THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2020



NATION 3

Bhagwat first RSS chief to visit Gandhi Smriti, where Godse killed Bapu



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6 killed after van rams into truck

Hisar: Six people were killed and as many were injured when their van rammed into a stationary truck in Haryana's Hisar district on Monday, police said. The victims were returning after attending a marriage function, they said. Among those killed included the driver of the van, which hit a truck parked on a roadside between village Rakhi Garhi and Kheri Chaupta, on the Narnaund-Uchana road, about 30 km from here. The victims were identified as van driver Dinesh (34) of village Milkpur (Hisar), Sachin (19), Kuldeep (28), Om Prakash (49), Sohan Lal (65), all residents of Silewala village in Hanumangarh (Rajasthan) and Bhupender Singh (30), resident of Talwara village in Hanumangarh (Rajasthan). According to the police, a marriage party had come from Chooli Khurd village in Hisar to Milkpur. Most of the members of the marriage party had returned in the night but around 12 people were left. - PTI

Four of MP family killed in house fire

Rewa: A couple and their two minor children were killed in a fire that broke out at their house in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa city in the wee hours of Monday, police said. The mishap took place around 2.30 am when the family members were sleeping in their house located in Tarhati area, City Kotwali's sub-inspector Neeraj Trivedi said. Some neighbours came out of their residences after hearing a blast and saw the victims' house engulfed in flames. The neighbours then alerted the police who rushed to the spot. Fire brigade also arrived at the spot and later managed to douse the flames. When the police entered the house, all the four family members, identified as Raheesh Khatik (45), his wife Gudiya (40), their daughter Sejal (13) and son Sahil (11), were found dead, the official said. — *PTI*

2 students held

with brown sugar

Malda (WB): Two college students have been arrested after drug worth ₹12 lakh were seized from them in West Bengal's Malda district, police said on Monday. They were arrested from Kani More area in Malda town on Sunday night. a police officer said. One of the arrested persons is a 500 gm of brown sugar two mobile phones and ₹2.000 in cash were seized from their possession, the Inspector in-charge of **English Bazar** police station, Amalendu Biswas, said. They were produced before a court on Monday and remanded to police custody for 11 days, he added. -PTI

BIRD RINGING STATION ON CARDS IN BIHAR

Patna: Bihar is set to have a bird ringing station, devoted to observation, monitoring and research on migratory birds — the fourth such facility in the country and the first to be set up with the support of a state government — a top official said on Monday. Principal secretary, environment and forests, Dipak Kumar Singh, said a Memorandum of Understanding was exchanged by representatives of the Bihar government and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) at Gandhinagar in the presence of C.K. Mishra, secretary to the Union ministry for environment, forests and climate change. "The MoU was exchanged on the sidelines of CMS-COP 13, or the 13th **Conservation of Migratory** Species-Conference of Parties, held at the Gujarat capital where delegates from 130 countries are participating in discussions on preservation of migratory species," Mr Singh said. "So far, there were three bird ringing stations - at Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Orissa.

The Bihar government will spend ₹5 crore for the new

project. As per the MoU, the

new bird ringing station will

be manned by trained scientists and other skilled man-

power from BNHS," the prin-

cipal secretary stated.

SMOKE ON THE WATER



Fire-fighting personnel and locals attempt to douse a fire in houseboats at KoniKhan, Dal Lake, in Srinagar on

Panel to meet to pick CVC, CIC today

Modi will chair meet to initiate process to select candidates

ANIMESH SINGH NEW DEI HI, FEB. 17

With the key government anti-graft agency Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) functioning without a proper head since the past eight months, and the post of chief information commissioner (CIC) who heads the Central Information Commission, also lying vacant since more than a month now, the Prime Minister on February 18 will hold a meeting to initiate the process of finalising the candidates for the top two

Modi will chair the meeting of the selection panel for picking the candidates for the posts of chief vigilance and chief informacommissioners, Tuesday.

The shortlisted candidates, whose list is likely to be pruned further Tuesday (February 18), were around 100-odd in humber from being with the number after being whetted by the search commit-

Prime Minister heads the selection committee for choosing the chiefs of both the CVC and CIC. The selection panel also comprises the Union According to highly-home minister and the placed sources, Narendra Leader of Opposition in

THE POST OF CHIEF vigilance commissioner has been lying vacant since June 9, 2019, after K.V. Chowdary left on the completion

of his tenure.

Lok Sabha. The key meeting comes at a time when the post of CIC has been lying vacant for more than a month now, after Sudhir Bhargava had superannuated on January 11, 2020, from the post of chief information commissioner. Significantly however, the post of chief vigilance commissioner has been

lying vacant since June 9,

2019, after K.V. Chowdary left on completion of his tenure.

then, vigilance Since commissioner Kumar has been functioning as interim CVC. The deadlines for send-

ing applications for the post of CVC had been extended thrice between May and June 2019. Meanwhile in the CIC

apart from the post of chief information commissioner, four other posts of information commissioners too are currently vacant. Out of the sanctioned strength of 11, the CIC is functioning only with six information com-

Strengthening Stree Shakti, says Rajnath

Welcomes SC's permanent commission order Rahul accuses BJP

NEW DELHI, FEB. 17

inferior to men.

inferior to men.

the Army.

SC that women Army offi-

cers didn't deserve com-

mand posts or permanent service because they were

He also attached a news

report that said the apex

court asked the govern-

ment to grant permanent

commission to women in

The Centre had made

the submissions in a plea

by the defence ministry,

challenging a 2010 judgment of the Delhi high court, which had ruled

that short service com-

missioned women officers

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Defence minister Raj-nath Singh Monday said that the government is working to strengthen the "Stree Shakti" in the Armed

Rajnath

Forces and is committed

to moving forward in this "I wholeheartedly welcome the Supreme Court's judgment on giving wo-

men officers permanent commission in the Armed Forces. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sup-ported the idea of perma-nent commission for women and annou-nced the change in policy in his Independence Day speech in 2018," said the defence

minister. In 2019, the ministry granted permanent commission to women in all 10 branches of the Indian Army, including Signal Corps, intelligence, aviation, engineering, service and ordinance corps, said the defence

It said the historic decision to allow women in field operations came earlier when the then defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that women will be inducted in the military police.

The defence ministry said that the recruitment process for women in the military police has started in 2019. The plan is to recruit women in roles ranging from probing



ernment disrespected Indian women by arguing in Supreme Court that Rahul Gandhi women Army officers did not deserve command in the Army and Air posts or permanent serv-Force should be granted ice because they were permanent commission. The Centre had proposed Mr Gandhi tweeted, that short-service com-missioned women officers "The government disrespected every Indian woman, by arguing in the with up to 14 years of service would be consid-

> mission. Welcoming the historic judgment by the Supreme Court, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said that the order is a befitting reply to the prejudice of BJP government towards women's power. "Women are capable — in the army, in valor and in water, land, sky, this is a befitting reply to the prej-udiced Modi government, which is opposed to women's power." Ms Vadra said.

ered for permanent com-

the Army in field operations wherever required, it said.

instances where certain women officers have been in the job for nearly twenty years, while SSC term terminates in fourteen The defence ministry said that before 2016, women constituted just 2.5 per cent of India's Armed Forces, working mainly in non-combat As of January 2019, 3.89

per cent of the Army per-

Irate mob tries to attack J&K youth at K'taka court

3 students in custody till Mar. 2 VITTAL SHASTRI & M.K.

HUBBALLI/BENGALURU,

In a day of dramatic developments, the Gokul Road police in Hubballi arrested three Kashmiri students of KLE Institute of Technology, Hubballi, who are facing sedition charges and produced them before the 3rd JMFC court on Monday. The court has remanded them in judicial custody till

Earlier on Sunday, the three engineering college students who had shouted pro-Pakistan slogans on the anniversary of the Pulwama massacre on February 14, were initially released under section 169 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). But the police detained them again following protests from activists of

March 2.

Hindu organisations. On Monday, a tense situation prevailed on the court premises as a mob tried to attack the three students, identified as Ameer, Basit and Talib from Shopian district of

They threw slippers at the police van which was carrying the youths demanding stern action

■ THE 3RD JMFC COURT has remanded the three Kashmiri college students, who allegedly shouted pro-Pakistan statements, in judicial custody till March 2.

Lawyers present at the Hubballi court also shouted slogans such as 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' when the police produced the youth before the court. Activists of Bajrang Dal and other Hindu organizations surrounded Hubballi-Dharwad police commissioner R. Dilip demanding the immediate arrest of the trio.

Right-wing activists accused the police of trying to protect the youth despite the fact that a non-bailable case was lodged against them. Meanwhile, Union min

and Hubballiister Dharwad Lok Sabha MP Pralhad Joshi said in a press release that the police had caused a lot of confusion in the sedition case without clarifying their action on the arrest of the youth. He demanded that the youth should not be spared for raising slogans in favour of Pakistan.

The sedition case lodged against the youth is a

■ Issues 'strong demarch' condemning Erodogan's pro-Pak remarks New Delhi slams Turkey's 'interference'

KUMARASWAMI

Lashing out for the second time in three days at Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's extre-mely controversial remarks supporting Islamabad on the Kashmir issue while on a visit to Pakistan recently, India summoned the Turkish envoy in New Delni on Monday and issued a "strong demarche", saying the remarks are "one more example of a pattern of Turkey interfering in the internal affairs of other countries"which "India finds

completely unacceptable". New Delhi also said the Turkish President's "remarks reflect neither an understanding of history nor of the conduct of diplomacy" and that these "distort events of the past to advance a narrow minded view of the present" New Delhi also "rejected the repeated attempts by Turkey to justify the cross border terrorism pracso biatantiy Pakistan", adding that "these developments have strong implications for bilateral relationship"

President Erdogan along with Malaysian Prime

■ NEW DELHI SAID THAT Mr Erdogan's "remarks reflect neither an understanding of history nor of the conduct of diplomacy and that these "distort events of the past to advance a narrow minded

view of the present".

Minister Mahathir Mohamad have been extremely critical of India in the past iew months while support ing Pakistan, after India revoked Article 370 and divided the erstwhile Jammu & Kashmir state into two Union Territories

in August last year.

India had also last year said it was "deeply concerned at the unilateral offensive by Turkey in north-east Syria", asking "Turkey to exercise restraint and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria", and adding that "Turkey's actions can undermine stability in the region and the fight against terrorism" which

'nas tne potential for causing humanitarian and civilian distress' In his extremely controversial recent remarks supporting the Pakistani position on Kashmir, President Erdogan had

battle of Gallipoli during World War I that the Turks had fought back then.

compared Kashmir to the

"We have never forgotten and will never forget the help, which the Pakistani people extended, by sharing their own bread during our War of Independence. And now, Kashmir is and will be the same for us. It was Canakkale (Gallipoli) yesterday and it is Kashmir today. Ithere is no difference," President Erdogan was quoted by the Turkish media as having told a joint session of Pakistan's parliament during his official visit to the

W. Bengal: Internet services to be suspended for exams

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, FEB. 17

In a rare but bold step to prevent question paper leak and cheating by students during the Madhyamik (secondary) examination in West Bengal, the state panel of secondary education Monday announced that internet services would remain suspended for two hours in 42 blocks of the state examination

Secondary Education president Prof Kalyan-

The exam will get underway from Tuesday at 2,839 centres. The total number of candidates this year is 1.015,888, which is, however, short of 33,-000 from the last year's figure. It also includes 576,009 female candidates which account for 56.70 per cent.

The state government had ordered the administration to suspend Internet services in Malda, Nadia, East Burdwan Murshidabad, North Dimapur and North 24 Parganas during the Higher Secondary Exam-

Train No. & Train Name

CAN FIN HOMES LTD. S L TOWER, SHOP NO - 4, 4TH FLOOR, ALPHA-1, GREATER NOIDA (UP) Ph.: 0120-4569974 / 7625079164,

within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

Internet services will

stand suspended between 12 pm and 2 pm, said West Bengal Board of

moy Ganguli in the city. He added that the step would be in force in those areas where question papers got leaked through WhatsApp last year barely minutes before the Madhyamik exam started.

The possibility of cheating by students using hidden devices has also been taken into account while identifying the 42 blocks across the state, said sources. This is the first time such a decision has been taken by the

POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule 8(1)] The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd. under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security

Interest Act 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of the powers under section 13 (2) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 02.12.2019 calling upon the borrower Mr. Pavan Kumar to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 8,93,970/- and interest from 02.12.2019 to till date of final paymer

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrow and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers, conferred under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on this 14th Day of

February, 2020 of the year. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of CFHL for ar amount of Rs. 8,93,970/- and interest thereon

DESCRIPTION OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY Flat No - D 375, Ground Floor, Block-D, Sector-Omicron-1, Greater Noida-201308 North East : Flat No-376, South East : Flat No-374, North West: Open, South West: Open

Date: 17.02.2020 Place: Greater Noida

S/d-Authorised Officer, Can Fin Homes Ltd.

Date of Restoration

(from originating station)

■ Ventures where no Sarsanghchalak tread before Bhagwat pays visit to Gandhi Smriti

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 17

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) supremo Mohan Bhagwat became the first "Sarsanghchalak (head of the Sangh parivar)" to visit the Gandhi Smriti, the place where Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, regarding whom there are claims and counterclaims that he had left the RSS before he committed the act.

The Gandhi Smriti was the venue for the book release function of 'Gandhi ko Samajhnae ka Yahi Samay (This is the time to understand Gand-



Mohan Bhagwat hi),' authored by the for-

mer NCERT director, J.S. Rajput, which released by Mr Bhagwat who hoped that in 20 years time India will be able to proudly tell the Mahatma on October 2 (his birth anniversary) that it was functioning on the path laid by him. In a speech that lasted

for more than half an hour, Mr Bhagwat also mentioned how Mahatma led many movements and also atoned for "agitation gone wrong", which were perceived by many as reference to some of the violent protests against the Modi government's Citizenship Amendment Act.

"He atoned for agitation gone wrong... if something went wrong in an agitation... Is there anyone these days to atone for law and order situation getting hit... it seems only those who die or who are caught and have to appear in a court have to atone," said the RSS

and former secretary-general, Lok Sabha, Subhash Kashyap, who was also present on the dais, said Gandhi's life was not about the successes that he achieved but the values he believed in.

He, however, lamented the political class for wanting power, success and prosperity at any

Mr Kashyap also questioned the proposed redevelopment of the central vista, saying for the "new New Delhi, poor man's money will be used to widen the already widened rift between a jhuggi and Parliament.'

CANCELLED TRAINS RESTORED

In partial modification to the Notice published on 16.02.2020 regarding construction of 4th Line on H.Nizamuddin-Palwal section and Non-Interlocking work at Faridabad station, following trains earlier announced to remain cancelled will be restored from the dates shown against each :-

LIST OF TRAINS RESTORED

24.02.2020 12171 Lokmanya Tilak Terminal - Haridwar Superfast Express 25.02.2020 12172 Haridwar - Lokmanya Tilak Terminal Superfast Express Note:-For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry

No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in.





Security Helpline No. 182

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Pak issues visas to Hindu pilgrims

New Delhi: Pointing out that it had issued nearly 10,000 pilgrimage visas to Indian Hindu and Sikh pilgrims last year, the Pakistan High Commission on Monday announced grant of visas to a fresh group of Indian Hindu pilgrims to visit the famous Katas Raj Temples in Pakistani Punjab. In a statement, the PHC said. "The group is planning to visit Shree Katas Raj Temples, also known as Qila Katas or complex of Katas Temples in Chakwal district of Punjab from 19-25 February 2020. Katas Raj temples surround a pond which is considered highly sacred by Hindus.' "A large number of Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from India visit Pakistan to observe various religious festivals/occasions every year. Only last year, Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi issued close to 10,000 pilgrimage visas," it added.

Girl kills self after

playing 'death game'

Bhubaneswar: The death of 14-year-old minor girl who reportedly fell off the terrace of her apartment in BJB Nagar area on Sunday evening remains shrouded in mystery. Initial reports claimed the girl identified as a Class VIII student of a private school in Bhubaneswar fell off the terrace of her building after losing balance which led to her death on the spot. However, a message that she posted on her Instagram handle few hours before her death indicates that she might have committed suicide by jumping off the building's terrace. The Instagram status reads: 'Bye Bye People'. Later, after being asked by one of her friends about where she was going, she replied 'Hell. May Be, Heaven." The police has registered an unnatural death case and launched an investigation to ascertain the exact reason behind the death. Police has also found the word 'PERFECT' written with a pen on the forehead of the deceased.

Odisha growth rate dips to 6.16 %

Bhubaneswar: Odisha's rowth rate is expected to decline to 6.16 per cent of **Gross State Domestic** Product (GSDP) in 2019-20 as against 7.90 per cent in 2018-19, the Economic Survey Report tabled in the Legislative Assembly on Monday said. Lower agriculture production being affected by cyclone and decelera[.] tion in mining and manufacturing led to the dip in the growth rate, the report said. However, per-capita income in Odisha in 2019-20 is expected to reach Rs 1,01,587 from ₹95,164 in 2018-19. As per advance estimate, 2019-20, the state's per-capita net domestic product at current price is

PARTY CAN'T THINK OF DISRESPECTING MANMOHAN: CONG

estimated to grow at 6.75%.

New Delhi: Rahul Gandhi or the Congress can never think of disrespecting former prime minister Manmohan Singh, the party said on Monday defending Gandhi's act of tearing a copy of an ordinance in 2013. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said Gandhi's move of tearing the ordinance brought by the UPA government to allow those convicted in criminal cases to contest elections was a courageous step. His reaction came after former Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said after the Rahul Gandhi ordinancetrashing episode of 2013,

whether he thought he should resign as prime minister. "I do not know what was discussed between the two people. But, Rahul Gandhi has considered Dr Singh as his guru and guide, neither Rahul nor the Congress can even think of disrespecting him," Mr Surjewala said. He said when

Singh had asked him

all parties in Parliament were with a majority trying to pass a legislation to grant pardon to all those who had cases against them, at that time one political leader displayed the strength to rise above party level in a bid to clean politics, "The issue is not tearing the paper but the issue is of clean politics and criminals should remain in politics," he said. - PTI

First suspected nCoV death in TN

42-year-old man recently returned from China after his health deteriorated

R. VALAYAPATHY PUDUKKOTTAI, FEB. 17

A-42-year-old man from Tamil Nadu who returned from China recently died of suspected Coronavirus at a private hospital at Madurai on Saturday. The deceased hailed from Kothaimangalam village in Pudukkottai district.

Official sources said on Monday that the victim, Sakthikumar, who runs a small restaurant in China recently returned home due to jaundice and underwent treatment in his village. However, due to manpower shortage to run his eatery there, he returned to China recently, despite his jaundice.

Sakthikumar again returned home as his

AGE CORRESPONDENT

The decision of Kerala

Police Academy to take

off beef from the menu of

the canteen has triggered

The authorities removed beef from the

list of food items served

at the canteen of the

Kerala Police Academy

about a week ago. With

the decision inviting

opposition from a section, the police authorities

decided that the food com-

mittees in respective camps may take a call on including beef in their

The training session for

over 4,000 police person-

nel began at various police camps in the state

on Sunday including Police Academy Thrissur. Beef was taken off for the

trainees and the staff

engaged in training at

these camps.
The training is going on at the KAP 3rd Battalion headquartered at Adoor

in Pathanamthitta dis-

trict, KAP 2nd battalion

Palakkad district, KAP 4th battalion Mangattu-

paramaba in Kannur dis- - iry

headquartered

Muttikulangara,

a controversy.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 17

Beef taken off

menu of Kerala

Police Academy

Move triggers major controversy

AUTHORITIES

DECIDED to serve

in a week.

in a week.

tourism

tweet

chicken. Earlier, beef

was served to trainee

police personnel twice

Malappuram.
The authorities decided

to serve chicken procured

from the poultry farm

run in police academy

premises as meat. Earlier

the menu for trainee cops

comprise fish, chicken,

beef, omelette and fish

fry. Beef was served twice

Meanwhile, ADGP training denied that there

was ban on serving beef

in any police camp.

It may be recalled the "beef fry" tweet on the

official twitter handle of

Kerala Tourism on Makarsankaranti day had

triggered a major contro-

versy. There was a delib-

erate attempt from cer-

tain quarters to add com-

munal colour to the

Kerala's popular delicacy

A section Twitterati attacked the CPM led

state government alleging

that the tweet on "beef

"Beef Ularthiyathu".

was

department's

highlighting

deliberately



Union minister Harsh Vardhan interacts with Wuhanreturned Indians after they were released from the ITBP guarantine facility in New Delhi on Monday.

health deteriorated. He was admitted to a private hospital at Madurai on Friday, but he died on Saturday. Public health

pect that Sakthikumar's health could have been aggravated possibly by coronavirus attack.

After his sudden death, public health department have now camped at his village, some 100 km from the district headquarters town of Pudukkottai, to thoroughly investigate whether Shakthikumar's death was caused by nCoV or was due to other medfactors, added.

According to family members, Sakthikumar had landed at Tiruchy airfrom China on February 4, travelling via Thailand and Kuala Lumpur His family members did not suspect any symptoms of Coronavirus, though he had been making frequent trips between India and China. For an average Tamil-speaking family, they were unable to immediately recall the name of the Chinese town.

involving his lungs and liver-related ailment for the last two years and had been treated at a private hospital in Thanjavur. They further said Sakthikumar died due to his "prolonged illness of his lungs and liver", besides the jaundice he was recently suffering from. The social media was needlessly playing it up to divert attention, the family sources said.

