

For bank deposits, private are back as the preferred choice over public

Shift began in 2016 but state banks surged in first half of 2019, only to slip

SANDEEP SINGH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

IN A reversal, depositors over the last six months have preferred to park their money with private banks rather than state-owned banks, according to financial statements of banks over the last four quarters analysed by *The Indian Express*.

While depositors have been moving towards private sector banks over the last three years, the first half of the calendar year 2019 saw state-owned banks getting back in the game with a sharp increase in incremental deposits. But during July-December 2019, state-owned banks slipped again.

Deposits of top eight private banks including HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank increased by Rs 2.68 lakh crore, higher than the Rs 2.58 lakh crore increase in deposits in the top eight state-owned banks.

Compare this with the previous six months: During January-June 2019, these eight state-owned banks including SBI and Punjab National Bank accumulated Rs 5.25 lakh crore, more than double of what the eight private sector banks managed (Rs 2.53 lakh crore) in the same six months.

The shifting preference is significant given that state-owned banks still hold bulk of the outstanding deposits.

In its recently released Report

EXPLAINED
E Public dominates but...

PSBs continue to dominate banking, accounting for roughly 70% of business. But private banks have chipped away. They have opened branches even in rural areas and have better managed mobilisation of deposits. Trust in private sector banks, too, may be growing.

THE SHIFTING PREFERENCE

Deposits added Jan-June 2019	Deposits added July-Dec 2019
TOP 8 STATE-OWNED BANKS 5.25	2.58
TOP 8 PRIVATE BANKS 2.49	2.68
AGGREGATE DEPOSITS DEC 2019	
TOP 8 STATE-OWNED BANKS 66.73	
TOP 8 PRIVATE BANKS 30.99	

All figures in Rs lakh crore; Source: Bank financial statements

on Trend and Progress of Banking in India, the RBI, too, had

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SHOWCASING SKILL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Hunar Haat, in New Delhi on Wednesday. Anil Sharma

Babri case accused Nyas head, VHP vice-chief to lead Ram temple trust

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY & APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE RAM Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, constituted for construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, met Wednesday for the first time and appointed Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas president Nriyaya Gopal Das as its president and VHP vice-president Champat Rai as general secretary. Nripendra Misra, former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, will head the committee for construction of the temple and management of the 66.7 acres in Ayodhya.

Das and Rai are among those named by the CBI as accused in the criminal conspiracy case relating to the demolition of the



Members of the Ram temple trust meet for the first time in New Delhi, Wednesday. PTI

Babri Masjid in 1992. They are out on bail and the case is being heard before a special court in Lucknow.

The 15-member trust, operating from its office at the

Greater Kailash-I house of senior lawyer and founder trustee K Parasaran, appointed Govinddev Giri of Pune as treasurer and decided to open a bank account

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PAK TOLD TO ACT BEFORE FATF JUNE SESSION

China joins India, US to set new deadline for Pak

Saudi Arabia too backs move, only Turkey opposes

Trade pact off Indo-US table, chopper deal on

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

IN A significant development, China and Saudi Arabia are learnt to have joined India, US and European countries to send a stern message to Pakistan to complete its commitments on action against terrorist financing and money laundering given to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) before the plenary session in June, including "conviction and prosecution of top leaders of all terrorist organisations".

Diplomatic sources said Turkey was the only country which held out in the end. This marks a major shift in China's position, which has always

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SHUBHAJIT ROY & KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

CLAIMING THAT India has not treated the United States "very well" on the trade front, US President Donald Trump has indicated that a "very big" bilateral deal may not be signed before the American presidential election in November.

In Delhi, government sources said that while a major trade agreement seems unlikely during Trump's visit on February 24-25, India is likely to sign a deal to buy 24 multi-role anti-submarine helicopters from American defence giant Lockheed Martin.

The Cabinet Committee on Security cleared the path for the



A US chopper at the airport in Ahmedabad. Express

Navy to buy the multi-role MH-60 Romeo helicopters through the Foreign Military Sale government-to-government route.

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INDIA AND U.S.: MATTERS OF TRADE
PAGE 13

Delhi High Court Bar protests transfer of Justice Muralidhar

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE SUPREME Court Collegium has recommended the transfer of Justice S Muralidhar, known for his bold pronouncements on communal violence and personal liberty, from the Delhi High Court to the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

This recommendation, which comes a year after a sim-



Justice S Muralidhar

ilar move to transfer Justice Muralidhar was discussed but stalled, was condemned "unequivocally and in the strongest possible terms" Wednesday by

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EXPRESS NETWORK



YOGI ON PROTEST DEATHS: IF SOMEONE COMES TO DIE, HOW CAN THEY LIVE? PAGE 8

Now Sandeep Dikshit speaks up on leadership: 'Who will bell the cat?'

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE RIPPLES in the Congress caused by yet another election defeat are refusing to subside. Arguing that the biggest challenge the party faces is the "leadership question", former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit's son and ex-MP Sandeep Dikshit Wednesday accused senior leaders of failing to find a new President after all these months because they are "scared who will bell the cat".

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Dikshit said there are many in the Congress who are



Sandeep Dikshit

capable of leading the party — "at least six-eight" — and attacked senior leaders saying "sometimes you want inaction because you don't want a certain action to happen".

"I'm actually feeling rather dismayed by our senior leaders. They must come up. Most of them, those who are in Rajya Sabha, those who have been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Jamia footage out, probe team calls for duty roster of policemen

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

IN THE first indication that Delhi Police is looking into the role of its own personnel in connection with the December 15 violence at Jamia Millia Islamia, a special investigation team (SIT) is learnt to have asked SHOs of police stations in the South East district for duty rosters of that day.

The move comes against the backdrop of several videos emerging over the past few days showing police assaulting people inside the Jamia library and breaking a CCTV camera and furniture. As reported by *The Indian Express*, the university estimates police action caused damage to the tune of Rs 2.66 crore.

Police have maintained that some of the video footage appeared edited and that they had entered the campus in hot pursuit of "rioters". On Monday, Special Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Praveer Ranjan said the SIT probing the December 15 violence will analyse all clips to establish the

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National Museum bars non-veg from Harappan menu in event on premises

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

IN A last-minute decision, the National Museum has barred non-vegetarian dishes from being served at Historical Gastronomica, a weeklong exhibition-cum-event on culinary history that offers "the Indus din-



A promotional image for Historical Gastronomica

ing experience" through an "ethno-archaeological kitchen of the Harappan culture" on the museum lawn from February 19 to 25.

Organised jointly by the National Museum, the Ministry of Culture and One Station Million Stories (OSMS), a private firm, the event's menu with vegetarian

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How-to videos in sign language: Two couples script a personal start-up story

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEBRUARY 19

TWO YOUNG couples in Kerala have joined hands for a special project inside the government-backed Technopark in Thiruvananthapuram that aims to build an online link to a better future for the hearing impaired.

Along with three others, they are the brains behind Digital Arts Academy for Deaf (DAAD), which



The DAAD team: (Sitting, from left) Sulu Noushad and CEO Remya Raj; (standing, from left) Priya Aneesh, Aneesh and Archana Krishnan with Priya Raj, the interpreter

is being incubated by the state government's Kerala Start-up Mission to develop course videos in sign language to teach basic IT skills to the hearing impaired.

But for this team of seven, it's as much professional as it is personal — all are hearing impaired.

DAAD was launched four months ago and has already developed 20 videos in sign language, most of which explain basic tools such as Photoshop, and skills like video-editing.

According to CEO Remya Raj (36), who worked as a business analyst earlier, DAAD is a solution to the problems she faced

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SC: Those from lower judiciary can't be district judges through direct recruitment

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

MEMBERS OF lower judiciary are not eligible for direct recruitment to posts of district judges against the quota fixed for practising lawyers with seven years experience, the SC ruled on Wednesday.

A bench of Justices Arun Mishra, Vineet Saran and S Ravindra Bhat said the members of the lower judicial service can, however, be appointed as district judges by way of promotion or limited competitive examination. The court was answering a reference, which involved interpretation of Article 233 of Constitution as to the eligibility of members of the subordinate judicial service for appointment as district judge as against the quota reserved for the Bar by way of direct recruitment.

The petitioners claimed those who had seven years experience as advocate before joining judicial service, those who completed seven years in judicial service and those who completed seven years by combining experience as a judicial officer and as advocate, should be treated on a par with lawyers having seven years experience and considered for the quota reserved for members of the Bar. But the court rejected this and directed that all subordinate judicial service officers recruited in this manner during the pendency of the matter be "reverted to their original post".

"As sequel no fruits can be ripened on the basis of selection without eligibility, they cannot continue as district judges. They have to be reverted to their original post. In case their right...for promotion had already been ripened, and their juniors have been promoted, the High Court has to consider their promotion in accordance with prevailing rules," the court said. It said "there is no violation of equal opportunity" in such a decision. It rejected arguments that not considering the judicial officers would violate any principle of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

FROM PAGE ONE

Bank deposits

pointed towards the customer shift from state-owned banks to private banks in case of term deposits.

"The average share of PVBs (private banks) in the incremental term deposits during 2016-19 was 81 per cent vis-a-vis 19 per cent in 2011-15. Corresponding numbers for PSBs were 13 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively."

The aggregate deposits with the eight state-owned banks in calendar year 2019 stood at Rs 66.73 lakh crore compared with Rs 30.99 lakh crore held by the top eight private banks. In other words, state-owned banks roughly hold more than two-thirds of total outstanding deposits.

The eight private banks whose deposits have been counted are: HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Federal Bank, Bandhan Bank and IDFC First Bank.

The state-owned banks counted are: SBI, PNB, Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, Bank of India, Union Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank and Oriental Bank of Commerce. The deposit figures have been obtained from their quarterly financial statements.

Sources said the incremental deposits of the eight state-owned banks also include interest accumulated. These banks cumulatively held 68 per cent of total outstanding deposits. "Therefore, the net addition of fresh deposits in the last six months in state-owned banks is likely to be significantly lower," said a banker. An RBI source said preliminary analysis of incremental deposits into banks over the last six months suggested that almost 80 per cent of fresh deposits seem to have been cornered by the private sector.

A closer study of the data shows that State Bank of India has seen a significant increase in its share of incremental deposits cumulatively raised by PSBs over the last two quarters. SBI, which accounted for just 23 per cent of the additional deposits raised by the eight state-owned banks during January-June 2019, saw its share jump to 63 per cent in the following six months. SBI and PNB together accounted for 78.5 per cent of the additional deposits accumulated by the eight PSBs in the list.

Among the private sector banks, too, HDFC Bank took the lion's share followed by ICICI Bank and Axis Bank.

While HDFC Bank added Rs 1.12 lakh crore, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank added Rs 55,613 crore and Rs 50,998 crore respectively during the six-month period July-December 2019. These three banks accounted for 82 per cent of the deposits raised cumulatively by the eight private banks.

Sandeep Dikshit

former Chief Ministers, even some of our current CMs who are very senior, I think it is time for them to come up and go the extra mile for their party. There is Amarinder Singh, Ashok Gehlot, Kamal Nath...why don't they get together, get other people around? There is (AK) Antony, (P) Chidambaram, Salman (Khurshid), (Ahmed) Patel...all of them have done great for the Congress. They are in the evening of their politics, they probably have another four or five years to go. I think this is a time for them to intellectually contribute...they can go into the process of leadership selection, either at the centre or in states or elsewhere," he said.

Dikshit is not alone in questioning the state of affairs. Earlier this week, former Union minister Manish Tewari had argued that the party needs to think about re-orienting its economic philosophy which continues to be "fairly socialist" and bring clarity on the question of secularism and its brand of nationalism.

"The current position is that madam (Sonia) Gandhi is an interim president, Mr (Rahul) Gandhi doesn't want to be president. So let us respect his position and carry on. If the Congress party at some point feels that Mr. Gandhi has to come back or wants to come back, opportunities will always be there. It has happened across other states also," Dikshit said.

He recalled how (former Haryana CM) Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Sheila Dikshit were brought back to leadership positions in their states and said "it is not that the party will not use its good leaders".

Dikshit said Rahul had asked senior leaders to select a new president but they failed. "It's very easy to put your finger on any one leader. But what are the rest of the 30, 40, 50 (leaders) doing? You have been given a challenge. Our then president has said that he's no longer willing to be president. Now the challenge for you was to get together, put people together, build a consensus and get a new Congress president. What this just says is that at any level, we are scared of taking any decision...Is it that the Congress doesn't have leaders, we don't have new people?"

Sonia Gandhi made a comeback for the party but why aren't the others performing, asked Dikshit. "They write articles, they write books, they mutter and murmur in conferences and in meetings...don't you have the guts to come together and give something? What are you scared of...losing some Rajya Sabha (seat), losing some position? Some of them have three to four terms in the Rajya Sabha. A couple of them would not become anything but Rajya Sabha (members). Can't they give something to the party?" he said.

Asked whether the leaders didn't want somebody from among them to become party president, Dikshit responded: "Who else will it be? Somebody from BJP, CPM or Mauritius? It has to be amongst you. Or you think you're incapable? Then say so, then you are incapable of being in the Working Committee, being in Rajya Sabha, becoming Chief Ministers, becoming state presidents, being patrons in the Congress. I think then you should retire. I think there are enough leaders in the Congress to lead it.

China joins India, US to set new deadline

backed Pakistan at the FATF.

Sources said it is now final that Pakistan will remain on the FATF grey list, and will face consequences if it doesn't take appropriate action by June this year. An official announcement is likely to be made on Thursday.

After the second informal summit at Mahabalipuram last year, the Ministry of External Affairs had said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping were "concerned that terrorism continues to pose a common threat". "As countries that are large and

diverse, (we recognise) the importance of continuing to make joint efforts to ensure that the international community strengthens the framework against training, financing (of) terrorist groups throughout the world and on a non-discriminatory basis," Modi and Xi had said in a statement.

"In a desperate attempt to mislead its people and the world, Pakistan has always been indulging in false and selective media leaks of FATF proceedings. The fact is that despite Pakistan's best at-

tempts, it has remained, and will remain, on the grey list of FATF. The onus is on Pakistan to ensure that it acts on FATF parameters to avoid being black-listed in future. Pakistan was given a stern message by almost all FATF member countries (except Turkey) to complete the remaining 13 action plan items by June 2020 plenary, including conviction and prosecution of top leaders of all terrorist organisations as mentioned in the action plan, else consequences will follow," a diplomatic source told *The Indian Express*.

"Further, Pakistan has long been trying to politicise the technical process of FATF, which is proven beyond doubt from the statements of Turkey and Malaysia leaderships recently. FATF members must take note of this," said the source.

Ahead of the FATF's plenary session, a sub-group tasked to review Pakistan's case has recommended that Islamabad should continue to be in the "grey list" for its failure to check terror funding. It has stopped short of recommending the country for the black list.

Trade pact off Indo-US table, chopper deal on

Cleared by the CCS Wednesday, the deal is likely to cost around \$2.5 billion. "Well, we can have a trade deal with India, but I'm really saving the big deal for later on," Trump told reporters in Washington Tuesday. "We're not treated very well by India," he said, adding, "I happen to like Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi a lot."

Trump said he still wanted to do "a very big trade deal with India", but added, "I don't know if it will be done before the election." The US President had earlier described India as a "tariff king" for imposing "tremendously high" rates on American products. India has maintained that the tariffs are comparable to major developing countries.

Sources said India and the US have "mutually agreed" that

they "don't want to rush into a deal". The two sides want the deal to "strike a right balance" and be "mutually beneficial", the sources said, adding that they are looking at a "win-win solution", with the long-term objective of India and the US becoming "FTA partners".

In a statement Wednesday, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla outlined "trade" as one of the key areas of discussion, apart from defence, security and counter-terrorism among others.

Shringla, who was India's Ambassador to the US till recently, said Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, would land in Ahmedabad on February 24 and attend a 'Namaste Trump' event on the lines of the 'Howdy Modi' event in Houston last

September.

"He (Modi) told me we'll have seven million people between the airport and the event. And the stadium, I understand, is sort of semi under construction, but it's going to be the largest stadium in the world. So it's going to be very exciting," Trump said in Washington.

The US delegation is likely to include Trump's son-in-law and advisor Jared Kushner, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin. From Ahmedabad, they will fly to Agra to view the Taj Mahal at sunset, and come to Delhi.

In Delhi, Modi and Trump will meet for bilateral talks at Hyderabad House, which will be followed by a business event. In

the evening, Trump will meet President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan and attend a state banquet.

Sources said the two sides will issue a joint statement, which will be "fairly comprehensive" and "forward looking", and will take into account the "fairly close and important relations". It will cover all aspects like defence, trade, energy, science technology, R&D cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, including students and consular issues.

While eight-10 agreements are being negotiated, sources said these are still a "work in progress", and some are likely to come through. On the issue of defence acquisition, sources said it is an "ongoing process" and "not linked to the visit".

Any Congressman who thinks we have no option, I differ with them."

Dikshit said there are "lots of people who can fit the bill". "I don't want to put a name. I differ from almost 95 per cent Congressmen, 95 per cent Congressmen will say who. My thing is who not? I have at least six-eight names whom I think are capable of becoming Congress president. This is a process that has to be started ab initio (from the beginning). It cannot be something that starts by itself. Perhaps Rahulji should take a step here or somebody else who has credibility," he said.

Asked why Rahul did not ensure that a successor was put in place, after leaving the post following the Lok Sabha elections last year, Dikshit asked the leadership to start the process. "What was stopping any of these people from coming together? They could have consulted him, Soniji and many of the other senior leaders. Why didn't that happen? What are you scared of? They are scared that 'who will bell the cat?' That is the difference between statesman and so-called leaders who are only looking for crumbs," he said.

Harappan menu

and non-vegetarian dishes, along with an invitation for online booking, was showcased on the museum website and also on social media by the government.

On Tuesday, however, the museum cited unspecified rules and asked OSMS not to serve non-vegetarian food during the event.

While sources in the Ministry of Culture said that "a couple of MPs" reacted to the menu shared by the ministry online, additional director general Subrata Nath denied knowledge of any "external interference" in the matter.

Asked about the rules cited by the museum, Nath said: "Actually, there is no rule as such. But we have to respect the museum's tradition. So we emailed the private organisers yesterday."

On other museums, such as

IGNCA, NMML and crafts museum, not having any such curbs, Nath said: "I won't comment on what others do. This museum has so many idols of gods and goddesses, and a relic of Lord Buddha. International dignitaries visit this museum. We have to consider these sensitivities here."

On why the government cleared and advertised the non-vegetarian menu in the first place, Nath claimed that the OSMS did not discuss the issue in detail. "Their Harappan menu is very well researched but they should not have opted for the non-veg dishes. In any case, we had a discussion and were able to avoid just in time what could have become an embarrassment."

OSMS has stopped accepting bookings for the non-vegetarian tasting menu and dinners. The dishes that are no longer available include fish in turmeric stew, quail/fowl/country chicken roasted in Saal leaf, offal's pot, bati with dry fish, meat fat soup, lamb liver with chick-pea, dried fish and Mahua oil chutney.

Somi Chatterjee, one of the directors of OSMS, did not respond to phone calls and emails from *The Indian Express* seeking comment.

Delhi HC Bar

the Delhi High Court Bar Association which said lawyers would abstain from work Thursday in protest.

In a resolution, the DHCBA, while urging the Collegium to revisit and recall its recommendation, said: "Such transfers are not only detrimental to our noble institution but also tend to erode and dislodge the faith of the common litigant in the justice dispensation system. Such transfers also impede free and fair delivery of justice by the Hon'ble Bench."

The Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde, met on February 12 where it also decided to recommend the transfer of Justice Ranjit V More from the Bombay High Court to the Meghalaya High Court and Justice Ravi Vijaykumar Malimath from

the Karnataka High Court to the Uttarakhand High Court.

The Collegium statement simply listed the names of the three judges and their postings. It did not give reasons for the transfers, keeping with the new practice of not disclosing reasons. In October 2017, the Collegium had started stating reasons for appointments, transfers of judges — a practice it discontinued in October last year.

Currently the third most senior judge of the Delhi High Court, Justice Muralidhar will be the second most senior judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court if the government approves the transfer recommendation.

In January 2019, *The Indian Express* reported on a move in the Collegium to transfer Justice Muralidhar out of Delhi High Court. It was discussed twice at the Collegium meetings, in December 2018 and January 2019. It was stalled after members of the Collegium, headed by then CJI Ranjan Gogoi, reportedly advised against it.

Known for his rulings on civil liberties, Justice Muralidhar was appointed an additional judge on May 29, 2006. The judge, who has a fan following among young lawyers, insists on not being called "Your Lordship" or "My Lord" in court. This request to lawyers features daily in the causelist (list of cases to be heard) of Justice Muralidhar's court.

He was part of the two-judge bench along with Chief Justice A P Shah that delivered the landmark verdict decriminalising homosexuality in 2009 — Naz Foundation vs Government Of Nct Of Delhi And Others. In 2010, he was part of the bench which brought the office of the Chief Justice of India under the Right to Information Act. The decision was challenged by the Supreme Court in the apex court and the ruling was eventually upheld in 2019.

In 2018, Justice Muralidhar delivered the Hashimpura verdict, convicting personnel of the Uttar Pradesh PAC for the 1987 mass killings. The same year, he also convicted Congress leader Sajjan

Kumar for his role in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. In 2018, after Justice Muralidhar's bench ended activist Gautam Navalkha's house arrest following his arrest by Pune Police in connection with the Bhima-Koregaon violence, RBI board member and RSS ideologue S Gurumurthy attacked the judge on Twitter, sharing an article alleging bias and impartiality. The tweets led to a contempt case initiated by the bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Yogesh Khanna against Gurumurthy which was closed after he tendered an "unconditional apology" to the judge and withdrew his remarks.

Jamia footage

sequence of events. "Once the sequence is established, we will identify all those involved in the violence and action as per law will be taken," he said.

Though the inter-state cell of the Crime Branch received the footage days after the case was transferred to them in December, the recent move appears to have been prompted by the footage being leaked.

Sources told *The Indian Express* that personnel from two police stations in South East district were approached by the Crime Branch on Wednesday and asked to provide details of where they were stationed when police personnel entered the college premises as well as the library.

"As of now, we are collecting information about all police personnel deployed on December 15, and will later ask them to identify personnel seen in the footage," sources said.

Sources said they had verbally conveyed to senior officers at Delhi Police headquarters that footage from the library could warrant an FIR against the personnel involved, but no decision has been taken in this regard. "Before deciding to lodge an FIR, SIT officers are taking legal opinion and collecting technical evidence," sources said.

Sign language while trying to get a technical ed-

ucation.

"Despite graduating in Economics, I found it difficult to get a basic diploma in technical education. I've had this idea of setting up a firm for developing course content in sign language for the last two years. While engaging with others in our community, I found the partners for the new venture. With support from the Kerala Start-up Mission, we launched DAAD in November," says Remya, with the help of Priya Raj who works in the firm as an interpreter.

Apart from the CEO, the women leading DAAD's foray are Sulu A Noushad (26), the finance director, Archana Krishnan (25), a graduate in fine arts, and Priya Aneesh (28), a commerce graduate. Aneesh, also a graduate, is the only male employee.

Remya Raj's husband Sajith Surendran and Sulu's husband Aneesh Kukko are employed in other firms, but are members of the DAAD's board of directors.

"During our interactions with others who are hearing impaired, we realised that our community is struggling to learn IT skills to get a job. Most of us have studied in general educational institutions where we had little help to learn using sign language," says Remya.

Remya has invested Rs 3 lakh in the venture with the Start-up Mission committing to infuse Rs 6 lakh in a phased manner. Sulu says the firm has already used sign language in a video game into sign language for an American company.

According to Kerala Start-up Mission business manager Prajeeth Prabhakaran, DAAD is "unique in every respect". "In the state's start-up ecosystem, we don't have such innovative ventures to address the learning requirements of a niche audience. They have also proved that hearing impairment is not an obstacle to run a venture. Within a few months into the launch, the firm has got an American client. They are getting a lot of support and advice from the Mission," he says.

Temple trust

with the State Bank of India in Ayodhya.

At the meeting, it was decided to build the temple in accordance with a model prepared by the VHP. Sources said the construction of the temple may start by April. Government officials appointed include Additional Secretary (Kashmir), Ministry of Home Affairs, Gyanesh Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), Uttar Pradesh, Avneesh Awasthy, and Ayodhya District Magistrate Anuj Kumar Jha.

There were acrimonious exchanges when Mahant Dharam Das arrived uninvited and threatened legal action if he was not included in the trust.

When the government announced the trust, Das and Rai were not included. Sources said the government did not want to start a controversy by nominating persons facing serious charges in an ongoing case. The decision, sources said, was taken by the trust. Incidentally, the Nyas headed by Das has already merged with the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust and transferred all its assets (including pillars carved for the temple and funds collected during the Ayodhya movement) to the new trust. Sources said formalities of this merger were completed on the day the new trust was registered.

After the meeting Wednesday, Champat Rai said: "We thank the Centre and the UP government for working towards this with alertness, and for the success they had in getting influential people of society to understand their point of view in a manner that the entire country accepted the SC judgment with pleasure."

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0-50 Good

ANAND VIHAR

Very Poor



51-100 Satisfactory

SIRIFORT

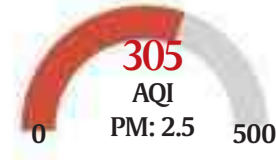
Poor



101-200 Moderate

SHADIPUR

Poor



201-300 Poor

DWARKA-SECTOR 8

Very Poor



301-400 Very poor

401-500 Severe



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Union Home Minister Amit Shah at the latter's residence, Wednesday. The Chief Minister later told reporters that he and Shah spoke about Delhi-related issues, but did not discuss the ongoing sit-in at Shaheen Bagh. ANI

Officials held hostage over rumours of 'NRC survey'

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NOIDA, FEBRUARY 19

A TEAM of five-six persons conducting an economic survey on behalf of the state government were allegedly held hostage by residents of a Greater Noida village after they were allegedly mistaken for surveyors "collecting information for the National Register of Citizens".

According to police, Raj Singh, a village-level entrepreneur, and his team were collect-

ing data on services provided to villagers in areas where internet connectivity is less than optimal, when they were stopped by a few residents on Tuesday.

Police said a case has been filed against 41 people, including 40 unknown persons, at Jarcha police station.

"We received information on Tuesday that a group of officials had reached village Chholas in Greater Noida to conduct a survey. A particular section of the community became afraid as they could not

understand the purpose of the inquiry. An argument took place and the officials were held hostage for a while before police arrived. One person has been named. Arrests will take place soon," said Rajesh Kumar Singh, DCP (3rd Gautam Budh Nagar).

According to police, the FIR has been filed under IPC sections 147 (rioting), 506 (intimidation), 353 (assault), 323 (causing hurt) and 342 (wrongful confinement).

Singh and his team were

conducting an economic survey for a central scheme. According to a police officer, the villagers were apprehensive that the economic survey was actually "a part of the NRC exercise".

Police said that one of the accused, Jawed, a resident of Delhi, was visiting the village when the survey took place.

He allegedly rallied 40-odd villagers to protest against the survey and fled when police arrived.

Police have prima facie ruled out assault but have gathered

evidence suggesting that the surveyors were confined against their will. Police in Greater Noida are scanning nearby areas to arrest Jawed and the other accused.

A similar incident took place in Meerut a few days ago when a group of officials conducting a polio vaccination programme were assaulted after being mistaken for surveyors.

In Kerala, an ASHA and an anganwadi worker were attacked while carrying out census work.

CABINET MINISTERS TOLD

CM wants action plan to deliver 'guarantees'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

DELHI CABINET ministers will soon have to submit a detailed plan to implement the 10 guarantees that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had made before the Assembly polls.

In the first meeting of the Cabinet after the new AAP government was formed, the CM asked all ministers and heads of departments to formulate a roadmap, including a timeline, budget and assessment period of the 10 promises.

The budget of the new government, officials said, will be drawn up based on the requirements listed out for the 10 guarantees. The guarantees cover areas such as power, water, health, transport, sanitation and housing.

"A very significant meeting was held today, where I met all ministers, secretaries and department heads, and had a detailed discussion on each of the 10 guarantees of our manifesto. The respective department heads or secretaries have been instructed to formulate a plan for smooth functioning of their departments. The plan will contain the timeline and budget or monetary requirements for the fulfilment of guarantees concerning their departments. The plan will also have set milestones of the execution of work, to assess the fulfilment of plans in the stipulated timelines," Kejriwal said.

"After one week, separate meetings will be held with each of these departments every

THE 10 GUARANTEES

POWER: Continue scheme giving 200 units of free power; 24-hour supply; lay underground power cables

WATER: Ensure 24-hour clean piped water supply

EDUCATION: Quality education for all till graduation; regulate private school fee

HEALTH: More mohalla clinics; add capacity in government hospitals

TRANSPORT: 11,000 buses in Delhi; 500-km-long Metro network; ensure last-mile connectivity; free bus ride scheme for students

ENVIRONMENT: Reduce air pollution by a third in five years; clean Yamuna

SANITATION: Clean roads and landfills

WOMEN'S SAFETY: More CCTV cameras, streetlights; appoint mohalla marshals

UNAUTHORISED COLONIES: Roads, drains, water lines, sewer lines, mohalla clinics and CCTVs in all unauthorised colonies

HOUSING: Permanent houses for residents of slums near their existing homes

week, where they will hold presentations notifying their requirements. The budget allocation on these guarantees will be announced during the announcement of the budget for this financial year," he added.

Calling the mandate — AAP got 62 of 70 seats the third time it contested the Delhi Assembly polls — a vote for continuity, the top leadership did not induct anyone new into the Cabinet. The portfolios of ministers have seen a slight change, with Satyendar Jain getting the responsibility of the Delhi Jal Board and Gopal Rai getting the environment department.

"All the cabinet ministers have started operating from offices, and the portfolios of ministers remain the same except one or two minor modifications. I have been consistently asked why I did not keep any department with me. I did not have any department with me during the last tenure as well except the Delhi Jal Board. It is much easier to monitor the functioning of all departments than handling any particular department. I believe it is the responsibility of the Chief Minister to overlook the performance of all ministers and operations of their departments," Kejriwal said.

Biocon founder Shaw lauds mohalla clinics

New Delhi: Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, founder and managing director of Asia's leading biopharmaceutical enterprise Biocon, lauded the Delhi government's mohalla clinic project, after she visited one of the health centres in South Delhi's Saket Monday. Shaw said the clinics are a step in the right direction towards "achieving the sustainable development goal of universal health coverage." She also said the healthcare model should be replicated by other states. She also met Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal after her visit to the mohalla clinic. **ENS**

Kejriwal calls on Shah in first meeting after polls

New Delhi: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Wednesday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in what Delhi government officials called a "courtesy" visit.

The CM said he and Shah had spoken about several Delhi-related issues, but did not discuss the sit-in protest at Shaheen Bagh.

"We had a very cordial and constructive meeting. We spoke about Delhi-related issues and the work to be done in Delhi. Both the state and the Centre have to work together for Delhi's development," Kejriwal said after the meeting.

The meeting at Shah's house lasted around 20 minutes and

comes against the backdrop of a high-decibel campaign that, towards the end, was centred around Shaheen Bagh.

In a statement, the Delhi government said: "The Central and state governments will work together on various matters including women's security to avoid any differences in approach, as there is a major division of power and responsibilities when it comes to the functioning of departments in Delhi. We have agreed that both governments will work together on all matters concerning Delhi, including significant issues such as women's security." **ENS**

Man shot dead by unidentified assailants

New Delhi: A 33-year-old man was shot dead in Kanjhawala by unidentified persons Wednesday evening.

Initial investigation has revealed that the assailants had fired around 30 rounds of which 20 bullets hit him.

Police said the victim, Pawan alias Anchal, a native of Karala village, was returning home in his Scorpio car when it was intercepted by the accused at main road of Ladpur village.

They opened fire at the vehicle.

An FIR has been registered against unknown persons and the investigation is on to identify the accused, police said. **ENS**

AFTER SC INTERVENTION

At Shaheen Bagh, a start to mediation

Mediators tell protesters that solution should come from them, say it will set an example for the rest of the world

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

EXPRESSING CONFIDENCE that they would find a solution to the blockade of a public road due to the Shaheen Bagh sit-in protest, a two-member mediation panel of the Supreme Court told protesters during an interaction Wednesday that "liberty lies in the hearts of men and women".

The panel, comprising advocate Sadhana Ramachandran and senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, was appointed by the apex court Monday after it acknowledged that people have a fundamental right to protest, but that there were "lines and boundaries" for expression of views in a democracy.

Welcomed by protesters on a stage set up at the site, the mediators initially faced resistance when they demanded a dialogue with people at the venue without the presence of media. The panel also read out the Supreme Court order from Monday to the protesters.

Ramachandran told the crowd, "Supreme Court has said that you have a right to protest, but like us there are other citizens who also have rights, like those who use this road... we want to come up with a solution with you on the Supreme Court order. Solution should be yours. Whose *andolan* is it and whose solution should it be? Does anyone here want someone else's right to end? We want to listen to you. In our country we respect each other's views... I have faith that we will come up with such a solution that will become an example to the whole world."



In an interaction later, the panel was told that the protest site occupies a 150-metre area on the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh road stretch, which can be opened by the police, leaving out the site.

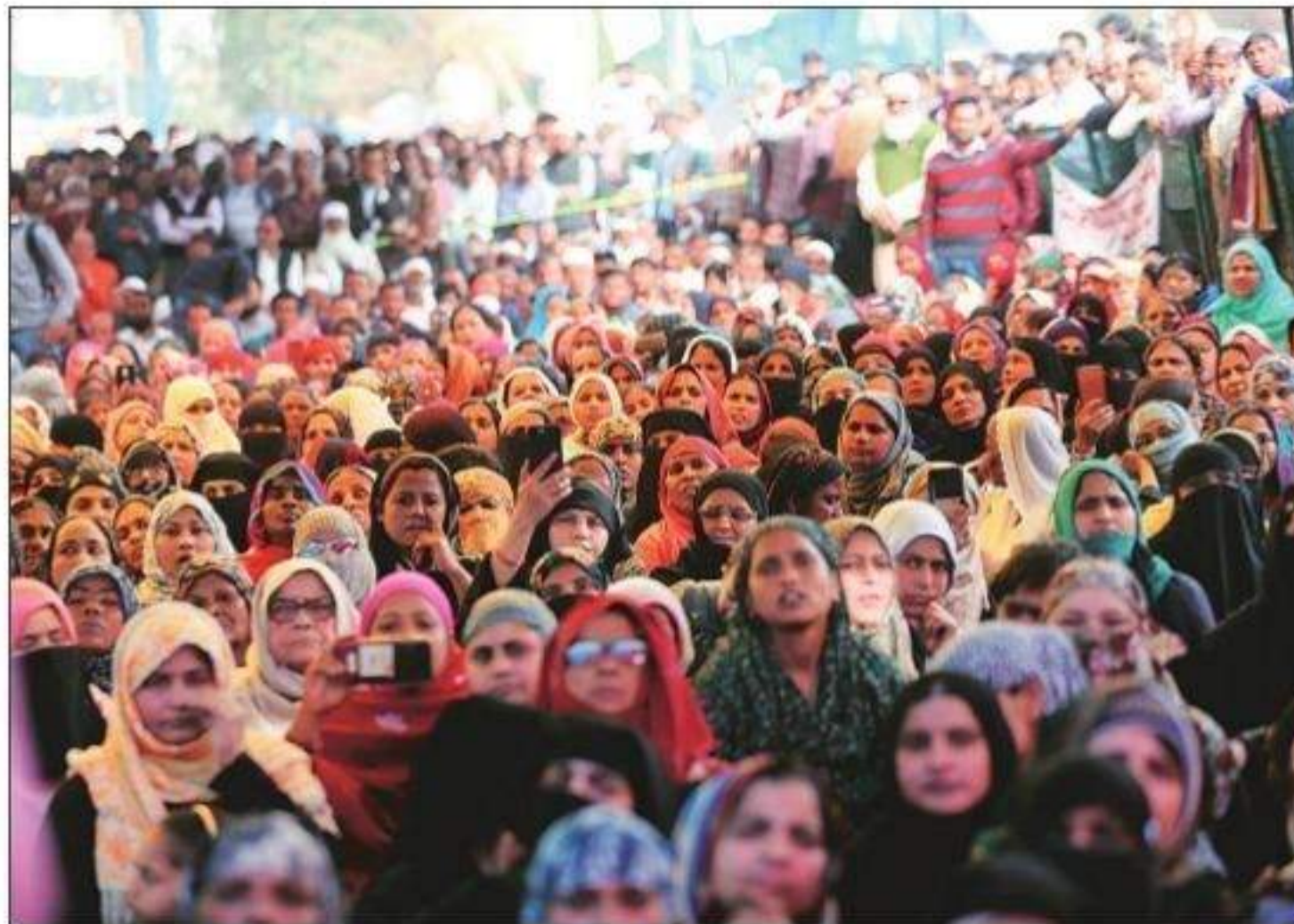
"Barricades have been put up on three sides of the road by the Delhi and UP Police. It's not like we do not support people who are facing difficulties. We move the barricades to let ambulances, police cars, and school buses pass through, and even private vehicles that are in emergency," a protester told the panel.

