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**On hold**  
SC order asking private telecom companies to pay Rs 1.5 lakh cr in dues is the latest blow to a sector that's reeling under debts of Rs 8 lakh cr

**BIG PICTURE PAGES 10-11**

**V-Day**  
The long fight that led to SC order entitling women Army officers to full job benefits and the women who waged it



**IDEA EXCHANGE PAGE 8**



**'Those who give hate speech must be barred from polls'**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22

DAYS AFTER his party lost the assembly polls in the national capital, Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari has said politicians who give hate speeches should be barred from contesting — but the action should be across party lines. Speaking at *The Indian Express* Idea Exchange, when asked why leaders such as Kapil Mishra, who raised slogans of "desh ke gaddaron ko, goli maro saalon ko", were given a ticket, Tiwari said, "Unhone jab lagaya tha toh meri jankari me aaya nahi... hum to chahate hain ki aise hate speech waale ko permanently hata diya jaye (When he raised [the slogan], it was not brought to my notice, but I want that people who give hate speech should be permanently removed)." He added: "Ek aisa system bane ki jo bhi hate speech diya ho uski vaidhanik manyata hi samapt kar di jaye (let us start a system wherein people who give hate speeches lose the legal right [to fight polls]). And if such a system is put in place, I, as an individual and not as party president, will support it." Asked why he was not taking

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**U.S. PRESIDENT'S VISIT BEGINS TOMORROW**

## Trump will raise issue of religious freedom with Modi: US official

Says world looking to India to uphold democratic traditions, respect for religious minorities

SHUBHAJIT ROY NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump will raise the issue of "religious freedom" and the shared tradition of democracy "certainly in private" with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a US administration official said in Washington on Saturday, ahead of Trump's visit to India on February 24-25 — his first since assuming office. While US officials said Trump will also raise these issues in his public remarks, there is not much opportunity for him to make such comments since the carefully choreographed media statement is not likely to have a question-and-answer session. However, there is a likelihood that the US President will have a separate press conference with the accompanying US media.

The US administration official also underlined that Modi, in his first speech after winning the elections last year, had talked about how "he would prioritise being inclusive of India's religious minorities". "And certainly, the world looks to India to maintain

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Security personnel conduct a rehearsal ahead of US President Donald Trump's visit, in Ahmedabad on Saturday. Javed Raja

## In boost for India-US defence ties, talks likely on key foundational pact

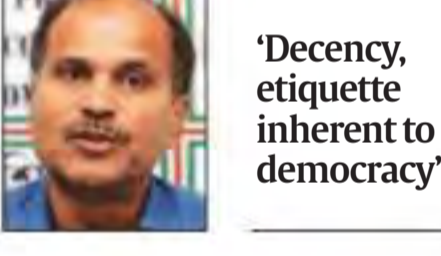
SHUBHAJIT ROY NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22

IN WHAT could turn out to be a major outcome in India-US defence cooperation, New Delhi and Washington are likely to move forward on negotiations for the final foundational agreement — the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA). US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are expected to discuss fast-tracking the pact and moving ahead on it as early as in March this year. Officials from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Pentagon are expected to get together to expedite the negotiations. Sources said this would complete the "troika" of foundational

agreements, which will allow India-US defence partnership to be enhanced and completely move away from the traditional technology denial regime. BECA largely pertains to geospatial intelligence requiring sharing information on maps and satellite imaging for defence purposes. The US has already submitted a draft pact, and India has sought more details on the extent of information needed to be shared under this arrangement. If BECA is ticked off the list, Indian government sources told *The Sunday Express* that this will complete the chain of compatibility as two — out of three foundational agreements — have already been operationalised by the current Trump administration. Sources said this would complete the "troika" of foundational

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## Adhir to skip banquet, says Govt has not invited Sonia



ADHIR RANJAN Chowdhury, leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha, said on Saturday that he has declined an invitation for the banquet to be hosted by President Ram Nath Kovind for US President Donald Trump on February 25, to protest against the government for not extending an invite to Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22

