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CHENNAI | WEDNESDAY 5 | FEBRUARY 2020

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**Thanjavur Big Temple consecration today**

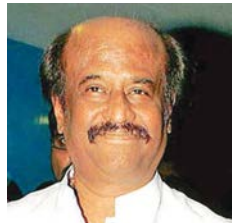
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Also it was said that all students may not be able to take the examinations in their own school premises since the state board would fix limited number of examination centres, which would mean that some children in the age of 10 and 13 would have to travel of places alien to them.

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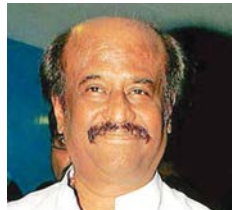
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## Cyclone relief

TNCC president K.S. Alagiri said CM Edappadi K Palaniswami is helpless even to control his ministers' speeches

### OTHER STORIES

## 'Tourism sector's cooperation vital to stop virus'

Chennai: Concerned over the spread of the novel coronavirus across the globe, the United Nations' World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) expressed solidarity with the Chinese people, government and the country's tourism sector at the time of crisis. It has urged the tourism sector to put people and their well-being in front. "The cooperation of the tourism sector will be vital in stopping the spread of the virus and limiting its impact on people and communities. Tourists also have a responsibility to inform themselves before they travel in order to limit the threat of transmission, and they should follow the recommendations of the WHO and their own national health authorities," the global agency said. Tourism is vulnerable to the effects of public health emergencies and is already being affected by this outbreak. However, it is too early to fully estimate the impacts this outbreak will have. UNWTO as the specialised UN agency for tourism will continue supporting World Health Organisation (WHO), the lead UN agency for the management of this outbreak by advising and providing tourism specific guidance," the agency said. "In recent years, China has emerged as a true global tourism leader, both as a source market and as a leading destination in itself, providing livelihoods for millions of people across the country. And tourism will offer a valuable lifeline as China recovers and rebuilds from this setback, just as the sector has proven its resilience many times before," UNWTO said in a statement. As a responsible sector and economic activity, the global agency has urged the tourism industry to "live up to its responsibility as an integral part of wider society. The sector must put people and their wellbeing first." About 23 countries including India, which accounts for three confirmed cases of the deadly virus, have been affected by nCoV that had spread from Wuhan in China.

## India to host EAS conference in Chennai

New Delhi: India is set to host an East Asia Summit conference this week in Chennai with a focus on maritime security cooperation and tackling challenges in the maritime domain. As announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 14th East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok in November 2019, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in partnership with the governments of Australia and Indonesia, will organise the fourth EAS Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation in Chennai from February 6-7, 2020. The Conference is expected to serve as a platform for free and open dialogue among all the EAS partners. —PTI

### HOUSING FOR ALL

# Impose restrictions on owning more than one house: HC

J.STALIN | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 4

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"By this restriction not only the price of housing units will come down but the persons who do not have sufficient means to purchase housing units will be in a position to purchase the property. It will go in a long way preventing the real estate people from converting the agricultural land into commercial properties or housing properties and thereby the agricultural lands can be saved", said a division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and Abdul Quddus while dismissing an appeal from Tamil Nadu Housing Board.

Writing the judgment for the bench, Justice Kirubakaran said if it is found in the survey that a family possesses more than two housing properties, the source of income for purchasing those properties should also be enquired into and investigated by the authorities. That part, the above restrictions would definitely reduce mindless exploitation of natural resources like sand, water and trees, which are all nowadays exploited illegally. Only if these natural resources are saved, they would be available for our posterity, the bench added.

The bench said, 'Housing for all' is the mission. 'Adequate Housing' is one of the most basic human needs and necessities. Housing should be available to everyone in the world. 'Adequate housing' is defined within the global strategy as 'adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities-all at a reasonable cost'. Homelessness is a major problem in India, the bench added.

## 'Respond to our queries on March 6'

Suo motu impleading Union ministry of housing and urban affairs and Union ministry of finance as party respondents in the case, the Madras high court has posed 15 queries to be answered by the state and Union governments.

### THE QUERIES ARE

- 1 How many families have basic amenity of housing in India as well as in Tamil Nadu?
- 2 What is the population and housing ratio in our country as well as in Tamil Nadu?
- 3 When "Housing for All" mission of the Central government to provide a house to each family in the country would be achieved?
- 4 Whether the Central and state governments have got special schemes for the marginalized and economically weaker sections as well as SC and ST people?
- 5 How many families possess more than one house in our country as well as in Tamil Nadu?
- 6 Is it not a fact that allowing a single family to acquire more housing unit/flat/plot would result in the escalation in price of the housing units in the real estate sector which would eventually deny the needy people from purchasing the property?
- 7 Whether all the details regarding possession of more than one housing unit is available with the government?
- 8 If not why not the central and state governments take a survey to find out the details regarding the number of housing units possessed by each individual or family?
- 9 Why not the governments restrict the families/individuals from purchasing/possessing more than one housing unit/flat/plot by defining what is meant by single housing unit till "Housing for All" is achieved?

10 Why not the government charge 100 per cent more or extra stamp duty to discourage buying more than one house/flat by a family/individual while purchasing second housing unit/flat at the registration level itself?

11 Why not the government conditionally allows the families to purchase more than one house/flat/plot provided the said family pays 100 per cent extra statutory dues like property tax, electricity charges, water and sewerage charges on the second property?

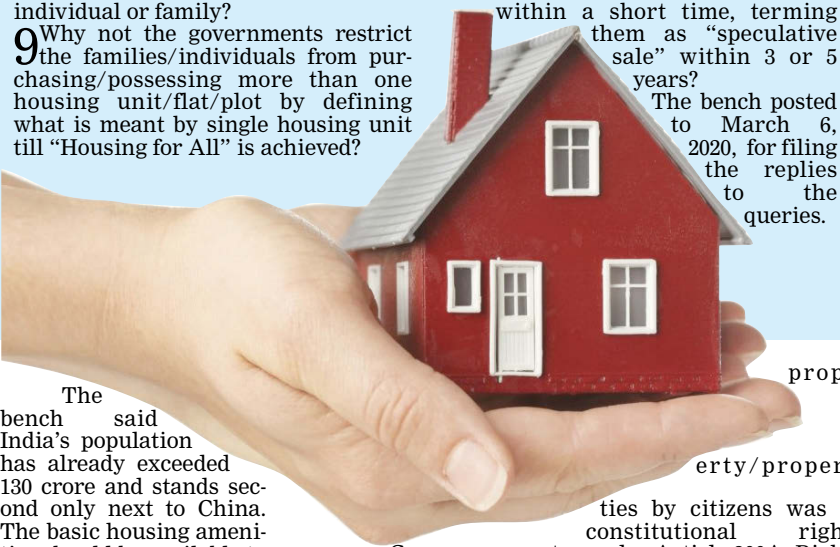
12 Why not the government initially prohibits the purchase of more than one housing unit in urban area viz., corporation/municipality/town panchayat limits?

13 Why not the financial institutions be prohibited from giving loan for purchase of more than one housing unit?

14 Why not the government prohibit the NRIs who are permanently settled by getting Citizenship and Permanent Resident status in various countries from purchasing housing units/plots/flats in an effort to bring down the cost of housing units/plots in India?

15 Why not the government prohibit sale of houses/flats/housing plots within a short time, terming them as "speculative sale" within 3 or 5 years?

The bench posted to March 6, 2020, for filing the replies to the queries.



The bench said India's population has already exceeded 130 crore and stands second only next to China. The basic housing amenities should be available to all the citizens. "India is being ruled by democratically elected government which is only for the people, of the people and by the people, as observed by Abraham Lincoln. Therefore, the government should take necessary steps to provide basic amenities like housing to all its citizens", the bench added.

The bench said lakhs and lakhs of people were living on platforms, roads, cement pipes, slums, under the trees and on banks of water bodies without proper shelter and basic amenities and safety. It was true that the Central

Government has presently taken a policy decision to provide housing unit to every family. It should be achieved at the earliest. It could become fruitful when restrictions were put on persons who hold more than one housing units, the bench added.

The bench said every individual has the right to purchase/own more than one house and as on date there was no restriction to own more than one house. However, such individuals should think of rights of others to have a house and avoid grabbing houses which should be available to others. Right to own

properties by citizens was a constitutional right under Article 300A. Right to property which was a fundamental right under Article 19 (1) (f) of the Constitution was taken away by deleting (f) from Article 19 (1) and placed it as Article 300A by virtue of 44th amendment. Hence, the government has got power to put restrictions to buy properties till "Housing for all is achieved". If more money was available with him/her, he/she can invest in bank and the money should not be used to purchase more than one house which would eventually result in denying of housing rights to the needy people, the bench added.

## Court upholds quashing of Kovai land acquisition

J.STALIN | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 4

The Madras high court has upheld an order of a single judge, which quashed the proceedings relating to acquisition of 369.13 acres of land initiated by the Tamil Nadu Housing Board for Thudiyalur-Vellakinar neighbourhood scheme in Coimbatore district.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and Abdul Quddus dismissed the appeal filed by the Tamil Nadu Housing Board, challenging an order of the single judge, quashing the land acquisition proceedings for non-compliance of sections 4 (1) and 6 of the Land Acquisition Act.

The bench said the acquisition proceedings have been initiated by the state of Tamil Nadu for providing housing units to public by issuance of notification under section 4 (1) of the Land Acquisition Act dated September 6, 1996, in respect of properties covered under several survey numbers totaling 369.13 acres. The properties covered under the survey numbers were owned by S.Doraisamy and 10 others. They challenged the said notification under section 4 (1) of the Act on various grounds that the notification under section 4 (1) of the Act issued was published in Pirpagal dated October 12, 1996, which does not have wide circulation in the area concerned. A single judge allowed the petition. Aggrieved, the TNHB filed the present appeal, the bench added.

The bench said though it has been contended by the appellants that other procedures have been followed, the single judge was right in quashing the proceedings for non-compliance of the provisions of the Act i.e., non publication of the notification under section 4 (1) of the Act and declaration under section 6 of the Act in two newspapers which were widely circulated in that area. Therefore, the appeal has to be dismissed, the bench added.

The bench said the newspaper "Pirpagal" was one of the newspapers in which section 4 (1) notification was published. As far as the said newspaper "Pirpagal" was concerned,

this court in the judgment in Arumugha Mudaliar's case had already held that "Pirpagal" was not a widely circulated newspaper. Therefore, the notification issued under section 4 (1) and declaration made under section 6 of the Land Acquisition Act were liable to be quashed. Moreover, the government has not filed any counter stating that the newspaper "Pirpagal" was a widely circulated newspaper in that area by giving the details of circulation. Therefore, on this ground alone the appeal was to be dismissed, the bench added.

The bench said moreover, in respect of 40 acres covered under the very same scheme, proceedings have attained finality in favour of the land owners. In respect of 67.52 acres, orders have been passed by this court in favour of the land owners and only review petitions were pending before this court. The sketch produced by the appellant before this court would also denote that scheme was already implemented in respect of phases 1 to 5. In respect of phases 6 to 10, the scheme cannot be implemented as the acquired lands were scattered in bits and pieces and various land owners had already obtained orders in their favour and the proceedings already attained finality. It was impossible for the appellant to implement phases 6 to 10 of the scheme making use of the small extent of lands which were found to be located at various places. The available lands were not located continuously making it difficult to execute the balance phases 6 to 10, the bench pointed out.

The bench said when the land acquisition proceedings were quashed by the single judge, surprisingly the government had not preferred appeal against the said order which would not only prejudice the interest of the government but also the beneficiaries of the land acquisition proceedings namely the general public. Only the requisitioning body viz., Tamil Nadu Housing Board alone had filed the appeal, which was not maintainable as per the division bench judgment of this court, the bench added.

It is reported in the media that data analysis of tax returns shows that 1.14 crore people owned one house across India and only 6,537 Indians have owned more than one self occupied house in India during the assessment year 2017-18. It only shows that people

are not straight forward and they are not disclosing the number of houses they possess and they suppress the facts to avoid tax liability.

As per the report made by RICS and KNIGHT FRANK, India is likely to need an

additional 25 million affordable housing units by 2030 to cater to the growing urban population. By the year 2030, more than 40 per cent of India's population will live in urban India as against current 34 percent and this is likely to create a demand for 25 million addi-

tional housing units, according to a report titled 'Brick by Brick-Moving towards 'Housing for All' by RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) in association with international property consultant Knight Frank.

### FACTS IN FIGURES

There are 1.77 million homeless people in India, according to the 2011 census, consisting of single men, women, mothers, the elderly and the disabled. It is stated that there are 18 million street children in India, the largest number of any country in the world, with 11 million being urban.

As per 2011 census, there is a shortage of 18.78 million houses in the country. Total number of houses has increased from 52.06 million to 78.48 million. About 78 million people in India live in slums and tenements, according to "Homeless Statistics at Homeless World Cup". Seventeen per cent of the world's slum dwellers reside in India. Homeless are exposed to extreme weather in summer and winter. Pavement dwellers in New Delhi are the best examples. Therefore, the government should increase the shelters for Homeless people.

According to a longitudinal analysis of India's housing pattern undertaken by the Economic Survey 2017-18, 28 per cent of India's city dwellers live in a rented house, which is much less than 54 per cent in the year 1961. It is also found that living in rented premises has declined and there has been a dramatic rise in the number of houses lying vacant in cities across the country.

The Central Government in the 2015 launched a scheme to tackle homelessness. The government promised that every Indian will have a home to live in by 2022 with 10 million homes ready by 2019 in rural areas and 10 million homes ready by 2022 in urban areas. In July 2018, the government announced that 5.4 million out of scheme target of 10 million have been approved for building in urban areas. The official data from Housing and Rural Development Ministry shows that by March 2019, 8 million homes had been approved.

# Be in Thanjai or watch Big Temple consecration on TV

G.SRINIVASAN | DC THANJAVUR, FEB. 4

All roads lead to Big temple at Thanjavur with the consecration of the temple, built by King Raja Raja Chola (985 CE to 1014 CE) and a world heritage monument declared by Unesco, to take place between 9 am and 10 am on Wednesday, February 5. Consecration is being held to the temple after 23 long years, after the last 'kumbabishekam' performed in 1997 when Kalignar M. Karunanidhi was chief minister.

Nearly one lakh people witnessed the seventh and penultimate phase of 'yagasala pujas' on Wednesday evening. So far, according to the police and temple officials three lakh people have visited the 'yagasala' and witnessed 'pujas' that began on February 1.

Thanjavur town, particularly the temple, an all-stone architectural marvel, wore a festive look. Illumination of the temple made it to glitter during nights while illumination in public places and

buildings gave a festive look to the town. Cultural programmes arranged by South zone cultural centre and department of art and culture are going on in the evenings in the town from February 1.

According to temple priests, last and eighth phase of 'yagasala pujas' will be held at 4.30 am on Wednesday. 'Gadams' will start from the 'yagasala' at 7 am and reach the kalasams by 7.30 a.m. Consecration to the 216-ft 'vimana' on the sanctum sanctorum and 'vimanas' of Amman, Vinayakar, Karuvurar, Murugan and Varahi temples will take place at 9.30 am. 'Mahadeeparathanai' will be done to Lord Brahadeeswara, Goddess Periyanyagi and other gods and goddesses at 10 am.

'Perabishekam' will be performed to the lord and to the Goddess at 8 pm after which 'Panchamurthis' will be taken in procession.

J.K.Tripathi, Director General of Police, who visited the temple on Monday said that five lakh people are expected for the consecra-

tion. Bhaskaran, commissioner of Urban development visited the temple on Tuesday and inspected the arrangements. M. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district collector accompanied him.

'LED screens' have been put up at ten places for people to witness the consecration. Thirty battery cars have been arranged for the benefit of senior citizens. Three hundred wheel chairs have been arranged for differently-abled persons. Syntax tanks with each 1,000 litres capacity have been placed at 275 places, said officials.

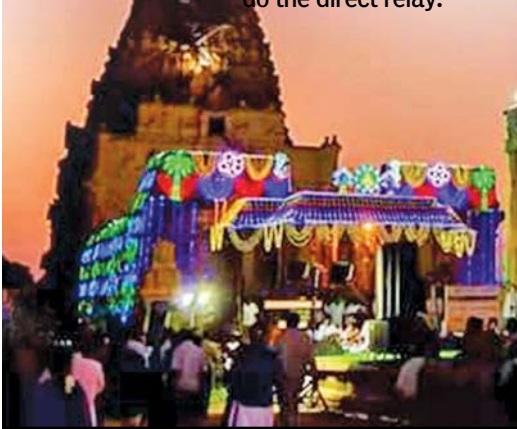
Temporary toilets have been arranged at 238 places. Transport corporation is operating 225 buses from various places to Thanjavur. Southern railway has arranged special trains. Twenty one temporary parking places, six medical camps, 28 ambulances and 26 mobile medical units have also been arranged for the benefit of devotees.

Heads of various mutts and state ministers are expected to attend the consecration.

### VIMANA VIEW

The main advantage is they can witness the 'vimana' of the temple from many places in the town as it is visible around a 15 km radius. This will help many to see the consecration from places where they are, instead of going to the temple as crowd permitted inside the shrine at the time of consecration is only 20,000.

Highly regulated to avoid any untoward incidents, people have the only choice of witnessing the consecration from vantage points and through LED screens and of course on television channels which do the direct relay.



### WHAT DO EPIGRAPHS SAY

Epigraphs say that Raja Raja Chola started construction of the temple in his 19th year of rule and completed it in his 25th year rule. The temple is 244-mts long, east west and 122-mts long south north. The 'vimana' has 13 floors and constructed without using cement and mortar with ball and socket arrangement. The 'cupbolic doom' on top is 80 tonnes in weight and the 'kalasam' is 12-ft high. Lord Brahadeeswara (Linga) is 13-ft high. The temple has been built on the banks of Grand Anicut canal and has Sivagangai tank and park adjacent to it. The temple has two 'gopurams' in front-Keralanadhagan gopuram and Raja Rajan gopuram'.

## 'Declare Big Temple a World Wonder'

B. VIJAYALAKSHMI | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 4

Big Temple consecration seems to have caught the attention of thousands in Tamil Nadu and also in other parts of the country. In a first, several TV channels will be telecasting live the kumbabishekam of this 1,000-year-old temple on Wednesday.

Several videos and audios highlighting the historical significance and the architectural splendor of the temple have been doing rounds on social media during last 48 hours. One of them laid stress on stupendous achievement of Tamil king Raja Raja Chola and the need for governments to take it to global heights. A Unesco world heritage monument, the Big Temple should be declared one of the Wonders of the World, the video added.

The 216-ft all stone 'vimana' is visible from many places in the town. A cross-section of people in the town said that they could witness the event from buildings at Srinivasapuram, over-bridge linking medical college road and temple road, Annai Sathya stadium and Mani Mandapam. For Babaji Rajah Bhosale, hereditary trustee of Palace Devasthanam, this is the second consecration of the temple in which he is taking a lead role. "I am happy and doubly blessed," he said.



## Budget view

Former union minister P. Chidambaram said Budget 2020 should have first ensured that people had money in their hands for daily expenses

### SHORT TAKES

## Key accused nabbed in Tiruchy gold heist

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB.4

The city police have taken into custody Murugan, alleged mastermind behind the famous Lalitha jewellery heist in Tiruchy. His custody was sought to probe the robbery cases filed against him in 2017 by the Anna Nagar police. After he was produced before Egmore magistrate court, Anna Nagar police began an enquiry on Tuesday morning. A history-sheeter, Thiruvarur Murugan, told police that he was involved in as many as 60 robberies in Anna Nagar and surrounding areas in Chennai. When Murugan was lodged in Puzhal prison, he made friends with seven other accused there. The gang burgled houses in Anna Nagar, Nollambur, J.J.Nagar and Thirumangalam in 2017. In Bengaluru, he has nearly 80 cases against him. Police said Murugan had allegedly committed more than 400 offences in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, and had hideouts in all three states.



## Four nabbed with six antique idols

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB.4

The idol wing of Tamil Nadu CID police on Tuesday recovered six antique statues from Keeranur in Pudukkottai district. Four persons have been arrested in connection with the seizure. Police sources said, based on a tip-off that a man in Keeranur in Pudukkottai district was attempting to sell an antique Vinayaka statue for Rs 3 crore, the idol wing team headed by Additional Superintendent of Police Rajaram rushed to the place on Tuesday and thwarted the attempt. Four persons Veeraswamy of Keeranur, Aravindh of R.S. Mangalam, Kumar of Lakkudi and Mathiahagan of Thodaiyur were also arrested. Police seized five more antique idols in addition to Vinayaka idol. The seized idols include a 62 cm Somaskanthar Sivan idol, 48 cm Parvathy Amman idol, 93 cm Sivagami Amman idol, 46 cm Vinayagar idol, 67 cm Manikavasagar idol and a 19 cm peedam, from the house of Veraswamy. It is said the gang had planned to sell the idols for more than Rs 20 crore. The seized idols were brought to the idol wing office in Chennai. The four arrested were booked under the Idol Theft Prevention no 05/2020 under section 41(1)(b), 102 CrPc @ 454(2), 457(2), 380(2), 414 IPC r/w 25(2) The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972. Investigations are on to nab others involved in the antique idol sale business.

## BOON FOR COMMUTERS

The Alandur footoverbridge connecting to the metro station was opened to the public on Tuesday. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami inaugurated it through video conferencing. Built at an estimated cost of ₹6 crore the foot overbridge is equipped with lifts and escalators on both sides of the road. Nearly 6,000 people use the Alandur metro station on a daily basis and the footover bridge will be useful for them to cross the road. The station was opened in 2015 but the construction of the facility was delayed because CMRL's call for tenders initially evoked no response. The contract was given to a firm only in January 2018.

## TNPSC GROUP II-A SCAM

# Cop held, kingpin's bank account frozen

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB.4

The CB-CID police on Tuesday arrested a police constable in connection with malpractices in the TNPSC Group II-A examination held in 2017. With the latest arrests, the number of arrests has reached 10. The CBCID had already arrested 16 persons in connection with the 2019 Group-4 examination scam. Police head constable, Sithandi, who acted as middleman was arrested by CBCID police near Sivagangai, on Tuesday. A case was registered

after it came to light that 42 persons who took the examination in Rameswaram centre, had scored high marks and joined various government departments. Officials said that Jayakumar from Chennai, the main agent, who had been collecting cash ranging from ₹8 lakh to ₹15 lakh, remains untraceable. According to sources, on Tuesday, CBCID police arrested head constable Chithaandi, but the main accused remains untraceable. The bank accounts of the duo were frozen by CBCID on Tuesday. On Monday, CBCID

investigators arrested M Muthukumar (35), a policeman from Tirunelveli. He had paid ₹8 lakh to Jayakumar on behalf of his wife who appeared for the exam in 2017. Mahalakshmi has been working as an office assistant in Ezhilagam. She was also arrested on Monday. Earlier, police raided Jayakumar's house in Mogappair and seized 60 'magic' pens (that use disappearing ink), a laptop and a pen drive, apart from a few documents. Police have announced ₹1 lakh cash reward to anyone who can help them apprehend Jayakumar.