Many elderly and woman protesters, who are leading the

agitation, took turns to present their views.

One of them said: "Inconvenience (due to road blockade) is an excuse to end the protest. If they are not listening to us here, will they listen to us if we move somewhere else? A lot of misinformation is being spread about us, that we are creating problems. We ourselves are in so much trouble that we are out on the street. You should relay our inconvenience to the government. This 'my way or the highway' approach won't work. There needs to be a dialogue from both sides."

Hegde said he was quite "in-



Supreme Court-appointed interlocutors (L) Sanjay Hegde and Sadhana Ramachandran in conversation while addressing protesters at Shaheen Bagh, Wednesday. Tashi Tobgyal

fluenced (*prabhavit*)" by the depth with which the protesters spoke and added that he was reminded of the saying 'Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women'. He said, "...as long as people like you take the Constitution and move forward, *iss desh me azadi barkarar rahegi* (freedom shall sustain in this country)." This invited loud cheers and claps from the crowd.

The panel was also told that the protesting women and men were going through "mental and physical trauma" because their "existence was being questioned" and they were being attacked upon. They were also told

that the agitation won't end until the new citizenship law, along with the National Population Register and a proposed National Register of Citizens, is rolled back.

A protester said, "Before December 15, I didn't know Shaheen Bagh existed in Delhi, but now there are Shaheen Baghs across the country and this one (in Delhi) is giving strength to them all. We request that this agitation not be ended until the citizenship law is rolled back."

The interlocutors will return to the protest site Thursday to continue interacting with the

protesters.

In a statement released later in the day, Ramachandran said, "We have had a fruitful first meeting with protesters at Shaheen Bagh today. We met a whole lot of very proud Indians who have great confidence in their constitutional institutions. There was great appreciation of the Supreme Court and its important belief in a democratic dialogue. It is very important for aggrieved parties to be heard, is how we saw it. And everyone expressed their confidence, as joint co-citizens of this country, that together we can find a feasible solution."

Dark web drug bust: 3 arrested for Singapore connect

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

NINE DAYS after the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested the country's first narcotics vendor on the dark web, three alleged intermediaries who passed on the information of orders to a company in Singapore were nabbed from Maharashtra's Nagpur on February 11.

Accused Sachin Makade (33) holds a degree in pharmacy, Banun Chauhan (33) is an MBA graduate, and Tejas Patel (28) is a college dropout who worked with the two, police said. 'Dark web' is a part of the internet which cannot be accessed by ordinary search engines, and is often used for illegal activities such as buying drugs and hacking accounts.

A senior police officer said, "On February 2, we arrested Dipu Singh (21), the first person arrested in India for selling drugs on the dark web. Questioning revealed the chain of supply. Singh would get orders for psychotropic drugs like Tramadol on dark web portals such as Empire Market. He would then pass on information about the orders to these three men in Nagpur, who had a shipping contact in Singapore, which in turn would ship these drugs to the US and UK."

Singh would allegedly transfer money to their bank accounts, and the three men would pay their Singapore contact in Bitcoins, said an officer. "These three men mostly dealt in drugs like Viagra initially. In 2018, when Tramadol was declared a controlled psychotropic drug under the NDPS Act, they began dealing in this, and received orders mainly

'Dark web' is a part of the internet which cannot be accessed by ordinary search engines, and is often used for illegal activities such as buying drugs and hacking accounts

from the UK and US," said K P S Malhotra, zonal director, Delhi Zonal Unit (NCB). He said the three men also allegedly received orders from the Philippines.

While talking about Singh's arrest, which led to these subsequent revelations, a senior officer said, "We randomly picked this vendor and placed an order, which we received. Our concentration is on Indian vendors who are selling opioid-based drugs on the dark web."

An officer said Singh, like most vendors, had two ways of selling drugs on the dark web — one, by using this chain, and another, by directly sourcing drugs and shipping them to clients. Singh's questioning has revealed the main source, and on February 12, three parcels containing 7,800 psychotropic drug tablets meant for Bokaro, Surat and Aurangabad were seized from Punjabi Bagh, police said.

Malhotra said, "The consignee of the parcel was based in Sonapat's Kundli and a raid was conducted on February 15. The accused is absconding since Singh's arrest, but 91,000 tablets of Tramadol and Alprazolam, and 135 kg of loose tablets were recovered."

PROSECUTION SANCTION

JNU sedition case: Delay irks court, CM says will prod dept

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

A DELHI court Wednesday expressed unhappiness over the state government's pending decision on whether or not to accord prosecution sanction of former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union president Kanhaiya Kumar and others in a 2016 sedition case. Earlier too, the court had granted Delhi Police time to procure the sanction.

According to official records, police had applied to the Delhi government for prosecution sanction just two hours before filing the chargesheet in the case on January 14 last year. In the absence of a sanction, the court has been deferring taking cognizance of the chargesheet.

Taking note of the delay, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Purshottam Pathak sought to know from the investigating of-



Police have accused Kanhaiya Kumar of sedition

ficer (IO) if they have sent a reminder notice to the state government. The court has directed the Delhi government's counsel and IO to file a status report by April 3.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, when asked about the prosecution sanction later, said:

"I can't influence the decision of the department concerned (Home) and I do not have a say in the department, but I will ask

them to make a decision quickly."

The police had claimed in the chargesheet that Kumar was leading a procession and supported seditious slogans raised on the campus during an event on February 9, 2016. Besides Kumar, then JNU students Umar Khalid, Anirban Bhattacharya and others were chargesheeted for allegedly shouting "anti-India slogans" during the event held to mark the hanging of 2001 Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru.

On Wednesday, the direction was issued after the IO appraised the court that the permission to prosecute the accused had not been granted so far, and the file pertaining to their request was pending before the Delhi government's home department.

Observing that "judicial time was wasted" on the issue, the court had on September 19 last year said it expected the Delhi government to take a decision

within one month.

The *Indian Express* had in September reported that the state government was set to turn down Delhi Police's request to prosecute Kanhaiya and others, after the Home department reportedly took the view that the February 9, 2016 event on the JNU campus did not amount to sedition against the state.

This was based on legal opinion obtained from standing counsel (criminal) Rahul Mehra, who had reportedly said that Delhi Police's request be turned down.

The accused persons in the case have been charged with offences under IPC sections 124A (sedition), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 465 (forgery), 471 (using as genuine a forged document or electronic record), 143 (being a member of an unlawful assembly), 149 (being a member of an unlawful assembly), 147 (rioting) and 120B (criminal conspiracy).



OUTREACH

Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik with schoolchildren at a painting competition organised as part of a road safety event at India Gate, Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey

2 use stolen IDs to make credit cards, dupe banks of crores

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NOIDA, FEBRUARY 19

TWO PERSONS have been arrested by Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) for allegedly duping banks of crores of rupees by getting credit and debit cards issued based on stolen personal data. The accused, Raja Saxena and Kautilya Sharma, were arrested from a crossing near Gaur City Mall Tuesday evening after officers received a tip-off.

"The duo were wanted in connection with stealing personal data, including PAN, voter IDs and Aadhaar cards, of working professionals, along with

They would obtain credit, debit cards and carry out transactions worth lakhs, police said

their salary slips. The accused would use the information to obtain credit and debit cards and carry out transactions worth lakhs. Dozens of IDs and cards have been recovered," the STF said.

Police said Raja hails from Rajasthan and Kautilya is a resident of UP's Hathras. Raja came to Delhi in 2007 and worked as a recovery agent associated with

a bank. That's when he met Kautilya and they both moved to Greater Noida West.

According to police, a case was earlier filed against the duo for allegedly duping the PA of a former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister. The accused had served 18 months of prison time, police said.

"Police have recovered personal data of more than 6,000 customers and IDs of more than 25,000 people from the mobile phones of the accused. We have also found 19 salary slips of various company employees, along with 29 fake Aadhaar cards that were used in the fraud," said an STF official.

Police rescue kidnapped call centre owner

New Delhi: A call centre owner, who was kidnapped from outside Tilak Nagar Metro station Tuesday night by five men who allegedly pretended to be cops, was rescued by Delhi Police hours later Wednesday. Police said the kidnapers drove around the city with the victim for at least eight hours, and used his phone to call friends and family demanding Rs 25 lakh as ransom. DCP (West) Deepak Purohit said, "A trap was laid at Ring Road, near Delhi Cantt Metro station, where the ransom money was to be delivered by Kumar's friend, who was accompanied in an auto by a police personnel in plainclothes. One accused was arrested while four people fled." During questioning, the accused said that "he hatched the plan for money to invest in his own business." **ENS**

DFS revokes suspension of five-star hotel licence

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) Wednesday revoked the suspension of fire safety licence of The Park hotel on Parliament Street, where a fire had broken out Saturday. An inspection carried out by the DFS has concluded that the hotel is complying with the safety norms now.

The fire had broken out in the five-star hotel's basement on February 15 due to a short circuit. Around 15 people, including nine Norwegian citizens, were injured in the incident.

DFS director Atul Garg said, "We had noticed shortcomings in the fire safety measures and suspended the licence asking them to comply by February 18.

They have now complied with the measures."

Delhi Police is also reviewing its cessation order on the hotel. DCP, police licencing, Asif Mohammad Ali said, "They have submitted a letter for removal of the cessation order... It is under review."

A statement released by the hotel said, "We had received a suspension notice from the Fire Department to undertake certain fire prevention improvements... We complied with it. Following which, the Fire Department visited the premises and conducted an inspection to verify... on 18th February, 2020... After a thorough check done by the Fire Department yesterday, the hotel has received a clearance and the Fire Safety Certificate has been restored."

Jamia violence: Students served police notices

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

A SPECIAL investigation team of Delhi Police Crime Branch has served notices to 10 students of Jamia Millia Islamia asking them to join the investigation in connection with the December 15 violence on campus.

On Wednesday, a team of the inter-state cell of crime branch visited the university campus and handed over notices to the students, a senior officer said. The students, who have been called for questioning, include some of those detained on the night of the incident, some identified through CCTV video clips that surfaced recently, and some who suffered injuries on that day, the officer said.

The South East district police

had detained 53 students hours after the violence. They were released from NFC and Kalkaji police stations after the Jamia college administration had given undertaking on their behalf, an officer said.

On Tuesday, some other members of the Crime Branch team led by DCP (Crime) Rajesh Deo had visited the campus.

The team members had spoken to Mohammad Minhajuddin, a student who had lost vision in one of his eyes in the police action.

Meanwhile, as reported by *The Indian Express*, the university administration has submitted to the HRD Ministry an estimate of damage caused to the property due to the alleged police action. It has cited damages worth Rs 2.66 crore, which includes 25 broken CCTV cameras.

250 e-rickshaws launched at 12 Metro stations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

IN A major boost to last-mile connectivity for commuters, the Delhi Metro Wednesday extended the facility of e-rickshaw services at 12 more stations, officials said. With this, the total tally of stations where such facilities are available rises to 29, with an operational fleet of over 1,000 e-rickshaws.

Director (Operations) A K Garg flagged off a fleet of around 250 new e-rickshaws from the Patel Nagar Metro station, the officials said.

These e-rickshaws will be plying from 12 stations — Qutab Minar, Ghitorni, Arjangarh, Nawada, Shadipur, Patel Nagar, Nangloi, Nangloi Railway

Station, Govindpuri, Harkesh Nagar Okhla, Moolchand and Botanical Garden.

"Till date, over 800 e-rickshaws were plying from 17 Metro stations, facilitating over one lakh passengers to reach destinations or stations daily. With this addition, the number of e-rickshaws has gone beyond 1,000, covering 29 Metro stations," DMRC said in a statement.

Twelve more stations are likely to be added within the next 2-3 months wherein around 500 more e-rickshaws will be put into service, it said.

These GPS-enabled rickshaws, called 'SmartEs', having covered cabin and full-front windscreen, will provide last-mile connectivity within a radius of 3-4 km from the Metro stations.

BRIEFLY

Four arrested for robbery

New Delhi: Four people were arrested on Wednesday for robbing a shop in Faridabad that offers money transfer services. One of the accused told police that a recent visit to the outlet with his mother led him to hatch the plan. The accused allegedly made away with around Rs 55,000 from the shop. Faridabad Police PRO Sube Singh said they have recovered Rs 16,000, two illegal country-made pistols and a blue Splendor bike used in the crime.

Woman gets police award for bravery

New Delhi: As a part of the ongoing Delhi Police Week, a programme to highlight the 'Sashakti' scheme, which aims at training schoolgirls and college students in self-defense, was held in the West district Tuesday. Joint CP (Western Range) Shalini Singh and DCP (West) Deepak Purohit presented a 'Virangana of west district' award to one Priyanka Singh, who caught hold of a man who tried to snatch her gold chain last year. A play on "acid attack and Himmat Plus app" was also staged by a group of students. **ENS**

Three Nepal nationals held for murder

New Delhi: Three Nepal nationals were arrested for allegedly killing a 28-year-old man after he allegedly hurled abuses at them in West Delhi's Khyala, police said on Wednesday.

Cab driver held for sexual harassment

Gurgaon: A driver associated with an app-based cab aggregator was arrested for allegedly sexually harassing a woman passenger, police said Wednesday. The accused, whom the woman had engaged for a trip from Gurgaon's Sector 51 to HUDA City Centre Metro station, had allegedly masturbated in her presence. **PTI**

7 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



After NPR remark, Uddhav gets a coalition reminder from Cong

MANOJ CG & PRADEEP KAUSHAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

MAHARASHTRA CHIEF Minister Uddhav Thackeray's statement that he has no problems with the exercise of updating the National Population Register (NPR) in the state could lead to a face-off between the Shiv Sena and its alliance partners, the Congress and NCP. The Congress high command on Wednesday expressed its displeasure over Thackeray's statement and reminded him that he is leading a coalition government.

"Our stand is very clear. We will not implement NPR... What he is saying is his stand... We will tell him (Thackeray) that decisions should be taken by the three parties together. Because this is a decision of tiranga...not saffron alone. Till the three parties meet and take a decision, he should not allow NPR in the state," AICC general secretary in charge of Maharashtra, Mallikarjun Kharge, told *The Indian Express*.

Sources in the Sena said that Chief Minister Thackeray had taken a well-considered position on the NPR and there was no question of any reversal. At the same time, the sources maintained that there was no threat to



Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray during a visit to the birthplace of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on the occasion of his birth anniversary, at Shivneri Fort in Pune Wednesday. PTI

the coalition government on account of their differences over the NPR and Bhima Koregaon issues.

Thackeray told the media on Monday that his government would not block data collection for updating the NPR in Maharashtra. "The NPR is different from the NRC. It is part of the Census. It happens every 10 years," he said. The Chief Minister, however, made it clear that his government will not support NRC. Regarding the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, he said that it

would not affect anyone in India.

Kharge said the NPR and Census were different. "They have put additional questions in the NPR like birthplace and birth date of father and mother...people belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward classes...those who are uneducated among them, they can't tell the birthplace or birth dates of their parents," he said.

"While surveying, they will write 'questionable' against the name of the person. You are put in

the questionable category. And when tomorrow they will bring NRC...at that time they will say this person's credentials are questionable and there should be further inquiry...till the inquiry is completed...he will not get any facilities...then he will have to run from pillar to post — Tahsildar's office, AC office, DC office...after that courts...to claim one certificate. This will amount to harassing people who are already citizens of the country," he said.

Kharge said, "Our people in the state...in the cabinet...have conveyed to them our party's stand...our people have protested. Our party's stand is clear. Whatever decision is taken by the all-India party...the same will be applicable to Maharashtra. Maharashtra cannot be an exception."

Asked what the Congress will do if Thackeray sticks to his stand on NPR, he said, "Let us see...I cannot say anything unless we discuss the issue with NCP and the high command holds discussions."

The Congress Working Committee had on January 12 asked the BJP government at the Centre to stop the process of updating the National Population Register, with party president Sonia Gandhi describing NPR 2020 as a "disguised NRC in form and content".

PM takes artisans, minister by surprise at India Gate skills fair

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Wednesday made an unscheduled visit to HunarHaat, organised by the Ministry of Minority Affairs on the India Gate lawns, taking even Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi by surprise.

Modi spent close to an hour interacting with the artisans, had a cup of tea in a *kulhad* (a clay cup), ate *litti-chokha*, and gave the weekday crowd some hectic photo opportunities.

It was a spur-of-the-moment, "unplanned" visit, officials said.

In multiple tweets, Modi posted: "The colours and diversity of India on display...Spent a wonderful afternoon at #HunarHaat on India Gate. It showcases the best of products including handicrafts, carpets, textiles and of course, delicious food! Do visit it. The participation of people from all across India makes #HunarHaat a vibrant place. Have a look at these photos...Had tasty Litti Chokha for lunch along with a hot cup of tea..."

Recounting the surprise element in Modi's visit, Naqvi said he had just returned home from the Cabinet meeting for lunch when he got a call that the SPG had arrived at Hunar Haat and it ap-

peared the Prime Minister was on his way. "I dashed out, disbelieving — if there indeed was a plan it was normal for him to mention it to me at the Cabinet. But I was still not willing to take a chance. I was doubtful, though, that if it was indeed true, I would not reach on time to receive him since VIP traffic restrictions would be in place. There was none, so I managed to reach the lawns on time."

By then, Naqvi was "confident" that Modi was not coming there, as the traffic was "normal". So, "imagine my surprise when I was told that the PM's car was stuck at the Rajpath red light," an ecstatic Naqvi recounted. Officials said traffic restrictions were not imposed since this was "a sudden visit, and the PM did not want people to be inconvenienced".

Modi reached around 1.35 pm and spent a leisurely 55 minutes at the fair — he inspected the wares, listened to artisans' stories, and also asked them how many generations in their families had been engaged in the craft. After some time he walked into a tea stall and had a cup of *kulhad* tea for Rs 20. He is learnt to have paid for the tea and even asked the stall owner to return the change.

After a while, he bought a plate of *litti-chokha*, sat on one of the charpoyas and ate it, with Naqvi for company all the while.

GREEN CAUSE

THREE MONTHS into his tenure, Chief Justice of India S A Bobde has already emerged as a champion of greens, with the bench headed by him battling for sustainable development, which takes into account environmental concerns, too. In the last few days, the CJ has spoken for the Flamingos of Thane Creek Sanctuary, the Great Indian Bustard in Rajasthan, conveyed his anguish on the fate of waterbodies of Nagpur, and posed questions on felling of trees for a foot-overbridge in West Bengal. The CJ also warned about the dangers of depleting forest cover and agreed that global warming concerns are "very believable". Last month, the CJ-headed bench also cleared a long-pending pilot project to introduce the African Cheetah to India.

HEALTH FIRST

IN A meeting with the Chinese Ambassador, Health Secretary Preeti Sudan had requested that students who had returned from China be allowed more time to join their respective universities. This request has been responded to favourably. The Chinese Embassy has written to the ministry that the State Council of China has decided to postpone the new semester of universities, including Southwest University, for which Sudan had represented. The students will be notified by their universities accordingly.

PORTAL PLANS?

AT A meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport Tourism and Culture on Tuesday, there was a moment of mirth when officials from the Culture Ministry were fielding questions about traffic on the newly launched portal on Mahatma Gandhi, one Opposition MP asked whether the ministry also plans to start a portal on his killer, Nathuram Godse. All MPs and officials burst out laughing.



Prashant Kishor

Oppn parties in Bihar back Kishor's initiative

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, FEBRUARY 19

ALL MAJOR Opposition parties in Bihar have backed poll strategist and expelled JD(U) leader Prashant Kishor's Baat Bihar Ki initiative to connect with people on issues related to the youth and development at the panchayat level.

Kishor has cited data from NITI Aayog, the HRD Ministry and the Bihar government to show how the state is poorly placed on count of 18 indices.

The RJD said that what Kishor is saying now, it has been saying all along. The party's Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Kumar Jha told *The Indian Express*, "It is an indication of what we have been saying all along. It was during UPA I that money flow started from the Centre to Bihar and other states. RJD had a strong presence in the government then...Every number has a story. Kishor has now said that the idea of Nitish Kumar's development is flat. But he should have more clarity." If he is endorsing Kishor's line of attack on Nitish, Jha said, "In fact, Kishor's endorsing points often made by our Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Prasad Yadav."

RLSP chief Upendra Kushwaha, a Grand Alliance constituent, was more forthright in his support. "Kishor has reflected feelings of the entire state. We now have to look for next level of development. Kishor's policies and strategies could be a vehicle for change in Bihar."

State Congress president Madan Mohan Jha said, "We fully endorse what Kishor has brought to public domain. The data shows that people of the state stand cheated on the model of governance being flaunted by Nitish Kumar." HAM (S) spokesperson Danish Rizwan said, "Kishor has the DNA of Bihar and we support him. After all, he has been talking about ways in which Bihar can develop to another level and how Nitish Kumar's model of growth is flat and too conventional."

JD (U)'s Rajya Sabha MP R C P Singh, who had frequent clashes of opinions with Kishor when he was in the party, said, "Nitish Kumar does not need anyone's certificate. The person (Kishor) should go to villages to measure development..."

Govt makes crop insurance schemes voluntary

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE UNION Cabinet on Wednesday approved the revamping of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS), making enrolment under both schemes voluntary for all farmers; increasing premium subsidy to 90 per cent for states in the Northeast from existing sharing pattern of 50:50; and provisioning of at least 3 per cent of total allocation of scheme for administrative expenses.

Briefing the media on the Cabinet decisions, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar said, "Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has been made voluntary. Till now, crop insurance was mandatory to connect with people on issues related to the youth and development at the panchayat level. Kishor has cited data from NITI Aayog, the HRD Ministry and the Bihar government to show how the state is poorly placed on count of 18 indices.

The RJD said that what Kishor is saying now, it has been saying all along. The party's Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Kumar Jha told *The Indian Express*, "It is an indication of what we have been saying all along. It was during UPA I that money flow started from the Centre to Bihar and other states. RJD had a strong presence in the government then...Every number has a story. Kishor has now said that the idea of Nitish Kumar's development is flat. But he should have more clarity." If he is endorsing Kishor's line of attack on Nitish, Jha said, "In fact, Kishor's endorsing points often made by our Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Prasad Yadav."

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this provision for Kharif and Rabi seasons will be March 31 and September 30 of successive years, respectively" for both PMFBY and RWBCIS, according to a statement, released after the Cabinet meeting. "Central share in premium subsidy to be increased to 90% for North Eastern States from the existing sharing pattern of 50:50 (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS)," it said.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved a new central sector scheme — Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) — to form and promote 10,000 FPOs to be formed in five years from 2019-20 to 2023-24. The Centre had announced creation of 10,000 new FPOs in 2019-20 Union Budget.

According to a statement, the Cabinet has approved total budgetary provision of Rs 4,496 crore for five years (2019-20 to 2023-24) with further committed liability of Rs 2,369 crore for the period from 2024-25 to 2027-28 towards handholding of each FPO for five years from its aggregation and formation.

The Cabinet also approved Phase-II of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) till 2024-25. It aims to focus on Open Defecation-Free Plus, which includes ODF sustainability and Solid and Liquid Waste Management.

"SBM (G) Phase-II will also be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25 in a mission mode with a total outlay of Rs. 1,40,881 crores... Of this Rs.52,497 crore will be allocated from the budget of Drinking Water and Sanitation; the remaining amount will be dovetailed from funds being released under 15th Finance Commission, MGNREGS and revenue generation models, particularly for solid and liquid waste management," according to a statement.



Union ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Prakash Javadekar and Smriti Irani at a Cabinet briefing Wednesday. Anil Sharma

Cabinet approval to Bill for regulation of reproductive technology

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE CABINET on Wednesday cleared the Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020.

The Bill aims to regulate assisted reproductive technology services in the country. A National Board, which will be constituted once the Bill is passed by Parliament, will lay down a code of conduct and set minimum standards of physical infrastructure, laboratory and diagnostic equipment and expert manpower to be employed by clinics and banks.

States and Union Territories shall constitute State Boards and State Authorities within three months of the notification by the Central government. The Bill also provides for National Registry and Registration Authority to maintain a central database and assist

the National Board in its functioning. It proposes stringent punishment for sex selection, sale of human embryos or gametes, and agencies/rackets/organisations behind such unlawful practices.

Assisted reproductive technology (ART) has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years. India is among countries that have seen highest growth in the number of ART centres and ART cycles performed every year. ART, including In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF), has given hope to persons suffering from infertility, but has also brought in a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues.

However, there is no standardisation of protocols yet in the country and reporting is still very inadequate.

The need to regulate ART services is mainly to protect the affected women and children from exploitation.

Nod to creation of 22nd Law Commission

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE UNION Cabinet Wednesday approved setting up of the 22nd Law Commission, more than five months after the end of the 21st Law Commission's tenure.

The commission will be formed for a three-year period with a chairperson, four full-time members, a maximum of five part-time members and secretaries of the Department of Legal Affairs and Legislative Department as ex-officio members.

The Law Commission advises the government on legal issues, conducts research to review and reform the law or to bring new legislation. Either through a reference made to it by the government or suo-motu, it researches laws and reviews existing laws in India to reform them, remove them or bring new legislations. It also undertakes studies for reforms in the justice delivery systems. It is a non-statutory body constituted by the government every three years, with the first being formed in 1955.

The lack of a Law Commission was recently mentioned in the Supreme Court when the government told the court that the Commission could study and suggest solutions to address the issue of vacancies in higher judiciary. On Monday, a bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and K M Joseph came down heavily on Attorney General K K Venugopal, asking him why the government was "holding back" Collegium's recommendations for appointments to various high courts.

Cong seeks scrapping of CVC selection

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

ARGUING THAT the process adopted for appointment of the next Chief Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) was "illegal, unlawful and unconstitutional", the Congress on Wednesday demanded that the selection be scrapped and the process be started afresh. The party said Sanjay Kothari, whose name was finalised for CVC at a meeting of the high-powered committee headed by the Prime Minister on Tuesday, was not even an applicant and his name was not placed before the committee.

The party said the "matter was so sensitive and serious" that the process of selection can be challenged in a court. "All options are open," Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari said.

A day after the committee cleared the name of Kothari, who is now Secretary to the President, despite objections from Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, the Opposition member in the committee, the Congress argued that the selection process was also "vitiated" because of the fact that Finance Secretary Rajeev Kumar was a member of the search committee and an applicant for the CVC's post as well. The party said Kumar's name was among the three names short-listed by the search committee and placed before the high-powered committee.

"The search committee consisted of Cabinet Secretary Rajeev Gauba, DoPT Secretary C Chandramouli and Finance Secretary Rajeev Kumar...The panel which

was sent to the high-powered committee consisted of Ajay Narayan Jha, member of the 15th Finance Commission, Kumar and Bhanu Pratap Sharma, former secretary of the DoPT...The Finance Secretary was a member of the search committee and was an applicant for the post of CVC and the search committee then recommends one of the members of the search committee to be appointed as the CVC...this is completely unheard off, this is bizarre," Tewari told reporters.

He claimed that the Prime Minister agreed that the process was "vitiated" when Kumar's case was pointed out by Chowdhury at the meeting on Tuesday. "So what does the government do. The Prime Minister pulls out a name from his pocket... and diluting all rules and procedures, issues a *Tuglaqi farmaan* (diktat) that Kothari will be the next CVC. He was not even an applicant. There were 126 applicants for both the posts of CVC and VC... A man who is neither an applicant, whose candidature was not considered by the search committee... who is not in the shortlist is then cleared for appointment as the next CVC."

"The person who has been given the responsibility of preventing corruption in the country... the process of his appointment itself is illegal and unconstitutional. In this country, you cannot even appoint a peon the way the Prime Minister and the Home Minister have appointed the CVC... bas jeb se naam nikala aur CVC. Are we living in a democracy or in a banana republic... he said.

Trump's comments insult, affront to India's dignity: Cong

New Delhi: Arguing that the remarks made by US President Donald Trump were an "insult" to India's dignity, the Congress on Wednesday said the government or Prime Minister Narendra Modi should respond to it.

The party was reacting to Trump's remarks that India had not treated his country "very well" on the trade front. "That comment

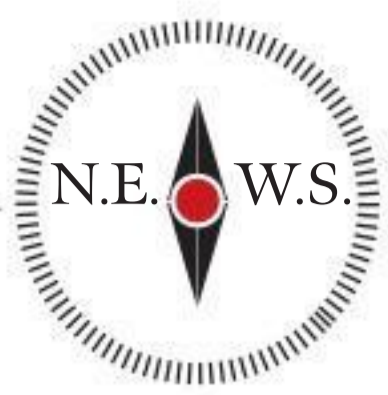
was completely uncalled for. I do hope the Ministry of External Affairs has responded to that and not crept under a carpet," said Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari.

"...I think it is an insult and an affront to our dignity as a country and I hope the Ministry of External Affairs or the Prime Minister would respond to it," he said. **ENS**

EXPLAINED State govt in a fix

THE BJP government in Uttarakhand is in a fix. People from SC and ST communities are present in significant numbers in some areas of the state. If the state government denies reservation in promotions, it may have to suffer losses in the 2022 elections. But, if it gives reservation, upper castes voters who form a majority in the state may be upset.

8 EXPRESS NETWORK



NORTH

Punjab cops bust drug racket run by officers

Ludhiana: The anti-drug STF of the Punjab Police Wednesday claimed to have busted a racket in Ludhiana that operated with the involvement of police officers, who allegedly detained drug peddlers and then sold or consumed the drugs recovered from them. The STF fur-

ther claimed that this gang of police officers would later release the peddlers after taking huge sums as bribe. R S Jaiswal, IG, STF (Jalandhar zone), said that information was received about a "gang running with nexus of police officers and drug smugglers in Punjab". **ENS**



J&K Public Health Engineering workers block a road to press for their demands, in Jammu. PTI

EAST

Student detained for making TikTok video inside exam hall

Kolkata: A 16-year-old examinee was detained in Malda district on Wednesday for allegedly making a TikTok video of the question paper for the Class 10 English exam of the state board and sharing the same on social media. According to police, the incident took place in Ratua area. It is alleged that soon after the exam began, the

boy clicked three pages of the question paper while sitting inside the classroom, edited it on the TikTok app, added Bollywood music to the video and circulated it on social media. "The student will be produced before the district Juvenile Justice Board on Thursday," said a senior police officer of Malda district. **ENS**

WEST

Bar owner held for sexually assaulting employee

Mumbai: A 45-year-old bar owner was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly sexually assaulting a bar singer in the eastern suburb of Ghatkopar here, police said. Based on a complaint lodged by the victim, the police nabbed Suresh Shetty, who allegedly sexually assaulted her after calling her to the bar on Wednesday morning, an official said.

One of the customers at the bar had borrowed Rs 2 lakh from the accused, gave it to the victim and later refused to return the money, he said. The accused allegedly started harassing the victim to get the borrowed amount back and threatened to sack her, following which he assaulted her on Wednesday, he added. **PTI**

SOUTH

TN cops: No passport or visa, 4 Bangladesh nationals held

Erode (TN): Four Bangladesh nationals have been arrested at nearby Perundurai for not having passports or visas, police said. They were later sent to Puzhal prison in Chennai and the Bangladesh Embassy in that city was informed about the four, the police said. The four were standing near a Magaliamman temple near Perundurai in Erode district of

Tamil Nadu on Tuesday and were interrogated by the police on routine rounds. On inquiry, one of them identified himself as Farroq Haji (38) employed in SIPCOT as a casual labourer, they said. The remaining three were Hemul Islam (22), Siraj Haji (45) and Rafiul Islam (35). None of them had proper passport or visa, they said. **PTI**

DEATHS DURING ANTI-CAA PROTESTS

If someone comes to die, how can they live, says Adityanath

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 19

CLAIMING THAT no one had died in police firing during the anti-CAA protests in Lucknow in December and that the deaths were caused by firing from rioters, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said in the state Assembly Wednesday that "koi marne ke liye aa hi raha hai toh zinda kahan se ho jayega (if someone comes to die, how can they live)?"

Adityanath also targeted the Opposition for criticising his government on its crackdown and recovery notices sent for alleged damage to property, saying those who had once ordered firing on "Ram bhakts" in Ayodhya were questioning him on action against rioters.

Replying to the Governor's address in the Assembly, Adityanath spoke at length about "Ram Rajya" and drew a distinction between the situation in Ayodhya in 1990, when police fired on "Ram bhakts", and the one in November 2019 after the Supreme court verdict in the temple case.



Adityanath was speaking in the UP Assembly

When Opposition members tried to remind the Chief Minister about Bijoor, where officers had acknowledged that one death occurred due to police firing, Adityanath maintained that "rioters died due to firing by other rioters".

"There was violence on December 19 and December 20. Police should be appreciated that there was no riot," said Adityanath. "Aur bhai, koi marne ke liye aa hi raha hai toh zinda kahan se ho jayega...lekin police ki goli se koi nahi mara, jo mare hain updravi, updravi ki hi goli se mare hain (If someone comes to die, how can they live? But no one died in police firing, rioters died

in firing by rioters only)," he said.

He said that if anyone comes with an illegal firearm to kill an innocent, but is caught by police, then "donon mein se kisi ek ko toh mara hoga (one of the two will have to die)".

Citing the example of two Dalit leaders during the freedom struggle, Bhim Rao Ambedkar and Jogendra Nath Mandal (who became a minister in the first Pakistan government), Adityanath said that while Ambedkar became popular, Mandal turned out to be a "desh-drohi (traitor)" and decided to go to Pakistan after Partition and had a "gumnami ki maut (unknown death)".

"Ek rashtraputr bankar-ke Bharat Ratna bana, aur ek ne desh ke saath gaddari ki aur gumnami ki maut mara. Ab tay kar lein kaun kya kama chahta hai (One became the son of the nation and got Bharat Ratna, while the other became a traitor and died an unknown death. Now decide who wants to choose which path)," he said.

The Chief Minister claimed that during the CAA protests, largescale funding by the

Popular Front of India (PFI) came to light. He said that all those expressing sympathy for the protesters were doing so for SIMI and PFI, and appealed that no one should become "another Jogendra Mandal".

Adityanath said he was surprised that when even criminals would not want to see their children turn criminals, "big leaders are sending their daughters amidst those who are raising anti-national slogans".

He said slogans were being raised in the name of "azadi" and asked, "What kind of azadi?... We will have to see whether we want to fulfil the dreams of Jinnah or those of Mahatma Gandhi."

Adityanath said that if someone wants to protest in a democratic manner his government would provide them with all freedom and support and security. However, he said, if people try to take law and order in their hands or play with the respect of women in the name of democracy, "woh jis bhasha mein samjhega usko samjhayenge (the response will be in the language they understand)".

