his India visit, does not make a good read for global investors.

This dispute is rooted in the 1999 National Telecom Policy regime, which allowed telecom companies to migrate to revenue-sharing contracts from the earlier fixed annual fee. Though it was intended to boost telecom services in the country, it left the definition of revenue to a later date. Clause 3 of the 1999 migration package, as quoted by the Supreme Court October 24 ruling, reads: "On receipt of Trai's recommendation and government's final decision, the final adjustment of provisional dues will be effected depending upon the percentage of revenue share and the definition of revenue for this purpose as may be finally decided."

The government's argument of the telecom companies unconditionally accepting the contract is misplaced as the definition of the revenue itself was not clear and the parties to the contract had the right to disagree to it when the definition of the revenue — to include all revenue that hadn't arisen out of telecom operations — was decided. While the government seems to have reserved to have a final say, the reference to Trai's recommendation makes one believe expert opinion on the matter would be given due deference. However, the Vajpayee government included non-operational income in sharable revenue in contrast to Trai's 2000 recommendations. Though the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) rejected the government's contention on the definition in 2006, the then government of Dr Manmohan Singh took this to the Supreme Court — complicating the process instead of accepting the recommendations of expert bodies like Trai and TDSAT.

Though the Supreme Court may be correct to set aside TDSAT's rejection of the government's definition citing the tribunal's lack of jurisdiction and telecom companies' unconditional acceptance of migration, an investor with basic understanding of the Indian Contract Act may wonder how could the acceptance be construed as unconditional when the definition of revenue itself — the fundamental component of the contract — was not decided at the time of signing! As per the Contract Act, both parties have a right to disagree if there is a material change in terms of the contract and seek negotiations or specific legal redressal. When such basic legal remedy to an investor, who spent lakhs of crores of rupees, was overlooked, citing lack of jurisdiction, how could investors find courage to invest their money in India?

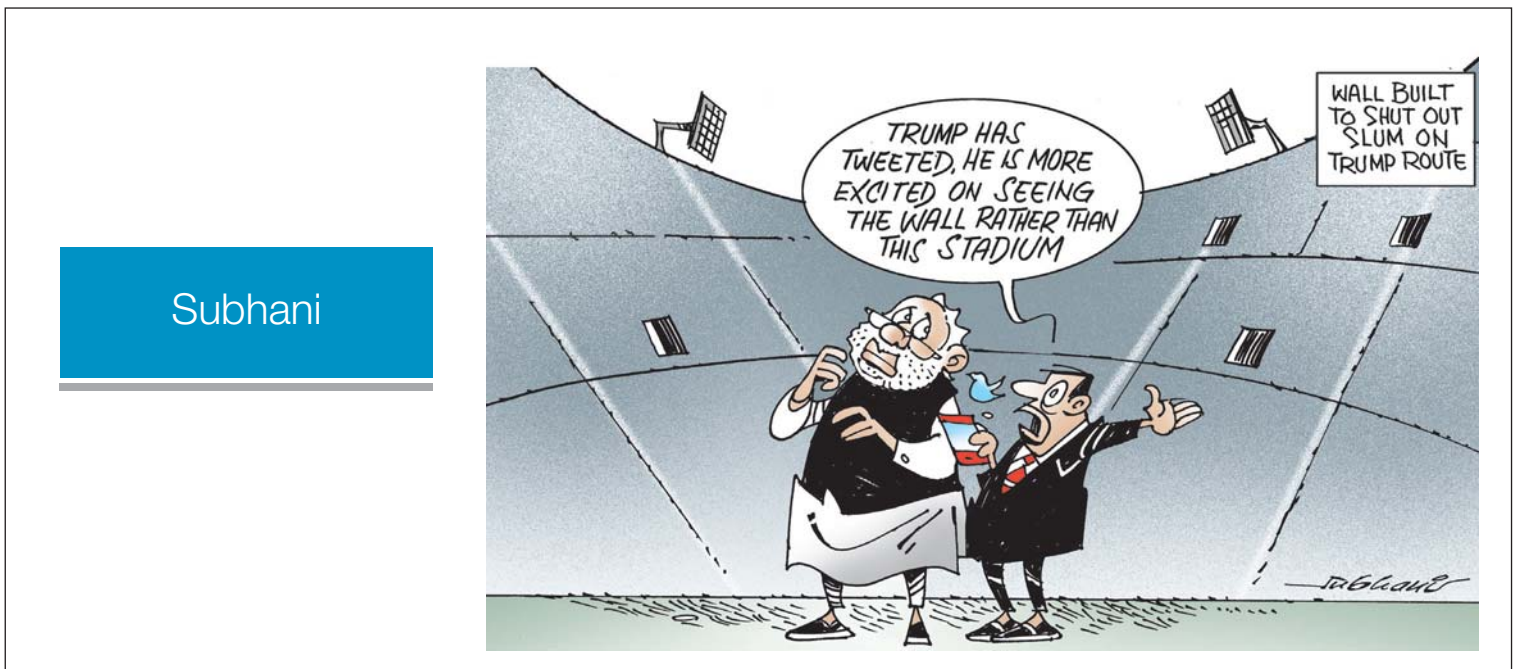
The Narendra Modi government should take steps to soften the verdict's impact and restore investor confidence, either by deferring the payment schedule of telecom firms for other dues or waiving the interest and penalty for the period when the definition was under litigation. Otherwise, the shutdown of even one telecom giant would wipe out 12,500 direct jobs and several thousand ancillary ones, and pull the banking sector into yet another mess with the default of over ₹1 lakh crores in loans.

### The Tamil Nadu paradox

The paradox continues in which 11 MLAs, including two ministers, have sat on the Treasury benches in Edappadi Palaniswami's Tamil Nadu government for nearly three years after voting against it during a trust vote. In 2017, O. Panneerselvam rebelled in the ruling AIADMK party, which led to bizarre events in the Assembly. Now, with the Supreme Court deciding not to cross the thin red line in division of powers between the judiciary and legislature, the matter has been tossed right back to the Tamil Nadu Speaker.

Having sat for three years even in the matter of issuing notices to the MLAs who defied a whip, it is on the cards that the Speaker may well allow the issue to die a natural death along with the life of the Assembly in 2021. Such powers that Speakers tend to assume are not even being challenged these days. Given such free rein, Speakers, whose very nature is partisan, are happy to enjoy their "sky high powers" within the walls of their House.

The court's reluctance to do so much as question quirky actions like disqualifying 18 ruling party MLAs for voting against the trust motion while the same act of 11 others has been deliberately overlooked has allowed the government to stay in power. The CM has consolidated his position and stature while his deputy, a former CM, has enjoyed all the trappings of power. Democracy may have been redefined in such piquant manoeuvres, but the end result in this case at least has, mercifully, been political and administrative stability.



Subhani

## South Block must shift to civility in discourse



K.C. Singh

Barely a week before US President Donald Trump begins his India visit, the security agencies of both nations are busy visiting places the President and his wife Melania will visit for official functions and sightseeing. However, the background noise generated by US congressmen and senators over Kashmir and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act persists. External affairs minister S. Jaishankar, after an unseemly Twitter row with celebrated historian Ram Guha over a claim in a new book on V.P. Menon that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru never wanted Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in his Cabinet, found himself embroiled in a fresh controversy at the Munich Security Conference.

The fundamental issue is the methodology a government adopts to deal with domestic or international criticism. Last month the public discourse sank to a new low in the electioneering for the Delhi Assembly polls where the Narendra Modi government's ministers, members of Parliament and other leaders used extremely provocative language. Led by none other than home minister Amit Shah, the BJP's total rout showed the people's total rejection of negative campaigning. Rather surprisingly Mr Shah, at a public function soon afterwards, had the moral courage to concede that. Surprisingly, suave former diplomat S. Jaishankar has also abandoned a lifetime of measured articulation of his views for pugnacious public retorts in defence of a series of divisive and controversial executive and legislative actions of the Modi-2 government. It can be explained as a recent convert to the BJP-RSS acting holier than others of the faith to demonstrate ideological

affinity. It could also simply be an attempt to conform to the take-no-prisoners approach of Mr Modi and Mr Shah. It raises the larger issue of how controversial domestic issues are best managed at a diplomatic level. US President Theodore Roosevelt's advice to "speak softly and carry a big stick" remains as valid today as a century ago. The latest fracas occurred at the Munich Security Conference last week when Mr Jaishankar shared the stage with US Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, President Trump's ally and friend, who was leading a 22-member bipartisan US delegation. He is heard distinguishing how democracies deal with internal or external disputes compared to autocratic regimes. He begins by wondering how Scotland's demand for independence may turn out, before deploring the Russian occupation of Crimea or the Chinese "shutdown", apparently referring to Uighur issue, before wondering how the Kashmir problem will end, adding "but let's make sure the two democracies will end it differently". This he felt was the best way to market democracy at conferences like MSC, where traditionally Russia-European Union relations get centre-staged. Mr Jaishankar retorted that "one democracy" would end it suitably, then acerbically concluding that the senator would know which one. Much applause followed in India for his sharp rebuke. Did Mr Jaishankar misunderstand Senator Graham, who was referring to UK and India as democracies, which dealt with disputes, internal or external, differently from China and Russia? So where was the need to get hot under the collar.

Perhaps the humility shown by Amit Shah in defeat needs to be emulated in South Block. Indian diplomacy has a tough task marketing normality in Kashmir when even European ambassadors — including the French and German envoys in New Delhi, after the latest conducted tour of Jammu and Kashmir, have accepted progress but simultaneously sought quick further steps. Obviously, the government seems headed away from such steps as two of the three former chief ministers and a former IAS officer have had the draconian Public Safety Act clamped on them. The Supreme Court is to examine the legality of that, in due course. Similarly, the CAA protests have not simmered down despite Mr Shah magnanimously offering to talk to whoever approaches him. The taste of the pie is, however, as they say, in the eating. On Twitter, the BJP's first tweet, after Mr Shah's public confession of failure over the sectarian and divisive electioneering in Delhi, still carried his insistence that the NRC is in the BJP's election manifesto and shall be implemented in future. This tweet was later deleted and a fresh tweet without the last part about the future posted.

Thus, on the eve of the US presidential visit, the backdrop of India's domestic dissonance will continue. Fortunately for the Modi government, Mr Trump is unlikely to be overly stressed about these developments, except so far as it impinges on Pakistani cooperation, which he needs to implement the finalised-on-paper Afghan accord. Thus, Kashmir and Pakistan will figure in private, if not another public Trumpian stab at mediation. President Trump will seek a mix of hoopla, with teeming masses by

the roadside or in a stadium, a trade deal with tangible takeaways that he can brandish particularly for his rural, semi-urban base, and defence deals. He will pitch for exclusion of Huawei and probably put on the table some matching allotment of India-US 5G collaboration.

Mr Jaishankar is also expected in Munich to test the waters for the India-EU summit, which has not taken place for a year and a half. The sticking point would again be India's domestic developments, particularly Kashmir and the lurking resolution in the European Parliament. India has to also start looking at post-Brexit European Union, as indeed Britain. Meanwhile, South Block has to stop adopting a pugnacious tone in countering criticism abroad. It is one thing to tick off Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, when he absolutely wrongly compares Kashmir to Gallipoli. Did he even realise that many valiant Indian soldiers had laid down their lives in that attack, which was a strategic mistake by British commanders? Does he even know that India is in Jammu and Kashmir after its legal accession to India, and not like Britain trying to counter the emergence of free Turkey? These are arguments that diplomats are supposed to make to neutralise the leader of a major Muslim nation.

But civilised discourse, at home and abroad, begins at the top. India's diplomats will adjust quickly once they know that the powers that be are willing to cut them the slack to engage and convert critics abroad, not sharply retort and alienate. Ironically, US diplomats are facing a similar dilemma as Twitter-addicted @realDonaldTrump is normally way ahead of the state department in crossing swords and smashing past policy positions. Thus, India can look forward to two days of unpredictable fun and games as Typhoon Trump hits India.

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

### LETTERS

#### AAP'S VICTORY

There are many congratulatory messages for Arvind Kejriwal when he won the Delhi elections while being critical of the BJP. However, are freebies offered by AAP justified? Can taxpayers' money be spent in this way? Politicians are making people lazy with freebies.

Susheel Hyderabad

#### AP CAPITAL

The farmers' agitation to retain Amaravati as capital of Andhra Pradesh entered the 60th day. However, nobody is bothered about the fate of the National Women's Commission which sent its members on a fact finding mission on police excesses against agitating women. Till date their report or action proposed has not seen the light of the day. The HC is continuously adjourning the various cases filed in support of Amaravati farmers.

R.S.N. Rao Hyderabad

#### GROOM'S DEATH

It's most unfortunate that a groom died during a wedding dance (*Groom collapses during wedding dance, dies, DC, Feb. 16*) Wedding organisers must reconsider hiring DJs after marriage. My heartfelt condolences to the family.

Balakumar Devi Hyderabad

#### TRUMP'S VISIT

Authorities must speed up the manner in which cities are maintained and instruct engineers accordingly instead of waiting for a foreign dignitary's visit. The poor can be given clothes to celebrate Trump's visit.

Gudipati Shanti Priya Secunderabad

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.

#### 96 die in air crash

SANTO DOMINGO, FEB. 16 All 97 people aboard a Dominican airlines DC-9 twin engine jet were killed when the plane plunged into the Caribbean soon after take-off, the Dominican Republic Navy said here. Earlier, 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle unconfirmed reports had said rescue ships had plucked 10 people alive from the wreckage after the plane crashed about five miles off the Dominican coast last night. Hope for any survivors faded overnight when a Dominican Navy spokesman said rescue teams had found pieces of human flesh floating near the crash scene.

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Irfan Husain  
View from Pakistan

## India no more a beacon for democracy in South Asia?

While the BJP defeat in Delhi was expected, its magnitude wasn't. Eight seats out of a legislature of 70 is a hammering of epic proportions.

