SHORT TAKES

#### **C-17 AIRCRAFT TO CARRY MED AID TO CHINA**

New Delhi, Feb. 18: India wil send a C-17 military aircraft to Wuhan on February 20 to evacuate more Indians from the coronavirus-hit Chinese city and also provide medical sup-

plies to China, military sources said on Tuesday. The C-17 Globemaster, the biggest military aircraft in the Air Force, will carry a large consignment of medical supplies to China and bring back more Indians from Wuhan, the epicentre of the coronavirus epidemic, the sources said.

According to the ministry of external affairs, the government till now has evacuated 640 Indians from China by sending Air India planes. Last week, India had announced that it will send

medicines as well as other

medical supplies to China.

Meanwhile, the six Indians infected with the novel coronavirus on board the quarantined cruise ship off the Japanese coast were responding well to the treatment, the Indian embassy here said on Tuesday even as 88 new cases of the deadly disease were reported on the vessel, taking the total number of confirmed

infections to 542.
China's National Health
Commission on Tuesday said
the death toll due to the outbreak climbed to 1,868 on Monday while the total number of confirmed cases jumped to 72,436

#### **OPENNESS TRAIT OF HINDUS: RSS**

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Rash triya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat is learned to have told a group of columnists on Tuesday that "openness" is a characteristic of Hindus and it should be preserved, adding that the community needed to be "awak-ened", but not against anyone. Bhagwat held the day-long

closed-door meeting in Delhi's Chhattarpur area with 70 columnists from across the country in an effort to clear misconceptions about the organisation. Few columnists who were present at the meeting were of the opinion that it was "fruitful discussion" on

wide-ranging topics. "Openness is the characteristic of Hindus, that must be preserved," a columnist quoted Bhagwat as saying.

Underlining that Hindus should be united and alert, Bhagwat said, "Hindus are to be awakened, but not against anyone. They need not to be reactionary. We don't classify anyone. We don't doubt any one," the RSS leader said.

On the CAA and protests against it, Bhagwat reiterated that the law could be disliked or demanded to be changed, but buses cannot be burnt or public property destroyed "That is not democracy. But now they are waving Indian flags, holding the Constitution and even saying 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai'. So who's changing? Who's winning," he asked.

#### **CONG-BJP ROW UNCOVERS** MURDER

**RABINDRA NATH** CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, FEB. 18

Gruesome killing of an 85-year-old woman at a village in Madhya Pradesh allegedly by her own daughter and grandson has been uncovered thanks to the tussle between Opposition BJP and ruling Congress over her death.

The state government sprang to action by ordering the local police to probe death of Jini Bai Uike in Rani Kamat village under Chhindwara district, after former chief minister and BJP national vice-president Shivraj Singh Chouhan tagged a story which appeared in some Hindi dailies narrating how poverty has driven her family members to pack her body in a sack and throw it in the pond since they could not perform her funeral rites, on his Twitter wall.

Jini's body was found on the bank of the village pond on Saturday. The local media quoted the kin of the deceased as saying that they could not afford the "luxury" of per-forming her funeral rites owing to poverty and hence threw her body in the pond.

However, the police probe has revealed that the deceased's daughter Phulbati and her son Panji bundled jinni Bai in a sack when she was alive and threw it in the local water body, considering her as a liability to them.



In this handout photo provided by the ITBP, people who were airlifted from Wuhan following outbreak of the deadly novel cornavirus, stand in a queue to collect release certificates before leaving from the quarantine facility at Chhawla in New Delhi on Tuesday,

### Tourism hit due to coronavirus

G. CHANDRASHEKAR | DC

BENGALURU, FEB. 18

The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID 2019) with its epicentre in China, has led to a drastic dip in the number of trav-ellers from Benglauru International Airport (BIA) to South-East Asian countries particularly Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. A huge number of pas-sengers have cancelled

their trips to stay away from these countries in the vicinity of China where several cases of the virus have been reported. Indigo, Air India and Air Asia are the major aviation companies which provide flights to

these countries.
Vishal Nahar, director of Suraksha Holidays said that there is a dip of about 30 to 40 per cent in bookings to Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Thailand. Tourism arrivals in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Mainland Vietnam, China and Macau will take a significant hit as

■ LARGE NUMBER of passengers have cancelled their trips to stay away from countries particularly Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia and

Singapore INDIGO, AIR INDIA and Air Asia are the major aviation companies

which provide flights to

these countries

dip by 25 to 30 per cent. Flights from Kolkata and Mumbai to China have been stopped com-

pletely. The coronavirus scare has made passengers look to European countries for travel travel and tourism though it is more expen-

sive, he added.
Vishwa Alampur from
Makemytrip, Koramangala told Deccan
Chronicle that there are absolutely no enquiries pertaining to South-East Asian regions due to the spread of the cornon-avirus.

Until the fear subsides, it is tough for the tourism sector to pick up in South-East Asian region,

### Doctor opts to serve in China

A. ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 18

A young plastic surgeon hailing from India had two options before him when the deadly novel coronavirus broke out in China last month. One was to return to his country or stay back and treat COVID-19 hit patients in China, which amounts to waging a battle against coronavirus. As a doctor, chose the second

A video showing Amish Vyas treating patients in the hospital in China went viral on social media. The video published by 'China Global Television Network' television channel stated that a courageous doctor decided to stay in China and provide treatment to victims of the novel coronavirus outbreak, instead of returning back to his country, even after prescome home. Amish Vyas, a native of

Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, is currently living in Hangzhou in Southeast China, with his wife and daughter, and works at a quarantine camp for suspected coronavirus pati--ents. Vyas studied medicine in China, and works as a plastic surgeon, and has been living in Hangzhou since 2014.

In the video, Amish Vyas said, "As a doctor I am not afraid of any infection. Only thing I would like to say to my fellow physicians and surgeons is that we are all one team, and just keep doing what you are doing. We are all together. We are one team all over the

In the same video, his mother, Kavitha Vyas, said "I talk to my son every day. But there is nothing I can do. I am in dilemma now. But it's my

### **OVER 240** RELEASED FROM **QUARANTINE**

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

As many as 248 Indians, mostly students who were evacuated from coronavirus-affected Wuhan area of China were discharged on Tuesday from Indian Army's Manesar quar-antine facility. These people have completed the quarantine period of 14 days and were tested negative for the coronavirus by AIIMS Virology department.

Air India aircraft on January 31 and February 1 had evacuate about 600 people from Wuhan. They were then quarantined in Army's Manesar quarantine facility and ITBP facility in Delhi's Chhawla area.

"All of these 248 persons in the Manesar quarantine facility were declared fit and are being sent back to their homes on Tuesday," said

## China returnee died of renal failure: Govt

### The deceased was running a small restaurant in China

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC PUDUKKOTTAI, FEB. 18

Seeking to put to rest the controversy over the suspected death of a China returnee in Tamil Nadu's Pudukkottai district, allegedly due to the novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) infection, the public health authorities said here on Tuesday that the patient, 42-year-old Sakthikumar, died of renal failure in the wake of him having suffered from jaundice for quite a

long time. Sakthikumar Avudayarkovil near Arantangi in Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu, it may be recalled was entersmall restaurant in China, had recently returned to

**SAKTHIKUMAR** of Pudukkottai district in Tamil Nadu had recently returned home after an attack of jaundice

of jaundice. He was forced

to fly back to China to run his restaurant, following anxieties over lack of sufficient number of people to take care of his eatery there. When his jaundice turned severe, he had no other option but to again

return home on February 4. Subsequently, he was admitted to a private hospital in Madurai on Friday last, but unfortunately died on Saturday, not prising enough to run a responding to treatment, sources in his family said. Clearing the air over the

hikumar's death, amid returnee from being suspicions that he was perhaps the first Indian department's being checked by the health department's Covi-19 victim since his lance. return from China, Dr B Kalaivani, deputy director of public health services, Pudukkottai, told *Deccan Chronicle* over the phone on Tuesday that though the patient had tested negative for the 'nCoV virus',

his village. But as his health condition deteriorated, his family admitted him to a private hospital in Madurai where he died on Saturday, clarified the offi-

he was asked to remain in

To a question, she said the district administration periodically receives the list of people who have returned from China and "there is no chance of But the deceased was

absconding for a few days, which might have given room for speculation in the social media posts. The official further said

her department staff since Monday had put the family members of the deceased on daily surveil-lance, and screening them for any symptoms of nCoV infection.

As many as 118 people in and around Aranthangi area who had returned from China recently are under the daily surveillance of the public health department, added Dr Kalaivani to drive home that nothing was amiss from the health authori-

### China allots \$11.4bn to fight virus

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

With China facing enormous pressure following the disastrous Coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan and other parts of Hubei province, Chinese ambassador Sun Weidong sought to put up a brave face on Tuesday, claiming that "it is easier to shake a mountain than China".

'China's economy is stable and strong like a mountain. The fierce wind could blow down the trees but not the mountain. What I want to say is that it's easier to shake a mountain than China," Sun was quoted by news

The Chinese envoy said China's confidence to deal with the epidemic came

economy, stating, "As the world's second largest economy, our economic strength is the strong material foundation for us to win this battle." He added the Chinese government has allocated more than 80 billion RMB (Renminbe — also known as Chinese Yuan) (USD 11.4billion) for epidemic prevention and control. He added that banks and financial institutions have provided more than 537 billion RMB in credit to fight against the epidemic. epidemic has

brought certain impact on some industries such as transportation, tourism and catering as well as small and medium-sized enterprises. In the short term, the downward pressure on China's economy will increase, but the from the country's strong impact is still local, temporary and limited," Mr darity and expressing Sun was quoted.

Mr Sun said China has taken the most comprehensive and rigorous prevention and control measures to win the battle against coronavirus at the earliest, asserting that the country has sufficient resources and policy tools to cope with economic fluctuations. At the same time, he said that a virus is a "borderless and a common threat to everyone in the world" and joint efforts are required to combat it.

He also said there is no case of infection as of today among the remain-ing Indians in Hubei province, the epicentre of the epidemic, and authorities are taking "good care" of them. The Chinese Ambassador appreciated India for extending soli-

readiness to assist China to deal with the epidemic, but significantly stressed that there should not be any restrictions on trade and movement of people between the two neighbours.

It may be recalled that India had earlier this month barred the entry of foreigners who have visited China on or after January 15, 2020, adding that all "visas issued to Chinese passport-holders including regular (sticker) as well as e-visas issued prior to February 5, 2020, have been suspended with immediate effect.

China has been reeling under coronavirus outbreak triggering global health concerns as well as apprehensions about negative impact on the country's economy.

### Doctor seeks help to get mother's body from China

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, FEB. 18

A doctor from Mumbai has sought help from the Indian government to get his mother's body back from China, which is hit by the coronavirus epidemic.

The body of Rita Mehra is currently at the morgue of Henan Province Provincial Hospital in Zhengzhou, China since Jan. 24.

Dentist Puneet Mehra (35) mentioned that three weeks ago on January 24, while he was returning to Mumbai with his 63-yearold mother Rita Mehra from Australia, she died on board due to heart attack. The Air China flight made an emergency

landing at Zhengzhou brought to India.' Airport and the body was taken to the morgue of the provincial hospital there. Puneet Mehra returned on February 7, but his mother's body is still at

the morgue.

The doctor has written to President Ram Nath Kovind, office of the External Affairs Ministry and the Ambassador of India in Beijing seeking help in getting back the body so that her last rites can be performed here with due respect.

Dr Mehra said, "I am trying hard to get my mother's dead body back, despite writing to the Central government there is still no sign of my mother's dead body being know any develop update in this removes.

In a letter to the family an Indian Embassy official said, "The Chinese government has taken unprecedented measures to control the epidemic, which is not willing to subside so far. In nutshell, it is not normal and an ordinary time that China is facing. The overall situation is extraordinary and completely abnormal necessitating the government to take any conceivable step to contain the spread." The official added, "However, we will try our hardest and hope as well as pray that we succeed. We will let you know any development or update in this regard the

KASHMIR I IMBROGLIO Mehbooba Mufti's daughter says Indian govt should be sued, demands compensation

### Iltija questions detentions, claims bleak future for Kashmir

**DC CORRESPONDENT** NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

Days after former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti was slapped with the Public Safety Act while remaining under detention, her daughter Iltija on Tuesday said she felt Kashmir was looking at a very bleak future. She also indicated the possibility of suing the Central government and demanding compensation

Talking to reporters at the Indian Women's Press Corps here, she said, "I think the government should be sued. We should demand compensation". On

being questioned again, she said, "Where else can we go (but the courts). Who else can we go to?'

Iltija, who also questioned the Internet shutdown in Kashmir for over seven months since the abrogation of Article 370 in August, as well as the continued detention of three former chief ministers, including her mother, said while she was a proud Indian, this was not the country she grew up in. "I am a proud Indian, we are now becoming a Hindu Pakistan. I have full respect for the Prime Minister. Either he is being misled or is wilfully misleading the country".



Womens Press Corps in New Delhi on Tuesday. She further added, "I am not anti-India because I am speaking against the

BJP, my loyalty lies with the country, it is not mortgaged to the BJP. I am not

at all popular. Kashmiris are angry with my mother, I don't claim I represent Kashmiris'

Asked if she saw a future for herself in politics,

Iltija replied that she had no plans as of now, but could not commit about the future. "J&K is a political problem. Wounds need to heal. I am doing this because when history is written, I do not want to be on the wrong side," she

Questioned on the perceived unpopularity of existing politicians like Omar Abdullah, Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, she said just like it was not possible to hold elections in India without the BJP and the Congress, it was not possible to hold elections in J&K without the PDP and National

### Singhvi backs govt on deporting British MP

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

The e-business visa of British MP Debbie Abrahams was revoked for her alleged involvement in anti-Indian activities and the decision to cancel the visa was conveyed to her on February 14 itself, senior officials claimed.

The Congress, meanwhile, backed the governsovereignty ment on this issue on

claimed she was not just an MP but a "Pakistan proxy". Singhvi tweeted, deportation of The Debbie Abrahams by India was indeed necessary, as she is not just an MP, but a Pak proxy known for her clasp with Pak govt and ISI. Every attempt that tries to attack India's must be

Tuesday. Party leader Abhishek "Manu" Singhvi

# **Chronicle**

**19 FEBRUARY 2020** 

### Arms and the woman: Verdict a gamechanger

t is official now. In a momentous judgment on Monday, the Supreme Court directed that women officers of the Indian Army be considered for grant of permanent commission, irrespective of service tenure, as well as for command posts in non-combat areas. Currently, women are being inducted in the Army through a short-service commission that lets them work for up to 14 years. They are only allowed permanent commission in the Army's medical, legal and educational branches. But now they will be considered for permanent commission in all 15 branches of the Army, come April, adjutant general Lt Gen. Ashwani Kumar said in the

Although they have amply proved themselves, female soldiers and trainees have a lot to be grateful for to Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Ajay Rastogi. They comprised the Supreme Court bench that dismissed the government's "sociological" argument of the largely male and rural rank and file of the Army having a mindset not congruent with receiving commands from women as "indefensible" and its "biological" argument of women being supposedly more suited to preparities and congruing representations. being supposedly more suited to parenting and caregiving responsibilities owing to their physiological differences from men as "disturbing" as grounds for their blanket exclusion from all difficult and challenging roles. The court, however, did not rule on deploying women in combat roles, saying a competent authority is needed to decide. Pertinently, the two other wings of the Indian armed forces — the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy de allow women in combat roles and compete twices and combat support roles. Navy — do allow women in combat roles and combat supervisory roles.