Sadaf, Darapuri among 28 told to pay Rs 63 lakh as damage to property

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 19

CONGRESS LEADER and social activist Sadaf Jafar (44), retired IPS officer S R Darapuri (77) and activist Mohammad Shoab (73) are among 28 people who have been asked to pay more than Rs 63 lakh as recovery for damage to public and government properties during the anti-CAA protests at Parivartan crossing in Hazratganj area of Lucknow on December 19 last year.

While Shoab and Darapuri claim they were under house arrest when the violence took place and that the recovery order is "baseless", Sadaf and other activists had earlier said there was "no evidence" linking them to the violence.

On Monday, Lucknow Additional District Magistrate (East) KP Singh issued an order for recovery of the amount within 30 days, failing which the administration will initiate legal procedure to attach their properties.

A total of 46 people were booked in connection with violence at Parivartan crossing. Police had initially registered an FIR against 42 people at Hazratganj police station and later claimed that the role of Darapuri, Shoab,

Deepak Kabir and Sadaf Jafar had come to light during investigation. They were all arrested and jailed hours after the violence.

Later, on the basis of a report sent by the police, which was claimed to be based on evidence, the Lucknow district administration issued notices to all the 46 people, seeking explanation on why recovery should not be sought from them for damage to property.

"Under the new commissionerate system, the police have magisterial power so they have been asked to ensure that recovery is done from the accused," said ADM (East) KP Singh.

Shoab said, "I was under house arrest when the violence occurred. Policemen took me from the house and later booked me in the case. If the district administration still moves to attach my properties, I will move the High Court."

Darapuri said, "I filed a reply against earlier notice informing that I was under house arrest when the incident took place so I could not have been involved in the violence. The district administration has so far not informed me what final order on recovery has been passed."

Sadaf Jafar said she will approach the court.

AT BAIL HEARING OF 21 HELD FOR MANGALURU VIOLENCE

HC: Bid to cover up police excesses, partisan probe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 19

GRANTING BAIL to 21 youths arrested for violence during an anti-CAA protest in Mangaluru on December 19 last year, when two persons were killed in police firing and eight others injured, the Karnataka High Court has observed that there was a "deliberate attempt" to "cover up police excesses" and the investigation was "mala fide and partisan".

Police had accused Mohammed Ashik and 20 other Muslim youths of unlawful assembly with lethal weapons, attempting to set fire to a police station, obstructing police from discharging their duties and damaging public property while violating prohibitory orders. After their bail petition was rejected by an additional district and sessions judge in Dakshina Kannada district, the youths had approached the high court.

In his order granting bail on February 17, Justice John Michael Cunha said: "There is no direct evidence to connect the petitioners with the alleged offences. Investigation appears to be mala fide and partisan. In the said circumstances, in order to protect the rights and liberties of the petitioners, it is necessary to admit them to bail... The records indicate that deliberate attempt has been made to trump-up evidence and to deprive the liberties of petitioners by fabricating evidence."

The court indicated that the police based their allegations against the youths solely on the premise that they were associated with the PFI.

"Though it is stated that the involvement of the petitioners is captured in the CCTV footage and photographs, no such material is

produced before this court showing the presence of any one of the petitioners at the spot armed with deadly weapons," it said. The gathering of the youths to stage a protest against CAA and NRC, as stated by police, "by itself is not an 'unlawful object' within the meaning of Section 141 of IPC," it said.

"The photographs, depict that hardly any member of the crowd was armed with weapons, except one of them holding a bottle. In none of these photographs, police station or policemen are seen in the vicinity... photographs produced by the petitioners disclose that the policemen themselves were pelting stones on the crowd," the court said.

"Overzealousness of the police is also evident from the fact that FIRs are registered under Section 307 IPC against the persons killed by the police themselves," the court said.

"Even though the law required the police to register independent FIRs in view of the specific complaint made against police officers making out cognizable offences, the police failed to register FIRs, which would go to show that a deliberate attempt is underway to cover up police excesses by implicating innocent persons at the whims and caprice of the police," it said.

"In the wake of the counter-allegations made against the police and in the backdrop of the failure of the police to register the FIRs based on the complaints lodged by the victims, the possibility of false and mistaken implication cannot be ruled out," it said.

The Congress used the bail order to target the ruling BJP in the House during a debate on police excesses in Mangaluru. State Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the state government would challenge the bail order.

Poet among two held for anti-CAA poem

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 19

A POET-JOURNALIST and editor of a Kannada YouTube channel were arrested in Koppal, central Karnataka, on Tuesday over an anti-CAA poem recited at a literature festival on January 9.

The poet, Siraj Bisaralli, who recited his poem, "When will you show your documents", at the Aneugudi Festival, organised by the state government's Kannada and culture department, has been accused of insulting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the poem.

Rajabaxi, editor of Kannadanet channel on YouTube, has been accused of "circulating the poem on Internet and social media" on January 14.

On January 24, Shivakumar Arakeri, general secretary of the local BJP Yuva Morcha unit, filed complaints against Bisaralli and Rajabaxi. He said Bisaralli "recited the poem at a public forum and the verses are intended to attack the central government's CAA and NRC plans... A government platform has been misused to attack the government's plans and insult the Prime Minister."

The FIR said Bisaralli and Rajabaxi had attempted to cause enmity and breach of peace.

Meanwhile, former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy recited Bisaralli's poem in the Assembly on Wednesday. "What is wrong with this poem," he said.

The duo have been sent to judicial custody.



At an anti-CAA rally in Chennai on Wednesday. PTI

Amid protests in TN, CM announces sops for Muslims

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, FEBRUARY 19

AMID A massive rally to the Secretariat in Chennai and demonstrations across Tamil Nadu against the CAA and NRC, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on Wednesday announced several sops for the Muslim community, such as increasing the monthly pension of Islamic scholars and allocation of Rs 15 crore for a Haj House.

Peaceful protests were held in major towns across the state on Wednesday. A march attended by at estimated 30,000 people in Chennai was the largest among them while smaller towns, such as Tirunelveli, also saw demonstrations with large number of people in participation, mainly from the Muslim community.

The Madras High Court had on Tuesday restrained any procession by "political or Muslim organisation" amid plans by protesters to proceed to the Secretariat and lay siege to the Assembly.

The protesters were demanding that AIADMK leader and Chief Minister Palaniswami should adopt a resolution against the CAA in the Assembly during the ongoing session, which concludes on Thursday.

Defying the High Court order on Wednesday, agitators converged at Chepauk as part of their original plan to proceed to the Secretariat and lay siege to the Assembly.

However, several entry points leading to the Secretariat were blocked and the procession could not move beyond Chepauk due to security arrangements.

No Muslim political organisation was allowed to raise political slogans or party flags as protesters converged in Chennai

from different corners before the peaceful gathering came to an end with singing of the national anthem around 1 pm.

Volunteers took care of drinking water, and traffic and crowd management during the protest. Almost all district headquarters and towns such as Coimbatore, Madurai and Trichy saw large gatherings.

On Tuesday, Palaniswami had asserted in the Assembly that the CAA will not affect minorities and that the opposition DMK was misleading minority communities.

On Wednesday, he hiked the monthly pension of Islamic scholars from Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000. He also announced financial assistance for Islamic scholars registered with the Tamil Nadu Waqf Board to buy two-wheelers. He also announced allocation of Rs 15 crore for construction of a Haj House.

Salwa Judum: 2 months after NHRC order, villagers yet to get Rs 5 lakh

GARGI VERMA
KONDASAWALI (SUKMA),
FEBRUARY 19

AROUND 500 km from the Chhattisgarh state capital, and past several CRPF camps, lies Kondasawali, a village in Sukma district fringed by the Bailadila hills, home to high-grade minerals and thus conflict.

It's here that seven people were killed in 2009, allegedly by Special Police Officers of the Salwa Judum, a government-backed militia formed in 2007 to take on the Maoists. Eleven years after the incident and six years after the first complaints in the case were filed, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in December 2019 ordered the state government to pay a compensa-

tion of Rs 5 lakh to each of the families of those killed. But two months after the NHRC order, the villagers are yet to get the compensation money.

Villagers even say they haven't heard of the NHRC order. "We haven't heard of any compensation. No one came to the village to tell us about this," said Sundam Sannu, a former sarpanch and one of those who filed complaints against the killings of 2009.

In Kondasawali, a village of around 300 people spread across four hamlets and whose only approach road has been cut off, allegedly by Maoists to keep out the State, memories of that conflict hang heavy. So does the hurt of being so "completely forgotten" by the State. With no water or electricity supply, no anganwadi

and a school with no teachers, the villagers decided not to vote in this year's sarpanch election.

In 2008-9, as the Judum took on the Maoists, it herded people into camps, away from their villages. In Kondasawali, like in several other villages, many tried to hold on to their land and their jungles. But the consequences of holding out were often severe. In Kondasawali, seven people were killed in 2008-2009, and over 95 huts burnt, after which the entire village emptied out.

"We were scared. One after the other, we went into the forest, hiding from the forces. In 2012, some of us came back and then others followed," recounted Lakhesh Joga, a villager.

In 2013, when most of the villagers returned, they decided to file a complaint on the seven



Villagers of Kondasawali say don't want compensation, but water, school. Gargi Verma

killings and the burning of huts. "We were worried that the Judum people would attack us again. So we filed complaints with police, district collector," said Sannu, the former sarpanch, walking to a clearing, three km inside the forest, where more villagers have gathered to talk about the conflict.

Aite, in her 20s, is part of the group that has assembled at the clearing. Aite was barely in her late teens when her father-in-law Barse Nanda was taken away from their house in 2009, allegedly by the Judum. Then, after years spent hiding in the jungles, when the family came back, her mother-in-law Barse Nande too "vanished" one day. "She had gone to graze our cattle. We later learned that she was killed as she was one of the complainants," she

said. Kunjam Boda also went "missing" when he had gone to pick mahua from the forest. "The people who killed him are still with the force, some in Dornapal, some in Jagargunda. When we step out of the jungles, they harass us," said Boda's nephew, who spoke on condition that he not be named.

Insisting they haven't heard of the NHRC compensation, the villagers say they now won't take the money. "Did they tell us all those years ago that we are taking your men but we will pay you Rs 5 lakh later? We will tell them to leave the money at the graves of all of our deceased men," said Deva, a relative of the Barse couple.

When contacted, Additional Chief Secretary Subrat Sahu said

the district officials tried to approach the village but "couldn't find anyone in the village". "We are now planning to deposit the money in their bank accounts," he said.

Sannu said that while most of the villagers had bank accounts, the passbooks are with a former panchayat secretary. "We don't know where he is or where our bank documents are. We don't even know which bank the accounts are in," he said.

"We don't want money. We want the government to help us. We need water, medical help, anganwadi and a school. Not because we were victims of the atrocity, but because we are still living here," he added. And then, in broken Hindi: "Mare hue ko nahi bechate (We don't sell our dead)."

Collegium recommends transfer of 3 HC judges

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, 19 FEBRUARY

THE SUPREME Court Collegium in a statement on Wednesday recommended the transfer of three senior judges of Delhi, Bombay and Karnataka High Courts.

The decision, taken on February 12, recommended the transfer of Justice S Muralidhar, the third most senior judge of Delhi High Court, to Punjab and Haryana High Court; Justice Ranjit More, fourth most senior judge of Bombay High Court, to Meghalaya High Court; and Justice Ravi Vijaykumar Malimath, the second most senior judge of Karnataka High Court, to Uttarakhand High Court.

The resolution did not indicate reasons for the transfers.

Following their transfer, Justice Muralidhar, Justice More and Justice Malimath will be the second most senior judge in Punjab and Haryana HC, Meghalaya HC and Uttarakhand HC, respectively.

Justice More's transfer to Meghalaya HC has posed a peculiar problem, as the High Court there is already functioning with three permanent judges — its sanctioned strength. The post of an additional judge is vacant there.

Former Delhi High Court Chief Justice A P Shah told *The Indian Express*: "The Central government has to issue a notification to increase the sanctioned strength of permanent judges (in Meghalaya HC). This is perhaps the first instance that the Collegium has created such a situation. They could have transferred him to any other high court, especially since there are vacancies everywhere."

Although there is no difference between a permanent judge and additional judge on the judicial side, the posts have different service conditions for administrative purposes.

With Justice More's transfer, the Collegium has also ensured it has room to appoint a Chief Justice to Bombay HC who is junior to Justice More. More was appointed in 2006 as an additional judge and is set to retire in November 2021.

Appointed on February 18, 2008 as additional judge of Karnataka HC, Justice Malimath retires in May 2024 if not elevated to Supreme Court. He is currently the second most senior judge of Karnataka HC and will continue as the second most senior in Uttarakhand HC if the government approves his transfer.

Uttarakhand HC Chief Justice Ramesh Ranganathan is set to retire in July this year.

NON-POLLUTING VEHICLES

Can Transport Minister come, explain proposal, asks top court

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

HEARING A plea seeking effective implementation of the Centre's Electric Vehicle (EV) policy, the Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed desire to interact with Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari on the issue.

A bench of Chief Justice of India S A Bobde and Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant, however, did not seek his presence after Additional Solicitor General Atmaram Nadkarni said it might be misused politically.

"Can the minister come to Supreme Court and tell about the proposal to introduce non-polluting vehicles using alternative fuels," CJI Bobde asked Nadkarni when PIL filed by the NGO Centre for Public Interest Litigations came up before the bench.

The A-G replied that although there was nothing wrong in it, it may be used politically.

The court said Gadkari had been talking on the subject of using alternative fuels to check pollution and clarified that it was only inviting, and not summoning.

Appearing for the petitioner, Advocate Prashant Bhushan said the government had promised 7 million vehicles by 2020 under its EV policy, but in reality there are not even a quarter-million EVs now. There was also a plan for a small levy on petrol and diesel vehicles, which in turn was to be used for subsidising EVs, he said.

Nadkarni pointed out that the idea of levy was that of the Niti Aayog, but this had been red-flagged by the Finance Ministry.

Past records under I-T scanner, over 2 lakh NGOs, trusts set to register again

Trusts flouting other laws to be denied fresh registration

KHUSHBOO NARAYAN
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 18

AT LEAST 2.17 lakh NGOs, charitable and religious trusts will have to apply for re-registration with the Income Tax (I-T) Department, which will look at past records and work objective of these organisations and decide whether they should be allowed tax exemptions. The whole exercise of re-registration following the recent amendment to I-T laws has raised concern among both NGOs and the already overburdened tax officials, sources said.

The amendment in Section 12A and the newly introduced Section 12AA of Finance Bill, 2020, do away with perpetual registrations of charitable organisations and NGOs with I-T Department. From June, all existing registered organisations will need to apply for fresh registration, which will now be renewed every five years.

Charitable and religious institutions approved under Section 10(23C) and Section 80G will also have to apply for re-registration.

As per the Finance Bill, all applications for re-registration have to be made between June and August this year.

While I-T officials are waiting for modalities of the re-registration process, according to the amendments, an organisation can be denied renewal of registration even for violations under other laws "as may be deemed material for the purpose of achieving its objectives".

An official told *The Indian Express* that NGOs, charitable trusts and religious institutions whose FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) licences have been cancelled by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) will be denied registration under the new I-T law. Similarly, NGOs that have violated other laws under any state public trust Act, Registrar of Societies, Prevention of Money Laundering Act, among others, will not be approved by the I-T Department.

Besides, the department is likely to go through trust deeds of all institutions applying for re-registrations, nature of their work, and previous financial records before approving them.

Noshir Dadrawala, programme director, Legal & CSR Compliance, at the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy, said: "There is no provision of surrender of FCRA licence, hence in a

lot of cases organisations have stopped filing annual returns so that their licence can be revoked. So mere cancellation of FCRA licence cannot be a reason for cancellation of registration under I-T laws. This is unconstitutional. This will open a Pandora's box for harassment and selective targeting of certain NGOs."

The MHA has de-registered 14,500 FCRA-registered NGOs in the last five years. In 2019 alone, registration of up to 1,808 NGOs was cancelled for non-submission of annual returns for 2017-18. Dadrawala said re-registration under I-T laws will add to compliance burden of the voluntary sector.

"There is already a lot of apprehension, not only within the voluntary sector but also the tax department, which is overburdened due to limited resources. If I-T Department does not carry out this process as a routine exercise and starts looking into trust deeds, work objective and other documents of the institutions, it is going to be chaotic," said Dadrawala.

He also said violations under other laws should not be a reason for denial of I-T exemptions.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

UP BJP legislator, his 6 nephews booked for rape of woman over four years

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 19

BHADOHI BJP MLA Ravindranath Tripathi (56) and six of his family members were named in a gangrape case registered on Wednesday in the district on a complaint of a woman who alleged that accused sexually assaulted her over four years, between 2014 and 2018.

The case was registered under IPC sections 376D (gangrape), 313 (causing miscarriage without woman's consent), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace), 506 (criminal intimidation). Police said the other accused in-

clude the MLA's nephews Sandeep Tewari (41), who is the main accused, Sachin Tewari, Chandrabhushan Tewari, Deepak Tewari, Prakash Tewari and Nitish Tewari.



Ravindranath Tripathi

Bhadohi SP Ram Badan Singh said, "The woman has claimed that she knew the MLA's nephew Sandeep Tewari. She has alleged that Sandeep and five others raped her on multi-

ple occasions. She also alleged that the MLA raped her on one occasion."

Singh added that the woman said she met Sandeep Tewari on a train from Varanasi to Mumbai. "The woman, who was widowed some years ago, has alleged that Sandeep later promised to marry her after getting into a relationship with her," said the SP.

The SP said the woman submitted a written complaint to him on February 11. "We did some basic checks and registered an FIR on Wednesday. We will now conduct a detailed in-

vestigation into the matter," said the SP.

The SHO of the local police station said the woman has alleged that when she confronted Sandeep Tewari about not marrying her as promised, he and the with others gangraped her.

"She has alleged that she was raped on multiple occasions at different places Varanasi, Bhadohi and Mumbai - over four years between 2014 and 2018. She has also alleged that Sandeep Tewari forced her to get an abortion done," said the SHO.

Top court directs Rajasthan to stop illegal sand mining

New Delhi: Clamping down on alleged illegal sand mining in Rajasthan, the Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Superintendents of Police and Collectors in every district of the state to take immediate action to end it. "We direct the State of Rajasthan and Collector and SP of each district in the state to take immediate steps for stopping illegal sand mining as there is no doubt that such unguided sand mining is likely to damage the environment irreparably," a bench headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde ordered.

ENS

Three Hizbul militants killed in Tral encounter

ADIL AKHZER
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 19

THREE HIZBUL Mujahideen militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in South Kashmir's Tral on Wednesday.

Addressing a press meet in Srinagar, J&K DGP Dilbag Singh said the militants were identified as Tral residents Jahangir Wani and Raja Maqbool, and Sadat Thokar from Anantnag. He said Wani had replaced Hamaad Khan as the Hizbul commander in Tral after the latter was killed in January.

"After the killing of Hamaad Khan, Jahangir had taken control... Ammunition has also been recovered," he said, adding that Jahangir and Raja were involved in terrorist activities because of which there was fear in the area.

The DGP said 19 militants from Kashmir and four from Jammu region have been killed in 10 successful operations in Jammu and Kashmir this year. He said eight youngsters quit militant ranks recently and have reunited with their families. "The number of youths joining militant ranks is very low and it is a good trend."

Saying that Pakistan has continued ceasefire violations along LoC, Singh said a drone was pushed back by BSF in Jammu region. "Launch pads across border which used to remain empty during winters are active this time."

Will act against those spreading rumours on social media through VPN: J&K top cop

Srinagar: Two days after J&K Police invoked Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act to register a case against people using social media through proxy servers, the police on Wednesday said their priority is to take action against those spreading rumours and instigating people by accessing social media through Virtual Private Networks (VPN).

"My first priority [to take action] is against those spreading rumours, instigating (people), and who are facilitating militants," Inspector General of Police (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said at a press meet where DGP Dilbag Singh was also present.

The IGP added, "On January 14, there was an order by the Home Department in which social media was banned. Despite that, many people are using social media through VPN. Among them, some miscreants are spreading rumours, instigating people; some are facilitating militants.... We have proof. We have lodged a general FIR, and whoever is found involved will be arrested." **ENS**

Expressed concern on detention of J&K leaders: US Congressman

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

VISITING US Congressman Ami Bera, who is Chairman of House Foreign Affairs sub-committee on Asia-Pacific in the US Congress, on Wednesday said it is his desire and interest to see a resolution and return to normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir, and that he expressed his "concerns" on "continued detention of political leaders in Kashmir" during a meeting with Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

Bera and US Congressman George Holding, who is member of House Ways and Means Committee and co-chairs the India Caucus, are on a two-day visit and met Shringla.

"I express(ed) some of my concerns about continued detention of political leaders in Kashmir, and again expressed that the quicker India can return to normalcy in Kashmir, we feel it's in their interest," Bera said.

On his concerns, Amerish Babulal "Ami" Bera, a Democrat Congressman who traces his roots from Gujarat, said New Delhi has cited "security concerns" on the continued detention of Kashmiri leaders.

He said India is a "valuable partner" of the US, and that partnership is rooted in shared val-



(From left) US Congressmen Ami Bera and George Holding

ues of democracy, free market opportunities, and "protecting minority rights".

Holding, a Republican Congressman, said he firmly believes that "the way to success in Kashmir is increasing economic opportunities and economic development".

Asked whether they had sought permission to visit J&K, Bera said, "I would love to visit Kashmir...we did express that we would like to take a delegation (of members of US Congress) to Kashmir at some point."

Holding said he is "heartened to hear that they are going to roll out an economic development

plan" in Kashmir, and "provide economic incentives for their investment infrastructure investment there, which obviously raise prospects and prosperity".

Bera also said India's founding as a secular democracy, where "800 million Hindus can live with 200-plus million Muslims and other religious minorities, and somehow work", is its strength. "And we don't want to see India lose that secular democracy, (as) that's what sets it apart from other countries in the region," he said.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

VAISHNAV MENU ON TABLE

TN govt faces heat for Akshaya Patra tie-up for school breakfast

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, FEBRUARY 19

TAMIL NADU'S prestigious noon meal scheme, an internationally acclaimed social justice model, has landed in a controversy with the AIADMK government's decision to engage an NGO, Akshaya Patra Foundation, to serve breakfast to 32,000 students in schools run by the Greater Chennai Corporation.

Projected as a brainchild of Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit, the project has been allocated Rs 5 crore from the Governor's discretionary fund. The NGO has been allotted land by the Corporation at prime locations in Chennai to set up centralised kitchens.

Akshaya Patra Foundation is an initiative of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Bengaluru, and its menu without garlic, onion and eggs, has drawn criticism from opposition parties and experts alike.

While the noon meal scheme in government schools is being run by the government for decades, this is the first initiative to provide school children with breakfast.

Greater Chennai Corporation's Commissioner G Prakash said the

current programme "taken up by the Governor is to ensure that children do not attend morning classes on empty stomach". It will not involve any government assistance, barring the Governor's fund and Corporation land, he said.

A kitchen facility in Greams Road "will feed healthy, nutritious and sumptuous breakfast to 12,000 children of 35 Corporation schools in the city," according to a statement from Akshaya Patra.

Rajya Sabha member and MDMK leader Vaiko pointed at ISKCON's menu for similar schemes that avoid onion, garlic and eggs and said in a statement, "In Tamil Nadu, eggs are provided as part of nutritious meal scheme to students. Now ISKCON will force them to eat vegetarian food. Developed countries even provide meat to students."

Alleging that the AIADMK government has handed over the prestigious scheme to a Hindutva group, he said that Tamil Nadu's Kaalai Unnavu Thittam (breakfast scheme) would now become a "Manu-dharma meal scheme".

In a statement, main opposition DMK criticised the move to engage an organisation known for "food fascism" when the state is equipped with infrastructure and resources to feed school children

across Tamil Nadu.

Justice K Chandru, retired judge of Madras High Court who has extensively studied the state's noon meal scheme and served several judgments in this regard, called the government's move to collaborate with a private agency for such a project "suicidal". He said, "The government is primarily washing its hands off a social justice scheme. Entering into such a deal with an NGO by giving them prime land is nothing but creating a scenario in which they can blackmail the government tomorrow."

In a state like Tamil Nadu, where 90 per cent people eat non-vegetarian food, there is no logic behind the move in engaging an organisation that is blamed for their "food propaganda" by rejecting garlic, onion and eggs, Justice Chandru said.

J Jayarajan, a senior food expert from the Institute of Development Alternatives, said engaging an NGO like Akshaya Patra ridicules Tamil Nadu's long legacy in pioneering and running a successful noon meal scheme. "We shouldn't forget that the Governor has given this money at a time when the Centre slashed hundreds of crores from the noon meal funding scheme," Jayarajan said.

Most don't consider mineral water bottles, straws single-use plastic: Study

ESHA ROY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

MOST CONSUMERS do not consider mineral water bottles and straws single-use plastic, a study has found. The study, 'Single Use Plastics: The Last Straw', was released by environment body Toxics Link on Wednesday. The study was conducted through an online survey across urban centres, including both metropolitan cities and smaller towns.

The study has also found that only 57 per cent of those surveyed considered plastic carry bags single-use plastic, despite efforts by the central and state governments to create awareness.

"There is a huge gap between the government's desire to phase out plastic products and awareness among the people, although the Prime Minister's

announcement of the government's intention has had a huge impact...The good news is that we found during our survey that consumers do not want to use single-use plastics and are looking for alternatives — the alternatives are simply not available yet," says study author Priti Mahesh.

She says 16 single-use plastic items were taken into account during the study; out of them three were particularly ubiquitous and harmful — multilayered plastics (such as biscuit or wafer packet wrappings which have an aluminium layer), plastic pouches and fast-moving consumer goods (packaging of products available in e-commerce) and noodle packets.

"The harmful products include things like plastic tubes — such as toothpaste or creams, medicine wrappers with multi-layer plastic capsule holders and the packaging for online products. The consumer is aware that these need to be replaced and have told us that they do not

need harmful plastic products like straws, plastic cutlery or the excessive plastic packaging of online goods. So the study busts the myth that the plastic industry peddles that they manufacture these products because the consumer wants them," she adds.

"The results clearly point towards the ambiguity in the mind of individual consumers regarding what is single-use plastic," says the study.

Plastic Bags less than 50 microns have been banned in India since 2016 when the revised Plastic Waste Management Rules were notified.

"Still, even after three years of the Rules, 22% were completely unaware. Surprisingly, though the youth were the group which was shunning plastic bags, their awareness of the ban was very low. Only 40% of the respondents, aged under 20, were certain about the 50 micron restrictions in the Plastic Rules. In fact, the awareness grew with age — the 60 plus population was the most aware at 76%," the study states.

Court asks CBI why Asthana wasn't put through lie detector

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

A DELHI court on Wednesday came down heavily on the CBI for not conducting psychological and lie detector tests on its former special director Rakesh Asthana in a bribery case in which he was recently given a clean chit.

Special CBI Judge Sanjeev Aggarwal also directed the initial investigating officer, Ajay Kumar Bassi, to appear before it on February 28 to explain the case diary.

The CBI had registered an FIR against Asthana on the basis of a complaint from Hyderabad-based businessman Satish Babu Sana, facing investigation in a 2017 case involving meat exporter Moin Qureshi. Sana's allegations of bribery against Asthana had triggered a war within the CBI, particularly between then director Alok Verma and his number two, Asthana.

Special Judge Aggarwal asked CBI investigating officer Satish Dagar, "Did you subject Rakesh Asthana to lie detector test and psychological test?" Dagar replied, "No."

The judge asked, "Why, Sir, if there is a 164 statement (Sana's statement under CrPC Section 164)?" Dagar said, "There is no direct interaction in the (Section) 164 statement."

The court said, "After going through the chargesheet, which I have done...you have been giving too much indulgence to the person..."

Special Judge Aggarwal also said that after going through the chargesheet co-accused Sunil Mittal appears like a fictional James Bond character "M": "You have pounced upon your own IO (investigating officer). You have plucked the low-lying fruit. It was easy."

The judge had read out contents of the chargesheet and asked the CBI, "What about calls made to RA [Rakesh Asthana] through WhatsApp? The complainant, Sana Satish Babu, has said this in his 164 statement. What is the reason to disbelieve his statement until he steps into the witness box?"

MP court acquits 8 Christians accused of forced conversion, abduction of 60 kids

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, FEBRUARY 19

EIGHT CHRISTIANS accused of the forced conversion and abduction of 60 children from Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh have been acquitted by a sessions court in Ratlam as none of the parents and children supported the prosecution story that they were being forcibly taken to a camp near Nagpur in May 2017.

The children, most of them under 14, had boarded a train from Meghnagar in Jhabua district along with eight elders. Their journey ended abruptly at Ratlam station when the police, tipped off by Hindutva outfits, rounded up the elders and booked them under the Freedom of Religion Act and IPC sections related to kidnapping and "criminal act done by several people".

The children included 28 girls who had to spend the night at a waiting room at the station while the boys were shifted to a shelter home in Ratlam. The girls were later shifted to a shelter home in Jaora. The police had claimed that the elders did not have any documents and could not explain why the children were being taken to the camp near Nagpur.

The police claimed it could be a case of human trafficking, forced child labour or even child theft. They refused to drop charges even after the father of a 14-year-old, on whose statement the FIR was registered, said

that he knew where his teenage son was being taken. The children shuttled between shelter homes over the next two days before being reunited with their parents.

The *Indian Express* had travelled to several villages in Jhabua district and spoken to the families of more than 20 children. The parents said they knew where the children were being taken to and had given their consent. Some of those arrested were relatives of the children. Those arrested were members of different Protestant churches.

Sharmila Damor, one of those arrested, was travelling with her two nieces on the train. She had told *The Indian Express* that during the train journey, some passengers started recording videos on their phones. The 24-year-old said someone spotted an 'Om' tattoo on her right hand. She said they thought she was being taken against her wish and were not convinced when she said she was among the caretakers.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Vivek Kumar Shrivastava acquitted the eight after none of the 20 witnesses, including parents, supported the prosecution story. Additional Public Prosecutor Vinod Jain said no witness supported the prosecution case and no accusation was proved. He said the court did not consider the police statements and that a decision on whether to challenge the judgment would only be taken after getting a certified copy.

MP Cabinet clears proposal to ensure time-bound clearances for investors

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, FEBRUARY 19

TO ATTRACT more investment and to convince potential investors, the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet on Wednesday cleared a proposal that will ensure time-bound clearance of applications seeking various permis-

sions. If a department concerned fails to give permission within that period, the application will be deemed to have been sanctioned.

Called Madhya Pradesh Time bound Clearance Act, 2020, the proposal covers 40 permissions and licences belonging to 10 departments. Of them, 25 licences and permis-

sions will have to be given in one day, 10 permissions and licences in seven days and five in 15 days.

The Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Kamal Nath also cleared the Madhya Pradesh Film Tourism Policy, 2020, hoping to make the state more attractive for film producers and to seek private investment.

Coal scam: SC asks CBI to file fresh status report on probe against ex-CBI chief Sinha

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the CBI to file fresh status report within four weeks on the probe into charges of "abuse of official position" by former agency chief Ranjit Sinha and the progress made in over 50 coal scam cases.

A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Deepak Gupta granted time to the agency after it sought time.

Sinha is accused of trying to impede the CBI's investigation into the cases, which emerged in 2012 after a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) was leaked to media.

The apex court dismissed the plea filed by lawyer M L Sharma, seeking a direction to the CBI to take coercive steps against Naveen Jindal, allegedly main beneficiary of coal scam cases. **PTI**

THIS WORD MEANS

EXTINCTION REBELLION

For a green cause, they dug up a Trinity College lawn that has part of Newton's heritage. What is this group?

ON MONDAY, members of an environmental activist group dug up a part of the lawn of Trinity College Cambridge while sparing an apple tree that descended from the one that inspired Sir Isaac Newton. According to news reports, the digging was to protest the college's alleged role in the "destruction of nature", but the protesters "symbolically protected the famous apple tree to highlight the college's collusion in the destruction of farmland".

The group calls itself Extinction Rebellion (XR) and claims to follow the principles of non-violent civil disobedience movements. It was launched in the UK on October 31, 2018, as a response to a report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that implied "we only have 12 years to stop catastrophic climate change and our understanding that we have entered the 6th mass extinction event," XR says on its website.

Critics have referred to the group's supporters as "environmental fanatics". In its FAQ section, the website raises the question whether the group comprises "law breaking anarchists or economic terrorists or eco-fascists"; the answer posted is that the members are "strictly non-violent" and "reluctant law breakers".

Before the Trinity College vandalism, another widely reported instance of law-breaking happened in April 2019. The group held a large demonstration in London over a course of 11 days that led to more than 1,100 arrests. Activists caused damage of an estimated over £6,000 at the Shell headquarters and glued themselves and sat on top of trains on the UK's light railways.

For the UK, the group lists three demands — to "tell the truth", which means that the government must declare a climate and ecological emergency; that it must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero by the year 2025; that the government must create and be led by a "Citizens' Assembly" on Climate and Ecological Justice to meet "big, wide-ranging and complex" challenges. Such a Citizen Assembly would bring together ordinary



Extinction Rebellion protesters dig up a lawn of Trinity College. Reuters

people to discuss, investigate and make recommendations on ways to respond to climate change emergencies.

The group says it does not want to rely on "traditional systems" like petitions or writing to MPs and is more likely to "take risks", which includes getting arrested. It claims its movement is to demand adequate action for the "unprecedented global emergency", for which "polite lobbying, marching, voting" etc haven't yielded the desired results from decision-makers.

On Wednesday, *The Guardian* reported that a man and two women have been charged with criminal damage after the digging of the Trinity College lawn. Three others have been charged with criminal damage over another protest that took place the following day. All six people have been released on bail to appear at Cambridge magistrates court on March, *The Guardian* said quoting police.

TIP FOR READING LIST

HOW ONLINE FRINGE GROUPS RULE

WHY IS it that toxic propaganda posts are shared so widely? In *Antisocial: How Online Extremists Broke America*, Andrew Marantz, a journalist with *The New Yorker*, explores how online fringe ideas spread fake news; how truth becomes "fake news"; and how a candidate who was dismissed as a joke was eventually elected US President by the "dark side of the Internet".

To write this book, Marantz spent time with alt-right groups and propagandists who are experts in using social media to their advantage, and he learnt how to make content go viral. "Everyone knows the most basic rule of the internet: Don't feed the trolls, and don't take tricksters at their word. The trolls, of the alt-right called themselves provocateurs, or shitposters, or edgelords. And what could be edgier than joking about Hitler?" Marantz writes in the book.



