

SHORT TAKES

TRUMP TWEETS IN HINDI ON WAY TO INDIA

New Delhi, Feb. 24: US President Donald Trump on Monday tweeted in Hindi on his way to India, saying he is eager to visit the country and would be soon meeting all.

Trump, on board the special Air Force One aircraft along with his delegation, took to the microblogging site to express his eagerness and posted the tweet in Hindi: "Ham Bharat aane ke liye tatpar hain. ham raste me hain, kuchh hi ghan-ton me ham sabse milenge. (We are eager to visit India. We are on our way and would be soon meeting all)."

In response to Trump's tweet, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Atithi Devo Bhava, (Guests are like god)."

The US president is accompanied by First Lady Melania, daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and the top brass of his administration. Just before his departure, Trump said he had committed to visit India a long time ago and is looking forward to be with the people of India.

TRUMPS SKIP KHAMAN, SAMOSA

Ahmedabad, Feb. 24: United States President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump did not eat anything, including Gujarati delicacy 'Khaman' which was part of the high tea menu, during their visit to the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad on Monday afternoon, its trustee said.

Trump and the First Lady visited the Ashram in afternoon for about 15 minutes in the midst of their roadshow from the Ahmedabad international airport to the cricket stadium in Motera.

They were welcomed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the ashram. "Some food items were arranged for the members of the visiting delegation, but neither the US President nor the First Lady had anything during their visit to the Ashram," said Sabarmati Ashram trustee Kartikeya Sarabhai.

Apart from 'Khaman', a famous Gujarati delicacy, items like broccoli and corn samosa, apple pie, kaju katli and a variety of teas were part of the menu of the high tea for the Trumps.

"We saw the list of food items which might have been arranged for the officials who were part of the visiting delegation. But none of the dignitaries ate them," Sarabhai said.

After visiting the Ashram, the US President, the First Lady and the PM proceeded to the cricket stadium at Motera for the "Namaste Trump" event that was held around 2 pm.

NO DIFFERENCE TO POOR: SENA ON TRUMP VISIT

Mumbai, Feb. 24: Panning Donald Trump's visit to India, the Shiv Sena on Monday said the 36-hour-long sojourn of the US president in the country won't make 'an iota of difference' in the lives of poor and middle-class Indians.

While leaving for India, Trump has said he is going to discuss business with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which makes it clear that his trip is aimed at boosting US trade, the Sena said.

"There won't be an iota of difference in the lives of the poor and middle-class people in India due to Trump's visit. Then where is the question of people being appreciative or enthusiastic of his tour," an editorial in Sena mouthpiece Saamana said.

"If there is any eagerness about US President Donald Trump's visit, it may be in Ahmedabad, where he lands first," the Sena said.

More than the Trump visit, the talk is about how walls were built to hide slums along the road he will traverse, the editorial said.

"It is reported that US President Donald Trump will touch upon the issue of curbs on religious freedom in India. These are our internal issues. This country is run by people elected democratically and they don't need guidance from any outsider on this," it said.

US President Donald Trump should instead indulge in 'tourism' of Ahmedabad, Agra and Delhi, the editorial said.

When Trump leaves India 36-hours after his arrival, there will be no signs of his visit on the soil of India, the Sena said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump at Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad on Monday. (Right) US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump observe the 'Three Wise Monkeys' memento presented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Trump is 'man of the match' at Motera

President praises India, attempts Hindi at the jam-packed stadium attended by 1.25 lakh-strong crowd

Ahmedabad, Feb. 24: The renovated Motera stadium here is yet to host its first cricket match but on Monday the sprawling facility became the site of a public spectacle where US President Donald Trump showered encomiums on India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi amid a rather delirious crowd.

The jam-packed arena, also known as Sardar Patel Stadium, frequently broke into applause as people displayed enthusiasm for the first visit by any US president to the home state of Modi.

Trump's praise for India, his denouncing of the menace of terrorism and his try at Hindi during his over 25-minute long speech was well received by people and punctuated by constant clapping by the nearly 1.25 lakh-strong crowd.

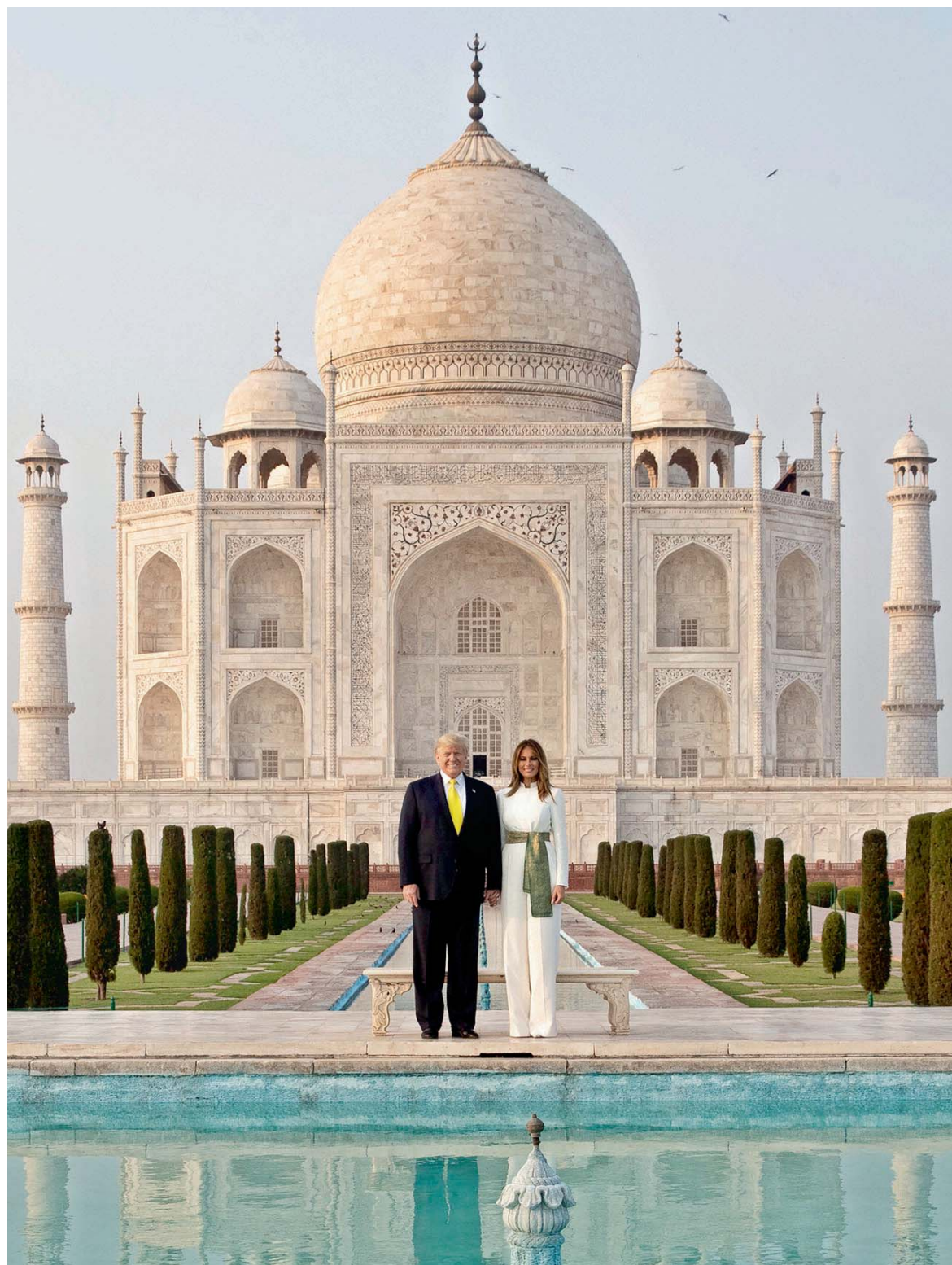
People were pleased when Trump praised Modi, remembering his humble background as a 'chaiwala' (tea seller) and his inspiring journey to the office of Prime Minister.

Though Modi and Trump's address for 'Namaste Trump' event was scheduled to start after 1.30 pm, people from across Gujarat started arriving at the world's biggest cricket stadium since 8 am.

Though placards and flags were not allowed to be taken inside the stadium located in the Motera area, people were seen wearing masks of Trump and Modi. There was a continuous stream of people towards the stadium since the morning as parking areas for vehicles was kept some distance away from the stadium. For security reasons, each invitee was given a personal invitation and police conducted their background checks.

Bollywood singer Kailash Kher and local Gujarati singers entertained the audience for a couple of hours before Trump and Modi reached the stadium, which has the capacity to accommodate 1.10 lakh people. Gujarati singers like Kirtidan Gadhvi, Geeta Rabari and Kinjal Dave also entertained the audience for over two hours.

Teachers and principals of government schools were roped in for manage-



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump at the Taj Mahal in Agra on Monday. — PTI

ment of the crowd, who ensured the people occupied their allotted seat. The invited guests also included Non Resident Indians and businesspersons.

For security reasons, no one was allowed to carry any banner or flag inside the renovated arena. Though the audience was

enthusiastic to see and hear both the leaders, sweltering heat forced some of them to leave even before Trump ended his speech as guests were sitting in the open stadium since morning.

The stadium, owned by the Gujarat Cricket Association, has been rebuilt after demolishing

the old one, which was built in 1982 and had a seating capacity of 49,000. The entire stadium complex is spread across over 64 acres and has a club house and an Olympic-size swimming pool. The construction of the new stadium was completed in two years with an estimated cost of ₹700 crore. — PTI

● **US PRESIDENT** during his over 25-minute long speech denounced the menace of terrorism.

● **THE CROWD** was pleased when Trump praised Modi, remembering his humble background as a "chaiwala" (tea seller).

Manmohan Singh, Cong leaders to skip Prez banquet

New Delhi, Feb. 24: Congress leaders, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, will not attend the official banquet being hosted by President Ram Nath Kovind in honour of US President Donald Trump on February 25, sources said.

Singh had earlier accepted the invite but expressed his inability to attend the same on Monday.

He has conveyed his regret to the President's office for not being able to attend the banquet, sources close to Singh said. The Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, will also not attend the official banquet as Congress chief Sonia Gandhi has not been

invited. She is also the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party.

The Opposition Congress is peeved at the Modi government's move to not allow its top leaders a meeting with the visiting US president, as has been the tradition.

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has said he will not attend the President's banquet as a mark of protest over the party's top leaders not being extended an invitation.

This will probably be the first time that leaders of the principal opposition will miss the official banquet in honour of a visiting head of state and will not hold separate discussions, Congress leader said. — PTI

Trumps see sunset from Taj Mahal

Agra, Feb. 24: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump on Monday evening visited the iconic Taj Mahal. They marvelled at the famed 17th century Mughal-era mausoleum built as a monument of love. Trump, accompanied by his wife, daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner, arrived here from Ahmedabad.

