

MINISTER IN LOK SABHA

Govt puts it on record: No NRC decision yet

Aadhaar for NPR voluntary, give info 'true to best of knowledge': Govt

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

WITH PROTESTS against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and proposed National Register of Citizens marking two months next week, the government reiterated in Lok Sabha Tuesday that it has not taken any decision on a countrywide NRC.

It also moved to allay fears over personal data being collected for the pre-Census updation of the National Population Register (NPR) by making clear that no document will be collected during the exercise — and that providing Aadhaar number would be voluntary.

Replying to a written question on NRC, MoS (Home) **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

BUY 1



EXPLAINED

E Flies in the face of past statements

DOUBTS HAVE persisted given repeated references to NRC, including by Amit Shah. The latest reply in House has formalised PM's assurance, but is this the final word?

Police say Shaheen Bagh gunman had joined AAP, party hits back

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

SETTING OFF a fresh political row four days before the national capital votes, the Delhi Police Tuesday said the man arrested for firing twice in the air at the Shaheen Bagh protest site on February 1 had joined the Aam Aadmi Party last year.

The police claim drew a sharp reaction from the AAP which said Union Home Minister Amit Shah



Delhi police say this photo of AAP's Sanjay Singh with Kapil Baisala (seen right) was found from the latter's phone

was directly behind the "conspiracy". The Delhi Police reports to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The

AAP said it plans to approach the Election Commission against **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Mumbai openers take India to U-19 World Cup finals, demolish Pakistan

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

ONE SOLD pani-puris on the road not so long ago, the other went to a famous cricket academy. On Tuesday, the lives of these two teenagers converged on a cricket pitch over 7,000 km from their homes in Mumbai. The result: India beat Pakistan by 10 wickets to enter the final of the Under-19 World Cup at Potchefstroom in South Africa.

Yashasvi Jaiswal (105 not out) and Divyansh Saxena (59 not out) sealed the deal with 14.4 overs to spare after India's



India beat Pakistan by 10 wickets in the semi-finals in Potchefstroom in South Africa. ICC

bowlers set it up by dismantling Pakistan for 172. Jaiswal did his bit with the ball too, prising out

rival opener Haider Ali (56). It was about eight years ago **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Lavasas paid Rs 46 lakh cash for house, used help's bank account: I-T

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

CASH DEPOSITS amounting to Rs 4.93 lakh after demonetisation; Rs 46.65 lakh paid in cash for construction of a building in Gurgaon; a payment of Rs 9.57 lakh to the builder routed through the bank account of a domestic help — these are the allegations in a report of the Income Tax (I-T) Department on com-



Ashok Lavasa and family got house built in Gurgaon

plaints of tax evasion by members of the family of Election Commissioner (EC) Ashok Lavasa.

In the last six months, his wife Novel Singhal Lavasa, an **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

DEFEXPO AND VISIT SLOVAKIA

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IN DWARKA, CONGRESS, AAP CANDIDATES SWITCH SIDES

With nearly two lakh voters, Dwarka constituency, which came into existence in 2008, has been labelled as one of the five most backward constituencies in Delhi.

VIDEO OF THE DAY



POCO X2 FIRST LOOK

The 120Hz punch-hole screen, clean glass back stand out

EXPLAINED



WHAT WAS THE 2003 SARS EPIDEMIC?

SARS was also caused by a type of coronavirus (SARS-CoV)

EXPRESS AUDIO

How the new income tax reform will affect savings

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Today on the 3 Things podcast, we look at how the government's move to reform personal income tax will affect savings and impact the economy.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SUBODH GUPTA

Instagram user says exploring settlement in defamation suit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE PERSON using the Instagram handle @herdsceneand, who had anonymously posted sexual harassment allegations against artist Subodh Gupta during #MeToo movement, on Tuesday told the Delhi High Court that an amicable settlement of the dispute was being explored in the suit.

Justice R S Endlaw agreed to @herdsceneand's counsel request to give them a week's time to reach a settlement with Gupta and fixed the matter for further hearing on February 11.

The court on January 22 had asked the counsel for the holder of Instagram account whether they will represent the interest of those persons for whom they

are fighting the battle or the court should implead them as a party to the suit. The court had said, "If confidentiality with respect to identity of the said person is to be maintained, and reasons therefore found, the same can be ordered and the proceedings ordered to be held in camera."

The court, in its interim order, had allowed the Instagram user anonymity in the defamation suit filed by Gupta against the user and others, seeking removal of the allegedly defamatory content made against him on the social media platforms.

However, the counsel for @herdsceneand had contended that disclosing the identity of the persons behind the account is likely to cause harm to them and also for which sufficient protection is not available in our legal system.

Bombay HC sets aside trial court order rejecting Areeb Majeed's bail plea

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court Tuesday restored the bail application of Areeb Majeed, a Kalyan-based man who is alleged to have travelled to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State, a terrorist organisation, in 2014. A trial court in September last year had rejected the bail application of Majeed, who has been in custody since 2014.

Referring to the "confusion" appearing in paragraphs of the trial court order, the high court has now directed the lower court to hear the matter, while giving it a "fresh consideration".

Majeed had filed a bail ap-

peal before the high court against the trial court's order in October last year. This was his third application.

On Tuesday, Majeed, who argues in person, submitted to the high court that the crucial witnesses relied on by the NIA in their chargesheet had not supported the agency's case during the trial. He also submitted that since his previous bail applications were rejected on the ground that there was prima facie evidence against him it is now a changed circumstance and hence he should be released on bail pending trial.

SADAF MODAK

FROM PAGE ONE

U-19 World Cup

that Jaiswal, the son of a shop keeper in UP's Bhadohi, left home to pursue his cricket dream in Mumbai. He began by sharing a tent with ground staff at the Azad Maidan and selling pani-puris.

Around the same time, Saxena convinced his father, a nuclear scientist, that his passion was cricket and landed up at former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar's academy in search of guidance.

"Divyansh was good in academics, scoring around 80% in Class 10 and passing with distinction in Class 12. But as a parent, I always gave my children the liberty to decide their own future. There was no proper practice facility where we lived then, so he decided to join Vengsarkar's academy," said Divyansh's father, Ajay Saxena, who works at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC).

Ajay says he doesn't talk much in office about his son playing for India. "I didn't speak to Divyansh either for the last two days as we didn't want to disturb him. He has been telling us that he will come home with the Cup. When he was batting today, there were many goose-bump moments for me. Probably, they will talk to me about this tomorrow at the office," said Ajay Saxena, laughing.

When Saxena was sharpening his batting skills, Jaiswal would often go to sleep on an empty stomach. Occasionally, his father would send money but that was never enough. Before boarding the flight to South Africa, his teammates shared a laugh about the numerous bats he was carrying — seven. "People have laughed at me since I was small. They don't know the importance of these bats. I know," he had said.

Back in Bhadohi, Jaiswal's father Bhupendra is thrilled with his son's heroics against Pakistan. "He made all of us proud today. He was batting brilliantly and it was only a matter of time before he got a hundred. He has made our chests swell with pride," he said.

Lavasas

ex-banker, sister Shakuntala Lavasa, a paediatrician, and son Abir Lavasa have been served I-T notices.

As one of the three ECs, Ashok Lavasa, on five occasions, opposed the clean chit given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former BJP president Amit Shah on charges of violating the Model Code of Conduct during the Lok Sabha elections.

The latest report of the I-T Department was shared with the Department of Revenue in November 2019, The Indian Express has learnt.

P C Mody, chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), did not respond to questions on whether any action has been taken on the allegations in the report. Ashok Lavasa, Novel Lavasa and Abir Lavasa did not respond to questions shared via email.

The report focuses on investments by the Lavasa family in two properties — a four-storied building in Gurgaon owned jointly by Ashok Lavasa, sister Shakuntala, wife Novel, son Abir and daughter Avny; and, a farmhouse near Karnal held by the Election Commissioner, his wife and son.

On August 22, 2019, the I-T Department searched the office and home of Satya Priya Tyagi, proprietor of Rupali Constructions that built the four-storied building in Gurgaon. According to the report, evidence in the shape of handwritten diaries, loose

Home assures House: No decision yet on NRC, no document needed for NPR

Nityanand Rai said: "Till now, the government has not taken any decision to prepare the National Register of Indian Citizens at the national level."

In another reply, this time on the NPR process, Rai said: "No document is to be collected during the updation of NPR... During the exercise of updation of National Population Register, no verification is done to find individuals whose citizenship is doubtful."

Rai's statement is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance after the passage of the CAA in Parliament that the government had not discussed the implementation of a nationwide NRC.

On December 22, 2019, Modi had said at the Ramlila Maidan: "Pehle yeh to dekh lijiye, NRC pe kuch hua bhi kya? Jhooth chalayai jaa rahi hai. Meri sarkar aane ke baad, 2014 se aaj tak, main yeh sachh 130 crore logon ke liye kehna chahta hu, kahin par bhi NRC shabd park koi charcha nahin hui hai. Koi baat nahin hui hai (First, see if anything has happened on NRC. Lies are being spread. From the time my government came to power in 2014 till today, I want to tell this truth to 130 crore people of this country, that there has been no discussion on NRC. No talk at all.)"

sheets, emails and WhatsApp messages seized during the search show that members of the Lavasa family allegedly paid Rs 46.65 lakh in cash to Tyagi and his close associate N K Sharma for the construction.

Novel Lavasa, in her statement recorded with the I-T Department on September 9, 2019, denied making payments in cash. She said she had paid Rs 2.5 crore to 2.7 crore only through banking channels. When contacted, Tyagi said: "I have given my statement to the I-T Department." He confirmed Sharma works with him.

The I-T Department has cited an email sent by Sharma to Novel Lavasa that gives a break-up of payments made in cash and through cheques by Novel and Abir for the property. The same email, the report states, was also found in Novel's Gmail account. When summoned by the I-T Department, Sharma confirmed that his email reflected payments in cash as well as through cheques by the Lavasa family.

The I-T Department also examined Novel's Google drive, which had JPEG images of handwritten calculations of payments made towards the construction of the Gurgaon property. Some entries mentioned in JPEG images matched with the break-up of payments in Sharma's email (also found in Novel's inbox). The report goes on to conclude that Novel gave a false statement under oath as there is evidence of unaccounted cash payments amounting to Rs 46,65,112.

The I-T report also points out that payments to the builder were made by persons other than members of the Lavasa family. According to Sharma's email, such payments amounted to Rs 16.54 lakh.

Of this, Rs 9.57 lakh was paid by Subhash Mahto, who is described as "domestic helper of Shri Ashok Lavasa" in the report. In her statement recorded on September 9, 2019, Novel denied that Mahto had made any payment on the family's behalf. However, on September

Before this, Home Minister Amit Shah had said on multiple occasions that NRC would be implemented across the country. Even during the debate on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha on December 9, Shah said: "We will bring the NRC across the country. Not a single infiltrator will be spared."

After Modi's assurance at the Ramlila Maidan, however, Shah said there was no plan for a nationwide NRC yet.

Recently, President Ram Nath Kovind did not refer to the NRC in his address to the joint sitting of Parliament at the beginning of the Budget Session Friday. In his previous address, however, the President had said that the "government has decided to implement the process of National Register of Citizens on priority basis in areas affected by infiltration".

Tuesday's Question Hour had multiple questions on issues associated with CAA, NRC and NPR. Asked whether the government had made it mandatory to share details of passport, driving licence, Aadhaar and other documents in the NPR, Rai said: "The respondent has to provide the information for National Population Register (NPR) updation true to the best of his

knowledge and belief. Aadhaar number is collected voluntarily."

The passage of the CAA in Parliament on December 11 triggered protests and fears that it would lead to a nationwide implementation of the NRC. It led to at least eight Opposition-ruled states to declare that they would not implement the CAA.

Many of these states have also opposed the NPR updation move, prompted by concerns that the central government would use the data collected to implement the NRC. The government is currently in discussion with states over the exercise.

The NPR is slated to be updated between April and September, 2020. The Census will be conducted from February 9-28, 2021.

Replying to another question on whether government would release illegal immigrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jain, Parsi and Buddhist communities held in detention centres, Rai said the CAA came into force on January 10, 2020, and the proceedings against these immigrants could abate only after grant of Indian citizenship.

Those covered by the Act can submit applications for citizenship after rules are notified

by the central government, he said. "No specific instruction has been issued by the central government regarding release of migrants from detention centres after enacting the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019," Rai said.

Also, with Modi having earlier asserted that there were no detention centres for illegal immigrants anywhere in the country, the government told Parliament that the nomenclature of detention centres had been changed to "holding centres".

To a question on the foreigners released from detention centres in Assam, Rai told Lok Sabha: "As per information available from government of Assam, the details of detainees released from the Holding Centre (erstwhile detention centre) are as follows..." He went on to list the six centres in Assam from where 761 foreigners had been released in the last three years.

In response to another question, Rai said: "As per information received from government of Assam, the state government has not constructed any detention camp in Assam exclusively to detain those who do not have documents proving their citizenship under the National Register of Citizens."

25, 2019, she informed the department that Mahto had extended a personal loan of Rs 9.57 lakh to her son Abir.

The report adds that Abir hasn't disclosed this loan in his Income Tax Return (ITR) for any year. The report says that there was sufficient bank balance in Novel and Abir's accounts on the dates when Mahto made payments amounting to Rs 9.57 lakh. "Thus there was no business need to take any loans," the report states.

For the agricultural land near Karnal purchased jointly by Ashok Lavasa, his wife and son in 2011-12 from Ombiri Devi, the I-T Department has said that approximately Rs 35 lakh was paid in cash by the Lavasa family. The report points to statements of Vishesh Tomar (son of Ombiri Devi) and Kanwar Pal Singh Tomar (husband of Ombiri Devi) who have said the land was sold for Rs 35 lakh to 40 lakh per acre and the sale amount was received in cheque and cash. The report concludes the land was sold for Rs 95.5 lakh (at 35 lakh per acre). Since the sale deed shows the registered value of the transaction as Rs 60.5 lakh (paid by cheque), the I-T Department alleges that the difference of approximately Rs 34 lakh was paid in cash from unaccounted sources.

According to the department, bank accounts held jointly by Novel with her son and another with her daughter reflect cumulative deposits of Rs 4.93 lakh during the demonetisation period. In her recorded statement, Novel attributed this to agricultural income and past savings. The I-T Department rejected this, saying that her ITR from 2014-15 to 2018-19 show Rs 5,846 as agricultural income. "Thus she did not have adequate agricultural income to explain deposit of cash in her accounts. She also could not explain any other source/savings to account for cash deposits," the report states.

The report alludes to Abir Lavasa's directorship at Nourish Organic Foods Private Ltd being an "undue benefit" arising out of Ashok Lavasa's posting in Power and Environment ministries from September 2009 to December 2013 and from August 2014 to April 2016, respectively.

The report says Seema Jajodia, who is "connected to the Monnet Ispat Group" that had "interests" in Environment and Power ministries, quit as director from Nourish within two months of Abir's joining, thereby giving him a larger role in the company. Seema Jajodia was married to the promoter of the Monnet Ispat Group Sandeep Jajodia. They were divorced in March 2016.

When contacted Monday, Sandeep Jajodia told The Indian Express that he has no connection with Nourish Organic Foods and has "never had any connection (with) them in any capacity".

Seema Jajodia said she hasn't had anything to do with the Monnet Ispat Group for "many years", especially after her divorce in 2016.

"I hired Abir (Lavasa for Nourish Organic Foods) based on his qualifications and talent. I didn't even know whose son he was (then). I met Mr Ashok Lavasa in Nehru Park once while walking, as I have met many many other IAS officers and all who go for a walk in the morning there. I have no knowledge of Mr Lavasa's postings or have anything to do with him," she said.

The report states that in October 2018, Abir was allotted 10,000 shares of Nourish Organic Foods Private Ltd below the market value at Rs 10 per share when he was appointed director in November 2017. Abir, the I-T Department says, accepted that shares were allotted to him below the market price and paid self-assessment tax of Rs 3,94,200 on September 7, 2019. The report alleges that Abir received Rs 50,000 as remuneration in cash every month "over and above the cheque component of Rs 1 lakh" and a director with

Nourish Organic Foods has corroborated this in his statement recorded with the I-T Department.

Shaheen Bagh

DCP (Crime Branch) Rajesh Deo who announced the shooter's alleged links to the party.

"We have recovered photos which show that a year ago, Kapil Balsala (the shooter) and his father had joined AAP. Further investigation is on," DCP Deo said. "Photographs were deleted from his phone, but we recovered them with help from technical experts. When we had questioned him initially, he had told us he joined AAP in the first part of 2019. We are trying to establish the exact date. There are photos that establish this and he has agreed to these photos."

Earlier in the day, police sought custody of Kapil in a Delhi court where it did not mention his alleged links with AAP.

Asked why Kapil's political links were being divulged days before the polls, Deo said, "Pictures were not released by us; several media houses had approached me and asked for confirmation, which I gave. I shared details about him during the general briefing and will investigate all facts as it is a very sensitive matter."

Police said the weapon Kapil used had been procured seven years ago for celebratory firing during a wedding.

Kapil's uncle Jogender Nagar told The Indian Express that the 25-year-old and his father had joined AAP "for two weeks".

"My elder cousin and Kapil's father, Gaje Singh, had joined AAP in early 2019, and remained in the party for about two weeks. He was looking for a ticket and it seemed it would not work out. Kapil had gone to support his father and did not have any political ambitions. He merely stood there alongside his father and got pictures clicked," his uncle said.

Another relative, Fatesh Singh, told PTI: "I have no idea where these photographs are

circulating from. My nephew Kapil had no association with any political party... My brother Gaje Singh fought Assembly elections in 2008 from the Bahujan Samaj Party and lost. After that, no one from our family had any links with any political party."

According to relatives and neighbours, Kapil, a resident of East Delhi's Dallupura, was mostly involved in managing his family's dairy business. His father Gaje Singh, on the other hand, has a political background, having unsuccessfully contested MCD elections in 2007 on a BSP ticket. He ran for MCD elections again in 2012 as a BSP member from Khichri Pur, and also contested the Assembly elections in 2008 but did not win.

Following DCP Deo's comments, BJP president J P Nadda tweeted: "I want to make it clear to Kejriwal that this country is bigger than any election, any government, and it will not forgive those who play with its security. Kejriwal and his team have been unmasked. The people of Delhi will give a befitting reply."

At a press conference called Tuesday night, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar, who is BJP's poll in-charge of Delhi, said: "It is not a casual photo. He was joining AAP and Sanjay Singh welcomed him. This shows how AAP instigates the youth and misuses them."

AAP's Sanjay Singh hit back: "BJP and Home Minister Amit Shah are using all kinds of tactics and hatching conspiracies. My photo is being used by them today. There are only three-four days to go for elections. Just watch how many more photos and videos they will share. I am shocked that while the model code of conduct is imposed, wherein the Election Commission is supreme, DCP (Crime Branch) Rajesh Deo says they have found a photo of AAP members and they are investigating the involvement of others. Is Amit Shah making Deo say this? Or is it someone else? On whose direction did he dare to do this?"

"Investigation is incomplete, no enquiry has been made regarding the photo and the involvement of others has not been looked into, and a responsible police officer is coming out and naming a party at a time when MCC has been imposed. We will complain to the EC against Deo tomorrow and seek immediate action against him. It is the EC's rule that no party can be named by any official till they have the permission of the EC. Did Deo seek permission from the EC? No. He had Amit Shah's permission. He had BJP's permission. How did the photo, which is part of investigation, reach the media and BJP? For three days, BJP has been alleging that AAP is involved in this. Manoj Tiwari told a news channel that AAP is involved in this. Are the investigation details being shared with BJP by Deo and Crime Branch?"

"Let's come to the photo now. I just want to say that BJP can use all the dirty tricks they can but the people will defeat them on 8th. Their deposits will be lost... Chinmayanand has been accused of rape and is photographed with the honourable Prime Minister and (UP CM) Yogi Adityanath. Should it be assumed then that they are also involved in his crimes? This is a photograph of Asaram Babu with the PM. It can't be said that the PM is responsible for his crimes... You are trying to defame AAP before polls on Amit Shah's direction... If someone has committed a crime, strict action must be taken. The police must stop being a puppet in BJP's hands," Singh said.

Dec 16 case: HC to decide on plea against stay on execution

Murder convict who managed to flee arrested

Gurgaon: Three days after “8 to 10 people” allegedly opened fire at a police van and shot an Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) to help flee two murder convicts who were serving their sentences in Bhondsi

prison, police said the convict who successfully managed to escape on Saturday was held from the forest near Patla village on Monday. The other convict, who was admitted to hospital after be-

ing injured during the chase, has also been discharged and formally arrested.

Kapil and Naresh, who were trying to free the convicts, were arrested on Saturday. **ENS**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE DELHI High Court is likely to pronounce on Wednesday its order on the Centre's plea against stay on execution of the four convicts in the December 16 gangrape-murder case.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait had on February 2 reserved order on the Centre's plea after holding special hearing on Saturday and Sunday.

The Centre and the Delhi government have challenged the trial court's January 31 order staying “till further orders” the execution of all the four convicts — Mukesh Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar Singh (31) — who are lodged in Tihar Jail.

Earlier in the day, the victim's parents urged Justice Kait to expeditiously decide on the Centre's plea.

On Saturday, President Ram Nath Kovind rejected the mercy plea of Vinay. The Supreme Court had also dismissed a plea filed by Pawan seeking a review of its order dismissing his juvenility claim.

“As of now, Mukesh has exhausted all his legal remedies including the clemency plea which was dismissed by President on January 17. His appeal against mercy plea rejection was thrown out by the Supreme Court on January 29. The curative petitions of Vinay and Akshay have also been rejected by the apex court. Subsequently, Akshay filed his mercy plea before the President. No decision has been taken on it yet. Pawan has not filed his curative and mercy petitions yet.

Initially, on January 7, 2020, the trial court had issued death warrants for January 22 against the convicts. A second death warrant was issued by the court on January 17 for February 1.

The four were convicted and sentenced to death in September 2013.

6 DECISION 2020 DELHI

I HEREBY DECLARE



AMANATULLAH KHAN (46)
AAP, Okhla

TOTAL ASSETS (2020)

₹ 3.93 CRORE

MOVEABLE ASSETS

₹ 20.49 LAKH

CASH: ₹ 2.16 L

JEWELLERY: ₹ 16.40 L

IMMOVABLE ASSETS

₹ 3.73 CRORE

Assets

Agricultural land ₹ 66 L

Non-agricultural land ₹ 2.71 Cr

TOTAL ASSETS (2015)

₹ 1.99 CRORE

MOVEABLE ASSETS

₹ 13.85 LAKH

IMMOVABLE ASSETS

₹ 1.86 CRORE

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION:

Class 12



PARVEZ HASHMI (65)
Congress, Okhla

TOTAL ASSETS (2020)

₹ 59.99 LAKH

MOVEABLE ASSETS

₹ 2.87 CRORE

CASH: ₹ 4.75 L

JEWELLERY: ₹ 57.32 L

IMMOVABLE ASSETS

₹ 11.14 CRORE

Assets

Agricultural land ₹ 2.55 Cr

Non-agricultural land ₹ 1 Cr

Houses ₹ 6.59 Cr

Commercial buildings ₹ 1 Cr

TOTAL ASSETS (2015)

₹ 30.22 CRORE

MOVEABLE ASSETS

₹ 14.23 LAKH

IMMOVABLE ASSETS

₹ 2.88 CRORE

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION:

MSc (Chemistry), AMU

BALLOTIN

Will clear Shaheen Bagh once BJP comes to power: Thakur

New Delhi: Union Minister Anurag Thakur said the "process of clearing Shaheen Bagh will begin once the BJP comes to power after the Delhi polls". Thakur was recently banned for campaigning for controversial remarks at a poll rally. **ENS**

28 KEY PROMISES IN CRISP DOCUMENT

AAP manifesto comes with preamble, builds on *bijli-paani* and education

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

FOUR DAYS before the polls, the AAP Tuesday launched its manifesto, a slim seven-page document that promises to uphold the preamble to the Indian Constitution, alongside a list of guarantees and proposals, some new and some old.

At the launch, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the manifesto lays down a vision to get Delhi to the "next level", and turn it into a world-class city, building on fundamental improvements made over the last five years in education, health, power and water.

"For that, the cooperation of the people of Delhi as well as the Union government is needed," Kejriwal told reporters.

Divided into two broad segments, the manifesto carries 10 guarantees made by the party previously, and 28 pointers covering a range of areas — starting from the Delhi Jan Lokpal Bill to the demand for full statehood.

The party's 2015 manifesto had 70 pointers spread over 12 pages, carrying a lone image of Kejriwal on the cover. The 2020 one, drawn up by a three-member committee, is less text heavy, more colourful, and carries five pictures of the AAP chief.

"When every child will get good education, when every person will receive good healthcare, when safety and dignity will raise the confidence of women, when every household will get cheap power and water, when every individual will take the country forward rising above religion and caste, only then will India's Tricolour flutter with pride," says the manifesto's cover page, which Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said was the "preamble".

The next page states, "Aam Aadmi Party makes a commitment to the people of Delhi to serve and uphold Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India as fundamental to our governance model... Having built the foundation, now is the time to accelerate the pace of development of Delhi."

"AAP will not only continue all its pro-people policies such as 200 units of free electricity, 20 kilolitres of free water every month, free bus rides for women, focus on education

MIX OF OLD AND NEW



Sanjay Singh, Manish Sisodia, Arvind Kejriwal and Gopal Rai at the launch of the manifesto, Tuesday. Prem Nath Pandey

DESHBHAKTI CURRICULUM Announced in August 2019, through the curriculum, which will be introduced in Delhi government schools, the AAP aims to teach the "real meaning" of patriotism, to counter BJP's "warped view" on nationalism. The manifesto merely mentions that the curriculum will be introduced building on the successes of the entrepreneurship and happiness curricula.

24x7 MARKETS IN DELHI Markets in key commercial areas to be established where shops, restaurants can remain open round the clock. This will make Delhi a bustling 24x7 hospitable city and also contribute to tourism and overall economy. The Maharashtra government recently announced a similar move, which is already being implemented in Mumbai.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW SAFAI KARAMCHARIS AND ₹1 CRORE FOR DECEASED SAFAI KARAMCHARIS: The party has promised to reassess the required number of safai karamcharis as per the 2011 census. ₹1 crore will be paid to the next of kin of those who die while performing cleaning tasks.

ENHANCE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ECONOMY: Initiatives to be undertaken to connect housewives with job and business opportunities. Women shall be provided cheap capital and requisite skills for this purpose.

DELHI JAN LOKPAL BILL, SWARAJ BILL Promises that figured in 2015 manifesto as well but did not materialise.

FULL STATEHOOD The plank on which the AAP had contested the Lok Sabha polls, in which the party faced a debacle. The party says that it will continue to push for full statehood for all of Delhi except the areas under NDMC, which houses "only 3 per cent of the city's population."

DOORSTEP DELIVERY OF RATION Party says modalities worked out, paperwork done, initiative to be rolled out within one year of taking office.

WORLD CLASS ROADS Redesigning of 40 roads to be taken up on a pilot basis.

■ **Emphasis on developing soft skills of youths through special spoken English and personality development classes.**

■ **Ownership rights for resettlement colonies and regularisation and registry of unauthorised colonies.**

■ **Will pursue with the Centre the proposal to include Bhojpuri language in the eighth schedule.**

and health, but has also drawn a roadmap to make Delhi a truly world class city in the next five years," the manifesto states.