However, this does not spell the ebb of the Modi wave: he and his Hindutva policies continue to dominate the populous hinterland where hysterical nationalism and extreme Hinduism flourish. So despite the fierce pushback against the anti-Muslim Citizenship Act that is mostly confined to the urban centres, Modi is secure in his strongholds.

Kashmir, too, remains under control by dint of the harshest crackdown ever seen in the held Valley. The shutdown of all communication systems has played havoc with trade and personal relationships, shocking the world with its blatant disregard of human rights. Hundreds of deliberately blinded Kashmiris bear testimony to the brutal nature of the Indian occupation.

So Modi can't afford to be complacent. With these two own goals, he

has unnecessarily upset two hornets' nests and given the world a glimpse into the real "shining India", where gang rape and all kinds of misogyny are the norm; where figures are fudged to pump up the growth rate; and where income inequality is reaching disturbing proportions.

I know Indian readers will retort that things in India are better than in Pakistan. This may be true, but it isn't the point. Here was a country that, before Modi came along, was a success story in many fields, ranging from the economy to culture. Its projection of its soft culture made it a model developing country that was going places fast. Now its official statistics are viewed as dodgy. The lynching of Muslims suspected of feasting or storing beef has shocked millions of foreigners. India's soft power has hardened since Modi's arrival.

So while Pakistan was slipping into extremist violence, India broke away from rigid socialist policies in the 1990s and marched ahead with a liberal economic agenda. Now, it is fast

becoming a mirror image of its neighbour.

This is no moment for Pakistanis to gloat: India used to be a beacon for those of us who thought that South Asia could be flourishing democracies, and that India would set the trend. Alas, the two largest ex-colonies born out of the Raj have taken on increasingly authoritarian colours. Sure, we have all the trappings of democracy, but intolerance and a rejection of the 'other' now dominate the public discourse. An old friend who spends considerable time in Mumbai reports that even with highly educated people, it has become impossible to criticise Modi.

There was a time, years ago, when I doubted the wisdom of Partition. I asked my father why he had decided to move the family to Pakistan when he was well known in India as a writer and a Sanskrit scholar. My parents also had many Hindu and Sikh friends. He answered that till the very end, he was undecided, but as the rioting and killing got worse,

his non-Muslim friends said they were no longer sure they could protect us, and he should move us to Pakistan and return when things were more settled.

That day never came, and I was left wondering what trajectory my life would have taken had we stayed on. I wonder no longer: as I see the discrimination and violence Muslims are being subjected to, I'm glad my father made the choice he did.

Liberal parties move to the right to combat what they view as a successful formula as politicians are always sensitive to the wind's direction. In Pakistan, power-hungry generals, with the exception of Ayub Khan, have pandered to the clerics for political support. This policy has, again and again, pushed us into extremism that has allowed crazed jihadis to flourish.

So where does Modi go from here? For the time being, he is secure. His security forces are too powerful for any long-term resistance to succeed. His message of Hindu dominance

resonates deeply. And the world still sees India as too large a market to upset by criticism of its human rights violations. But events can change very quickly, with the economy being a key trigger, as Imran Khan is discovering to his cost. Mike Tyson, once the world heavyweight boxing champion, put it best: "Everybody has a plan until they run into a punch in the mouth."

There was a brief period early in his term when Imran Khan tried to reach out to Modi in an effort to resolve our many differences. Time after time, he was snubbed. He seemed to have forgotten how he reviled Nawaz Sharif for similar gestures. "Jo Modi ka yaar hai, ghaddar hai, ghaddar hai!" (Anybody who is a friend of Modi's is a traitor!) was one slogan he deployed constantly.

And so our paths that had long diverged now seem to be converging. I just hope this convergence won't be too violent.

By arrangement with Dawn



**IN BRIEF**

**Barca, IOC Twitter accounts hacked**

**Barcelona:** Barcelona's Twitter accounts were hacked after the team's 2-1 home win over Getafe in the Spanish league on Saturday. A group calling itself "OurMine" took over Barcelona's accounts and posted a fake image hinting that the club had re-signed Brazilian forward Neymar. It also posted a message noting that it was the second time it had hacked the club. It said that "the security level is better but still not the best," and added information on how it could be contacted to help "improve" the accounts' security. The messages were later deleted and Barcelona eventually retook control of its accounts. The group had also hacked Barcelona in 2017. Some of the Twitter accounts belonging to the International Olympic Committee also were hacked by the same group on Saturday, with similar messages. — AP



**TECH COS PROFIT FROM CLOUD BIZ**

**San Francisco, Feb. 16:** With each passing quarter, Amazon, Microsoft and Google have been setting new records, while cloud computing has become the invisible backbone supporting much of our daily lives. Its potential to become an even bigger part of people's daily existence is sky-high.

**USES**

The rising popularity of the cloud has gone hand-in-hand with that of 4G broadband technology and of smartphones. The combined power of the network and of servers makes it possible for us to listen to music, to watch videos, to work remotely, to post on social media or to request a ride and watch it arrive, in real time, on a smartphone map. Companies and individuals can buy not just cloud-based storage but also processing power. Internet services and software, all of it situated not in one's computer or smartphone but in huge data centres.

There are now even cloud services for video games, which require enormous amounts of data and extremely rapid response times.

"Cloud gaming," as with other uses, lets users dispense with expensive and fast-outdated equipment.

**MARKET**

Most big companies and institutions now access the cloud either through their own private servers or as a client of a public cloud provided by a company such as Amazon, Microsoft or Google.

These big providers offer an array of options, from simple hosting to ultra-complete online services, with an a la carte menu of tools and software, and with programs ensuring maintenance and security.

The public cloud can thus provide savings while also allowing greater flexibility as users' needs evolve.

In practice, many companies choose a hybrid approach, melding the lower cost, greater power and high adaptability of the public cloud with the comforting security of a private cloud.

"Companies on average use about three different public-cloud providers," said Bob O'Donnell, president and chief analyst at TECHanalysis Research.

While some companies grew up in the data world, he added, "let's not forget that lots of companies have been moving slowly and cautiously; plenty of companies are just getting started."

In 2020, the market for the public cloud is expected to reach \$266 billion, a 17 percent increase over 2019, according to Gartner Consulting.

And market research firm IDC predicts a near-doubling of the market by 2023, to \$500 billion. The 2006 launch of Amazon Web Services gave the online giant a huge lead over its competitors. Analysts put its current share of the global public-cloud market at 30 to 50 per cent. — AFP

## EC, IIT-M look for ways to introduce e-voting

Project is in the R&D stage with an aim to develop a prototype

**New Delhi, Feb. 16:** The Election Commission has collaborated with IIT Madras to work on a new technology which will allow electors to vote from far away cities without going to the designated polling station of their respective constituencies, a senior poll panel official has said.

The project is at present in the research and development stage with an aim to develop a prototype, another official said.

Explaining the 'blockchain' technology involved in the project, Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Sandeep Saxena said the concept is a 'two-way electronic voting system, in a controlled environment, on white-listed IP devices on dedicated internet lines, enabled with biometric devices and a web camera'.

He, however, made it clear that voters will have to reach a designated venue during a pre-decided period of time to be able to use this facility. It does not mean voting from home, Saxena explained, which is 'anytime-anywhere-any device' and would require some more time and technological advancement.

Explaining the technicalities, the Senior Deputy Election Commissioner told PTI that the 'two-way blockchain remote voting' process would involve voter identification and authorisation using a multi-layered IT enabled system working on the EC's e-Governance award winning Electoral Registration Officer Network (ERO Net) using biometrics and web cameras.

After a voter's identity is established by the system, a block chain enabled personalised e-ballot paper (Smart Contract) will be generated.

When the vote is cast (Smart Contract executed), the ballot would be securely encrypted and a blockchain hashtag (#) will be generated. This hashtag notification would be sent to various stakeholders, in this case — the candidates and political parties, the official said. The encrypted remote votes so cast would once again be validated at the pre-counting stage to ensure that they have neither been decrypted, nor tampered with or replaced.

"Suppose there is a Lok Sabha election and a Chennai voter is in Delhi. Instead of returning to vote in his or her constituency or missing out on voting, the voter can reach a pre-designated spot set up by the EC, say in Connaught Place, in a particular time window and can cast his vote," Saxena said.

He said such voters may have to apply in advance to their returning officers to exercise the option.

Another top EC functionary, who refused to get

### SMARTPHONE VOTING STIRS INTEREST AND SECURITY FEARS IN UNITED STATES

■ West Virginia's disabled residents and overseas military personnel will be able to vote by smartphone in the US presidential election this year, the latest development in a push to make balloting more accessible despite persistent security fears.

■ Former presidential candidate Andrew Yang endorsed the idea, saying, "Americans should be able to vote via their mobile device, with verification done via blockchain." Critics however call for caution in light of an array of cybersecurity worries and a fiasco in Iowa over a mobile app that was used for vote tabulation, but could have been adapted for individual ballots.

■ Rising interest in electronic voting has heightened concerns among security experts who fear these systems are vulnerable to hacking and manipulation that could undermine confidence in election results.

■ A report released Thursday by Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers uncovered Voatz "vulnerabilities" which could allow votes to be altered and potentially allow an attacker to recover a user's secret ballot.

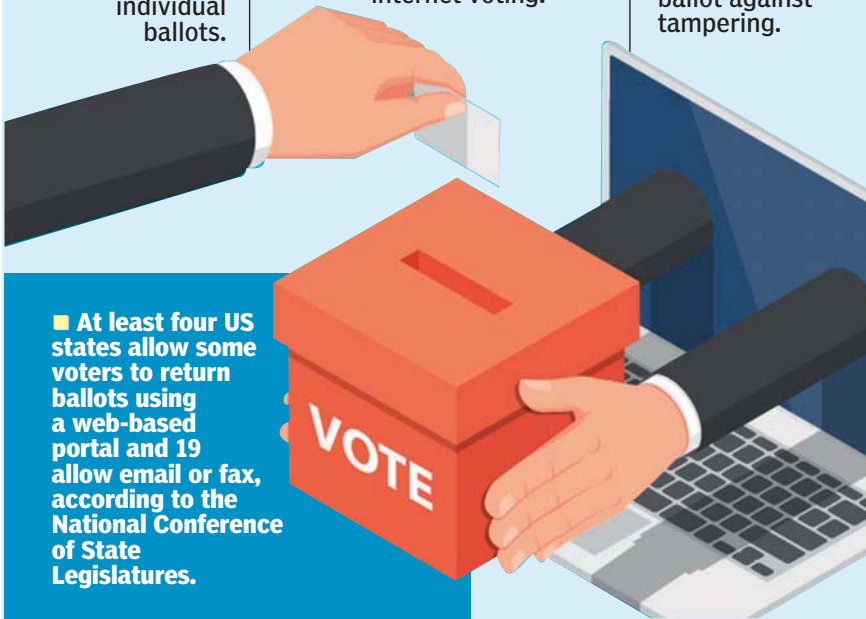
■ The researchers said that amid the uncertainty, election officials should "abandon the app for immediate use." Backers of mobile voting argue it is more efficient, and can improve accessibility for deployed troops, the elderly and other people who can't get to polling stations.

■ Voatz called the study "flawed" and said its app has been updated 27 times from the version used by researchers. MIT researchers Michael Specter, James Koppel and Daniel Weitzner on Friday stood by their findings, saying they used recent versions of the app.

■ While internet voting has been implemented in parts of the world, notably in Estonia, security is still a key concern, and that goes double for smartphone voting, say researchers.

■ "Internet voting can't be secured by any known technology," said Andrew Appel, a Princeton University computer science professor and member of a National Academy of Sciences panel which produced a 2018 report, "Securing the Vote," that recommends against internet voting.

■ A key hurdle for online voting, including with smartphones, is ensuring ballots are secret while at the same time verifying the voter's identity and securing the ballot against tampering.



■ At least four US states allow some voters to return ballots using a web-based portal and 19 allow email or fax, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

spot set up by the EC, say in Connaught Place, in a particular time window and can cast his vote," Saxena said.

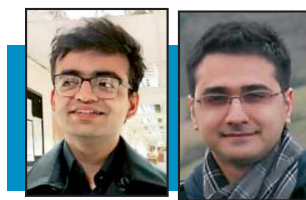
He said such voters may have to apply in advance to their returning officers to exercise the option.

Another top EC functionary, who refused to get

quoted, said at present it is only a research and development project. If the technology is found to be 'okay', then only after stakeholder consultations and changes in the election laws and rules, it will be tried in actual conditions, he said. There have been demands from vari-

ous parties that the EC should ensure that migrant workers who miss out on voting as they cannot afford going home during elections to exercise their franchise should be allowed to vote for their constituency from the city they are working in. — PTI

## NRC website imbroglio highlights need for govt accountability



Rohan Seth & Prateek Waghre

Last week, multiple news outlets reported that the website housing NRC data had gone offline. Reportedly, this happened because a cloud services contract procured by Wipro on behalf of the State government of Assam was not renewed and thus, turned off due to non-payment. For now, officials have made assurances that the data itself is safe. Some aspersions have also been cast on former state officials working on the NRC project. This is still a developing story and there are multiple conspiracy theories being floated about the root-cause ranging on a spectrum from malintent to negligence and good old-fashioned incompetence.

From a public policy perspective, there are multiple questions that come up — should the state be contracting with private enterprise? How accountable should the state be when there is loss of data or harm caused to people by accumulating this data? How much data should the state gather about its citizens and the potential for misuse? Let's look at them starting from the narrowest question and then expanding outwards.

