

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | MONDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2020

WEATHER



Max: 33°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast:
Hazy sun; air quality will be unhealthy for sensitive groups

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari: Masi 12
Tithi: Prathamai
Star: Sathayam
Rahukalam:
7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.17 am
Zohar: 12.28 pm
Asar: 3.44 pm
Maghrib: 6.17 pm
Isha: 7.28 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.17 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.28 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.37 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.44 PM

COUNTER POINT



Please let us sit... we want to see Ivanka and Melania, not Trump!

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New Delhi: The Congress must fix its leadership issues on top priority to address the growing perception among the people that the party is 'adrift', senior leader Shashi Tharoor said on Sunday and asserted that resolving the uncertainty over a long-term president was crucial for the party's revival. In an interview to PTI, Tharoor also said that it was up to Rahul Gandhi to take a call if he wishes to return as Congress chief, but if he does not change his earlier stance then the party needs to find an 'active and full-time leadership' so that the party can move forward as the nation expects.

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NATION | 6
Judiciary has pursued gender justice: President



SPORT | 14
India women to face Bangladesh

TABLOID
Safety measures flouted



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Trump, who is also accompanied by daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and top brass of his administration, will get a taste of India's cultural potpourri during his Gujarat itinerary which is high on symbolism, especially after the bonhomie between the two leaders at the 'Howdy, Modi!' event in Houston during the Indian prime minister's visit to the US in September 2019. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a friend of mine. I had committed to this trip long time back. I will be addressing a big rally," Trump said at the White House.

The US president, who is scheduled to arrive at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International airport at around 11.40 am on Monday, will participate along with Modi in roadshows on his way from the airport to Sabarmati Ashram and from there to the newly-built Motera cricket stadium, where over one lakh people are expected to be present for the 'Namaste Trump' event.

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President Donald Trump waves as he boards Air Force One to depart for India, at Andrews Air Force Base, on Sunday. — AP

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Over 10,000 police personnel, besides officials of the United States Secret Service, and personnel of the National Security Guards (NSG) and the Special Protection Group (SPG) have been deployed for the high profile visit. "India looks forward to welcoming @POTUS @realDonaldTrump. It is an honour that he will be with us tomorrow, starting with the historic programme in Ahmedabad," tweeted Modi. Trump, who is the seventh US president to visit the country, too took to Twitter saying he was looking forward to being with his "great friends" in India as he retweeted a video in which his face was superimposed on the hit Indian movie-character Bahubali, showing him as a great sav-

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Hriday Kunj is a room on the Ashram premises where Mahatma Gandhi and his

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Taj is spruced up for Don, Melania

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face of Agra". Agra's Divisional Commissioner Anil Kumar said Trump is slated to arrive at Kheria airport at 4.30 pm where he will be treated to a variety of dances by a group of about 350 artists to the accompaniment of traditional instruments.

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will welcome the US president on his arrival at the airport, Agra DM Prabhoo Singh said.

He said huge cutouts and billboards have also been planned to be put up at the airport by Sunday night to welcome him. ■ P7

Will PM raise H-1B visa, restoration of GSP: Congress

New Delhi, Feb. 23: A day ahead of US President Donald Trump's visit to India, the Congress on Sunday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi whether he would raise with him the issue of easing of the H-1B visas for Indians, the restoration of GSP status and the security concerns vis-a-vis the Taliban.

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CM likely to attend Prez's banquet

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 23

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami is likely to attend a banquet hosted by President Ram Nath Kovind to the visiting US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump on Feb. 25.

President Kovind and his wife Mrs. Savita Kovind have extended an invite to Mr. Palaniswami to take part in the State banquet in Rashtrapati Bhavan. The CM was specially invited as Mr Trump's entourage accounts for good number of IT and other professions from Tamil Nadu and also due to Mr. Palaniswami's successful completion of the investment road show in the US recently. The CM who led a high-level delegation to the US, UK and UAE, succeeded in attracting investments worth Rs. 8,835 crore to Tamil Nadu.

Several projects have already been inaugurated and he launched a project-Jogo Health which has increased its investment 16 times more than the actual investment committed by them - this week. On Friday, he had inaugurated a 'Diplomatic Outreach' programme focussed on highlighting economic and investment opportunities in the State. The event saw the exchange of several agreements with an aggregate investment commitment of Rs. 1,250 crore besides creating thousands of jobs in the State. ■ P4.

MANN KI BAAT

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Protesters for and against CAA clash in capital

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NEW DELHI, FEB. 23

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As the anti-CAA group was shouting slogans against

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According to the Nazareth police, the accused was produced at Poonamallee magistrate court in the morning. Rajan was arrested on Friday on charge of negligence. ■ Report on P3

COVID-19

Four more Indians on Japan ship test positive

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It also said that Japanese authorities confirmed that samples were taken from all passengers and crew members on the ship, and were being processed. "All results expected by 25/26 Feb. Indian nationals on the ship who do not test positive will be facilitated by the Indian Embassy in Tokyo soon after," it said in a second tweet.

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President Xi, who attended a meeting here to double efforts in coordinating the prevention and control of the COVID-19 outbreak, said the epidemic "has the fastest transmission, widest range of infection and has been the most difficult to prevent and control".

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(POF). However, no official information about it has been made so far. Behera said ATS DGP

Anoop Kuruvila would monitor the probe from Kulathupuzha.

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Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, which share borders with Kerala, are

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IN BRIEF

Microsoft ₹41.6 L per year top offer at SRM placement

Chennai: More than 8200 SRMIST students got job offers in the placement season. The total number of placement figures surpasses previous year's when 3,020 offers were received from big four IT companies. About 625 corporates have made more than 1,965 offers to its students, many of it in the pay package of above ₹10 lakhs per annum. TCS made 1,437 offers and Infosys 1,315 offers, about 1,175 offers came from Cognizant while Wipro made 822 offers, said director, career centre, Sriram S Padmanabhan. TCS also made 183 offers under 'Digital Track' (₹7 lakhs per annum). The highlight of the present placement is an offer from Microsoft at ₹41.6 lakhs. Other top recruiters were Amazon (18 offers of ₹32 lakhs per annum), Barclays (25 offers of ₹10 lakhs per annum) and Udaan (4 offers of ₹30 lakhs per annum). Veritas and Pay Pal made internship linked placement offers.

Pollachi master tailor's surprise gift for Trump

Coimbatore: A 90-year-old master tailor from Pollachi has a surprise gift for U.S. President Donald Trump during his two day visit to India -- a white khadi shirt stitched by him. V S Vishwanathan hit upon the idea after seeing Trump on television many times and in photographs and has expressed confidence that the U.S. President would accept it and appreciate his gesture, family members said. The shirt has been sent to the Prime Minister's Office in Delhi, marked to the U.S. Embassy, they said. Vishwanathan had gifted such shirts to various political leaders, including former Tamil Nadu Chief Ministers, the late K Kamaraj and C N Annadurai and also former President R Venkataraman, his family said. He once ran a tailoring shop but does not do so now due to old age. At present, he trains budding tailors free of cost, they said. —PTI

PM quotes Avvaiyar on biodiversity

New Delhi: Describing the biodiversity of India as a "unique treasure" for the entire humankind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people to preserve and conserve it. Addressing his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' radio address, the prime minister referred to Tamil poetess Avvaiyar to drive home his point. "What we know is just a handful of sand. What we do not know is like a universe in itself," he said quoting her. Similar is the case with the biodiversity of this country, the prime minister pointed out. "The more you know, the more you realise the magnitude of what you do not know. Our biodiversity too is a unique treasure for the entire human kind. We have to preserve it, conserve it and explore further," he said. —PTI

Spotting summit winner seems simple enough

R. Mohan
Namma Chennai diary

Summits are something the Prime Minister revels in. He has done it often enough in the last six years to have made them the highlight of his reign. His global outreach was timely and in keeping with the rising image of India and in direct proportion to a country destined to live for decades with the Hindu rate of growth that transformed into a top drawer economy nestling among the world's developed nations.

It will be a kind of double in summits for Modi 2.0 with the most powerful of the world as the Chinese president Xi's visit to Mahabalipuram has just taken place.

In fact, there is no comparison to be made in the scale of his outreach as Manmohan Singh, his predecessor as PM for 10 years, was not a patch on him, with Mr Singh's droning monotone unlikely to so much as excite anyone.

It is only in measuring the Trump-Modi summit against the success of the Xi-Modi meeting amid the sculptural excellence of



PM Modi and Donald Trump at Howdy Modi event in US last year



PM Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at Mamallapuram in 2019.

Mamallapuram could it come down a notch. Make no mistake, the optics are bound to be higher out of the road show and the Motera Stadium spectacle in Ahmedabad than even the aesthetics of the ancient land of the Pallavas on the seashore in the south of India.

The meeting of the leaders of the world's oldest and the world's largest democracies is bound to attract a different kind of attention.

Their embrace is of a different order, especially since the US and India are now virtual military trade

partners with India allowed to buy almost any equipment that the US military-industrial complex makes.

USA and India are on a different wicket from China and India.

Even so, the fear that there may not be much substance in this summit of heavy optics was triggered by the talk and then retreat from a possible trade deal that Trump has been promising for long, or at least since the 'Howdy, Modi!' event in Houston where the bonhomie was as bubbly as Moët & Chandon.

Trump's expectations, it appears, have been scaling up by the day to go to a phenomenal 10 million or one crore people to greet him and Modi in Gujarat. Not that many people live in the whole city of Ahmedabad, which should offer a measure of how hyped up all this is.

But there is nothing Trump loves more than an audience, a captive one at that, for him to hold spell-bound with his speeches that are more fluent than his twitter prose.

How to deal with the author of 'The Art of the Deal' is, perhaps, still a

conundrum as no one can afford to take Trump at face value or on what he says, without a quick fact check, of course.

His promised trade deal may come only if he is back in the White House in January 2021, but before then India would be buying about ₹24,000 crore of helicopters, which should help keep down the Trump gripe - "India hitting us very hard on trade."

Let's face it - Trump is a businessman who believes that he makes the best deals, for himself of course, and without ever failing. Since he has prom-

ised to make America great again he would expect India to pay by means of reducing the trade surplus, besides coughing up for the choppers. Modi will probably find himself travelling down a one way street just for the privilege of holding up "Khem Cho" Trump's hands and posing for a few lakhs, if not quite a crore people. The trick is probably not to pay too much attention to Trump's groans of protest.

After all, he had a bone to pick with the Oscars too because he thought Parasite was too foreign a

film to be awarded the 'Best Picture'. "What the hell was that all about? We've got enough problems with South Korea with trade, on top of it they give them the best movie of the year?" he thundered.

The world's most transactional President will be up against the greatest showman.

They could be two peas in a pod in these aspirational exhibitions of pomp and pageantry. If not for their shared characteristic of demagoguery as a key to handling and sustaining their political power as well as their base of popular support, they could be as different as chalk and cheese. At the end of the day it would be difficult to pick who the winner was, say, as in the 'Howdy, Modi' event. If indeed, as was suspected at that time, Trump had invited himself to Houston as a way of connecting with his constituents for the 2020 presidential elections, the only conclusion to be drawn is he was the winner then. It might be no different in Ahmedabad and Delhi where there will be three Trumps plus a Kushner to one Modi. Have the results been declared already?

(R. Mohan is the Resident Editor of the Chennai and Tamil Nadu editions of Deccan Chronicle)



Actor Aadhi flags off one of the 113 cars that took part in the car rally for the blind in Chennai —DC

113 cars take part in rally for the blind

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB 23

As many as 113 cars took part in the car rally for the blind. The brought together the visually impaired and the sighted in an inclusive sporting event for the differently-abled.

There were nine categories of participants - novice, regular, expert, Savera Group, O2 Health Studio Group, Duchess Club Group, BOB Cycling Group and in each category three prizes were awarded.

The navigator and the driver are mutually dependent with the navigator having to read out the instructions which are in Braille for the driver to follow the rally route.

The navigator and the driver have a common goal and they interact for over two days during the dummy rally and the actual event. The annual

● The navigator and the driver are mutually dependent with the navigator having to read out the instructions which are written in Braille

car rally for the blind seeks to make the visually impaired feel needed and not merely be people with needs. It was conducted by NAB and O2 Health studio along with Madras Motor Sports Club. Novice, Regular, Experts Category, Savera Group, O2 Health Studio Group, Duchess Club Group, BOB Cycling Group and in each category First, second and Third prize given, Ms. Nina Reddy, president of the National Association for the Blind said she is looking forward to greater support and encouragement to build upon activities with more volunteers and increased participation.

Piped gas for Chennai: SC no to Adani plea

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has upheld an award for piped gas distribution network in Chennai and Tiruvallur districts in Tamil Nadu to a Gujarat-based firm by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB). A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and Hemant Gupta dismissed the appeal filed by Adani Gas Limited and others and justified the action of PNGRB saying that calling the bidders with the highest composite scores cannot be faulted. The Board had granted the award for piped gas distribution network in Puducherry to AG & P LNG, in Chennai and Tiruvallur districts to Torrent Gas Private Limited and to SKN Haryana in Kanchipuram district in 2018. —PTI

BIRDS' PARADISE



A flock of Egrets enjoy the evening breeze in the backwaters of Pattinapakkam in Chennai. —DC

School organic fair to be fete for vegans

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 23

In a celebration as well as early education on a healthier lifestyle for children, families and the community, an organic fair is being conducted by the Redwood school.

Through 57 counters, the fair will be promoting awareness of healthy, natural, homemade and organic choices in people's lives.

Starting with a firm ban on plastic a few years ago

at Redwood and at the fair, the school also promotes small scale businesses which share the same ideology of making sustainable and informed products that will safeguard our planet.

The eighth organic fair can be expecting a minimum footfall of over a thousand visitors. Some of the highlights will be the presenting of hand-crafted, natural, vegan, healthy and tasty food products such as jams, pickles and peanut butters, organic



food infused with artisan cheese, peanut butters and natural, vegan ice creams, sugar plum in a variety of natural, chemical-free and made-to-order cosmetics

like soaps, lip balms and over 100 different types of filled pasta and dried pasta. Holistic yoga and the need of it for a better living will be demonstrated.

The World Wildlife Fund will sell various publications and help children understand and commit to Earth Hour. There will also be puppy adoption drive and natural pet food. Farms: Tips on how to set up your very own hydroponics system at home for plants.

The making of designer glassware by cutting glass tiles out of sheet glass will be taught. On sale will be baby skincare products made for babies and children between the age groups birth to 12 years. On sale will be candies: Traditional candies made using jiggery.

(The Redwood Organic Fair will be held on Saturday, February 29 (4 pm to 7 pm) at the school. Premises - 34 Raja Street, Kalyani Nagar, Kottivakkam, Chennai 41)

CAUVERY CLEAN UP



Members of the Tamil Nadu Veera Vivekhandar Peravai participate in the Cauvery plogging operation at Ammamandapam bathing ghat at Srirangam near Tiruchy on Sunday. —DC

'Flame of Forest' brings charm to Ooty

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, FEB. 23

While the jungles have begun to dry, causing concern for foresters here in the hills, the bloom of "Flame of the Forest", a wild flower, has brought charm and colours to the forests as the greens saw a vital ecological role for this flower during the dry months.

It is true, the woods at Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and other adjoining jungles in the hills, especially, in the lower plateau, is now beginning to manifest its beauty with the blossoming of 'Flame of the Forest'.

The mass bloom of brilliant orange-red coloured Flame of the Forest flowers with their long petals looking upwards makes one feel that as if the flames are emanating from the tree.

Their bloom in clusters atop the tree is making



Forest flowers bloom like flames in the jungles of Nilgiris. —DC

Mr. V. Sivadas, secretary of the Nilgiris Environment and Socio-cultural

Trust, said that this flower, whose botanical name is 'Butea monosperma',

with its thick brightly coloured petals charm birds and insects as they have good nectar content. It is pertinent to note that the nectar of this flower provides the feed to honeybees as generally other flowers do not bloom in the jungles during the dry months.

Thus it becomes ecologically significant to sustain avian and insect lives during the odd weather in the jungles.

The species that is found in Nilgiris is a wild one which grows well in wild environment. The monkeys too enjoy eating the petals of this flower, he added.

itself something special in the jungle environs now.

This tree is said to be having a good pigment to

manufacture red dye, if grown commercially.

The conundrum of human-wildlife conflict



It was daybreak, Saumitra and his friend were lazily strolling nearby the wooded areas in the periphery of their village when they came across a herd of elephants approximately 200 feet away. He could see roughly 15 or 16 of them, half juveniles and half adult females grazing the way they do, ripping branches off trees and gnawing them down. He had seen several herds of elephants doing this frequently, but this time he smelled some eerie hostility in the air. Before he could react, he suddenly saw a massive male elephant spin around, put his trunk in the air with his ears extended out, ululating and charging at them. Terrified, they tried to flee, but there's no outrunning a seething rogue elephant.

As he stood transfixed, Saumitra could see the grey, the hair follicles, the eyeball, the trunk, the tusk, the foot-the whole thing. Next thing Saumitra knew was that the elephant had hurled him into the air and then slammed him to the ground. Excruciating pain followed as the elephant's tusk pierced through his left thigh, goring it, and ripping it out sideways. After a pause, the elephant lifted its leg and transferred its 6-ton body weight on the helpless 60kg man lying on the ground crushing his ribs and snuffing out his life instantaneously just the way we unknowingly trample small insects under our feet when we step on them.

Wild animals can become more terrifying than the most dreaded terrorists like Osama Bin Laden when we put a growing squeeze on their habitat. Expanding human and animal populations, shrinking forests, and the proliferation of invasive species is evolving into a confrontation that has the potential to develop into a full-blown battle. The terror unleashed by the elephant that killed Saumitra earned him the name Osama bin Laden as a barb to the dreaded terrorist. He was a rogue bull elephant liable for at least 27 deaths and devastation of property in the jungles of the Sonitpur district of the state of Assam. After a two-year rampage from 2004 to 2006, the authorities shot the elephant dead.

Likewise, Avni was a six-year-old tigress suspected of having killed 13 people over two years in the hills of central India. A hunter was engaged for tranquillising the tigress with a dart. But when the tigress, despite the dart, began charging at the hunter, the hunter yanked the trigger of his gun and brought the beautiful beast down. Just a day after they exterminated Avni, another tigress in Uttar Pradesh was run over and beaten to death by furious locals after she mauled a 50-year-old man. A few days later another majestic tigress Sundari that was blamed for killing a woman in Orissa was relocated to Nandankanan zoo.

We trespass into their habitat

Is it right on our part to call Avni a man-eater? Because man-eaters don't transgress into our habitats, it's we who trespass into their habitat. Tigers are solitary and require vast territories - Are we not supposed to respect and honour their territories? When we dishonour and trespass into their territories, they have no option but to attack humans. We have lost 95 percent tigers since the 20th century started, we now have only 3,900 tigers left. Now the tigers require us more than ever. If it is so, is it not our responsibility to respect their territories, and let them live in peace and protect them and not trespass into them as tourists or as hunters to poach them?

Elephants and tigers are slaying one person a day in India as humans are constricting their habitat. According to the environment ministry, 1,144 people got killed in attacks on India in 1,143 days between April 2014 and May 2017. And man is slaughtering a leopard a day as the man-animal struggle for space is growing to enormous proportions as India continues to forfeit vast swathes of wood-



ed areas to urbanisation in contemporary decades, pushing animals into human-occupied zones.

Tamil Nadu scene

When we get down to Tamil Nadu, the predicament is no different. Every day when the West Zone Inspector General of Police routinely gives the daily situation report to me I get to hear at least two to three cases of the human-animal conflict every week in which they kill or maim a human especially in the Nilgiris, most of them being because of elephants entering farmer's fields. The Forest Department attributes this to a shift in land-use pattern and crop cultivation close to reserve forest tracts.

Likewise, we get to see a rise in human-animal conflict during droughts and summer as a scarcity of water drives the animals to the periphery bringing them in conflict with humans. Increased cultivation of animal-enticing cash crops such as sugarcane is reported to have increased the conflict near Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve and Rajapalayam. Frequent forays of humans into the wilderness seem to have familiarised these animals far too much with humans. Screaming, wailing, howling, bursting firecrackers, beating drums, bonfires and letting ferocious hounds do not seem to have made any impact on the wildlife ravaging the crops or human habitats. Wild animals continue to plummet into wells; elephants continue to trample humans; wild boars continue to cause havoc in agricultural farms, leopards continue to maul cattle and humans with rising regularity due to the infringement of wildlife corridors which is making migration of animals along the traditional corridors impossible or fragmented.

The data from the State forest department and the Ministry of Environment, Forests and climate change of India, contends that in Tamil Nadu alone, the human-animal conflict has claimed at least 185 human lives, and over 132 lives of elephants and tigers between 2013 and 2016. This data does not take into account monkeys, leopards, rabbits, deer, bears, and other animals that are also regularly entering conflict with humans.

Invasive flora to blame too

One explanation why the Nilgiris region has seen a rapid increase in incidents of human-wildlife conflict is because the area has witnessed the proliferation of invasive plant species. Invasive plants are plant species that got introduced from various parts of the world and thrive at the cost of native diversity. Eleven of the world's 100 harmful invasive species are now found in India. Several of them such as Lantana camara, Parthenium hysterophorus, Prosopis juliflora have mushroomed inside protected tracts causing antagonistic consequences on forest soil such as the banishment of native species on which local herbivores such as elephants, gaur, and wild boar depend on for food. All three exotic species are inedible, and some, such as the Parthenium, are harmful to herbivores. Prosopis can be toxic as well and cause severe indigestion and tooth decay to wildlife. They found traces of Prosopis in elephants that reportedly died of starvation at the state's Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, and in another dead elephant found near Thengumarahada.

Hence wild animals stray into planters fields more often because of the lack of better fodder in the wild.

Most invasive species create dense, rough, and thick undergrowth in the forest, as these species, particularly Lantana and parthenium, grow as thickets with hardly any space between them. This impedes the movement of large animals, both herbivores and carnivores, and obstructs their access to both their ancestral activity corridors and to food sources.

Furthermore, plantations of the forest department have been further aggravating this effect. Species such as Acacia and Eucalyptus have been decreasing the water table levels further benefiting exotics that are better adapted to drier environments. A resin-like substance that trickles from such foreign species renders the soil acidic, hindering the growth of any other plant species. In the Western Ghats, where vast plantations of eucalyptus and wattle got raised in the past by changing grasslands and shola forests, has led to the devastation of the original habitat of the Nilgiri Tahr.

Further, the ban on cattle grazing also appears to have contributed to the development of undergrowth and a loss of dung and cattle manure, which is a source of nourishment for native species leading to a decline of native species. Therefore, a situation emanating from lack of edible plants inside forests and hampering of movement inside the woods has compelled both carnivores and herbivores to go outside jungles in search of food. Under such circumstances, farming fields have become very attractive to large herbivores such as the deer and elephants as they find the fields crammed with edible plants. Predators, in turn, pursue the herbivores out of the wilderness to hunt them for food as a result they come in conflict with the humans. Presently, the Indian Bison visits Kodaikanal town because of the non-availability of food plants because of the extensive plantations of alien species.

Enormous consequences

Human-wildlife conflicts are having enormous consequences. Such confrontations have been giving rise to hostility, vexation, resentment and alienation. Most families are suffering crop losses from wildlife invasions. The animals that most often obliterate crops are elephants, deer, pigs and monkeys. Pigs mostly raid root vegetables and subterranean crops. Most of these animals attack crops at night, hence defending crops against destruction is difficult. The farmers to protect the crops have to stay awake at night.

Farmer's families resort to a rotational guarding of fields with substantial health impacts such as sleep deprivation or disruption in daily schedules. If animals overrun the fields when the crop is ready for harvest, the result is the destruction of several months of work. Continual guarding takes a toll on health and makes travel or migration difficult. Not just crop losses, livestock losses also happen frequently in such areas. Losing cattle or buffaloes, goats, and dogs are also common. Such losses make more impact than crop losses because cows, goats, and buffaloes embody several years' worth of investment or savings. And antidotes for such losses veer around steps like fences, guarding, and so on to diminish wildlife entry into human habitations or "compensation" for those affected, injured, or killed by wildlife. Those most affected by human-wildlife conflict seem to be the forest dwellers or the farming

communities that live near the forests.

Peanuts in compensation

The forest department extends peanuts as compensation to the affected victims of crop loss. The compensation ranges from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000. To receive the benefit provided by the forest department for crop loss because of pillaging animals, the victims have to go through a long-winded bureaucratic procedure. The authorities process the claims of the victims only after they furnish a certificate by the village administrative officer and the agricultural officer.

Compensation for death or permanent disability as an outcome of an attack by a wild animal is more straightforward, though. It varies between ₹20,000 and ₹1 lakh with disability and ₹3 lakhs to ₹5 lakhs in case of death. Wildlife attacks are one rationale for migration out of place. When an elephant trampled the breadwinner of a family in the Nilgiris, the remaining family members shifted to Coimbatore city shortly afterwards.

The human-wildlife conflict is a feature of almost all forested landscapes in India. The cause behind most conflicts as we have seen is the burgeoning population of both humans and animals, resulting in enormous competition for land leading to contraction of the habitat of the animals and also due to an increase in development projects. India, at the moment, would do well if it handled the conflict by engaging the affected communities and by vigorously safeguarding the existing habitats of animals from human interference. The approach being adopted today appears ineffective as we base it on reactive measures. A proactive measure, such as engaging the community, would portend well for diluting the conflict.

Use of a more straightforward, cost-effective early warning system (SMS alerts) as used in Valparai of notifying the presence of elephants could get replicated in other parts of India to ease the way to coexistence. To tackle the problem of man-human conflict, governments may have to undertake a rapid modernisation of Forest departments. Bigger budgets and the creation of better infrastructures will strengthen the hands of the forest department to ward off attacks by using modern techniques such as GIS, drones, lasers, scanners, DNA fingerprinting, infrared sensors, 3D sensing and imaging. Deployment of drones and the use of AI could predict animal movements accurately, and the use of robots to chase or guide the direction of movement of wild animals could also be contemplated.