The Prashant Kishor-founded I-PAC, which is advising the AAP, was a key player in the drafting of the manifesto. On its suggestion, the AAP adopted a staggered approach, as part of which it first released a report card, followed by a guarantee card and finally the manifesto.

Opponents lash out

The BJP called the AAP manifesto a "bundle of lies" while Congress described it as "hollow". "It shows that AAP has failed completely in the last five years. This manifesto is again promising to bring Jan Lokpal Bill and Swaraj. It is a copy paste of the 70 promises made in 2015," Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari said.

Criticising the AAP for "repeating promises made before", Delhi Congress chief Subhash Chopra said, "AAP's promise to appoint new safai karamcharis is a big joke as not only did their government not regularise the sanitation workers on contract, but also delayed their wages, which resulted in sanitation workers striking work many times to get their salaries."

Will BJP bet on Shaheen Bagh work? Jury is out

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, TUGHLAKABAD, MEHRAULI, FEBRUARY 4

IF THE BJP's aggressive, high decibel campaign for the February 8 Delhi polls, with its obsession with Shaheen Bagh, was aimed at harnessing people's frustration at traffic jams created by the protest, it worked.

But if it was meant to consolidate votes in favour of the party candidates, the election pitch — which seeks to pit Prime Minister Narendra Modi against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal — might not yield the desired results.

Modi's popularity and acceptance in the city are intact, despite the malaise in the economy and criticism over the Centre's failure to tackle joblessness. Voters laud the Prime Minister for "bold steps" he has taken — from Article 370 to Ram Mandir — but are quick to add that local issues are a bigger concern than national ones when it comes to choosing a government for the state.

"Modi ji is at the Centre; we re-elected him with more votes to protect the country. But we have to choose Arvind Kejriwal for the work he has done for Delhi," Amit Kumar De, a resident of Tughlakabad, said.

Parvinder Verma, a committed BJP voter, agreed: "When it comes to the nation, it's Modi ji. But this is a state election. Even if we vote for the BJP, Modi ji cannot be the Chief Minister of Delhi."

While De, a factory worker, was fulsome in his praise for facilities Kejriwal's AAP government had introduced in government

schools, which he feels have put them on a par with private schools in the neighbourhood, Joginder, a young driver, appreciated the way the local AAP MLA, Sahi Ram Pehalwan, was "available always to his voters".

This kind of a response from the ground could have prompted the BJP — which sees an election victory as a stamp of approval for initiatives it has taken since coming to power at the Centre last year — to focus its campaign around Shaheen Bagh. Typically a party that effectively highlights the failures of the incumbent government, the BJP seems to have realised that poking holes in AAP's governance is not resonating with voters. This could explain why top leaders, right from Prime Minister Modi to Home Minister Amit Shah, have mentioned Shaheen Bagh in their election speeches.

Votes apart, criticism of Shaheen Bagh appears to have many takers. De, Verma, Azad Kumar, also a cab driver, and almost everyone assembled near a tea stall in Tekchand village spoke disapprovingly of the anti-CAA protest there. For them, the protest is unnecessary, and the protesters a menace. Some also bought into the BJP's claims that the protest had been organised by the AAP.

"Had Shaheen Bagh not been there, it would have been even better for Kejriwal," said De. Asked Azad: "Would you appreciate some people sitting on dharna in front of your house, blocking people coming to your house?"

Villagers said the protest, which has crossed 50 days, has adversely affected their life, income and peace of mind. "Wo bolte hain shanti se protest kar rahe hain, lekin



From Prime Minister Modi to UP CM Yogi Adityanath, Shaheen Bagh has featured prominently in the BJP's campaign speeches ahead of the Delhi polls. Tashi Tobgyal

ashanti faila rakha hein," said Sachidanand, who drives a van. Azad said authorities ought to deal with them harshly. "We should have a CM like a Yogi ji (Adityanath). Only then will it be controlled."

Amit Kumar, a doctor, said Shaheen Bagh has changed the campaign, and added that the government should have held discussions with the women sitting on protest.

In conversation after conversation, it is evident that protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act have deepened fault lines across the city.

"Modi ji ne achcha kiya, inhe bhagaana hai, saara danga ye log karte hain," Aneasha, who lives in a colony near Bhagwan Valmiki Mandir in New Delhi constituency, said. In

South Delhi's Mehrauli, Vivek, who runs an eatery, said: "What's wrong in asking Muslims to get their citizenship certificates? There are so many troubles because of them."

The BJP campaign has also tried to portray the polls as a battle between "desh bhakt" and "desh drohi." As a small crowd waits for Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's rally in Mehrauli's Kusum Khatri, speaker after speaker reminds the voters: "The choice is between forces of anarchy and patriots"; "this election is an opportunity for you to support those who protect the nation"; "it's your time to defeat the separatist government in Delhi".

Despite the polarising campaign, work on the ground remains the key factor.

Among 4 new promises, 24x7 markets, more safai karamcharis

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE AAP'S 2020 manifesto has four promises which did not find mention in any official document of the Delhi government in the last five years, or in statements by ministers or party leaders. The promises — the launch of 24x7 markets, the appointment of new safai karamcharis, job creation for homemakers and simplification of criteria to obtain OBC certificates — are among the 28 initiatives that form part of the AAP manifesto launched Tuesday.

Of the 28, 13 are carry-overs from 2015 manifesto, which got stalled at various levels, while 11 promises, which were not part of the previous manifesto, have been spoken about in the last few years.

While the proposal to appoint new safai karamcharis is new, the promise to extend compensation to those workers dying while performing their duties is not new. The 2015 manifesto had said, "On the death of a safai karamchhari on duty, Rs 50 lakh will be given to the bereaved family." That proposal has not been implemented yet — which families of police, armed forces and fire services personnel who fell in the line of duty benefited from — but AAP has now promised to enhance the compensation to Rs 1 crore per family.

The doorstep delivery of ration proposal — one of the flashpoints of an AAP government-Centre tussle — also finds mention. Jasmine Shah, one of the three members of AAP's manifesto committee, said the initiative will be rolled out within a year of taking office. "The roll out plan has been worked out and the paperwork is clear," he said.

Sources said the manifesto had several other specifics, especially on health, including a framework for protection of doctors at workplaces, but all that had to be removed to keep the document concise.

Some promises still lack clarity. It is not immediately clear how the AAP plans to appoint safai karamcharis as the municipal corporations do not fall under the elected government's jurisdiction. The promises pertaining to Jan Lokpal Bill, Swaraj Bill and even the proposal related to 24x7 markets will require close coordination and a working relationship with the Centre and police, which was missing for a better part of the last tenure.

SADAR BAZAR All candidates known faces, tough to tell which way wind is blowing

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

IN NORTH Delhi's Sadar Bazar constituency, voters say the contest is emerging to be a three-cornered one between the sitting MLA, a sitting councillor and a former councillor.

All three candidates of the main parties in the fray are known faces in at least parts of the constituency — Aam Aadmi Party's Som Dutt won the seat in both 2013 and 2015 Assembly polls, Bharatiya Janata Party's Jai Prakash is the sitting councillor from Sadar Bazar municipal ward and the chairman of North Delhi Municipal Corporation's standing committee, and Congress's Satbir Sharma was elected councillor from the Kishanganj ward both in 2012 and 2007. They are all also residents of



Crowded and broken roads, lack of work and overhead wires are some concerns aired by people in the constituency. Tashi Tobgyal

the constituency. In the well-known Sadar Bazar wholesale market area, residents speak of dissatisfaction with the work done here. The Pahari Dhiraj area of the market is dominated by Hindu traders. Among the issues residents point out are congested and broken roads, lack of parking space, and law and order problems such as pickpocketing. Overhead wires are draped haphazardly over buildings, and no mohalla clinics have come up in the area.

Lakshman Saini (49), who owns a shop that sells spare parts for coolers, said, "The two main issues in this area are traffic and encroachment. The current MLA has not done anything and is not even seen here. He is not suitable for the position but he might sail through in the Kejriwal wave, Jai Prakash has a good relationship with the locals here." Several traders in the market speak of a dip

to be as much as 75%. Further away in the constituency, at Bara Hindu Rao, retired mechanic Ziauddin painted a bleak picture of the economic situation. He said, "All other work is meaningful only if people have employment. Here you see that people who labour and work with their hands are not getting work. But what can the state government even do about this situation?"

Many residents in the area are migrant labourers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and have not registered as voters in Delhi. They speak of long waits at labour chowks for work to come by. The cloud of economic uncertainty notwithstanding, residents say the sitting

MLA's work is unsatisfactory. "Imran Hussain's Ballimaran constituency is nearby, and people can see that he has done a lot of work there. Here, roads are broken and there are parts with no electricity. The water supply is poor in interior parts of the gullies. People have a lot of respect for Kejriwal and will vote for him. But it appears that, overall, BJP might gain more votes this time," said Muhammad Rehman, who runs a tyre shop.

In the Old Delhi part of the constituency, residents talk of a two-way fight between AAP and BJP, with residents of Muslim-

dominated localities leaning towards 'the broom'. A greater part of the constituency — Kishan

Ganj, Pratap Nagar, Padam Nagar, Shastrri Nagar, Anand Parbat and Inderlok — lies outside the old markets. At Shastrri Nagar, where AAP's Dutt himself resides, residents said though work had been done by the government and the sitting MLA, they anticipate a three-cornered contest. Unlike the Old Delhi part of the constituency, Singh, a resident of Padam Nagar, is known and well regarded here. Campaign songs of the various parties blared through the streets every few minutes. Stickers bearing faces of all three candidates are plastered across the walls of closely packed residential buildings. Than Singh, who runs a tea shop in the area, said, "It's very hard to tell which way the wind is blowing here. Kejriwal is *badhiya* but Satbir Singh is a very old figure around here. The BJP candidate is also good".

CONSTITUENCY WATCH
SADAR BAZAR



I HEREBY DECLARE



SHIVANI CHOPRA (40)
Congress, Kalkaji

TOTAL ASSETS (2020)

₹63.30 LAKH

MOVEABLE ASSETS

₹63.30 LAKH

CASH: ₹78,000 L

JEWELLERY: NA

IMMOVABLE ASSETS

NIL

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Barrister at law (BVC), Inns of Court School of Law, London. PGDiploma in Professional and Legal Skills



BRAHAM SINGH (56)
BJP, Okhla

TOTAL ASSETS (2020)*

₹29.64 CRORE

MOVEABLE ASSETS

₹49.39 LAKH

CASH: ₹1.5 L

JEWELLERY: ₹12.39 L

IMMOVABLE ASSETS

₹29.15 CRORE

Assets

Agricultural land	₹3.13 Cr
Non-agricultural land	₹6.80 Cr
Houses	₹15.32 Cr
Commercial buildings	₹3.90 Cr

TOTAL ASSETS (2015)

₹16 CRORE

MOVEABLE ASSETS

₹28.41 LAKH

IMMOVABLE ASSETS

₹15.72 CRORE

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION:

Turner, IIT, Malviya Nagar

BALLOTIN

No jobs in Delhi for youth: Manmohan

New Delhi: Taking a jibe at the ruling party for being unable to provide employment to the youth, former PM Manmohan Singh claimed the Congress, if it wins, will provide major impetus to jobs. At a public meeting in Rajouri Garden, Singh said: "Despite studying and spending money, the youths are not being able to get jobs. The unemployment rate in Delhi in the last four months was 15%, which is much higher. Congress will work towards bettering the job scenario," said Singh, taking a dig at the ruling party. **ENS**



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the rally in Dwarka, Tuesday. Praveen Khanna

AT DWARKA RALLY

Modi says opponents cry for terrorists, question airstrike

ABHINAV RAJPUT

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Wednesday targeted the Aam Aadmi Party for "stalling" Central government schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, and asked if people fell sick outside of Delhi, will mohalla clinics go to them. He was speaking at a rally in Dwarka in support of candidates from West and North West Delhi ahead of the February 8 polls. Unlike his speech on Monday, Modi did not mention Shaheen Bagh on Tuesday.

"Ayushman Bharat Yojana has a speciality that will make you understand its benefit... if a person in Delhi, who can be entitled to its benefits, goes to some other state and falls sick, such as Gwalior, Bhopal or Kanpur, will the mohalla clinic go there?" he asked.

Targeting Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, he said: "A person who feels the pain of the poor, will he keep them away from government schemes?"

Modi also targeted the opposition for "asking for proof" of surgical strikes in Pakistan and "doing politics" over the Batla House encounter at a rally. "Delhi doesn't want politics that weaken India's side during a terrorist attack. It allows enemies to launch an attack on India through such statements," the PM said.

"During surgical strike and airstrike, people sitting in the government here, who are nowadays asking for your vote... do you remember the kind of statements they gave? Is the anger there or not? Shouldn't it come out during polls?" he said, appealing to the people to vote for the BJP to "teach its opponents a lesson".

"These people can cry for terrorists of Batla House, put police forces in the dock to help them, but cannot develop Delhi," he said.

Listing the achievements of the Centre, Modi spoke about building peripheral expressways, giving ownership rights to residents of unauthorised colonies, opening more bank accounts for the poor than the population of the US, and building more houses than

the population of Sri Lanka.

Modi also said that opposition parties were spreading lies and rumours about the Citizenship Amendment Act, and people of Delhi need to understand this.

In his first campaign speech in Delhi on Monday, Modi told a rally in Karkardooma: "Seelampur ho, Jamia ho ya phir Shaheen Bagh, beete kayi dinon se Citizenship Amendment Bill ko lekar pradarshan hua. Kyu ye pradarshan sirf ek sanyog hai? Ji nahi, ye sanyog nahi, ye ek prayog hai. Iske peechhe rajneeti ka ek aisa design hai jo rashtra ke sauhard ko khandit karne ke irade rakhta hai."

("Be it Seelampur, Jamia or Shaheen Bagh, the past few days have seen protests against the Citizenship Amendment Bill. Are these protests merely a coincidence? No, this is an experiment. Behind this is a political design which intends to destroy the amity of the country.")

The national capital goes to the polls on February 8 and the results will be declared on February 11.

Which nationalist speaks of dividing country in every speech, asks Rahul

ASTHA SAXENA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

FORMER CONGRESS president Rahul Gandhi and his sister and senior leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for promoting divisive politics and not addressing real issues like unemployment. Addressing a public gathering at South Delhi's Sangam Vihar, Rahul also blamed the Modi-led government at the Centre and Arvind Kejriwal-led state government for failing to provide jobs to youth.

"Narendra Modi apne ap ko desh bhakt kehte hain lekin apne har bhashan me ek hindustani ko dusre se ladwate hain... Ye kaise desh bhakt hain jo din bhar, 24 ghante, hindustan ko baantne ki baat karte hain (Narendra Modi calls himself a nationalist but in every speech he turns Indians against each other... What type of nationalist talks about dividing India)," he said.

Rahul said that countries around the world believe in India's calibre and in the ability of 'Made in India' to beat 'Made in China' products. He also pointed out how countries are eager to invest in India, with an eye on the untapped youth demographic. Alleging that Modi government has handcuffed the youth, he said that till the time they are not set free, no one can defeat China.

"But Modi ji doesn't want to give employment to India, he says he doesn't need to do

it. He wants to divide Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christians. He wants to destroy the unity of the country. He wants to have a 'New India' which is full of violence, hatred, unemployment," he said.

Hitting out at Kejriwal, Rahul questioned the AAP's record in building new schools, hospitals and flyovers in the last five years. "He came to power by spreading lies about the Congress party. What has he done to create jobs? How many new schools, hospitals, flyovers, and Metros has he started?" he asked.

Meanwhile, Priyanka took a dig at Prime Minister Modi on his "sanyog-prayog" remarks on Shaheen Bagh, asking whether the rise in unemployment was a coincidence or his experiment.

"When PM comes to give a speech in front of you, he does not even make a mention of it (unemployment). Can he tell us whether the job losses were a coincidence or an experiment. Can he tell us that in 35 years, the unemployment rate is the highest, was it coincidence or his experiment?," she said, adding that 3.5 crore jobs have been lost in the last five years in seven important sectors.

Hitting out at AAP for claiming credit for the work done by former Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit, she said "They (AAP) say they have done work in the field of education, but highest number of schools and universities were built at the time of Congress. Congress built all the hospitals in Delhi."



Rahul and Priyanka at the public meeting in Sangam Vihar, Tuesday. Tashi Tobgyal

In Chhatarpur, it's AAP's work versus BJP's history

ANANYA TIWARI

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

A CONSTITUENCY that was carved out in 2008 and has elected an MLA each from the BJP, Congress and AAP since, South Delhi's Chhatarpur is an area where allegiances have changed thrice.

The area is a mix of urban villages, posh farmhouses, unauthorised colonies and JJ clusters. Those who live in JJ clusters and the unauthorised colonies have expressed appreciation for the work done by the AAP, but many villagers continue to be unmoved from their traditional stance of voting for the BJP.

An area dominated by gujar voters, the villages that are part of Chhatarpur have brought the BJP to power three times since 1993.

In Jaunapur village, BJP remains a string contender because of its central leadership. Satpal Ambavata (48) a kirana store owner, said, "I really like Modi, and that's it."

Between 1993 and 2008, the area was part of the Mehrauli constituency. After delimitation in 2008, close to 90% of what was earlier the Mehrauli constituency comprised the Chhatarpur constituency.

And while the BJP has traditionally held sway in the area, AAP MLA Kartar Singh Tanwar is a popular choice, especially in the JJ clusters and unauthorised colonies. He is up against three-time BJP MLA Brahm Singh Tanwar and Satish Lohia from Congress.

At the Sambhav Bapu JJ cluster colony,



The constituency is a mix of urban villages, posh farmhouses, unauthorised colonies and JJ clusters

owner of a food shop and head of the area Aman committee Mohammad Younis (65) said, "Tanwar stopped demolition of the JJ colony. No other MLA has been like that. He has done a lot here — made the roads, improved water supply, given electricity for free, and established schools."

Ritik Nayak (19), who grew up in Shanti Colony, said the schools in the area had seen a lot of improvement. "I have seen schools improve in front of me. Earlier, kids would be running around, there was no discipline, the building crumbling. Now, there is cleanliness, technology and students are better off. I love Modi ji, but for CM, I will vote for Kejriwal," he said.

Cong has most candidates with family legacy

ASTHA SAXENA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

CHILDREN AND spouses of several candidates from all three political parties are taking forward the legacy of their families in the upcoming assembly polls. Among them are six candidates from Congress, one from BJP and one from AAP.

Shivani Chopra, who has been fielded by the Congress from Kalkaji, has stepped into the shoes of her father and Delhi Congress chief Subash Chopra, a three-time MLA (1998-2013) from the same constituency. A law student from Delhi University, Chopra is a Barrister from England.

"Even though I can't fit in his shoes, I want to create my own niche. What really inspires me is that he is always accessible to everyone. People still have his mobile number. I want to have this type of connection... the need of the hour is to introduce new faces," she said.

Other second generation candidates fielded by the party are former Delhi minister Yoganand Shastri's daughter Priyanka Singh; former Model Town MLA Kunwar Karan Singh's daughter Akanksha Ola; Nangloi Jat MLA Birender Singh's son Mandep Shokeen; former Ambedkar Nagar MLA Chaudhary Prem Singh's son Yaduraj Chaudhary; and former Mustafabad MLA Hasan Ahmed's son Ali Mehendi.

Excited to contest from the same constituency as her father, Priyanka Singh (41) said working in RK Puram will not be difficult

Declare CM candidate and debate with me: Kejriwal to BJP

SOURAV ROY BARMAN

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4



Subhash Chopra's daughter Shivani is contesting from Kalkaji

for her. "This is my first election and as an elected representative, my aim will be to address daily issues of residents with innovative solutions. Stepping into the shoes of my father is a difficult task — he has raised the bar so high I feel no politician today can match it," she said.

From AAP, Jitender Singh Tomar's wife Preeti, is contesting from Trilokpur. "I am the sitting MLA of the constituency, but now I want to concentrate on farming. Taking my place, Preeti has entered the political sphere and she will surely win the elections. Jitender ho ya Preeti, baat ek hi hai. People know our work and they will vote for us," Tomar said.

BJP's Rajiv Babbar, son of O P Babbar, is contesting from Tilak Nagar. O P Babbar held the seat in 1993, 2003 and 2008. He contested again in 2013 and 2015, but lost to AAP's Jarnail Singh.

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Tuesday challenged the Bharatiya Janata Party to declare its Chief Ministerial candidate within a day, saying he is ready for a public debate with the person pitted against him.

Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal said the BJP must make the announcement for the sake of a healthy democracy, where people eyeing public office must be answerable to the people.

"Both the BJP and AAP manifestos are here. Now what is required in a democracy is a debate on the promises made by both the parties. The people should be able to question and the parties should explain how the promises made by them are achievable. I want the BJP to declare its Chief Ministerial candidate and I am ready for a debate with that person. It can take place at a place of their choosing," said the chief minister.

The AAP chief said that two TV anchors, "one of their choice and another of our own choosing", can moderate the debate.

In the absence of a CM face, every vote to the BJP will be "a waste", he said, adding that Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is leading the BJP's campaign in Delhi, has no right to call the shots on who the CM will be in a functional democracy.

"Amit Shah says vote for us and I will pick the CM. In a democracy, people decide their Chief Minister. Amit Shah cannot decide who the Chief Minister will be. People have the right to elect their own CM. Shah is, in a way, telling people, 'give us a blank cheque, I will put the name there'. The Constitution does not give that right to Shah," he said.

The CM said that the AAP is straightaway telling people of Delhi that every vote to the AAP will essentially "be for Kejriwal". "Where will the votes to BJP go? In the absence of a face, it will go to waste. People are saying today if we vote for the BJP, what if tomorrow the party makes some illiterate and useless person the CM? What if that person is not able to run Delhi? I am ready to debate if they declare the CM face by 1 pm tomorrow," he added.

Meanwhile, Amit Shah said on Twitter: "Kejriwal wants to hold a debate with the BJP's Delhi CM candidate. He should know that a small BJP worker is good enough to have a debate with him on Delhi's fake development. And in any case, every Delhi resident is a BJP CM candidate."

1,600 PEOPLE ARRESTED IN 2 MONTHS

Cops keep an eye out for 'musclemen' as poll crimes spike

JIGNASA SINHA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

POLICE HAVE arrested over 1,600 people in the last two months for their involvement in crimes related to the upcoming assembly election in Delhi.

This figure is over double the approximately 700 persons arrested before the 2015 election.

The accused were allegedly held for either defacing property, carrying arms or illicit liquor. Some of them are known as 'musclemen' — bodybuilders or gym-owners who are used by politicians to intimi-

date voters or give 'freebies'.

Sharat Kumar Sinha, DCP (PCR), said, "The police took action against 7,311 people as part of preventive measures under the Excise Act. More than 967 people were caught in and around Delhi for allegedly carrying illicit liquor. We have seized 87,000 litres of liquor."

Around the 2015 Delhi assembly election, the excise department took action against just 1,065 people, out of which a total of 267 people were arrested for carrying illicit liquor.

Police said that during election, many smugglers are found giving liquor to influence voters in the city.

TALE OF 2 POLLS		
ARMS	2015	2020
FIR	47	374
People arrested	65	410
Arms seized	48	466
EXCISE		
Arrests	272	964
Liquor seized	267	967
	35,000 li	87,000 li
Cash recovered	₹33.3 L	₹4 cr

Another issue that cops face is defacement of property. Police said any defacement of property related to a political rally or entity violates the model code of conduct.

"Over 40 party workers have been arrested for defacing public property. Many of them are musclemen — 27 people from AAP, six from Congress and three from BJP," said the police.

The police have also caught 508 people for allegedly defacing property. In 2015 elections, only 163 people were caught for defacing public property.

People carrying licensed or illegal arms were also caught for allegedly intimidating

people or carrying arms and ammunition. DCP Sinha said, "We have seized over 466 arms in the last two months and 410 people have been arrested. Over 7,217 licensed arms were also seized or collected by the police. Our picket teams are on the lookout for any offender who might be carrying arms across borders."

During the 2015 polls, the police recovered 48 illegal arms and over 65 people were arrested in such cases.

Speaking about rallies and political events, the police said they have recorded 24 cases where parties or candidates didn't seek permission from police before conducting a rally.

BRIEFLY

SC to hear plea on Shaheen Bagh protest

New Delhi: The Supreme Court will Friday hear a plea citing difficulties to local residents, business and commuters on account of the ongoing protests against the new citizenship law at Shaheen Bagh and the consequent closure of Road No 13A between Mathura Road and Kalindi Kunj by the police. In a related development, the top court asked Delhi BJP leader Nand Kishore Garg, who prayed for urgent listing of his plea highlighting difficulties due to traffic disruptions on account of the Shaheen Bagh protests, to approach its mentioning officer. **ENS**

2 held for killing tailor

New Delhi: Two men were arrested for allegedly killing a tailor and demanding Rs 15 lakh in ransom in outer Delhi's Mangolpuri, police said on Tuesday. The accused, identified as Pankaj and Saleem, were nabbed following raids at several locations, they said. A Koan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer), said probe revealed that Pushpender had gone to Saleem's house in Mangolpuri around 8.30 pm on Sunday. Both of them allegedly had some grudge against him, police said. Pankaj hit him on his head with a small gas cylinder at the instance of Saleem, DCP said. **PTI**

Man kills wife for 'taunt on waking up late'

New Delhi: A 45-year-old man was arrested on Tuesday for allegedly strangulating his wife after she taunted him in front of her sister for waking up late, police said. The accused has been identified as Fazruddin, a resident of Ghaziabad. He had come to Delhi with his wife for her medical treatment. A case of murder has been registered at Neb Sarai police station. **PTI**

Baby dies of cold, mother says fell ill at the protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

A FOUR-MONTH-OLD infant whose parents have been protesting at Shaheen Bagh died, allegedly due to exposure to the cold, on the night of January 29, with the hospital where he was taken saying a post-mortem report is awaited to ascertain the exact cause of death.

At Jamia Nagar on Tuesday, the child's mother, Nazia (24), said she would continue protesting. Sitting with her two surviving children — a one-year-old boy and a five-year-old girl — near the stage, she claimed the new citizenship law was the reason for her child's death. "I would bring him to the protest to fight for the future. He was only a witness in the fight; he played with his siblings. Protesters gave him a Tricolour



The child's mother, Nazia. **ANI**

bandana, they loved him."

The woman's husband, Mohammed Arif, used to work at an embroidery shop, but claims he quit after the violence at Jamia last month and has been driving an e-rickshaw ever since.

The parents said the infant, Mohammed Jahaan's, last photo

was taken at the protest, with the same bandana people have given him. Nazia told protesters: "I am not afraid of anyone now. I have already lost a child. I don't mind if the lives of my other two kids are sacrificed for the same cause. My family might not support my decision, but it is for a greater cause."

Recalling the night of the child's death, Arif said: "On January 29, Nazia came home around 10 pm with the kids. She said that Jahaan had a fever. I gave him some milk and we went to sleep. At night, around 2:30 am, he was crying and we decided we would take him to the hospital the next day. But in the morning, we found him dead. He was not responding, there was no pulse."

The parents rushed the baby to Alshifa Hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. The hospital said an autopsy report is awaited.

'Motive unclear', police get two-day custody of Shaheen Bagh shooter

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THREE DAYS after Delhi Police arrested a 25-year-old man for allegedly firing two shots in the air at the protest site in Shaheen Bagh, the investigating agency has not been able to ascertain the motive, they told a Delhi court Tuesday.