## Fire breaks out at Manali refinery

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB.4

A major fire broke out at the Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited's (CPCL) Manali refinery in the early hours of Tuesday. Sources said the blaze started following a leak in the pipeline carrying naphtha around 3:45 am. The Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited is a group company of the Indian Oil Corporation owned by the Indian Oil and Gas Corporation, headquartered in Chennai with 1,600 employees working in the company. They refine crude oil to produce and supply various petroleum products manufacture and sale of lubricating oil additives. Thick smoke emanated in the early hours of Tuesday, triggering panic among the

employees. Since the fire alarm went off, employees scammed to safety. The staff of the fire department attached to the CPCL rushed to the spot and tried to contain the fire. Meantime, personnel from the Fire and Rescue Services from Manali, Ambattur and Tiruvottiyur stations, joined them. The fire was extinguished after a three-hour struggle. CPCL officials said there was no danger to employees or machinery as the fire broke out at a remote spot. A case has been registered and investigations are on. It may be noted that it is the second fire incident reported in the company in a span of four months. In October 2019, a few containers storing tar were gutted in a fire.

## Monthly rental fee is fixed at ₹1,000 per cart shop on Marina beach: Corpn to HC

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB.4

The Greater Chennai Corporation has informed the Madras high court that it has proposed to fix the license fee for the Motor Fixed cart shops in Marina at the rate of Rs 3,000 per annum and without Motor Fixed carts at Rs 1,500 with a monthly rent of Rs 1,000 per cart shop in Marina, besides maintenance fee of Rs 200 per month from each vendor. Additional advocate general S.R.Rajagopal made the submission before a division bench comprising Justices Vineet Kothari and R.Suresh Kumar, when the PIL filed by Fishermen Care came up for hearing on Tuesday. The matter relates to cleaning Marina Beach and shifting of fishermen. G.Prakash, Commissioner, Greater Chennai Corporation filed a status report on Tuesday. In his status report, he submitted

## No complaint filed by students or management



Students seen with machete

FROM P1

On seeing the lethal weapon, students who were witnessing the incident allegedly panicked and fled from the spot. In the 19-second video that took over social media on Tuesday, a student wearing a black shirt was seen holding a pistol. He was allegedly seen chasing the rival gang with the gun. It is said that the reason behind the clash is unknown. Two students who were injured in the attack were

admitted to the SRM medical college hospital on the campus. Speaking to DC, Public Relation Officer of the University, Nandha Kumar, denied that the students were involved in violence using lethal weapons. It is also said that two student groups were involved in a fight on Monday evening in the same canteen area. Police said no complaint was filed by the students or the university management. Meanwhile, the university was brought under high security cover after the violence. Police personnel were deployed in and around the campus to thwart further violence. It may be noted that before six months, two persons were arrested by Maraimalai Nagar police as they celebrated the birthday of a student in the college by cutting the cake with a machete.



## College student ends life in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB.4

An 18-year-old college girl committed suicide at her residence in Chindatripet on Monday afternoon. Sources said, Kumudha was a first-year B.Com student of a private college in Guindy, and she also worked part-time in an electrical company. Her father had passed away few years ago and she lived with her mother Vimala and brother who is studying class four. On Monday afternoon, her mother had stepped out taking lunch for her son at school, and when she returned she found the doors locked from within. There was no response from Kumudha who was inside. With the help of neighbours, she broke the door open and found Kumudha hanging from the ceiling. Chindatripet police registered a case and are investigating. Meanwhile, in an unrelated case, a 13-year-old school student jumped from the school building in Virugambakkam on Tuesday, in a bid to end her life. The incident sent shock waves across the city. According to police, the girl student Malini (\* name changed), resident of third cross street in Virugambakkam, is a class

● In one incident an 18-year-old college girl (Kumudha) committed suicide in her home when her mother and brother were not in home. Police are investigating the reason behind her suicide. In another case, a 13-year-old school girl jumped from the school building in an attempt to end her life. It is alleged that the girl was reprimanded by her Tamil teacher for not completing her homework. Police said she was asked to bring her parents to the school for a meeting. Upset, she jumped from the third floor. Police said she was rushed to a private hospital as she suffered a fracture. No complaint has been registered.

8 student of Jaigopal Garodia government girls school in Virugambakkam. It is alleged that the girl was reprimanded by her Tamil teacher for not completing her homework. Police said she was asked to bring her parents to the school for a meeting. Upset, she jumped from the third floor. Police said she was rushed to a private hospital as she suffered a fracture. No complaint has been registered.

## Gold worth ₹50.7 lakhs seized by customs in airport

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 4

The customs at the Chennai Airport seized 1.2 kilograms gold worth ₹ 50.7 lakhs. According to the airport sources, a 44-year-old man from Chennai who arrived by Kuala Lumpur was intercepted. During a search, 25 refurbished laptops were found in his checked-in luggage. A total of 25 gold rings and one crude gold chain were found ingeniously concealed inside the laptop. Total 303 grams of gold valued at Rs 12.76 lakhs were recovered and seized. In another case on Monday night, Vijaya (57) of Chennai and Anjala Devi (36) of Ramanathapuram who came from Colombo by indigo flight were stopped and checked. 230-gram gold worth Rs. 9.68 lakhs recovered from Vijaya and 260 grams valued at Rs 8 lakh were recovered from Anjala Devi. In another case on Tuesday, 476 grams gold worth ₹20 lakhs was seized from one Chennai passenger who arrived from Dubai. In all the four cases, a total of 1.2 kg gold valued ay ₹50.71 lakhs were seized.



## ALLEGED INACTION BY SPEAKER ON DISQUALIFICATION OF 11 AIADMK MLAs

# SC seeks Tamil Nadu's response on DMK plea

(New Delhi, Feb 4: The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the Tamil Nadu government's response on a petition by DMK leaders while terming as "unnecessary" the alleged inaction for almost three years of the state Assembly Speaker towards disqualification of 11 AIADMK lawmakers who voted against Chief Minister E Palaniswami during a 2017 confidence vote. The 11 lawmakers included Deputy Chief Minister

Panneerselvam. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde took note of the submission of senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for DMK leaders, that the disqualification plea was moved before the Speaker in March 2017, but even after a lapse of three years no action has been taken by him. "We think that the three years delay is unnecessary (on the part of Speaker)," said the bench which also comprised Justices B R Gavai and

Surya Kant. "Tell us whether you are going to take action. If yes, then when and how," it said, adding that the recent apex court judgement, delivered in the disqualification case of Manipur's BJP minister, was the law of the land and "holds the ground". The bench was referring to the January 21 verdict by another three-judge bench of the apex court headed by Justice R F Nariman that held that the Speakers of Lok Sabha and state

assemblies should decide disqualification petitions against legislators, especially those who defect, within a "reasonable period" of maximum three months. On Tuesday, Sibal, who was assisted by lawyer Amit Anand Tiwari, referred to the recent judgement and said the TN speaker has not even issued notices to those MLAs even after the lapse of almost three years and moreover, the term of the assembly would end next year. "If

the disqualification plea is moved against an opposition MLA, the Speaker issues notice next day. And if such pleas are filed against the ruling party MLA, then the notice is never issued." Sibal argued. "If Mr Sibal's submission is correct, then tell us as to when you are going to take action. We want to know this," the bench told the Advocate General of Tamil Nadu and posted the matter for further hearing on February 14. PTi

# Caterer fined ₹40K for service deficiency

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 4

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram District has slapped a fine of ₹40000 on a city caterer for delay in supplying food during house-warming ceremony in Tambaram two years ago. The caterer also failed to provide quality food.

In the petition G.Gopalakrishnan of Selayur submitted that he was planning to conduct house-warming ceremony of his newly built house. He was expecting many persons including family members and friends, to attend the function. He had approached M/s.G.K.Veg-Restaurant, (Outdoor Caterers), Chitdapakkam, to supply food including tea

and coffee on the occasion. Partner of the caterer Krishnamoorthy agreed to provide manpower. He paid ₹66,975 for serving tea, coffee, breakfast and lunch on November 25, 2018. The house warming ceremony was over by 7.00am on November 25, 2018 but caterer had provided breakfast only at 8.45 p.m after several reminders. Similarly, the

lunch, which schedule to provide at 11.30am, was delayed and brought at about 1.30pm. Most the guests and invitees had left place without taking lunch. Majority of the food items were not tasty. Even payasam was diluted and tasted like badam milk. Not supplied even salt and pickle and sufficient manpower. The caterer committed negligence and

unfair trade practice. Hence, he sought a refund of ₹66,975 and compensation for causing him mental agony. M/s.G.K.Veg-Restaurant, (Outdoor Caterers), had not appeared before the forum. The bench comprising president J. Justin David and member D.Baburadharajan said it is the duty of the M/s. G.K. Veg-Restaurant, (Outdoor Caterers) to pro-

vide coffee, breakfast and lunch on time as agreed by caterer. The act of the caterer amounts to deficiency in service and caused mental agony and financial loss to the complainant. The bench directed caterer to pay a compensation of ₹40000 for causing him mental agony and committing negligence in service.



राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, कुरुक्षेत्र  
**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, KURUKSHETRA**  
 (Under the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India)  
**KURUKSHETRA-136119 (HARYANA)**  
 Advt. No.: 03/2020

**CONVOCATION - 2020**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Convocation of NIT Kurukshetra will be held on Thursday, February 20, 2020. Shri Rajnath Singh Ji, Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, Government of India will be the Chief Guest of the convocation.

All eligible degree recipients are invited to attend the convocation. The tentative list of the degree recipients is uploaded on the Institute website. For registration schedule and other details related to the convocation, please visit the Institute website [www.nitkkr.ac.in](http://www.nitkkr.ac.in) regularly.

No.: Gen-1/A/Adt./3869/900 dated 04.02.2020 **Registrar**



## Virus alert

### Health minister Dr C. Vijayabaskar on Tuesday held discussions with collectors of all districts on corona virus scare

## SHORT TAKES

### 'Senthil Balaji organised a crowd to stop cops'

Chennai: The police informed the Madras high court that DMK MLA and former transport minister Senthil Balaji and his brother organised a crowd and prevented the police from conducting the search in connection with a job scam in the transport department.

State Public Prosecutor A.Natarajan made the submission when the anticipatory bail petitions filed by Senthil Balaji and his brother Ashok Kumar came up for hearing before Justice P.D.Audikesavulu on Tuesday. Senior counsel S.Prabakaran, appearing for the petitioners submitted that no notice was served on the petitioner before conducting the search. Opposing the anticipatory bail petition, SPP Natarajan submitted that Senthil Balaji and his brother were absconding. When the judge asked SPP Natarajan to serve the 41 A notice (Notice of appearance before police officer) on the accused, the judge orally asked the police not to harass the petitioner till then.

### Tiruchy 'smart city' work awaits ADB funds

Tiruchy: The Asian Development Bank aided Rs 336 crore third phase of underground drainage for the city is awaiting approval from the ADB, and work will start within a couple of months, said city corporation commissioner S. Sivasubramanian here on Tuesday.

Talking to newsmen here, Sivasubramanian said under the 'Smart City' programme, 26 works are in progress at an estimated cost of Rs 922.14 crore, of which two works have been completed at a cost of Rs 16.67 crore.

He said the Union urban development ministry has announced an 'ease of living' contest in which Tiruchirappalli city corporation area was also listed out. This is an online contest through twitter, Facebook, and other social media and the Union urban development ministry's website from February 5 to 29. The result of the contest will be finalised based on 14 activities like drinking water supply, road network, electricity, education, health, housing, environment, disaster management, and security.

Corporation chief engineer Amudhavalli said, efforts are being taken to replace the existing Fort Station road railway overbridge with a new one, by 50:50 share with the Southern railway. The detailed project report for this purpose will be ready by next month, she added. — DC

### AIADMK distances itself from dairy min's terror remark

Chennai: The ruling AIADMK on Tuesday distanced itself from the 'Islamist terrorism' remark of Milk and Dairy Development Minister K. T. Rajenthra Bhalaji and said he must have expressed his personal view.

Maintaining that it did not reflect the view of the party or the government, AIADMK senior and State Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar said, "it is neither the party's view nor that of the government. It is his personal view... there appears to be no ulterior motive in (him) saying so," Mr. Jayakumar told reporters here.

Accusing the opposition DMK of harbouring Islamist terrorists — a charge levelled by BJP senior Pon Radhakrishnan post Special Sub Inspector of Police Wilson's murder, Mr. Bhalaji claimed if Islamic terrorism is encouraged, then the rise of Hindu terrorism cannot be stopped. "Some parties with the intention of creating Islamist terrorism are politicising this matter... we can't stop Hindu terrorism," he said. In an interview to Tamil news channel, he alleged that if Islamist terrorism is patronised then the rise of Hindu terrorism cannot be stopped. He also asserted that BJP's Tiruchi functionary Vijay Raghu was killed by a Muslim extremist. On DMK youth wing secretary Udhayanidhi Stalin, Mr. Jayakumar said the opposition party was staging protests against the government and campaigning against the CAA only to project DMK president M. K. Stalin's son Udhayanidhi. — DC



DMK youth wing secretary Udayanidhi Stalin leads a protest against corruption in TNPSCT in North Chennai on Tuesday.

## Stalin on road, intensifies anti-CAA sign campaign

D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 4

The signature campaign by the DMK and its allies including the Congress seeking the repeal of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and Centre giving up its moves on NPR/NRC, got a booster shot on the third day on Tuesday with the DMK president M.K. Stalin himself coming on to Chennai's roads to mobilise signatures from all sections of the people, giving the drive a new thrust.

Making an appeal, Mr. Stalin said the target to mobilise over one crore signatures across Tamil Nadu should "become a people's movement" against CAA/NPR/NRC moves by the BJP government. The signature campaign was launched by him in his Kolathur constituency on February 2, even as DMK's allies have fanned out to different parts to collect signatures from the people. The campaign is on till February 8.

Mr. Stalin also appealed to his party cadre to distribute hand-



bills to the people door-to-door to explain why these measures should be scrapped.

Mr. Stalin made it clear that the campaign was against the AIADMK-BJP combine which was maintaining a studious silence over the controversial law. All the signatures collected should be submitted to the DMK headquarters in Chennai from where it will be put together and handed over to the President of India.

Meanwhile, DMK youth wing secretary, Udayanidhi Stalin led a protest in North Chennai near the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission (TNPSCT) office, demanding a CBI probe into the recent recruitment scam in the

TNPSCT. "Our agitation will continue till our demand is met," said Udayanidhi to reporters later.

**PARTY REVAMP:** Continuing its internal shuffling in party posts after the DMK's poor showing in the rural local bodies polls in the western districts, the party today revamped the Coimbatore urban district unit, which has taken party men by surprise.

In the Coimbatore city urban east unit, 14 new wards have been added to make it 71 wards-unit and N. Karthik, MLA, has been made in-charge for that unit. For Coimbatore city west unit, which has 29 wards, M. Muthusamy has been made party in-charge. For Coimbatore north, C Ramachandran has been made district secretary and Thendral Selvaraj made party in-charge for Coimbatore south.

The DMK general secretary, Prof. K Anbazhagan, who made the announcement, however, said the changes were made for purely administrative reasons.

## 54-ft palm leaf Sivalingam for Mahasivarathri

J.V. SIVA PRASANNA KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 4

A conch Lingam (Sangulingam) within a massive 54 feet high Sivalingam which is being readied with palm leaves will be among the major attractions for the Mahasivarathri on Feb.21 at the ancient Sri Tripurasundari sametha Sri Chandramouleeswarar temple at Nagari. The gigantic Lingam will grace along with a 45-feet high 'Navadhanya' Nandhi.

As both the Lingam and Nandhi would be made using eco-friendly material they would sever the purpose of temporary

worship besides reinforce bhakti among the people who fast all through the night on Mahasivarathri. Devotees visiting the temple at Keelapatu village in Nagari would be thrilled to walk inside the Panai Olai Lingam and personally perform the abhishekam to the Conch Lingam within it.

"We want to give the devotees a divine experience of performing abhishekam to the Lord on Mahasivarathri and all those who perform it to the Conchlingam could take home a conch as a memento," says V. Subramanian, Secretary of Jankalyam, who is the

motivating force for the villagers around the temple. "We have been planning various kinds of Lingams every year and this year we decided to make Palm leaf Lingam containing a Conch Lingam and a Navadhanya Nandhi," he adds. About 40,000 to 50,000 conch shells would be used to make the Sangulingam measuring about six feet in height.

"I had originally planned to ready the project by Feb. 1 but a rogue bull charged at the Nandhi structure on three occasions and upset my plans," says S. Ganesh, who has been making the Lingam for

## Actor summoned to appear for enquiry on Feb. 25 T'kudi firing: Rajini to testify before panel

ARULOLI. M | DC TIRUNELVELI, FEB. 4

The one-man commission headed by Justice Aruna Jegadeesan on the Thoothukudi police firing that claimed 13 lives two years ago on April 18, summoned Rajinikanth to appear for an enquiry during the 19th enquiry session to be held on February 25 here.

The demand to summon Rajinikanth for his interview made at a private resort (Sathya resort) in Thoothukudi on May 30, 2018, that anti-social elements intruded into the people's struggle against Sterlite and triggered violence, resulting in the police firing that claimed 13 lives, was made by lawyers Vanchinathan and



Hariragavan, affiliated to 'Makkal Adhikaram'.

Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) founder president Seeman, during his deposition on October 16 last year also put forth the demand before the commission that the Tamil matinee idol be summoned as an witness.

Based on this, advocate Vadivel Murugan, repre-

sentative of Aruna Jegadeesan commission, on the final day of the 18th enquiry session of the commission on January 25, said that actor Rajinikanth, if necessary, would be summoned for enquiry the following session.

Rajini's statement on the police firing triggered lot of criticism almost from all quarters, and the star himself stands firm on his statement.

Many anti-sterlite activists, welcomed the commission's move, as they believe that Rajinikanth may not have any documentary evidence to substantiate his statement, and he may stand exposed. Anti-sterlite activists also added that Rajinikanth should not be shown any leniency by the

commission. It is also noted that Rajinikanth, who visited the injured at the Thoothukudi medical college hospital on May 30, 2018, was asked, "Who are you?" by an angry youth, Santosh, who was undergoing treatment for a bullet injury.

When Rajinikanth met him and smiled at him, the youth's question to the actor was, "Who are you?". Rajini answered with a smile saying, "I am Rajinikanth" and moved on.

But Santosh's sentiment was out loud and clear. This anger against Rajinikanth here, however still persists, and he may need special bandobust if he appears before the commission on February 25, said a police officer.

### Ramados bats for caste-based census

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 4

PMK founder Dr S. Ramados has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure that caste details are included in the 2021 national census since "to make caste based reservation scientific and precise, caste based census is essential".

In a letter to PM, he said Indian society was stratified on the basis of caste and it was essential to devise and implement affirmative action programs to lift those in the bottom of the social pyramid and added, "Caste based reservation is one of the vital affirmative action programs." He said, "There is widespread expectation among various sections of society that the 2021 census will enumerate castes."

## Cabinet discusses budget meet, health issues

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 4

A meeting of the Tamil Nadu Cabinet, presided by the Chief Minister, Mr. Edappadi K Palaniswami, here on Tuesday discussed the possible dates for presentation of the State Budget for 2020-21 as the government is keen to have the session soon. Deputy Chief Minister, O. Panneerselvam and other ministers, besides Chief Secretary K Shanmugam were also present.



The meeting also discussed the preventive measures taken by the Health department in the wake of the Coronavirus

spreading from China, besides the Part-B schemes to be included in the Budget. The elections to rural local bodies in the remaining nine districts and for urban local bodies across the state were also discussed, sources said.

The Dairy development minister, Mr. Rajenthira Balaji, who is in the centre of a controversy for his remarks on Islamic and Hindu terrorism, had a brief separate meeting with Mr. Palaniswami, it is learnt.



LIC employees stage a protest against privatisation in Chennai on Tuesday. — DC

# A damp squib belies great expectations

NARASIMHAN VIJAYARAGHAVAN

On February 1 @nsitaraman presented her second budget, the most anticipated in recent times. It could possibly be bracketed with the 1991 Budget of Manmohan Singh under P. V. Narasimha Rao dispensation, when India was undeniably facing a serious financial crisis, including depleted foreign exchange reserves. It was a huge challenge and an opportunity that was bitten into, for there was no other option. Henry Kissinger was often quoted to say, "Nothing clears the mind more marvellously than absence of alternatives". That is particularly true of our economic milieu.

Arvind Subramanian, the former Chief Economic Adviser (to Modi 1.0) had co-authored papers with his Harvard colleague calling the present economic situation as "The Great Slowdown" akin to 1991 but a glorious opportunity to tuck into. Nani Palkhivala, whose centenary was celebrated in Chennai with a speech by the Finance Minister Ms. Nirmala Sitaraman on the "Road Map to a \$5 trillion Dollar Economy", put

"The Great Slowdown" akin to 1991 but a glorious opportunity to tuck into. Nani Palkhivala, whose centenary was celebrated in Chennai with a speech by the Finance Minister Ms. Nirmala Sitaraman on the "Road Map to a \$5 trillion Dollar Economy", put it as only he can. "There are two types of persons who frame the budget - the tinkers and the structuralists. Most officials in the Finance Ministry have always been tinkers".

Arvind Subramanian made it clear that the problems faced by India on the economic front were multi-pronged — stressed assets of public sector banks and NBFCs, depletion in investments, a fall in consumption, fall in exports and burgeoning unemployment. The prognosis was that Budget had to face head-on the structural issues and not tinker with the peripherals.