Are animals spiritual beings like human beings? Do they possess a spiritual nature? The Mahayana School of Buddhism, believe animals possess Buddha nature and therefore have an equal potential to become enlightened. The Buddha further expounded that those sentient beings living in the animal domain have been our mothers, brothers, sisters, fathers, children, and friends in past rebirths. One cannot, therefore, make a difference between the spiritual rules applicable to animals and those relevant to humans: humans and animals are eventually part of a single-family. We are all interconnected so let us, therefore, live in harmony without conflict and protect each other.

(Dr Jayanth K. Murali, IPS, is ADGP (Law and Order) Tamil Nadu. He can be contacted at www.jayanthmurali.com)

Film shooting mishap: Crane operator gets bail

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB 23

Crane operator Rajan, who was arrested by Police in connection with tragic death of three people on the shooting sets of actor Kamal Haasan's Indian 2 film, was granted bail on Friday.

According to the Nazareth police, the accused was produced at Poonamallee magistrate court in the morning. Rajan was arrested on Friday on charge of negligence.

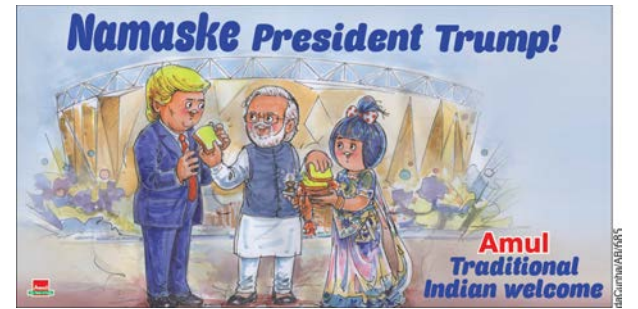
On Feb 19 night, assistant director Krishna, art assistant Chandran and production assistant Madhu were killed on the sets of Indian 2 being directed by Shankar at Nazareth in the city. The tragedy took place after the crane deployed on set fell to the ground.

On Thursday, Lyca Productions, the company that is financing the film, was booked by the police under sections 287 (Negligent conduct with respect to machinery), 337

● Police had questioned director Shankar and actor Kamal Haasan

(Causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others), 338 (Causing grievous hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 304A (Causing death by negligence) of Indian Penal Code as a result of a case was filed based on a complaint by assistant director Kumar, alleging that sufficient safeguards were not put in place by the production company.

Following the incident, the Police had questioned director Shankar and actor Kamal Haasan. The crane on set was reportedly used to set up a scene that needed heavy lighting while it crashed. Meanwhile, the company had announced a compensation of ₹2 crore to the families of those who died and were injured. Kamal had also announced a compensation of ₹1 crore.



Student killed as bike rams into container truck

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB 23

A 17-year-old Plus-2 student was killed on the spot and his friend and pillion rider suffered critical injuries as the motorcycle they were riding rammed into a container truck near Edapalayam on the Red Hills-Tiruvallur highway on the outskirts of Chennai on Sunday.

Police said the student Surender and his friend Dhanush Balaji were riding on the bike when the two-wheeler suddenly lost control and crashed into a stationary container truck from the rear.

Surender tragically died on the spot, even as passersby helped the seriously injured Dhanush Balaji to reach a private hospital nearby where he

is battling for life. Chozhavam police on information rushed to the spot and are investigating. Surender's body has been sent to the Stanley Medical College hospital for post-mortem. Vehicular traffic was halted for a while on the busy Tiruvallur highway even as the driver of container lorry was not to be seen after mishap.

The two students had come out early on Sunday to participate in an awareness marathon, said to have been organised on behalf of their school, to promote the virtues of 'Vitamin-C' in foods, as part of a nutrition-sufficient diet. After participating in the marathon the two students were returning home when the tragedy overtook them.

Work spot sexual harassment: HC's view

Chennai: The Madras High Court has observed a solitary allegation of intemperate language against a woman employee does not constitute an offence under the law on sexual harassment at work place and the act cannot be allowed to be misused with exaggerated or non-existent charges.

Granting relief to a senior central government official who was accused of sexual harassment by a woman officer, it also said the Administrative Head or the Chief has every right to extract work and he or she has his or her own discretion and prerogatives.

Allowing a petition by V Natarajan, Deputy Registrar of Trade Marks and GI, Intellectual Property of India, Chennai, a bench of Justices M Sathyanarayanan and R Hemalatha quashed orders of the Central Administrative Tribunal and the district Local Complaints Committee (LCC) against him.

"The complainant, it appears, made a futile attempt to settle her personal score with the petitioner. Every office has to

maintain certain decorum and women employees cannot be allowed to go scot-free without completing their assignments," the bench said in a lengthy order on Saturday.

If a woman employee was discriminated against due to her inefficiency or for any other official reasons, the recourse for her is not the one taken by this complainant, it said.

"Though the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is intended to have an equal standing for women in the work place and to have a cordial workplace in which their dignity and self-respect are protected, it cannot be allowed to be misused by women to harass someone with an exaggerated or nonexistent allegations, the bench added.

The woman officer had lodged a complaint on December 2, 2013 against the petitioner and the Registrar and Controller General of Trade Marks and GI and Patents and Design, accusing him of high-handed and arrogant behaviour, causing hurt to her self-respect.

The Registrar and Controller General set up an internal complaints committee (ICC) as per the act.

Subsequently, she made another complaint narrating many incidents about the "rude behavior" of Natarajan, in which she mentioned the word "sexual harassment" at several places.

Later, she wrote to the Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women expressing apprehension the ICC would not render justice as her complaint was against the head of department.

Subsequently, based on an enquiry by the District Social Welfare Officer who found prima facie case, the LCC had recommended a detailed departmental enquiry against Natarajan.

Meanwhile, the CAT allowed a plea by the complainant challenging the constitution of the ICC. The petitioner's appeal was dismissed by the tribunal, following which he moved the high court.

The court said the woman's first complaint in 2013 was generic and its essence was "intemperate" language used by the

officer and 'bias' shown against her.

But the February 17, 2016 complaint before the LCC smacked of "tutoring" and talked about "physical advances" and "lewd remarks" though it did not mention any date or sequence of events in support.

"This also appears to be an afterthought. Therefore, a solitary allegation of intemperate language against a female employee does not constitute an offence" under the act, the bench said. "It gives an appearance that instructing a woman employee to do something officially or even scolding a woman employee itself is sexual harassment, it said.

It held the CAT erred in concluding that the petitioner was the employer as defined under the act and therefore the ICC would not have any relevance while the LCC gave an erroneous decision with a non-speaking order which was also ex-parte.

The court also faulted the woman officer for "defiant attitude" in not attending the ICC hearing and for approaching the state commission for women. —PTI

HANDICRAFTS EXPO



A visitor takes a look at the handicrafts displayed at the Crafts Bazaar 2020 at Co-optex ground, Chennai on Sunday. —DC

Sri Lankan held with cigarette cartons

Chennai: North Beach Police on Sunday arrested a Sri Lankan national from the beach area here with eight cartons of foreign cigarettes. According to the police, the accused has been identified as Usman, 41, from Colombo.

He was arrested during a raid on the beach area following a tip-off received at the station. A police team found the man to be suspicious, who on questioning, refused to answer. His possessions were checked and cartons of foreign cigarettes were recovered. He was arrested and remanded to judicial custody, the police said. —DC

Eight detained under Goonda Act

Chennai: Eight habitual offenders including a woman were detained under Goonda Act on Sunday at the behest of City police commissioner. According to the police, the detained have been identified as Akbar, 25 of Anna Sathyanaagar; Naga Valli alias Jasmin, 23, of Kamaraj Salai; Akash, 25, of Kalyanapuram, Viyasarpadi; Ramki, 30, of Adi Dravidar Colony, Ernavur; Nagaraj, 28, of Ernavur; John Alexander, 47, AGS Colony, Muthalivakkam; Jayaprakash, 49, of Akaram and Sivakumar, 47, of Dr Radhakrishnan Nagar. They were accused in the various cases including murder cases, said the police. —DC

60-year-old man held for snatching cell phone

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB 23

Esplanade Police arrested a 60-year-old man on Sunday for snatching the cell phone from person who was standing near Broadway bus stand on Saturday. The accused was identified as Muhammad Rafeeq Khan, 60, MKP Nagar. Two cell phones and ₹7,180 were seized from his possession.

● The accused had snatched the cell phone from Shanmughavel's hand while he was standing near Broadway bus stand at 7 am

The phone snatcher was arrested based on complaint registered by Shanmughavel, 61, of Viyasarpadi. The accused had snatched the cell phone from his hand

while he was standing near Broadway bus stand at 7 am, the complainant said. The accused was arrested with the help of CCTV camera installed in the incident spot, the police said.

Rafeeq was accused in another cell phone theft case registered in B 1 North Beach Police station in 2017. The accused was produced in the court and remanded to judicial custody.

IN BRIEF

No final word on CM's Delhi programme

Mr. Palaniswami is scheduled to attend a slew of programmes including the 72nd birth anniversary of party leader and former CM J. Jayalithaa in Chennai and later in Salem on Monday. It is not confirmed if he would leave for the national capital to attend the banquet. In October last year, the State government had hosted the informal Xi-Modi summit at Mamallapuram.

Parties protest including activist in rowdies list

Nagapattinam: Various political and non-political organisations of Nagapattinam district strongly condemned the Sirkazhi police for including the Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam district secretary, Periyar Selvam, who actively participated in the anti-ONGC, methane extraction protests, in the history-sheets' list of Sirkazhi police station limits, on the charge that he disturbed public peace. The CPI (ML) Nagapattinam district secretary Gunasekaran said in a release here on Sunday that a resolution to this effect was adopted at a meeting in which more than 30 organisations of political and non-political bodies including representatives of the DMK, Congress and CPI(M) took part, here on Sunday. He said it was also decided to represent the matter to the Nagapattinam district collector, SP and local MLA with a plea to remove Mr. Selvam's name from the history-sheet list of Sirkazhi police station. Even after this, if the authorities did not do the needful, they plan to hold continuous agitations on this issue.

Anti-CAA flex board falls on dais at PC's event

Chennai: A huge flex board came crashing down on a dais at an auditorium while Congress leader P Chidambaram was addressing an anti-CAA meet here on Sunday. The board was hanging just behind those seated on the dais. Fortunately, no one was injured. The former Union Minister was in front of the podium when a portion of the big board began tilting precariously and within moments fell with a thud. Everyone's attention was drawn to it and organisers had the board refixed quickly. The cause of the crash was not known immediately. The board announced the day's programme. The Forum for Protection of Constitution-Chennai held the "Save Constitution, Save Democracy," event. —PTI

CM grants ₹2L assistance to girl for NASA visit

Chennai, Feb 23: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Sunday ordered ₹2 lakh as assistance to a class IX girl student, a space enthusiast, for successfully qualifying in an online test to visit America's space agency NASA and participate in an international conference. The student V Abinaya studying in Namakkal district got through the exam held by firms here and in America, the Chief Minister, in a statement, said adding the opportunity to visit NASA and take part in a global space science symposium is a "victory for her talent." Wishing her many more successes in space science, Palaniswami lauded her for the 'achievement and to encourage younger generation, I have ordered ₹2lakh assistance from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund.' —PTI



Scenes from anti CAA-NRC protest at Puliyanthope in Chennai on Sunday. — DC

Fresh anti CAA-NRC protest in city

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 23 Residents at Puliyanthope, drawing inspiration from Washermenpet, have started a fresh protest against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC). According to the organisers, as many as 150 people including women and children launched a Shaheen Bagh model protest on Friday. For last two days, the protest has drawn attention of more people and organisations. The protest will continue till the CAA-NRC to be revoked, the organisers say. The fresh protest the city was witnessed at a time when huge anti CAA-NRC protest of over 3,000 people has been underway at Old Washermenpet for the last couple of weeks. The protesters sit like in Shaheen Bagh, shouting 'Azadi' slogans at the site despite a police clampdown. Washermenpet and Puliyanthoppu residents registered their dissent against the Act while across India, many all-women protests against the CAA-NRC have been cropping up similar to the one at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh which has been going on since December 15. On February 14, police personnel arrived at the protest site in Old Washermenpet and cleared out 50 women who had gathered in the streets to peacefully agitate. But the protesters in large numbers turned up next day to continue the protest.

CM and Deputy CM change their twitter profile picture AIADMK gears up for Jaya birth anniversary

J V SIVA PRASANNA KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 23 Ahead of former Chief Minister J. Jayalithaa's birth anniversary on Monday, the AIADMK members erupted into a celebratory mood. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy CM O. Panneerselvam set the tone and tenour changing their profile picture on their official twitter account. A picture of Jayalithaa hailing her as India's iron lady and Puratchi thalaivi Amma adorns the twitter

accounts of Mr. Palaniswami and Mr. Panneerselvam who are AIADMK's co-ordinator and coordinator, respectively. Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments (HR & CE) Minister Sevoor S. Ramachandran pulled a golden chariot at the renowned Sri Annamalaiyar temple in Thiruvannamalai as part of the late leader's 72nd birth anniversary. Over 300 AIADMK members took part in the event on Sunday. In Vellore, Commercial Taxes Minister K. C. Veeramani led the celebra-

tions in cutting a cake at Old Age Home. He assured to establish a solar water heater at his own expenses at the Old Age Home in Gudiyatham. Meanwhile, in the city Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar has planned to offer gold rings to the children born on Feb. 24. The party had urged her supporters to avoid grandeur during her birthday celebrations and mark the day by distributing welfare measures to the poor and take up various pro-people activities. As part of this, they should organise blood donation camps, take

up eye donation activities, conduct medical camps and hold various events for students and distribute aid to them and conduct free marriages and feed those at old age homes among others, the party had said. Mr. Palaniswami had announced that her Feb. 24, which marks her birthday would be observed as State Girl Child Protection Day. Jayalithaa had died on Dec. 5, 2016 and was laid to rest behind the memorial of her mentor and AIADMK founder and former Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran abutting the Marina Beach.

Salem's 'Shaheen Bagh' may embarrass CM

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, FEB. 23 Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. Edappadi K Palaniswami, who arrives here on Monday to participate in a series of functions including the birth anniversary of 'Amma' Jayalithaa, may face an embarrassment as Salem's own 'Shaheen Bagh' protesters against the Centre's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and NPR/NRC

initiatives, plan to show black flags to him. The peaceful protests by nearly 300 women with their children and kin at the Fort area here, demanding scrapping of CAA/NPR/NRC, for the past six days is poised to enter the seventh day on Monday. However, they plan to pep up their demonstrations holding placards with slogans, "No CAA, No

NPR, No NRC", with a black flag demonstration coinciding with Mr. Palaniswami's visit. The black flag demonstration is to urge the Chief Minister to convene the Assembly again and pass a resolution demanding the Central government to withdraw the CAA, one of the women protesters said, adding, their stir would go on indefinitely until the Act was scrapped.

A.Raja to take up LPG distribution issue with Centre

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, FEB. 23 A. Raja (DMK), the lawmaker from Nilgiris parliamentary constituency, has affirmed that he would take up efforts for restoration of Indane LPG cylinders distribution rights to the Tamil Nadu civil supplies corporation (TNCS) here in Ooty. It is pertinent to note that the TNCS here which had been a franchise for the Indane LPG cylinders, both domestic and commercial, over four decades has now been deprived of its franchise/agency as the Indian Oil Corporation has terminated the contract with the TNCS here and given the retail/distribution rights to private players. As this has already created chaos in the hills Mr. Raja, while talking to media persons on this issue, said that the TNCS which took up the Indane LPG cylinders agency/distribution contract with a mere 2,000 customers in 1980's went on to add more as it has near 24,000 customers. Now, due to cancellation of the agency/distribution rights, the LPG consumers attached to the TNCS are subjected to untold misery, besides, the TNCS staffers dealing with LPG distribution are at the risk of losing their jobs, he said and added that he will take up this issue with the union petroleum ministry soon.



MLA Karunas with his family calls on CM Edappadi K Palaniswami on his 50th birthday in Chennai on Sunday.

Chidambaram's posers to PM Modi ahead of Trump's India visit

Chennai, Feb 23 : Congress leader P Chidambaram on Sunday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the CAA, NRC and NPR, telling him to ask visiting US President Donald Trump if it was possible to extradite as many as 19 lakh people from Assam. Addressing a meet here against the Citizenship Amendment Act, the former Minister, citing the BJP's brute majority in Parliament, asked, if there was any guarantee that the government will not bring in an amendment similar to the CAA, to give a push to its idea of a "Hindu" country. Alleging that there was a great threat to the Constitution and the need to save it, he said countries were now asking questions over the CAA. "U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he will



ask questions about the CAA even before his arrival. If six to 10 lakh people are going to be affected, will the visiting leader go without posing questions," he asked. The European Parliament, UNHRC and a United States panel on religious freedom were all asking questions, calling upon the government to give up the contentious law. "We know who will be affected. The government is hiding that. The world (countries) is not a fool; it is aware that this will bring a huge threat to Muslims on the basis of their religion," he said, adding most countries have started asking questions. The CAA was "a tool" evolved to retain 12 lakh Hindus and send out seven lakh Muslims in Assam, he alleged. While there are countries which have stopped illegal immigration, there was no country that extradited as many as 19 lakh people, he said. "Which country has extradited 19 lakh people? If Narendra Modi has any doubt, he can ask American President Donald Trump and he will answer," he said. He asked if the US president, who had all along talked about sending back

early as when the survey was mooted, that it would lead to social discord. While 40 lakh people were identified as foreigners in the exercise initially, a review pegged it at 19,06,657, he said. As soon as it came to be known that 12 lakh of them were Hindus and seven lakh Muslims, the Centre found itself in a quandary as all of them had to be sent out of the country. "The NRC in Assam is a very big failure," he said. To overcome the "predicament" of 12 lakh Hindus, the government came up with the CAA, he said. Alleging that the government was lying about the law, he said the Ministers too were lying. "A big lie is that the law (CAA) will not affect people who are in India. Will those in Africa will be affected," he asked sarcastically. The CAA wants to send

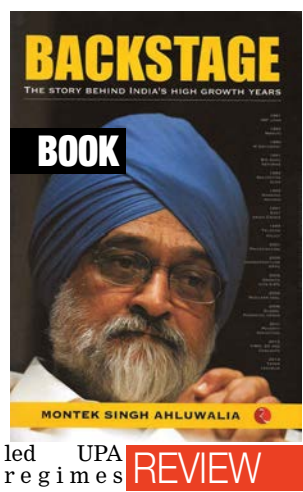
only Muslims out of the country while allowing others to stay put and the law has been challenged on grounds, including religious discrimination, in the Supreme Court, he said. If the BJP-led Centre could bring the CAA, which was tantamount to impinging on the basic features of the Constitution, there was no guarantee that the government will not bring other amendments, he said. "Why will you not bring other amendments tomorrow? What is the confidence that you will not declare (India) a Hindu country in view of the brute majority?," he asked. The RSS and BJP were spreading "venomous views" that those belonging to the same gothra should not get married. "What is the confidence that this will not become a law (forbidding same gothra marriages)," he asked. —PTI

Ubermensch to last man, Montek captures all in political churn

M.R. VENKATESH | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 23

Having worked with at least four Prime Ministers over three decades in various capacities since he first entered North Block in 1979, one of our outstanding economic and fiscal policy makers, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, has in this memorable volume let the ups and downs of India's growth years speak for itself. He walks down memory lane with his equally intellectually accomplished wife Isher, but makes clear at the very start that this book "is not a memoir". Montek presents this 434-page story as a "travelogue of India's journey of economic reforms, which I had the privilege of being an insider for 30 long years. My own story is interwoven with the narrative, but the personal experiences are not the principal focus." Alongside his objective and critical approach— one of the gains of being a Stephanian in Delhi and later at Magdalen College in Oxford for a PPE degree (Philosophy, Politics and Economics)—, one aspect that stands out in this gentlemanly narrative is the way Montek gradually unpacks the twists and

turns in the political economy. They, one way or the other, affect the entire social spectrum — from 'Ubermensch', the 'magnified superior' whom Nietzsche described in his Zarathustra, to the last man in our town panchayat PDS queue. That is the breadth and depth of the sense of social inclusiveness that bristles through the narrative amid all the political drama. Thus every chapter is to be relished at its own pace, space and time. Nuggets of insights into economic theory, ifs and buts of policy making, their implementation and scores of anecdotes, lightens Montek's reminiscences as a senior civil servant. Given the sheer physical size and extraordinary diversity of the country, India's trust with economic development after political independence, is a highly complex multi-layered story. From what Prof Raj Krishna famously called the 'Hindu rate of Growth' at about 3.5 per cent, to big bang reforms of early 1990s, under Dr Manmohan Singh as Finance minister, which prepared the ground for a higher growth rate, peaking to over 7 per cent annually during Congress-



led UPA regimes. BACKSTAGE: The Story Behind India's High Growth Years by Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Published by Rupa Publications India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2020 (Price ₹595/-)

when Dr Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister, and consequently poverty declining from 37 per cent in 2004-05 to 22 per cent in 2011-12, Montek shows how India's accomplishment "is unique in the economic history of developing countries." This optimistic economic rejuvenation post-1991 spun around dramatic

developments such as negotiating an IMF loan, Harshad Mehta scam and so on. Notwithstanding the current economic slowdown, the unmistakably strong correlation between higher rates of growth and poverty reduction and better standards of living, woven around the revival of the primary agriculture sector, runs through like an axiom. Even diehard Marxist economists could hardly turn their backs to faster rates of economic growth. They had their reasons though to assail Montek given his early stint in the World Bank and later setting up the first Independent Evaluation Office of the IMF in Washington, which gave him a deeper perspective on forex management, currencies' convertibility pitfalls in developing economies and its lessons for India averting external payments crisis. Another aspect is what economic experts and professionals can bring to the table of scientific/rational policy making rooted in mathematical models and nudging all stake holders including the States to change the ways of doing things. This trend is visible more from the late 1970s.

True, there were economic and other domain experts earlier, like eminent agriculture scientist Dr M S Swaminathan who as then DG, ICAR, and then agriculture secretary B Sivaraman, was part of the first 'Green Revolution' under the guidance of the then Agriculture minister C Subramanyam. In fact Montek credits the success of the 'Green Revolution' in the late 1960s to a 'large measure' to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who took "bold decisions" in allowing imports of high-yielding varieties of Mexican wheat seeds, overruling formidable objections to such imports; but her reform spirit did not permeate into the industrial sector. Yet, the Indian bureaucracy valuing 'economic expertise' was more a distinct Rajiv Gandhi era imprint in mid-1980s. Montek says he was 'warned' by friends and well wishers against taking up an assignment with the Government of India, when his wife and he could have professionally had more satisfying careers in the US. But he gave all that up and returned home, in the hope of contributing to economic policy-making to help India come out of a low-growth,

largely controlled economy, thanks to his mentor Dr Manmohan Singh. And he says he had no regrets at all in that decision, for all the agony and pain at times, like for instance during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots when all hell broke loose in Delhi after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. Containing the fiscal deficit is a core concern; but as the author traversed through various positions since he first joined as economic advisor in the Finance Ministry, followed by other key positions as being part of the PMO, stint in the Commerce Ministry, later Finance Secretary and again after a break during NDA-1 to return as Deputy Chairman of the Union Planning Commission during UPA-1 and UPA-II, the journey is amazing. Montek demonstrates to us, through different examples and situations, how lobbying for development expenditure, whether it is social infrastructure like health and education or physical infrastructure like roads, ports and airports, is as important as living within one's fiscal means. The pipes that carry Central grants may be 'leaky', but we still need the 'pipes' and have to 'fix the leaks', he

recalls having told former Finance Minister P Chidambaram once, when he was in the Plan body. It reflects his deep belief in the role of States in a federal polity and partly as incentives that motivate equity goals at both the Centre and States. The 'M Document' that Montek had prepared in 1990, during a politically volatile period, transiting from V P Singh's government to what was hoped Rajiv Gandhi's return that fate snatched away through a LTTE suicide bomber, had played a very significant role in the gradually restructuring of industrial, trade and fiscal policies in the reforms era later. Dr. Manmohan Singh was the "true architect of the reforms", but Montek adds it would not have happened if Narasimha Rao as PM had not backed Dr. Singh. Later, however, during the UF regimes, the credit really goes to Mr. P. Chidambaram, a surprise choice as FM by the then PM Deve Gowda, for ensuring continuity in the economic reforms, writes Montek. The book is really a lot more, and substantive too in uncovering sub-texts in India's growth story. From

market regulator SEBI being his brainchild, scams and controversies that hit successive regimes, CAG's grave errors in the 2G spectrum report, experiments with PPP model for big ticket infra, row over FDI limits, export-led growth versus economic insularity and import substitution, two recent 'major policy mistakes'— demonetization of November 2016 and flawed GST implementation in 2017-, to political leadership styles and resignation dramas, Montek incisively balances plain-speak of historical repertage with pungent critical remarks. Montek's penultimate chapter, an insider view of the Planning Commission, is a subtle, empathetic and brilliant reflection on the relevance of the plan body even after it was abolished by the Modi regime. He bats for deeper reforms particularly in the banking sector, as he signs off with the exhortation, "India can and must return to its high growth years— our younger generation deserves nothing less." For Montek Singh Ahluwalia, the proverbial 'Owl of Minerva' takes wings from 'Yojana Bhavan'. It is a must-read for a holistic view on India's recent economic history.

IN BRIEF



Volunteers clean up Amma Mandapam

Tiruchy: Members of the Tamil Nadu Veera Vivekhandar Peraval led by their founder president Ranjithkumar cleaned up the Amma Mandapam bathing ghat in the Cauvery river at Srirangam on Sunday, which received overwhelmed appreciation from the general public and devotees who visited the bathing ghat. According to Ranjithkumar, they had to take three hours for the cleaning up operation in and around the Amma Mandapam bathing ghat. He said that water is a gift of God and Hindu dharma treated water as holy. Despite this, the visiting public and devotees make it a habit to leave their used clothes, plastics and carry bags in the river which pollutes and spoils the sanctity of the river. He appealed to the visitors of the Amma Mandapam bathing ghat to leave trash and wastes in the dust bins, and help preserve the river and its water from pollution.