Kapil Baisala, the accused, was arrested from Shaheen Bagh Saturday and sent to two-day police custody Sunday. He was produced before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Gurmohina Kaur Tuesday, where police asked for four-day custody. The court granted police two more days of custody.

In videos shot by eyewitnesses, Kapil can be heard saying "Jai Shri Ram" and "hamaare desh mein kisi ki nahi chalegi, sirf Hinduan ki chalegi (No one except Hindus will have their way in our country)".

In their remand application, police said, "He is to be interrogated to know the exact motive of firing. He is changing his version again and again, and not fully cooperating... His father and brother are deliberately avoiding joining the investiga-



Kapil Baisala, the accused

tion..."

Police said that Kapil was active on social media platforms and that they needed his custody to "verify his social media accounts to ascertain the persons or groups he was connected with".

Arguing that they had just a day to investigate the case, police submitted to the court: "Identity of the supplier of the recovered firearm is yet to be ascertained and the accused has not disclosed his complete details so far. He is misguiding the investigation by changing his version...again and again."

Police said they have so far managed to ascertain that the weapon was procured from

Bihar. They also submitted that Kapil had "purposely deleted his WhatsApp account". However, the account has now been restored, but it couldn't be analysed due to lack of time, police said.

When the court asked what the Crime Branch had done in the last two days, they said that Kapil's motorcycle has been seized, and they have begun interrogating Kapil's friend, who accompanied him to Shaheen Bagh. They were also scrutinising his friend's WhatsApp data.

Police claimed Kapil is "associated with various groups on WhatsApp and he is to be interrogated regarding other members of these groups, keeping in view of a larger conspiracy... He is to be interrogated against several conversations/chats/call recordings, etc, found present in their mobile phones, which are to be thoroughly scrutinised."

Kapil was represented by his lawyers, M S Sisodia and Akhil Rexwal, who opposed his further custody, arguing that the alleged weapon and mobile phone have already been recovered, and that the WhatsApp messages were not relevant to the case.

67 PEOPLE QUESTIONED

Month on, JNU probe stalled, evidence hard to come by

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

FIVE DAYS after around 100 masked persons went on a rampage inside the JNU campus for around four hours on January 5, leaving 36 students, teachers and staff injured, the Delhi Police had released the names of "nine suspects" — all students. But a month later, a special investigation team of the Delhi Police Crime Branch has not been able to identify a single attacker they can arrest with evidence.

An SIT team comprising 20 police personnel is working round-the-clock and has made a camp office inside the admin block of JNU. "The SIT has so far questioned 67 people, including 10 suspects, whose pictures were released by the SIT's chief, DCP Joy Tirkey, during his first press conference. Since then, no briefing has been called by him. The SIT has recorded the statements of injured students, teachers, wardens, security guards and the students against whom allegations were made," a senior police officer said.

Sources said most of the statements given to them had one thing in common — that the "attackers were wearing masks and they don't know anything about them".



Masked men and women went on a rampage in JNU on January 5

"Some of the injured students have alleged they were beaten up by students who belonged to Left outfits. The same allegations were made by the rival groups. After their questioning, around nine names came and we questioned them too, but we don't have any evidence against them. We are now trying to gather some evidence which will corroborate their involvement in the violence," an officer said.

Sources said it had come to fore during probe that a back-up of CCTV footage of the campus was available and SIT retrieved

the data with the help of experts of Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL). "The footage has been given to FSL. Police have sent a letter to Google, after giving the email addresses of several students and members of the WhatsApp groups 'Unity Against Left' and 'Friends of RSS', to seek details of their messages, pictures and videos. It is learnt that police believe the back-up of these messages may be available with the email account," the officer said.

The SIT has questioned students Akshat Awasthi and Rohit Shah in connection with the

January 5 violence on JNU campus. "They were questioned separately for around three hours each and both of them denied their involvement in any type of violence. The SIT summoned them after a TV news channel conducted a sting operation in which both the first-year students of JNU claimed to be ABVP members and 'confessed' their role in the violence," police sources said.

During the questioning, the duo reportedly told police that they were approached by some people who assured them help in getting a national profile in the students' union and asked them about their role in the incident. "Awasthi claimed before police that he was sleeping in his room when the attack happened at Sabarmati Hostel. Just for self-adulation, they exaggerated their involvement. They also informed police that they have filed a complaint against the TV news channel for allegedly cheating them by conducting a sting operation," police sources said.

Earlier, the SIT tried to summon another student, Komal Sharma, whom they served a notice over the phone and asked to join the investigation. However, she has not complied and her phone is switched off. Police had identified Sharma as the masked woman seen in purported videos of the violence.

Coronavirus: Five China evacuees moved to Safdarjung hospital for observation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

AS MANY as five people — three men and two women — admitted to the ITBP facility in Chhawla Camp have been sent to Safdarjung Hospital for observation. There are 406 people admitted in the quarantine facility.

"All five of them have been sent to the hospital for observa-

tion. It is just a precautionary measure," said Vivek Pandey, spokesperson, ITBP.

Meanwhile, another five persons, who were kept in isolation at the Manesar facility after showing symptoms of cough and cold, have tested negative for the virus.

According to officials, the team of army doctors and officers are interacting with students on a regular basis to know their problems and keep them

motivated.

"Residents are provided with TV facilities, carrom boards and cards for indoor recreation. Many of them are also playing volleyball. Laundry is set up in the camp itself with the complete set changed every second day. The linen is dipped in hypochlorite and then washed with hot water and dried in sun. Rooms are fumigated with a strong disinfectant," said an official.

Meanwhile, the centre-run RML hospital admitted another suspected coronavirus patient Tuesday morning. A 38-year-old man, who returned to the country on February 2 after staying in China for last 12 years, was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday. "The sample has been sent and the reports are awaited. There are seven suspected patients admitted in the hospital," said Smriti Tiwari, spokesperson, RML.

10 IN PARLIAMENT BUDGET SESSION

MOTION OF THANKS TO THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

'Oppn talks Preamble, forgot to read UCC, cow protection'

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

ACCUSING OPPOSITION parties of "engineering" the protests against CAA, NRC and NPR at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh, BJP members in Rajya Sabha, speaking during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, on Tuesday said that the Opposition, in its predilection for reading the Preamble of the Constitution, had failed to read Articles that deal with implementation of Uniform Civil Code in the country and the State's obligation of prevent cow slaughter.

Opening speaker, Union minister Bhupendra Yadav's mention of reported comments by Congress MP Kapil Sibal seeking postponement of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title suit on the ground that it would benefit the BJP in elections elicited a strong rebuttal from Sibal, who walked into the House a little later. Sibal threatened to take the matter to the House ethics committee.

Sibal denied strongly that he had ever made that statement. Yadav said he had only quoted newspaper reports that had been cited in the House earlier, too.

Yadav listed achievements of the NDA government over the last six years, which he said tried to "take everyone forward" while the Opposition created an "atmosphere of divisiveness". He said: "You changed the Constitution and implemented Emergency



Bhupendra Yadav with Prakash Javadekar at Parliament House. Renuka Puri

(in 1975), but now you have developed this habit of reading the Preamble. I would urge you to also read Article 44, which deals with Uniform Civil Code, or Article 48 on prevention of cow slaughter. But without doing that you are raising a hue and cry about Article 370 (which provided special status to erstwhile state of J&K), which was a temporary provision.... You profess faith in the Constitution, yet you changed its Preamble..."

The BJP, Yadav said, "kept losing elections from 1950s to 1990s but we never ques-

tioned the electoral process. You raise questions on EVMs the moment you lose."

Citing the presence of Congress leaders such as Digvijaya Singh, Shashi Tharoor and AAP's local MLA Amanatullah at Shaheen Bagh, Yadav said: "Clearly you are giving moral, if not other kind of support to the protesters. When a young girl from that stage makes violent statements against the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister, one can imagine the kind of poison you are injecting into young minds. You are free to go there but did you try to tell them that this (CAA) will not affect them?"

Both Yadav and Sudhanshu Trivedi, who seconded the motion, spoke at length on the resolution of the Ayodhya dispute. Trivedi rued the fact that even "Ramallala Virajman", who was a party in the case, was asked to prove that it was his birthplace with documents. Referring to the documents in Persian that were submitted in court, he said, referring to the Opposition's criticism of the NRC process, "These are people who asked Ramallala for documents but decline to furnish their own."

Earlier in the morning, Chairman Venkaiah Naidu held his ground in the House despite disruptions during Zero Hour. His refusal to yield resulted in normal functioning of the House. When some members met him in the chamber seeking opportunity to make Zero Hour submissions, Naidu asked them to first impress upon their leaders to ensure normal functioning of the House, according to a source.

Oppn MPs tear into Govt: Don't hide failures with divisive issues

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

AN UNPRECEDENTED 431 amendments, running into 44 pages, were moved in Rajya Sabha to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address by 12 MPs, including those from the Congress, Trinamool Congress (TMC), Samajwadi Party, DMK, CPI and the CPM.

Among the amendments are those moved by Congress's Digvijaya Singh and Madhusudan Mistry that regret the fact that the President's address fails to mention the resentment caused by the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the NRC, and the NPR.

Singh moved one on the lack of mention of the incarceration of former Jammu and Kashmir chief ministers and how "social tensions and economic policies led to lower GDP and loss of employment". Mistry moved an amendment on failure to recognise the plight of Muslims in India and their dismal socio-economic conditions.

MDMK leader Vaiko moved an amendment regretting the lack of mention of the need to implement recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee for farmers, to "broad-base CAA to confer citizenship to Sri Lankan Tamils", and to review the "discriminatory and communal" law to stop protests across the country.

TMC's Sukhendu Sekhar Roy moved amendments seeking additions at the end of the Motion of Thanks to the President's ad-

EXPLAINED

E.

431 amendments: Immaterial, but embarrassing for govt

THESE AMENDMENTS do not make any material difference to the government's functioning. But it is an embarrassment for the government that Rajya Sabha also expresses regret to the President's speech, which was drafted by the government. This is a tool used by the Opposition to express strong differences with the ruling party.

dress regretting its failure to "acknowledge hardships and anxieties of people" as a result of CAA, as also the government's failure to allay people's "fear of a nationwide NRC and NPR". Amendments moved by Roy also regret that the address did not take into account "hardships of peaceful protesters, including students who were illegally detained, denied medical care, lathi-charged, fired at, and sub-

jected to other forms of torture".

Leader of Opposition in the Upper House Congress's Ghulam Nabi Azad, accused the government of using "divisive" issues such as CAA, triple talaq law and abrogation of Article 370 to steer public attention away from its "failures" to create 10 crore jobs, bringing back black money, and keeping its promise of giving Rs 15 lakh to every citizen.

Countering BJP MP Bhupendra Yadav's accusation that opposition parties "engineered Shaheen Bagh," Azad said, "It is your creation."

He said: "This government is demolishing institutions and on August 5 last year, it demolished the institution of Parliament by bringing a Bill by stealth; no time was allocated by the Business Advisory Committee, the Bill was not circulated... Former CMs are (now) in jail. I was here (in Delhi) because of Parliament session, or else I would also have been there (in J&K)," Azad said.

TMC's Roy tore into the government for its changing stance on NRC. He called the government "dashanan (ten-headed)", which makes "different speeches from its different heads". He said Home Minister Amit Shah had intervened during the Question Hour in Parliament when his junior minister was fielding questions on NRC to emphatically assert that a citizens' register across the country is on its way.

TRS's Keshava Rao said it is not possible to change the Constitution with a law. Elamaram Kareem (CPI-M) said, "The President's address is missing real issues of the country: the economic crisis."

FROM THE GALLERY

FROM THE CHAIR

RAJYA SABHA

"I am not a lawyer but I listen to them very intently"

HARIVANSH, Deputy Chairman, when Congress leader Anand Sharma referred to him as a lawyer.

LOK SABHA

"Should we vote on this issue? Whatever honourable Mulayam Singh-ji says, we'll agree."

OM BIRLA, Speaker, on whether the House should take a break for lunch.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"You changed the Constitution in 1976 and implemented the Emergency but now you have developed this habit of reading the Preamble. I would urge you to also read Article 44 which deals with Uniform Civil Code or Article 48 on prevention of cow slaughter."

BHUPENDRA YADAV, Union minister, speaking on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address.

Nothing called 'Love Jihad', says MoS Reddy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

GOVERNMENT ON Tuesday told the Lok Sabha that there was nothing called "Love Jihad" under the existing laws in the country and that the Constitution gave everyone the freedom to practice and propagate any religion.

In reply to a written question on whether the government was aware of Kerala High Court saying there was nothing called Love Jihad, Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy said: "The term 'Love Jihad' is not defined under the extant laws. No such case of 'Love Jihad' has been reported by any of the central agencies."

The minister, however, said two cases from Kerala involving inter-faith marriage have been probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). It is understood the minister was referring to the Hadiya case where the court had directed the central agency to probe alleged links of her husband with Islamic State and if she had been converted before marriage forcibly. The central agency was also probing another case related to the issue in Kerala.



PARTY MATTERS

DMK MPs Kanimozhi, Dayanidhi Maran, A Raja, and other leaders at Parliament House on Tuesday. Renuka Puri

RS: Slogans stop as Oppn raises issues

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

RAJYA SABHA Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu usually adjourns the House at the first hint of disruption. However, on Tuesday, he allowed the House proceedings to go on, and what followed in the Upper House was an interesting protest, with the opposition Congress and TMC indulging in unusual slogan-shouting tactics.

As Naidu called the first member to raise his Zero hour submission, TMC's Derek O'Brien stood up, saying he had given a notice under Rule 267 seeking a discussion on the CAA-NRC protests. Naidu reminded O'Brien that he had given a ruling on a similar notice on Monday and pointed out that the issues that he wanted to raise can be touched upon during the discussion on the President's Address.

"All these things can be discussed in a peaceful manner, healthy manner," Naidu said. "If you don't want to respect the rules, respect the Chair and then (if you) want to shout and then say something outside, I leave it to your wisdom. I would like to tell the members whoever want to hear...I have already given a



Opposition members protest in the well of Rajya Sabha. RSTV/PTI

ruling yesterday on the same subject...please start the debate. Discuss the issue. And then if you want to criticise it, criticise it. If you want to support it, support it," he said.

The Chairman said the rules regarding Rule 267 are clear and citing his long experience in the House. He argued, "I have experience of some 20 years of what is Rule 267, how many times it was allowed and under what circumstances it was allowed..." He did not adjourn the House and proceeded with Zero Hour. Members of the Congress and the

TMC then rushed to the Well of the House and started shouting slogans.

Five members — Vaiko, Vikas Mahatme, Binoy Viswam, Banda Prakash, Prashanta Nanda — spoke amid the slogan-shouting. The slogans, however, stopped when AAP's Sanjay Singh started speaking on the delay in the execution of the four convicts in the December 16, 2012 gangrape case. After Singh, JD(S)'s D Kupendra Reddy spoke about traffic problems in Bengaluru. Members of the TMC and the Congress did not go back to their seats but stood silent in the Well, listening to Reddy.

The slogan-shouting resumed as soon as the next speaker — BJP's Kirodi Lal Meena — spoke about the locust attacks on crops in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Punjab. BJP members like Union Minister Parshottam Rupala questioned the tactical slogan-shouting by the opposition. From then on, the slogan shouting stopped whenever opposition members stood up to speak, and resumed as soon as others rose.

The courtesy was not extended to A Navaneethkrishnan, Prasanna Acharya and V Vijayasai Reddy, the floor leaders of the AIADMK, BJD and the YSRCP, respectively.

PRADEEP KAUSHAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

NATIONALISM, SECULARISM, communalism, CAA, and Shaheen Bagh marked speeches of MPs as the discussion on Motion of Thanks to the President's address continued for the second day in Lok Sabha.

BJP member from Medinipur, West Bengal, Dilip Ghosh said his state suffered the most as anti-CAA protesters burnt trains and dislocated railway tracks.

Using the barb "Shikhandi" — the transgender warrior in 'Mahabharat' used by Arjun as a human shield to kill Bhishma in the battle of Kurukshetra — to describe the ruling TMC in Bengal, Ghosh, also the state unit BJP chief, said: "Unfortunately, these shikhandis are in power there. The police did nothing. They did not use their baton, nor did they file an FIR."

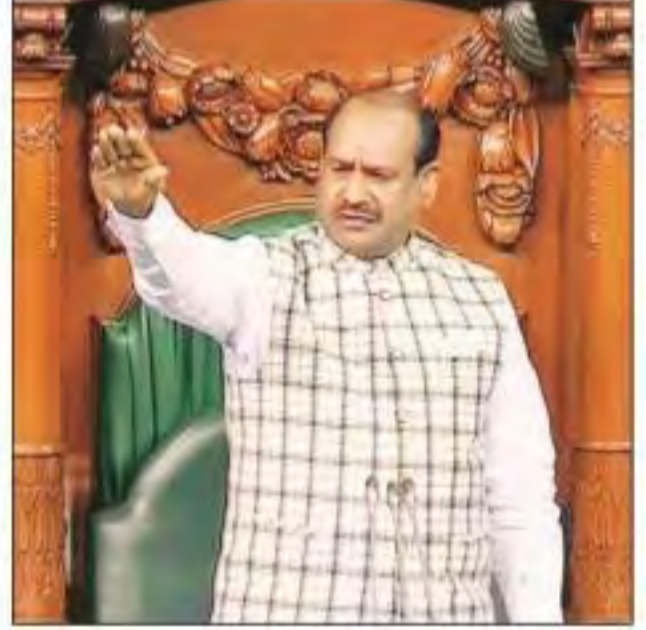
He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was shown "go back" banners during his Kolkata visit but Rohingya Muslims and "infiltrators from neighbouring countries were welcomed". He alleged that anti-CAA protesters, including those at Shaheen Bagh, are enjoying "biryani bought with foreign money".

Speaker Om Birla expunged Ghosh's remarks regarding functioning of West Bengal Assembly.

Rajiv Ranjan Singh Lalan, of BJP ally JD(U), accused the Opposition of spreading misinformation on the CAA and said, "Efforts are being made to vitiate the atmosphere for political gains...Yes, we have to contest elections, but not at the cost of playing with the unity of the country."

When TMC's Saugata Roy tried to interrupt him, Singh sought to know how could a state government refuse to implement a law passed by Parliament.

Nama Nageswara Rao (TRS) wondered how the government can make India a \$5-trillion economy in four years when that requires a growth of at least 16 per cent per year. He said the terms of the 15th Finance



Speaker Om Birla in Lok Sabha. PTI

Commission were "unjust" to states in southern and eastern India.

Taking potshots at the government's purported failures on different fronts, Congress's Shashi Tharoor said it should name its schemes "sit down", "shutdown" and "shut up, India". He accused the government of dividing the country into "Hindus versus Muslims, Us versus Them, and Ramzade versus I won't say".

Tharoor also criticised the government for quoting Mahatma Gandhi for its defence of the "draconian" new citizenship law.

AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi said, "I would like to ask Prime Minister Modi if he calls himself a brother to Muslim women, why is he afraid of them now?"

National Conference MP Hasnain Masoodi said, "Abrogation of the special status (of J&K) has been a historical blunder and no less than a misadventure."

D Ravikumar (DMK) regretted that it did not speak about the plight of people belonging to the SC and ST communities.

Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav said the President's address did not mention the Ganga and said the river can be clean only when other rivers, including the Yamuna, are clean.

5 QUESTIONS

'BJP destroying every single thing this country is built upon'

TRINAMOOL CONGRESS MP MAHUA MOITRA spoke to **ABANTIKA GHOSH** on why her party felt the need to move amendments to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address and why she accused the government of demonising dissent.

The Trinamool Congress has never moved amendments to the President's speech. What changed this time?

We have never moved amendments to the President's speech as a mark of respect for constitutional authority. But this time the issues were so stark, so divisive that we felt the need to move amendments. My senior colleague Sougata Roy has therefore moved amendments.

In your speech in the House, you accused the government of "demonising dissent". Why did you say that?



Mahua Moitra on Monday targeted the government over fielding BJP MP Parvesh Verma to speak first in the Lok Sabha.

Look at what (Union minister) Anurag Thakur said. He exhorts people to shoot! These are our *daadis*, our children. Are they terrorists? Also look at the appallingly poor taste, the brazenness of fielding somebody (BJP MP Parvesh Verma) who is banned for 96 hours by the EC to open the debate in Lok Sabha when that time is not even over. This is sticking a finger in the eye of every Indian.

But don't you think the repeated references to Shaheen Bagh are benefitting BJP in the Delhi elections?

This is not about the Delhi Assembly elections. Every day they are destroying every single thing that this country is built upon. It is lies and suppression of facts when it comes to issues such as the economy and jobs. On the other side is the stoking of fear in the name of religion. Shaheen Bagh is just a manifestation of the anger. They should remem-

ber that greater mandates than their 303 have been reduced to zero by the people.

But, as the government repeatedly points out, the Citizenship Amendment Act that the opposition is protesting against now, has been passed by Parliament.

They have the numbers, they have the majority. They can do what they want. Tomorrow if they want to put 356 and divide Darjeeling, we can only watch. It's a question of moral authority. You have the rope, you decide whether you use it to hang people or to draw water from a well.

Is your party in touch with other Opposition parties for the passage of the amendments?

That I cannot say. My party leaders will talk about that.

GOVT & POLITICS

11



UNITED WE SIT

AT PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's election rally in Dwarka on Tuesday, Union minister Gajendra Shekhawat surprised BJP workers with his friendly gestures. Given charge of party candidates from constituencies in South Delhi, Shekhawat, who oversaw all preparations for Modi's rally, did not take the seat meant for him on the dais. Instead, he sat with party workers in the audience. He was seen giving instructions and tips to party workers throughout. When Modi began his speech, Shekhawat pointed out important points that they have to take to the voters.

OFFICER'S CHOICE

A SENIOR IPS officer with a paramilitary force in J&K was recently repatriated to his cadre. The officer apparently tried to stall his transfer first and did not leave for a good two months after the orders were issued. Once he did, he left some of his household stuff and his dog behind. Later, to get his dog out of the Valley safely, the officer ensured a convoy of six vehicles transported it to Jammu, from where it was taken to his home.

BUDGETING AIM

AT A consultative meeting of the National Confederation of Dalit and Adivasi Organisation, an umbrella organisation of SC, ST and OBC groups, Rajya Sabha MP from the Congress P.L. Punia slammed the Budget and said unequal allocation of funds has been made to these groups despite their numbers, and that the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry is the only department to make dedicated allocations for these groups. Punia said despite total funds being spread across 40-odd departments in different ministries, it was not spent for the benefit of the backward classes, nor was there any mechanism in place to monitor them.

CJI to decide on plea for live-stream of proceedings, says SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE SUPREME Court on Tuesday referred an application seeking implementation of its earlier order on live-streaming of proceedings in nationally important cases to Chief Justice of India S A Bobde for a decision on the administrative side.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra told advocate Indira Jaising, who had moved the plea, that it is for the CJI to take a call on the September 2018 judgment of the court, which had favoured live-streaming and that no compulsory directions can be given.

Justice Mishra said the administrative side cannot be compelled to frame rules by way of a judicial order. The court noted that what was okayed by the court in 2018 was a pilot project. "Let's see if the pilot project works...but not like this. You can't compel us to enforce anything."

Attorney General K K Venugopal suggested that the matter be referred to the full court reference, but the court reiterated that it is for the administrative side to do whatever required.

Jaising's plea referred to the



CJI Sharad Arvind Bobde

September 2018 judgment, wherein the court had given its nod to live-streaming of court proceedings and said this will bring more accountability and enhance the rule of law. On the benefits of allowing this, the court had said, "Above all, sunlight is the best disinfectant."

The project, it ordered, "must be implemented in a progressive, structured and phased manner, with certain safeguards to ensure that the purpose of live-streaming of proceedings is achieved holistically and that it does not interfere with the administration of justice or the dignity and majesty of the court hearing the matter and/or impinge upon any rights of the litigants or witnesses."

As a pilot project, only cases of constitutional and national importance being argued for final hearing before the Constitution Bench be live-streamed initially, the court said. For this, it said, permission of the court concerned will have to be sought in writing in advance.

DISQUALIFICATION OF 11 AIADMK MLAs

Top court seeks TN Speaker response on DMK plea

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE SUPREME Court on Tuesday sought information from the Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker regarding the status of a disqualification petition moved against 11 AIADMK members for voting against CM E Palaniswami during a confidence vote in 2017.

"We think that the three years delay is unnecessary," a bench of Chief Justice of India S A Bobde and Justices BR Gavai and Surya Kant said after Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the DMK, submitted that the disqualification petition was

moved in March 2017. The 11 MLAs include Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam. "Tell us whether you are going to take action. If yes, then when and how," the court said and referred to the recent judgment in the disqualification case of a Manipur minister.

The SC had in the Manipur matter said that Speakers of the Lok Sabha and assemblies should decide such disqualification within a "reasonable period" of maximum three months. Sibal contended that the Speaker was yet to even issue notice on the plea.

The court will now hear the matter on February 14.

Air defence, peninsular, logistics commands on the table: Gen Rawat

Pointing to soaring pension bill, Chief of Defence Staff suggests raising retirement age of soldiers

SUSHANT SINGH NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

OUTLINING THE roadmap for joint/integrated theatre commands of the armed forces which will start this year with the creation of a joint Air Defence Command, General Bipin Rawat, Chief of Defence Staff, Tuesday said informal discussions on creation of other integrated theatre commands have been mooted, and these commands will be created within three years but will initially be assigned to the services chiefs.

He expressed concern over the rate at which the bill for defence pensions is increasing every year, although he believes that retired soldiers, particularly from combat arms, need to be looked after once they hang their uniform. Responding to criticism of the Budget allocation for defence, he said it is "more of a management issue than a funding issue".

"The amount for defence pensions this year is around Rs 1.33 lakh crore (Rs 133,825 crore), and last year it was somewhere around Rs 1.10 lakh crore (Rs 117,810.44 crore). This is a very sharp jump. If this is the way the jump keeps happening, tell me it is sustainable?" he said.

He said the solutions lie in increasing the retirement age of soldiers to 58 in roles which do not need them to be young and robust, subject to medical fitness, and taking the soldiers of combat arms who retire at a young age into the Defence Service Corps (DSC). By increasing the retire-



CDS General Bipin Rawat with Army Chief General M M Naravane and Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar during a meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

ment age, he expects at least one-third of the Army to serve till that age, thereby reducing the ratio of pensioners to serving military personnel.

A study to decide on increasing the retirement age has been ordered which is expected to come later this year, and a decision on the subject can be expected by the end of the year. But he said that as far as retired soldiers are concerned, "we need to care for men who matter and give their youth in service of the nation".

General Rawat said that the

other answer is "increasing TAisation", i.e., create more battalions of Territorial Army for civilians who can be mobilised for two months every year for specific duties, such as truck drivers being used to drive military trucks in summer months for winter stocking in high altitude areas.

"As far as the defence budget is concerned, if it is not sufficient, how is every service chief saying that they are ready? It is about the management of your budget, where you buy whatever is available with money in hand and are

EXPLAINED The CDS & the big picture

INDIA'S FIRST CDS has his task cut out. As principal military adviser to the Defence minister on the three services, and head of the Department of Military Affairs, he will oversee the process of creation of joint/integrated theatre commands. While creating synergy, he has to provide the big picture to the government to help it with its policies on defence.

very serious about what you want and buy it," he said.