**AWS V/S MEGHRAJ**

One of the reasons for outrage has been the use of Amazon Web Services to host this site especially when the National Informatics Center (NIC) itself offers a cloud service called 'MeghRaj'. The concern cited is that the data may leave the country, or that private contractors will potentially be able to access sensitive data. It is almost cliched to say that the Internet has no borders, but this distinction is important. Data is not any safer just by virtue of it being in India and at a state-operated facility. On the contrary, it is probably better for a website and its data to be hosted with industry leading operators that follow best-practices and have the expertise to efficiently manage both operations and security. One must consider both the capacity and role of the state in this context. What is the market failure that the state is addressing

**Section 35 of the draft Personal Data Protection Bill allows the government to exempt whole departments from the Bill, removing checks and balances that should exist when the government acts as a collector or processor of your data.**

by offering cloud hosting services in a market where the likes of Amazon, Google and Microsoft operate?

The objection regarding contractor access to sensitive information is important and merits further consideration. To a large extent, this can be addressed by a contractual requirement to restrict access to individuals with security clearances. Yes, this brings the dimension of a principal-agent problem and lax enforcement of contract law in India. But it is important to contrast it with the alternative — an individual representing the state, where the principal-agent problem is even more acute. As things stand, there are still options to hold a private entity accountable for violation of contract, but there is a lower probability of punitive action against an individual representing the state for harm arising out of action/inaction on their part. As far as causes for outrage go, the fact that the data was stored with AWS should not be one. There are larger aspects at play here.

**STATE ACCOUNTABILITY**

This incident brings with itself a much larger question on the accountability the Government should have towards data. The Indian government keeps a substantial amount of personal and sensitive data on its citizens. For example, data on how much gas you consume, your physical address, the model, make

and the number of your car as well as how many times you traveled out of the country in the last 10 years. That is more sensitive information than most companies in the private sector hold.

Keeping this (and the social contract) in mind, how accountable should the government be? According to the draft of the Personal Data Protection Bill, not very. Section 35 of the bill allows the Government to exempt whole departments from the bill, removing checks and balances that should exist when the Government acts as a collector or processor of your data.

How does that make sense? Why should the state be any less accountable than a private enterprise? In fact, the Government has sold the data of its citizens, without their consent (~25 crore vehicle registrations and 15 crore driving licenses) to the private sector for revenue. As of now, it is hard to conclude whether the incident occurred due to malintent, negligence, or incompetence. But regardless of the cause, it brings with itself a lesson. The Government and all its departments needs to be more responsible and be held more accountable when it comes to the data they store and process.

**IMPLICATIONS OF A DATA-HUNGRY STATE**

A case can be made that the state is not a monolith and there exist certain barriers and redundancies due to which databases in the Government do not talk to each other... yet. Chapter 4 of the 2018-19 Economic Survey of India envisioned data as a public good and advocated "combining... disparate datasets." The combination of limited state capacity, lack of accountability and a hunger for data can be a dangerous one. While capacity can be supplemented by private enterprise, there is no substitute for accountability. In such a scenario it is extremely important to consider, understand, debate the chronology, implications and potential for misuse before going ahead with such large scale activities that could end up severely disrupting many millions of lives.

*(The writers are research analysts at The Takshashila Institution. All views are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the newspaper's)*

## Bringing laws to legalise Biometric Recognition



Srinivas Kodali

India as a society is going through major transformations with the laws that are being pushed through the parliament. Laws are not being debated enough but being enacted through the parliament, leading to protests on streets. As a society we are increasingly ignoring to follow rule of law as well, the police in the country especially are using techniques and means which no existing law allows them to do. Take the case of facial recognition itself, there is no law which allows the police to use it, but they would claim there is no law which restricts them not to do so either.

According to a report by The Ken the government is considering to amend a law, Identification of Prisoners and Arrested Persons Bill, 2020 to allow the police department to use facial recognition. The bill is likely to be tabled in the monsoon session when the data protection bill is also expected to be considered for passing. The bill is expected to give legitimacy for the police

departments use of facial recognition and further allowing them to collect other biometrics like fingerprints, iris of retina, DNA, blood samples, foot and handprints, voice samples and host of data for forensic analysis.

The use of biometrics in policing in India has a rich history with the Indian Evidence Act of 1872 allowing the collection of fingerprints as evidence. It is under this law the police even evolved forensic techniques of collecting DNA at crime scenes. The Identification of Prisoners Act of 1920 allowed the police to further collect fingerprints and photographs of convicts and anyone who is also arrested under suspicion of committing a crime. These laws over the years helped the police department document and solve crimes.

But with the rising population and the difficulty to maintain physical records, the police have upgraded their procedures and capacity with the help of IT. The ubiquitous use of biometrics

part of Aadhaar meant, the police could source fingerprint scanners easily and develop their own fingerprint recognition systems. The Hyderabad Police were one of the first to acquire these systems part of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) pilot implementations under Crime and Criminal Networks and Systems (CCTNS) project.

CCTNS is essentially a network of databases linking all police departments and allowing them to share information of crime records and criminals. Under CCTNS umbrella is where the government is building a host of new systems like the National Automated Facial Recognition System and Automated Fingerprint Identification

**The use of biometrics in policing in India has a rich history with the Indian Evidence Act of 1872 allowing the collection of fingerprints as evidence. It is under this law the police even evolved forensic techniques of collecting DNA at crime scenes.**

System. These biometric recognition systems will thus be accessible to every police department in the country through CCTNS. The system is designed to find and track people throughout the country by having a centralised database of wanted persons.

If one where to understand how these national systems could change policing practices across India, the best place to look at is Hyderabad. The Hyderabad Police has been implementing all the pilots for the CCTNS system including the fingerprint recognition system and facial recognition. These pilots have led to people randomly being harassed on the streets of Hyderabad to be photographed or to give their fingerprints to identify if they are a criminal. The police have been detaining anyone whom they could not identify or where not carrying their identity documents when going out of their house. With no law or rules being framed to regulate the use of these systems, the police have gone overboard in using them everywhere and on anyone.

The problem building such surveillance systems is the lack of law or criminal codes which safeguards citizens and limit arbitrary use of these systems, forcing one to

approach courts. The MHA and National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) which is maintaining the CCTNS project intends to fix it by amending the Identification of Prisoners Act. The hope is that since facial recognition is only being used to find criminals and wanted persons, amending this act would give the police department the power to do this legitimately. The idea sounds great but could fall apart if the law is subjected to the proportionality test under the fundamental right to privacy judgement, Puttaswamy Vs Union of India.

The Supreme Court in its judgement on privacy has clearly demanded the government bring a law on surveillance and that the term "national security" be defined. With no clear definition of national security, the government has power to conduct surveillance of any innocent who is not accused in any crime. This has been the case if one looks into the people who were under surveillance using the pegasus spyware. The entire list of people subject to this draconian form of surveillance is not known, but the individuals whom whatsapp informed were all human rights activists, academics, lawyers demanding accountability

**CCTNS is essentially a network of databases linking all police departments and allowing them to share information of crime records and criminals. Under CCTNS umbrella is where the government is building a host of new systems like the National Automated Facial Recognition System and Automated Fingerprint Identification System. These biometric recognition systems will thus be accessible to every police department in the country through CCTNS.**

of the state. Surveillance and Police reforms are a need of the hour for our society with police acting with impunity and no checks with the recent events on CAA protests. Any such reforms before they are even proposed need to understand the capabili-

ties of police and intelligence agencies in India. If the parliament and state assemblies continue to allow these invasive systems in the country and their states, ignoring the supreme court judgement on privacy, we would be looking at a police state.

Several cities across the world are banning facial recognition systems with the disproportionate amount of power they give to police departments. Surveillance has its benefits when targeted against individuals of power who can harm our society under court orders.

Without any supervision on police and no accountability to the public at large, these ubiquitous systems available to every beat cop could just mean police harassment. It is known holding police accountable is near impossible in this country with the power of violence they have produced with sanctions from the state. The illegal encounters seem small when biometric recognition systems are used on the entire society to police their bodies every second.

*(The writer is an independent researcher working on data, governance and internet. All views are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the newspaper's)*



IN BRIEF

**Bandits kill 30 in Nigeria attack**

**Kano (Nigeria):** Armed gangs killed 30 people in raids on two villages in an area of northwest Nigeria plagued by cattle rustlers and kidnappers, police said on Sunday. Dozens of gunmen on motorcycles attacked the villages of Tsauwa and Dankar in Katsina state on Friday, shooting residents and burning homes. "The bandits killed 21 people in Tsauwa and another nine in nearby Dankar," Katsina police spokesman Gambo Isah said. "Most of those killed were old people and children who couldn't escape." Police and soldiers deployed in the area arrested one suspect, Isah said. The attackers burnt homes, livestock and food supplies before fleeing, said Tukur Mu'azu, traditional chief of Batsari, a district that straddles the two villages. He gave the same toll as the police for what he described as an "unprovoked attack".

**Connecticut club shooting: 1 dead**

**Hartford (US):** Multiple people were shot at a Connecticut nightclub, leaving one person dead, police said early Sunday. Preliminary information indicated four others were wounded, Hartford police Lt. Paul Cicero told The Associated Press. In a tweet posted around 3 a.m., police described the location as a nightclub in Hartford's South End. The address provided in the tweet corresponds to the location of Majestic Lounge. A phone call to the number listed on Majestic Lounge's Facebook pages was not answered. Further details, including information about the shooter, weren't immediately available. Just before 4:30 a.m., Cicero said police were still in the early stages of investigating and there were "a lot of moving parts".

**Ministers push for Libya peace**

**Munich:** Foreign ministers and other top officials from about a dozen countries gathered Sunday in Germany to keep up the push for peace in Libya after countries with interests in its long-running civil war agreed to respect a much-violated arms embargo and back a full cease-fire. With this meeting on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, Germany and the U.N. were seeking to keep up a drive to cut off outside military support for the warring parties. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said the January 19 agreement by leaders in Berlin has been repeatedly violated by continuing arms deliveries and escalating fighting. Libya has been in turmoil since 2011, when a civil war toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

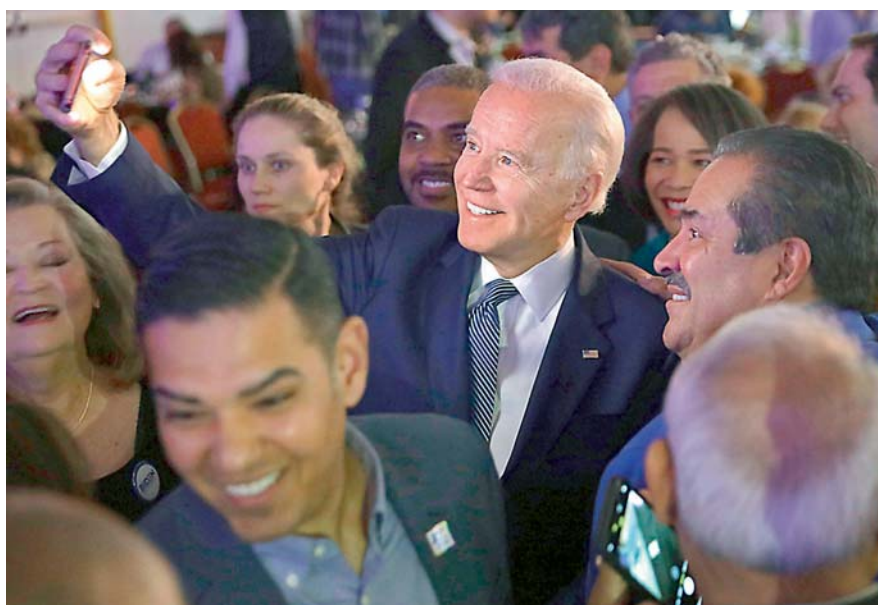
**SUDAN WILL HAND OVER BASHIR TO ICC**

**Nyala (Sudan), Feb. 16:** In the sprawling Camp Kalma, refugees displaced by the Darfur conflict are overjoyed at the decision by Sudan's new authorities to finally deliver president Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court. Bashir, who was deposed in April 2019 following mass protests, has for the past decade flouted International Criminal Court arrest warrants on charges of genocide and war crimes in the ravaged Darfur region of western Sudan. On Tuesday, Sudan's transitional authorities agreed to transfer him to stand trial before the court based in The Hague. "There was rejoicing across the camp after people heard Bashir is being handed over to the ICC," 65-year-old refugee Adam Ali, a longtime resident of Kalma camp in Nyala, capital of South Darfur state, told AFP. Darfuris and rebel groups have repeatedly demanded he be handed over to the ICC over alleged war crimes in a conflict which according to the United Nations left 300,000 people dead and displaced 2.5 million others. Local community leader Yaqoob Mohamed said the decision was "a victory for the victims" and would go a long way towards "rebuilding trust" with the leadership in Khartoum. Hundreds of thousands of those displaced by the conflict still live in camps and remain dependent on aid.

**Recalling mass shooting, Biden promises changes**

**Former V-P draws distinctions with Sanders on guns and healthcare**

**Las Vegas, Feb. 16:** Former Vice President Joe Biden delivered a fiery speech at the Clark County Democratic Party gala a week before the Nevada presidential preference caucuses as he drew sharp distinctions with Bernie Sanders on guns and healthcare. Biden didn't call Sanders' name Saturday night as he stood in a casino ballroom and recalled the worst mass shooting in modern American history that occurred several hundred yards away in 2017.



Democratic presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden poses for selfie with a guest prior to the Clark County Democrats Kick Off to Caucus Gala at Tropicana Las Vegas. — AFP

Then the former vice president alluded to the Sanders' Senate vote for a 2005 law that gave gun manufacturers immunity from civil lawsuits related to gun violence.

It's a horrible, horrible decision, Biden said, asking the audience to imagine Big Tobacco having legal immunity. He recalled meeting parents of children killed in school shootings. "I will not rest until they're able to sue the gun manufacturers," he said.

Biden later turned to health care. Again without naming Sanders, Biden repeated a recent argument from the power Culinarian Union that a single-payer Medicare for All system would eliminate union

members' health coverage won through collective bargaining. Biden touted his idea to add a public option to existing health insurance markets.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders laced into billionaire former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg at a Democratic Party dinner in Las Vegas.