The Taj Mahal, which was built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal who died in 1631, has been refurbished for the visit. President Trump and the First Lady held hands as they strolled at the Taj complex and later wrote in the visitors' book.

They were also briefed about the history and importance of the monument. The US President's visit to Agra and Taj has generated huge excitement among local residents. Some shops have even displayed their own banners, welcoming Trump to India.

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From the Kheria airbase here, Trump's convoy of over 30 vehicles drove to Oberoi Amarvilas hotel near the Taj Mahal complex, as over 15,000 school students who lined up both sides of the route held US and India flags and cheered the US president as his motorcade passed by.

Trump and the First Lady enjoyed the view of the marble marvel in the evening as a cool breeze added to the pleasant weather. They also posed for pictures for photographers.

The couple spent about an hour at Taj to catch the sunset from the Unesco heritage site, before heading to Delhi. An extensive three-layered security is in place for his Agra visit. — PTI

WRONG | MESSAGE In Sabarmati visitors' log, Trump thanked Modi 'for this wonderful visit'

No mention of 'Bapu' surprises tweeples

Ahmedabad, Feb. 24: A lot of eyebrows were raised on Twitter and many people expressed surprise as US President Donald Trump left a message in the visitors' book at Sabarmati Ashram without any mention of Mahatma Gandhi.

In the book, Trump wrote, "To my great friend Prime Minister Modi. Thank you for this wonderful visit."

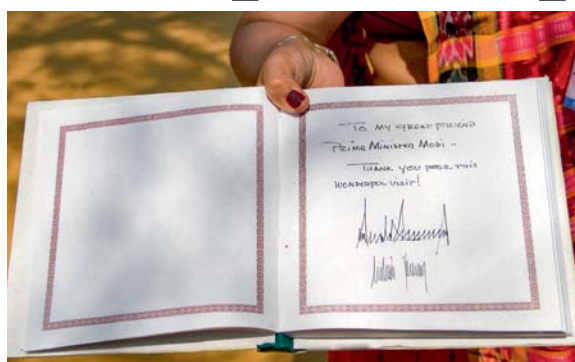
Trump, who reached Ahmedabad on Monday for the first leg of his India tour, visited the Ashram along with wife Melania minutes after he landed here.

After noticing no mention of Mahatma Gandhi

in the message by Trump, netizens took to Twitter, comparing his note with that of former US President Barack Obama.

When Obama visited the Mani Bhavan — where Gandhi used to stay while in Mumbai — in south Mumbai in 2010, his note in the visitors' book read: "I am filled with hope and inspiration as I have the privilege to view this testament to Gandhi's life. He is a hero not just to India but to the world."

Five years later, in January 2015, after visiting the Raj Ghat in Delhi, Obama wrote, "What Dr Martin Luther King Jr said then remains true today. The spirit of Gandhi



A view of the Sabarmati Ashram's visitor's book signed by US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump in Ahmedabad on Monday. — PTI

is very much alive in India today. And it remains a great gift to the world. May we always live in the spirit

of love and peace — among all people and nations." Congress leader Manish

Tewari posted an image of Trump's remarks in the Ashram visitors' book, and said, "This is a snapshot of the note that someone sent. It ostensibly is @realDonaldTrump's note at Sabarmati. No mention of the Great Mahatma. Does he even know who Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was?"

"And this is what @barackobama had to say about the Great Mahatma possibly at Rajghat or Sabarmati. The distinction can not be more stark," the former Union minister said, posting an image of Obama's remarks.

Tapas Dey (@TapasDeyINC), former

Tripura MLA, tweeted: "No mention of Bapu Mahatma Gandhi Ji in the visitor's book of Sabarmati Ashram, instead President @realDonaldTrump express his love to @narendramodi."

Another Twitter user Martin Joseph (@martinjmsw1) tweeted about Trump's hand writing. "President Trumps comments in the visitor book of Sabarmati Ashram. The letters must be either in uppercase or lowercase but he used randomly mixed capitalisation in writing. Its known StudlyCaps. He must repeat his high school Grammar classes." — PTI

HINDU SENA ORGANISES 'YAGNA'

New Delhi, Feb. 24: A fringe Hindu outfit on Monday organised a 'yagna' ahead of talks between US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The 'yagna' was organised by Hindu Sena at Jantar Mantar. "We performed the rituals to seek God's blessings for PM Narendra Modi and Trump as they begin their talks and to pray that they can work together to eradicate terrorism," Hindu Sena chief Vishnu Gupta said.

Meanwhile, Left outfits and women's groups protested a few metres away against Trump's visit. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle 25 FEBRUARY 2020

A pitch to sell arms and a tribute to diversity

It's not clear what effect, if any, the visit to Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram on Monday had on US President Donald Trump as he kicked off his 36-hour India visit...

In today's context, this is an invitation to purchase defence systems more widely and deeply from the US, especially after America cleared India for the Strategic Trade Authorisation Tier 1 category in 2018...

While the US President's address to tens of thousands of Indians at a major public event emphasised a tighter alliance framework with India...

Mr Trump spoke about India's progress over 70 years in which it had grown into an economic powerhouse and had done so while being a "democratic, peaceful, and tolerant country"...

Mr Trump also alluded in positive terms to the diversity of faiths in India and its "many treasures", such as "the sacred banks of the Ganges, the Golden Temple and Jama Masjid"...

While speaking forcefully to ally with India to root out "radical Islamic terrorism", the US leader noted his administration had been working successfully with Pakistan in fighting terrorism...

Experts are warning of an impending global pandemic as the Covid-19 virus has invaded 30 nations since December 8, when the first Wuhan patient developed symptoms...

Coronavirus now a pandemic

China's obstinacy in delaying India's proposed IAF C-17 Globemaster flight to China to evacuate the last 80 Indians still stranded in Wuhan goes beyond the inscrutability of the dragon's decision-making...

Has China, guilty of initially suppressing news of the virus while discrediting whistleblower doctors, lost the plot? Has the shutdown of big cities with millions of people helped contain the virus' spread...

India has good reason to feel annoyed as its checks on medical exports to China are based on logistical issues and are temporary. China's appeal for commerce to go on uninterrupted is understandable but hard to attempt in the prevailing atmosphere of fear and rising panic over a runaway pathogen...



Subhani

A chance for Mamata to grab secular space?



Shikha Mukerjee

Politics as practised by political parties has been left behind by the spontaneous demonstrations and sustained protests by the gritty women who continue to sit night and day at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi's Okhla area...

Hindu gods and goddesses, spout Sanskrit or the sacred texts whatever those might be, and convey to touchy voters that despite their commitment to secularism, or their identification by the BJP as Muslim appeasement parties...

In these states, the idea of secular politics, which is different from the pre-2019 politics of secularism, will fight for support against the politics of communal identities, alienation and division...

West Bengal will be the most closely watched state in this contest. The BJP believes that its best chance of gaining new ground, devouring a once Left bastion and ejecting the soft Hindutva-Muslim appeasement Trinamul Congress is in 2021...

For Mamata Banerjee, overcome the negatives that incumbency automatically brings to a bid for re-election to a third term? It will require her to pull off a tough balancing act of increasing her appeal among Hindu voters without decreasing the loyalty and the votes of the substantial Muslim voters across the state...

The BJP is, it seems, certainly rock-like its determination to not only reclaim the Hindu nation as its exclusive domain in the next series of elections, it is also set to seek new endorsements for its manifesto that will change the fundamental values that permeate the

Constitution as well as the institutions of the modern nation state established in 1947.

Leaving aside the BJP's dilemma, albeit of its own making, Jammu and Kashmir, where elections to the original state were due in January-February 2021, and in the current environment where organising credible elections in the newly-formed Union territories will be a challenge...

West Bengal will be the most closely watched state in this contest. The BJP believes that its best chance of gaining new ground, devouring a once Left bastion and ejecting the soft Hindutva-Muslim appeasement Trinamul Congress is in 2021...

For Mamata Banerjee, overcome the negatives that incumbency automatically brings to a bid for re-election to a third term? It will require her to pull off a tough balancing act of increasing her appeal among Hindu voters without decreasing the loyalty and the votes of the substantial Muslim voters across the state...

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the run-up to the 2021 elections will be a choice between playing the election game by rules that she creates and so controls, or playing by the BJP's rules. If Ms Banerjee persists in her politics of appeasing both high-caste Hindus and "Nama Shudra" voters...

Staging exaggerated demonstrations of Hindu bhakti and Muslim piety would be perceived, quite correctly, as exercises in appeasement. It would distract from the performance of the West Bengal government on social security and infrastructure development...

As the first chief minister to object to the CAA, NPR, NRC, Ms Banerjee is ideally positioned to occupy the secular political space that the sustained, coherent non-party protests have opened up. The demand is entirely secular and where the public has come out in support at rallies and sit-ins...

The moment is one that Mamata Banerjee could seize to catapult out of the corner into which she has been boxed in by the BJP and her critics in West Bengal, who harp on her past associations with right-wing communal politics, and her alleged current vulnerabilities that are open to exploitation by a regime that is unscrupulous in using institutional power to arm-twist select political opponents.

The writer is a senior journalist in Kolkata

LETTERS

RENTING HOUSES

People from all communities have their choice of tenants (Divide is complete in Balapur, Saidabad, DC, Feb. 24). We see places where people from all communities live in the same complex...

Sulochana Gopu Hyderabad

Land owners have private property and they are well within their rights to choose a tenant.

V. Sundara Ram Hyderabad

The landowners' choice of tenants has more to do with their mindset than religion. It is in no way connected to religion as we can see in our day-to-day life. There is also an illusion that vegetarians will be good tenants.

P.J. David Hyderabad

DEPLORABLE TREND

Your scathing editorial on the shocking thanksgiving speech by SC judge Arun Mishra was spot on (Judge's praise of PM height of sycophancy, DC, Feb. 24). One may forgive as understandable, though disturbing, the investigating, banking, Lt. Governors and other government controlled institutions stooping to repeatedly playing to the tune of the ruling party.

C.J. Bhupathi Hyderabad

BRAVO THAROOR

I admire the courage of Shashi Tharoor for his frank opinion on the Congress leadership, dynasty rule, nomination system and coterie around Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi. Leaders must listen to his suggestions.

A.S. Murthy Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Woman ready to bear test tube baby

LONDON, Feb. 24.

A leading British gynecologist has claimed that scientists here may be able to produce a "test tube baby" — a child conceived out of the body in the laboratory — within a year.

Dr. Patrick Steptoe told television viewers last night that a 34-year-old unnamed wife, childless after five years of marriage, is taking part in an experiment to produce such a baby.