He said that priority in procurement is extremely important as "deficiencies really matter in getting some modern equipment and some ammunition". He also highlighted the need to focus on creating indigenous capacities for production of ammunition, as a lack of surge capacity during periods of urgent requirement are an area of weakness.

General Rawat praised the Director General of Border Roads Organisation for getting Rs 4500 crore from other users for construction and maintenance of roads. He said innovative models for getting constructed family accommodation in lieu of defence land in certain areas will have to be explored to release more funds for modernisation.

On the issue of Navy getting a third aircraft carrier, General Rawat did not sound hopeful when he said "look at our priority, what will be its effect on the Air Force and the Army. We have to look at the how the economy develops and how the other two services are developing. We have to see the impact of the third aircraft carrier".

He laid out the roadmap for integrated theatre commands, ruling out the US and Chinese models in favour of a unique model suited to Indian conditions. He said "we will have to look at our own system and there is a way on which we can go for jointness. We have to study our threats and priorities and based on this, we need to resolve a theatre. But we will retain the flexibility for inter-theatre and intra-theatre commands".

Describing it as a "low hanging fruit", General Rawat said the process will start with the creation of an Air Defence Command this year. The other integrated theatre commands will be created in 2021 and 2022. He said the proposal is for a Peninsular Command for the eastern and western coastlines, a joint training command, and a joint logistics command wherein some informal discussions have been held with the three services but no formal interaction has happened so far. He said the creation of theatre commands for the borders with China and Pakistan will be based "on the bigger picture" where "re-sourcing has to be seen".

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com



Anant Kumar Hegde

Hegde replies to BJP notice: Never named Gandhi, reports on remarks incorrect

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

KARNATAKA BJP MP Anant Kumar Hegde, who has sparked a controversy with his alleged comments on Mahatma Gandhi and the non-cooperation movement during the freedom struggle, has held the party leadership that he did not mention Gandhi or Quit India Movement in his speech, and that the controversial remarks attributed to him were "incorrect", it is learnt.

Sources in the BJP said Hegde, a former Union Minister, sent a reply to party president J P Nadda and the party's disciplinary committee following the party's showcause notice to him on Monday.

Sources said the party leadership will study his reply and decide on further action, if any. There is a view in the party that what Hegde said might be in bad taste but the content was distorted in some media reports, a senior BJP leader said.

In his explanation, Hegde is learnt to have claimed that he did not use words like "nau-tanki" or "drama" to describe the freedom struggle led by Gandhi. He is learnt to have informed the party that he had said non-cooperation movement was not the only form of struggle that got India freedom.

Addressing a public event in Bengaluru on Saturday, the Lok Sabha MP from Uttara Kannada constituency was quoted as saying, "Some people keep saying we got independence because someone sat on satyagraha. The British gave independence out of sheer frustration. On reading history books, my blood boils. Such people are termed 'Mahatma' in our country."

Hegde, who has over time drawn criticism for his controversial comments, including one praising Nathuram Godse, also purportedly said on Saturday that the freedom movement was "one big drama." He was quoted as saying: "None of these 'leaders' were beaten up by the police even once. The freedom movement by itself was one big drama. It was staged with the approval of the British."

Goa Speaker disallowed starred question on Sanatan Sanstha: Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE PANJIM, FEBRUARY 4

GOA ASSEMBLY Speaker Rajesh Patnekar on Tuesday disallowed "without explanation" a starred question posed by Congress MLA Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco on the workings of the Sanatan Sanstha, the legislator claimed.

Lourenco said, "There were serious questions to be asked and it (my question) was listed. I had pointed to the functioning of the Sanatan Sanstha. The organisation's name has come in the murder cases of both (activist Govind) Pansare and (rationalist Narendra) Dabholkar, and even in the murder probe of (journalist) Gauri Lankesh. The lawyer for the organisation is also being probed and weapons have been found on them. How is all this not valid question?"

According to the MLA, the question was put forward in the Monsoon Session but didn't make it to the board. It was later listed as a "Postponed" and "Starred question" and was listed for Tuesday's House hours.

"I will write to the Chief Minister. This is Goa, and the neighbouring states of Maharashtra and Karnataka are probing them. How then should the MLAs in the state not discuss or know what is shaping inside this organisation?" he said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP president J P Nadda and party leaders Nitin Gadkari, Harsh Vardhan and others in New Delhi on Tuesday. Renuka Puri

Best Budget under current global economic scenario: PM to party MPs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Tuesday lauded the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as the "best Budget under the current global economic scenario" and said that even critics are coming around to this view despite attempts by many to "mislead" people on it, sources said.

Addressing a BJP Parliamentary Party meeting, the first in this session, Modi is learnt to have also hailed the Bodo accord and the agreement to settle members of Bru-Reang

tribe in Tripura. He called them "historic" successes of his government in this decade, which will usher in an era of peace in the Northeast after decades of bloodshed and violence.

According to sources, Modi told the party's Parliamentarians that this has been the outcome of the persistent efforts of his government, as it did in curbing Maoist rebellion and boosting development in areas hit by Maoist violence.

States in the Northeast used to see frequent blockades and bandh, bringing life to a standstill for days, but things have now changed for the better, Modi is reported to have said in

the meeting. In the meeting, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan gave a presentation on novel coronavirus, and how their respective ministry is dealing with the situation.

Addressing party MPs for the first time after he took over as the BJP national president, J P Nadda asked the members to campaign in Delhi, where the BJP is fighting a fierce battle to dislodge the AAP government. Nadda said the party has drafted a plan to get 240 BJP MPs to campaign in Delhi localities populated mostly by the poor for the February 8 election.

Modi and other senior leaders felicitated Nadda on his new role.

DEC 16 GANGRAPE

People restive over delay in execution, says Venkaiah Naidu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

ON A day the parents of the December 16, 2012 gangrape victim urged the Delhi High Court to expeditiously decide the Centre's plea challenging the stay on execution of the four convicts, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said people are becoming "restive" because of the repeated postponement, and asked "all concerned" to see to it that the judgment is implemented at the earliest.

Naidu's remarks came after AAP MP Sanjay Singh demanded the intervention of the President or the Chief Justice of India in the matter. Naidu said the matter was "very sensitive and serious", and argued the court judgment must be implemented at the earliest. He said people across the country are concerned and agitated over the delay in execution of the court order.

"Whatever be the reason, I don't want to take names, I don't want to mention about any institution, but it is very important that those are concerned with this should fulfill this responsibility at the right time," he said.



Venkaiah Naidu in Rajya Sabha. PTI

"We cannot allow this sort of thing to go on in the country because people have been given every available legal opportunity. After getting all those avenues and opportunities exhausted, on some pretext or other, if things are getting postponed, people are becoming restive. This has to be understood by one and all. And all concerned my see to it that the judgment is implemented at the earliest," he said.

Raising the issue, Singh said that while the entire country was on the streets following the gangrape in 2012, the culprits have been able to get a new date every time to delay the execution. Meanwhile, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar blamed the Delhi government for the delay in executing the punishment.

Lobbying peaks as BSY set to expand Cabinet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 4

KARNATAKA CHIEF Minister BS Yediyurappa's efforts to expand his Cabinet to fill 16 vacancies has triggered severe lobbying from aspirants and complaints by a section of BJP legislators that some regions of the state are being overlooked.

Yediyurappa has announced he will induct 13 ministers on Thursday. Of these, 10 portfolios are earmarked for Congress and JD(S) rebels who helped BJP form the government last July, and subsequently won the bypolls for BJP, while three posts will go to BJP veterans, he has said.

Three posts are likely to remain vacant. While there is a general ac-

ceptance in BJP on the decision to give 10 Cabinet berths to the new entrants — and fulfill a promise made while seeking their help to topple the then Congress-JD(S) government — a note of dissent has arisen in BJP over indications that CP Yogeshwara, who lost the 2018 Assembly polls on a BJP ticket from Channarayana is among the three BJP leaders likely to be inducted.

A group of BJP MLAs from the Hyderabad-Karnataka region (comprising districts in north-east bordering Telangana) met Yediyurappa and urged him to not create regional imbalances in the ministry by favoring leaders from certain regions and candidates who lost the polls.

Similar concerns have been expressed by MLAs from coastal Karnataka, where BJP swept 17



BS Yediyurappa

of 19 seats.

According to these BJP leaders, the proposed expansion will see induction only from regions such as Belagavi in Bombay-Karnataka (north-western districts) and Bengaluru in south Karnataka, as many rebels and BJP aspirants are from these regions.

Raju Gowda, BJP MLA from Shorapur in Yadgiri — who is aid to have played a key role in en-

ting the rebels to join BJP — said after meeting Yediyurappa: "All of us, MLAs from Hyderabad-Karnataka region, met the CM and asked him to give representation to our region. Some regions are over-represented in the Cabinet. Our request is for representation for the regions of Hyderabad-Karnataka, coastal, and Mysuru-Karnataka."

Gowda also opposed the plans to make Yogeshwara a minister. He said, "Yogeshwara lost the elections. His community (Vokkaligas) are already represented in the Cabinet. If you continue to give representation for the same regions how will our regions develop?"

The BJP is believed to be pushing the case for Yogeshwara's induction to help gain foothold in rural Bengaluru,

Ramanagara and Channarayana regions of south Karnataka.

Yogeshwara, a former actor and real estate businessman, was recently at the forefront of a campaign led by RSS leader Kalladka Prabhakar Bhat to stop installation of a giant Christ statue in Kanakapura region, where Congress's D K Shivakumar enjoys massive popularity.

There has also been lobbying by two rebels who lost the bypolls on BJP ticket: MTB Nagaraj (former Congress MLA) and H Vishwanath (formerly JD(S)).

With terms of several Members of Legislative Council slated to end in June, Yediyurappa has reportedly assured rebels who lost the bypolls that they will be elected to the Upper House and subsequently be given ministerial berths.

12 EXPRESS NETWORK



CORONAVIRUS FEARS

India cancels all visas to Chinese nationals

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

DAYS AFTER it evacuated 647 Indians from Hubei province of China, New Delhi on Tuesday cancelled all existing valid visas for Chinese and foreigners who visited the country in the last two weeks.

On February 2, India had temporarily suspended e-visa facility for Chinese travellers and foreigners residing in China in view of the novel coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan.

In its announcement on Tuesday, the Indian Embassy in Beijing said, "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 of Government of India (+91-11-23978046 and email: ncov2019@gmail.com.)"

On the validity of the visas, it said: "Embassy of India and our Consulates have been receiving several queries from Chinese citizens as well as other foreign nationals, who are based out of China or visited China in the last two weeks, as to whether they can use their valid single/multiple entry visas to travel to India. It is clarified that existing visas are no longer valid. Intending visitors to India should contact the Indian Embassy in Beijing (visa2.beijing@mea.gov.in) or the Consulates in Shanghai (Ccons.shanghai@mea.gov.in) and Guangzhou (Visa.guangzhou@mea.gov.in) to apply afresh for an Indian visa. Indian Visa Application Centres (www.blsindia-china.com) in these cities may also be contacted in this regard."

The visa section of the Embassy/ Consulates of India in China can be contacted to ascertain the validity of visa before un-

dertaking any visit to India, it said.

Meanwhile, Chinese health authorities said on Tuesday that the death toll has risen to 425, with 64 deaths on Monday, and the number of those infected has touched 20,438.

The virus has spread to over 25 countries — India has reported three cases so far. All the three patients from Kerala recently returned from Wuhan.

Currently, 647 Indians and seven Maldivians, who were evacuated, have been quarantined at a medical camp in Manesar, near Delhi.

Earlier, India had asked its citizens to "refrain" from travelling to China, and had suspended travel on e-visas for those with Chinese passports and others residing in China.

As New Delhi evacuated Indians, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. China's Ambassador to India, Sun Weidong, had quoted Wang as telling Jaishankar during the phone conversation that "all should play a constructive role. We don't think it is helpful for a certain country to hype up the situation, or even create panic".

Sun had quoted Jaishankar as saying that "it is important to evaluate the outbreak in an objective and rational manner and not take action that may complicate the situation".

"At yesterday's briefing on the novel coronavirus outbreak, the WHO does not recommend travel or trade restrictions against China. We believe that India and other countries will respect this important recommendation, Wang Yi said," the Chinese envoy had said on February 4.

EXPLAINED

WUHAN EVACUATION PAGE 16



At the Kochi Medical College on Tuesday. PTI

Two Kerala students from Wuhan under home quarantine go to Saudi Arabia

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEBRUARY 4

TWO STUDENTS, who had come from Wuhan and were under home quarantine here, have slipped out of the country and gone to Saudi Arabia, disregarding the directions of the health authorities to refrain from travelling during the incubation period of the novel coronavirus.

Kozhikode District Medical Officer Dr V Jayasree said the two students had reached Kerala on

January 15. While they did not have any symptoms of the infection, they had been quarantined. They left the country two days ago.

"We have informed the state control room," Jayasree told PTI. "Our request to those under surveillance is that they should remain in isolation at home during the incubation period of 28 days, even if they do not have any symptoms, particularly those who have come from China," she said.

State Health Minister K K Shailaja said the students would be brought back immediately.

"No new cases have been reported. All those who are under isolation, including the three confirmed cases, are stable. Surveillance has been stepped up at all airports in Kerala, and health staff have been given training," said the minister.

As the number of persons under observation in Kerala for suspected exposure to the virus rose to 2,421 on Tuesday, the state health department sent text messages to them: "Kerala is proud of you. You are the brave warriors who sacrifice your freedom for the protection of soci-

STATUS IN INDIA



Screening at Delhi airport. Courtesy: Twitter

89,500
passengers screened

From 777 flights Across 21 airports

454
samples tested
with 451 samples negative

3,935
passengers under
community surveillance

As of Tuesday

NORTH UP: 4 arrested for rape bid on Dalit woman

Muzaffargarh: Four people were arrested for allegedly abducting and trying to rape a Dalit woman in Uttar Pradesh's Shamli district, police said on Tuesday. Manzur, Israr, Mukarram and Manzur abducted the 30-year-old woman from her house in Thana Bhawan town on Monday, Circle Officer (CO)

Amit Saxena said. Reportedly, the woman's brother-in-law had recently eloped with a girl related to one of the accused. The abduction and rape bid was to avenge the perceived dishonour, police sources said. "We rescued the woman and arrested the four," Saxena said, adding that the matter was being probed. PTI



The mangled remains of a passenger bus at Dhumdhara in Assam's Goalpara district. At least six people were killed in the mishap. PTI

EAST IS suspect throws shoe at judge, strikes NIA counsel

Kolkata: An alleged member of the Islamic State, who is being tried under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, on Tuesday hurled his shoe at a sessions court judge in Kolkata. The shoe, however, missed judge Prasenjit Biswas and instead hit NIA counsel Tamal Mukherjee. The accused, Abu Musa, was arrested in 2016 for

his alleged role over a blast in Burdwan in 2014. He is suspected to have links with ISIS and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh and is in judicial remand. Before throwing his footwear, Musa shouted that he did not believe in man-made laws. "The shoe missed the target and hit a lawyer who was present in the court," said a police officer. ENS

WEST Teacher held for molesting minor students in Nanded

Aurangabad: A 30-year-old teacher was arrested for allegedly molesting students at a primary school in Maharashtra's Nanded city, police said on Tuesday. The police on Monday arrested the teacher for allegedly showing pornographic video clips to 10-year-old girl students at a primary school and molesting them,

an official said. On Monday, parents reached the school and beat up the teacher, following which he was handed over to the police, the official added. A case under relevant sections of the IPC and POCSO Act has been registered against the accused, upper superintendent of police Dattaram Rathod said. PTI

SOUTH Techie kills mother, attacks brother in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: A 33-year old techie allegedly stabbed her mother to death and made a murderous assault on her younger brother before fleeing their home here, police said on Tuesday. According to police, the woman fatally stabbed her mother using a knife and attacked the brother early on Monday. The injured brother has been

hospitalised here. A search was on for the techie and the motive for her action under investigation, police said. The woman, employed as a software engineer with a company here, earlier had told her mother and 30-year old brother that she has been transferred to Hyderabad and she may have to relocate. PTI

Woman strangulated in UP restaurant, uncle suspect

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NOIDA, FEBRUARY 4

A 25-YEAR-OLD man allegedly strangulated his relative at a restaurant in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras after the family refused to allow him to marry her. Police said the 19-year-old victim was being pursued by her uncle, despite their family's disapproval.

According to police, the woman and the man had entered the restaurant at around 3.30 pm. The hotel staff told police that after the man ordered food, he approached the waiter and said he will be back in "ten minutes". The accused then walked out of the restaurant, police said.

"We received information that the body of a woman had been found in a restaurant within Kotwali Police Station jurisdiction. The hotel staff told us that the woman had been earlier spotted with a man who soon left. The woman was later found lying motionless next to the table. After she was identified, the family told us that she had gone for lunch with her relative, and they suspect him. A case has been filed for murder and investigation is pending," said Hathras SP Gaurav Banswal.

The family told police that the man had been insisting on marrying the 19-year-old, but the family had refused since they were blood relatives.

While the post-mortem is being conducted, the police found marks on the woman's neck suggesting a strangulation. The hotel staff is also being questioned and the CCTV footage will be examined.

Chinese envoy meets Health Secy over coronavirus

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

CHINESE AMBASSADOR Sun Weidong met Health Secretary Preeti Sudan on Tuesday to discuss the novel coronavirus (nCoV 2019) situation in both countries. Sudan is also learnt to have raised with Sun the issue of leave extensions for Indian students studying in China, who had travelled home before the outbreak of the virus.

"The government of India had reached out to the Chinese

government on the need to extend the leaves of some of the Indian students who are currently home from various Chinese universities in view of the nCoV 2019 situation in that country. In that connection the Chinese Ambassador met the Health Secretary. He also shared with her updates of what is happening in China and the kind of steps that are being taken there to prevent spread of the virus. She also thanked him for the Chinese government's cooperation for evacuation of close to 650 Indians from Wuhan in two



Sun Weidong

batches," said a senior health ministry source.

Sudan also chaired a review

meeting with state health secretaries and senior officials from the ministries of Shipping, Tourism, External Affairs and Home Affairs via video conferencing, in which she told them that the Prime Minister's Office is monitoring the novel coronavirus "closely and regularly".

Sudan asked states to take necessary steps for contact tracing and adequate surveillance management. She also said that in order to meet with the increasing demand of additional manpower to undertake screening at airports, states should pro-

vide required health workforce and other logistic supports to APHOS.

It has also been decided that earmarked aero bridges will be used at seven international airports — Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Cochin, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai — at dedicated gates to screen passengers so as to ensure effective prevention.

The Ministry of Tourism is coordinating with the Hotels Associations for wider self-reporting by travellers visiting religious and other tourist places in states.

Air India to suspend Delhi-Hong Kong flights from Feb 8

New Delhi: Air India Tuesday said it is suspending its Delhi-Hong Kong flight from February 8, after authorities there confirmed the death of a patient with coronavirus.

"In view of the coronavirus issue Air India is suspending its flights to Hong Kong after flying AI314 on the 7th of February 2020," said Air India chairman and managing director Ashwani Lohani on Twitter. PTI

Govt working towards developing India as defence manufacturing hub: Rajnath

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 4

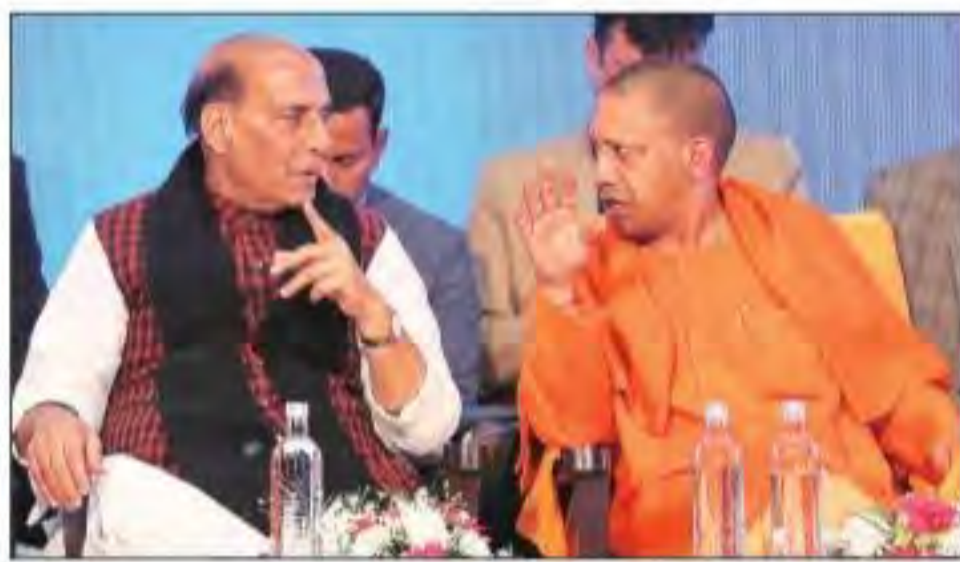
DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the Union government is working to develop India as a "defence manufacturing hub", adding that the country cannot be dependent on imported arms for a long time, and thus the target is to create a world-class domestic industry.

Speaking on the eve of the DefExpo 2020 in Lucknow, Singh said the government aims to become the third-largest economy in the world by the end of the decade.

Stating that the DefExpo 2020 is the biggest such exposition in the country, Singh said about 70 countries and over 1,000 exhibitors — including 856 Indian companies will participate. He said that the defence ministers of more than 35 countries have already arrived for the event, and there would be a special dialogue to explore and share defence capabilities.

"The prosperity and strength of this country is in the backdrop of this event as the stature of the country has increased across the world, and entire world takes India seriously," Singh said. "We are developing India as a defence manufacturing hub."

Singh said that it is his strong belief that by the end of the decade, India would be among the top three economies of the world. However, he added that India cannot depend on imports



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow. Vishal Srivastav

for long and thus the target is to develop a "vibrant" and "world class domestic industry" in which the dependence of import decreases and industry becomes self-reliant.

He said that while the target of a \$5 trillion economy might seem beyond reach, and some people might have criticised it, "if you do something out of the league, they first ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight with you and then you win".

Singh said that Uttar Pradesh has been given the opportunity to hold this international event, and it is a moment of pride for the state as many global investors are showing interest in investing in UP. He said the event would act as a flag-bearer of the government, adding that this would also ensure more job opportunities for the youth.

Earlier, Uttar Pradesh Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath announced that UP will be the first state to use 19-seater Indian-made Dornier aircrafts manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for domestic travel between cities in the state, like Lucknow and Varanasi, Lucknow and Bareilly, Lucknow and Agra, etc. He said that the foundation for the Bundelkhand Expressway would also be laid this month in Chitrakoot district.

Talking about the defence manufacturing corridor in Uttar Pradesh, Adityanath said his government has identified land banks along the corridor for industries near six nodes including Lucknow, Agra, Kanpur, Chitrakoot, Jhansi and Aligarh. The CM said Uttar Pradesh has been chosen for the event as the state has huge potential — not just in terms of land bank but also in terms of better connectivity.

US envoy: Opportunity to see talent of India's defence industry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 4

US AMBASSADOR Kenneth J. Juster, who is leading the US delegation at the DefExpo 2020, here, said Tuesday that it was a "great opportunity to see the talent and innovation of India's defence industry."

The theme of DefExpo 2020 is 'Digital Transformation of Defence'. Defence exhibitions such as these demonstrate that industry in the US and India, along with our respective governments, share a common understanding regarding the nature of the modern battlefield, Juster said.

"We share the belief that, in order for India to ensure its defence and work with like-minded nations in pursuit of common security objectives, it is critical that India moves toward systems — not just weapons — that are effective, agile, and resilient. In addition, we believe that India must ultimately move toward systems that are interoperable with the equipment and networks of its security partners," Juster said.

PROPOSED SHIVAJI STATUE

Undersea tunnel mooted to reach site during monsoon

VISHWAS WAGHMODE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

AN UNDERSEA tunnel, by which visitors can access the proposed Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj memorial site in the Arabian Sea in bad weather during monsoon, is the latest idea to emerge from the committee monitoring the implementation of the project.

Vinayak Mete, the head of the memorial's project implementation monitoring and coordination committee, has sought the construction of a tunnel connecting the memorial to the shore on the ground that it would not be possible to reach the proposed Shivaji statue by boat when the sea becomes rough during monsoon.

Mete, who has helmed the committee since January 2016, and was appointed to the post by the previous BJP-led state government, raised the idea in a meeting on January 27. The minutes of the meeting were issued on Monday.

"Majority of the (committee) members present said that it is not possible to reach the memorial site during monsoon and bad weather by boats. The representatives of the project's contractor, Larsen and Toubro, also mentioned the difficulties in traveling to the site for three months during monsoon," said Mete as per

the minutes of the meeting. He added that one has to be prepared for water, electricity and disaster management for all seasons.

"So, for all these reasons and to ferry tourists during monsoon, a tunnel should be built... The public works department should gather information and submit a report on it in the next meeting," Mete said.

He further asked for details about the safest sea route to reach the memorial site, types of boats and permissions required from Maharashtra Maritime Board, Mumbai Port Trust and Navy.

According to government estimates, around 10,000 tourists are expected to visit the memorial site daily after completion of the work.

The proposed memorial — 212 m in height, including a 123.2-m equestrian statue standing atop an 88.8-m pedestal — was the flagship project of the previous Devendra Fadnavis government. It is expected to cost Rs 3600 crore. Questions had been raised about the economic feasibility of the memorial, which is to be built over 1.5 km inside the sea. The construction of the sea tunnel, a first in India, is likely to escalate the cost further.

Currently, work on the project is stalled.

PROTEST WATCH

WEST BENGAL



Members of the All India Lawyers Union at a protest rally against CAA, NPR and NRC in front of the Calcutta High Court on Tuesday. *Express*

UTTAR PRADESH

Lectures delivered as protest enters Day 19

Lucknow: The protest at Ghantaghar in old Lucknow continued on Tuesday, completing 19 days of the agitation. TV and film actor Imran Khan visited the protest site. Lectures were also delivered on the spot with former Lucknow University Vice-Chancellor Rooprekha Verma and other activists and lawyers speaking about the new citizenship law. Praising the women protesters, Imran Khan said, "This fight is not of a religion, but it is to save the Constitution

from the law which is against it. The CAA is against the Constitution..."

The Constitution gives equal rights to all." Seven cases have been registered in Lucknow against those involved in protests against CAA and NRC. While four FIRs were earlier registered at Thakurganj police station against the protesters at Ghantaghar, two were filed over demonstrations in Gomti Nagar and Mohanlalganj.

ENS

MAHARASHTRA



A protest against the new citizenship law in Govandi area of Mumbai on Tuesday. *Prashant Nadkar*

GUJARAT

Women hit the streets against CAA, NRC, NPR

Modasa: Thousands of women agitated against the CAA, the proposed NRC and NPR, by staging a sit-in at Modasa town in Aravalli on Tuesday. Waiving the Tricolour, the protesters assembled at Ghoshiya ground in Modasa and shouted slogans in protest of the CAA, the NRC and the NPR, referring to the three as "a black Act and draconian exercises". Many of the protesters were draped in Tricolour-themed Hijabs. "I am a computer engineer and a homemaker and still, I have

found the time to come to the protest site as I am agonised by this black Act... We are not just protesting but also spreading awareness among our sisters in small towns," said 35-year-old Saleha Malik, a native of Modasa. Tuesday marked the fourth such demonstration against the CAA, NRC and NPR in Modasa town. Refusing to comment on the protest, a senior official of Aravalli police said, "We had not granted any permission to the protesters."