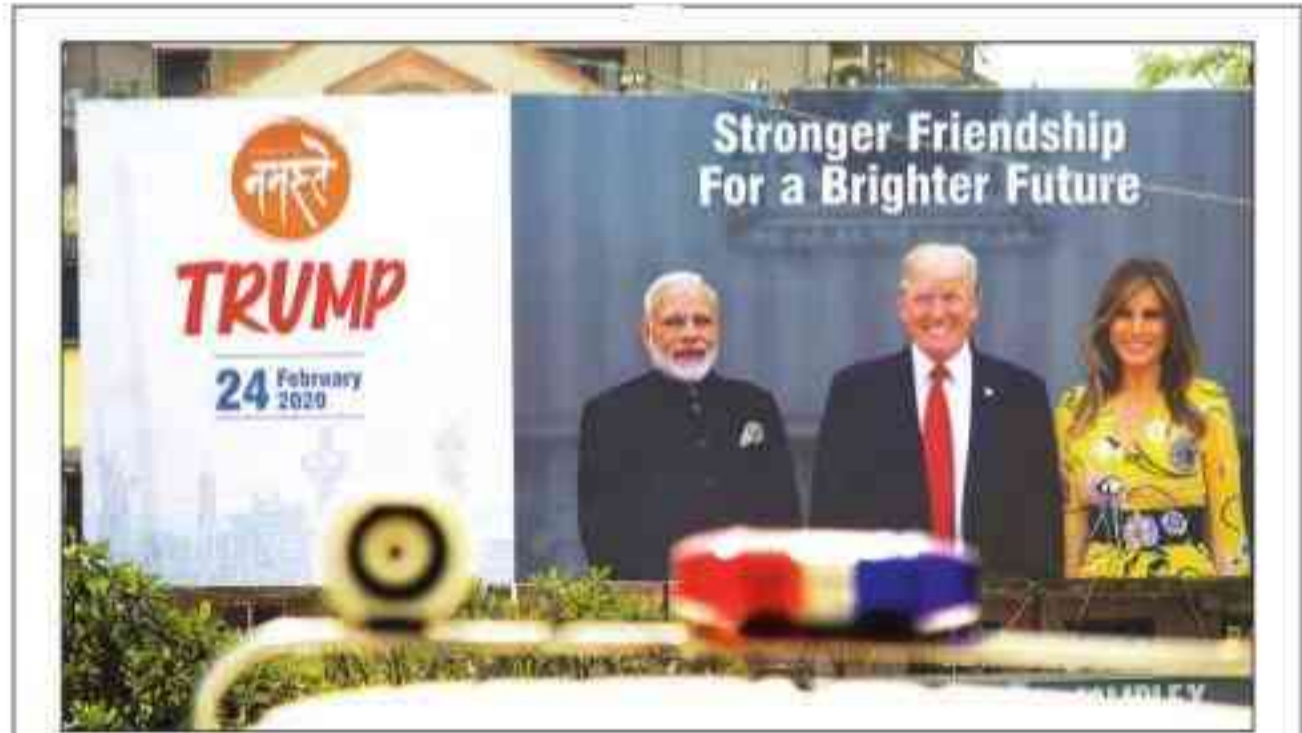
Marantz has written extensively about technology, social media, the alt-right, the press, comedy and pop culture. Pulitzer-prize winning author Elizabeth Kolbert has praised Marantz's latest book, writing: "Antisocial is at once funny and scary, antic and illuminating. It's a must-read for anyone still struggling to understand the last election or hoping to make sense of the next one."

In its review, *The Guardian* calls it an "absorbing and disturbing book" that raises two awkward questions. One is whether digital technology now constitutes an existential threat to liberal democracy. "Second, was the old media ecosystem, with its elitist gatekeepers, editorial control, political bias and other flaws, really worse than what we have acquired? Or, pace Winston Churchill on democracy, was it just the worst system apart from all the others?"

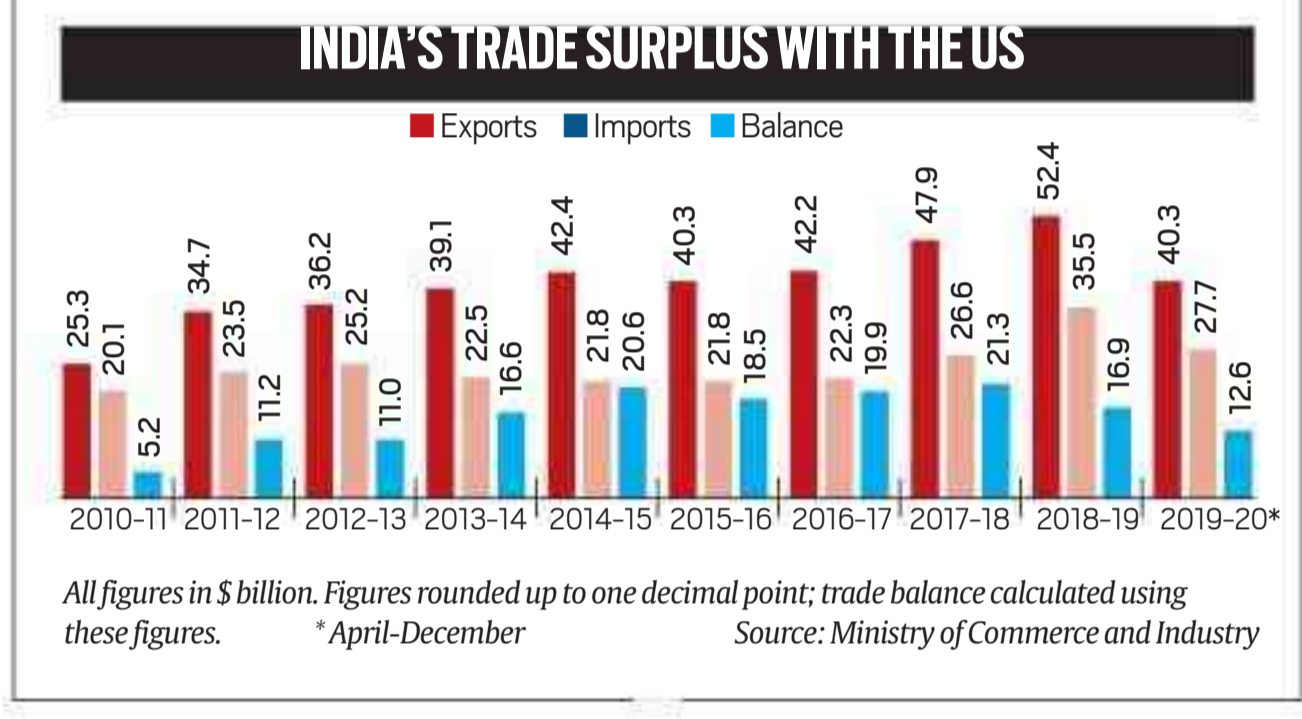
SIMPLY PUT

India and US: Matters of trade

President Donald Trump arrives in India on Feb 24, months after he went on stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 'Howdy Modi' event in Texas. Both countries have repeatedly resolved to strengthen trade ties — however, attempts at working out a short-term agreement have fallen apart in the past, and tensions have risen over tariffs. What is the current state of play? PRABHA RAGHAVAN takes stock



A billboard in Ahmedabad ahead of President Trump's visit. Javed Raja



WHY TRADE WITH THE US MATTERS TO INDIA

INDIA'S EXISTING and stalled bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) started to receive attention from the government last year, even as the country worked to conclude the seven-year negotiations to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world's "largest" regional trade pact.

But by backing out of the RCEP in November, India shut the door on the large "integrated market" that the deal was offering — and increased the pressure on itself to strengthen existing separate trade agreements with each member of the RCEP bloc. Without these, it may not be able to tap a sizeable portion of the global market; also, it may not be able to easily access products and services of these countries.

In the backdrop of the global economic slowdown, where India's global exports have fallen consistently, it is important for the country to diversify and strengthen bilateral relations with other markets.

It has set its sights on "large developed markets", improved access to which would help its industry and services sectors. These include the US, which has, over the last two decades, become a crucial trading partner in terms of both goods and services.

In March 2017, soon after taking office following an election campaign focused on "making America great again", Donald

Trump ordered the "first-ever comprehensive review" of the trade deficits of the United States, and "all violations" of trade rules that harmed American workers. India was among the countries that exported more to the United States than it imported, and the latter was left with a trade deficit of over \$21 billion in 2017-18.

While the US's deficit with India is only a fraction of its deficit with China (over \$340 billion in 2019), American officials have repeatedly targeted the "unfair" trade practices followed by India. These include the tariffs that India imposes, which the Trump administration feels are too high — and over which the President has personally called New Delhi out on several occasions.

A trade package with the US was in the spotlight last year, and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal had said that the two countries had "almost resolved the broad contours" of the deal.

"We will hopefully come out with our first set of agreements soon, but we both believe that India and the US should look at larger engagement in the days ahead, possibly even leading to an announcement for a bilateral agreement that will go beyond the mere tinkering that we are doing at present," Goyal had said in October 2019.

Nothing has been announced since then.

Locating the main sticking points

NEGOTIATIONS ON an India-US trade deal have been ongoing since 2018, but have been slowed by "fundamental" disagreements over tariffs (taxes or duties on imports), subsidies, intellectual property, data protection, and access for agricultural and dairy produce. The office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) has underlined India's measures to restrict companies from sending personal data of its citizens outside the country as a "key" barrier to digital trade. The US wants India to strengthen patent regulations, and to ease the limitations American companies investing in India face.

THE 'HARLEY' TARIFFS

India is a "tariff king" that imposes "tremendously high" import duties, President Donald Trump has complained repeatedly. He has cited the example of Harley-Davidson, the US motorcycle maker. Even after India halved the duty on the bike to 50% in 2018, he has said the rate is "still unacceptable".

While it is often assumed that duties on the large-engine motorcycles have put them beyond the reach of most Indian consumers, the fact is that a plant at Bawal in Haryana has been assembling the bikes since 2011, and Harley has still not captured a sizeable chunk of the Indian market. Fewer than 3,700 of the motorcycles were sold in India in 2017, according to an analysis by Alyssa Ayres of the American think tank Council on Foreign Relations, and that too mostly cheaper models that were assembled in the country.

STEEL INDUSTRY HIT

In 2018, the US imposed additional tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminum imports from various countries, including India. While India's government claims the impact is "limited", they brought down the US share in India's steel exports to 2.5% in

2018-19 from 3.3% in 2017-18. In March 2018, India challenged the US decision at the World Trade Organization (WTO). India held off on imposing retaliatory tariffs until the US struck again — by removing it from a scheme of preferential access to the American market.

GSP AXE & RESPONSE

In June 2019, the Trump administration decided to terminate India's benefits under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme, which provides preferential duty-free access for over \$6 billion worth of products exported from this country to the US. The decision followed a warning earlier that year, after negotiations on a potential trade agreement had broken down.

The US accused India of taking decisions over the previous few years that prevented "equitable and reasonable access" for Americans to its markets. These included a decision to slash maximum retail prices of life-saving cardiac stents and essential knee implants by 65%-80%, put tariffs on information and communication technology products, and demand that exporters of dairy products certify their produce was derived from animals not fed food containing internal organs.

India was the largest beneficiary of the US GSP programme. While duty-free benefits accrued to only around \$200 million for the billions of dollars worth of exports, India is understood to have asked for restoration of these benefits in the ongoing trade negotiations. However, on February 10 this year, the USTR classified India as a "developed" country based on certain metrics. It is not clear whether the upgrade from "developing" will impact the restoration of benefits under the GSP scheme.

Removal from the GSP list amidst rising trade tensions prompted India to finally impose retaliatory tariffs on several American imports, including almonds, fresh apples, and phosphoric acid. This was a significant

move — and the US approached the WTO against India.

India is one of the largest importers of almonds from the US, having imported fresh or dried shelled almonds worth \$615.12 million in 2018-19. Imports from the US of fresh apples stood at \$145.20 million, of phosphoric acid at \$155.48 million, and of diagnostic reagents at nearly \$145 million that year.

FARMS, MEDICAL DEVICES

The US has long demanded greater access for American agriculture and dairy products. For India, protecting its domestic agriculture and dairy interests was a major reason to walk out of the RCEP agreement.

"In the recent past, India has shown its resolve in an international trade deal (RCEP) to protect the interests of its farmers and dairy industry. We expect the same resolve to be reflected in the case of the India-US trade deal," Ashwani Mahajan, national co-convenor of the RSS-affiliated Swadeshi Jagran Manch said.

Trade negotiations over the last one year have grappled with the issue of improved access for American medical devices firms to India. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal even included the US ambassador, Kenneth Juster, in a discussion with government officials and multinational medical device firms on this.

India is working to finalise a proposal to move from caps on prices of medical devices to limiting the margins of those involved in the supply of the products. It is unclear whether this would mean the government might be willing to reconsider its earlier, widely publicised decision to slash, in the public interest, prices of stents and knee implants.

The health cess on imported medical devices announced in the Budget for 2020-21 too, may be seen as a negative for the American side, as the US is among the top three exporters of these categories of products to India.

Some successes so far, some promise ahead

WHILE THE United States is among India's top trading partners for goods, India is its eighth largest. In comments on Wednesday, US President Donald Trump appeared to suggest that while no deal was imminent, work on a longer-term agreement was progressing well, and that his personal chemistry with Prime Minister Narendra Modi might help.

"Well, we can have a trade deal with India but I'm really saving the big deal for later on. We're doing a very big trade deal with India. We'll have it," Trump said. "I don't know if it will be done before the [US presidential] election, but we'll have a very big deal with India. We're not treated very well by India, but I happen to like Prime Minister Modi a lot," he said.

India's trade surplus with the US came down to \$16.9 billion in 2018-19, and the previous Commerce Minister, Suresh Prabhu, had said last year that the surplus could be reduced further through imports of products such as aircraft from American firms.

Experts feel that India and the US could begin with some "low-hanging fruit" to indicate their willingness for a deeper economic commitment. This includes the US reinstating India's benefits under the GSP programme, and India doing away with duties on motorcycles.

In Budget itself, signals that a major India-US dairy deal is unlikely

HARISH DAMODARAN & PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
 NEW DELHI, PUNE, FEBRUARY 19

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump's statement virtually ruling out the signing of any major bilateral trade deal with India during his upcoming visit is partly reflected in the latest Union Budget's tariff proposals relating to the dairy sector. There has been a lot of speculation about India offering to open up its dairy and poultry market, including by extending duty concessions, to US imports. The picture on the ground so far, though, has been quite the opposite. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget for 2020-21, if anything, has hiked import duties on all dairy products.

Dairy: hike in duties

The basic customs duty on butter, ghee,

butter oil, whey and cheese was raised from 30% to 40%. Further, the Budget did away with the concessional duty of 15% applicable on imports of up to 10,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder during any financial year. That concession, under the so-called tariff rate quota regime, was withdrawn and all imports (whether up to or beyond 10,000 tonnes) were subjected to a uniform duty of 60%.

The Budget basically increased the import duties on all dairy products to their maximum permissible "bound" rates under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. One interpretation of this move was it would enable India to offer tariff concessions or reduction in customs duties (relative to the generally applicable rates) under free trade agreements (FTA) with individual countries/blocs.

For instance, ice-cream attracts a general basic customs duty of 30%. But ice-cream is already now importable into India at zero



Budget hiked customs duty, import duties on dairy products. Bhubendra Rana

duty from the 10-member ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nation) countries and at 5% duty from South Korea under a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Both the

India-ASEAN FTA in goods and the India-South Korea CEPA were signed in 2009 during the tenure of the UPA government.

The NDA government was initially seen as favourable to India joining the Regional Comprehensive Partnership Agreement (RCEP), a bigger FTA bloc involving the 10 ASEAN countries and South Korea plus China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. That deal would have required India to grant concessional import duty access to dairy products, especially from New Zealand and Australia. But the government, in November, announced that it was opting out of the RCEP.

If President Trump's statements on Tuesday — that "we are not treated very well by India" and "I don't know if it'll be done before the election (presidential election on November 3)" — are any indication, there is little chance of any big trade deal materialising during his February 24-25 visit.

Poultry: new restrictions

Dairy apart, poultry was another sector where India reportedly was open to allowing greater access to US imports. Poultry meat imports into the country, at present, attract 100% duty. India had, in 2007, additionally imposed restrictions on US poultry product imports, citing concerns over avian influenza. However, in October 2014, the WTO's dispute settlement board ruled that the ban was discriminatory and unscientific, as the US had not recorded any outbreak of the highly pathogenic avian flu virus since 2004. In July 2016, the US sought WTO authorisation seeking to slap a \$450 million retaliatory annual fine on India for not complying with the dispute panel's order. The matter was subsequently referred to arbitration.

Meanwhile, in mid-2018, India allowed a small consignment of frozen chicken leg pieces from the US to land by air. That lone

and last consignment was subjected to 100% import duty. Just as in the case of dairy products, efforts to get that import duty reduced have met with stiff opposition from the Indian poultry industry. The latter's contention has been that the American consumer preference is for chicken breast and there is practically no market for legs in the US. The bulk of chicken legs are, then frozen for exporting to other countries. The danger of these being "dumped" is higher in markets such as India, where legs, rather than breasts, are the most popular cut of chicken.

In 2019, broiler (poultry meat) production in the US amounted to £43.9 billion or 19.91 million tonnes (mt), way above India's estimated 4.06 mt for 2018-19. Out of the £43.9 billion of US production, £7.11 billion or 3.22 mt, worth \$3.23 billion, was exported. And roughly 60% of this constituted chicken legs.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A FINE LINE

Government-RBI relations are on a more even keel but central bank must tread carefully to safeguard the right balance

WHEN HE TOOK over the reins of the Reserve Bank of India, one of Shaktikanta Das's top priorities would have been to mend bridges between North Block and Mint Street. Relations between the two deteriorated precipitously in the tenure of his predecessor, Urjit Patel. Patel's abrupt departure, and the unfortunate events preceding it, had raised troubling questions over government interference in the working of the central bank and cast a shadow over its claims of independence and autonomy. Das, a seasoned bureaucrat, has been quick to identify and address some of the contentious issues between the two. Under him, there has been a visible institutional recalibration on several issues. The RBI has adopted a new capital framework, freeing up more funds that can be transferred as dividend to a cash-strapped government. It has now taken a less forceful approach towards resolving bad loans through the insolvency and bankruptcy process, and opted for greater regulatory forbearance for specific sectors. It weighed in on the side of a looser monetary policy well before the extent of the current slowdown was apparent. But while all this has meant a more harmonious working relationship between the two, concerns over the central bank's independence and autonomy remain.

Responding to these concerns, Das, who has been careful to avoid any public skirmishes, has said in an interview to this paper: "We have to listen to each other, we have to appreciate each other's views but eventually the decision is made independently". Restoring the lines of communication with government is indeed a welcome step, as is a regular closed-room dialogue between the two on critical issues such as sovereign bonds. Both parties should be mindful that public displays of differences help neither's credibility. On its part, the Centre must respect the autonomy of institutions, and encourage their independence. At the same time, the central bank should be mindful of the impact of its moves on its perceived independence and autonomy. It must constantly seek, and safeguard, the right balance.

The inherent tension between the central bank and government is apparent in the current scenario. With growth sagging and inflation spiking, there is little the monetary policy committee can do, bound by a framework which gives priority to price stability. Das, who has placed a higher premium on arresting the economic slowdown, has responded by adopting unconventional tools to push down yields. While this may work in the current scenario, it exposes the conflict between the RBI's monetary policy and debt management objectives. In the interview, Das said that the RBI is reviewing this monetary policy framework. Credibility of the central bank in controlling inflation takes years to build. Any attempt to alter the basic premise of this framework, therefore, must be carefully thought through.

JABEDA'S CASE

Functioning of Foreigners Tribunals in Assam reveals the error-prone nature of the exercise of establishing citizenship

THE PLIGHT OF Jabeda Begum alias Jabeda Khatun, a resident of Guwahari village, Baksa district, Assam, reported by this newspaper on Wednesday, shines the light on the flaws in the institutions and the framework designed to address issues related to citizenship in Assam. Her claim to be an Indian citizen was rejected by a Foreigners Tribunal in May 2019, and recently, the Gauhati High Court rejected her appeal even though she presented 15 documents, including voter lists for four years, a parent's NRC clearance, certificates from the village headman attesting to permanent residency and marriage, ration card, PAN card and bank passbook. The HC ruled that she "failed to prove her linkage with her projected parents and her projected brother" — the Assam Accord mandates that a person must establish that either she or her ancestors had been living in Assam before 1971.

This case illustrates the wider fears and concerns flagged in the context of the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). Critics of the NRC, citing Assam's example, have argued that it could trap people in red tape and leave them at the mercy of an often bumbling bureaucracy. The NRC in Assam was an expensive failure. The register in 2019 left out nearly two million people, a large number of them non-Muslims, and was then rejected by the state government, which alleged discrepancies in it. Foreigners Tribunals, instituted in 1964, have the authority to decide whether a person is or is not a foreigner within the meaning of the Foreigners Act, 1946. These quasi-judicial bodies have ruled against the citizenship claims of over a lakh people in Assam between 1985 and August 2018. Recently, the Supreme Court held that the orders of the tribunals will prevail over NRC orders on citizenship. However, these tribunals have been found wanting. It has been pointed out that members of the tribunals are short on judicial experience, ignorant of due process, and insensitive to the context in which claims and complaints are filed.

The template for the citizenship debate has been set by Assam. The functioning of Foreigners Tribunals, the appellate authority for those left out of NRC, seems to confirm the worst fears raised about the state embarking on a nightmarishly bureaucratic process to isolate illegal immigrants. Remember how a tribunal in Kamrup declared Indian Army veteran, Mohammad Sanaullah, a foreigner and sent him to a detention centre. The Centre and Assam government need to streamline the functioning of Foreigners Tribunals before they even contemplate the NRC and other such projects in Assam or elsewhere.

THE GREATNESS GAME

The definitive sporting moment of the last 20 years may lie outside India

IT TAKES INDIAN sporting enthusiasts voting in an online poll to adoringly elevate a Sachin Tendulkar image to Best Sporting Moment at the Laureus global awards. This country's billion plus dividend might not translate into Olympic medals or FIFA World Cup participation. But Indians won't let go of the opportunity to jab a finger in a voting poll, if it can elevate Tendulkar lifted-on-Virat Kohli's-shoulders after winning the World Cup, as the definitive sporting moment of the last 20 years.

India's sporting achievements are not exactly numerous. Two come to mind from the last couple of decades — Dhoni's World Cup and Abhinav Bindra's Beijing gold. India, of course, won the first World Cup in 1983 and has legitimate bragging rights over a hockey dynasty. But that was a longer time ago. Yet, the power of numbers will be deployed to win India a slice of Laureus glory, which otherwise is out of reach given that it was the age of Messi, Ronaldo, Serena, Simone and Nadal, and Federer.

This is an occasion, perhaps, to recall some of the great sporting moments in recent times. Federer's GOAT symphony, Phelps gathering eight golds at one Games, Serena dominating the women's field like only she could and Usain Boltacing three Olympics. A few moments are unforgettable though greatness eludes: Isner-Mahut going 70-68 in the fifth, Steph Curry hitting a buzzer beater against Oklahoma in 2016, Ronda Rousey's glorious armar offensive, Jordan Spieth's perfect shot to escape the unplayable on No 13 at the Open, Iceland's run at Euros or Japan downing the Boks. Linsanity had a fine run, and Leicester beat the 5000/1 odds. Australia won the Cricket World Cup thrice. Even England won a World Cup. So much to choose from, if only sports fans could resist the temptation to pat their own backs, or rather their Sachin-carrying shoulders.

The test protests face

The protests are not just against the CAA-NRRC-NPR trinity. They have already succeeded in numerous ways



HARSH MANDER

THE INDIAN PEOPLE have risen. Resolute both in their solidarity and their resistance, in cities and towns, and even villages across the country, people of various faiths and identities have spilled out in hundreds of thousands. With no single leader, at the vanguard of this rising are young people and working-class Muslim women. Its icons are Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar and its symbols the Tricolour and the Constitution. The national anthem, sung rousingly in every protest, has become a protest chant. With fear and silence broken, voices of dissent ring out. We are stirred by defiant poetry and slogans celebrating our solidarity and freedom, the country and the Constitution.

It is a movement without precedent in the journey of the republic. But many wonder if the movement will succeed, whether it will weary and whimper out, whether it will be crushed, and where it will finally lead.

Those who worry about success mistake the character of the resistance. It is a grave error to view this merely as a battle against the CAA-NRRC-NPR trinity. It is a rebellion against the audacity of a government asking citizens to prove they belong. It is a warning that the government must listen to its people. It is a spontaneous rising against fear, hate, discrimination and violence, and the dangerous project of militarist Hindutva nationalism. It is an uprising against a government which demonises students, dissenters and minorities. It is the rejection of its failures to address the hopeless realities of everyday life, of joblessness, farm distress, violence against women and a broken economy.

It is apparent that the movement has already succeeded in numerous ways. Its paramount success is that it is the first national movement for Hindu-Muslim unity after Mahatma Gandhi was taken away from us. Indeed, it is a movement for the unity of people of various religious and caste identities. When poor Sikh farmers camp cold nights in Shaheen Bagh to prepare langar with desi ghee for their protesting sisters, it represents the triumph of what is finest in our civilisational traditions. "We have seen the suffering of 1947", one says. "We want to ensure that this never happens again".

Its paramount success is that it is the first national movement for Hindu-Muslim unity after Mahatma Gandhi was taken away from us. Indeed, it is a movement for the unity of people of various religious and caste identities. When poor Sikh farmers camp cold nights in Shaheen Bagh to prepare langar with desi ghee for their protesting sisters, it represents the triumph of what is finest in our civilisational traditions. 'We have seen the suffering of 1947', one says. 'We want to ensure that this never happens again'.

A second success of the movement has been the re-politicisation of students in universities across India. For too long, most universities had become sterile sites deprived of both political and ethical reflection. Today students are teaching their elders not to hate, showing the way to a more caring and equal country.

A third accomplishment is the reassurance to India's Muslim people. For Muslims, the past years have been harrowing and terrifying. Muslims were rendered politically irrelevant, and were treated as a political liability to every party. Bigotry, hate speech and lynching became an acceptable part of everyday life. I have travelled to protest sites in every corner of the country. In protests inspired by Shaheen Bagh led by Muslim women, I find the mood electrically festive. Less protests, these are more celebrations of the reassurance that India still is equally their country, that the promises of Mahatma Gandhi and the Constitution were not empty, that we all stand together. This same sentiment permeates rallies of lakhs I have addressed, where men in skullcaps and women in hijabs joyfully wave the national flag, shoulder to shoulder with Indians of other faiths.

A fourth achievement is the reclaiming of the idea of nationalism by those Indians who include and unite rather than divide. Those who truly love their country would not want it to be divided by hate, fear and violence. The resentful divisive nationalism of the right has been fittingly replaced by the patriotism of Tagore and Gandhi, in which you love your country by loving all its people, and respecting every other country.

A fifth victory is in making the Constitution the soul of the people's movement. I get goose bumps each time, in mass as well as street-corner protests, when, usually led by young girls, crowds reverentially recite the Preamble of the Constitution. It is apt that "we the people of India" have come together to defend the Constitution at a time when it is most threatened.

The final triumph of the movement is that it compelled reluctant, morally ambiguous non-BJP parties to take a stand to defend the Constitution, which they were willing to betray for petty considerations. It has also clearly

rattled the Union government, leading it to lie that the NRC had not been its agenda, that detention centres don't exist; and the obsession with Shaheen Bagh in the Delhi elections.

I am convinced that the movement must ride on these brilliant successes to move into its next phase. Whereas protests and rallies will continue as long as people have the stamina and conviction to persist with these, the main focus of the movement must shift to non-cooperation with the NPR, due to roll out from April. If the NPR is allowed, it will allow the Union government at any time of its choosing to identify "doubtful citizens" for exclusion from a NRC.

A flawless NPR-NRRC is an unimplementable project. Its real aim is to push all of India's Muslims, and with them vulnerable and dissenting groups, into permanent dread of when they could be disenfranchised and interred in detention camps. The movement must therefore compel state governments to refuse to implement NPR and to decouple it from the census, which must continue.

It would be unconscionable for a movement to defend the Constitution for all of us to ride on the shoulders of India's Muslims, who would be most brutally targeted for their non-cooperation in the present regime. The call for citizen boycott of NPR must focus on non-Muslims, because for Muslims the cost of disobedience will be intense and grave.

Finally, let us heed Maulana Azad: "Today if an angel were to descend from the Heaven and declare from the heights of the Qutab Minar that India will get Swaraj within 24 hours provided she relinquishes Hindu-Muslim unity, I will relinquish Swaraj rather than give up Hindu-Muslim unity. Delay in the attainment of Swaraj will be a loss to India but if our unity is lost it will be a loss to entire mankind".

The other part of the movement, therefore, must be to deepen our unity and solidarity. It must address not just the state but each of us. In the end, the kind of country we become will be determined not by law or court judgements, but by whether love or hate colonises our hearts.

Mander is a human rights worker and writer

A FORCE FOR GLOBAL GOOD

A democratic Taiwan benefits the world community



TIEN CHUNG KWANG

ON JANUARY 11, the Republic of China (Taiwan) held its seventh direct presidential election since 1996. Despite intimidation, disinformation and meddling from the People's Republic of China (PRC), President Tsai Ing-Wen won her second term in office decisively, with a record majority of 8.17 million votes, representing 57 per cent of the popular vote. The turnout reached a historic new high of 74.90 per cent of the electorate. Her Democratic Progressive Party also retained the majority (62) in the 113-seat parliament.

President Tsai's victory was seen as a blow to China, as well as a total rebuff of the PRC's "one country, two systems" model by the people of Taiwan. These smooth and successful elections are not only testament to Taiwan's vibrant democracy but also a manifestation of Taiwan's sovereignty and independence. "Taiwan has once again demonstrated the strength of its robust democratic system and makes it a model for the Indo-Pacific region and a force for good in the world," the US secretary of state, Michael Pompeo, had said in his congratulatory statement.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) has been an independent sovereign country since its founding in 1912. Following the civil war and the inception of the PRC in mainland China in 1949, Taiwan and the PRC have established their respective governments and separate constitutions with jurisdictions independent from each other between the Taiwan Strait. The government of Taiwan exercises its sovereign rights and establishes diplomatic re-

lations with friendly countries. It is crystal clear that Taiwan has never been under the PRC's rule for a single day. Therefore, the PRC's claim that Taiwan is her internal affair is mendacious and qualifies as disinformation. Over the past 70 years, Taiwan has weathered numerous challenges and setbacks, in particular, constant threats from PRC, and has become a progressive and democratic country. With the determined and concerted efforts of its people, Taiwan has achieved both economic miracles and peaceful democratisation.

The people of Taiwan cherish their freedom, values and democratic way of life. In the wake of the pro-democracy demonstrations that hit the streets of Hong Kong in March 2019, the people of Taiwan empathised with and were supportive of Hong Kong's people movement to protect their freedom and democratic way of life. Unfortunately, the government of Hong Kong rejected its people's demands and took ruthless and violent actions against them — all of which the PRC leadership turned a blind eye to. This is a complete failure of the "one country, two systems" model in Hong Kong. It simply attests to the fact that the people of Taiwan have rightfully rejected China's "one country, two systems" model since its inception in 1997.

A rising China, using its might and any possible means, has never stopped suffocating Taiwan's international space over the past 70 years. Ever since President Tsai Ing-Wen took office in May 2016, China has been re-

lentlessly intensifying all manner of pressures on Taiwan on the international and domestic fronts. To intimidate the people of Taiwan, China's military planes and vessels have been frequently cruising closer to the island of Taiwan — its aircraft sailed over the Taiwan Strait just two weeks ahead of the presidential election. The results of the election showed that these belligerent actions could only bear bitter fruit and drift the people across the Taiwan Strait even further apart.

With seven countries having switched their diplomatic recognition to China in three years, the number of diplomatic allies of Taiwan now stands reduced to 15. Taiwan, since 1971, is also barred from participating in the UN system and numerous international organisations — bearing in mind the common interest of the international community, due to China's erroneous claim of the "one-China principle".

However, to keep Taiwan out of the World Health Organisation, especially at this highly sensitive time of the novel coronavirus outbreak, constitutes clear and present danger to not only the 23 million people in Taiwan but also the billions of people around the globe. China must stop playing politics with global health. It is time for Taiwan to be included in the international efforts to contain the novel coronavirus.

Ambassador Tien Chung Kwang is the representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India

FEBRUARY 20, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSEMBLIES' ELECTIONS THE EARLIEST THE elections to the nine assemblies dissolved on Sunday can be held is in mid-June, according to authoritative sources. While the Election Commission is gearing itself up for conducting what the poll body chief S.L. Shakhdar calls "a mini general election", the logistics of such a massive task rule out any shortcut to the process. According to Shakhdar, two-thirds of the country will be involved in the elections and it would be unfair to hold them without adequate preparation. He told Express News Service that he had ordered summary revision of voters' list and this would take two months to complete. Another four months

would normally be needed to have the lists printed.

POWER TRANSFER AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI WAS reported to have transferred his post as commander-in-chief of Iran's armed forces to President Bani-Sadr. The move stirred speculation that Bani-Sadr might move troops to the US embassy in Teheran to replace the militants who took some 50 Americans hostages 108 days ago. The increase in Bani-Sadr's authority was reported by Teheran radio, which quoted the ailing Ayatollah as stating the appointment was aimed at "consolidating power in Iran at this critical moment".

SUNDRI MISSING THE FEMALE PANTHER, Sundri, disappeared from the Udaipur zoo seven weeks ago but the controversy she left behind rages on. The point at issue is whether an animal like Sundri can jump over a 20 feet-high zoo fence. In December, the Rajasthan forest department had stated that Sundri had leapt to her freedom after cutting loose the wire mesh atop the fence. The news brought naturalists to the site. Sundri could not have cut the wire mesh since she had lost two of her canine teeth before her capture, they concluded. The zoo authorities had to eat their words: The mesh, they said, had been cut by some miscreants to enable Sundri to escape.



15 THE IDEAS PAGE

Trading with America

Trade has long been a contentious issue between Delhi and Washington. Trump administration has made the problem more acute, but India too is turning to protectionism



C RAJA MOHAN

A SENSE OF crisis has always marked the public discourse on India-US relations. It is no different as Delhi prepares to receive US President Donald Trump early next week. The perennial anxiety about the relationship is now reinforced by a new element — deep domestic polarisation in both countries.

The Democrats in the US have struggled to oust Trump from the White House and rarely find anything they can agree with their President on. While ousting Narendra Modi through a legal process of impeachment is not an option in India, the political divide is even deeper.

Meanwhile, under Trump, consensus on foreign policy in Washington has broken down. In Delhi, the Opposition has never been willing to acknowledge the diplomatic successes of the Modi government. But the usually bipartisan support for foreign policy in the strategic community has eroded. Many leading voices of the establishment who have a long and distinguished service have become major critics of Modi's foreign policy.

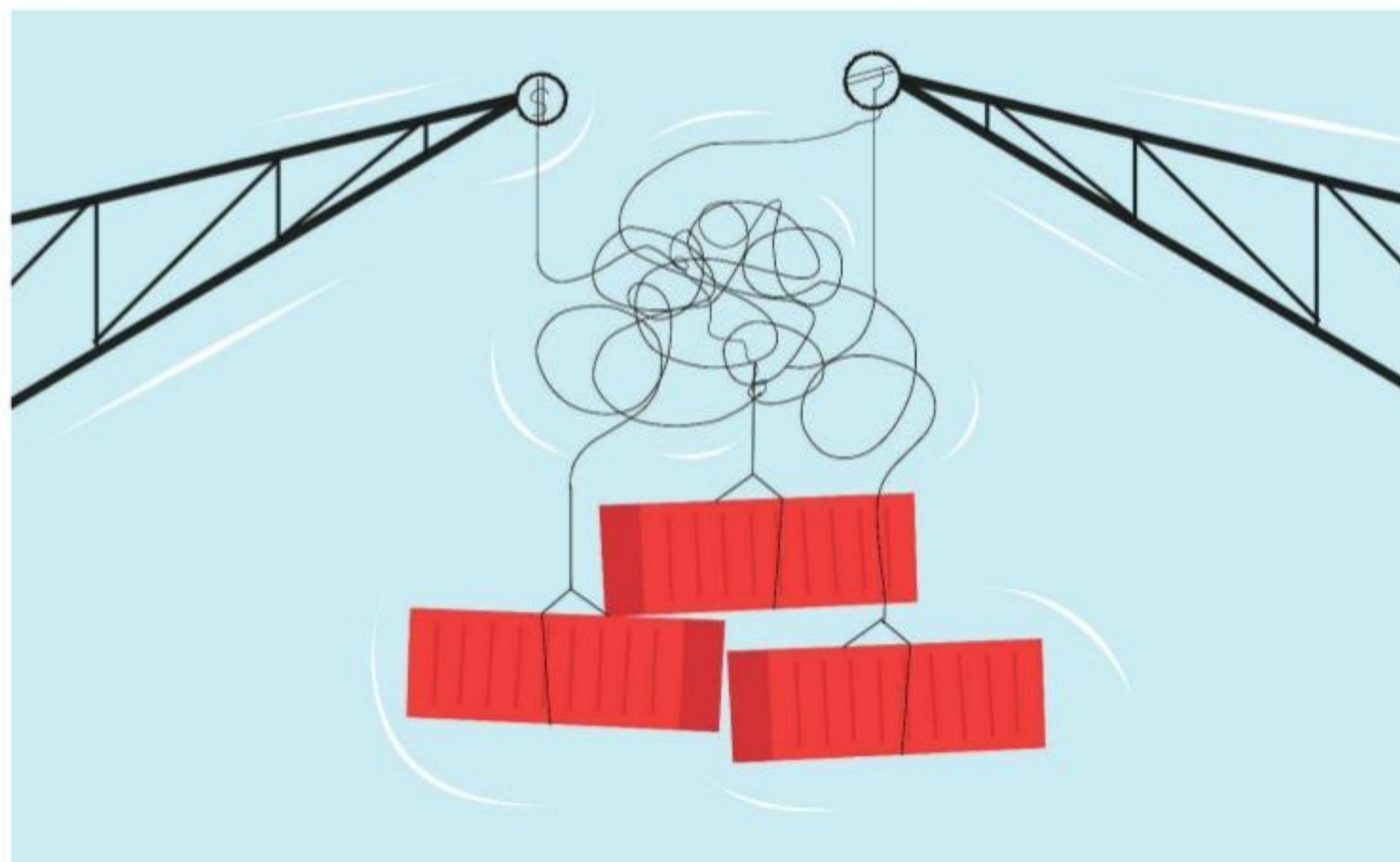
In Washington, Trump's foreign policy in general and his engagement with India has been criticised as too transactional. In Delhi, Trump's visit is being derided for the apparent lack of substance and the focus on atmospherics.