He said, the new method involved removal of the female egg from the ovary, fertilisation of it, in a laboratory, and replacement of the egg in the woman's womb.

The writer is a senior journalist in Kolkata

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Muhammad Amir Rana



2019 elections have muddled intra-Afghan reconciliation

The results of the 2019 Afghan presidential elections have further complicated the prospects for achieving intra-Afghan political reconciliation. They have pushed down the hope that the newly elected government would be able to form an inclusive team to talk to the Afghan Taliban...

The persisting political turmoil in Kabul has increased just a week before the announcement of a deal is expected between the US negotiation team and the Taliban. Many anticipate that the much-awaited deal will bring to the fore the crucial process of nation-building in a

war-torn country, where all Afghan stakeholders will not only have to build consensus on a permanent, comprehensive ceasefire, but also reconstruct a new social contract for their country. However, the deepening political crisis in Afghanistan can slacken the peace process, causing a delay in the announcement of the deal...

The Afghan Taliban deputy and Haqqani Network chief Sirajuddin Haqqani hinted at the Taliban's internal difference over the peace process in an opinion piece published in the New York Times. However, their differences are not as severe as the trust deficit among their opponents including Afghan

and international stakeholders. Political chaos in Kabul is an advantage for the Taliban, which they will use to bolster their bargaining position while dealing with the US and fellow Afghan stakeholders. It is not yet certain how Washington will respond to the simmering controversy over election results.

In the current environment, what are the options left for Pakistan? Complete detachment from the emerging situation in Afghanistan is one option. This can be interpreted as maintaining a neutral position before and during the complicated process of intra-Afghan talks. This would be an ideal but awkward position because of complications that could emerge during the withdrawal of foreign forces and the dialogue process. The US would have to rely on Pakistan to use its influence over the Taliban and a

few other political actors in Afghanistan.

Secondly, there is no guarantee that Russia, Iran, and particularly India, would maintain a neutral position. India and Iran have their proxies and favourites in Afghanistan, whom they will not abandon. Pakistan will be an easy target of such "favourites" if the dialogue is deadlocked. Pakistan will have to maintain and further diversify its relations with Afghan stakeholders other than the Taliban.

If the exit process is caught in complications, the US can review its approach. But for the global community, the most critical aspect would be long-term economic assistance pledges to help Afghan power elites develop viable economic growth structures. This factor will also dominate the intra-Afghan dialogue. It remains to be seen how Afghan stakeholders,

who have divergent interests, will deal with this challenge. It is expected they will build pressure on Pakistan regarding the transit trade agreement and could demand easy access to ports. If Pakistan-India relations remain tense, it would not be easy for Pakistan to make any concession.

The processes of withdrawal and dialogue will be lengthy with all their complexities, but their completion will see the real test for Pak-Afghan ties. Pakistan should have a blueprint for the future and prepare the ground for a long-term strategic and economic cooperation treaty with Afghanistan. This is important in order for both countries to emerge from the Indian-centric strategic hangover and develop their independent bilateral relationship.

By arrangement with Dawn

IN BRIEF

Togo Prez wins fourth term

Lome: Togo President Faure Gnassingbe has won a fourth term in power, according to provisional results declared by the national electoral commission (Ceni). He took 72 per cent of the vote share in the first round of the presidential election, Ceni said, far ahead of former prime minister Agbeyome Kodjo, with 18 per cent, who had also claimed victory after Saturday's vote.

Haitian police attack army HQ

Port-au-Prince: Haitian police demanding better working conditions shot up the army headquarters on Sunday, killing a serviceman and wounding another, the Defense Ministry said. Media reports had said six people were wounded in the attack in Port-au-Prince by what the ministry said were gunmen wearing masks. "We are under siege. We are coming under fire with all kinds of weapons — assault rifles, Molotov cocktails, tear gas," General Jodel Lesage said. He said soldiers had returned fire but did not give an injury toll, nor could he say how many people were at the army headquarters, near the presidential palace, at the time of the attack.

Indian shot dead at grocery store

Washington: A masked assailant shot dead Indian national Maninder Singh Sahi at a grocery store in Los Angeles in the early hours of Saturday, local police said. Maninder, 31, was married and father of two. Hailing from Karnal, Sahi had arrived in the US less than six months ago and had sought political asylum. He was working at a 7-Eleven grocery store in the Whittier City in Los Angeles County of California. According to the Whittier Police Department, the incident occurred at 5.43 am. It appears the suspect entered the store with a semi-automatic handgun with the intent to commit a robbery. For unknown reasons the suspect fired the handgun killing the clerk.

Lesotho PM in court for murder

Maseru (Lesotho): Lesotho Prime Minister Thomas Thabane appeared in court on Monday over the murder of his estranged wife after a weekend in which he was said to be receiving emergency medical care in South Africa. In the latest twist that has gripped the southern African kingdom, the 80-year-old premier attended the magistrates court in the capital Maseru. Charges had been expected to be formally read out to him for allegedly acting in "common purpose" in the June 2017 killing of 58-year-old Lipolelo Thabane, whom he was in the process of divorcing. But after a brief sitting, the matter was deferred to the High Court and the prime minister was not formally charged.

STROKE TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH FOOD

London, Feb. 24: Different types of food, including fruits and vegetables, are associated with risks of different types of stroke, according to a study that may lead to better dietary recommendations to protect against the deadly medical condition. Researchers, including those from the University of Oxford in the UK, said two types of strokes are most common, including Ischaemic stroke which occurs when a blood clot blocks an artery supplying blood to the brain, and haemorrhagic stroke which occurs when there is bleeding in the brain that damages nearby cells. In the current study, published in the European Heart Journal, the scientists assessed more than 418,000 people in nine European countries, analysing cases of ischaemic stroke and haemorrhagic stroke separately. The study reported that while higher intakes of fruit, vegetables, fibre, milk, cheese, or yoghurt were each linked to a lower risk of ischaemic stroke, the scientists said a greater consumption of eggs was associated with higher risk of haemorrhagic stroke.

#MeToo movement: Harvey guilty

Hollywood studio boss convicted after weeks of testimony from a string of accusers

New York, Feb. 24: Harvey Weinstein was convicted Monday at his sexual assault trial, sealing his dizzying fall from powerful Hollywood studio boss to archvillain of the #MeToo movement. The verdict followed weeks of often harrowing and excruciatingly graphic testimony from a string of accusers who told of rapes, forced oral sex, groping, masturbation, lewd propositions and that's-Holl-

wood excuses from Weinstein about how the casting couch works. The conviction was seen as a long-overdue reckoning for Weinstein after years of whispers about his behaviour turned into a torrent of accusations in 2017 that destroyed his career and gave rise to #MeToo, the global movement to encourage women to come forward and hold powerful men accountable for their sexual misconduct.

The jury of seven men and five women took five days to find him guilty. The case against the once-feared producer was essentially built on three allegations: That he raped an aspiring actress in a New York City hotel room in 2013, that he forcibly performed oral sex on another woman, production assistant Mimi Halesy, at his apartment in 2006, and that he raped and forcibly performed oral sex on "So-

pranos" actress Annabella Sciorra in her apartment in the mid-1990s. Three additional women who said they, too, were attacked by Weinstein also testified as part of an effort by prosecutors to show a pattern of brutish behaviour on his part. The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are victims of sex crimes unless they grant permission, as Halesy and Sciorra did.

Jurors signalled their struggles with the Sciorra charges four days into deliberations. On Friday, after reviewing sections of her testimony and related evidence, they sent a note to the judge indicating they were deadlocked on the counts but had reached a unanimous verdict on the others. After some debate in the courtroom, the judge ordered jurors to keep deliberating. — AP



Harvey Weinstein

EXPULSED WSJ REPORTERS LEAVE CHINA

Beijing, Feb. 24: Two Wall Street Journal reporters left China on Monday after being expelled over a controversial headline in an op-ed that angered Beijing. Three reporters were ordered out of the country last week over what Beijing deemed a racist headline that the journalists were not involved in writing — marking one of the harshest moves against foreign media. The Journal opinion piece — headlined "China is the Real Sick Man of Asia" — was written by a US professor who criticised the Chinese government's initial response to the Covid-19 outbreak. China's foreign ministry said it was "racially discriminatory", and the three reporters had their press cards revoked. — AFP

ISRAELI AIR STRIKES KILL SIX ULTRAS IN SYRIA

Jerusalem, Feb. 24: Israeli air strikes targeting the Islamic Jihad militant group in the Gaza Strip and Syria killed at least six fighters, a war monitor said Monday, after the jihadists fired a barrage of rockets at Israel. In the latest violence ahead of a March 2 general election in the Jewish state, the Israeli Air Force targeted "Islamic Jihad terror sites" throughout Gaza and near the Syrian capital Damascus, a military statement said. It followed over 20 rockets and mortars fired from the Palestinian enclave, themselves a response to the killing of an Islamic Jihad militant along the Gaza-Israel border. — AFP

Hearing begins in Assange's case

London, Feb. 24: Britain on Monday starts hearing Washington's extradition request for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange in a test case of media freedoms in the digital age and the limits of US justice. A ruling against Assange in the case could see the 48-year-old Australian jailed for 175 years if convicted on all 17 US Espionage Act charges and one count of computer hacking he faces. Each stems from his site's release in 2010 of a trove of classified State Department and Pentagon files detailing the realities of the US campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. One video from 2007 showed an Apache helicopter attack in which two soldiers gunned down two Reuters reporters and nine Iraqi civilians in broad daylight in Baghdad. The files also disclosed the secret identities of diplomats and government agents in hostile environments — as well as locals who risked their lives by cooperating with the United States. These names were redacted by the Western newspapers with which WikiLeaks initially worked. But a falling out with their editors prompted Assange to release hundreds of thousands of files in their original form. The US Justice Department said last May that the "human resources"

A riot of colours



Performers wearing costume from the Portela samba school parade during Carnival celebrations at the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on Monday. — AP

French ex-PM, wife on trial for fraud

Paris, Feb. 24: He could have been president of France. Instead, former Prime Minister Francois Fillon is going on trial to face fraud charges after he used public funds to richly pay his wife and children for work they allegedly never performed. The trial beginning Monday is scheduled to last until March 11, but it may be quickly suspended until Wednesday on request from Fillon's defence team out of solidarity with a lawyers' strike

against French President Emmanuel Macron's controversial pension reform. Fillon is suspected of having given jobs as parliamentary aides, involving no sustained work, to his wife and two of their children from 1998 to 2013. Altogether, the aide work brought the family more than 1 million euros (USD 1.08 million). Once the front-runner in the 2017 presidential election, Fillon, 65, has denied wrongdoing. The scandal, which made headline in

the French media just three months before the 2017 vote, crushed the conservative candidate's campaign and allowed centrist candidate Macron to gain momentum. Fillon has been charged with the misuse of public funds, receiving money from the misuse of public funds and the misappropriation of company assets. He faces up to ten years in prison and a 1 million euro fine. His wife, Penelope Fillon, has been charged most-

ly as an accomplice. A former lawmaker, Marc Joulaud, also goes on trial for misuse of public funds after he allegedly gave her a fake job as an aide from 2002 to 2007, while her husband was prime minister. In addition, charges also cover a contract that allowed Penelope Fillon to earn 135,000 euros in 2012-2013 as a consultant for a literary magazine owned by a friend of her husband also an alleged fake job. — AP