Meanwhile, the health

secured all the medical files related to his treatment in the last two years and have sent the same

to Chennai for clinical Bengal govt to provide Z-plus

security to Prashant Kishor RAJIB CHOWDHURI in view of

KOLKATA, FEB. 17

Close on the heels of his expulsion from the JD-United for opposing the CAA, political strategist Prashant Kishor's proximity with the ruling Trinamul Congress in West Bengal is only growing as the state government has now decided to provide Z-plus security cover to him.

The development came on Monday after chief minister Mamata Banerjee gave her sources in the state home approval to the decision department. Since the



g e n c e branch of the state police. Mr Kishor would now be escorted by a team of commandoes armed with tactical weapons, sources revealed.

In his case, the security contingent would be drawn from the state police, according to Trinamul roped in Mr Kishor after its poor show in the Lok Sabha election last year and appointed his political consulting firm: Indian Political Action Committee for party's strategy for its success in 2021, his movements have so far remained secret on most occasions.

Lashing out at the Trinamul Congress, state BJP president and Midnapore MP Dilip Ghosh alleged, "Mr Kishor has become the biggest asset to the Trinamul and a VIP now."

ED unearths gold-smuggling hawala racket

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs

Unaccounted cash worth ₹3.75 crore and over 39 kg of gold and silver have been seized after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted raids in multiple cities against jewellers associated with an alleged gold-smuggling hawala racket.

According to sources the raids were conducted at several locations in Jaipur, Kolkata and Chennai under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (Fema), with the ED claiming that the action has led to detection of huge evasion of customs duty, GST as well as income-tax. "The ED received reliable input that Maharaja Jewellers (proprietor Tara Chand Soni), Bhagwati Jewellers (owner Ram Gopal Soni) and Ladiwala Associates (owner Honey Ladiwala) of Jaipur were purchasing smuggled gold bars from Harsh Bothra of Chennai and Banka Bullions Pvt. Ltd etc," the central probe agency said in a statement issue here on Monday.

While acting on the information, it was found that various individuals were involved in smuggling of gold bars and subsequent dispatch of those to Jaipur. Gold bars were mainly arriving in Jaipur via Kolkata and

Over 25-kg gold ornaments looted

Ludhiana: Five men looted over 25 kg of ornaments at gunpoint from a gold loan branch of India Infoline Finance Ltd in Ludhiana's Gill Road area on Monday morning. Four men with their faces covered entered the IIFL branch around 10.15 while one stayed outside in a car, police said, adding that there was no security guard outside the branch at the time of the incident.

had high purity level, sources said. The suspects used to remove the foreign mark of manufacturer or bank engraved or embossed on the gold bars and then smuggle those into the country, the ED said, adding those were then dispatched to various domestic markets by different modes of transportation to escape the scanner of enforcement agencies.

The accused jewellers did not account for jewellery manufactured from smuggled gold and illegal funds generated were then transferred through hawala agents based in these cities, the probe agency said. Hawala denotes the illegal manner of transferring funds by skirting banking channels and dealing in cash

■ India could have up to 5 theatre commands, says Bipin Rawat CDS outlines new military commands

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, FEB. 17

India will have a peninsular command for maritime security, a separate J&K theatre command, and air defence command, said Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat on Monday. He said that India will start rolling theatre command by 2022 but air defence command will be the first to be set up by the beginning of 2021 and a peninsular command by

Gen. Rawat said that by the end of 2020 directive will be issued to set up a study group for the theatreisation, under which commands one east of the whole Indian Ocean

personnel and assets from army, navy and air force in an area will come under single commander to effective strike at the enemy.

He said under the study

J&K could be a single the-

atre command. Currently Akhnoor is under Indian Army's Northern Command and the rest of the Jammu region comes under Western Command. Gen Rawat said that there could be 2-5 theatre commands along the western and northern borders. He said that there could be



Bipin Rawat

Nepal and another west of

Nepal. Gen. Rawat said that Navy's eastern and western command could be combined under one commander, the Peninsular Command as India face either one command for threats like 26/11. The China or two separate commander will focus on

ships from western to eastern command as per the threat perception and will be in better position to manage the security of the region as he will be on ground," said Gen. Rawat. He said that a study will be set up on 31st March 2020 and the peninsular command is expected to take shape by end of 2021 and some of the assets of army and air force will also be transferred to it.

Region. "The Commander

will be free to transfer

He said that study has been initiated for setting up a air defence command wnich will be under Air

the country. "The study will be submitted by 31st March this year and it will take at least one year to set up the command," said Gen Rawat. He said most of the air defence assets of army, navy will be transferred to the new command so that there is better co-ordination and quick reaction during an air attack on the country.

The Chief of Defence Staff also said that government plans to have a separate training and doctrinal command modelled on similar structure in the US. while a separate command will be set up to take care o Force and will be responsi- logistical requirements of ble for the air defence of the three services.

Shaheen Bagh: SC seeks lawyers' help

trict and Malappuram posted on special police camp, Makarsankranti day.

■ Continued From Page 1

take a leaf from the Shaheen Bagh protest and start blocking roads and other public places. Telling the protesters that "reasoning must prevail", Justice Kaul made it clear that if the efforts being made by them does not succeed, then it would be over to the administration.

Asking senior counsel Sanjay Hegde and Sadhana Ramachandran, a wellknown mediator, to try to talk to the leadership of the Shaheen Bagh protests and make them see "reason", the court fixed February 24 as the next date of hearing.

The court embarked on speaking to the protesters and urging them to see reason on a suggestion by a lawyer – who it later emerged was appearing for Chandrashekhar Azad, the Bhim Army chief. The solicitor-general, Mr Mehta, said Mr Azad, who was himself a cause of the problem, could not be counted on as a mediator. Then the lawyer appearing for Mr Azad suggested the name of well-known bureaucrat and first central information commissioner Wajahat Habibullah.

The court said this during the hearing of two petitions — one by Amit Sahni and another by BJP's Nand Kishore Garg — seeking directions for the removal of protesters sitting on dharna since December 15, 2019.

Give women command: SC to Army ■ Continued From Page 1

end of 2021.

male counterparts". "Such a line of submission is disturbing as it ignores the solemn constitutional values which every institution in the nation is bound to uphold and facilitate". said the judgment.

The Centre, in the course of the hearing, had claimed that the Army was a way of life, requiring "sacrifice and commitment beyond the call of duty", inherent physiological differences between men and women and women officers who have to deal with pregnancy, motherhood, children and family may not be suited to the life of a soldier.

Referring to the Centre's February 25, 2019 move to grant permanent commissions to women officers in other corps in support arms and services, the court said that itself "recognises that physiological features of a woman have no significance to her equal entitlements Constitution".

Taking a dim view of the arguments by the Centre in the course of the hearing on the lack of ability of women officers to match their male coun-

terparts in the Army, the court referred to 10 instances where women officers earned laurels Monday: "The Union government continued to thwart implementation despite the by their distinguished service not only within the country but also being a part of the United Nations peacekeeping forces and in trouble-torn Afghanistan as well.

On the bar to the staff posting of the permanent commission women officers, the court said: "An absolute bar on women seeking criteria or command appointments would not comport with the guarantee of equality under Article 14".

The court cited the instance of such a restriction was not imposed when the JAG and AEC branches were opened up for grant of PCs for women SSC officers in the past.

Observing that the engagement of women officers in the Army had been "evolutionary" the court said the Centre had a mandate to grant permanent commission to women officers as there was no stay of the March 2010 judgment of the Delhi high court.

In an apparent indictment of the Centre for its "scant regard" for the high court judgment, the court said on

order of this court dated September 2, 2011 clarifying that "the operation of the impugned judgment is not stayed at all". The Centre had approached the Supreme Court in 2010 challenging the Delhi high court order directing the grant of permanent commissions to women officers.

The Supreme Court on Monday modified the communication by the government which says only those women officers who have less than 14 years of service would be considered for permanent commissions and others will be allowed to complete 20 years of service and leave the Army with pension benefits.
The court said all serving

women officers on short service commissions "shall be considered for grant of permanent commissions" irrespective of any of them having crossed 14 years or, as the case may be, 20 years of service. This option, the court said, would be available to all women officers now in service as short service com-

Cong leaders spat

■ Continued From Page 1 tion would be high," he Maken and late Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit. "Brother, I would never undermine Sheila Dikshit's stellar performance as Delhi CM. That's your specialty. But it's never too late to change! Instead of advocating an alliance with AAP, if only you had highlighted Sheilaji's a c h i e v e m e n t s , @INCIndia would've been

Speaking on the party's behalf, Congress chief spokesman Randeep Singh Surjewala threw his weight behind the Delhi unit, saying: "In Delhi, the battle was between Mr Kejriwal's 'Dangalwali (feuding)
Delhi' and BJP's 'Dange
wali (riots) Delhi'. Only
Sheila Dikshit had managed to change the face of

in power today".

"Since Delhi is the capital, economic activity is at its highest here and thus the revenue collecsaid, taking on Mr Deora's comments.

Mr Surjewala said the Congress has "unequivocally" asked its Delhi leaders to "introspect" and would now ask Congress leaders from outside Delhi to look at their own performance and leadership and how better they can con-tribute to their respective constituencies.

The Congress was routed in the Delhi Assembly polls earlier this month. Only three out of 70 contestants had managed to save their deposits.

The party was in the throes of a bitter war of words since then. Earlier, Delhi party leader Sharmishtha Mukherjee hit out at former finance minister P. Chidambaram for praising the AAP. The Delhi unit alleges it had been left to fend for itself, with virtually no support from the top leadership.

British MP

■ Continued From Page 1 quoted as saying: "I tried to establish why the visa had been revoked and if I could get a 'visa on arrival' but no one seemed to know. Even the person who seemed to be in charge said he didn't know and was really sorry about what had happened. So now I am iust waiting to be deported... unless the Indian government has a change of heart. I'm prepared to let the fact that I've been treated like a criminal go, and I hope they will let me visit my family and

friends." The British MP

had last year apparently

written a letter to India's

high commissioner to the UK, saying the action (of revoking Article 370) "betrays the trust of the

people" of Kashmir. Ms Abrahams later tweeted: "Just to be clear, have Indian relatives who I was meant to be visiting with, and have Indian members of staff accompanying me. The reason I got into politics is to advance social justice and human rights for all. I will continue to challenge my own government and others on these issues.

Ms Abrahams chairs a British parliamentary group that focuses on Kashmir.

4 Nirbhaya convicts set to hang now on March 3

■ Continued From Page 1

brought to justice. Nirbhaya's family lawyer Seema Kushwaha, however, claimed that defence lawyer A.P. Singh was misleading people and the convicts' families into thinking he will be able to save the convicts.

The two death warrants issued earlier could not be executed as the convicts took it in turns to use every legal option available to them. The first date of execution, January 22, postponed February 1 by a January 17 court order. Then the trial court, on January 31 staved "till further orders'

the execution of the four as they had not exhausted all their legal remedies. The fresh death warrant was issued after Delhi's Tihar jail authorities

informed the trial court that three of the four convicts had exhausted all legal options and none of them have any correspondence pending at the

Pawan is the only convict delayed further." who has not filed a curative petition — the last

legal remedy available to a person which is decided in-chamber — or mercy plea before the President. The trial court said:

"There is only two possible inferences for such indolence: 1) either convict Pawan is satisfied with the verdict of the Supreme Court; or 2) he is simply interested in delaying court proceedings. In either case, he cannot claim that the execution of the sentence needs to be

The trial court noted that the Delhi high court had

given "one more opportunity" to Pawan, "unambiguously clarifying to exercise his rights within a week, failing which req-uisite action shall be initiated without any further delay". The court said Pawan cannot be allowed to defeat the ends of justice by simply opting to remain indolent.

All four convicts have already exhausted the one week allowed by the high court to exercise all their legal options and will need to go to the Supreme Court to get an extension.

Akshay's counsel has now informed the court that he has prepared a fresh mercy petition to be before President.

One of the four convicts, Vinay, has started hungerstrike at Tihar Jail after his petition challenging President Ram Nath Kovind's rejection of his mercy plea was turned down by the Supreme Court last week. The convict had claimed the President had not factored in his mental illness after

torture in jail.

YEARS AGO IN

Chronicle

Pledge to work for nation, Sheikh tells Muslims

Delhi: Sheikh Abdullah today called upon the Muslims of India to take an oath to "live or die" for the land of their birth and work for its progress and

security.
Addressing a mammoth Id congregation at the Idgah, the Sheikh said: "we must understand one thing clearly that there is no other place in the world for the five crore Muslims living in the country.'

'You have to live here, work here and overcome your difficulties here. You cannot think of going to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or any other Muslim country. You belong to India. You have to work for the country as advised by the Quran and preached by Mohammed," he said.

"We are forgetting everything which our prophet told us and we are getting away from the holy Quran in which it is comprehensively laid down how a true Muslim should serve his community, society and

Sheikh Abdullah said the general situation in Muslim countries was far from satisfactory. Muslims in every corner of the world were facing difficulties.

"We have to overcome these difficulties and not give an impression of helplessness. Helplessness and frustration were taboos for a Muslim.'

He urged Indian Muslims to share the joys and sor-rows of their brethren among Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and other com-

munities. The president of the Kashmir Plebiscite Front, Mirza Afzal Beg, said here today that Sheikh Abdullah's advice to Indian Muslims to place their trust in the majority community and learn Hindi did not apply to Muslims in Kashmir.

Mirza Afzal Beg was addressing a huge gathering of Muslims who had assembled for Id-Ul-Zuha prayers at Idgah in

Mr Mirza Afzal Beg reiterated his stand that the Kashmir "problem" was the "source of trouble" between India and Pakistan. Without the right of self-determination being conceded to the people, the problem, he claimed, could not be

Changing trajectories: More women needed in science, tech, engineering, maths in India



Gagandeep Kang

In India, women have shown that they can and do contribute to science and technology (S&T). Take, for example, the Chandrayaan-2 mission to the moon, led by Isro scientists Muthayya Vanitha, project director, and Ritu Karidhal, mission director. To quote the headlines, the two 'shattered the glass ceiling and aimed for the moon'. Like them, other women have led important developments in Indian science.

per cent of the researchers. In India, the numbers are even lower — 15 per cent — according to a report by the National Task Force on Women in Science. The world has benefited enormously from known contributions by women in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) — from the pioneering work of Marie Curie in multiple fields related to radioactivity to the contributions of Internet pioneer, Radia Perlman, the "mother of the Internet". There are also hidden contributions where the work that women did was attributed to their male colleagues or super-

In India, women have shown that they can and do contribute to science and technology (S&T). Take, for example, the Chandrayaan-2 mission to the moon, led by Isro scientists Muthayya Vanitha, project director, and Ritu Karidhal, mission director. To quote the headlines, the two "shattered the less than the statement of the s the glass ceiling and aimed for the moon". Like them, other women have led and contributed to important developments in Indian science.

The good news is that women's enrolment in higher education institutions has witnessed a remarkable increase — from 13 lakhs in 1990 to 27 lakhs in 2000, and then to 142 lakh women in higher education institutions in 2017. Yet women's representation in S&T and the rate of growth is deeply sub-optimal for a coun-try with as many aspirations as

Science, technology, research and development are essential for inclusive and sustained economic growth, and not enabling 50 per cent of the population to contribute is a mistake. Studies show that addressing this issue will increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and bring deeper, broader and more representative approaches to science and development. We could not only change our trajectory for scientific and technological



Isro scientists Muthayya Vanitha, project director, and Ritu Karidhal, mission director of the Chandrayaan-2 mission

development, we would also change society by addressing the targets set under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 — ensuring gender equality.

As of April 1, 2015, only 13.9 per cent of all personnel engaged in research and development (R&D) in the country were women. According to the Research Development Statistics at a Glance 2017-18 brought out by the department of science and technology (DST), Government of India, women's participation in extramural R&D projects supported by various Central S&T agencies was 29

per cent in 2014-15. Women in India are already at a disadvantage due to the lower enrolment rate of girls at the primary school level. Girls are more likely to drop out of education systems early, especially in resource-poor families, due to deeply ingrained gender biases. Alarmingly, in 2019-20, we ranked 112th of 153 countries in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index.

Today, we stand at a crucial juncture in relation to promoting women in science. Several programmes already exist that aim to do just this. In 2014, the DST restructured all women-

specific programmes under one umbrella called Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN), to bring gender parity in STÉM. Under this scheme, women scientists are encouraged to pursue research in frontier areas of science and engineering, on problems of societal relevance and to take up STEM-based internship followed by selfemployment. Added to this, DST's women's technology parks (WTPs) act as a single window hub for convergence of diversified technologies, leading to socio-economic development of women through capac-

ity building and adoption of location-specific technologies. To begin empowering younger students, the department launched *Vigyan Jyoti* in 2019 to reach out to girls in select districts at primary education institutes, to support an interest in science through mentorships and interactions. Initiatives like these, led by government bodies like DST and other programmes run by Department Biotechnology and private organisations can go a long

way in addressing the gender disparities in STEM.

India Health Fund, a collaboration by Tata Trusts and

Global Fund, is addressing the need for creating an enabling environment where women in STEM can transition their research into solutions. The initiative provides technical and financial support to innovators in India in developing key solutions in tuberculosis (TB) and vector-borne disease èlimination.

As part of their overarching

goal to facilitate more and

more research and development in public healthcare systems and technologies, the Fund is committed to empowering women innovators and enabling them to bring their technologies from lab to the market. For instance, IHF supported the exceptional work of Dr Maroudam Verrasamy, founder of CisGen Biotech Discoveries, which developed diagnostic kits that uses a combination of native and recombinant antigens to detect bovine TB. Besides this, IHF also supported Dr. Nerges Mistry and Kalpana Sriraman of the Foundation of Research in Community Health (FMR) in developing bio-medical solu-tions for addressing infectious diseases, such as TB.

While the steady increase in the numbers of women in science is heartening, the effects of the continued underrepre-

sentation of half the population can have far-reaching adverse effects. In healthcare, for example, we are now learning women's health has taken a backseat, with the lessening of research aimed specifically at understanding the varied differences in female physiology. Studies have shown, for example, that the risk of heart disease in women is often underestimated due to different clinical representations or symptoms and a lower representa-

tion in clinical trials. Education is a critical tool in empowering women. We need to ensure that girls across the country have not only access to basic education but also to financial and societal support for them to pursue an education in STEÑ and in this way empower more women, like Muthayya Vanitha and Ritu Karidhal, to make an impact in country's

The writer is a top scientist who focuses on viral infections in children, and is executive director of Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Faridabad. She was the first Indian woman scientist to be elected as a fellow of the Royal Society.

Prema Gopalan: A silent crusader in rural India



Moin Qazi

meanwhile

ore than 26 years ago, in 1993, the Latur district in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra was jolted by an earthquake that left a trail of mass destruction. It was India's most devastating earthquake of the 20th century that left nearly 10,000 dead. It ravaged and obliterated vast swathes of villages

and uprooted multitudes of people. Today, several thousand women among those severely affected by the tragedy are recognised as transformational leaders. How these semi-literate and impoverished women converted adversity into opportunity is a saga of grit and tenacity. The glue that bonded them and provided the necessary impetus was a passionate and indefatigable social entrepreneur, Prema Gopalan. Schooled and trained in disaster management, she began rehabilitation work among these women and in 1998 formally launched Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) (selfeducation for empowerment) with a larger and long-term mission of self-

empowerment and self-learning. The crisis and the resulting social mobilisation for reconstructing villages transformed trauma into hope and nudged people to create a larger community-centred model enhancing resilience. The initial success revealed to Prema the gold mine she had struck of rural women with the tenacity to handle local develop-ment and governance. She fanned their spark of perseverance into a flame that shines across the region's

development canvas. Building on their capacities, Prema steered them through a broad-based development strategy of economic and social empowerment. It helped her conceptualise the broad vision for SSP which lay in promoting processes which are socially inclusive, sustainable and gender equitable. SSP's core focus areas are: skill building and entrepreneurship; climate resilient farming; women's leadership; clean energy; health, water and sanitation. SSP's work now straddles 2,000 villages in 25 districts across seven states. It has empowered about 2 lakh women entrepreneurs, farmers and community leaders and positively impacted more than 5 million people in under-served communities.

Prema's work has won appreciation and support from the highest forums. She is a recipient of the Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award (2018) from the Schwab Foundation. SSP has received a large number of awards including the Equator Prize, 2017 from the UNDP and UNFCCC Momentum for Change Award, 2016 Communities and Climate

BUILDING FEMALE LEADERSHIP

SSP started out as a not-for-profit, helping bridge the gap between the community and the government following the temblor. It organised the women to monitor the relief work of the government. In the process it enhanced leadership skills, strengthened community involvement and generated new opportunities. It adapted its model to the unique cultural context of the area for building an indigenous and community-specific movement. SSP's ability to work with people rather than for them gives it an added advantage.

Rural women are the human face of poverty and development. They toil on their farms but lack access to land titles and are, therefore, not recognised as farmers. This, in turn, denies them access to finance, state entitlements, training, technology and markets. SSP is driving a number of initiatives that address major challenges like food security and climate change through organic agriculture and

social entrepreneurship. SSP's Women's Initiative to Learn and Lead (WILL) is creating a new definition for bottom-up redevelopment that repositions grassroots women as changemakers who address community challenges through innovation and partnership with key stakeholders. Its training and mentorship ecosystem provides women business

skills, financial literacy, marketing



Prema Gopalan

support and links to large companies through a last mile distribution network, and start-up capital. Since 2009, its rural B-school has spawned a mass level movement of

grassroots women entrepreneurs running varied small businesses and production units. They are actively involved in community decision-making and local governance, and have increased the access of women to entitlements, economic resources, health and basic services. These women entrepreneurs embrace community leadership by propagating clean and green practices in the context of climate change. Currently, an active network of 1,250 women entrepreneurs is working across eight districts in India. They are the most trusted allies in the battle against climate change which is having devastating impacts and threatens to roll back the gains we've made on poverty, health and more

The SSP model comprises four ventures: A resilience fund for women-led businesses; a fraternity of 5,000 selfhelp groups networked through federations; a rural school of entrepreneurship and leadership for women which provides business, financial and marketing skills; and a market aggregator that provides warehousing, branding, marketing and distribution services to last-mile businesswomen. The consortium nurtures the value chains and entrepreneurial ecosystems that women need to succeed in remote and opaque markets.