Yet, if we step back we will find there is much that is impressive in the bilateral relationship. Take the most contentious issue in play between Washington and Delhi today — trade. In 1995, total two-way trade, including goods and services, between India and the US was \$11 billion. In 2018, it crossed \$140 billion. It is reported to be around \$150 billion in 2019. A 14-fold increase in trade turnover in 25 years is certainly not something to sneer at. India's China trade too has risen, even more rapidly. From a couple of hundred million dollars in the mid-1990s to nearly \$90 billion in 2019. But unlike the US, where India enjoys a surplus of nearly \$23 billion, it has a deficit of nearly \$57 billion with China. Can India and the US do better on trade? Yes, of course. Only a few years ago, the two sides were looking at an annual trade target of \$500 billion. That looks rather ambitious amidst the current disputes.

That brings us to the seriousness of the current trade disputes between Delhi and Washington. That we have made great progress in the last two decades should not minimise the significance of the current headwinds facing the economic relationship. The two sides have struggled to finalise a minor trade agreement worth \$10 billion — some have called it "small potatoes" — before Trump lands in Ahmedabad on Monday. When Modi met Trump in New York last September, Indian officials were saying the agreement was just round the corner.

Trade has long been a contentious issue between Delhi and Washington. There had been enduring tension since the late 1980s between the US demand for greater market access, intellectual property protection, and a host of other demands and India's own cautious approach to economic liberalisation. All recent US administrations have applied continuous pressure on India for trade agreements. The pressure has significantly risen under President Trump.

If his predecessors were willing to cut



CR Sasikumar

some slack for India by citing larger political and strategic considerations in the bilateral ties, Trump has put trade disputes at the front and centre of the relationship. His officials in the Department of Commerce and the US Trade Representative's office have adopted extremely aggressive tactics in the negotiation with India.

But Trump's trade offensive is not borne out of a special animosity towards India. Trump has undertaken a radical reorientation of US trade policy. For Trump, this is a matter of long-standing ideological conviction as well as a political convenience. He has bet that the anti-free-trade White working classes in the American rust belt are the key to his re-election.

You could certainly quibble with the assumptions underlying Trump's trade policy. Given America's pole position in the global trading system, you have no option but to deal with it. For Trump is getting away with his demand for the restructuring of trade relations with key economic partners. He has renegotiated the NAFTA with neighbours Canada and Mexico and has compelled China to start reducing the massive trade deficit with the US.

The media cites Indian officials complaining about the negotiating tactics of Trump officials, who are demanding ever more and have taken old markers — like the GSP — off the table. The complaints certainly seem believable, given the trouble China has had negotiating an interim trade agreement with the US worth \$200 billion. While Trump won't stop saying Xi Jinping is his "best friend", his trade officials never let up on the Chinese negotiators. Trump sings the same song with India. Earlier this week, Trump is reported to have said that "he likes Modi a lot" but insisted that the "US has not been treated well by India".

President Xi certainly took a lot of it on the chin. For he understood the importance of a vigorous trading relationship with the US that stood at \$737 billion in 2018 and more deeply on the role of trade, especially with the US, in transforming China's fortunes at home and beyond.

In response to Trump's pressure, Xi reaffirmed his commitment to economic globalisation and domestic liberalisation and wooed American investors with even greater vigour than before. Modi appears to be sending the opposite signal — of a definitive drift towards protectionism. India's trade troubles are certainly not limited to the

The European Union is reluctant so far to restart trade negotiations that ended in great frustration for Brussels some years ago. Australia and New Zealand have given up. India's immediate neighbours complain that South Block's rhetoric on connectivity and regionalism is matched by the multiple non-tariff barriers that continue to constrain commerce across the South Asian frontiers. It is certainly probable, statistically one in a million, that the fault lies, always, with India's partners. But one would think there might be a real problem with Delhi's own trade policies.

engagement with the US.

Delhi walked away at the very last minute from signing the RCEP agreement last year to deep disappointment among its partners including the ASEAN, Australia, Japan and New Zealand. One of the main arguments cited by India was the massive trade deficit with China and the potential danger of it widening further under RCEP.

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Trump has certainly made India's trade headache more acute. But he has also opened up opportunities. His trade war on China has put pressure on the global supply chains centred around China. Many companies are moving their production out of China; but only a few are turning towards India. While Delhi has talked the talk on taking advantage of the US-China trade war, it is yet to get its act together.

What makes Delhi's devaluation of trade as a key instrument of economic growth potentially irreversible is the fact that there is little domestic political opposition to it. While many are pushing back against Modi's recent domestic policies, few are willing to speak against the creeping protectionism. One of the rare moments in the last few years when the Congress cheered Modi was when he turned India's back on RCEP!

For now, though, India's partnership with the US might not only survive the current trade tensions, but advance during Trump's visit: There is so much happening elsewhere in the relationship — especially in the defence and security domain. But the time has come for Delhi to take a hard look at its current trade policy that threatens to undermine India's regional and international prospects.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Facts speak louder than words. History will finally record Xinjiang's revolutionary turning point which leads the region away from turbulence."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Misreading the Mahatma

Those opposing CAA-NRC are doing disservice to Gandhiji's worldview



SHRIKRISHNA KULKARNI

OVER THE PAST few weeks, I watched with increasing distress the violent opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the as yet non-existent National Register of Citizens. Misinformation and misrepresentation are being used to inflame insecurities. Every trick is being used to game our democratic systems. What is particularly distressing is that not even Mahatma Gandhi has been spared in this diabolical game of inflaming passions and inciting violence. Those opposed to the inherently humane CAA law have mangled and distorted the real views of Babu to build a case for their bigoted world view. I wonder if silence is a virtue anymore. In sharing my views, I have collated facts that should help the reader assess the need for the CAA and NRC and also bring out the real views of the Mahatma.

In 1906, the Muslim League was founded to promote Muslim interests. In October 1906, Viceroy Lord Minto heard a delegation of 35 Muslim leaders from various Indian provinces who demanded separate electorates for Muslims in Muslim-majority provinces and reserved seats in the Imperial Council. In 1909, the parliament of the UK passed the Indian Councils Act. For the first time, seats would be reserved for Muslims, where only Muslims would be polled. It was this patronage of the Muslim League by the British that would eventually break the unity of India.

Fast forward to 1946. In January 1946, elections were held for the provincial and central legislatures in 17 provinces. While the Congress claimed that it represented all of undivided India's population, the Muslim League contended that it was representing all its Muslims. The dominant issue of these elections became the contention that Hindus and Muslims are two different nations and can never stay in one country. The Muslim League won 87 per cent of the reserved seats (429/492). The overwhelming majority of Muslims in undivided India voted for the Muslim League and its demand for a separate nation for Muslims.

After 1947, the leadership in Pakistan consolidated its political position by appealing the Muslim majority. This was done by reinforcing the role of the Holy Quran, Shariat and Sunnah in the affairs of the state. Here lie the roots of the subsequent genocide of the non-Muslim religious minorities of Pakistan.

Gandhiji had much to say about the post-Partition plight of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan and the need to secure justice from Pakistan. Here I share his own words, chosen from Gandhiji's *Delhi Diary*, which contains his speeches and first hand accounts of his views:

September 25, 1947 (page 35), on the duty of the Union government: "...To ensure the safety of the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan was the duty of the Indian Union Government. But for that the Government should be given a free hand and should receive the full and sin-

cere cooperation of every Indian."

Mother India, whose life breath is Sanatana Dharma, ensured that Muslims and every other religious minority were equal citizens. We are the people who proclaim "Sarve bhavantu sukhinah". It is, therefore, difficult to accept claims that the minorities of India have been deprived.

September 26, 1947 (page 39) on injustice not being tolerated: "He (Gandhiji) had been an opponent of all warfare. But if there was no other way of securing justice from Pakistan, if Pakistan persistently refused to see its proved error and continued to minimise it, the Indian Union Government would have to go to war against it."

In 1973, Pakistan adopted a new constitution which proclaimed it to be an Islamic nation. The ethnic cleansing of the non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan unfolded in front of the whole world. The government of independent India did nothing to help these unfortunate people.

On December 11, 2019, the CAA was passed by our Parliament. The amendment dilutes the citizenship requirements for those non-Muslim minorities, specifically Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, from the Islamic republics of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who entered India before December 31, 2014. The amendment does not take away citizenship of any Indian citizen of any religion; the amendment does not take away the right of anyone to apply for Indian citizenship; the amendment is close-ended.

The CAA, therefore, supports the wishes of Gandhiji in letter and spirit. It took 72 years for a government to put aside political calculations and have the courage to implement Gandhiji's wishes.

Our population is growing by more than 15 million per year. No government in the world can provide the resources and jobs to support such increases in the population. It is the primary duty of any responsible, elected government to make an accurate estimate of its population. A national register of citizens (NRC), in my view, is therefore a must.

A united India is a prerequisite to a "strong India". As I see it, destroying the "politics of appeasement" is the unfinished Gandhian agenda. To keep India weak, the objection to CAA will be weaponised by clubbing it with an as yet non-existent NRC. These forces will also weaponise Gandhiji by misinterpreting him. We must understand Gandhiji, understand his roots. Beware of the intermediaries who claim expertise on Gandhian thought but, in reality, are in opposition to Gandhiji's worldview.

Gandhiji was rooted in sanatana dharma and the Bhagwad Gita. He was a "spiritual aspirant", thrust into a socio-political role. Would Gandhiji support the Shaheen Bagh protests? A protest rooted in fear mongering, bigotry and untruths about the CAA and NRC? Absolutely not. We have a nation to build. We can ill-afford such manufactured, sponsored distractions. We must ensure that the CAA and NRC are implemented. The CAA can help heal wounds and reconcile our past. And, the NRC will set the foundation on which we can secure our present and our future.

The writer is chairman of the board of directors of IIM, Kolkata and Mahatma Gandhi's great grandson

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WELCOME VERDICT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'In her own right' (IE, February 19). In a landmark victory for gender equality, the Supreme Court has allowed permanent commission to all women officers in the Army. There can now be no excuse for the stereotypical and constitutionally flawed notion that women are the "weaker sex" or there are tasks "too arduous" for them.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

NO PROPAGANDA

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'High insecurity' (IE, February 19). Actions such as the denial of visa to a British MP have raised apprehensions that India is insecure and thin-skinned. The truth is that India has welcomed criticism. But this liberty has been misused. Now, the message has gone out that while constructive criticism is welcome, propaganda is not.

Tushar Chaudhary, Meerut

PRONOUNS MATTER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Content of speech or name of speaker?' (IE, February 19). The writer talking about LGBTQ rights in the broader framework of the ongoing protests is appreciated. However, I wish the article hadn't misgendered the trans person, and used their dead name. They go by "Krush Chudawala" and use the pronouns

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

"him" or "them". The right to be who they are was what they were fighting for in Azad Maidan and their efforts need to be recognised.

Akshita Rohatgi, Delhi

HERO TO HENCHMAN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Handpump hero' (IE, February 19). There is a world of difference between fights against injustice and inequality on-screen and in real life. Many heroes/heroines end up as sidekicks and admirers of those villainous leaders of the country the likes of which they were fighting singlehandedly with a duplicate in the shadow on screen.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur



MEERAN CHADHA BORWANKAR

Fight the monster

Young women, as in Gargi college, must take on those who assault them

I AM FROM a place called Fazilka, which has become a district in Punjab now. But when I studied in the school there, it was a sleepy, small town, typical of India. Everyone knew everyone else, or nearly so, and cases of molestation had yet to emerge on the public conscience. I am told they were taking place then, mostly, within the confines of the house, but families preferred to brush them under the carpet. Till the demon became so big that the National Crime Records Bureau took notice and brought it out, in full public view.

While growing up and studying in Jalandhar, I did hear of this social scourge — a veritable monster, which by then had indeed become big and bold. Beyond the domestic space, it was now knocking at the doors of most public places and gatherings. My lecturers at the college explained that urbanisation and migration were leading to anonymity. Emboldened by the fact that it can go unrecognised, the monster started visiting schools, colleges, cinema halls and gardens. I remember my parents being very apprehensive of letting me participate in college festivals or allowing me to stay out late. My mother's curfew timings really bothered me but the family was united in the belief

that public places had become unsafe.

My sister studying in Chandigarh, however, told me that things were safer there, and I wondered why: She explained that young women are bolder and "tackle mischief-makers on the spot". It made me happy and I thought that things must be much better in Delhi. It is, after all, the national capital.

Thirty years down the line, when the monster became really huge, the central and state governments modified laws relating to women, created special courts, made women police investigate offences against women, pursued speedy trials and punishment of the offender. Some police officers even went to the extent of allegedly "encountering" the monster. But this social evil keeps reappearing, still, because it has many heads.

And yet, when this monster entered your college festival, you were not prepared. You failed to notice him or hold his dirty head and thrash him. What is this controversy about insider or outsider? We all know that it's both — the monster is both within the college and, also, hanging around outside. We, from small towns, can recognise him from a distance. And yet, you — from the famed national capital — failed to do so. I am surprised and distressed.

I am appalled that the Delhi police is expected to identify the monster from the CCTV footage. I would have loved to hear of one of the PCR vans of Delhi Police rushing 20 young and old monsters to AIIMS after they were thrashed by the Gargi College women for trying to molest, grope and masturbate during their college festival. I missed looking at the photos of the moaning injured monsters on hospital beds in the national newspapers the next day.

I would have also wanted to see the ever-busy television channels report that the parents of none of the injured monsters had come to meet them in the hospital and they had been publicly disowned instead. I am sure, busy as they were covering the stupendous victory of AAP in Delhi, many of the TV anchors would have then forgone it to showcase your gallantry. I would not have been surprised if Arvind Kejriwal himself applauded the women of Gargi in his victory speech.

Are you not aware that God helps those who help themselves? Even the law protects those who protect themselves. You need to understand the lurking danger in all public places and be adequately prepared. To the young women of Gargi, I'd say, please read the Indian Penal Code: Sections 96 to 106

are for self-defence. You can go to any reasonable extent to keep your body and property safe. There were so many of you and your combined strength would have definitely put the fear of God in those piddly monsters. I know I can be hauled up for inciting you, but how long can we keep quiet? When all conventional and progressive methods have failed — including changes in the law, encounters and hangings, and the malaise continues unabated, we have to think boldly. For me, it is to thrash the goons if we are in good numbers as you were in your college festival. And, to report if we are in smaller numbers or alone. Remaining quiet is not an option. I am happy that you, the Gargi women, did not remain quiet and pursued the matter. But I am sad that you were not prepared.

I want an assurance that the women of Gargi will remain alert and fully prepared to behead the monster if it is seen lurking around their campus again. Gargi women, lead the nation in this war against the monster!

The writer studied in a government school in Fazilka and retired as an officer of the Indian Police Service

16 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Former Malaysian PM Najib Razak

MALAYSIA
Never ruled out 'murder-suicide plot' by MH370 pilot: Ex-PM

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia has never ruled out the possibility that missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 could have been downed by a suicidal pilot, the country's former prime minister Najib Razak said on Wednesday. Najib, who was premier when MH370 vanished with 239 people on board nearly six years ago, was responding to remarks by former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott that Malaysian leaders had considered from the outset that flight captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah may have committed mass murder.

PAKISTAN
Court sentences three over 2014 bombing

Lahore: A Pakistani anti-terrorism court on Wednesday handed down death sentence and 300 years imprisonment to three terrorists of the banned Jamaat-ul-Ahrar for their involvement in the 2014 Wagah border bombing that killed over 60 people. Wagah is a village located in Lahore, Pakistan's Punjab province and Attari in India's Punjab state along the Indo-Pak border. Over 60 people, including women and children, were killed in the horrific suicide attack on November 2, 2014 at the Wagah border on the Pakistani side.

AUSTRALIA
Mid-air plane collision kills 4

Melbourne: Four people were killed in a mid-air collision between two light planes in Australia on Wednesday, scattering debris across a rural area north of Melbourne. Police said the two twin-engine aircraft were each carrying a pilot and a passenger when they crashed around 4,000 feet above the town of Mangalore. Images from the crash scene on the ground showed twisted metal and chunks of fuselage scattered in a field and among trees. Police said both planes were flying legally in the area. One aircraft had just taken off from the nearby airfield but the other plane's origin was still unclear.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK: CHINA DEATH TOLL CROSSES 2,000

Passengers begin leaving cruise ship after virus quarantine ends

One Indian among 79 new cases discovered on board; Iran reports two virus deaths in the country



A bus, believed to be carrying passengers from the cruise ship *Diamond Princess*, leaves Daikoku Pier Cruise Terminal in Yokohama, Japan, on Wednesday. Reuters

REUTERS & PTI
TOKYO, BEIJING, FEBRUARY 19

HUNDREDS OF people began disembarking a cruise ship in Japan on Wednesday after being held on board for more than two weeks under quarantine, as criticism mounted of Japan's handling of the biggest coronavirus outbreak outside China. Even as patients trundled off the *Diamond Princess* cruise liner with their suitcases, Japanese authorities announced 79 new cases had been discovered on board, bringing the total above

620, well over half the known cases outside mainland China. One more Indian was among those to have tested positive for the virus and was shifted to hospital, taking the number of Indian nationals infected with the virus on the vessel to seven, according to the Indian Embassy. In China, the death toll from the coronavirus climbed above 2,000, but the tally of newly reported cases fell for a second day to the lowest since January, offering hope and helping Asian shares and US stock futures rise. The *Diamond Princess* has been quarantined at a dock at

Yokohama near Tokyo since Feb 3, initially with 3,700 people aboard. From Wednesday, passengers who tested negative and showed no symptoms were free to leave. Around 500 were expected to disembark on Wednesday, with the rest of those eligible departing over the next two days. The Indian Embassy earlier said it was making efforts for de-boarding of all the Indians from the ship after the end of the quarantine period. Meanwhile, two people have died in Iran after testing positive Wednesday for the coronavirus, the health ministry said, in the country's first cases of the disease.

BEIJING HITS OUT AT NEWSPAPERS

CHINA REVOKES CREDENTIALS OF THREE 'WALL STREET JOURNAL' REPORTERS

Beijing: China on Wednesday said it has revoked the press credentials of three reporters for the *Wall Street Journal* over a headline for an opinion column deemed by the government to be racist and slanderous. The headline referred to the current virus outbreak in China and called the country the "Real Sick Man of Asia". In a statement Wednesday, foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the Feb 3 op-ed by Bard College Professor Walter Russel Mead "smears

the efforts of the Chinese government and people on fighting (the virus) epidemic". "The editors used such a racially discriminatory title, triggering indignation and condemnation among the Chinese people and the international community," he said. The statement said the expulsions came after the *Journal* refused to "make an official apology". Like most foreign media, the *Wall Street Journal* is unavailable within China. AP

CHINESE EMBASSY ACCUSES 'KATHMANDU POST' OF BIAS, THREATENS FURTHER ACTION

Kathmandu: The Chinese embassy here accused the *Kathmandu Post*, the English daily from the Kantipur Media House, of being biased on China-related issues. The immediate provocation was an article titled 'China's secrecy has made coronavirus much worse' that the *Post* reproduced from the *Korean Herald*. It was authored by Ivo Daalder, former US envoy to NATO. "It is regrettable that Mr Anup Kaphle, Chief Editor of The

Kathmandu Post has always been biased on China-related issues. This time, he went as far as disregarding the facts and becoming a parrot of some anti-China forces... The Chinese Embassy in Nepal has made solemn representations to the newspaper and himself and reserves the right of further action," the embassy said. The Kantipur Media House was joined by other publications in condemning the embassy's statement. YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

'Barr mulls quitting as Attorney General over Trump tweets'

MICHAEL BALSAMO & ZEKE MILLER
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 19

US ATTORNEY General William Barr has told people close to him he's considering quitting his post after President Donald Trump wouldn't heed his warning to stop tweeting about Justice Department cases, an administration official told *The Associated Press*. The revelation came days after Barr took a public swipe at the President, saying in a television interview that Trump's tweets about Justice Department cases and staffers make it "impossible" for him to do his job. The next day, Trump ignored Barr's request and insisted that he has the "legal right" to intervene in criminal cases and sidestep the Justice Department's historical independence. The administration official was not authorised to discuss Barr's private remarks and requested anonymity. It's unclear how seriously Barr has considered resigning or whether he is instead trying to pressure Trump to back off his provocative tweets about the Justice Department. Barr's spokeswoman said late Tuesday that the attorney general "has no plans to resign."

EXPLAINED
Barr a key ally for the President at an important time

AS A-G, William Barr has been a very important ally for Trump, especially in dealing with the Mueller report's fallout. Barr, who has been criticised by Democrats who say he politicised the Justice Department, remains a key figure for the Trump administration at another important period. An overhaul of the FBI and an investigation into the Russia probe are two important initiatives for Trump, which Barr is expected to oversee. So, losing the A-G at this time would constitute a major blow for the President.

Trump tweeted on Tuesday that he's considering suing those involved in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation and opined that his confidant Roger Stone deserved a new trial after being convicted of witness tampering and obstruction. AP



Mike Bloomberg

Bloomberg to sell his firm if elected as US President, says campaign

JASON LANGE
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 19

DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL contender Michael Bloomberg will sell Bloomberg LP, the financial information company that made him a billionaire, if he is elected to the White House in November, his campaign confirmed on Tuesday. Bloomberg has risen quickly in opinion polls since entering the race for the Democratic nomination in November and he will appear in his first debate of the election cycle on Wednesday in Las Vegas. Democrats are vying for the right to challenge Republican President Donald Trump in the Nov. 3 election. The former New York mayor has said before he would likely sell Bloomberg LP if elected, which his campaign affirmed on Tuesday. "If elected President, Mike will sell the company," spokeswoman Galia Slayen said. REUTERS

Syria's Aleppo airport receives first scheduled flight in 8 years

REUTERS
ALEPPO, FEBRUARY 19

A SYRIANAIR passenger plane landed on Wednesday at Aleppo's civilian airport, the first scheduled flight to touch down in the country's war-devastated economic hub for eight years. The reopening of the airport comes days after the Russian-backed Syrian army said it had seized rural areas northwest of Aleppo, a major strategic gain in weeks of bombing of the last rebel bastion in north-western Syria.



An airliner landed at Aleppo airport Wednesday. AP

Government officials hope the resumption of commercial flights will help revive economic activity in the city, which was the scene of some of the most vicious fighting of the war between 2012 and 2016. Rebel-held eastern Aleppo was regained by government forces in 2016. Transport Minister Ali Hammoud said authorities were waiting for approvals to resume international flights, with plans to reopen the route to Cairo next month.



Hasan Minhaj

Hasan Minhaj to perform at White House Correspondents' Dinner: WHCA

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 19

POPULAR INDIAN-AMERICAN stand-up comedian Hasan Minhaj, who has been critical of US President Donald Trump, will perform at the annual dinner of the White House Correspondents Association. Minhaj, whose parents come from Aligarh, will serve as the entertainer at the event. Kenan Thompson, the actor and *Saturday Night Live* cast member, will serve as the host for the annual White House Correspondents Association (WHCA) dinner on April 25. "Hasan Minhaj, the Peabody award-winning host of Netflix's *Patriot Act* with Hasan Minhaj, will return to the dinner as featured entertainer," the WHCA announced. Trump, who has skipped the WHCA dinner for the last three years, is unlikely to attend. PTI

Pak court nullifies converted minor Hindu girl's marriage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARACHI, FEBRUARY 19

IN PROBABLY a first-of-its-kind judgment, a Pakistani court has nullified the marriage of a minor Hindu girl, who was converted to Islam and married to a Muslim man in the country's Sindh province. Mehak Kumari, a Class 11 student, was allegedly abducted from Jacobabad district on January 15 by Ali Raza Solangi who later married her. Her father filed an FIR, claim-

ing that Solangi had abducted and married her forcibly. He also said that her daughter was 15-year-old when she was abducted. Additional Session Judge Ghulam Ali Kanasro ruled that Mehak, who took the Muslim name of Aliza to marry Solangi, was underage. The couple, however, claimed that Mehak embraced Islam at a shrine after which they contracted a free-will marriage. The judge ruled that Mehak was underage and was not fit for marriage under Sections 3 and 4 of the Sindh Child Marriage

Restraint Act. He directed Larkana's senior police officials to take action against all those involved in conducting, facilitating and abetting the child marriage. Kumari was brought to the court from a women's shelter home from Larkana where she was sent on court orders soon after the couple was taken into custody. Heavy security was deployed in and around the court for the hearing to quell any unrest as local Hindu and Muslim leaders were present in town.

STUDENTS TO BE PROVIDED PLASTIC STICKERS WITH FOUR PRONOUN OPTIONS: 'HE/HIM,' 'SHE/HER,' 'THEY/THEM' AND 'ZE/HIR'

Gender pronouns can be tricky on campus. Harvard is making them stick

ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS
FEBRUARY 19

FOR GENERATIONS of future diplomats and cabinet officials educated at Harvard's renowned John F Kennedy School of Government, orientation day has come with a name placard that the students carry from class to class, so their professors can easily call on them. When Diego Garcia Blum, 30, got his placard last fall, the first-year graduate student immediately took a Sharpie to it, writing "He/Him" next to the big block

letters of his name. Other students did the same thing, writing "She/Her" and "They/Them." "Yup! Day 1," Garcia Blum, recalled, adding, "That's when I thought, the students are ahead of the school." But despite its reputation as a bastion of the establishment, the Kennedy School followed the students' lead, agreeing to provide plastic stickers this semester with four pronoun options that students could apply to their name cards: "He/Him," "She/Her," "They/Them" and "Ze/Hir." "I think it's valuable, generally speaking, to challenge the norm that you can assume a per-

son's gender based on appearances," said Raven Graf, 25, a nonbinary student at Kennedy whose pronouns are they/them. As young people who have grown up with a more expansive concept of gender identity bring those ideas to college classrooms, universities have responded in varying ways, with some professors and schools quickly accommodating a wider range of gender pronouns, and others struggling over whether and how to institute new policies. Last week New York University said students would now be able to indicate their pro-



Harvard's John F Kennedy School of Government has introduced the initiative

nouns in the system that provides class rosters and seating charts to faculty members. At least 39 other schools allow students to indicate their pronouns on course rosters, according to a national clearing-house maintained by the director of the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Stonewall Center. Skylar L Spear, a first-year law student at New York University who is transgender and nonbinary, said the ability to enter pronouns when registering for classes would remove some of the obstacles that students face. In the past, Spear, 24, has emailed professors in advance to

say that their pronouns are they/them. One professor maintained a tradition of addressing students by last names and an honorific like "Mr" or "Miss" Spear asked the professor to refer to them by their last name, without any honorific. "It took him awhile to get used to it," said Spear, who empathised with the professor's discomfort. "I appreciated that he was trying. But it did make me uncomfortable to speak up in class, because I wasn't sure what he would call me for a while." For professors who are used to wielding broad authority in their classrooms, and who often bristle

at being told to change their ways, the evolving use of pronouns can sometimes be a power struggle. The University of Minnesota's faculty senate approved a pronoun policy in December, but only after three years of debate. Professors and their students can also find themselves gazing across a generational divide when it comes to an understanding of gender identities. A recent survey by Pew Research found that Americans in their teens and early 20s are far more likely to know someone who uses gender-neutral pronouns than people of previous generations. NYT

BANYAN

Belt and roadblock

Indonesia's government wants to get on with China in private



Indonesia President Joko Widodo with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing in March 2015. China's involvement in Indonesia is growing, but it got going late. Reuters

WHEN CHINA'S PRESIDENT, Xi Jinping, launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, Indonesia was seen as essential to its success. So much so that he went to Jakarta, its capital, to launch the maritime dimension of his world-girdling programme of infrastructure investments. But then a funny thing happened: very little. Nearby Cambodia has been overrun by Chinese involvement in its economy and politics. In Pakistan BRI and its local iteration, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), are held up as proof of a relationship "as close as lips and teeth"—even as CPEC goes off the rails. In contrast, most Indonesians have never heard of China's signature foreign policy. Banyan's recent informal poll of residents of Jakarta was nearly unanimous: BRI is a financial institution, Bank Rakyat Indonesia.

China's involvement in Indonesia is growing, but it got going late. One reason is the long slow process of getting any project off the ground. Public consultations drag on, land is a nightmare to acquire, bureaucrats block licences and sleazier ministers wonder what is in it

for them. One minister under President Joko Widodo, or Jokowi, admits that the Indonesian way is hardly ideal, but at least the country avoided many of the reckless, grandiose projects and poor financial terms embraced by faster-moving neighbouring countries. The only real albatross, a planned high-speed railway from Jakarta to Bandung, is a cautionary tale. In 2015 China beat Japan in the bid for its construction by not insisting on government guarantees for its loans. Quickly the usual problems emerged: even the air force, with a base in the path of the train, objected. Last year all the land was at last acquired. But the project is years late and over budget. Since no broader high-speed network is envisaged that offers economies of scale, the 150km line will never pay for itself. The railway is China's flagship project in Indonesia, but Indonesian ministers do not want to talk about it.

The railway is also a lesson in the sometimes ugly sensibilities over the nearly 3m Indonesians of Chinese origin, which in turn shape Indonesia's engagement with China. Chinese have been do-

ing business in Indonesia for centuries, and today form a big part of the entrepreneurial class. Anti-Chinese antagonisms date back at least to colonial times,

when the Dutch appointed ethnic Chinese as tax farmers even as they encouraged occasional pogroms against Chinese traders, builders and sugar-mill

workers. In the 20th century some Indonesian nationalists defined themselves in part by their anti-Chineseness. After independence, hatred boiled over in 1965 following an alleged left-wing coup attempt. Ethnic Chinese were seen by many as communist sympathisers. Chinese Indonesians were among those targeted in army-directed massacres in which hundreds of thousands of people died. Anti-Chinese riots erupt around the archipelago from time to time. And in 2017 the ethnic-Chinese and Christian governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, or Ahok, an ally of Jokowi, was jailed on trumped-up charges of blasphemy. A rabble-rousing politician, Prabowo Subianto, who said Ahok should "know his place lest the Indonesian Chinese face the consequences of his action", is now the minister of defence.

The railway was also criticised, caught in a broad surge of anti-Chinese sentiment. The government has drawn its own conclusions. All the other big projects backed by China are to be built far from the Javanese heartland where, one official

explains, "a lot of the religious conservatives and Muslim hardliners are collected". They include an oil refinery in northern Sumatra near the Malacca Strait, a smelter on Sulawesi that allows Indonesia to process its nickel ore for the first time, and planned hydropower plants in northern Kalimantan to encourage aluminium smelters to move from China.

Indonesia, then, mostly engages with China on its own terms—and a Chinese commitment for a training college to teach Indonesians about nickel processing is further proof of that. At times it will even be seen to stand up to China, as in a maritime spat last month in which the navy and coastguard expelled a Chinese fishing fleet from Indonesia's exclusive economic zone. The move led some observers to imagine that Indonesia will unite its South-East Asian neighbours against China in the South China Sea. But that is wishful thinking, Jokowi must appear robust to anti-China forces at home. But, for the economy to grow, he must court Chinese money.

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At Walini tunnel construction site for Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Railway in West Bandung regency of West Java province. The railway is China's flagship project in Indonesia. Reuters

A UNITED IRELAND

Could it really happen?

Irish unification is becoming likelier

FOR MOST of the century since Ireland gained independence from Britain, control of the country has alternated between two parties. On February 8th that duopoly was smashed apart, when Sinn Féin got the largest share of first-preference votes in the republic's general election. The party, with links to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which bombed and shot its way through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, won with a left-wing platform that included promises to spend more on health and housing. Yet it did not hide its desire for something a lot more ambitious. "Our core political objective", its manifesto read, "is to achieve Irish Unity and the referendum on Unity which is the means to secure this."

Scottish independence has grabbed headlines since Brexit, but it is time to recognise the chances of a different secession from the United Kingdom. Sinn Féin's success at the election is just the latest reason to think that a united Ireland within a decade or so is a real—and growing—possibility.

That prospect means something far beyond the island of Ireland. The Irish diaspora includes more than 20m Americans. Parties to ethnic conflicts across the world have long found common cause with Northern Ireland's Roman Catholics, who contend that the separation from the south is an illegitimate vestige of 500 years of incompetent and often callous domination from London. Ireland, source of pubs, poets, playwrights and too many Eurovision songs for anyone's good, has soft power to rival a country many times its size.

Until today, however, unification has never been more than a Republican fantasy. Even as the IRA waged a bloody campaign in the 20th century, the north's constitutional status was

The pressure for unification is about more than Brexit. Northern Ireland's census in 2021 is likely to confirm that Catholics outnumber Protestants for the first time. The republic has also become more welcoming. The influence of the Catholic church has faded dramatically and society has become more liberal.