Sanders rattled off a list of Bloomberg heresies against the Democratic party — implementing racist policies like stop and frisk in New York, opposing the minimum wage or higher taxes on the wealthy during the Obama administration.

"The simple truth is that mayor Bloomberg with all

his money will not create the kind of excitement and energy we need to have the voter turnout we must have to defeat Donald Trump," Sanders said.

It was a rare attack by name from Sanders. Bloomberg is skipping the Nevada caucuses and was not at the Clark County Democratic Party dinner

where Sanders and other 2020 contenders spoke.

Some Nevada Democrats who made Bernie Sanders their first choice in the state's early caucus voting say they think he has a better chance of being elected president now than he did in 2016. Solana Kline of Reno says she supported Sanders last time, but didn't think he could win so she opted for Hillary Clinton because she was more mainstream. Kline says the whole political climate has changed since then and Sanders vs. Trump would be viewed more as good vs. evil.

Clinton carried Nevada in 2016, but Sanders won in Washoe County, which includes Reno and Sparks.

Brian Feeney says Sanders has more support and is better positioned to win this time around. The 42-year-old behavioural analyst who works with children with autism at the University of Nevada, Reno says he may consider the Green Party candidate if Sanders isn't the Democratic nominee. Margaret Hines of Reno also backed Clinton in 2016 but says Sanders is inspiring voters to take back their power from leaders in Washington. — AP

**Trump may raise \$10m in Florida**

**Palm Beach, Feb. 16:** President Donald Trump mixed reelection business with pleasure during a weekend stop at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, attending a fundraiser on Saturday evening expected to raise \$10 million for his campaign and the Republican National Committee. The event was believed to be his most expensive fundraiser ever, with invitations going to donors who gave \$580,600 per couple, according to The Washington Post, which obtained an invitation to the event at the Palm Beach estate of billionaire investor Nelson Peltz.



Donald Trump

Pro-Trump groups have been shattering fundraising records on the path toward a goal of raising \$1 billion this election cycle. Advocacy groups that have sought campaign finance reform said the Supreme Court paved the way for such fundraising hauls by striking down in 2014 the limit on the total amount of money an individual could give to all political party committees in a two-year election cycle. The ability of Trump to raise these astronomical amounts of influence money from billionaires and multimillionaires is a direct result of the Supreme Court's utter failure to understand the nation's campaign finance laws or the implications of its decision, said Democracy 21 President Fred Wertheimer in an op-ed published in Medium.

**THE EVENT** at the Palm Beach estate of billionaire Nelson Peltz was believed to be Trump's most expensive fundraiser, with invitations going to donors who gave \$580,600 per couple.

er in an op-ed published in Medium.

In that 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court found that limits on the total amount of money donors can give to all candidates, committees and political parties were unconstitutional. Sen Bernie Sanders has criticized some of his fellow Democratic presidential candidates for accepting campaign donations from the extremely wealthy, questioning whether those who accept the donations would stand up to those who provide them if the situation called for it. — AP

**NATO CHIEF DISMISSES MACRON N-CALL**

**Munich, Feb. 16:** The head of NATO dismissed President Emmanuel Macron's call for a European "strategic dialogue" about the role of France's nuclear weapons, saying a "tried and tested" deterrent was already in place.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said Saturday that thanks to the US and Britain's atomic weapons, Europe was already protected by a longstanding and effective nuclear umbrella.

While a NATO member, France does not make its atomic weapons available to the alliance, but in a major speech last week Macron called for dialogue among EU countries about what role the French nuclear deterrent could play. Stoltenberg, who last year clashed with Macron over the French leader's claims NATO was suffering "brain death" in its geopolitical thinking, gave his latest suggestion a frosty reception. "We have to remember that we have a European nuclear deterrent today — 28 allies deliver that every day and it's not only a promise, but it's something that has been there for decades," Stoltenberg told reporters at the Munich Security Conference.

"It's tried and tested, we exercise it, and it's institutionalised, and it is the ultimate security guarantee for Europe." France is the EU's only nuclear power after Brexit and Macron has championed the idea of European "strategic autonomy" — the ability to defend itself without relying on the US. — AFP

**Gantz will form govt without Netanyahu**

**Jerusalem, Feb. 16:** Israeli opposition leader Benny Gantz is vowing to form a government that will include neither the indicted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor the Arab parties in parliament. In a series of TV interviews two weeks before national elections, Gantz looked to project confidence that the March 2 vote will provide the decisive outcome that eluded the two previous elections last year.

Gantz's Blue and White party is currently polling ahead of Netanyahu's Likud, although neither appears to have a clear path to a parliamentary majority required to form a coalition government. Gantz laid out two potential paths while speaking to Channel 12 News on Saturday night. He said he's either going to partner with a broad range of "Je-

wish and democratic" parties — including the ultranationalist party led by apparent kingmaker Avigdor Lieberman. Or he could team up with the ruling Likud Party, but only if it gets rid of longtime leader Netanyahu, who's fending off a slew of criminal corruption charges.

"Netanyahu has ended his historic role from a political standpoint. The Likud with Bibi cannot form a government, and without Bibi there's unity" — BENNY GANTZ, Israeli opposition leader

Netanyahu has ended his historic role from a political standpoint. The Likud with Bibi cannot form a government, and without Bibi there's unity" — BENNY GANTZ, Israeli opposition leader

the Nur Khan Airbase, Radio Pakistan reported. According to the Foreign Office, Guterres will hold talks with President Arif Alvi, Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. He said he was "deeply concerned" over the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and tensions along the Line of Control.

**UN chief in Pak on four-day visit**

**Islamabad, Feb. 16:** UN chief Antonio Guterres arrived here on Sunday on a four-day visit to Pakistan during which he will attend the international conference on Afghan refugees, hold parleys with the top Pakistani leadership and visit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur.

The UN Secretary-General was received by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Munir Akram and senior officials of the Foreign Office and the United Nations in Pakistan on his arrival at

the Nur Khan Airbase, Radio Pakistan reported. According to the Foreign Office, Guterres will hold talks with President Arif Alvi, Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. He said he was "deeply concerned" over the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and tensions along the Line of Control.

parliamentarians and the youth. He will deliver special talks on themes of sustainable development, climate change and peacekeeping. He will also visit Lahore. He will also visit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, the final resting place of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev, in Kartarpur. Guru Nanak Dev spent the last 18 years of his life at Kartarpur Sahib, which has now become the world's largest Sikh Gurdwara. He will speak at the international conference on "40 Years of Hosting Afghan Refugees in Pakistan". — PTI

**Qatar-Saudi Gulf talks stall**

**Doha, Feb. 16:** Talks between Doha and Riyadh to resolve a two-year-old regional spat have stalled, Qatar's foreign minister has said, with diplomats and analysts suggesting the situation has hit a stalemate. Saudi Arabia, along with its allies the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, cut all diplomatic, trade and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017.

The four governments accused Doha of backing radical Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, and seeking closer ties with Saudi arch-rival Tehran — allegations Qatar vehemently denies. "We have always been very open for dialogue, since the start of the Gulf Cooperation Council (regional bloc) crisis," Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday. — AFP

WOMEN | POWER

**Sweeping reforms in ultra-conservative kingdom has brought in changes**

**New era sees Saudi women light up in public**

**Riyadh, Feb. 16:** Rima settles in a chair at an upscale Riyadh cafe, looks around carefully and, seeing no one she recognises, drags on her electronic cigarette before exhaling a cloud of smoke.

"I feel that smoking in public is a part of exercising my newly won freedoms. I am happy that now I can choose," the 27-year-old Saudi who works for a private company in the capital told AFP.

Like Western feminists of the early 20th century, in an era of social change in Saudi Arabia some women are embracing cigarettes, shisha pipes or vaping as a symbol of emancipation. The sight of wom-

en smoking in public has become much more common in recent months, an unthinkable prospect before the introduction of sweeping reforms in the ultra-conservative kingdom.

The kingdom's ambitious de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has rolled out an array of economic and social innovations to project a moderate, business-friendly image.

Women are now allowed to drive, attend public sporting events and concerts, or obtain passports without the approval of a male guardian. Rima, who started smoking two years ago, dismisses concerns about the harmful effects of



Women smoke at a coffee shop in north Riyadh. — AFP

tobacco, but is worried her family will find out. She says she is prepared for a showdown.

"I won't tell them that this is about my personal liberty, because they won't

understand that women are free to smoke like men," said Rima, dressed in a traditional black abaya with gold embroidery matching the hijab that covered her hair.

Najla, 26, who like Rima asked to use a pseudonym, said that despite the rapid social changes, double standards still existed, and that it was still considered a "scandal and disgrace" if women smoked.

The only woman lighting up amid several tables of male smokers, she said she intended to "challenge society" and ignore the occasional dirty looks. "My rights will be fully respected when my family accepts me as a smoker," she said, recalling that a friend was sent to an addiction clinic when her parents found out about her smoking.

Najla started smoking while still a school student

and, like her, up to 65 percent of female Saudi high schoolers light up secretly, according to a 2015 study by the medical faculty at King Abdulaziz University cited by Arab News.

Despite the limitations, in a country where until just a few years ago religious police would chase and hit women for infractions like wearing nail polish or allowing a strand of hair to escape from their hijab, the changes have been head-spinning. "Most of our women clients order shisha. It's something that was totally unimaginable just three months ago," a Lebanese waiter said at an up-market cafe in north Riyadh. — AFP

**ROCKETS HIT US BASE IN BAGHDAD**

**Baghdad, Feb. 16:** Multiple rockets hit an Iraqi base hosting American troops near the US embassy early Sunday, the latest in a flurry of attacks against US assets in the country.

"The Coalition confirms small rockets impacted the Iraqi base hosting (coalition) troops in the International Zone... No casualties," said coalition spokesman Myles Caggins. That base, known as Union III, is the headquarters for the US-led coalition, deployed in Iraq since 2014 to help local troops fight the Islamic State jihadist group. — AFP



IN BRIEF

**Virus hits Chinese biz in Namibia**

**Windhoek:** Namibia should by rights feel little concern about the coronavirus outbreak given that the sparsely-populated desert country is 12,000 kilometres from China and without a single confirmed case. But like many countries on the continent, the southern African nation hosts a big Chinese retail business community with close links to home. And as the fear of infection spreads, businesses are taking things into their own hands. A notice in Chinese and English taped to an aluminium shutter on a Chinese-owned shop in Windhoek's Chinatown spells it out: Any merchant returning to Namibia from China "must be quarantined for 14 days and keep the shop closed for that period", state the typed instructions signed by the Chinatown management. Many shop owners who travelled to China for the year-end break have opted to stay put instead of returning to Windhoek's Chinatown, a retail and wholesale hub.

**Hubei bans vehicle traffic**

**Shanghai:** The government of Hubei province, the centre of China's coronavirus outbreak, said on Sunday a ban will be imposed on vehicle traffic across the province to curb the spread of the virus. In a published document on Sunday, it said police cars, ambulances, vehicles carrying essential goods, or other vehicles related to public service would be exempted. It added that the province will carry out regular health checks on all residents in the province. It also stated that companies cannot resume work without first receiving permission from the government.

**Fear grows after death in Taiwan**

**Taipei:** Fears continue to grow about the spread of the coronavirus with attention increasingly focused on infected cruise ships. Japan said it found an additional 70 cases aboard the Diamond Princess in the port of Yokohama, bringing the total number of infected on the ship to 355. Malaysia said it won't allow any more passengers from the Westerdam luxury liner to enter the country from Cambodia, after an American woman was diagnosed in Kuala Lumpur after being released from the ship. Taiwan confirmed its first death from the virus, a man in his 60s who had no known exposure. China said Sunday the number of cases nationwide had reached 68,500, with the death toll rising to 1,665. Hubei province, the epicenter of the outbreak, reported fewer new infections for a second straight day, and 139 deaths. It had 1,843 new cases, dropping from 2,420.

**BANGLADESH CRAB FARMERS FEEL PINCH**

**Dhaka, Feb. 16:** Thousands of tons of Bangladesh crabs earmarked for Chinese dining tables are being left to rot because the coronavirus has halted exports. The Bangladesh crab industry, which involves some 500,000 mostly poor farmers, is facing its worst-ever crisis as some 90 percent of all crabs from the \$30-million market are exported to China. Farmers said not a single shipment of crabs was flown to China since exports were halted in the last week of January. That period is usually the busiest of the year because of the Lunar New Year, where Chinese families have lavish banquets. Many farmers had borrowed from banks and money lenders at high interest rates to boost stocks ahead of the Lunar New Year. "My stock is 70 percent damaged and if I cannot move the rest in a day, those (the rest) will die too," Bidyut Ghosh, a crab farmer from the southwestern town of Paikgacha, told AFP. The crabs are harvested live and can survive for up to 10 days in the right conditions, but once taken from their ponds they can't be returned without losing quality and condition. Crab trader, Ranjit Mondol, from the coastal district of Bagerhat said that prices usually doubled or tripled at this time of the year. —AFP

**Toll in coronavirus climbs to 1,665**

**WHO experts scramble to assist Beijing contain the spread of virus in the country**

**Beijing, Feb. 16:** The death toll from China's coronavirus epidemic has climbed to 1,665 after 142 more people died, mostly in the worst-hit Hubei Province, and the confirmed cases jumped to 68,500, officials said on Sunday, as top WHO experts scramble to assist Beijing contain the virus spread.

China's National Health Commission confirmed 2,009 new cases across the country.

Hubei and its provincial capital Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in December, reported 1,843 of the new cases. The latest report brought the total confirmed cases in Hubei to 56,249 cases.

Of the new deaths, 139 were in Hubei, two in Sichuan, and one in Hunan, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The number of new cases, however, appears to have started dropping and a top Chinese health official has said efforts to control the outbreak have reached the most crucial stage.