Protect troops, US tells Iraq

Washington, Feb. 24: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday urged Iraq's designated prime minister to protect US troops and meet grievances of a month-long protest movement ahead of a parliamentary confidence vote. In the first substantive US comment on Mohammad Allawi since he was named on February 1 as a consensus candidate, Pompeo said he told him by telephone that the United States backed a "strong, sovereign and prosperous" Iraq. He "stressed Iraq's obligation to protect US and coalition diplomats, forces and facilities," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortgas said in a statement. Pompeo spoke to Allawi about "the urgency with which Iraq's next government must put an end to the killing of protesters, seek justice for those killed and wounded, and address their legitimate grievances," she said. Allawi has called a vote of confidence in parliament on Monday ahead of a deadline, after earlier skepticism that he could form and win approval for a government. The US last month outraged Iraqi leaders by carrying out a drone strike at Baghdad's airport that killed a top general from neighboring Iran, Qassem Soleimani. Tensions had soared after



Mike Pompeo

Iraqi Shiite militias fired rockets on bases that are home to US bases, with fresh attacks reported in recent weeks. US leaders scoffed at the Iraqi objections to the killing of Soleimani on its soil, with President Donald Trump threatening economic sanctions if Baghdad evicted the 5,200 troops in the country, which was thrown into chaos by the 2003 US invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein. Pompeo refused a request by the outgoing prime minister, Adel Abdel Mahdi, to send a delegation to discuss a troop withdrawal and said publicly that many Iraqi leaders privately wanted US forces to stay. Adel Mahdi stepped down in December in the face of the unprecedented anti-government protests. The Iraqi prime minister's office described the conversation with Pompeo as a congratulatory call. The State Department did not explicitly offer congratulations but described Allawi as the "new prime minister." — AFP

Mahathir quits, shocks all

Kuala Lumpur, Feb. 24: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resigned on Monday in a shock move after his political allies sought to form a new coalition in a bid to block the succession of leader-in-waiting Anwar Ibrahim. It followed weekend political drama that saw an attempt by Anwar's rivals within his own "Pact of Hope" coalition — which stormed to a historic election victory in 2018 — and opposition politicians to form a new government. That coalition would reportedly have excluded Anwar, Mahathir's presumptive successor and a former opposition icon who was jailed for years on questionable sodomy charges, blocking his ascent to the premiership.



Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad shakes hand with successor Anwar Ibrahim in Putrajaya, Malaysia on Monday. — AP

Anwar and Mahathir have a notoriously stormy relationship but joined forces to oust a corruption-plagued government at the 2018 polls. Mahathir had made a pre-election pledge to hand power to Anwar but has repeatedly refused to fix a

date. With the ruling coalition's fate still uncertain on Monday morning, Mahathir's office made the surprise announcement that he had "sent a resignation letter as prime minister of Malaysia" to the king at 1:00 pm (0500 GMT). No reason was given. — AFP

Netizens furious over pictures of PM's birthday celebrations

Nepal's map on cake draws ire

Kathmandu, Feb. 24: Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's birthday celebrations were marred by controversy after pictures of him cutting a 15-kg cake with the country's map drawn on it went viral, according to media reports on Monday. Oli's wife Radhika Shakya, along with a large number of people, including school children, and his close aides attended the 69th birthday celebra-

tions of the premier on Sunday at his birthplace in east Nepal's Terhathum district. The cake, with a replica of the country's map drawn on it, was taken in a helicopter from Kathmandu to the venue. In the pictures circulated online, Oli is seen cutting the cake and distributing it to the children present at the occasion, Annapurna Post daily reported. Social media users expressed anger at the use



K.P. Sharma Oli

of the country's map on the cake. According to Article 151 of Criminal Code 2017, denigrating glory of the national anthem, flag and coat of arms is restricted. "The Code prohibits the use of national emblems in inappropriate places and situations. Anyone found to have been

involved in such an act can face legal action," said one of the social media users online. Cutting Nepal's map in the form of the cake is inappropriate as it indicates motive to disintegrate the country, senior advocate Dinesh Tripathi was quoted as saying by online portal Hamrakur.com. This may invite legal action, he said, demanding apology from the prime minister. — PTI

IN BRIEF

WHO team visits Wuhan hospitals

Beijing: The WHO experts visited various hospitals in China's Covid-19-hit Wuhan city over the weekend, health officials said on Monday. The China-World Health Organisation (WHO) joint expert team visited Hubei Province, epicentre of the 'Covid-19' outbreak over the weekend to conduct field investigations, the NHC said. The experts visited Tongji Hospital, the Wuhan Sports Centre that was converted into a temporary hospital, and the provincial centre for disease control and prevention to learn about the epidemic prevention and control as well as medical treatment, it said. They also talked with officials and experts in the province and briefed NHC director Ma Xiaowei on their findings and suggestions, it said. President Xi Jinping presided over a meeting of officials on Sunday to review the progress of his government's efforts to contain the virus.

China Parliament session postponed

Beijing: In an unprecedented move, China on Monday postponed the annual session of Parliament from March 5 due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The ruling Communist Party of China showcases its political clout in the annual Parliament session. The country's top legislature, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), met here and approved a draft decision on postponing the NPC's annual session due to Covid-19, China Global Television Network TV reported. The third annual session of the 13th NPC, one of China's biggest political events, was originally planned to open on March 5 in Beijing. Every year, the NPC and the top advisory body Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which together have over 5,000 members in their ranks, meet during March to approve the government's annual agenda including the budget.

China bans illegal wildlife trade

Beijing: China on Monday declared an immediate and "comprehensive" ban on the trade and consumption of wild animals, a practice believed responsible for the deadly Covid-19 outbreak. The country's top legislative committee met on Monday and approved a proposal "on comprehensively prohibiting the illegal wildlife trade, abolishing the bad habit of overconsumption of wildlife, and effectively protecting the lives and health of the people," state television reported. Previous temporary bans have been put in place, including after the SARS virus killed hundreds of people in China and Hong Kong in 2002-03 and was also traced to wild animal consumption. That prohibition was short-lived, however, and conservationists have long accused China of tolerating a cruel trade in wild animals as exotic menu items or for use in traditional medicines.

CANARY ISLAND AIRPORTS OPEN AS HAZE LIFTS

Madrid, Feb. 24: All eight airports on Spain's Canary Islands reopened on Monday a day after a sandstorm shrouded the archipelago, forcing their closure, the transport ministry said. "The overnight improvement in the weather has allowed the resumption of air traffic in all airports in the Canary Islands," the ministry tweeted. ENAIRE, the public body that manages Spanish airspace, said flights had resumed after "an improvement in the haze". Air travel was disrupted on the archipelago on Saturday after strong winds carrying red sand from the Sahara shrouded the tourist hotspot in a murky haze, forcing the cancellation or diversion of flights to and from the islands of Gran Canaria and Tenerife. Some flights briefly resumed Sunday morning before Spanish airport operator AENA was forced to close all of the islands' eight airports — three in Gran Canaria and Tenerife as well as five others. "Air transport professionals don't remember seeing such adverse weather conditions for air transport in the Canary Islands," Transport Minister Jose Luis Abalos tweeted on Sunday.

Italy reports 4th Covid-19 death

Rome, Feb. 24: Italy reported on Monday its fourth death from the new covid-19 of an 84-year-old man in the northern Lombardy region, as the number of people contracting the virus continued to mount. It was the third death in Lombardy, where villages have been put in lockdown and security measures enforced in a bid to stem the spread of the disease, the region's health department said. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has said that residents could face weeks of lockdown in an effort to

Initial cases in Kuwait, Bahrain

Dubai, Feb. 24: Kuwait and Bahrain confirmed on Monday their first novel covid-19 cases, health ministries in the two Gulf states announced, adding all had come from Iran. Kuwait reported three infections and Bahrain one. "Tests conducted on those coming from the Iranian city of Mashhad showed there were three confirmed cases of the Covid-19 (COVID-19)," the Kuwaiti health ministry said in a statement posted on Twitter. It said the cases were of a 53-year-old Kuwaiti man, a 61-year-old Saudi citizen and a 21-year-old stateless Arab. "All three cases are under constant observation by the health authority," the ministry added. Bahrain's health ministry also reported the country's first COVID-19 case on Monday after a "citizen arriving from Iran was suspected of having contracted the virus

IRAQ CONFIRMS FIRST INFECTION

Najaf, Feb. 24: Iraq on Monday confirmed its first novel Covid-19 case in an elderly Iranian national living in the southern city of Najaf, according to health officials. Iraq had blocked travel to and from Iran days before announcing that the religious seminary student in Najaf is its first confirmed case. — AFP

Afghanistan finds first infection



Afghanistan Health Minister Ferozuddin Feroz at a news conference in Kabul, on Monday, after one of three persons suspected of having the coronavirus tested positive in western Herat province. — AP

Kabul, Feb. 24: Afghanistan has detected its first novel Covid-19 case, the country's health minister said on Monday, a day after Kabul announced it would suspend air and ground travel to Iran, where 12 people have died from the outbreak. "I announce the first positive Covid-19 (case) in Herat," health minister Ferozuddin Feroz told a press conference, calling on citizens to avoid travel to the western province which borders Iran. Afghan authorities had earlier announced a suspension of suspend air and ground travel to Iran, as fears mount across the region over a jump in new covid-19 infections. Iran has registered the

HUNGER | PANGS

Unable to step out, citizens depend on online buying services

Beijing, Feb. 24: The lockdown of Guo Jing's neighbourhood in Wuhan — the city at the heart of China's new Covid-19 epidemic — came suddenly and without warning. Unable to go out, the 29-year-old is now sealed inside her compound where she has to depend on online group-buying services to get food. "Living for at least another month isn't an issue," Guo said, explaining that she had her own stash of pickled vegetables and salted eggs. But what scares her most is the lack of control — first, the entire city was sealed off, and then re-

● **SINCE THE** January 23 quarantine, people in Wuhan are facing a number of tightening controls over daily life

sidents were limited to exiting their compound once every three days. Now even that has been taken away. Guo is among some 11 million residents in Wuhan, a city in central Hubei province that has been under effective quarantine since January 23 as Chinese authorities race to contain the virus. Since then, its people have faced a number of tightening controls over daily life. — AFP