ONE-ACRE FARM MODEL

SSP's Climate Resilience Farming model repositions women as farmers and promotes food, nutrition and income and water security. One of the most revolutionary contributions of SSP is in bringing about this shift to sustainable farming and protection of water and natural resources through climate-resilient and nutrition-sensitive farming. The role of women as farm managers has traditionally been obscured by the image of men as primary decision-makers on farms. Prema wants to fix this lack of equilibrium. These women are becoming active decision-makers on core issues like growing crops, conserving natural resources and increasing biodiver-

The number of households who have become climate-resilient is already statistically significant, but for a wider transformation, many more need to be encouraged to shift to this eco-friendly means of livelihood. Being able to achieve this transition is certainly a critical piece of the empowerment puzzle.

SSP has also pioneered the region's "one-acre farming". Instead of the traditional approach of focusing on water guzzling kharif crops like rice and onion, these women have placed the nutritional needs of their families first .The women are reviving the tra-ditional knowledge and skills of local ecology-based farming. Multiple crops are grown to cope with the caprices of climate and boost soil fertility, nutritional security, farm biodiversity and income viability. Women use local seeds and sustainable inputs such as bio-pesticides, hydroponics, organic fertilisers and low-cost water conservation techniques like drip irrigation, sprinklers, recharging of bore wells, farm ponds and tree plan-tation to boost scarce groundwater and improve soil health.

Women have been able to convince their spouses to lend them a patch of their land so that they could use it for growing organic food crops — vegetables, fruits and local grains and pulses staving off hunger for their families. They are pairing crops that are

best for each other. Thus, most farmers are now practicing diversified organic farming. This represents a small revolution, as women are growing crops by themselves and are using only organic inputs. Economic migration has reduced, especially amongst women. There has been a reduction in hunger, increased food security and improved

health outcomes. SSP has also created a dedicated tribe of "seed guardians" and "seed mothers". Empowering women farmers to manage their own seed enterprises is enabling them to become decision-makers in the community. They are thus conserving the indigenous seed heritage and protecting its food sovereignty. Seeds are at the heart of agriculture, but they are also a significant cost for farmers. Organic seeds are hard to come by in a market flooded with genetically modified and hybrid seeds. Conserving organic seeds that are suited to the soil and as a climate adaptation measure is a priority for smallholders.

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE

SSP has also built a support system of village-level networks of entrepreneurs known as sakhis (friends). An innovative intervention is in rural healthcare. These Arogya Sakhis are community members who receive basic training and live and work in the communities they serve. They are equipped with health devices, such as glucometers, blood pressure machines. Along with a mobile tablet, they visit rural women door-to-door to conduct basic medical tests.

These women conduct a series of preventive tests using mobile health devices, capture the data by using a tablet and upload the results on the cloud server developed by our technology partner. The data is then shared with a doctor, who analyses it and provides a report and prescriptions over the cloud. The sakhis then guide the patients on the treatment and precautions to be taken. Wherever needed, they are referred to hospitals for further treatment.

SSP's approach remains continually relevant because it keeps reinventing itself, It helps in reinvigorating the internal environment as well. There are lessons, both optimistic and cautionary, to be learned from SSP's experiences. Beneficiary-centric perspective is the antidote for the widespread failure of top down development programs. At the same time, creating programmes that work is important, but just as critical is scaling up those programmes. We need to work towards practical solutions rather than merely changing the mindsets of people.

Women serve critical roles in providing familial and societal stability, and their empowerment is crucial to the modern development agenda. Giving women the tools they need to succeed is a requisite to ensuring the ultimate prosperity of their communities. Despite the prevailing social patriarchy and cultural obstacles, women are changing perceptions and creating businesses that have a real impact on their communities and beyond. In rewriting the rules of the economy and society, they are challenging the status quo. Prema Gopalan's pioneering work with women can serve as an enlightening model for more meaningful and relevant policy discourses.

> The writer is a well known development professional

THE ASIAN AGE | TUESDAY | 18 FEBRUARY 2020 | NEW DELHI

18 FEBRUARY 2020

THE ASIAN AGE

Trump's visit: Expect optics, not substance

S President Donald Trump is looking forward to his first official visit to India, when the optics will be very high indeed. It's likely that Mr Trump will be pleased as punch as there will be huge crowds waiting for him during a roadshow with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The two leaders share a particular chemistry that was apparent ever since they first met and bear-hugged. The theatrics of their friendship will be high as it was during Mr Modi's visit to Texas, when Mr Trump joined him at the "Howdy, Modil" event. The question is: how useful will this visit by a fourth consecutive US President be in advancing US-India ties, that are already strong and may have grown during Mr

Trump's four years at the White House.

A Trump promise on a trade deal with India has been in the air for some time. But it seems unlikely that an agreement will be signed during the February 24-25 visit as negotiations have run aground. Any deal to lessen India's surplus, that shrank to about \$16 billion from an earlier \$30 billion, won't be favourable. Losing more of the trade surplus with a big partner will only affect the smaller economy. The strategic part of their talks might prove more substantive, but once again it will be the US that will benefit more as it sells India more heli-

copters, and grants allow the acquisition of The question is: an integrated air defence weapon system. The missile shield will be more than a symhow useful will this bolic furtherance of ties as it means India visit by a fourth would get even closer to being in the global American axis. As one of the world's consecutive US President be in biggest arms importers, India should be in advancing US-India an advantageous position to negotiate terms. Realistically, it doesn't work that ties, that are already way as quality comes in anything at a strong and may have grown during Donald

It's a quirk of history that India's ties with Trump's four years at the US have been warmer in the the White House Republican years of the two George Bushes and now Mr Trump than it was during the

Clinton and Obama years, particularly the latter, when the loss of US jobs was attributed to "Bangalored", or outsourcing to India. The Trump administration makes no bones about employing more restrictive visa practices for immigrants as well as IT workers. It must be a disappointment to a large part of India's highly qualified workforce that ties aren't warm enough to permit exceptions. This is one area in which Mr Modi can lean on chemistry to make it better for

aspiring Indians.
Given the circumstances in which the visit will take place, it's clear that, having been absolved of charges in the Senate impeachment trial, Mr Trump will be the dominant personality at the summit. It's no secret that the abrogation of Article 370 and the passing of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act are big pinpricks, that will come up in the discussions. Reiterating the usual Indian line about these being "internal matters" may not cut much ice. India must do more to convince the US in order to

Jamia: Cops on backfoot

'nmistakable visual evidence has emerged of unwarranted police action on the students of Jamia Millia Islamia on December 15, a few days after the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was passed — widely seen as heralding the indefensible plan to filter out underprivileged Muslims via a National Register for Citizens. The video, released by the Jamia Coordination Committee, shows masked paramilitary personnel storming Jamia's Old Reading Hall and thrashing youngsters at study desks. A young man lost his eye. It was the flashpoint of the people's resistance against the CAA, which gathered steam after the government's moves over the National Population Register. As of today, 33 lives have

been lost to the nationwide protests.

The path of dissent is never easy. But the law gives Indian citizens the freedom to assemble peacefully to voice opinions, the very lever that moves democracy and our system of governance. It doesn't give the police the right to shut it down with violence, as it did in Washermanpet, Tamil Nadu, without provocation, on Friday. Yet no FIR has been lodged for the incident forcing the university to move the Delhi court. Instead, the Delhi police crime branch released its own video of a young man entering the library with stones in a purported bid to justify

its crackdown by insinuating a possible intent of violence. It hasn't convinced anyone of their lack of culpability. With the Opposition stepping up criticism, special commissioner of police (intelligence) Praveer Ranjan has been pushed to the backfoot, and he has now promised an investigation. Will there result, as a consequence, new police reforms freeing members of the force to act according to the law and own conscience, instead of government diktats? Will the Delhi police be shamed into taking action against its own? There is always hope

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It's too early for AAP to expand beyond Delhi



Sanjay Kumar

ning victory, Arvind Kejriwal along with six ministers took the oath for the third time as Delhi chief minister at Delhi's historic Ramlila Maidan on Sunday. This victory in itself was remarkable, with 62 of the Assembly's 70 seats, but what was even more remarkable was that the AAP was up against an army of very experienced BJP leaders who campaigned relentlessly against the AAP and Arvind Kejriwal, some of whom engaged in a very shrill and negative campaign. But the AAP sailed against all odds to victory. The message by Mr Kejriwal in his public address after the oath made this victory far more remarkable. Mr Kejriwal said that irrespective of who voted for him or not, he considof his family" and promised to work for all the people of Delhi. He added he "forgives his opponents for their remarks against him", and wanted take everyone along with him. He also sought the "blessings" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

There was also a clear signal that he wanted to expand the AAP beyond Delhi. In his speech, he urged people to "call your villages and tell them that their son has become the chief minister, and there is no need to worry". After all, he had taken the oath as Delhi's CM, so why should he ask people to call their family members in villages? This was a clear indication he would try to reach out to people beyond the geographical boundaries of Delhi.

the AAP in 2020.

somewhat on the defen-

sive over the charge that

he had only won because

of the freebies. He said:

"I am accused of distrib-

uting freebies. But all

good things in the world

like a mother's love and

a father's blessings are

free. Delhi loves Kejriwal. I love Delhi.

This love is for free". It

is true that the freebies

However, for the AAP, expanding the party beyond Delhi at this

election remained largely focused on the development work done by the AAP government in the past five years. The CSDS governance study conducted in early December 2019 captured juncture would be a tall order. The sweeping victhe mood of the people of tory in Delhi does not Delhi regarding the AAP give any indication of the rising popularity of the AAP or Arvind government's work in the fields of education and health — and indicated widespread approval of the AAP's work. Though Delhi wit-Kejriwal in other states. Even in Delhi, this victory should only be seen as nessed an acerbic campaign waged by the BJP voters wanting Mr Kejriwal to be Delhi's chief minister. There is no indication if voters on the basis of emotive and national issues, the would express the same voter sentiment that the political choice if there was a Lok Sabha election soon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi CSDS survey had captured in early December did not change much. This was because voters still remains a very popsaw the election mainly ular leader with the peoas a question of Delhi's ple of Delhi when it comes to heading the government at the governance. In this sense, the victory of the AAP was clearly a vote Centre. The verdict of four elections — the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls for performance on the ground. The water, electricity, education and and the 2015 and 2020 Assembly elections healthcare record of the government was clearly its USP. The CSDS surare clear evidence of the voters of Delhi expressvey indicated that three of every five of those ing a spilt verdict. While who traditionally backed the BJP said in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP they favoured a AAP vicmanaged to win all seven Lok Sabha seats tory due to the governand cornered a huge ment's performance record. This mattered a chunk of votes, the same voters voted for the AAP lot for the "pro-incumbency" sentiment in favour of the AAP. in the 2015 and 2020 Assembly elections in a big way. During the 2015 By asking the people of Assembly elections, the

Delhi to convey to friends and relatives in AAP won 67 seats and polled 54 per cent votes their villages that their 'son" had become the while in 2020 it won 62 seats and polled 53.5 per cent votes. The CSDS minister, Mr chief Kejriwal was trying to survey also indicated send out the message that one-third of those that the people of Delhi who voted for the BJP in had rejected BJP leaders' equating Arvind Kejriwal as a "terrorthe 2019 Lok Sabha polls switched their vote to ist". The Delhi elections Mr Kejriwal, in his Ramlila address, seemed

A CSDS survey indicated that three of every five of those who traditionally backed the BJP said they favoured an **AAP** victory due to the government's performance record

remained focused around the face of Mr Kejriwal. During his handed out by the Kejriwal government contributed to this mas-sive mandate, but this campaign, he went to the extent of saying "vote for me only if you consider me as your son, don't vote for me if you consider me as a terrorist". The AAP benefited from the fact that it had Mr Kejriwal's "face" at the head of its campaign. The BJP, on the other hand, had no such credible, visible face. It once again depended on the charisma and charm of its top national leaders — mainly Prime Minister Modi. In a state poll, this clearly worked in favour of the AAP as almost two-fifths of those satisfied with the Modi government's performance voted for the AAP. Mr Modi remains very popular with Delhi's voters; yet they chose Mr Kejriwal over

> state government.
>
> The BJP's last-minute efforts to polarise voters and win back the support of those who voted for it in the Lot Sabba for it in the Lok Sabha polls six months ago didn't cut much ice. While possibly it did con-tribute to the BJP's rise in voteshare compared to the last Assembly election, it was not sufficient to reduce the wide gap that had developed between the BJP and AAP. At the end of the day, governance and service delivery appeared to trump the politics of emotive appeals and divisiveness.

Mr Modi mainly because

they were conscious that this was a question of who would head the

Kejriwal in his address did say that the elections were over, and whether you had voted for the AAP or not, you are a part of my family clearly trying to send out a positive message of his commitment to work for all the people of Delhi as he begins his third

innings in government. The writer is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. He is also a psephologist and a political commentator and analyst. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

RELOOK AT CAA?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi ruling out a relook at the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). the hollowing out of Articles 370 and 35A in J&K and the bar on triple talag must come as a setback to his detractors. There has been intense pressure from all quarters for a rethink on these issues. The Prime Minister put the lid firmly on the controversy by remarking that the decisions were taken in the national interest and India waited on these for years.

> N.J. Ravi Chander Bengaluru

SHAMEFUL STIGMA

THE WAY in which Gujarat's Shree Sahajanand Girls Institute's (SSGI) principal forced 68 young women students to remove their underwear in order prove they weren't menstruating shocked the nation. More shocking is that SSGI is run by the Swaminarayan sect, a Hindu religious group, which in the 21st century still follows medieval rules. Discrimination against women on account of menstruation is widespread in India. On the other hand, where Indian women are fighting to remove the stigma around menstruation, even in 2018, the Supreme Court in a landmark order threw open the doors of the Sabarimala shrine to women of all ages, saying eening women out of the te ple in Kerala was discriminatory It's a pity that a developing country like India unable to accept that vaginal bleeding is a presage and preparation for pregnancy and a sign of readiness for pregnancy.

Bidyut K. Chatterjee

OF EQUALITY IN ARMY

DISMISSING THE Centre's objections, in a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court on Monday directed the government to grant permanent commissions to all women officers in the Indian Army irrespective of their tenure of service within three months. The significant judgment has brought true equality in the Army, putting an end to gender bias in the armed forces.

Chakdaha, West Bengal

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: letters.asianage@gmail.com. Else, send to Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110002

Shahbaz Khan

A paradigm shift is needed on discourse in public life

awaharlal Nehru Edwina Mountbatten's relationship has been a subject of interest, both during their lifetimes and after. At the time, however, no solid proof existed to substantiate the rumours regarding their liaison — or so it was thought, for Mohammad Ali Jinnah is said to have received cer-tain letters exchanged between them that confirmed the public's suspicions; a wonderful opportunity for Jinnah to use these against

his political foes. These days, when exposing details of politicians' private lives is hardly seen as novel, it may come as a shock that Jinnah declined to use those letters and returned them. "Caesar's wife should be above suspicion," he said, "The shame is ours, not theirs." Such was the dignity and grace of the politician who liberated us; such was his level of esteem

and respect even for his rivals. Contrarily, our politicians today would cross entire oceans to procure any evidence to blackmail and defame their political foes; discarding any such self-presented opportunity is beyond imagination. While undoubtedly impassioned in their rhetoric, it is usually to denigrate their opponents and point fingers, often accompanied with a perverse joy in watching the misfortunes of their intended targets.

No one is without sin, yet those who criticise their rivals are often the same people who would have committed far worse deeds. Our esteemed politicians wistfully may not be such devout followers of the truth or even their religion, as opposed to how blind they are in advocating their parties and its respective stance, always prepared with a loaded gun to fire away at all times whether right or iniquitous.

As a result, public discourse is divisive and devoid of substance. What we see is a propensity for disorderly conduct, impertinence and negativity, with hostility towards any idea that contradicts our own views. However, what we need is to set aside inflammatory rhetoric targeting individuals to make room for sincere dialogue focused

Unfortunately, no one is openminded, willing to listen, make compromises or concede that the other might be right. Instead, we resort to brazen personal attacks when contradicted, perpetuating an endless circus of egos with circumscribed thinking and clouded vision, and leaving no room for arguing on merit, let alone taking concrete steps towards develop-ment on any front.

Personal attacks are of no interest to the state, except, of course, paving way for those seeking power for personal gain — a vision of public service despondently cynical to the core. This trend has proved disastrous, for it not only diverts attention from the bigger picture but also strips us of any prospect of progress.

Speech has a significant impact on a state and its society, determining its success or failure. An effort to confine speech limits intellectual freedom and concomitantly results in a botched, stultified economic system. The present government was initially very fond of free speech, but the tide quite turned

after it came to power, perhaps due to the anxiety that speech which does not favour them might reveal truths endeavoured to be kept suppressed.

Nevertheless, there is a thin line between what is considered free speech and unmannerly, abusive speech — and ample tutelage is needed to understand the difference. Criticism and disagreement are no doubt crucial as legitimate concerns should pass untrammelled, but the manner in which we do so must be within an atmosphere of unconditional respect and tolerance.

In the midst of confusion and selfinterest, we have forgotten these basic principles. It was hoped that the prevailing atmosphere would eventually change. However, despite many promises of change, things have become worse; the word "change" becoming the most abused word of the decade, now virtually synonymous with empty promises and duplicity. If this persists, the public's confidence will plummet — beyond repair.

This has already led to a break-

down of civil discourse that has shredded our social fabric by inciting impressionable spectators to adopt the same mannerisms. Young minds who aspire to be leaders of tomorrow witness the very same stream of gruesome verbal (even physical) brawls on television. What values this inculcates in them is a no-brainer. Yet history offers us many lessons from lead ers who should instead serve as inspirations for us today, leaders such as Jinnah.

If we are hell-bent on pointing fingers, let us start with the man in the mirror. Let's remind ourselves of basic courtesies like politeness, respect and forbearance - not only for our own sake but for the next generation. We cannot hope for this nation to prosper if the majority of its politicians, if not all, are devoid of such virtues. Sometimes, the answer may be as simple as learning to listen than to speak, to hold back than to fume, and to appreciate than to humiliate.

By arrangement with Dawn

Not 'just words': How to counter hate speech



Insiyah Vahanvaty

he Cambridge Dictionary speech as "public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex or sexual orientation". In its mildest form, hate speech seeks to cause discomfiture and unease; while its ugliest form seeks to incite violence by instigating others and allowing them the space to turn rhetoric into action.

Individuals who indulge in hate speech often counter objections to their words by raising the provision of free speech, which, by definition, allows them "the right to express one's opinions without censorship, restraint or legal penalty". The argument then, that hate speech cannot be penalised is therefore a common one. In certain liberal democracies, such as the United States of America, this

argument does hold up legally. Hate speech is not a punishable offence, and is protected under the First Amendment. The Indian Penal Code, however, treats hateful messaging differently. While the Indian Constitution provides every individual freedom of expression, Article 19 stipulates that is subject to "reasonable restrictions" for preserving inter alia "public order, decency or morality".

In addition, Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code says, inter alia:

"Whoever (a) by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, promotes attempts to promote, promote, on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, caste or community or any other ground whatsoever, disharmony or feelings of enmihatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities, or (b) commits any act which is preju-

dicial to the maintenance of harmony between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities, and which dis-turbs or is likely to disturb the public tranquillity, ... shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with

However, what we are seeing

lately is that despite these laws and safeguards, there have been many recent instances of hateful messaging, many of which have been made by political aspirants who seek to indulge in divisive politics. The peril of hate speech is that they are not "just words," as argued by those who seek to legitimise discourse that fuels animosity between communities who have religious differences. When a minister raised the slogan "Desh ke gaddaro ko goli maaro s***** ko," in an election rally in New Delhi on January 27, it was followed very literally by a teenaged youth less than a week later, who opened fire on a group of protesters at Jamia Milia Íslamia, injuring one student. The fact that the politician was allowed to raise the slogan in the first place leads one to wonder if there was no threat perceived by the authorities appointed to police hateful messaging in permitting political aspirants to encourage felA democracy needs to tread the thin line between freedom and oppression. Freedoms enjoyed by one cannot be translated into oppression suffered by another. This principle cements the line between free speech and hate speech.

low citizens to shoot at those they consider "traitors".

That the close and dangerous link between hate speech and violence is well understood and documented is made evident by the fact that not only the Constitution and the Indian Penal Code have made provisions to keep it under check, but also so has the Code of Criminal Procedure. In recent times, however, the courts have provided contradictory views regarding the violation that hate speech is. In 2013, the Supreme Court issued a notice to the Central government directing them to frame guidelines that would ensure the control of hate speech delivered by politicians. This notice was also issued to the Election Commission of India. However, in 2014, when a PIL was filed asking the Supreme Court to direct the Election Commission to curb hateful

speeches made by politicians, this was dismissed on the grounds that the fundamental right of people to express themselves cannot be curbed.