■ Puducherry Lt.Governor and Narayanasamy at loggerheads again
Bedi spikes CM's plan for Casinos

DC CORRESPONDENT PUDUCHERRY, FEB. 23

The controversial Lt Governor of Puducherry, Dr Kiran Bedi is once again at loggerheads with the V Narayanasamy-headed Congress government in the Union Territory, this time over the latter's proposal to allow opening of Casinos to augment revenues to severely cash-strapped Pondicherry.

Even as the proposal mooted recently by the Chief Minister on his return from a visit to Singapore drew instant criticisms from conservative quarters and from some opposition parties



Lt Governor of Puducherry, Dr Kiran Bedi shares a light moment with a boy, exchanging glasses during one of her morning rounds. —Courtesy: Twitter

including the AIADMK on grounds that it could have an unhealthy impact on the minds of the young, Dr Bedi herself had flagged the desirability of opening

Casinos, even if strictly regulated, on social media. Recently, in an interview, Mr. Namasivayam, PWD minister in the Puducherry Cabinet assured that the Government would take care that implementation of any new scheme was in such a way that it will not have any adverse impact on the people.

However, when the file regarding Casinos reportedly went to the Lt Governor, Dr Bedi, it is learnt has declined to clear it. The national news agency PTI tweeted on Sunday that the Puducherry Lt Governor Dr Kiran Bedi "seeks opinion of the

Central Government's proposal to introduce Casinos in the Union Territory as measures to shore up more revenue."

That was good indication that Dr Bedi who takes the moral high ground on almost every issue in the Union Territory, does not favour starting of Casinos.

This is notwithstanding the fact that some twitterati responded to PTT's tweet saying if Goa could be permitted to have Casinos for the purpose of garnering more revenue for the State, why should it not be allowed for Puducherry as well. This debate is bound to continue for lot more days.

Sunil Kumar including other IPS officials get promoted by govt

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 23

The State government on Sunday promoted Sunil Kumar, Additional Director General of Police, as Director General of Police and posted him as DGP, Chairman of Tamil Nadu Uniformed Services Recruitment Board, Chennai.

He had been Chief Vigilance Officer of TN Cooperative Milk Producers Federation Ltd., Chennai.

Sunil Kumar Singh, ADGP, Economic Offences Wing, Chennai, has been promoted as DGP and posted as

DGP, Inspector General of Prisons, Chennai.

Abhash Kumar, ADGP, Prisons, Chennai, has been posted as ADGP, Economic Offences wing, Chennai.

S. Davidson Devasirvatham, Inspector General of Police, Commissioner of Police, Madurai, is promoted as ADGP and posted as ADGP, Commissioner of Police, Madurai in the upgraded post.

S. N. Seshasai, IG of Police, Welfare, Chennai, is promoted as ADGP and posted as ADGP, Special Task Force, Erode.

BULL TAMING EVENT TURNS FATAL IN DISTRICTS

Two killed as van carrying bulls capsizes in Thanjavur

G.SRINIVASAN | DC THANJAVUR, FEB. 23

Two persons were killed and three others were injured, when the minivan in which they were transporting the bull that participated in the Jallikattu at Mathakkottai near Thanjavur capsized on Vilar road on Saturday night.

The deceased were Rajaraja Cholan (25), son of Palanivel, Kathadkippatti and Durairaj (20) son of Karuppasamy of Kalvirayanpettai. They

died at Thanjavur medical college hospital where they were admitted for treatment. Other injured persons who are taking treatment at the hospital are Vetrivelan (17), son of Anbalagan, Mathi (35) son of Thangavel and Madhavan (17) son of Pariraj-all belonging to Kathadipatti near Sengipatti. The bull-tamers, Prabhakaran alias Kanagaraj, aged 30, of Nagiampatti near Thammampatti near Salem, was one of the participants who was critically injured,

Salem Jallikattu: 1 bull-tamer dies in GH

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, FEB. 23

A critically injured bull-tamer who participated in the Nagiampatti Jallikattu event to coincide with 'Shivarathiri festival' on Friday, succumbed in the Salem Mohan Kumaramangalam Government Hospital here on Sunday. The bull-tamers death sent shockwaves among the players fraternity.

The bull-tamer, Prabhakaran alias Kanagaraj, aged 30, of Nagiampatti near Thammampatti near Salem, was one of the participants who was critically injured,



Prabhakaran

besides five others who tried to tame the bulls at the sporting event. Their names were given as Thagahapatti Dinesh, 22, Tiruchy Velampatti Ilavarasan, 23, besides Hari, 22, Mahendran, 30 and Perumal, who were undergoing treatment at Salem GH. Of the six critically injured,

Prabhakaran died not responding to treatment. In all 20 persons were injured in the bull-taming event took place near Salem.

However, there was disturbing fallout with the deceased Prabhakaran not initially in the list of the injured as he had allegedly not registered his name in the list of bull-tamers. He had allegedly used the token and uniform given to his brother who had registered for the event and doubled for him too in taming the bull, which has taken the Health department officials by shock and surprise.

45 injured in 2 Jallikattus in Pudukkottai

R.VALAYAPATHY | DC PUDUUKKOTTAI, FEB. 23

At least 45 persons were injured in two Jallikattu events held at Thiruvappur and Idayaathur in Pudukkottai district on Sunday. Official sources said that 1,200 bulls and 380 bull-tamers participated in the Thiruvappur Jallikattu, while 700 bulls and 250 bull-tamers were in action at Idayaathur Jallikattu.

Both the events were flagged off by the State Health Minister Dr C. Vijayabaskar.

As many as 27 persons were injured in the Thiruvappur Jallikattu event and all of them were treated at the venue itself. Another 18 bull-tamers were injured at Idayaathur Jallikattu



and were given first aid at the health centre there. From there, two of them referred to Government medical college hospital here, sources added.

AFTER SIVARATHIRI



(Clockwise from left) A Devotee take part in rituals to mark Mayana Kollai in Chinna Malaiyanur Arulmigu Paladai Sri Angala Parameswari Amman temple, Krishnampettai, Triplicane on Sunday. The 'Mayana Kollai' or looting of graveyard festival, is celebrated amidst the dead. The event involves processions to the crematorium with deities riding chariots, and devotees dancing with painted faces and narrating the lives of gods in the form of songs, narrating the mythology of Angalamman. This traditional festival is observed as part of the Masi Amavasai festival, in which devotees donning costumes of Angalamman, kill lambs and poultry birds with their bite and come in a procession around the temple premises and streets in town. The deity and other rituals can also be seen in the pictures. In the last picture Kaliyamman is taken in procession to Palar as part of the festivities in Vellore Makhan.

(Photos by E.K.Sanjay and K.Senthil Nathan)



Don't be misled by DMK, give up CAA agitation: Min

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 23

Accusing the opposition DMK of inciting anti-CAA protests for political gains, AIADMK senior and Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar said it was high time the Muslims discerned the opposition party's 'game plan' and give up the agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Urging Muslims not to be misled by the DMK, the Minister said the State government had already come forward and assured that the minorities, especially the Muslims, would not be affected by the Act. "You should understand the true nature of the DMK and cease to agitate. You should support the State government," Mr. Jayakumar said and added "the DMK, like an eagle, is waiting to prey on the Muslims, for its political gains."

Meanwhile, Cooperation Minister Sellur Raju and Revenue Minister R. B. Udayakumar said the AIADMK would not be affected by former AIADMK Minister R. S. Raja Kannappan switching loyalties to the DMK. "It is not a loss to the AIADMK. He is like an invalid currency," Mr. Raju claimed.

"Raja Kannappan is known to shift loyalties. He has joined the DMK as a new passenger of a sinking ship. Both the vessel and the passenger are in danger," Mr. Udayakumar alleged.

Speaking to reporters in Madurai, he said on the CAA that Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami had already explained that the Act would not affect the Muslims.

CITY CLIPS

CHENNAI UNITES AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

CHENNAI, FEB. 23

Chennai: Every minute there is a child being abused, raped or killed not very far from you. Child Abuse is not gender specific. "We have a zero tolerance towards crimes against children. All angles of abuse and neglect are looked into. We employ the best practices from around the world in ensuring children related crimes are handled with due care and diligence. Our All Women Police Stations have Child counsellor and all police officers working there are trained consistently on handling sensitive crimes," said chief guest H Jayalakshmi, DC (Crimes Against Women and Children). Social activist Apsara Reddy said, "Our society needs to look at child abuse as a human rights issue. It can happen in any home and there is no real profile of a perpetrator. Construct of shame is always centred around the victim and their family. Instead shame should shift on the perpetrator."

Members of FICCI FLO, Lions Club and various transgender organisations took part in the rally. Expts from various corporate companies participated. Bruce Schwak, said, "The child protection task can't be one that police alone undertakes. Society must also be active agents in protecting children. We must report anything suspicious and ensure we draw the attention of authorities."



WINNERS PICKED IN SINGING COMPETITION

Chennai: As many as 800 youngsters, including college students took part in the 10th edition of the singing competition titled 'Valentines 2020', an event held to identify and bring to light musical talent. Eighteen finalists performed to the tunes played by a live band at a thematic fashion show hosted by students of Iris Glam powered by Naturals and sponsored by Eldia pure coconut oil. Ms Abhinaya, Nikita and Lohawani won the top prizes among women contestants and Manoj, Jayaraj and Balasubramanian among men.

HEART BEATS FOR CARDIAC PATIENTS

Chennai: Dr Rela Institute & Medical Centre's department of cardiac sciences launched its Cardiac Support Group 'Rela Heart Beats'. The initiative supports patients in their rehabilitation, offering a chance to all members of the support group to share their experiences in a mutually supportive environment. A privilege card carries various benefits like discounts on services and free anticoagulation and antiplatelet advice for six months following cardiac procedure.

Student commits suicide inside Uni campus

SINDHYA SAMUEL / P.A.JEBA RAJ | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 23

Even as the Crime Branch-CID is conducting probes on three student suicide cases from SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur that occurred in the University campus in the same manner in 2019, another student suicide was reported from the campus on Saturday night. The suicide has sent shock waves among fellow students and the public.

According to the police, the student, A. Ayushi Rana (20), daughter of Anil Kumar of Punjab, was a second-year B-Tech student. Ayushi, who

was staying in the college hostel, did not come to record her fingerprint on the biometric system post curfew on Saturday night.

Since her mobile phone was not reachable at around 10 pm, her friends went to her room to check on her. As there was no response from her, the hostel authorities were informed and subsequently, Maraimalai Nagar police were alerted.

Police, who rushed to the spot, broke the door open and found Ayushi hanging in the room. The Maraimalai Nagar police sent the body to the Chengalpattu government hospital for post-mortem. Following her



The deceased Ayushi Rana.

death, police searched her room, but did not find a suicide note. Following the incident, security has been beefed up in and around the campus. It may be noted that last year, three students of SRM university had committed suicide inside the 250-acre campus in a span of 60 days with all three students using the same method of jumping from high floors.

In May 2019, 19-year-old Aneesh Choudary from Jharkhand committed suicide by jumping off the fifth floor of the college building. Police sources said his decision to take his life reportedly came after the college had withheld his scores in exams as he was reportedly caught cheating during a test. No suicide note was recovered in his case.

A day after the Aneesh suicide, a 23-year-old biomedical engineering student Anupriya committed suicide by jumping from the tenth floor of women's hostel building. A suicide note retrieved from her room accused her parents of being "regressive.

After the two incidents, the college management set up an online counselling system by the Psychiatry Department in the medical college, operating 24/7 to reach out to the students. Even so, a third suicide occurred in the same college in the same manner on July 15, 2019 with S Raghavan of Kanyakumari district, a final year

Information Technology, student jumping off the college building. Separate suicide cases which were registered at Maraimalai Nagar police station were transferred to the CBCID based on an order by Tamil Nadu DGP J.K.Tripathy.

केन्द्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड
CENTRAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

CENTRAL TEACHER ELIGIBILITY TEST

NOTICE

The Central Board of Secondary Education will conduct the 14th edition of Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) on 05.07.2020 (Sunday). The test will be conducted in 112 cities all over the country. The online application-Process for CTET July 2020 examination has been started from 24.01.2020.

It is hereby informed that due to administrative reasons, the last date for submitting online application has been extended till 02.03.2020 and the fee can be paid upto 05.03.2020 till 15.30 PM.

The information Bulletin containing details of examination, syllabus, languages, eligibility criteria, examination fee, and examination cities are available on CTET official website www.ctet.nic.in. The interested candidates may apply through online mode accordingly.

Director (CTET) & Secretary, CBSE

केन्द्रीय अध्यापक पात्रता परीक्षा एकक, पी० ए० १-२ इन्स्टीट्यूशनल एरिया, आर० पी० ए० एक्सटेंशन, पटपार्गान, दिल्ली-110092
CTET Unit, PS, 1-2 Institutional Area, I.P. Extension, Patparganj, Delhi-110092
फोन/Telephone: +91-11-22235774, 22247154, 22247176 वेबसाइट/Website: www.ctet.nic.in

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IN BRIEF

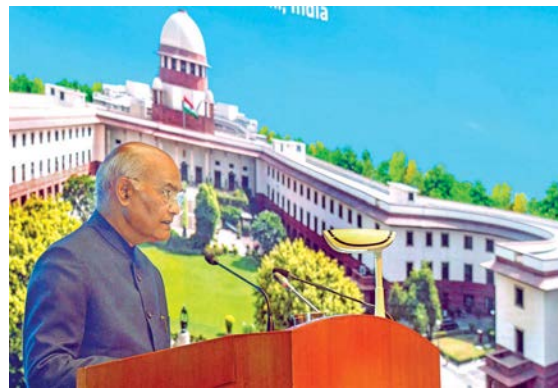
4000-YR-OLD CRAFTS VILLAGE IN VARANASI

New Delhi: A nearly 4,000-year-old urban settlement has been unearthed by a team of surveyors from the Banaras Hindu University...

Judiciary has pursued gender justice: Prez

Supreme Court has always been pro-active and progressive: Kovind

New Delhi, Feb 23: President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday hailed the efforts of the Indian judiciary in pursuing the "cherished goal of gender justice"...



President Ram Nath Kovind delivers the valedictory address at the International Judicial Conference being organised by the Supreme Court of India, in New Delhi, on Sunday.

Court of India also deserves admiration for carrying out many radical reforms that made justice more accessible to the common people. Landmark judgments passed by this court have strengthened the legal and constitutional framework of our country...

development and protection of Right to Privacy in the internet age. These aspects influence every member of the global community, he said. Observing that these five distinctly defined topics cover the matrix of challenges faced by the judiciary across the world...

Resolving leadership issue key for Cong revival: Tharoor

New Delhi, Feb 23: The Congress must fix its leadership issues on top priority to address the growing perception among the people that the party is "adrift"...



The process of electing some members of the party's highest decision-making body will usher in a dynamic leadership team with a credible mandate to work together to address the organisational challenge

for urgently addressing this perception in the eyes of the public comes from - and for that matter, changing the attitude of the media, which is repeatedly writing us off dismissively...

TODDLER WEDS DOG FOR FAMILY PROSPERITY

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, FEB. 21

Despite advancement of science and technology, superstition and blind beliefs still continue to exist in human society where the parents get their children married to animals to protect their families from evilness...

Such an incident was reported on Sunday from Baria village under Sukruli block in tribal dominated Mayurbhanj district.

According to report, a one-and-a-half-year-old girl, the daughter of Bibhishana Chatar, had two crooked teeth, which is very common these days. Considering it as a 'bad omen', her family got her married to a dog on final day of Mage, a tribal festival...

In tribal dominated districts of Koraput, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, people in interior areas often brand their children with hot iron and bangles with a dogmatic belief that such an exercise would cure them (children) of their diseases.

Tribals solemnizing girl, dog marriage Baria village under Sukruli block in tribal dominated Mayurbhanj district

Amulya's dad told not to travel now

DC CORRESPONDENT CHIKKAMAGALURU/BENGALURU, FEB. 23

Oswald Noronha, father of activist Amulya Noronha, who is behind bars after she raised pro-Pakistan slogans at an anti-CAA meeting in Bengaluru a few days ago, has been asked by Chikkamagaluru police in his hometown not to travel outside his native village, Shivapura...

The residents at Shivapura expressed displeasure that Amulya had brought disrepute to their village with her pro-Pakn sloganeering. Meanwhile, former Karnataka minister D.K. Shivakumar came out in support of Amulya. He reiterated, "One should give her (Amulya) a fair chance, so that it becomes clear what she really wanted say or meant by making such a statement."



Participants ride in their vintage car during the Statesman Vintage and Classic Car Rally at Connaught Place, in New Delhi, on Sunday.

Ex-CIC to SC: Police blocks roads, not Shaheen dadis

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 23

Former Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah told the Supreme Court that the protest at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) was peaceful and inconvenience being caused to commuters was due to barricades "unnecessarily" put by police on roads far away from the site.

Army chief Chandra Shekhar Azad in their joint affidavit filed in the apex court. Habibullah, Mr Azad and Mr Naqvi have jointly filed an intervention application in the top court which is seized of the matter. Habibullah had visited the protest site at Shaheen Bagh pursuant to the direction by a bench of Justice S.K. Kaul and Justice K.M. Joseph. The bench is scheduled to hear the matter on Monday.

Bagh and ensuring smooth traffic flow in the area. The Supreme Court had earlier said that though people have a fundamental right to protest "peacefully and lawfully", it was troubled by the blocking of a public road at Shaheen Bagh as it might lead to a "chaotic situation".

duties and wrongly laying the blame on the protest. It is this barricading of unconnected roads that has led to a chaotic situation. Former CIC Habibullah also said the police should reveal the names of persons responsible for the decision to block the parallel and arterial roads in the area. The blockage of the road by protesters had become a key issue ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, with the BJP blaming the protesters and accusing Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of encouraging them.

Succession row hits Lingayats' Mutt

VITTAI SHASTRI | DC HUBBALLI, FEB. 23

A succession crisis has gripped one of the largest mutts of the Lingayats - the dominant community in Karnataka to which Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa belongs.

Dingaleshwar Swamiji of Balehosur (Gadag district) claims he is the successor to the present seer of the mutt, Gurusidda Rajayogindra Swamiji, which has been contested by another seer, Mallikarjun Swamiji of Gubbalagumpi village in



Dingaleshwar Swamiji addresses a public meeting of his devotees.

Gokak taluk who claims he was declared successor in 1998. In fact to stake his claim, Dingaleshwar

held 'Satyadarshan' with his devotees amid tight police security in front of the religious institution and also took out a procession along with thousands of his devotees before the meeting. But police officials did not allow him to convene the meeting inside the mutt citing law and order issues. The seer claims he has all records to prove his appointment as successor and has set a 45-day deadline to appoint him successor. Meanwhile, Mallikarjun Swamiji too

visited the mutt along with his devotees to stake claim. The mutt has contributed a lot to the elimination of discrimination in the 12th century when social reformer Basavanna launched a revolution (Kalyan Kranti) to bring equality in society. The religious institution was named Moorusavir Mutt as it provided shelter to 3,000 seers during the revolution. The total property of the mutt is valued at hundreds of crores and it has thousands of devotees spread

across the state. Addressing the meeting of his devotees outside the mutt, Dingaleshwar Swamiji accused some seers of hatching a conspiracy to prevent him from becoming successor. He claimed Gurusidda Rajayogindra Swamiji has named him successor in 2014 in the presence of several politicians and senior leaders of the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community but some seers were trying to malign his image by lodging criminal cases against him.

Ravi Pujari held, to be extradited

M.K. ASHOKA | DC BENGALURU, FEB. 23

The stage is all set to bring back dreaded underworld don Ravi Poojari to India, announced Karnataka home minister Basavaraj Bommai on Sunday.

"All legal hurdles have been cleared to bring back Poojari. A court in Senegal had cleared his handing over process. There are some formalities pending at the international level. As soon as they are completed, we will bring him back," Bommai stated.

"International agencies are in touch with us and our officers are stationed there. They will bring him back soon," he added. International don Ravi Poojari is wanted in as many as 70 criminal cases in Karnataka alone. He is wanted in cases of extortion and murder and was active in the Mumbai underworld. He was part of the Dawood gang and



later, is said to have worked with another don, Chota Rajan for some time. Claiming to be an enemy of Dawood, Poojari reportedly finished off all his associates and anti-India elements in the country. His men were involved in a shootout on the Shabanam Developers office in Bengaluru in which a lady staffer was killed in the firing. He is also said have been involved in the shootout case of Shahid Azmi, an advocate from Mumbai. There are cases against him in Kerala, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. Senegal officials caught him after India issued a Red Corner notice against him in January 2019.

TENDERS / NOTICES

மாநில அரசு வளர்ச்சி மற்றும் ஊராட்சி நிறுவனம், மறமுலை நகர் - 603 209 அரசு வளர்ச்சி மற்றும் ஊராட்சித் துறை, தமிழ்நாடு அரசு ஒப்பந்தப் புள்ளி அறிவிப்பு

மாநில அரசு வளர்ச்சி மற்றும் ஊராட்சி நிறுவனம், மறமுலை நகர் - 603 209 அரசு வளர்ச்சி மற்றும் ஊராட்சித் துறை, தமிழ்நாடு அரசு ஒப்பந்தப் புள்ளி அறிவிப்பு

SHORT TAKES

ADHIR CITES SONIA SNUB TO SKIP DON FETE

New Delhi, Feb. 23: Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury will give a go-by to the official banquet hosted by President of India for US President Donald Trump on Tuesday, as a mark of protest for not inviting the leader of the principal opposition party.

Chowdhury said the Modi government has done away with the tradition of allowing the principal opposition party to hold discussions with the visiting US president, unlike in the past when such meetings were arranged.

"I will not attend the banquet hosted by the President on February 25. It is a protest on my behalf," he told. He said the government has not extended an invite to Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

"We do not feel good about the change in tradition by the Modi government, when the principal opposition party leaders are ignored during such key visits. In the past, we ensured the principal opposition party leaders meet the visiting dignitaries, including US President George Bush or Barack Obama," he said.

TRUMP, SIXTH U.S. PRESIDENT TO VISIT INDIA

Washington, Feb. 23: Donald Trump will be the sixth US President ever to travel to India and the first one to land in Ahmedabad.

Trump on Sunday left for his maiden visit to India for talks with the top Indian leadership during which the two countries are expected to significantly ramp up bilateral relations, especially in the defence and strategic ties.

When Air Force One touches down Ahmedabad on Monday, he will become the fourth consecutive American president to visit India, reflecting on the new phase of bonhomie in the 21st century between the two largest democracies of the world.

And he is only second White House occupant to travel to India in their first term. Barack Obama was the first US president to do so in 2010. Obama visited India twice in 2010 and 2015.

WB BJP CHIEF TAKES SWIPE AT MAMATA

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, FEB. 23

West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Sunday took a swipe at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for not raising her demands for funds by meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

Threatening to move the court if the Trinamul Congress creates any anomaly over the Municipal Election, he alleged that the ruling party has been trying to go to the civic body polls without giving time to the BJP. On Banerjee's recent letter to the PM seeking ₹50,000 crores as the Centre's dues to her government, the Midnapore BJP MP in Howrah asked, "Why does not she visit when the Centre calls her?"

He elaborated, "She should go and tell face to face what she has to say. She sent the letter just to show us as if she has sought something. But I suspect if she wants something at all because accounts are sought when someone goes there. That is why she does not attend the meetings. Half of the funds, starting from environment to security, return without getting spent."

Ghosh added, "These funds must be spent and the accounts of expenditure should be furnished also. The central government is waiting to disburse funds."

On the Municipal polls, he said, "They want the Municipal polls to be held anyhow so that other parties can not prepare themselves. But we want the polls to happen as per the rules. We will however move the court if any irregularity happens."

Hitting back to Ghosh, Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim said, "When the PM came here, the CM met him. She placed her demands before him. Earlier she did the same in Delhi."

On the state BJP chief's allegations against the Trinamul on the civic body polls, Hakim added, "As a municipal affairs minister, I even do not know when the municipal polls would happen until the election commission sends us any recommendation. But how could Ghosh know about it?"



A woman walks past a billboard featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump, ahead of latter's maiden visit to India, in Ahmedabad on Sunday. — PTI

Cong seeks India takeaways

Opposition party slams Centre for not putting interests of 'India first'

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 23

● SURJEWALA ASKS Centre pointed question on H-1 B visas that allows US employers to temporarily hire citizens from other countries

Ahead of the visit of United States of America President Donald Trump, the Congress slammed the central government charging it of not putting 'India First'. In a series of tweets Congress Communications Chief Randeep Singh Surjewala slammed the central government, beginning his attack with a pointed question on H-1 B visas that allows US employers to temporarily hire citizens of other countries.

He tweeted, "Trump government's restrictive immigration policies have hit H-1B visas. Indians get 70 pc of 85,000 H-1B visas. Now, rejection rate for India has increased from 6 pc in 2015 to 24 pc in 2019, especially for IT professionals. Post 10 million people gala event, will PM Modi ask for easing H-1B visas?"

The US-Taliban deal, which is expected to be signed at the end of this month and has been termed by Russia as an "important event for

peace," also figured in one of the tweets by Surjewala as he raised concern about national security.

"US prepares to sign deal with Taliban on Feb 29. What about India's red lines? Have we forgotten IC814 hijacking & release of terrorist Masood Azhar in Kandhar, who's JEM then attacked Parliament & Pulwama? As gala bash unfolds, Will Modiji raise our National Security concerns?" he wrote in another post.

Surjewala's other tweet said, "Will PM Modi ensure restoration of preferential trade treatment for India that allowed duty-free entry for \$5.6 billion worth of the country's exports to the United States?"