Tourists wearing protective facemasks visit the Piazza San Marco, in Venice, on Monday during the usual period of the Carnival festivities, with the last two days having been cancelled due to outbreak of novel coronavirus. — AFP

50 dead from virus in Qom this month: Iran lawmaker

Health Ministry insists only 12 people have succumbed in the country

Qom, Feb. 24: A staggering 50 people have died in the Iranian city of Qom from the new Covid-19 this month, a lawmaker was quoted as saying on Monday, even as the Health Ministry insisted only 12 deaths have been recorded to date in the country. The new toll reported by the Qom representative, Ahmad Amiriabadi Farahani, is significantly higher than the latest number of nationwide confirmed cases of infections that Iranian officials had reported just a few hours earlier, which stood at 12 deaths out of 47 cases, according to state TV. Health Ministry spokesman Iraj Haririhi rejected the Qom lawmaker's claims, insisting the toll from the virus remains at 12. However, he raised the number of confirmed cases from the virus to 61. Some 900 other suspected cases are being tested, he said. "No one is qualified to discuss this sort of news at all," Haririhi said, adding that lawmakers have no access to Covid-19 statistics and could be mixing figures on deaths related to other diseases like the flu with the new virus, which first emerged in China in December. Still, the number of deaths compared to

I THINK the performance of the administration in controlling the virus has not been successful. None of the nurses have access to proper protective gears," he said, adding that some health care specialists had left the city. So far, I have not seen any particular action to confront corona by the administration. — AHMAD AMIRIABADI FARAHANI Qom representative

the number of confirmed infections from the virus is higher in Iran than in any other country, including China and South Korea, where the outbreak is far more widespread. Farahani, the lawmaker from Qom, was quoted in local media saying more than 250 people are quarantined in the city, which is a popular place of religious study for Shiites from across Iran and other nations. He spoke following a session in parliament in Tehran on Monday, and was quoted by ILNA and other semi-official news agencies. The lawmaker said

PAK SUSPENDS FLIGHTS TO CHINA TILL MARCH 15

Islamabad, Feb. 24: Pakistan has again suspended flights to covid-19-hit China till March 15 due to surge in the infected cases in that country, days after it resumed the air operations to and from Beijing, according to officials. Earlier, Pakistan suspended flights from China on January 31 till February 2, a day after the World Health Organisation declared the outbreak of the virus as a global health emergency. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) was operating two flights weekly to Beijing after the resumption of air services on February 3. — PTI

MONGOLIA BANS S. KOREAN PLANES TILL MARCH 2

Ulaanbaatar, Feb. 24: Mongolia will ban flights to and from South Korea starting Tuesday until March 2 due to the outbreak of the new covid-19, weeks after closing its border with China over the epidemic. The decision by the National Emergency Commission was announced by Enkhmangalan Byambatsuren, a member of parliament, who told Mongolians "it will be wiser to stay in (South) Korea where the healthcare system is much better than Mongolia". Mongolia has not reported any cases of the novel covid-19 but is nervous about contagion. — AFP

as well as in Italy and South Korea, could signal a serious new stage in its global spread. A top world health official expressed concerns Monday over the virus' spread. "We are worried about the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in Italy," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. "It is an incredible time. Less than two months ago, the Covid-19 was completely unknown to us," he said. "The past few weeks has demonstrated just how quickly a new virus can spread around the world and cause widespread fear and disruption." The outbreak in Iran has centered mostly in the city of Qom, but spread rapidly over the past few days as Iranians went to the polls on Friday for nationwide parliamentary elections, with many voters wearing masks and stocking up on hand sanitizer. Authorities in Iran have closed schools across much of the country for a second day. Soccer fans across Iran not permitted to attend matches, and shows in movie theaters and other venues were suspended until Friday. — AP

2 more Japan officials +ve

Tokyo, Feb. 24: Two more officials sent to a cruise ship quarantined off Japan to help with on-board efforts to contain the deadly covid-19 have contracted the illness themselves, authorities said Monday. The announcement came as experts warned the next one to three weeks would be "crucial" to preventing widespread infections and as fears deepen that the isolation of the virus-stricken Diamond Princess has been ineffective. A quarantine officer in

his 50s and a health ministry official in his 40s both tested positive and are in hospital, the ministry said, after they were dispatched separately to the vessel earlier this month. The new infections come after Japan Sunday reported a third death among people who spent time on the ship — a man in his 80s who died from pneumonia. Six officials linked to containment work on the boat have now tested positive, fuelling doubts about the effectiveness of the quarantine. "We don't know at the moment through what routes the infections occurred. We'll find out and take measures," a ministry official told reporters. More than 690 ship passengers have so far fallen ill with the pathogen, and off the vessel Japan has confirmed over 140 cases. Shigeru Omi, chief director at the Japan Community Healthcare Organisation said, "I admit the isolation policy was not perfect. The ship was not designed as a hospital. The ship is a ship." — AFP

Covid-19 toll climbs to 2,592

Beijing, Feb. 24: The Covid-19 toll climbed to 2,592 while the number of confirmed cases increased to over 77,000, officials said Monday. The country's National Health Commission said it received reports of 409 new confirmed cases of the novel Covid-19 infection and 150 deaths from 31 provincial-level regions on Sunday. The confirmed cases on the Chinese mainland have reached 77,150. Sunday saw 1,846 people walk out of hospital. Meanwhile, the China-World Health Organisation joint expert team visited Hubei province, epicentre of the outbreak to conduct field investigations. — PTI

QUARANTINE RELIEF REVERSED

Beijing, Feb. 24: Authorities in Wuhan on Monday reversed a decision that would have allowed some people to leave the quarantined city. The city government said that the previous announcement had been made by a traffic prevention and control group "without the consent" of the local leadership, and was now "declared invalid". It had earlier announced that people who are not quarantined and seeking special treatment or stranded in the city can leave in batches. — AFP



Community staff members sort food and daily necessities as they prepare to deliver to residents in Wuhan of China's central Hubei province. — AFP

Indian beaten after race slur at friend

London, Feb. 24: An Indian-origin woman trainee lawyer in the UK fell unconscious after being beaten by an unidentified man when she tried to save her Chinese friend from a racist attack over Covid-19, media reports said on Monday. The incident took place when Meera Solanka (29) from England's Solihull town was out with her friends, including her Chinese friend Mandy Huang (28) from London, celebrating her 29th birthday. Solanka was hospitalised after she stepped in when Mandy was told: "Take your f***** covid-19 back home!", Birmingham Mail reported. — PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS % Sensex 40,363.23 -1.96 Nifty 50 11,829.40 -2.08 S&P 500 3,337.75 0.00

Maruti drives in petrol variant of Vitara Brezza

Maruti Suzuki India on Monday launched the petrol version of its popular compact SUV Vitara Brezza priced between ₹7.34 lakh and ₹11.4 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi).

New e-form to reduce time to start biz: Govt



The government on Monday introduced a new electronic form for incorporation of companies, saying the initiative will help in reducing time and cost of starting a business in the country.

CCI okays NTPC acquiring Govt's stake in NEEPCO

Fair trade regulator CCI on Monday said it has given nod to acquisition of government's entire stake in THDC India and North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Ltd (NEEPCO) by state-owned NTPC Ltd.

GAIL 5-year capex to touch ₹1.05 lakh crore

Country's largest gas utility major GAIL India Ltd will invest ₹1.05 lakh crore over the next five years to expand pipelines, lay city gas distribution network and petrochemical production capacity.

Panic led to FPIs selling stocks worth ₹1,160.90 crore, according to provisional data Markets crash as virus alarm spreads

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD with agency inputs MUMBAI, FEB. 24

The rapid spread of coronavirus outside China has raised alarm bells in the global markets and led to around two per cent drop in Sensex and Nifty-50 indices.

Both Sensex and Nifty-50, which opened after a long weekend, had a gap down opening due to the sharp fall in Asian markets.

Heavy selling commenced in the afternoon as European markets too opened sharply lower and slumped over 3 per cent.

Sensex fell over 850 points intra-day, its second big fall in 2020, touching a low of 40,306.36 before the final close at 40,363.23 down 806.19 points or 1.96 per cent.

A big global risk off could potentially result in outflows from emerging markets and trigger a flight to safety.

"A big global risk off could potentially result in outflows from emerging markets and trigger a flight to safety. While the disease may not have impacted the country directly as much, the domestic economy which is just about showing some nascent signs of recovery may not escape unscathed.

negative that all stocks in both Sensex30 and Nifty-50 closed in the red. Blue chip IT stocks like Infosys which had appeared safer bet, also fell in the last hour of panic selling.

Globally, equity markets are unnerved by the spread of coronavirus to countries beyond China and neighbouring countries to West Asia and Europe now, analysts said.

The pandemic is threatening to cloud global economic growth and EXIM trade. The growing risk aversion is clearly visible in the sudden spike in safe haven assets like gold prices seen lately and the surge in volatility index."

Volatility index India VIX an indicator of short term volatility in the market shot up 26 per cent intra-day to 17.2 and closed 24 per cent up at 16.99. In addition to global uncertainties, the expiry weak and the fiscal year end pressure only adds to the volatility in the near term," Dua said.

Emkay Global's S. Hariharan, said, "Macro news flow around spread of the coronavirus and its concomitant impact on trade & activity levels have been the strongest driver of daily moves in the last few sessions and would continue to be a major factor. Among large components, Auto sector has been the worst hit over the last 2 weeks, driven primarily by concerns on supply chain disruptions."

MARKET OVERVIEW

World stock markets and oil prices tumbled Monday, with Milan and Seoul falling hardest on growing fears of a coronavirus pandemic, as gold hit a seven-year peak on safe-haven buying, dealers said.

Traders had been broadly optimistic that the virus - which has killed nearly 2,600 and infected 80,000 - was being contained outside China but a spurt of infections and deaths in other countries including South Korea, Italy and Iran has fanned fears of a global outbreak.

The global losses followed Friday's selloff on Wall Street, where the S&P 500 and Nasdaq each gave up more than one percent, while US 30-year Treasury yields hit an all-time high as traders scooped up other haven investments.



World oil prices sank by more than four percent on Monday as traders fretted over the coronavirus' spreading impact on global energy demand, analysts said.

Benchmark contracts Brent North Sea and New York's West Texas Intermediate both slumped by 4.1 and 4.0 percent respectively, compared with their levels late Friday.

KEY FIGURES AROUND 4.40 PM IST

Table with 2 columns: Index/Commodity and Change. Includes Milan - FTSE Mib, Madrid - IBEX 35, London - FTSE 100, Frankfurt - DAX 30, Paris - CAC 40, EURO STOXX 50, Seoul - KOSPI, Shanghai - Composite, Hong Kong - Hang Seng, Tokyo - Nikkei 225, New York - Dow, Brent Crude, West Texas Intermediate, Gold, Euro/dollar, Pound/dollar, Euro/pound, Dollar/yen.