In contrast, the social media has taken up a slightly more responsive role in the censoring of hate speech. Despite an enormous room for improvement, there are policies in place. Hate propaganda reported by users on Facebook is reviewed, and if found to be inflammatory, taken down within 24 hours. Twitter takes down hateful content and issues warnings to accounts that violate their "Hateful Conduct Policy", suspending accounts that are repeat offenders. Following the horrifying lynchings that took place in India a couple of years ago. wherein innocents were killed on suspicion of being child kidnappers, WhatsApp placed a restriction on the number of times a piece of content can be forwarded. Although there is still a long way to go, there does appear to be an attempt to reduce the visibility of hateful

content on these platforms. As an ordinary citizen, you may recognise your limitations in controlling hate speech itself, but you might seize the opportunity of counter speech as a direct response to hate speech. This is a powerful tool which can be used in a multitude of ways.

If it's on the social media, you might choose to engage with the speaker and battle his/her hateful messaging by putting forward a contrary message. The #iamhere campaign, a counter narrative to hateful messaging, which was started in Sweden, spread quickly to other parts of the world because of its simplicity of function. Admins of the group routinely post articles that contain hate propaganda onto their page, encouraging members to counter speak with the hashtag #Jagärhär (which means "I am here"). This drives up the counter posts, effectively drowning out the hateful content. A few weeks ago, at New Delhi's Shaheen Bagh protest site, a young man fired into the air in an attempt to register his dissent towards the protesters. The next day, a group of young citizens decided to counter speak by launching a campaign called GoliNahiPhool (Flowers, not Bullets) and showered the protesting women with flower

peace and solidarity. Another method Indian counter-speakers have embraced is through the creation of art — whether music, poetry, paintings or street art. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Vande Mataram to Faiz Ahmad Faiz's beautiful defiant poem *Hum* Dekhenge, strong resistance art has been known to possess

petals in a demonstration of

the power to move people and to unite them — the ultimate

goal of any counter speech. Lastly, you might choose to reclaim words that are used as slurs against communities, minorities or any other group. An example of this is the way the Slutwalk campaign, a global campaign calling for the end of rape culture and slut shaming chose to reclaim the offen-sive word and rebrand it, rejecting the idea that women should experience shame over their sexualities, sexual prefer-

ences and choice of clothing.
A democracy always needs to tread the thin line between freedom and oppression. The freedoms enjoyed by one cannot be translated into oppression suffered by another. This is the very principle that cements the line between freedom of speech and hate speech. In times of turmoil, then, it falls upon us, ordinary men and women, to self-police and counter speak when faced with an objectionable idea or piece of content. Because when it is the best of times, and the worst of times, it is always the ordinary citizen who takes up the torch and leads the way.

Insiyah Vahanvaty is a writer and editor. She also runs GoondaRaj, a social justice initiative and podcast that aims at countering hate and mob violence.

In the future, viruses may well be hailed as saviours, not scourges



Zarrar Khuhro

iruses get a bad rap. Admittedly, much of that is deserved, what with the novel coronavirus (or COVID-19 if you prefer) which has much of China in a lockdown and the rest of the world in a panic. Highly infectious and showing no real signs of subsiding, this latest viral variant, according to the US Centres for Disease Control, will "probably be with us beyond this year". On a larger scale, it's not as bad as it is low viruses (I'm thinking of smallpox) have in the not-sodistant past devastated entire

civilisations.
But amidst all the panic and apocalyptic fear-mongering, we forget the debt that we owe viruses. After all, without these strange, mysterious entities (they can't exactly be classified as life forms) you and I would not be you and I, or at least not in any currently recognisable form.

Because viruses, along with making us sick and occasionally killing us, have helped us evolve. Over 65 million years ago a

tiny shrew-like creature — an egg layer according to scientists — was infected by a particularly sneaky retrovirus that didn't just make its way into the host's genome but managed to get into its sperm or egg cells, ensuring that the mutation it caused would be passed on to every subsequent generation. Countless generations later, this infection led to the development of the placenta in this creature and others similarly infected, thus allowing for the development of a foetus inside the mother's body.

Without this ancient chance encounter humans may well have been egg layers. This sort of viral "tough love" has been a constant feature of our evolution, forcing us to adapt or die. According to scholar David Enard, "When you have a pandemic or an epidemic at some point in evolution, the population that is targeted by the virus either adapts, or goes extinct."

Indeed, we may have to thank our little viral friends for the existence of life as we know it; while traditional scientific thought has it that viruses appeared fairly late in the evolutionary timeline, after the development of cells, the discovery in 2014 of a giant frozen virus in Siberia, dubbed the Pithovirus, is causing a rethink.

But the origin of viruses, and, indeed, viruses themselves, remain a mystery. Along with the Pithovirus, other giant viruses have also been discovered such as the

Megavirus which contains 1,120 genes (the HIV virus only has nine) leading us to believe that these may be an entirely new "domain" of life. Essentially, the viral "chicken" may have come before the

cellular "egg" We know that viruses are gene stealers, acquiring and transplanting genetic material from and to a variety of hosts. Fair enough, but what should we think when we find a virus that has no recognisable genes whatsoever? Say hello to the Yaravirus, which contains genes that no scientist has ever seen before! Which begs the question: exactly where did these genes come from? Did they somehow mutate beyond recognition in the virus itself or are they the legacy of a hitherto undiscovered form of life?

While the eventual answer may be far more mundane, the fact remains that what we do not know about viruses dwarfs what we do know. And some answers may well be found in outer space, as the growing field of astrobiology includes those who believe that viruses may, in fact, have come from outer space. In fact, one controversial claim is that influenza itself was seeded by dust from comets passing near the earth, some

perhaps even eons ago. Others are scouring the heavens and heavenly bodies for extraterrestrial viruses which could, if discovered, provide proof of life on other planets.

Meanwhile, back on earth we are busy harnessing the strange abilities of viruses for our own ends. Given that these sneaky little packages of genetic material are very good at unlocking cells to deliver their payload, scientists are aiming to create treatments for diseases like Huntington's. which is caused by an error in the genetic code, by using redesigned viruses to deliver a "corrective" dose exactly where it is required.

In practice, this is even cooler than it sounds: a young girl called Emma, who suffered from leukemia, was treated by having her blood cells "infected" by a specially modified virus of the same family as the HIV virus (ves. that's right) and then re-injected into her bloodstream. Her cancer went into remission. Less spectacular, yet no less promising, is the research being done on Bacteriophage viruses, which infect and destroy specific bacteria, and the day perhaps isn't far that viruses, long reviled as scourges, may well be hailed as saviours.

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Creation is nothing but a manifestation of God



Sadguru Rameshji

Sab jag ishwar roop hai, bhalo buro Jaki jaisi bhavana, taiso hi phal hoyi

he formless divine being has taken all possible forms in this universe. Hence, there is nothing that is good/bad, right/wrong — because for anything to be good/bad or right/wrong, they have to be different from each other, which in reality is not so, as everything is sourced from one origin only.

To establish in this state of oneness. we can start perceiving and attributing everything as manifestation of the supreme divinity. For example, when we are sitting on a sofa/chair, we must feel that we are sitting on the lap of the divine being. Similarly, when

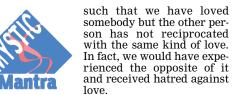
we are lying down on our bed, we can feel that we are prostrating at his feet. Imagine for that 7-8 hours that we sleep, we are at God's feet. Slowly, make this vour habit with everything around you and eventually, you won't even have to make

efforts to imagine this — as it would be your default view towards every-

thing in this world. The second aspect of the couplet is that whatever feelings/emotions we emanate towards others, similar emotions come back to us. This is because since everything is that one alone, it becomes a reflection for everything else which it has manifested and whatever emotions emanate, they reflect back on us. If we emanate love for others we will get back love and if we emanate hatred towards others, then others will hate

Lord Krishna has also stated the same thing in the Bhagavad Gita that: "With whatever feeling one worships me, I worship him back with the same

Sometimes the experience has been



Such things happen because knowingly or unknowingly in the past (including the past birth) we would have emanated hatred against that person and the other person is exhausting its own hatred now, even though we have started loving the person now, in the present.

The emotions of love which are now being emanated will not go waste and the same will be returned to us in the future, in all probability, when we need it most. So, it is extremely advisable that we emanate only good feelings/emotions towards others (irrespective of what the other's feelings are for us).

Emanating good and positive emotions towards others is a profitable proposition for us as they are freely available within us and we neither have to earn them nor buy them from outside nor are required to pay anything for emanating them. Profit 1: We will not get upset when others hate us as we would know that what we are getting is what we gave

in the past. Profit 2: We will not be adding any more negative/bad emotions to the already existing ones and would not get caught in the cobweb of negative

emotions.
Profit 3: When the other person's negative feelings get exhausted, the good feelings that we have deposited over time, will come back to us - hopefully, with due interest!

So, irrespective of what others feel for us, we should continue to feel good for them, as we are here to make profits and not losses. Emanating good and positive emotions for others is an investment for the future. This investment is guaranteed to give high returns provided we have faith and

Sadguru Rameshji is a modern age spiritual guru and the force behind Poorna Ananda, a Hyderabad-based centre for spiritual evolution and joyful living. He can be contacted at www.poornaananda.org









IN BRIEF

Signal set to

qo mainstream

Hyderabad: Just days after popular messaging app, Whatsapp, hit the vaunted two billion users mark, it faces a new challenge from Signal. The app, which is rec-ommended by American whistleblower Edward Snowden, seems to rolling out new features that is aimed at general public and not just the privacy enthusiats. Signal has increasingly become a fully featured, mainstream communications platform. With its new coding muscle, it has rolled out features at a breakneck speed: In just the last three months, Signal has added support for iPad, ephemeral images and video designed to disappear after a single viewing, downloadable customizable "stickers," and emoji reactions. More significantly, it announced plans to roll out a new system for group messaging, and an experimental method for storing encrypted contacts

Iranian hackers plant backdoors

New Delhi: In 2019, quite a few of the enterprise VPN servers, such as those sold by Pulse Secure, Palo Alto Networks, Fortinet, and Citrix, disclosed major security bugs. Now, Zdnet, citing Israeli cyber-security firm ClearSky, reports that these bugs were exploited by state-backed hackers from Iran to infiltrate companies The report comes to dispel

ers are not sophisticated, and less talented than their Russian, Chinese, or North Korean counterparts. ClearSky says that "Iranian APT groups have developed good technical offensive capabilities and are able to

exploit 1-day vulnerabilities

in relatively short periods of

the notion that Iranian hack-



2FA a must for Google Nest users

New Delhi: Users of Google Nest products will soon be forced into using two-factor authentication (2FA) to access their devices. Google said that all Nest users who have not enrolled in the 2FA option, or migrated to a Google account, will be required to "take an extra step by verifying their identi-ty via email". "When a new login into your account is initiated, you'll receive an email from account@nest.com with a six-digit verification code,' the company said. "That code will be used to make sure it's you trying to login. Without it, you won't be able to access your account. This will greatly reduce the likeli-

hood of an unauthorised

person gaining access to

vour Nest account.'



Win10 update is deleting files

New Delhi: Like every other

Windows 10 update, Microsoft seems to have failed its users once again. Unlike other fails, this fails has severe consequences as the latest update, KB4532693, is deleting files on some people's PCs. according to reports. The update appears to deleting any files saved on the desktop as well. According to a report on TechRadar, some people have been able to restore their files, but it seems that many people have found they are unable to restore the files that were deleted. Recently, Microsoft pulled the KB4524244 update as users reported it was causing issues. The update was causing issues with HP devices.

Big Brother fears guide EU's Al rule

European Commission will set the stage for rules on the subject in the growing sector

Brussels, Feb. 17: Amid fears of a Big Brotherstyle society ruled by machines, the EU will urge authorities and companies to think hard before rolling out facial recognition technology.

But the bloc, which will make a much-anticipated announcement this week on the role of artificial intelligence (AI), will stop short of imposing an outright ban, an official said. On Wednesday, the European Commission will set the stage for

European rules on the subject with innovation in the growing sector so far dominated by the US and The commission, the

EU's powerful regulator, is eager to answer the worries of European citizens about the rising importance of AI in their lives, amid reports from China of facial-recognition technology used to crack down on dissent.

"I find it truly really scary what I saw in Hong said the EU Commission's executive vice president on digital **AI: FRIEND OR A FOE?**

The commission, the EU's powerful regulator, is eager to answer the worries of European citizens about the rising importance of Al in their lives, amid reports from China of facial-recognition technology used to crack down on dissent.

 But instead of an outright ban or moratorium, which would require member state backing, Margrethe Vestager told reporters in Brussels she would recommend that authorities and companies use caution.

• Big tech firms familiar to everyday users — such as Facebook or Tencent — are mainly from the US or China. Europe meanwhile is seen as a leader on regulation, notably with rules on data privacy that have been widely replicated elsewhere.

Vestager, who will spear-head the policy.

During a wave of anti-Beijing protests, she said, "People could get a message on the phone: 'We know you're there, maybe you should go home'. Not really supportive of the freedom to assemble, or to express yourself." But instead of an outright ban or moratorium, which would require member state backing, Vestager told reporters in Brussels that authorities and com-

"What we will say in the paper in a very lawyered up language is, let's pause and figure out if there are circumstances where facial recognition remotely should be authorised," she told reporters.

"Because if we do not pause, then it will... just be everywhere," she warned comparing it to the sudden rise of CCTV security in city centres.

Describing the spread of cameras, she said: "First you put up one, but then it has a blind angle and then you put up the other one...

All of a sudden you have everywhere. cameras Caution is also needed because the uses of facial recognition are wideranging — from unlocking smartphones to capturing criminals — and

'FOR REAL'

often inaccurate and in

The former Danish finance minister, who is also in charge of enforcing EU competition rules, underlined that AI was a vast subject and that any should be mindful of not punishing smaller innovators, which would only benefit major

Big tech firms familiar to everyday users — such as Facebook or Tencent are mainly from the US or China. Europe meanwhile is seen as a leader on regulation, notably with rules on data privacy that have been widely replicated elsewhere.

But with AI, Vestager said Europe wanted to be a player and not just a sheriff. And if Europe is to develop tech giants, it will

probably be in business services and network infrastructure, and not mass market sites or social media. "If you want to have a say about things that we consider risky then you should be able to do it yourself," she said.

Europe wants to be "sovereign" on AI and protect integrity of our grids, of our infrastructure of our research," she said. But this was not against anyone, she insisted, amid talk of a high tech cold war between the US and China with Europe caught in the middle.

"It's about us, what we would like to be able to do." Other proposals on Wednesday will include a push to make data centres more energy-efficient and be carbon neutral by 2030.

The EU will also offer a voluntary labelling scheme for companies that abide by EU rules and values on AI. "We don't want to regulate anything that starts with A and ends with an I. That doesn't make any sense," said. "But where there is risk, it will be for real.'

Google pulls the plug on its free Wi-Fi scheme

New Delhi, Feb. 17: Tech giant Google on Monday said it has decided to wind down its 'Station' programme globally through 2020, including in India, given that going online has become much easier and cheaper over the last five years.

The US-based company said it is working with its partners to transition existing sites so they can remain useful resources for the community.

Google had launched 'Station' in India in 2015 in partnership with Indian Railways and Railtel to bring fast, free public Wi-Fi to over 400 railway stations in the country by mid-2020.

"But we crossed that number by June 2018 and implemented Station in thousands of other locations around the country partnership with telecommunications companies, ISPs and local authorities. Over time, partners in other countries asked for Station too and we responded accord-Google President (Payments and Next Billion Users) Caesar Sengupta said in a blogpost.

He added that since then, getting online has become much simpler and cheaper and that mobile data plans have become more affordable and mobile connectivity is improving globally.

Apart from India, Station is available in Nigeria, Thailand, Philippines, Mexico, Indo-nesia, Brazil and South

Sengupta cited the example of India, where mobile data per GB is among the cheapest in reports that state mobile data prices have reduced

by 95 per cent in the last 5 vears and Indian users consume close to 10 GB of data, each month on an

"And similar to what the Indian government did, several governments and local entities have kicked off their own initiatives to provide easier, costeffective access to the internet for everyone.

In addition to this changed context, the challenge of varying technical requirements and infrastructure among our partners across countries has also made it difficult for Station to scale and be sustainable, especially for our partners," Sengupta

He added that the company sees greater need and bigger opportunities in making products and teatures tallored t better for the next billion user markets.

'Therefore, we've made the decision to gradually wind down the Station programme through 2020. We are working with our partners to transition existing sites so they can remain useful resources for the community," he said Under its Next Billion

Users initiative, Google has built lite apps (YouTube Go, Google Go and more), offline features YouTube and Maps Offline), as well as country-specific products like Tez (now Google Pay India) and platforms like Android Go to bring lower-cost devices to customers. "Our commitment to supporting the next billion users remains stronger than ever, from continuing our efforts to make the internet work more people...,
Sengupta said.

CHROME EXTENSIONS SECRETLY UPLOADED PRIVATE DATA FROM MILLIONS OF USERS

This latest discovery comes

seven months after a different independent researcher

documented browser extensions that lifted browsing histo

ries from more than 4 million

infected machines. While the

ast majority of installations

affected Chrome users, some Firefox users also got swept up. Nacho Analytics aggregated

the data and openly sold it.

 More than 500 browser extensions downloaded millions of times from Google's Chrome Web Store surreptitiously uploaded private browsing data to attacker-controlled servers, according

• The extensions were part of a long-running malvertising and ad-fraud scheme that was discovered by Independent researcher

 She and researchers from Cisco-owned Duo Security eventually identified 71 Chrome Web Store extensions that had more than 1.7 million installations. After the researchers privately reported their findings to Google, the company identified more than 430 additional extensions. Google has since removed all known exten-

 The extensions were mostly presented as tools that provided various promotion- and advertising-as-a service utilities. In fact, they engaged in ad fraud and malvertising by shuffling infected browsers through a maze of sketchy domains.

 Many of the redirections led to benign ads for products from Macy's, Dell, and Best Buy. What made the scheme malicious and fraudulent was (a) the large volume of ad content (as many as 30 redirects in some cases), (b) the deliberate concealment of most ads from end

users, and (c) the use of the ad redirect streams to send infected browsers to malware and phishing sites.

 Following a long practice, Google didn't identify any of the extensions or domains it found in its own investigation. Computers that had one of the plugins received a popup notification that said it had been "automatically disabled." People who followed a link got a red warning that said: "This extension contains malware."

operating since at least January 2019 and grew rapidly, particularly from March through June. It's possible the operators were active for a much longer period, possibly as early as 2017.

NEW PHONE APP TO HELP TACKLE LOCUST SWARM

London, Feb. Researchers have developed a smartphone app to tackle crop pests, an advance that may help farmers whose lands are being decimated by the ongoing locust outbreak against which the UN has called for "rapid action".

The app called MAE-STRO, described in the journal Scientific Reports, can recognise locusts and grasshopper pests via the smartphone's camera, and record their GPS location.

According to the researchers, including from University of Lincoln in the UK, farmers can use the app to record the location and volume of locusts, and initiate targeted delivery of pesticides to prevent swarms from decimating crops in their path.

They plan to develop a cloud server to which the app data can be swarm's location can be identified in real time.

With such a facility, the scientists hope to employ a targeted

approach for the precise use of pesticides, reducing the magnitude of locust swarms. "Each year, approximately 18 million hectares of land are damaged by locusts grasshoppers, impacting hugely on farmers and their pro-ductivity," said study coauthor Bashir Al-Diri from the University of Lincoln.

The current locust outbreak is the biggest in 26 years in India, beginning late last year in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and also affecting Punjab recently.

"Monitoring tech-niques currently rely on field surveys by people through digging insect eggs, but this information only helps farmers to make mid and longterm forecasting decisions and can delay effective management measures," Al-Diri said. The researchers gath-

ered more than 3,500 images of locusts to train the app, which can also recognise a variety of terrain and plant growth, the study noted. "Our goal is to help farmers identify and record the spread of locusts on their land before they start to develop __air __borne develop swarms. We hope this new app will eventually put more knowledge and more power into the hands of the farmers,

Microsoft sets up engineering hub in Noida

New Delhi, Feb. 17: Microsoft on Monday said it has set up a new development centre in Noida. its third such facility in India, that will serve as an engineering and innovation hub for the company.

announcement comes ahead of the visit of Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella slated for later this month. "The centre will build on Microsoft's commitment to tap India's world-class engineering talent to create solutions for global impact," Microsoft said in a statement. India

Microsoft's of represents strategy of globally shared development to build products and services for driving digital innovation, it added.

"The IDC-NCR will play a critical role in Microsoft India's expansion and growth story. The facility will open opportunities for thousands of engineers, with plans to expand to a full-fledged development centre, similar to IDC facilities in Bengaluru and Hyderabad," the statement

The company, however,

Development Centre (IDC) did not disclose the investment being made for set-

ting up the centre.
The IDC-NCR will be home to the company's engineering teams across tech groups, including Microsoft's AI and Research Group, Cloud and Enterprise Group, and Experience & Devices Group, along with Core Services Engineering and Operations, the statement said. The IDC-NCR will also house Mixer, Microsoft's live streaming gaming platform team, becoming the first centre to host the gaming team outside the company headquarters in Redmond, US. "We have built a strong

engineering presence in India over the past two decades and we are excited to be expanding to Noida," Kurt DelBene, executive vice-president (corporate strategy, core services engineering and opera-tions) and chairman of the IDC advisory board, said.

Rajiv Kumar, managing director at Microsoft India Research and Development, said the centre creates opportunities for engineers to do meaningful work that will have impact

across the world. "We are excited to tap into the engineering talent available in this part of the country to create a truly pioneering organisation that will build innovative solutions for global impact," he added.