The general system of preferences (GSP) was scrapped by the US last year. The Congress has been taking shots at PM



Sand artist Laxmi Gaud creates a sculpture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump on the eve of latter's maiden visit to India, at Juhu Beach in Mumbai on Sunday. — PTI

Modi over the issue. On Friday, another senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said, "This visit should not be reduced to a photo opportunity or a PR exercise that would devalue the importance of our partnership... that would

also not be in India's national interest."

Surjewala also said up till 2018, India imported 250 crore ton Crude Oil/month from Iran on Rupee payment, 90 days credit and doorstep delivery.

The Modi government stopped buying cheaper Iran oil as per US sanctions that raised oil prices in India, he alleged. "As fest continues in Ahmedabad, Will Modiji secure cheaper oil for India," he asked.

SABARMATI ASHRAM ON DON ITINERARY

Ahmedabad, Feb. 23: US President Donald Trump will visit the Sabarmati Ashram here in Gujarat during his maiden visit to India on February 24, city Police Commissioner Ashish Bhatia said on Sunday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will accompany Trump to the Ashram, which is closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi and India's freedom struggle, in the midst of their joint roadshow from the international airport, he said.

Earlier, confusion prevailed over Trump's visit to the Ashram. Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Friday said the White House will take a call on such visit.

"Trump will arrive at the Ahmedabad International Airport at around 11:30 am tomorrow (February 24). It was already announced that Trump will land here directly from Washington. At the airport, he will be given the guard of honour," Bhatia said while addressing reporters.

He said Trump would embark on a roadshow after attending a cultural programme. "Trump will then proceed for the Sabarmati Ashram which he would be visiting for a very short time. From the Ashram, Trump will resume the roadshow, and reach the Motera stadium via Indira bridge," the police commissioner said.

PM Narendra Modi and Trump are scheduled to address the "Namaste Trump" event at the Motera cricket stadium. — PTI

Food testing lab, luxury suite, private spa to cater to Trump

● THE PREMIUM hotel also has an air quality monitoring system to ensure that its guests breathe air that is "as fresh as mountain breeze"

New Delhi, Feb. 23: With a food testing laboratory, elaborate security systems, uber luxurious amenities such as an ornate private drawing room and spa and floor butlers, the mansion-like Grand Presidential Suite of the ITC Maurya here that has played host to a number of heads of states is all set to welcome US President Donald Trump on Monday.

The premium hotel also has an air quality monitoring system and ensures that its guests breathe air that is "as fresh as mountain breeze," according to its website.

The two-bedroom Grand Presidential Suite, known as 'Chanakya', has hosted several heads of states including former US pres-

idents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and George W Bush. It has a private drawing room, a private terrace, a gym and a dining area along with a private entrance, a parking boulevard, a high speed elevator, elaborate security systems and a presidential floor butler, according to the hotel's website.

The website describes the 'Chanakya' suite as "a two-bedroom mansion of luxury with silk paneled walls, dark wood flooring and magnificent artwork." It says the suite boasts of a reception area, a large living room, a study, a peacock-themed

12-seater private dining room, an opulent bathroom with mother of pearl accessories and imperial décor and a mini spa and gymnasium.

"With the latest in technology, the suite has 55" high definition TV's and IPOD docking station. Exclusive access to a business courtyard, The Summit Lounge and Boardroom, provide an oasis where affairs of the state can be discussed in complete privacy," it says. The suite also has the facility of a microbiological laboratory for food testing.

President Trump and the delegation accompanying him will breathe clean air when in the hotel premises as it conforms to the World Health Organisation guidelines on air quality, sources said. They added that there are air purifiers installed in the hotel and monitors installed on every floor which show the air quality inside the property which is always in the 'good' quality category, that is between 0-50 on the Air Quality Index, even if the air outside is 'toxic'.

According to sources, the floor where the Grand Presidential Suite is located has been cordoned off by security personnel for the last two weeks. The entire hotel will be out of bounds for other guests as all the rooms have been booked for Trump's entourage. — PTI

TECHNO | SAWY

Police to use anti-drone technology to neutralise any suspicious drone

10,000 Gujarat cops deployed to guard Trump

Ahmedabad, Feb. 23: Over 10,000 policemen from different parts of Gujarat have been deployed at strategic locations in Ahmedabad as part of the elaborate security arrangements for US President Donald Trump's visit here on Monday, officials said.

The massive police deployment is in addition to officials of the United States Secret Service, and India's elite National Security Guards (NSG) and Special Protection Group who would also be guarding the US president's visit.

The Secret Service agents along with other

US security personnel have already arrived with their equipment and vehicles in at least four cargo planes during the last one week.

Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take part in a 22-km roadshow from the Ahmedabad international airport and then proceed for the 'Namaste Trump' event at the newly-built Sardar Patel Stadium in the city's Motera area, where over one lakh people are expected to be present.

Police will be using the anti-drone technology to neutralise any suspicious drone on the route, offi-

cials said, adding that an anti-sniper team of the NSG will also be stationed along the roadshow route, starting from the airport till the Motera stadium via Indira bridge.

With the help of sophisticated hand-held devices, the entire route has been scanned several times by the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad. Police and other security agencies have also conducted a rehearsal on the entire roadshow route using over 100 vehicles, they said.

Along with police personnel, who will be led by 25 IPS officers, teams of the Rapid Action Force, State Reserve Police,

Chetak Commando and Anti-Terrorist Squad are also deployed at strategic locations.

Before the US president's arrival, at least four C17 Globemaster cargo planes of the US Air Force have landed at the Ahmedabad international airport with security and communication equipment, Trumps' official helicopter 'Marine One' and a mammoth SUV-like vehicle. The giant SUV, which would be part of Trump's cavalcade during his 22-km long roadshow on February 24, is known as WHCA Roadrunner. WHCA stands for White House Communications Agency. — PTI

Motera's entry gate collapses

Ahmedabad, Feb. 23: A day before US President Donald Trump's visit to Ahmedabad, a makeshift VVIP entry gate erected outside the newly-built cricket stadium in Motera area here collapsed due to gusty winds on Sunday morning, an official said.

The entire incident was recorded by a bystander and aired on local television channels. The makeshift entry gate was made of welded steel rods and covered in flex banners. After sometime, a portion of another makeshift gate structure at the stadium's main entrance also collapsed due to the windy weather, another official said.

No one was injured in both the incidents and work was underway to put the structures back in place, he said.

"The (VVIP) entry gate collapsed when fabrication work was going on. It

was not a major incident. No one was injured in the incident," said Special Commissioner of Police, Crime Branch, Ajay Tomar said.

President Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in a roadshow here on Monday and later address the 'Namaste Trump' event at the Sardar Patel Stadium in Motera area where over one lakh people are expected to be present.

The stadium has already received 'Building Use' permission from the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, an official earlier said. It is the world's largest stadium with a capacity to accommodate 1.10 lakh spectators.

The stadium has been rebuilt after demolishing the old one which had a seating capacity of 49,000 spectators.

Agra decked up to welcome Trump

FROM PG 1

Huge security has been deployed across the city, especially along the nearly 13-km route to be taken by Trump's convoy from the airport to the Amarvilas hotel, and in and around the Taj. "There will be a three-layer security tomorrow, the innermost being of the US Secret Service, followed by UP Police and paramilitary forces, and also NSG and PAC. Police commandos have also been deployed," Singh said, adding, about 3,000 personnel will be guarding the city.

At some place Rapid Action Force personnel could be seen patrolling along the designated route as men in khaki also kept guard to ensure foolproof security.

UP Police commandos, and personnel of police and paramilitary forces also kept a tight vigil in and around the Taj Mahal premises.

According to the Agra DM, Trump is scheduled to arrive at the Taj Mahal complex at 5:15 pm on Monday, and he will spend about an hour at the famed 17th century mausoleum built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan.

"The US president's convoy will travel till the Oberoi Amarvilas hotel situated near the East Gate of the Taj Mahal complex. From there in president, his family and members of high-level delegation accompanying him will move in eco-friendly golf carts to travel into the monument premises," Singh said.

U.P. GOVERNOR, CM TO WELCOME TRUMP IN AGRA

Agra, Feb. 23: US President Donald Trump will be welcomed by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on his arrival at the airport in Agra where hundreds of artistes will perform, a top official said on Sunday.

"The UP Governor and Chief Minister will welcome US President Trump at the Kheria airport. However, they will not accompany him to the Taj Mahal. The Governor and the Chief Minister would also be at the airport to send him off," Agra District Magistrate (DM) Prabhu N Singh said. — PTI

TRUMP, HIS FAMILY and other members will move in eco-friendly golf carts to travel into Taj Mahal premises

As per Supreme Court directions, petrol or diesel-operated vehicles are not permitted within 500 m of the Taj Mahal's gate.

The administration has been busy in the last few days in getting streets spruced up, walls beautified with thematic paintings and the lawns of the iconic Taj Mahal bedecked with flowers, giving the historic city of Agra a makeover.



President Donald Trump, with first lady Melania Trump, gives a thumbs up as they walk to board Air Force One to depart for India, Sunday. — PTI



A screenshot of the Baahubali video retweeted by US President Donald Trump ahead of his maiden visit to India on Sunday.

DECCAN Chronicle

24 FEBRUARY 2020

Judge's praise of PM height of sycophancy

If there was a prize for judicial triteness, the contributions of the Indian judiciary's cream at the opening of the International Judicial Conference 2020, hosted by the Supreme Court, on Saturday would be a clear winner.

Cringe-worthy as that was, it pales into insignificance seen against the sycophancy towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the out-of-context deference shown to exactly the sort of things said routinely by the current political establishment.

Their lordships simply failed to inspire confidence in the idea of the independence of the judiciary as they delivered sermons on the subject of "Judiciary in a Changing World" before a gathering from 20 nations. What impression of India's democracy they left on visitors is moot.

Justice Arun Kumar Mishra, the third senior most judge of the Supreme Court, eulogised the PM as "an internationally acclaimed visionary" and a "versatile genius who thinks globally and acts locally" as he thanked Mr Modi for his "inspiring speech which would act as a catalyst in initiating the deliberations and setting the agenda for the conference".

The PM, in his speech, thanked India's judiciary for striking a balance between the needs of the environment and imperatives of development, and for delivering verdicts that were accepted by all Indians. These evidently struck Justice Mishra as being forays into genius territory. For other Indians, the question is apt to arise: In a tricky case, can ordinary citizens expect to be shown the same solicitude as the government if hosannas are publicly sung to the PM by a Supreme Court judge?

In the annals of India's judiciary, the Supreme Court has keeled before the executive in the past (as during the Emergency) and is perceived to be doing so to this day. The Ayodhya case, the Judge Loya case, silence on habeas corpus matters pertaining to Kashmir, and the manner of handling the Rafale issue, have left much to be desired, and raised questions. However, it is hard to recall words that parallel Justice Mishra's in praise of the PM.

Indeed, rectitude and reticence of a high order were not so long ago deemed worthy attributes even of sub-district judges, leave alone luminaries of the higher judiciary, as judicial officers routinely declined social and sometimes even family invitations to underline the neutrality and impartiality of their office. Once when PM Rajiv Gandhi sought to visit the Chief Justice of India who had taken ill, the CJI quite rightly advised him not to, lest the harmless gesture be misunderstood.

The present CJI could have been more circumspect too at Saturday's conference. Instead, Justice S.A. Bobde stressed "fundamental duties", exactly as Mr Modi does. He spoke of courts functioning courts in India 2,000 years ago (Manu Smriti), which seemed like pandering to the gods of present-day politics, forgetting that legal institutions of ancient Egypt go back 5,000 years, and those of ancient Babylon (Hamurabi), ancient Rome — from which a good deal of modern laws derive — and ancient Greece pre-date the ancient Hindu system by many centuries.

Right to protest fundamental

The right to peaceful assembly without arms is a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(b) of our Constitution. The government of the day cannot insist that such an assembly must not question a law passed by the legislature. In fact, democracy works the other way when people register their legitimate protest against government policies and laws in a peaceful way and the government engages them in talks, leading to better laws and policies.

But the police in some states have got some bizarre ideas about that constitutional right. If you Google, there are half a dozen instances where the Hyderabad city police denied permission to people who wanted to take out processions against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The Andhra Pradesh high court was the other day constrained to admonish the police for its arbitrariness and ordered it to form guidelines for deciding whether to give permission to a rally or not.

What is intriguing is that while anti-CAA protests are regularly been denied permission, those supporting the legislation get permission, the latest being the one to be addressed by Union home minister Amit Shah. In Uttar Pradesh, the police face allegations of shooting and killing protesters, though the chief minister denies wrongdoing on the part of the police.

Sometime back, the Madras high court overruled the Chennai police and granted permission to an anti-CAA rally and asked the police to videograph it using drones. The Supreme Court, on its part, has been negotiating with the Shaheen Bagh agitators fully recognising their right to protest.

Representatives of the Union government, starting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while defending the law, have repeatedly recognised the people's right to dissent. If that's the case, the governments must ask their police forces not to be more loyal to the king than the king himself and recognise the rights of the citizens of the republic instead.

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Anita Katyal
 Political Gup-Shup
 Bid to 'shield' Modi over CAA; rank and file for new Cong prez

Efforts are currently on in the Bharatiya Janata Party to insulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the party's humiliating defeat in the recent Delhi Assembly polls. Party insiders talk in hushed tones about serious differences between Mr Modi and his confidant Union home minister, Amit Shah. It is being said that Mr Modi was not in favour of rushing ahead with the enactment of the amended citizenship law at this juncture and wanted to take it up at a later date. But Mr Shah apparently brought this matter to the notice of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh that is said to have pressed Mr Modi to defer to his home minister's wishes, leaving him no choice but to back Mr Shah. This, BJP leaders said, explains why Mr Modi was not present in the Lok Sabha during the debate on the amended citizenship law. In fact, he did not even vote for the bill though the party had issued a three-line whip to all its MPs. However, sceptics are not convinced with this explanation, as the Modi-Shah duo is known as the

original jodi no. one.
 There is no end to the rumblings in the Congress as an increasing number of frustrated party leaders are publicly demanding that the leadership crisis be resolved at the earliest. The subtext of these statements is that Rahul Gandhi should make it clear that he is not ready to helm the Congress and an election is called giving another leader, preferably a non-Gandhi, an opportunity to bid for this job. There is talk that all those (and it is a sizeable number) wanting greater clarity on the leadership front, are planning to write a letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi in this regard. But, the question is who will bell the cat, as Sandeep Dikshit said recently. Another leader put it aptly: The Congress, he said, is like the Mughal harem where the concubines are constantly sniping but hardly ever revolt.
 Former cricketer Kirti Azad who crossed over from the Bharatiya Janata Party to the Congress on the eve of last year's

Lok Sabha election apparently is keen on going back to his old party. Mr Azad is feeling restless after his wife Poonam Azad, a Congress candidate from the Sangam Vihar seat, suffered a humiliating defeat in the recent Delhi Assembly election. He was also hoping to be named Delhi Congress president but had to make do as the party's campaign committee chief. According to capital's political grapevine, Mr Azad is sending out feelers to his old BJP colleagues with the explanation that he had differences with the late Arun Jaitley but had never criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Azad is keen on rejoining the BJP before this year's Bihar Assembly election but his ghar wapsi could prove difficult as his detractors are waiting to point out that the cricketer-turned-politician had lost no time in slamming Mr Modi when he joined the Congress.
 They may be battling each other publicly but former Uttarakhand chief minister Harish Rawat was quick to come to

the rescue of his successor Trivendra Singh Rawat when he recently faced a fresh rebellion from his party colleagues. State minister Satpal Maharaj and Union minister for human resource development Ramesh Pokhriyal are both eyeing the chief minister's gaddi and have been lobbying hard for a leadership change. In the midst of this churning, Harish Rawat issued a statement accusing the BJP's central leadership of creating political instability in Uttarakhand. The Congress leader pointed out that the BJP had changed as many as nine chief ministers when it was in power and also gone out of its way to ousting him when he was occupying the top post. He also underlined that no BJP legislator was in touch with him. Last heard, Trivendra Rawat was heaving a sigh of relief as his political opponent's timely statement helped him survive the latest threat to his kursi.
 Punjab Congress leaders are secretly celebrating the party's dismal performance

and the Aam Aadmi Party's victory in the Delhi polls. Disgruntled Congress leaders in the state, who have been on the look-out for other options, are now pinning their hopes on the AAP which has a base in the state and has the potential to grow, especially after its spectacular victory in Delhi. So far their choices were limited. The Bharatiya Janata Party doesn't count for much in Punjab and the Shiromani Akali Dal is facing a serious internal crisis. It is no coincidence then that within days of the Delhi election result, several Congress leaders, including ministers, raised a banner of revolt against Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh. At the same time, there is talk that Congress rebel leader Navjot Singh Sidhu may be joining the AAP. Marginalised by the chief minister, a sulking Mr Sidhu has been looking for a way out for several months now.
 Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist



Compassion only door to hope in the Valley



Kashmir, like the Internet, has been mostly in silent mode since August 5. The quietude could be deceptive. It is never easy to decipher the Kashmiri mind. Kashmiri duality has been both a liability and an asset. After August 5, it has kept everybody befuddled. Sometimes nothing needs to be done; you just live through it, wait it out. The winter in any event is a period of hibernation and this has been a particularly severe winter with an extended chillai kalan. At this stage we could claim that the security paradigm has succeeded but it shelf life has run out. If the Kashmiri is tired of mourning the demise of Article 370, Delhi too seems to be back to the mid-1990s. Militancy has not ended. Radicalisation is growing apace with hopelessness but the Islamic State, which is often talked about, is still alien to Kashmir. The J&K police, which knows best about the goings-on in the Valley, is no longer wholly trusted. Boys laugh at the constable, yet he is the only one who knows what they are up to. There is talk of infiltration of foreigners in the last six months, yet those killed in recent encounters have mostly been homegrown. What is the Jaish, the deadliest of foreign terrorist groups, up to? The security forces, as always, have done more than their job in Kashmir. Now it is up to the politicians, as our generals have repeatedly said. The Kashmiri is undoubtedly tired, castigated, beaten, desperately seeking normalcy. Much as he despises defeat, he is looking for a way out. In the hopelessness, he needs hope most of all. It is time to listen and to engage with the Kashmiri. Since the lockdown, an impression has gained

time. As the former, renowned Mossad chief, Efraim Halevy, said of the Hamas, the Kashmiri can neither be destroyed nor permanently contained. Engagement is the only way forward. Without politics and democracy, radicalism, the offshoot of frustration, will eat into Kashmir, particularly its youth. P.V. Narasimha Rao understood this when, with terrorism not fully subdued, he promised the sky to the Kashmiris to facilitate elections in J&K in 1996. Then too, Farooq Abdullah came to Delhi's rescue. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed never tired of saying that there was no solution to Kashmir except Farooq. The Mufti's refrain before he became chief minister in 2002 was that politics in Kashmir needed a level playing field. The playing field now is as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. The three former chief ministers who could possibly fill the void are all under detention and yet there appears to be a rush to the mainstream. In a vacuum everyone is a chief minister, or so they think. The Kashmiris are always ready to listen and engage. The separatists too, at least "the Advani Hurriyat", so labelled in Kashmir because of their engagement with the former deputy prime minister in early 2004, need to seriously contemplate, if given another, last, chance, whether they would grab it or continue to look over their shoulder and be consigned to the dustbin of history. The magic of democracy is that hardliners get moderated and mainstreamed. Kashmir cannot be

changed without compassion. It needs a sense of belonging and dignity. That is why we should also engage with Pakistan. Sudheendra Kulkarni, who visited Pakistan in December, wrote on his return that Pakistan was ready, more ready than ever before, for engagement with India. Imran Khan obviously wants peace but if people who visit Delhi via Islamabad and Rawalpindi are to be believed, then the generals too now want peace with India. Imran should not miss out on the invitation to visit India for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meet that may pave the way for the resumption of the Saarc summit. As the poet Wallace Stevens says, "After the final no comes yes and on that yes the future depends." Meanwhile, Kashmir, which we rightly believe is nobody's business, appears to be becoming everybody's business. In Davos, with Imran Khan by his side, President Trump volunteered not for the first time to mediate between India and Pakistan. What Trump will say during his much-publicised visit is anybody's guess. Given his sense of self-importance, the Kashmiri always finds himself stranded at the "crossroads". Even when it is time to look ahead, he will be harking back to the past and his litany of grievances. Despair, however, Noam Chomsky says, even in the most horrendous situations, is not an option. Kashmir has two choices; give up and wait for worse to follow, or grasp whatever opportunity comes its way. Our "atoot ang" is estranged. Friends are no longer what they used to be; at times, only familiarity remains. But Kashmir chose correctly in 1947 and will again, whenever tested. Kashmiriyat is not dead. Kashmiri goodness will prevail.
 The writer is former chief of the Research and Analysis Wing. He is also the co-author of Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years and The Spy Chronicles: RAW, ISI and the Illusion of Peace.

LETTERS
 PRIYANKA'S QUESTION
 Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi has raised a question over funding of committee formed to oversee US President's Gujarat visit. When very high profile and most powerful world leader visits, our country, spending money during his visit should be outside the purview of opposition leaders. ₹100 crores is peanuts. Priyanka is an upcoming leader. She should guard herself against political petty mindedness and cultivate political culture during the visits of foreign dignitaries. Any quarrel with the BJP government should not be allowed to degenerate to low levels of politics. The Congress leaders need not fritter away their energies on finding fault with every action of the government. Let them begin their rivalries after the departure of the dignitary. Political maturity is what is needed now.
 V.N. Gopal, Chennai

ALL IN THE GAME
 This refers to the report that Vidhya Rani, the elder daughter of slain forest brigand Veerappan, has joined the BJP. If criminals and their kith and kin can become lawmakers in our country, what's the harm in a poacher's daughter joining politics? In fact, had Veerappan been alive today, he would have been a leader by now, given the patronage he had received from certain outfits in Tamil Nadu during his halcyon days in the Satyamangalam forest.
 P.G. Menon, Chennai

TAYLOR'S ACHIEVEMENT
 For years Ross Taylor has been a vital cog in the Kiwis batting line up. Taylor made history when he took the field against India in the ongoing opening Test at Wellington, as he became the first player in the world to represent 100 matches in all the three formats of the game. (Taylor completes a special treble, Feb. 22). He is already New Zealand's leading run-scorer in Tests and ODIs. On his day, the stylish right-hander can dismantle any bowling attack in the world with disdain, employing his repertoire of strokes. The attacking batsman is particularly strong on the leg side, Taylor has the special ability to mix offence with defence. This Taylor has the adroitness in stitching runs with high consistency, the hallmark of his success.
 R. Sivakumar, Chennai

India, US can work closely, but there are limits



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

When then US President Richard Nixon landed in New Delhi at the height of a boiling Indian summer in 1969, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi received him with the far from welcoming remark: "You came at the wrong time of day and the wrong time of the year." That comment could be made on Monday to President Donald Trump, not because the mercury is bubbling or Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an ungracious host, but because of the political and economic pressures behind the current unrest. India is at sixes and sevens.

acknowledges it, far from being another Asian hegemon, India is not only poor but backward and lagging far behind developed nations in all the globally recognised indices of growth. There is little question, therefore, of India pressuring an assertive and expansionist China either to do business on American terms or adjust its traditional geopolitical thinking to a new concert of Asia. Yet, this is what the US seeks. It is the ultimate objective of moves like reviving the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue which the Chinese view with deep suspicion, and renaming the oldest and largest US command "which includes 36 nations as well as both the Pacific and Indian Oceans" the Indo-Pacific Command. But despite these marks of approbation for a nation in which he, as a businessman, has invested his name and reputation if not his money, Mr Trump will find India in some disarray if he looks beyond Mr Modi's brave rhetoric. The Aam Aadmi Party's victory in the recent Delhi Assembly elections warned the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party

Whether or not the ebullient US President acknowledges it, far from being another Asian hegemon, India is not only poor but backward and lagging far behind developed nations in all the globally recognised indices of growth

that there is always an alternative to the ruling party in a democracy. (In fact, one reason for Mr Trump's visit is that he himself faces the democratic test in November.) The tumult in so many cities over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Population Register and the National Register of Citizens may be illogical and emotion-driven, but does show up the government's helplessness in the face of a popular upsurge that the Opposition parties might yet harness to electoral purpose as Jayaprakash Narayan was able to do in 1977. What might further encourage such Opposition aspirants as

Rahul Gandhi and Mamata Banerjee is that the economy is in the doldrums. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's refusal to admit this explained the irrelevance of her recent lacklustre Budget. Unemployment is the highest in 50 years, exports are stagnating, foreign direct investment has not lived up to expectations, a sluggish 4.5 per cent growth is dragging down the global average (as Gita Gopinath, the IMF's chief economist, pointed out much to New Delhi's chagrin), only 15 million Indians pay income-tax, and the government is trying to sell nationalised assets worth \$30 billion to meet its fiscal deficit. Mr Trump and his high-powered team must already have some inkling of the straits in which India finds itself. They don't need to peer behind Ahmedabad's newly-built wall and gaze on a shantytown of 500 slums housing nearly 3,000 slum dwellers to understand the level of destitution. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services would not have reported that nearly 7,000 Green Card applications by Indians — almost 35 times the

number in 2018 — are pending if conditions were hunky-dory at home. New Delhi cannot but be evasive on this point because one cause of high unemployment is its own abrupt and arbitrary decision to demonetise high-denomination currency notes and the devastating impact it had on the informal sector. None of this will come as a surprise to the Americans who must know that the growth rate of Indo-US trade fell from 8.4 per cent in last year's first two quarters to a mere 4.5 per cent in the last quarter because of the economic slowdown. Trade in goods and services stood at a miserable minus 2.3 per cent, in contrast with the 9.6 per cent growth recorded for the year's first two quarters. The old "Make in India" slogan associated with the Congress Party and its swadeshi commitment that Mr Modi discovered and reiterates as if it is his own coinage can't by itself boost manufacturing. India's relations with the United States depend to some extent on the party that occupies the White House. There may be a philosophical com-

monality with the Democrats like John F. Kennedy or Jimmy Carter, but their own programmes have allowed Republican Presidents like Dwight D. Eisenhower and George W. Bush to cooperate more closely on a practical plane. There are limits, however, to such engagement, and it might not be in India's interest to play an active role in the Honolulu-based Indo-Pacific Command, which covers "over half of the earth's surface and its diverse populations, from Hollywood to Bollywood, from polar bears to penguins, as former US defence secretary Jim Mattis once put it. India's priorities are nearer home and more economic than military. It is to be hoped that swept off his feet by Mr Trump's heady flattery, Mr Modi will not commit India either to massive weapons purchases to counter the ever-present terrorism bogey, or to policing duties that do not directly benefit our impoverished millions.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

Coronavirus isn't the first: Why have so many recent viruses come from bats?