With this, the Supreme Court has taken a giant step towards bridging the perception gap between women's capabilities, competences and aspirations and the reality of their often limited role in public life. It has opened the door to far-reaching reforms in policy and governance in all walks of Indian life, where women do daily battle with forces that contrive to cir cumscribe not just their presence but also undermine their efforts, and yet find their contributions discredited or disregarded. For instance, the architect of Delhi's education reforms, Atishi Marlena, did not find a place in the newly-formed state Cabinet even though it was the determined voting by her ilk that brought her government to power and with such a thumping majority. As for parliament, the women's reservation bill, calling for just 33 per cent reservation of seats for members of the sex, is yet to be passed. Women's participation in the national workforce has steadily been declining since 2005 and it fell to 26 per cent in 2018. In agriculture, which is the area of their best contribution in terms of sheer numbers and in which field they are a majority, women find themselves marginalised, not even counted for loans, subsidies and benefits, not only because so few of them own land but also, critically, because they do not conform to the government's idea of the farmer — which is automatically male. But even the service performed by homemakers, cooks and cleaners is not seen as work either, or regarded as lesser work, not worthy of the basic dignity of being considered for regulation or being accorded an income. Clearly, the government needs to look beyond CCTVs and the Ujjwala Yojana if it is serious about meeting the needs of women. And building a freer, fairer,

### J&K: Govt intolerance grows

Tew Delhi's intolerance of criticism — domestic and foreign — of its decision to end Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy in August through a questionable and undemocratic process, and its subsequent oppressive policies, is far from ebbing, as three recent high-profile examples show. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's criticism of India over Kashmir, while addressing the Pakistan Parliament, was dubious. His criticism is undertable the foot before the the backet on Laborite posts. icism is undercut by the fact that he heads an Islamist party. Mr Erdogan also foolishly compared Pakistan's so-called resistance on Kashmir to the Battle of Gallipoli in the First World War where Turkey's heroic resistance threw up Kemal Ataturk as a young military hero, whose mantle and heritage of secularism in an Islamic society the Erdogan regime has tried to destroy. And yet two Indian statements within three days on Mr Erdogan point to a paranoia. British Labour MP Deborah Abrahams was deported from Delhi airport on Monday on shallow technical grounds only as the is from Delhi airport on Monday on shallow technical grounds only as she is a known critic of India on Kashmir. Her Kashmir stance is not always well-founded, but to deny her entry shows a streak of meanness and highlights the desire to look strong by being rough with critics. This does not behove a democracy. At last week's Munich Security Conference, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar was acerbic with US Senator Lindsey Graham, a strong ally of President Trump who Mr Narendra Modi woos, for merely expressing the hope that as a democracy India would deal with the Kashmir issue differently from how the Russians or Chinese might. Earlier, the minister used sharp language against India-origin US Congresswoman Premila al for criticising the government's actions on Kashmir

While individual Western legislators have been sought to be punished, the government has gone all out to gain the approval of foreign parliaments and governments for its actions on Kashmir, which have faced sharp domestic criticism. These the government has sought to quell and disregard.

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# We need to bring civility, make campaigns cleaner



Amitabha Bhattacharya

"why" and ow" of the verdict in the recent Delhi elections being debated endlessly by activists and intellectuals across India. Since poll outcomes depend on many factors, including the performance of the government in power, anticipation and management of perceptions, the credibility and antecedents of candidates

fielded, the manifestoes of the competing parties and the ability of leaders to work for better conversion of votes into seats and anti-incumbency sentiments, any result can be justified with permuta-tions and combinations of such factors. Electoral rhetoric often adds to the

One may argue whether the overall quality of dis-course before polls has improved over the years, the language used has often reached gutter levels, or whether relevant issues are framed for an informed debate or not. but there is little doubt that political pronouncements, promises and even gimmicks follow a predictable pattern and are thus less stimulating to discerning voters. Is it feasible to develop a framework in make the process more informed, nuanced and challenging? Here are a few ideas.

First, to enable a voter

to exercise his/her option conscientiously, the leaders of political parties must first explain clearly the respective roles of the Centre and state governments, pursuant to the demarcation of powers in the Union, State and Concurrent lists of the Constitution, in maintaining peace and in prodevelopment activities in that specific constituency. In an Assembly election, for example, the leaders should explain how, within the powers vested with the state government, health and educational standards have improved, how communal harmony is fostered how activities like road building, construction distribution of piped water supply, creation of irrigation facilities and completion of other public works have undertaken, how local self-governments panchayats and munici palities have empowered, how employ ment opportunities have been created in that constituency, and the like.

The discourse for parliamentary should, for elections instance, focus on how the Centre succeeded in defending the borders, foiling ter rorism, improving relationships with neighbouring countries, handling the contentious citizenship issue and manag ing the economy. Equally critical is how the Centre, through devolution of resources to states, has enabled them to move towards the Millennium Development Goals. In the case of a specific constituency, one can focus on Central institutions set up, now many mues of national highways have been added, how Central funding for various shemes has been utilised. how railway or communications tworks have been expanded,and suchlike. For both Assembly and Lok Sabha polls, the Oposition should try to counter these declarations, rebut allegations made with relevant facts, and explain what they would do, if elected to power

Second, each party needs to concentrate on ideas and performance, against the promises made. Attacking individuals, often via exaggerated allegations of corruption, may attract headlines and even dent a candidate's winning potential, but may not be a good poll strategy. If an individual has indulged in corrupt the best activities, recourse is to take the matter to the courts. On the other hand, deliberations on issues and ideas

organs of the State — the legislature and the judiciary — are not mindlessly undermined. It has been a trend to castigate Parliament or the higher judiciary if the laws through passed process or reasoned judgments delivered by the courts don't suit the requirements ofthe Opposition parties. Admittedly, all of us are entitled to criticise the wisdom of Parliament or of the high courts and the Supreme Court. But serious and orchestrated attempts to malign these institutions, doubting the motives of individuals, may not be in the highest public interest. If a law is enacted, it is binding on all unless invalidated by the highest court. In Parliament, since voting takes place on party lines, the outcome is generally predictable. But in the courts, each judge in a bench exercises his/her discretion. Therefore,

decision, smacks of low self-esteem. Fourth, while using expressions of dissatisfaction, even dismay, shouldn't some restraint be exercised in respect of the chief minister for Assembly polls and the Prime Minister for par-liamentary elections? In election time, some levity is allowed and is even enjoyed by people, but any disdainful reference, especially of a personal nature, directly at a CM or at the PM, who has to maintain an international image, could perhaps be avoided to the extent possible. Civility does not

seeking,

Bench

Finally, can there be a political consensus about some strict "no-go" areas during campaigning -

Can there be a political consensus about some strict 'no-go' areas during campaigning such as any attempt that may encourage divisiveness within the body politic?

such as any attempt that may encourage divisive-ness within the body politic? India's federal spirit thrives on the strength of individual states and their symbiot-ic meletionship with the Third, it is important to ensure that the two other ic relationship with the Centre. In the early days after independence, Jawaharlal Nehru's pub-lic meetings used to be lessons in adult educa-tion. He used to explain the value of freedom and democracy, the need for inter-religious amity, the necessity of getting over the shackles of caste and superstitions, and the strengthening of the Centre-state relationship, in order to build an India, aptly visualised Rabindranath Tagore as "Where the mind is without fear, and the head is held high..." Even then his government had been criticised as dictatorial, 'licence-permit raj". As a matter of fact, governments in the past seven decades were relentlessly lampooned Opposition parties and undermining the decisions of a Constitution public intellectuals. Way back in 1933, the Oxford Union debated and carried the motion "That through the media, to indirectly influence a this House will in no cir-

> Churchill. Therefore, democratic aissent must through, even if allegations may sound exagger ated, preposterous and "manufactured" even and requires to be politically negotiated. That by itself does not constitute an adequate reason for political discourse to remain pitched to a mediocre and predictable level, peppered occasionally by hate speech and muscle-flexing. While the average quality of debate might not have deteriorated over the decades, there are obviously no apparent signs improvement either. Does it behove a maturing democracy? The Supreme Court's recent direction that would discourage the fielding of dubious candidates may turn out to be a gamechanger.

cumstances fight for its

much to the chagrin of many, including Winston

Country"

The writer is a retired IAS officer from the Andhra Pradesh cadre, who has also worked with UNDP and with the private sector

### **SHEER WASTE**

Celebrating Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's birthday by observing Harita Haram is a sheer waste of public money. It seems that nobody in the government nor the plethora of bureaucrats are aware that the right time to plant trees is during the break monsoon season and not February. It shows that politicians and bureaucrats are indulging in *naatak* baazi to show the 'uninformed public' that they care for the environment whereas, in reality they are indulging in populist measures to impress the public as a means of promoting their own interests.

Wg Cdr Satinder Singh (Retd) Secunderabad

#### **WOMEN IN COMMAND**

The SC verdict granting permanent commission to women in the Indian Army is a welcome measure and will prove that services are gender neutral (SC puts Army women in command position, DC, Ech. 19) However the procedure Feb. 18). However, the procedure need not be a fast-track one. We do have women officers in various branches in the military. As a first step, SSC women officers may be given options within a time frame, both for 20 years of pensionable ser vice and promotion to higher ranks. This gives them ample time to take decisions after consulting family members. Equal chances to serve at various places of operations by both men and women officers must be provided.

Wg. Cdr. V. Sundaresan (retd)

Secunderahad

#### **Indo-Pak** amity vital for world peace: Nixon

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18. President Nixon said today that India and Pakistna could contribute to stable peace "if their nation-building surmounts the centrifugal forces that have historically divided the sub-continent, if their economic growth keeps pace with popular demands and if they 50 YEARS AGO IN

Chronicle avert further costlv rivalries

between themselves."

But these are formidable "ifs" he added, in his foreign policy message to the Congress

"We stand ready to help the subcontinent overcome them. These nations' potential contribution to peace it too great for us to do otherwise," the President declared.

In his 40,000 word message to the Congress on "United States policy in the seventies — A new strategy for peace" the President evoked Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of non-violence and

# Jawed

The battles ahead: Can Left build bridges?

fter tense days despite exit polls predicting outright victory for him, Arvind Aam Party did sweep the Delhi polls with 62 seats in the 70-member Assembly. The BJP gained five seats over its previous tally of three, well below its much-advertised expectations of capturing power.

The Congress for the second time scored a duck. Some say it played a weak hand to facilitate Opposition victory. If true, that's the model to defeat Prime Minister Modi's increasingly authoritarian rule. It

eluded the Opposition last year. Mr Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) didn't spare any idiom of hate speech to target Muslim women or the wider popular resistance to his communally framed citizenship law. Delhi thus won a significant victory over the politics of hate. Home minister Amit Shah, the wholesale agent for communal poison he mixes effectively in his electoral strategy, has tried to appear contrite. But the PM's minders in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are adamant that the law to exclude Muslims — a key plank in their proposed Hindu Rashtra — must stay at any cost, and that was exactly what Mr Modi also reiterated at the weekend. Therefore, the battle is on and, in fact, now moves into a more critical phase.

Kejriwal's fine victory was built around his five years of investment in free primary healthcare, spruced up free schools with water and cheap electricity for the underprivileged He did well in taming the BJP without getting involved in its communal vitriol. There is criticism that Kejriwal used religious metaphors in a public show of his reverence for Hindu deities, but he also sang a biblical song used in the civil rights movement. The criticism seems petulant under the circumstances, not the least because the ideal leader of an ideal party to lead the march against Modi does not exist. Previous searches have drawn a blank. Congress promised to sell cow urine in Madhya Pradesh, among other offers, to its imagined or real Hindu voter. The Left has not been untouched by the virus. Its use of religious motifs as cultural icons in West Bengal for decades stand in contrast to its stark failure to popularise its truer ideological plank of scientific temper, not to forget scientific socialism. The result has been telling. Following its rout in West Bengal, a massive chunk of the party cadre walked over to the BJP.

Ironically, it is the Shiv Sena with its baggage of Hindu fascist ideology that has moved to a more reassuring position with Maharashtra chief minister Udhav Thackerav admitting recently that it was a mistake to mix religion with politics. Shiv Sena. of course, cannot suddenly discard its pet reference points, including taking potshots at Pakistan. The rivalry with Raj Thackeray, a former kinsman of the Sena, makes it neces sary for him to keep looking over the shoulders in competitive bigotry. But that's all that the Opposition has

to shape into a winning team. Kejriwal's victory apart, for the bigger challenges ahead, the Opposition appears to be in disarray, mostly for selfish reasons. Elections are due in

Bihar in November and they promise to be a complex proposition. Popular leftist leader Kanhaiya Kumar is already campaigning there for all the secular and democratic causes the Communist Party of India represents. His youthful caravan is routinely targeted by mobs along the dusty journey, and Modi's supporters are not the only suspects. Kanhaiya lost the parliamentary elections in May last year in which he was pitted against two major contending flanks — Lalu Yadav's secular politics and the BJP's rabid communalism. The latter exploited the division and trounced them both. As long as the priceless secular vote continues to be thus split the BJP and its local allies would claim critical advantage, not the least in Bihar.

In fact, after Bihar, until 2024 when Modi faces the next general elections, there are some two-dozen state contests to test his chances. In May 2021, the Opposition gets another chance to tame Modi in West Bengal, Assam and Tamil Nadu, among the major states going to polls. Communist-ruled Kerala also heads for elections around the middle of next year. However, the BJP has found it difficult to breach the state's secular and democratic tradition.

The presence of the Left in the Opposition ranks is always reassuring, particularly in view of its much-liked government in Kerala, which has been outspoken on the citizenship law. However, the Left also brings its own baggage of sectarian priorities that may yet again torpedo chances of a joint campaign against Modi. If the Left cannot find a way of building bridges with Mamata Banerjee for the Assembly elections next year, it should be prepared to accept responsibility for any adverse

By arrangement with **Dawn** 

### **U.S. TO PILE MORE MISERY ON HUAWEI**

Washington, Feb, 18: The Trump administration is considering changing US regulations to allow it to block ship-ments of chips to Huawei Technologies from companies such as Taiwan's TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker, two sources familiar with the matter said.

New restrictions on commerce with China's Huawei are among several options to be considered at high-level U.S. meetings this week and next. The chip proposal has been drafted but its approval is far from certain, one of the sources said.