Microsoft India Development Centre is one of the company's largest research and development centres outside the Redmond headquarters. Set up in Hyderabad in 1998, IDC drives Microsoft's strategy of globally shared development to build products and

VOLDEMORTING EXPLAINED

In an era, where hashtags and keywords tend to dominate every online conversation, people have started a new trend called Voldermoting

A recent paper by researcher Emily van der Nagel puts a name to the phenomenon of hiding a word in plain sight. She calls it Voldemorting. Van der Nagel traces Voldemorting back to the Harry Potter books, where most characters are too afraid of Voldemort to say the word directly, instead replacing his name with euphemisms like You Know Who and He Who Must Not Be

Voldemorting, van der Nagel says, comes via a comment left by a user named Eugene, who made the connection as part of a discussion about deliberately starving "trash celebrities" of

The internet

practice of

On the internet there's no such thing as a tracing spell, but there's something almost as effective: search algorithms. Plugging a distinctive name into a search box lets us track mentions around the web. I could set up a Google Alert to email me every time a website mentions my name, or simply do a periodic Twitter search for myself or my favorite celebrity, so I can ride to my or their defense if someone says some-

thing negative.

Yet Voldemorting departs from the Harry Potter analogy in one crucial way. You Know Who and He Who Must Not Be Named are a small set of ominous phrases, while internet Voldemorting is often playful and cycles through infinite variations of newly coined words.

> That includes single words for social media sites (birdhell, birbsite, birdworld, faceborg) and elaborate phrases like those found in the Detrumpify browser extension (Manchurian Combover, Empty Popcorn Bag Rotting in the Sun).

It's easy to see why internet-ers have resorted to this strategy. If you complain about an airline on social media, even if you don't fairly good you'll get a reply from a perkily beleaguered social media nanager tasked with searching for mentions of the brand and proactively replying to complaints.

> unwanted attention, it's also a way of marking out a particular name or concept as



Cumberbatch in the past.

attention by not referring to them by name.

language game that developed more and more elaborate synonyms for Benedict

directly @mention them, odds are

Since Voldemorting is often a response to objectionable.



quick

INDICATOR	RS	%
Sensex	41,055.69	-0.49
Nifty 50	12,045.80	-0.56
S&P 500*	3,380.16	0.18
Dollar (₹)	71.33	-0.11
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.92	0.00
Euro (₹)	77.45	-0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	40,809 ▼ 170	-0.41
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	57.32	0.001
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.387	0.018
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.588	0.001
* As of 9:30 pm IST		

RBI gets ₹1.94L cr bids for maiden LTRO auction

The RBI kicked off the maiden long-term reverse repo opera-tion (LTRO) by conducting a three-year issue worth Rs 25,000 crore, for which it received bids of more than Rs 1.94 lakh crore. Deploying an out-of-the-box tool to ensure permanent and deeper liquidity in the system, which hovers over Rs 2.5 lakh crore now, the RBI had on Feb. 6 announced Rs 1 lakh crore of long-term reverse repo operations.

Godrej buys 27-acre rail land in Delhi



Godrej Properties said it has acquired nearly 27 acre land parcel in the national capital for Rs 1,359 crore to develop a luxury housing project. The land parcel, at Ashok Vihar, belonged to the Rail Land Development Authority. The payment for this land will be made in instalments over several years uments. The company will develop a luxury housing project on this 26.58 acre land parcel.

Mistry moves SC; says deserved more relief

Less than a month after the Supreme Court stayed an order reinstating him as Tata Sons chairman. Cvrus Mistry has moved the apex court seeking removal of many anomalies in the NCLAT order, saying his family deserved more relief from the tribunal. Mistry has filed a cross appeal in the court. In the petition, Mistry has described the group's relationship with Tatas as "a quasi-partnership relationship."

Virus fallout: Beijing autoshow postponed

Organisers of China's biggest car show announced the event was the latest to be postponed due to the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus. The Beijing autoshow, which is held every two years, attracted 820,000 people in 2018 from 14 different countries and regions. This year's event was due to take place between April 21 and 30. Organisers said the event would be cancelled to "do a good job of epidemic prevention."

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Sebi circular to prevent Karvy-like incidents soon

ASHWIN J PUNNEN

Securities and Exchange Board of India chairman Ajay Tyagi on Monday said the markets watchdog will soon come out with a circular to prevent Karvy-like incidents in which the broking firm had allegedly misused clients's securities, and asserted that whatever action required will be taken.

We will just wait and see," he said, referring to the dues to be paid by Karvy Broking Services td (KSBL)

As of February 14, Tyagi said the total dues of KSBL stood at Rs 1,189 crore. "Securities held by banks are Rs 511 crore, and the banks have no funds. The total shortfall in securities is Rs 183 crore and funds is Rs 495 crore. So, the shortfall is Rs 678 crore," he noted. In November, the regulator

barred KSBL from taking new brokerage clients after it was found that the brokerage firm had allegedly misused clients' securities to the tune of more than Rs 2,000 crore.

According to Tyagi, the NSE is in correspondence with Karvy and has also served it a notice.

"I have been told that Karvy has informed that they are in one of their companies where term sheet has also been agreed upon...They are claiming that Regulator

they will clear all cleared the outstanding amount by end of norms for regulatory sandbox. It will allow live testing amount involved of new financial in selling that subproducts sidiary is good enough to take care of

for clients and banks. We will just wait and see," Tyagi said. "First priority will be to return the funds and securities of investors. Whatever else

the fund requirements

the process of selling a stake in needs to be done will be done," he added.

He said on Karvy's dispute with lenders, the latter have recourse to proceed in the court of law and that Sebi not really examine whether Karvy repaying banks.

Tyagi was speaking to the media after the Sebi board meeting. The meeting cleared the norms for investment advisers, proposing client level segregation.

The new rule will replace the old system in which the same client could either be on the advisory side or the distribution side.

The regulator also cleared the norms for regulatory sandbox. It will allow live testing of new financial products or services in a controlled environment. The exchanges and market infrastructure institutes have already implemented innovative sandbox.

Sebi also said that there will be enhanced eligibility criteria for registration as investment adviser, including enhanced net and qualification requirement.

Previously, corporate advisers, including individuals who were conducting their business through corporate structures like LLPs, could distribute products and render advisory services to the same client; provided the two services were separated from each other.

Tyagi, whose term ends later this month, said the regulator is actively looking at recategorisation of mid-cap and small-cap stocks for the mutual funds.

To ensure uniformity, Sebi in 2017 issued a list defining largecap, mid-cap and small-cap companies. The list is being prepared once in six months by Amfi in consultation with Sebi and stock exchanges.

■ Says economy slowed rapidly over 2 years

Moody's cuts 2020 growth to 5.4%

NEW DELHI, FEB. 17

Global rating agency Moody's Investors Service, on Monday, cut India's growth forecast to 5.4 per cent for 2020 from 6.6 per cent projected earlier on slower than expected economic recovery.

Moody's growth projections are based on calendar year and as per its estimates, India's GDP grew 5 per cent in 2019.

Moody's peer Fitch Ratings had last month cut the country's GDP growth forecast for 2019-20 fiscal year to 4.6 per cent and said growth would recover to 5.6 per cent in FY21.

In its update on Global Macro Outlook, Moody's said India's economy has decelerated rapidly over the last two years but it expects economic recovery to begin in the current quarter.

We expect any recovery to be slower than we had previously expected. Accordingly, we have revised our growth fore-casts to 5.4 per cent for 2020 and 5.8 per cent for 2021, down from our previous



projections of 6.6 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively," Moody's said.

With a weak economy and depressed credit growth reinforcing each other, Moody's said, "It is difficult to envision a quick turnaround of either, even if economic deceleration may have troughed.

On the fiscal front, it also said that the Union Budget 2020 did not contain a significant distribution. nificant stimulus address the demand slump. "As similar policies in other countries have shown, tax cuts are unlikely to translate into higher consumer and business spending when risk aversion is high," it said.

Expecting an additional easing by the central bank, Moody's said, "If the recent rise in CPI inflation, mainly as a result of higher food prices. is seen to have second-round effects, this would make it more challenging for the central bank to cut interest rates

further." On global growth, Moody's said the coronavirus outbreak has diminished optimism about the prospects of an incipient stabilisation of global growth this year. It expects G-20 economies to grow 2.4 per cent in 2020, a softer rate than last year.

AGR dues mopup could cut FY20 fiscal deficit to 3.5%

■ Bharti, Tata make part payment, Voda Idea to pay

New Delhi, Feb. 17: Finding no leeway, tele-com companies have started the process of paying up the mammoth Rs 1.47 lakh crore adjusted gross revenue (AGR) and spectrum dues to the govern-ment on Monday, with analysts predicting that the huge revenue collection will contain the country's fiscal deficit to 3.5 per cent this fiscal against the Centre's estimate of 3.8 per cent of the GDP.

However, with doubts still persisting about the debt-laden telcos' ability to cough up the entire money by the Supreme Court-set deadline of March 16, the Reserve Bank of India said it is very closely monitoring" the fallout of the crisis on banks.

Finance minister Nrmala Sitharaman said the telecom department has been actively engaging with telecom companies over the issue of statutory dues and she would wait to hear its decision. "I will wait to hear from the department or on behalf of the government from the department, so that we know what is the position that the department wants to take on the matter," she

Vodafone Idea. whose capacity and willingness to pay up was in doubt, however, said it would immediately pay Rs 2,500 crore to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and another Rs 1,000 crore before the end of the week. Vodafone owes about Rs 53,000 crore to the government in dues, interest and penalties.

Bharti Airtel said it paid Rs 10,000 crore to the telecom department towards statutory dues on Monday and will pay the balance after a self-assessment exercise. "The...amount of Rs 10,000 crore has been paid on behalf of Bharti Airtel, Bharti Hexacom, and Telenor," the Sunil Mittal-led company said.

As much as Rs 9,500 crore has been paid on behalf of Bharti Airtel (including Telenor India which merged with the company), and another Rs 500 crore for Bharti Hexacom, it said. As per the government's assessment, Airtel owes nearly Rs 35,586 crore in statutory dues.

Tata Group firm TTSL said it paid Rs 2,197 crore to the government to settle all its outstanding AGR "Tata Teleservces Ltd and Tata Teleservices (Maharashtra) Ltd have

crore to the 2.197Department Telecommunications towards license fee and spectrum usage charges, it said. The government last

made a payment of Rs

week ordered mobile carriers to immediately pay the entire dues after the Supreme Court threatened the companies and officials with contempt proceedings for failing to implement its earlier rul-

In a note SBI Research said the fiscal arithmetic will change significantly after March 16, the date by which telecom companies have to pay their AGR

dues. Of the total Rs 1.47 lakh crore payable by the telcos to the DoT, Rs 92,600 crore is the unpaid licence fee and the rest Rs 55,504 crore is the charges for spectrum usage. "If we assume that the government is able to collect Rs 1.20 lakh crore through AGR dues, the fiscal deficit for FY20 will reduce to 3.5 per cent of GDP," the note said. "However, this will put a question on the amount that the government can raise next year from the telecom sector out of Rs 1.33 lakh crore budgeted, which in turn can impair the fiscal arithmetic of SBI Research

pointed out. In an interview, RBI gov-ernor Shaktikanta Das said the central bank is "very closely monitoring" the issue but so far no red flags have been raised.

"With regard to the impact on the banking sector, we are very closely monitoring it. It all depends on how the companies concerned are able to make the payments and when they are able to make the payments. We are monitoring it," he

- Agencies

Govt may stop sops for services **exports**

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, FEB. 17

government is mulling discontinuation of export incentives under a particular scheme to the services sector. The government move came after a review which showed the incentive that scheme has not helped India increase shipments positively.

"So, I am proposing that from the earliest opportunity, we should discontinue this Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS) in its current form. It has not helped us to increase our exports positively. The industry has to get out of the mindset of subsidies as they are detrimental to India's long-term interests, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal told the media at an event here.

Generally, the foreign trade policy provides tax incentives under the SEIS scheme to several services industries. Depending on the nature of services, the government gives duty credit scrips, or certificates. The scheme offers reward at 5 per cent or 7 per cent of net foreign exchange earned.

Citing an example, the minister, however, said, "We now give subsidies on services exports. I have gone through the list in great details, barely 2,200 companies take that subsidy. Some of them are such large names, making thousands of crores of rupees of profit."

JSW buys GMR Energy's thermal plant in Kamalanga for ₹5,320 cr

New Delhi, Feb. Billionaire Sajjan Jindal-led JSW Energy on Monday said it will buy GMR Energy Ltd's 1,050 MW thermal power plant in Odisha for Rs 5,321

JSW Energy signed a share purchase agreement to acquire 100 per cent of GMR Kamalanga Energy Ltd, which owns and operates a 1,050 MW (3x350 MW) thermal power plant in Odisha, for Rs 5,321 crore (subject to working capital and other adjustments), the company said in a statement.

"Post-acquisition, the total installed power generation capacity of the company will increase to 5,609 MW," it said.

The buyout will expand JSW Energy's presence in the eastern region of the country and further diversify its fuel mix and offtake arrangements.

The transaction is subject to customary regulatory and other approvals for its completion. Of the Rs 5,321-crore



enterprise value of GKEL, JSW Energy will pay the promoters Rs 755 crore in upfront cash and another Rs 615 crore on achieving different milestones. The balance Rs 3,951 crore is on account of GKEL's debt that JSW Energy is taking

GMR Kamalanga Energy Ltd (GKEL), a subsidiary of GMR Energy, owns and operates three units of 350 MW at Dhenkanal in

JSW Energy, as part of its strategy for expansion and consolidation in the power sector, has been scouting for strategic assets. "Consequent to the acqui-

chips deteriorating further. Oil PSUs were also trend-

ing down because of crude

The deal is subject to the

approval of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and GKEL lenders. Also, Haryana, which buys power from Kamalanga, has to approve

agreement.

GKEL had a revenue of Rs 2,195 crore in FY2019.

It sells 263 MW of electricity generated to Odisha for Rs 3.11 per unit and another 283 MW to Bihar at Rs 3.39 a unit. To Haryana, it sells 334 MW at Rs 2.89

sition, GKEL will be a 100 per cent subsidiary of JSW Energy," it said.

of the power purchase

per unit.

JSW given immunity from BPSL misdeeds

New Delhi, Feb. 17: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal on Monday gave JSW Steel Ltd immunity from all criminal investigations after its takeover of Bhushan Power & Steel Ltd, whose assets were sought to be attached by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) over alleged bungling by the former management.

A two-member NCLAT bench headed by Justice S J Mukhopadhaya also declared attachment of assets of insolvent Bhushan Power & Steel (BPSL) by the ED as "illegal and without jurisdiction".

JSW Steel had moved the NCLAT seeking to extinguish all present and liabilities account of criminal investigations against BPSL, contending that an contending that an absence of any such pro-tection would jeopardise the feasibility and viability of its resolution plan. JSW Steel had made the

highest bid of Rs 19,700

had in December amended the insolvency law to ringfence a corporate debtor, after its takeover in a bankruptcy auction, from criminal proceedings arising from offences committed by the previous management, the ED argued that immunity is not retrospective in nature and does not cover companies whose resolution plan was approved prior to the law.

The bench rejected ED's contention that recent amendments Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code by the government by inserting section 32A would not apply to JSW retrospectively and said the ordinance was clarificatory in nature and it was "ex facie evident" that it must be made applicable retro-spectively. "We hold that the assets of the corporate debtor (BSPL) of which JSW Steel Ltd is a 'Successful Resolution Applicant' is immune from attachment by the Directorate of Enforcement," the

Oyo reports 5-fold rise in losses

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 17

Hospitality chain Oyo Hotels and Homes' consolidated losses shot up five times in FY19 to \$335 million in FY19, mainly due to its global expan-sion, including into China. But its global revenues too grew multi-fold in the fiscal.

Consolidated losses grew 538 per cent from \$52 million in FY18 to \$335 million in FY19. As a percentage of the consolidated revenues, the losses moved up from 25 per cent to 35 per cent in a year. According to Oyo, losses grew on the back of international expansion, especially because Chinese expansion happened at the fiscal end.
Since China and other

international markets were in development and investment mode, they contributed to 75 per cent, or \$252 million, of the losses for FY19. However, the net loss

percentage came down in the Indian market from 24 per cent to 14 per cent of the revenue, though it went up in absolute terms. In FY19, net loss in the Indian market stood at \$84.56 million against \$ 50.64 million. With the market expan-sion, the consolidated

revenues too grew fourfold from \$211 million to \$951 million in FY19. Indian revenues grew 186 per cent from \$211 mil-lion to \$604 million in one year.

While, India contributed to nearly 63.5 per cent of the consolidated revenue, nearly 36.5 per cent, or \$348 million, was contributed by Oyo's operations outside India, specially China.

PSU stocks getting mauled on bourses

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, FEB. 17

Stocks of public sector undertakings (PSUs) are seeing huge value destruction in 2020, with market participants shorting these stocks in the futures and options segment, holding a view that the government may further bring down its

stake in these companies.

However, the negative

sentiment towards govern-

ment-owned companies has become more obvious

in the last one month, with

quarterly performance of

some of the erstwhile blue

oil prices falling to around \$56-57 a barrel. On Monday shares of ONGC fell below Rs 100 for

the first time and touched a low of 98.85 on the BSE before closing at Rs 99.95, a fall by 3.20 per cent. Another blue-chip, Coal India, fell to a new low of Rs 166.85 and finally closed 3.92 per cent down at Rs 167.85. The market cap of these two erstwhile energy giants are now just above Rs 1 lakh crore compared to May 16, 2014 when ONGC



scaled its highest-ever market capitalisation of Rs 3.56 lakh crore and Coal India enjoyed market capitalisation of Rs 2.51 lakh crore in August 2011.

Another erstwhile constituent of the Sensex, BHEL, dropped 3.87 per cent to Rs 34.80 and touched a new all-time low of 34.70.

The market cap of the PSU has now shrunk to Rs MTNL, also a Sensex

company in its heydays, fell 8.14 per cent to Rs 9.48 and its market capitalisation stood at Rs 597.24 crore as it reported a loss of 1,065.34 crore last week. The Nifty CPSE Index fell

huge negative sentiment in the market towards central public sector undertakings. Kishore P Ostwal, chairman and managing director, CNI Research, said, "Despite hefty dividend

announced by companies

take all these stocks out of F&O segment. They are falling due to government's Public sector bank stocks 2.28 per cent, indicating

also fell sharply with Nifty PSU Bank index down 2.96 per cent. The top losers included Bank of Baroda (-4.86 per cent), Punjab National Bank (-4.43 per cent) and Bank of India (-3.49 per cent).

like GAIL (Rs 6.40 per share) and Oil India (Rs 9

per share), stocks are being

shorted by traders as they

are also traded in the

futures and options seg-

ment. Government should

24 killed in church attack

Ouagadougou: Gunmen have killed 24 people and wounded 18 in an attack on a Protestant church in a village in northern Burkina Faso.

officials said Monday. In a separate incident, five Burkinabe soldiers in the troubled region were killed by a roadside, security sources said. A group of "armed terrorists" raided the village of Pansi, in Yagha province, "and attacked the peaceful local population after having identified them and separated them from non-residents", Governor Colonel Salfo Kabore said in a statement. The assault occurred on Sunday during a weekly service at a Protestant church, security officials said. "The provisional toll is 24 killed, including the pastor... 18 wounded and individuals who were kid-

Arrests reveal shocking plot

napped," Kabore said.

there for safety.

A resident of nearby Sebba said Pansi villagers had fled

Berlin: Members of a German extreme right group arrested last week were believed to have been plotting "shocking" large-scale attacks on mosques similar to the ones carried out in New Zealand last year, the government said on Monday. Officials said that investiga-tions into 12 men, detained in police raids across Germany on Friday, had indicated they planned major attacks, following media reports over the weekend the group aimed to launch several simultaneous masscasualty assaults on Muslims during prayers. "It"s shocking what has been revealed here, that there are cells here that appear to have become radicalised in such a short space of time," interior ministry spokesman Bjoern

Indian taxi driver saves elderly lady

Gruenewaelder said.

New York: An alert Indianorigin taxi driver in California has saved an elderly woman from being scammed out of \$25,000, prompting police to declare that he deserved a 'great

citizen award'. Raj Singh, the owner of Roseville Cab, picked up a 92-year-old woman who mentioned that she was headed to a bank to withdraw a large sum of money to settle an Internal Revenue Service debt, 'reports said. Singh, who picked her up two weeks ago, said this sounded very suspicious to him so he told her it may be a scam. He took her to the Roseville Police Station and asked an officer to speak with her. The officer convinced her that it was a scam. Officers gave Singh a \$50 gift card to thank him

22 DEAD IN CAMEROON MASSACRE

Libreville, Feb. 17: A massacre in an anglophone region of Cameroon left 22 villagers dead including 14 children, the UN said, with an opposition party blaming the killings on

Armed men carried out the bloodshed on Friday in the village of Ntumbo in the Northwest region, James Nunan, a local official of humanitarian coordination agency OCHA, said. "The victims included a pregnant woman and 14 children," Nunan said. Nine of the children were less than five years old. Eleven of the children were girls, said Nunan.

Separatists in the region have been fighting the Central government for three years. The Movement for the Rebirth of Cameroon, one of the countrys two main opposition parties, issued a statement saying: "The dictatorial regime (and) the supreme head of the security and defence forces are chiefly responsible for these crimes.

A key figure in the separatist movement, lawyer Agbor Mballa, in a Facebook post also accused "state defence forces" of carrying out the killings.