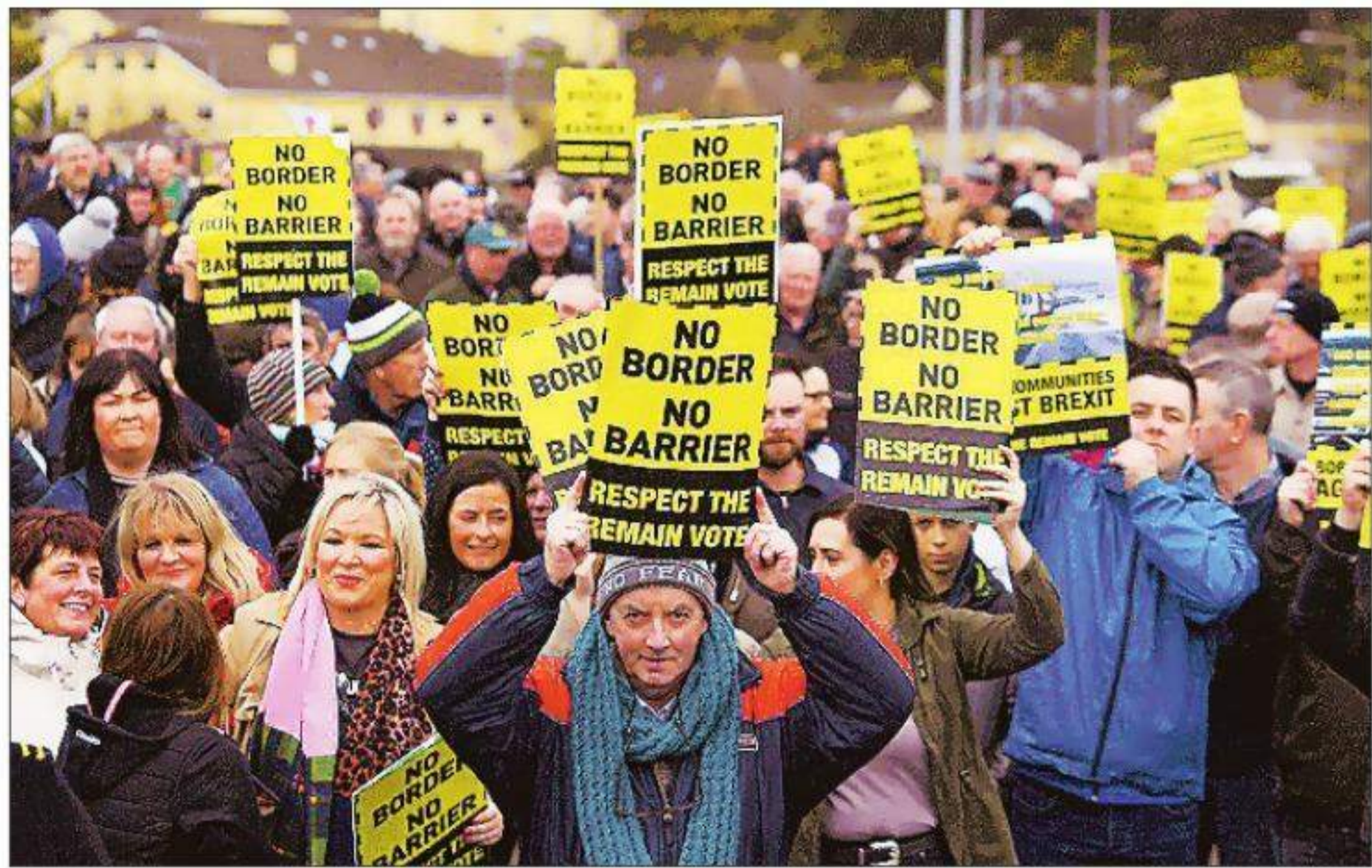
cemented by a solid Protestant majority and the financial and military backing of the British state. The Good Friday agreement of 1998 took the heat out of the struggle, bringing an end to the Troubles, which had claimed over 3,500 lives. Many Catholics were content to have representation in Northern Ireland's government thanks to that agreement, and to see their culture, flag and sports celebrated and subsidised. The Protestants have their terrorists, too, and a campaign for unification was thought to risk opening old wounds, with bloody consequences.

Brexit is one reason all this has changed. The north voted against, but the biggest unionist party and England voted for. Nationalists were not the only ones to be angered by the current home secretary, who suggested using the threat of food shortages to soften up the south in the negotiations, heedless of the famine in the 1840s when all of Ireland was under British rule. Brexit also

creates an economic border in the Irish Sea, between Northern Ireland and Britain, even as it keeps a united Ireland for goods. Although services will become harder to trade with the south, trading goods will be easier than with Britain. In that the north's six counties are affected more by what happens in Dublin, the value of having a say in who governs there will grow.

The pressure for unification is about more than Brexit. Northern Ireland's census in 2021 is likely to confirm that Catholics outnumber Protestants for the first time. The influence of the Catholic church has faded dramatically and society has become more liberal. Over the past three decades restrictions on contraception have been lifted and gay marriage has been legalised. All this explains why support for unification in Northern Ireland appears to have risen in recent years. In some polls respondents show roughly equal support for it and the status quo.

That leads to the last reason for thinking that unification is more likely. Even though the Good Friday agreement reconciled some Catholics to remaining in the United Kingdom, it also set out how the north could peacefully rejoin the republic. A British secretary of state who thinks it likely that a majority favours unification is bound to call a vote on the north's constitutional status. To change the republic's constitution, another referendum would be required in the south. The EU has already said that Northern Ireland could rejoin the bloc under Ireland's membership after such a vote, meaning that for Northern Irish voters a referendum on Irish unity is also a second referendum on Brexit. Unlike an independent Scotland,



A protest against Brexit at the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in Carrickcannon, Ireland. Reuters

which would have to go it alone (at least until the EU agreed to admit it), Northern Ireland would immediately rejoin a larger, richer club, from which it could win big subsidies—if not, perhaps, as big as the subsidy it gets from Westminster today.

There are obstacles and uncertainties. Sinn Féin's recent success may turn some in the north against unification. Brexit may turn out to have less effect than expected. A British secretary of state may use the wriggle room in the Good Friday agreement to hold off calling a referendum. Many British politicians worry that such a vote would be an administrative headache or, worse, provoke violence. So do their Irish counterparts (barring Sinn Féin), though they must always be seen to be

fully behind unification.

Yet sooner than most people expect, the momentum for a united Ireland could come to seem unstoppable. If Scotland chooses independence, many in Northern Ireland would lose their ancestral connection to Britain. If the government in Westminster persistently refused to recognise that there was a majority in favour of unification in Northern Ireland, that could be just as destabilising as calling a referendum.

The green shoots of unification

The island of Ireland needs a plan. The priority should be to work out how to make unionists feel that they have a place in a new Ireland. Work is needed on the nuts and

bolts of unification—including how to, and indeed whether to, merge two health systems (one of which is free), the armed forces and police services, and what to do about the north's devolved assembly. It helps that the republic has a fine record for the sort of citizen-led constitutional consultations that might help sort things out. Politicians from Britain and Ireland need to start talking, too. The price of ending violence two decades ago was for Northern Ireland, the republic and Britain to jointly set out a political route to a united Ireland. If the people of the north and the republic choose that path, the politicians must follow it.

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SECTOR WATCH PHARMACEUTICAL

Coronavirus stretches supply chains: NITI seeks suggestions to promote self reliance

PRABHA RAGHAVAN NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

AS THE Finance Ministry rushes to assess the impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on India's industries, the pharmaceutical sector's imports of crucial ingredients to make medicines is once again in focus. A meeting was held on Wednesday at government think tank NITI Aayog on India's dependence on imports of "critical" active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), with the government seeking inputs from the industry on the "various options" that could be explored to make the country self-reliant, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Some of those in attendance declined to comment on whether the meeting was called as a result of the recent outbreak of the virus in China. India is heavily dependent on the neighbouring country for key ingredients used to make certain vitamins and antibiotics. "The meeting was to understand how we can reduce the dependency on other countries. The government wants to take measures to further support the industry," said a senior official, present at the meeting.

"The industry has given some suggestions on environmental concerns and financial incentives — some subsidies. The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) will examine this. The government is proactive in supporting the industry," the official told *The Indian Express*. As per the official, the government is currently finalising a list of nearly 60 APIs, including ones for diabetic drugs like metformin and antibiotics like azithromycin, where India is "mostly dependent" on China. The government wants to encourage the industry to become self-sufficient in producing these, the official said.

"We've identified some APIs and some intermediates along with that...these APIs are of national interest and we need to be self-dependent in them," said VV Krishna Reddy, national president, Bulk Drugs Manufacturers Association (BDMA), who was present at the meeting.

The Centre is finalising a list of nearly 60 APIs, including ones for diabetic drugs like metformin and antibiotics like azithromycin, where India is 'mostly dependent' on China

According to him, the discussions focussed on developing a "broad outline" to strengthen domestic manufacturing of these APIs. The goal is to make India a potential hub for global supply of these products, he said. This included strengthening the country's API parks, which are still under construction, according to him.

"We, as an industry, would be willing to set up plants that have world-scale production in terms of the quantity that is to be produced. We should be self-sufficient not only in terms of the APIs but the intermediates also," he said.

Another industry executive present at the meeting said that reducing timelines for environmental clearances for manufacturers also figured in the discussions.

While it is speculated that the DoP is moving to ban exports of some APIs and formulations during the outbreak, a senior official within the department told *The Indian Express* that "no such move" was being contemplated at the moment. However, the government is "observing the situation", the official added.

According to government data, China accounted for nearly 67 per cent of India's imports of bulk drugs in 2018.

The DoP, in May 2018, approved a scheme for the development of the pharmaceutical industry, with assistance to the bulk drug industry as one of its sub-schemes.

As of December 10, 2019, proposals to set up common facility centres in bulk drug parks were received from Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh.

FM MEETS INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES TO TAKE STOCK OF COVID-19 EFFECT

Cos under supply pressure can invoke force majeure to bypass contracts

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE GOVERNMENT on Wednesday said supply chain disruptions caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in China would allow companies to invoke force majeure clause — an extraordinary provision that allows them to wriggle out of liabilities in case they are unable to fulfill their contractual obligations.

The announcement comes a day after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met several industry representatives to take stock of the situation, announcing the government would "speedily" formulate measures to minimise its impact on sectors.

The move is a potential relief for companies facing difficulty in receiving shipments from China due to issues like shutdown of operations there or a hold-up at the ports in India.

The Department of Expenditure in a notification dated February 19 advised ministries that the impact on supply chains due to the spread of the virus was a fit case for the invocation of the force majeure clause, according to a tweet by the Finance Ministry.

"A doubt has arisen if the disruption of the supply chains due to spread of coronavirus in China or any other country will

'FREES PARTIES FROM CONTRACTUAL DUTIES'

A force majeure clause in the contract frees both parties from contractual liability or obligation when they are prevented by such events from fulfilling their obligations

A 'force majeure' means extraordinary events or circumstances beyond human control, including

events like natural calamities that could be described as an 'act of god'

Other events include wars, strikes, riots and crimes. However, events like negligence or wrongdoing or predictable or seasonal rain are not considered force majeure

be covered in the force majeure clause. In this regard, it is clarified that it should be considered as a case of natural calamity and FMC may be invoked wherever considered appropriate, following the due procedure...," stated the notification.

A 'force majeure' means extraordinary events or circumstances beyond human control, including events like natural calamities that could be described as an 'act of god'. Other events include wars, strikes, riots and crimes. However, events like negligence or wrongdoing and predictable or seasonal rain are not considered force majeure.

A force majeure clause in the contract frees both parties from contractual liability or obligation when they are prevented by such events from fulfilling their obligations.

According to Sitharaman, sectors like pharmaceutical, chemicals (such as paints and tyre manufacturing) and solar equipment were "very vocal" about disruptions in their supply chain.

"Today, when their raw materials have to come, there is a delay, or the products come, but the papers (necessary paperwork from China for Indian customs) don't come. So the disruption is felt increasingly by these three," she said.

Some micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) had been facing delayed and staggered raw material supply, which had been impacting their ability to manufacture and send out their products, she had said. These MSMEs had sought flexibility from the banks, as their operations were affected due to the outbreak, according to her.

Manmohan: We have a govt which doesn't acknowledge the word 'slowdown'



Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with former Deputy Chairperson of the erstwhile Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia at the launch of the latter's book Backstage: The Story Behind India's High Growth Years, in New Delhi, on Wednesday. Anil Sharma

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

RAISING CONCERNS over the government's refusal to acknowledge a "slowdown" in the economy, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Wednesday the real danger is that credible solutions won't be found unless the problems are recognised.

"...The good points and the weak points of the UPA government have been debated and they should be debated because today we have a government which does not acknowledge that there is a word as slowdown... this is not good for economy. If you do not recognise the problems that you face, you are not likely to find credible answers to take corrective actions, measures and that is the real danger," Singh said at the launch of Ahluwalia's book 'Backstage'.

Singh cited Ahluwalia's book to say that the goal to have a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 is wishful thinking. "...Montek has also pointed out in his book that contrary to what the ruling group may say the \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 is wishful thinking. Also, there's no reason to expect that farmers' incomes can be doubled in three year period," he said.

The former Prime Minister further said that to achieve a high rate of growth, there needs to be rethinking of the role of fiscal policy, fiscal development of the country and bolder tax reforms. "...in our country if you look at the real fiscal picture, the real fiscal deficit of states and Centre combined is as high as 9 per cent and that's not good for satisfying our ambition of having a dynamic economy, growing at the rate of 8-10 per cent. Therefore, while advocating fiscal reforms, tax reforms, also increasing expenditure in the direction it should be, that is, infrastructure, health, education, defence, and all

these activities require much greater attention than they have received in the past," he said. Singh said he hopes there will be a solid debate that will produce a better programme for carrying the reform process further. "I do believe that there is a need for rethinking the reform process afresh. A second generation of reforms requires new pathways and these new pathways can emerge only through solid discussions of the challenges that our country faces," he said. Ahluwalia said that the economy and its problems are currently much more complex than 1991 when the challenge in a way was much "simpler" but it can be resolved. "...right now there's a lot of despair. The growth rate is very low, it's unlikely that it will go much above 5 per cent next year and compared to the targets we have set, like the \$5-trillion target requires a 9 per cent growth... the situation was pretty bad in 1979 and 1991, but the economy was brought around. This economy has the capacity to respond... there's enough expertise in the country to know what needs to be done. You just have to bring the expertise together and listen to them," he said.

Ahluwalia said, "You can't take ten unreformed banks and merge them into four unreformed banks and call that bank reforms."

Former FM P Chidambaram said the economy was like a patient being wheeled into the ICU but stopped outside to be looked at by a team of incompetent doctors. "There is no aggregate demand rise, unemployment is rising, consumption is falling, credit is sputtering and yet the government says all is well...if every indicator is pointing southwards, how can GDP rise 7-8 per cent," he said. The situation is not as bad as 1991 but close to 1997 during the Asian crisis or the 2013 taper tantrum, Chidambaram said, adding bankers are unwilling to lend, and credit has been brought to a halt by vilifying bankers.

'Solar capacity addition down 12% to 7,346 MW in 2019'

India's solar energy capacity addition dipped 12 per cent to 7,346 MW in calendar year 2019 from 8,338 MW in 2018, as per a report by Mercom India Research



Share of solar projects with total installations in 2019:

85%: Large-scale solar projects, with 6,242 MW capacity, falling 7 per cent y-o-y

15%: Rooftop solar projects, with 1,104 MW, falling 33 per cent y-o-y

Source: Mercom India Research/PTI

17%: EXPECTED YEAR-ON-YEAR RISE IN SOLAR INSTALLATIONS IN THE COUNTRY TO ABOUT 8,500 MW BY END OF 2020

65-70 GW: ESTIMATED RANGE OF SOLAR INSTALLATIONS BY 2022, BASED ON CURRENT MARKET CONDITIONS

Top three states that accounted for almost 70% of solar installations in 2019:

- Karnataka
- Rajasthan
- Tamil Nadu

1,897 MW: Capacity added by Indian solar market in October-December 2019 period; 12.8 per cent fall as compared with 2,177 MW installed in preceding quarter. Share of various projects at:

- 1,593 MW: Large-scale projects
- 304 MW: Rooftop projects

35.7 GW: Cumulative solar installations at end of 2019, with shares of projects being:

- 87.6%: Large-scale projects, i.e. 31.3 GW
- 12.4%: Rooftop projects, i.e. 4.4 GW

Reasons for fall in large-scale solar additions in 2019: Elections, a slowing economy, liquidity issues, tariff caps, lack of financing, curtailment, and payment delays

Mittal joins hands with Birla to meet FM, says govt needs to focus on sector's 'sustainability'

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

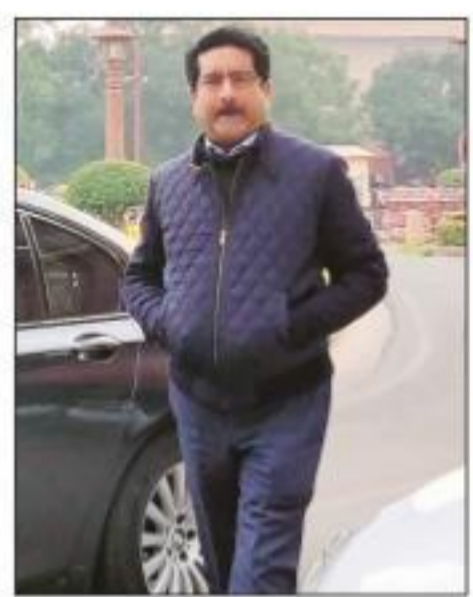
FOUR DAYS after the Supreme Court rap for failure to pay adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues by the stipulated deadline of January 23, Bharti Airtel founder Sunil Bharti Mittal and Vodafone Idea chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla appeared to be joining hands in seeking some relief from the government on the issue. Both Mittal and Birla met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday evening for nearly 40 minutes. The telecom industry leaders, however, refused to divulge any details of the meeting.

Talking to reporters after the meeting with Sitharaman, Mittal denied having discussed the AGR



Bharti Airtel chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal and Vodafone Idea chairman KM Birla at North Block on Wednesday. Express photo

issue, and instead said the government should focus on "how to ensure sustainability of the sector". "There is nothing specific. In



general terms, the telecom industry has been under stress for three-and-a-half years. This industry is very vital to the nation's digital

agenda and many other industries that ride on it, employment, government taxes. The only thing that the government needs to focus now is how to ensure the sustainability of the sector," said Mittal, adding he would not speak anything about AGR dues as of now.

Mittal, earlier in the day, met Department of Telecommunications (DoT) Secretary Anshu Prakash. Birla, accompanied by Vodafone Idea managing director and chief executive officer Ravinder Takkar, met Prakash on Tuesday. Takkar had returned to the DoT office again in the evening. Birla is also learnt to have met Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad last Friday.

On February 14, the Supreme Court, during the hearing of a modification plea moved by tele-

com and non-telecom companies, said if the firms did not make payments of the pending AGR dues before March 17, the managing directors and other directors of the firms would have to make personal appearance before the court. The apex court then issued show-cause notice to the companies as to why contempt of court should not be initiated against them for failing to comply with orders.

On October 24, 2019, the SC upheld the DoT's definition of AGR and said since the licensees had agreed to the migration packages, they were liable to pay dues, the penalty on dues, and the interest on penalty due to delay in payments. The SC then gave the telcos three months to clear their AGR dues. That three-month deadline had ended on January 23.

HC judge recalls own order that gave Nirav Modi relief from being declared fugitive economic offender

KHUSHBOO NARAYAN MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 19

A BOMBAY High Court judge, on February 14, recalled a month-old order that had inadvertently given a big relief to fugitive diamond jeweller Nirav Modi, in connection with the ongoing money laundering probe against him. Justice AM Badar, on January 6, in an ex-parte order, directed a trial court not to pass a final order against Modi on the fugitive economic offender (FEO) issue.

When Badar gave this order, neither the lawyers representing Modi nor the government informed him that the trial court had already passed a final order declaring Modi an FEO on December 6, 2019.

On February 14, recalling his January order, Badar noted that the daily board list of January 6 clubbed and listed the petitions filed by Mehul Choksi, along with those of Modi. Both Choksi and Modi are being represented in the high court by the same lawyer. Badar said while the lawyer for the Enforcement Directorate (ED) "sought adjournment" for filing reply only in case of Choksi's petition against being declared FEO, the HC passed an interim order directing the trial court to "not pass final order" in case of both Choksi and Modi as their petitions were listed together.

"... there was no need to pass

On February 14, Justice AM Badar noted that the daily board list of January 6 clubbed and listed the petitions filed by Mehul Choksi along with those of Nirav Modi

the order to the effect that the trial court was not to proceed to pass final order in the matter of Nirav Modi. As both the parties have not informed this aspect, common order came to be passed in all four applications," said Badar in the fresh order, after hearing the ED plea for a recall of the old ruling.

"In this view of the matter, order dated 6th January 2020 so far as it relates to Criminal Application bearing No.1580 of 2019 (Nirav Modi v. State of Maharashtra and Anr) is recalled," the order said. The ED has now been given a week to file its reply to Choksi's petition, after which the HC will decide if the trial court can pass an order on the issue of declaring Choksi an FEO.

Last December, a special court designated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), declared Modi a "fugitive economic offender" under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 — enacted against those fleeing the country to evade the process of law. When Modi left

India on January 1, 2018, he was aware about payments that were due on January 25, 2018 to Punjab National Bank (PNB) on the Letters of Undertaking (LoUs) issued to his firms, and therefore he left the country in "suspicious circumstances", the court had said.

The ED had filed a plea to declare Modi an FEO in 2018. The agency had submitted that Modi left India due to his involvement in an alleged bank fraud to the tune of Rs 6,498.70 crore in connivance with the bank staff, though the diamantaire claimed it was a business-related trip. The court had accepted the contention that Modi left the country to avoid criminal prosecution.

"The material on record leads to draw inference that Modi left the country under the circumstances rendering suspicious his behaviour in order to dodge the forthcoming penal consequences of the acts he has done or committed while in India till 2017," the special court had said. The same court is now hearing submissions for confiscation of his property.

Both Choksi and his nephew Modi are accused of routing transactions of about Rs 15,600 crore through fraudulent LoUs of PNB. Both left India in first week of January 2018, before the PNB scam came out in public. Modi has been arrested in the UK and is currently facing extradition proceedings, while Choksi currently resides in Antigua and Barbuda.

Five IndiGo passengers deplaned for trying to open door

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

AGROUP of five unruly passengers on board an IndiGo flight from Delhi to Jeddah on Tuesday were off-loaded after one of them tried to forcibly open the aircraft's door while it was taxiing for takeoff.

According to sources, the passengers were part of a 110-strong group from Srinagar travelling to Jeddah and two of the passengers were not allowed to board because they lost their boarding passes. The passengers on the aircraft insisted

As per sources, the flyers were part of a group from Srinagar travelling to Jeddah and two of them were not allowed to board as they lost their boarding passes

that their companions be allowed to take the flight, and created a ruckus, sources said.

Following the commotion, during which the people on board

tried to open the aircraft door, the captain tried to pacify them but had to ultimately return to the parking bay, where the group leader, three female and a male co-passenger were offloaded. After that, government officials said, an anti-sabotage check was conducted. The flight 6E1741, which was scheduled to depart at 8.10pm on Tuesday, ultimately departed three hours later at 11.10pm.

IndiGo, while confirming the incident, said: "Some passengers displayed unruly behaviour and were offloaded to continue flight operations. A report has been filed

with the relevant authorities".

In 2017, the Civil Aviation Ministry issued rules to tackle on-board disruptive behaviour by passengers and established the 'no-fly list'. The rules define three categories of unruly behaviour: Level 1 refers to behaviour that is verbally unruly, and calls for debarment up to three months; Level 2 indicates physical unruliness and can lead to the passenger being debarred from flying for up to six months and Level 3 indicates life-threatening behaviour where the debarment would be for a minimum of 2 years.

'CCI finds no evidence of collusion'

New Delhi: The Competition Commission of India has found no evidence that IndiGo and four rival carriers colluded to fix ticket prices, sources told Reuters. In 2015, the CCI, ordered a probe into IndiGo, SpiceJet, GoAir, Air India and the now-defunct Jet Airways. REUTERS

Hyper-local HikeMoji launched

NANDAGOPAL RAJAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

HOW DO you pivot a company with a billion dollar-plus valuation and a 50 million user base?

Well over a year after Kavin Bharti Mittal wound up Hike Messenger and moved users to the Ai-powered Hike Sticker chat, he has announced the launch of HikeMojis, which he calls "India's first hyper-local and personalised avatar".

For Mittal, HikeMojis are not just emojis based on the user's persona; it is the first building block in something larger he is set out to create. "We said we have to do something bigger and better, and in 2020, with all the technology that we have, what could we do," elaborates Mittal, the founder and chief executive

"Because India is conservative and selfies still don't look that great, we thought using the camera is one step too far. So is there something that's one step before"

KAVIN BHARTI MITTAL
FOUNDER-CEO, HIKE

of Hike, the Indian messaging platform he built up since 2012.

For a lot of people, the next level of expression is cameras. But the Hike team had a different take. "Because India is conservative and selfies still don't look that great, we thought using the camera is one step too far. So is there something that's one step before," Mittal asks. Explaining how they arrived at the HikeMoji concept, he says it helped that Hike

already was good at creating stickers and had a team of artists working on very Indian concepts.

Now, three months after HikeMojis were launched in Beta, the platform is able to create a 100 quintillion combinations of very Indian emojis based on the user's selfie in under three seconds using a very powerful layer of machine learning and AI. This could well be the largest avatar creation platform of its kind.

While Mittal is thrilled at the one million avatars the platform has created in before it moves into version 1 today, AI-powered emojis are not really new as a concept. Apple and Samsung create them on the device itself and let users share it everywhere else. This is where Hike aims to do something unique and different: convert your messages into emoji stickers in real time.

Sensex recovers after 4-day fall on telco relief hopes, dip in virus cases

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 19

AFTER DECLINING in the past four sessions, stock markets on Wednesday rebounded sharply amid positive global cues and expectations of some relief for telecom players. The Sensex ended 428.62 points higher at 41,323 while the broader Nifty50 jumped 133.40 points to 12,125.90.

Analysts said global markets were higher Wednesday as a fall in the rate of new coronavirus cases in China and improvement in global supply chain lifted the investor sentiment. "There are indications that the government may not take any drastic step on the AGR dues front," said an analyst.

Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit Financial Services, said, "Positive cues were witnessed in

the market on hopes that the government is planning to consider some relief measures for the ailing telecom players. On the global front, there is a decrease in new virus cases and close to 80 per cent of the Chinese enterprises are back to work indicating a possible economic recovery."

The government will soon announce measures to deal with the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the domestic industry, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said Tuesday. There is no crisis situation yet as raw materials are available, she had said.

Vodafone Idea shares surged on Wednesday as much as 38.28 per cent to Rs 4.19 on the BSE, following the reports that the Centre is unlikely to invoke the telco's bank guarantees. Government officials from the finance and the telecom ministries who met

Wednesday indicated doing all that is possible to retain at least three private players in the sector.

According to Ajit Mishra, VP—Research, Religare Broking, "Markets are currently dancing to the global tunes and we do not see this scenario changing anytime soon. Traders should keep a close watch on world markets for further cues."

Meanwhile, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq hit all-time highs on Wednesday as hopes that China would take more measures to prop up its economy eased worries about the coronavirus impact.

At 12:44 pm ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 161.42 points, or 0.55 per cent, at 29,393.61 and the S&P 500 rose 20.91 points, or 0.62 per cent, at 3,391.20. The Nasdaq Composite was up 92.62 points, or 0.95 per cent, at 9,825.37.

EXPLAINED

E.

Follow-up buying in select index majors fuels rally

MARKETS GAINED over 1 per cent, after four successive days of fall. The benchmark took cues from global indices which ended positively, in response to the a dip in new coronavirus cases.

Besides, the follow-up buying in select index majors further fuelled the recovery.

Bombay HC provides no interim relief for disqualified directors

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 19

IN A setback to several directors of private and public companies, the Bombay High Court refused interim relief on batch of pleas challenging their disqualification by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA). On September 2017, the MCA had disqualified over two lakh directors by applying section 164 (2) of the Companies Act, 2013. Section 164 (2) allows the MCA to disqualify a

director if the company does not file financial statements or annual returns for a continuous period of three financial years. Aggrieved directors had moved HC in 2018.

The HC prima facie held that it does not think the September 2017 circular was inconsistent with provisions of company law of 2013. A division bench of justices S C Dharmadhikari and R I Chagla passed an order on February 7 in interim applications filed by directors seeking stay on the MCA's move debarring directors across India.

Project that pairs 20 best Smart Cities with 20 bottom ones starts today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

ORGANISED BY the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), the 100-day sister cities challenge — which pairs the 20 best performing Smart Cities with the 20 bottom ones in implementing projects under the mission — will commence Thursday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Varanasi constituency, currently ranked 14th, will be paired up with Amritsar as both attract religious tourists. As per MoHUA officials, the cities have been paired based on a certain criteria; for instance, coastal towns, state capitals, industrial hubs, hilly terrain or educational destinations are paired up with each other.

Officials said the sister cities will have a joint meeting once every 30 days (via video confer-

The 100-day sister cities challenge is organised by the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry

encing), and at least once in the 100-day period "the teams of sister cities would visit the city and understand the Smart Cities projects under implementation and completion." Technical drawings and financial studies including DPRs, feasibility reports and impact assessment reports will be shared amongst the two cities.

"The internal rankings of the cities is drawn up every Friday in the Ministry based on performance (80 per cent) and utilisation of funds (20 per cent)," Vikash Chandra, an advisor with Deloitte that oversees this challenge, told *The Indian Express*.

BRIEFLY

₹214-cr GST fraud detected

New Delhi: An anti-evasion wing of Central-GST has detected a fraud of more than Rs 214 crore through fake invoices in Delhi, an official release said on Wednesday.

RBI nod to Kotak stake cut

New Delhi: Kotak Mahindra Bank on Wednesday said the Reserve Bank of India has granted its final approval for reducing promoters' stake in the private sector lender to 26 per cent. **PTI**

Energy saving fans by Orient

New Delhi: Orient Electric has launched the i-Series range of fans, powered by ECM technology, that saves 50 per cent energy as against ordinary fans. **ENS**

Global crude prices up 2.5%

New York: Oil prices rose 2.5 per cent on Wednesday as demand worries eased with a dip in new coronavirus cases in China and supply curtailed by a US move to cut more Venezuelan crude from the market. **REUTERS**

Biocon's Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw awarded EY Entrepreneur of the Year for 2019

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

BIOCON CHAIRPERSON and managing director Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw was on Wednesday named the EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2019 and will now represent India at the EY World Entrepreneur of the Year Award meet in Montecarlo from June 4 to 6.

Awards were also announced for nine other categories, a press release said, adding the EY Entrepreneur of the Year Awards is the only global business award programme that is celebrated across 60 countries.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur were the chief guest and guest of honour, respectively, at the awards function. **FE**

21 THE RURAL TRACKING THE CHANGING INDIA IN ITS VILLAGES



Kalyan Hake (left) with his father at his chana field, which is almost ready for harvest; (below) tur procurement has started at Vikas Agro's Takli centre. Partha Sarathi Biswas

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
LATUR (MAHARASHTRA), FEBRUARY 19

"Why is the government still allowing imports? Why don't they come and see the crop here?," asks Kalyan Hake, pointing to the chana (chickpea) on his six acres, of which the grain on two acres has already been harvested.

As the 32-year-old farmer from Takali Bardpur in Latur taluka and district of Maharashtra's Marathwada region prepares to harvest the remaining crop, Hake is visibly nervous about his prospective realisations. "The government's minimum support price (MSP) for this year's chana is Rs 4,875 per quintal, whereas it is already trading at Rs 4,200 now in Latur APMC (agricultural produce market committee) mandi. If rates are so low before even the marketing season has actually begun, imagine how much they will slide once the crop arrivals happen after Holi," exclaims Hake, who expects his average grain yield at 8 quintals/acre this time, as against 6 quintals for the 2018-19 crop.

The Union Agriculture Ministry, on Tuesday, estimated India's chana production for 2019-20 at 11.22 million tonnes (mt), up from last year's 9.94 mt and marginally short of the record 11.38 mt of 2017-18. Farmers have, moreover, planted an all-time-high 107.21 lakh hectares (lh) area under this rabi (winter-spring) pulses crop, compared to 96.19 lh in 2018-19 and 107.08 lh in 2017-18. While the acreage in Madhya Pradesh has dropped from 34.32 lh to 27.38 lh — the abundant water in reservoirs and recharged aquifers from surplus rains have prompted farmers there to sow more wheat instead of chana — it has significantly gone up in states such as Maharashtra (from 13.14 lh to 21.79 lh), Rajasthan (15.03 lh to 21.38 lh), Chhattisgarh (3.71 lh to 4.11 lh) and Gujarat (1.74 lh to 3.78 lh).

At the MSP procurement centre in Takali Bardpur run by Vikas Agro Producer Company Ltd, a farmers' cooperative, over 5,000 pulses growers have already registered their crop for sale. "I don't know when they will start procurement and when the payment will be made into my bank account. But there is no other place I can sell today. The APMC prices are below MSP and traders say they will fall further if imports aren't halted. Why can't the government just do that, rather than spending money for procurement and making us stand in lines?" points out Hake.

For farmers in the relatively dry Marathwada and Vidarbha region, chana is an ideal rabi crop to grow after their kharif soyabean, which is planted from mid-June (after the monsoon rains) and harvested by October. Cultivated mostly on the residual

MSP CHALLENGE Bumper again

Pulses farmers are set to harvest a record chana crop, but their party could be spoiled by imports



IMPORT OF PULSES (IN THOUSAND TONNES)					
	Peas	Chana	Masur	Arhar/Tur	Moong/Urad
2013-14	1330.43	276.13	708.71	465.82	624.23
2014-15	1951.97	418.88	816.47	575.22	622.89
2015-16	2245.39	1031.49	1260.19	462.71	581.60
2016-17	3172.76	1080.63	829.44	703.54	574.52
2017-18	2877.03	981.32	796.62	412.95	346.97
2018-19	851.41	185.95	248.97	530.67	574.24
2019-20*	614.78	300.34	735.70	361.84	271.15

*April-December, Source: Department of Commerce

soil moisture, it requires hardly one round of irrigation, as opposed to three or more for wheat. This time, bountiful rains, especially during the second half of the monsoon (August-September) and extending till early November, has resulted in higher sowings and farmers like Hake even reporting a one-third jump in yields.

In Latur, a major chana-growing district of Maharashtra that also houses one of India's biggest wholesale market for pulses, many farmers could not take their kharif crop due to poor rains in the first half of the monsoon (June-June). Hake is among those who was forced to skip his soyabean crop and, instead, went in for early sowing of chana to-

wards the end of October. With harvesting going on at full swing, the not-so-great year outlook for the legume is a major worry.

At the Latur APMC, traders identify two main reasons for the current weak sentiment.

The first is imports. Since March 2018, the Narendra Modi government has clamped a 60% import duty on chana, while pegging it lower, at 40%, for the larger kabuli or garbanzo bean varieties. Earlier to that, it imposed a 50% customs duty on white/yellow peas (which are a cheap substitute for chana and even used for adulteration of besan flour made from the latter) in November 2017 and 30% on masur (lentil) in December 2017. Further, imports of

tur/arhar (pigeon-pea), moong (green gram) and urad (black gram) were, in August 2017, moved from the "free" to the "restricted" list, subject to annual quantitative caps. These measures have helped stem the flow of imports from their 2016-17 and 2017-18 peaks. The current fiscal has, nevertheless, witnessed an increase, particularly of masur and chana imports (see accompanying table). Both happen to be rabi pulses crops. Masur and white/yellow peas are imported mainly from Canada, while chana is mostly supplied by Australia, tur/arhar by Myanmar, Mozambique and Tanzania, and moong and urad by Myanmar.

A second reason is the huge unsold stock of chana lying with the government from last year's MSP-procured crop. The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) was, as on February 17, holding 21.03 lakh tonnes (lt) of pulses in its godowns, of which chana alone comprised 15.83 lt. According to Nitin Kalantari, a leading Latur-based dal miller and pulses trader, Nafed's stocks alone are weighing down prices in the mandis. "They should have off-loaded this grain during the Dussehra and Diwali season, when demand for besan (used in many sweet preparations) is high. Nafed is now floating tenders to sell, right at the start of the new crop's arrivals. How can prices, then, look up?," he notes.

At the Takali Bardpur procurement centre, Vilas Uphade, director of Vikas Agro, is having a tough time convincing all growers not to come with their crop now. The farmer producer company — part of the MAHA-FPC, a state-wide consortium of producer organisations/companies that is a sub-agent of Nafed for undertaking MSP procurement operations — began purchase of tur/arhar on February 18. "Tur (which is harvested in December-January) is also selling at Rs 4,900 per quintal (below the MSP of Rs 5,800), but our real concern is chana. Not only is the crop much bigger this year, but many farmers have not done any kharif sowing and gone directly for chana. They need a good price for what is clearly a bumper crop," explains Uphade.