ADHIR RANJAN Chowdhury, leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha, said on Saturday that he has declined an invitation for the banquet to be hosted by President Ram Nath Kovind for US President Donald Trump on February 25, to protest against the government for not extending an invite to Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi. He said the government had "initially agreed" to the CM and his deputy accompanying Melania, but conveyed on Thursday that they had changed their mind. While Kejrival and Sisodia did not react personally, the Aam Aadmi Party said the episode underlined the "pettiness" of the Union government. The US embassy declined to comment. Melania is scheduled to spend about an hour in a happiness curriculum class, the flagship initiative of the Delhi government, which aims to help children relieve stress, meditate, and discuss things that are troubling them. While inspecting one such class at an East Delhi school around 10.15 am on Saturday, Sisodia told reporters, "We got a request, and we had said that if she (Melania Trump) wants to come she is welcome. Facilities have also been checked in some schools for her, but I won't

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## Melania will visit Delhi govt school, but without CM, Dy CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22

CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia will not be present during US First Lady Melania Trump's scheduled visit to a 'happiness class' at a Delhi government school on February 25, after the US embassy conveyed to the Delhi government that it does not want the event to "turn political", it is learnt. Officials in the Delhi government claimed that the embassy had "initially agreed" to the CM and his deputy accompanying Melania, but conveyed on Thursday that they had changed their mind. While Kejrival and Sisodia did not react personally, the Aam Aadmi Party said the episode underlined the "pettiness" of the Union government. The US embassy declined to comment. Melania is scheduled to spend about an hour in a happiness curriculum class, the flagship initiative of the Delhi government, which aims to help children relieve stress, meditate, and discuss things that are troubling them. While inspecting one such class at an East Delhi school around 10.15 am on Saturday, Sisodia told reporters, "We got a request, and we had said that if she (Melania Trump) wants to come she is welcome. Facilities have also been checked in some schools for her, but I won't

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## Modi is a versatile genius who thinks globally, acts locally: SC Judge Mishra

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22

JUSTICE ARUN Mishra of the Supreme Court on Saturday described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "versatile genius who thinks globally and acts locally". Delivering the vote of thanks at the inaugural ceremony of the International Judicial Conference, 2020 in New Delhi, Justice Mishra said: "India, i.e. Bharat, which is the biggest successful democracy of the world... is a responsible and most friendly member of the international community under the stewardship of internationally acclaimed visionary, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi." He added that "India is committed to constitutional obligations and dedicated to a peaceful and secure world, free from terrorism." Justice Mishra said that "in the process of development, preservation of the environment is considered supreme", and that



Justice Arun Mishra at the event on Saturday. ANI

the "Indus Valley Civilisation is a reflection of our long-cherished philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is a single family)". He said that "dignified human existence" is India's "prime value". Conveying his regards to the PM for inaugurating the conference, Justice Mishra said: "We thank the versatile genius, who thinks globally and acts locally, Shri Narendra Modi, for providing us inspiring thoughts which would act as a catalyst in initiating

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PM Narendra Modi with CJI SA Bobde and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, in New Delhi on Saturday. ANI

## Courts have said corrupt and terrorists have no right to privacy: Prasad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22

UNION LAW and Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Saturday called for caution to ensure that terrorists do not abuse the digital ecosystem. "Internet is one of the finest creations of human mind. It should not be abused by a few. We need to acknowledge that some of the biggest terrorist threats have emanated by those who have abused this great innovation of human mind. I think that kind of balance has to be there," the Minister said at the inauguration of the International Judicial Conference 2020.

Hailing the SC ruling holding privacy to be a fundamental right, Prasad said: "Our courts have also stated that terrorists and corrupt have no right to privacy. Because the right to privacy has acquired critical proportions in the wake of digital landscape expanding globally." He said that while one should speak his or her mind, criticise, and ask questions, "but it all should work in a manner that the identity of India as a country continues to remain strong...". On the subject of populism, Prasad said that "in a democracy we welcome dissent. We welcome populism too", but "we have a problem also when populism impinges upon well settled

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**19-YEAR-OLD HELD AT ANTI-CAA PROTEST**

## Amulya to Azamgarh, sedition law used without questions, SC guidelines ignored

APURVA VISHWANATH NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22

TEN MINUTES past midnight on Thursday, police approached Shirin Javeed Ansari, Vth Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Bengaluru City, seeking the custody of 19-year-old Amulya Leona whom they had arrested under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code — sedition — for raising slogans of "Pakistan Zindabad" at a rally to