Matt Ridley

I'm no Nostradamus, but 20 years ago when I was commissioned to write a short book about disease in the new millennium, I predicted that if a new pandemic did happen it would be a virus, not a bacterium or animal parasite, and that we would catch it from a wild animal. "My money is on bats," I wrote. We now know that the natural host and reservoir of the new coronavirus, Covid-19, is a bat, and that the virus probably got into people via a live-animal market in Wuhan. This is not the first disease bats have given us. Rabies possibly originated in bats. So did, and does, Ebola, outbreaks of which usually trace back to people coming into contact with bat roosts in caves, trees or buildings. Marburg virus, similar to Ebola, first killed people in Germany in 1967 and is now known to be a bat virus. Since 1994 Hendra virus has occasionally jumped from Australian fruit bats into horses and rarely people, with lethal effect. Since 1998 another fruit-bat virus, Nipah, has also infected and killed people mainly in India and Bangladesh. Sars, which originated in China in 2003, is derived from bats, though possibly via civet cats. So is Mers, a similar bat-borne coronavirus that's killed hundreds of people and camels in the Middle East since 2012. All these have high mortality but are not easily

passed on from one person to another. Covid-19 is the opposite: highly contagious but rarely lethal. There is a good reason for this trade-off between infectivity and virulence, but it helps to think like a virus to understand it. On the whole, unless transmitted by insects, dirty water or sex, new diseases evolve towards lower virulence if they spread far. The 200 or so different rhinoviruses, adenoviruses and coronaviruses that cause what we call "the common cold" have a vested interest in not disabling us much, let alone killing us: they want us to struggle into work, coughing and sneezing, or turn up at parties, kissing and shaking hands. In this way, milder strains spread farther than fiercer ones and gradually displace them. Likewise, bats can "carry" Covid-19 but not die. By contrast, malaria wants us to lie down in a darkened room, delirious, so as to attract and not notice mosquitoes. Herpes, syphilis and HIV — the worst new animal-acquired infection of recent decades by far, caught from chimpanzees — like to subsist for months or years in the hope that we move on to a new sexual partner. Evolution is a cunning foe. Why are bats responsible for so many recent zoonoses (poor Greek for infections acquired from other animal species)? First, bats are mammals, which means they are sufficiently closely

Fortunately, the modern world not only makes us a tempting target for new diseases, it also gives us new tools to combat them. It took years to sequence the genome of HIV and days for Covid-19.

related to us for some of their viruses to thrive in our bodies. A virus that lives in a fish or a bird is less likely to be able to infect a human being, influenza being a rare exception, caught from ducks via pigs. Second, bats have never been domesticated. On the whole we have already caught the diseases of cows and pigs and dogs. Measles, smallpox, anthrax and tuberculosis were all gifts from our farmed animals. Third, unlike most other mammals, bats live in huge flocks — just as we do. They therefore host viruses that spread by casual contact. Tigers meet so few other tigers and so rarely that they are hopeless hosts for ambitious viruses. Bracken Cave, in Texas, is home to roughly 20 million breeding Mexican free-tailed bats, similar to the (human) population of the Mexico City urban area. In places there are 500 bat pups per square foot on the wall. To a virus that represents a tasty buffet. But why now? That is easy to answer too. It's not because of climate change or the destruction of forests. Bats have lived in belfries, as well as dead trees, for centuries. It's because we now live at such high densities and travel so much. With 7.7 billion people on the planet, many of whom now travel long distances,

we are a tempting target. As I wrote 20 years ago: "The rewards for a germ that colonised us would be immense. It would quickly become one of the most successful microbes in history." The chances are that plenty of people died of bat-borne infections in the past too, but the epidemic usually petered out because villages were small and long-distance travel was rare. However, it seems bats probably did not give us Covid-19 directly. The virus's sequence of RNA (DNA's cousin) in human beings is 96 per cent the same as that found in a bat sampled in Yunnan in 2013 during the search for the origin of Sars. This implies that they share a common ancestor at least 25 years ago. By contrast, the pangolin version of the virus is 99 per cent similar to ours. Probably, captured pangolins, on sale in the live-animal market in Wuhan and mainly imported from Malaysia, had somehow caught the virus from bats. Pangolins are globally endangered because of demand from China.

Fortunately, the modern world not only makes us a tempting target for new diseases, it also gives us new tools to combat them. It took years to sequence the genome of HIV, weeks to sequence the genome of Sars and days for Covid-19. Our ability to diagnose the disease is therefore rapidly catching up, and the chances are that a vaccine will soon be available, while quarantine and strict self-isolation may yet keep the virus from going global. If it does, virulence will probably fall; not much comfort for those who do die, but meaning that the death of billions is unlikely. In the meantime, please can we learn two obvious lessons? First, let's stop bringing wild animals into markets alive (if at all): viruses do not survive long in dead bodies, even if not refrigerated. It's a cruel practice anyway. And second, let's keep our distance from bats. Definitely don't eat them.

By arrangement with the Spectator



'The job does come with strings attached.'

Lal Masjid: Is Pakistan's govt beginning to appease terror again?



Pervez Hoodbhoy

Maulana Abdul Aziz of Lal Masjid fame is back on the scene. He is threatening a second round unless his demands are met. Negotiations are currently in process to placate him. One wonders if old memories have gotten lost. Or, instead, are they still so fresh that the authorities dare not refuse Aziz's demands. Surely it's time to recall how appeasing terrorism culminated in the horrific disaster of 2007. That's when Islamabad became a battlefield above which thick smoke filled the sky for days. Led by Abdul Aziz and his brother Abdur Rashid Ghazi (later killed), Lal Masjid clerics had set out to create their version of an Islamic state in the city. On April 12, 2007, in an FM broadcast from an illegal transmitter on the mosque's premises, they issued a chilling threat to the government: "There will be suicide blasts in every nook and cranny of the country. We have weapons, grenades and we are experts in manufacturing bombs. We are not afraid of death." This was four months before the final showdown on July 4, 2007. The mosque's clerics had attracted around them a core of banned militant organisations including Al Qaeda and Jaish-i-Mohammad. A state within a state, Lal Masjid was a magnet for fighters from Central Asian Republics. Inside the mosque's premises, Ghazi and Aziz ran their own Islamic court. Here they received the Saudi Arabian ambassador and negotiated with the Chinese ambassador for the release of his country's kidnapped nationals. For many months Gen. Musharraf's government looked the other way. Even as arms and fuel were being stockpiled inside the mosque and Jamia Hafsa students rampaged across Islamabad, the government rejected suggestions to cut off the mosque-madrasah complex's electricity and gas supply, block its website, or shut down its illegal FM radio station. To this day, we do not know if this was cowardice or complicity. The softness shown to the mullahs left Islamabad's residents bewildered. Clearly, the state had a hard fist because just months earlier the 80-year-old Oxford-educated Nawab Akbar Bugti had been killed by aerial bombardment in Kohlu, Balochistan. But on the Lal Masjid matter Musharraf's chief negotiator, Chaudhry Shujaat Husain, flatly ruled out the use of force. Speaking to the press he described the Burqa Brigade militants as "our daughters" with whom negotiations would continue and against whom "no operation could be contemplated". The reader is asked to imagine the course of events had there been a similar uprising in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran or Egypt. If their capitals had been taken over, their response would have been immediate — and perhaps unforgivably brutal. On the other hand, Lal Masjid militants were needlessly pampered until the Chinese forced Musharraf to act. The rest became history. Islamabad shook to the sound of rockets and bombs and carnage fol-

lowed. Ten SSG crack commandos were killed by the heavily fortified defenders and scores wounded. In an earlier suicide attack on a checkpoint near the mosque, over a dozen policemen died. On the side of Lal Masjid defenders the death count ran into hundreds. A massive cache of weapons was seized after the defenders were eliminated and placed in police custody. Weeks later, it disappeared mysteriously. It did not take long for the death of soldiers and policemen to be forgotten. No FIR was ever lodged by the authorities against Aziz and his companions. Sometime later, he walked out a free man and resumed his preaching. But many years later Khurram Zaki, a 40-year old civil rights activist from Karachi, decided to take on Aziz's hate speech against Shias. He and his friends were to file an FIR but on May 7, 2016, just days after he declared his intent, he was gunned down by unknown assailants on a motorcycle. No normal state rewards those who once stood up against it in violent, armed insurrection and now threaten it again. Normal states do not reward those who kill their own soldiers and policemen. Surely such abnormal behaviour must have a cause. Could it be because no other country is particularly interested in reining in the Lal Masjid clerics? Let us note that last week the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hafiz Saeed, was convicted by an anti-terrorism court to two prison terms each of five-and-a-half years. The openly whispered secret is that the punishment came not because he deserves it but because this helps avoid Pakistan being blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force. Even if true, this does not explain everything. We know that FATF carries a big stick and so one can slightly understand why Hafiz Saeed must be jailed for now. But, after great cost, Aziz's stick had been whittled down to size. Why fear it? Why agree to give, as reported, ₹35 million and 20 kanals of expensive urban land? Certainly, the authorities refuse to negotiate with either the PTM or Baloch nationalists and prefer crushing to talking. Is there something different here? An answer of sorts could once be hazarded. Extra-state actors provided by Aziz and others were cheap, disposable tools for pursuing foreign policy objectives in Kashmir and Afghanistan. The strategy eventually backfired and Pakistan finally dumped it. Neighbouring countries now make fewer complaints compared to years ago. Confirming the shift, and presumably with the backing of the current Army establishment, Prime Minister Imran Khan famously tweeted on October 5, 2019, that "anyone crossing the LoC from AJK to provide humanitarian aid or support for Kashmiri struggle will play into the hands of the Indian narrative". One doesn't doubt the sincerity of his statement. Pakistan is far more peaceful now that the age of extra-state actors has passed. So why continue kowtowing to Aziz and his kind? I am totally stumped. The authorities must explain why they are choosing to appease those who fought the state and killed its soldiers and policemen. They have to tell us why they are handling with velvet gloves those responsible for the tragic sufferings of 13 years ago. Else a second tragedy may not be far away.

By arrangement with Dawn

A prayer is a 'thank you' to existence



Amrit Sadhana

All over the world, down the ages, religions were centred around prayers and worship. In fact, prayer is one of the most ancient expressions of religion. The practices and rites of contemporary tribal peoples might offer a glimpse into remnants of earlier forms of religious behaviour. We can say it is an advanced form of asking for help from the idol you believe in. No doubt, it strengthens your faith, but it also means throwing your responsibility on someone. Someone else must do something for you. And you are a passive receiver. The allure of prayer is so strong

that people are not willing to get over it. There is certainly a bio-energetic reason why humans resort to praying in the hour of crisis. "Prayer and meditation are highly effective in lowering our reactivity to traumatic and negative events," says Dr Paul Hokemeyer, a marriage, family and addictions therapist. "They are powerful because they focus our thoughts on something outside ourselves. During times of stress, our limbic system, more commonly known as our central nervous system, becomes hyper-activated, which does two things: it thrusts us into survival mode, where we freeze, fight or flee the situation. This also shuts down our executive functioning [and] prevents us from thinking clearly. Therefore, when we're stressed out, we make poor decisions and act in self-destructive ways... When we sit down and engage in prayer or meditation, we can shift

away from this frightened and stressed survival mode into an intentional state and re-engage our prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that enables us to make intelligent, mindful decisions." However, it is good to remember that prayer and meditation are not synonymous. Meditation is doing something internally to achieve something, taking in your own responsibility. For the modern man, the prerequisite of prayer, the belief or faith is hard to come by. We must remember that this is the scientific age, which is founded on doubt, not belief. Therefore, Osho has changed the whole connotation of prayer. He says that prayer is the last stage, the culmination of meditation. For: "Prayer is love. Prayer is gratitude. Prayer is thankfulness — to the sunrise or to the sunset, or to the sky full of stars, or to the earth, to the mountains, to the rivers. It is not a belief; we are part of it. Prayer can be pos-

sible only if your life has become so beautiful, so blissful, that you feel gratitude, a thankfulness towards existence. So, prayer is not for everybody, it is only for those who have succeeded in meditation. It is the last word in meditation. When you have come to know the silence of existence, when you have experienced life itself, when you have experienced the unspeakable, when you are drowned in the beatitude of your meditation, the last word is wordless gratitude, a thankfulness." Prayer is not asking for something; it is an overflow of contentment. Existence has been compassionate that it has allowed us to come out of misery, it has allowed us to experience the ultimate of consciousness and we are grateful to it. It is a "thank you" to existence.

Amrit Sadhana is editor of Osho Times International. She facilitates meditation workshops based on Osho insights around the country and abroad.



IN BRIEF

Car crash kills 3 Arizona students

Phoenix (US): Three Arizona high school students enrolled in an automotive technology program were killed when a college van went off a highway on the way back from a professional drag racing event near Phoenix, officials said on Saturday. The van crashed Friday night on US 70 near Pima, a rural community about 135 miles (217 kilometers) east of Phoenix, the state Department of Public Safety said in a statement. An adult was driving the van carrying seven high schoolers and one college student, the DPS said. Two 16-year-old boys from the small towns of Thatcher and Fort Thomas and a 17-year-old boy from the tiny town of Duncan were ejected and killed when the van veered over the center line, went off the highway and rolled, the DPS and college officials said. The driver and five other students suffered injuries that weren't life-threatening.

Togo opponent claims poll 'fraud'

Lome: Togo tallied ballots Sunday after a key challenger insisted he could cause a shock upset despite what he claimed was "fraud" in an election President Faure Gnassingbe was widely expected to win. Troops briefly surrounded the homes of opposition candidate Agbeyome Kodjo and one of his main allies shortly after voting ended on Saturday in a move the authorities said was for their "own safety". Kodjo, a former prime minister and head of the national assembly, has emerged as a dark horse challenger looking to stop Gnassingbe's bid for a fourth term in office that would extend his family's half-century domination over the West African nation. The president and his supporters had been confident of a resounding victory in the first round, despite widespread disillusionment after 53 years of dynastic rule that has failed to drag many out of poverty.

US bus crash: 3 dead, 18 injured

Pala Mesa: A charter bus swerved on a rain-slicked Southern California highway and rolled down an embankment Saturday, killing three people and injuring 18 others, authorities said. Several passengers were thrown from the bus, and one of the dead was trapped under the vehicle after it landed on its roof shortly after 10 a.m. off Interstate 15 in Pala Mesa, an unincorporated community about 45 miles north of San Diego, North County Fire Protection District spokesman John Choi said. "There were no seat belts on this bus," Choi said. Another person who died was trapped inside the bus, he added. The wounded were taken to three hospitals with varying injuries, Choi said.

LANKA BRIEFS U.N. ON HR PROBE PULLOUT

Colombo, Feb. 23: A Sri Lankan diplomat has briefed the president of the U.N. Human Rights Council on the government's decision to withdraw from a 2015 resolution calling for an investigation into alleged human rights violations committed during the country's long civil war. Foreign Ministry Secretary Ravinatha Ayrasinha met Human Rights Council President Elisabeth Titchy-Fisslberger in Geneva and informed her that Sri Lanka's Cabinet has decided to withdraw from the resolution, the foreign ministry said Saturday. Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena will formally announce the decision in his speech at the 43rd session of the council next Wednesday, the ministry said. Gunawardena will also respond to an oral update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet. He will later meet the official. Sri Lanka co-sponsored a resolution in 2015 along with 11 other countries, also including the United States, Britain, Australia and Germany, calling for an investigation into alleged serious human rights violations against both government forces and the now-defeated Tamil Tiger rebels in the island's civil war, which ended in 2009.

Sanders sweeps Nevada caucuses

Bernie solidifies frontrunner status as Democratic nominee for 2020 Prez poll

Las Vegas, Feb. 23: Progressive firebrand Bernie Sanders earned a decisive victory Saturday in the Nevada caucuses, solidifying his frontrunner status in the race to choose the Democratic nominee who faces President Donald Trump in November's election.

His win is a substantial accomplishment in a state seen as an important bellwether because it is the first diverse electorate to weigh in on the 2020 presidential race.

It also shows that Sanders has been able to broaden a coalition beyond the narrow limits of leftist voters, refuting the argument used by several moderates in the race that he would not be able to bridge the divide between progressives and centrists.

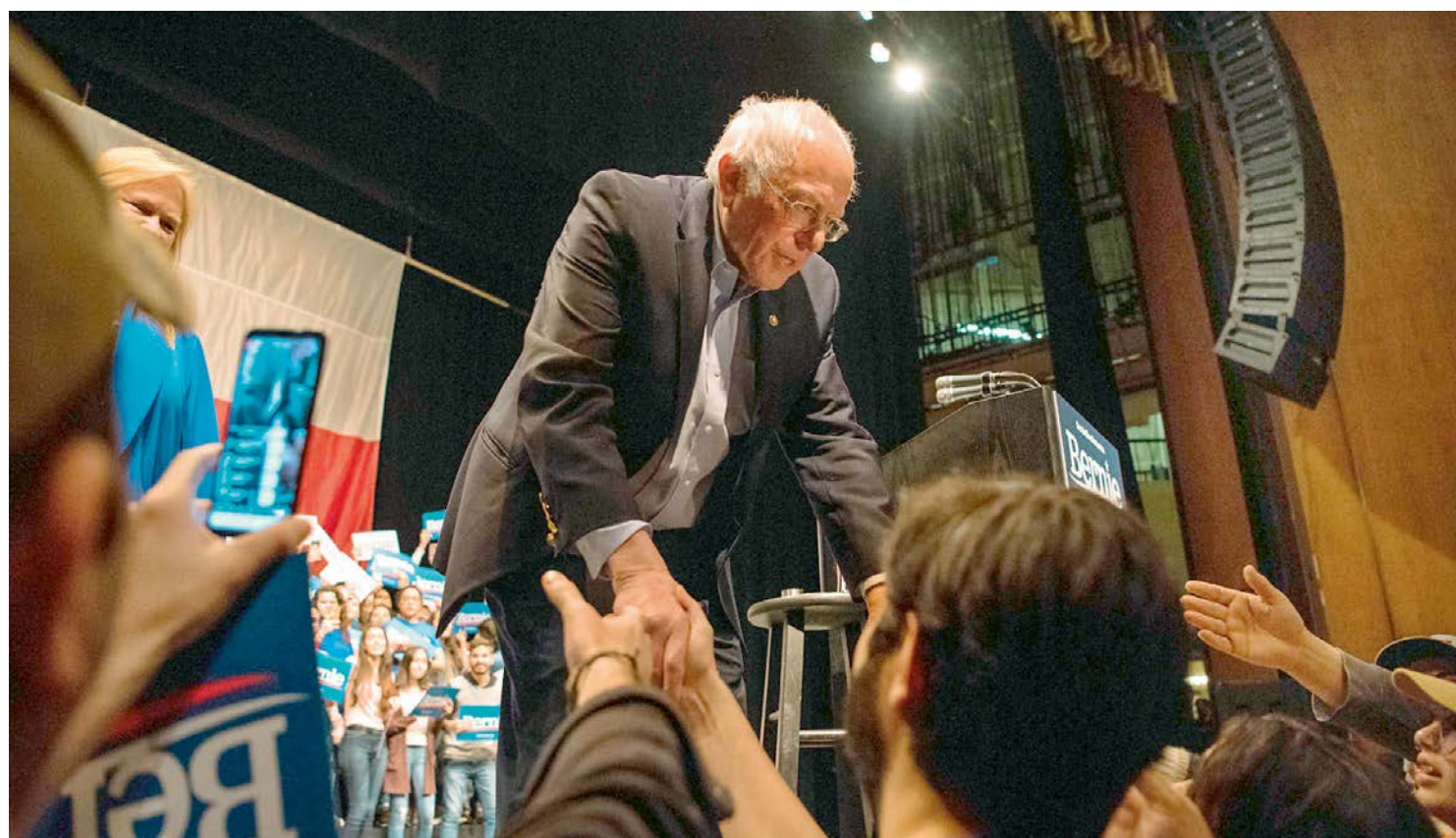
By late Saturday with official results slowly trickling in, Sanders was comfortably ahead with some 22 percent of precincts reporting.

The 78-year-old senator from Vermont was leading with about 46 percent, followed by former vice president Joe Biden at 23 percent.

South Bend, Indiana's former mayor Pete Buttigieg, who scored a shock narrow win in Iowa to start the race nearly three weeks ago, stood at a distant third a 13 percent.

The two female US senators in the running, progressive Elizabeth Warren and pragmatist Amy Klobuchar, were well back, in single digits.

Sanders was quick to claim victory, saying his



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders greets supporters after his speech at a campaign rally in Texas.

"multi-generational, multi-racial coalition" that won Nevada is "going to sweep this country."

His progressive policies, including universal health care, higher taxes on the wealthy and corporations, and raising the minimum wage have struck a chord with millions of Americans.

"The American people are sick and tired of a government which is based on greed, corruption, and

lies. They want an administration which is based on the principles of justice," he told a raucous rally, which responded with chants of "Bernie! Bernie! Bernie!" Sanders was speaking in El Paso, Texas, one of the 14 states that vote on "Super Tuesday" on March 3.

Buttigieg congratulated Sanders on his Nevada victory. But the moderate, 38-year-old military veteran offered a stern warning

against picking a self-described democratic socialist who sees "capitalism as the root of all evil" to go up against the populist Trump.

"Senator Sanders believes in an inflexible, ideological revolution that leaves out most Democrats, not to mention most Americans," Buttigieg said in remarks that took on a surprisingly coarse tone.

LOOKS LIKE CRAZY BERNIE IS DOING WELL, TWEETS PRESIDENT TRUMP

Las Vegas, Feb. 23: Progressive firebrand Bernie Sanders claimed a decisive victory Saturday in the Nevada caucuses, solidifying his front-runner status in the race to choose the Democratic nominee who faces Prez Donald Trump in November's election. President Trump offered

a congratulations of sorts to Sanders. "Looks like Crazy Bernie is doing well in the Great State of Nevada," Trump tweeted, maligning other candidates before adding, "Congratulations Bernie, & don't let them take it away from you!"

TOP AIDE: NO INTEL OF RUSSIA HELPING TRUMP

Washington, Feb. 23: President Donald Trump's national security adviser says he has not seen any intelligence indicating that Russia is doing anything to try to get the president re-elected.

The comments by Robert O'Brien were released Saturday in a transcript of an interview with ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" set to air on Sunday. O'Brien was asked about media reports saying that an intelligence professional told members of the House intelligence committee that Russia's aim was to favor Trump in the election.

Some officials familiar with the classified briefing said lawmakers were told that Russia was taking steps that would help Trump. And Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders acknowledged Friday that he was briefed last month by U.S. officials about Russian efforts to boost his candidacy.

A senior intelligence official with knowledge about the briefing, however, told The Associated Press on Friday that the handful of US election security briefers did not tell House intelligence committee members that Russia was "aiding the re-election of President Trump." The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the classified briefing, said some of the lawmakers reached conclusions that had not been made by the briefers.

Israelis brace for 3rd poll in less than a year

Jerusalem, Feb. 23: Israel is bracing for an unprecedented third election in under a year, with voters eyeing an end to the deadlock but polls indicating another tight race despite criminal charges against the prime minister.

Two previous votes in April and September last year failed to produce a clear winner between right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main challenger Benny Gantz, who heads the centrist Blue and White party.

Ballot-weary Israelis have shown limited enthusiasm ahead of the March 2 election, with some grudgingly accepting the possibility of a fourth run before the year ends.

But there have been significant developments



A Palestinian man sets fire to tyres along the Gaza-Israel border, east of Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday.

since Israelis last went to the polls.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest serving premier, has become the first to be indicted while in office.

Charges unveiled in November and filed in court last month accuse him of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

Palestinian killed by Israeli forces

Jerusalem, Feb. 23: Israeli forces on Sunday shot dead a Palestinian suspected of placing a bomb near the Gaza border, before extracting his body with a bulldozer, the army said.

"Following the successful thwarting of the attack near the Gaza Strip fence earlier this morning, an IDF (Israeli army) bulldozer extracted the body of one of the attackers," a military spokeswoman said.

Earlier Sunday, the army had said it "spotted two

terrorists approaching the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip and placing an explosive device adjacent to it".

"The troops opened fire towards them. A hit was identified," a military statement said. Following the incident, a video from Gaza emerged showing a bulldozer approaching the body as young, apparently unarmed men, were trying to collect it. The sound of gunfire is heard and the men ultimately run away as the bulldozer collects the body.



Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks in a meeting in Tehran on Sunday.

Hardliners win all seats in Tehran

Tehran, Feb. 23: Iranian hardliners have won all 30 parliamentary seats in the capital, Tehran, state TV reported on Sunday, but officials have yet to announce the voter turnout from the nationwide elections two days ago.

State TV also said that former Tehran mayor Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, a top contender for the post of parliamentary speaker, was the top winner in the capital, with more than 1.2 million votes.

Voters had limited options on Friday's ballot, as more than 7,000 potential candidates had been disqualified, most of them reformists and moderates. Among those disqualified were 90 sitting members of Iran's 290-seat Parliament who had wanted to run for re-election.