Severe water scarcity last year led Ali Mohammed Sheikh to skip his chana crop in 2018-19. The delayed onset of monsoon this time meant that he couldn't also plant the 2019 kharif soyabean. But the monsoon's magic revival from August enabled this 10-acre farmer from Takali Bardpur to go for chana on eight out of his 10-acre holding. "If the government procurement centres are not opened in time, I may have to settle for a price of Rs 3,500 or even lower," sighs Sheikh, who also grows sugarcane and wheat on one acre each of his balance land that has irrigation facility.

Amidst slump, GI tag for betel variety

Traders, farmers see hope after string of reverses — halted exports, reduced prices, shrinking vineyards

VISHNU VARMA
TIRUR (KERALA), FEBRUARY 19

THERE WAS a time when the smell of freshly-plucked vettila (Malayalam for betel leaves) would waft through the centre of Tirur town in Malappuram district of north Kerala, recalls Alikutty, manager at T K Mohammed & Co, one of the oldest firms trading in betel leaves in the town.

Every evening, the town's historic Paan Bazaar Street would be lined with trucks laden with betel leaves. Hundreds of workers would then begin the laborious process of unloading, washing and then re-packing the leaves with moistened straw in little cane baskets. By night, the baskets would be on their way to the local railway station, from where they would eventually make their way to markets in north India and onward to cities such as Karachi and Lahore in Pakistan, where Tirur's spicy, thick-stalked variety of leaves were much in demand.

But for Alikutty, all that feels like a different era now. Ever since Pakistan imposed a steep 140% import tax on the betel leaf in 2016, exports have ground to a halt and business has fallen drastically. With prices plummeting, a lot of farmers moved away from betel leaf cultivation.

"When I came into this field in 1983, there were over a hundred trading companies. Today, there are less than 15. Earlier, we used to send out 20 tonnes of leaves a day. Today, we barely send four tonnes, all of which go to Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and other markets," says Alikutty.

But amid this grim mood, what has generated hope among the farmers is the announcement of the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the Tirur betel leaf variety. Last month, state Agriculture Minister V S Sunil Kumar formally handed over the GI recognition to a collective of farmers in the town, promising them that the tag would help them brand the leaf better and reach the best markets. He also said the government would explore other uses of the leaf, including exploring its application in Ayurveda.

Indira Devi, director of research at Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), Thrissur, who was among those who pursued the GI tag for the leaf, said, "There's a specific chemical attribute called eugenol in betel leaves. When we analysed and compared it to other betel varieties across India, we found the eugenol content to be high in the Tirur variety. The high eugenol content is a major determining factor (for the GI tag) as it gives the leaf a special desirable quality for chewing and influences its smell and taste," she said, adding, "The GI tag can certainly aid in the product's visibility and credibility."

According to a 2017-18 report of the KAU, betel vine, classified as a beverage crop along the likes of areca nut and cocoa, is cultivated on 268 hectares across Kerala, of which 130 hectares is in regions surrounding Tirur.

The betel vine, cultivation of which is highly labour-intensive, flourishes in well-drained soil and requires irrigation at regular intervals.

On his one-acre farm, five km from Tirur



Workers packing betel leaves in Tirur, Malappuram. Vishnu Varma

town, Mohammed Haji has been growing betel vines for the past three decades.

"In the days that I started cultivation, land sizes were big. As land shrank, cultivation dropped. Besides, labour costs today are high. For a day's work of planting and plucking, you need to pay a labourer Rs 900-1,000. Since the prices are low, the profit margins are slim," says Haji, who is among the rare farmers who grow the vines both as an inter-crop along with areca nut trees as well as in clusters, locally known as 'koottakodi'.

Shahul Hameed, who grows betel vines on a small patch of land, says youngsters have been steadily opting out of betel leaf farming. "This is a crop that needs a lot of care. But the upside is that it gives you a good yield if all goes well. If you can manage the crop yourself, without additional labour, betel farming can give you profits that equal a government officer's monthly salary," he says.

Fifteen kilometres away, Unni, who followed in his father's footsteps to take up betel leaf cultivation, says the future of the crop hinges a lot on government support. While he says the GI tag is a good move, he says the crop has still not got its "rightful due".

"Every time we ask railway officials if they can extend the stoppage time of a train by an extra two minutes so that we can load the supplies, they simply shrug and ask, 'It's just betel leaves, right?' That's the attitude. They've never looked at it as a high-value commodity," he says, adding, "It's because they associate it with chewing. People need to know that betel leaves, by themselves, don't cause harm. It's when tobacco is introduced to the mixture that it causes cancer. People aren't told about these things."

With Indo-Pak ties still frosty, Unni says he has no hope that the trade will pick up any time soon.

"The situation is still uncertain. What the government needs to do is explore how value-added products can be created out of betel leaf. They must open research centers and find out if the by-products of the leaf can be marketed as toothpaste, beauty products or even in Ayurvedic medicine," he says.

INTEGRATED NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Soil health cards for sustainable agriculture

Application of fertilisers based on soil testing taken up on a mission mode is creating a quiet revolution



ALKA BHARGAVA

AT THE dawn of Independence, India was a food deficit nation, largely dependent on imports to feed her people. Faced with famines, stagnant production and rising imports, the adoption of the Green Revolution in the mid-sixties was inevitable. It entailed introduction of high-yielding semi-dwarf wheat and paddy varieties that were responsive to increased application of fertiliser and water.

The leveraging of agricultural research and technology proved successful. India, in 2018-19, produced 284.95 million tonnes (mt) of foodgrains — roughly 3.5 times the pre-Green Revolution level — and that included 23.40 mt of pulses. Moreover, our agriculture has diversified, so much so that production of horticultural crops (fruits and vegetables), at 313.85 mt in 2018-19, ex-

ceeded that of foodgrains! The country is today self-sufficient in all major agri-commodities, barring oilseeds.

However, the above output increases have also come at the cost of our natural resources, especially soil and water. Keeping in view the deleterious effects of the rampant and imbalanced use of chemical fertilisers, a unique programme of Soil Health Cards (SHC) was launched by the Central government on February 19, 2015, laying the foundation for evidence-based integrated nutrient management in Indian agriculture. The latest Union Budget for 2020-21 has also laid emphasis on the balanced use of all kinds of fertilisers.

The SHC programme, implemented over the last five years, assesses soil fertility in terms of the availability of key nutrients — primary (nitrogen, phosphorous and potash) as well as secondary (sulphur) and micro (iron, zinc, copper, manganese and boron) — and physical parameters (electrical conductivity, pH and organic carbon). The SHCs issued to individual farmers also carry a prescription of the right dosage of nutrients based on both deficiency and crops grown in the soils of their particular area. In Phase I of the programme (2015-17), 10.74 crore cards were distributed, with another 11.45 crore being issued in Phase II (2017-19). The programme basically advo-

icates judicious use of chemical fertilisers, together with organic manure and bio-fertilisers, in order to improve the health of the soil and its productivity.

The crucial infrastructure requirement for the programme has been provided through the setting up of 429 new static soil testing labs (STL) and strengthening of 800 existing ones, apart from 102 mobile STLs, 8,752 mini-STLs and 1,562 village-level STLs. As a result, the total soil testing capacity has increased from 1.73 crore to 3.01 crore samples per year. The programme itself has evolved into a mission mode project, to instill belief among farmers in the prescriptions and application of fertilisers as per the SHCs issued to them. As a follow-up to the two phases, model villages are now being developed, one in each of the country's 6,954 blocks. Further, testing at individual holding level is being done, as against grid-based analyses so far, along with SHC-based demonstration of application of fertilisers and farmers' fairs for raising awareness.

The SHCs are only the first link in ensuring healthy soils and production of safe and nutritious food. The receptivity of farmers to the programme has led to the emergence of 'Mitti ke Doctor' (soil health specialists) and even women's self-help groups that undertake soil



SHC programme, implemented over last five years, assesses soil fertility in terms of availability of key nutrients. Express

testing at village level. Andhra Pradesh currently has 'Raitnu Bharosa Kendras (farmers' trust centres)' that offer integrated testing facilities, including of soil. The Mitti ke Doctor of Jharkhand, mainly comprising rural women, are revolutionising the delivery of soil testing and other interventions at the doorstep of farmers, to encourage them to switch to balanced fertiliser and pesticide application for sustainable agriculture without

compromising productivity. The SHC programme has also attracted global attention. India is assisting Nepal in setting up soil-testing facilities and capacity building for integrated nutrient management and certified organic farming. These also figure in India's initiatives in South-South Cooperation focusing on African countries.

The Fertiliser (Control) Order 1985 has been amended from time to time to register new nutrient products and formulations. With growing demand for organic produce, the FCO is now also incorporating bio-fertilisers, organic fertilisers and non-edible deoiled cakes, in addition to chemical fertilisers. The main sources of bio-fertilisers are microorganisms such as nitrogen-fixing azotobacter, phosphate-solubilising bacteria and mycorrhizae fungi that promote uptake of nutrients by plants.

The contribution of chemical fertilisers to greenhouse gases is an important reason for inclusion of organic farming within the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture under India's National Action Plan for Climate Change. Nano-fertilisers are another emerging category of products with potential to reduce the requirement of urea and other conventional chemical fertilisers. The nano-nitrogen, nano-zinc and nano-copper introduced by the Indian Farmers' Fertiliser Cooperative recently for on-field trials are examples of such fertilisers that allow controlled release of nutrients. These can significantly increase nutrient use efficiency and bring down their runoff into groundwater and water bodies in the vicinity of fields.

Another potential tool for water and soil conservation is 'biochar', which also converges with the National Bamboo Mission. This high-quality charcoal produced by pyrolysis (decomposition at elevated temperatures) of 'waste' bamboo in the absence of oxygen can be used either as such or mixed with organic additives in a suitable ratio. Biochar can enhance crop yields by 5-40%, friendly mycorrhizal fungi by 40%, nutrient retention by 50% and water retention capacity of soils by 20%. It would, thereby, reduce the requirement of irrigation and promote resistance to various fungal and nematode diseases. By enduring in the soil for thousands of years, biochar also helps in mitigation of climate change via carbon sequestration.

In a nutshell, the judicious application of fertilisers based on SHC prescription has multifold benefits in terms of improved soil health, safe food and mitigating climate change. Balanced use will also reflect in reduced water consumption, while at the same time protecting water bodies from run-off pollution. Farmer awareness about balanced fertilisation is being stepped up through the coordinated efforts of the departments of agriculture, co-operation & farmers' welfare and fertilisers, besides the network of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's Krishi Vigyan Kendras. Farmer can, thus, be enabled to fulfill the mantra of Swasth Dharma, Khet Hara (if the soils are healthy, the fields shall be green)!

(The writer is additional secretary at Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers' Welfare, Government of India)

23 TALK ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



WILD, WILD WEST

Filmmaker Martin Scorsese's next directorial venture *Killers of the Flower Moon*, featuring Robert De Niro and Leonardo DiCaprio, will be the first "western" of his career. Set in the '20s Oklahoma, "there will certainly be cowboys, but they have cars and also horses," says Scorsese (pictured).

SNAP SHOTS



In Memoriam

VETERAN KANNADA actor Kishori Ballal (pictured with Shah Rukh Khan in a still from *Swades*) died on Tuesday at the age of 82 due to age-related ailments, in Bengaluru. Born in Dakshina Kannada district, Ballal made her acting debut in the '60s with the Kannada film, *Ivalantha Hendathi*. In her five-decade-long career, she worked in over 75 movies across different languages, such as *Kahi*, *Suryakanthi*, *Carry On Maratha* and *Quick Gun Murugum*. Ballal is best known for playing Kaveri Amma, a motherly figure to Shah Rukh Khan's character Mohan Bhargava in Ashutosh Gowariker's 2004 film, *Swades*. She also appeared in Rani Mukerji's *Aiyya* and Deepika Padukone's *Lafangey Parindey*. She was married to Bharatanatyam dancer N Sripathi Ballal.



Sustained Effort

THE AMBASSADOR of France to India, Emmanuel Lenain, hosted a reception at the Résidence de France, Delhi, on Tuesday evening to celebrate designer Rahul Mishra's recent debut as guest member at the Haute Couture Week in Paris. On the occasion, Mishra (pictured) showcased selected designs from "Home", the collection he presented at the Paris Haute Couture Week on January 23. "The collection espouses the cause of ecology and sustainable development — a cause that France holds very dear. Our modes of production and consumption must evolve so that our planet can remain inhabitable," Lenain said. Mishra, the 2014 International Woolmark Prize awardee, is the first Indian designer to be welcomed as the 'Guest Member' on the Haute Couture Calendar. At the event, Lenain also paid a tribute to veteran designer Wendell Rodricks, who passed away recently. "He had long-standing ties with our country, where he attended design courses and was invited to the Paris prêt-à-porter salon back in 2007," said Lenain.



Field of Dreams

ACTOR DEEPIKA PADUKONE has shared her look as Romi Dev, wife of cricketer Kapil Dev, from the upcoming film 83. In the photo, she is seen sporting a bob haircut and flaunting a black polo-neck top with cream bottoms, standing beside her husband and actor Ranveer Singh, who plays Kapil in the sports drama. The film, directed by Kabir Khan, will chronicle India's win against West Indies to clinch their first-ever World Cup trophy in 1983. It will release on April 10.

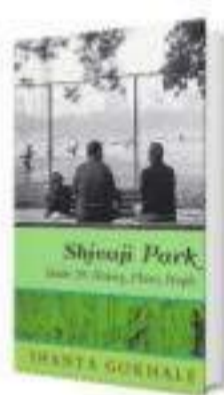


A Park with a View

Author Shanta Gokhale's latest book draws an intimate portrait of the Shivaji Park neighbourhood through its residents, buildings, and even its trees

BENITA FERNANDO

WHAT PUNE is to Maharashtra, Shivaji Park is to Mumbai. That's the common assumption, at least. The neighbourhood of Shivaji Park is named after one of the largest maidans in the city and boasts of effective urban planning that allows the sea breeze to filter through, canopied pavements and Art Deco houses. If young liberals are not tempted to rent a place here, it is because the area is often thought of as a Maratha heartland, synonymous with the nativist politics of both the Shiv Sena and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS). In her new book *Shivaji Park - Dadar 28: History, Places, People* (Speaking Tiger Books, Rs 499), Shanta Gokhale corrects this myopic view through a documentarian effort peppered with personal experiences. "In the course of writing



this book, I began remembering things from the earliest days, which, in the normal course you don't because you are too busy living in the present. A whole lot of things returned. Shivaji Park is seen as a predominantly Marathi neighbourhood, which it was and continues to be. But, there have been enough people here who are Maharashtrians but not necessarily Marathi-speaking," says the 80-year-old writer. Gokhale's portrait of Shivaji Park restores the neighbourhood's heterogeneous character, starting with some of the earliest historical evidence of the people who migrated here when Mumbai was still a cluster of islands and the only "natives" were fisherfolk and Adivasis. Gokhale has lived in Shivaji Park's Lalit Estate, a building known by its curved verandahs, for precisely 78 years of her life. Growing

up in this fiercely cosmopolitan neighbourhood, she feasted on Mama Pereira's East Indian lunches, woke up to the sound of Kohinoor Mill's siren and had Tamil children as her playmates. "Lalit Estate itself was a communal mix," writes Gokhale, while she refrains from turning the book into a personal memoir, providing only the choicest recollections. The modern layout of the Park has a grimy past. Gokhale notes that after the devastating plague epidemic of 1896-97, the Bombay City Improvement Trust (BCTI) attempted to decongest the city. Plots in the precinct were sold and a grassy meadow was thrown open as a park in 1925. It was called Mahim Park, but the name stuck on only briefly. In 1927, the tercentenary year of Shivaji's birth, the park was renamed on popular demand, led by a Congress corporator and freedom fighter, Avantikabai Gokhale. In modern India, the Shiv Sena, which was launched by Bal Thackeray in 1966 in this very place, has relentlessly renamed several localities and structures, invoking the name of Shivaji. Its politics, like that of the MNS, has often involved campaigning against "outsiders". Has Sena Bhavan, the office of the party, therefore changed the character of the area? Gokhale says, "If I were a *sainik*, I would know what it exactly means to Shivaji Park. Not being a *sainik*, I see it from the outside and that is why I say that it doesn't impinge on our lives. Sena Bhavan is not my truth at all. I keep calling Shivaji Park



(Clockwise from above) Shanta Gokhale Pradip Das; the cover of her book *Shivaji Park - Dadar 28: History, Places, People*; Shivaji Park

a democratic space for the same reason because most of us from the '60s to the '80s thought highly of the musicians and filmmakers who lived here, not so much about the politicians." In allegiance to the cultural connotations of Shivaji Park, Gokhale features several notable figures. The late engineer NV Modak, who envisioned the Vaitarna Dam; cricket guru Dronacharya Acharekar; and music director C Ramachandra are just some of the names. However, the star of Gokhale's book is the park itself, serving as a metaphor of inclusiveness. Gokhale brings up the *katta*, the low kerb around the park, which has its own dynamic. She calls it a beloved seating and sleeping arrangement, and anyone who has been to this area knows what she is talking about — it's a great leveller, where an affluent Gujarati merchant will share space with a peanut vendor. Gokhale's Lalit Estate flat and Shivaji Park are witnesses to her prolific writing — the author is well-known for her theatre criticism and translations. What does it mean to be a writer rooted in one place for all her life? "As a young girl, I didn't need the space. But later, when I married the second time, and by then my children were growing up, we were confined to a single room and that's when I began to feel I needed space — one that I could command and occupy as a writer. It was only 20 years ago that I found the space and it allowed a whole lot of writing to flower. Before that, it wasn't easy," says Gokhale.

So Fresh, So Clean

In India for his debut tour, Tamil-Canadian rapper Shan Vincent de Paul feels like he's finally come home



Shan Vincent de Paul (right) with Yanchan

ANUSHREE MAJUMDAR

THERE'S NO fighting the smile that spreads across one's face at the beginning of *Best Friend*, Shan Vincent de Paul's latest track from his album *IYAA*, due to release in March. Produced with long-time collaborator Yanchan, it samples AR Rahman's monster hit *Mustafa* from *Kadhal Desam* (1996). "We wanted to make a song that would challenge society's ideas of masculinity, especially in the South Asian community. We wanted to visit a Tamil classic, so when he sent me the beat with the sample, the song immediately started writing itself," says Paul, 37, who is powering through "Oh Gawd", his maiden five-city India tour this month. While the Toronto-based Tamil rapper and director has been making waves in Canada's

hip-hop community for some time now, several fans in the subcontinent were introduced to him via 'Mrithangam Raps', a series of videos on YouTube that showcased a new genre — Carnatic rap, a fusion of the mridangam (played by Yanchan) and Paul's percussive rapping over beats. "A couple of purists had a problem with me rapping or swearing; others didn't want rap to be merged with Indian classical music because they don't want to be associated with Black culture. But it's about craft and not showmanship: rap is usually a very arrogant and braggadocious form. So, doing it sitting down, connecting with another person and instrument, is about making it bigger than us," says Paul, who debuted the first live performance of 'Mrithangam Raps' with Yanchan at VH1 Supersonic last week. Paul will perform

in Delhi on Friday, before wrapping up in Chennai. The response to his work has been tremendous, he says. "But no place has made me feel at home the way Chennai has." Born in Jaffna, Paul and his family were forced to leave Sri Lanka during the civil war; they made their way to Canada, settling down in Brampton, Ontario. "We were one of the only brown families back then, hustling between jobs. That's where I fell in love with rap," says Paul, who brought out his debut album in 2016. "It was about a conversation with god. But now I am ready to talk about my origins, where I come from, my struggles with racism, and talking about how the war in Sri Lanka impacted my people and continues to do so. 'Mrithangam Raps' is a way for me to reclaim my Tamil identity and celebrate it," he says.

Hand that Holds a Needle

Women from Delhi's Kapashera use embroidery to tell their stories of migration and time



The workshop was an attempt to stitch stories around people's lives

SHINY VARGHESE

IT WAS May and the scorching heat was biting into her bones as Sumedha Garg was walking around Kapashera's gullies. The artist and social designer in her was looking for stories among residents, walking from one door to the next. The bare industrial tenement town along the border of Delhi and Gurugram was once rich in wild cotton trees. That day there was not a single tree she could sit under. The area around Udyog Vihar, known for garment exports and other factories, has little to offer workers in terms of housing. The grey gloom of tin sheds and train compartment-like rooms, where they stay, are bereft of any protection from the heat. But on the tapestry that the women from these garment factories have stitched, are flocks of parrots, peacocks, even a mermaid. Garg, with architect-researcher Nitin Bathla, has been working in the area for over a year as part of a socially engaged art project, supported by Khoj International Artists' Association. At a recent workshop that they organised, the women of Kapashera had come to tell their stories. "During our research in the area, we learned that there were no places for children to play or for women to gather and spend time. That's when we came up with the idea of 'Khel Khet Kahani'. We wanted to understand what people dream, what they think and what they see," says Garg. On the wall of their studio space, that has now become the "safe house", the tapestry is a triptych of colour, images and

graphics. "The Yadav community are the bigger landlords, who use the map of Kapashera to master plan the area. So we thought we should use this patriarchal tool and make art of it," says Bathla. With help from local NGO, Sakhi Kala Manch, Garg had the 'saat sahelis' come on board. These seven women found a certain kinship with one another and found a voice through embroidery. One of them, Bibha Devi, 50, from Muzaffarpur, Bihar, stands up to speak for her friends, as she explains the tapestry. "People come to these companies to make an honest living but men waste it in alcohol and our landlords fleece us," she says. As she points to a red cloth stitched upside down on a piece of cloth, she says, "It shows our time is warped, *humara samay ulta chal raha hai*. We need to set it right." There are motifs of sewing machines, of the marketplace, of aeroplanes. "Our cotton comes on aeroplanes from China and our finished goods go on planes to other parts of the world. They are integral to our lives," Bibha explains. The colour and vibrancy of the tapestry is in stark contrast to the reality of their homes. Gurgaon's condominiums are a stone's throw away. Though we are on the 'green belt' of Delhi, one sees green trees vanishing and making way for cubby-hole apartments and sheds, where these workers stay for as much as Rs 3500 for a 3ftx4ft room. He informs that as daily wage labourers, they get paid anywhere between Rs 150 to Rs 800. "The housing condition is such that it doesn't allow a migrant to anchor, putting him in a state of permanent temporariness," he says.

Drawing from Their Lives

Rohingya refugees in India sketch their stories in a comic book titled *Rendered Stateless Not Voiceless*

VANDANA KALRA

WE SEE Zuhara Bibi and her family struggling to find a place in a bus, truck and train during their long journey from Myanmar to Jammu and Delhi. There is also Tasmda recounting being discriminated against in her school in Myanmar. Shamema is disgruntled with the dirty shared toilets in the refugee settlement where she stays with her family. These are few of the snapshots of the life of Rohingya refugees in India, written and sketched by them as part of a comic book called *Rendered Stateless Not Voiceless*. Put together by World Comics India, a collective that promotes comics as a communication and empowerment tool for the marginalised, the book is an outcome of a work-

shop conducted by the organisation with around 50-60 Rohingya refugees in Kalindi Kunj and Nuh, Mewat. "The idea of documenting their stories is to reach out to people and authorities through first-person accounts... The book will help highlight the human face behind the refugee crisis," says Sharad Sharma, cartoonist and founder of World Comics India. Having worked with immigrants previously, he had been following the news on the Rohingya refugees after they arrived in India in large numbers in 2012, but it was only last year that he decided to document their stories through art. "A comic book can help us reach out to those who are literate and also others who may not be able to read," says Ali Johar, who was only 10 when he had to flee his home in Myanmar to find refuge in Bangladesh in



Ali Johar's comic strip titled *Born Ali-en* (left); women reading from *Rendered Stateless Not Voiceless*

2005. Seven years later, his family moved to Delhi. "It has been a constant struggle," he says. Until recently, Johar stayed with his family in a shanty in Kalindi Kunj with several other refugees who have settled there. While he has now moved to Zakir Nagar, he visits his friends often. Managing education scholarships for select students from the community, he is also here to propagate how he feels that good education perhaps is the only means for a better tomorrow. "In Myanmar, my father was a businessman with political connections, but in

India, we are refugees and have no rights; we can't buy property, get a government job. But no one can deny us education," says Johar. The graduate in political science from Delhi University is promoting the same message through his comic strip, *Born Ali-en*. President of the Kalindi Kunj camp, Sanjida Begum, 27, agrees with Sharma that art can help them tell their stories. In her story, *Hum Khud Chale Jayenge*, she sketches the concerns of her community on being deported back. "We are grateful that we have been allowed to stay for this long. We do have difficulties, but Myanmar is not safe for us. When it is peaceful there, we will return on our own," says the mother of two, who travelled to India with her three-month-old in 2012. Mother-daughter duo Taslima and Mizan have also shared their concerns and aspirations through the book. Taslima notes that they should only be sent home after they are guaranteed safety and assured citizenship rights that existed till 1982. Mizan, a student of class VI at Gyandeeep Vidya Mandir, is grateful to the UNHRC for helping her get admission in Delhi. "Back in Myanmar, we had a nice place to stay, a good school, here we stay in such inhospitable conditions. We don't know when will we get our rights," says Mizan. She wants to become a doctor. "We need more doctors and engineers in Myanmar," she says.



PUJARA FOR COUNTY

India Test specialist Cheteshwar Pujara was on Wednesday signed up by Gloucestershire for the first six matches of the English County Championship.

BRIEFLY

Kohli to play all formats for three more years

Wellington: Virat Kohli will continue to play all three formats for the same intensity for the next three years before reassessing his workload, the India captain said on Wednesday. The 31-year-old is one of the busiest players in contemporary cricket who leads India across formats and is also captain of the Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League (IPL). "I think it's been eight or nine years that I've been playing almost 300 days a year with the travelling and practice sessions," Kohli told reporters ahead of the first test against New Zealand beginning on Friday. "And the intensity is right up there all the time. So it does take a toll on you," said Kohli, who has grown into the premium batsman of his era since his India debut in 2008. Also one of the fittest cricketers around, Kohli takes intermittent breaks to survive the crammed calendar and believes that is the only way one could play all three formats of the game. You are going to see a lot of that in the future from many players. Not just myself, especially from the guys who are playing all three formats. It's not that easy." **REUTERS**

We can put pressure on any team: Harman

Sydney: India captain Harmanpreet Singh on Wednesday said her team has the ability to put pressure on any side in the upcoming ICC Women's T20 World Cup if it stays in the right frame of mind. "The nerves do start to kick in because we are very excited about that opening game and we're looking positive in that," said Harmanpreet, who knows the city well after her stint with Sydney Thunder in the Women's Big Bash League. "We are a side that can put pressure on any team, we just look to stay in the right mindset and play in the way we can because that is our biggest strength. In sport, sometimes you are in good form and others you are not. I know that everyone playing in this tournament will look to be positive, and that is good for our team," she added. With less than two days remaining for their clash against Australia at the Sydney Showground, Harmanpreet said a slow track and a huge Indian diaspora augurs well for her side. **PTI**

'PSL step towards hosting ICC events'

Islamabad: The return of premier domestic Twenty20 cricket in Pakistan is a step toward bidding for a major ICC event, the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board said Wednesday. Ehsan Mani said the PCB is making preparations to bid for a top cricket event in the cycle of 2023-31. "We want to show to the ICC and to other countries that we are capable of hosting an ICC event and we will aggressively bid for that," Mani said. Pakistan has in the past hosted at least three major cricketing tournaments, including matches during the 1987 and 1996 World Cups and the 2008 Asia Cup. "But this (PSL) is the largest cricketing event hosted by us," Mani said. Title defenders Quetta Gladiators will take on two-time champion Islamabad United in the opening match of the Pakistan Super League on Thursday as the league returns home in its entirety after four years. **PTI**

Mission to far side of the moon

India haven't visited NZ for Tests in six years, which gives the two-match series an added layer of unpredictability



EXPRESS IN NEW ZEALAND

SANDIP G
WELLINGTON, FEBRUARY 19

DECEIVED BY Ishant Sharma's in-ducker that swung into his pads and brushed the inside half of his bat, Virat Kohli stared suspiciously at the practice pitch for a fleeting second and queried to the bowler: "Was it you or the pitch?" Ishant's reply was a gingery smile, as if Kohli's had cast aspersions on his skills, before he strolled up to him and explained in detail. A few balls later, he beat the skipper again, this time the outside edge with one that deviated away off the surface. Kohli went mid-pitch and sought the specifics of the delivery, like whether he had covered off-stump, or whether he should have left it.

In the adjacent nets, Ajinkya Rahane was taking throw-downs under the watch of batting coach Vikram Rathour, to whom he would constantly walk up and consult about alignment and footwork, whether he was feeling for balls that he could have otherwise left. Beside him, Cheteshwar Pujara, after every stroke, was preoccupied with leaving as many deliveries as possible, and would ask the bowlers to continuously pound the fifth-sixth stump line, interchanging between good and full lengths.

The bowlers, in turn, would ask batsmen, whether they were too full or short. Jasprit Bumrah resorted to his old method of keeping a pair of shoes on the areas of the strip he wanted to hit. The colour of the practice wickets was not menacing green but still abetting movement off the surface, perhaps a prelude to things to come.

In many ways, it was a markedly different net session, wherein everyone was chatty and vocal, keenly seeking feedback and making mental notes on how they should bat. Beneath the veneer of bantering, there was raw intensity and urgency about the nets, tucked in a corner of the magisterial Basin Reserve, most of its grand structure still untainted by modernity.

There was a feeling of plunging one's first steps on an alien shore. Basin Reserve and Wellington can exaggerate the feeling of unfamiliarity, from the chilly wind incessantly blowing into the face, to the weather that toggles between bright sunshine and depressing gloominess, mountain on one side and beaches on the other, and a deviously green strip staring at them.

At one moment, one feels like pulling over a jumper, but at the next feels like ripping off the shirt. The ground is bang in the middle of the city and beside the main road, yet an eerie silence engulfs the arena. Though half of the team has been in the country for a month plying white-ball cricket, the red-ball version has suddenly infused a sense of intrigue. It's uncricketable. Unlike Australia and England, India's full-fledged series to New Zealand are rare. The last time was six years ago, for a two-Test series which got over even before Indian players had got accustomed to the conditions. The last time India encountered New Zealand in any series was four years ago.

They are an adversary India's experienced batting trio of Kohli, Pujara and Rahane has faced the least. All three have featured in just two Tests in this country. Their corresponding numbers in Australia read 12, 7 and 8. In England, they have tallied 10, 9 and 10. Among the players in the current squad, Ishant has picked the most Test caps in New Zealand (five). As many as six of New Zealand's potential eleven have never played a Test against India, home or away. Kohli dwells on the positive side.



PANT FITS THE BILL?

Rishabh Pant, who is competing with Wriddhiman Saha to don the big gloves, trains alongside Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane.

"They are here without any baggage of the past, as they haven't failed here in the past. A bunch of new guys, they play with a lot of fearlessness and something that can motivate the whole team and give us the starts that we want and not be intimidated by the opposition in any manner," he observed.

The conditions offer a different challenge for the skippers too. "The wind, in this stadium, more than any other stadium in the world, plays a massive role. Choosing bowlers accordingly, who bowls into the wind, who bowls with the wind. These are the kind of things you have to think as a captain. If the breeze is blowing across the stadium, then who is more effective bowling the in-swingers or out-swingers. So these kind of things, you need to think as a captain," admitted Kohli.

The unfamiliarity, nonetheless, is a virtue too. At a time when frequent match-ups have spoiled the novelty of fixtures, infused a sense of tedium, tours to New Zealand have sustained their charm. In the unfamiliarity lies a certain degree of thrill too, despite the reality that most of their paths have crossed each others' quite frequently, albeit in different contexts and formats. Most of New Zealand players are familiar to the Indian audience, yet unfamiliar when they put on the white robes.

Like the tours, success too has been rare in these climes — India have beaten New Zealand just twice in this century, in the 2009 series, while losing on the two other excursions. In nine sojourns before this series, India have returned home with the series just twice. All of the various factors contribute to an engrossing contest, if a little too short, at a juncture when the teams have been at their strongest in their history.

Finest assembly of pacers

India are perched at the summit of the World Test Championship, fashioned largely by arguably their finest assembly of fast bowlers which according to Kohli can slice through any side irrespective of the nature of the pitches. India have bowled out every opposition in their last seven Tests, the triumvirate of Ishant, Bumrah and Mohammed Shami pouching 142 wickets at 20.59 in their

10 Tests together, that is 74 per cent of the wickets India have taken in these games.

Add the pair of spinners — only one is likely to feature, a luxury when most teams have not even one — and they've perhaps the most well-rounded attack in contemporary cricket. Seam, swing, pace, spin, bounce, variations, smarts — they tick all boxes. As impressively, they're complemented by a battle-hardened batting firm that's at the peak of its prowess or approaching that elevated stage. Even the inexperienced Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw and Hanuma Vihari have seamlessly progressed to this level.

In contrast, New Zealand might not have big names, barring Ross Taylor and Kane Williamson, or stability, but they are more than the sum of their parts, as New Zealand teams are stereotypically classified. On balance, they have a better team than they ever had this century. Opening batsman Tom Latham has blossomed, Henry Nicholls has rendered stability, Tom Blundell is ripening, Colin de Grandhomme is nailing the job as the seaming all-rounder, BJ Watling has been a quality wicketkeeper-batsman for years, but hit another level in the last few years. Trent Boult remains an operator of the highest quality, while Tim Southee these days is more a chipping-in kind of bowler but still does his job and is lethal on strips that abet movement. They'd miss the energy of Neil Wagner, who's on paternity leave, but Daryll Mitchell and Kyle Jamieson offer canny alternatives. All they lack is a quality spinner, but the late-blooming Ajaz Patel could solve the predicament.

Though New Zealand were crushed by Australia last month, consumed by stage-fright and knackered by injuries to their key players, they fiercely guard their fortress. The last home series they lost was three years ago, against an at-their-peak South Africa. And it doesn't get more intimidating than Wellington - windy, blustery Wellington. Few grounds in the world make one feel as foreign as the Basin Reserve. The net session, and the wind that literally blows one away, would testify.

Live: 1st Test, Wellington, Star Sports network, 4 am (Friday).

In Playing XI, eight in race for four slots

Team India will have a few selection dilemmas to address ahead of the first Test against New Zealand at Basin Reserve.

Shaw or Gill

The injury to Rohit Sharma means India will have a new opening pair. While Mayank Agarwal is a certainty, a call needs to be taken between Shaw and Gill for the second opener's slot. It looks like Shaw is likely to pip his 2018 U-19 World Cup mate, after Gill had two low scores in the practice match in Hamilton. Captain Virat Kohli also hinted at including Shaw in the XI. "Prithvi is a talented player and he has his own game and we want him to follow his instincts and play the way he does. These guys have no baggage." In that case, Shaw will be making his return to Team India after his debut series against West Indies in October 2018.

Ashwin or Jadeja

Ashwin has a better record than Jadeja. But

it's batting and fielding where the latter has stolen a march in recent times. So much so that whenever India plays just one spinner, Jadeja gets preference over Ashwin. It may be the a similar case at Basin Reserve.

Saha or Pant

On one hand there is Saha, a genuine wicketkeeper with the ability to play courageous knocks under tough conditions lower down the order. On the other, there's Rishabh Pant, who has been seen mostly ferrying drinks. He didn't get any opportunity on the limited-overs leg of this tour, since KL Rahul was performing a dual role. However, Pant looked on song in the practice match, where he notched up a half-century. But for the series opener, the team management is likely to adopt a conservative approach and bank on Saha's experience.