The measure would be a blow to the world's no. 2 smartphone maker as well as to TSMC, a major producer of chips for Huawei's HiSilicon unit and mobile phone rivals Apple and Qualcomm. "What they're trying to do is make sure that no chips go to Huawei that they can possibly control," the second source said.

Huawei is at the heart of a battle for global technological dominance between the United States and China. The United States is trying to convince allies to exclude its gear from next generation 5G networks on grounds its equipment could be used by China for spying. Huawei has repeatedly denied the claim.

To target global chip sales to Huawei, US authorities would alter the Foreign Direct Product Rule, which subjects some foreign-made goods based on US technology or software to US regulations.

Reuters reported possible changes to that rule in

Under the draft proposal, the US government would force foreign companies that use U.S. chipmaking equipment to seek a US license before supplying Huawei — a major expansion of export control authority that could anger US allies worldwide.



#### **TESLA MAY USE COBALT-FREE BATTERIES**

Beijing, Feb. 18: Tesla is in advanced stages of talks to use batteries from CATL that contain no cobalt — one of the most expensive metals in elec-tric vehicle (EV) batteries — in cars made at its China plant, people familiar with the mat-

Adoption would mark the first time for the US automaker to include so-called lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries in its lineup, as it seeks to lower production costs amid faltering overall EV sales in China.

Tesla has been talking to the Chinese manufacturer for more than a year to supply LFP batteries that will be cheaper than its existing batteries by a "double-digit per-cent," said a person directly involved in the matter, who was not authorized to speak with media and so declined to be identified. Tesla and CATL declined to comment.

EV manufacturers usually nickel-cobalt-aluminum (NCA) or nickel-manganesecobalt (NMC) batteries on passenger vehicles because of their higher energy density, which is critical in determining how far an EV can drive on single charge. To boost the density and safety of its LFP batteries, CATL has been working on its so-called cell-to-pack technology, the people told *Reuters*.

It was not clear to what extent Tesla intends to use LFP batteries but the automaker has no plans to stop using its current NCA batteries, said one of the

Tesla has been ramping up production of its Model 3 cars at its newly built \$2 billion Shanghai plant and cutting prices to win market share from premium conventional automakers – Reuters

# Biohackers are pushing the boundaries even further

Followers of the biohacking movement seek to "upgrade" their bodies

Moscow, Feb. 18: Gripping a scalpel, Vladislav Zaitsev makes an incision in the fold of skin between his client's thumb and index finger and pushes in a small glass cylinder.

Alexei Rautkin, a 24year-old programmer in a hoodie, is having a chip inserted in his hand so he can open the door to his office without swiping a card. "It's something I decided a long time ago,' he savs

"Mainly because it's convenient but there's also a kind of exclusivity, because practically no one else has this.

Rautkin and Zaitsev are among a growing number of Russians interested in biohacking, a global movement whose followers seek to "upgrade" their bodies with experimental technology and DIY health fixes that began in Silicon Valley at the start of the last

decade.
For some, the lifestyle trend involves implanting technology under their

For others — mainly wealthy Russians — the quest is to live longer, which they hope to do through intensive monitoring of their bodies, taking vast quantities of supplements or extreme exer

Although it's unclear how many biohackers there are in Russia, the movement is spreading, with social media forums. conferences and businesses springing up to cater to their needs.

Zaitsev, a programmer with a ducktail haircut, taught himself to insert chips, helped by the fact he's a medical school dropout.

The 28-year-old caught national attention in 2015 by taking the chip out of a Moscow metro pass, dissolving it in acetone and encasing it in silicone before inserting it into the back of his hand.

The disc, about the size of a British one penny coin, is still visible but currently defunct Zaitsev reprogrammed it with bank card details,

only for the bank to close. He also has magnets on his fingertips, mainly for party tricks.

He says the biohacking movement is about using technology to facilitate concrete tasks. "In biohacking, I like things that give a real, confirmed effect, for example putting in chips," he says.

Based on the contact between the close-knit community on social media, he estimates that about 1,000 Russians are chipped. Most install work passes, he says, while some insert magnets or a compass implant that vibrates when they turn north.

expanding the capabilities of the human body." world. Around the implanted microchips are being used to start cars, turn on smartphones, computers and printers, monitor body temperature and store medical information

or as business cards. Professional magicians even use them to enhance their tricks.

Some chips have been approved for human use, but Zaitsev said he uses



Entrepreneur Stanislav Skakun, 36, has his blood taken for analysis at a private clinic in Moscow. He plans to integrate a chip to his body. People seek to "upgrade" their bodies with experimental technology and DIY health fixes. In Russia, the movement is spreading and businesses are springing up to cater to the needs.

veterinary ones made in Taiwan and ordered by mail for about 500 rubles

While some have raised concerns over potential surveillance and hacking, the number of chipped people is still very small in Russia, and unlike smartphones, the chips do not transmit the users' location.

### STUDIO FLAT

SURGERY In his studio flat, Zaitsev charges Rautkin 2,000 rubles (\$32) for the operation to insert the chip that is slightly bigger than a grain of rice.

He has chipped about 50 others, too, he says.

The "typical client is a geek", he adds. "Most are

men aged 35 or younger." Other biohackers have little time for chipping, however. Entrepreneur Stanislav Skakun says that biohacking is about extending life, potentially for thousands of years, an idea known as transhumanism. "I haven't yet found a chip that would be useful for prolonging life... I can't see any point in doing this yet," the 36year-old said.

Instead, he regularly attends a private clinic where nurses fill some 20 test tubes with his blood for analysis.

It's just part of his exhaustive routine over the last five years, measuring hundreds of biochemical markers and taking handfuls of vitamins and supplements daily.
Although he declines to

talk in detail about what he takes, he says the supplements include iodine, Vitamin D, magnesium and prebiotics.

As well as genetic tests to identify personal risk factors and compensate for them, he undergoes tests for inflammation, cholesterol, glucose, bone density, the stress hormone cortisol and the efficiency of his immune system.

#### **MOLECULAR** 'SCISSORS'

Trim with piercing blue eyes, Skakun claims that

He hopes to live long enough to see scientific advances extend life massively. "If we conquer cancer, Alzheimer's and cardiovascular disease, we'll prevent practically all the

Such ideas are espoused British human on France's Jeanne Calment,

died at the age of 122. jumped on breakthroughs in gene therapy, one of the hottest areas of medical research. Controversially, Zayner, who is a scientist, in 2017 livestreamed an experimental attempt to alter his own DNA using new gene editing technology called Crispr.

widely accessible.

But the US Food and Drug Administration has expressed concern about safety risks involved in DIY kits available to the

Kiran Musunuru, genetics professor at the University Pennsylvania, says the Crispr "scissors" often cut next to the targeted gene, causing unexpected

consequences, Musunuru added.

Top US science journal

"in the last five years, my biological age hasn't changed at all."

reasons we die," he said.

by international proponents of transhumanism, such as controversial gerontologist Aubrey de Grey, who believe humans will be able to significantly extend their lifespan and only die from accidents or violence.
Currently the oldest record,

Some biobackers have biohacker Josiah

The tool, informally known as molecular "scissors", is being used to treat genetic conditions, such as sickle cell disease, and has made gene editing more

public for self-administered gene therapies.

mutations. "It's very easy to do if you don't care about the

Science said last July that the tools for public and private regulators to manage biohacking's public health risks were largely already available. "But they must be used better." it said, in an opinion

### 'WISHFUL THINKING'

Skulachev. Maxim Russian biologist Moscow State University who studies longevity, said that biohackers were right to say that ageing may be programmed into our genes and theoretically could be blocked. think ageing was somehow

introduced in our genome as a programme," he said.
"For us the only way to fight ageing is to somehow break this pro-gramme — hack it."

In doing so, this could end age-related conditions and cancer, he said, adding that living to the age of 100 would become the new norm.

Nevertheless, he also predicts that the super-elderly will develop other health problems limiting their lifespan which have not yet even manifested themselves.

The problem with biohackers is they are "running too fast," said Skulachev, 46, whose team is trying to come up with a drug to interfere with the genetic ageing process. "At the moment there is no technology to break this programme and from this point of view... biohackers are engaged in wishful thinking.'

#### **'UPGRADE** YOURSELF'

Yet biohacking in Russia is already "a big move-ment" with conferences and businesses, says Skakun, who formerly in corporate worked finance. Two years ago he founded a startup called Biodata that arranges tests for clients and stores information, charging 150,000 rubles (\$2,430) for a full checkup. Clients are "mainly top managers and Well-heeled patrons are

also paying up to 250,000 rubles (\$4,050) annually for a Moscow gym that calls itself a "biohacking laboratory"

The gym, which opened last year with the slogan "Upgrade Yourself", is on the 58th floor of a skyscraper in the business district. Similarly, members are "company owners or top managers", says founder Artyom Vasilyev. The slim 29-year-old got

into sports science after competing seriously as a runner. On the treadmill, a gym member dons a face mask to analyse the gases in his breath.

Minutes later he gets a breakdown that shows when his workout was most effective. Afterwards, he stands in

a chamber chilled by liquid nitrogen to minus 120 degrees Celsius (minus 184 Fahrenheit), which Vasilyev says aids recovery. For all his enthusiasm. Vasilyev doubts that people will live for hundreds of years any time soon.

T'm more into the idea that you can live 100, 115 years or 120 years but live them in a good-quality Zaitsev, the chipenthusiast, scathing about the quest for longevity, which he calls "a kind of religion" seeking a "magic pill".

A month after the

implantation, Rautkin is using his chipped hand to open doors at his e-com-

merce company. Unfortunately it doesn't work on the main door, but he is philosophical about this. "I am using it quite successfully," he says. "It's not a problem at all to remove it, or leave it for some other use, possibly to identify myself in some other place, maybe to unblock a phone or notebook.

-AFP

# Apple to miss sales target due to coronavirus

Bengaluru/New York, Feb. 18: Apple warned on Monday it was unlikely to meet its March quarter sales guidance set just three weeks ago as the world's most valuable technology firm became one of the biggest corporate casualties of China's coronavirus epidemic.

The rapidly spreading virus has killed nearly 1,900 in China and stricken some 72,000 people, confining millions to their homes, disrupting supply chains and delaying reopening of factories after the extended Lunar New Year holiday break.

Manufacturing facilities in China that produce Apple's iPhone and other electronics have begun to reopen, but they are ramping up more slowly than expected, Apple said. That will fewer iPhones available for sale around the world, making Apple one of the largest Western firms to be hurt by the outbreak.

Some of its retail stores in the country remain closed or are operating at reduced hours, which will hurt sales this quar-ter. China accounted for 15 per cent of Apple's revenue, or \$13.6 billion, last quarter, and supplied 18% of revenue in the year-ago quarter. In late January, Apple

had forecast \$63 billion to \$67 billion in revenue for the quarter ending in March, which it said was a wider than normal range due to the uncertainty created by the virus. It did not offer a new revenue estimate nor provide a profit forecast on Monday.

"The magnitude of this impact to miss its revenue guidance midway through February is clearly worse than feared," Wedbush analyst Daniel Ives wrote in a note.

Apple, worth \$1.4 tril-

lion by market capitalisation, could face a torrid market reaction on Tuesday when Wall Tuesday, when Wall Street reopens after the Presidents Day holiday, analysts said. "If Apple shares were traded cheaply, that might not matter much. But when they are trading at a record high, investors will be surely tempted to sell," said Norihiro Fujito, chief investment strategist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities.

Shares of its Asian suppliers fell on the news, with Samsung Electronics losing 2.4 per cent, Taiwan Semiconductor

Manufacturing (TSMC) down 1.8 per cent and SK Hynix shedding 3.3 per

Analysts have estimated that the virus may slash demand for smartphones by half in the first quarter in China, the world's biggest market for the devices

#### SHORT-TERM IMPACT?

Apple said it will reopen China stores "as steadily and safely as we can," while global supplies of iPhones will be limited as manufacturers toward operating plants at full capacity. It plans to provide more information in April, when it first-quarter releases

Wedbush remained optimistic that Apple would be able to recover from the coronavirus setback.

"While trying to gauge the impact of the iPhone miss and potential bounce back in the June quarter will be front and center for the Street, we remain bullish on Apple for the longer term," Ives

The disruption follows a strong December quarter for iPhone sales, which were up for the first time in a year. That could provide an opening for mobile phone rival Samsung, which has invested in manufacturing capacity in Vietnam and elsewhere.

launched Samsung smartphone delivery services for customers to test its new products this week, as the spread of the virus has prompted the South Korean firm to cancel promotional events and brace for weak store

Apple's contract manufacturers have added far more locations inside China than outside, with major supplier Foxconn expanding from 19 locations in 2015 to 29 in 2019 and another supplier, Pegatron Corp, going from eight to 12 locations, according to data from

Apple. In contrast, Samsung had signaled early in the US-China trade war that it could meet US mobile phone demand without production. Samsung is also far less exposed to China as an end market.

Fiat Chrysler, Hyundai Motor and General Motors have said their auto production lines were, or could be, hit by Chinese factories that are slow to restart because of the virus.

### Samsung poised to benefit from China virus woes

Seoul, Feb. 18: Samsung Electronics stands to be a major beneficiary of the China production problems announced by rival Apple Inc on Monday, reaping the rewards of a decade-long bet on lowcost smartphone manufacturing in Vietnam.

Half of Samsung's smartphones are now made in Vietnam, where the coronavirus that has crippled the China operations of Apple and many other firms has so far had only a limited impact on its production.

Apple said on Monday it would not meet its revenue guidance for the March quarter due to the coronavirus impact on both production and sales in China, where most iPhones are made. Xiaomi last week also flagged a hit to its March quarter sales. Huawei, another major

rival, has not announced any production problems, but Samsung insiders, analysts and suppliers expect it will also be hit hard due to its heavy reliance on Chinese manufacturing and parts. Many Chinese and foreign firms have begun to reopen China factories that were idled for weeks, but shortages of workers and other problems have in many cases kept output to

a minimum. Samsung has also large ly ceded the China market

to its rivals in recent years, meaning it won't suffer from the store closures and drop in demand that is hitting Apple and others. "Samsung is better positioned to weather the virus fallout than its formidable rivals such as Huawei and Apple," a person with knowledge of Samsung's supply chain told *Reuters*. "The virus exposed China risks. We feel fortunate that we were able to escape the risks," he said. Another person familiar with Samsung's thinking told Reuters: "Samsung does not say it publicly. But it is relieved." Still, two sources familiar with Samsung's Vietnam operations cautioned that should the virus outbe Samsung would feel the impact, as the company sources many components from China.

Problems with crossborder shipments also cropped up in the early phases of the virus outbreak Vietnam imposed stricter border controls, according to Hong Sun, vice chairman of Korea Chamber of Business in Vietnam.