Gold price soars by ₹953 in a day

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 24

Gold crossed ₹44,000 in the domestic market on Monday along with the international prices which moved closer to ₹1700 levels on increased safe haven buying as the spread of coronavirus fuelled fears of global economic slowdown. Gold is likely to move further up in the near term and gain ₹1,000 per 10 gm in the domestic market.

On Monday, gold prices in Delhi spot market spiked to a record ₹44,600

per 10 gm. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, February futures spurred by more than 2.5 per cent to a record high of ₹43,800 per 10 gm. The prices went up as the international gold rate zoomed to touch \$1,688 per ounce during the intraday trade on Monday and tested its highest level since February 2013.

Reports about the spread of coronavirus infection beyond China spooked the financial markets and investors flocked to safe haven assets like gold. South Korea reported hun-



dreds of new infections, and Iran said at least 12 people there had died. In Europe, Italy is working to

contain a spike in cases.

Further, IMF too warned that the deadly coronavirus epidemic could put an already fragile global economic recovery at risk.

"Markets are worried of a global economic slowdown if China-like situation spreads to other countries and this is fuelling demand for gold. If other countries also take measures similar to China like closing down production units and restricting people movement, businesses are likely to get hurt," said Jateen Trivedi, senior research analyst, com-

modities and currencies, LKP Securities.

According to him, gold can cross \$1700 and move towards \$1740-1760 levels in the near term.

"Immediate short term target for gold can be \$1725 and this could translate a movement of over Rs 1000 in the domestic market. However, prices are likely to cool down when the coronavirus trigger subsides in the near term," said Himanshu Gupta, vice president and head of commodities and currencies research, Globe Capital.

Term insurance likely to pinch the pocket further

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, FEB. 24

If you intend to buy a term insurance policy, you should do it soon. This is because life insurance companies are planning to raise the premium rates on term insurance covers before April 1.

The trigger for the revision in premium rates has come from foreign reinsurance companies that have decided to hike the reinsurance rates on term insurance business of domestic life insurers.

Term insurance refers to protection plans where the insured pays a specific premium amount at fixed intervals during the policy term.

In the event of demise during the policy term, the nominees receive the 'sum assured' which the policy holder had selected while purchasing the plan.

A Reinsurer is a company that provides financial protection to insurance companies. Reinsurers handle risks that are too large for insurance companies to handle on their own and make it possible for insurers to obtain more business.

While deciding the mortality premium rates, insurance firms made assumptions such as salaried customer versus self employed, smoker versus the non smoker, urban customer versus the rural customer. These assumptions have not worked and there has been a deterioration in the mortality experience. Also because of competition, insurers have kept the pricing of term insurance low

— REINSURANCE INDUSTRY OFFICIAL

sion to hike the reinsurance rates for term insurance. Similarly, Swiss Re too has communicated to domestic insurance companies of increasing the reinsurance cost next month. As a result, life insurers could pass on the hike in reinsurance cost to their customers next month. We don't expect them to absorb the higher reinsurance cost."

An appointed actuary of a private life insurer said, "The premium rates on term insurance plans are highly competitive today. Secondly, the rates are set on the mortality experience which has worsened than expected. The rein-

surers have already communicated that before April 1, they would be reviewing the reinsurance rates on term insurance."

Trevor Bull, MD and CEO of Aviva Life Insurance told DC, "Term insurance is a commoditised product. Reinsurers and insurance companies are led by their experience on claims and other regulatory updates in pricing for term. It would not be unusual to find them changing prices from time to time, based upon their experience. And yes that could potentially impact the end consumer price for term products."

When asked what would the increase be for prospective term insurance buyers, Bull said, "It's too early to say as it is work in progress and still being assessed. Also, it is dependent on the age and terms of coverages."

A reinsurance industry official explained, "While deciding the mortality premium rates, insurance companies made assumptions such as salaried customer versus self employed, smoker versus the non smoker, urban customer versus the rural customer. These assumptions have not worked and there has been a deterioration in the mortality experience. Also because of competition, insurers have kept the pricing of term insurance low."

India on the cusp of being a top-3 digital society, says Mukesh Ambani

Mumbai, Feb. 24: With mobile networks better or at par with anywhere else in the world, India has an opportunity to become a 'premier digital society', Mukesh Ambani said on Monday as he saw the country becoming the third world's largest economy within the next decade.

Speaking at a fireside chat with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, he said the big change driving this transformation was the deepening of mobile networks which were working at a much faster pace than before. "I can easily say that the mobile networks in India now are better or at par with anywhere else in the world," he said. "The opportunity that we have for India, really, is the opportunity to become the premier digital society in the world."

India, he said, has all the components in place to "grow and march forward". "I have no doubt in my mind that we will become among the top three economies in the world," he said. "We can argue about whether it will happen in 5 years or 10 years but it's going to happen, and we will be in the top three economies in the world."

When that happens, he wondered: "Will we be the most technologically enabled society? Will we be having all our development enabled by all the tools of technology?" — PTI



Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and RIL chairman Mukesh Ambani in a fireside chat in Mumbai on Monday.

Nadella: CEOs need to build inclusive tech capabilities

Mumbai, Feb. 24: Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella on Monday urged Indian businessmen to keep inclusivity at the centre of their digital technology pursuits.

Nadella said the last decade has seen the advent of connected technologies through mobile but rued that only aggregators have made the most out of the opportunity, and underlined that there is a case for broadening of the productivity gains. The India-born Nadella

Unusual moves in asset prices hint at growing virus fears

New York, Feb. 24: Some asset prices are moving together in unusual ways, an indication that investors may be preparing their portfolios for a coronavirus-led global slowdown.

US stocks, gold, US Treasuries and the dollar have all surged in 2020, a climb that has taken place alongside persistent concerns over the outbreak's economic fallout.

Such synchronous moves are not typical, as investors usually have different reasons for buying each asset class. A bullish bet on stocks, for example, is often a wager on stronger economic growth, while gold and bonds tend to find favor in more pessimistic times.

That conventional wisdom has not applied this year. The S&P 500 is up 3.3 per cent in 2020 and stands just off a record high despite Friday's drop, gold is up 8.3 per cent and near its highest level in seven years while the US Dollar Index is up 3 per cent and hovering near a three-year high. Stocks, gold and the dollar have all notched yearly gains of 3 per cent or more only twice in the past decade.

Meanwhile, the 10-day rolling correlation between the dollar and gold stands at 0.6 - higher than it has been more than 99 per cent of the time over the last decade. Typically, a stronger dollar tends to pressure gold, which is denominated in the US currency and becomes more expensive for foreign buyers when the buck rises.

Correlation is measured on a scale from minus one, which represents asset prices going in opposite directions, to plus one, indicating prices moving in perfect tandem.

Several forces may be fueling the multipronged rally, analysts said. While investors are loathe to reduce their stock exposure—a losing strategy over the more than a decade-long bull market—many are buffering their portfolios with haven

US stocks, gold, US Treasuries and the dollar have all surged in 2020, a climb that has taken place alongside persistent concerns over the outbreak's economic fallout.

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A BULLISH BET on stocks, for example, is often a wager on stronger economic growth, while gold and bonds tend to find favour in more pessimistic times.

assets such as gold, bonds and the dollar in case the outbreak accelerates or its economic fallout is greater than expected.

At the same time, investors are favouring US stocks and bonds, as many expect the US economy to be less vulnerable to a hit from the coronavirus than those in Asia and the eurozone. That has boosted the dollar while sending yields on some US government bonds to record lows.

Many also expect the disruptions wrought by the outbreak to hit global growth and push central banks—including the Federal Reserve—to cut rates or introduce stimulus measures. However, such a momentum shift has occurred only four times since 1975 and has been followed by an average return of 17% on the Russell 3000 index, her research shows. "A ball in motion tends to stay in motion," she said. — Reuters

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SHORT TAKES

Hardik to play in DY Patil T20 event

Navi Mumbai: Fit-again India all-rounder Hardik Pandya is set to play in the D. Y. Patil T20 tournament, which began here on Monday. Hardik suffered a bad lower back injury five months ago and underwent a surgery in London. The 26-year-old all-rounder, who hasn't played international cricket since then, has been recovering at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. "The Reliance 1 (team) would be represented by players like Hardik Pandya, Bhuvaneshwar Kumar, Shikhar Dhawan," said Dr Vijay Patil, President, DY Patil Sports Academy and also the President of Mumbai Cricket Association at a press briefing here. Dhawan and Bhuvaneshwar are also on their road to recovery after sustaining injuries. — PTI

Mushfiq hits double century

Dhaka: Mushfiqur Rahim hit his third Test double century as Bangladesh declared their first innings with a lead of 295 Monday in their one-off match against Zimbabwe. Bangladesh ended their innings on 560 for six in the final session before spinner Nayeem Hasan then claimed two wickets in two balls in the first over in Dhaka. The visitors reached nine for two at stumps on the third day, still needing 286 runs to make Bangladesh bat again on a wearing pitch at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. — AFP

Shafali to play fearless cricket

Perth: Experienced pacer Shikha Pandey on Monday said the Indian team management has given Shafali Verma the license to play fearless cricket as the teen sensation produced another explosive innings to set up a comfortable win against Bangladesh in the women's T20 World Cup here. The 16-year-old Verma smashed a 17-ball 39, including four sixes, to steer India to 142 to six before her bowling colleagues restricted Bangladesh to 124 for 8 in their 20 overs to win the match by 18 runs. While Verma was the star of the show, 19-year-old Jemimah Rodrigues also impressed with a measured 34 from 37, and Pandey is confident the world will be seeing more of the same from the exciting young pair in Australia. "We have not asked her (Verma) to change anything. She has been given free licence to play her fearless brand of cricket," Pandey said. "She is amazing. At 16, I hadn't even started training to become a cricketer. I'm very pleased to have such young fearless players in our team. It's amazing to see them doing what they did for us." Pandey, who also chipped in by taking two wickets for 14 runs, said the likes of Verma has no "baggage". — PTI



Tim Southee (centre), who took a five-wicket haul, celebrates on Day Three of the opening Test at Wellington. — AP