Ishant or Umesh

Ishant looked out of the reckoning for this tour after twisting his ankle in a Ranji Trophy match in December. The Delhi pacer, however, cleared the fitness test just in time to board the flight to New Zealand. As things stand, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami will be the first-choice seamers, with a tussle for the third seamer between Ishant and Yadav. Going by current form, it would be a tad unfair to leave Yadav out of the playing XI, as he was in red hot form in the Bangladesh series accounting for 12 scalps in two Tests. Ishant, though, with his wealth of experience, could just get the nod. Kohli seemed to suggest so in his pre-match press conference on Wednesday. "Ishant looked pretty normal and



Third seamer's spot up for grabs.

pretty similar to what he was bowling before the ankle injury. He is hitting good areas again and he has played (Test cricket) in New Zealand couple of times, so his experience will be useful to us. It was really good to see him bowling with pace and in good areas." **ENS**

AWAY SPINNER

In the New Zealand camp, a Mumbai Indian plotting India's downfall

SANDIP G
WELLINGTON, FEBRUARY 19

GROWING UP in Auckland, Ajaz Patel never dreamt of becoming a cricketer. His parents had just shifted with him and his two sisters to the city from Mumbai and there were more pressing livelihood issues to grapple with. His father, Yunus, then a refrigerator mechanic, had just opened a shop and young Ajaz was getting accustomed to the new country and new life.

Cricket, thus, was merely an afterthought. "I was more of a school and home guy. I did not have too many friends to play the game in the streets or the nearby ground and we were just finding our feet in the new country. I used to play cricket when I was a child in Mumbai with my cousins and friends in school," he told New Zealand Herald before making his debut two years ago.

But that's when his aunt intervened and put him at a cricket club along with her children. Naturally left-handed and tall for his age, Ajaz was groomed to be a fast bowler. Not the tearaway types but more the guy who probes batsmen with a tight line and nails them with his natural angle away from

the left handers. At age-group level, he reaped reasonable success, and was a first-choice seamer for Avondale College alongside future Black Caps Martin Guptill and Jeet Raval.

But the U-19 World Cup snub prompted a rethink and he decided to have a frank chat with Auckland U-19 coach and former New Zealand off-spinner Dipak Patel. "Do you think I am good enough? Should I switch to batting or bowling spin? I sometimes bowl spin in the nets and a few times for the club (New South Lynn)." At the end of the conversation, Dipak took him to the nets and asked him to bowl spin, before he went to watch him at a club game. "I was impressed, he's got that ability to spin the ball and from there on it's all about the art. It's about learning and it takes a long time. I knew his fast bowling would not have taken him anywhere, there were so many better kids than him," he remembers.

However, it wasn't as easy as just switching on a light. It meant more hard work than before, but Ajaz was willing to slog. "Once he got a hang of it, he was unstoppable. He would keep bowling throughout the day. Sometimes I had to force him to take a few days' break. But he wouldn't listen and



Left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel was born in Mumbai before the family moved to New Zealand.

wanted to make up for lost time. He had set an individual goal of bowling a particular number of deliveries a day," Dipak remembers. It was never below 1,000.

At the same time, Dipak didn't want to

hurry Ajaz's transformation. He wanted to do it in an organic way and made him play as many club games as possible. Though he was among the top five wicket-takers at club level for two years in a row, he found it difficult to break into the domestic team, as Auckland's spin bowling department was sorted. So he decided to make a switch and joined the Taradale Club in Napier, so that he could push for getting picked for Central Districts. It meant staying away from home, which he had never done in his life, and felt terribly homesick in the more back-woods Napier. But once he started making friends at the club, he started to enjoy life. One of his close friends was skipper Luke Kenworthy, who fondly recalls Ajaz's professionalism.

"He's brilliant as a pro. When he does come out for club cricket, he definitely doesn't treat it as a step down. It's not a bit of fun for him, he's really into it and he really helps the boys out a lot," he says.

Though obsessively serious about the game, Ajaz was pleasant and friendly. "He obviously had a different culture, never used to drink or smoke, but was friends with everyone, a lively character and it was difficult for someone to not like him," Kenworthy says.

First-Class break

Propelled by hordes of wickets — Kenworthy claims that he averaged at least three wickets a game — there came a point in time when Ajaz could not be ignored. The first-class break arrived in December 2012, and he demonstrated his utility by topping the Plunket Shield charts for three successive seasons, the last of which resulted in Central Districts' title triumph. "We knew he would one day play for New Zealand," Kenworthy recalls.

Only that he had to wait a long time for that day. New Zealand were plodding through the post Vettori-era and trying a raft of different spinners, before Mitchell Santner sealed the place with his all-round skills. "He just kept improving, added subtler variations, learned to use the crease better and became a more mature bowler. He's a very resilient character, who took the setbacks in the strides," says Dipak.

Ajaz used the time to get experience in different conditions, like joining the Surrey league for Cranleigh Cricket Club and bowling at the Mumbai Indians during a trip to Mumbai. Then just before his 30th birthday, he was informed about his inclusion in the squad to tour UAE to play Pakistan, thanks to injuries to Mitchell Santner and Todd Astle.

Dope-offenders on the rise as 11 more caught in December

MIHIR VASAVDA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

A FORMER Asian junior medallist wrestler, who has competed in senior World Cups, and a former national boxing champion are among 11 athletes to have failed dope tests, as per the latest results made available by the National Anti-Doping Agency. The athletes were tested in December at various domestic championships and the list includes four minors.

Among the 11 who have been provisionally suspended is wrestler Roublejit Singh Rangji, who won a bronze medal at the 2015 junior Asian Championship, and competed in the 2017 Freestyle Wrestling World Cup

in Kermanshah, Iran, among other events.

Rangi tested positive for THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), a cannabinoid prohibited by WADA in-competition as it possesses health risk to athletes and has the potential to improve performance. WADA, in 2011, had noted that "athletes who smoke cannabis or spice in-competition potentially endanger themselves and others because of increased risk taking, slower reaction times and poor executive function or decision-making."

It added: "Based on current animal and human studies as well as on interviews with athletes and information from the field, cannabis can be performance-enhancing for some athletes and sports disciplines."

Rangi, NADA said, has accepted his optional provisional suspension with effect

Among the 11 who have been provisionally suspended is wrestler Roublejit Singh Rangji, who won a bronze medal at the 2015 junior Asian Championships.

from February 6.

Like Rangi, boxer Divya Pawar too has been provisionally suspended after she tested positive for banned substance higenamine during the national championships. However, since higenamine falls under 'specified substances' category of the World Anti-

Doping Agency, she could escape with a lenient sanction and not the four-year ban imposed otherwise. WADA defines prohibited substances as 'specified' and 'non-specified' to 'recognise that it is possible for a substance to enter an athlete's body inadvertently.'

The recent round of positive tests will add to the growing list of athletes who were caught for using performance-enhancing drugs in 2019. According to NADA, 156 athletes in 19 sports have failed drug tests till November last year, making it one of the worst years for Indian sport in terms of dope cheats. The number is much higher compared to 2018, when 70 athletes were caught for doping. The corresponding figure for 2017 was 73 while in 2016, it was 77.

Qatar asks India to send fewer samples

However, NADA's effort to go after offenders could be affected after the testing laboratory in Doha wrote to the Indian anti-doping watchdog earlier this week, asking them to send fewer samples.

After the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) suspended the National Dope-Testing Laboratory (NDTL) six months ago for non-compliance, India has been sending blood and urine samples of athletes to the WADA-accredited lab in Doha. In January, NADA claims to have sent close to 500 samples to the Doha lab.

However, NADA has now been asked to significantly reduce that number.

"Since they also receive samples from other countries, the Doha lab has told us to reduce the number of samples and keep it

up to 250 so that they can manage their workload," an official said.

This will pose a challenge for the Indian agency, given two other alternate labs in Asia where they can send samples for testing, too, are out of question - Thailand, like India, has been suspended while the services of the Chinese lab cannot be utilised because of coronavirus.

"Japan and Australia labs are very costly, so unless the government increases our budget - which has been reduced - we will have to cut our sample collection," the official added.

The six-month duration, for which the NDTL was suspended, ends on Thursday. However, there is no clarity yet on whether WADA will extend the suspension or end it.

Bengal thrive on tough love

Coach Arun Lal's methods, including focus on fitness, have paid rich dividends for the team

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
CUTTACK, FEBRUARY 19

AFTER TAKING charge as Bengal's head coach this season, Arun Lal took a leaf out of Bishan Singh Bedi's book. His stint as team mentor last term had convinced Lal about the need to change the team culture. Tough love was the need of the hour. On the eve of Bengal's Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Odisha at Tangi near Cuttack, Lal chose to be anecdotal.

"Once Bishan did this to the Punjab boys. On the first day of the camp, 200 boys turned up. He made them run. Even if someone threw up, he said, 'OK, now run'. Next day the number came down from 200 to 120. At the end, there were only 40," he recalled.

"People criticised when I was making the Bengal boys run. When you are feeling down and still running 25 rounds, it makes a difference. I said 'if you get unfit, go home'. When they will do well this year, they will understand. Look at (Ishan) Porel. Last year, I called him an old woman. This year, he is India material." Lal took pride in his old-school approach.

Not often do Bengal go to a Ranji Trophy knockout fixture as overwhelming favourites. Lal's methods have brought a positive change to this side. Back-to-back outright wins away from home - against Rajasthan and Punjab - have given Bengal the required confidence. Of course, Odisha are playing on their home patch, on a rock-hard pitch, with a tinge of green, at the DRIEMS College ground, where they have won three matches with bonus points - with four seven-pointers in the group stage in total. But they qualified from the weaker Elite Group C, and on paper cannot match Bengal's firepower, at least bowling-wise.

Then again, this could be a banana skin for the visitors and they need to guard against complacency. Maybe, that was the reason even the fast bowlers were made to go through their paces on the eve of a five-day game. Optional practice sessions before multi-day fixtures, especially for fast bowlers, has become a fad in Indian cricket of late. Lal rubbished it. "I don't believe in that. If you can't do it here, how can you do it there (in the match)? This is too much of mollycoddling. This workload management theory I don't believe. Good that if someone gets unfit, another one gets a chance and the bench strength increases."

Bowling has been Bengal's strength this season. They have collectively have taken 113 wickets in eight group league matches. Mind, three of those games, at Eden Gardens, were affected by bad weather. Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed is the find of the season, with 29 scalps and 281 runs. Rookie fast bowler Akash Deep stood up to be counted with 25 wickets. That only one century has been scored against Bengal this term - by Kerala's Sanju Samson - speaks volumes for the team's bowling.

With regards to batting, old hand Manoj Tiwary rolled back the years with a triple century against Hyderabad, and more im-

Not often do Bengal go to a Ranji Trophy knockout fixture as overwhelming favourites. Lal's methods have brought a positive change to this side.

portantly with 73 not out and 65 against Punjab on a treacherous Patiala pitch. His batting was the difference between the two sides in the last game.

Bengal, however, are likely to be without Akash Deep in the quarterfinal, for he is nursing a groin injury. But Porel is back after his stint with India A in New Zealand and his arrival is a real boost. Another area of concern is captain Abhimanyu Easwaran's form, as he has scored only one half-century in this campaign. The added responsibility seems to be pulling the opener down, and is reflected in his tentative feet movement.

Little wonder then that Lal has had a few one-on-one sessions with Easwaran, where the suggestion was to focus on singles. "Think one, not four. In cricket, there's a gospel truth that when you don't get runs, take one and stand at the non-striker's end. Spend an hour at the crease and everything will be all right," the coach said.

After scoring back-to-back centuries in the first two matches, Abhishek Raman, too, has hit a slump and it would be interesting to see if Sudip Chatterjee replaces him.

Downside of T20 league

Odisha are into the knockouts after three seasons. Coach Rashmi Ranjan Parida's message to the team was to prove that they were good enough not to be in Group C. The primary goal has been achieved. But Odisha cricket at the moment is suffering from a dearth of talent. In the late 1990s and at the turn of the century, Odisha was producing good players. Debasis Mohanty, Sanjay Raul and Shib Sunder Das went on to play for the national team. Before that Ranjib Biswal knocked on the door. Then, as the Odisha Premier League (OPL) was introduced in 2011, priorities changed for young cricketers. "They started to use the OPL as a platform, with an eye on the IPL. It negatively affected their cricket, because they couldn't grow as proper first-class players," Parida observed.

The OPL stopped after three seasons but the downside of it was that a lot of youngsters chose to take the easier route. And let alone India potential, Odisha at the moment are not even producing players good enough to be considered for India A. Club cricket gradually losing its sheen doesn't help matters. From that perspective, the match against Bengal is very important for the hosts. If they can pull off an upset and progress further, some players might gain prominence. Odisha have an experienced batting line-up and even without the injured Rajesh Mohanty, their pace attack, led by Basant Mohanty, is pretty decent.



J&K captain Parvez Rasool trains at the Gandhi Memorial Science College Ground in Jammu ahead of their quarterfinal against Karnataka. PPT

Goa ready to rub shoulders with the big boys

VISHAL MENON
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

"FORGET ABOUT the nine league matches that you've played. It's these three remaining matches that will define you."

Goa captain Amit Verma used these words to address his teammates following their innings and 211-run win over Mizoram in Kolkata last week. The victory, in essence, was a watershed moment in Goa's cricketing history, as this was the first time they had qualified for the Ranji Trophy quarterfinals.

J&K and Goa will aim to upset the applecart in the knockouts and carry the underdog element in the business end of the tournament. If it was veteran all-rounder Parvez Rasool who has been instrumental in J&K's quarterfinal march, Goa have pinned their hopes on their captain, Verma.

The 32-year-old is very much a domestic workhorse, as much as he's a journeyman, having ploughed away for 12 seasons with three first-class teams. He made his debut for Karnataka in 2007 and was a regular with them till their 2013-14 Ranji Trophy triumph.

But the emergence of Karun Nair and KL Rahul meant that opportunities with the domestic superpower would be too few and far between. He took a NOC in 2014 and shifted to Assam under his mentor Sanath Kumar. After two fruitful years, including one where Assam qualified for the Ranji Trophy semis, he finally made Goa his home after Assam stopped taking in professional cricketers.

In his second season, Verma has brought



Goa players after their win over Mizoram in Kolkata.

about a turnaround in Goa's fortunes with his irrepressible all-round performances. He has scored 791 runs, with three finely-crafted centuries while batting at No.4. More than these runs, it's his bowling that's been a revelation. His leg-breaks, combined with googlies and flippers, have tied opposition batsmen in knots. He has 41 scalps at a scarcely-believable bowling average of 13.26.

These feats came in the Plate Group, but still Goa had to top it as only one team advances from the weakest bunch.

QUARTERFINALS (FEB 20 TO 24)

Bengal vs Odisha (Cuttack)

Gujarat vs Goa (Valsad)

Karnataka vs J&K (Jammu)

Saurashtra vs Andhra (Ongole)

Like a true team man, however, Verma doesn't give much credence to his feats. He reckoned that it was his team's insatiable desire to compete and excel that's helped them advance.

"After the win over Mizoram, I got the boys into a huddle and told them that we were just three matches away from winning the Ranji Trophy. There's absolutely no reason why we cannot beat the more fancied teams. Yes, they are talented no doubt, but if we keep playing the way we have done in these nine matches, no one can stop us," Verma quipped.

The Goa captain will know for a fact that the path ahead is quite arduous. Up next, they face Gujarat, 2017 Ranji Trophy champions at Valsad. Toppling them in their own backyard will not be as easy as dismantling Plate Division teams such as Mizoram and Puducherry. Ahead of Goa's most stringent tests so far, captain Verma looked to count on the positives.

"Personally, I have fond memories of playing at Valsad. Back in the 2015-16 season when I was playing for Assam, we had defeated Punjab in the quarterfinal to qualify for the semis for the first time," he explained.

Much more than depending on the element of luck and propped up by history, what's got Verma excited is that he has a talented team at his disposal. While the captain has been doing the bulk of the job - from plundering runs to picking up wickets - there's a core group of talented individuals who have come up with timely contributions at crucial junctures.

Among them are opener Sumiran Amonkar, No.3 batsman Smit Patel and the dashing Suyansh Prabhudessai. Amonkar scored 160 against Arunachal that paved the way for Goa's third innings win of the season. With three centuries, including a humongous 236 against Mizoram, Patel, too has been a pivot at the top of the order for Goa.

In a similar vein, Verma has been central to the team's bowling plans, but don't discount the indefatigable efforts of pacers Lakshay Garg and Felix Alemao. The duo has not picked wickets in a heap. Alemao's 28 scalps and Garg's 13 scalps may look like very tepid returns. But their captain jumps to his pacers' rescue.

"Unlike most teams, we played most of our matches on wickets that suited our spinners. Which is why you don't see our pacers in the list of the top wicket-takers. But you don't have to look beyond Felix's 11-wicket haul against Puducherry that helped us win that match by 81 runs," Verma recounted.

Going forward, it's just a question of three matches for Goa. The belief in the dressing room is intact and the mood bordering on quiet confidence. "Trust me, we have only begun to dream," Verma concluded.

FC Goa make it a first for an Indian club

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMSHEDPUR, FEBRUARY 19

FC GOA ON Wednesday became the first team from the country to secure a berth in the group stage of the AFC Champions League, the continent's top-tier club competition, after beating Jamshedpur FC 5-0 in an Indian Super League match here.

Ferran Corominas (11th), Hugo Boumous (70th and 90th), Jackichand Singh (84th) and Mourtada Fall (87th) scored for FC Goa to ensure that their side ended the league phase on top spot and win the ISL League Winners Shield. The top team at the end of the league stage of ISL has been guaranteed a berth in the 2021 AFC Champions League.

FC Goa ended the league phase with 39 points after 18 matches. They are now six points clear of ATK who are on second spot with 33 points on their match left to play.

Indian clubs like Mohun Bagan and East Bengal have played in the Asian Club Championships but no team from the country has ever played in the group stage of AFC Champions League since its introduction in 2002. I-League champions used to play in the preliminary/play-off rounds of the AFC Champions League till this ongoing season



FC Goa is the 1st team to secure a spot in group stage of AFC Champions League.

but none have been able to qualify for the group stage. With the ISL having been recognised as the top-tier league in the country by the All India Football Federation, its top team in the league phase will represent India in the prestigious AFC Champions League.

Under Asian Football Confederation's member association ranking system issued in November 2019, India has been allotted one slot in the expanded AFC Champions League

as the country occupied eighth spot in the West Zone.

The member associations ranked 7th to 10th in both West and East Zones get one direct slot in the group stage of the AFC Champions League which will have 40 clubs in the 2021 edition instead of 32 earlier.

FC Goa also became the first-ever side to record 50 ISL league match wins. They also broke their own goal-scoring record, ending

the league stage with 46 goals - an all-time high. Jamshedpur, on the other hand, finished their season at eighth spot in the 10-team league with 18 points.

With the top spot and an AFC Champions League group stage entry at stake, FC Goa started the game on a positive note. There were no signs of complacency and it took the visitors just 10 minutes to break the deadlock. Boumous initiated a counter-attack for his team after Mobashir Rahman missed his kick from a Jamshedpur corner. The FC Goa midfielder set Corominas free into open space and with the Jamshedpur defence caught unaware, the striker executed a fine finish into the net past goalkeeper Rafique Ali.

The tempo of the game was slower after the restart. Ahmed Jahouh nicked the ball off Monroy in midfield and fed Corominas who charged at the defence.

The striker laid the ball off for Doungel whose shot had to be deflected by Memo Moura. Boumous, who has been in supreme form this season, scored the much-needed second goal in the 70th minute.

He dribbled into the box from the centre, found Doungel to his left who chipped the ball right back into the path of the in-form attacker who smashed the ball into the net from six yards out.

Chawla not here for picnic at Tihar: ASG

PRITAM PAL SINGH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE MINISTRY of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday stated before the Delhi High Court that they would not violate the assurances given to the United Kingdom government for the extradition of Sanjeev Chawla, the key accused in the 2000 cricket match-fixing scandal involving late South African captain Hansie Cronje.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Sanjay Jain, appearing for the MHA, submitted before Justice Anu Malhotra, that Chawla would be in Tihar jail and he will be questioned inside the premises. Only if there was an 'emergent situation' would Chawla have to move out of the Tihar jail, that too after taking prior permission of the court, the ASG added.

"He (Chawla) has not been brought here for picnic at Tihar. He has been extradited to corroborate with the evidence and to unearth the entire conspiracy of match-fixing, involving other co-accused," the ASG contended. Senior counsel Vikas Pahwa and advocates Vineet Malhotra and Hemant

Shah, appearing for Chawla, opposed the same and submitted that, while seeking extradition, "diplomatic assurances were given by the Government of India to the Government of UK".

"As per Letter of Assurance of Government of India, the accused has to be kept at Tihar Jail Complex during the pre-trial detention and in the event of prison sentence upon conviction," Pahwa argued.

Opposing the same, ASG Jain argued, it (the government) never gave any assurance to the UK authorities that no further investigation will be carried out in the case.

He contended that the purpose for which he (Chawla) has been extradited would not be met. "It should not be that operation successful and the patient died," the ASG added.

Hearing arguments from both the sides Justice Malhotra reserved the order on Chawla's appeal against a trial court's February 13 order remanding him to 12 days of police remand. The High Court, however, in its interim order on the next day cancelled the trial court's remand order and sent Chawla to judicial custody at Tihar, till its further order.

BRIEFLY

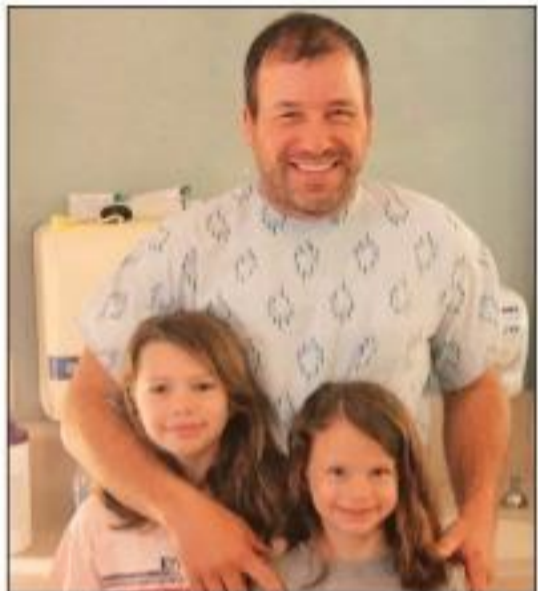
Wenger pushes for rework of offside rule

FIFA's head of global development Arsene Wenger wants to see a change in the offside law which could end a run of contentious decisions in the game since the introduction of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) but no decision is imminent. Wenger, who was manager of Premier League club Arsenal for 22 years, wants a player to be deemed onside if any part of their body which can legitimately score a goal is level or behind the last defender. It will flip the current rule which states the player is in an offside position if any part of their body they can score with is beyond the line of the last defender. However, the International Football Association Board (IFAB), football's lawmaking body, does not have any concrete proposal for a law change on the agenda for their February 29, Annual General Meeting.

Trump considering Tokyo Olympics trip

US President Donald Trump says he is considering an invitation from Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to attend the Tokyo Olympics. "I was invited by Prime Minister Abe, and we'll make that determination," Trump said late Tuesday during a meeting with members of the US Olympic Committee and organizers of the 2028 Los Angeles Games. "We might. We're going to try," Trump said. The Tokyo Games are scheduled for July and August, which would mean Trump leaving the country during his campaign for re-election in November. Trump told Los Angeles organizers that he fully backs the 2028 Games, and claimed that his personal intervention as president-elect after his 2016 election victory clinched the hosting rights.

Newman back on his feet after crash



Driver Ryan Newman is awake and able to speak after a horrifying last-lap crash at Monday's Daytona 500 resulted in him being rushed to a nearby hospital in serious condition, his racing team said on Tuesday. "Ryan Newman remains under the care of doctors at Halifax Medical Center in Daytona Beach, Florida," Roush Fenway Racing said in a statement on social media. "He is awake and speaking with family and doctors." After competitor Ryan Blaney tapped the 42-year-old's car from behind during the NASCAR race, Newman's vehicle careened into a wall, flipped into the air and was hit by another car on the driver's side. Newman, who won the Daytona 500 in 2008, was immediately transported to a hospital following the incident, which stunned on-lookers and fans, including President Donald Trump, who had served as the race's grand marshal. **AGENCIES**

It needed Sime-one special

Argentine-managed Atletico Madrid achieve what nobody has done in the Premier League this season —beating Liverpool

REUTERS

MADRID, FEBRUARY 18

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE holders Liverpool will need to summon another famous European comeback at Anfield next month after they were beaten 1-0 away to Atletico Madrid in their last-16 first leg on Tuesday.

Spain midfielder Saul Niguez struck the only goal of the game in the fourth minute by bundling into the net from close range following a corner, their traditional weapon of choice in recent years.

Liverpool, who have won 25 of 26 Premier League games this season and are on course for a record-smashing title win, missed a series of chances to equalise in the second half, with Mohamed Salah and captain Jordan Henderson coming closest to scoring. Jurgen Klopp's side play at home to Atletico on March 11 in the return leg at Anfield, where they produced an incredible 4-0 win over Barcelona in last year's semi-final second leg after losing the first match 3-0.

"We gave them the best possible start and that gets the fans behind them and then they start falling over and getting under the skin a bit," Liverpool defender Andrew Robertson told reporters. "We put in a decent performance and we know we can be better. We've got a second leg to put it right. They celebrated as if they won the tie after the game. They are coming to Anfield and we know our fans will be there."

Diego Simeone's men have looked nothing like the sides that reached the 2014 and 2016 Champions League finals and challenged Real Madrid and Barcelona's duopoly of La Liga for most of this campaign. They trail league leaders Real by 13 points.

But on Tuesday they produced a vintage defensive display, sitting deep and barely giving Liverpool any space for their attacking trident of Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane to work their usual magic.

"This is the result of hard work and what happens when you never stop believing but keep on going," match-winner Saul told reporters. "We have kept on working even though no-one believes in us and wants to bring us down. I celebrated the goal with so much passion because I was so up for the game, we have been criticised a lot but luckily I was able to help us out."

Atletico's Wanda Metropolitan stadium was the scene of Liverpool's 2-0 triumph over Tottenham Hotspur in last year's final but they faced a very different type of atmosphere this time around.

Clouds of billowing red smoke greeted the Atletico bus when it arrived at the ground as the home supporters stoked up a scorching atmosphere throughout the game to give their side a lift in the middle of their worst season in recent memory.

The home side were happy to let Liverpool dominate possession but despite having 73% of the ball, Klopp's side did not manage a single shot on target, although Atletico defender Felipe did block a goalbound shot from Salah in the first half. Atletico only had one other attempt aside from their goal, when Alvaro Morata fired straight at the legs of Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson.

Liverpool forward Mane was fortunate not to be sent off late in the first half after clashing with Simeone's Vrsaljko while on a yellow card and he was swiftly substituted by Klopp for Divock Origi, who scored the second goal in last year's final.

He caused little disquiet to Atletico's towering defenders, yet Salah should have levelled with a header which went wide of the near post, while Henderson also narrowly missed the target from inside the area later on.

Klopp upset with Atletico's play

Saul Niguez's scrappy goal in the fourth minute got Atletico off to an ideal start in a fervent atmosphere at the Wanda Metropolitan but Klopp was unhappy with



Atletico Madrid's Saul Niguez (far right) with teammates Koke and Alvaro Morata (left) after scoring the only goal of the Champions League game against Liverpool. Reuters

THE NUMBER GAME

2 Out of three losses Liverpool have faced this season, in all competitions, two have come in the Champions League. They were outplayed at Napoli in September 2019.

10 Number of goals Atletico's Saul Niguez has scored in the Champions League. Only Antoine Griezmann, now at Barcelona, has scored more (21) for the Spanish club.

12 Simeone's Atletico have hit a purple patch, winning 12 out of their 13 home matches in all major European competitions. They have kept a clean sheet on 11 occasions.

some aspects of Diego Simeone's side's play.

"You need to be really strong as a referee in this atmosphere. Already in the first 30 minutes three of their players went to the ground. I don't know what for," Klopp told reporters. "They got a result, the stadium wasn't here to see sensational football. Atletico were here to squeeze a result out of this game, they got the result and so they are happy and we are not that happy."

The biggest flashpoint of a fiery game saw Atletico loudly appeal for Liverpool forward Sadio Mane to be sent off for a second clash with Simeone's Vrsaljko after being booked for an earlier incident with the Croatian.

Klopp substituted the Senegal international immediately after the interval.

"The plan today was to get Sadio out of the game with a yellow card, I was a bit afraid that his opponent would go down if Sadio only takes a deep breath or whatever," added Klopp, who was himself given a booking for protesting on the sidelines.

Teen star Haaland powers Dortmund to 2-1 win over PSG

REUTERS

DORTMUND, FEBRUARY 18

BORUSSIA DORTMUND's lethal teenage striker Erling Haaland scored twice in eight minutes to lead them to a 2-1 win over Paris St Germain in their Champions League last 16, first leg on Tuesday.

The Norwegian, 19, who joined in the last transfer window and has eight goals in five Bundesliga matches, stabbed in from close range after a quick-fire passing move in the 69th minute. He then thundered home an unstoppable shot for his second goal in the 77th, two minutes after PSG's Brazilian forward Neymar had levelled for the French champions. Haaland, the first Dortmund player to score in his first league, German Cup and Champions League matches, has reached 10 goals in seven games in Europe's elite competition this season, including eight for Salzburg in the group stage, faster than anyone.

He is only the second teenager to net 10 Champions League goals, after Kylian Mbappe, and is the first teenager to score 10 in a single campaign in the competition. He is also the first player to score with two different teams in the same season in the competition.

"I still need to improve, keep working," Haaland said. "I want to go far in the Champions League. With the second goal I enjoyed the moment." PSG, who were eliminated at this stage of the competition in the previous three seasons, had fit-again Neymar and French striker Mbappe back in the starting lineup but were almost completely shut out by an efficient Dortmund backline.

"Obviously, maybe we deserved the draw but Dortmund were very good," said PSG defender Thomas Meunier.



Dortmund forward Erling Haaland (right) is the first teenager to score 10 goals in a single season in the Champions League. Reuters

"They didn't lose one game here at home this season and we saw today it is so difficult. We thought they had defensive problems, but we didn't create many chances."

In a cautious first half the French side had the slight advantage in possession but Dortmund carved out the only real chance after 27 minutes with a curled shot from Jadon Sancho. Mbappe and Neymar were kept under tight surveillance, with Dortmund defenders Mats Hummels, Lukas Piszczek -- on his 350th appearance for the club in all competitions -- and Dan Axel Zagadou denying the pair any space to manoeuvre.

The Germans' main source of firepower,

the livewire Haaland, was also shackled for about an hour before finally finding some space to instinctively round off a quick Dortmund move. PSG, who will be without midfielder Marco Verratti and Meunier for the return leg after they picked up bookings, drew level through Neymar, who found the net after a fine run down the right by Mbappe. The Brazilian also later hit the post.

But the visitors could do nothing when 17-year-old substitute Giovanni Reyna found Haaland on the edge of the box and the prolific forward released a fiercely struck left-foot shot that gave PSG goalkeeper Keylor Navas no chance.

ASIAN WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Meet Aditya Kundu, a wrestler who is a civil inspector and wants to be a lecturer

MIHIR VASAVDA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

ADITYA KUNDU is the very antithesis of a stereotypical Indian wrestler. He, firstly, is among the handful who aren't from Haryana. He can articulate his bouts. Did not quit studies. Is a inspector of civil works in Chandigarh. And aspires to be a lecturer.

Kundu, 23, was among the three Indian wrestlers who won Greco-Roman bronze medals on the second day of the Asian Championship - Ashu (67kg) and Hardeep (97kg) being the other two. But Kundu's journey to the 72kg podium is rather unique. "I was pushed into wrestling by my father (Ranbir Singh, a former Sports Authority of India coach). Now, I can't stay away from it," he says.

In keeping with the tradition, Kundu started out as a freestyle wrestler and even won a gold medal at the University Games. But a knee injury suffered a few years back meant he couldn't put too much stress on his legs, forcing a move to Greco-Roman, where a wrestler can only use his upper body.

A Commonwealth Championship gold medal in 2017 gave him reassurance that



PTI

Teaching is something I see myself doing after wrestling is done. I did not want a 9-to-5 desk job. That's not for me. I need to be on the field, doing something."

ADITYA KUNDU

the switch wouldn't threaten his career. And Wednesday's result, in his maiden continental event and only his second international tournament, would only enhance his reputation. Kundu defeated

Japan's Nao Kusaka 8-0 in the medal bout after losing to Kazakhstan's Ibragim Magomadov in the semifinals.

"It was disappointing but I couldn't dwell on the defeat, just like I can't go overboard with this medal. I need to cut my weight to 67kg so that I can be eligible for the Olympic qualifiers. That's my priority now," he says.

While competing at the Olympics is a 'dream', Kundu knows there's life beyond it. Unlike most, who take up sports to get a government job, Kundu completed his M.Phil last year along with the National Eligibility Test to become a lecturer. He claims to be a 'moderate student, the 75 per cent type'.

"But teaching is something I see myself doing after wrestling is done," he says. "I did not want a 9-to-5 desk job. That's not for me. I need to be on the field, doing something."

So until he becomes a lecturer, Kundu got himself a job as a civil inspector. So, in the next few days, when he isn't grappling on the mat, the Olympic hopeful will be carrying out physical inspection at construction sites in Chandigarh.

"I have Plan A, B, C, D for my life. For a living, I can do more than enough," he says. "But right now, I want to make it to the Olympics team."

IRAN'S BEHROOZ Mohammadali Hedayat received a wake-up call on Wednesday by India's dope control officers. A day before, Hedayat was leading his 87kg Greco-Roman semifinal against Kyrgyzstan's Azat Salidinov 7-0 when he suddenly held his ankle, and hobbled out of the mat with less than 10 seconds remaining in the bout. That put him on the radar of anti-doping officials, as he would have been tested for performance-enhancing drugs if he had finished on the podium.

To test anyone outside the top four, dope control officers need permission from the event organisers; in this case, the WFI. So the United World Wrestling ordered Hedayat to be tested and sought WFI's assent. By then, the Iranian had left the venue. So the dope-control officers paid a surprise visit at his hotel at around 6am on Wednesday and collected his urine sample. That will now be sent to the testing lab in Doha and it'll at least be a couple of weeks before we know if Hedayat was actually injured or was faking it, as the organisers suspect.

No rooms for Indian team

THE THREE bronze India won, though, could barely mask the series of unfortunate events that unfolded at the Championships on

Wednesday.

On the eve of the first day of women's wrestling of this thoroughly-mismanaged event, the Indian team that reached Delhi from their base camp in Lucknow did not have any rooms at the official hotel. The wrestlers and coaches were stranded for several hours before they were ultimately moved to another hotel.

The coaches, it is learnt, weren't provided transport to travel from the hotel to the stadium, where the draw for Thursday's bouts was being conducted. And since the support staff were not given a place to stay, a coach offered them his room while proposing to stay at his residence in Delhi. A source said the team had to skip their training session on Wednesday because of the confusion. However, the Wrestling Federation of India downplayed that bit.

"There was some problem today because we did not have enough rooms. We hope to move the Indian team to the official hotel tomorrow," WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar said.

Technical malfunctions

KUNDU WON a medal on Wednesday but it wasn't without a glitch. Twenty-one seconds



Aditya Kundu (R) and Loiqi Amirkhonzoda wait for their bout to restart after a technical glitch.

into his quarterfinal against Tajikistan's Loiqi Amirkhonzoda, there was a technical malfunction which led to the bout being stopped for almost 10 minutes. Both wrestlers initially stood on the mat while waiting for matters to get sorted out. Later though, they wore their tracksuits and sat on the edge of the mat as organisers got into panic mode in trying to salvage the situation. Kundu eventually won 9-0. Later, the technical officials and volunteers got an earful from WFI president Brj Bhushan Sharan Singh.