Reuters

### JEFF BEZOS PLEDGES \$10 BILLION TO CLIMATE CHANGE FIGHT

to fund scientists, activists, nonprofits and other groups fighting to protect the environment and counter the effects of climate change, he said on

• Bezos, the world's richest man, is among a growing list of billionaires to dedicate substantial funds to battling the impact of global warming.

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos will commit \$10 billion

 The Bezos Earth Fund will begin issuing grants this summer as part of the initiative.

 Counteracting climate change has become a popular cause for U.S. billionaires in recent years, with Microsoft's Bill Gates, Michael Bloomberg and hedge fund manager Tom Steyer counted among the world's wealthiest environmental philanthropists. • Last year, Bezos pledged to make online retailer Amazon net carbon neutral by 2040 and to buy 100,000 electric delivery vehicles from U.S. vehicle design and manufacturing startup Rivian Automotive LLC.

Cutting emissions will be challenging for Amazon.

The e-commerce company delivers 10 billion items a

year, has a massive transportation and data center

footprint, and has faced criticism from within its own

Bezos also said at the time that Amazon would meet the goals of the Paris climate accord 10 years ahead of the accord's schedule and invest \$100 million to restore forests wetlands.

 Amazon workers were among hundreds of employees of big technology companies to join climate-change marches in San Francisco and Seattle late last year, saying their employers had been too slow to tackle global warming and needed to take more drastic action.

 Amazon Employees for Climate Justice, an activist workers group, welcomed the Bezos Earth Fund announcement, but said it did not make up for the company's consumption of fossil fuels and other activities that contribute to climate change.



IN BRIEF

#### **UK PM, wife reach** divorce settlement

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his estranged wife Marina Wheeler have reached a financial agreement for their divorce, court records showed on Tuesday. Lawyers for Johnson and Wheeler attended a brief private hearing at the Central Family Court in London. Judge Sarah Gibbons barred the media from reporting financial details of the settlement. The judge gave Wheeler permission to apply for a divorce decree that will formally end the couples marriage. Johnson and Wheeler, a lawyer, married in 1993 and have four children. They announced in September 2018 that they had separated and planned to divorce. Johnson, 55, now lives with 31-year-old partner Carrie Symonds in the prime ministers official residence, 10 **Downing Street** 

#### **Justice for Mehek** gains momentum

**London:** A group of human rights activists and Indian diaspora representatives have been staging protests outside the Pakistan High Commission here as part of a 'Justice for Mehek Kumari' campaign, a minor Hindu girl who was abducted and forcibly converted to Islam in Pakistan. The campaign has called for protests on social media since Sunday and gathered outside the Pakistan mission in central London with placards reading 'Stand up for Human Rights'. "We are here in sup-port of Mehek Kumari," said one protester. Kumari, 14, was reportedly abducted last month by a man in the Jacobabad district of Sindh province in Pakistan. She has claimed being forcibly converted to Islam, leading to radical clerics issuing a death sentence against her.

#### **Ex-coast guard** chief charged

Seoul: A former South Korean coast guard chief was indicted Tuesday for allegedly bungling rescue operations at one of the country's deadliest maritime disasters, when more than 300 people were killed, most of them schoolchildren. The 6,825-tonne Sewol capsized off the south coast in April 2014, and many of the students — who were on a school trip — obeyed orders stay in their cahins as the vessel slowly sank. The disaster triggered intense public fury when it emerged then-president Park Geunhye was uncontactable for several hours as the disaster unfolded. Kim Suk-kyoon. who led the coast guard at the time of the accident, was indicted on accusations of "professional negligence resulting in death" for failing to take necessary rescue action, said a prosecution representative. He is the most senior official to face criminal trial over the sinking, but another 10 current and former coast quard officers were also indicted on the same charges. Sewol's

### **SEARCH ON FOR MISSING MIGRANTS**

captain Lee Joon-seok was

murder in 2015.

convicted of negligence and

Barcelona, Feb. 18: Spain on Tuesday was searching for some 143 people missing on five migrant boats en route to the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, according to Spain's maritime rescue serv-

A Civil Guard plane was searching for the boats near the islands of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, off the northwest coast of Africa, the service said. Authorities were alerted about the missing boats on Monday afternoon.

Helena Maleno, of the human rights group Walking Borders, told reporters the migrants, including women and children, are believed to have departed from the northwest coast of Africa between Friday and Saturday.

Although the total number of sea crossings to Spain decreased by more than 50% in 2019, arrivals via the dangerous Atlantic route to the Canary Islands doubled.

According International Organization for Migration at least 210 people died on that route last year.

**Breaking bread** 



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (C) eats food along with Pakistan's religious affairs minister Noor-ul-Haq Qadri (L) during his visit to the Sikh Shrine of Guru Nanak Dev at Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur near the Pakistan-India border on Tuesday. Guterres said the opening of the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor was a practical example of Pakistan's desire for peace and inter-faith harmony, as he visited the revered Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, the final resting place of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev. A Sikh boy presented him a bouquet

# Pak stays on terror funding 'grey list'

Escapes new FATF sanctions, final decision on Friday

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 18

A sub-group of the global anti-terror watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Tuesday recommended continua-tion of Pakistan in the 'Grey List' for its failure to check terror funding and a final decision will be taken on February 21, according to news agency reports.

The decision was reportedly taken at a meeting of the FATF's International Co-operation Review Group (ICRG), held at the ongoing Paris plenary. "The ICRG meeting, sub group of the FATF, has recommended to retain Pakistan in the 'Grey List'. A final decision will the FATF takes up issues concerning Pakistan," sources were quoted as stating. Other government sources meanwhile told this newspaper that any decision by a sub-group would have to be placed before the FATF plenary

for endorsement. Pakistan is trying to

### 2 Saeed cases in Lahore court now

Lahore, Feb. 18: An antiterrorism court Pakistan on Tuesday transferred two terror financing cases against Mumbai attack mastermind and Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed to Lahore on his request.

Saeed, a UN designated terrorist on whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty, was arrested on July 17 in the terror financing cases. The 70year-old fiery cleric is lodged at the high-security Kot Lakhpat jail here. Lahore High Court Chief

Justice Mamoon Rashio Sheikh held the hearing

wriggle out of the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force by September this year.

The FATF had recently said that "from Sunday February 16, more than 800 representatives from 205 countries and jurisdicon the petition of Saeed and his close aide Zafar Iqbal, who is the secretary of Al-Anfaal Trust.

Saeed in his petition requested the court to transfer two terror financing cases against him from Multan and Sahiwal cities of Punjab to Lahore so that the anti-terrorism court in Lahore could hear all such cases against him. The court accepted his plea after the prosecution raised no objection on it. On February 12, Saeed and Iqbal were sentenced in o terror financing cas registered against them.

tions around the world, the IMF, UN, World Bank and other organisations, will arrive for FATF Week in Paris, France", and that there will be "six days of meetings which will focus on global action to follow the money that fuels crime

and terrorism". It had also added that "progress by Pakistan and other countries that present a risk to the financial system" will be evaluated.

New Delhi is also keeping a close watch on devel-opments and will be reminding the world about how Pakistan has failed to live up to its promises of ending support to terror groups.

Pakistan is trying to wriggle out of the grey list with the help of its all-weather friend China and other nations like
Malaysia and Turkey
besides certain Western
nations whom it is trying
to convince. The FATF's
'grey list' comprises comprises nations like Pakistan who are seen to have failed to fulfil their obligations to

In what was seen as a desperate attempt by Islamabad to convince the world about its intentions on tackling terror, a Pakistani anti-terrorism court had last week convicted Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed on terrorism-related charges.

### **PAKISTAN TESTS AIR-LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILE**

Islamabad, Feb. 18: Pakistan conducted a successful flight test of the air launched nuclear-capable cruise missile Ra'ad-II with a range of 600 km on Theodor circuition of the control of the Tuesday, significantly boosting the military's "deterrence capability" on land and at sea.

The Ra'ad-II weapon system is equipped with state-of-the-art guidance and navigation systems ensuring engagement of targets with high preci-sion, according to a press release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations, the military's media wing. The cruise missile with a range of 600 km significantly enhances air delivered strategic standoff capability on land and at sea, it said. The successful flight test was witnessed senior Pakistan Army officers and military officials, the statement said.

develop-Pakistan's ment of be seen as an attempt to match India's BrahMos cruise missile, according to the US-based Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance.

It also said that currently this missile is planned to be attached to  $\stackrel{ ext{M}}{ ext{M}}$ irage aircraft or F-16 fighter jets. -PTIfighter jets.

Voting a religious duty: Khamenei

### Ghani secures second term

Kabul, Feb. 18: Ashraf Ghani has secured a second term as president of Afghanistan, according to final results of the September 28, 2019, poll released on Tuesday by the country's election

commission.
"The election commission... declares Mr Ashraf Ghani, who has won 50.64 per cent of the votes, as the president of Afghanistan," election commission chief Hawa Alam Nuristani told a press conference in Kabul. "May God help him in serving the people of Afghanistan... I also

pray that peace comes to our country," she added. The results had been delayed for nearly five months after allegations vote-rigging from Ghani's main Afghanistan's Abdullah Executive Abdullah, forced a recount. The delay left Afghanistan facing a political crisis just as the US seeks a deal with the Taliban which would allow it to withdraw troops in return for various security guarantees and a promise that the militants would hold peace talks with the Afghan government.

If all goes well, then Ghani is likely to be the man sitting across from the Taliban at the negotiating table in a bid to



Ashraf Ghani

chart Afghanistan's

future. Earlier this Abdullah's team said they would not accept fraudulent results. Current Vice-President Abdul Rashid Dostum, a powerful Uzbek former warlord and Abdullah's ally, has also threatened to form a parallel government if fraudulent

fraudulent election results are announced. Abdullah lost to Ghani in 2014 in a divisive election that saw the US intervene to broker an awkward power-sharing deal between the two rivals. Nearly one million of the initial 2.7 million

votes were purged owing to irregularities, meaning the election saw by far the lowest turnout of any Afghan poll. Ultimately, only 1.8 million votes were counted — a tiny number Afghanistan's estimated population of 35 million and 9.6 million registered

Bloomberg makes

it to Dem debate Washington, Feb. 18:
Billionaire Mike
Bloomberg has qualified

Mike
Bloomberg has qualified Democratic presidential debate, marking the first time he'll stand alongside the rivals he has so far avoided by bypassing the early voting states and using his personal for-tune to define himself through television ads.

A new NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll published on Tuesday shows Bloomberg with 19 per cent support nationally in the Democratic nominating contest. The former New York City mayor, who launched his presidential campaign in November, will appear in Wednesday's d Las Vegas alongside former Vice-President Joe Biden, Senators Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth and Warren and Amy Klobuchar and former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg. Fellow billionaire and philanthropist Tom Steyer is still hoping to

former national security adviser to President Donald Trump, raised concern on Monday about his unpublished book being "sup-pressed" by the White House and suggested he should be able to respond to the president's tweets about him. Asked about the president's criticism of him on Twitter, Bolton said: "Trump tweets, but I can't talk about it. How fair is that?"

qualify. Bloomberg's campaign said that it was see-"a groundswell of support across the country" and that qualifying for Wednesday's debate "is the latest sign that Mike's plan and ability to defeat Donald Trump is resonating with more Americans." -AP

### Turkey ramps up Gulen crackdown

Turkish prosecutors have issued detention warrants against 695 people suspected of links to the US-based Muslim cleric blamed by Turkey for a failed coup attempt in 2016, state media reported Tuesday.
The warrants were

issued as part of a crackdown on the network led by cleric Fethullah Gulen that continues nearly four years after the attempted coup. Turkish authorities maintain that the group remains a national security threat.

Anadolu Agency said

prosecutors were seeking the detention of 467 alleged Gulen followers who are suspected of cheating in a police superintendent promotion examination in 2009. Police were conducting simultaneous raids in 67 provinces across Turkey, the agency reported.

Gulen, who has lived in self-imposed exile in the United States since 1999, denies involvement in the coup attempt. Turkish authorities and critics of Gulen charge that many of his followers were able to infiltrate state institutions over the years. — AP

#### Tehran, Feb. 18: Iran's supreme leader said on eight environmental Tuesday it is a "religious duty" for people to vote in this week's general elec-

tion and strengthen the Islamic republic against the "propaganda" of its

"Participating in elections and voting... is a religious duty, not just a national or revolutionary Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in speech, parts of which were aired on state television. "Elections nullify many of the vicious plots the Americans have in their minds and Zionists have in their hearts against the country," he said, referring to US ally

eight environmental activists, including an Iranian who reportedly also has British and American citizenship, to prison sentences ranging from four to 10

years on charges of spying for the United States and acting against Iran's national security, the judiciary said on Tuesday.

Israel. Iranians are set to elect a new parliament on Friday, with conservatives expected to make a resur-

IRAN SAID on Tuesday that a German held in Iran has been released as part of a prisoner swap for an Iranian held in Germany on suspicion of violating US sanctions. "We are ready to free this German national... on condition that they do not extradite our citizen to America," a spokesman said.

gence. Observers expect a low turnout as many reformist and moderate candidates have been

barred from running by the Guardian Council. The council, made up of six clerics appointed by the supreme leader and six lawyers selected by the disqualified iudiciary. more than half of the 14,444 hopefuls. The move threatens the thin majoritv of President Hassan Rouhani's alliance in parliament. Friday's election comes after months of domestic turmoil and steeply escalating tensions between Iran and its arch enemy the United States. In nationwide November. demonstrations over petrol price turned violent before being crushed in a deadly crackdown. — AFF

#### **SEX ABUSE: BOY SCOUTS FILE FOR BANKRUPTCY**

Washington, Feb. 18: The Boy Scouts of America filed for bankruptcy Tuesday in what it said was an effort to safeguard compensation payouts for sexual abuse victims.

The organization has been accused of covering up generations of abuse inflicted on thousands of its young members and failing to do enough to root out peadophiles using the youth movement to prey on minors over its 110year history.

Bankruptcy proceedings will help the Boy Scouts to "equitably compensate" victims through the establishment of a victims' compensation trust and allow the organisation to continue at a local level, a statement from the group said. "The BSA cares deeply about all victims of abuse and sincerely apologises to anyone who was harmed during their time in Scouting," chief executive Roger Mosby said in the statement. More than 12,000 members of the Boy Scouts had been sexually abused since 1944, victims' lawyer Jeff Anderson said last year. He also said files maintained by the Boy Scouts listed more than 7,800 alleged perpetrators of

sexual abuse.