Modi 2.0 was fully alive and aware of the great slowdown. The huge slash in corporate taxes prior to Narendra Modi's departure to attend "Howdy, Modi!" clarion call with Donald Trump was a clear signature tune that the industry was facing a seri-

ous crisis and was looking for immediate solution, nay salvation. Modi 2.0 even recapitalised the nationalised banks and tommotomed to all those who cared to listen. 'there was no liquidity problem and goaded the banks to indulge in a prudent lending spree'. Were the banks listening? They did not seem to be. Were the entrepreneurs lining up seeking money for investments? No. The investment climate was dull, drab and signifying a doom despite the RBI coming out with a series of interest rate cuts.

The automobile and real estate sectors were desperate for infusion of animal spirits as their inventories were piling up even as festival seasons came and went. Well, the government was surely not to blame for the mess that the automobile and realty sectors were facing. It was their own making as they

built inventories like there was no tomorrow and the financial institutions lent to keep the bubble afloat. The inventories far exceeded the demand in the market. It was not as if one fine day, the proverbial R K Laxman's common man decided that come tomorrow I am not buying these assets. Supply exceeded demand and the cascading effect of mounting inventories impacted the financial sector as well, as analytically argued by the former CEA. The authors felt that while structural changes were called for, tinkering with personal income tax to offer the middle class a "much needed sum in their pockets to spend more" was not an ideal solution, since those in the income tax bracket were the ones in need of coins in the purse. The Budget was not listening.

There was in reality a surfeit of suggestions for the Finance Minister to tuck into. Not only professors and academicians and politicians were in the loop, even the common man was getting on board, in phone-ins. The expectations were raised by the media as if just one Budget 2020 can do the trick and unleash the Keynesian ani-

mal spirits. That is not possible. There is no magic wand or tool in place. Not even a Nani Palkhivala, the finest Finance Minister India never had, could have conjured up a trick to miraculously attend to the multiple fronts the economy needed to be attacked from.

Structural changes take time. The nation is impatient and wanted a Big Bang Budget.

Viewed against this backdrop, the finance minister has fallen short. The Economic Survey for the last three years has been quite candid in pointing out that India cannot afford to keep addressing the distribution of the cake. We cannot keep talking of sharing the pie, unconcerned with increasing the size of the pie. Growth was a must before we talked of distribution. Inequality had to be tackled, but how? By trying to grow faster and having the benefit of a much larger pizza on the table.

The sum and substance of the Budget is that it has got the diagnosis right. India needs investments. India needs to grow and bigger. But with a fall in the revenue collection, both of the direct and indirect tax genres, we cannot

keep embracing quantitative easing a.k.a. deficit financing. That the Modi 2.0 dispensation pegged it at 3.8% is a minor miracle. There are statutory mandates to live by and, of course, the inflationary spiral would loom large to impact the political thick-

et. There have been far too many debates, discussions and dissertations on the Budget 2020. Adding one more may mean little. Where is a Nani Palkhivala to tell us what was the Budget all about? Whether it was a glorious opportunity missed? Or a start made in the right direction for structural changes with say an announcement to list LIC, the behemoth, on the stock market? Allowing We The people to take a share in LIC apart from the Navratnas would and should be a boost to the economy? But when? Modi 2.0 is struggling to sell of Air India despite one plus one and two plus two offers. We are still a long way off in real terms, what with the telecom majors waiting in line for the finance ministry to give them a Samadhan break to repay the dues, that the Supreme Court has disdainfully ruled that they should cough up. So, let us be clear that wiggle room for the finance minister was not huge and she could not play aces or jokers without any on her hand.

It was way back on March 27, 1958 that Nani Palkhivala delivered the first of celebrated annual budget speeches at Green Hotel, Apollo Bunder, then Bombay, under the auspices of Forum of Free Enterprise. And it was in 1966 that the first open air Budget lecture was delivered by him at the CCI. And mind you the club authorities received a notice from the Collector of Bombay threatening to delicense the club for using it for 'non recreational purposes'. Nani's brilliant response. "There was absolutely no violation of the lease terms of the club as 'recreation' meant not only physical recreation, but also 'intellectual recreation' for which the ground could be rightfully used. "That ended the matter". Well, Budget 2020 or 2200, without a Nani Palkhivala, it is all so mundane to talk of it, as it has ceased to be intellectual anymore. (Author is practising advocate in the Madras High Court)



## Fix prices

Information minister Kadambur C. Raju said the govt would soon decide on online sale of cinema tickets

### BRIEF

## Cop killed in road mishap near Tiruchy

**Tiruchy:** In a terrible tragedy, a 29-year-old police constable attached to the Tamil Nadu special police battalion was killed in a road accident when a two-wheeler he was riding hit against the centre median of the road at Alanthur section road on the Tiruchy-Madurai national highway near here on Monday night. The deceased constable K. Prabhakaran was on his way home after his duty hours when the mishap occurred near Rajalipuram. The Manikandam police are investigating.

## Man kills wife, attempts suicide

**Tiruchy:** A 46-year-old engineer was hospitalised following his suicide attempt by cutting a vein in his hand, after allegedly murdering his pregnant wife at Musiri near Tiruchy on Tuesday. Police said Kamalanth who got married to one Jeevitha six months ago, developed discord with his wife and quarrelled very often when she questioned him about his job. Following a similar quarrel this morning the accused cut the neck of his wife and killed her on the spot and he also inflicted cut injuries on his hand in a bid to end his life. On information, police rushed to the spot and removed the deceased woman's body to the Government hospital Musiri for post-mortem, and also admitted the accused in the same hospital, police added.

## Six infra projects completed at Sevalaya

**Chennai:** Six new infrastructure projects were inaugurated at Sevalaya's Kasuva Centre by Page Pierre, philanthropist and owner and manager of Page Pierre SA and his colleagues Dr Daniel Oyon and Mr Marc Fues from the Page Pierre Foundation. The projects, implemented at a cost of ₹65 lakhs, cover solar panel, paver block flooring for primary school, shed for vehicle parking and additional roofing in the community college, bio-gas plant and computers and laptops for the computer lab in school. The projects will benefit the 2000+ students at the school and nearly 300 residents of the Homes and staff. The Page Pierre Foundation patrons were pleased to share their pride in being associated with Sevalaya for over 12 years.

# Nilgiri langur's new feed under researchers' scan

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, FEB. 4

While jungles at Theetukul suburbs here is seemingly becoming the hub of 'Nilgiri langur', a rarely sighted vulnerable monkey species, its liking for a herbal plant in recent times evokes curiosity among the researchers here.

'Nilgiri langur (karunkurungu in Tamil) with its shining and well-grown black fur over its body and its head region covered with shiny golden brown fur, pose for a majestic appearance and charm. This species which live in troops over the years had become confined to deep woods in native shola forests in Nilgiris, making its sighting a rarity. But, now, its movement along the Theetukul areas has brought sort cheer to the conservationists as it indicates that its current population try to venture near the town limits. Dr S. Rajan, former member



Nilgiris langur at Theetukul limits near Ooty. —DC



Ipomoea nil plant. —DC

of the TN biodiversity board and scientist at Central Ayush wing, here said that due to habitat loss, the population of 'Nilgiri langur' began to wane long years back and is categorised under "vulnerable species".

A good number of 'Nilgiri langur' seen now in Theetukul area indicates that this langur, which lives in the upper plateau, is trying to re-occupy the suburb territory along the jungle fringes. But, what is more intriguing is that they are found to voraciously feed on a herb, 'Ipomoea nil', known as 'morning glory'.

"This plant is used in anti-inflammatory, carminative, inflammations, constipation, dyspepsia, bronchitis, fever, skin diseases, scabies and used as purgative," Dr Rajan said and added that a detailed study is needed to understand why the 'Nilgiri langur' now feeds on this herb.

## New integrated bus station work after Nagarpalika polls

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC TIRUCHY, FEB. 4

The much-awaited integrated bus terminal project for Tiruchy would be finalised shortly and the foundation stone for it will be laid within six months, according to Tiruchy collector S. Sivarasu.

Mr. Sivarasu told newsmen after inspecting the ₹17.34 crore construction of the Chinthamani city bus terminus on Tuesday that after the urban local bodies' elections are held, work on the new integrated bus terminus will start based on resolutions passed by the new municipal corporation and other connected local bodies. He was accompanied by Corporation Commissioner S Sivasubramanian and chief engineer Ms. Amuthavalli.

He said once the integrated bus terminal is operational, the existing traffic congestion in and around Tiruchy city will be permanently solved. He said the high-roofed



Tiruchy Collector accompanied by Corporation Commissioner S. Sivasubramanian and Corporation's Chief Engineer Mrs. Amuthavalli inspects the ongoing construction of the city bus terminal at Tiruchy. —DC

Chinthamani city bus terminal, capable of accommodating 20 buses at a time, was unable with the ever-increasing number of buses. Hence it was brought under smart city mission for redevelopment.

Explaining the ongoing construction activities, Mr. Sivarasu said presently raft foundation concrete work was in progress. Out of 248 piles, 218 piles have been laid so far. He said the new bus stand will have 30 bus bays in two terminals

besides arrangements are being made to park 350 two-wheelers in its basement. The ground floor will have 11 shops and the first floor will have 22 shops. This apart, a passengers waiting hall, pedestrian pathway, tickets selling room, protected potable water, cloak room, mothers feeding room and other basic amenities for the bus passengers will be provided, he added and hoped that all the works will be completed by February next year.

## Write off students edu loans, TN JD(U) urges PM

**Tiruchy:** The state minority wing of the Janata Dal (United) appealed to the TN Govt to introduce total prohibition in the state.

In a release here on Monday, party's state minority wing president Robert Christi also urged to provide housing facility for the urban area homeless people immediately as per the Supreme Court verdict, and taking into consideration the Prime Minister's order which also kept in abeyance for the last six years.

Referring to the TN Chief Minister's comprehensive health insurance scheme as well as Prime Minister's health insurance scheme, Mr. Robert Christi said the health insurance scheme should be extended to all diseases and to increase family's annual income limit from ₹72,000 to ₹1.21 lakh to avail state and central government insurance schemes.

He also appealed to PM Modi to write off the educational loans and to order all nationalised and private banks to extend educational loans liberally with total subsidy. —DC



HANDLING FIRE

Tamil Nadu forest and fire service departments conduct a demo at Pallipattu forest in Thiruvallur district to create awareness on handling forest fires. State fire service official N. Bhaskaran also present. —DC

## World Cancer Day observed in Kovai

LAKSHMI L LUND | DC COIMBATORE, FEB. 4

To commemorate World Cancer Day observed on February 4, Sri Ramakrishna Institute of Oncology and Research (SRIOR) under the leadership of its director Dr P. Guhan launched cancer awareness umbrellas on Tuesday. Each umbrella has different coloured ribbon oriented on each of its leaf corresponding to the cancer it is associated with.

Each colour ribbon has a QR Code printed below it which when scanned it will provide information about that particular type of cancer. On selecting a pink ribbon, the user will be provided with information pertaining to the breast cancer like self-examination, signs, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and cure. "The umbrella will be

distributed free of cost to NGOs and individuals who are willing to register themselves as ambassadors." Dr P Guhan director SRIOR said. On the occasion the hospital announced launch of its month-long free prostate screening programme. Men who are over 35-years old can get screened for prostate cancer at the hospital.

Meanwhile, city-based GEM Hospital, led by its Chairman Dr C Palanivelu, in partnership with Rotary Club of Coimbatore launched its 'Care for Life' initiative on Tuesday.

To support patients who are fighting cancer, beauty salon Green Trends launched 'Shairi' the month-long hair donation drive on Tuesday. The pan-India donation drive was launched in Coimbatore and in more than 50 cities across the country.



Dr V. Shanta, chairperson of Adyar Cancer Institute, along with cancer survivors during World Cancer Day 2020 meet at Adyar Cancer Institute in Chennai on Tuesday. —DC

## Protests erupt in DMK unit in Salem after posts reshuffled

ZAKER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, FEB. 4

Protests erupted in the Salem district unit of the DMK on Tuesday following the alleged sidelining of the scions of the late veteran DMK leader Veerapandi S Arumugam, known in party circles as 'lion of Salem', amid a youth cadre attempting self-immolation and triggering tension in the area.

In the latest internal shuffling of party posts in the DMK on Monday, Veerapandi S Raja, son of late Veerapandi Arumugam, was divested of his already trimmed role as party in-charge of Salem East district unit and made one of the secretaries of the DMK election committee at the party headquarters in Chennai.

It may be recalled that until Veerapandi Arumugam's demise in 2012, the DMK had entrusted the entire Salem district unit to his responsibility. Supporters of his family in the party felt increasingly

alienated as the Salem district unit itself was trifurcated and Veerapandi S Raja made in-charge of just one of the newly carved out units. Now, after the rural local bodies elections, Raja has been stripped of that post too, triggering the protests before the DMK office in Salem today. As protests against "sidelining" of Veerapandi Raja gained momentum, a youth Dileep doused himself with kerosene and attempted to set fire to himself, but other party men nearby thwarted his suicide bid.

A supporter of Veerapandi Raja, T. Chandramohan, Salem district youth wing organiser, demanded restoration of status quo ante in the DMK's district unit, considering the major role played by the Veerapandi family in building the party in Salem. "To sideline the entire family is highly regrettable," said Chandramohan, who added that he has resigned from his post in protest.

## Students laud budget for education

**Coimbatore:** Post the union budget 2020 announcement, on Monday, the first working day of the educational institution, students of the department of commerce of the Sri Krishna Arts and Science College (SKASC), brainstormed about the various positive aspects for the education sector in the budget. Almost all students welcomed the budget for having allotted about ₹99,311.52 crore for the education sector. This is an increase of five percent compared to last year.

The students also expressed happiness that a sum of ₹3,000 crores has been allotted for skill development of

the student community. The students are hopeful the same will boost employability.

Also expressing hope on the new national education policy which will be made official sometime in the future by the government, students are hopeful that it will be a game changer in promoting the quality of education in the country, considering the fact that several hundred recommendations were received by the ministry regarding this.

Students echoed the opinion that the encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI) in the education sector is a welcome move by the government. —DC

## India can offer solutions, says Ecuadorian envoy

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 4

India has capacity to offer potential solutions for the issues bothering Ecuador, said Hector Cueva Jacome. Mr Jacome, Ambassador of Ecuador to India, was speaking on the occasion of World Cancer Day at SRM Institute of Science and Technology premises on Tuesday.

"Best technology comes from India, and it is easily adaptable, affordable and accessible for any country in the world," he went on to say. "Effective solutions can come from India in the area of battling cancer. The disease can become a disaster if nothing is done to prevent it."

Ecuador can prevent, treat breast and prostate cancers with technological and professional help from India. These cancers are common in their nation, however not many go to seek help to treat the disease due to financial and

social issues. These ailments are totally preventable, said the ambassador.

The solutions found in India are cost-effective. GlENZA, the medicine used for prostate cancer costs about \$4,500 per month in Ecuador while in India it is available for \$700 per month. The cost of using mammography is about \$200 when it is not much in India, he said.

Vice chancellor of SRMIST Sandeep Sancheti said World Cancer Day in a way ensures that we are raising awareness on the dreaded disease only to come out of its clutches. If the disease is not controlled it will spread like wild fire. Dean of SRM Dental College Dr N.Vivek said nearly about 80 percent of the population in the developing world will likely suffer from cancer by 2040, however, these numbers can be brought down by being instrumental in prevention.



Students at World Cancer Day event at SRM Institute of Science and Technology on Tuesday. —DC

## Missile integration facility in Kovai

S. KATHTHASAMI | DC COIMBATORE, FEB. 4

The L&T MBDA Missile Systems (LTMMSL), a joint venture between Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and MBDA, has set up a missile integration facility in Coimbatore.

With an eye on domestic and global markets, LTMMSL has set up the assembly, inert integration without explosives and testing facility for missile sub-systems and missile weapon launch systems with spread across an area of 16,000 square meter in the Special Economic Zone at

Coimbatore. It forms a part of the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor.

Speaking about the project, J D Patil, Chairman of LTMMSL, said, "we have been working proactively to offer advanced missiles and missile systems to the Indian armed forces through domestic production. The creation of this new integration facility at Coimbatore is a first step in this direction. We are showcasing some of these new offerings at the DEFEX-PO20 to be held at Lucknow."

He further said, "the

LTMMSL will build complete missile systems for the Indian armed forces exploring prospects under the categories of Indian designed, developed and manufactured (IDDM), Indian and make in India categories for defence procurement. This LTMMSL has also responded to Indian navy's air defence requirement for Short Range Surface-to-Air Missile System (SRSAM). Going forward, LTMMSL is offering the Exocet MM 40 Block 3 anti-ship missile, and the 5th Generation Anti-tank guided missile (ATGM5) to the Indian

Armed Forces."

According to him, ATGM5 will draw on the next generation technologies of the MMP battlefield anti-tank weapon that has already entered the service in France. "ATGM5 will be a product, involving the transfer of key technologies to India."

Pasquale Di Bartolommeo, Vice Chairman and member of the board said, "L&T owns 51 per cent stake in LTMMSL and MBDA owns 49 per cent, thus fully complying with India's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy."

## nCoV impact: Chinese importers say no to Indian roses

SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC KRISHNAGIRI, FEB 4

Importers of Chinese origin doing business in other South Asian countries are not interested in importing roses from India this year. They took this decision to save their farmers in crisis due to the 'novel corona virus (nCoV)' outbreak in China.

In Hosur of Krishnagiri district, the roses are grown in poly houses for the high value cut flowers (rose buds with long stem) meant for export markets.

Over 500 Hosur farmers here are growing roses in an extent of around 1,500 acres and busy in harvesting their crops for the coming Valentine's Day business.

But, the warm winter this year has become a thorn for the farmers as that has spoiled their business



opportunity this season.

The adverse climatic condition has supported early maturing of the rose buds upsetting the farmers plan to harvest the crop targeting the 2020 Valentine's Day. "The price has doubled this year due to demand in both the domestic and export markets. It was ₹ 200 per bunch having 20 rose stems last season and now it sells for ₹400 each bunch. It would further increase up to ₹600 before the closing of export business for

January and continues till February.

This year the chill winter spell was short and because of that the roses have matured before time.

Low temperature is required for roses to stay fresh and bloom late and that has not happened this year. G.Bala Siva Prasad (34), a rose grower of Gudisettilu village, near Bagalur of Hosur in Krishnagiri said, "not only climatic condition, but also the nCoV outbreak in China have affected the rose exports". He further said "Only three among the ten importers, who are regular buyers of my rose crop have placed their orders for the coming Valentine's Day business".

Bala further explained: "Seven others are Chinese people doing business in Indonesia, Malaysia,

Singapore and others who are not interested to import from India. They took such a decision this year to save their rose farmers at Yunnan province, China's key cut flower producing region, in trouble due to the unofficial ban of other countries on importing Chinese goods following nCoV issue in China".

According to the Bala, Indian farmers would also experience similar situation due to the alleged positive nCoV cases reported here in India.

"Just five days to go for the closing of the Valentine's Day business. So far, 25 nCoV positive cases were reported in our country. Definitely, our exports will also be stopped if the numbers (nCoV positive cases) increase, not only for the Valentine's Day, but also our regular export business," added Bala.



Sonia improves

Sonia Gandhi, who is undergoing treatment for a stomach infection at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in New Delhi, is stable and her condition has improved, the hospital authorities said

'Integration of forces' ops in 3 yrs' New find set to help detect hidden high-grade explosives

No decision on number of joint commands on India-China border: Gen. Rawat

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 4

In one of the biggest military restructuring, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat on Tuesday said that in three years India is likely to have an "air defence command" to cover all aerial operations in the Indian airspace, a "peninsula command" for all naval operations in Indian Ocean region and a "logistics command".

We feel that all the assets which are there must integrate under one service so that command and control issues can be simplified. Gen. Bipin Rawat, CDS



being integrated," the CDS said. He said there is a need for a peninsula command, which would be with the Navy. "Our thought process is that let us go with the peninsula command. At present, there is East and West command in the Navy over Indian Ocean," he said.

"If you look at the Navy Chief, these two commands are just one of his charters. Look at his charter, he is looking at the entire Indian Ocean region. He is looking from east coast to Africa right down to Australia. So, he has got a bigger picture to look at," said Gen. Rawat. Therefore, with the creation of the peninsula command, the Navy Chief can disinvest himself from the closer Indian Ocean region and look at the bigger picture, he said. He said that command-

ers of such theatres would be reporting to their respective service chiefs initially and no decision has been taken on how many joint commands would be created on the Indo-Chinese border. "Once we are done with our cross staffing, initially the theatre commanders will have to be assigned with the regular theatre with the chiefs taking over," Gen. Rawat added. On the question about the time frame he has in his mind to create these theatre commands, the CDS said, "I have been given three years... For the creation of these theatres."

N.B. HOMBAL | DC BENGALURU, FEB. 4

Smuggling of explosive material by anti-social elements has been a big problem faced by many countries and India in particular. Now, two prominent Indian scientists along with their Korean counterpart have developed a technology using Neutron Activation Analysis which helps defence forces across the world to detect high grade explosives hidden in trucks, containers and passenger luggage. The physics department of Sungkyunkwan University, Republic of Korea has published a detailed paper on 'Recent Development In Nuclear Technology and its

Benefits to Society' which dwells on how high-grade explosives hidden deep inside cargo containers, trucks and passenger luggage can be detected. According to eminent research scholars of this university Prof. V.N. Bhorsakar, Prof. S.D. Dhole and Prof. S. Hong of Sungkyunkwan University of Republic of Korea, the X-ray scanning method is used to detect these explosives, but this technology has its limitations. "The technology is ineffective when it comes to large sized and heavy steel containers at checkpoints. However, this limitation can be overcome by adopting the Gamma-ray imaging technique. Gamma-ray imaging can easily

scan large quantity goods containers manufactured using heavy steel or lead," the paper explained. The paper added that another technique - Neutron Activation Analysis - which is an off-shoot of nuclear technology, helps detect low-Z elements used heavily in explosives by anti-social elements. "Low mass elements (Low-Z) such as Carbon, Nitrogen, Oxygen, Chlorine and Aluminium cannot be detected easily if they are stored along with large goods in containers. The same problem is faced in identifying land mines too. The Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) method has turned out to be very effective in identifying hidden explosives," the paper explained.