The three-year conflict between Anglophone forces seeking to break away from French-speaking Cameroon has claimed more than 3,000 lives and forced more than 700,000 people to flee their

Poll may tighten Khamenei grip

Dubai, Feb. 17: Hardliners are set to tighten control of Iran this week in a parliamentary election stacked in their favour, as the leadership closes ranks in a deepening confrontation

with Washington.
Big gains by security hawks would confirm the political demise of the country's pragmatist politicians, weakened by Washington's decision to quit a 2015 nuclear deal and reimpose sanctions in a move that stifled rapprochement with the

More hardliner seats in the February 21 vote may also hand them another prize — more leeway to campaign for the 2021 contest for president, a job with wide day-to-day control of government. Such wide command of

the power apparatus would open an era in which the elite Revolutionary Guards, already omnipresent in the life of the nation, hold ever greater sway in political, social and economic

of Supreme Ayatollah Ali

hardliners dominate the field, removing moderates and leading conservatives and permitting voters a choice mostly between hardline and low-key conservative candidates loyal to him. "Literally, it is not a race

anymore. Hardliners want the presidency. This is the end of moderation for at least a decade if not more," said an official on condition of anonymity. Like hardliners, conservatives back the ruling

theocracy, but unlike

them support

engagement with the outside world. Faced with little choice, many voters are likely to be focused on bread-andbutter issues, in an economy hurt by US President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" policy

With Iran facing growing isolation and threats of conflict over its nuclear standoff with the US, and growing discontent at home, the turnout is seen as a referendum on the establishment — a potential risk for the authorities. — *Reuters* Their grief etched in stone



Relatives of the 11 Ukrainians, who died in a plane mistakenly shot down by Iran in January, during a ceremony unveiling a memorial stone at the site of the future monument, at the Boryspil International airport outside Kiev on Monday.

Stop backing Syria: Trump

Turkey also calls for Russia to stop backing atrocities by Damascus

Washington, Feb. 17: President Donald Trump has called for Russia to end its support for the Syrian regime's "atrocities" as he expressed US concern over violence in the Idlib region, the White House said on Sunday.

Turkey's foreign minister also pressed his Russian counterpart over the attacks by Damascus on the last rebel-held bastion in the country.

Bashar al-Assad made fresh gains on Sunday as he intensified his assault on the holdout northwestern province of Idlib. In a call with Turkish

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Trump 'expressed concern over the violence in Idlib and... conveyed the United States' desire to see an end to Russia's support for the Assad regime's atroci-

Backed by Russian air power, Syrian President Turkey has 12 observa-tion posts in Idlib as part

of a 2018 deal reached between Ankara and to prevent a Moscow offensive, but Syrian regime forces have pressed ahead regardless.

Four of the Turkish posts are believed to be encircled by Syrian forces, and Ankara has threatened to attack Damascus if they do not retreat by the end of February.
"I stressed that the attacks in Idlib must stop

establish a lasting cease-

fire that would not be vio-lated," Turkish Foreign Cavusoglu told journalists at the Munich Security

Conference, after he met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Rebel supporter Turkey and Damascus ally Russia have worked closely on

Syria in recent years despite being on opposing sides of the nine-year con-

A Turkish delegation will head to Moscow, after Turkish delegation

Russian officials visited Ankara last weekend but failed to reach a concrete

War monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights on Sunday said regime forces "were in control of all the villages and small towns around Aleppo for the first time since 2012.

Regime forces have for weeks been making gains chipping away at territory held by jihadists. -AFP

to clean power **Abu Dhabi, Feb. 17:** The United Arab Emirates said on Monday it has issued a licence for a reac-

UAE switches

tor at its Barakah nuclear power plant, the first in the Arab world, hailing it as a "new chapter" The UAE has substantial energy reserves, but

with a power-hungry population of 10 million it has made huge investments in developing alternative power sources including solar. "We mark a new chapter in our journey for the development of peaceful nuclear energy with the issuing of the operating license for the first Barakah plant," Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan tweeted. "As we prepare for the next 50 vears to safeguard our needs, our biggest strength is national tal-

The Barakah plant, located on the Gulf coast nation's needs. est of the capital Abu Dhabi, had been due to come online in late 2017 but faced a number of the nuclear plant will eledelays that officials attributed to safety and regional player, building regulatory requirements.

The national nuclear regulator has now given the green light to the first of four reactors at the plant, Hamad al-Kaabi, the UAE representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told a press conference.

Abu Dhabi authorities said in January that the plant would start operat-

No new date was given on Monday but Kaabi indicated it would happen soon. "The full operation of Barakah plant in the near future will con-tribute to the UAE's efforts for development and sustainability," he said, adding that the operator would "undertake a period of commissioning to prepare for commercial

operation" The plant is a regional first — Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, has said it plans to build up to 16 nuclear reactors, but the project has yet to materialise.It is being built by a consortium led by the Korea Electric Power Corporation at a cost of some \$24.4 billion.

When fully operational, the four reactors have the capacity to generate 5,600 megawatts of electricity around 25 percent of the remaining three reactors are almost ready for operation. The UAE also hopes vate its status as a key on its success in establishing itself as a centre for tourism, banking and services.

This is part of the UAE's drive to diversify energy reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and project its image as a regional leader in science and technology," analyst said. one Gulf

Imran: Pak not haven for ultras

Islamabad, Feb. 17: There are no "safe havens" for **8 KILLED IN** "right now", Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Monder Time said on Monday admitting publicly that it was possibly not the case under previous regimes. Addressing an international conference marking 40 years of hosting Afghan refugees in the country, he said Pakistan seeks peace in Afghanistan and instabil-ity in the war-torn neighbouring country was not

in its interest.

Khan's assertion on terror safe havens came as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global anti-money laundering watchdog, began a crucial meeting in Paris where Pakistan is trying to wriggle out of being blacklisted for not doing enough to combat terror financing. The US, India and Afghanistan have long accused Pakistan of providing safe havens to ter-ror groups like the Taliban, the Haqqani network, the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed. "I can tell you there are no safe havens here," Khan said at the conference, also attended by UN Secretary Antonio General Guterres. "Whatever the situation might have been in the past, right now

201CIDE RFV21

Karachi, Feb. 17: A powerful suicide bombing at a religious rally Pakistan's Balochistan province killed at least eight persons including three policemen and injured 23 on Monday according to media reports. The bombing took place during the religious rally at the Quetta Press Club near Shahrah-i-Adalat road.

Several vehicles parked in the vicinity were also impact of the blast, Dawn newspaper reported. The attack came the same day Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who is in Pakistan, termed the improved security situation in Pakistan as "absolutely remarkable".

Afghanistan.' Meanwhile, Guterres also termed the improved security situation in Pakistan as "absolutely remarkable", Dawn News said. He said Pakistan which looked like a "fortress" a few years back had now become a family station for the

world body's staff. -PTI

Race to outrun a regime



Vehicles carrying internally-displaced persons drive through the Syrian town of Atme near the Turkish border towards the city of Afrin on Monday, as people flee advancing regime forces in Idlib and Aleppo provinces.

Ex-UK PM recounts her sticky tape moment

Dubai, Feb. 17: Former British Prime Minister Theresa May said on Monday that early on in her political career, she vowed never to think that being a woman held her

"Don't think that you get something because you're a woman, she told an audience of mostly women at the Global Women's Forum

of state was — well, sticky. May recounted one such moment.

She was on a British Air Force flight, heading to a dinner and having to change into evening attire. There were no changing facilities on board but the staff told her not to worry.

'They took me up into the cockpit, with two pilots there, and I'm thinking 'really'," she said.

"A chap comes along Still, there were times with sticky tape and a when being a woman head sheet, and he sticks it up

behind the pilots and says: 'There you go, you can change behind that'," she said, to laughter and applause from the audi-

May, who became the second female British prime minister in 2016, after Margaret Thatcher, was speaking on stage with the United Arab Emirates ambassador to the United Nations, Lana Nusseibeh.

Nusseibeh shared her own "embarrassing" anecdote, saying that once while trying to keep up with the UAE's foreign minister on the streets of New York, she got her heel stuck in a gutter and it

She did her best to keep up. "Men, frankly, don't run in heels," Nusseibeh

May also spoke about a type of boys-club culture that existed when she first entered the House of Commons as a member of Parliament in the late 1990s, with "a huge emphasis on the men sort of drinking together and getting together into groups.

"Some of the women felt they had to join that, and I didn't,"

May said. "I wanted to do it the way I wanted to do it. So, I did it my way. I was myself and, hey, I was

prime minister. May stepped down as Conservative leader last year, leaving behind a

TRUCE WITH | THE TALIBS

No let-up in attacks even as US, fundamentalists take first steps towards peace

Taliban await fresh order on deal with US

Kabul, Feb. 17: Taliban agreement in principle for fighters attacked Afghan overnight, and militant commanders said on Monday insurgency operations would go ahead until they receive fresh instructions based on a deal with the United States to reduce

there is one thing we

violence in the country.
Last week, a senior US administration official negotiations with

Taliban representatives in

Qatar had resulted in an

a week-long reduction of violence, but the seven-day period had not commenced. The official said the agreement covered all Afghan forces, and would be closely monitored. "Our leadership hasn't conveyed any message

about a ceasefire to us," a Taliban commander in

Helmand, a southern

province that has seen

some of the fiercest fight-

and Nangarhar — two other provinces regarded as strongholds for the Taliban — also said they would continue their attacks as planned.

A Taliban spokesman also issued a statement on Monday saying an Afghan military helicopter had been shot down in Nimroz province, but an official there said the helicopter made an emergency landing and had not been

Commanders in Paktika | FIVE AFGHAN soldiers were killed when Taliban fighters stormed their base in northern

Afghanistan, officials said on Monday, as the country waits for an expected "reduction in violence" before a US-Taliban deal. The attack happened in Shora Khak area of volatile Kunduz province, days after US Defence Secretary Mark Esper said an agreement with the Taliban was in place

attacked.

Despite the violence on the ground, a senior Taliban leader in Doha February in a ceremony" in Doha. Mawlavi Abdul Salam confirmed a deal with the

free 1,000 of theirs." United States is set to be signed by the end of

"signing

Hanafi, deputy chief of the Taliban's Doha office, was quoted as saying:
"Soon after signing the
peace accord, the United
States will release 5,000 of our prisoners and we will

Successful implementation of the deal would move the United States closer to a further drawdown of troop levels in Afghanistan, meeting an objective for US President Donald Trump, who has

vowed to stop the "endless tion in November.

There remains a long way to go to a peace settle ment and end to the nearly two-decade-old U.S. military presence that began shortly after the 9/11 attacks by al Qaeda. U.S. officials have been clear that the 13,000 U.S. troops will be cut to about 8,600 this year, with or without a

withdrawal deal. — Reuters IN BRIEF

Virus preventable, says health official

Beijing: The novel coronavirus that has killed more than 1,700 people in China is "preventable and treatable", an official from the country's National Health Commission said on Monday. Guo Yanhong, a hospital administration supervisor at the commission, made the remarks at a daily press con-ference, in which she also said the percentage of infected patients in virus epicentre

Taiwan embraces

Wuhan who are critically ill had dropped to 18 per cent

now from 38 per cent at the beginning of the outbreak.

cute mascots

Taipei: While China deploys stern communist slogans in its battle against a deadly new coronavirus, democratic Taiwan has embraced cuddly mascots and humour to ease public anxiety and educate on best practices. Images of cute animals have featured in daily social media updates from government agencies to tackle disinformation and prevent the spread of infections. The health ministry has deployed a cartoon "spokesdog" — a Shiba Inu called Zongchai — that has proved a hit with hashtags of his name going viral and posts shared thousands of times. Recent contributions have included advice on hygiene and quarantine regulations as well as reminding people to use face masks judiciously given the ongoing shortages since the new virus exploded in China. "Leave face masks for those who need them. frequently wash your hands with soap, reduce touching

WHO experts join field inspections

eyes, nose and mouth with hands," read one update.

Beijing: Top WHO experts, including from the US, have joined the fight against the novel coronavirus in China that has claimed 1,770 lives, as Beijing stepped up its efforts by deploying 30,000 more medical staff in the wo-rst-affected Wuhan city to contain the spread of the epidemic. China's National Hea-Ith Commission (NHC) said on Monday that 105 people died of the virus on Sunday while 2.048 new cases of infection have been confirmed, taking the total number of COVID-19 infected cases to 70.548, the state run Xinhua news agency reported. Of the new deaths, 100 were reoorted from the central Hub ei province, three in the central Henan province, and two in the southern Guangdong province. The efforts to combat coronavirus picked up pace with the global experts mobilised by the WHO joining hands with their Chinese counterparts. China has con-

RUSSIAN WHO FLED SENT BACK TO HOSPITAL

firmed that the WHO team reportedly comprising 12 members includes experts

from Washington.

from the US, a major demand

Saint Petersburg, Feb. 17: A court in Saint Petersburg on Monday ordered a woman to be forcibly returned to coronavirus quarantine in hospital after she broke out and went home.

The city's Botkin hospital filed a highly unusual request for a court order to hospitalise 33-year-old Alla Ilyina after she posted on social media about breaking out of her isolation room, complaining of inedible food and a lack of necessities such as shampoo. The court ruled in favour of her "forced ho-spitalisation" which it said must be carried out immediately. Court bailiffs escorted her to an ambulance after the hearing, local television showed.

Ilyina had visited the Chinese resort island of Hainan, returning by plane on February 1. A few days after returning she developed a slight temperature and sore throat. Doctors diagnosed her with "acute virus illness" that they suspected could

be the new coronavirus. She was placed in 14-day quarantine on February 6 but fled a day later, according to the local health watchdog. She post-ed Instagram videos giving details of her escape method and detailing complaints over bland food and lack of fresh air. The hospital's chief doctor responded by filing legal action to return Ilyina. She has to stay in hospital until at least February 19 and must receive two negative test results before

With 105 new deaths, toll at 1,770

2,048 fresh cases confirmed, total number of those infected rises to 70,548

Beijing, Feb. 17: China reported 105 new deaths due to the new coronavirus on Monday, pushing the overall death toll to 1,770, as officials announced stringent measures such as closing non-essential public venues and traffic restrictions to control the epidemic in the worst-hit Hubei province.

The National Health Commission said 2,048 new cases of the virus have been confirmed, taking total number of COVID-19 infected cases to 70,548, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Of the new deaths, 100 were from Hubei Province, three in Henan, and two in Guangdong. Though 10,844 people had been discharged from hospitals after recovery, the commission said in its daily report said that 7,264 people were still suspected to be infected by the deadly virus.

By Sunday, 57 confirmed cases including one death had been reported from Hong Kong, 10 in Macao, and 20 in Taiwan, including one death.

Hubei, where 18 cities with over 50 million people are under lockdown since January 23, announced a slew of more stringent measures to control the epidemic, including enforcing province-wide traffic restrictions on all non-emergency vehicles and closing all non-essential public venues. A circular by the provincial government said the health screening campaign should be strengthened and no one should be missed. Also, companies should not resume production unless allowed by loc-al authorities. Those that have resumed work, including public institutions, should follow strict prevention measures. The measures came as the situation remains "grave", the cir-cular added. On Sunday, the commission announced a drop in new cases, suggesting that epidemic control measures were taking effect. — PTI

IN WUHAN, the epicentre of the epidemic, the proportion of severe cases among the confirmed cases fell from a peak of 32.4 per cent on January 28 to 21.6 per cent on February 15.

MI FENG, spokesperson



This photo shows a man (R) who has recovered from the COVID-19 coronavirus infection donating plasma in Lianyungang of China's eastern Jiangsu province.

China asks recovered patients to donate plasma

Beijing, Feb. 17: Chinese health officials Monday recovered from the coronavirus to donate blood so that plasma can be extracted to treat others who are critically ill.

Drugmakers are racing to develop a vaccine and treatment for the epidemic. Plasma from patients who have recovered from a spell of pneumonia triggered by COVID-19 contains antibodies that can help reduce the virus load in critically ill patients, an official from China's National Health Commission told a press briefing Monday.

'I would like to make a call to all cured patients to donate their plasma so that they can bring hope to critically ill patients." said

I WOULD like to make a call to all cured patients to donate their plasma so that they can bring hope to critically ill patients.

GUO YANHONG, head, medical administration department of China's National Health Commission

the NHC's medical administration department. Eleven patients at a hos-

pital in Wuhan — the epi-centre of the disease received plasma infusions last week, said Sun Yanrong, of the Biological Center at the Ministry of Science and Technology.

patient (among

health ministry

positive for the virus but

were allowed to board eva-

cuation flights home. The

Diamond Princess vessel moored in Yokohama near

Tokyo has become the sec-

ond-largest cluster of cor-

onavirus cases outside the epicentre in China.

largely confined to quar-

ters since February 5 with

only brief and occasional

breaks to take air on deck

— with face masks.

Passengers have been

off the bed and walk and the others are all recover-

ing," she said.

The call comes days after China's state-owned medical products maker reported successful results from its trial at Wuhan First People's Hospital.

China National Biotec Group Co. said in a post on its official WeChat account that severely ill patients receiving plasma infusions "improved within 24 hours". "Clinical studies have shown that infusing plasma (from recovered patients) is safe and effective," Sun said. Blood doners will undergo a test to ensure that they are not carrying the virus, said Wang Guigiang, chief phy-

99 more cases found on ship

Beijing likely to postpone annual Parliament session

Beijing, Feb. 17: China is considering a rare move to postpone its annual parliament session scheduled to be held in early March as the country grapples with the coronavirus outbreak that has claimed over 1,700 lives, official media reported on Monday.

The 13th National People's Congress (NPC), the country's top legislature, is due to hold its annual session in Beijing on March 5, according to an official announcement in Decembspread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), the NPC Standing Committee is to discuss postponing this year's NPC plenary session, the state-run China Daily said in a brief report.

If the NPC, which is held every year along with the advisory body Chinese Peoples Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), is postponed, it will be regarded as an unprecedented move. The ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) considers two sessions as Health Commission Guo Yanhong, who heads them) has already been di- ity First Hospital. — AFP er last year. But amid the significant political event death toll to 1,770. — PTI

to adopt its national agenda, including the annual budgets. Together the NPC and the CPPCC have over 5,000 delegates.

China is discouraging large gathering to prevent the spread of the virus. The postponement is reportedly being contemplated as the coronavirus continued its virulent run, though officials say it is slowing down. China reported 105 new deaths due to the coronavirus on Monday,

SHIP OPERATOR

RACES TO TRACK

Phnom Penh, Feb. 17: A US cruise operator is

working to track down hundreds of passengers who disembarked a lux-

ury liner in Cambodia after one traveller was

later diagnosed with the

The Westerdam was at sea for two weeks during which it was barred

from Japan, Guam, the

Philippines, Taiwan and

Thailand over fears it

could be carrying the virus, which originated in

China and has killed

more than 1,700 people.

deadly coronavirus.

PASSENGERS



The public gathering to celebrate Emperor Naruhito's birthday has been cancelled amid fears over the coronavirus outbreak.

Japan Cancels Emperor's B'day

Monday it would cancel a public gathering to celebrate the birthday of new Emperor Naruhito, as fears grow over the spread of the new coronavirus in the country.

"In light of various situations, we have decided to cancel the visit by the general public to the palace for His Majesty's birth-

Tokyo, Feb. 17: Japan said day," the imperial house-Monday it would cancel a hold agency said in a statement a day after the government warning to people to avoid crowds and "non-essential gatherings".

"His Majesty's appearwell as the public signing of the greeting book will be cancelled.

Tokyo, Feb. 17: An additional 99 people have tested positive for coron-**1,716 HEALTH** avirus on a cruise ship off the Japan coast, Japanese media said Monday, citing

new figures from the That would take the total Chengdu (China), Feb. 17: For the first time since the number of positive cases on the Diamond Princess beginning of the outbreto 454. The health minisak, China's National Heatry declined to confirm 1th Commission reported that at least 1,716 health the reports immediately. workers had been infected It was also not clear whether the figures included while treating patients. 14 US citizens who tested This has raised concerns

> tact with the afflicted. Zeng Yixin, deputy director of China's health commission said that infected medical workers comprise 3.8 percent of all who have contracted the virus in China. He told the number would not rise as China was increasing efforts to ensure that supply of protective equipment would be adequate.

> about the capability of the

government to protect the

caregivers in direct con-

14 US evacuees test +ve for virus

tested positive for the new coronavirus were among the more than 300 US citizens and family members evacuated by plane from a quarantined ship in Jap-an, the US State Department said Monday.

The passengers had already disembarked from the Diamond Princess and were preparing to return to the United States on chartered aircraft when US officials were informed 14 of them who had been tested days earlier were positive for COVID-19, it said in a joint statement with the Department of Health and Human Services.
"These individuals were

Washington, Feb. 17: THE PASSENGERS
Fourteen people who had were preparing to were preparing to return to the US when officials were informed 14 of them who were tested days earlier were

> containment area on the evacuation aircraft to isolate them in accordance with standard protocols,'

positive for COVID-19.

"During the flights, these individuals will continue to be isolated from the other passengers." The firrtly at a US Air Force base in California, where all "These individuals were moved to a specialised will undergo $14~{\rm days}^{\rm S}$ undergo $14~{\rm days}^{\rm S}$ -AFF

Cambodia, a staunch ally of Beijing, allowed the ship to dock Thursday at its southern coastal town of Sihanoukville, with authorities carrying out temperature checks on passengers before they left the ship to catch flights home.

But one traveller was stopped late Saturday on arriving in Malaysia after airport staff detected a fever. She was later diagnosed with the coronavirus. The 83-year-old American woman is under observation at a hospital while her husband, 85, is also being monitored. Some 137 passengers from the Westerdam who also took the Malaysia flight with the American have now left on commercial flights

for other destinations. Cruise operator Holland America said late Sunday it was in "close coordination" with Mal-aysian and Cambodian officials alongside experts from the World Health Organisation and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

NATURE'S I FURY Weather agency issues 'danger to life' warning after flooding and high winds

Storm Dennis wreaks havoc in UK, France

Monday began to clear up after Storm Dennis battered the country over the weekend, leading the government's weather agency to issue a rare "danger to life" warning amid widespread flooding and high winds. Hundreds of flood warnings remained in place, including five "severe" warnings around the River Teme in Worcestershire in western England, after more than a month's worth of rain fell in 48 hours in some parts of Britain.