The report said 9,419 infected patients had been discharged from hospital after recovery so far.

The coronavirus has posed a severe threat to the medical staff as more than 1,700 Chinese health officials have been infected by the virus while treating the patients and six of them have died.

Experts from the World Health Organisation are expected in Beijing on Sunday to join Chinese health authorities in containing the virus, which has spread to several other countries forcing them to temporarily stop tourist arrivals from China.

The health commission said a joint mission with WHO experts will pay field visits to China's three provincial-level regions to learn the effectiveness of the epidemic control measures.

One task of the mission will be to come up with standard medicine to cure the disease, according to the health commission.

Several antiviral drugs are under clinical trials and Chinese researchers have narrowed down their focus to a few existing drugs, including Chloroquine Phosphate, Favipiravir and Remdesivir, said Zhang Xinmin, director of the



An Indonesian student (L) hugs her relative after being quarantined following the coronavirus outbreak, at the Juanda International Airport in Sidoarjo, East Java. — AFP

**THE MEASURES**  
China has adopted to rein in the spread of the coronavirus are starting to have an impact.

MI FENG, spokesman of China's National Health Commission

China National Centre for Biotechnology Development. Experts have asked people to frequently wash hands and face, and wear masks.

Authorities have begun quarantining large quantities of bank notes and coins in the affected areas and sanitising them with UV light before releasing them back into circulation to stop the virus from spreading. On Saturday, Chinese officials said that more than half of the coronavirus patients are being treated. —PTI

**Number of new cases drop for third day**

**Beijing, Feb. 16:** The number of new cases from China's coronavirus epidemic dropped for a third consecutive day on Sunday, as the World Health Organisation chief warned it was "impossible" to predict how the outbreak would develop.

Global concern remains high about the spread of the virus, which first emerged in China's central Hubei province in December, with the first death outside Asia reported in France this weekend. The death toll jumped to 1,665 in mainland China on Sunday after 142 more people died from the virus. More than 68,000 people have now been infected — but the number of new cases of the COVID-19 strain continued to

decline. In hardest-hit Hubei, the number of new cases slowed for a third consecutive day and at 139, the number of deaths was level with Saturday's toll. The number of new cases in other parts of the country has dropped for twelve straight days.

Mi Feng, National Health Commission spokesman, said Sunday that the figures were a sign that China was controlling the outbreak. "The effects of epidemic prevention and control in various parts of the country can already be seen," he told reporters. But the WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that it was "impossible to predict which direction this epi-

**CHINESE AUTHORITIES have placed some 56 million people in Hubei and its capital Wuhan under quarantine, virtually sealing off the province from the rest of the country in an unprecedented effort to contain the virus**

dem will take". "We ask all governments, companies, and news organisations to work with us to sound the appropriate level of alarm without fanning the flames of hysteria," he said, speaking at the Munich Security Conference.

The UN health body has asked China for more details on how diagnoses are being made. An international team of WHO experts will arrive in Beijing this weekend for a joint mission with Chinese counterparts.

The scale of the epidemic ballooned on Thursday after authorities in Hubei changed their criteria for counting cases, retroactively adding 14,000 cases in a single day. Chinese authorities have placed some 56 million people in Hubei and its capital Wuhan under quarantine, virtually sealing off the province from the rest of the country in an unprecedented effort to contain the virus. Local authorities around China have introduced

measures to try and stop the virus spreading. Beijing's municipal government has enacted a rule requiring people coming to the capital to self-quarantine for 14 days, according to official media.

Outside mainland China, an 80-year-old Chinese tourist in France was the fourth person to die from the new coronavirus, with the other deaths in the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Japan. The biggest cluster outside China is on a quarantined cruise ship off Japan, with 355 infections confirmed. The US, Canada, and Hong Kong said they will evacuate their citizens from the ship, and quarantine them on home soil. —AFP

**Cost of anti-virus fight increases**

**Beijing, Feb. 16:** Du Xuekun's sales usually jump after the Lunar New Year holiday. But this year, Du has been at home for a month with no income after vast swathes of China's economy were shut down in a sweeping effort to contain a virus outbreak.

Du, who lives in Jiaozhou, near the central city of Zhengzhou, is one of millions of people who are bearing the soaring cost of the most extreme anti-disease measures ever imposed. Some businesses are reopening, but Beijing has told the public to stay home if possible.

"People will buy food and clothes online but for sure won't buy an apartment without seeing it," said Du. Industries from auto sales to travel to retailing effectively shut down after curbs were imposed starting January 23 with the suspension of most access to Wuhan, an industrial metropolis of 11 million

**Kim's 1st show in weeks**

**Seoul, Feb. 16:** North Korea's Kim Jong Un marked the birth anniversary of the country's former leader Sunday, in his first reported public appearance in over three weeks as a deadly coronavirus rages in neighbouring China. Kim "paid high tribute" to his father Kim Jong Il at the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun in Pyongyang that holds the embalmed bodies of his father and grandfather, the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper reported. The COVID-19, which



Kim Jong-un.

originated in China and has killed over 1,600 people, has alarmed the North, prompting it to close its borders and suspend all

flights and trains to and from its giant neighbour and most important ally. Pyongyang has said nothing about cases in the North, but has stopped tourism and extended the quarantine period to 30 days for those suspected of carrying the virus, including foreigners. The appearance is Kim's first in 22 days after he attended Lunar New Year festivities then disappeared from the public eye amid global concern over the virus outbreak. —AFP

on people at the centre of the outbreak. Travel restrictions expanded to cities with more than 60 million people, while curbs on business spread nationwide. The Lunar New Year holiday was extended to keep

factories and offices closed. Restaurants and cinemas have been shut.

The rising losses threaten to become a political liability for the ruling Communist Party. "If the economy really gets into a

tailspin, the challenge for the party will be substantially increased," said Steve Tsang, director of the China Institute at London's School of Oriental and African Studies. —AP

**NEPAL BRINGS BACK 175 FROM VIRUS-HIT CHINA**

**Kathmandu, Feb. 16:** The Nepal government on Sunday evacuated 175 Nepali citizens, mostly students, from Hubei province, the epicentre of the novel coronavirus, by a special aircraft and put them under quarantine for two weeks.

A chartered plane Airbus A330 took off from Tribhuvan International Airport to Wuhan Tianhe International Airport on Saturday afternoon to bring back the Nepali nationals, including 170 students, an employee, two visitors and two children. They were evacuated from six cities of the province, including provincial capital Wuhan, Enshi, Shiyan, Yichang, Jingmen and Jingzhou. Highest number of Nepalese, 55, were evacuated from Wuhan. —PTI

**355 infected on quarantined ship**

**Yokohama, Feb. 16:** The number of people infected with the deadly new coronavirus on a quarantined ship off Japan has risen to 355, the country's health minister said on Sunday, as the United States, Canada and Hong Kong prepare to repatriate their residents on board. The figure is a jump of 70 cases from a government tally released Saturday and comes as Katsunobu Kato voiced worries that the rising infection count among the nation's general population could mean the virus's spread has entered a new phase.

"So far, we have conducted tests for 1,219 individuals. Of those, 355 people tested positive," Kato told a roundtable discussion for public broadcaster NHK on conditions aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship.

The vessel has been in quarantine since February 5 at the port of Yokohama near Tokyo and Japan's efforts to control the viral infections on board have prompted international concern.

The ship was carrying more than 3,700 passengers and crew from more than 50 countries and territories when it docked and was placed in isolation, after authorities found a passenger who got off in Hong Kong during the voyage had tested positive for the virus. Japanese officials continued to find new infections among the passengers and crew and rushed them to local hospitals, while others have been told to stay inside their cabins during the 14-day quarantine period set to

**TWO MORE** Indians on board a quarantined cruise ship off Japan have tested positive for the novel coronavirus even as India assured that it will provide all possible assistance to its nationals on the ship to return home after they test negative in the final coronavirus tests that would begin on Monday.

**JAPAN'S HEALTH** minister Katsunobu Kato on Sunday urged the public to avoid crowds and "non-essential gatherings", including notoriously packed commuter trains, to prevent the virus from spreading in the country.

end Wednesday. The US was preparing Sunday to evacuate some of its citizens but said those repatriated will go through another two-week quarantine period at home. "Based on the high number of COVID-19 cases identified on board the Diamond Princess, the Department of Health and Human Services made an assessment that passengers and crew members on board are at high risk of exposure," the US embassy said. —AFP

**LIFE | THREAT Britain faces another fierce storm as army drafts in help people**

**Two found dead in UK rough seas**

**London, Feb. 16:** Rescuers pulled two male bodies from rough seas off the coast of southeast England and military personnel mobilised to help build flood barriers as a second straight weekend of stormy weather wreaked havoc across Britain.

The fourth named storm of the season, dubbed Dennis by Britain's Met Office weather service, prompted widespread travel disruptions on Saturday and had the potential to cause more damage than last week's Storm Ciara given the already saturated ground in much of the country. The body of one man was pulled out of the sea by a lifeboat from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and followed a seven-hour search that involved a Royal Navy vessel.

The search commenced before dawn after a distress call came from the B Gas Margrethe, a Maltese tanker that had been anchored off the coastal town of Margate. Police said they were trying to establish the man's identity.

In a separate incident, the body of a second man was pulled from the sea in the afternoon. Authorities said the death was not being treated as suspicious.



Huge waves crash against the sea wall at Porthcawl, in south Wales. —AFP

The Met Office had 68 flood warnings in place around England, which means flooding was expected over the weekend. Another 40 had been issued in Scotland and 10 in Wales by their environmental agencies.

The number of flood warnings have spiked sharply over Saturday, a clear sign that the storm is deepening heading into Sunday. The highest wind gust, according to the Met Office, was 87 mph in Capel Curig in north

Wales. Hundreds of flights were cancelled as a result of the high winds. Easyjet, for example, cancelled around 230 flights in and out of Britain as wind speeds were set to hit 70 mph (113 kph).

Train services were also significantly disrupted. The travel chaos affected tens of thousands of passengers on what would typically be a busy travel day for British families since most schools are closed next week for mid-winter break. —AP



quick  
BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	41257.74 -0.49
Nifty 50	12113.50 -0.50
S&P 500*	3,380.16 0.18
Dollar (₹)	71.39 0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	93.06 0.36
Euro (₹)	77.50 -0.25
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	40,979.323 0.79
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	57.32 0.001
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.369 -0.055
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.588 0.001

\* As of 9:30 pm IST

India in talks  
with Russia on  
mega crude deal

India and Russia have finalised the broad contours of a government-to-government agreement for long-term import of crude oil by India from Russia's Far East. The pact may be inked during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit in October for the annual summit talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, diplomatic sources said. The pact is part of the efforts to take annual bilateral trade to the targeted \$25 bn from current \$11 bn.

FPIs invest over  
₹24,600 cr in  
first half of Feb.

Foreign portfolio investors remained net buyers in the first half of February by investing a net Rs 24,617 crore in the markets due to positive sentiments post-Budget and the RBI decision to maintain an accommodative stance in the latest policy review. As per the depositories' data, FPIs pumped in a net Rs 10,426 crore into equities and Rs 14,191 crore into the debt segment between February 3 and 14.

India Inc can  
now list GDRs  
at GIFT IFSC

Indian companies now have the option to list their global depository receipts at the international financial services centre in Gujarat. The corporate affairs ministry has amended the Companies (Issue of Global Depository Receipts) Rules, 2014, permitting listing of global depository receipts (GDRs) at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT). GDR is a foreign currency denominated instrument.

Discoms' dues  
to gencos rise  
nearly 50%

Power producers' total outstanding dues owed by discoms jumped nearly 50 per cent to Rs 88,177 crore in Dec. 2019 over Dec. 18, reflecting the stress in the sector. Distribution companies owed Rs 59,015 crore to gencos in Dec. 2018, according to portal Praapti. The total overdue amount, not cleared even after the 60-day grace period, stood at Rs 78,174 crore in Dec. 2019 against Rs 44,464 crore in Dec. 2018.

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Over 3,300 insolvency cases admitted as of Dec.  
IBC cases: Haircut  
rises to 88% in Q3FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, FEB. 16

Banks took a steep haircut of around 88 per cent for cases resolved in 3QFY20 under the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes (CIRPS).

Barring a few cases, almost all resolutions in 3QFY20 had a haircut of over 60 per cent. As per the latest data of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), a total of 3,312 cases have been admitted under the insolvency process as of 3QFY20. Out of this, 561 new cases were admitted in 2QFY20. Around 58 per cent of all closed cases (780 out of 1,351) till date were via liquidation while only 190 cases (14 per cent cases) were resolved with an average haircut of around 57 per cent on admitted claims till 3QFY20.

While the amount yielded on resolution as a percentage of liquidation value is high at 200 per cent, it has been declining. The haircut for cases resolved in 3QFY20, was quite high at 88 per cent. The average premium to



liquidation value was 120 per cent for accounts resolved in 3QFY20. While some accounts have shown superior results, the overall haircut scenario is dismal.

The number of cases admitted for Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes over the last 11 quarters has increased significantly, and has been generally increasing every quarter, with a major portion of these cases being admitted over the last seven quarters, highlighting the rising acceptance of

IBC as an effective debt resolution mechanism. However, most ended up in liquidation.

"Large number of liquidated cases and duration of resolution continue to remain primary concerns," said MB Mahesh, analyst at Kotak Institutional Equities.

The number of cases admitted to NCLT in 3QFY20 was 561; second highest till date with 50 per cent from financial creditors. This was an important outcome as financial creditors still

continue to use IBC as a framework of resolution despite the June 2019 circular on stressed assets resolution.

Of the 182 cases which were closed in 3QFY20, 30 cases were resolved while 134 cases faced liquidation. The average duration of resolution was more than 350 days for all resolved cases till 3QFY20. More than 30 per cent of cases have crossed 270 days. Out of the total registered cases till 3QFY20, 39 per cent were from the manufacturing space and 33 per cent from real estate, construction and trading sector.