Battered at the Basin

India crash to embarrassing 10-wicket defeat against New Zealand

Wellington, Feb. 24: Indian batsmen's inadequacies in adverse conditions were laid bare as they crashed to an embarrassing 10-wicket defeat against a ruthless New Zealand side that wrapped up the opening Test in just over three days here on Monday. Starting the day on 144 for four, India were all out for 191 in 81 overs in their second innings. This was a shade better than their dismal 165 in the first innings, which eventually proved to be decisive. Trent Boult (4/39 in 22 overs) and Tim Southee (5/61 in 21 overs), one of the finest but most underrated new ball pairs in world cricket, showed that when it boils down to playing incisive seam and swing bowling, this batting line-up is still a work in progress. The required target of nine runs was knocked off by New Zealand without much ado for their 100th Test win. "I think we let ourselves down massively with the bat in the first innings," India skipper Virat Kohli said after the match. "You could say the toss played a big role in the Test match



Hanuma Vihari is cleaned up by Tim Southee. — Twitter

but that's an uncontrollable, so you can't focus on that and take that as massive factor. But having said that, the first innings performance pushed us back," he added. India's last defeat was against Australia at Perth during the 2018-19 series but the loss at the Basin Reserve would hurt them more because the visitors have not surrendered in such fashion of late. There was no resistance from a star-studded line-up and more than intent, the failure was due to poor technique on a track that had something on the third and fourth day. This is a team that plays fast bowling much better than their predecessors, the reason for their success on the bouncy Australian tracks. But when it comes to facing conventional seam and swing bowling in testing conditions, they are yet to learn the art of saving a Test match. India had lost the mental

battle on the first day itself when they saw the moisture on the wicket. The toss became a factor and not for one session did they look comfortable. Mayank Agarwal was the only batsman who felt at home, albeit in patches, as New Zealand showed what a Test match strategy is all about. If the first innings was about mixing back of length deliveries with fuller length balls, the second saw the pacers coming from round the wicket and targeting the rib-cage. The line was disconcerting and it stifled them for good. It affected their mindset and when Ajinkya Rahane and Hanuma Vihari stepped out on the fourth morning, defeat was written all over as both looked ill-equipped to handle such high quality seam bowling. Rahane (29 off 75 balls) and Vihari (15 off 79 balls) are players who only play long-form cricket at the international level and both are known for their patience. But little did the Indian vice-captain apprehend that he would get a delivery from Boult, which, instead of moving away after pitching, held its line. With the ball doing exactly the opposite of what Rahane had thought, he had no option but to jab at it, and all he got was an edge. Southee, who bowls lovely classical outswinger then bowled an off-cutter from the other end and before Vihari could comprehend, it came back sharply to peg the stumps back. Within first 20 minutes, the two seasoned practitioners of swing had knocked the stuffing out of India's resistance. "A really brilliant all round game for us. It is also a step in the right direction as well," Kane Williamson said. Southee, who had a terrific match, deservedly completed his 10th five-wicket haul, and all it took was 16 overs to end the India innings. New Zealand now have 120 points in the World Test championship. — PTI

SCORECARD

India (1st Innings): 165.
New Zealand (1st Innings): 348.
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 c Watling b Boult 29, Hanuma Vihari b Southee 15, Rishabh Pant c Boult b Southee 25, Ravichandran Ashwin lbw b Southee 4, Ishant Sharma lbw b de Grandhomme 12, Mohammed Shami (not out) 2, Jasprit Bumrah c Daryl Mitchell b Southee 0. **Extras (w-2) 2. Total: 191 in 81 over.**
FOW: 1-27, 2-78, 3-96, 4-113, 5-148, 6-148, 7-162, 8-189, 9-191.
Bowling: Southee 21-6-61-5, Boult 22-8-39-4, Colin de Grandhomme 16-5-28-1, Jamieson 19-7-45-0, Patel 3-0-18-0.
New Zealand (2nd Innings): Tom Latham (not out) 7, Tom Blundell (not out) 2. **Total (for no loss in 1.4 overs) 9.**
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 1-0-8-0, Jasprit Bumrah 0.4-0-1-0.

BOUNCING BACK ISN'T A TERM WE USE: WILLIAMSON ON RECOVERY

Wellington, Feb. 24: The perfect execution of plans against India has pleased New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson but he refused to term his team's 10-wicket win as "bouncing back" from their 0-3 debacle against Australia. New Zealand came into the series after their nightmare in Australia and put up a splendid performance to outclass India in just over three days. "Bouncing back isn't a term that we use within our group. You can get carried away thinking about results (especially) when you have a number of poor ones and sometimes the want (urge) for a good one can be a distraction towards getting (achieving) it," Williamson said. — PTI

Don't make big deal of it: Kohli

Wellington, Feb. 24: Captain Virat Kohli had no qualms in admitting that India were outplayed by New Zealand in the opening Test but said they "can't help it" if a few want to make a "big deal" out of one loss. Hosts New Zealand thrashed India by 10 wickets at the Basin Reserve on Monday to go 1-0 ahead in the two-match series. "We know we haven't played well, but if people want to make a big deal out of it, we can't help it as we don't think like that," the India skipper said at the post-match media interaction. This was India's first defeat in the World Test Championship, coming after two inept batting efforts. "Some people might want it to be the end of the world but it's not. For us, it's a game of cricket we lost and we move on and keep our heads high," Kohli said. It is the acceptance of defeat that defines the character of a side, the world's premier batsman said. "We understand that we need to play well to win, also at home. There's no cakewalk at international level as teams will come and beat you. You accept it and that defines our character as a side." If he had given credence to the "outside chatter", he said the team wouldn't have been where it is now. "That's why we have been able to play this kind of cricket." — PTI

Shafali, Poonam power India past Bangla

WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

Perth, Feb. 24: Leg-spinner Poonam Yadav delivered yet again with timely dismissals to lead India to a comfortable 18-run win over Bangladesh in their ICC Women's T20 World Cup match, here on Monday. Invited to bat, a substantial partnership eluded them after a fiery start but India still managed to post a competitive 142 for six at the WACA ground. India were off to a flying start with opener Shafali Verma (39 of 17 balls) coming out all guns blazing in the Group A game. However, the Indian innings never got the impetus after the departure of the 16-year-old, who hit four sixes and two fours in her entertaining knock. Later, Veda Krishnamurthy (20 off 11) hit few lusty blows to help India post a fighting total. Bangladesh fought through Murshida Khatun (30) and Nigar Sultana (35) but Poonam rattled the middle and lower order with her strikes. In the end, Bangladesh could manage 124 for eight, giving India their second straight win in the tournament. "The way Shafali and Richa played today, they showed how capable they are for the team. Veda's innings was turning point. We needed boundaries at that point and she did a great job," India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said. Poonam, who had helped India halt Australia's chase



Shafali Verma en route to her quickfire 39 against Bangladesh at Perth in the T20 World Cup on Monday. — ICC

in their opening game as well, was the top bowler again. She scalped Sanjida Islam (10), Fahima Khatun (17) and Jahanara Alam (10) to make it tough for Bangladesh. Bangladesh needed 49 runs from last five overs but they failed to negotiate Poonam's flighted deliveries. The Indian spinner had Fahima caught by Shafali in the first ball of the 16th over while Rajeshwari Gaekwad saw the back of well-set Nigar Sultana. Poonam then returned to dismiss Jahanara, who stepped out looking for a big hit only to be stumped by Taniya. The runs dried up and Bangladesh now needed 22 off the final over. Pacer Shikha Pandey clean bowled Rumana Ahmed with a perfect yorker and writing was clear on the wall. Earlier,

BRIEF SCORES

India 142/6 in 20 overs (Shafali Verma 39, Jemimah Rodrigues 34, Veda Krishnamurthy 20*, Salma Khatun 2/25, Panna Ghosh 2/25) bt Bangladesh 124 for eight in 20 overs (Murshida Khatun 30, Nigar Sultana 35, Shikha Pandey 2/14, Arundhati Reddy 2/33, Poonam Yadav 3/18).

Shafali punished the rival attack with her fluent stroke-making. Attempting a big one, Shafali skied one off veteran Panna Ghosh and was dismissed, caught by wicket-keeper Shamima Sultana. This was after fellow opener Taniya Bhatia (2) was sent back by Salma Khatun. Shafali turned out to be the best scorer in India's innings. Jemimah Rodrigues played a sedate yet crucial 34-run knock since hard-hitting skipper Harmanpreet Kaur was already dismissed by Ghosh. With both Shafali and Harmanpreet cooling their heels back in the dug out, India's run-rate took a dip. Jemimah erred in judgement while calling Deepti for a single and was run out. Richa Ghosh, who replaced Smriti Mandhana in the playing XI, hit two splendid boundaries before holing out to Nahida Akter off Salma Khatun. The slide continued with Deepti Sharma (11) running herself out following a mix up with Veda Krishnamurthy (20 off 11). — PTI

RANJI TROPHY ROUND-UP

Saurashtra, Bengal march into semis

Ongole, Feb. 24: Saurashtra booked their spot in the semifinals of the Ranji Trophy on the basis of the first innings after their quarterfinal tie against Andhra ended in a draw on the final day here on Monday. Resuming at the overnight score of 375 for 9, the visitors were dismissed for 426 in 138 overs in the second innings, setting an improbable target of 710 runs for Andhra. After being bowled out for 136 in the first innings, Andhra finished at 149 for 4 in 51 overs in their second essay before play was called off. A strokeful half-century by Andhra captain K S Bharat (55, 69 balls, 6 fours, 1 six) was the bright spot in the host team's second innings. The wicketkeeper-batsman, who is on the fringes of national selection and has been part of various India 'A' teams in the recent past, showed why he is rated highly, playing some delightful shots during his knock. **Bengal beat Odisha** At Tangi, Bengal stormed into the Ranji Trophy semi-finals by virtue of their first innings lead over Odisha after only one session was possible on the final day which was interrupted by bad light on Monday. Resuming on 361 for 7, Bengal lost their remaining three wickets for 12 runs inside six overs to set Odisha an improbable 456. — PTI

BRIEF SCORES

At Ongole: Saurashtra 419 & 426 in 138 overs (Perak Mankad 85, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 60, Avi Barot 54; Jyothi Sai Krishna 4/74, Mohd Rafi 3/92) drew with Andhra 136 in 78.2 overs (C. R. Gnaneshwar 43, Ricky Bhui 28, K. S. Bharat 26; Jaydev Unadkat 4/42, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 3/27) and 149/4 in 51 overs (K. S. Bharat 55 n.o., C. R. Gnaneshwar 29, Karan Shinde 27 not out).
At Cuttack: Bengal 332 & 373 in 138 overs (Shreevats Goswami 78, Shahbaz Ahmed 64, Abhishek Raman 67, Arnab Nandi 45, Koushik Ghosh 41) drew with Odisha 250 and 39 for no loss in 10 overs.
At Jammu: Karnataka 206 & 316 in 106.5 overs (K.V. Siddharth 98, Abid Mushtaq 6/83) bt J&K 192 & 163 in 44.4 overs (S.S Pundir 31; K. Gowtham 7/54). — PTI

SHORT TAKES



Pranavi powers Hyd to victory

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 24

Captain Pranavi Chandra and opening bat Chandra Smitha fashioned Hyderabad's nine-wicket win over Goa in their BCCI Under 19 Women's one-day cricket match at Scindia School Cricket Ground in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, on Monday. Opening the Hyderabad attack, right-arm pacer Pranavi put Goa under pressure with quick strikes as he returned with impressive figures of 9-0-28-3 which were instrumental in the opposition being restricted to 110 for 8 in their allotted 50 overs. Ishita Koduri played second fiddle by taking 2 for 14 in her 10 overs, six of which were maiden. In reply, Smitha slammed an unbeaten 64 in 60 balls, 10 of which she smashed to the boundary as Hyderabad overhauled the target in just 22.1 overs for the loss of only one wicket. **Brief scores:** Goa 110/8 in 50 overs (Pranavi Chandra 3/28, Ishita Koduri 2/14) lost to Hyderabad 111/1 in 22.1 overs (Chandra Smitha 64 n.o., Thaniyath 28). **Points:** Hyderabad 4, Goa 0.