Naga talks on political issue end

2 minor issues delay signing of peace accord, rebels to take call

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, FEB. 4

The ongoing Naga peace talks between the Centre and National Socialist Council of Nagaland, Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) and the Naga National Political Groups (NPPG) has concluded negotiation on all the political issues, but signing of the peace accord was delayed due to few minor issues on which Naga rebel groups have to take a call. Asserting that the ball is now in the court of rebel groups, security sources in the ministry of home affairs told this newspaper that more than hundred armed cadres of NSCN(IM) are still in Myanmar and they will have to be brought

back to India before the signing of the peace accord so that they also surrender along with the other cadres. Pointing out that some members, including senior cadres of the NSCN(IM), are involved in unlawful activities like supply of illegal arms and ammunitions to criminal gangs in other parts of the country and some are running car lifting rackets, security sources said that ministry of home affairs has told the Naga leadership that it was not acceptable to the government. Security sources said that Government of India was insisting on categorical solution to these minor issues to end the presence of illegal weapons from the region. Asserting that negotia-

Security sources in the MHA said that more than hundred armed cadres of NSCN(IM) are still in Myanmar and they will have to be brought back to India before the signing of accord

tion between the Naga rebel groups and the government was complete and only the peace accord is left to be signed, security sources said that the government was talking with the NSCN(IM) and NPPG separately so far but now they have to come together for the signing of the agreement as there will be only "one agreement". Security sources said that as part of the agreement reached between the government and the rebel groups, two autonomous councils would be set up in the Naga inhabited areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Nagaland will have one more Lok Sabha seat and the government will take effective steps for the rehabilitation of the members of the rebel groups. Clarifying that there have been a demand for cultural integration of the Naga inhabited areas, security sources said that a large section of people in Nagaland opposed it and issue of cultural integration of Naga inhabited area was rejected.

House erupts on Hegde remarks on Gandhi

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 4

The Lok Sabha erupted on Tuesday over controversial remarks on Mahatma Gandhi made by BJP MP Ananth Kumar Hegde with Congress members disrupting proceedings in the entire first half resulting in a walkout by the Opposition in the end. As soon as the House convened in the morning, Congress MPs Hibi Eden, Gaurav Gogoi, K Suresh and Abdul Khaleque gave adjournment motions in the House and demanded an immediate discussion. Amid ruckus, Speaker Om Birla adjourned the House till noon. When the House reassembled at noon, Congress members trooped into the well shouting slogans and with placards of "BJP Party Godse Party" and "Mahatma Gandhi Amar Rahein".

Didn't name Gandhi in my speech, claims Hegde

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 4

Facing flak for his controversial remarks against Mahatma Gandhi, BJP MP Anant Kumar Hegde on Tuesday, in a written reply to the party leadership, asserted that he made no mention of Mahatma Gandhi in his speech and said the remarks attributed to him are "incorrect". Mr Hegde, sources said, sent a detailed reply to party president J.P. Nadda, and the party's disciplinary committee, which had issued him a show-cause notice on Monday.

CENTRE CANCELS ALL VISAS, E-VISAS ISSUED TO CHINESE NATIONALS

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI, FEB. 4

In a bid to prevent the spread of Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) in India, the government on Tuesday prohibited the entry of Chinese nationals into the country and cancelled all visas, including e-visas, issued to them. Chinese delegations that were to travel to India to participate in two mega exhibitions — DefExpo 2020 and Auto Expo — starting this week, will also not be visiting due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

embassy in Beijing or the consulates in Shanghai and Guangzhou to apply afresh for an Indian visa... All those who are already in India (with regular or e-visa) and had travelled from China after January 15 are requested to contact the hotline number of ministry of health and family welfare... Visa Section of the embassy/consulates of India in China can be contacted to ascertain the validity of visa before undertaking any visit to India," the Indian embassy in China tweeted. The Chinese government has reported 20,438 confirmed cases of the coronavirus so far and a death toll of 425. The virus originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Five people, who were among those evacuated from Wuhan and were being kept at an ITBP facility in Delhi, were shifted to Safdarjung Hospital as a "precautionary measure" after they showed basic symptoms like cough and sneezing and some had a medical history. ITBP officials said that samples of all the people quarantined at the facility have been collected and are being sent to laboratories in AIIMS and Pune for further tests.

from people who are doing Godse politics," the West Bengal MP added. To this, Mr Joshi said BJP members are real "bhakts" and followers of Mahatma Gandhi while the Congress is a follower of "nakti (fake) Gandhi like Rahul and Sonia Gandhi". Following this ruckus, all Opposition, including Congress, DMK, NCP and later Trinamul Congress walked out from the House. Mr Hegde had recently said in Bangalore that freedom fighters, who did not sacrifice anything, made the country believe that it attained Independence through "Upavas Satyagrah". Gandhi's preferred mode of agitation.

from people who are doing Godse politics," the West Bengal MP added. To this, Mr Joshi said BJP members are real "bhakts" and followers of Mahatma Gandhi while the Congress is a follower of "nakti (fake) Gandhi like Rahul and Sonia Gandhi". Following this ruckus, all Opposition, including Congress, DMK, NCP and later Trinamul Congress walked out from the House. Mr Hegde had recently said in Bangalore that freedom fighters, who did not sacrifice anything, made the country believe that it attained Independence through "Upavas Satyagrah". Gandhi's preferred mode of agitation.

The Foreigners Regional Registration Office under the home ministry has issued orders to all airlines "not to take on board any passenger from China, including Chinese or other foreign nationals, who may be holding valid ETA-E-visa to board their aircraft for any destination in India."

Air India, which has suspended flights to major Chinese cities, on Tuesday announced suspension of its flights to Hong Kong after it reported its first death from the virus. "It is clarified that existing visas are no longer valid. Intending visitors may contact the

PARADIP PORT TRUST e-Tender Call Notice Name of the work : Upkeping of Railway Yard outside Harbour area (From Eco. Rly. Boundary to Bauriapaalanda Level Crossing) for the year 2020-21. Estimated cost : ₹ 93,18,435. Last date and time of submission : 22.02.2020 up to 17.00 hrs. Refer our website for details : https://eprocure.gov.in/procure/apps

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Tribal student dies in Maha school

Palghar, Maharashtra: A 13-year-old tribal student of a state-run boarding school in Maharashtra died on his way to a hospital in Palghar district on Sunday, the police said on Tuesday. However, tribals have blamed the management of Ashram School, located in Hirwe Pimpalgaon in Dahanu taluka, for the death of the student, identified as Vishal Chowdhary. A case of accidental death has been registered, Kasa police station inspector Anand Rao Kale said.

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# DECCAN Chronicle

5 FEBRUARY 2020

## Modi's Delhi poll speech ill-advised

On Monday, addressing an election rally for the Delhi Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi caused surprise as he asserted that the anti-CAA sit-in protests at Shaheen Bagh, Jamia and Seelampur — preponderantly poor Muslim pockets of the city — were a well-designed “experiment” to fine-tune an effort to destroy the nation's harmony, in short a conspiracy to prejudice India's unity. This is a serious allegation against the most Gandhian of protests, a “satyagraha”, in the face of crude attacks by ministers and BJP leaders.

Moved by the peaceful, round-the-clock sit-ins by the poorer sections of society, people in large numbers from more affluent classes travel many miles every day to show their solidarity with women with babies in arms — one of whom recently lost her four-month boy who caught a chill — who have been on protest continuously for over 50 days, probably a record.

When the holder of the nation's most powerful office chooses to attack the poorest sections of a religious minority, instead of giving them respect and hearing their grievances, he is, in effect, extending a *carte blanche* to communal elements. The atmosphere was already laden with tension. Three incidents of Hindutva-crazed men firing at protesters in the space of four days occurred last week. This was therefore a time for sobriety.

**Mr Modi appeared annoyed that protests were continuing despite 'repeated assurances' by the government. The people may, in fact, like to know what these assurances are as these haven't been publicised.**

Mr Modi appeared annoyed that protests were continuing despite “repeated assurances” by the government. The people may, in fact, like to know what these assurances are as these haven't been publicised. In case the PM was referring to his Ramlila Maidan statement that the NRC had never been considered by the government and protests had been ignited on a false premise, this was shown to be factually incorrect. In this regard, statements by the Union home minister and portions of the President's address to Parliament have been widely quoted, casting doubts on the so-called “assurances”.

If the PM has a well-founded basis for his angry denunciation of the Delhi protesters, the country has not heard anything about it. It may be recalled that in the campaign for the Gujarat Assembly polls in late 2017, Mr Modi had, without evidence, accused his predecessor Manmohan Singh, former vice-president Hamid Ansari, and a retired Army Chief, of “conspiring with Pakistan” to have the BJP defeated. As such, the PM's high-pitched rhetoric against the women of Shaheen Bagh is also likely to be treated with scepticism.

Quite amazingly, on Monday, the BJP fielded Parvesh Verma as its lead speaker for the motion of thanks to the President for his address to Parliament. Only days earlier, this MP was ticked off by the Election Commission for declaring that Shaheen Bagh protesters would rape and kill (Hindu) women. In his Lok Sabha speech, this man accused the anti-CAA protesters of trying to break up India and claimed their aim was to assassinate the PM and the Union home minister. Such fevered imagination must be nipped in the bud before it ignites communal passions.

## Djoker has the last laugh

Novak Djokovic presented fresh evidence that he belongs to the all-time greats category with his eighth Australian Open title, also his 17th Grand Slam, that keeps him within catching distance of Roger Federer (20) and Rafael Nadal (19). The Serbian, whose childhood was spent in war-torn Belgrade, knows a thing or two about strife; but was still shocked at the confrontational attitude of Australian tennis fans. Rooting for the underdog may be the norm Down Under, but that seemed to make Djokovic an object of hate. The champ spat an expletive too, pleading with the referee that they not disturb his serving action.

A peculiar aspect of the Monaco resident's game is it can fall off a cliff suddenly, even as he is seemingly on song. To see him rally then from a set down and take the decider off Dominic Thiem, with his normal composure returning in time on the medium fast Melbourne surface was to appreciate a champion who knows how to make a comeback under stress. The first in the Open era to win Grand Slams in three different decades, Djokovic is poised to leave a great legacy, besides entertaining millions with his grand impersonations of tennis colleagues and going out of his way to please fans.

The men's Grand Slams have been monopolised by three modern mucketeers, but it's quite the reverse in women's tennis, with eight different first-time champs in the last 12 Grand Slams. Given that supermom Serena Williams hasn't won since her daughter was born, emerging new generation talent s like Ashleigh Barty, Naomi Osaka, Bianca Andreescu and Sofia Kenin, the Australian Open champion, have been ruling the roost with very different styles of play in winning maiden Grand Slams, while showing promise to become the next big star.

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Alex Colville

## The whole of China is in an eerie state of shutdown

Do you want me to scan your temperature?” asks the receptionist, brandishing an infrared thermometer. Arriving at my hotel in Shanghai, I have a hacking, chesty cough. I picked the wrong week to contract this year's bout of normal, perfectly healthy winter flu. In China, there is now only one illness.

Like Christmas in the West, the Spring Festival (or Chinese New Year) is always the time when big cities shut down. But thanks to the coronavirus, China has entered a period of quarantine. Early in January, there was still a large crowd of skaters on Houhai Lake in Beijing, revelling in the fun of the frozen landscape. But things have moved very fast. Concert halls, museums and cinemas have shut down. This week when I visited one of Beijing's larger cinemas, which takes up an entire floor of one of the city's monolithic shopping malls, the

lift doors opened to an eerie darkness and silence. The floor was guarded by a lone steward. He was so confident that no one would be stupid enough to turn up that he had gone to sleep.

My work is based in Beijing but this week I travelled to Shanghai. Although seasoned expats warned me against leaving (“the city will be shut in the next two days, trust me”), I decided against cancelling a pre-booked train, but took a face mask as a precaution. It wasn't a pleasant experience, wearing one for four-and-a-half hours.

Shanghai, ‘the Paris of the Orient’, is cold, grey and dead. Entire housing blocks remain unlit at night. Stepping into a shopping mall on the glitzy Nanjing Road was a grim experience. There are reminders everywhere that this is meant to be a joyful time. Jolly red-and-gold lanterns and hongbao adorn fences, streetlamps and trees. They seem a world away

from the handful of spectral, masked figures wandering the streets.

The number of mouths and noses I've seen exposed in public over the past three days can be counted on one hand. Suddenly, leaving home with a naked face is as irresponsible as leaving without your keys. Wearing a mask in public is seen as a sign of good manners and a civic duty. People will get angry with you, I am warned when I attempt to go outside without one.

Although there is still outward calm, fear manifests in private and online. At times of disaster, the Chinese put family above all else. Social media is full of stories of aggrieved households in Wuhan. Rumours are rife, answers not easy to find. Will my city be closed? Will there be food shortages? How do we know how many people have died? Many people distrust official statistics, and the uncertainty is making things worse.

**China is undeniably accumulating extraordinary economic and military power under Mr Xi's leadership. But he is also accountable for the plight of his people during crises like the coronavirus epidemic.**

*Sreeram Chaulia is a professor and dean at the Jindal School of International Affairs*

## Coronavirus is China's huge political failure



Sreeram Chaulia

As the human toll of the coronavirus steadily rises, it is obvious that the epidemic represents a colossal failure of China's top-down authoritarian political system. It has dented the carefully built-up image of China's one-party state as a highly efficient technocratic machine that is delivering good governance and rapidly improving the lives of its 1.4 billion people.

China's Communist Party has only itself to blame for the devastating crisis it has on its hands. The first known case of coronavirus was reported on December 8, but local party officials in China's Hubei province, where the epicentre of Wuhan is located, did not notify the general public until the final day of 2019. Evidence that the virus was being transmitted through human-to-human contact was available from mid-December, but China officially announced so on state television only on January 20.

International investigators have revealed that Chinese doctors and epidemiologists who rang alarm bells in December were disciplined and their comments on social media were erased by government censors. One medical practitioner in Wuhan who was demanding urgent attention to the virus as it was proliferating was forced to confess to the police that he had engaged in “illegal behaviour”.

While silencing conscientious specialists, the government aired the views of party-controlled respiratory illness experts who claimed for weeks that the situation was “under control” and that the virus spread was being prevented. Just when early information flow would have nipped the virus in the bud, China's government carried out a thorough censorship drive on the Internet—the relatively unfiltered virtual public square in China—to con-

trol “rumours” about the deadly virus and maintain “public order”.

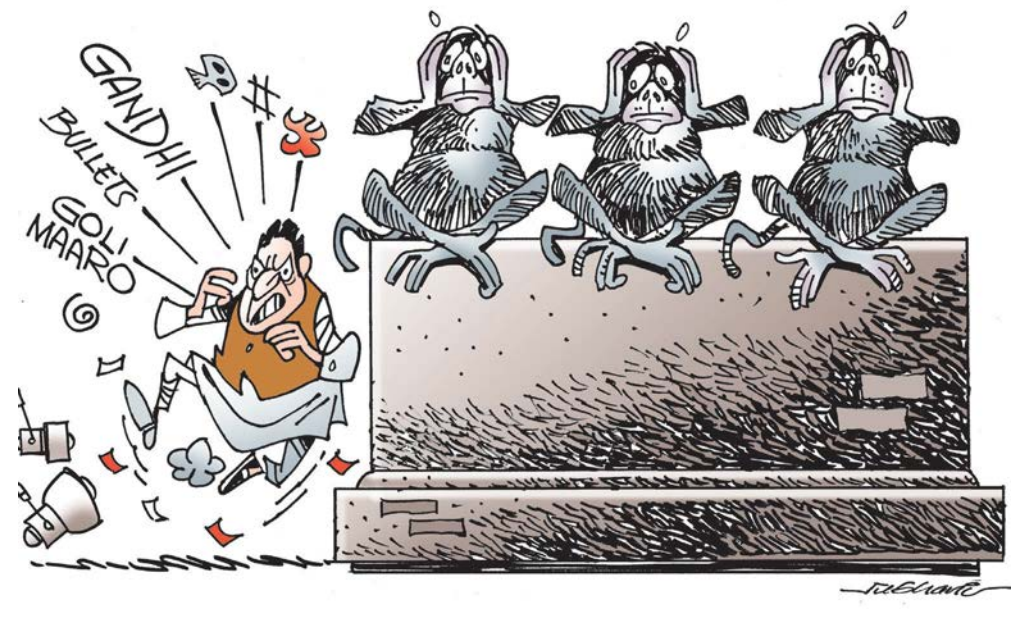
As a result of these concerted coverups and deliberate delaying tactics by China's self-serving “party state”, approximately five million people had departed Wuhan before the travel restrictions and quarantines were implemented from January 23. As of February 4, over 20,500 cases of coronavirus infections were confirmed in 27 countries and territories, which is already more than double the 2002-2003 epidemic of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that originated in China's southern Guangdong province.

Had official China not suppressed news about coronavirus and swept it under the carpet throughout December and the first three weeks of January, it would not have mushroomed into a scary global health emergency.

Why did the Chinese government, which had been guilty of secrecy, non-transparency and belated responses during previous public health crises like SARS and the milk adulteration scandal of 2008, not learn from past errors? Its opaque political system since 1949 remains in some ways unchanged and unreformed, despite spearheading decades of astonishing state-driven economic growth and modernisation.

China's state is more autocratic and centralised today under President Xi Jinping than it ever was since Mao Zedong. The manner in which Mr Xi has tightened the screws on all levels and layers of the vast party bureaucracy is mindboggling.

His extreme cult of personality, willful constitutional manipulation, ruthless takedowns of rivals, incessant anti-corruption drives and enforcement of ideological loyalty across China's 90-million-strong Communist Party mem-



## LETTERS

## NEW I-T RETURN FILING

The novel introduction of new type of filing Income-Tax return, introduced by our finance minister, in which removal of all the exemptions hitherto availed, has given a severe blow to the working class on the whole. The phenomenon of saving culture, which has been inculcated right from the childhood, has been totally tarnished by the introducing new type of I-T return filing. Further, to add more fuel to the fire, senior citizens, who have invested their hard-earned money from their retirement benefits will be forced to forego their saving habits. We earnestly hope our finance minister will put forth second thought and abolish the new type of return, for betterment of Indian economy.

P.S. Rajagopalan, Chennai

## NIRBHAYA CASE

Under the guise of giving opportunity to the convicts it is getting extended month after month and day after day. It is not known why the hanging of other three should be held in abeyance when the mercy petition of one of them is in the court. Why should not the hanging implemented in the case of those out of the four rapists whose mercy petition has been rejected? By doing so a lesson will get conveyed that the act of rape will not go unpunished despite the lapse of any number of years. But it will also be a lesson that decisions in such intolerable acts will not get delayed by having a law enacted to the extent that it should be decided within a short frame of time.

V. Rajagopalan, Chennai

## RAO'S LAND REFORMS

One 10-year old boy was seated in a cart driven by oxen. Since he came from a very rich family, four servants who accompanied him were walking briskly behind the cart. The boy seeing their plight asked them to climb and sit with him on the cart. But the servants fearing their father's wrath refused to sit besides him and travel. But the boy was so adamant he got down from the cart and started walking with the servants. The servants knowing the repercussions if the Zamindar saw his son walking had reluctantly climbed the cart, reached home. His father admired his son's broad-mindedness, respect for fellow human beings and equality. The boy was late Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, who as the AP Chief Minister introduced ‘land reforms’ with ‘land ceiling’ and as PM he introduced ‘Economic reforms’ along with Mr Manmohan Singh, guided India into the new age of globalisation by liberalising the Indian economy, thus made it a global economic super power. Will our ‘netas’ emulate him?

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

biggest victim. Old hands say this national shutdown is a far more assertive response than the Sars outbreak of 2003 was met by. The entertainment, hospitality and travel industries will lose billions of yuan. There has been a dramatic drop in the number of passengers travelling between Beijing and Shanghai.

The biggest threat is probably boredom. What do you do when your only avenue of entertainment is other people, but human contact is the whole problem? The answer is to create videos on social media. I've seen one of a girl pushing herself across the floor face down, with her head angled to the camera. She is a picture of perfect ennui.

Or there are even simpler options: a picture has gone viral on Weibo of an entirely empty Durex stand in a Beijing supermarket.