ENS

Meerut cops cite youth's killing to block bail to riot accused

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
MEERUT, FEBRUARY 4

ON DECEMBER 20, 26-year old Mohsin sustained bullet injuries during an anti-CAA protest in Meerut. He was declared brought dead at a hospital the same day. His grieving family protested when they were denied the post-mortem report.

The Meerut police are now flagging the findings of the post-mortem report, linking Mohsin's death caused by a firearm injury to the rioting that took place. In fact, police used this to oppose the bail plea of a man booked in a case of rioting and attempt to murder which was registered at the Brahmपुरi police station in Meerut—five persons were killed during the protests in Meerut and families of the victims alleged excessive police action.

The FIR stated: "At around 3.30 pm, near Hapur adda, there were 400-500 people armed with sticks, country-made pistol and pistols. The police explained

to the crowd that prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC have been imposed... however, with intention to kill the policemen, they started pelting stones at the police vehicles. The police arrested four people — Aasif, Samir, Mohammed Ikrar and Shehzad — from the spot. They were arrested from the Lisadi gate at 6.10 pm."

Ikrar's bail application was rejected on January 1 with sessions judge Gurpreet Singh Bawa recording in his order: "The prosecution has argued that police officials were injured after all the accused attacked them sticks, bricks, rods, stones and petrol bombs... the case diary shows that police officials Imran, Satendra, Udhham Singh, Manoj Kumar, Ajay Kumar, Nazim Khan, Adhesh Pundir, Sudhir, Jitender Saxena, Dhanveer, Shabbab, Santosh, Veerpal, Satish Chandra, Ajay Kumar, Bijendra Singh, Pinku, Raghuraj Singh, Mahaveer Singh and Raj Singh were medically examined and found to have red contusion and

red abrasion. In case of Sudhir and Jitendra Saxena, the doctor recommended them for an X-ray examination. The examination reveals that there was no fracture of any bone."

"The prosecution has also submitted that during the incident Mohsin suffered firearm injury. The post mortem report has been placed, which confirms that cause of Mohsin's death was due to the injuries caused by the firearm... The allegations are serious in nature. Considering the serious nature of offence and the role of the accused — and without making any observations on the merits of the case, the bail plea is rejected," the order stated.

Court records show that while police submitted the case diary giving details of injuries caused to police personnel and Mohsin's post-mortem report to indicate that the protesters used weapons, they made no mention of any weapon being seized from the arrested accused — only the recovery of bullet shells, glasses and sticks were mentioned.

"There was firing reported at Tayuwell junction. And bullet shell and other things were recovered. The forensic team was also informed. Sticks and glass pieces that were lying on the road was also seized," the court said while recording the police submission.

While rejected the bail application, the court recorded a key defence argument based on CCTV footage, which points out that the arrests were made even before the incident took place.

"The defence has argued... that on December 20, 2019, at around 10 am, the police took him into custody. He has said that the police has falsely implicated him. It is argued that time of arrest can be verified by the CCTV installed near the house. The accused has also placed a copy of the CCTV footage of the arrest. The accused has also stated that the FIR has been registered at 3.30 pm. There are also news report that the arrest took place on December 20," the court said.

BJP a party of Dushasanas... must unite for Constitution: Mamata

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 4

CONTINUING HER attack on the Narendra Modi government over the controversial citizenship law and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said the BJP is "a party of Dushasanas" and urged people to unite to save the Constitution.

"The NPR, NRC and CAA are like black magic. TMC is not a party of Dushasanas like the BJP. They (BJP) are descendants of Muhammad bin Tughlaq and people must unite to save the country from them," she said. According to Hindu epic Mahabharata, Dushasana, the younger brother of Kaurav prince Duryodhana, tried to disrobe Draupadi after the Pandava brothers lost a bet. Tughlaq, who ruled Delhi sultanate between 1325 and 1351, undertook many administrative reforms which came a cropper.

The Chief Minister, one of the



Mamata Banerjee addresses an anti-CAA rally, in Bangaon in North 24 Parganas district on Tuesday. *Express*

staunchest critics of the citizenship law, addressed two anti-CAA rallies in Ranaghat in Nadia district and Bangaon in North 24 Parganas.

She attacked BJP leaders for branding anti-CAA protesters as "anti-nationals" and extended her support to Shaheen Bagh protesters in Delhi. She blamed BJP leaders for the firing inci-

dent at Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi. "It is because BJP leaders are instigating people. These are attempts to terrorise the protesters. They (BJP leaders) are saying 'goli maro' (shoot them). How can you shoot at protesters for peaceful agitation? Is this acceptable in a democracy?"

Seattle City Council passes resolution against CAA, NRC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 4

THE SEATTLE City Council, one of the most powerful city councils in the US, on Monday unanimously passed a resolution condemning CAA and the proposed NRC.

The new citizenship law passed by Parliament in December 2019 offers citizenship to non-Muslim minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Reaffirming Seattle as a welcoming city and expressing solidarity with the city's South

Asian community regardless of religion and caste, the resolution "resolves that the Seattle City Council opposes the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act in India, and finds these policies to be discriminatory to Muslims, oppressed castes, women, indigenous, and LGBT people".

The Indian government has maintained that the CAA, which was passed by the Indian Parliament last month, is an internal matter of the country and stressed that the goal is to protect the oppressed minorities of neighbouring countries.

The NRC exercise was conducted in Assam on the directions of the Supreme Court.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month said his government has never discussed the NRC since coming to power for the first time in 2014 and it was done only in Assam.

Introduced by Indian American City Council member Kshama Sawant, the resolution urges the Parliament of India to uphold the Indian Constitution by repealing the CAA, and to stop the National Register of Citizens, and take steps towards helping refugees by ratifying various UN treaties on refugees.

NID postpones convocation after inviting Sarabhai

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, FEBRUARY 4

THE NATIONAL Institute of Design (NID) has postponed its annual convocation ceremony, where danseuse Mallika Sarabhai, who criticised the Narendra Modi government over the new citizenship law, was invited as the chief guest, citing "unforeseen circumstances".

Sarabhai has received a letter from the institute informing that its 40th convocation scheduled to be held on Friday has been postponed. Responding over email on reports that the event was postponed because of objections to Sarabhai as its guest, the danseuse said, "The Chair Jamsheed Godrej (Managing Director and Chairman of Godrej & Boyce) invited me about four months ago through a letter and I readily accepted. I have been associated with NID and have served in their Board."

The NID, though an autonomous institute set up in 1961 by the Centre with assistance from the Ford Foundation and the Sarabhai family, is under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

"I was informed about the cancellation through a letter that went to everyone. I have not spoken to anyone nor asked. No one



Has been a vocal critic of PM Narendra Modi

has said I won't be their guest," Sarabhai added.

The institute, in a message to its graduating students, stated that the "40th convocation scheduled on Friday, February 7, stands postponed due to unforeseen circumstances". The message added that the convocation was postponed, not cancelled, and that "a new date will be communicated in due course".

NID's spokesperson said, "Attempts are being made to hold the convocation on the scheduled date. An official statement on its status is likely to be issued on Wednesday."

Sarabhai, daughter of noted dancer Mrinalini Sarabhai and Vikram Sarabhai, who is known as the father of India's space programme, has been a vocal critic of PM Modi since he was the chief minister of Gujarat. She had also joined protests against the controversial CAA in Ahmedabad.

AMU proctor quits citing 'personal reasons'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 4

ALIGARH MUSLIM University (AMU) Proctor Afifullah Khan resigned on Tuesday and Mohammad Wasim Ali was appointed as the varsity's Proctor after the former's resignation was accepted by the vice-chancellor.

An official order, passed on Tuesday, stated, "Approved the appointment of Prof Mohd Wasim Ali, Department of Law as Proctor, AMU in addition to his own duties for a period of two years or until further orders."

Speaking on Afifullah Khan's resignation, AMU public relations officer Omar Peerzada said that Khan resigned due to "personal reasons." "His resignation was on his own request," said Peerzada.

An FIR had been registered against student leaders Hamza Sufyan, Nadeem Ansari and six unidentified persons at Civil Lines police station on January 21 after the students allegedly misbehaved with Afifullah Khan. The FIR was lodged in connection with an incident on January 17 when a shoe was thrown at the proctor in protest against the varsity administration. The varsity administration had filed a complaint alleging misbehaviour by some students, led by Sufyan and Ansari.

A former AMU Students' Union president said, "This is the beginning of the battle for us students... We have been protesting since December 15 demanding the resignation of proctor and other officials for their failure on December 15. The other officials such as V-C, Dean of Students' Welfare, will also have to resign. And our protest against NRC and CAA will continue."

Bring nationwide NRC: BJP MP in Parliament

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

WHILE HOME Ministry on Tuesday said there was no plan for a nationwide NRC as yet, BJP MP from Jharkhand Nishikant Dubey demanded NRC across the country. Speaking during Zero Hour, Dubey said, "Illegal immigration is a huge problem in my state. The issues of CAA, NRC and NPR may or may not be important elsewhere but in my state it is very important... I request you to implement NRC across the country."

He also compared the current agitation against CAA and NRC with the Khilafat movement of 1919. "Whenever nationalist forces become active in this country... we must look at history... When Mahatma Gandhi launched the Swadeshi movement and the non-cooperation movement, then claiming that Islam was in danger, the Khilafat movement was started between 1919 and 1924. Congress supported the movement. This laid the foundation of country's partition," Dubey said.

"The Muslims ruled this country between 800 AD and 1857 AD. So Islam was not in danger. So today, when nationalist forces have come forward, there is conspiracy to grant citizenship to Muslims from Pakistan, Afghanistan and



Nishikant Dubey

Bangladesh for votebank politics. ... Please save the country from partition and implement NRC across the country," Dubey said even as opposition benches interrupted him.

Earlier, the House had to be adjourned about five minutes after assembly as opposition benches tried to create a ruckus over issues of CAA-NRC and statement of BJP MP Anantkumar Hegde who purportedly questioned the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi in freedom struggle.

When the House reassembled at noon, Congress Leader of the House Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury raised the issue. "There are peaceful protests going on against CAA-NRC across the country inspired by Mahatma Gandhi... such words are being spoken about him? Sir, it's disrespect to the worshipper of Ram," Chowdhury said.

Don't glorify Maoists... terrorists have links with them: Kerala CM to Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
FEBRUARY 4

KERALA CHIEF Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday said some terrorists "operating in the state" have connections with Maoists and asked Congress not to glorify the ultras as he defended the NIA taking over UAPA cases against two student activists of CPI(M).

He made the remarks in the state Assembly while opposing a notice for an adjournment motion sought to be moved by the Congress-led UDF against slapping of cases against two students under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for their alleged Maoist links and the NIA probe.

The issue generated a lot of heat in the House with both Vijayan and Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala sparring before the latter led the front members in a walkout as the Speaker disallowed the notice.

UDF leader MK Muneer, who moved the notice, contended that Taha Fazal (24) and Alan Suhaib (20), arrested on November 2 last year, were under custody without any evidence against them and demanded an explanation and withdrawal of the cases.



Pinarayi Vijayan

Fazal and Suhaib, students of journalism and law, respectively, and the CPI(M)'s branch committee members were arrested in Kozhikode with the action drawing widespread criticism in the Left-ruled state.

In his reply, Vijayan asked the opposition not to justify Maoists just because they (UDF) oppose the Left. "There is no need to justify the Maoists just because you are politically opposing the Left Democratic Front (LDF). We all know what the Maoists are doing," he said. He said "some terrorists operating in the state have some connection with the Maoists".

Chennithala mocked at Vijayan's reply to the notice and said he felt as if he was listening to Shah in the Lok Sabha. He said those who became Maoists were from the Left parties. "The police claimed that Alan scribbled Maoism Sindabad on the school wall when he was in the ninth standard. What are they saying," Chennithala said, adding the chief minister failed to explain why the two were arrested.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE PROTEST TEST

It is not the protests that threaten to divide, their demonisation does that

FINALLY, THE PRIME Minister of India broke his silence on the ongoing protests against a discriminatory citizenship law at Shaheen Bagh among other places but only to sound off key. It is no “sanyog (coincidence)” that protesters have gathered at Seelampur, Jamia or Shaheen Bagh, PM Narendra Modi said, but a “prayog (experiment)” — “iske peeche rajneeti ka ek aisa design hai jo rashtra ke sauhard ko khandit kame ke irada rakhta hai”, there is a design that aims to destroy amity in the country. That statement is problematic because it seeks to frame the democratic expression of opposition to a law passed by government as something sinister. It also appears to underline that the unseemly and downright inflammatory campaigning by the BJP ahead of the Delhi elections in the last few days and weeks is sanctioned and even encouraged by the party’s very top. If the prime minister, no less, frames the election as one between the BJP and conspirators against the nation, then Messrs Anurag Thakur, Yogi Adityanath, and Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma, who was fielded in Parliament by his party soon after being banned from campaigning for hate speech by the Election Commission, must not be seen as transgressors. They are loyal footsoldiers in a concerted assault on the norms of political civility.

The BJP has fought nasty election campaigns before and even the PM himself has gone low in the past. In the Haryana campaign last year in October, he spoke of the main political opponent’s “chemistry” with Pakistan. In the Gujarat assembly election in 2017, he had alleged that a conspiracy was hatched with Pakistan, involving former PM Manmohan Singh, to defeat the BJP. And yet, the labelling and vilification of the protests against the CAA in the course of the campaign for Delhi is different, and worse. Here, the BJP and the PM are not just aiming barbs at their political rivals but also, and more, at the people. The anti-CAA protests that have erupted in Delhi and across the country and that are overwhelmingly peaceful and evidently leader-less are being relentlessly baited and targeted by the ruling party — instead of being listened to, or engaged with. By painting Shaheen Bagh as the den of “pro-Pakistan” “anti-nationals”, “jihadis” and “urban Naxals”, the BJP and its government are not just breaching democratic etiquette but also denying agency to all those who have questions about a law that has stoked widespread concerns that go to the heart of Indian identity, equality and citizenship.

It may be that the BJP’s rhetoric will lose its harsh edge once Delhi has been won and lost. It may be that the moderating impulse that compelled the PM to take a step back from a nation-wide NRC in another speech that launched the BJP’s Delhi campaign will return. Meanwhile, this systematic trashing of the protest raises questions on the government’s willingness and ability to talk to its own people without calling them names. It is not the protests that threaten amity, it is their demonisation which does that.

DISINCENTIVE TO SAVE

Budget should have focused on creating a pool of domestic savings to finance long-term investments in infrastructure

IN AN ATTEMPT to prop up a sagging economy, the Union Budget 2020-21 has unveiled an alternate income tax regime hoping that it will increase household disposable income and provide the much needed fillip to consumption. The government has provided taxpayers the option of shifting to the new regime with lower tax rates, provided they forego all their exemptions and deductions. As tax payers tend to take advantage of exemptions and deductions to channel part of their income towards physical and financial savings, however, this measure, while meant to incentivise consumption in the short run, may end up reducing household savings and thus the domestically available investible surplus in the economy. Considering the fall in the savings rate in the economy, it is surprising that the budget has chosen not to incentivise domestic savings.

In an economy, savings form the pool of investible surplus. In India, the surplus savings of households are absorbed by the government and the private corporate sector. As per the 12th Finance Commission, the total transferable savings of the household sector were around 10 per cent of GDP, which combined with a current account deficit of 1.5 per cent, would be enough to finance the government (Centre and states) fiscal deficit of 6 per cent of GDP, fulfill the funding requirement of the private corporate sector of around 4 per cent, and of non-departmental public enterprises to the tune of 1.5 per cent. But, over the past years, household savings in the economy have been falling, as with sluggish income growth, they have been dipped into for financing consumption, and borrowings have also increased — incremental financial liabilities of households have in fact risen from Rs 3.8 lakh crore to Rs 7.65 lakh crore in 2018-19. Latest data also shows a decline in both gross and net (excluding financial liabilities) household financial savings in 2018-19.

In this context, it is surprising that the budget chose not to incentivise household savings which could have been used for financing long-term projects. Perhaps the government is hopeful that the decline in domestic savings will be offset by the flow of savings from the rest of the world. The budget has raised the limits for foreign investment, and has offered incentives to sovereign wealth for investing in India. But the focus should have been to create a pool of domestic savings to finance long-term investments in infrastructure, especially at a time when the government has unveiled an ambitious infrastructure pipeline.

BABEL’S INTERPRETER

With the death of George Steiner, the world has lost one of the few academics who range across disciplines and cultures

FOR WANT OF a word with a broader intellectual ambit, let us call George Steiner a philologist. The French-American critic and teacher of comparative literature who has died aged 90 was both admired as a polyglot polymath, and occasionally criticised for failing to see the trees for the wood. Now, one of the last Renaissance men is gone, and a world that has taken to fetishising specialisation is the poorer for it. Steiner taught in four languages in Princeton, Cambridge and Geneva, and believed that no one who was proficient in only one language could possibly know it very well. A prolific reviewer and critic, he also found time to write fiction, in which he sometimes opposed this own thesis, perhaps to see where the synthesis would fall.

Steiner will be best remembered for *After Babel* (1975), one of the most seminal yet accessible works on translation and its centrality in human understanding, and in relations between cultures. He saw all communications as a form of translation, and his ideas remained at the cutting edge until the publication of Umberto Eco’s *Mouse or Rat* almost 30 years later, which viewed translation as a process of negotiation.

But Steiner’s influence extended far beyond language, because it is the bearer of culture. The investigation of culture and its politics is the domain of the critic, and Steiner brought to the subject the wide-angle vision of an academic who read *Ulysses* in English and the *Odyssey* in Homeric Greek with equal facility. Regrettably, his geographical domain was largely restricted to the West and as a Jewish survivor of Hitler’s Germany, he was extraordinarily focused on the Holocaust as an endpoint of European culture. Nevertheless, the world will remember him as one of the last Renaissance men, who addressed the deepest question: What makes us human?



P VAIDYANATHAN IYER

No risk, no gain

Budget was expected to give positive impulses to the economy. It took no bold steps

AHEAD OF THE Budget, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met a range of people — economists, analysts and industrialists — to understand why the economy was choking and the plumbing it required. He was told, by some who dared to, that a hard landing of the Indian economy has already happened: In just six quarters, the growth rate had almost halved — from 8.1 per cent in January-March 2018 to 4.5 per cent in July-September 2019.

The slowing cycle, of course, started way back in the last two years of the UPA government. But India Inc’s confidence was at its lowest ebb now, companies were sitting on piles of idle cash, suffering substantial capacity under-utilisation, and not planning any fresh investment in the near-to-mid-term. So, the least that was expected when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman rose to present the Budget for 2020-21, was to give solid positive impulses to the economy.

Let us, for once, set aside the argument about the nature of the prolonged economic slowdown — cyclical or structural. There are reasons to suggest there is a strong structural element to the slowdown — and that more strategic thinking and hard reforms are required to catapult India back into a high-growth orbit. Of course, these will yield results only in the medium-to-long term, but in the very short-run, play a critical role in reviving confidence in the market place. But the government has lulled itself into imagining the slowdown is cyclical, and counter-cyclical policies — fiscal and monetary — can reverse the growth path. That be so, but has the government moved with conviction to pursue such policies?

In the Economic Survey for 2019-20 — the period when the economy slid sharply — Chief Economic Adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian advocated a counter-cyclical fiscal policy by creating additional headroom for increased expenditure. But what actually happened in 2019-20, as revealed by the revised estimates for the year, offers

There are reasons to suggest there is a strong structural element to the slowdown — and that more strategic thinking and hard reforms are required to catapult India back into a high-growth orbit. Of course, these will yield results only in the medium-to-long term, but in the very short-run, play a critical role in reviving confidence in the market place. But the government has lulled itself into imagining the slowdown is cyclical, and counter-cyclical policies — fiscal and monetary — can reverse the growth path. That be so, but has the government moved with conviction to pursue such policies?

some guidance on what to expect next year. Staring at a shortfall of a massive Rs 3 lakh crore in gross tax receipts in 2019-20, the government slashed current expenditure by 0.4 per cent of GDP for the year, and also reduced the transfer to states by 0.8 per cent of GDP. This despite the fact that it dipped into RBI reserves to realise an extra Rs 58,000 crore.

Cutting transfers to states certainly hurts growth more now than ever before. Over the last seven years, states’ spending, as a percentage of GDP, has increased significantly from just 14 per cent of GDP to about 18 per cent. Lower transfer to states mean lower spending by them, and reduced contribution to country’s economic growth.

The sharp cuts in expenditure by the Centre, and a one-time windfall from the RBI notwithstanding, the government couldn’t meet its fiscal deficit target. The target was breached by a good 0.5 percentage points to 3.8 per cent of GDP for 2019-20. Given the projections of a subdued real growth rate of under 6 per cent for 2020-21, the government, in its wisdom, also decided to stick to a fiscal consolidation plan, and pare the deficit to 3.5 per cent of GDP in the coming year. This probably is the prime minister’s imprint on the Budget — the big political call that spending more to impart a positive fiscal impulse to the economy is not worth the risk of a rating downgrade. The Budget, thus, ruled out a counter-cyclical fiscal push, as is reflected in the funds allocated for major sectors and flagship programmes, including the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

In the last year or so, much of the counter-cyclical monetary push has also yielded no dividend to the economy. The mess in the financial sector has festered long enough — 15 months, if not more. But the government has refused to address the elephant in the room — a frozen credit market. Triggered by the falling of IL&FS, the non-banking finance sector faced one cri-

sis after another. The heavy lifting by NBFCs, in terms of funding small businesses and retail consumers, suffered with no banks willing to lend to them following the crisis of confidence in the NBFC sector. Banks were as it is saddled with bad loans, and bankers cringed in fear, not willing to lend. To top it all, policy rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India meant little to nothing, since banks were not transmitting its benefits to companies and individuals.

This continued logjam needed a solution long ago. The finance minister did take a number of small measures through the year, but it meant nothing. The credit market remains frozen. The markets are unable to distinguish between the good and the bad amongst NBFCs. It is critical to assess the asset quality of NBFCs to understand the extent of mess in individual companies, and look for solutions then. They could be provided capital to help turn around. Not all apples are rotten in the basket. The good ones need to be salvaged. This requires a political intervention. For all the big risks the prime minister has shown appetite for in the realm of society and politics, he chose not to risk anything for the economy.

The government has turned more risk-averse than before since Rahul Gandhi’s “suit boot ki sarkaar” jibe. To reach a \$5-trillion size by 2024-25, India needs to grow in double digits over the next five years. But forget that. Low growth is less jobs for the millions entering the workforce, and job losses too. It doesn’t take much time for the resulting unrest to spill onto the streets.

Post script: To the punishment the stock markets meted out to a lacklustre Budget, which neither offered a coherent growth strategy nor any innovation, a senior government official wryly remarked: “The Sensex failed to appreciate things could have been worse.”

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H G S DHALIWAL

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

Infirmities and delays in criminal justice system strengthen the case for jury trials

IT IS EVERY man’s business to see that justice is done. But, it is also true that the course of justice often prevents it. The long delay in hanging the convicts in the December 16 rape and murder case stands in stark contrast to the encounter killing of four rapists of a veterinary doctor in Telangana.

The chasm between people’s perception of justice and the actual majesty of law as it unravels over trial, conviction and execution has been widening with each passing day of long-drawn trials and eventual implementation of the verdict. This is one of the biggest causative factors for the lynchmob and justice-at-hand mentality, even in minor accident offences involving transport vehicles.

Post the December 16 and Telangana cases, there are no easy answers and solutions to tackle the root cause of the malaise of sexual assaults, which manifests first as a crime that essentially is not only an assault on an individual victim but also the psyche of all women. The massive support and adulation for the Telangana police personnel responsible for the encounter has to be seen against this backdrop. The delayed trials and the insensitivity of the criminal justice system leaves the victims and their families hapless and helpless. Often, for victims, the trauma of trial is more painful than the actual crime.

In the age of social media, even those

unaffected by the crime are equally outraged by the infirmities of the criminal justice system. This outrage portends well. Perhaps, this is the right moment for the state to negate the shortcomings in the criminal justice system — which are resulting in widespread popular anger, often testing the limitations of state response — and make common people participants once again in justice dispersal through the jury trial system. Jury trials have been quite popular and widely accepted in many other common law countries like the US, despite its criticism in well-known cases such as Scottsboro Boys, Emmett Till and Rodney King.

The original provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1861 and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1882 had a provision for jury trial. It was given a burial with the new Code of Criminal Procedure that came into force in 1974. The famous Nanavati case of 1959 hastened the demise of the jury trial system in India. However, the acute shortcomings of the conventional criminal justice system, evident in cases such as the December 16 rape and murder, call for revisiting the merits of the jury trial system.

In a multicultural and a multiracial country like India, with its motley of castes, ethnicities and interest groups, jury trials can have their own challenges, especially relating to composition of jury members.

Sometimes, a jury trial can be akin to riding a ship into a storm. However, with the modern tools of artificial intelligence, smart algorithms and the availability of big data, especially due to widespread adoption of the common platform of Aadhaar across the country, all these challenges, which primarily relate to jury formation, can easily be overcome. The jury trials can also have the added benefit of sharing the workload of an already overburdened judicial system.

These challenging times, when the entire edifice of criminal justice system is shaken and is being questioned by citizens for its lack of speed and sensitivity, call for a paradigm shift. This is the moment when the country wants to be judge, jury and executioner. A democracy based on the rule of law cannot allow the public to be the judge or executioner. However, people drawn from a diverse pool, who qualify on a set of well-defined parameters, including education, vocation, age, experience and other relevant criteria, can be members of the jury in “public interest” cases like the December 16 rape and murder.

If there ever could be, this truly is the moment for the jury to decide for whom the bell tolls.

The writer, a 1997 batch IPS officer, is currently IGP, Arunachal Pradesh



FEBRUARY 5, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

DETENTION BILL
THE GOVERNMENT MANAGED to have the Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies Bill passed to the Rajya Sabha by mustering the crucial support of some non-Congress (I) members to defeat an Opposition-sponsored amendment suggesting reference of the Bill to a select committee of the House. The amendment, tabled by V B Raju, A G Kulkarni and Purabi Mukherjee of the Congress, was lost when 101 of the 188 members present opposed it. The absence of several Congress members as well as the AIADMK’s support helped the government stave off another embarrassment in the House in which the

ruling party is in minority.

ALI VERSUS CARTER
MUHAMMAD ALI, STUNG by criticism of his mission to urge a Moscow Olympics boycott, accused US President, Jimmy Carter of “sending me around the world to take the whipping” from black Africans opposed to US dealings with South Africa. Ali told reporters he probably would not have undertaken his presidential assignment if he had known beforehand “the whole history of America and Africa and South Africa”.

PROSECUTING DEVI
FORMER PRIME MINISTER Charan Singh

asked Home minister Zail Singh to directly file a prosecution in a court of law against his wife, Gayatri Devi, on the basis of the findings of the one-man commission of Justice Vaidialingam. Singh said in a letter to Zail Singh that the whole issue be sorted out at the earliest because “it is a question of my wife’s honour and integrity which I regard as my most valuable possession”. The former PM said that Vaidialingam had “travelled far beyond his brief terms of reference.” He said that Vaidialingam was entitled “only to go into the allegations against my wife which had been made in a letter alleged to have been written by an MLA of UP to the then Prime Minister”.