**HUMANITARIAN** | HORROR

### Over half-a-million children in northwestern Syria forced to flee

## Idlib push: Babies freezing to death

**Beirut, Feb. 18:** The fears of a humanitarian Italian Committee for catastrophe. UNICEF has warned that the imminent arrival of freezing temperatures across the Middle East poses a serious danger for refugees in the area, in particular Syrian children as over half-a-million children in northwest Syria have been forced to flee amid continued violence

and harsh weather. The mass displacement of civilians is sparking

Around 900,000 people

have been forced from their homes and shelters in less than three months, leaving huge numbers to sleep rough in the thick of winter. Children have died of exposure in snow-covered camps and the UN has warned that the crisis could worsen if no ceasefire is reached to facilitate the relief effort. "Over the past four days alone, some

43,000 newly displaced peo-ple have fled western Aleppo where fighting has been particularly fierce, spokesman David Swanson said. start of

Since the February, the displacement figure was a staggering 300,000, he said. The wave of displacement is the biggest since the start of the civil war nearly nine years ago. It is the largest exodus of civilians since World War II. "The



Children at a refugee violence in northwest

residential areas, mosques and markets have been the UN head of humanitarian affairs and emergency relief, Mark Lowcock, said on Monday. He said that basic infrastructure was falling apart, that health facilities were being destroyed and that the risk of disease outbreaks was high.

'The biggest humanitarian horror story of the 21st Century will only be avoided if Security Syria is indiscriminate. Health facilities, schools, avoided

Council members, and those with influence, overcome individual interests and put a collective stake humanity Lowcock said. Russia, the main foreign

broker in Syria, has vetoed countless resolutions on the conflict. "The only option is a ceasefire, Lowcock said. Seven chil dren, including a sevenmonth-old baby, have died from freezing tempera-

### IN BRIEF

#### **Old people prone to** die from virus

Beijing: People infected with the novel coronavirus who are more than 80 years old have the highest chances of dying from infection of all age groups, according to the largest study since the highly contagious outbreak began in China, with details of near-ly 44,000 cases. The study, published on Monday in the Chinese Journal of Epidemiology, revealed that a total of 1,023 deaths have occurred among 44,672 con-firmed cases as of February 11, for an overall case fatality rate of 2.3 per cent. According to the clinicians from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, majority of the patients were aged 30-69 years (77.8 per cent), male (51.4 per cent), farmers or labourers (22 per cent), and diagnosed in Hubei Province (74.7 per cent).

#### **No China tariff on US medical imports**

Beijing: China will waive tra-

de-war tariffs on imports of selected US medical equipment from March 2, the gov-ernment said Tuesday, as the country battles to contain the new coronavirus epidemic. Products that will qualify for the exemptions include patient monitors, blood transfusion equipment and instruments to measure blood pressure, according to a list re-leased by the Tariff Commission of the State Council. The commission said the move was "to better meet the growing needs of Chinese consumers" and that it would accept applications from firms in China. The tariff exemptions will apply for a designated period, supporting firms that want to import from the US based on "business

#### **Docs' kids to get** extra exam points

considerations", said authori-

ties. The list of eligible prod-

ucts also includes a wide

range of food items.

Beijing: Children of China's medical workers battling the coronavirus will be awarded extra exam points when applying for schools and higher education. Doctors and nurses in Hubei province have been lionised online and by state media. China's schooling system places emphasis on exams, and even younger children face competition to get into top schools that parents believe will raise chances of getting into a good university. The measures will "further care for the province's frontline medical staff" and encourage them to be more "resolute" in their fight to contain the virus, the pro-

vince said. Children of medical workers applying for high school can receive an additional 10 points in their entrance exams, while younger children will be prioritised for admission at public kindergartens, according to officials

### **QUEEN NEPHEW IN LATEST ROYAL SPLIT**

London, Feb. 18: Queen Eliza beth II's nephew David Armstrong-Jones is set to divorce, a spokesman said Monday — the second marriage split in the British royal family announced within a week.

Armstrong-Jones, 58, the son of Queen Elizabeth's late sister princess Margaret, and his 49year-old wife Serena have been married since 1993.

'The Earl and Countess of Snowdon have amicably agreed that their marriage has come to an end and that they shall be divorced," a spokesman for the couple said. "They ask that the press respect their privacy and that of their family.

The earl is the first person in the line of succession to the throne who is not a direct descendant of Queen Elizabeth. He was born fifth in line but is now 21st in the succession or der. Known professionally as David Linley, the Earl of Snowdon is a furniture maker and was the chairman of Christie's

auction house. The couple have two children: Charles, 20, and 17-year-old Margarita. The news comes after Queen's oldest grandchild Peter Phillips and his wife Autumn announced last Tuesday that they have separated and will divorce. Phillips, 42, and Autumn will share custody of their two daughters and both remain in Gloucestershire, England. The marriage breakdowns have piled more misery on the royal family.



A man (L), who has displayed mild symptoms of the coronavirus, uses a laptop at an exhibition centre converted into a hospital in Wuhan.

# Virus overreaction, says WHO

### China's official toll nears 1,900 with 1,807 fresh cases as over 73,000 infected globally

Critic of President Xi arrested

**Beijing, Feb. 18:** The World Health Organisation has warned against a global over-reaction to the new coronavirus epidemic following panic-buying, event cancellations and concerns about cruise ship travel, as China's official toll neared 1,900 on Tuesday. More than 73,000 people have now been infected in China and hundreds more abroad, although the WHO stressed the disease has infected a "tiny" proportion of people outside its epicentre and the mortality rate remains relatively low. Hubei province, the outbreak's epicentre, reported 93 of the deaths and 1,807 of

**Beijing, Feb. 18:** Police in China have arrested a prominent activist who had ernational. China's ruling Communist Party has severely curtailed civil libertbeen a fugitive for weeks ies since Xi took power in and criticised President Xi 2012, rounding up rights Jinping's handling of the lawyers, labour activists coronavirus epidemic while in hiding, a rights group said Tuesday. Anti-corruption activist Xu Zhiyong was arrested on Saturday after being on the run since December,

and even Marxist students. The death this month of a whistleblowing doctor who was reprimanded by police for raising the alarm about the deadly new virus before dying of it himself triggered rare according to Amnesty Int-

> ning to dent global economy, with China paralysed by quarantine measures.

Xu Zhiyong calls for political reform

and freedom of speech. The "Chinese government's battle against the coro-

Trade fairs, sports comp-

etitions and cultural even-

ts have been disrupted,

navirus has in no way diverted it from its ongoing general campaign to crush all dissenting voicsaid Patrick Poon, China researcher Amnesty International, in an emailed statement.

Another source, who spoke to AFP on the condition of anonymity, said Xu had been arrested in the southern Guangzhou.

ctions were unnecessary, rejected the suggestion that all cruises should be halted. "Measures should be taken proportional to the situation. Blanket measures may not help," WHO chief Tedros Adhan-om Ghebreyesus told rep-orters in Geneva. The -AFPWHO has praised China while several countries banned travellers for taking measures to China and major

airlines have suspended flights. The cruise ship

industry has come into fo-

cus as hundreds of people

became infected aboard a

vessel off Japan. One pas-

senger tested positive after disembarking another liner in Cambodia.

The WHO, which has pr

eviously said travel restri-

### DIRECTOR OF **WUHAN HOSPITAL DIES**

**Beijing, Feb. 18:** A hospital director at the epicentre of China's virus epidemic died Tuesday, state media said, the latest medical worker to fall victim to the new coronavirus spreading across the country. The COVID-19 virus,

which is believed to have originated in Wuhan late last year, has infected more than 72,000 peo-ple and killed nearly 1,900. Liu Zhiming, the director of Wuchang Hospital in Wuhan, died Tuesday morning after "all-out rescue efforts failed," state broadcast-er CCTV reported.

China said last week that six medical workers had died from the virus, while 1,716 have been infected. Liu's death was initially reported by Chinese media and bloggers shortly after midnight on Tuesday — but the stories were later deleted and replaced with reports that doctors were still trying to save him.

After initial reports of his death were denied, the hospital told AFP on Tuesday morning that doctors were giving him life-saving treatment.

Liu's death has echoes of that of Wuhan ophthalmologist Li Wenliang, who had been punished by authorities for sounding the alarm about the virus late December. Li's death prompted a national outpouring of grief as well as anger against the authorities, who were accused of mishandling the crisis.

People took to social media to mourn Liu on Tuesday, with many use-rs on the Twitter-like Weibo platform drawing critical comparisons between Liu's death and Li's. In both cases their deaths were initially reported in state media posts — later deleted — and their deaths denied, before being finally confirmed again.

"Has everyone forgot ten what happened to Li Wenliang? They forcefully attempted resuscitation after he died," one Weibo commenter wrote. Another commenter said, Liu "already died last night, (but) some people are addicted to tor-

### China details 80% cases mild

Beijing, Feb. 18: Health officials in China have published the first details on nearly 45,000 cases of the novel coronavirus disease that originated there, saying more than 80 per cent have been mild and new ones seem to be falling since early this month, although it's far too soon to tell whether the outbreak has peaked.

Monday's report from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention gives the World Health Organisation a "clearer picture of the outbreak, how it's developing and where it's headed," WHO's director-general said at a news conference.

'It's too early to tell if this reported decline will continue. Every scenario is still on the table," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. The new disease, called Covid-19, first emerged in late December in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has spread to more than two dozen other nations.

China says more than 70,000 people have been infected and 1,770 have died in mainland China, but numbers are squishy because the country is co unting many cases based on symptoms rather than the methods WHO uses.

The new study reports on 44,672 cases confirmed in China as of February 11. The virus caused severe disease such as pneumonia in 14 per cent of them and critical illness in five per cent.

The fatality rate for these confirmed cases is 2.3 per cent — 2.8 per cent for males versus 1.7 per cent for females.

That's lower than for SARS and MERS, two similar viruses, but COV-ID-19 ultimately could prove more deadly if it

### THIEVES MAKE **OFF WITH 6,000 SURGICAL MASKS**

1,600 were in the provin-

The outbreak is threate-

cial capital Wuhan.

Tokyo, Feb. 18: Thieves in Japan have made off with some 6,000 surgical masks from a hospital, with the country facing a mass shortage and a huge price hike online due to the coronavirus.

Four boxes containing the face masks disappeared from a locked storage facility at the Japanese Red Cross hospital in the western port city of Kobe, a hospital official said on Tuesday.

"We still have a large number of masks — enough to continue our daily operations at the hospital, but this is so deplorable," the official told AFP. Police have launched an investigation as they suspect the thieves intend to resell the masks.

Masks have sold out at many drug and discount stores across the nation as number of infections have increased.

spreads to far more people than the others did. Ordinary flu has a fatality rate of 0.1 per cent yet kills hundreds of thousands because it infects

millions each year. The COVID-19 cases include relatively few children, and the risk of death rises with age. It's higher among those with other health problems — more than 10 per cent for those with heart disease, for example, and higher among those in Hubei province versus elsewhere in China. Cases seem to have been declining since February 1.

### **HOSPITAL TRIES TREATMENTS**

Shanghai, Feb. 18: In a sprawling medical compound an hour's drive from downtown Shanghai, doctors are employing a patchwork of coronavirus treatments in a race to save victims of an epidemic for which there is still no established cure.

The Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center is the designated facility for coronavirus cases in China's biggest city, which was previously used to treat victims of the 2002-03 SARS epidemic and was hastily expanded to handle the current outbreak.

But doctors said the sc ale of the COVID-19 health crisis has pushed the centre to its limits. "Admitting so many severe cases all at once is a big test for us," Lu Hongzhou, the centre's co-dir-

**SOCIAL** MALAISE

Tokyo, Feb. 18: All passengers and crew on board a ship quarantined off Japan have now been test-

will leave the ship on

official told reporters.

### Ship test over, 500 to leave today Gyms livestream workouts

ed for the new coronavirus, the government said Tuesday, as more countries moved to evacuate citizens from the boat. South Korea became the

latest to announce it would remove its citizens from the Diamond Princess, where more Diamond than 400 people have tested positive for COVID-19. Around 500 passengers

Wednesday after testing negative for the new coro-Instead. navirus that has infected hundreds on board, a health ministry official said Tuesday. "The num-ber (who will leave Wedneat home. sday) is changing, largely because it is up to passenected with the virus will gers (if they get off)," the be allowed off on Wednes-

"But it will be around 500 people." Only those who have tested negative and have not been in close

Shanghai/Beijing, Feb. 18: "Stand in front of a chair. Chest up, core tight and square your pelvis," said Heidi Liu, a pilates instructor at a studio in Shanghai, as she demonstrated a series of poses and

stretches. But there were no students in the classroom at the Pilates ProWorks studio located in the middle of a central district in Shanghai. Liu

livestreaming using an iPad, broadcasting to people working out with her Gyms and restaurants

day and many disembark-

ing will be Japanese pas-

sengers, the official said.
"They will go home on

public transport but they

was

are mostly deserted as millions of Chinese choose to or are forced to stay away from public spaces because of the coronavirus epidemic.

While authorities have pledged to offer various support mechanism to virus-hit firms, business owners are scrambling for ways to tide their businesses over or keep busy until policies materialise or customers start venturing back. Livestreaming has been one of the biggest trends to hit China's exercise sector in recent weeks, with gyms going online to

ces such as stations," he

added. Those who leave

the ship will not face any

restrictions, he said. "They won't be forbidden to go out." But not all

those who have tested neg-

help keep residents fit some of whom are stuck indoors for up for 14-daylong quarantines.

'We don't want our clients to forget us. And if we are not doing anything, some might be afraid that we were already gone. We are trying to do something to comfort everyone," said Chris Li, Pilates Proworks' owner. The majority of these classes are being offered for free, getting many eyeballs -20-minute class received over 4,700 likes but no income.

many countries have said

they will evacuate their ci-

tizens from the ship, and

many being offered repa-

triation may stay on board

until evacuation flights

immediately

— Agencies

will be taken by bus to plaative will be getting off After big cat kills hubby, Bangla rural women ostracised

## Tiger widows shunned as bad luck

sh), Feb. 18: Abandoned by her sons, shunned by her neighbours and branded a witch. Mosammat Rashida's crime? Her husband was killed by a Bengal tiger. Women like her are ostracised in many rural villages in Bangladesh, where they are viewed as the cause of their partner's misfortune. "My sons have told me that I am an unlucky witch," she told AFP in her flimsy plank home, in the honey-hunters' village of Gabura at the edge of the Sundarbans a 10,000-square-kilometre (3,860-square-mile) man-

grove forest that straddles

Bangladesh and India.

Mother-of-four Mosammat Rashida, whose husband was killed by a Bengal tiger a decade ago, in her Shyamnagar house.