Amulya Leona has been sent to custody for 14 days. ANI

protest the new citizenship law only hours earlier. In the presence of the teenager's two lawyers, Judge Ansari asked Amulya when she had been arrested and whether the police had beaten her, before sending the teenager to judicial custody for two weeks. The remand order and FIR are yet to be uploaded online, and Amulya's lawyers are yet to be given copies of these documents. The facts of Amulya's case are

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## Behind Govt's claim of Naxal link: Father stood surety for 2 who joined mainstream in '14

JOHNSON TA BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 22

AMULYA LEONA Noronha, the 19-year-old college student arrested in Bengaluru for sedition, is being investigated for alleged links with Naxal groups. Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa said on Friday that "preliminary investigations revealed that she had association with Naxal organisations in the past". While neither Amulya nor her family members have any case against them for alleged Naxal links, police sources said the government's allegation has emerged from the fact that Amulya's father, Osvald Noronha (48), stood surety for the release of two men who were linked to the Naxal movement, before they voluntarily joined the

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**WORLD**



**CONCERN OVER GLOBAL SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS AS IRAN, SOUTH KOREA REPORT MORE CASES**

**AFGHANS MARK START OF ONE-WEEK PARTIAL TRUCE**

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# Rural Maharashtra: SHGs get sanitary pads on app, girls buy for Rs 5/packet

TABBASUM BARNAGARWALA BEED, FEBRUARY 22

IN RAIMOHA village of Beed district, Sultana Shaikh's house is the centre of attention for shy teenage girls every time she logs in to a mobile application to place an order for a carton of 100 packets of sanitary pads. At just Rs 5 for each packet with eight pads, Sultana says the 100 packets are sold out in three days. She earns a profit of Re 1 per packet. An initiative of the state rural department, the cheap 'Asmita Plus' pads, being sold

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through self-help groups (SHGs), have encouraged village girls to shift from cotton rags to sanitary napkins, and women like Sultana are driving that change, while also earning a livelihood. All Sultana has to do is place an order online, and the pads are delivered at her house.

Since March 2018, 2.75 lakh zilla parishad school girls have registered for this scheme under the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission. Each girl, in the 11-18 years age group, has been issued an identity card and can buy up to 13 packets in a year. Every time she buys a packet, her identity card number is fed into the mobile app. The government pays a subsidy of Rs 19 per packet to the manufacturers. While three manufacturers — Smart Hygeia (Nagpur), Eternis Hygiene Products (Pune) and Shri Radhe Hygiene Products (Pune) — were selected earlier, the last one has



Sultana Shaikh opens a new carton of sanitary napkins, delivered at her house in Beed. Nirmal Harindran

since been removed for supplying inferior quality pads. SHGs can buy the packets online and sell them at the village level. However, there is no subsidy for rural women, so the cost of the packet is higher — Rs 24, with the seller earning a profit of Rs 5 per packet. The scheme had its share of trial and error. It was first launched in March 2018 as 'Asmita', but buyers complained of poor quality and absorption issues. So, hundreds of packets were left unsold at SHGs. The Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission then got extra large size, leak-proof pads

with absorption capacity of 70 ml and sought feedback from its staff. The new pads, 'Asmita Plus', were launched in March 2019. In less than a year, 1,879 SHGs have purchased 2,155 'Asmita Plus' cartons across the state. According to the data available, 57,081 school girls have availed of the scheme so far. "It took months for us to convince villagers that the quality is better than the previous pads," said Shakeel Shaikh, in-charge of the scheme for Beed district. Another change this time was that SHGs could place orders on the mobile app, instead of visit-

ing the district office to collect the packets. The government has tied up with India Post for delivery. The next step is an 'Asmita bazaar', which will allow SHGs to buy grocery and sell them locally to villagers. "We are bringing about a social change while earning some money. For years, women in our village used cloth. The pads are so good that even women are asking district officials to provide them at subsidised rates," said Kalpana Pawar (26), who works with an SHG. In Raimoha, the scheme has provided a lifeline for Sultana

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