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

The budget India missed

It has no immediate measures to stimulate the economy, address the slowdown. It harks back to protectionism and contains provisions that will increase bureaucratic control



NAUSHAD FORBES

FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA Sitharaman had an unenviable task on February 1. The Indian economy is now growing at its lowest rate in years. Employment is more stressed now than in decades. The need for a stimulus has been overtaken by a ballooning deficit.

When companies are in trouble, they tend to flail around and do too much. This is almost always disastrous. Instead, a stressed company should do less. Doing less requires focus — using one's resources for only a few essential things, leaving the rest for happier times. This need to focus also helps concentrate the limited management bandwidth. So, we end up with a multiplier effect — directed resources with better implementation.

Getting out of trouble by doing less was not in evidence in this year's Union Budget. A marathon speech was tiring enough to listen to — and, visibly exhausting to deliver. Part A rambled around three themes, each with three subjects, each of which have up to 16 points. The first point was useful: Incentivise states to implement the three model agricultural laws passed by the Union government over the last three years. So was the last: List the Life Insurance Corporation on the stock exchange. The rest, in my view, could have been left for happier times.

Part B, on the tax changes, was more focused and useful — this includes the section on simplifying personal income tax by lowering rates and removing exemptions, reducing one level of the treble taxation of dividends, extending tax concessions for employee share purchases and attempting to reduce tax litigation. So the Budget had some positives, but it was not the Budget we needed. There are four reasons for this criticism.

First, and most importantly, the seriousness of the current slowdown needed to be addressed directly. In private meetings with industrialists, the finance minister and prime minister have shown strong awareness of the current economic crisis and an openness to hear inputs on what can be done. That was not apparent in the Budget speech. Perhaps the government believes its own Economic Survey — that the slowdown is only cyclical, the corner has been turned, and things will get better on their own from now on. Or, it believes that a public recognition of our economic stress will spoil the narrative of a vibrant Indian economy. A clear public recognition of the current economic distress would have been a huge enabler of radical steps to set things right. That should have been the message of the first few of the 160 minutes of the finance minister's speech.

Second, the Budget should have focused on two immediate measures to stimulate the economy. To contain the official deficit, the government has delayed paying its dues. The Union government owes some Rs 3,00,000 crore (1.5 per cent of GDP) to private and public enterprises, beneficiaries of social sector schemes (MGNREGA beneficiaries for example), and state governments. Recognising these liabilities, letting the deficit expand by this amount through extra borrowing, and paying them in full would have pumped liquidity into the economy and been a stimulus like no other. Besides, this is money the government will have to pay at some point; paying it in this financial year will make containing next year's deficit simple.

The other immediate challenge in the economy pertains to Non-Bank Financial Companies (NBFCs) and is directly connected with the real-estate sector. Rampant



CR Sasikumar

unfinished and unsold inventory is choking the wider economy, and NBFC woes are affecting consumption more generally. Some action has been taken, but it is too little and too tentative to keep the wider economy from dragging down.

Third, this Budget comprises some genuinely bad things. Chief among them is a further increase in protectionism. Import tariffs on many items have been increased. Imports under the purview of FTAs are to be reviewed for adherence to the rules of origin — with the threat of higher duties. In order to protect products made by MSMEs, which are of "good quality", import tariffs have been increased. This may seem logical, but it is not. Who will decide if the quality is good? How will such products be selected? Who will judge adherence to rules of origin? The authors of the Budget seem to have not read their own Economic Survey, which makes a strong case for free trade and shows that India has clearly benefited from FTAs. Every major exporter is a major importer. We should learn from our own history since 1991 — engaging with the world leads to a bright future. After progressively opening up from 1991 to 2016, we appear to have decisively reversed course. The Budget continues this retrograde direction.

Fourth, the Budget's arithmetic rests on doubling the budgeted revenue from disinvestment from Rs 1 lakh crore to Rs 2 lakh crore. Half of this is to come from "strategic sales" — we still hesitate to use the word privatisation. Listing LIC could also raise a big part of the target — and, this will probably happen. But at the end of 10 months

perhaps the government believes its own Economic Survey — that the slowdown is only cyclical, the corner has been turned, and things will get better on their own from now on. Or, it believes that a public recognition of our economic stress will spoil the narrative of a vibrant Indian economy. A clear public recognition of the current economic distress would have been a huge enabler of radical steps to set things right. That should have been the message of the first few of the 160 minutes of the finance minister's speech.

Perhaps the government believes its own Economic Survey — that the slowdown is only cyclical, the corner has been turned, and things will get better on their own from now on. Or, it believes that a public recognition of our economic stress will spoil the narrative of a vibrant Indian economy. A clear public recognition of the current economic distress would have been a huge enabler of radical steps to set things right. That should have been the message of the first few of the 160 minutes of the finance minister's speech.

this year, we have raised only Rs 18,000 crore, less than the 20 per cent of the Rs 1 lakh crore target. No mention was made of what will change to result in such an increase in revenues.

This brings me to my final point. A great new book by Vijay Kelkar and Ajay Shah, *In Service of the Republic*, says we must build the institutional infrastructure for the complex economy we are. But we rely on the discretion of politicians and bureaucrats. If we judge the Budget from this standpoint, it fails on most counts. One hundred and twenty minutes of the 160-minute speech were all about programmes — a scheme for solar pumps here, a National Forensic University there, five tourist areas to be developed somewhere else. All this requires government capacity to implement, a capacity that has been demonstrably absent. The few improvements — reducing exemptions in income tax, for example — have been outweighed by many increases in discretionary power. This amounts to an increase in bureaucratic power — more government, not more governance.

The last page of Kelkar and Shah's book has telling sentences: "The private sector is fearful of the arbitrary power wielded by officials, and does not speak up. There is no voice, but there is an exit in the form of reduced investment." This Budget has missed the core issue facing the economy today.

The writer is co-chairman Forbes Marshall, past president CII, chairman of Centre for Technology Innovation and Economic Research and Ananta Aspen Centre

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"For many Britons, the long and bitter debate (over Brexit) had been less about economics and politics than about identity." — THE NEW YORK TIMES

In defence of a shared vision

Both France and India are committed to strategic autonomy. To this end, France supports Make in India in defence



EMMANUEL LENAIN

I RECENTLY RECEIVED an Indian visitor who was surprised to see a bust of General Charles de Gaulle in my office. I chose it because this 20th-century French political figure theorised about the strategic autonomy of France. A country with the independence to make its own strategic choices. And that's a vision we have shared with India since its Independence.

It is thus with great satisfaction that I am visiting Lucknow today for the inauguration of DefExpo — an exhibition as old as France and India's strategic partnership — which will again see a strong French representation in 2020. France's seven biggest defence companies (Airbus, Dassault, MBDA, Naval Group, Nexter, Safran and Thalès) will be present, and around 15 SMEs will showcase their know-how of naval, land and air defence technologies, either at the French stand or with their Indian partners.

Apart from the expertise of the French arms industry, this presence also marks France's full commitment to supporting the Indian government's Make in India programme in the defence sector. This is not a new-found commitment nor one of convenience, but is part of our longstanding bilateral relations. It is also in line with a certain idea that India and France have of themselves and their way of carrying weight in global matters — that of building their strategic autonomy.

The defence cooperation between our two countries can be traced back to the first few years following India's Independence. As early as 1953, the Indian Air Force was equipped with a hundred Toofani fighter jets from Dassault, then the Mystère IV, which defended India in tough times. This marked the first page in the history of our cooperation in military aviation, which also recorded the supply of 60 Mirage 2000s in the 1980s — whose performance continues at superlative levels; and, of course, the ongoing delivery of 36 Rafales on schedule. The first batch of aircraft, currently being used to train Indian pilots, will land at Air Force Station Ambala within a few months.

Defence cooperation has been one of the fundamentals of the bilateral relationship, which enabled us to develop a close and ambitious strategic partnership for over 20 years. Today, that partnership has been deployed in the maritime domain, in support of our joint strategic vision for the maintenance of stability and security in the Indo-Pacific. As far as naval equipment is concerned, the Indian Navy has already commissioned two of the six submarines built in Mumbai as part of an industrial partnership between Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and Naval Group. French companies will, of course, continue to be there to contribute to meeting needs for additional capabilities for the

Indian Navy or the Indian Coast Guard.

As for industrial cooperation, the French approach has always been, whenever possible, to offer partial indigenous production in India. France was largely a precursor with regard to Make in India, with HAL manufacturing the light helicopters Cheetah and Chetak, and BDL's Milan anti-tank missile in India in the 1960s. It continues this policy today. The plant built under the Dassault Aviation and Reliance joint venture will enable, for example, the complete production of the Falcon 2000 business jet here in India by 2022. After the delivery of the first two Scorpene submarines, transfers of technology provided by the Naval Group enabled MDL to be solely in charge of building the next four submarines: The design of these submarines has thus become a largely Indian know-how. Safran will soon inaugurate an aircraft wiring systems factory in Hyderabad and also build another major facility to manufacture LEAP turbofan engine components. Thales is investing massively in engineering works in Bengaluru, MBDA is building a plant in Coimbatore and French aeronautical equipment manufacturer Latécoère recently inaugurated a factory in Belgaum. Over 7,000 people, including 1,500 engineers, are currently employed in Airbus projects across the country. I could continue giving more such examples that show how Make in India has been and is a practice for French aeronautical and defence firms, both yesterday and today.

I am convinced that these concrete industrial partnerships benefiting both our countries are the future of our defence relations. So is our industry. The French aerospace industries association, GIFAS, and GICAN, the French Marine Industry Group, are organising a seminar focused on this subject during DefExpo. Along with the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM), they are exploring opportunities for developing Indo-French industrial partnerships at all stages of the production chain. This long-term bet by France is illustrated by the roots set down by our industries in India: GIFAS opened a permanent office in Delhi in 2018 and 60 of its members are in India through 75 organisations, 20 joint ventures and more than 25 production plants. Further, more than 15 French companies from the naval sector are present in India to work on ongoing projects.

India can count on France being by its side for its Make in India enterprise. We share the same vision for a new balanced multipolar world, which must be based on the rule of law. We also share the same vision on the main challenges of our times, be they security developments in Asia and the Indo-Pacific, or combating international terrorism. But it is by possessing the capability of ensuring our national security and making our strategic choices that we most efficiently defend our shared principles and visions.

It is first and foremost because we are convinced that our joint action must rest on a network of solid cooperation as well as the principle of autonomy that France and India are such strategic partners today.

The writer is France's ambassador to India

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SILENCE IS NOT PEACE

THIS REFERS TO article, "Yearning for change" (IE, February 4). The aspirational youth of J&K do want a new narrative. But this vision has to be democratic and rooted in local realities. Communication/internet services are restricted. Such forced silence should not be mistaken as peace. Hope and redemption is possible only when peoples' voices are heard.

Anurag Ekka, Ranchi

AN ARCHAIC LAW

THIS REFERS TO the report, "School sedition arrests: Nine-year old waits for mother to be freed, police seize slippers, question children" (IE, February 4). What could be possibly subversive about a play pertaining to a topical issue, staged by some harmless school students? Policing a theatre group smacks of despotism. This incident should remind us all of the threat that the archaic law still poses to the freedom of speech and expression.

Varun Das, Zirakpur

COARSE CAMPAIGN

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Behind Shaheen Bagh, Jamia protests, design to divide India, says PM" (IE, February 4). Three incidents of shootings and violent speech, more suitable to civil war than electoral contest, form the backdrop to the election in Delhi. The city

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

has become the stage for every pitched battle about identity to have jolted India this year.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

WOMEN AT FRONT

THIS REFERS TO the article, "Mother India" (IE, February 4). It would be wrong to reduce the protests against NRC/CAA to a movement of Muslim women. Women from other communities have also participated in these protests. However, women from Shaheen Bagh have been pioneers of sorts. Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has mooted talks with the Shaheen Bagh protesters. Hope the government works out an amicable solution.

Tapomoy Ghosh, Burdwan



VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

SHARJEEL MINDSET

THE LATEST ISSUE of RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* has once again focused on nationwide protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens. On its cover, it has a picture of Sharjeel Imam who is under arrest on charges of sedition for allegedly suggesting in a speech that Assam could be cut off from India.

In an editorial titled, "Decoding the Sharjeel mindset", the weekly has argued that Imam's speech has exposed how CAA-NRC protests are part of a sinister design to establish an Islamic State.

"Finally, the veil of democratic, peaceful protest against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) at Shaheen Bagh and other similar places has fallen and the real face is exposed. The video of Sharjeel Imam, the IIT-turned-JNU activist, and his subsequent arrest has

rattled many who wanted to showcase national flags and national anthem to cover up the radical narrative that was being played out in the name of CAA protest," the editorial says.

It said Imam's actions depict "a classic communo-jihadi mindset" that is being perpetrated in the name of opposing CAA. "Invoking the 'Tarikh' — history from the Muslim point of view — is nothing but what Dr Ambedkar had analysed in his book on Pakistan — the invasion to make entire country Islamic. Women and children getting trapped in this narrative is... dangerous for the future unity and harmony of this country. The Sharjeel mindset should be understood and countered... Mere State response on the ground of treason will not work in such case, but a creative and constructive societal response is needed to deal with the people infected with the Sharjeel virus," it says.

PROJECT ARAB SPRING

IN ANOTHER ARTICLE, *Organiser* has drawn parallels between the Shaheen Bagh protests and the Arab Spring. "Is there an uncanny similarity between how things developed in Arab Spring in West Asia and how things are shaping up in the name of anti-CAA protest in India? Is there a veiled attempt to create a

civil war kind of situation in India in the name of opposition to an Act passed by Parliament? Are some trying to create a Syria kind of devastation in India? The answers to these questions are chillingly an YES," the article asserts.

It has gone on to record the upheaval unleashed by the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and how it led to Islamist forces appropriating power in the region.

"Many of the countries where Arab Spring originated have been devastated in never-ending civil wars, became testing grounds for global powers to wage their proxy wars and have witnessed violent rise of radical Islamist extremist organisations. The rise of violent Islamic terror organisations like ISIS would not have reached such cataclysmic level had there not been an Arab Spring in the MENA region which created the perfect fertile soil of chaos, anarchy and social turmoil for foreign intelligence backed extremist groups to sneak in and corrode states from within," it says.

DELHI'S DECLINE

ORGANSIER HAS ALSO given space to the upcoming Delhi polls and argued in an article that the city's infrastructure and gov-

ernance has actually declined under the Arvind Kejriwal government. It argues that the foundation of Delhi — as a world-class city in terms of transport infrastructure — was laid by the Vajpayee government.

"The last five years, however, have been the exact opposite as we fail to find any new tangible development projects by the Aam Aadmi Party-led government which insists on going back to age-old model of freebies... The defeat of AAP in the MCD elections and then in Lok Sabha elections of 2019, mark an underlying silent trend of disenchantment. This disenchantment is partly because of their failure at governance and partly because of them discarding their agenda," the article says.

The article attempts to empirically examine the delivery of promises made by the Kejriwal government, and their claims on issues such as education and healthcare. However, while concluding, it arbitrarily tries to toe the BJP campaign line for Delhi: "The Delhi of 2020 will have to make a choice — whether to go with AAP, a party that supports those who want to break India and is involved in relentless minority appeasement, or to go with a party that will put the focus back on the development of the national capital."

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TELLING NUMBERS

Lung cancer most common type globally, breast cancer in India

ON WORLD Cancer Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) released two reports that stated, among various figures, that 1 in 10 Indians will develop cancer during their lifetime, and 1 in 15 Indians would die of cancer (*The Indian Express*, February 4). India had an estimated 1.16 million new cancer cases, 784,000 deaths and 2.26 million five-year prevalent cases in 2018. Globally in 2018, there were 9.6 million cancer deaths, out of which the most were due to lung cancer at 18.4%, followed by colorectal cancer (9.2%), stomach cancer (8.2%), liver (8.2%), breast (6.6%) and cancer of the oesophagus (5.3%). In India, the six most common cancer types are breast, at 1,62,000, followed by oral (1,20,000), cervical (97,000), lung (68,000) and stomach and colorectal, at 57,000 each. These accounted for 49% of all new cancer cases. Among 5,70,000 new cancer cases in men, oral cancer incidence was the highest at 92,000 followed by lung cancer at 49,000. For women, of the 5,87,000 new cancer cases, breast cancer incidence was the highest at 1,62,000, followed by cervical at 97,000. The report said that cancer patterns in India are dominated by a high burden of tobacco-related head and neck cancers. Globally, if the present trends continue, there will be a 60% increase in cancer cases over the next two decades, WHO said.

Global burden of cancer	
2008	12.6 million
2018	18.1 million
2040	29.4 million

Prevalence by type, 2018	
Lung	11.6%
Breast	11.6%
Colorectum	10.2%
Prostate	7.1%
Stomach	5.7%
Liver	4.7%

Cancer mortality, 2018	
Lung	18.4%
Colorectum	9.2%
Stomach	8.2%
Liver	8.2%
Breast	6.6%

Most common cancer types in India, 2018	
Breast cancer	1,62,500
Oral cancer	1,20,000
Cervical cancer	97,000
Lung cancer	68,000
Stomach cancer	57,000
Colorectal cancer	57,000

THIS WORD MEANS SOTU ADDRESS

When the US President speaks to the American people

AT 9 PM ET on Tuesday — 7:30 am in India on Wednesday — President Donald Trump will begin the annual State of the Union (SOTU) Address to a joint Session of the US Congress in Washington DC.



Trump delivers his 2019 SOTU Address. Erin Schaff/The New York Times

CONTEXT: The President's SOTU Address is coming in the middle of his impeachment trial in the Senate. He will be speaking in the House of Representatives, the same chamber in which he was impeached for high crimes and misdemeanour less than two months ago. The House impeachment managers have argued that he has corrupted the institution of the presidency, and American interests would be at risk unless the Senate removes him from office. But there is virtually no chance of that happening — and Trump will use his Address to set the terms for the remainder of his term, and to possibly directly address his political showdown with the Democrats.

messages, to 1946, the address was formally known as the Annual Message. Between 1942 and 1946, it was informally called the "state of the Union" message/address; since 1947, when President Harry S Truman gave his message to Congress (January 6), it has been officially known as the State of the Union Address.

ORIGINS: The SOTU address is the American President's annual report to the people, and fulfils his constitutional obligation to give to Congress "from time to time... information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient". (Art. II, Section 3, Clause 1)

WHERE, WHEN: Modern SOTU addresses have been delivered in the House Chamber. Prior to the move of the Capitol to Washington, DC, the Annual Message was often delivered in the Senate Chamber. A House concurrent resolution sets aside the day and time for a joint Session to receive the communication. Until 1934, the Annual Message was delivered every December; since then, the Annual Message/SOTU has been delivered every January or February.

From 1790, when President George Washington delivered the first of these

Trump's Address on Wednesday will be the 97th in-person Address/Annual Message in United States history.

SIMPLY PUT

Inside the Wuhan evacuation

What did it take for India to evacuate over 650 people from the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak? *The Indian Express* spoke to officials who played key roles in India's effort, to piece together the story

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE EVACUATION over the weekend of 654 individuals — 647 Indians and seven Malaysians — on two Air India flights from Wuhan, ground zero of the novel coronavirus outbreak, marked the culmination of a complex 96-hour operation mounted by New Delhi that involved engaging with Beijing at multiple levels. Besides the obvious health risks, there were logistic challenges to be overcome and diplomatic sensitivities to be negotiated.

Early concerns

The embassy in Beijing took note of the first reports of the infection around January 2-3. But it was only around January 20, when it became national news in the Chinese media, that the scale of the outbreak became apparent.

On January 22, with 571 cases and 17 deaths confirmed, Vikram Misri, India's ambassador to China, told his team that Indians in Hubei province may be affected, and "Let's start preparing". The following day, an embassy reception to celebrate Republic Day was attended by Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui, a former ambassador to New Delhi, among other Chinese dignitaries. There was some concerned chatter at the gathering, said sources who were present.

Locating the Indians

The big challenge before a possible evacuation attempt was to establish how many Indians there were in Hubei — and where. Some 50 million people live in the province, and Indians in China are not required to register with the embassy.

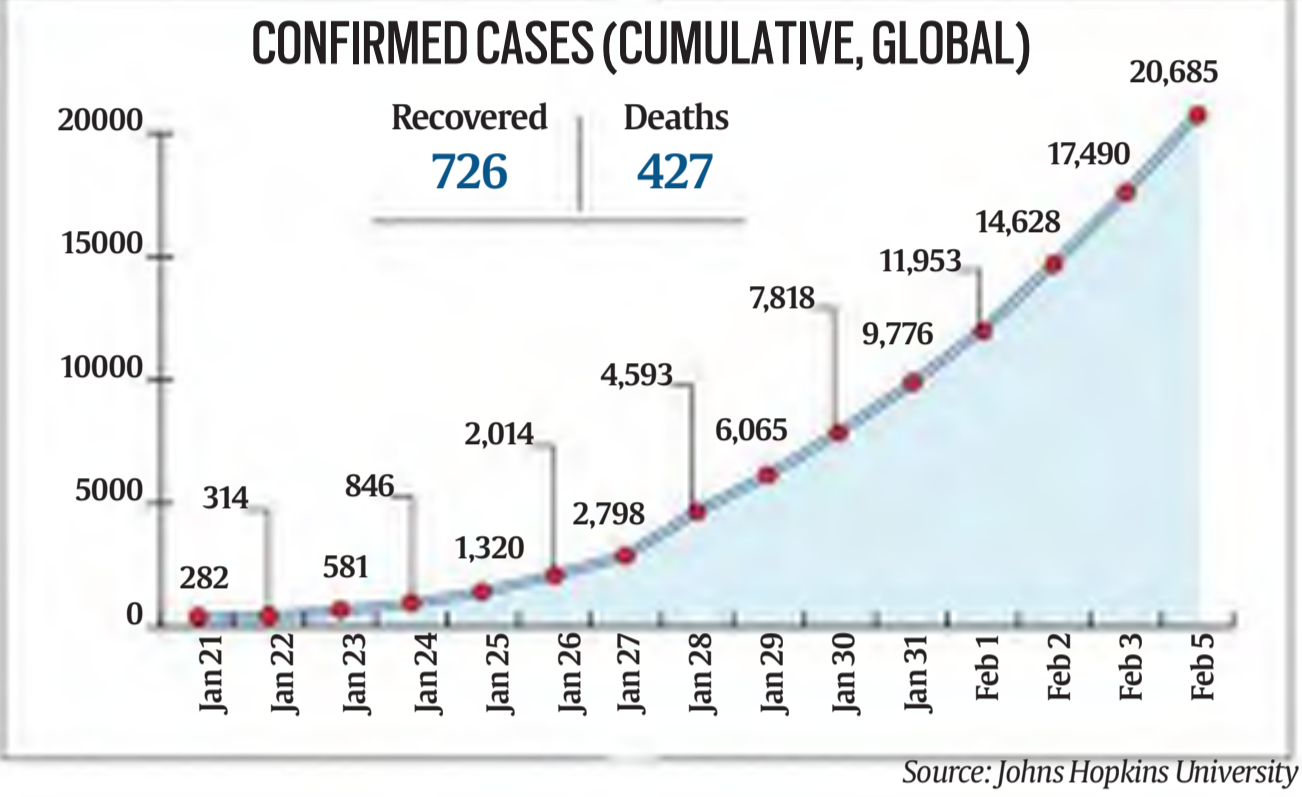
Over the next few days, the Indian mission announced helpline numbers on social media. Its reach, however, was likely to be restricted because both Facebook and Twitter are blocked in China. Some younger diplomats used WeChat, the popular Chinese messaging and social media app, to try to connect to Indians in Hubei. In a WeChat group, the embassy assured that "help was on the way".

By January 26, confirmed cases had crossed 2,000 globally and the prognosis was grim. After several rounds of consultations in the embassy and in New Delhi, a decision was taken to evacuate.

By then, the control room in the embassy had collected enough data to be able to plot the location of Indians in Hubei on a map. They knew there were 750-odd Indians in Hubei — a half of them lived in Wuhan and its outskirts;



The first batch of Indian evacuees at Wuhan airport. ANI



Source: Johns Hopkins University

the rest were deeper inside the province, some 450-500 km from Wuhan airport.

Getting to the airport

The affected area was under lockdown, with severe restrictions on the movement of people and vehicles. The big question before the officials was: how to get people to the airport? Not being allowed to move freely meant they could not be expected to assemble at a particular point in Wuhan city, or to reach the airport on their own. The embassy tapped contacts in private transportation companies, who said they needed special permission to ferry these Indians to the airport from various places in the province.

Working with China

Obtaining the required permissions and approvals presented a major challenge; Chinese authorities were initially not inclined to allow evacuation. Even as Misri and Deputy Chief of Mission Aquino Vimal worked to obtain the clearances, the Chinese signalled on

January 28 that the situation was under control and there was no need to panic, and therefore, to evacuate. Chinese ambassador to India Sun Weidong posted on Twitter that the "WHO does not recommend the evacuation of nationals", and asked the international community "to remain calm and not overreact".

Back home, outgoing Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale and his successor Harsh Vardhan Shringla were working with the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Air India, agencies like the Bureau of Immigration, and the Army on the logistics. Air India was asked to stand by with two aircraft, with crew and a team of doctors ready to fly at short notice.

In the morning of January 29, the same day Shringla took charge, the Chinese government gave "in-principle" approval to the evacuation. But it was still important that the approvals were conveyed to all concerned authorities.

"The Chinese Foreign Ministry had to convey to the provincial authorities, who would then ask the city authorities, and also separately to the universities and the private

What went wrong with Iowa Democratic caucuses?

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

ON MONDAY, when results of the Democratic Party's Iowa caucus were supposed to come in, chaos erupted as the results were delayed much beyond the usual early evening announcement. Even into early morning on Tuesday (Tuesday night India time), most news reports repeated "inconsistencies" were found in the Iowa Democratic Party's reporting, primarily due to a mobile application failure. Now, the party is hurrying to get results out using a paper trail instead.

All this raises questions about the use of technology during polling, which is pertinent to India. Last month, 10 booths in Telangana piloted facial recognition to verify voters against their voter ID photographs, resulting in 65-86% accuracy, according to officials.

Why the uncertainty

From the most updated information

coming in from the US, it seems reporting failures caused issues, not a hack.

Precinct chairs are the point persons to submit results (precincts can be described as voting districts). Multiple precinct captains reported difficulties using a mobile application meant for reporting the results. Some had even reported problems to the headquarters of the state party before the beginning of the caucuses, but the officials in charge did not provide the training to mend the issues. In addition, a backup hotline, the Iowa Democratic Party Caucus Hotline, put callers on hold for hours.

The Iowa Democratic Party held a conference call with various presidential campaigns on Monday night, telling them 35% of the precincts had been reported.

What app was used

The Iowa Democratic Party's new mobile application was built by a company called Shadow Inc. Its work on the election was kept under wraps until now. *The New York Times*

reported: "According to a person familiar with the app, its creators had repeatedly questioned the need to keep it secret, especially from the Iowa precincts where it would be used... [The person] said that there were concerns that the app would malfunction in areas with poor connectivity, or because of high bandwidth use, such as when many people tried to use it at the same time."

The *NYT* quoted Sarah Banks, 39, a caucus secretary, as saying she had logged in to test the app on Monday with no problem, but when the time came to report the actual tallies at night, her app failed.

So, who won?

Several candidates took the opportunity to declare themselves victorious on social media and rally speeches on Monday night. Mayor Pete Buttigieg gave a speech that seems to declare himself the frontrunner, while former Vice President Joe Biden discredited the entire process. Republicans were quick to take advan-

tage of the confusion. "Democrats are stewing in a caucus mess of their own creation with the sloppiest train wreck in history. It would be natural for people to doubt the fairness of the process," Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale said in a statement.