Iran's interior minister said on Sunday that 42.6 percent of eligible voters had turned out at the country's parliamentary election.

Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said the participation rate was "acceptable" for Iran after it experienced bad weather, an air disaster, a coronavirus outbreak and other incidents in the lead-up to Friday's election.

The turnout is widely seen as a measure of how Iranians view the country's embattled theocratic government. The low turnout could signal widespread dissatisfaction with Iran's clerical rulers and the system they preside over.

A range of crises has beset Iran in the past year, including widespread anti-government protests in November and US sanctions piling pressure on the plunging economy.

In remarks from his office in Tehran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blamed the "negative propaganda" of Iran's enemies for trying to discourage people from voting in Friday's elections.

VIRUS FEAR USED TO STIFLE VOTING, SAYS KHAMENEI

Tehran, Feb. 23: Officials in Iran haven't announced the full results from parliamentary elections two days ago, but on Sunday the country's supreme leader accused enemy "propaganda" of trying to dissuade people from voting by amplifying the threat of the coronavirus.

Authorities have also not released the all-important figure saying how many Iranians voted in the polls. A low turnout could signal widespread dissatisfaction with Iran's clerical rulers and the system they preside over.

A range of crises has beset Iran in the past year, including widespread anti-government protests in November and US sanctions piling pressure on the plunging economy.

In remarks from his office in Tehran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blamed the "negative propaganda" of Iran's enemies for trying to discourage people from voting in Friday's elections.

US sanctions piling pressure on the plunging economy.

On the eve of the vote in Iran, the Trump administration sanctioned five election officials and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo slammed the election as a "sham."

In remarks from his office in Tehran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blamed the "negative propaganda" of Iran's enemies for trying to discourage people from voting in Friday's elections.

US to implement green card norms

Washington, Feb. 23: The United States on Monday will begin enforcing a regulation that could deny green cards or legal permanent residency to legal immigrants who seek public benefits like food stamps.

The move might affect a number of Indians who are on H-1B visas and are in long queues to get permanent legal residency. The decision follows the Supreme Court's ruling on Friday which lifted the final remaining injunction on the 'public charge' rule. "As a result, the Department of Homeland Security will be able to implement its regulation on Monday," said White House Press Secretary

THE MOVE might affect a number of Indians who are on H-1B visas and are in long queues to get permanent legal residency.

Stephanie Grisham. "This final rule will protect hardworking American taxpayers, safeguard welfare programs for truly needy Americans, reduce the Federal deficit, and re-establish the fundamental legal principle that newcomers to our society should be financially self-reliant and not dependent on the largesse of United States taxpayers," Grisham said.

Family will: S'pore PM's kin guilty of misconduct

Singapore, Feb. 23: The daughter-in-law of Singapore's former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew has been found guilty by a disciplinary tribunal here of grossly improper professional conduct in her handling of the last will of the late leader.

Lee Suet Fern, who is also the sister-in-law of Singapore's current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, handled the will relating to the property that has become a bitter cause of dispute in the Lee family. Her actions were of sufficient gravity and the matter will be referred to the Court of Three Judges, the highest



Lee Suet Fern

disciplinary body to deal with lawyers' misconduct. The Sunday Times reported.

If found guilty, Mrs Lee, 61, who is a prominent advocate and the wife of the late leader's younger son Lee Hsien Yang, could face a fine, suspension or

could be disbarred as a lawyer. The two-man tribunal appointed by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon described Mrs Lee as a "deceitful witness, who tailored her evidence to portray herself as an innocent victim who had been maligned".

This was a "facade", the tribunal said. "Before us, she lied or became evasive whenever she thought it was to her benefit to lie or evade," the Singaporean daily quoted the Tribunal as saying.

The tribunal in its 206-page report released last week noted that Mr Lee Hsien Yang's conduct was "equally deceitful".

SOCIAL | CONNECT Even walking side-by-side may help alter strangers' relation

Walk in step for better interaction

Tokyo, Feb. 23: Walkers may use step synchronisation as a form of non-verbal social communication, according to a study which suggests that the activity may reveal the psychological effects of movement interaction between humans.

The study, published in the journal Plos One, demonstrated how people's traits and the first impression affect their synchronous walking as a way of nonverbal communication.

In the study, the researchers, including

those from Tohoku University in Japan, divided participants into 10 single-gender groups — five female and five male.

They said group members took turns being paired up with other members, and they walked together along a quiet, barrier-free path wearing voice recorders and motion sensors which recorded their walking movements.

The scientists carried out the experiment under three conditions. In one, they took a half

THE STUDY, published in the journal Plos One, demonstrated how people's traits and the first impression affect their synchronous walking as a way of nonverbal communication.

silent walk half conversation condition where the participants did not speak for half of the journey, yet conversed on the way back, the researchers said. In the other, the participants took a silent walk

where they did not converse for the entirety of the journey, and lastly, a non-walking condition where participants did not walk, and sat quietly filling in a questionnaire in a classroom, the study reported.

According to the researchers, the participants had no prior knowledge of each other, and were asked to rate their impression of their partners before and after each walk using the interpersonal judgment scale (IJS). They also misled the par-

ticipants about the true nature of the study to prevent them from intentionally synchronising their steps.

According to the study, there was an increase in the impression ratings for the two groups of participants who walked together, but not for the group of participants who simply spent time together, suggesting that walking side-by-side, even without verbal communication may be sufficient to alter the social relation between two strangers.

IN BRIEF

Pak shuts Iran border over virus

Islamabad: Pakistan on Sunday said that it has declared a medical emergency and temporarily closed its border with Iran to counter the threat of coronavirus from across the border. Iran has so far witnessed eight deaths and 43 cases of infection due to the novel coronavirus. Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove said that Pakistan's border with Iran in Balochistan province was temporarily closed. "We have closed the border. The measure was taken due to the threat of coronavirus," Langove told reporters here. The provincial government of Balochistan said that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has set up a 100-bed tent hospital at the border town of Taftan. "All people coming from Iran are being screened by the medical teams deputed at the border crossing," a statement issued by the provincial government said.

Turkey: Quake on Iran border kills 8

Istanbul: Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said Sunday eight people were killed in eastern Turkey after a 5.7 magnitude earthquake hit neighbouring Iran, the official Anadolu news agency reported. He said three of the dead were children, adding that some other people were believed to be trapped under the rubble. Turkish broadcaster NTV showed images of damage in several villages in Van province on the Iran border. "Search and rescue efforts are ongoing," Soylu said. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said 21 people were injured and eight of them were in critical condition, according to Anadolu. The epicentre of the quake, which struck at 9:23 am (0553 GMT), was near the Iranian village of Habash-e Olya, less than 10 kilometres from the border, according to the US Geological Survey. The quake had a depth of six kilometres, according to Tehran University's Seismological Centre.

2 Polish climbers die in Slovakia

Bratislava: Two young Polish climbers fell to their deaths in Slovakia's High Tatras Mountains on Friday amid high winds and heavy snow, local rescuers said Saturday evening. Slovakia's Mountain Rescue Service (HZS) said its rescuers "found two bodies of Polish climbers (aged 27 and 25 years)", on Saturday afternoon near the 2,558 metre-high Kezmarysky Peak, according to a statement. Strong winds and very low visibility due to falling snow had initially hampered rescue helicopters from approaching the area. "After multiple flight attempts, rescuers returned to their base in Stary Smokovec, where they collected several groups of rescue brigades and deployed them by helicopters to all sides of the Kezmarysky Peak," the HZS said in a statement on Saturday evening. Kezmarysky Peak is one of the most popular and demanding climbing destinations in the High Tatras.

CHANGING DIET ABRUPTLY MAY HARM HEALTH

London, Feb 23: Switching to a rich diet after eating a restricted one can decrease life expectancy, and have negative health effects, according to a study in fruit flies which says changing diet repeatedly or abruptly may be harmful.

The researchers, including those from the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, provided new insight into why, as well as how, diets could benefit humans in terms of slowing ageing and the onset of age-related disease. In the study, published in the journal *Science Advances*, they fed fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*) a restricted diet and then returned them to a rich diet. The scientists found that these flies were more likely to die, and laid less eggs compared to flies that spent their whole life on a rich diet. The study authors believe that dietary restriction could be making the flies ill-prepared for rich diets. This theory, the scientists said, suggested that humans and animals invested in maintaining and repairing the body in times of low food availability, to await times when food availability increases again.



Market workers in protective gear spray disinfectant at a market in the southeastern city of Daegu on Sunday. — AFP

3 die in Iran and 2 in S Korea

Deaths in Islamic nation at 8 as Korea raises nation's alert to 'highest'

Tehran, Feb. 23: Iran on Sunday reported three more novel coronavirus deaths among 15 new cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of fatalities to eight and infections to 43. Four new Covid-19 cases surfaced in Tehran, seven in the holy city of Qom, two in Gilan and one each in Markazi and Tonekabon, health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said.

123 new cases in Korea Shanghai, Feb 23: South Korea went on high alert Sunday following a sharp jump in coronavirus cases. South Korea reported

123 new cases and two deaths on Sunday, taking the countrywide toll of fatalities to four. South Korea is raising the nation's alert to its "highest" level. President Moon Jae-in said on Sunday after the number of infections nearly tripled over the weekend to 556. Led by an outbreak cluster in a religious sect in the southern city of Daegu, South Korea now has the most infections outside of China apart from the Diamond Princess cruise ship docked in Japan, which has seen more than 600.

"The next few days will be crucial," Moon said following a government meet-

MORE THAN 300 cases have been linked to the Shincheonji Church of Jesus sect in Daegu. Some 9,300 Shincheonji members have either been quarantined or asked to stay at home. More than 1,240 have reported symptoms.

ing on the virus. "The government will raise the alert level to the highest level according to experts' recommendations." Moon did not specify what those measures may include. More than 300 cases have

been linked to the Shincheonji Church of Jesus sect in Daegu — whose founder claims the mantle of Jesus Christ and vows to take 144,000 people with him to heaven on judgement day. Some 9,300 Shincheonji members have either been quarantined or asked to stay at home, according to the Korean Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 1,240 have reported symptoms.

Over 100 cases in Italy Rome, Feb. 23: The number of coronavirus cases in Italy has risen to over 100, Attilio Fontana, president of the northern Lom-

bardy region said. He said there were "more than 100 cases" in the country overall and 89 cases in Lombardy alone.

Jordan bars entry Amman, Feb. 23: Jordan on Sunday said it would bar citizens from China, Iran and South Korea from entering the kingdom in a bid to prevent the deadly coronavirus outbreak spreading. The minister of state for media affairs, Amjad Adayleh, said it was part of "preemptive measures... following the rise in cases of coronavirus in South Korea, Iran" and China. — Agencies

WOMAN CHECKED BEFORE LEAVING CRUISE, NOW +VE

Tokyo, Feb. 23: Japan on Sunday confirmed that a woman who tested negative and disembarked from the coronavirus-stricken Diamond Princess cruise ship later tested positive, raising questions about the effectiveness of the quarantine measures. The woman in her 60s returned to her home in Tochigi prefecture north of Tokyo by train after she disembarked on Wednesday, but she had a fever on Friday and tested positive on Saturday, a local official told AFP.

She was the first passenger from the ship to have tested positive in Japan after having been cleared to disembark. The news comes as infectious disease experts and local officials have questioned the effectiveness of the quarantine period on the vessel. "There has been a judgement that those who disembarked after testing negative had no problem, but it has now become clear that those people can turn positive," Tochigi governor Tomokazu Fukuda said. "We call on the government to take additional measures," he said. — AFP

3rd ship passenger dies

Tokyo, Feb. 23: A third passenger has died after contracting the coronavirus on a cruise ship that was quarantined off Japan, the country's health ministry said on Sunday. In a statement, the ministry identified the victim as a Japanese man in his 80s who was also suffering from other ailments. He was removed from the Diamond Princess and taken to a local hospital after testing positive for

Covid-19, the statement said, without giving details on when he tested positive or where he was being treated. The man's cause of death was given as pneumonia, the statement added. The death comes after two other elderly passengers, also both Japanese and in their 80s, died on Thursday after contracting the virus. Despite a quarantine imposed on the Diamond Princess, more than

600 people on board tested positive for the virus, with several dozen in serious condition. Nearly 1,000 passengers were allowed to leave the ship this week after testing negative, but there are now serious concerns about their status. In total, Japan has so far recorded four deaths linked to the outbreak, which has infected more than 130 people, excluding those linked to the Diamond Princess. — AFP

Japan sorry as 23 left before test

Tokyo, Feb. 23: Around 100 more passengers were allowed to disembark from the coronavirus-stricken Diamond Princess cruise ship on Saturday as Japan's health minister apologised after 23 others were allowed to leave without being properly tested.

The 100 passengers who left on Saturday had been in close contact with infected people on board, local media said. They included the last group of Japanese passengers to leave the ship, while some foreign passengers were still waiting on board for their governments to send chartered aircraft.

Television footage showed a driver in a white protective suit at the wheel of a bus with the curtains drawn so that passengers could not be identified. They will be quarantined for two weeks near Tokyo, officials said.

An official apology At a news conference on Saturday, Health Minister Katsunobu Kato apologised for 23 passengers having been allowed to leave the ship without undergoing all the required tests. "We deeply regret that our operational mistake caused the situation," Kato said, adding that the passengers would be tested again.

WE DEEPLY regret that our operational mistake caused the situation **KATSUNOBU KATO, Health Minister, Japan** With the latest disembarkation, a 14-day quarantine is expected to start for more than 1,000 crew still on board. Many of them were not placed in isolation as they were needed to keep the ship running — preparing food and delivering meals to cabins. Critics have charged that they were inadvertently spreading the virus



THE epidemic is communist China's "largest public health emergency". It has the fastest transmission, widest range of infection and has been the most difficult to prevent and control **XI JINPING, China Prez**

throughout the ship, which has seen more than 600 cases of the potentially deadly Covid-19 disease. Kato defended Japan's on-board quarantine, telling a TV programme Saturday there was no medical facility large enough to admit more than 3,000 people at once. Speaking at the news conference, Kato said six Australian passengers tested positive after leaving Japan. Meanwhile, 18 repatriated Americans and one Israeli who returned home from the ship have tested positive, authorities from the two countries announced Friday. — AFP

WHO experts visit Wuhan

Beijing, Feb 23: Ninety-seven more people died in China due to coronavirus, taking the toll to 2,442, officials said on Sunday, as a team of WHO experts visited the worst-affected Wuhan city in Hubei province. By the end of Saturday, a total of 2,442 people had died of the disease and 76,936 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection had been reported in 31 provincial-level regions, China's National Health Commission (NHC) said in its daily update on Sunday. Meanwhile, the 12-member team of public health experts from the World Health Organisation (WHO) visited Wuhan to conduct a detailed probe about the virus which reportedly originated from the city's seafood market in December last year. The experts and their Chinese counterparts held talks with the local health authority in Wuhan and visited relevant health-care institutions. The specialists also discussed quarantine measures, wild animal trade apart from community prevention measures. — PTI

RUSSIA DENIES U.S. CLAIM OF FUELLING ALARM

Moscow, Feb 23: Russia's foreign ministry denied a claim by US officials that Russian-linked social media accounts were making a coordinated effort to spread alarm about the new coronavirus, branding the accusation intentionally misleading. "This is a deliberately false story," spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in Russia's first official reaction to US claims. "Russia's intent is to sow discord and undermine US institutions and alliances from within, including through covert and coercive malign influence campaigns," said Philip Reeker, acting Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia. "By spreading disinformation about coronavirus, Russian malign actors are choosing to threaten public safety by distracting from the global health response." — AFP

Doc dies, medical staff fatality at 10

Beijing, Feb 23: A 29-year-old female doctor died on Sunday after contracting the coronavirus while treating patients at a hospital in China's Wuhan city, taking the toll of the medical staff to 10, according to a media report. Xia Sisi, a gastroenterology physician got infected while working at the Union Jiangbei Hospital of Wuhan in Hubei province, the epicentre of the virus. She was hospitalised on January 19 and later transferred to Zhongnan Hospital of Wuhan University on February 7 after her condition worsened. She died on Sunday, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The Union Jiangbei Hospital mourned the death of Xia and expressed condolences for her family. The Chinese medical staff, who are on the frontlines fighting the Covid-19, are paying a heavy price. On February 20, Peng Yinhua (29), who postponed his wedding to treat patients, died. Earlier, Li Wenliang, a 34-year-old doctor, who was one of the first to sound the alarm about the new outbreak, also died. — PTI

ON FEBRUARY 20, Peng Yinhua (29), who postponed his wedding to treat patients, died **EARLIER, LI Wenliang,** a 34-year-old doctor, who was one of the first to sound the alarm about the new outbreak, died on February 7 **LIU ZHIMING,** head of the Wuchang Hospital too died due to the virus **LIU FAN,** a senior nurse of the hospital, also died

ak died on February 7. Li sent a message to his medical-school alumni group on December 30, warning that seven patients had been quarantined at Wuhan Central Hospital after suffering from respiratory illness that seemed like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Liu Zhiming, head of the Wuchang Hospital too died due to the virus. Liu Fan, a senior nurse of the hospital, also died along with her parents and brother. — PTI

Virus shadow on Emperor's b'day

Tokyo, Feb 23: Japanese Emperor Naruhito, marking his 60th birthday, offered his sympathy to those affected by the new virus, as concerns over infections forced the traditional gathering of tens of thousands of well-wishers outside the royal palace to be cancelled. Sunday's birthday is a special one for Naruhito, his first since becoming emperor. Sixty is considered a landmark age in the Japanese zodiac calendar. "As we face concerns about the spread of the coro-



navirus, I offer my sympathy to the patients and their families," Naruhito told reporters. "I hope that the escalation of the infections will be contained as soon as possible." — AP

MAMMAL | MIGRATION **Warmer water helps to molt skin in an environment that does not sap body heat**

Whales may be migrating to tropics to shed skin

Washington, Feb 23: Whales that forage in polar waters could be migrating to low latitudes to maintain a healthy skin, according to a study which may lead to better conservation measures to protect the marine mammals. According to the study, published in the journal *Marine Mammal Science*, whales foraging in the freezing waters of Antarctica conserve body heat by diverting blood flow away from their skin which reduces regeneration of skin cells, and halt the normal sloughing of their body's outer layer. "I think people have not

SCIENTISTS SAID all birds and mammals regularly shed their skin, fur, or feathers, and migrating to warmer water would allow whales to revive their skin metabolism.

given skin molt due consideration when it comes to whales, but it is an important physiological need that could be met by migrating to warmer waters," said Robert Pitman, lead author of the study from Oregon State University in the US. The scientists said all birds and mammals re-

gularly shed their skin, fur, or feathers, and migrating to warmer water would allow whales to revive their skin metabolism, and molt in an environment that does not sap their body heat. Over eight years, the researchers deployed 62 satellite tags on killer whales, and found that all four types that feed in frigid Antarctic waters migrated as far as 11,000 kilometres round trip. They said most migrations were fast, non-stop, and largely straight north and back. One whale, the study noted, completed two such migrations in 5.5 months.

The researchers also photographed newborn killer whale calves in Antarctica, indicating the whales don't need to migrate to warmer waters to give birth. They said larger whales that migrate to the tropics to molt may have begun giving birth in those same warmer waters. "Instead of whales migrating to the tropics or subtropics for calving, whales could be travelling to warm waters for skin maintenance, and perhaps find it adaptive to bear their calves while they are there," the researchers wrote in the study. — PTI



A killer whale in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

quick
BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|--------|
| Sensex* | 41,170.12 | -0.37 |
| Nifty 50* | 12,080.90 | -0.37 |
| S&P 500* | 3,346.71 | -0.79 |
| Dollar* (₹) | 71.60 | 0.10 |
| Pound Sterling* (₹) | 92.53 | -1.12 |
| Euro* (₹) | 77.38 | -0.29 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 42,800.500 | 1.16 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 57.87 | -1.44 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield* | 6.422 | 0.038 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.493 | -0.032 |

* As of Friday

Suzuki to ramp
up motorcycle
business in India

New Delhi: Suzuki Motorcycle India (SMIPL), the wholly-owned two-wheeler arm of Suzuki Motor Corp, plans to scale up its motorcycle business as it aims the segment to account for 20 per cent of its overall sales volumes in the domestic market, a top company official said. The company, which currently sells five motorcycle models in the country, gets just around 10 per cent of its overall volumes from motorcycle sales. — PTI

FPIs remain
bullish, invest
₹23K cr in Feb.

New Delhi: Staying bullish on Indian markets, overseas investors have pumped in a net amount of ₹23,102 crore in February so far driven by positive sentiment around the budget and RBI's decision to maintain an accommodative stance in the latest monetary policy. Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) invested a net sum of ₹10,750 crore into equities and ₹12,352 crore into the debt segment. — PTI

RCom committee
of creditors to
vote on bidders

New Delhi: Reliance Communications (RCom) on Sunday said a meeting of the company's committee of creditors is scheduled to be held on Monday. Though there is no official information on the agenda, sources said the CoC on Monday will put to a vote asset bids received from UV Asset Reconstruction Company and Reliance Jio from which lenders are expected to recover around ₹23,000 crore. — Reuters

BSNL staff to go
on strike over
delayed relief

New Delhi: BSNL's employee unions have called for a nationwide hunger strike on Monday, to protest against delay in execution of the ₹69,000-crore revival package announced by the government. "This hunger strike is being organised to demand the expeditious implementation of the Union Cabinet's revival package in respect of BSNL and to demand settlement of the grievances of the employees," AUAB said.

AGR dues may affect
Navy, banking operations

New Delhi, Feb. 23: US satellite broadband provider Hughes Network Systems may have to shut its Indian operations due to unpaid levies owed to the government, which could put thousands of banking services at risk, a company letter seen by Reuters showed.

India's Supreme Court late last year ordered a number of telecom companies, including Hughes and larger firms like Vodafone, to pay billions of dollars owed to the government. Hughes' India unit provides services to defense, education and banking sectors in the country and told India's telecoms minister in a letter dated Feb. 20 that it faces bankruptcy as it can't pay the ₹6 billion (\$84 million) it owes. The closure of the company could disrupt connectivity at more than 70,000 banking locations and many critical satellite networks in the Indian navy, army and railways, Hughes' India President Partho Banerjee said in the letter, which was seen by Reuters. "We are facing a huge demand ... which by no means is serviceable by us and is in fact pushing our company towards bankruptcy & closure," Banerjee said.

"This is an SOS request," he added. The company says the government's telecoms department had made an incorrect calculation of the dues more than a decade ago which has ballooned to \$84 million with interest and penalties.

Hughes, when approached by Reuters for comment, would not comment on the substance of the letter but said in a statement it "remains committed to India" and would continue to provide services to its customers. India's telecoms ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Vodafone Idea, which owes \$3.9 billion in dues, interest and penalties, has already warned of a potential exit, putting at risk 13,000 employees and billions of dollars in bank loans. India's claim for unpaid dues followed a dispute with companies over how adjusted gross revenue, a percentage of which companies need to pay to the government as fee, was calculated.

While the \$84 million Hughes owes is significantly smaller than the sums owed by larger peers, a company document from December showed it was still more than three times its net worth in India.

"This, if not resolved, will make the operation unviable thus rendering many customers like banks, other enterprises and critical government networks without any connectivity," the company said in a separate letter.

Hughes, which is part of US-based satellite group EchoStar, said in December 2018 it had been chosen to provide high-performance satellite broadband system for India's naval communications network. — Reuters

Buffett tight-lipped
about his successor

**FC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEB. 23**

Berkshire Hathaway's 89-year-old chief Warren E. Buffett has given no hints on who is going to succeed him and his business partner 96 year old Charles Munger in the annual letter to the shareholders while laying out plans for departure as they prepare to retire.

Warren Buffett is considered one of the most successful investors in the world and has a net worth of \$88.9 billion as of December 2019, making him the fourth-wealthiest person in the world. "Charlie and I long ago entered the urgent zone. That's not exactly great news for us. But Berkshire shareholders need not worry: your company is 100 per cent prepared for

COAI: TEST CHECKS ARE
STANDARD AUDIT PROCEDURE

The government will conduct 'test check' for any one year (of telcos' dues) to examine variances between telecom companies' assessment and the government's own calculation of AGR liabilities.

The Supreme Court earlier this month rejected a plea by mobile carriers such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Ltd for extension in the payment schedule and asked them to deposit an estimated ₹1.47 lakh crore in past dues for spectrum and licences.

Some telecom firms are already struggling with mounting losses and debt, and the additional liability has raised concerns of them defaulting on existing loans.

Tata Teleservices and Tata Teleservices Maharashtra have submitted to the government the details of calculation in support of its payment, but sources in the DoT said that wide gap between the company's calculations and the department's assessment of about ₹14,000 crore, will certainly be examined.

Any move to encash bank guarantees will precipitate an already precarious situation

— RAJAN MATHEWS
Director General, COAI

Govt officials meet
to discuss relief
measures for telcos

New Delhi, Feb. 23: Senior officials of the telecom department and other key ministries met on Sunday to discuss urgent relief measures that can be extended to the telecom industry, which is battling an unprecedented crisis on account of massive statutory dues it owes the government.

The meeting, held at the Department of Telecom, lasted for over an hour and is said to have deliberated on options before the government to provide much-needed lifeline to the AGR-hit industry.

Telecom czar and Chairman of Bharti Airtel Sunil Mittal had last week made an appeal to the government for cut in levies and taxes to pull the sector out of what he had described as an "unprecedented crisis".

Telecom department officials remained tight-lipped after high-level government meeting on Sunday, where officials from Niti Aayog and finance ministry are said to have been present.

DoT Secretary Anshu Prakash remained unavailable for comments.

The crucial meeting comes at a time when the telecom companies are staring at ₹1.47 lakh crore in unpaid dues — ₹92,642 crore in unpaid licence fee and another ₹55,054 crore in outstanding spectrum usage charges. Of the estimated dues

that include interest and penalty for late payments, Airtel and Vodafone Idea owe about 60 per cent.