Her husband died while ey mostly in the southout collecting honey in the western Sundarbans, whejungles there. "Honey-hure most of the man-eaters nters prefer to collect hon-(tigers) live," leading Be-

where they are viewed as the cause of their partner's misfortune. ngal tiger expert at Jahangirnagar University,

Monirul Khan, told AFP. Tigers are an endangered species but climate change and human development is reducing their wild habitat, often forcing

them towards villages in

ostracised in many rural

villages in Bangladesh,

search of food. Wildlife charities estimate there are some 100 tigers in the Bangladesh side

At least 519 men died from tiger attacks in 50 villages in one district – home to half a million people — between 2001 and 2011, according to Ledars

of the Sundarbans

Bangladesh, a charity helping widows reintegrate back in the villages. Their deaths are a dou ble blow for the women left behind. Already grieving the loss of their partner, overnight they become ʻtiger widows' — pariahs

in their homes and villages at a time when they most need support. They are often left with little means to support themselves or their fami-

DECCAN CHRONICLE | HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 19 FEBRUARY 2020



INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40,894.38	-0.39
Nifty 50	11,992.50	-0.44
S&P 500*	3,364.72	-0.46
Dollar (₹)	71.39	0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	93.32	0.42
Euro (₹)	77.60	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	41,865▲239	0.57
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	57.21	-0.46
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.384	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.554	-0.034
* As of 9:30 pm IST		

### **UP Budget sets** aside ₹2,000 cr for Jewar airport

The UP government earmarked Rs 2,000 crore for the new airport project at Jewar near Delhi and also set aside Rs 500 crore for an airport in Ayodhya and Rs 200 crore for the beautification of Varanasi's Kashi Vishwanath temple. The Budget presented in the state assembly by finance minister Suresh Kumar Khanna provided Rs 358 crore for the Kanpur Metro Rail Project and Rs 286 crore for the metro rail in Agra.

### Alstom to buy Bombardier's rail division



French company Alstom said it had agreed to buy the rail division of Bombardier, speeding up the Canadian firm's fire sale. Alstom will pay up to 6.2 billion euros (\$6.8 billion) in a mix of cash and shares, according to an MoU between the firms. The Quebec pension firm Caisse de Depot, which owns 32.5% in ombardier Transportation, will become Alstom's biggest single shareholder on completion with around 18% in the French firm.

### Yes Bank to be dropped from Nifty-50

Shree Cement will replace Yes Bank in the Nifty-50 from March 27, NSE Indices, a sub-sidiary of the National Stock Exchange, said. Further, Vodafone Idea, Ashok Leyland, Indiabulls Housing Finance, L&T Finance Holdings and Shree Cement will be dropped from Nifty Next 50. Adani Transmission, IDBI Bank, Info Edge (India), L&T Infotech and **Torrent Pharmaceuticals would** be added in Nifty Next 50.

### Sugar exports may cross 5 mt this year: Isma

Sugar exports may cross 5 million tonne in the marketing year ending September on higher demand from overseas amid a global deficit of 8-9 million tonne, industry body Isma said. For the current year, the government has allowed export of 6 mt of sugar under the Maximum Admissible Export Quota to help deal with the surplus sugar. India had exported 3.8 mt during 2018-19 marketing year (Oct.-Sept.).

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### ■ Oil behemoths trying to revive stalled mega deal

## **Aramco begins due** diligence at Reliance

SAKET SUNDRIA & DINESH NAIR

Reliance Industries Ltd's talks to sell a minority stake in its oil-to-chemical division to Saudi Aramco have been gathering pace in recent weeks, according to people familiar with the

Aramco officials and bankers on the deal have working Reliance's offices in Mumbai for due diligence this month, according to the people, who asked not to be identified as the information isn't public. Both parties are trying to overcome differences over the deal's structure, which had stalled the process

Ambani-led Mukesh Reliance is keen to sign a binding agreement before the next annual shareholders meeting, which is due to take place before the end of September, one of the people said.

Reliance in August valued its oil-to-chemicals

New Delhi, Feb. 18: In

order to make the insol-

vency process more smooth, the IBBI has pro-

posed allowing committee of creditors (CoC) to vote

simultaneously on two or

more resolution plans for

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) aims at time-bound and

market-linked resolution

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) implements the code and the CoC of a

company has a key role in

Srei Equipment,

offer joint loans

Srei Equipment Finance Limited, an arm of Srei Infrastructure Finance

Limited (Srei), on Tuesday

teamed up with the state-

run Uco Bank, to offer

joint loans for purchase of

construction and mining.

farm and medical equip-

ment under a co-lending

arrangement. In the new

of

iQuippo, a Kanoria Foundation initiative, will

facilitate sourcing of

"Uco Bank's strong track

record and wide reach, especially in eastern India, makes us confident

about the success of this

programme. The combined strength of Srei

Equipment, Uco Bank and

iQuippo will provide the

equipment and create a

win-win situation for all

the partners and the cus-

tomers. The strategic alliance will also help in

fulfilling the government's

vision of making credit available to MSME and

retail customers in infra-

structure space at an affordable cost," said Sunil

Kanoria, vice-chairman,

art platform, designed together with IBM, is India's first platform to digitise the co-lending

process. We are excited to

add Uco Bank in the grow-

ing list of our financial

services partners. We will assist the bank in expand-

ing its reach into the

MSME space," said Anant

Kanoria,

"This partnership will definitely boost credit availability to larger spectrum of MSMEs," said Atul Kumar Goel, MD & CEO Luca Park

CEO, Uco Bank.

"iQuippo's state-of-the

boost demand for infrastructure

things,

scheme

necessarv

the resolution process.

**Uco Bank to** 

**RITWIK MUKHERJEE** 

of stressed entities.



division at \$75 billion, including debt, implying a \$15 billion valuation for the 20 per cent stake. If the deal closes at this value, it will be the largest transaction in India since Walmart Inc's \$16-billion acquisition of a majority stake in Flipkart Online

Services Pvt Ltd. For Aramco, the deal could be its biggest since agreeing to buy a majority

**IBBI** wants CoC to vote on

2 or more resolution plans

Issuing a discussion

paper, the IBBI has pro-

posed three changes in

regulations—replacement

of authorised representa-tive, voting by class of creditors at two stages and

voting on two or more

In cases where more than one compliant resolu-

tion plans are available,

both the plans should be

put to vote simultaneously

by the CoC. "The plan that

receives the highest affir-

mative votes, subject to receiving the requisite 66

per cent, may be regarded

**FALAKNAAZ SYED** MUMBAI, FEB. 18

India needs to more than

double the number of qualified actuaries to

meet their rising demand

from a whole spectrum of

financial services. The country currently has only 460 actuaries for a

population of 1.30 billion

while it needs at least

1000 qualified actuaries to cater to the multiple domains and industries, Subhash Kuntia, chair-

man, Insurance Regulat-

ory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) said at the 21st Global Conference of

"India has only 460 actu-

aries for a population of 1.30 billion, while the US

has 37,000 actuaries despite having less than a third of the Indian population." It is not a second to the indian population.

Terming the actuaries

as the conscience keep-

ers of the insurance

industry, Khuntia asked

Institute

Actuaries of India to

take more efforts to increase the number,

adding that inherent

lation," Khuntia said.

Actuaries here.

plans simultaneously.

compliant

resolution

stake in Saudi Basic Chemicals for \$69 billion last year.

Ambani in August told shareholders that Reliance and Aramco had agreed to a non-binding deal for a 20 per cent stake in the oil-to-chemical operations. But in December, the government requested a court to stop the proposed sale to help ensure the company

as approved by the CoC,"

the discussion paper

In case, two or more reso-

lution plans receive equal number of votes, the cred-itors might be asked to

vote for one of them, as a

Providing an economic

analysis of the proposal, the IBBI said if a resolu-

tion plan considered best

is not voted in favour by

the CoC based on their

commercial wisdom, then

the CoC would be required

to consider the next best

skill sets in mathematics

and software make

Indians very amenable to

the stream.

Khuntia said the actu-

aries can play a larger

role beyond traditional

areas of actuarial work

such as in product innovation and regulatory sandbox initiatives and

in public interest pro-

Sunil Sharma, presi-

dent of the Institute of

Actuaries of India, said, "There are 24 life insur-

ance and 34 non-life

insurance companies

and 460 actuaries are suf-

ficient to meet the needs

of the insurance and pension industries. But

globally actuaries work

in a whole spectrum of

financial services indus-

try such as investment

banking, risk-based capital, government depart-

ments and in companies

with long-term cash flow

committments and so the

need is to support these

sectors beyond insur-

Khuntia also said Irdai

has not yet received any

official proposal from

LIC to list on the bourses.

ance.

grammes.

tie-breaker measure.

noted.

India will need over

1,000 actuaries: Irdai

arbitration claims in an unrelated case. A month later, Reliance's joint chief financial officer V. Srikanth told reporters that the transaction isn't expected to be completed by March

Reliance has been selling assets from mobile-phone towers to a 49 per cent stake in its fuel retail business to reduce leverage that's risen over the past few years as it poured money into new sectors such as telecommunications. The conglomerate's debt stood at \$43 billion at the end of December, according to its latest earnings statement.

Deliberations between Reliance and Aramco are ongoing and talks could still fall apart, the people said. A representative for Reliance declined to comment, while a representative for Aramco, formally known as Saudi Arabian Oil Co., didn't immediately respond to requests for

-Bloomberg

### **Vehicles** getting a lot more safer now

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, FEB. 18

After Tata Nexon and Tata Altroz, Mahindra's XUV300 has become the third made-in-India, sold-in-India model to receive a 5-star adult occupant protection rating in the Global NCAP crash tests, signifying the strides made by home-grown companies in making safer passen ger vehicles in India.

Mahindra Mahindra, India's third biggest passenger vehi-cle maker, has been conerred with the Global NCAP's ?rst ever 'Safer Choice' Award for its XUV300 compact SUV this week

The UK-based Global New Car Assessment Programme is the world's car safety

watchdog.
To win the award, the
Mahindra XUV 300 had to meet many stringent requirements such as a 5-star rating for adult occupant crash safety and a minimum 4-star rating for child occupant protection.

## MFs ring-fence Voda Idea exposure on default fear

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Mutual funds are carving out their investments in troubled Vodafone Idea Ltd's debt into separate portfolios as they seek to limit any fallout from a possible default by the tele-

com carrier.
UTI Mutual Fund and
Nippon Life India Asset Management moved to ring-fence their holdings in Vodafone Idea's debt on Monday after credit assessor Care Ratings down-graded the carrier's borrowings, statements from the companies show. Last month, Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund also sidepocketed the company's debt.

Creation of segregated portfolios is a mechanism separate distressed, illiquid and hard-to-value assets from other liquid assets in a portfolio.

In December 2018, the Securities and Exchange Board of India allowed asset managers to side pocket, or separate dis-tressed, illiquid and hardto-value assets to prevent them from damaging the returns generated by more liquid, better-performing assets. In a statement, UTI AMC

said its board of trustees approved the creation of segregated portfolio in five schemes—UTI Credit Risk Fund, UTI Bond Fund, UTI Regular Savings Fund, UTI Dynamic Bond Fund and UTI Medium Term Fund.

"With effect from February 17, 2020, securities of Vodafone Idea Ltd will be segregated from total portfolio," it added. These five schemes have exposure of Rs 186 crore in debt instruments issued by

Vodafone Idea. Nippon India MF said it has decided to create segregated portfolio of securities of Vodafone Idea held

### Birla meets telecom secretary Towering debt

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Amid talks of the government mulling encashing bank guarantees provided by telcos, Vodafone Idea chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla on Tuesday met telecom secretary Anshu Prakash, as he looked for options to keep the company afloat. After the meeting, Birla

said he "cannot say anything at the moment.' Birla, who met the secretary for over an hour, was accompanied by Ravinder Takkar, MD & CEO of Vodafone Idea.

He refused to respond to queries whether or not Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) would default on payment of AGR dues or if the company could head towards insolvency.

Vodafone Idea on Monday paid Rs 2,500 crore to the Department of Telecommunications and promised to pay another Rs 1,000 crore

Vodafone Ida's debt has jumped by over 5 times in the past 4 years

2017 2018 Note : 2015, 2016, 2017 data is for erstwhile idea Cellular Ltd. which merged with vodafone India Ltd. and vodafone Mobile Services Ltd.

But the amount paid for now is less than 5 per cent of the dues that the DoT estimates the company

The DoT is mulling the option of encashing bank guarantees given by firms when they got telecom licences, as none of the telcos have paid the full

Encashing the guarantees may sound the death knell for companies such as Vodafone Idea which has been struggling to garner the dues.

in three schemes—Nippon India Strategic Debt Fund, Nippon India Credit Risk Fund and Nippon India Hybrid Bond Fund--from February 17 to protect the

interest of investors.

The fund house has an exposure of over Rs 227 crore to Vodafone Idea debt across the three schemes.

"In light of no further relief and the Supreme Court's reiteration of the requirement to make the payment imminently, the company's operations are likely to become unviable unless there is significant equity infusion," Nippon India said in a note.

Last month, Franklin Templeton MF side-pocket-

ed its exposure after rating agencies had downgraded the non-convertible debentures of Vodafone Idea to below investment grade.

Prior to that, Franklin Templeton MF, which had an exposure of over Rs 2,000 crore to Vodafone Idea in six of its schemes, had marked down its investment in the securities issued by the telecom player to zero. The fund house had markdown the schemes on the same day the Supreme Court rejected the telecom player's review plea related to over Rs 40,000 crore in adjusted gross revenue-related dues to the government.

**Govt pegs** 

wheat

output at

106.21 mt

India is set to harvest a

record 106.21 million

tonne wheat in 2019-20

crop year on increase in acreage owing to good

rains, according to the

latest government data.

Wheat production has

been rising year-on-year

and the previous record of 103.60 mt was

achieved during 2018-19

Wheat is the main rabi

(winter) crop, harvesting

of which will begin from

Releasing the second estimate of foodgrain production, the agricul-

ture ministry said the

cumulative rainfall during the monsoon season

was 10 per cent higher

than the Long Period Average. Accordingly, production of most of the crops for 2019-20 crop year has been estimated

higher than their normal

Total foodgrain produc-

tion is pegged at a record

291.95 mt for 2019-20 crop year, higher than 285.21

mt last year. Of the total

production, foodgrain

output is estimated to be

142.36 mt from the kharif

(summer) season and 149.60 mt from the rabi

The foodgrain basket

comprises wheat, rice,

season of this year.

cereals and pulses.

production, it said.

crop year (July-June).

next month.

Delhi, Feb. 18:

—Agencies

### HSBC axes 35,000 jobs as profits slump

Asia-focused banking giant HSBC on Tuesday axed 35,000 jobs, far more than expected, and posted slumping annual profits, as it warned over the financial impact of the deadly coronavirus out-

from a year earlier, largely

London-based

lender added in a results statement that it hopes to cut its global workforce by 15 percent to 200,000 staff

would fall.

HSBC has been trying to lower costs as it faces a multitude of uncertainties caused by the grinding US-China trade war, Britain's departure from the European Union and now the fatal new coronavirus in China.

ROLAND JACKSON & JEROME TAYLOR

break in China.

Pre-tax profits tumbled by a third to \$13.3 billion (12.3 billion euros) in 2019 owing to a \$7.3-billion write-off related to its investment and commercial banking businesses in Europe.

over the next three years Commentators expected 10,000 job cuts.