London, Feb 17: Britain on **A RECORD 594 warn**ings and alerts had been put in place, extending from **Scotland's River Tweed** to Cornwall in southwest England.

> A record 594 warnings and alerts had been put in place on Sunday, extending from Scotland's River weed to Cornwall in southwest England, while major incidents were declar-

to flooding.

The storm also battered much of France, with some 20,000 people still without electricity on Monday after suffering power cuts in the northwest of the country and rail traffic disrupted. In south Wales, the government's weather agency issued a rare red warning, saying there was a risk of "significant impacts from flooding" that included a "danger to life from fast flowing water,

ed in South Wales and parts of western England due extensive flooding to property and road closures". erty and road closures".
Pictures circulated on so-

cial media showed the nearby River Taff bursting its banks, while rescue workers rushed to reach people trapped in their homes in Powys. Police said a man in his 60s died after entering River Tawe, north of Swansea, but later clarified that the death was not "linked to the adverse weather". Winds of over 90 miles per hour were recorded in Aberdaron, south Wales.



Members of emergency services check shops on a street in Tenbury Wells, England, on Monday, after the River Teme broke its banks amid Storm Dennis.

ICA office likely in Bengaluru

Mumbai: The Indian Cricketers Association (ICA) is likely to have its office in Bengaluru due to high rent for office space in Mumbai. The ICA, India's firstever players' association formed as per recommendations of the Supreme Court-appointed Lodha panel, was on Sunday granted ₹2 crore by the BCCI to kickstart its operations.

an initial grant of ₹5 crore but got ₹2 crore. The body had been desperately seeking funds ever since its office bearers were elected in October last year. "We are look-

The players' body was seeking

ing to take up space for an office in Bangalore in the next 10-15 days, as Mumbai will be very expensive, and we won't be able to afford office space here," ICA president Ashok Malhotra said after a meeting

The ICA is looking at Bengaluru as an option for having its office also because its treasurer Krishnaswamy is based there. - PTI

Prove, pick T20 spot ABD told

Johannesburg: The retired AB de Villiers will be considered for a place in the South African T20 World Cup squad only if he shows good form and proves himself to be the "best man for the job", says the team's head coach Mark Boucher. Soon after taking charge as South Africa's head coach in December last year, Boucher said he may try to persuade a few recent retirees, including de Villiers, to return to the South Africa squad ahead of the T20 World Cup to be held in Australia in October-November. "He's (de Villiers) a discussion in the media and in the public but he is no discussion for me. I have had chats with him and we will probably know pretty soon what's going to happen with him," Boucher said, adding, "Like I said from day one when took over, if we are going to a World Cup, I would like to have our best players there. If AB is in good form and he is raring to go and he makes himself available for the time we have asked him to be available; if he is the

Aussies brace for

best man for the job, then he

must go." — PTI

frosty reception

Johannesburg: Australian coach Justin Langer and limited-overs captain Aaron Finch said on Monday they were looking forward to playing in front of South African crowds on their first tour since the sandpaper scandal of 2018 Former captain Steve Smith and batsman David Warner, who were both banned for a vear for their role in ball-tampering during the third Test in Cape Town, are both in the team that will play three Twenty20 internationals and three one-day internationals against South Africa, starting with the first T20 game at the Wanderers Stadium on Friday. "We love coming to South Africa," said Langer at the team's arrival press conference. "We've got so many good memories for so long. It was obviously a very hard tour last time but the way our guys have moved on, it gave us a great opportunity to reassess where we're at in Australian cricket,' he added. - AFP

EMBRACE D/N TEST MATCHES, URGES WAUGH

Berlin: Australian legend Steve Waugh has exhorted the modern-day greats to embrace daynight Tests and lauded India for accepting the "challenge" of playing with the pink-ball during their tour Down Under later this vear

Waugh said the experience of playing a day-night Test in Australia is unforgettable "It is great. It is a great opportunity, a great spectacle. One will never forget playing a daynight Test in Australia. It's got a fantastic atmosphere. It is a new challenge and a chance for the greats of this generation to tick that box for them," Waugh said while speaking on the sidelines

of the Laureus Awards ceremo-Waugh, who is a member of the Laureus Academy, said daynight Test contests are good for the game, "If you score a hundred or pick five wickets in a day-night Test, it goes down in the annals of history. It's how you look at it either it is a challenge or too hard. I'm sure India will see it as a challenge. It's good for world cricket and I am glad that India have agreed to

SAINI'S SONG

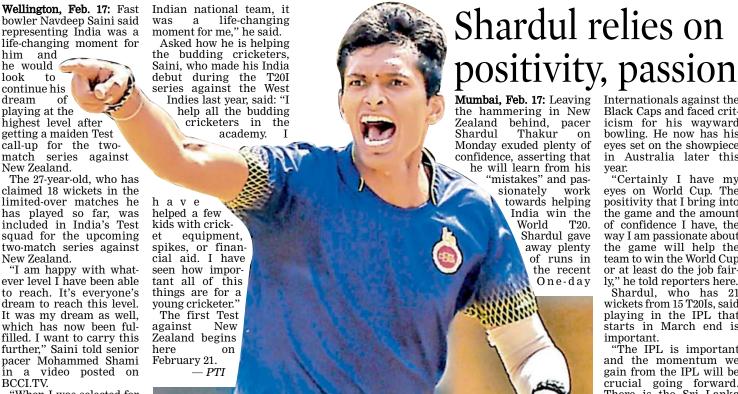
Being in India team life-changing, says speedster

bowler Navdeep Saini said representing India was a life-changing moment for him and he would continue his dream playing at the highest level after getting a maiden Test call-up for the twoseries against New Zealand.

The 27-year-old, who has claimed 18 wickets in the limited-over matches he has played so far, was included in India's Test squad for the upcoming two-match series against New Zealand.

'I am happy with whatever level I have been able to reach. It's everyone's dream to reach this level. It was my dream as well, which has now been fulfilled. I want to carry this further," Saini told senior pacer Mohammed Shami īn a video posted on BCCI.TV.

"When I was selected for the Indian team, it was like a dream come true for me. I started playing at a local level, and then I moved on to Ranji. From there, to become a part of



Internationals against the Black Caps and faced criticism for his wayward bowling. He now has his eyes set on the showpiece in Australia later this

year.

"Certainly I have my eyes on World Cup. The positivity that I bring into the game and the amount of confidence I have, the way I am passionate about the game will help the team to win the World Cup or at least do the job fairly," he told reporters here.

Shardul, who has 21 wickets from 15 T20Is, said playing in the IPL that starts in March end is important.

The IPL is important and the momentum we gain from the IPL will be crucial going forward. There is the Sri Lanka T20s coming up and we are going to Zimbabwe after IPL. Then we are playing Asia Cup going into T20 World Cup," he said. -PTI

Boult back, Patel too in Test team

Wellington, Feb. 17: Fitagain senior pacer Trent Boult has been named in the 13-member New Zealand squad for the first Test against India starting here on Friday.

According to a media release issued by New Zealand Cricket, the 6 feet 8 inch giant pacer Kyle Jamieson, who made his ODI debut against India in the recent series, has also earned his call up in the Test squad, which will have slow left-arm orthodox Ajaz Patel as the only

Boult's comeback is a big boost for the New Zealand side as he missed the entire limited overs leg due to a fractured right hand sustained during the Boxing Day Test against Australia at the MCG. "It's terrific to have

Trent back with us and we're looking forward to the energy and experience he adds to the group alongside his obvious class with the ball in hand," head coach and chief selector Gary Stead

hand, has been included in a pre-series Test squad for the first time. He had replaced injured Lockie Ferguson midway in Australia in December

last year.

"Kyle will offer us a point of difference with the bounce he could extract on what is traditionally a good surface in Wellington," Stead said. Mumbai-born Patel was

chosen over leg-spinner Ish Sodhi because of his consistency. "We're excited to welcome back Ajaz (Patel) who has done a great job for us overseas and has a proven domestic record in New Zealand conditions," the coach

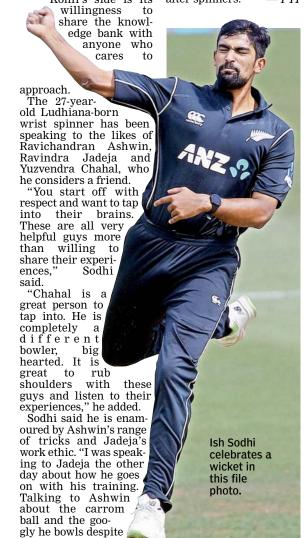
Batting allrounder Daryl Mitchell is also in the squad. THE SQUAD

Zealand: Williamson (captain), Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Kyle Jamieson, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner, BJ Watling.

Ish is all praise for attitude of Indians

Wellington, Feb. 17: New being an off-spinner. It's Zealand spinner Ish Sodhi is in awe of the "crazy" skills that Indian cricketers possess and what has added to the respect he has for Virat mindset when he goes Kohli's side is its

crazy," Sodhi said. It's not just the bowlers that he talks to. Sodhi also tries to understand a bighitter like Rishabh Pant's



New selectors early next month: Lal New Delhi, Feb. 17: The of New Zealand tour," Lal job and that will be our Sulkashana Naik are the said, referring to the ongoing tour, which will tions, how many applicants we will call for the focus. Also, there is no word yet from BCCI on other two members of the Cricket CAC, which has been

Board of Control for Cricket's Committee Advisory (CAC) member Madan Lal says two new selectors will be in office by the time the national team's tour of New Zealand winds up early next month.

Former India cricketers Rudra Pratap Singh and tasked to find replacements for outgoing chairman of selectors MSK Prasad and his fellow panel member Gagan

"We have received a list of 44 applicants and we should have the two selectors appointed by the end

end on March 5 after a two-Test series starting on Friday.

The national selection panel also includes Devang Gandhi, Jatin Paranjpe and Sarandeep Singh, all of who have one more year left in interview is not yet decid-

ed," Lal added.
The applicants include former India pacers Ajit Agarkar and Venkatesh

Prasad among others. 'There are big names in the list but it is not about that. It is about best pick-

ing the right man for the

whether to continue with zonal policy or not," Lal said. Laxman Sivarama-

krishnan, Khurasia and Nayan Mongia are also among those who have applied for the two positions in the panel.



Captains of the competing teams at the Twenty20 Women's World Cup in Australia (from left) Thailand's Sornnarin Tippoch, Stafanie Taylor of West Indies, India's Harmanpreet Kaur, New Zealand's Sophie Devine, Australia's Meg Lanning, England's Heather Knight, Salma Khatun of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka's Chamari Atapattu, Pakistan's Bismah Maroof and South Africa's Dane van Niekerk pose with the World Cup trophy at Taronga Zoo in Sydney on Monday, ahead of the competition that begins on Friday.

Harman banks on youngsters

Says team is buzzing ahead of women's T20 World Cup

captain

Harmanpreet Kaur conceded on Monday but also asserted that her young side has grown substantially to be a top contender for this month's women's T20 World Cup.

Mithali retired from T20 cricket last year while Goswami previously played in the format before the 2018 edition. The average age of India's squad in Australia is 22.8 with Harmanpreet being among the seasoned ones in the team.

"We already miss the experience they share with us, but these young girls and showing their

Sydney, Feb. 17: The void left by legends such as Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami is not easy to fill, Sydney.
The ICC Women's T20

World Cup will open with a mouth-watering clash between India and defending champions and hosts Australia in Adelaide on February 21.

"In the last two years... I've gone from being the youngest one to one of the oldest in the team," she

"They (her teammates) never show us that they're young, they can always do what we expect of them. The team is looking in really good shape and showing what they can do with extra responsibility," she added.

We already miss the experience, but these young girls and showing their talent and ability. In the last two years... I've gone from being the youngest one to one of the oldest in the team

good shape and showing what they can do with extra responsibility. - HARMANPREET **KAUR** Indian women's

The team is looking in

team captain She is still not over the disappointment of missing the ODI world title in 2017 and Harmanpreet said the T20 World Cup

trophy would go a long

way in making up for that debacle. India women came tantalisingly close to winning

the ICC ODI World Cup three years back, losing to hosts England by nine runs in the final.

"Our team is growing day by day, everyone is looking so positive," Harmanpreet said. "It's going to be very big

if we win, I was very surprised at all the reaction from 2017. My parents didn't tell me, they didn't want us to feel the pressure. If we win, it's going to be very big for us. We will try to give our best," she said.

Harmanpreet is well aware of what a long run in an ICC tournament can do for her country.

"Over the last two years, we have already had a few games as part of the Women's T20 Challenge and this year we are looking forward to more," said the aggressive batter, who became the first Indian cricketer to join an overseas league by signing up with Women's Big Bash League side Sydney League side Thunder in 2016.

"If we win the World Cup, there's no doubt things will change. That tournament would bring a lot of confidence to the girls," Harman said.

"If we get a women's IPL that will be really good for us. If we win the World Cup, it's going to be very big for us as a team, so we will try to give our best," she added.

Du Plessis quits as SA's captain

Johannesburg, Feb. 17: Faf du Plessis announced on Monday that he was stepping down as South Africa's cricket captain with immediate effect.

Du Plessis, 35, said he needed to take "a step back" from the captaincy in order to help the emergence of the next generation of leaders under

Quinton de Kock. De Kock led the team in recent one-day and Twenty20 internationals against England while Du Plessis was being rested. It was announced last

month that De Kock would be South Africa's long-term one-day captain but in Monday's statement, Du Plessis said he was also relinquishing the Test and T20 captain-

In a statement issued by Cricket South Africa, Du Plessis said he wanted to concentrate on contributing to the team as a batsman and senior player. Du Plessis captained South Africa in 112

matches across all for-

mats, including 36 Tests.

He said his time away



Faf du Plessis

from cricket since the end of the Test series against England last month had given him "a lot of per-

Back in side

Meanwhile, du Plessis and fast bowler Kagiso Rabada returned to the South African squad for a three-match Twenty20 series against Australia, starting on Friday.— AFP The squad: Quinton de Kock (captain), Temba Bavuma, Faf du Plessis, Bjorn Fortuin, Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Jon-Jon Smuts, Dale Steyn, Pite van Biljon, Rassie van der Dussen

Edmund claims

New York crown

New York: Britain's Kyle Edmund defeated Italy's Andreas Seppi in straight sets to clinch the ATP Tour's New York Open crown on Sunday. Edmund, whose only previous singles title came at the European Open at Antwerp in 2018, cruised to a 7-5, 6-1 victory at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Uniondale, Long Island. The eighth-seeded 25-year-old right-hander wrapped up victory in 1hr 21min, converting the

second of three match points. World number 62 Edmund overwhelmed Seppi with a vastly superior service game, peppering his Italian opponent with 11 aces to Seppi's four with no double faults.

Edmund also put Seppi's erratic serve under pressure, carving out seven break points to take a grip on the match.

Sania returns to

action in Dubai

Dubai: Indian tennis star Sania Mirza will return to action at the ongoing Dubai Open on Wednesday after recovering from a calf injury which had cut short her campaign at the Australia Open in January, Sania will Indian will pair up with her French partner Caroline Garcia and they face Russia's Alla Kudryavtseva and Slovenia's Katarina Srebotnik in the opening round of the women's doubles event on Wednesday. "Quitting off a grand slam tournament due to an injury is a sad experience. Especially, when you are back into the game after a long break. But thanks to my physio Dr. Faisal Hayat Khan (Burjeel Hospital for Advanced Surgery) for mak-

ing me fit for the tournament," she said. Returning to the circuit after a two-year break, Sania's first Grand Slam outing after maternity leave had ended with an early exit after she retired mid-way into her women's doubles first-round match due to a right calf injury. In a dream comeback after the break, Sania and her Ukrainian partner Nadiia Kichenok had claimed the doubles title at the Hobart International — PTI

Williams looks to restore fortunes

London: The once dominant Williams Formula One team will rely on its "fighting spirit" to make progress this season after a catastrophic 2019 campaign which yielded just a single point, team deputy Claire Williams said on Monday Williams - daughter of founder Frank - was speaking as the team unveiled its car for the upcoming season, the FW43. which is an evolution of last term's car

Featuring a significantly revised livery of red, white and blue. Williams claims that "this year marks a fresh start for the team" following the worst campaign in their history. "We have spent time addressing our areas of weakness and have ensured that we have the right people, structures, procedures and resource in place to deliver competitive race cars. The fighting spirit is still very much alive,"said Williams. — AFP

PARINCE VALIANT IS FAVOURITE FOR DELHI FEATURE

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 17

Prince Valiant is favourite to win the Blazing Ace North India Derby (Grade III), the feature event at the Delhi races on Tuesday. The first race will begin at 1.30 pm.

SELECTIONS

1st race: The Saintly Plate (1400 mts) 1. Hare Ka Sahara, 2. Lodge Keeper, 3. 2nd race: The Ace Divino Plate Div-

1. Miss Blue Fairy, 2. Cash In Hand, 3. 3rd race: The Ace Divino Plate Div-II

(1200 mts) 1. Organic Sword, 2. He Is Sexy, 3. Niche Diamond

4th race: The Ace Group Cup (1200

1. Kaftan, 2. Vedagarbha, 3. Master

5th race: The Blazing Saddles Cup (1400 mts) 1. Franco, 2. Talented, 3. Rapid Decision 6th race: The Blazing Ace North India Derby (Grade II) (1600 mts) 1. Prince Valiant, 2. Electra, 3. Top

7th race: The Chairman Emeritus Cup 1. Organic, 2. Hope And Glory, 3. Vazra

6th race: The Ace Parkway Plate (1600

1. Imbali, 2. Treasure, 3. Ashwa Maithil Day's best: Franco

KING JAMES RULES

Anthony pulls off a thriller for Team Lebron

Kawhi Leonard stole the show on the floor and Hall of Famer Magic Johnson took centre stage in an emotional pre-game ceremony on a night the NBA paid tribute to the late

Kobe Bryant.
Chicago's favourite son
Anthony Davis sank one
of the two free throws to cap a thrilling fourth quarter and lift Team LeBron to a 157-155 win over Team Giannis in Sunday's 2020 NBA All-Star Game.

Leonard finished with 30 points and seven rebounds and was awarded the new Kobe Bryant MVP award. The trophy was named after the former Los Angeles Laker, who perished along with his daughter Gigi and seven others in a horrific helicopter crash three weeks ago.

"I want to thank Kobe for everything he has done for me, all the long talks and workouts. Thank you," said Leonard, who grew up in Riverside, California east of Los Angeles.

Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 25 points and 11 rebounds to lead Team Giannis who kept the game close right up until the nail-biting fin-

"The guys were taking charges and running back playing defence," said Leonard of the highly competitive All-Star Game which contrasted sharply with Friday's benign Rising Stars game that deteriorated into a slam-dunking contest.

With the score 156-155 and new format dictating that the winner needed to be the first to get to 157



Giannis Antetokounmpo (centre) of Team Giannis looks to pass during the NBA All-Star game against Team LeBron in Chicago on Sunday. Team LeBron won 157-155.

points, Davis went to the line for two shots after being fouled by Team Giannis' Kyle Lowry.

"I told my teammates I was going to go to miss the first one and put more pressure on myself to knock down the second said Davis, who grew up in Chicago.

That's exactly what he did to put a perfect ending on the night which began with another Laker icon Johnson making an emotional speech honouring Bryant in front of a crowd of 20,900 at the United Center in Chicago.

"We'll never see another basketball player quite

like Kobe," said Johnson, who also paid tribute on Sunday to David Stern, the late NBA commissioner. James made his 16th all-star start breaking a tie with Bryant for the most all-time. Bryant holds the record for most all-star MVP awards with four. The league also hon-

oured Bryant by having Team Giannis wear his No. 24 and Team LeBron wear his basketball-play ing daughter's No. 2.

Team LeBron earned \$400,000 in prize money which they donated to the Chicagoland youth charity Chicago Scholars.

Marsielle overhaul Lille 2-1

Paris, Feb. 17: Marseille hit back from a goal down to score twice in two minutes for a 2-1 win at Lille on Sunday which kept Andre Villas-Boas' side comfortably on course for the Champions League.

The victory gave second placed Marseille an 11point lead over Rennes in third spot in French Ligue 1 where champions Paris Saint-Germain still lead the way with a 10point cushion.

Lille stay fourth but are 12 points behind Marseille in the race for the two automatic qualifying places for next season's Champions League.

"We didn't do much in the first half, but in the second we had a lot of intensity and showed aggressiveness,"

Villas-Boas. He added: "We talked at half-time about what we would do if we got a goal. played a decent

Nigerian international Victor Osimhen gave Lille a 51st-minute lead pounconto Jonathan ing Bamba's pass to beat Marseille goalkeeper Steve Mandanda for his 13th goal of the season, the same number as PSG's Brazilian superstar

Neymar. But Marseille were level in the 67th minute when Reinildo turned a header from Valere Germain into his own goal before Argentine striker Dario Benedetto grabbed the winner two minutes later.

A below-par Marseille could even afford the luxury of a missed penalty just on the hour when Lille keeper Mike Maignan saved from Valentin Rongier.

Victory was the perfect way for Marseille to bounce back from Wednesday's French Cup exit at the hands of Lyon.

Lyon's poor league form continued with a 1-1 home draw against Strasbourg at a blustery Groupama Stadium that leaves them languishing in mid-table.

Rudi Garcia's side are 11th on 34 points after a fourth match without a win, one in which the away side struck the post twice late on.

you again on a football

Scott wins, Tiger stumbles home

Los Angeles, Feb. 17: Adam Scott fired a one-under-par 70 on Sunday to win the Genesis Invitational, and this time the Australian's victory at Riviera Country Club is official.