While Airtel has raised \$3 billion in last few months and is expected to have sufficient funds to tide over the AGR crisis, Vodafone Idea — that has only paid just seven per cent of its total ₹53,000 crore statutory dues — remains vulnerable.

The government, meanwhile, is looking to strike a balance between complying with the Supreme Court order on AGR dues, ensuring health of the sector and safeguarding consumer interest.

Both Mittal and VIL Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla continued to meet top government functionaries throughout last week to seek prompt measures that would offer a breather to the sector. A top government official had said recently that attempts are being made to balance the need for health of the sector, consumer interest while complying with the Supreme Court order on statutory dues.

Although the official had not elaborated, sector watchers had said the statement alludes to the government keen on ensuring adequate competition by retaining the present three-plus-one model of competition (three private players and one public sector company). — PTI

Delay due to lack of regulatory approval: Sources
PSBs to miss April 1
deadline for mergers

Mumbai, Feb. 23: With the deadline of April 1 fast approaching for the mega merger of ten public sector banks, there seems to be more odd in the way of meeting the target date as a series of regulatory approvals and clearances are still pending, bank officials said.

Even after Cabinet approval to the proposed mega merger plan, officials said, fixation of share swap ratio, shareholders consent and other regulatory approvals are expected to take at least 30-45 days.

It is believed that the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has sought details from these lenders about their financial projections for the next three to five years. Details in respect of NPAs, capital requirement, credit growth and cost savings on account of the mergers have been asked for, officials said.

So, chances of the merger becoming a reality beginning next fiscal year seems little unrealistic at the moment, a senior public sector bank official said.

Besides, regulatory nods, the Scheme of Amalgamation has to be laid before Parliament for 30 days for the perusal of the members. The second-half of the Budget session



Earlier this month, Nirmala Sitharaman had said that she saw no reason to go back on the government's mega merger plan for banks or any reason (which is) particularly causing any delay in the notification. In December 2019, RBI had opined that India could create some banking majors if mergers achieve targets.

is scheduled to start on March 2.

Last year in August, the government announced the consolidation of ten public sector banks (PSBs) into four mega state-owned lenders.

As per the plan, United Bank of India and Oriental Bank of Commerce would merge with Punjab National Bank, making the proposed entity the second largest public sector bank.

It was decided to merge Syndicate Bank with Canara Bank, while Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank. Similarly, Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank are to be consolidated with Union Bank of India.

According to a senior banker, information technology integration of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with Bank of Baroda

is still in process even after 10 months of merger. In addition, the HR issues still continues to hamper business, causing inconvenience to customers.

Moreover, the mega merger would create greater disturbance in the banking system and will affect the operation especially loan sanction as there will be chaos initially for few months, the official added. Bank unions are also opposing the move saying merger is not a solution to the banking sector problem and slowdown in economy.

Rather than consolidation, there is a need for expansion. All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA) general secretary C.H. Venkatchalam said.

The past merger carried out by banks are yet to show results and the pro-

posed massive consolidation exercise will be catastrophic for the banking system at this point of time when the economy is in a downturn, he stated.

Terminating the government decision on consolidation as illegal, All India Bank Officers' Confederation general secretary Soumya Datta claimed that the decision was taken in the absence of full board.

There was no representation from officers and staff in the board of any of these ten banks so decision is illegal, he further claimed.

According to a senior official of Oriental Bank of Commerce, the grouping of banks in the consolidation plans does not appear to be logical as it would lead to large scale closure of branches than expansion of banking services.

For example, the official said the merger of Syndicate Bank with Canara Bank would lead to large scale closure of branches as both are Karnataka-based and have strong presence in South India.

The merger of Oriental Bank of Commerce with PNB and Andhra Bank with Union Bank of India will have similar issues, the official said. — PTI

Uniform 28%
GST for
lotteries

**FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEB. 23**

Come March 1, lotteries will be levied a 28 per cent GST. The move comes after revenue department notified the GST rate on supply of lotteries and amended its earlier central tax rate.

With the demand from all quarters, the GST Council in December 2019 had decided to impose a single rate of 28 per cent on lotteries.

According to a notification by the revenue department, the central tax rate for supply of lotteries has been amended to 14 per cent and a similar percentage will be levied by the states. "This will take the total GST incidence on lotteries to 28 per cent. The notification shall come into force on the 1st day of March, 2020," the revenue department said.

At present, a state-run lottery attracts 12 per cent GST, while a state-authorized lottery attracts 28 per cent tax. There were demands that a uniform tax rate should be imposed on lotteries.

"Since the trade war

US likely to be India's top
trading partner for 2nd year

**SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 23**

The US is expected to be India's largest merchandise trade partner for the second straight year in FY20. While Indo-US trade continues to grow, Chinese trade has shrunk even before coronavirus started affecting the shipments. This is going to be beneficial for India's overall trade balance as India has a trade surplus with the US against a trade deficit with China.

Till the end of December quarter, at \$68 billion, India's bilateral trade with the US has gone up above \$64 billion with China. While both exports and imports to the US have been growing in the past few years, imports from China have been showing a declining trend.

In 2018-19, the US had become India's largest partner with a total bilateral trade of \$87.9 billion, leaving behind China with a trade of \$87 billion in the second position. Until 2017-18, China has been India's largest trade partner.

The trade with China is likely to get further affected in the March quarter owing to the Coronavirus infection that has hit shipments between both the countries.

While exports to the US grew from \$47 billion FY18

to \$52 billion in FY19, imports grew faster from \$26 billion to \$35 billion. This narrowed down the trade surplus from \$21 billion to \$16 billion. Till December, exports stood at \$40 billion and imports at \$27 billion.

"The import of defence equipments and aircrafts from the US is likely to grow in the coming years. We have grown our exports in several categories, especially those in which there is tariff war with China. However, capacity is an issue as far as Indian export growth is concerned," said Sahai. However, he does not see the trade surplus with US turning into deficit at least in next five years.

In case of China, imports to India shrunk from \$76 billion to \$70 billion while exports grew from \$13 billion to \$16 billion. The trade deficit narrowed down from \$63 billion to \$53 billion. In the first three quarters of the current fiscal, the exports have already crossed \$13 billion and imports stood at \$51 billion. "Trade war and coronavirus is an opportunity for India to increase its production and capacity. Though we have seen some investments happening in sectors like electronics, India is still awaiting large investments," added Sahai.

"Overall withdrawal of Generalised System of Preferences and higher tariffs on steel products did not have major impact on exports," said Ajay Sahai, director general and CEO of Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

While exports to the US grew from \$47 billion FY18

RBI devises new plan for fin inclusion

**SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 23**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in consultation with other financial services regulatory bodies, has launched a National Strategy for Financial Inclusion that will help provide access to formal financial services in an affordable manner by 2024.

The strategy recommends increasing outreach of banking outlets of Scheduled Commercial Banks, Payments Banks and Small Finance Banks to provide banking access to every village within a five km radius or hamlet of 500 households in hilly areas. Necessary infrastructure should be created to move towards a less cash society. Financial service providers have to strengthen outreach through virtual modes including mobile apps and move towards an



increasingly digital and consent-based architecture for customer onboarding.

Further, every willing and eligible adult enrolled under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana should be enrolled under an insurance scheme and pension scheme. Public Credit Registry should be made fully operational by March 2022 so that authorised financial entities can leverage on the same for assess-

ing credit proposals from all citizens. All the relevant details pertaining to the ongoing skill development and livelihood generation programmes should be made available to the new entrants at the time of account opening.

The details of the account holders, including unemployed youth and women who are willing to undergo skill development might be shared to the con-

cerned skill development centres or livelihood mission. Awareness on financial literacy, managerial skills, credit and market linkages should be developed by National Skill Development Mission.

Financial literacy modules should be used for orientation of children, young adults, women, new workers, entrepreneurs, senior citizens etc. Focus should be on process literacy

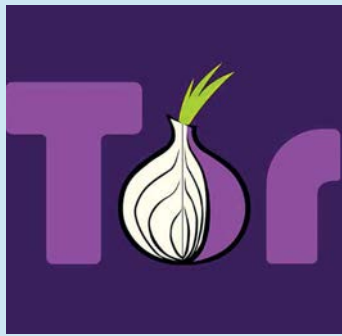
along with concept literacy and the reach of Centers for Financial Literacy should be expanded at every block in the country.

Internal Grievances Redressal Mechanism of financial service providers should be strengthened and a robust customer grievance portal or mobile app should act as a common interface for lodging, tracking and redressal status of the grievances.

With advancements in Geo-Spatial Information Technology, a robust monitoring framework leveraging on the said technology can be developed for monitoring progress under financial inclusion with special emphasis given to aspirational districts, North Eastern Region and Left-Wing Extremist affected Districts.

A monitoring framework and a GIS dashboard also can be developed.

HOW TO USE TOR BROWSER'S TOOLS TO PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY



If you're concerned about your privacy on the Internet, most experts tend to recommend either Firefox or TOR Browser.

• The name Tor stands for The Onion Routing, which was the original description of how the open-source browser anonymises its users.

• As Tor's site explains, it does this by encrypting your information and relaying it through Tor's system of servers (called a circuit), so that your ISP can't track your activity.

• While this efficiently protects your identity, it can also become troublesome with sites such as financial institutions or medical services that see your login as not coming from your home computer. It can also slow things down.

• The Tor Browser just bundles Tor tech into a Firefox wrapper, so using this browser doesn't mean you're suddenly going to stumble onto the dark web.

• When you install the Tor Browser, it is set by default to private browsing mode, which will delete all cookies and site data when the browser is closed.

– Click on the three bars in the top right corner of the browser window. Go to "Options" (on a PC) or "Preferences" (on a Mac).

– Go to "Privacy & Security" on the left-hand menu.

– Find the "History" section in the main area and uncheck "Always use private browsing mode." You will need to restart the browser; you can then choose what you want it to remember when you exit (such as your browsing and download history).

IF YOU WANT TO MANUALLY DELETE COOKIES DURING A BROWSING SESSION:

– In the "Privacy & Security" section, look for "Browser Privacy" (which will be the first section on the page). Find "Cookies and Site Data" and click on "Manage Data..."

– You can then use the "Remove Selected" button to remove data from a particular site or just click "Remove All" to delete all of it.

– On the "Browser Privacy" page, you can also click on "Manage Permissions..." to specify what cookies should be blocked or allowed for individual websites. Enter in the URL and then select either "Block," "Allow for Session," or "Allow."

– Finally, you can select "Clear Data" to delete all cookies and data currently stored by the browser.

• According to the browser's support page, Tor offers strong protection against fingerprinting.

"Tor Browser is specifically engineered to have a nearly identical (we're not perfect!) fingerprint across its users," it says. "This means each Tor Browser user looks like every other Tor Browser user, making it difficult to track any individual user."

• The Tor Browser doesn't block ads, but Tor also recommends that you don't install extensions as they may cause privacy or functionality issues. As a result, while Tor protects you against tracking, you may still have to put up with the presence of the ads themselves.



OPPO has gone back to basics with ColorOS 7

ColorOS 7
RATING: ★★★★★

Late in November, OPPO officially unveiled ColorOS 7 at an event in India and now, the company is rolling out a trial version for ten of its devices which also includes some of its recent flagships.

With ColorOS 7, OPPO has done the unthinkable and strayed away from its ethos and in the process introduced an update that brings so much more to the table. This is the brand's biggest ever update and it boasts a lightweight design and an intuitive interface that helps in elevating the entire user experience. With it being based on Android 10, you get some of the highly-anticipated features such as system-wide dark mode, focus mode along with enhanced privacy and location controls.

DESIGN
ColorOS 7 is based on Android 10 and it comes with an overhaul in the user interface by introducing a fresh colour palette across the board alongside new fonts. The design here isn't just how well the software is optimised, but instead, it is designed to reduce visual fatigue.

This undoubtedly OPPO's biggest upgrade in years and there are improvements and enhancements ranging from wallpapers to the notification shade and from the new font to a host of new icons.

Apart from the above mentioned updates, OPPO has added new animations, more wallpapers, better haptics, refined sounds and so much more. Lastly, one of the overlooked features here is how few bugs are actually present in this build. And this is one thing that should not be taken for granted.

ICONS

With ColorOS 7, the icons can also be customised and this is a neat feature added as it allows you to match it with your wallpaper or theme in use. This is a new feature for the OS and prevalent to an extent on other OEM softwares; however, OPPO offers it in a very few can claim to. In this version, you get three sets of exclusively designed icon styles to choose from — Rectangle, Pebble and Material styles. Also, there is a redesigned third-party app icon option where ColorOS 7 uses its Art+ icon design where the top 200 apps from the App Market can be redesigned to conform to the style of the software.

DARK MODE

The ColorOS 7 is where Dark Mode is finally done right and this is evident on some of OPPO's flagship handsets with AMOLED displays. The Dark Mode can also be scheduled for a particular time and this is something that's not a part of Android 10. Additionally, the compatibility with third-party apps is one of the standout features here and this integration is far superior to what Google offers.

SIDEBAR

Another noteworthy point here is that OPPO's Smart Sidebar takes up less space as there is just a single row of shortcuts instead of two. This allows for easy manoeuvring during single-handed operation.

Apart from this, you get an improved Off-screen clock, new animations, Game Assistant, faster wireless transfers, improved gesture navigation, more wallpapers, better haptics, refined sounds and so much more.

Lastly, one of the overlooked features here is how few bugs are actually present in this build. And this is one thing that should not be taken for granted.

In digital age, privacy faces multiple challenges: Judge

Challenges posed by tech, climate change and terrorism, transcend jurisdictions

New Delhi, Feb. 23: Privacy in the digital age faces challenges from hackers, private companies and government, and the judiciary has to deal with balancing the right to privacy with other rights and supplement existing legislative frameworks, Supreme Court Judge D.Y. Chandrachud said on Sunday.

Justice Chandrachud, during a panel discussion on the 'Role of Judiciary in Protecting Privacy of Citizens in the Internet Age', said the challenges from these three "actors" present a range of concerns. "The challenges to privacy are presented by three key actors — (i) hackers; (ii) private companies; and (iii) the government. This presents a range of concerns: First, there is a possibility of serious data breach and the misuse of personal information," he said.

"Second, vast silos of data may be used to profile people and to discriminate against vulnerable groups. Third, there is a chilling effect on free speech and disclosure of information," the apex court judge said.

Justice Chandrachud said that the issue is about how "we as judges can preserve autonomy and informational self-determination of individuals in an age where technology governs every aspect of our lives. Or is privacy an illusion?"

He said when a person searches for a book or a destination on the internet, the screen is instantly flooded with appealing pop-up advertisements. "If you search for an

idea, a multitude of ideas confront you on the screen. The digital world has been ushered in at a pace which the incremental change of judicial decisions can scarcely match. Our Constitution protects the right to personal freedom, human dignity and liberty," he said.

Justice Chandrachud pointed out that in today's world, every individual identity is viewed in terabytes of information and every individual is viewed as a collection of data represented by activities on the internet like shopping preferences, social media patterns, geographic location and personal biometric information.

"This defines two new horizons: the first is of big data — data aggregation, which like 'death by a

thousand cuts', is the collection of unconnected data to map the identity of the individual.

"This has the potential to seriously threaten the rights of individuals to keep their personal and sensitive information private and to control how their information is used," he said.

Justice Chandrachud said the second horizon is of AI, which comprehends machine learning analysis of political beliefs, religious affiliation, race, ethnicity, health status, gender and sexual orientation.

"Our individual data is aggregated and disaggregated to sort, score, classify, evaluate and rank people. How comfortable are we with AI telling us whether an offender who seeks bail is likely to be a repeat

offender?" he said.

Justice Chandrachud, who is in line to become the Chief Justice of India in 2022, said globally good governance is witnessing an increasing reliance on digital technology to aid in the delivery of welfare services with the active support of the citizenry.

Judges need to see how to apply the standard of proportionality which was formulated in a pre-digital age amid the complexities of a digital age, he said.

"In examining the judicial interface with privacy protection in the digital age, two preliminary points need to be highlighted: The dawn of the digital age is not in itself perilous. It presents avenues for mass improvements in social life. The issue is not the collection of data, but

its use and misuse; and how do courts balance the right to privacy with other rights and supplement existing legislative frameworks?" Justice Chandrachud said.

He referred to a Kenya High Court verdict that halted the implementation of the national biometric identification system until the government implemented a comprehensive data protection framework.

"Chief Justice Bryan Sykes of the Supreme Court of Jamaica was a part of the bench that struck down the Jamaican National Identification and Registration Act and outlined in his opinion the dangers of merging silos of information to create wholly new information," he said. Recalling the 2018 Aadhaar verdict in which a five-judge constitution bench had by majority upheld the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar Act, Justice Chandrachud said, "As the lone dissenter in that bench, I draw solace from the recently delivered judgment of Justice Sykes."

Later in his welcome address for President Ram Nath Kovind, Justice Chandrachud said challenges posed by technology, climate change and terrorism, transcend individual jurisdictions.

Highlighting that "justice knows no borders", he said, "Collegiality is at the core of judging."

The Supreme Court had in a landmark verdict ruled that even the office of its chief justice is subject to a citizen's right to information, Justice Chandrachud said.

—PTI

A no-nonsense pair of true wireless earbuds

Jabra Elite 75t
PRICE: ₹15,999
RATING: ★★★★★



If you're looking for a no-nonsense pair of true wireless earbuds, then the Jabra Elite 75t should be high on your checklist. The Jabra Elite 65t had always been the gold standard of true wireless earphones and when compared with others, it was always regarded as the one worth purchasing. The reasons for its success are virtually countless and the two standout features here were its great audio quality and gorgeous design.

In late December 2019, Jabra has launched a follow-up to the Elite 65t in the form of the Elite 75t and it builds up on areas where its predecessor already excelled — design and audio quality.

The Jabra Elite 75t features minor enhancements that go a long way in cementing the brand's status as the model to beat.

The new Elite 75t comes with standout features such as an even more compact form factor for both the earbuds and the charging case and a battery life that not just measures up to the competition, but beats some of the best out there. Additionally, the Sound+ app is also supported with the new model which means that you get the equaliser option,

HearThrough and every other customisation that was available on the Jabra Elite 65t.

The earbuds are made of premium plastic and rubber which gives it its lightweight form factor. They are also IP55 splash-resistant which means that they can survive light rains or sweaty gym sessions. A feature about the Elite 75t which we truly loved was

the snug fit. This allowed us to undertake rigorous activities without even a slight fear that they would come undone.

The charging case is a lot compact as well when compared with the Elite 65t or even the Jabra Elite Sport. And even though it's smaller in size the Elite 75t's charging case possesses an additional 20 hours of battery life which

takes the overall playback to 28 hours.

The Jabra Elite 65t gained plaudits due to the balanced sound signature that was well-received across the globe. With the Elite 75t, it's rather confusing as to why the brand has gone in a different direction here and launched it with enhanced bass response. While it's true that certain consumers prefer a bassy output, the balanced sound of the Elite 65t was the product's call to fame. This enhanced bass feels like a step backwards for the Jabra Elite 75t as it overpowers the other frequencies and in the process drowning it out.

The Jabra Elite 75t is priced at ₹15,999 in India and for this amount you get easily one of the best true wireless earphones on the planet.

If Apple's AirPods Pro isn't your fancy, then this Jabra option should be the next obvious choice as it comes with an amazing design, small charging case, an intuitive smartphone app and much more that make it stand a head above shoulders over the competition.

Intermediary guidelines might infringe on privacy



Rohan Seth

If you try to keep up to date with the tech policy debates in India, intermediary liability is one of those few topics you cannot escape. In very oversimplified terms, the debate here is whether companies like Facebook should be held accountable for the content that is posted on them.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) came up with proposed changes to the intermediary guidelines back in December 2018. Since then, discourse around the topic has been rife and the new, finalised guidelines are speculated to come out in the next few weeks.

So when Bloomberg

reported that MeitY is expected to put out the new rules later this month without 'any major changes', speculation around the guidelines was replaced by concern.

One of the most contentious clauses of the intermediary guidelines was to make messages and posts traceable to their origins. That would mean WhatsApp would need to use its resources to track where a message was originating from and then report that to the government.

As The Verge puts it, tech companies could essentially be required to serve as deputies of the state, conducting investigations on behalf of law enforce-

ment, without so much as a court order.

That is deeply troubling. In contemporary India we have either begun to take secure messaging for granted or just do not think about how secure our communications are today.

Here context matters. More often than not, when I talk about privacy and end to end encryption, I get glazed eyes. That is understandable. People find it hard to understand how encryption impacts their lives. But humor me in a thought experiment. As you read this, take a look around you. Take a good look at the person physically closest to you at this moment and ask yourself whether you would be okay with disabling the security on your phone and giving it to them for three days. If the thought of doing that makes you even slightly uncomfortable, you now understand why privacy matters.

Using the new rules, privacy is now going to be chipped away for anyone in India who uses any end to end encrypted service.

Intermediary is a broad term and encompasses not just platforms but also cloud service providers, ISPs and even cybercafés.

Using the new rules, privacy is now going to be chipped away for anyone in India who uses WhatsApp (or any other end to end encrypted service). Add to that the fact that India today does not have the strongest of institutions. The issue on whether NaMo TV was a

governance tool or a political one taught us that. So if there is anything that the political climate tells us today is that there is a very real chance that these guidelines can and will be used for political gain.

The other side to the story also is that these are intermediary guidelines and do not apply to just platforms. Intermediary is a broader term and encompasses not just platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, or Signal, but also cloud service providers, ISPs and even cybercafés.

Not all of these players have equal access to information when ordered by law enforcement agencies to disclose it. In a consultation report released by Medianama, it listed instances of harassment of intermediaries.

According to the report, ISPs claimed to live in a constant situation of threat and made to feel like criminals for running

their businesses. During raids, people and their families were often asked to part with their phones and electronics, along with access to their passwords. In fact, according to the report, when a cloud service provider for an app in Andhra Pradesh was approached by the Police with a request for information, it had to go out of business being unable to comply. Not all intermediaries are created equal and these guidelines do not acknowledge that.

But the broader problem I see here is that there is no problem statement here. What these guidelines are trying to address is not clear. If the agenda is for the law enforcement agencies to information on digital communications (and that is essential to maintain law and order), it does not make sense to do it through these means. There are international provisions that India can and should resort to address this

(CLOUD Act in particular).

Once we go down this route, there is a non-zero chance that intermediaries such as WhatsApp might stop providing their services in India. Especially since if they comply, it will set precedent for other countries to follow India in their approach to breaking encryption. This could end up causing these intermediaries to serve as government lieutenants. Regardless of what platform we choose to communicate on, we need to value privacy going forward. If you disagree with the idea, now might be a great time to unlock your phone and hand your phone over to the person physically closest to you.

(The writer is a research analyst at The Takshashila Institution. All views are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the newspaper's)

SHORT TAKES

IPL changed Indian cricket, says Afridi

Karachi: Former Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi has credited the success of Indian cricket to the Indian Premier League, saying it has helped the country's budding cricketers to cope better with the pressures of international cricket. "I think the IPL turned around Indian cricket. Their new players after having played in the IPL with top foreign players and having shared the dressing room with them are ready when they come into international cricket. They are ready to cope with the pressures at this level," the former skipper said. "I think the IPL changed their cricket and I think even our Pakistan Super League will do the same. Already we are seeing some good young players coming through the league. When you play with or against top international players before big crowds you learn to handle the pressure." — PTI

SA hold nerve for win over England

Perth: South Africa's batting order held their nerve to deliver an upset six-wicket victory over England at the women's Twenty20 World Cup in Perth on Sunday. The Proteas have made the early running in Group B along with the West Indies, who beat newcomers Thailand on Saturday. Only the top two from each of the two five-team groups qualify for the knockout phase. Chasing a modest 124, South Africa appeared in control at 90 for 1 in the 16th over before the match turned with the wickets of captain Dane Van Niekerk (46) and Marizanne Kapp (38) in quick succession. Needing nine runs off the final over, Mignon du Preez was the hero with a six off the fourth last ball from Katherine Brunt before then hitting the winning runs with a boundary. — AFP

South Africa beat Aussies by 12 runs

Port Elizabeth: South Africa's bowlers held their nerve as the hosts bounced back from a record defeat to win the second Twenty20 international against Australia at St George's Park on Sunday. Opening batsman David Warner hit an unbeaten 67 for Australia but it wasn't enough as South Africa defended a modest total of 158 for four to win by 12 runs and level the three-match series. Australia lost three wickets for eight runs in the last 2.1 overs to finish on 146 for six. It was their first T20 defeat in nine matches going back to November 2018. South Africa captain Quinton de Kock was named man of the match after he slammed 70 off 47 balls to get the home team off to a blazing start as they set out to recover from a record 107-run defeat in the first match in Johannesburg on Friday. — PTI



Veda Krishnamurthy

Veda warns India of complacency after Aussie win

Perth, Feb. 23: India's middle-order batter Veda Krishnamurthy has warned her colleagues against complacency after their splendid win against Australia, saying they must stay focussed ahead of their clash against Bangladesh in the T20 World Cup, here on Monday. India's impressive bowling display lit up the tournament-opener with leg-spinner Poonam Yadav playing a key role with four wickets to halt the defending champions' run chase. Krishnamurthy does not want to see India let their emotions get the better of them, insisting the top and middle order need to survive longer. "We can't be complacent with the victory (against Australia). We have to let go of those emotions now and focus on repeating all the good things we did," Krishnamurthy said. India will need to improve their batting performance as they scored a below par 132 against Australia. Since the tri-series preceding this World Cup, the Indian batting has been inconsistent, struggling to post big totals. — PTI

Boult strikes down India

Wellington, Feb. 23: The Indian batsmen, caught between over-cautiousness and impetuosity, produced yet another inept batting performance to put New Zealand firmly on the driver's seat at the end of third day's play in the first Test here on Sunday.