Three from TS in basketball camp

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 24

Three from Telangana — Korla Gowtham, Kartik Chaddha and Gona Pratheek — have been selected for the national coaching camp of the Indian U-16 men's basketball team to be held at Basketball Academy Jayprakash Narayan National Youth Centre in Vidyanagar, Bengaluru. The camp runs from February 25 until April 4 in preparation for the FIBA U-16 Asian Men's Championship scheduled to be held from April 5 to 12.

South, West off to good starts

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 24

South and West Zones got off to winning starts in the Food Corporation of India's All-India Inter-zonal Cricket Tournament being played at the Gymkhana Grounds here. South defeated West by eight wickets in the first match while East got the better of North East by 41 runs in the second game. **BRIEF SCORES**
■ South Zone 104/9 in 20 overs (Chevron 25, Gangadharan 23) lost to West Zone 105/2 in 12.2 overs (P. Sanket 29 n.o., A. Pratik 22 n.o., S. Nitin 4/10, K. Siddesh 3/27).
■ East Zone 171/5 in 20 overs (G. Sudip 53, Nilava Deb Naik 34, Kazi Junaid 2/20, Arikta Das 2/22) bt North East Zone 130/9 in 20 overs (Dharani Dhar 31, Subham Mondal 30, Diplab Saikia 24/2).

CWG shooting, archery in India

London: India will host the Commonwealth shooting and archery championships in January 2022 and the medals from the two events will be counted in the final tally of the Birmingham Games, an unprecedented move approved by the Commonwealth Games Federation. However, the medals will be added one week after the conclusion of the multi-disciplinary sporting event in Birmingham, the CGF announced on Monday. It can be considered a big win for India since it had threatened to boycott the Birmingham edition of the Games for dropping shooting, an optional sport, from the roster. Archery is also another optional sport. — P/T

AuBang on target

Pierre-Emerick scores brace as Arsenal edge Everton

London, Feb. 24: Mikel Arteta admitted Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has erased any doubts about his commitment after Arsenal's captain led by example with a double in their 3-2 win against Everton on Sunday.

For much of a troubled season Arsenal have been written off as also-rans in the battle to qualify for the Champions League.

But, recovering from the wreckage of the Unai Emery era, their revival under Arteta is gathering pace.

Rocked by Dominic Calvert-Lewin's first-minute goal at the Emirates Stadium, Arsenal equalised through Eddie Nketiah and took the lead

thanks to Aubameyang. Richarlison levelled for Everton to cap a dramatic first half, but Gabon striker Aubameyang had the final word seconds after the break.

Gunners boss Arteta revealed he was not convinced about Aubameyang's mentality before he took over, but watching his skipper tracking back to help defend in the closing stages won over the Spaniard.

"Before I took over I had my questions about him but he showed his commitment. I wanted him to show if he wanted to do it and do it physically," Arteta said.

"I'm so happy with him. He is

THE RESULT

Arsenal (Nketiah 27, Aubameyang 33, 46)	3
Everton (Calvert-Lewin 1, Richarlison 45+4)	2

scoring important goals and as a captain he is giving a great example to everyone else with the way he is working defensively," he added.

Arsenal climbed above Everton into ninth place and sit four points behind fifth-placed Manchester United.

With second-placed Manchester City banned from European competitions for the next two years,

as it stands finishing fifth could secure Champions League action pending the result of City's appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

There is growing belief at Arsenal that they could take advantage of the punishment for Arteta's former club. The Gunners are now unbeaten in their last 10 games in all competitions, including seven without defeat in the league after a second successive victory.

"I'm really pleased with the performance. It's not easy to play three times in seven days, we got back late from Greece, and then to concede an early goal as well," Arteta said. — AFP

Felix strikes as Atletico brush aside Villarreal

Madrid, Feb. 24: Atletico Madrid followed up their surprise win over Liverpool by beating Villarreal in La Liga on Sunday as Joao Felix marked his return from injury with a first league goal since September.

Felix came off the bench at the Wanda Metropolitano after almost a month out with an ankle problem and the 20-year-old looked refreshed as he drove in Atletico's third in an impressive 3-1 victory.

Kieran Trippier was also back after recovering from a groin injury and he was involved in Atletico's second goal as Koke headed in.

Angel Correa had earlier cancelled out Paco Alcacer's strike for Villarreal. Atletico's

inconsistency this season means they are out of the title race, 12 points adrift of leaders Barcelona, who thrashed Eibar 5-0 on Saturday.

SEVILLA BOOST TOP FOUR HOPES

Sevilla delivered a huge boost to their hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League by winning 3-0 away at top-four rivals Getafe, for their first victory in six matches.

A poor run of form had threatened to kill Sevilla's chances of securing a place in Europe's premier tournament but they dismantled usually solid Getafe with goals from Lucas Ocampos, Fernando Reges and Jules Kounde. — AFP



Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (left) scores as Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford fails to save the ball during their English Premier League match at Emirates Stadium in London on Sunday. — AP

Messi gives troubled Barca hope

Madrid, Feb. 24: Lionel Messi has said Barcelona are not playing well enough to win this season's Champions League but his four goals against Eibar on Saturday were a reminder that with him there will always be hope. Barca play Napoli in the first leg of the Last 16 on Tuesday and will be expected to go through, even if their opponents are on a strong run, having won six out of their last seven matches, including victories over Juventus and Inter Milan.

Yet despite a whirlwind couple of months of political wrangling, remarkably Barcelona approach this tie sitting top of La Liga and with a spring in their step, in large part due to Messi.

His quadruple in the 5-0 rout at Camp Nou on Saturday was cathartic and not only because Real Madrid, whom Barca face in the Clasico on Sunday, failed to regain first place after losing to Levante a few hours later.

"It was a win we needed," said coach Quique Setien. "He's been in this form for 14 or 15 years and he keeps performing like this," said Setien.

Messi has scored seven quadruples in his career but none executed amid such an intense time of pressure, with the spotlight on the Argentine. While other players might have sulked or crumbled, Messi delivered with another breathtaking performance that underlined his ability to drag this troubled team through even the most turbulent of periods.

Messi could have had



Chelsea's Spanish defender Cesar Azpilicueta takes part in a training session at the club's Cobham training facility in Stoke D'Abernon, southwest of London, on Monday, eve of their UEFA Champions League pre-quarterfinal first leg match against German club Bayern Munich. — AFP

Mueller is ready for Chelsea

Berlin, Feb. 24: A year after being dumped by Germany head coach Joachim Loew, Thomas Mueller is set to showcase why he is so important for Bayern Munich — and Robert Lewandowski — at Chelsea in the Champions League.

Alongside Erling Braut Haaland, Bayern's star striker Lewandowski is joint top-scorer in the Champions League with 10 goals going into the Last 16, first-leg clash on Tuesday.

In order to keep him fresh, Mueller is a second-half replacement in Friday's 3-2 league win over bottom side Paderborn when Lewandowski netted twice.

The Poland striker is on a career-high 38 goals after 32 games in all competitions and is happiest with Mueller alongside him. "It's easier with Thomas next to me, he helps me out a lot," Lewandowski has said of Mueller.

"We always have one player more in the penalty area when he plays, I have more space and not always two or three opponents against me," he added.

It's no coincidence that Lewandowski is enjoying his highest goal tally just when Mueller's 14 assists in Germany's top flight also puts him near his personal best.

Alongside fellow 2014 World Cup winners Mats Hummels and Jerome Boateng, Mueller was told last March he was no longer needed by Germany. — AFP



Tarun Kona (left) and Jakkampudi Meghana are all smiles at the prize distribution ceremony in Kampala, Uganda.

Tarun, Meghana win double titles

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 24

Tarun Kona and Jakkampudi Meghana bagged a grand double each in the Uganda International Badminton Tournament at the Lugogo Indoor Stadium in Kampala.

Tarun won the men's doubles, Meghana won the women's doubles and then they both combined to take the mixed doubles trophy to complete the Indian domination. Tarun partnered Shivam Sharma as the second seeds beat top seeds Godwin Olofua and Anulawopu Juwon (Nigeria) 21-15, 22-20 in the men's doubles final.

Later, Tarun paired with Meghana to defeat countrymates Poorvisha Ram and Shivam Sharma 21-7, 14-21, 21-16 for the mixed doubles title.

Meghana also made it memorable by combining with Poorvisha Ram to defeat Daniela Macias and Danica Nishimura of Peru

GOPI TO MENTOR COACHES AFTER TOKYO OLYMPICS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 24

He has produced many a badminton player of international repute but post Tokyo Olympics, national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand plans to turn a mentor to coaches.

To start with, he has tied up with The Sports School Anup Sridhar Badminton Academy in Bengaluru. Plans are afoot to start The Sports School in Hyderabad early next year.

"I have been following the work of The Sports School quite closely. Their vision is very much aligned with mine. I have known Anup Sridhar for the last two decades, both as player and coach. I am delighted to work closely with Anup at The Sports School in our goal to making India a dominating force in world badminton," Gopi stated.

"Post the Olympics, I would want to move away and dedicate my time on a mentor role and would be working towards developing the coaches through the coaches programme," the former All England Open champion added.

Built with the vision to inspire the next generation of world-class student-athletes, The Sports School aims to create a culture and environment where sports and education come together. The group has plans to tie up with 200 institutions across India to lend the expertise and bring together education and sporting excellence.

"In Anup, we have someone who has played the game at the highest level and a proven new-age coach. Pullela Gopichand was a champion player himself and the best badminton coach we have ever had. I am very excited for our student-athletes as they now have these two legends guiding them," said Dr Chenraj, Chairman, The Sports School.

The Sports School's mission has been bolstered after a collaboration with the Jain Group of Institutions, whose vision is to empower talent through its blend of academic rigour and sports.

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