At the initial stage, RBI had directed the initiation of resolution proceedings for 12 large accounts by banks. These 12 companies had outstanding claims of Rs 3.45 lakh crore compared to a liquidation value of Rs 73,220 crore. Resolution plans for seven companies have been approved, while liquidation orders were passed against two companies. In case of Amtek Auto, implementation of the resolution plan failed and hence the process has been restarted.

IMG clears  
BPCL sale  
bid papers

New Delhi, Feb. 16: An inter-ministerial group has approved sale bid documents for privatisation of Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL), and a notice seeking bids will be issued after a small group of ministers approves it, sources said.

An inter-ministerial group or IMG comprising representatives from the ministries of finance, petroleum, law, corporate affairs and department of disinvestment has approved expression of interest (EoI) and preliminary information memorandum (PIM) for the company.

This will now be put up for approval by 'Alternative Mechanism,' which is essentially a very small grouping of key cabinet ministers, sources privy to the development said.

Once the approval is granted, an EoI seeking interest from potential buyers will be floated, they said, adding the EoI along with PIM was likely to be out in the market within this month.

The Centre plans to sell its entire 53.29 per cent stake in BPCL that will give buyers ready access to 14 per cent of India's oil refining capacity and about a fifth of the fuel market share. —PTI

Turkish buyers return  
to India for jewellerySANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, FEB. 16

Owing to higher duties in Dubai and curbs on smuggling, Turkish buyers have started coming back to India to directly buy plain gold jewellery from the market. Exports to Turkey have witnessed significant growth in recent months and the industry believes this will continue to grow in the future.

Export of plain gold jewellery to Turkey zoomed multiple times to \$54.31 million in April-December 2019 against a meagre \$2.79 million during April-December 2018, as per the data of Directorate of General of Foreign Trade. Though in absolute terms, these direct exports are a small percentage of India's overall gold jewellery exports, an opportunity has been opened for the industry to tap.

"Turkey is a gold-loving nation and it loves India's hand-made plain gold jewellery. Till 2004-06 we used to directly export our jewellery to Turkey. But Turkey used to have and still has a high import duty of 17 per cent on gold jewellery. Hence later on,

Turkish agents started buying Indian gold jewellery from Dubai as it was available duty-free. They would smuggle this jewellery into Turkey," said



Pankaj Parekh, former vice-chairman of the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council.

However, after Dubai imposed 5 per cent duty and 5 per cent VAT on its imports in recent times, margins of these agents shrunk drastically. Further, of late, Turkish authorities also have become stricter with smuggling. This is bringing back the Turkish buyers to India.

As per industry estimates, Turkish agents would have been buying more than \$200 million worth Indian gold jewellery from Dubai. But April-December exports account for just 25 per cent of this.

"We expect the Turkish exports to keep growing in the coming months and Turkey becoming a significant buyer in the future," he said.

Deloitte stops  
non-audit  
services to  
public entities

New Delhi, Feb. 16: Auditing major Deloitte Haskins & Sells and its network firms in India will no longer offer non-audit services to public interest entities that they audit in the country, the company said on Sunday.

The announcement by Deloitte comes days after another audit firm Price Waterhouse Network of Firms in India said they will no longer provide non-audit services to their audit clients that are governed by the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).

In a statement, Deloitte said this voluntary action is in the spirit of self-regulation and extends beyond non-audit services permissible under prevailing rules and regulations in India.

"We believe this would increase the public's confidence in auditor independence and quality and will remove ambiguity in a public and business environment that demands greater clarity about our services," a spokesperson from Deloitte said.

The jurisdiction of the NFRA—an oversight body for auditors—extends to all listed firms and large unlisted public companies. —PTI

## Airtel, Voda Idea to pay dues today

New Delhi, Feb. 16: Telecom operators Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Tata Teleservices are likely to make payment for adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues on Monday to avoid stringent punitive action from the telecom department, according to official sources.

The three companies are jointly liable to pay dues of over Rs 1 lakh crore, but they have informed the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) of making only partial payment, as per their representatives.

"Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Tata Teleservices have said that they will

make payments on Monday. The DoT will take action after evaluating the amount paid by them," an official source said.

Earlier on Friday, Bharti Airtel offered the DoT to pay Rs 10,000 crore by February 20, but a DoT official said that the department can't grant any extension.

Vodafone Idea on Saturday said that it is assessing the amount that can be paid towards AGR dues, even as it flagged concerns over the continuation of its business.

Telecom operators are collectively liable to pay Rs 1.47 lakh crore in AGR dues as per the Supreme

## Oil India to move TDSAT

New Delhi, Feb. 16: Oil India is likely to move the TDSAT this week against the telecom department seeking about Rs 48,500 crore in past dues on the surplus bandwidth capacity it had leased to third parties, its CMD Sushil Chandra Mishra said. Other non-telecom firms,

which have also been slapped with similar demands, too are likely to move the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal. Those likely to go to the TDSAT include GAIL India, Power Grid Corp and Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers & Chemicals.

Court order dated October 24, 2019.

The deadline to pay the amount ended on January

23, but none of the telecom operators, except Reliance Jio, paid the amount.

As per the last available

estimates, Airtel owes nearly Rs 35,586 crore, including licence fee and spectrum usage charges, to the government.

Vodafone Idea is starting at dues worth Rs 53,000 crore, which includes up to Rs 24,729 crore of spectrum dues and another Rs 28,309 crore in licence fee. Tata Teleservices owes around Rs 13,800 crore, BSNL Rs 4,989 crore and MTNL Rs 3,122 crore.

Out of Rs 1.47 lakh crore, around Rs 1.13 lakh crore is likely to be recovered, as other companies, which are liable to pay AGR dues, have folded up their businesses. —PTI

Start-up to  
sell tender  
coconut drinkRAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, FEB. 16

Premji Invest and Hellion Venture Partners backed iD Fresh Food, which delivers ready-to-cook stuff in innovative packaging has forayed into tender coconut drink, estimating this to be a Rs 4,000-crore market.

The Bengaluru-based startup, which makes 55,000 kg of idly/dosa batter every day and delivers it to more than 30,000 retail outlets, also sells other traditional food items like Malabar parotta, South Indian filter coffee decoction and chapatis.

In coconuts, iD Fresh Food also plans to sell grated coconuts. Speaking to *Financial Chronicle* at the firm's Mumbai food factory in Bhiwandi, Musthafa PC, CEO and co-founder, iD Fresh Food, said: "The tender coconut market, a predominantly unorganised market in India, is valued at Rs 4,000 crore while graded coconut market is worth Rs 150 crore."

The firm's food products are now available in the USA, Dubai and across 44 cities in India.

The tender coconut that is offered in the Bengaluru market first. "The plan is to introduce the product in Bengaluru," he said.

Pepper: Vietnam looks to  
India as China market stallsRITWIK MUKHERJEE  
KOLKATA, FEB. 16

The Vietnam government has urged the Indian government to reduce trade barriers on its exports, of items such as black pepper and cashew nuts. This is clearly a bid to make up for any possible negative impact of the coronavirus on the Southeast Asian country's trade with China, its largest trading partner. Trade between Vietnam and China is expected to be hit severely by travel curbs and closure of borders over virus concerns.

The Vietnamese move coincided with the steps initiated by the Sri

Commodity  
Compass

Lankan government to prevent routing of third country origin pepper to India following a request of the Indian government. Sri Lanka has also temporarily suspended import of spices, including pepper and arecanut to Sri Lanka through the Entry Port Trade and Commercial Hub operations to prevent these spices being reshipped to India as Sri Lankan products.

The Indian Pepper and Spice Traders, Growers, Planters Consortium, Kerala chapter, had earlier requested the government not to allow pepper imports till the domestic price of pepper reached Rs 500 per kg.

Imports of black pepper into India have likely risen by over 17 per cent month-on-month to 1,640 tonne in December as domestic traders stepped up purchases due to lower prices in Vietnam. Pepper is now sold at Rs 150-250 per kg in Vietnam against Rs 320-325 per kg in India, depending on the quality. Vietnam is the cheapest and largest producer in the world. Pepper production in there was nearly 22 per cent up at 280,000 tonne in 2019.

Maruti to 'charge  
at competition'

New Delhi, Feb. 16: The country's largest car maker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) will not only defend its market share but also "charge" at and "chase" competitors in the wake of newcomers, such as Kia and Chinese players, intensifying competition, according to a top company official.

MSI, which had a share of 50.59 per cent in the passenger vehicles market in the April-January period, is not new to competition and will focus not only on new products but enhance its customer relationship in order to maintain its grip in the Indian car market.

"I am not defending, I am charging. We are charging anytime. If they are good products, we try to chase them," MSI managing director and CEO Kenichi Ayukawa told PTI in an interview.

Stressing that the company is used to competition, Ayukawa said, "Competition itself is there anytime. In the 1990s, new players came in and so the competition was there. Some new players are coming in. This time, players from Korea and China are coming." —PTI

## Ships are skipping China and causing turmoil for trade

ALEX LONGLEY  
FEB. 14

February 2020 will come to be remembered as a period of historic disruption to physical supply chains the world over, as the coronavirus wrecks trade.

Dozens of export sailings to ship China-made goods to consumers from the US to Europe—think handbags, flat-screen TVs, and plastic toys—have been cancelled since the coronavirus crisis escalated last month. Those non-shipments are part of a much bigger picture in which every aspect of global shipping—from oil and gas to dry-bulk commodities—has been upended.

The unprecedented gyrations caused by the virus matter because 90 per cent of all trade moves by sea

and China has grown into the maritime industry's main source of cargoes. The disruptions have left toy makers like Hasbro Inc and fashion houses like the owner of Michael Kors, Versace and Jimmy Choo struggling with their supply chains. Vessels are idling. And exporters to China face diversions as clients there use force majeure clauses in their contracts to walk away from commitments to buy cargoes.

"All the signs are that there has been a major disruption in global supply chains and commodity trade as well," said Caroline Bain, chief commodities economist at Capital Economics. For some products "it's only going to get worse in February data."

Toyota, Honda to restart  
China plants this week

Feb. 16: Toyota Motor Corp. will partly resume operations at three plants in China this week, bringing back some of the capacity that had been on an extended halt in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

The factories in Changchun and Guangzhou will restart on February 17, while operations in Tianjin resume the next day, Kensuke Ko, a spokesman for the

Japanese automaker, said in an email. The plant in Chengdu will restart after next week, he said.

The spread of the virus has weighed on the global economy, with some major carmakers extending plant shutdowns. An initial plan by Toyota to reopen factories on Feb. 9 was delayed. Honda Motor Co has said it plans to restart its China manufacturing operations this week. —Bloomberg

Even at a most-basic level, shippers are struggling to sort out the neces-

sary paperwork required for shipments involving China, snarling some

trades in an industry where many transactions need physical documentation to accompany consignments.

Container vessels that routinely move goods worth hundreds of millions of dollars in single shipments are at the sharp end of the turmoil. The number of blank sailings—where ships don't load at a planned location—has jumped since the outbreak began. AP Moller-Maersk, the world's largest shipper, has listed at least 27 blank sailings since January 31 on its website.

Almost 600,000 20-foot boxes are currently out of action as a result of the virus according to Alan Murphy, CEO of container shipping analysis company Sea Intelligence, up from about half that

amount just under a week earlier. Though rates can vary, using an estimate of \$1,000 per container, that means shippers had to stomach a hit of \$600 million this week. Ships may either be slowed down in the hope that demand improves in future weeks, or idled until things turn around, Murphy said.

Toy maker Hasbro said in earnings this week that the virus is disrupting its commercial operations in China—where it had already been seeking to diversify its supply chain as a result of the trade war. Capri Holdings Ltd., which owns Michael Kors, among other brands—said its outlook may be impacted by the outbreak as it wrestles with potential supply chain issues.

There's a knock-on effect

for exporters in other nations too. Containers are typically used in US and other regions to carry those countries' exports. The lack of liners hauling containers from Asia, may soon mean countries like the US face a shortage. It's already getting more difficult to get empty ones in Canada, said Greg Northey, a spokesman for industry group Pulse Canada.

The issues afflicting shippers of finished goods are also being felt in energy and commodity markets.