On a day when World No.1 Rory McIlroy fired a two-over-par 73 and tour-nament host Tiger Woods stumbled to a six-over 77 to finish last, Scott countered two bogeys and a double-bogey with five birdies to build an 11-under total of

273.

He finished two strokes

Couth Korea's in front of South Korea's Kang Sung and Americans Scott Brown and Matt

Kuchar, who started the day tied for the lead with Scott and McIlroy, carded a one-over-par 72 while Kang closed with a 69 and Brown fired a 68.

Scott hoisted the trophy at Riviera in 2005, but since the rain-soaked event was shortened to 36 holes he wasn't credited with a US PGA Tour victory.

But this "W" goes in the books as the 2013 Masters champion's 14th US tour title. That goes along with 14 international victories most recently at the Australian

Championship December, where Scott ended a near four-year title drought.

McIlroy's hopes of celebrating his return to world number one with a win were dashed when he sur-rendered four shots in the space of two holes with a triple-bogey at the par-four fifth, followed by a bogey at the sixth.

Adam Scott countered two bogeys and a double-bogey with five birdies and fired a one-under-par 70 to claim victory in the Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club.

The tournament host, Tiger Woods, faltered to a six-over 77 to finish last.

The Northern Ireland star headlined a group of five players sharing fifth place on eight-under 276, where he was joined by Japan's Hideki Matsuyama and Americans Bryson DeChambeau, Max Homa and Joel Dahmen.

Woods's day could hardly have gone worse. Already 15 off the pace to start the day, the 15-time major champion dropped five shots in his last six holes as he stumbled home with

a six-over-par 77.

Overall Woods had seven bogeys and a double-bogey with one birdie and an eagle on the way to an 11over par total of 295 -- 68th and last of the 68 players to

make the cut. Woods went into the week gunning for a record-set-ting 83rd US PGA Tour title, having matched Sam Snead's record of 82 at the Zozo Championship in October.

But Woods came up empty for the 13th time on the course where he played his first PGA Tour event as a 16-year-old.



Adam Scott (right) poses with tournament host Tiger Woods and the trophy after winning the Genesis Invitational in Pacific Palisades, California, on Sunday.

Moussa walks off post racial chants

Madrid, Feb. 17: Porto's Mali international striker Moussa Marega walked off the pitch in disgust after being subjected to a torrent of monkey chants in a stormy Portuguese league game at Vitoria Guimaeres

on Sunday.
The 28-year-old had scored a 60th-minute winner for Porto against his former club which sparked the home fans to aim even more vitriol at the Franceborn player which had started as early as the pre-

match warm-up.
In the 71st minute,
Marega signalled to the bench that he was walking off in protest even though teammates, Porto coach Sergio Conceicao and Vitoria players tried to get him to stay on the pitch.

As he walked off, an angry and upset Marega gave a thumbs-down signal with both gloved hands to the home fans.

He had already been given a yellow card for his goal celebration. Marega played for Vitoria

Guimaeres from 2016-2017 on loan from Porto, scoring 13 goals in 25 games.

Marega later wrote on Instagram after the game, which Porto won 2-1, that tormentors were 'idiots who come to the stadium just to make racist

"And I also thank the referees for not protecting me and for giving me a yellow card because I am defending my skin colour.

"I hope I will never see



The tormentors are idiots who come to the stadium just to make racist chants. And I also thank the referees for not protecting me and for giving me a yellow card because I am defending my skin

- MOUSSA **MAREGA** after being subjected to a torrent of monkey chants in

the Italian League

field. You are a disgrace," he added.

Conceicao blasted the home fans before posting a photo of his player on social media with the message: "We are all Moussa."

'We are completely indignant at what happened. We know the passion that exists at Vitoria and I think that most fans do not recognise themselves in the attitude of other people who insulted Moussa," he added.

Vitoria Guimaraes or the Portuguese football federation were yet to comment on the incident.



Sergei Milinkovic-Savic (centre) of Lazio celebrates after scoring his side's second goal during the Italian league football match against Inter Milan at Rome's Olympic stadium on Sunday, Lazio won 2-1.

Lazio trample Inter Milan

CELTA STRIKE LATE TO

Madrid, Feb. 17: Real Madrid's winning streak

ended when they conceded a late goal to draw 2-2 at

home to Celta Vigo and finish the weekend with

Real manager Zinedine Zidane was philosophi-

"There's nothing to explain, it's just the way

things are, it's football. I'm not worried about it,

but I'm disappointed, as always when you drop two

Barcelona beat third place Getafe on Saturday to

Real had won five straight in La Liga to accelerate

On Sunday they welcomed back Eden Hazard.

who had been out since November. Coach Zinedine

Zidane also recalled his other 100 million euro play-

er Gareth Bale to complete an all-star attack with

open a 10-point gap on the chasing pack. Sevilla could have climbed to third on Sunday but were

held, 2-2, at home by rock-bottom Espanyol.

their lead over Barcelona down to one point.

points at home," he said.

past Barcelona.

Karim Benzema.

Ciro Immobile allowed

the Serie 'A' top scorer to

slot in his 26th goal in 24

Milan, Feb. 17: Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi gave warning his side are ready to fight for their first Serie 'A' title since 2000 after moving into second in Serie 'A' on Sunday, just one point off leaders Juventus after a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Inter Milan.

Juventus reclaimed pole position thanks to Paulo Dybala and Juan Cuadrado's goals as the Turin giants rediscovered their winning form 2-0 at home against

Brescia. Inter Milan dropped from top spot to third three points behind the eight-time reigning champions — after falling to just their second defeat of the season.

"We need to stay humble and focused but I'm sure we will succeed. We have nothing to lose. WE know that Juventus and Inter are two great teams," said Inzaghi. In a fiery clash in the

break with his first Serie

'A' goal for Inter Milan

after his move from

Manchester United. The 34-year-old got his foot to tap-in off a rebound after Thomas Straskosha had cleared Stadio Olimpico defender from former Lazio player Ashley Young broke through just before the Antonio Candreva. A Stefan de Vrij foul on

games this season, five minutes after the break. Sergej Milinkovic-Savic snatched the winner after 69 minutes amid confu-

sion in front of goal. "We gifted Lazio two goals," said Inter coach Antonio Conte as the northerners fell to their second defeat after as they target their sec-ond Scudetto, with a return to Champions League football on the cards for next season. **RONALDO RESTED** In Turin, Argentine forward Dybala curled in a

Lazio extended their

unbeaten run to 19 games

perfect free kick six minutes before the break, shortly after Brescia's Florian Aye was sent off for two yellow cards in quick succession.

Colombian Cuadrado tapped in the second from close range after a Blaise Matuidi cross with 15 minutes to go, to get back winning after two away

We did whay we had to do,"Juventus Maurizio Sarri Cristiano Ronaldo was

rested. but veteran defender Giorgio Chiellini returned after a long injury layoff. The champions did not have it all their own way against Brescia, who stay secondfrom-bottom, points from safety after extending their winless run to nine games.— AFP

Gujrathi remains on top in Prague

Prague: Indian Grand Master Vidit Gujrathi opened up a onepoint lead after posting an impressive win over world's top junior Alireza Firouzja in the fifth round of the Prague Chess Festival's Masters Category here. The 25-year old notched up his third win by outclassing his Iranian opponent in a 24-move Slav exchange late on Sunday. Firouzja, playing with black pieces, underestimated the power of the exchanged

variants and went down without much of a fight. "I am happy with the way the games are going," Gujrathi said after moving to four points from five games.

P. Harikrishna, the other Indian in the 10-player field, held high-er-rated Russian Nikita Vitiugov in 59 moves, to take his tally to two points. Vitiugov and top seed Jan-Krzysztof Duda of Poland are in second spot with three points. — PTI

East Bengal beat Indian Arrows

Mumbai: East Bengal defeated Indian Arrows 3-1 in their I-League game at the iconic Cooperage Stadium here on Monday as the Bengal-based outfit took revenge of their ear-

lier loss. While Jaime Colado (5th minute), Asheer Akhtar (62nd minute) and Lalrindika Ralte (67th minute) scored for East Bengal, Vikram Pratap Singh (54th minute) pulled one back for Arrows, the developmental side of All India Football

Federation. With this game, I-League returned to the Cooperage after three years In the previous match between the two sides, Arrows had got better of East Bengal 1-0. Both the teams started in an aggressive manner and East Bengal took the lead in the fifth minute, as striker Colado slot-

Shuttler Bhagat wins double gold

São Paulo, Brazil: Ace Indian shuttler Pramod Bhagat clinched two gold medals as Indian Para badminton players returned home with a rich haul of 10 medals from Brazil Para **Badminton International** Championships here. World No. 1 Bhagat picked up

the gold medals in men's singles SL3 and men's doubles SL3-SL4 categories along with Manoj Sarkar and, thus accumulated the important ranking points towards the qualification to Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, where Para Badminton will make its debut. The other gold medallist for India was Suhas Lalinakere

Yathiraj, who put up a brilliant performance to succeed in a nail-biting men's singles SL4 final. Yathiraj came back from a game down to shock France's top seed Lucas Mazur 9-21, 21-16, 21-19 in three games.

In men's singles SS6 final, Krishna Nagar too settled for the silver going down to local player Vitor Gonçalves Tavares 18-21, 19-21. — PTI

SRIKANTH, SAINA CHASE OLYMPIC BERTH IN SPAIN

Barcelona: Seasoned Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth will look to keep their Olympic hopes alive when they compete at the \$170,000 Barcelona Spain Masters starting here on

The Indian duo has been inconsistent in 2019 and didn't enjoy a good start to the new year.

While Saina has crossed the first round in only one of the three events in 2020, Srikanth has lost in the opening round in all three tournaments that he has played so far this year. Saina and Srikanth are currently

ranked 18th and 15th respectively, while being placed 22nd and 26th in the 'Race to Tokyo' rankings, which takes into consideration only the points accumulated from the tournaments

played in the last one year. According to the BWF Olympic qualification rules, only two players from each singles category can qualify if their ranking is within the top-16 by April end. Among the Indians, world champion P.V. Sindhu and B. Sai Praneeth and men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have almost secured their berths for the

Tokyo Games. With the Olympic qualification cut-off date ending in April, there are only seven tournaments, including the Barcelona Spain Masters, left in the calender and the Indian duo will have to produce consistent performances to earn a ticket to Tokyo. — PTI

KONERULES AGAIN

Humpy claims her second title in last two months

World rapid champion Koneru Humpy claimed her second title in the last two months by emerging triumphant at the Cairns Cup chess tournament following a draw against compatriot Dronavalli Harika in the ninth and final round here.

Humpy, who was crowned world champion in the last week of December 2019, finished the tournament with 6 points. The icing on the cake is that Humpy would be gaining five ELO rating points (the basis for international rankings) and moving to No. 2 in the world list.

"I am very happy to have won such a strong tournament. It also reminds me that winning the world rapid title was no flash in

the pan," Humpy said.
The 32-year-old Humpy needed only a draw in the last round to at least tie for the first place and be in contention for the top prize. She secured the draw late on Sunday without much difficulty by playing a solid line of Four knights opening against Harika. Humpy received \$45,000

Humpy, who was crowned world champion in the last week of December 2019, finished the tournament with 6 points. The icing on the cake is that **Humpy would be** gaining five ELO rating points and moving to No. 2 in the world list.



Dronavali Harika (left) and Koneru Humpy prior to their ninth round action at the Cairns Cup Chess Tournament in St. Louis on Monday.

for winning the title in what is considered one of the strongest tournaments ever. World champi-on Wenjun Ju finished second with 5.5 points after winning her final round game against Russia's Alexandra Kosteniuk (5 points). Kosteniuk ended fourth in the tournament. Harika finished tied fifth with 4.5

the seventh round. "The match against Alexandra Kosteniuk, which was a long battle in the seventh round was the toughest. It helped me keep my unbeaten record against her in five games," she She is now aiming to do

points. well in the Grand Prix in win over 16-year old Humpy said the toughest Italy in May which is her American Carissa Yip but

match in the event was

against former world

champion Kosteniuk in

next big event. "The next big event is the Grand Prix in Italy this May and then I will be playing in the PSPB tournaments in India," she added.

Humpy, who is leading the FIDE Women's Grand Prix Series right now, aims to qualify for the Candidates scheduled

later this year. Humpy started with a win over 16-year old

suffered a defeat in the second round to Mariya Muzychuk before bouncing back strongly.
She played a solid game

to hold world champion Wenjun Ju and got the better of players like Nana Dzagnidze and Alexandra Kosteniuk.

A victory over Valentina Gunina in the penultimate round helped her pull ahead of the field.

ASIAN WRESTLING | C'SHIP

Bajrang, Vinesh to lead home charge

New Delhi, Feb. 17: Bajrang Punia will look to defend his 65kg freestyle title while Vinesh Phogat will aim to upgrade the Sakg bronze she won in the last edition to gold when the Asian Wrestling Championship begins here

on Tuesday.

The six-day event at the KD Jadhav Wrestling Stadium will act as a platform for the Indian form for the Indian wrestlers to test their skills against the best in Asia ahead of the Tokyo

Olympics.
The championship has been classified as a ranking tournament for the Tokyo Olympics by the United World Wrestling — the global governing body

of the sport.
Besides Punia and Vinesh, who had won a bronze medal each in the World Championships last year, the 30-member India squad will also feature Deepak Punia, Ravi Kumar Dahiya and Olympic medallist Shakshi Malik.

Anshu Malik, Ashu and Sonam Malik are the three voungsters who would look to make a mark in the tour-

The tournament will be played in three categories
— men's freeStyle, Greco-Roman and women's wrestling. The first two days will see Greco-Roman competition, followed by women's wrestling (next two days) and men's freestyle (last two days).

There was initially uncertainty over the parinitially ticipation Pakistani wrestlers and two officials due to political tension but they have been cleared by the governIt is a great opportunity for all of us. We will be playing in front of our home fans. Though to many it might seem as pressure, but I believe it will work as an advan-

— BAJRANG PUNIA, Indian wrestler

ment to take part in the championship.

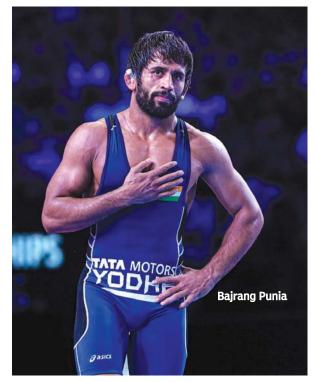
senior

Championship is returning to India after a gap of two years. India last hosted the championship in 2017. In the 2019 edition in Xi'an province of China, India had won 16 medals, includ-

ing the lone gold from Punia in 65kg category. World No. 2 and India's leading medal hope, Punia said, "It is a great opportunity for all of us. We will be playing in front of our home fans. Though to many it might seem as pressure, but I believe it will work as an advantage and I am hopeful that large numbers will be coming in to fill the stands and support us.

Apart from the Indians, there will be a number of top international wrestlers as well, like Kenichiro Fumita, gold medallist at 2019 World Wrestling Championships, Nurislam Sanayev from Kazakhstan in freestyle.

Greco-Roman, wrestlers like Korea's Ryu Han Su (a twotime world champion) and Uzbekistan's Tasmuradov (a five-time Asian Championship gold medallist) will be in action.



Arsenal back into CL contention

London, Feb. 17: Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said he still only wants the best for former employers Manchester City, even though a European ban for the English champions could give the Gunners a route next season's Champions League.

4-0 win Newcastle on Sunday lifted Arsenal up to 10th in the Premier League, but ust six points adrift of Tottenham in fifth.

City's two-season ban handed down by UEFA on Friday means fifth will be enough to secure a Champions League place unless the champions succeed in overturning that sanction at the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Arteta, who left City to

take his first senior managerial role at the Emirates in December, could now be the beneficiary of his former club's punishment. "It's very difficult. I

want the best for Manchester City, the best for Pep (Guardiola) and the players. The only thing I want for them is positive and good things,' said the Spaniard.

"I just want to do for Arsenal the best I can."

SON STRIKES LATE WINNER AT VILLA

Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho also believes City's two-season ban has opened the door for a host of teams to qualify for next season's competi-

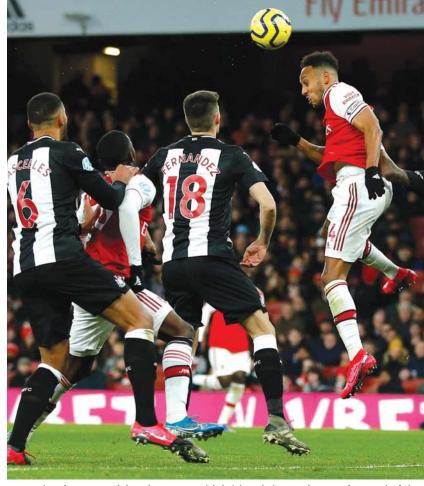
Mourinho's men moved up to fifth in the Premier League — which could be enough to secure Champions League football should City's appeal against the ban fail thanks to Son Heungmin's stoppage time win-ner to beat Aston Villa 3-2 on Sunday.

Spurs are also now just one point behind Mourinho's old club

THE RESULTS

Arsenal (Aubameyang 54, Pepe 57, Ozil 90, Lacazette 90+5) Newcastle

Aston Villa (Alderweireld 9-og, Engels 53) Tottenham (Alderweireld 27, Son 45+2, 90+4)



Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (right) heads home the opening goal of the English Premier League match against Newcastle United at the Emirates Stadium

Stuttering Atletico seek old habits to upset Liverpool

Madrid, Feb. 17: Atletico Madrid might once have relished the challenge of resisting an opponent like Liverpool, but reach-ing the Champions League's quarter-finals will require a performance not yet seen from them this season.

Diego Simeone's side are no longer the same Atletico famed for their inch-perfect defence, relentless work ethic and a knack for grinding down even the most assured, attacking teams. Instead, they are 12 points adrift of leaders Real Madrid in La Liga and last week sat sixth, a reflection of a deflating few months during which their old identity

has blurred and their

esteemed coach been

questioned.

Live on TV

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Atletico Madrid vs Liverpool from 1.30am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Dortmund vs PSG from 1.30am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

When it was pointed out to Simeone on Friday that both of Valencia's goals in their 2-2 draw at Mestalla had come from set-pieces, he said: "We don't have the same characteristics now. Just like we attack differently, we also defend differently." Out of the title race before March and knocked out of the Copa del Rey before the last 16,

Atletico's season is in tatters, with the assumption they will soon depart the Champions League too.

NEYMAR BACK FROM INJURY FOR DORTMUND CLASH

Neymar has been named in the Paris Saint-Germain squad for the last-16 first leg at Dortmund, despite missing the French club's last four games through

injury. He has been struggling with a rib problem.

PSG are yet to reach the Champions League semifinals since being bought by their Qatari owners in 2011, with their run to the last four in 1994-95 still the closest they have come to lifting the European Cup.

'GUARDIOLA TO STICK WITH CITY DESPITE BAN'

London, Feb. 17: Pep Guardiola has told friends he is going to remain as manager of Manchester City even if the appeal against their two-year European football ban is rejected by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), according to media reports on Monday.

The 49-year-old Spaniard is said by The Times to have told both the City board and the players he will be staying despite the sanction and reported interest from champions Juventus.

Guardiola, who has been at City for four years, reportedly told the play-ers of his intention at a meeting on Saturday. "Look, whatever league

we are in, I will still be here," Guardiola told them according to Sky Sports News.
"Even if they put us in

League Two, I will still be here. This is a time for sticking together." He is likely to confirm this at the press confer-

ence on Wednesday following the re-arranged Premier League match with West Ham. The match on February

9 was postponed due to Storm Ciara. The Sun claims the for-

Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager has told friends he is going to at least see out his contract with the club which runs until 2021.

He is old friends with City executives Ferran Soriano and Txiki Begiristain and enjoys an amicable relationship with club Khaldoon al Mubarak.

"He is not the kind of person whose first thought is to leave when things turn bad," sources close to Guardiola told The Daily Telegraph.



VIRUS EFFECT: NO CHINESE

WRESTLERS AT ASIAN MEET

New Delhi, Feb. 17: Chinese wrestlers will not compete in the Asian Championships beginning here on Tuesday as they have not been granted visas by the government due to the novel coronavirus outbreak there, a top official of the national federation said on Monday. Wrestling Federation of India assistant secretary Vinod Tomar said that the government has denied visas to the 40-strong Chinese contingent.

'We have got to know that the government has not granted visas to the Chinese contingent and so they are not taking part in the Championships," Tomar said.

"The world is grappling with the issue of coronavirus and so health of the athletes is the primary concern now. It is understandable why the government has not given visas to them," he added.

He, however, said that the WFI is yet to get a formal communication from the government.

CORONAVIRUS | HAVOC

Tokyo marathon cancels amateur race

Tokyo, Feb. 17: Organisers said on Monday they are cancelling the amateur portion of the Tokyo marathon, affecting around 38,000 runners, on fears about the spread of the new coronavirus in

Japan. "We reached the conclusion that unfortunately it is difficult to organise the event... After several cases (of the virus) were confirmed in Tokyo," the Marathon

Foundation said. The decision will not affect elite runners, including elite wheelchair participants, the organisers said. But they only account for around 200 of the tens of thousands of people who had registered for the

March 1 race.

The cancellation comes after Japanese government officials warned the spread of the virus in the country

entering "a new phase". At least 65 cases have been diagnosed in Japan, excluding hundreds of infections aboard a cruise ship quarantined off the

On Sunday, the health minister warned citizens to avoid large crowds and non-essential gatherings, sparking speculation that the marathon would be cancelled.

A public gathering for the birthday of Emperor Naruhito that was scheduled for February 23 has also been cancelled on virus fears.