By arrangement with the Spectator



# A gun and a jet plane: The story of two face-offs



Palash Krishna Mehrotra

When Kunal Kamra first realised that Arnab Goswami was travelling on the same plane as him, he must have said to himself: Man, this is too good an opportunity to let go of. Goswami, for a change, looked like a rabbit with sideburns, trapped in blinding headlights. He kept the shades on for good reason. Goswami, minus the fortification of his studio, reminded me of a tyrannical schoolmaster, found strolling in the local bazaar. To his students, the schoolmaster looks strangely vulnerable and human when seen outside the confines of the classroom. It was a classic face-off between two influencers on different sides of the divide. Both put on an act. Both are in the

business of instigating, harnessing and monetising outrage. Both need to keep going viral to stay afloat and pay their bills. The argument against Kamra, that his method wasn't right, doesn't hold any water. Goswami has sent enough journalists into aeroplanes to heckle unsuspecting victims on his behalf. Stand-up comedy is performance art; it's not limited to the stage. Heckling is part of the performance. The stand-up comic can get away with a lot because the stand-up comic is many roles rolled into one: social commentator, political activist, polemicist, TV anchor, humorist, actor and, of course, influencer. If anything, Goswami's lapsing into silence was a sign of things to come, a time when the news anchor will gradually lapse into obsolescence. The

news anchor's profession is already nowhere close to the peak of 2000, when print journalists felt sidelined by television. The problem here for the Hindu Right is that they have no stand-up artists worth speaking of. They have news anchors aplenty to spread their manufactured message but when it comes to the medium of tomorrow (and today), they are left floundering. The Hindu Right needs to work on it on a religious war footing. Very soon, we could have large auditoriums packed with bhakts, rocking in laughter to Hindi gags about dirty Muslims, playboy Nehru, Urban Naxals, and that amorphous category that even liberals love to hate: the liberal. This will be far more influential than Goswami who, at the end of it, is an Angrezwallah with no real mass appeal to speak of. At the moment, the BJP is losing the stand-up comedy battle. The second face-off that took place was not between influencers but a Jamia student and a katta-waving bhakt. I choose to see it as a face-off between two rebels. On the one side, we had silken-haired singer, Shadab Najari, who was asking

**The first thing that struck me about this was that this is exactly how authors approach publishers with their manuscript. As the editor backs away weakly, trying to fob off the author with a pretend gun, the author advances calmly: 'Relax, don't be scared, let's talk, okay?'** The shooter to calm down and talk. "Ruk, jao. Aao baat karte hain baith ke." As an author, the first thing that struck me about this was that this is exactly how authors approach publishers with their manuscript. As the editor backs away weakly, trying to fob off the author with a pretend gun, the author advances calmly: "Relax, don't be scared, let's talk okay? I don't want to harm you." Before you know it the editor has vanished into a nameless crowd of readers and critics, as the author is left holding her bloodied unpublished manuscript. Returning to Ground Zero, this face-off was one between literacy and philistinism, the

civilised and the savage, tuneful music and the bestial cry, good hair and bad hair. On the one side we had courage and a calm tone, on the other a ready-made slogan and incoherent anger. One swears by Greta Thunberg, the other by the holy waters of the frog's well. One is trying to save the idea of India, the other's ambition is more limited: to become cock-of-the-walk in the street he was born in. Like Arnab's pregnant silence, the different directions in which the two walked is full of symbolism too. Shadab was moving forward, step by painstaking step, towards a potentially explosive situation. The bhakt was walking away from the situation that he'd created himself, until the time he eventually falls off a cliff or the map. Shadab is the courageous one, grappling with the unknown alone, while the bhakt knows that his fall will be broken by a khakhi safety net provided by the State. The bhakt's rebellion is against Gandhi and the Muslim; it comes from social media radicalisation where 'bhagwa' boys' from different Hindu castes — Jats, Rajputs, Gurjars — compete to out-saf-

from each other: I slapped the imam of a mosque and shot a viral video; now, better me on TikTok. The Jamia shooter's Facebook page was laced with these videos and rivalries, withering masculine boasts and taunts. But again, like with stand-up comedy, where the Hindu Right needs to display urgent creativity to develop its own robust tradition, the Hindu Right lone wolf comes across as embarrassingly limp compared to the white supremacists the Jamia shooter was trying to emulate, especially in the FB live broadcasts preceding the incident. White supremacists are muscular and carry assault weapons, their skin carpet-bombed with tattoos. Having grown up in an East UP small town, I'm familiar with *kattas* in the classroom. I once picked one out of my classmate's bag and started waving it around while the teacher was writing something on the blackboard. This was until my classmate noticed and grabbed it back, saying: "What the hell do you think you're doing; it's real and loaded!" A country pistol gives no *shobha* to a Hindu suprema-

cist. White supremacists also plan their attacks in great detail, well in advance. The plan is to inflict maximum damage in the least amount of time and then have the courage to turn the gun on oneself. To sum up, I'm just repeating what my maths teacher used to say in Class 8: Do whatever you want to do, even if it's a prank like stuffing sugar in my scooter's exhaust pipe, but do it well, like a pro. The urgent need for Hindu supremacists aping the racist white American fringe is twofold: invest in a good meaty diet and buff up. Carry proper weapons. Execute to a plan. Think of new slogans. Second, to counter Kamra *et al*, the Hindu Right needs to spawn its own stand-up comedy scene and come up with good anti-national/ go-to-Pakistan jokes. The TV anchor is already a fading star. The question though remains: Can an ideology of hate produce genuine peals of laughter, unless it is inadvertent and at its own expense? *The writer is the author of The Butterfly Generation & the editor of House Spirit: Drinking in India*

# How it all went right: The great Brexit wound has almost healed



Rod Liddle

They are getting themselves terribly worked up about that new 50 pence coin commemorating our departure from the European Union. By 'they' I mean those people in the Brexit Derangement Syndrome intensive care ward, wired up to saline drips, attended to day and night, occasionally afforded a few thousand volts of ECT when things get really bad, but still foaming, still beside themselves with apoplexy. Alastair Campbell has announced that he will not accept the coin if given it in change. Lord Adonis, who was perhaps already in the antechamber of derangement even before June 2016, said: 'I am never using or accepting this coin.' The writer for middle-class kiddies, Philip Pullman, our own pound shop C.S. Lewis, urged 'literate' people to boycott the coin because the inscription was missing an Oxford comma. A nod, there, to the central tenet of the Remoaner fringe these past four years that those who wanted Brexit were all thick. The thing about an Oxford comma, Phil, is that it is not needed. It is optional — go on, look it up. All this over a 50p piece. Hell, I wasn't wholly delighted when Jane Austen suddenly appeared on our £10 notes, given the misery I endured in school reading *Pride and Prejudice*. But I have managed to survive, and use those notes, without throwing the toys out of my pram, or weeping, or tearing my hair out.

Such epic petulance, such surly bigotry and spite. The repeated stamping of a tiny foot in a vast and empty auditorium. The little tranche of Remoaners — now morphing imperceptibly into Rejoiners — insisting that they will acquire Irish passports or saying they might leave the country altogether. This last little coterie may or may not include the journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, who seemed to say she would leave the country if Boris Johnson became Prime Minister. Whether she actually said this or not is moot. Either way, between us we must be able to think up a policy which would really persuade her to go. I'll pay her taxi to the airport and give her some money for a snack on the way. A chicken wrap or something. And yet these people are a tiny, if voluble, minority. The remarkable thing is that since 13 December the great national divide over Brexit seems to have mended almost completely. One of the most frequently expressed opinions these past three years of commentators from both sides — although especially from the Remain side — is that the country was sickeningly split into two warring tribes and that this would take a generation to repair. I never quite bought into this argument. There seemed to me to be a furious rump of Remoaners unable to accept a democratic decision and — well, the rest of us. The vast majority of those who voted Remain have long since accustomed themselves to us leaving — a point never really reflected in the mainstream media, which of course prefers dissent to accord and still thought the whole thing was up for debate. As it happened, that cleft did not take a generation to heal — it took about two weeks. Since Boris Johnson's remarkable

**As it happened, that cleft did not take a generation to heal — it took about two weeks. Since Boris Johnson's remarkable victory, the fugue of complaint has been effectively silenced — except for on that lunatic wing. There is even a certain gung-ho optimism at large...** victory, the fugue of complaint has been effectively silenced — except for on that lunatic wing. There is even a certain gung-ho optimism at large, and not simply from Brexiters. Not a single one of those egregious Project Fear predictions has come true, not one. Inward investment stock in the UK was more in 2018 than in France and Germany combined, at almost £1.5 trillion (no. 1 in Europe). The UK's economic growth is predicted to outperform the entire eurozone, with Germany — only recently sidestepping an official recession — heading towards stagnation. Unemployment is the lowest it has been for 45 years and the unemployment rate just a little more than half of that for the eurozone as a whole. Wages are at last rising. The pound is comparatively buoyant. Then there is this. Will Brexit render your home worthless, as the then chancellor George Osborne kindly advised in 2016? Nope, quite the reverse. Since Brexit was assured by that general election victory in December, British house prices have risen at their fastest rate since 2002, according to the property website Rightmove. If anything had dampened the property market prior to the election, it was an uncertainty about whether we were

going to leave or not, which was solely a consequence of that rump of the defeated side not accepting the decision of the people and using every possible recourse to prevent it. A paralysed parliament and a concomitant lack of direction was far more damaging to our country than a timely withdrawal from a bureaucratic institution riven by internal division and economically floundering would have been. For three years, the provisional wing of the Remain movement used every possible recourse to thwart Brexit. This included, but was not confined to, the House of Lords, the law courts and the undermining of parliamentary protocol. They had on their side the judiciary, the BBC, our academics, the City of London and the CBI, the International Monetary Fund and of course the European Union. At every possible juncture we were informed that calamity awaited us. We were told that calamity would occur even if we simply voted for Brexit — never mind us actually going through with it. And even when the calamities predicted in Osborne's Treasury Report in the spring of 2016 notably failed to occur, there was not the slightest admission that Remain had got it terribly wrong — it was simply a case of calamity protracted for a while. Meanwhile, David Cameron suggested that the jihadi maniacs of Isis were avidly pro-Leave and that we would be more likely to have an unpleasant war with someone — he didn't say who — if we voted to leave the EU. All of this petulant, alarmist gibberish — far more egregious than an erroneous slogan written on the side of a bus — accompanied us for three long years, from 23 June 2016 to 13 December 2019. A shrill screech of idiotic fury from people who did not like

being gainsaid and thought they knew better than the rest of us. Because of course — pace Pullman — we were all thick. Those false jeremiads were far more damaging to our country than simply leaving the EU. And now, for the most part, they have gone silent. There is still barking from the sidelines, of course. The provo Remainers now insist that calamity will come one day. That we will not be able to strike a trade deal with anyone without losing our soul. That we will not achieve a deal with the EU in time and that if we do it will be deleterious to our economy. They yearn, these people, for Britain's failure, the more abject the better. In their recitals of foreboding, each one as baseless as the one before, they seem to be the kind of people who might have their cake, eat it, regurgitate it on a plate, suck it up through a straw and then spit it out via Twitter. Most Remainers are optimistic that we will succeed, much as you might expect. They may wish we were not leaving, but they do not wish us to fail as a consequence. We have the EU to deal with, of course, and the usual sabre-rattling from the likes of Michel Barnier; an indication, I think, of the sheer terror within the 27 that Brexit actually may make us better off after all, and what effect that might have on the disaffected countries still within. And oily Leo Varadkar has announced, with spite, that the UK must get used to being a 'small country'. Not as small, literally or metaphorically, as yours, mate. Meanwhile we get on with it, stable and thriving, hugely grateful that we trusted not in the establishment, but in democracy. *By arrangement with the Spectator*

# Shaheen-CAA stir critically poised, but EC is inactive

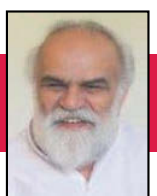


Jawed Naqvi

The gunman half danced, half walked with a swagger towards the swarming crowd of India's bravest women. His movements resembled a Shyam Benegal movie sequence around an obscure ritual to propitiate a remote southern deity. The women had been protesting for weeks in Delhi against Prime Minister Modi's communally framed citizenship law that excludes Muslims. Then the gunman shot one man in the forearm but luckily no further damage was done. The experienced women remained calm and didn't respond to the provocation. The police then escorted the man away and instantly declared him a minor, which means he is not liable to be prosecuted. The age was clearly cooked up but that was not the only thing unreal about the incident that took place on Jan 30, the dark day of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination at a prayer meeting. A picture showed the man aiming the gun at the crowd while the policemen looked on indulgently. One of the officers was standing arms crossed as if there was nothing happening he should be disturbed by. The picture circulating on the web carried the telling remark: "Ye jo dhashatgardi hai/ Iske peechhe vardi hai." A friend from Karachi claimed the lines were actually lifted from Pakistan, where they were apparently used to describe complicity between assorted terrorists and adjuncts of the state. An American professor of history told me the slogan was coined in Pashto in Afghanistan. For an Indian, it is difficult not to see the picture in the context of the recent arrest of police officer Davinder Singh in besieged Jammu and Kashmir. The top cop was in charge of the anti-hijacking unit at the Srinagar airport. And now he was found in a car headed for Delhi just before the R-Day celebrations with two alleged Hizbul Mujahideen men, the same group media says had claimed responsibility for the deadly Pulwama attack. It must be a coincidence that Davinder Singh also belongs to Pulwama. Earlier, Davinder was named in a little known letter that Afzal Guru wrote to his lawyer before being executed following his conviction to save the "conscience of the society" in the 2001 parliament attack case. Researchers and writers, including Arundhati Roy, have recorded many gaping holes in the police story. Guru claimed Davinder tortured him brutally, which the cop admitted. He had pressed him to help the alleged attackers in the parliament case with logistics in Delhi, which the cop denied. In a similar vein, questions were raised by informed individuals, including a retired top

cop from Maharashtra, about the mysterious shooting of anti-terror police officer Hemant Karkare. Karkare was investigating a far-right Hindu group in false flag bomb attacks in which Muslims were blamed. One woman he charged in the crime was elected as Modi's handpicked candidate for the LS elections last year. Meanwhile, nationwide protests against Modi's new law, of which Shaheen Bagh has emerged as the rallying point, and even described as a second freedom movement, is finding itself caught in the political crossfire of Assembly elections in Delhi. The BJP is campaigning against the Shaheen Bagh women, painting their peaceful sit-in as the hub of Muslim terrorism. Leading ministers have used vicious imagery to attack the protesters, some have openly called for them to be shot. Following the calls another young man showed up with a pistol at the protests, asserting that only Hindus had the right have a say in the country. The police took him away too. But the threats are becoming bolder and the election commission is doing little to rein in the situation. In the last contest in 2015, Arvind Kejriwal's AAP had swept Delhi with 63 seats of the total 70, with three going to the BJP. The BJP has started describing Kejriwal as a terrorist who supports the Shaheen Bagh protests. Kejriwal, on his part, is mindful of the sensitive Hindu votes he needs to garner. The votes went to Modi in the May elections last year, as the BJP won all seven seats in Delhi. Kejriwal accuses the BJP of raising a false bogey of Hindu-Muslim disharmony in the current elections. But the barrage of communal innuendo won't end. One of the BJP leaders, in fact, claimed that victory for Shaheen Bagh in the elections would lead to mass rape and murder of Hindu women. While Shaheen Bagh is not a contestant in the elections, it has clearly become a factor in the polarised campaign. The BJP is desperate to win the elections for two key reasons. It has to stall the march of the Opposition in Assembly elections and equally, it needs to capture power in the capital city on behalf of the business tycoons who shore up the party and who have been riled by Kejriwal's campaign to keep crony capitalism at bay. Gandhi's freedom movement consisted of a series of protests, which he called, suspended and abandoned for reasons that were never fully explained though they seemed to yield results. The current Congress leaders, on the other hand, called for a second independence movement in October 2018 but no one knows its whereabouts if it ever took off. The Shaheen Bagh anti-fascist campaign, on its part, is poised at a critical moment in India's history. It must not give traction to the BJP in Delhi, and it cannot abandon the movement it inspired the entire nation to become part of. *By arrangement with Dawn*

# The story of the Sufi mystic: Bayazid



Swami Chaitanya Keerti

The enlightened mystics teach us to live our life with full intensity. But most of us conduct our lives as if in a daze. Real awakening needs a certain intensity. Lack of intensity creates boredom. It is only sometimes when we are face to face with a dangerous situation that we become fully awake. There is a story of a Sufi mystic, Bayazid, who used to talk to his disciples about awareness, and they would ask, "What is awareness? You keep on talking about it." One

day he took them to the river. On both sides, there was a small hill. He said, "We are going to put a long wooden bridge — just one foot wide — from this end to the other, and you have to walk on it. And then you will know what awareness is." They said, "But we have been walking our whole life, and we have never come to know." He said, "Wait," and he did the experiment. Many of them, who became scared, said: "We cannot walk. Just one foot wide?"

"But how do you need to walk on? When you are walking on the earth, you can walk on a one-foot-wide strip easily. Why can't you walk on a one-foot-wide strip hanging between two hills?" he asked his disciples. A few people tried. They took a few steps but then came back, and said, "It is dangerous." Then Bayazid walked and a few followed him. When they reached the other side, those who followed him fell at his feet and said, "Master, now we know what awareness is. The danger was so much that we could not afford to walk in slumber. We

had to be alert. Any wrong step and we would have gone forever." Osho says: "Awareness means an intensity. Such an intensity of wakefulness that no thought interferes with. You are simply conscious without any thought. Try it. You can try it anywhere. While walking on the road, every moment is danger. Here, every moment is risky as it can turn into death. You are all crossing the plank with a mountainous burden on you; just a small slip and you are gone. You have to be alert, so alert that no other energy is left in you, everything has become just a flame

of awareness." Bayazid was asked several times who was his guru. He would reply that he had no guru. He said: If I had only one guru, I would not have been able to learn so much. The most important thing is that I remained a learner, a disciple, my whole life, and learned from everyone I met. I did not look for any special people to learn something, any ordinary person, even a small child or a thief could teach me something. I simply developed a certain attitude for learning from anybody and any situation. A pale dry leaf falling from the tree could teach me a profound lesson of life. *Swami Chaitanya Keerti, editor of Osho World, is the author of Mindfulness: The Master Key*





Regret

Imran Khan meets Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohammed, expresses regret over not attending summit of Muslim nations

IN BRIEF

Ireland: Sinn Fein ahead in new poll

Dublin: Republican party Sinn Fein have surged into first place with just days until Ireland goes to the polls in a general election, according to a new survey. Sinn Fein were at 25 per cent, ahead of opposition party Fianna Fail on 23 per cent, the final Irish Times/Ipsos MRBI opinion poll said on Monday night. Fine Gael the party of the incumbent government led by prime minister Leo Varadkar was trailing on 20 per cent in third. The general election takes place on Saturday. The poll was conducted from January 30 to February 1 among 1,200 adults at 120 locations in every constituency. Its results suggest an historic shift in sentiment. Sinn Fein's flagship policy is uniting the republic with the British province of Northern Ireland and dissolving a border erected in

Myanmar: Internet shut in Rakhine

Yangon: Myanmar has reimposed an Internet shutdown in two conflict-torn western states, after partially lifting the blackout five months ago, a leading telecoms operator said late on Monday. Norwegian mobile operator Telenor Group said in a statement the transport and communications ministry had ordered for mobile Internet traffic to be stopped again in five townships in Rakhine and Chin states for three months. A months-long Internet blackout in four Rakhine townships - Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Rathedaung, and Myebon - and one in Chin state had been lifted in September amid peace talks seeking to end clashes between government troops and ethnic insurgents. Officials cited "security requirements and public interest" for the reinstatement, Telenor said, adding that four other townships remain under a blackout first imposed in June last year. Tun Tun Nyi, a Myanmar military spokesman, said the army was unaware of the shutdown. "We don't know and we haven't heard about it," he told Reuters by phone on Tuesday. Ministry officials did not respond to calls from Reuters seeking comment.

Arrest warrant for Zuma in graft trial

Johannesburg: A South African court issued an arrest warrant for former president Jacob Zuma on Tuesday, after he skipped court on grounds of needing medical treatment, but the judge stayed the warrant until his corruption trial resumes on May 6. Zuma's lawyer presented the judge with a sick note from what he said was a military hospital, but Judge Dhaya Pillay questioned whether the note was valid, as there was no medical number showing if and where the doctor was certified. "I don't even know if [he]... is a doctor. There is... nothing to suggest that he is," she said, before issuing the warrant. The former leader is on trial on 18 charges of fraud, racketeering and money laundering relating to a \$2 billion arms deal with French defence firm Thales in 1999, when Zuma was deputy president. He rejects the allegations as a politically motivated witch-hunt. Dan Mantsha, Zuma's lawyer, said that he was abroad for medical treatment, without saying where. Local media have suggested he is in Cuba, although it was not immediately possible to verify this.

FORMER KENYAN PRESIDENT MOI DEAD AT 95

Nairobi, Feb. 4: Daniel arap Moi, a former schoolteacher who became Kenya's longest-serving president and presided over years of repression and economic turmoil fueled by runaway corruption, has died. He was 95. Moi's death was announced by President Uhuru Kenyatta in a statement on the state broadcaster on Tuesday. Moi, who ruled Kenya for 24 years, had been in hospital for over a month. Despite being called a dictator by critics, Moi enjoyed strong support from many Kenyans and was seen as a unifying figure when he took power after founding President Jomo Kenyatta died in office in 1978. Some allies of the ailing Kenyatta, however, tried to change the constitution to prevent Moi, then the vice president, from automatically taking power upon Kenyatta's death. So wary was Moi of any threat during that uncertain period that he fled his Rift Valley home when he heard of Kenyatta's death, returning only after receiving assurances of his safety.

In Iowa, Dems lay a big caucus egg

Trump calls it an 'unmitigated disaster' as Sanders and Buttigieg both claim victory

Des Moines (US), Feb. 4: Democratic party officials in Iowa worked furiously Tuesday to deliver the delayed results of their first-in-the-nation caucus, as frustrated presidential candidates claimed momentum and plowed ahead in their quest for the White House.

Technology problems and reporting "inconsistencies" kept Iowa Democratic Party officials from releasing results from Monday's caucus, the much-hyped kickoff to the 2020 primary. It was an embarrassing twist after months of promoting the contest as a chance for Democrats to find some clarity in a jumbled field with no clear front-runner. Instead, caucus day ended with no winner, no official results and many fresh questions about whether Iowa can retain its coveted "first" status.

State party officials said final results would be released later Tuesday and offered assurances that the problem was not a result of a "hack or an intrusion." "It looks like it's going to be a long night, but we're feeling good," former vice-president Joe Biden said, suggesting the final results would "be close". Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders said he had "a good feeling we're going to be doing very, very well here in Iowa" once results were posted. "Today marks the beginning of the end for Donald



Caucus goers check in at a caucus at Roosevelt High School, in Des Moines, Iowa.

Trump," he predicted. "Listen, it's too close to call." Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren said, "The road won't be easy. But we are built for the long haul." And Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, was most certain. "So we won't know all the results, but we know by the time it's all said and done, Iowa, you have shocked the nation," he said. "By all indications, we are going on to New Hampshire victorious."

Democrats faced the possibility that whatever numbers they ultimately released would be questioned. And beyond 2020, critics began wondering aloud whether the Iowa caucuses, a complicated set of political meetings staged in a state that is whiter and older than the Democratic Party, are a tradition whose time had past. Des Moines County Democratic Chair Tom Courtney said the new app created "a mess".

Pre-caucus polls suggested Sanders entered the night with a narrow lead, but any of the top four candidates — Sanders, Biden, Warren and Buttigieg — was positioned to score a victory. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump on Tuesday took a jibe at the Opposition Democrats, describing as an "unmitigated disaster" their failure to publish the results from the voting in Iowa. Reacting to the chaos and confusion in the

Democratic Party, Trump, in an early morning tweet, said: "The Democrat Caucus is an unmitigated disaster. Nothing works, just like they ran the Country. Remember the 5 Billion Dollar Obamacare Website, that should have cost 2% of that." "The only person that can claim a very big victory in Iowa last night is 'Trump'," he added. Earlier, the Trump campaign also mocked the delay on Twitter. — Agencies

Trump triumphs in Iowa caucuses

Washington, Feb. 4: US President Donald Trump, seeking reelection, on Monday coasted to victory in the 2020 Iowa Republican caucuses, trouncing his two lesser-known ruling Republican Party rivals.

Trump, according to The Des Moines Register newspaper, garnered the support of more than 95 per cent of his party votes on Monday night when the reports last came in. "President Trump captures overwhelming Iowa Republican support," the local newspaper reported. Trump, seeking a second term in the White House, won the Republican contest with 97 per cent of the vote and 8 per cent of precincts reporting, according to reports.

Former Illinois Representative Joe Walsh received 1.4 per cent of votes and former Massachusetts Governor Bill Weld garnered 1.2 per cent of the votes. The official Twitter account for Trump's campaign reacted on its triumph, tweeting that "The Republican Party Has Never Been More United!" "Republicans in Iowa, go out and Caucus today. Your great Trade Deals with China, Mexico,

ON THE BRINK of his Senate acquittal, Trump will be unleashing "relentless optimism" during his third State of the Union address, a speech designed to pivot from his impeachment to his near complete control of the Republican Party.