Traders of oil from West Africa, Latin America and the North Sea initially reported weaker demand from China, while some buyers of Saudi Arabia's barrels have asked to get less than they would normally take for March. —Bloomberg



**SHORT TAKES**

## Women's warm-up match washed out

**Brisbane:** India's first ICC Women's T20 World Cup warm-up match against arch-rivals Pakistan was washed out here on Sunday without a ball being bowled, denting the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side's last-minute preparations. Heavy downpour resulted in the match being called off without the toss being held at the Allan Border Field, days of the showpiece starting February 21. India will face West Indies in their second and final warm-up game here on February 18. The T20 World Cup will begin on February 21 with a mouth-watering contest between the Indian women and current champions and four-time winners Australia women in Sydney. Elsewhere, England defeated New Zealand by six wickets in Adelaide in their first official warm-up game. Australia's preparations were also hampered as they were unable to play their warm-up match against the West Indies due to a wet outfield. — PTI

## Col against Kapil made infructuous

**New Delhi:** BCCI ethics officer D. K. Jain on Sunday confirmed that he has rendered the conflict of interest complaint against Kapil Dev as "infructuous" after the former India captain stepped down from his multiple cricketing roles. Jain, who is into his last month of his one-year contract with the BCCI, had earlier rendered infructuous the complaint against Shantha Rangaswamy and Anshuman Gaekwad in December after they also stepped down from their multiple posts. "The complaint against Kapil has been rendered infructuous," Jain said. All three of them were part of the Cricket Advisory Committee but resigned in September after MPCA life member Sanjeev Gupta had levelled conflict of interest allegations against them. BCCI has now formed a new CAC. Jain had called Rangaswamy, Gaekwad and Kapil for a personal hearing on December 27 and 28 in Mumbai but the World Cup-winning captain did not appear due to personal reasons. — PTI

## Klaasen powers South Africa to 222

**Centurion:** Heinrich Klaasen hit 66 off 33 balls as South Africa posted an imposing 222 for six in the third and final Twenty20 international against England at SuperSport Park on Sunday. Klaasen, 28, took full advantage of his first appearance in a home international this season, hitting four sixes and four fours just as it had seemed South Africa were faltering after a blistering start between Temba Bavuma and Quinton de Kock. Bavuma (49) and De Kock (35) raced to 84 for the first wicket before both were out in quick succession. De Kock fell to Ben Stokes in the eighth over and Bavuma was bowled by leg-spinner Adil Rashid three balls later. Stokes and Rashid bowled well in tandem until Klaasen got into his stride with some powerful strokes. — AFP

## JAMES, STONIS UPSET MEGAN ON LGBT SLUR

**Sydney:** A fine swing bowler for Australia's women's cricket team and a champion of same-sex marriage, Megan Schutt is upset with her male counterparts James Pattinson and Marcus Stoinis' recent homophobic slurs. She wants men to be more receptive towards homosexuality as they are "attacked" more for being gay. Heading into the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup as the number one bowler in the format, Schutt faced a volley of vitriolic attacks after she came out as a lesbian a few years ago. Undeterred, the straight-talking cricketer went on to marry her girlfriend Jess Hollyoake, finding happiness after being called a paedophile and asked to go to hell. "It was a pretty horrible thing. I remember putting out a rainbow flag (it represents LGBT pride) on our balcony and Jess didn't want to have that up there at the time. She said, what if someone targets our house because of that?" Schutt was quoted as saying by *Sydney Morning Herald*. "And I said, 'We can't hide, this is a time to show support for everyone else around us'. No one who is trying to fight for same-sex marriage is having a good time right now so we need to stick together more than ever," she said. — PTI

# Mayank back in form

## Birthday boy Agarwal back among runs, Pant too finds touch

**Hamilton, Feb. 16:** Mayank Agarwal found form on his birthday and Rishabh Pant mixed caution with his customary aggression as India's warm-up fixture against New Zealand XI ended in a draw here on Sunday. The match was called off an hour after lunch with India reaching 252 for four just 48 overs into their second innings. Agarwal, who had gone through a wretched period since the second Test against Bangladesh, retired on 81 off 99 balls with 10 fours and three sixes to his name.

To the relief of the Indian team management, Pant played in his customary manner to reach 70 off 65 balls, but also showed discretion when the opposition bowlers were in the midst of a good spell. There were four sixes — two each off leg-spinner Ish Sodhi and off-spinner Henry Cooper.

While Sodhi was hit down the ground, Cooper was dispatched over extra cover on a couple of occasions.

He didn't curb his aggression though; there were times when he was ready defend against the spinners and also leave some of the deliveries that the Kiwi pacers bowled.

Even though Pant is easily the better batsman compared to his senior Wriddhiman Saha, the innings might have come too late in the day considering that the latter is a better keeper and possibly a more responsible batsman in pressure situations.

The biggest positive to have emerged from the New Zealand second innings is Agarwal's poor run coming to an end.

The Seddon Park track easing out was definitely a factor but Agarwal's footwork was more assured as he played some glorious on-drives and pull-shots off fast bowlers.

Before this game, Agarwal had played 10 competitive games including first-class, ODIs and List 'A' matches and couldn't cross the 40-run mark in 11 completed innings. He even bagged a pair against New Zealand 'A' in an unofficial Test match.



Mayank Agarwal (centre) is flanked by Cheteshwar Pujara (right) and Ajinkya Rahane (left) in Hamilton on Sunday.

Once he had got his form back, he didn't come out to bat after lunch giving Saha an opportunity to score an unbeaten 30, his runs coming mostly against non-regular bowlers.

The Agarwal-Pant pair added 100 runs in 14.3 overs and it also helped that part-timers like Cooper was introduced into the action. In the morning, Prithvi Shaw (39 off 31 balls) was bowled through the gate by Daryl Mitchell as the batsman left a gaping hole between his bat and pad.

Shaw, though, seemed to have done enough during his brisk 72-run stand with Agarwal, which could put an end to the debate around the opening slot even though the tracks in Wellington and Christchurch could be a test of technique for the flamboyant Mumbaier.

It was a match that Shubman Gill would perhaps like to forget in a hurry as he was dismissed cheaply for the second time in a row. He scored 8 before Daryl Mitchell trapped him leg before. — PTI

## No point pondering over poor run, says top-scorer

**Hamilton, Feb. 16:** India's Mayank Agarwal avoided fretting about what went wrong during his wretched run on the tour of New Zealand, which he finally ended through the gate by Daryl Mitchell as the batsman left a gaping hole between his bat and pad.

Prior to his latest knock, Agarwal's series of scores read 8, 32, 29, 37, 24, 0, 0, 32, 3, 1, 1, raising questions about his confidence during the two-Test series against the Black Caps.

"It's been a little different playing here but I want to leave all that behind. Whatever has happened has happened. Yes, I got an 81 in the second innings of this practice game and I want to take this confidence forward into the Test match," Agarwal told reporters.

While he wasn't keen on dissecting what went wrong, Agarwal did say

that he had sessions with batting coach Vikram Rathour to sort out the technical glitches that might have cropped into his batting.

"Vikram sir and me, we have sat down and spoken about the areas where we need to improve. Yes, we have worked on it. After I got out in the first innings, I went back behind to the nets, did a lot of drills. I am happy whatever I have worked on is coming good now."

When asked about the specifics, he said that one of the issues was his closed stance.

"Just being a little too closed. That's just one part of it. But it is what it is and I don't want to discuss too much about it. Yes, we worked on and we've moved forward and I would leave all that behind.

"It's just one of those

things that has happened while batting and I am glad that we are able to rectify it and move ahead."

Agarwal believed in letting bygones be bygones and wants to now cash in on the new-found form.

"There's no point thinking about what's happened. Obviously, I can't bring that back. The last thing I can tell myself is yes, I have got 81 not out here and I can carry that into the Test match," Mayank added.

So what exactly is his go to shot which tells him that he is in the groove?

"I got a couple of on-drives in this innings and as a batsman, you know that you have to be doing a lot of things correct to hit an on-drive. When I got a couple of those, it gave me the assurance that was required," he replied. — PTI

## JOHRI'S RESIGNATION YET TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE INDIAN BOARD

**New Delhi, Feb. 16:** BCCI's first chief executive officer Rahul Johri, who had tendered his resignation a while ago, might have to wait a little more before he is relieved of the plum job by the Board.

BCCI sources said on Sunday that Johri, appointed in 2016 to the then newly-formed position, had made up his mind to step down after the Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) exited the scene in October last year.



Rahul Johri

Board president Ganguly said they were yet to receive his resignation letter. "We will see after we receive it," he said. — PTI

## India to play day-night Test in Australia: Dada

**New Delhi, Feb. 16:** India will play a day-night Test during their much-anticipated tour of Australia later this year, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said on Sunday.

This comes a month after captain Virat Kohli asserted that his team was ready to play a day-night Test anywhere in Australia. "Yes, India will play a Day/Night Test in Australia. A formal announcement will be made soon," BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said.

**Yes, India will play a Day/Night Test in Australia. A formal announcement will be made soon.**

— **SOURAV GANGULY**, president, Board of Control for Cricket in India

dent Sourav Ganguly said. Ganguly, a former captain, also said that the second Test of the next home series against England

will be a day-night affair. He added that the Board will try to have at least one day-night Test in each series moving forward.

India played their maiden day-night Test against Bangladesh last November at the Eden Gardens, winning the match quite comfortably with plenty of time to spare. While the venue has not been finalised yet, the pink ball game is likely to be held in either Adelaide or Perth. — PTI

## Railway hoopsters walk away with Samuel title

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 16

South Central Railway (SCR) crushed host YMCA Secunderabad 83-57 in the final of the third Samuel Vasanth Kumar memorial floodlit prize money basketball tournament here.

The winners were in absolute control, leading 50-34 at half-time.

It was attack from the word go for the Railways squad that kept its opponent at bay in every quarter. Its triumvirate comprising forward A. Vijay Kumar, pivots Santosh Mani and Raju M. played such a fast game that they denied ball possession to their rivals in the first two quarters. SCR hustled the YMCA defence right through, rarely letting the latter settle down to guard their citadel effectively. Santosh was unstoppable sinking a trio of three-pointers en route to becoming top-scorer in



the title clash. YMCA's forwards Harish Varma, Allen Peter Cyrus (adjudged Most Promising Young Player) and Ashu Tyagi worked hard to

catch up with the Railway squad, the trio in particular trying to find the ring from outside. With SCR showing alacrity with defensive rebounds, the home side wasn't too successful with inside shooting either.

The six-day tournament, held in honour of the late Basketball Federation of India referee and sports journalist was jointly organised by the Hyderabad District Basketball Association and the Sports Writers Association of Telangana (SWAT).

**THE RESULTS**  
**Final:** South Central Railway 83 (Santosh Mani 29, Vijay 22, Kaushik Ram 19) bt YMCA, Secunderabad 57 (Harish Varma 20, Ashu Tyagi 12). Half-time: 50-34.  
**Most Promising Young Player:** Allen Peter Cyrus.  
**MVP:** Merugu Vijay Kumar (Customs & GST).  
**Best coach:** Banna Ravinder.

## ATHARVA, KALE PUT PRESSURE ON HYDERABAD

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 16

Overnight centurions Atharva Taide and M. R. Kale made the most of the batting conditions as they piled on more runs against Hyderabad in their Col. C. K. Nayudu match at the Gymkhana Ground in Hyderabad on Sunday.

Atharva slammed 163 from 290 balls and Kale got out on 194, six short of a well-deserving double hundred as Vidarbha managed to put on a mammoth 521 from 131 overs.

For the hosts, Ajay Dev Goud was the lone bright star as he claimed 5/113 from the 30 overs that he bowled. **Brief scores:** Hyderabad 311 & 92/3 in 38 overs (Tilak Varma 41 batting, Pragyan Reddy 4 batting) Vidarbha 521 in 131 overs (Atharva Taide 163 — 290b, M. R. Kale 194 — 268b, M. R. Raut 32, Bhute 30, Ajay Dev Goud 5/113 — 30-4-113-5, Abhirath Reddy 3/91.

## New Club, Jubilee Hills get off to winning starts

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 16

Secunderabad Club, New Club, Jubilee Hills International Club and Nizam Club registered wins in their respective Inter-Club T20 Cricket Tournament matches organised and hosted by the Secunderabad Club over the weekend.

Mickil Jaiswal (67) and Sanjeev Reddy (54) helped Secunderabad Club (133/1 in 12.3 overs) thump Fateh Maidan Club (127/8 in 20 overs) by nine wickets and with 6.3 overs left.

In another match, Sai Charan's 65 helped New Club (168/2 in 20 overs) edge past Press Club (165/4 in 20 overs) by four runs. Ratna Kumar top-scored for Press Club with 57.

**● Aadyanth Reddy of Jubilee Hills Club was the top-scorer with 87 while Mickil Jaiswal scored 57 for hosts Secunderabad Club in their nine-wicket win over Fateh Maidan Club.**

eight wickets. Man of the Match, Aadyanth Reddy impressed with a fluid 87 for the winning side. Chasing 117 for a win, Deccan Club (118/4) got the better of Nizam Club (116/8 in 20 overs) by six wickets. Karan shone with the bat for Deccan with a brilliant 51.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**Fateh Maidan Club 127/8 in 20 overs (Arvind Shetty 25, Abhinash 23, Mayak Gupta 22, Tanay Tyagarajan 2/15, Akshay Badruka 1/19, C. V. Anand 1/16) lost to Secunderabad Club 133/1 in**

12.3 overs (Mickil Jaiswal 67, Sanjeev Reddy 54). **Man of the Match:** Mickil Jaiswal (Secunderabad Club).