The radical overhaul comes as HSBC streamlines operations in the United States and Europe, although no details were given on where the axe

### Chinese goods may turn dearer

With supply remaining interrupted, Chinese goods in the retail stores are likely to become dearer in the next couple of weeks. The inventory at the importer level has already started drying up.

large share of goods either sold through the retail stores as finished products or used by the manufacturers as raw materials and spare parts. According to the trader community, the supply

chain has started seeing disruption with products getting exhausted at the

have one to one-and-a-half months of stocks with them. After the outbreak of coronavirus in the first week of January, the imports have been hit. They are either not able to import from China or are scared to collect goods already lying at the ports. Stocks have started drying up at their level,' said KhandelTraders (Cait).

According to him, the goods with distributors and dealers will last for 15 to 20 days more. The retail stores will start witnessing their inventories get-

including toys, furniture,

benefit from less competi-

tion from cheaper Chinese

In the absence of an early

check on the spread of the Covid-19 outbreak, the

drag in the Indian econo-

Rice output is estimated to increase marginally to 117.47 million tonne this year from 116.48 mt last year, while production of cereals is expected to increase to 268.93 mt from 263.14 mt. Production of pulses is

pegged slightly higher at 23.02 mt for this year as against 22.08 mt last year, the data showed.
Oilseeds output is esti-

mated to increase to 34.18 mt from 31.52 mt. Among cash crops, sugarcane output is estimat-

ed to decline to 353.84 mt from 405.41 mt. Cotton output is esti-

mated to increase to 34.89 mt from 28.04 mt. —PTI

### SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, FEB. 18

China accounts for a

importer level. Úsually, the importers

wal, Secretary General of Confederation of All India

ting reduced thereafter. Hundreds of products,

footwear, clothing fabric, furnishing fabric, appliances, FMCG products, gift articles, watches, mobiles, mobile acces-sories, electrical goods, stationery items and plastic products are likely to become costlier if the supply chain is not restored.

### India least vulnerable to coronavirus in Asia: Nomura

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD** MUMBAI, FEB. 18

India stands as the least vulnerable to Covid-19 or coronavirus in Asia according to a report by Japanese brokerage firm Nomura while China's GDP growth may dip to 3 per cent in the first quarter. But supply disruptions of Chinese imports in India may affect domestic production but India could

also benefit from lower

commodity prices and less competition from cheaper Chinese imports, analysts from Nomura said.

"It is not a part of the global value chains centered around China, it is less dependent on China for visitor arrivals (2.7 per cent of total visitors) and China accounts for only 5.3 per cent of its total exports. These factors should limit the indirect impact on India," Nomura said in a note.

for a much larger share of India's imports (14.2 per cent) and any disruption in China's production will result in lower imports of primary and intermediate goods into India and disrupt domestic production, the report said.

Over 60 per cent of Chinese imports into India comprise electrical machinery & equipment, nuclear reactors & boilers and organic chemicals,

However, China accounts with an additional 7 per cent in the form of plastic articles and fertilisers. A disruption in these imports will adversely affect key industries such as pharmaceuticals, autos, electronics, solar and agriculture, and could lead to higher prices if inventories are depleted.

On the positive side, India should benefit from lower commodity prices, and domestic textiles, fertiliser and MSME firms should

my in the first quarter is likely to intensify, with the

risk of some factories haltgrowth, Nomura said.

ing production lines owing to input shortages. The deeper slowdown in global growth is likely to weigh on exports and investment

#### SHORT

TAKES

#### **India women win** first warm-up tie

Brisbane: Spinner Poonam Yadav claimed three wickets as India geared up for the ICC women's T20 World Cup with a thrilling two-run win over the West Indies in a low-scoring warm-up match on Tuesday. Electing to bat, India posted a lowly 107 for eight in their stipulated 20 overs before returning to restrict West Indies to 105 for seven. Chasing 108 to win, West Indies were comfortably placed at 57 for one in 13 overs when Deepti Sharma struck, cleaning up opener Lee-Ann Kirby (42) to trigger a collapse. Soon skipper Stafanie Taylor (16), Chedean Nation (0) and Deandra Dottin (1) were back in the hut as West Indies slipped to 67 for five in the 17th over. Hayley Matthews (25) and Chinelle Henry (17) blasted three fours and a six in the 19th over to leave them with 11 to get off the last six balls. — PTI Brief scores: India 107/8 in 20 overs (Shikha Pandey 24; A Mohammed 2/16) bt West Ann Kirby 42; Poonam Yadav

#### **SA's Temba ruled** out of first T20

New Delhi: Cricket South Africa (CSA) on Tuesday confirmed that Temba Bavuma has been @ ruled out of the first T20I against Australia after suffering a hamstring injury. The 29-yearold Bavuma got injured while fielding in the third T201 against England on Sunday. The recommended recovery time for the Bavuma's injury is seven to 10 days. The right-hand batsman will remain with the team and receive treatment from the medical staff in the hopes of returning to play in time for the second T20I match in Port Elizabeth.No replacement will be called into the squad. The Proteas will face Australia in the first T20I of the three-match series on February 21. Earlier on Monday, Faf du Plessis stepped down as the skipper of South Africa's Test and T201 teams However, the 35-year-old will remain with the squad for the upcoming T20I series against



Sachin Tendulkar poses with the Laureus award given for the 'Best Sporting Moment in the last 20 years' in Berlin on Monday.

#### **Moeen to lead Birmingham**

London: Moeen Ali will captain Birmingham Phoenix in English cricket's new Hundred competition, it was announced Tuesday. The England all-rounder, who grew up near Edgbaston, the venue for the Phoenix' home matches, will lead a side that includes fellow World Cup winner Chris Woakes as well as Kane Williamson, the captain of the New Zealand side beaten in last year's thrilling global 50over final. A dashing left-handed batsman and off-spin bowler, Moeen rose through the ranks at Edgbaston with Warwickshire before establishing himself in county cricket with Midlands rivals Worcestershire. "Every time that I come to Edgbaston it takes me back to some great first memories of coming here at a very young age," said Moeen. — PTI

#### **Kohli reaches** 50m on Insta

New Delhi: Skipper Virat Kohli has become the first Indian to reach the 50 million followers mark on social media platform Instagram. Kohli, who is breaking cricketing records with each passing match, has a great social media following. The 31year old has so far made 930 posts on the platform and his social media posts continue to enthrall fans worldwide. Overall Instagram's official account has the most number of followers and it is followed by Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, who has 200m followers. In terms of Indians with most number of followers, Bollywood actor Priyanka Chopra is on the second spot with 49.9m while Deepika Padukone is in the third place with 44.1m. Recently,

Kohli had become the most suc-

cessful Indian Test captain, sur-

passing Dhoni. - Agencies

# Boult statement

### Can't wait to get Virat out, announces fit-again Boult

Wellington, Feb. 18: There are no half measures for fit-again New Zealand pace spearhead Trent Boult who is ready to challenge India captain Virat Kohli on his return to international cricket during the two-Test series starting here on Friday.

Boult was out of action for the past six weeks due to a fracture on his right hand sustained during Boxing Day Test against Australia and missed out on the limited-overs leg of the India

Back for the traditional format, the left-arm fast bowler made his priorities clear ahead of the first Test. "That's personally why I play the game, to get guys like that (Kohli) out and test myself against them, so I can't wait to get stuck in. But he's an exceptional player. Everyone knows how great he is," Boult said, sending out a warning after landing in the capi-

tal city for the opening Test. New Zealand's last Test series in Australia was a nightmare as they lost 0-3 and India will be a tough test for the Black Caps. "They are a great side and they are

the ICC Championship. They are very clear on how they wanted to play the game. It was a tough learning curve in Australia. It's good to see where we are in terms of bounc-ing back," said Boult.

The Basin Reserve track will have a lot for the seamers and in conducive conditions, a wily customer like Boult will prove to be a handful for the travellers.

'I'm preparing for a solid wicket. It generally is very good here and goes the full distance (five days). I do enjoy playing here, the history that's involved, and it's going to be an exciting week building up. I can't wait to get out there," said the 30-year-old who has taken 256 wickets from 65 Tests.

It was frustrating for him to watch his side get walloped 0-5 in the T20 series but exhilarating to when it got its mojo back in the subsequent one-dayers. The Black Caps won 3-0 in the 50-over format. "Î think it is what it is. I have just

got to put the last six or so weeks behind me and just back myself to get out there and do my thing," said Boult, who warmed up by playing a club game at the picturesque Taupo ground.

Boult did find a bit of humour in his injury which, for him, was more of an accident. "If I had to break a hand, (it would) probably right one. Breaking a hanc you don't really know how much you use it unless you break it," said Boult.

"I was pushing in off the long run. I think a couple of the clubbies from Taupo really enjoyed that. It was a good afternoon," added the pacer, who sent down eight overs in a friendly game for his club Cadets.

While bowling isn't a problem Boult is hoping that catching does n't become an issue. "Everything has gone very well but catching will be the biggest issue for me," he said.

Professionally, Boult had to lie low due to injury, but it was also a good break as he and wife Lana welcomed their second child. "Having some time away from the game and having my second son a couple of weeks ago came at quite a good time," said Boult.
Fighting fit, all he wants now is

to get hold of a red kookaburra and get a few to tail into Kohli and company. "I am hungry to be here and can't wait to get back in the white and get the red ball moving around." —PTI

### 2023 Cup is long way away: Taylor

Veteran New Zealand whether I deserve batsman Ross Taylor my spot in the side. If I batsman Ross Taylor doesn't rule out playing the 2023 ODI World Cup but says his form, fitness and motivation level at the end of next year will decide whether he actually manages a place in the squad.

The 35-year-old will become the first cricketer in the world to complete 100 games across three international formats when he steps out for the first Test against India at

**Trent Boult** 

Basin Reserve on February 21.

"I haven't ruled it (2023 World Cup) out but I still think it's a long way away. First and foremost I want to get to next year — the Twenty20 World Cup and then the home summer — and then I'll have a good idea on how I'm placed at the end of next summer," Taylor was quoted as saying by 'stuff.co.nz'. "Whether there is still

a drive, whether I'm

good enough, whether

can tick all those, then definitely 2023 is an option."
The big-hitting bats-

man said despite his desire to continue, he won't out himself under too much pressure. "You always want to do well and first and foremost the game is more important. At the same time you can put extra pressure on yourself. You've just got to go out and enjoy it and take it as another game. Hopefully I can contribute in any way I can," he said.

Taylor will be joining Stephen Fleming, Vettori and Brendon McCullum in the New Zealand Test 100-club and he credit-





**Kyle Jamieson** 

### **Jamieson reveals** shift to Auckland has helped him

Wellington, Feb. 18: Towering New Zealand pacer Kyle Jamieson has revealed that moving from Canterbury to Auckland helped him get rid of a detrimental aggressive streak and become a cricketer worthy of national duty.

The 6'8" tall pacer, who made his ODI debut against India in the recent series, was handed a place in the Test squad for the upcoming two-match rubber beginning at Basin Reserves here on February 21.

"I'm a pretty fiery character on the field. On the field I'm pretty aggressive. I think it came out in ways I necessarily didn't like. I would sort of do it and then post-game be like, 'What did I do that for?" he was quoted as saying by 'stuff.co.nz'.

Jamieson shifted to Auckland, where he was born, prior to this sea-son after making his T20 debut for Canterbury in 2016 in the Super

Smash. He said there was a lot of negativity around him Canterbury, where he grew up, and it affected his behaviour. "There was a bit of negativity surrounding myself and that environment and that was coming out in my behaviour on the field," he

### Bumrah wasn't all that bad in ODIs: Bond

Wellington, Feb. 18: New conservative approach against Jasprit Bumrah could become a template for other teams as they look to tackle the Indian pace ace who recently endured a rare wicket-less outing in an ODI series, reckons for-mer fast bowler Shane Bond.

premier bowler The copped criticism for his lean run during the three ODIs against New Zealand and Bond put that down to expectations. "That's the nature of expectations when you got a bowler of Jasprit's quality," Bond, the fastest New Zealand bowler during his time, said in an exclusive inter-

"I thought New Zealand played him well and identified him as a risk. They have played him conservatively and obviously there was some inexperience around (Navdeep Saini and Shardul Thakur)," he

"All teams will now identify him as a risk and attack others. So that's where the bowling group and what they do (as a



Shane Bond (left) and Jasprit Bumrah.

group) is massive. It is not an easy place to bowl as wickets are flat.

But Bond felt Bumrah's bowling wasn't all that bad during the series, which India lost 0-3. "At the end of the day, all you can do is try and bowl well. He bowled reasonably well but sometimes you don't get wickets,'

Bond, who has spent considerable amount of time with Bumrah as the Mumbai Indians bowling coach in the IPL, nonetheless expects India's premier strike bowler to have

a "massive impact" on the two-Test series starting

Friday. 'When you come back from a lay-off, it's always hard to get into the groove.

Just that he hadn't had a wouldn't have played a lot of game before the series and conditions are a bit foreign," said Bond.
"Although New Zealand

played him well in limited overs, Jasprit will have a ımpacı Test series. I have no doubt about that," added the bowler, whose promising career was cut short by numerous injuries.

"It always takes time to get back to top form because there is no substitute of game time. So it's good for Jasprit that he is leading into Test matches with some short form cricket," said Bond, who played 18 Tests, 82 ODIs and 20 T20 Internationals.

New Zealand are always tough to beat in their own den and Bond expects Kane Williamson to opt for a five-pronged pace attack.
"The biggest thing about New Zealand wicket is that it doesn't spin. Whoever wins the toss bowls because most movement in the pitch is in the first day. If New Zealand wins toss, they will bowl. "I won't be surprised if New Zealand don't play a

spinner. Personally,

spinner as they will just have a holding role. 'Hope Pandya gets to

#### play before IPL'

Mumbai Indians bowling coach Shane Bond want all-rounder Pandya, who is recovering from a back surgery, to play a few matches before Indian Premier League, beginning March

Bond will be travelling to Mumbai for a meeting with the franchise and asked about Pandya, the MI bowling coach is confident that the all-rounder will come back stronger.

"I only hope he gets to play some cricket before the IPL and always believe it's better to spend a little bit longer for coming back rather than rushing it,' Bond said.

"There's no doubt he can come back. I am just pleased that they are taking an orthodox approach with Hardik's rehabilitation and T20s, especially IPL will be nice for him to comeback as he will not be over-bowled."

# Handball high for teams from St Francis College

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

St Francis Degree College Vivekananda Government College won the women's and men's titles respectively at the 1st Inter-collegiate Handball Challenge League organised Hyderabad Handball Club at the Lal Bahadur Stadium handball court in

Hvderabad. In the women's final, Francis 'A' team defated Mahaboobia College 12-6. Pratyusha was the highest scorer for the winner with

St Francis 'B' team took the joint third place with Bhoj Reddy Engineering College for Women.