How far Iowa matters

The Iowa caucus was already a controversial election point. Being the first gauge of voter sentiment, it claims to set the tone for the rest of the campaign. Jimmy Carter was launched into the spotlight from an Iowa win in 1976, as was Barack Obama in 2008.

However, several other chosen candidates (Ronald Reagan, George H W Bush, and Bill Clinton) did not win Iowa. Still, media and campaign trails give a large amount of attention to a state that is whiter, older, and far more rural than the rest of the country. The state is proud of the caucus system — which entails in-person town halls and debates — but others state it excludes those who would have only submitted through an absentee ballot.

Why government has lifted a duty that polyester makers paid on a chemical

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

DURING HER Budget speech on Saturday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government was abolishing in "public interest" an anti-dumping duty that was levied on imports of a chemical called PTA. Domestic manufacturers of polyester have called the move a huge relief for the industry, claiming they had been fighting to remove the duty for four-and-a-half years.

What is PTA?

Purified Terephthalic Acid (PTA) is a crucial raw material used to make various products, including polyester fabrics. PTA makes up for around 70-80% of a polyester product and is, therefore, important to those involved in the manufacture of man-made

fabrics or their components, according to industry executives.

This includes products like polyester staple fibre and spun yarn. Our cushions and sofas may have polyester staple fibre fillings. Some sportswear, swimsuits, dresses, trousers, curtains, sofa covers, jackets, car seat covers and bed sheets have a certain proportion of polyester in them.

What led to the government decision?

As Sitharaman explained on Sunday: "That particular product (PTA) is a raw material for many of the industries. There has been persistent demand that they should be allowed to source that particular product at an affordable rate, even if it means importing it." She had said easy availability of this "critical input" at competitive prices was desirable to unlock "immense" potential in the textile sector, seen as a "signifi-

cant" employment generator.

The duty had meant importers were paying an extra \$27-\$160 for every 1,000 kg of PTA that they wanted to import from countries like China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, Korea and Thailand. Removing the duty will allow PTA users to source from international markets and may make it as much as \$30 per 1,000 kg cheaper than now, according to industry executives.

Why was it imposed in the first place?

The anti-dumping duty on PTA was imposed after two domestic manufacturers, MCC PTA India Corp Pvt Ltd and Reliance Industries Ltd, approached the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) in October 2013. The companies, which submitted that they accounted for over 50% of the domestic PTA industry, had argued that some countries had been exporting the

product to India at prices lower than its value in their own domestic markets. This dumping of PTA into the Indian market had a "significant" adverse impact on the domestic industry, they argued.

Following an investigation, DGTR agreed with MCCPI and RIL's claims, and imposed anti-dumping duties on PTA imported from South Korea and Thailand in 2014 and 2015, and from China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Iran and Malaysia in 2015 and 2016.

Why was the move controversial?

Companies using PTA to manufacture polyester products claimed that the move went against the government's vision of making the textiles sector a globally competitive industry. According to them, the move left them with limited domestic suppliers of PTA. The companies had alleged that the product's cost had become more

expensive domestically, which made their own products pricier and less attractive for their domestic and international buyers. This had led to a drop in exports of some of these products during 2014-16, and an increase in imports of the products they had been producing, as there was no safeguard against imports of cheaper versions of these downstream polyester-based products.

On top of this, the domestic industry had argued that domestic PTA producers had not only been unable to ramp up capacity to cater to demand for the product, shutdowns of their manufacturing facilities once a year for maintenance purposes had also led to shortages of the raw material. PTA users claim that they had not been manufacturing as much polyester as they were capable of, operating at 70% of their capacity at any given time.

Are there other raw materials in line for

a similar move? Mono Ethylene Glycol (MEG), another raw material used in the manufacturing of polyester, is currently the subject of another anti-dumping duty investigation initiated by DGTR recently. This investigation was initiated after RIL, supported by another company (India Glycols Ltd) had argued that top MEG exporters like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates had been dumping the product and that the domestic industry was suffering "material" injury as a result. An association representing textile companies like Indo Rama Synthetics India Ltd, Filatex India Ltd and Bombay Dyeing has approached DGTR against the move, arguing that anti-dumping duties on MEG would adversely impact the textile industry the way the duty on PTA allegedly did.

Rly's cadre merger plan shot down by most panels

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

MERGER OF all Railway services into one cadre would neither be feasible nor be in the best interest of the organisation, Indian Railways had replied to a question in Lok Sabha in 1996, citing expert committee reports on the subject.

On December 24 last year, the government cited various expert committee reports, including the ones in the mid-1990s, to justify the decision to merge the existing eight Group-A cadres into one Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS) and bring about other restructuring moves.

"Unification of services has been recommended by various committees for reforming Railways, including Prakash Tandon Committee (1994), Rakesh Mohan Committee (2001), Sam Pitroda Committee (2012) and Bibek Debroy Committee (2015)," the official statement after the Cabinet briefing stated.

Records, however, show that the Prakash Tandon committee had actually recommended setting up of various committees or task forces to consider the implementability of its own recommendations.

So, to study the feasibility of its recommendation to unify various cadres and restructure the Railway Board, the government had set up the Gupta-Narain

EXPLAINED

E. Idea problematic, experts noted

SEVERAL GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED committees appear to have processed the question of reform in Indian Railways and unification of cadres as a means to end "departmentalism". Almost all the committees appear to have held that unification of cadres and creation of a single service was a problematic proposition. Most committees had outright rejected the idea.

committee, headed by J P Gupta, a former Railway Board chairman and former UPSC chairman, and comprising Prakash Narain, another former Railway Board chairman. This committee had, in fact, rejected the Tandon committee's recommendations.

The Gupta-Narain committee ruled out a merger and, after consultations with UPSC, said that recruiting engineers and non-engineers through the Civil Services examination to feed technical and non-technical requirements of Indian Railways was not possible.

This report was not made public. *The Indian Express* has

now reviewed the whole report.

"This will lead to a dangerous erosion in professionalism, efficiency and safety of operations," the report said about merging specialisations. It said these "large-scale cross-disciplinary postings" will be "damaging to the safety and efficiency of railway working".

The government has decided that from 2021 UPSC will hold a separate exam for candidates of the Civil Services exam to join IRMS, like the Indian Forest Service does.

After evaluating the Tandon committee recommendation to this effect, the Gupta-Narain panel noted that holding such an examination would bring down the quality of recruitment to the Railways. It said, "...as the best talents appear for the Civil Services Examination (due to inclusion of IAS and IFS) and Engineering Services Examination. Both of these (exams) offer wider choices to candidates. Many bright persons do not wish to appear for too many examinations, specially as each examination to some extent affects the preparation for other examinations."

About the concept of reorganising the Railways on ex-cadre lines, wherein an officer from any discipline can be a Board member pertaining to any other discipline - as is the plan now - the panel had noted that it would cause "havoc" at the cost of specialisation.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

3-yr-old falls into hot curry vessel in UP govt school, dies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 4

A THREE-YEAR-OLD GIRL died after she fell into a vessel of hot curry that was prepared for mid-day meal at a government-run primary school in Mirzapur's Rampur Atri village Monday.

Six cooks at the school — all women — were arrested Tuesday and produced before a local court while the headmaster was suspended. Four 'shiksha mitras' and an assistant teacher were served showcause notice by the district administration and their salary for February has been withheld, officials said.

Police identified the deceased as Anchal.

Mirzapur SP Dharmveer Singh said in a statement, "In Rampur Atri village, under Lalganj police station, Anchal, 3, had gone to study. Although she is not enrolled in the school, she used to go there to study with her

brothers. When the mid-day meal was being distributed, she fell into a food container. She died during treatment. Six cooks have been booked under IPC section 304-A (causing death by negligence)... We are helping the family members in all possible ways."

Police force has been deployed in the village, said Lalganj SHO Shyam Bihaari.

The case was registered based on a complaint from Mirzapur Basic Shiksha Adhikari V K Singh. He said the headmaster, Santosh Kumar Yadav, was suspended because he was not present at the school when the incident happened. "He was absent without leave and we have suspended him and are probing the matter," he said.

The school is on the same premises as a junior school and a combined total of 289 students are enrolled. "There are 117 students at the junior high school and 172 children at the primary school," he said.

Gujarat riots: SC fixes April 14 for hearing Zakia Jafri plea

New Delhi: Saying the matter had been adjourned many times and it will have to hear it someday, the Supreme Court on Tuesday fixed April 14 for hearing a plea by Zakia Jafri, wife of slain MP Ehsan Jafri, challenging the SIT's clean chit to then Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi in the 2002 riots. A bench comprising

Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari posted the matter for hearing in April after Zakia's counsel sought an adjournment and urged the court to post it after the Holi vacation.

When advocate Apama Bhat, appearing for Zakia, told the court that the issue in the matter is contentious, the bench said, "It has

been adjourned so many times, whatever it is, we will have to hear it someday. Take one date and make sure you all are available."

Zakia filed the petition in 2018 challenging the Gujarat High Court's 2017 order rejecting her plea against the decision of the Special Investigation Team. **PTI**

J&K admn releases PDP ex-MLA, trade leader

ADIL AKHZER
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 4

THE JAMMU and Kashmir administration on Tuesday released a former PDP legislator and a trade leader who had been under detention since August 5, when the Centre revoked the special status of J&K and bifurcated the state into two Union Territories.

A senior security official in Srinagar told *The Indian Express* that PDP leader Aijaz Ahmad Mir, the former Shopian MLA, was released from the MLA Hostel on Tuesday.

Separately, renowned trade leader Shakeel Qalender, the former president of the Federation of Chamber of Industries, Kashmir, was also released. A senior administration official told *The Indian Express* that Qalender has been released from the central jail in Srinagar.

Qalender had served on the CRangarajan committee, which was set up in 2010 by the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to formulate a plan for creation of jobs in J&K.

Other leaders still detained in J&K include former chief ministers Mehbooba Mufti, Omar Abdullah and Farooq Abdullah.

DEHRADUN GANGRAPE

Main accused gets 20 yrs jail, 3 minors sent to juvenile home

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, FEBRUARY 4

A SPECIAL POCSO court has pronounced its judgment in the August 2018 boarding school gangrape case, sentencing the main accused to 20 years' imprisonment. Three minor accused, who were acquitted by the juvenile justice board last year, have been ordered to surrender before the juvenile board. They will be sent to a juvenile home.

The incident pertains to the gangrape of a 16-year-old girl by fellow students at a boarding school here on August 14, 2018. Police said the incident was kept under wraps for over a month by school authorities, who threatened to expel the girl if she spoke about it. The police said when the victim suspected she may become pregnant, the school administrative officer's wife gave her "home remedies to terminate the pregnancy".

On Monday, after sentencing the main accused, the court ordered nine-year jail terms for the school director, the administration officer and his wife, while the principal got three years in jail.

Bengal govt to provide chopper to Dhankar

Kolkata: In what can be seen as a sign of reconciliation between the state administration and the Raj Bhavan, the Mamata Banerjee government has decided to provide Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar with a helicopter for his travel to Santiniketan on Thursday.

"We had sought a chopper for the Governor to travel to Santiniketan to attend a pro-

gramme. It was approved," a Raj Bhavan official said.

A senior TMC leader said the development is an indication of both the Raj Bhavan and the state government softening their stance. On several occasions last year, the state government had rejected Dhankhar's request for a chopper to travel to Santiniketan, Domkal and Farakka. **PTI**

TN govt drops plan to conduct public exams in Classes 5, 8

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, FEBRUARY 4

THE TAMIL Nadu government on Tuesday rolled back its controversial decision to hold public examinations for Classes 5 and 8 from this academic year. A statement by the AIADMK government, released in wake of criti-

cism from academics and opposition parties, said the old examination method will continue.

As per the state government's plan, students of Class 5 were to appear for three exams — English, Math and Tamil — while Class 8 students were to appear for all five subjects.

After School Education Minister K A Sengottaiyan announced the move, it was viewed as a policy decision that would put students under severe stress. The plan also challenged the state's long-standing "no-detention policy" till Class 8.

Questioning the move, educationists argued public exams in Class 5 and 8 will impose unnecessary stress on students, which may lead to more dropouts.

The government's refusal to divulge the reason behind the new plan invited more criticism. A senior state education department official said they proposed the plan with a hope

that it will make the system more accountable for both teachers and students.

The official told *The Indian Express* the idea was originally proposed by the Centre to implement in Tamil Nadu on a pilot basis before considering the same for CBSE and other systems.

"What was pointed out from Delhi was the dangers in letting students pass Class 10 through a liberal exam system while they do not have the quality of Class 6 students. The idea was to ensure the quality in school education, especially in state board when the no-detention system and lapses in the school system itself leading to serious flaws in the merit prospects of a generation of students from state board schools. Even if these concerns and issues still remain valid, the government has finally taken a view to probe other ways to address this problem instead of public exams in Class and 8," said a senior government secretary.

19 THE WORLD



MEANWHILE LESOTHO FIRST LADY TO BE CHARGED WITH MURDER

The first lady of Lesotho is set to be charged with murder in connection with the 2017 killing of the prime minister's former wife, police said Tuesday. Maesaiah Thabane, who had fled the country to escape arrest, returned on Tuesday. Prime Minister Thomas Thabane's former wife, Lipolelo, was killed two years after a court ruled that she was the lawful first lady and entitled to benefits.

TOP OF THE WORLD



AFRICA Kenya's former president Daniel Arap Moi dies

Nairobi: Former Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi, who kept his country on a relatively stable footing during his tenure but was less successful at reigning in poverty and corruption, died on Tuesday, the office of the president and his family said. He was 95. There was no immediate information on the cause of Moi's death but he had been in and out of hospital with breathing problems in recent months. "Our nation and our continent were immensely blessed by the dedication and service of the late ... Moi; who spent almost his entire adult life serving Kenya and Africa," President Uhuru Kenyatta said in a statement.

Caucus confusion in Iowa for Dems as results delayed

Party blames inconsistencies in data; just like they ran the country, says Trump

JOSEPH AX & GINGER GIBSON
DES MOINES, FEBRUARY 4

What the debacle means for top candidates

Bernie Sanders
Ahead of the caucuses, polls had shown Bernie Sanders leading in Iowa.

After the results were delayed, Sanders' campaign released their own data showing he had won. However, the delay in the official results comes as a setback for Sanders who had hoped to go into New Hampshire, where the next primary will be held, by giving a primetime victory speech from Iowa which could have given him momentum in the race to become the Democratic nominee.

Pete Buttigieg
Buttigieg's campaign has also released their own numbers that show the former mayor as having won the caucuses. Even the Sanders campaign's numbers show Buttigieg doing better than more senior rivals Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren.

With the campaign in New Hampshire already underway, Buttigieg has aggressively pushed the narrative that he was victorious in Iowa which could give him unexpected early momentum in the primaries.

Joe Biden
The delay in the announcement of the Iowa results could be a blessing for Joe Biden, who is seen as one of the strongest contenders to claim the Democratic nomination.

Unofficial numbers and polls had shown, however, that Biden did poorly Iowa, likely coming in fourth place after Sanders, Buttigieg and Warren. But with no official results declared, Biden goes into the New Hampshire campaign relatively unscathed after what could have been a damaging night in Iowa.

EXPLAINED

Elizabeth Warren

Warren had surged in polls ahead of the Iowa caucuses, but unofficial numbers showed that she had not done as well as Sanders or Buttigieg. The delay in the results is likely to lead to an agonising wait for the senator as she seeks to figure out where she stands at the beginning of the race and what strategy she should adopt going forward.

Bernie Sanders, a US senator, released their campaigns' own count of the Iowa vote which showed them having done well.

Iowa Democratic Party Chairman Troy Price said the mobile app was recording data accurately but only partial data. The coding problem was fixed and state officials are verifying the data from the app with required paper documentation, he said.

Trump took a swipe at the Democrats, 11 of whom are contenders in the state-by-state battle to face him in Nov. "Nothing works, just like they ran the country." He also said the delay was not Iowa's fault and pledged that Republicans would continue to uphold the tradition of early Iowa caucuses. **REUTERS**

USA

Seattle City Council passes resolution against CAA and NRC

Washington: The Seattle City Council, one of the most powerful city councils in the US, on Monday unanimously passed a resolution condemning India's recently-enacted Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). Reaffirming Seattle as a welcoming city and expressing solidarity with the city's South Asian community regardless of religion and caste, the resolution "resolves that the Seattle City Council opposes the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act in India, and finds these policies to be discriminatory to Muslims, oppressed castes, women, indigenous, and LGBT people".

PAKISTAN

Suspension of Musharraf death sentence: Pak lawyer moves SC

Islamabad: A Pakistani lawyer has appealed to the Supreme Court to set aside the verdict of a high court that annulled the death sentence of self-exiled former president Pervez Musharraf. On January 13, Musharraf's trial in the high treason case was declared as "unconstitutional" by the Lahore High Court (LHC), leading to the annulment of the death sentence against the former president. Advocate Taufiq Asif requested the apex court to set aside the LHC verdict.

EU rejects Trump's Middle East peace plan, annexation

REUTERS BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 4

THE EUROPEAN Union rejected parts of the new U.S. peace plan for the Middle East on Tuesday, saying the plan broke with "internationally agreed parameters", and any Israeli annexation of Palestinian land would be subject to challenge.

President Donald Trump's plan, announced last week, was warmly welcomed by Israel and rejected outright by the Palestinians. It would give Israel most of what it has sought during decades of conflict, including nearly all Palestinian land on which it has built settlements.

The EU, which often takes time to respond to international developments because of a need for unanimity among its 27 members, had said last week that it needed to study the Trump plan before it would give its verdict.

It made its conclusions public on Tuesday in a statement



EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. *Reuters*

from EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

"To build a just and lasting peace, the unresolved final status issues must be decided through direct negotiations between both parties," Borrell said, noting the issues of the borders of a Palestinian state and the final status of Jerusalem were among those still in dispute.

"The US initiative, as presented on 28 January, departs from these internationally agreed parameters," Borrell said.



Caucus participants arrive to register in Des Moines, Iowa. *AP*

Pak to buy more Malaysian palm oil to 'compensate' after row with India, says Imran

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KUALA LUMPUR, FEBRUARY 4

PAKISTAN PRIME Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday thanked Mahathir Mohamad for "speaking up" on the Kashmir issue and promised to do his best to buy more Malaysian palm oil to "compensate" it after India restricted the import of the commodity from the country amid a diplomatic row.

"You have spoken for the justice for Kashmiris, for which we are thankful," Khan said during a joint press conference with his Malaysian counterpart Mahathir.

"We noticed that India threatened Malaysia for supporting the Kashmir cause to cut their palm oil import, Pakistan will do its best to compensate for that," he was quoted as saying by the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan.

Indonesia and Malaysia are the two countries which supply palm oil. Malaysia produces 19 million tonnes of palm oil in a year, while



Imran Khan with his Malaysian counterpart Mahathir Mohamad in Putrajaya, Malaysia, Tuesday. *AP*

Indonesia produces 43 million tonnes, according to trade data.

India, the world's largest importer of vegetable oils, buys nearly 15 million tonnes annually. Pakistan bought 1.08 million tonnes of palm oil from Malaysia in 2019, while India bought 4.4 million tonnes, according to the Malaysian Palm Oil Council.

The Indian government has

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK HITS SUPPLY CHAINS

Hong Kong records first virus death, 2nd fatality outside mainland China

Death toll 427; in China, toll increases by record 64 in a day

FARAH MASTER & RYAN WOO
HONG KONG, BEIJING, FEB 4

HONG KONG reported its first coronavirus death on Tuesday, the second outside mainland China from a fast-spreading outbreak that has killed 427 people and threatened economic supply chains around the world.

But after Shanghai's main market lost nearly \$400 billion the previous day, global and Chinese markets bounced, with both Europe and metals enjoying their best sessions of the year.

On the ground, bad news was relentless.

Chinese-ruled Macau, the world's biggest gambling hub, asked casino operators to close for two weeks to help curb the virus.

And in the latest major corporate hit, Hyundai Motor said it would gradually suspend production at South Korean factories because of supply chain disruptions.

Hong Kong's first fatality was a 39-year-old man with an underlying illness who had visited China's Wuhan city, the quarantined epicentre of the outbreak.

China, meanwhile, reported a record daily jump in deaths of 64 to 425. The only other death outside mainland China was a man who died in the Philippines last week after visiting Wuhan.

Total infections in mainland China rose to 20,438, and there have been nearly 200 cases elsewhere across 24 countries and China's special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

Thailand's tally of infections jumped to 25, the highest outside China, while Singapore's rose to 24. The World Health Organization has declared the flu-like virus a global emergency and experts say much is still unknown. **REUTERS**



Medical workers strike in Hong Kong, calling for its borders with China to be closed. *Reuters*

Chinese lockdowns approach Shanghai

AGENCIES BEIJING, FEBRUARY 4

MORE CHINESE cities, including one just 175 kilometres from Shanghai, were put under lockdown on Tuesday, as the impact of a deadly new virus spread further from its epicentre.

Around 12 million people are affected by the new restrictions, adding to the tens of millions of people already quarantined in and around Wuhan, ground zero for 2019-nCoV.

The city of Taizhou, parts of Hangzhou—including the district that is home to the headquarters of Chinese tech giant Alibaba—and some of Ningbo will only allow one person per household to go outside every two days to buy necessities, city officials said.

Taizhou—850 km from the epicentre in Hubei province—will also suspend 95 train services

from the city from Tuesday.

In addition, residential communities will only be allowed to use one entrance and residents must present ID each time they come or go, Taizhou's government said on its official WeChat account.

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.

In the Hangzhou districts, additional measures included mandatory mask-wearing and compulsory ID and temperature checks. On Monday, Hangzhou's Yuhang district also said it would suspend buses, taxis, shuttle buses, and airport lines until further notice.

In Taizhou, public bus services were suspended at the end of January, while Ningbo closed the entrances of nine highways last Wednesday.

Cross-examination drives key Weinstein accuser to tears

ASSOCIATED PRESS NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 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.

The incident, which prompted the judge to send the jury home about an hour earlier than usual, came as the defence on Monday sought to paint the 34-year-old woman as an opportunistic manipulator who took advantage of Weinstein while pursuing an acting career, even after he allegedly raped her.

The woman said she tried to make Weinstein "my pseudo father" after a rough upbringing. She said she sent him flattering emails and kept seeing him because "I wanted him to believe I wasn't a threat". "I was afraid of his unpredictable anger," she testified. She became emotional while



Harvey Weinstein at court in New York. *Reuters*

reading an email passage about being abused earlier in her life. It was part of a lengthy confessional email she sent to her then-boyfriend in May 2014 about her relationship with Weinstein.

She was weeping as she left the courtroom, and her cries could be heard from a nearby witness room. She returned after about a 10-minute break, but continued to weep loudly, resting her head on the witness stand and blotting tears with a tissue.

TINY BRITISH TERRITORY IN THE CARIBBEAN CASHES IN ON ITS '.AI' DOMAIN NAME, WHICH IS A FAVOURITE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FIRMS

Anguilla has tropical breezes, pristine beaches and a domain name to die for

STEVE LOHR FEBRUARY 4

THE LUXURY resorts along serene white-sand beaches have long propped up the economy of Anguilla, a tiny British territory in the Caribbean.

But the island is also the lucky financial beneficiary of two hot trends in technology: artificial intelligence and vanity internet addresses.

Anguilla is the landlord for internet addresses that end in ".ai"—a suddenly valuable slice of online real estate. Every time

a .ai name is registered or renewed—by AI startups, or by speculators hoping to resell the names to those startups, big companies or investors—the island collects a \$50-a-year fee, which goes mostly to the government treasury.

Those fees added up to \$2.9 million in 2018, the most recent official government tally, or nearly as much as the combined salaries of the 127 primary-school teachers, assistants and administrators in the territory. The revenue rose sharply again last year.

"It's really snowballed," said Vincent Cate, who manages the

.ai registry in an office not far from the ocean.

Anguilla owes its good fortune to the large, yet obscure and often quirky market for internet addresses. Startups are increasingly willing to take on unusual internet addresses, or domain names like .ai, to stand out.

There's WT.social, a social network started last year by Jimmy Wales, a founder of Wikipedia. BenevolentAI, a drug development startup that has raised \$290 million, is at benevolent.ai. Compound, a cryptocurrency lending marketplace with prominent investors, can be



Road Bay in Anguilla. The yearly fees for Anguilla's domain name, which go mostly to the government's treasury, added up to \$2.9 million in 2018. *NYT*

found at compound.finance.

The marketplace for internet addresses has become attractive even to big investors. A private equity firm in 2018 bought Donuts Inc., a company with the rights to more than 240 newer domain names, like ".technology" and ".engineering." Another private equity firm has bid for the rights to ".org"—used by most nonprofits—offering more than \$1 billion and setting off a controversy over whether the domain should be controlled by a profit-driven company. And Berkshire Hathaway, led by Warren E. Buffett, is the largest

shareholder in Verisign, the registry that manages ".com."

"The Domain Name System is an important part of the plumbing of the internet, and it's become a big business," said Matthew Zook, a professor at the University of Kentucky who has studied the industry for years. Annual registration and renewal fees alone, he estimates, total almost \$4 billion.

To some degree, search engines like Google, social networks like Facebook and mobile apps like Uber have diminished the role of domain names as the way people navigate online.

Gone, for the most part, are the days when getting online meant painstakingly typing a web address into a browser.

Still, the names remain important as digital identifiers and brands. They are mentioned all the time in ads and mouthed by politicians. Among internet addresses, .com remains the giant, accounting for 40% of all registered domain names. But last year, 33% of startups had domain names other than .com, more than double the percentage five years earlier, according to an analysis by Brex, which provides credit cards for startups. **NYT**

SECTOR WATCH TELECOM

AGR dues: Oil India, GAIL, other PSUs face payouts nearly double of net worth

AASHISHARYAN NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE IMPACT of the Supreme Court's (SC) direction on the telecom sector with respect to the pending adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues pales in comparison to the payout confronting the non-telecom companies, which face the prospect of shelling out over twice the amount that telecom companies are required to pay.

At Rs 3 lakh crore, the demand from non-telecom companies — nearly all of which are public sector units (PSUs) such as Gail India Ltd, Power Grid Corporation India Ltd, Rail Tel, Oil India Ltd, and Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) — is also between two and three times their average revenue for the past five years.

The total demand raised by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) against state-owned gas transporter GAIL is Rs 1.72 lakh crore — nearly four times its net worth at Rs 44,092 crore, and nearly three times its average annual revenue over the past five years.

The AGR demanded from electricity transmission major Power Grid is nearly Rs 22,170 crore — nearly equivalent to its average annual revenue over the five years at Rs 25,513 crore and over three times the company's average net profit over the past five years.

In case of Oil India, on November 22, the DoT sent the oil exploration company a demand notice to pay Rs 40,108 crore as part of its pending AGR dues. The amount sought from the oil exploration company is nearly one-and-a-half times its net worth as of March 2019 and nearly 20 times its average net profit over the past five years.

This is despite companies such as GAIL, Oil India, and others having maintained that while most of the bandwidth bought by them in the mid-2000s is for captive use, "any additional bandwidth capacity available with them is leased out by them to telecom operators" for optimal use of the spectrum. The clarifications by these PSUs notwithstanding, DoT officials are of the view that they have to pay the AGR dues as they failed to "hive off the unit using the spectrum" into a separate unit, as per the SC's directions in 2011.