**● New Club 168/2 in 20 overs (Sai Charan 65, Nitesh 33, Sai Venkatesh 23, Nitesh 1/32, Ratna Kumar 1/30) bt Press Club 165/4 in 20 overs (Ratna Kumar 57, Nitesh 45, Shanmuk 25). **MoM:** Sai Charan (New Club).**

**● Zoroastrian Club 132/5 in 20 overs (Khushal 46, Jamsheed 35, Anirudh Gupta 3/18, S. Yudish 1/14 Aadyanth Reddy 1/10) lost to Jubilee Hills International Club 134/2 in 8.3 overs (Aadyanth Reddy 87, S. Yadish 41). **MoM:** Aadyanth Reddy (JHIC).**

**● Nizam Club 116/8 in 20 overs (Yash Satwalekar 33, K. Prithvi Reddy 32, Rahul Tapadia 3/12, Praneeth Raj 2/15 Ashwin 2/30) lost to Deccan Club 118/4 (Karan 51, Seshagiri 29, Tej Haridas 2/31, Parth Satwalekar 1/10). **MoM:** Karan (Deccan Club).**



SHORT TAKES

Vidit top show in Prague chess

Prague: Indian Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi continued to lead the standings in the Masters Category of the Prague Chess Festival here after sharing a point with Swedish GM Nils Grandelius in the fourth round. P. Harikrishna, the other Indian in the 10-player field, held Sam Shankland of the USA to a draw after suffering a defeat in round three at the hands of the world's top junior Alireza Firouzja. Gujrathi (Elo 2721), the second-ranked Indian chess player behind Viswanathan Anand, could not force the issue against Grandelius, the lowest rated player (at 2659) in the field, in a 35-move game. Harikrishna, on the other hand, opted for a Sozine attack against Shankland, but had to sign peace after 48 moves. Top-seed Jan-Krzysztof Duda of Poland played out a quiet draw against Spanish GM David Anton Guijjarro in 30 moves. Gujrathi will take on Firouzja in the fifth round. — PTI

₹3L fine on Bagan for salary dues

Kolkata: The All India Football Federation's disciplinary committee on Sunday fined I-League heavyweights Mohun Bagan ₹3 lakh for non-payment of salary to four of its former players. The Mariners, who are front runners to clinch this season's I-League title, have been directed to clear the dues and pay the fine within a fortnight. "The disciplinary committee under the chairmanship of Ushanath Banerjee directed Mohun Bagan to pay dues of four players within 30 days and pay fine of ₹3,00,000 within 15 days, failing which they will face 'Transfer Ban' for forthcoming successive two windows in whatever name or under banner it plays in any AIFF tournament," the order stated. — PTI

Daman and Amit walk to glory

Ranchi: Sanabam Daman Singh of Manipur won the men's 50km race walk event on the second and final day of the National Championships here on Sunday. The 30-year-old Singh won the event in 4 hours, 8 minutes and 10 seconds, well outside the Olympic qualification standard of three hours and 50 minutes. Gurpreet Singh of Punjab, 35, was second with a timing of 4:09:44s while Anjani Singh (Uttar Pradesh) finished third clocking 4:22:37s. In the men's Under-20 10km race walk event, Haryana's Amit won the gold with a national record time of 40 minutes 28 seconds. — PTI

BACH THANKS BINDRA FOR SPL PROJECT

New Delhi: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach has thanked champion shooters Abhinav Bindra and Niccolò Campriani for their project 'Taking Refugee', under which they are helping refugee athletes to qualify for the Tokyo Games. Bindra had hosted two refugee shooters — Khaoula and Mahdi — at his foundation in Bengaluru in December last year. "Thank you for your letter which I read with great interest informing me of the progress of the project 'Taking Refugee'. Rest assured I am extremely pleased with the impressively rapid progress of the athletes and also by the measures taken at the governance level for an increased accountability and transparency of the initiative," Bach wrote. "Not only this project is commendable, it is also entirely aligned with the objectives of the IOC which supports youth refugee athletes," he said in the letter addressed to Bindra and Campriani. Through the initiative, the duo aims to train the refugee shooters in air rifle and help them participate with the Refugee Olympic team. — PTI

Mane rescues Reds

Sadio strikes as Liverpool beat Norwich

London, Feb. 16: Sadio Mane struck as Liverpool overcame Storm Dennis and feisty basement club Norwich 1-0 to extend their lead at the top of the Premier League table to 25 points. Jurgen Klopp's champions-elect were short of their fluent best in windy conditions at Carrow Road on Saturday but returned immediately to winning ways after their winter break. Liverpool have gone 43 top-flight matches unbeaten, just six matches behind Arsenal's record of 49 games in 2003-04 and are sprinting towards their first league title for 30 years. They have earned 103 points from the past 105 available to them in the Premier League, winning 34 of their past 35 matches.



Liverpool's Sadio Mane in action during his side's English Premier League match against Norwich City at the Carrow Road Stadium in Norwich, England, on Saturday. Liverpool won 1-0. — LIVERPOOL

The result leaves Daniel Farke's Norwich rooted to the bottom of the table, six points behind 19th-placed Watford. They look set for an immediate return to the Championship despite their battling performance. Klopp brought back midfielder Naby Keita for his first start in a Premier League match since December and Mane was on the bench as Liverpool started with confidence. The champions-elect controlled possession in the early stages without creating many clear-cut openings but Norwich managed some brief spells of attractive passing football themselves. Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino was particularly impressive, producing an exquisite piece of skill to control a long Jordan Henderson pass before the ball was stolen off his toes as he shaped to shoot. Liverpool were quickly on top again in the second half but struggled to create clear chances until Keita tested Tim Krul from distance in the 58th minute. The Anfield giants laid siege to the Norwich goal but frustration mounted as the home side somehow kept the score at 0-0. Just when it seemed Norwich could become only the second team this season, after Manchester United, to deny Liverpool all three points, Mane broke the deadlock. The second-half substitute controlled a long ball from Henderson with his right foot in the 78th minute before lashing the ball past Norwich's goalkeeper for the lone goal of the match. — AFP

Barcelona, Feb. 16: A slick Antoine Griezmann strike set Barcelona on their way against Getafe in La Liga on Saturday before they survived a late onslaught from the gritty visitors to win 2-1. The result leaves Barcelona trailing on goal-difference atop La Liga before leaders Real Madrid's Sunday home game with Celta Vigo. In a physically engaging game, Barca star Jordi Alba limped off in the first half. Alba, the club tweeted after the game, "is suffering from a right adductor muscle injury and will be undergoing further tests." The Catalan giants have a Champions League last-16 game away to Napoli on Tuesday. Barcelona forwards Luis Suarez and Ousmane Dembele are both out with long-term injuries. Fed by a masterful through ball from Lionel Messi, Griezmann's finish was perfect as he clipped the ball over onrushing goalkeeper David Soria on 33 minutes. Sergi Roberto doubled the scores six minutes after the opener, firing into the bottom corner from a cross by Alba's replacement Junior Firpo. But a late rally from Getafe, third in La Liga after four straight wins without conceding a goal, gave Barca a scare. Getafe, playing in their dayglo yellow away strip,

Griezmann seals it for Barca

Barcelona's Antoine Griezmann (left) vies for the ball during their Spanish league match against Getafe CF at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Saturday. Barcelona won 2-1. — AFP



Barcelona's Antoine Griezmann (left) vies for the ball during their Spanish league match against Getafe CF at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Saturday. Barcelona won 2-1. — AFP

often silenced the 80,409 fans at the Camp Nou. Their direct approach yielded a goal when Angel Rodriguez scored with a powerful volley on 66 minutes. Rodriguez came within an inch of pulling Getafe level on 73 minutes sparking a goalmouth scramble. Goalkeeper Marc-Andre Stegen scooped the ball off the line. Barcelona clung on before Griezmann and Messi both went close with late efforts. Allan Nyom thought he had put Getafe ahead on 25 minutes when he banged home a rebound. A VAR review, however, judged he had fouled Samuel Umtiti. Mallorca climbed out of the relegations places as Cucho Hernandez scored the goal in a 1-0 home victory over Alaves. Real Sociedad's visit to Eibar on Sunday has been called off because of poor air quality following a landslide into a nearby rubbish dump, the clubs announced on Saturday. The Basque regional health department had recommended that sports be avoided in the area after the rocks slide on February 6 into the Zaldibar rubbish dump, about eight kilometres from Eibar's Ipurua stadium. — AFP

Humpy in lead at Cairns Cup

St Louis (USA), Feb. 16: Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy inflicted a defeat on Valentina Gunina of Russia in the eighth round of the second Cairns Cup here, jumping into sole lead with 5.5 points and a round to play. In a huge upset, 16-year old America Carissa Yip stunned world champion Wenjun Ju in a 61-move game late on Saturday, taking her tally to 3.5 points. Dronavalli Harika, the other Indian in the field, was held to a third consecutive draw, by former world champion Mariya Muzychuk. She now has four points and is joint fifth with Kateryna Lagno. Interestingly, Humpy will meet Harika in the final round with the former in with a chance to claim the top prize. In the Humpy-Gunina game, the Indian opted for Semi-Slav and outplayed her rival in 35 moves to record her fourth win of the tournament. In the Yip-Ju encounter, the young American attacked on both flanks to surprise the Chinese star. Yip had started with four straight defeats and has now bounced back in style with three wins. Russia's Alexandra Kosteniuk, a former world champion, is hot on the heels of Humpy, with five points, after posting a win over Nana Dzagnidze earlier. — PTI



Koneru Humpy makes notes during a match at the Cairns Cup.

THE RESULTS Eighth round: Carissa Yip (USA) 3.5 bt Wenjun Ju (China) 4.5; Koneru Humpy (India) 5.5 bt Valentina Gunina (Russia) 2; Mariya Muzychuk (Ukraine) 4.5 drew with Dronavalli Harika (India) 4; Nana Dzagnidze (Georgia) 4 lost to Alexandra Kosteniuk (Russia) 5; Kateryna Lagno (Russia) 4 drew with Irina Krush (USA) 3. — PTI

Duplantis breaks one more record

Glasgow, Feb. 16: Sweden's Armand Duplantis set a world pole vault record of 6.18 metres at an indoor meeting in Glasgow on Saturday, adding one centimetre to the record he set in Poland last week. Duplantis, who won silver at last year's world championships in Doha, cleared the bar with something to spare and won a world record bonus cheque for \$30,000. The old record of 6.16m set by French vaulter Renaud Lavillenie had stood since 2014 until Duplantis broke it last Saturday in Torun, Poland. Duplantis, known by his nickname "Mondo", did a lap of the track signing autographs in Glasgow. "There are so many things that go into this, so many years of hard work," he said. "It's really complicated but I guess when you're doing it right it seems simple. I feel good on the runway, I feel fast, I feel strong and I feel I am working the poles I have really well. I'm excited for the outdoor season." He added. "The Olympics is the biggest thing that a track and field athlete can compete in and that is when I want to have my best competition this season. It is a good start but that's where I want to be the best," Duplantis said. Duplantis opened on Saturday at 5.50m and got over 5.75m on his second try. Two-time world champion Sam Kendricks led at that point, but the US athlete exited the competition at the next height, 5.84 metres. The 20-year-old sailed over on his first attempt. With no one else left in the competition, he then flew over 6 metres. Duplantis had the bar moved up to 6.18m and one attempt was all he needed. The pole vaulter was born in the United States to American father and coach Greg — himself a former pole vaulter — and Swedish heptathlete mother Helena. — AFP



Armand Duplantis of Sweden competes in the men's pole vault final at the Müller Indoor Grand Prix Glasgow athletics on Saturday. — AFP

Gusti, Shriya do Telangana proud

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 16



Winners of the South Zone Shooting in Big Bore events pose with their medals along with National Rifle Association of India secretary general D. V. Seetharama Rao (front row, left) and Telangana Rifle Association president Amit Sanghi (front, right).

Gusti Noria and Kondapally Shriya Reddy kept the Telangana flag flying at the 1st South Zone Shooting Competitions in Big Bore Events at the Certified Aman Sanghi 300m Big Bore Shooting Range in Sanghi Nagar, Ranga Reddy district. Gusti won the 300 metre Rifle Prone (NR) veteran men's individual gold with a score of 264/300, ahead of State mates P. Rajgopal Reddy (261/300) and Shafath Ali Khan (257/300). Shriya shot 279/300 to take the top honour in the 300 metre Rifle Prone (NR) gold in the junior women's individual category. Andhra shooters also did well at the event conducted by Telangana Rifle Association under the aegis of The National Rifle Association of India. Gnaana Saideep Ronanki

was the other Andhra shooter on top. She shot 280/300 to win the 300 metre Rifle Prone (NR) women's individual title. As many as 150 shooters participated in 34 disciplines in junior, senior and veteran both in men and women categories from across the southern states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Chief Guest D. V. Seetharama Rao, joint secretary of the Indian Olympic Association and secretary general of the National Rifle Association of India, distributed medals to the winners. Speaking on the occasion, TFA president Amit Sanghi said the new 300m big bore range provides the platform for Telangana shooters who would previously have no opportunity to practice before the pre-National and National competitions. Mr Sanghi also invited shooters from other states to come and make use of the facilities at the range. THE RESULTS 300m Rifle Prone (NR) men's individual: 1. Gnaana Saideep Ronanki (Andhra Pradesh) 283/300, 2. J. S. Venkatachalapathy (Tamil Nadu) 276/300, 3. Waheed Mosood Syed (Telangana) 276/300. 300m Rifle Prone (NR) junior men's individual: 1. Gnaana Saideep Ronanki (Andhra Pradesh) 283/300, 2. Kayomarz Ichhaporia (Telangana) 263/300, 3. Aslan Mohammed Ibrahim (Karnataka) 262/300. 300m Rifle Prone (NR) veteran men's individual: 1. Gusti Noria (Telangana) 264/300, 2. P. Rajgopal Reddy (Telangana) 261/300, 3. Shafath Ali Khan (Telangana) 257/300. 300m Rifle Prone (NR) women's individual: 1. Vara Nounisree Botcha (Andhra Pradesh) 280/300. 300m Rifle Prone (NR) junior women's individual: 1. Kondapally Shriya Reddy (Telangana) 279/300.

Benjamin is on top in Australia league

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 16

Hyderabad batsman Benjamin Thomas has been on a song in Australia where he is playing for the Mooroolbark Cricket Club in the Lindsay Trollope Shield Division One conducted by Cricket Victoria. In the latest match, the opening batsman cracked an unbeaten 120 which included 18 boundaries to help his side beat Ainslie Park Cricket Club by seven wickets. Mooroolbark replied to Ainslie's 196 with 199 for 3 in 59.2 overs. Benjamin has so far aggregated 513 runs in nine games at a whopping average of 128.25 and leads the batting charts of the league. He is way ahead at the top, with the next best average being 49.00 by Ayden Sier of the Ainslie Park Cricket Club. He is the only overseas player in the side, contracted to play in the season that began in November and runs till March. Brief scores: Ainslie Park Cricket Club 196 in 80 overs (Ayden Sier 60, Rowan Peters 32, Simon Young 4/76, Benjamin 3/41) lost to Mooroolbark Cricket Club 199/3 in 59.2 overs (Benjamin Thomas 120 n.o — 4x18, Troy Murphy 56).



Benjamin Thomas poses in front of the Mooroolbark Cricket Club honours board. Brief scores: Ainslie Park Cricket Club 196 in 80 overs (Ayden Sier 60, Rowan Peters 32, Simon Young 4/76, Benjamin 3/41) lost to Mooroolbark Cricket Club 199/3 in 59.2 overs (Benjamin Thomas 120 n.o — 4x18, Troy Murphy 56).

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