Canada, Japan, South Korea and more, are DONE. Great times are coming, after waiting for decades, for our Farmers, Ranchers, Manufacturers and ALL. Nobody else could have pulled this off!" President Trump said earlier in the day. In the US presidential elections system, the political parties have to undergo a democratic exercise in each of the 50 States — either through caucus or primaries — to elect their presidential nominees. The winners of the primaries are finally declared as nominee by both the Republican and the Democratic parties held late summer, who then fight out in the November 2020 presidential elections. — PTI

Texas: 2 dead, 1 injured in shooting

Texas, Feb. 4: Two people were shot dead and another was wounded as an unidentified person opened fire on the Texas A&M University-Commerce campus on Monday, the university police said. The incident happened at the Pride Rock Residence Hall, they said in a tweet. The surviving victim was taken to a hospital in unknown condition, the university police department said. The shooter has not been identified yet. Earlier, the police tweeted that they were investigating a crime scene and asked the campus community to shelter in place. The university later posted a notice on its website that the "precautionary shelter in place recommendations" have been lifted, but Pride

Rock and the surrounding areas remain blocked off. Classes were also cancelled for the day, the administration said. Police are actively investigating, they said. As of August 2016, those who hold a current and valid concealed handgun license in Texas are allowed to carry a concealed handgun on certain parts of the campus. Handgun licence holders are also allowed to store the weapon in a safe in their campus housing, according to the police. The university is home to thousands of Indian-origin students and several faculty members. An analysis of student visa data suggests that in 2018 as many as 183,312 Indian students came to the U.S. to study at American colleges and universities. — PTI

Baghdad on the boil



Security forces try to disperse anti-government protesters during clashes in Khilani Square in Baghdad, Iraq.

TERROR: UK DEFENDS TOUGH NEW PLANS

London, Feb. 4: The British government on Tuesday defended proposals to extend prison sentences of convicted terrorists after two knife rampages in London — despite warnings it could face a challenge in court. Justice Secretary Robert Buckland on Monday promised "emergency legislation" to end the automatic release of terror offenders half-way through their sentences. That followed attacks by two men on early release on Sunday in the Streatham area of south London and near London Bridge in November. Both attackers were shot dead by police. Two people were stabbed to death in November and the latest stabbing injured three. Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants to raise the minimum time served to two-thirds of the sentence and have a parole board review and approve every early release. That could keep dozens of convicts up for release this year behind bars. Senior cabinet minister Michael Gove maintained that some terrorist offenders should be imprisoned indefinitely "if necessary". "Until we know that they are comprehensively de-radicalised and that it is safe to have those people on our streets then public protection must come first," Gove said. But Alex Carlile — a legal expert who served as an independent reviewer of anti-terror legislation — said the new proposals "may have gone too far". — AFP

Gota: Won't allow extremists in SL

Colombo, Feb. 4: Sri Lanka will not allow extremist organisations to be active in the country, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa vowed at the Independence Day ceremony on Tuesday during which his government dropped the rendering of the national anthem in Tamil for the first time since 2016. Addressing the nation on the occasion of the 72nd National Day in Colombo, Gotabaya Rajapaksa said that he

will be the president of all Sri Lankans. He said he would ensure civil freedoms like free press and the right to expression. "We will not allow extremist organisations that pave way for terrorism to be active in the country," Gotabaya Rajapaksa said. "I wish to fully strengthen the freedom of people to think and write freely...my government is ready to tolerate and accommodate opposing views," he said. — PTI

Iran sentences 'CIA spy' to death

Tehran, Feb. 4: Iran said Tuesday that its top court confirmed a death sentence for an Iranian man convicted of spying for the CIA, with state media alleging that he had shared details of the Islamic Republic's nuclear program with the American spy agency. Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili identified the purported spy as Amir Rahimpour and said he would be executed soon. Esmaili did not elaborate on what Rahimpour was accused of doing, nor on his age or background. State media

did not immediately name Rahimpour's lawyer. However, a report by the state-run IRNA news agency alleged that Rahimpour received money from the CIA to share details of Iran's nuclear programme. "While being in touch with the spy agency, he earned a lot of money as wages as he tried to deliver some information from Iran's nuclear program to the American agency," the IRNA report said. Rahimpour "had been identified and prosecuted and sentenced to death and recently, the country's Supreme Court

confirmed the sentence and, God willing, he will be punished soon." The CIA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Esmaili said two other alleged spies for the CIA each received 15-year prison sentences — 10 years for spying and five years for acting against national security charges. Esmaili did not name those arrested, only saying they worked in the "charitable field," without elaborating. Iran in the past has sentenced alleged American and Israeli spies to death. The last such spy executed

was Shahram Amiri, who defected to the U.S. at the height of Western efforts to thwart Iran's nuclear program. When he returned in 2010, he was welcomed with flowers by government leaders and even went on the Iranian talk-show circuit. Then he mysteriously disappeared. He was hanged in August 2016, the same week that Tehran executed a group of militants and a year after Iran agreed to a landmark accord to limit uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. — AP

As conflict escalates, vast majority fleeing are women and children

Syrian troops' push in Idlib displaces over 5L people



A mourning Syrian family after airstrikes destroyed their house and killed relatives, at the northern town of Sarmin, in Idlib province, Syria.

Beirut, Feb. 4: A Russian-backed Syrian government offensive against the country's last rebel enclave has displaced more than half a million people in two months, the United Nations said on Tuesday. "Since December 1, some 520,000 people have been displaced from their homes, the vast majority — 80 per cent — of them women and children," David Swanson, spokesman for the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs, said. The wave of displacement,

which coincides with a biting winter, is one of the largest since the start of the Syrian war nearly nine years ago. "This latest displacement compounds an already dire humanitarian situation on the ground, when over 400,000 people were displaced from the end of April through the end of August, many of them multiple times," Swanson said. He said the UN was alarmed by the plight of more than three million people — half of them displaced from their homes

— who live in Idlib province and surrounding areas. Government troops and militia backed by Russian and other allied forces have in recent weeks ramped up the pressure on the last pocket still controlled by rebels and jihadists. They have retaken dozens of villages and some major towns — including the erstwhile rebel bastion of Maaret al-Numan — and are pushing northwards, sending displaced populations ever closer to the Turkish border. — AFP

TURKEY: ANKARA, MOSCOW WORKING FOR SYRIA PEACE DESPITE CLASH

Ankara, Feb. 4: Turkey's foreign minister said Tuesday that Ankara and Moscow were trying to keep peace efforts for Syria alive despite Syrian government advances and a deadly clash between Turkish and Syrian forces. However, Mevlut Cavusoglu also renewed a call on Russia to "rein in" the Syrian government forces and reiterated Turkey's determination to retaliate against any future Syrian

attack on its troops. On Monday, Turkish artillery targeted Syrian government forces in northern Idlib province, responding to shelling that killed seven Turkish soldiers and a Turkish civilian. A Syrian war monitor said 13 Syrian troops were also killed in the clash. The exchange of fire in Idlib, the last rebel stronghold in Syria, increased tensions between the two neighbouring countries. — AFP



Not a pandemic

WHO's Global Infectious Hazard Preparedness division head Sylvie Briand says coronavirus does not yet constitute a pandemic

IN BRIEF

Primitive turtle survived extinction

London: A primitive species of turtles, measuring about 60 centimetres, was among the few terrestrial animals that managed to survive the mass extinction believed to have killed the dinosaurs about 66 million years ago...

Yoga may prevent depression: Study

Boston: Practising yoga may increase levels of a messenger molecule involved in regulating brain activity, and completing one yoga class per week may maintain elevated levels of this chemical...

Device can identify quality blood donor

Toronto: Researchers have developed a new device which can identify high-quality blood donors, an advance which may benefit millions of patients who need blood transfusions every year globally...

KENYA: 14 KIDS DIE IN SCHOOL STAMPEDE

Nairobi, Feb. 4: Fourteen children were killed in a stampede as they rushed down a staircase at the end of classes at a primary school in western Kenya on Monday, officials said.

Coronavirus: China toll reaches 425

Three more Asian countries confirm cases; Hong Kong sees first death due to epidemic

Beijing, Feb. 4: Three more Asian countries confirmed coronavirus infections on Tuesday among citizens who had not travelled to China, as Hong Kong reported its first death from the disease...



Hundreds of empty beds lined an exhibition centre converted into a makeshift hospital in Wuhan in central Hubei province, the epicentre of China's deadly virus epidemic, on Tuesday.

Virus: China allows entry to US experts

Beijing: China has agreed to allow U.S. health experts into the country as part of a World Health Organization (WHO) effort to help fight the fast-spreading coronavirus...

Japan quarantines 3,711 on cruise ship

Yokohama: Japan has quarantined a cruise ship carrying 3,711 people and was testing those onboard for the new coronavirus Tuesday after a former passenger was diagnosed with the illness in Hong Kong.

Disabled boy dies waiting for his dad

Beijing: A disabled boy has died after being left to fend for himself when his father was quarantined over the deadly new coronavirus in China.

Lockdown heading towards Shanghai

Beijing, Feb. 4: More Chinese cities, including one just 175 kilometres (110 miles) from Shanghai, were put under lockdown on Tuesday, as the impact of a deadly new virus spread further from its epicentre.

LANDLORDS WERE also forbidden from renting property to people from "severely affected areas such as Hubei"

Landlords were also forbidden from renting property to people from "severely affected areas such as Hubei" if they have travelled to their hometowns recently, it added.

When a patient on Australia's Gold Coast refused to shake the hand of her surgeon Rhea Liang, citing the virus that has killed hundreds, the medic's first response was shock.

Virus spreads fear, racism worldwide

Sydney, Feb. 4: As the deadly coronavirus has spread worldwide, it has carried with it xenophobia — and Asian communities around the world are finding themselves subject to suspicion and fear.

There has been a spike in reports of anti-Chinese rhetoric directed at people of Asian origin, regardless of whether they have ever visited the centre of the epidemic or been in contact with the virus.



Protesters rally for action on climate change outside Parliament House in Canberra on Tuesday.

Weinstein case: Accuser in tears

New York, Feb. 4: A key accuser in the New York City rape trial of Harvey Weinstein broke down in tears on the witness stand during an exhaustive cross-examination over the nature of her relationship with the once-powerful movie mogul.



Her cross-examination will resume Tuesday. "I remember the day I realized I was controlling my world because I was sexually assaulted and that story played out where I played into sexual dynamics with people to feel like I would never be taken advantage of again," she said.

Oz Parliament remembers fire victims

Canberra, Feb. 4: Lawmakers commemorated wildfire victims and praised the heroism of firefighters when Australia's Parliament sat on Tuesday as hundreds of protesters rallied outside demanding more policy action on climate change.

Australia is not and will never be overwhelmed as we face the challenges that remain active, as we confront and face the devastating drought compounded in so many places by these fires

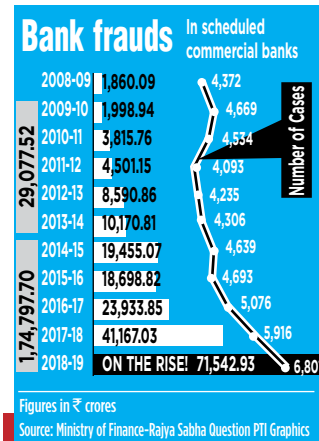
SCOTT MORRISON PRIME MINISTER

Morrison paid tribute to those who lost their lives, including three U.S. airmen who died when their Hercules C-130 tanker crashed while fighting a blaze in New South Wales state last month.

Relatives of some of the nine firefighters who have died in this fire season were in a public gallery to hear lawmakers give their condolences. The U.S. ambassador represented the airmen's families.

face the devastating drought compounded in so many places by these fires, as we confront and contain the challenge of the virus indeed that threatens the world, Australians will not be overwhelmed," Morrison told Parliament.

ing a family vacation to Hawaii in December at the height of the crisis while his hometown of Sydney was choking on wildfire smoke. One environmental protester among the many gathered under a sky hazy with wildfire smoke wore a Morrison mask and carried a sign reading: "My Bushfire Plan? Hawaii!"



## Survey hints at positive hiring outlook

Employers in India are bullish about their hiring outlook for the first half of this year, with 55 per cent of recruiters anticipating new jobs as well as replacement hiring to happen during the six-month period, a survey said on Tuesday. The bi-annual survey, 'Naukri Hiring Outlook January-June 2020', that saw participation from over 2,400 recruiters across the country, projected an overall positive outlook. Around 55 per cent recruiters anticipate new jobs as well as replacement hiring to happen in the first half of the year while 26 per cent predict only new jobs and 13 per cent expect to do replacement hiring only, it noted.

## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	40,789.38	2.30
Nifty 50	11,979.65	2.32
S&P 500*	3,301.01	1.60
Dollar (₹)	71.11	-0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.61	-0.43
Euro (₹)	78.46	0.28
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	41,270	-388
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.00	1.48
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.51	-0.076
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.54	0.03

\* As of 10 pm IST

## Sequoia backed Stove Kraft plans initial public offer

**Mumbai:** Sequoia Capital backed Stove Kraft, a kitchen solutions company has filed offer document for an initial public offer of equity shares. The public offer would comprise of a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to ₹145 crore and an offer for sale of up to 71.63 lakh equity shares by the promoter group entities and by Sequoia.

## PNB posts ₹493cr loss in Q3 after higher provisions



**Mumbai:** Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Tuesday reported a standalone net loss of ₹492.28 crore for Q3 FY20 on higher provisioning for bad loans. PNB had posted a net profit of ₹246 crore for the same period a year ago. In Q3, the bank had reported a profit of ₹507 crore. The total income was at ₹15,967 crore as against ₹14,854 crore in the year-ago period.

## CSB Bank posts ₹28 cr profit for Q3 of fiscal 2020

Newly-listed CSB Bank on Tuesday reported a net profit of ₹28 crore for the third quarter ended Q3 FY2020 against ₹74 lakh reported in the same quarter of the previous fiscal. Net Interest Income (NII) rose by 31 per cent to ₹155 crore from ₹118 crore. On the asset quality front, gross NPAs stood at 3.22 per cent of the gross advances at the end of Q3.

## India GDP may grow at 5.5% in FY2021: Moody's

**New Delhi:** Rating agency Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday said economic growth projections made by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget for 2020-21 appear ambitious. For the next fiscal, the rating agency estimated real GDP growth of 5.5 per cent, lower than 6-6.5 per cent projected by the government's Economic Survey.

# Global rally boosts Sensex by 917 pts, investors gain ₹3.5L cr

## Rise in manufacturing activity in January too help Sensex, Nifty post rally

**ASHWIN J. PUNNEN**  
MUMBAI, FEB. 4

The Sensex surged over 917 points on the back of rebound in global stocks, recouping most of the losses suffered in the budget day sell-off. The Sensex rose 917.07 points or 2.3 per cent to close at 40,789.38, while NSE Nifty settled at 11,979.65, up 271.75 points, gaining the most in a single day in over four months.

Investors' notional wealth rose by ₹3.57 lakh crore (₹3.57 trillion) in two days of market rally as recovery in the market led to a rise in market capitalisation of the BSE-listed

firms which climbed ₹3,57,044 crore to ₹1,56,61,769 crore since Saturday.

Disappointed by a lacklustre Union Budget, the Sensex took a massive plunge on last Saturday to mark its worst session in over a decade as the government failed to meet market expectations.

But the indices gaining for the last two sessions shows investors have shrugged off Budget disappointment and are focussing now on other market moving factors like corporate earnings and macroeconomic data.

Investors cheered the country's manufacturing sector activity climbing to

a near eight-year high in January, helping domestic stocks end higher on Monday — the very first session after Budget.

"Market is finding some sanity after the Budget setback. Hereon the focus will be on corporate results and global trend. With valuations on the higher side, the on-going results reported has been mostly inline with estimates. Manufacturing PMI shows notable rebound providing a breather that economy will stabilize as mentioned in the budget," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

On Tuesday, Titan was the biggest gainer in the

Sensex pack, rallying 7.97 per cent, followed by ITC, HDFC, Bajaj Finance, and Tata Steel. On the other hand, Bajaj Auto and HUL were on the losing side.

All sectoral indices ended with gains with BSE consumer durables, metal, oil and gas, energy realty and finance indices rallying up to 3.52 per cent. Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices advanced up to 1.37 per cent.

"Indian markets witnessed a strong rally on the back of rally in global markets. The Indian markets have wiped off all the losses incurred on the budget day to close almost at the pre-budget level. Investors have shifted

their focus back on earnings and are finding solace in healthy margins reported by many companies," Hemang Kapasi, portfolio manager, equity investment products, Sanctum Wealth Management, said.

Analysts said positive global market also led to the upward momentum as bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul settled with firm gains. Stock exchanges in Europe also opened on a positive note. "With the Budget overhang gone, investors are breathing a sigh of relief and are back to make fresh calls," Umesh Mehta, Samco Securities said.

## OIL MIN TO SPLIT GAIL FOR SELLING PIPELINE VERTICAL

**New Delhi, Feb. 4:** The oil ministry has moved a Cabinet note seeking approval for hiving off state-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd's pipeline business into a separate entity for a possible sale to a strategic investor at a later date, sources privy to the development said.

GAIL is India's biggest natural gas marketing and trading firm and owns more than 70 per cent of the country's 16,981-km pipeline network, giving it a stranglehold on the market.

Users of natural gas have often complained about not 'fairly' getting access to GAIL's 12,160-km pipeline network to transport their fuel.

Sources said to resolve the conflict arising out of the same entity owning the two jobs, bifurcating GAIL is being considered.

GAIL's core business after the bifurcation would be the marketing of natural gas and petrochemical production. It will have to hire capacity on pipelines from the subsidiary and pay regulator approved tariffs for the same.

It will continue to execute the gas sales agreements it has already signed and will be responsible for the discharge of the obligation under purchase pacts including for import of LNG.

The ministry in December floated a note for consideration of the Union Cabinet for transferring the pipeline business into a 100 per cent subsidiary. The Cabinet, they said, is likely to consider the proposal shortly.

Sources said the pipeline subsidiary may be sold off to a strategic investor but the sale is not likely before 2022 as the government thinks that the gas market in the country will not be mature before that time. — PTI

## Relaxed after the Budget



Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) post budget meeting, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. — PTI

# Ailing CPSEs buy 40% less goods from clients

**SANGEETHA G.**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 4

Reducing the number of CPSEs and their poor health have affected procurement as well. With less than two months for the financial year to end, the procurement of goods and services by central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) is down by 40 per cent against last year.

As many as 116 CPSEs have procured goods and services valued ₹92,219 crore during the current fiscal, as per the latest update by MSME Sambandh. This is 40 per cent lower than the procurement of last fiscal, which stood at ₹1,53,441 crore made by 165 CPSEs.

The mandatory procurement from medium and small enterprises too was down by 34 per cent at ₹26,711 crore as against ₹40,376 crore last year. However, the CPSEs have met the mandatory target of making 25 per cent procurement from MSEs. The procurement from MSEs run by SC/ST entrepreneurs was down by 48 per cent to ₹426 crore against ₹823 crore last year.

However, women MSE contribution remained almost similar to last year at ₹234 crore.

This year's actual procurement till date is in fact is 26 per cent down from the target of ₹1,25,126 crore. The target made by 122 CPSEs itself

was lower by 12 per cent than last year's target of ₹1,41,705 crore.

According to an industry expert who did not want to be named, reduced number of CPSEs and their poorer health would have reflected in the procurement data. As against 165 CPSEs, which had reported their procurement last year, this time only 116 companies have provided it.

As per Economic Survey, of the total 348 CPSEs as on March 31, 2019, 249 are in operation, 86 CPSEs are yet to start commercial operations and 13 CPSEs are under closure/liquidation. In the past few years, the government had shut around 25 CPSEs.

## GST LOTTERY TO PROD BUYERS TO TAKE BILLS SOON

**New Delhi, Feb. 4:** The government is planning to introduce lottery offers between ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore under the GST to encourage customers to take bills while making purchases.

CBITC member John Joseph said every bill under the GST regime will provide a chance to the customers to win a lottery and that would act as an incentive for them to pay the tax. "We have come with the new lottery system. Every bill under GST is supposed to be a price-winning lottery ticket. It will go for a draw and people will say that by not saving 28 per cent, I have a chance of winning ₹1 crore or ₹10 lakh," he said. — PTI

# Import of gold declines in Jan.

**SANGEETHA G.**  
CHENNAI, FEB. 4

Continuing the downward trend, gold imports in January fell 48 per cent to the lowest level in four months.

In January, the country imported 36.26 tonnes of gold against 69.51 tonnes in the same month last year. In value terms, January imports totalled \$1.58 billion, down from last year's \$2.31 billion, reports quoting government officials said.

Gold imports have been coming down since July when the prices started moving up. In the domestic market, the rising prices touched record high levels. Both demand and imports remained subdued during the second half of the year.

However, in November when prices fell from the all-time high levels, the trade used this opportunity to replenish their stocks, which saw imports going up by 78 per cent to 71 tonnes against 40 tonnes in the same month last year. However, once prices started rebounding, imports once again came down. Other than November, the entire second half witnessed shrinkage of imports. For the year 2019, imports were down by 12 per cent of 831 tonnes against 944 tonnes in 2018.

As industry expert said that the actual imports could be even lower as the government has been col-

**THE KERALA** health minister said they had started the process to identify people who may have come in contact with the two virus-infected patients.

lating data of the refined gold and the dore imported to the country. If the gold refined out of the dore is considered, the imports could be even lower.

Increased supply of the metal into the market in the form of recycled gold also kept imports subdued. Recycling of old gold went up 37 per cent in 2019 to 119.5 tonnes against 87 tonnes in 2018.

"Recycling volumes went up above 100 tonnes after five to six years. The gold price rise was one of main reasons behind this phenomenon. However, some of the BIS-certified refineries have started making recycling more organised by improving marketing and collection," said Somasundaram P.R., Managing Director, India, World Gold Council.

WGC finds that this could be beginning of a trend and the government needs to incentivise recycling in order to pull out the huge stocks of gold lying idle with households and ease the import burden.

# RBI moves SC in HDIL-PMC case

**FALAKNAAZ SYED**  
MUMBAI, FEB. 4

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court challenging the Bombay High Court order, which allowed the sale of assets owned by bankrupt Housing Development and Infrastructure Ltd (HDIL) to repay dues of fraud hit Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank.