A and B — fielded by St Francis **Degree College for** Women won the first as well as third places in the intercollege handball tournament.

In the men's final, Vivekananda edged past Marv's College Secunderabad 9-6. The third place was taken by Government College of Physical Education, with a 11-10 win over Loyola College.
THE RESULTS

■ Men's final: Vivekananda Government Degree

College College bt St Mary's College Secunderabad 9-6. Match for 3rd place: Government College of Physical Education College 11-10. Semifinals: Vivekananda bt Loyola 9-9; St Mary's bt GCPE 11-6. Quarterfinals: Vivekananda bt Haji Ghouse College 14-12; Loyola bt AV Degree College 15-11; St Mary's bt Gitam University 18-2); GCPE bt MLRIT College 17-10.

■ Women's final: St Francis Degree College 'A' bt Mahaboobia College 12-6. Match for 3rd place: St Francis 'B' and Bhoj Reddy Engineering College joint winners. Semifinals: St Francis 'A' bt St Francis 'B' 10-6; Mahaboobia bt Bhoj Reddy Engineering 8-6.



Members of the St Francis Degree College 'A' and 'B' teams pose with the trophies, college principal and teachers after bagging the first and third places at the 1st Inter-collegiate Handball Challenge League organised by Hyderabad Handball Club at the Lal Bahadur Stadium in Hyderabad.

SHORT TAKES

#### **Javelin thrower Amit gets 4-yr ban**

New Delhi: In a "landmark" decision by the Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel of the NADA Haryana's Amit Dahiya has been banned for four years for evading dope sample collection by sending a proxy during the National Javelin Throw Open Championships last year. Dahiya had finished third with a best throw of 68.21m in the

event held at Sonepat, Haryana on April 16, 2019. After the event, the 21-year-old Dahiya was asked by the National Anti-Doping Doping officials to furnish his dope samples but he instead sent another person to the collection room.

During the verification process,

the NADA Dope Collectors came to realise that the person who had come to provide the urine sample was not the bronze medallist. Realising that the plan failed, Dahiya's proxy fled from the collection room. Dahiya was handed provisional suspension on July 16 last year and the NADA presented the case to the ADDP on January 9. The ADDP has now passed an

visional suspension. "In a landmark decision by the National Anti Doping Agency, javelin thrower Amit Dahiya has been penalised with intentionally evading sample collection and trying to cheat anti-doping

order to suspend him for four

years from the date of his pro-

officials during the 2nd National Javelin Throw Open Championship 2019 held at SAI Center, Sonipat," the NADA

It said that this was the first time the NADA has taken cog-nisance of a case in which the athlete evaded sample collection and successfully proceeded against him under the prescribed provisions. - PTI





Andhra win big, **Hyderabad lose** 

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 18

Andhra women turned in splendid performance to defeat Mumbai by four wickets in the Senior women's one-day tournament match in Elite Group 'A' and 'B' at Sachin Tendulkar Gymkhana in Kandivili, Mumbai,

After restricting Mumbai to 197, Andhra rode on half-centuries from P. V. Sudharani (61) and E. Padmaia (58 not out) to reply with 201 for 6 in 46.4 overs. Andhra will now meet Tamil Nadu in their second league match at the same venue on Wednesday.

However, Hyderabad went down to Rajasthan in their Elite Group 'C' match at the Kholvad Gymkhana Ground in Surat, Gujarat. Chasing Rajasthan's 166/6 in 50 overs, Hyderabad were all out for 160 in 48.5

**BRIEF SCORES** 

Mumbai 197 in 50 overs (Vrushali Bhagat 36, Sayali Satghare 57, M. Dakshini 43, Anjali Sarvani 3/28, K. Dhathri 2/35) lost to Andhra 201/6 in 46.4 overs (S. Hima Bindu 28, P.V. Sudharani 61, E. Padmaja 58

Rajasthan 166/6 in 50 overs (T. B. Vaishnav 60 n.o, Bhogi Shravani 2/21) bt Hyderabad 160 in 48.5 overs (K. Anitha 33, Rachna S. Kumar 37, S. L. Meena 2/33, S. S. Kalal 3/15, A. D. Garg 2/29).

### **U-17 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP FINAL IN NAVI MUMBAI**

Tuesday by the organising com-

coveted trophy in Navi Mumbai. said sports minister Kiren Rijiju at the launch event here.



# **Red Devils rout Blues**

### Martial, Maguire score as Man United win

London, Feb. 18: manager Frank Lampard told his side the "fight starts now" for a place in the Champions League next season after suffering a 2-0 smash and grab defeat at the hands of Manchester United on Monday.

The Blues had two goals disallowed by VAR reviews and were furious Harry Maguire was not sentoff for an off-the-ball kick out at Michy Batshuayi before he headed in United's second goal after Anthony Martial's

Lampard cut a frustrated figure as the flaws in both boxes which have seen his side win just four of their last 14 league games were exposed once more against ordinary opposition.

"The fight starts now," said Lampard. "It's not worth me going on about it now but the reality was

there for us to see. "If we're not going to take chances then we're not going to win When you dominate large periods you have to take

### THE RESULT

Chelsea Man United (Martial 45, Maguire 66)

vour chances." Victory lifts United

up to seventh and within three points of Chelsea in fourth, while fifth could now even be good enough to qualify for the Champions League next season pending Manchester appeal again a twoseason ban from European competi-

on. However, Hod boss ooss Ole Solskjaer United Gunnar admitted he had not been impressed by the visitors' performance. "When you win 2-0 here you are delight-

ed," said Solskjaer. "Then again I didn't think we played well, particularly with the ball in the first half. We were cumbersome, slow, passing wasn't great but we got the first goal then we hung in there."

Lampard made bold call before kickoff by again dropping

the most expensive goalkeeper in football history, Kepa Arrizabalaga, to the bench in favour of the 38-year-old Willy Caballero.

Batshuayi also started with Tammy Abraham ruled out by injury and Lampard's anger at missing out on a striker in the January window was borne out by a poor night for the misfiring Belgium forward.

But the course of the game could have been different had Maguire not escaped unpunished for kick-ing Batshuayi after the two collided in front of the dugouts.

"I know I caught him and I felt he was going to fall on me and my natural reaction was to straighten my leg to him," Maguire.

"I apologised to him and it was nice that the referee saw sense.' Chelsea's sense of injustice increased when Willian was harshly booked for diving as he went down under a chal-lenge from Bruno Fernandes looking for a penalty.

### **Son less Spurs** take on Leipzig

Feb. 18: Hotspur's London, Tottenham hopes of obtaining some thing from the season have been equated to someone hanging on for dear life from a balcony in a typically colourful analogy by their manager Jose Mourinho.

Mourinho is already without star striker Harry Kane — side-lined since January with a torn hamstring — as the club enters a crucial period. Midfielder Moussa Sissoko is another long-

term casualty.
Spurs host German side RB Leipzig in a Champions League Last 16 first leg match on Wednesday and play Chelsea in a match that could prove pivotal in the dog-fight for the fourth final Champions

League spot. Son's absence comes as a cruel blow to the player and the team as he had been in a rich vein of form scoring in the last five matches after filling in for Kane up front. The

### Live on TV

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE** Atalanta vs Valencia from 1.30 am (Thursday) on

Sony Ten 1, HD Tottenham vs RB Leipzig from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

27-year-old South Korean international forward suffered the injury in the 3-2 Premier League victory over Aston Villa — in which he scored twice including the late winner — on Sunday.

Son suffered the injury in a robust first-minute challenge from Villa's Ezri Konsa.
The club did not specify

how long Son would be out — he is due to undergo surgery this week — but Mourinho was pessimistic. Gian Piero Gasperini's Atalanta are counting on the wave of enthusiasm generated by the outsiders remarkable run in Champions League debut season.

#### ASIAN WRESTLING | CHAMPIONSHIP

### Sunil opens gold account in style

### **Becomes third Indian to** win Greco-Roman crown

New Delhi, Feb. 18: Sunil Kumar started India's Asian Wrestling Championship campaign on a golden note breaking a 27-year old gold medal drought in the Greco-Roman category. Sunil now becomes only the third Indian ever to achieve this feat after Pappu Yadav.

Sunil defeated Azat Salidinov of Kyrgyzstan by a scoreline of 5-0 in the 87kg summit bout at the KD Jadhav Indoor Stadium here on Tuesday.
Sunil with his compre-

hensive defence was able to keep Salidinov at bay for most of the bout. Salidinov didn't have an answer to the strategy of Sunil and finally went down pretty

Earlier, Sunil on his way to the final made an impressive comeback in the semi-final bout. He came back from 1-8 down to win the bout 12-8. This was an improvement for Sunil from his 2019 performance in the same tournament where he won a Silver

Sunil Kumar after the win said, "I am feeling happy to have earned India's first Gold Medal today. I have worked really hard on my ground techniques and it feels good to

Sunil Kumar defeated Azat Salidinov of Kyrgyzstan by a scoreline of 5-0 in the 87kg summit bout on Tuesday.

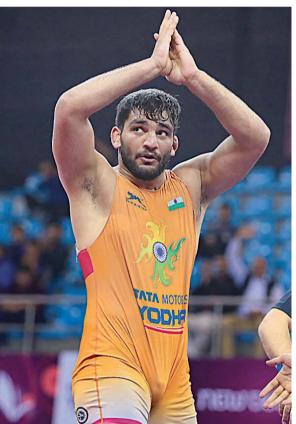
have done better than my last year's performance. Before Sunil's historic gold medal win, Arjun Halakurki (55kg) won his bronze medal bout defeating Donghyeok Won of

Arjun started the bout slowly and was down by 1-4 in the first period. But, Arjun didn't give up and came back strongly snatching six straight points with a combination of good defence and attack. The final score at the end of the bout was 7-4 in favour of

Arjun.
Though, India's third medal hope Mehar Singh (130 kg) suffered a setback today as he lost his bout against Roman Kim of Kyrgyzstan by a narrow scoreline of 2-3.

Mehar was majorly suffering the aftereffects of his wrist injury which he suffered in his semifinal

- Agencies



Sunil Kumar celebrates his 5-0 win over Azat Salidinov of Kyrgyzstan 5-0 in the 87kg summit bout at the Asian Wrestling Championships in New Delhi on Tuesday.

### Wrestlers spotted sporting masks

New Delhi, Feb. 18: They are aware that novel coronavirus is not a threat in India but a few grapplers from countries such as Japan, Korea and Chinese Taipei were seen wearing masks during the Asian Wrestling Championships here on Tuesday as a "pre-

cautionary measure".

Ahead of the championships, wrestlers from China were declined visas due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus there. The deadly disease has infected more than 72,000 people and killed nearly 1,900 so far.

"We have a contingent of around 28 and just a few of the wrestlers and officials wearing masks. Although we know there is no virus here and it is safe but why to take a chance, Seyeon Lee, part of medical staff of Korea, said. The virus is believed to

have originated in Wuhan late last year. That city is under a lock-down to prevent the virus from spread-

here were unanimous in saying that mask was just a precautionary measure.

The athletes competing Bakour Florian, a Digital

The air quality in the national capital is also a concern for many. "The air quality is still unhealthy in Delhi and there is naturally an overall concern about this virus as we all know some of the Asian countries have been affected," said a member of the Japanese team.

VIRUS | SCARE

Project Manager at the

world governing body United World Wrestling

(UWW), was seen sporting

"My family is concerned

as the virus is spreading in Asian countries. We know there is no virus here as

China has also been denied

visa but it is more of a pre-cautionary measure," he

à mask too.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) said the masks were being used by participants due to their concerns about Delhi's air quality. "Some wrestlers from Korea, Thailand and Japan are wearing masks which is common because they always have apprehensions about Delhi's pollution levels," a WFI offi-

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cial said.

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New Delhi: Navi Mumbai will host the final of the Fifa U-17 Women's World Cup on November 21 for which five host cities, including soccermad Kolkata, were unveiled on

mittee. Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Kolkata and Navi Mumbai will play host to 16 teams which will compete across 32 matches to lift the "As India prepares to host vet another Fifa event, I look forward to the support from the whole country in making this tournament a rousing success. Our Indian U-17 women's team will be playing in a Fifa tournament for the first time. It is a proud moment for the nation and we will provide all possible support to ensure its success,"

Crash and burn



Ryan Newman, driver of the Koch Industries Ford, crashes and flips during the NASCAR Cup Series 62nd Annual Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Florida, USA, on Monday. The 42-year-old Newman's Ford Mustang had led on the final lap but spun out of control, hit the wall and flipped onto its roof before bursting into flames. Newman's car was also sent flying into the air after being struck by Go Fas Racing's Corey LaJoie. Newman was in serious condition, admitted in an ICU, at a local area hospital.

### Brady stuns Svitolina; Sania too wins

Dubai, Feb. 18: Elina Svitolina's bad run in the WTA circuit continued, as she surrendered to quali-fier Jennifer Brady in her opening round match at Championships 2-6, 1-6 on

Tuesday.
The first set was a straight forward one with the American Brady leading with a break. While serving to stay in the set at 5-2, the erroneous ten-

nis from Svitolina led her Ons Jabeur beat Alison

Halep. Meanwhile, Kim Clijsters says she is going to plough ahead with her tennis comeback despite losing her return match 6-7-6 (8/6) to Garbine Muguruza.

Riske 7-6 (7/3), 1-6, 6-3 to earn a second-round date

with top seed Simona

Indian tennis ace Sania Mirza and her partner Caroline Garcia registered a hard-fought win Russia's Kudrvavtseva and Katarina Slovenia's

Srebotnik to advance to the women's doubles prequarterfinals. The Indo-French pair beat their Russian opponents 6-4, 4-6, 10-8 in the first round 16-YEAR-OLD ALCARAZ

WINS ON ATP DEBUT

Sixteen-vear-old Carlos Alcaraz was up way past his bedtime on Monday night, but it was for a very good reason. The teenager won his ATP Tour debut at the Rio Open presented by Claro, defeating

Ramos-Vinolas 7-6 (7/2), 4-6, 7-6 (7/2) in another firstround match that finished at 3:00am after three hours and 37 minutes. Spain's Fernando Verdasco was eliminated

fellow Spaniard Albert

by Pablo Andujar in the first round of the Rio Open on Monday. The 36year-old Verdasco lost 3-6, 3-6 to his countryman.

**BORG'S SON LOSES FIRST** PRO TENNIS MATCH Leo Borg, son of Swedish

tennis legend Bjorn, lost

received a wild card to the 46,000-euro Bergamo tour-nament after some good results in junior events.

first professional

match on Tuesday, falling

in straight sets at the sec-

ond-tier Challenger event

The 16-year-old Borg,

who is ranked 98 in the

world junior rankings,

in Bergamo, Italy

But the Swedish young-ster fell 3-6, 1-6 to qualifier Tseng Chun-hsin of Taiwan, an 18-year-old ranked 301st in the world. — Agencies