At stumps, India reached 144 for 4 in their second innings as the top-order found Trent Boult's (3/27 in 16 overs) high-quality swing bowling too hot to handle. India now trail New Zealand by 39 runs going into fourth day, which could well be the final day of this game unless Ajinkya Rahane and Hanuma Vihari show the art of survival that was distinctly lacking in some of the other top-order batsmen.

Asked what kind of total can be defended in the fourth innings, senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin remained non-committal. "I know to keep it simple and say this is defendable and this is not, (it) is pretty much how you would want me to present it, but it's too much — like six sessions to go and we are not even at a stage where we can say what is a good

Kohli & Co. look down the barrel after another top-order flopshow

score to defend," he said. After New Zealand's tail wagged big time to post a good first innings total of 348, the deficit of 183 understandably put India under severe pressure. If Cheteshwar Pujara (11 off 81 balls) paid for his ultra-defensive mindset shouldering arms to an in-dipper, skipper Virat Kohli's (19 off 43 balls) split-second indiscretion became his undoing as he went for a needless pull-shot to a well-disguised short ball.

Mayank Agarwal was impressive in one session and lost concentration in the second, ditto to what happened on the first day and was caught down the leg-side. The bowler on both the occasion was Boult, who successfully took over the job of tormenting the Indian batsmen from Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson. Just like first innings, Pujara was leaving balls on length but at one stage, he was stuck on personal score of 6 for 28 consecutive balls. While leaving Jamieson from length was not an issue, Pujara did not account for Boult, shouldering arms a delivery that came in sharply. "That's the luxury of being a left-armer and being able to use those subtle changes. The red balls here in New Zealand haven't been swinging as much as they have in the past and if that's not happening for me, then it comes down to changing angles and using different parts of the crease," said Boult. — PTI

Trent Boult registered figures of 3/27 in the second innings of the first Test against India in Wellington on Sunday. — AP



R. Ashwin

78-year-old visually challenged Jones loves 'feeling' cricket from stadium

Wellington, Feb. 23: The hair is dishevelled, beard unkempt and shirt untucked. The old man, with a white stick, walks up to the designated stand, keeps his bag down, and quietly takes his seat. A young volunteer walks up to him with a cup of coffee. "Allan, your coffee and sugar is added, make sure you don't spill it," the young lady is off in a flash. "Excuse me, are you ...?" "Yes, I am blind. My name is Allan Jones and I love coming to cricket matches," the old man replies before you finish your question and smiles. The 78-year-old is visually challenged since birth but he still turns up to take his designated seat whenever there is a Test match at the Basin Reserve. He can't see the action but the Septuagenarian hears the radio commentary of one of his favourites, Jeremy Coney.

Jones says he loves to hear the sound of the bat hitting the ball, "feeling" cricket from the stadium, where he has his earpiece plugged in to follow Coney. You suddenly want to know more about him as he fishes out an old fashioned small FM radio and plugs in the ear-piece. "I love Jeremy Coney's commentary during Test matches. I come to the ground and listen to him and Brian Waddle to get the feeling of what's happening on the ground. "This is my designated seat (on RA Vance Members Stand) at the Basin Reserve for the last 40 years," Jones says, the serene smile refusing to leave his face. So how did he lose his eyesight? "It was some accident? "Oh no, I have been blind for the last 78 years, since my birth," he says nonchalantly. "But I love coming to the ground for Test matches. I can sit through the five days and enjoy the twists and turns. Test cricket is like life. I enjoy that sound when the ball hits the middle of the bat. — PTI

SCORECARD India (1st Innings): 165 New Zealand (1st Innings): Tom Latham c Pant b Ishant 11, Tom Blundell b Ishant 30, Kane Williamson c sub b Shami 89, Ross Taylor c Pujara b Ishant 44, Henry Nicholls c Kohli b Ashwin 17, BJ Watling c Pant b Bumrah 14, C de Grandhomme c Pant b Ashwin 43, Tim Southee c Shami b Ishant 6, Kyle Jamieson c Vihari b Ashwin 44, Ajaz Patel (not out) 4, Trent Boult c Pant b Ishant 38. Extras (B-1, LB-1, W-6) 8. Total (In 100.2 overs) 348. FoW: 1-26, 2-73, 3-166, 4-185, 5-207, 6-216, 7-225, 8-296, 9-310. Bowling: Bumrah 26-5-88-1, Sharma 22.2-6-68-5, Shami 23-2-91-1, Ashwin 29-1-99-3. India (2nd Innings): Prithvi Shaw c Latham b Boult 14, Mayank Agarwal c Watling b Southee 58, Cheteshwar Pujara b Boult 11, Virat Kohli c Watling b Boult 19, Ajinkya Rahane (batting) 25, Hanuma Vihari (batting) 15. Extras (W-2) 2. Total (for four wickets in 65 overs) 144. FoW: 1-27, 2-78, 3-96, 4-113. Bowling: Southee 15-5-41-1, Boult 16-6-27-3, de Grandhomme 14-5-25-0, Jamieson 17-7-33-0, Patel 3-0-18-0.

MOST RUNS FOR INDIA IN TESTS

| Batsman | M | I | Runs |
|------------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Sachin Tendulkar | 200 | 329 | 15921 |
| Rahul Dravid | 163 | 284 | 13265 |
| Sunil Gavaskar | 125 | 214 | 10122 |
| VVS Laxman | 134 | 225 | 8781 |
| Virender Sehwag | 103 | 178 | 8503 |
| Virat Kohli | 85 | 143 | 7223 |
| Sourav Ganguly | 113 | 188 | 7212 |

Stats: S. PERVEZ QAISER

RANJI TROPHY QUARTER-FINALS

Saurashtra put contest to bed

Ongole (AP), Feb. 23: Saurashtra battered Andhra out of their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal by extending their overall lead to a mammoth 658 runs here on Sunday. By stumps on the fourth day, Saurashtra had made 375 for nine in their second innings. Resuming the day on 88 for two in reply to Karnataka's 206, Jammu and Kashmir let the advantage slip by losing wickets at regular intervals to be bundled out in 62.4 overs. — PTI

RANJI BRIEF SCORES

At Ongole: Saurashtra 419 & 375/9 in 123 overs (Perak Mankad 85, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 60, Avi Barot 54, Vishvarajsinh Jadeja 46; Jyothi Sai Krishna 4/47, Smd Rafi 3/92) vs Andhra 136. **At Cuttack:** Bengal 332 & 361/7 in 132 overs (Shreevats Goswami 78, Abhishek Raman 67, Arnab Nandi 45, Shahbaz Ahmed (batting) 52; Govinda Poddar 3/95, Anurag Sarangi 2/26) vs Odisha 250. **At Valsad:** Gujarat 602/8 decl. & 199/6 decl. (Samit Gohel 72; Lakshay Garg 4/30) bt Goa 173 and 164 (Suyash Prabhudessai 66; Siddharth Desai 5/81). **At Jammu:** Karnataka 206 & 254/4 in 67 overs (R. Samarth 74, KV Siddharth (batting) 75; Parvez Rasool 2/53) vs J&K 192 in 62.4 overs (SP Khajuria 62, Abdul Samad 43; M Prasad Krishna 4/42).



India women celebrate their win over title holders Australia in the Women's T20 World Cup. — ICC

High-flying India women to face plucky Bangladesh

Perth, Feb. 23: Their confidence on a high after the impressive win over title holders Australia, India will look to carry forward the momentum against a plucky Bangladesh in their second Group A match of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here on Monday. Leg-spinner Poonam Yadav's magical spell helped India beat Australia by 17 runs in the tournament opener on Friday but the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side can't afford to take Bangladesh lightly as

to beat Bangladesh. In the last five meetings between the two sides, India lead 3-2 on head-to-head record and a win on Monday will take them closer to the knock-out rounds from the five-team group. India will, however, need to improve their batting performance as they scored a below par 132 against Australia. Since the tri-series preceding this World Cup, the Indian batting has been inconsistent and has not posted big totals barring a few matches. — PTI

LIVE on TV

India vs Bangladesh on STAR Sports 2, HD @ 4:30 PM

India shouldn't let guard down



Hemant Kenkre Silly Point

Big surprises come in small packages as India fans and team Australia found out at the Sydney Showground Stadium three days ago. Standing at 4 feet and 11 inches, Poonam Yadav stopped the hosts (and defending champions) in their tracks in the first fixture of the International Cricket Council Twenty20 World Cup (T20WC). Facing a below par total of 133 runs, the Aussies were jolted by Yadav's spell of 4 wickets for 19 runs, the best in the tournament's history to give team India two valuable points at the start of their campaign. Coming into the match with a fractured forefinger in her left hand (she bowls leg spin with the right) Poonam showed no signs of lack of match practice and leapt back to form with a dream spell. Spin is always going to be team India's go to factor in this tournament. They have been placed in the group of death — with two top contenders, the hosts and New Zealand in Group A. Beating the top side always gives a big boost to the morale of any

team and undoubtedly the squad led by skipper Harmanpreet Kaur must be on top of the world, down under. In Yadav and Rajeshwari Gayakwad, they have two experienced bowlers who can hold the team in good stead. The daughter of a retired Army officer, Agra-bred Poonam has a unique delivery which reaches the batsmen as slow as slow can get. She tosses the ball high up in the air, creating a loop which entices an attacking thought into the batters' mind. Mixing googlies with the traditional leg spin, Poonam tends to test the batters patience with the ball taking its time to pitch on to the surface. Coaches always say that balls that are tossed up above the normal eye level put a doubt in the batsman's mind, which is exactly what Poonam did. If the tiny lady kept pulling rabbits out of her hat with a constant supply of wickets for the team, another equally diminutive member, Taniya Bhatia gave superb support behind the stumps with a match haul of two catches and two stumpings. Playing with an existing injury has probably given Poonam the impetus to perform better. The 28-year old had her forefinger crushed while training at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru two months ago and had a plate inserted as a remedial measure. Missing the all important T20WC would have been the first thing her mind. The way she came back into the team with the backing of team coach WV Raman and getting herself fit to tour Australia shows the mettle she is made of. Cricket history has many such acts of courage where cricketers have put their team and the cause above themselves. Legendary Indian spinner Anil Kumble will always be remembered for bowling 14 consecutive overs with a broken jaw in the West Indies during the Antigua Test of 2002 with a bandaged face. That act will always have the same space as his remarkable ten wicket haul against Pakistan at the Ferozeshah Kotla, in Delhi in 1999. Malcolm Marshall coming out on the field at Headingley with a plastered left hand (thanks to a double fracture to his thumb), bowling and batting in the Test match against England. The remarkable deed spurred his team to black-wash England 5-0 in 1984. His skipper Clive Lloyd rated Marshall's heroism as one of the 'greatest and most courageous acts.' Putting the team above self is what real cricket is all about. One hopes Poonam's courageous act will inspire team India on their journey in the T20WC. The team looks well balanced and has the arsenal to cause an upset, as was seen during their outing against champions Australia. Furthermore, skipper Harmanpreet and ace opener Smriti Mandhana have played the Women's Big Bash League in the host country and are aware of the challenges that are on offer down under. With extreme success comes complacency as we saw during the ICC Under-19 World Cup where India lost after a fabulous show throughout the tourney. Indian women will need to guard against that factor as they take on lesser ranked teams like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. India's next match is against Bangladesh at Perth on 24th February, followed by a very important game against New Zealand at Melbourne on the 27th of this month. It is imperative for the team to stay focused on the goal and not let the win against the Aussies put their guard down.

SHORT TAKES

Settlement paid to assault victims

New York: A proposed USA Gymnastics tiered settlement system would pay some sexual assault victims of former US team doctor Larry Nassar only \$82,550, according to multiple reports Saturday detailing the payment plans.

Simone Biles, expected to be among the stars of this year's Tokyo Olympics after winning four gold medals at Rio in 2016 and 19 world titles including a fifth a 11-around crown last year, would be among 66 gymnasts to receive the top-level settlement amount of \$1.25 million.

An attorney for hundreds of victims of Nassar's abuse says the total \$215 million settlement offer is insufficient and releases too many people from further claims, including the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee, former USA Gymnastics chief executive Steve Penny and former national team directors Bela and Martha Karolyi. — AFP

Marquez suffers pre-season jitters

Doha: World motorcycling champion Marc Marquez admitted Saturday that his long-standing shoulder problem hampered his performance on the opening day of pre-season testing on Saturday.

Honda rider Marquez, a six-time champion in the sport's elite class, was sixth fastest at the Losail track, 0.361sec behind the Suzuki of Spanish compatriot Alex Rins.

Marquez underwent surgery on his right shoulder last November after a fall in testing in Jerez, aggravating an injury originally picked up at last year's Malaysian Grand Prix. "Today we started well but I am struggling a bit more than in Malaysia (at a recent test) with my shoulder," said Marquez.

"In the long corners here, especially the long right handers, I feel my shoulder. As always, Qatar is not an easy circuit for us and we're aiming to be as strong as possible," he added. Qatar will host the world championship season-opener on March 8. — AFP

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Nishioka pips Ugo, cruises into final

Miami: Unseeded Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan rallied for a 1-6, 6-4, 6-0 victory over sixth-seeded Ugo Humbert Saturday to reach the ATP Delray Beach final.

Nishioka, apparently refreshed by a second rain delay, roared through the final set to advance to his second career final. He won his only prior title match at Shenzhen in 2018.

On Sunday he'll face either second-seeded Milos Raonic of Canada or fourth-seeded American Reilly Opelka for the trophy. The Raonic-Opelka semifinal was moved to Sunday morning because of rain.

Nishioka, 24 and ranked 63rd in the world, is already projected to surpass his career-best ranking of 58 on Monday.

After reaching that mark in March of 2017 Nishioka tore a left knee ligament and dropped as low as 380th in the world in April 2018 before starting to climb his way back. — AFP

THIEM'S RUN IN RIO COMES TO A HALT

Rio De Janeiro: World number four Dominic Thiem of Austria missed a chance to reach a career-best third in the ATP rankings with a Rio Open quarter-final loss Saturday to Italy's Gianluca Mager.

Mager, a 128th-ranked qualifier playing in only his eighth career tour-level match, defeated 2017 Rio champion Thiem 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 in a match that was halted Friday by rain.

Had Thiem reached the semi-finals in his 2020 clay-court debut, he would have overtaken Roger Federer for third in Monday's ATP rankings.

Thiem was down a set and a break when rain stopped the match Friday with Mager leading 7-6 (7/4), 2-1.

Mager served for the match in the ninth game of the second set but Thiem broke to pull level at 5-5, only to have the Italian claim the final two games and the match after one hour and 55 minutes on the court.

Mager booked a semi-final date against 106th-ranked Hungarian lucky loser Attila Balazs, who ousted 133rd-ranked Spanish qualifier Pedro Martinez 2-6, 6-4, 6-2 in another rain-hit quarter-final. — AFP

Rockets soar high

Harden, Russell wreak havoc on Utah Jazz

Los Angeles, Feb. 23: James Harden and Russell Westbrook combined for 72 points as the Houston Rockets beat the Utah Jazz on the road for the second time in four weeks, winning 120-110 on Saturday.

Harden scored a team high 38 points and added five rebounds and seven assists while Westbrook scored 34. It was Harden's sixth three-pointer with 2:13 remaining that silenced the Jazz for good.

Utah had cut a 16-point deficit to 115-108 before Harden nailed a long three pointer that lifted Houston to its seventh win in the last nine contests.

Eric Gordon and Ben McLemore scored 12 points apiece off the bench for the Rockets, who finished 20 of 48 from behind the arc at Vivint Smart Home Arena.

It was the Rockets' three-point prowess that set the late tone with McLemore, Austin Rivers and Gordon all connecting from long range to spark a 17-5 run after Utah closed to within 83-80 on a three-point play from Mike Conley.

Donovan Mitchell led Utah with 31 points while Jordan Clarkson added 22 off the bench.

Utah scored 64 points in the paint, but that wasn't enough to counter the Rockets' explosive shooting.

Elsewhere, reserve Kent Bazemore scored 23 points as the Sacramento Kings are off to a roaring start to the second half of the season with a 112-103 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

De'Aaron Fox and Bogdan Bogdanovic each scored 20 points for Sacramento. Nemanja Bjelica tallied 10 points and seven rebounds in front of the crowd of 19,060 at Staples Center arena. Fox had a team-high eight assists for the

Kings, who have won five of their last seven. The Kings blew out the Clippers 124-103 in their most recent meeting in Los Angeles last month as Fox scored a career-best 34 points and the team set a franchise record for three-pointers made with 21.



Eric Bledsoe (centre) of Milwaukee Bucks shoots past Philadelphia 76ers during their NBA game in Milwaukee on Saturday. The Bucks won 119-98. — AP

points and 12 rebounds, while Harrison Barnes added 13 points for Sacramento. Nemanja Bjelica tallied 10 points and seven rebounds in front of the crowd of 19,060 at Staples Center arena. Fox had a team-high eight assists for the

Kings, who have won five of their last seven. The Kings blew out the Clippers 124-103 in their most recent meeting in Los Angeles last month as Fox scored a career-best 34 points and the team set a franchise record for three-pointers made with 21.

The Kings overcame a solid performance on Saturday by Kawhi Leonard, who led the Clippers with 31 points.

The Clippers are in second place in the Pacific Division but have been plagued by inconsistency and injuries this season.

Saturday's defeat marked their first contest since the break and it extended their losing skid to three straight.

Lou Williams scored 24 points and Montrezl Harrell had 16 points and 10 rebounds off the bench for Los Angeles. — AFP

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Lou Williams scored 24 points and Montrezl Harrell had 16 points and 10 rebounds off the bench for Los Angeles. — AFP

Nantes overhaul mighty Marseille

Paris, Feb. 23: Andre Villas-Boas had few excuses for his Marseille team on Saturday after their 14-match unbeaten run in Ligue 1 came to an end with a surprise 3-1 home defeat by off-form Nantes.

Marseille are second and have put themselves in a strong position to qualify for the Champions League next season thanks to their hot streak but were

downed by goals either side of half-time by Anthony Limbombe and Abdoul Kader Bamba and a late Alvaro own goal at the Stade Velodrome.

Morgan Sanson had given Marseille hope of continuing their run after levelling the scores with a lovely finish five minutes before the break, but Villas-Boas admitted his side deserved to lose after a weak display.

"We weren't very good today, we lost the ball a lot and struggled to build play," said the Portuguese coach.

"We had confidence that we could change the match when we equalised, but their second goal hit us hard," he added.

Marseille are nine points clear of third-placed Lille, who won 3-0 against rock-bottom Toulouse — who have now lost 14 of their last 15 matches — to move third following a first-half brace from Loic Remy.

However Rennes can retake third with a home win over Nimes on Sunday. The defeat for Marseille

● **Sitting on ninth place of the French table, Nantes shocked the second placed Marseille 3-1 and ended their 14 match unbeaten run in Ligue 1.**

● **Anthony Limbombe, Kader Bamba and Alvaro Gonzalez's scored goals for Nantes.**

also means Paris Saint-Germain can move 13 points clear at the top if they beat Bordeaux at the Parc des Princes on Sunday.

Nantes meanwhile climb to 10th after bagging their first win in six league matches and are level on 37 points with Lyon, Nice and Montpellier, who were beaten 1-0 by an Angers side that is now five points clear of the relegation zone.

All four teams are in a multi-team race for European football with four points separating Nantes and Rennes, who are fourth and sit in the Europa League spot.

Limbombe stunned the Velodrome when he stooped to head home Bamba's cross in the 35th minute in what was the game's first shot on target, but the hosts reacted positively to going a goal down and were level shortly after. — AFP

WEST BROM BRISTOL 3-0 IN CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH

London, Feb. 23: West Brom manager Slaven Bilic hailed a "complete performance" from his Championship leaders after they beat Bristol City 3-0 on Saturday as promotion rivals Leeds overcame Reading.

Albion sit four points clear of second-placed Leeds and nine ahead of third-placed Fulham in the race for the two automatic promotion places to the Premier League. Callum Robinson headed Slaven Bilic's side into the lead in the 32nd minute at Ashton Gate and Hal Robson-Kanu doubled their advantage four minutes later.

West Brom midfielder Romaine Sawyers was shown a straight red card in the second half but Robson-Kanu added the visitors' third 11 minutes from full-time.

Leeds secured successive wins for the first time since December as Pablo Hernandez bagged the only goal of a 1-0 victory in the 57th minute against Reading at Elland Road.

Marcelo Bielsa's side opened up a five-point gap between themselves and third-placed Fulham, who drew at Derby on Friday. — AFP

Stojanovic wins men's event in Triathlon Cup

Dubai, Feb. 23: Serbia's Ognjen Stojanovic and Barbara Riveros of Chile emerged victorious in the men's and women's sections respectively in the NTT ASTC Triathlon Asian Cup here on Sunday.

Results: Asian Cup: Men: 1. Ognjen Stojanovic (SRB) 00:16:33 (1st run)-01:02:33 (cycling)-00:28:53 (second run)-01:48:47 (overall); 2. Oscar Coggins (HKG) (00:16:34) - (01:02:33) - (00:29:09) - (01:49:03); 3. Jdan Celustka (CZE) (00:16:34) - (01:02:31) (00:29:29) 01:49:24. **Women:** 1. Barbara Riveros (CHI) (00:20:23) (01:07:04) - (00:32:43) 02:01:07; 2. Antoanela Manac (ROU) (00:20:23) (01:07:05) (00:33:06) 02:01:25; 3. Arina Shulgina (ITU) (00:20:23) (01:07:07) (00:33:14) 02:01:36. **National Championship: Men:** 1. Adarsh Muralidharan Nair (SSCB) (00:17:56) (01:05:57) (00:33:06) 01:58:01; 2. Bishworjit Saikhom (SSCB) (00:18:50) (01:05:14) (00:33:43) 01:58:42; 3. Mali Raghunath (SSCB) (00:19:49) (01:05:36) (00:36:58) 02:03:15. **Women:** 1. Sarojini Devi Thoudam (Mani) (00:22:12) (01:16:44) (00:41:04) 02:21:20; 2. Monika Mukheshbhai Nagpure (Guj) (00:22:12) (01:16:57) (00:42:39) 02:22:56; 3. Pragnya Mohan (Guj) (00:22:50) (01:16:20) (00:44:26) 02:24:41.



India Cements-Vijay CC, winners of the VA Parthasarathy Memorial Trophy. They beat Sanmar-Alwarpet by five runs in the final.

VAP hat-trick for Vijay CC

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 23

Pradosh Ranjan Paul (85) and K. Dinesh Karthik (53) helped India Cements-Vijay CC beat Sanmar-Alwarpet by five runs to clinch the VA Parthasarathy Memorial Trophy for a third consecutive time at the VB Nest Cricket Ground on Sunday.

BRIEF SCORES
India Cements-Vijay CC 252/8 in 50 overs

(Pradosh Ranjan Paul 85, K. Dinesh Karthik 53, K.B. Arun Karthick 26; R. Suthesh 2/18, D. Rahul 2/63, R.S. Jaganath Sinivas 2/56, U. Mukilesh 2/27) bt Sanmar-Alwarpet 247 in 49.2 overs (B. Sai Sudharsan 52, K. Vishal Vaidhya 71, R. Sanjay Yadav 28, U. Mukilesh 33; C.V. Varun 3/45, Pradosh Ranjan Paul 2/44).

Man of the Final: Pradosh Ranjan Paul (Vijay). **Player of the Tournament:** R. Kavin

(Alwarpet). **TN women thrash Mumbai**

Tamil Nadu women posted a thumping 117-run victory over Mumbai in the BCCI senior women's one dayers tournament at Mumbai on Sunday.

Brief scores: Tamil Nadu 202 in 49.2 overs (N. Niranjana 58, S. Anusha 64, S.B. Keerthana 25; Sayali Satghare 4/27) bt Mumbai 87 in 35.1 overs (S. Anusha 3/16, Elokshi Arun 3/11).

SSN Trophy from February 24 to 27

The 17th Annual Sports Fest SSN Trophy 2020 all India inter-college tournament will commence from February 24 to 27 at the SSN College.

The tournament consists of eight different events - football, badminton, cricket, basketball, chess, squash, table tennis and tennis for both men and women. The prize money is worth ₹4 lakhs.



Simona Halep poses with the trophy after defeating Elena Rybakina 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) in the women's singles final at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday. — AFP

Simona crowned with Dubai title

Dubai, Feb. 23: Simona Halep defeated Elena Rybakina 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) on Saturday to secure her 20th career title with victory at the Dubai Championships and claimed she felt "pretty dead".

The world number two from Romania, who also won the title in Dubai in 2015, clinched her first trophy since Wimbledon last summer.

"I love playing here, I gave everything I had," said Halep who had been 1-3 down in the final set and took victory after coming back from a set down for the third succes-

sive match in Dubai. "Now, actually, I'm pretty dead," the Romanian added.

Rybakina, 20, who will rise to 17 from 19 in the new rankings next week, was playing her fourth final from five tournaments in 2020 having won

the Hobart trophy last month on the eve of the Australian Open. "She's a talented player," Halep said of her opponent who has a WTA-leading 19 match wins for the season.

"She's young and has many more years ahead of

her," Halep added. Rybakina, who was just inside the top 200 this time last year, took the tight final set into a deciding tiebreaker when she broke the world No. 2 as the top seed served for victory.

"I may have been a bit nervous," Halep said. "I just kept trying to fight for every ball. I'm really proud of this week, I think I gave my best. I enjoy every match I play here," she added.

Rybakina took the early initiative, gaining a 4-2 lead but struggling to close out the opening set. The Kazakh had to save

two break points as she served for the set leading 5-3.

The 20-year-old double-faulted on a first set point before finally claiming the set on her third opportunity after 38 minutes, saving a pair of break points.

Halep struck back in the second, breaking for 3-1, but Rybakina answered in the seventh game with a break back before losing serve again to trail 3-5 after salvaging three break points.

Simona Halep squared the match at a set each from Rybakina's backhand error a game later. — AFP