The central bank sought a stay on the High Court order. In its plea, the RBI has said that the Bombay High Court passed the order without making it a party in the case. The order was passed without hearing it in the matter and that the order goes against its efforts to revive the bank, the RBI said.

A three judge bench comprising of Chief Justice of India SA Bobde and Justices B.R. Gavi, and Surya Kant asked advocate Rakesh Dwivedi who mentioned the matter before the court to approach the SC registry for an urgent listing.

The Supreme Court had earlier stayed specific directions of the High Court relating to the shifting of the main accused — Rakesh and Sarang

Wadhawan, the promoters of HDIL from the Arthur Road jail in Mumbai to their Bandra residence to enable disposal of their properties.

The PMC Bank, which has around 16 lakh depositors, was placed under an RBI administrator on September 23 for six months due to massive under-reporting of dud loans. Besides appointment of an administrator, the central bank has taken several steps to revive the bank which were not brought to the Court's notice which prompted the RBI to approach the Supreme Court seeking a stay on the High Court's judgment.

PMC Bank, over a long period of time, had given more than ₹6,700 crore in loans to the HDIL, which is 73 per cent of its total advances, and which turned sour with a shift in the fortunes of the now bankrupt company. Its total loans stand at around 9,000 crore and the deposits at over ₹11,610 crore.

Last month, the Bombay HC had ordered liquidating the assets of the infrastructure company to settle dues of depositors of PMC Bank.

# Budget may have negative impact on insurance



By Invitation  
**Rakesh Jain**

Union Budget 2020 remains a neutral but structural effort, even though the market had very high expectations from the government in terms of key announcements for insurance, real estate and health sector. Introduction of new optional and lower direct tax slab for Individuals, and removal of exemptions and benefits will cre-

ate higher disposable income in the hands of small taxpayers. This will support consumption and will also propagate insurance. However, with the optional approach there would be a negative impact on the attractiveness and spread of health insurance.

The allocation of ₹2.83 lac crore for agriculture sector and various initia-

tives proposed such as subsidy on fertilisers, warehousing, transportation, etc. will support the rural economy and have a positive impact on overall spending in rural sector. We expect positive impact on crops and crop insurance post lower rates of fertilisers. The same may be said for motor insurance.

Insurance industry was expecting FDI to increase

to 74 per cent.

This would have allowed the sector to grow faster with additional capital and technical expertise. We hope this remains a focus area for the government in the future.

We welcome the move to widen the scope of the government's flagship scheme — Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PM-JAY), and the proposal

to set up a viability gap funding to allow empanelment of hospitals through a public-private-partnership (PPP) model.

The time-limit for the project which qualifies as affordable housing projects is extended by one year thus incentivising to real estate sector to provide affordable housing space and accordingly enjoy tax holiday.

It would have been encouraging to announce mandatory home insurance to protect the existing households against various natural disasters frequenting.

A welcome step has been introduced under the

budget whereby Deposit Insurance Coverage for a depositor has been hiked from ₹1 lakh to 5 lakh to protect the loss of hard-earned depositors' money. This will further enhance the social security among the middle-class and will help them rebuild their trust.

The government's push towards the digital ecosystem has benefited the general insurance industry significantly and we hope these measures will continue to support ease in insurance distribution.

(The writer is executive director and CEO, Reliance General Insurance)

## L&T BAGS ₹5K CR ORDER FROM ETIHAD RAIL

**FC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, FEB. 4

Larsen & Toubro has been awarded a large order of ₹2,500 to ₹5,000 crore range by Etihad Rail Company PJSC for the design and build of freight handling facilities at 7 strategic locations across United Arab Emirates.

"This Design and Build Contract for Freight Facilities Package has been bagged against stiff international competition. This project will be executed in JV with Power China," L&T said.



### Smart integration

LG announced that select 2019 smart TVs will now benefit from integration with the Apple TV app and Apple TV+ service

### SHORT TAKES

## HYDERABAD GETS ACCENTURE 2ND HUB IN INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 4

Accenture on Tuesday opened a new Innovation Hub in Hyderabad, where clients can co-innovate with it by ideating, rapidly prototyping and then scaling disruptive products and services for the digital economy.

The Hyderabad Innovation Hub is spread over 300,000 square feet. It is the second such hub for Accenture in India after its Bengaluru centre and 22nd across the world.

The clients can take the help of more than 2,000 Accenture professionals, who have expertise across multiple industries and advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, security, extended reality, automation and blockchain.

“Our research shows that organisations are struggling to achieve their innovation goals, due to the lack of an enterprise-wide strategy for technology investments and adoption,” said Bhaskar Ghosh, group chief executive, Accenture Technology Services. “Through our leading advanced technology capabilities, we help clients scale their technology investments and bridge the innovation achievement gap. Our Innovation Hub in Hyderabad has the pieces our clients require to accelerate value creation through enterprise-wide, game-changing innovation,” Mr Ghosh said.

## NILEKANI FOR AI-BASED CREDIT SYSTEM

Bengaluru, Feb. 4: Aadhaar architect Nandan Nilekani on Tuesday batted for artificial intelligence-based credit disbursement systems stating it would make access to funds easier, especially for small and medium enterprises.

“We shouldn’t get distracted by the current challenges. Obviously, we have an issue with bank non-performing assets (NPAs), non-banking financial company NPAs, but out of this will emerge the next generation of credit which is going to be entirely tech and data-based,” Nilekani said at an event here.

He added that credit decisions by artificial intelligence-driven systems will be based on business flows rather than being asset-based. “It is good for newcomers because they may not have assets,” he said.

Nilekani explained that AI can be used to figure out good and bad credit risk, and rates at which loans are given can be tweaked based on such assessment. “Today, big guys get cheap credit, small people get expensive credit through money lenders and all. All that will go away,” he added.

The Infosys co-founder said entrepreneurs should focus on “getting to the path of profitability fast.”

He added that internet businesses globally had turned profitable after a few years of losses, and therefore, getting to that path should be kept in mind. —PTI

## BLACKBERRY GONE FOR GOOD FROM AUG. 31

Hyderabad, Feb. 4: Owing to the expiry of BlackBerry’s rights to the name, TCL Communication says it will cease production of the phones later this year. From August 31, TCL Communication will no longer sell BlackBerry-branded smartphones as the company’s rights to the name and technologies expire, so the name will revert to the original BlackBerry company, but it is unlikely that new phones will be made again.

“The future is bright for both TCL Communication and BlackBerry Limited,” TCL Communication announced in a statement.

The company has, though, said that it will continue to provide support for its BlackBerry phones until either August 31, 2022, or as long as local regulations require.

Figures from 2017 estimate that only 8,50,000 BlackBerry phones were shipped by TCL and other manufacturers that year.

Meanwhile, Apple sold 216 million iPhones in the same period. —Agencies



## MAN MANIPULATES MAPS, CREATES VIRTUAL TRAFFIC JAMS

Simon Wreckert, Berlin-based artist, walked the streets carrying a red wagon with 99 smartphones. Wherever he went, Google Maps showed a congested traffic jam. Google Maps showed a thick red line indicating congestion on the road, when there was no traffic at all. All the 99 phones had Google Maps running, giving an illusion that the roads were jam-packed.

Stating that showing how data can be hacked and manipulated is like pointing out the emperor has no clothes, he said maps are an instrument of power. They substitute political and military power in a way that represents the state borders between territories and they can repeat, legitimate, and construct the differences of classes and social self-understandings, he added.

Wreckert was quoted as saying by *Motherboard* that by moving the smartphones in the street he was able to generate virtual traffic which will navigate cars on another route.

Wreckert rented 99 smartphones, all of them Android devices, and purchased 99 sim cards online. He would spend an hour or two on each spot, walking back and forth on the street to generate a traffic jam.



Quoting semanticist Alfred Korzybski, Wreckert said, “The map is not the territory but another version of reality.”

Data is always translated to what they might be presented. The images, lists, graphs, and maps that represent those data are all interpretations, and there is no such thing as neutral data. Data is always collected for a specific purpose, by a combination of people, technology, money, commerce, and government, he explained.

## India up against big tech cos over 5G signaling

Govt in competition as global telecom body evaluates

Hyderabad, Feb. 4: The talk around 5G really unfolded two years ago when US President Donald Trump rallied the developed world around banning Huawei Technologies, especially its 5G tech. Subsequently, countries began permitting, one by one, the Chinese telecoms vendor to supply its 5G gear for the new network roll-out. In December 2019, India allowed Huawei to participate in 5G trials.

However, there is more to it than appears, *The Ken* reports. Around this time last year, the Telecommunications Standards Development Society, India (TSDSI), proposed a radio interface technology (RIT) to the

International Telecommunications Union (ITU). Later in the year, in December, the ITU accepted the proposal under consideration for additional features to telecom stan-

dards. The new tech is a modification to the radio signal — the information carrier in telecommunications — which can enhance the signal transmission range of a base station. India wants to apply this technology for wider coverage at low speeds. This is ideal for rural India, which certainly needs high-speed broadband but not necessarily in high-speed vehicles.

Starting February, the remaining steps for including the RIT as part of the 5G global standards — International Mobile Telecommunications-2020 — will begin. Independent groups will now evaluate this technology.

An Indian official said, “Quarterfinals are over, semi-finals will begin in Geneva this month.”

The so-called ‘match’ is between global telecoms vendors — Nokia, Ericsson, Qualcomm on one side, and TSDSI on the other, alone at the negotiating table because there is no Indian equipment company big enough to wield commercial clout internationally.

The Indian proposal makes use of the third generation partnership product (3GPP) framework, a global standardisation body for wireless standards that is dominated by telecoms vendors.

Consequently, TSDSI has asked it to reserve certain bits so that the RIT is harmonised. —Agencies

As a series of data leaks and privacy violations continues to weaken the public’s trust in big tech companies, Google has responded by creating a privacy hub that lets us access, delete and limit the data it collects. Here’s how to manage your personal data:

### HOW TO SET YOUR INFO PRIVATE

Go to your Google Account page

Type your Google username

From the menu bar, choose Personal info and you can change or delete your photo, name, birthday, gender, password, other emails and phone number.

To see what information is available publicly, select Go to About me.

To manage your Web & App Activity, Location History and YouTube History, choose Data & Personalization and select these options.

Setting Google not to track your activity doesn’t necessarily mean you have closed off your data completely. Google has admitted it can track the user’s physical location even if location is turned off.

Srinivas Kodali, an independent cybersecurity researcher, said, “There have been numerous reports that showed anonymised data can be de-anonymised for a while now. This report is just an addition. Anonymisation of data and usage of what is called homomorphic encryption to analyse

encrypted data to ensure privacy is not compromised are few new techniques to not allow employees to have access to large troves of data.”

“But if this data is shared, it indeed can be de-anonymised with other available data-sets. Sharing is the problem, anonymised or not.”

—PTI

### FLASH GAMES AT ONE STOP

After Adobe revealed in 2017 it would no longer be supporting Flash, there’s a saviour in the form of a site dedicated to saving the Flash games and even offering them for offline play. Blue Maxima runs the website Flashpoint, which has around 36,000 games in its directory.

There are two versions of Flashpoint to download: Infinity and Ultimate.

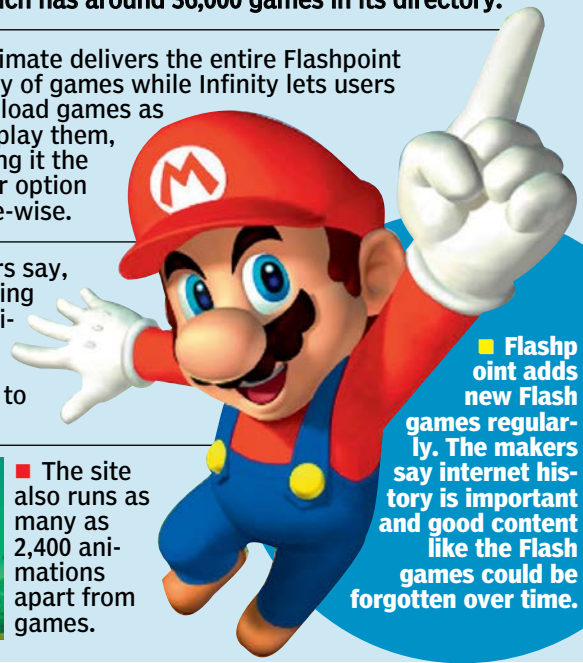
Flashpoint, its makers say, is dedicated to preserving as many games and animations from these platforms as possible, so that they aren’t lost to time.

The site also runs as many as 2,400 animations apart from games.

Ultimate delivers the entire Flashpoint library of games while Infinity lets users download games as they play them, making it the better option space-wise.

Flashpoint adds new Flash games regularly. The makers say internet history is important and good content like the Flash games could be forgotten over time.

—PTI



## NOVEL DEVICE CAN MONITOR BODY CHEMISTRY

Washington, Feb. 4: Researchers have developed a novel device the size of a wristwatch which can monitor an individual’s body chemistry to help improve athletic performance, and identify potential health problems.

According to the study published in the journal *Biosensors and Bioelectronics*, the device can be used to detect dehydration, and track athletic recovery with potential applications ranging from military training to competitive sports. The researchers said the device monitors the blood levels of different metabolites, which are chemical markers that can be monitored to assess an individual’s metabolism. —PTI

## Senseforth.ai stands out in SQuAD 2.0

New Delhi, Feb. 4: Senseforth.ai, a leader in the Conversational AI space, attained the 6th spot in one of the world’s most authoritative machine reading comprehension benchmarks, the Stanford Question Answering Dataset 2.0 (SQuAD 2.0). Senseforth.ai scored 90.830, beating the human performance level of 89.452 and becoming the only Conversational

AI start-up to be featured in the top-6 of this global leaderboard. Senseforth.ai’s proprietary NLP technology is embedded in its Conversational AI platform, A.ware, which is being used by over 35 organisations in Asia and North America to acquire customers, drive user engagement and provide pre-sales & after-sales support. Senseforth.ai has

emerged as the preferred Conversational AI partner for leading brands like Nestle, PwC, Future Generali, HDFC Bank, SBI Card, ICICI Bank, RBL Bank, Airtel, Kotak Mutual Fund and Stanton Optical, among others.

Speaking about the development, Shridhar Marri, CEO and Co-founder, Senseforth.ai said, “Attaining the 6th spot on the SQuAD 2.0

leaderboard cements our authority as a leader in the Conversational AI space. Our superior rank is a testimony to our commitment to building advanced technology solutions that address key challenges of growing enterprises.”

SQuAD 2.0 comprises more than 1,00,000 questions with over 50,000 new, unanswerable questions. —PTI

### WOMAN | POWER People feel seeing map gives psychological comfort, helps avoid virus-hit neighbourhoods

## Chinese turn to coronavirus tracking apps

Shenzhen, Feb. 4: Chinese citizens are using mapping programs and travel trackers in a bid to avoid neighbourhoods with infections of the coronavirus and to better prepare for the dangers they face.

Both data mapping company QuantUrban and a third-party Wechat mini-program developer have created platforms that take official information on the neighbourhoods where confirmed cases live and map it geographi-

cally so that users can gauge how close they are to infection sites.

While the WeChat program, called ‘YiKuang’ — or ‘Epidemic Situation,’ covers the southern cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou, QuantUrban’s browser-based maps also cover nine other cities in the province.

“Shenzhen might have a major outbreak in the next few days, and government data comes out slowly,” said April, a Shenzhen-based manager who

declined to give her full name.

“Seeing the map is a psychological comfort. You can’t guarantee there won’t be fresh cases, but you can avoid an area that’s already hit,” she

said. Confirmed cases in Shenzhen have climbed rapidly to 245 as of Monday, making the southern tech capital the worst-affected of China’s main cities — Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. It has a large population of migrant workers from the heavily affected central provinces.

“We wanted to annotate the information on the map so that the public could better see how epidemic sites are distributed more intuitively, and also

remind everyone to make adequate protection,” said Yuan Xiaohui, QuantUrban’s co-founder and CEO.

Volunteers also help the team to keep the map up to date as the government releases data daily, she said.

YiKuang also relies on volunteers to keep up to date and originally denoted neighbourhoods with confirmed cases with a skull and crossbones logo. It has since changed to less alarming exclamation

points after users on social media platform Weibo complained they would cause panic.

“If I know that there are sick people nearby, I can take steps to be extra cautious,” a finance student named Steven said. “I live between Shenzhen and Guangzhou, and these maps are really great there.”

QuantUrban is also covering nine other cities in Guangdong province, Yuan said. —Reuters





## Seeking turnaround

New Zealand bowling coach Shane Jurgensen stressed that his team need to make adjustments quickly for the ODI series starting on Wednesday

### SHORT TAKES

## Denly spearheads England fightback

Cape Town: Joe Denly hit a career-best 87 to lead an England fightback in the first one-day international against South Africa at Newlands on Tuesday. England made 258 for eight after being sent in on a slow pitch. They were floundering at 131 for six before Denly and Chris Woakes (40) came together in a seventh-wicket stand of 91. Left-arm wrist spinner Tabraiz Shamsi did the major damage for South Africa, taking three for 38. England made a good start with Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow putting on 51 for the first wicket before both were dismissed in successive overs. Joe Root and captain Eoin Morgan seemed to be stabilising the innings before both were out in the space of three balls -- Root to a direct-hit run-out by Rassie van der Dussen and Morgan to a catch at slip off Shamsi. — AFP

**Brief scores:** England 258/8 in 50 overs (Joe Denly 87, Chris Woakes 40; Tabraiz Shamsi 3/38) vs South Africa.

## Kobe's death left an impact on Kohli

Hamilton: India captain Virat Kohli on Tuesday said the death of NBA legend Kobe Bryant in a helicopter crash has impacted his outlook towards life, which he feels, is sometimes taken for granted in pursuit of control over the future. "Firstly, it was a shock to everyone. I grew up watching those NBA games in the morning and watching what he did on court. But when someone that you have looked up to, passes away like that, it does put things in perspective," Kohli said. — PTI



Yashasvi Jaiswal celebrates his century against Pakistan in the U-19 World Cup semifinal. — ICC

# A star is born

## Yashasvi's unbeaten ton helps India crush Pak in U-19 World Cup semis

Potchefstroom (South Africa), Feb. 4: Yashasvi Jaiswal batted like a man among boys while Kartik Tyagi reminded Pakistan of Waqar Younis' teocruising yorkers as defending champions India walloped their arch-rivals by 10 wickets to enter their seventh ICC U-19 World Cup final here on Tuesday.

The gulf in class between the two sides was evident as Indian bowlers collectively choked Pakistan to a paltry 172 in 43.1 overs. Opener

against Pakistan in a World Cup semi-final is something I can't put into words," Jaiswal, who hit eight fours and four sixes, said after winning the 'Player of the Match' award.

India thus maintained their supremacy over Pakistan at the age-group and senior level in ICC tournaments — both men and women. The 'Boys in Blue' have earlier reached the summit clash in 2000 (winners), 2006 (runners-up), 2008 (winners), 2012 (winners), 2016 (runners-up) and 2018 (winners).

The current batch with key players, having already played senior representative cricket and five with IPL deals in their bag, showed the difference in skill level and application from their opponents, an aspect that could be attributed to the robust junior cricket structure put in place by none other than Rahul Dravid.

Jaiswal literally toyed with the bowling attack, hitting the Pakistani bowlers towards all parts of the ground. The youngest Indian double centurion in List A cricket finished the game with a six, which also completed his hundred.

En route his hundred, pacer Abbas Afridi was



Sushant Mishra (second from left) celebrates a Pakistani wicket during the ICC U-19 World Cup semifinal in South Africa. — ICC

### SCORECARD

effortlessly hit over deep mid-wicket for a six and then pulled the next one behind square for another six.

The Pakistan bowling attack was pedestrian at best and didn't have much answers to the drives that flowed from Yashasvi's blade. Divyansh's batting was also pleasing to the eye, playing the ball late. "We were talking about how we needed to stick at the wicket. They bowled well initially and we wanted to ride that out," Jaiswal added.

The match as a contest was over in the first half when Pakistani batsmen had no answer to Tyagi's pace and Bishnoi's variations. — PTI

**Pakistan:** Haider Ali c Ravi Bishnoi b Jaiswal 56, Mohammad Huraira c Saxena b Mishra 4, Fahad Munir c Ankolekar b Ravi Bishnoi 0, Rohail Nazir c Tilak Varma b Mishra 62, Qasim Akram run out (Ankolekar/Jurel) 9, Mohammad Haris c Saxena b Ankolekar 21, Irfan Khan b Kartik Tyagi 3, Abbas Afridi lbw b Ravi Bishnoi 2, Tahir Hussain c Jurel b Kartik Tyagi 2, Aamir Ali c Veer b Mishra 1, Mohammad Amir Khan (not out) 0. **Extras (b 1, nb 1, w 10) 12. Total (all out in 43.1 overs) 172.**  
**FoW:** 1-9, 2-34, 3-96, 4-118, 5-146, 6-156, 7-163, 8-169, 9-172. **Bowling:** Kartik Tyagi 8-0-32-2, Sushant Mishra 8.1-0-28-3, Ravi Bishnoi 10-0-46-2, Akash Singh 7-0-25-0, Atharva Ankolekar 7-0-29-1, Yashasvi Jaiswal 3-0-11-1. **India:** Yashasvi Jaiswal (not out) 105, Divyaansh Saxena (not out) 59. **Extras (lb 2, w 10) 12. Total (for no loss in 35.2 overs) 176.** **Bowling:** Tahir Hussain 6-1-17-0, Gasim Akram 8-0-37-0, Mohammad Amir Khan 5-1-20-0, Abbas Afridi 7-0-50-0, Aamir Ali 5.2-0-38-0, Fahad Munir 4-0-12-0.

Many congratulations to India U-19 team for having successfully reached the final with thumping victories in quarterfinal and semifinal. I wish the young bunch all the success in final. — MSK PRASAD, BCCI chief selector

# Rejigged India out to dominate Kiwis

Hamilton, Feb. 4: Injuries to key players has opened the door for exciting youngsters such as Prithvi Shaw to make an impression in the Indian line-up against a low-on-confidence and depleted New Zealand in the three-match ODI series starting here on Wednesday.

This is India's third ODI assignment after the World Cup last year, having previously beaten West Indies (away) and Australia (at home). The Black Caps, on the other hand, play their first ODI since that infamous loss at Lord's in the World Cup final against England.

The last time these two sides met in the 50-over format, New Zealand had knocked India out of the World Cup with an 18-run win over two days in the second semi-final at Manchester. India extracted revenge with a 5-0 T20 whitewash that concluded on Sunday.

In the current context, stakes aren't that high as both sides prepare for the T20 World Cup later in Australia this year. In fact, the upcoming two-Test series later this month bears more significance than this ODI clash. In the ODI series, neither side will be at full strength as a string of first-team players will be missing due to injuries.

India were dealt a major blow when Rohit Sharma was ruled out of the remainder of this tour owing to the calf injury he picked up in the final T20I. The Men in Blue are already missing Shikhar Dhawan, Hardik Pandya, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Deepak Chahar. For New Zealand, inspirational skipper Kane Williamson has joined the long list of injured along with the likes of Trent Boult.

Mayank Agarwal was named as Rohit's replacement for the ODI series on Tuesday afternoon. And skipper Virat Kohli outlined that they will stick to the strategy adopted against Australia in Rajkot, where KL Rahul kept wickets and batted at number five.

Kohli had more or less confirmed Shaw's ODI debut in that scenario, and now India will probably

have two openers debuting. The last time such a situation arose was 2016, when KL Rahul and Karun Nair opened for India on their debuts in Zimbabwe. Sunil Gavaskar and Sudhir Naik (1974) against England and Parthasarthy Sharma and Dilip Vengsarkar (1976) against New Zealand are the other previous instances. Such a move would set up India's batting line-up with Kohli at number three and Shreyas Iyer at number four.

In the nets on Tuesday, Manish Pandey batted along with Kohli and Iyer, ahead of Shivam Dube, Rishabh Pant and Kedar Jadhav. If Pandey plays, the lower order will be a curious mix with Dube, Jadhav and Ravindra Jadeja vying for the all-rounder's spot. — PTI



New Zealand's stand-in captain Tom Latham (left) and his India counterpart Virat Kohli pose with the trophy ahead of the three-match ODI series. — BCCI

## Shaw, Mayank to make ODI debut as openers, says Kohli

Hamilton, Feb. 4: India are set to field two debutant openers, Prithvi Shaw and Mayank Agarwal, in the first ODI against New Zealand here on Wednesday after skipper Virat Kohli confirmed that K L Rahul will continue to bat in the middle-order. Rahul will keep wickets and bat at number five like he did during the Australia series, Kohli said on Tuesday. "Prithvi's definitely going to start and whoever the replacement is, we'll ask for an opener (which has already been decided with Agarwal replacing Rohit). KL will bat in the middle-order. We want him to get accustomed to that role and keep as well," said Kohli.

**IPL platform for Cup preparation**  
India captain Virat Kohli on Tuesday said that his team is not looking to strengthen its T20 World Cup preparations in the ODI series against New Zealand as the upcoming IPL is the "right platform" for it.

INDIA-NEW ZEALAND IN ODIs					
SUMMARY OF RESULTS					
Venue	Played	Ind won	NZ won	Tied	N/R
In India	35	26	8	-	1
In New Zealand	39	14	22	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
Last 5 matches	5	3	2	-	-

### FOR THE RECORD

**Prithvi Shaw and Mayank Agarwal** will be the fourth Indian opening pair to make their ODI debuts together. Incidentally, Dilip Vengsarkar and Parthasarthy Sharma opened together on debut in New Zealand, at Christchurch on February 21, 1976

### LIVE on TV

India vs New Zealand on STAR Sports 1, HD @ 7:30 AM

However, head coach Ravi Shastri had last month said that the ODIs India play against New Zealand and South Africa (in March) could be a preparatory

ground for the T20 World Cup in Australia. "We have had five T20s already, it's not that we don't have a lot of T20 cricket. We have IPL as well which is going to be a month and a half of T20 cricket. So we will probably utilise that," said Kohli. — PTI



Mayank Agarwal

## Saurashtra leave Mumbai teetering

Rajkot, Feb. 4: Saurashtra left arm spinner Dharmendrasinh Jadeja snared five wickets to leave Mumbai teetering at 249 for eight on the opening day of their Elite Group B Ranji Trophy game here on Tuesday.

Had Sarfaraz Khan yet again not rescued Mumbai after they suffered a top-order collapse with his 78, the 41-time Ranji champions would have been in more trouble in what is a must-win game for them. Jadeja rattled their top-order and among his wickets were Jay Bista, Bhupen Lalwani, Siddesh Lad and rival skipper Aditya Tare.

Opting to bat at the SCA Stadium in Khandheri, Mumbai openers Bista and Lalwani failed to convert their starts. The duo put up 62 for the first wicket before Bista was trapped in front of the wicket by Jadeja.

Senior-pro Suryakumar Yadav fell for a first-ball duck after being trapped in front of the wicket by Prerak Mankad as Mumbai were in spot of bother at 63 for two. Soon it became 74 for three after Jadeja removed Lalwani, who gave a sitter at mid-off. Crisis man Siddesh Lad had on several occasions in the past took his team out of rubble, but failed to do it on Tuesday. He became Jadeja's third victim after the left arm spinner trapped him in front of the wicket to leave the visitors tottering at 88 for four.

Then Sarfaraz and all-rounder Shams Mulani steadied the ship with their 109-run stand for the fifth wicket. They ensured that the domestic giants took lunch and tea without losing any further wickets.

Sarfaraz, who took his team out of trouble in the last two matches, again played a matured and responsible knock. However, after doing all the hard work, he fell on 78 after being cleaned up by Kamlesh Makwana.

Sarfaraz's unbeaten run thus ended in first-class cricket after amassing 605 runs from three innings. Aditya Tare was dismissed cheaply as he became Jadeja's fourth victim. Mulani held one end and completed his fourth fifty

### BRIEF SCORES

**At Rajkot:** Mumbai 249/8 (Sarfaraz Khan 78; Shams Mulani 59 batting; D Jadeja 5/90) vs Saurashtra.

**At Baroda:** Baroda 174 (A Sheth 53, Anureet Singh 25; M. Mohammed 7/68) vs Tamil Nadu 135 for no loss (Abhinav Mukund 73 batting, Suryaparakash 61 batting).

**At Delhi:** Delhi 270/6 (Kunwar Bihuri 78 batting, Hiten Dalal 69, Himmat Singh 53) vs Gujarat.

**At Patiala:** Andhra 97 (Siddarth Kaul 5/24, Vinay Choudhary 3/28) & 31/4 (Vinay Choudhary 3/11) vs Punjab 108 (Mandeep Singh 23, Shoaib Mohammed Khan 5/46, S Ashish 5/50).

after tapping Jadeja for a single.

**Kunwar, Himmat take Delhi to 270/6 vs Gujarat**  
All-rounder Kunwar Bihuri and the talented Himmat Singh struck fighting half-centuries to rescue Delhi from a precarious position as the hosts reached 270 for 6 against Gujarat at New Delhi on the first day of their Ranji Trophy group A encounter. Delhi at one stage were staring down the barrel at 136 for 5 with only opener Hiten Dalal looking comfortable against the Gujarat attack. However, Himmat, who made a comeback into the senior side along with Kunwar rescued Delhi with a 134-run sixth wicket stand.

Pacer Arzan Nagaswalla was the pick of the Gujarat bowlers while seasoned Axar Patel did the most important job of dismissing Himmat off the last ball of the day.

The right-hander, who showed tremendous patience during his 153-ball stay went for a drive but the edge landed in Rujul Bhatt's hands in the slip cordon. This was after he had hit eight fours and a six during his knock. — PTI



Prithvi Shaw during a training session in Hamilton. — Twitter



## McLaren lane

Canadian lawyer Richard McLaren (in pic) will lead a doping probe into the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) and its president Tamas Ajan

### SHORT TAKES

## Kerala in women's league semifinals

**Bengaluru:** Gokulam Kerala continued their formidable form and rubber-stamped their place in the Indian Women's League (IWL) semifinals with a game to spare after overcoming Bangalore United FC 5-1 on Tuesday.

The result also confirms Kenkre FC's progress to the last four, who are now five points clear of Sreebhumi. Bangalore needed to win to have any chance of progressing going into the final set of group fixtures, but are now officially out of the running.

The locals got off to a poor start and fell behind after just three minutes. Komal Kumar's outstretched leg deflected a cross into her own net as Gokulam struck first, albeit with a bit of fortune.

BUFC responded quickly, however, and just two minutes later, Satyabati Khadia latched onto a cross-field delivery from Purnima Rao and with Aditi Chauhan off her line, Khadia went for an audacious lob over the Gokulam keeper and found the back of the net in what was a truly magnificent effort.

Sabitra Bhandari's lightning strike rattled the upright in first-half stoppage time as BUFC survived a barrage of Gokulam attacks to go into the break on level-pegging. The second half turned out to be a different story.

The rampage was sealed in the third minute of stoppage time, when Kamala Devi glided past three defenders to complete her hat-trick in style. — PTI

## China team's AFC fixtures put off

**Kuala Lumpur:** AFC Champions League football fixtures featuring Chinese clubs will be delayed to April and May, officials said Tuesday, after Australia imposed travel restrictions over the deadly coronavirus outbreak. The games featuring Chinese clubs had been scheduled to be played in Perth and Sydney in February and March but were thrown into turmoil following the new curbs.

After an emergency meeting Tuesday in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, the Asian Football Confederation said the games will now be played in April and May. "We came together in difficult circumstances to allow us to play football while ensuring we protect the safety and security of all players, officials, stakeholders and fans," AFC secretary-general Windsor John said in a statement.

John said representatives of the six member associations involved — Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand — agreed to postpone matches involving Chinese clubs that will take place in the first three match days. Among the matches to be re-arranged Japan's Vissel Kobewill play China's Guangzhou Evergrande on May 26. — AFP

## TOP CYCLIST FUGLSANG HITS BACK

**Lausanne:** Top cyclist Jakob Fuglsang took to social media on Monday to contest links to disgraced Italian doctor Michele Ferrari, in response to reports of an investigation into the Olympic road race silver medalist.

Reports in Denmark say the Cycling Anti-Doping Foundation (CADF) has detailed accounts of alleged links between the Danish cyclist and the banned doctor, but the International Cycling Union (UCI) says it has yet to see any report.

Fuglsang's team Astana has denied knowledge of the links, saying in a statement it "does not collaborate with any suspicious doctor, such as Dr Michele Ferrari."

The rider, who would be a contender for the Olympic road race title in Tokyo, or the Giro d'Italia in May, broke his silence via Instagram. "I contest that I have met with Dr Ferrari. I am not aware of any report and I can confirm no procedure has even been opened by competent anti-doping authorities against me. Accordingly, I have no case to answer. I am extremely concerned that such rumours could be spread out in the press," he wrote.

Earlier on Monday, former Danish cyclist Brian Holm said the reports into links between Fuglsang and Ferrari were rumours that had been circulating since "last spring." — AFP

# Clippers snub Spurs

## George helps side rally past San Antonio for victory

**Los Angeles, Feb. 4:** Paul George found his groove just in time to help the Los Angeles Clippers pull off a 108-105 NBA victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Monday.

George, who made just two of his first seven shots, drained four of his last six as the Clippers rallied from a 15-point second-quarter deficit to snatch the win.

Trailing by nine points at halftime, the Clippers out-scored the Spurs 31-19 in the third period to take an 85-82 lead.

After a back-and-forth battle in the fourth the Clippers emerged with the win by three.

Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers with 22 points and his one-handed dunk — off a pass from George — put Los Angeles up by two with 1:35 to play.

George drained a jump shot with 13.7 seconds left to give Los Angeles a 106-102 lead, the Spurs responding with a three-pointer from Patty Mills before Lou Williams made two free throws for the Clippers to seal it.

George, who had earlier left the game with his nose bleeding in the third after taking an elbow from DeMar DeRozan but returned in the final period.

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 13 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter for the Spurs, but DeRozan, who scored 26, came up empty in the final period.

In Miami, Jimmy Butler exploded for a season-high 38 points against his former team, doing enough damage to sit out all of the fourth quarter of the Heat's 137-106 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers.

Butler's aggressive game helped the Heat overcome the early departures of Tyler Herro and Meyers Leonard — who had to be helped from the floor.

With Boston's 123-115 victory over the Hawks in Atlanta, Miami and the Celtics both finished the night with records of 34-15 — eight games behind Eastern Conference leaders Milwaukee and 1.5 behind second-placed Toronto. The Golden State Warriors, coming off a 131-112 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers, kept things rolling with a 125-117 victory over the Wizards in Washington. — AFP



Montrezl Harrell of the Los Angeles Clippers goes up for basket past LaMarcus Aldridge (right) of the San Antonio Spurs during their NBA game in Los Angeles on Monday. The Clippers won 108-105. — AP

## Star homage for Kobe, Gianna

**Los Angeles, Feb. 4:** The NBA's two All-Star teams will wear jersey numbers honoring the memory of Kobe Bryant and daughter Gianna in the mid-season showcase.

Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James had a simple reason for going with Gianna Bryant's No.2. "Zhuri," James said, referring to his own five-year-old daughter.

James spoke movingly on Friday of the joy Bryant had found since his retirement in life as a family man and father of four daughters.

"It felt like these last three years were the happiest I've ever seen him," James said.

● The NBA's two All-Star teams will wear jersey numbers honoring the memory of Kobe Bryant and daughter Gianna Bryant in the mid-season showcase.

● Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James will flaunt the No.2 — Gianna's jersey number — for the game.

The numbers are among the planned All-Star weekend tributes to Bryant and Gianna, who were among nine people who died in helicopter crash on January 26.

The team captain by Milwaukee Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo will wear the No.24 that Bryant wore in the later stages of his 20-year NBA career.

Memories of Bryant are sure to be everywhere for the rest of the season, but James said the Lakers are finding their way forward.

"Today was the start of a new week. We got a great workout, great practice today. We continue to focus on what needs to be done to continue to win ball games and get better and be as great as we can be. So it was a good day for us today," James said as the team trained at their practice facility in suburban El Segundo.

But it hasn't been easy, and James said the Lakers continue to lean on each other as they try to get to grips with Bryant's death.

"There is no way any individual can do it on their own," he said. "The week that we had, the week that we've all had. You have to lean on somebody in order to gain strength. That's the only reason we're all able to get through it together," he added. — AFP

### RUSSIA | DOPING

## Wada asks for public hearing

**Montreal, Feb. 4:** The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said it has asked the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) for a public hearing on its case for Russia's exclusion from international sporting competitions.

At stake in the hearing will be the fate of Russian athletes hoping to compete in such events as this year's Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and 2022 football World Cup.

WADA director general Olivier Niggli said his group made the formal request for a public forum to resolve the dispute would ensure the world hears the case from both sides and understands how punishment, if any, is administered.

"WADA's investigations on Russia, and this latest case of non-compliance, have generated huge interest around the world," Niggli said on Monday.

"It is WADA's view — and that of many of our stakeholders — that this dispute at CAS should be held in a public forum to ensure that everybody understands the process and hears the arguments," he added.

WADA sent its case against the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) to CAS, the world's highest sport court, last month.

It will be a CAS panel that must decide whether to confirm the four-year ban WADA imposed on Russia last month after considering Russia's case against the epic sanction.

In December, WADA imposed a four-year ban on Russia over what it considers a state-sponsored dop-

ing scheme — prohibiting Russia from participating in such events as this year's Tokyo Olympics.

WADA says Russia "manipulated" data from an anti-doping laboratory in Moscow in the latest move in a long-running scandal that began with the 2015 revelation of long-term institutional doping involving senior Russian officials, secret agents and trafficked urine vials.

Under the sanctions, Russians would be allowed to compete in the Tokyo Olympics only if they can demonstrate they were not part of the doping network — the same situation Russian athletes faced at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.

RUSADA disputed the WADA executive committee ban on December 27, setting the stage for WADA to send the case to CAS.

WADA investigators retrieved data from the RUSADA Moscow laboratory last year, but in analyzing the data, WADA and independent investigators confirmed the data had been manipulated and some data had been deleted.

— AFP

## NEED RUSADA'S APPROVAL FOR OPEN HEARING: CAS

**Lausanne, Feb. 4:** The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) said Tuesday it must receive permission from Russia's anti-doping agency to approve a public hearing in the appeal against the country's exclusion from international sport.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on Monday asked CAS, the world's highest sports court, for an open hearing after Russia appealed a four-year ban for a state-sponsored doping scheme.

"CAS has actually just received a request from WADA. We must now consult RUSADA on the matter," CAS secretary general Matthieu Reeb said. "If there is a consensus in favour of a public hearing, CAS will certainly approve this choice," he added.

WADA sent its case against RUSADA to CAS last month, after the latter disputed the sanction imposed by the global anti-doping body.

A CAS panel must decide whether to confirm the four-year ban or consider Moscow's case against the ruling.

At stake will be the fate of Russian athletes hoping to compete in such events as this year's Tokyo Olympics, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and 2022 football World Cup. — AFP



MCC, winners of the Madras Gymkhana Club-Singaram Trophy inter-club T20 tournament.

## MRF to compete in European Rally

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 4**

Team MRF are back in international rallying. The Indian tyre manufacturer has announced that it will compete in the full season of the 2020 European Rally Championship, with Irish rally driver Craig Breen, and co-driver Paul Nagle. The duo will pilot a Team MRF Tyres Hyundai i20 R5 prepared by the Italian BRC Racing Team.

Breen is an accomplished rally driver, who has competed in 61 World Rally Championship events, and finished on the podium twice. He is the reigning Irish Tarmac Rally Champion, and also finished second in the 2015 ERC. His co-driver, Nagle, has won five WRC events in all.

The MRF Tyres Rally outfit has claimed nine Asia Pacific Rally Championship titles, three of which were won by Indian rally ace Gaurav Gill. The team also competed in four rounds of the World Rally Championship in 2018,



Craig Breen (right) and co-driver Paul Nagle will pilot Team MRF Tyres car.

taking part in the WRC2 class as a non-registered entry. The team then took a hiatus from active competition, and spent 2019 testing and developing the next generation of MRF Tyres with Breen, as well as former WRC driver Mikko Hirvonen. The team will make a return to active competition at the Azores Rallye between the 26th and 28th of March.

MRF Tyres vice-chairman & managing director,

Mammen said, "MRF Tyres has a long and proud history in rallying in India and the Asia Pacific region. With nine APRC titles, it is the right time to take the next step and take Indian motorsport into the European Rally Championship. To work with great professionals in the field like Craig Breen, Paul Nagle, BRC Racing Team and Hyundai Motorsports is a great privilege."

Speaking of his association with MRF Tyres, Breen said, "I am really happy to start this adventure with MRF Tyres. We worked together last year placing emphasis on tyre development. Now I am really looking forward to embarking on this journey in the European Rally Championship. It will be a great year with MRF Tyres, BRC Racing Team and Hyundai Motorsport. I am looking forward to the Azores Rally and getting the program started."

## HAMILTON IS NO GOD, SAYS VERSTAPPEN

**London, Feb. 4:** Red Bull's Max Verstappen says he can beat Lewis Hamilton to the Formula One title if his car is good enough, insisting Britain's six-time world champion is "not God".

The 22-year-old Dutchman could prove Hamilton's closest challenger this year following Red Bull's strong finish to the end of last season.

But asked if he could beat Hamilton over the course of a season, Verstappen said: "Yes. Of course, it is very car-dependent in Formula One. Lewis is very good. He is definitely one of the best out there. He is not God, maybe God is with him, but he is not God."

"When you can put the pressure on it is a lot harder for the guy in the lead. If he never really has pressure, he can drive at 97 or 98 percent and then you never make mistakes. If we start the season within two-tenths (of a second of Mercedes), we can mount the pressure. I am looking forward to the battle," he added. — AFP



Max Verstappen

## Thangarasu takes five in Bluesky win

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 4**

R. Thangarasu's five for 20 helped Bluesky CC defeat Emerging XI by 100 runs in the second division of the TNCA Vellore District Cricket Association League.

**Brief scores: 1st Division:** United CC 73 in 22.4 overs (D. Dinesh 3/17) lost to Gudiyatham Cricket Academy 74/7 in 22.4 overs (L.Saravanan 3/20). **2nd Division:** Bluesky CC 213/8 in 25 overs (R. Ramanathan 46, T. Balaji 29, B. Sathishkumar 25) bt Emerging XI 113 in 24.1 overs (R. Thangarasu 5/20); Vellore Cricket Academy 177/6 in 25 overs (V. Naveen Kumar 33, C. Lawrence 25, M. Suryanarayanan 3/29) bt Sunshine CC 161/9 in 25 overs (T. Hariharan 29, V. Vinothkumar 35, L. Amesh 3/30). **3rd Division:** SabaGroup CC 171/3 in 25 overs (R. Sathishkumar 30, S. Sankar 42, G. Gowtham 53) bt BlueStar CC 149/9 in 25 overs (R. Arvindhraj 52, S. Jeeva 28, R. Sathishkumar 4/30); Black Panther CC 139/9 in 25 overs (M.Hemanathan 33, R. Vignesh 63, V. Krishnakumar 3/17) bt Saba Group CC 107 in 23 overs (G.Chandrasekar 26; S.Arunkumar 6/33).

**Thiruvallur post 331** S. Santhosh Kumar top-scored with 94 runs as Thiruvallur posted a strong total of 331 against Kanyakumari on day one of the semifinals of the TNCA inter-district under-19 tournament.

**Brief scores: Day 1:** Thiruvallur 331/9 decl in 76 overs (P. Lithish Kumar 36, S. Santhosh Kumar 94, R. Ram Arvindh 52, S. Taaraksh 60 not out; S.C. Ashok Milton 3/84) vs Kanyakumari 33/4 in 12 overs; Salem 220 in 68 overs (S. Rishikesh 32, G. Parthasarathy 37, S.J. Krithick 37, S. Arun 30; S. David Allvin Nishanth 4/62) vs Kancheepuram 101/1 in 22 overs (J. Jasper Benjamin 33 not out, R. Yash 35 not out).

**TN women lose to Goa** Eloksi Arun bagged four wickets, but it went in vain as Tamil Nadu lost to Goa by 143 runs in the BCCI women under-23 one-dayers at the TI Murugappa Ground. **Brief scores:** Goa 205/8 in 50 overs (Purvaja Verlekar 29, Sanjula S. Naik 86, Shindiya Naik 47; Eloksi Arun 4/44) bt Tamil Nadu 62 in 28.2 overs (Sanjula S. Naik 3/21). **Points:** Goa 4 (12); Tamil Nadu 0 (4).