The high pending payout amounts against all licensees, DoT officials further explained, is on account of compounding of dues which include principal amount payable, interest on pending AGR dues, the penalty levied due to faulty self-assessment by companies, and the interest on penalties.

In its October 24, 2019 judgment, the SC upheld the

The SC directive to the telecom sector with respect to the AGR dues pales in comparison to the payout confronting the non-telecos, which face the prospect of shelling out over twice the amount that telcos are required to pay

DoT's definition of AGR and said since the licensees had agreed to the migration packages, they were liable to pay the dues, the penalty on dues, and the interest on penalty due to delay in payments.

Since 2011, when the case first came to the apex court, the central government has maintained that since all the license holders had "unconditionally accepted the migration package and having taken the benefit of the same are bound by the terms and conditions of the license agreement and cannot be permitted to resile from the same".

"The 2011 Supreme Court judgment clearly mentions that if they wanted to avoid the burden, they should have hived off those units into a separate unit and maintained separate accounts," a senior DoT official said.

Non-telecom PSUs, which now face the burden of shelling out the amounts had, however remained conspicuous by their absence during which the SC heard the arguments for and against upholding the DoT's AGR definition. These PSUs started mounting their defenses nearly three months after the October 24 SC judgment, and only to contest the notices sent to them by DoT asking them to pay their AGR dues.

The first to move the apex court with a modification plea in November was GAIL, which had received the demand notice of Rs 1.72 lakh crore from the DoT. GAIL was followed by others including Oil India, DMRC, Power Grid and others. GAIL, DMRC and Oil India did not respond to queries by *The Indian Express* on why the companies took nearly three months to challenge the SC ruling on AGR.

Incidentally, GAIL and Oil India, alongside PGCIL and others, approached the apex court on January 24 seeking an early hearing in to their modification plea exactly a day after Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had said that DoT seeking AGR dues from non-telecom PSUs was a result of a "communication gap" and that these firms did not owe any such amounts.

INDEX CLOSES AT 40,789.38 ON STRONG INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Sensex rallies 917 pts on global cues; back at pre-Budget level

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

STOCK MARKETS on Tuesday bounced back to the pre-Budget level after crude oil prices fell to a 13-month low on Monday as the coronavirus outbreak curtailed Chinese demand and the global markets recovered even as India's manufacturing activity showed signs of a comeback.

Despite concerns over fiscal slippage and rising coronavirus fears, the Sensex soared 917.07 points, or 2.30 per cent, to 40,789.38, while NSE benchmark Nifty50 gained 271.75 points, or 2.32 per cent, to 11,979.65 on strong institutional support. With this, the key indices have now recouped the losses suffered on the Budget day. The Sensex had plunged 988 points on Saturday after the budget announcement, but recovered by 136 points on Monday amid heavy buying by domestic institutions.

Further, latest data points show that the economy is showing signs of a revival with India's manufacturing sector activity climbing to a near eight-year high in January, driven by sharp rise in new business orders amid a rebound in demand conditions, leading to a rise in production and hiring activity. Despite the downturn in the economy, the IHS Markit India Manufacturing PMI jumped from 52.7 in December to 55.3

EXPLAINED Street mood turns positive on strong macro data

LATEST DATA show that the economy is showing signs of a revival with India's PMI manufacturing index climbing to a near eight-year high in January, driven by a sharp rise in new business orders, amid a rebound in demand conditions, leading to a rise in production and hiring activity.

Further, steps to contain the deadly coronavirus and any significant drop in global crude oil prices will improve investor sentiment.

in January, its highest level in just under eight years

The rupee, on the other hand, appreciated by 11 paise to close at 71.27 against the US dollar, tracking heavy buying in domestic equities and easing crude prices. The Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy outcome could be the next trigger for the rupee as its comments on inflation and growth forecast will be followed closely by the investors.

Analysts said the rally in global markets boosted Indian markets, prompting investors to step in with buy orders. Shanghai Composite ended up 1.3 per cent on Tuesday and the Shenzhen Component Index closed 3.2 per cent higher. Monday marked that index's biggest single-day percentage drop since 2007. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index rose 1.2 per

cent, while South Korea's Kospi rose 1.8 per cent. Japan's Nikkei 225 edged up 0.5 per cent. Stock exchanges in Europe, too, opened on a positive note.

"Steps to contain the deadly coronavirus and a significant drop in global crude oil prices in recent days helped improve investor sentiment," said an analyst. The market is keenly awaiting the RBI monetary policy and quarterly results of the remaining companies, he said.

S Ranganathan, head of research at LKP Securities, said, "A global rally in equities post a correction due to the coronavirus had positive rub off in India as well today with the BSE Sensex gaining more than 900 points with all sectoral indices ending in green. With the budget fully digested, the drop in oil prices is a big positive for India and with expectations of

MSCI flows we witnessed short covering and buying in heavy weights".

However, foreign investors were sellers since February 1 and pulled out stocks worth Rs 2,525 crore in three sessions. "The recovery was amply supported by domestic institutions which went on a buying spree," said veteran BSE brokers Pawan Dhamidharka.

Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit Financial Services, said, "Markets witnessed a V shape recovery post the overreaction on the budget day, as the expectation was too high. These are typical tendency of the market to over and under estimate given its volatile trading pattern. Markets are focusing on the earnings growth and global trend, Q3 has provided a positive trend to earnings while global market is positive."

As the Budget failed to provide any short-term relief, the market experienced a massive carnage. "This was a knee jerk reaction but as investors realized that the budget will aid in the long-term growth of the economy, the market picked up. With the budget overhang gone, investors are breathing a sigh of relief and are back to make fresh calls. Additionally, January auto sales numbers were comparatively decent and with no other negative news, the Indian bourses saw a sudden rally today," said Umesh Mehta, head of research, Samco Securities.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a BJP parliamentary party meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday. Renuka Puri

FM to Corporate India: 'Expect you to be equally the engine to pull economy forward'

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

URGING THE industry to be equal partners in pushing growth engine of the country, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Tuesday said only government spending cannot push India's growth story and the industry needs to come out of its self-doubt and hesitation mode.

"...the approach has been we shall spend on asset creation and it is the cascading effect of this spend which is going to help the industry. So, we expect you to be equally the engine to pull the economy forward. I don't think in today's conditions, it can be just the government spending which can pull this economy towards that growth which all of us want. I strongly believe industry today will have to come out of that hesitation, which you held and rightly in your mind, but I think it's time now to come out of the hesitation. I called it self-doubt sometime back. That hesitation is something which I want the industry to come out of," Sitharaman said at a post-Budget interaction held by CII.

The Finance Minister further said that the government has done whatever little it could do and it's not closing the doors and is ready to do even more. "But I want it to be a meaningful intervention from the government rather than rush to do something which may not be necessary at all for the government. From our side we have definitely done like cutting down on the rates, removing MAT and post that now taking the burden of DDT. So I think it's now time for all of us to pull our weight along, make sure that the economy has support of each one of us, where each one will have to become the engine for pulling this economy

up. After all, the spirit of enterprise is yours, we are here to facilitate," she said. On the Budget announcement to impose a health cess of 5 per cent over and above the customs duty, and whether it's a protectionist move, Sitharaman said if there are medical devices being made in India, there shouldn't be a flood of imports and the additional import and the revenue generated will be directed towards medical infrastructure creation in the aspirational districts where there are not enough hospitals that could be empanelled under Ayushman Bharat. She said she would be meeting stakeholders in three metros beginning February 7, adding: "This group will be coming with me in the next few days to at least three cities — Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata — in India, to interact with industry, economists, trade bodies, traders, farmers and farmers' group".

With respect to fiscal deficit, she said the situation right now is in contrast to what had happened in response to the 2008-09 economic crisis since the government has only used the escape clause of the FRBM Act. "I am clearly indicating that I am going to clearly lay a glide path so that treatment to the economy which is now so demanded and justifiably demanded will be given clear monitoring. We are not going to leave it unendingly as though there's never going to be an end and the treatment has to continue forever. If the economy shows clear improvement, we shall focus our attention to something else. That's the difference between 2009 treatment and now. And because it was left without an end, the splurging continued. And between 2014 to 2019, we had to sort that mess out which resulted in the twin balance sheet problem," she said.

FDI at \$34.90 billion till Nov of FY20

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India has been increasing on an annual basis and was at \$34.90 billion till November of this fiscal, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur informed Parliament on Tuesday

2.37% of GDP Despite a global contraction in FDI inflows, FDI into India have improved over the past decade to \$62 billion, which accounts for 2.37 per cent of GDP in 2018-19 fiscal

9TH As per the World Investment Report (WIR), 2019, India rose from twenty fifth position in 2018 and featured at ninth place with FDI contribution of 3.23 per cent, he added



INVESTOR CONFIDENCE has gone up after the government took measures to improve ease of doing business, comprehensive reforms in the FDI policy and introduction of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 among others, he said.

GOVT MEASURES TO BE A BIG BOOST The success of various initiatives is reflected in the increased inflow of FDI and increase in Gross Fixed Capital formation, he said, adding several measures taken by the government will further boost FDI in all sectors

Feel this is a fair deal: CBDT chief on direct tax amnesty scheme

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE CENTRAL Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman, PC Mody, on Tuesday said the direct tax dispute resolution scheme offers a fair deal to taxpayers to settle pending tax disputes. Under the scheme if a taxpayer is not able to pay within the March 31 deadline, he gets a further time till June 30, but in that case he would have to pay 10 per cent more on the tax, Mody said.

"I feel this is a fair deal and I would urge people to rethink about the pending issues, and

come forward and avail of the scheme," Mody said speaking at an Assocham post-Budget interaction here. After a dispute resolution scheme for indirect taxes, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday announced a direct tax amnesty scheme called "Vivad Se Vishwas" in the Budget 2020-21 with a nearly 60-day window to clear all pending dues without paying interest and penalty. Through the new scheme, the government aims to resolve disputes with taxpayers in nearly 4,83,000 direct tax cases pending at various legal and quasi-legal bodies.

Under the scheme, any tax-

"Time has come for a relook and revisit of the entire system, and I think the younger people and people who have not got used to the deductions and exemptions will find it attractive to go for the lower rate"

PC MODY CBDT CHAIRMAN

payer currently in dispute with the government over the pending dues will be allowed to pay just the principal amount. There will

be a complete waiver of interest and penalty, provided the taxpayer pays such amount by March 31 and the scheme would remain open till June 30. In the budget for last fiscal, Sitharaman had announced the legacy dispute resolution scheme for indirect tax disputes, to "allow quick closure" of the litigation pertaining to the pre Goods and Services Tax regime. Under the indirect tax amnesty scheme, nearly 73 per cent of the total eligible taxpayers had committed to pay tax dues of Rs 30,627 crore under the scheme. On the new tax structure which provides taxpayers an option of lower I-T rate by giving up certain

exemption and deductions, Mody said the intention behind this was to make the tax system simple. "All this while, we have been used to incentives in the form of exemptions and deductions. We are consciously trying to move away from all that only to make the tax structure simple, as straight as possible so that the taxpayer feels comfortable complying with it," Mody said.

"Time has come for a relook and revisit of the entire system, and I think the younger people and people who have not got used to the deductions and exemptions will find it attractive to go for the lower rate," he added.

With 20% intraday jump, Tesla shares march toward \$1K

REUTERS TOKYO, FEBRUARY 4

SHARES OF Tesla Inc surged 20 per cent on Tuesday to hit \$940, extending a stunning rally that has more than doubled the company's market value since the start of the year as more investors bet on Chief Executive Elon Musk's vision. The latest surge was partly fuelled by Panasonic Corp saying on Monday its automotive battery venture with Tesla was in the black for the first time.

"Investors are now starting to believe that Tesla can make mass-volume electric vehicles, and automakers, battery makers and suppliers can make money from EVs," said Cho Hyun-ryul, analyst at Samsung Securities.

Some analysts have attributed the rally to short covering as well. Short interest in Tesla stood at 13.8 per cent as of January 30, according to Refinitiv data.

Shares of heavily shorted companies can at times get pushed higher as traders rush to buy stock to cover their short bets, triggering what is known as a "short squeeze". Tesla's surge on Tuesday valued the company at nearly \$170 billion. Tesla last week reported a second consecutive quarterly profit.

It reported revenue of \$24.6 billion in 2019.

10% TDS only on dividend by MFs, not on redemption of units, clarifies Tax dept

New Delhi: The tax department on Tuesday clarified that the Budget proposal of 10 per cent TDS will be applicable only on dividend payment by mutual funds and not on gain arising out of redemption of units.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had in Budget 2020-21 scrapped dividend distribution tax (DDT) paid by companies and mutual funds on dividend paid to shareholders or unit holders.

In place, it was proposed to levy tax deducted at source (TDS) of 10 per cent on dividend/income paid by a company or mutual fund to its share/unit holder if the amount of such dividend/income exceeds Rs

5,000 in a year.

In a statement, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said queries have been raised if mutual fund would be required to deduct TDS also on the capital gains arising on redemption of units.

"It is hereby clarified that under the proposed section, a mutual fund shall be required to deduct TDS at 10 per cent only on dividend payment and no tax shall be required to be deducted by the mutual fund on income which is in the nature of capital gains," it said.

It went on to state that necessary clarification, if required, shall be proposed in the relevant provision of the law. PTI

COMPANY SAYS ITS CLOUD COMPUTING SERVICES TOOK IN \$2.6 BN IN REVENUE LAST QUARTER

YouTube a \$15 bn-a-year biz, Google reveals

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SAN FRANCISCO, FEBRUARY 4

GOOGLE PARENT Alphabet missed revenue expectations in the fourth quarter despite stellar growth at YouTube and in the cloud, earnings figures released Monday showed.

Detailing its cloud computing and YouTube revenues for the first time, Alphabet reported that profits rose 19 per cent from a year ago in the quarter to nearly \$10.7 billion as revenues increased 17 per cent to \$46 billion.

Alphabet and Google chief executive Sundar Pichai touted YouTube as a revenue star at the company, with ad revenue reach-

ing \$15 billion last year in an increase of about 36 per cent from 2018.

YouTube music and television premium services now have more than 20 million paid subscribers, according to Pichai.

Despite assurances by executives that Alphabet sees plenty of money-making potential ahead and is investing to capitalize on long-term trends, Alphabet shares slipped more than four per cent in after-market trades that followed release of the earnings figures.

The California tech giant, which dominates online search and makes the Android mobile operating system, has been working to reduce its dependence on the digital advertising which de-



Alphabet reported that profits rose 19 per cent from a year ago in the quarter to nearly \$10.7 billion as revenues increased 17 per cent to \$46 billion. AP

livers most of its cash. "Our investments in deep computer science, including arti-

ficial intelligence, ambient computing and cloud computing, provide a strong base for continued growth and new opportunities across Alphabet," said Pichai.

The company said its cloud computing services took in \$2.6 billion in revenue during the last three-month period — up more than 50 per cent — and nearly \$9 billion for the year.

Chief financial officer Ruth Porat said Alphabet will ramp-up hiring this year. Much of that will be engineering talent for its cloud division which competes with cloud market-leaders Amazon and Microsoft.

"We are leaning into investing for longterm growth," Porat said. "That has been a key principle

here and continues to be." Google advertising took in the majority of revenue at \$38 billion in the quarter, and more than 80 per cent of its annual revenues of \$162 billion.

Colin Sebastian, an analyst at Baird, said the earnings report showed "a deceleration" in growth for Google, which may have been due to the impact of fewer holiday shopping days.

Despite that, Sebastian said he sees "no change to our positive long-term thesis" for Alphabet.

Analyst Nicole Perrin at eMarketer said the results highlight the significance of YouTube, the popular video service for which Alphabet had not up to now disclosed financial data.

India's growth projections ambitious, says Moody's

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

MOODY'S INVESTORS Service on Tuesday said economic growth projections made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget for 2020-21 appear ambitious given the structural and cyclical challenges facing the Indian economy.

The Budget expects nominal GDP growth of 10 per cent in 2020-21, followed by 12.6 per cent and 12.8 per cent in FY2022 and 2023. But, Moody's saw GDP growth rising to around 8.7 per cent in the next financial year beginning April 1 from about 7.5 per cent in the current fiscal.

Stating that growth outlook will remain weak, it has put real GDP growth during the current fiscal ending March 31 at 4.9 per cent, slightly below the government's forecast of 5 per cent.

"Growth has remained relatively weak as a prolonged deleveraging cycle and ongoing stress among non-banking financial institutions (NBFI), which has constrained the financial system's overall provision of credit, weigh on consumption and investment," it said.

Ads claiming to make you fair, prevent ageing may soon be punishable

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

COMPANIES ADVERTISING medicines and products purported to make a person fairer, improve their height and memory or cure issues like hair loss or greying and premature ageing, among several others, may soon attract more stringent fines and jail time.

The new draft of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) (Amendment) Bill, 2020, proposes a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh and up to two years' imprisonment in cases of a first time offence. In the case of a subsequent conviction, imprisonment may extend to five years and the fine, up to Rs 50 lakh.

The previous version of this Act, dated 1954, had kept penalties for a first time conviction at up to six months, with or without a fine, and imprisonment of up to one year for a second time conviction. The amendments also propose to expand the definition of an advertisement to "any audio or visual publicity, representation, endorsement or pronouncement made by means of light, sound, smoke, gas, print, electronic media, internet or website and in-

Health Ministry has sought comments on a proposal to make punishment for 'objectionable' ads more stringent

cludes any notice, circular, label, wrapper, invoice, banner, poster or such other documents."

The Act prohibits persons from taking "any part" in the publication of ads referring to any drug in terms which suggest or are "calculated to lead to" the use of that drug for uses like inducing miscarriages or preventing pregnancies, among others. The amended Act also prohibits advertisements that purport the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment or prevention of "any" of the 78 diseases, disorders or conditions it has specified, including AIDS, bronchial asthma, certain types of cancers, change of the foetal sex and sexual impotence, premature ejaculation and spermatorrhoea. The previous Act listed 54 such diseases, disorders and conditions. The Health Ministry has sought suggestions, comments or objections to these amendments within 45 days.

Q3: ARPU AT ₹135 ON TARIFF HIKE IN DECEMBER

Bharti Airtel loss at ₹1,035 cr

Exceptional charge of ₹1,050 cr, mainly on account of interest on provision of licence fee and spectrum usage charges recorded in Sept 2019 quarter

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

BHARTI AIRTEL'S consolidated net loss during the October-December quarter stood at Rs 1,035 crore. The net loss during the preceding quarter was the highest in its history at Rs 23,045 crore on the back of provisions for the licence fee and spectrum usage charge based on the definition of the Supreme Court of what constitutes adjusted gross revenue.

Net loss of Rs 1,035 crore was on the back of an exceptional charge of Rs 1,050 crore which comprises a charge on account of interest on the provision of licence fee and spectrum usage charges recorded in the quarter ended September 2019 of Rs 1,048.1 crore.

The noteworthy point is the sequential jump of 5.3 per cent in average revenue per user (Arpu) at Rs 135. This is largely on the back of tariff hike the company effected during December 2019, the full impact of which would accrue during

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE AT ₹21,947 CRORE

Consolidated revenue during the quarter at Rs 21,947 crore was up 3.86 per cent sequentially, while Ebitda at Rs 9,350 crore was up 4.6 per cent

Margin expanded 30 bps on a sequential basis to 42.6 per cent driven by the December tariff hikes

The company, which has adjusted gross revenue dues of Rs 35,586 crore, said that it has successfully raised Rs 21,502 crore of funding through a combination of fresh equity issuance via qualified institutional placement and issue of convertible bonds

the January-March quarter. The Arpu was higher than competitor Reliance Jio whose Arpu during the same quarter was at Rs 128.

"While tariff revision undertaken in December 2019 is a welcome step towards repairing the financial health of industry, we believe tariffs must go up further for enabling the industry to invest in emerging technologies," said Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO, Bharti Airtel (India and South Asia).

Consolidated revenue during the quarter at Rs 21,947 crore

strengthen its balance sheet. Pursuant to the infusion of fresh equity and long-term financing via convertible bonds subsequent to the reporting period ended December 31, 2019, and available liquidity/facilities with the Group, the management has reported that the previously reported material uncertainty on the Group's ability to continue as a going concern no longer exists," Bharti Airtel said in a statement.

During the quarter, the company's India mobile services revenues grew 1.7 per cent compared to the preceding quarter at Rs 11,165 crore. India business revenue grew 2.83 per cent quarter-on-quarter at Rs 15,797 crore.

Apart from Arpu, on other key operating metrics also Bharti performed well during the quarter. Its total voice traffic on the network increased 5.9 per cent sequentially at 758,897 million minutes. Minutes of usage per month, per user increased 5.8 per cent to 898 minutes. This is higher than Jio's 760 minutes during the same quarter. **FE**

BRIEFLY

Sebi seeks reply from Franklin

Mumbai: Sebi has sought a reply from Franklin Templeton after the fund house's markdown of its investment in second-largest telecom firm Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) that led to an erosion of investor wealth.

LIC staff union hold walk-out across country

Mumbai: Nearly one lakh employees of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) staged an hour-long walk-out on Tuesday against the government's decision to sell a part of its stake in the life insurance major through an initial public offering. **PTI**

WTO chief not meeting US Prez Trump

Washington: World Trade Organization Director General Roberto Azevedo said on Tuesday he would not meet with US President Donald Trump during his current visit to Washington, but believed US officials shared a sense of urgency about reforming the global trade body. **REUTERS**

District export plan to boost shipments

New Delhi: The Commerce Ministry has initiated a process to prepare a district export plan specific to every state and Union territory, with a view to boost the country's outbound shipments, an official statement said on Tuesday. **PTI**

Pudumjee Paper profit rises 50%

Mumbai: Pudumjee Paper Products Ltd (PPPL) has reported a 50 per cent rise in the net profit at Rs 23.31 crore for 9-month period ended December 2019 as against Rs 15.46 crore a year ago. Turnover for the nine-month period rose about 8 per cent to Rs 471.21 crore from Rs 437.87 crore. **ENS**

Coronavirus shadow on Auto Expo: Chinese executives to stay away from exhibit areas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

INDUSTRY BODY SIAM on Tuesday said all Chinese companies participating at India's flagship automobile show Auto Expo have confirmed that their exhibit area would be manned by their Indian employees in the wake of coronavirus outbreak.

The biennial automobile show kicks off on Wednesday with media presentations, and will be officially inaugurated on Thursday. The expo will be open to public from February 7-12.

In a statement, Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) President Rajan Wadhwa said, "None of these stalls would be manned by anybody who has come to India recently from China."

He further said, "As all arrivals from China have now been stopped, there will be no visitors/delegations from China at the Motor Show 2020."

India on Sunday announced temporary suspension of e-visa facility for Chinese travellers and foreigners residing in the neighbouring country and issued a fresh advisory saying anyone with travel history to China since January 15 can be quarantined. In addition, auto component makers body ACMA said Chinese participants at the components

SIAM on Tuesday said all Chinese companies participating at the expo have confirmed that their exhibit area would be manned by their Indian staff

show of Auto Expo are unable to travel to India due to the outbreak of coronavirus in China, even as around 30 companies from there have confirmed that their stand would be managed by their Indian counterparts in their absence.

"All Chinese companies participating at the Auto Expo - The Motor Show 2020 have confirmed that their exhibit area would be manned by their Indian employees/representatives," Wadhwa said.

He further said despite no coronavirus threat directly at Auto Expo, the organisers are taking measures to make people aware of symptoms and prevention actions.

Chinese firms led by the likes of Great Wall Motor, First Automotive Works (FAW) and electric bus and matter maker BYD have booked around 20 per cent of the total space of around 40,000 square metres at the expo.

'NBFCs' wholesale book under severe stress

Crisil has warned of potentially high stress in non-banking lenders' wholesale book well above the reported bad loan numbers by March, indicating rising risks to their retail book

3.3% The reported NPAs in the realty segment is estimated to have risen to 3.3 per cent as of September 2019, from 1.8 per cent as of March 2019. About 40 per cent of the book, including lease rental discounting, was still under moratorium as of September 2019

REASONS

Financial flexibility of many underlying operating companies in this space and realtors have been impacted due to the overall slowdown

A major chunk of the loan book is under moratorium, which means NPAs could jump when loans come out of it

OUTLOOK

It is not the traditional segments-retail books where the material concerns lie. It is the wholesale loan book where more significant slippages are expected to manifest as portfolios come out of moratorium

The crisis in the wholesale books will be led more by real estate and structured credit, which comprise only 16 per cent of the total assets of NBFCs at Rs 3.8 lakh crore as of March 2019

IL&F'S COLLAPSE

Almost all NBFCs have been under severe liquidity stress since the fall of industry major IL&F in September 2018

THE SPIKE in bad loans is being driven by the realty books, which has almost trebled as of the September 2019 quarter to 10%

RETAIL LOAN BOOK UNDER PRESSURE

The "slowdown hasn't spared retail loans either as non-performing assets, measured as 90+ days past due for NBFCs are expected to continue to rise by another 30 to 150 bps by March 2020, depending on the asset class. This is on the back of 20 to 150 bps increase seen in the first half of fiscal 2020"

Source: Crisil/PTI

NII AT ₹4,355.05 CR IN Q3

PNB posts ₹492-cr loss as provisions swell

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

PUNJAB NATIONAL Bank (PNB), the country's third-largest public-sector lender, on Tuesday posted a surprise net loss of Rs 492.28 crore for the December quarter, as provisions for bad assets rose 73.3 per cent year-on-year.

The bank had reported a net profit of Rs 246.51 crore in the comparable quarter last year. The provisions on account of non-performing assets (NPA) for the December quarter stood at Rs 4,445.36 crore, compared with Rs 2,565.77 crore a year ago.

Provisions were high on account of divergence in asset classification and harmonisation among banks. "The reason for provision of Rs 4,445 crore is the divergence declared by RBI of Rs 2,200 crore, for (which) we have done the provision. Related to the harmonisation of provisioning among three banks, we have done the provision of around Rs 1,500 crore," MD & CEO CH SS Mallikarjuna Rao told a channel. **FE** had in December reported that the central bank was looking

(₹ cr)	Q3FY19	Q3FY20	Chg (%)
Provisions	2,566	4,445	73
Net profit/loss	247	-492	

Source: Company data

to harmonise provisioning done by banks.

Net interest income of the bank rose marginally by 1.5 per cent y-o-y to Rs 4,355.05 crore in the December quarter. Domestic net interest margin fell by 28 basis points (bps) sequentially to 2.36 per cent. Non-interest income increased 32.2 per cent y-o-y at Rs 2,404.8 crore. The bank recovered Rs 1,194 crore in written-off accounts during the quarter.

Total deposits for the December quarter grew 8.9 per cent y-o-y to Rs 708 lakh crore, of which domestic deposits stood at Rs 6.89 lakh crore. Current-account-savings-account deposits, which accounts for 43.74 per cent of domestic deposits, grew 10.2 per cent y-o-y to Rs 3.01 lakh crore. **FE**

Insurance on bank deposits raised to ₹5L from Tuesday

New Delhi: Insurance cover on bank deposits has been increased to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 1 lakh effective Tuesday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a statement.

The cover is provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RBI.

This, the RBI said, has been done with a view to providing a greater measure of protection to depositors. On Saturday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had made the announcement regarding increasing insurance cover to Rs 5 lakh in her Budget Speech. **PTI**

'FinMin to assuage concerns of rating agencies; economy remains robust'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE FINANCE Ministry has said it will try to assuage concerns of rating agencies on opting for higher deficit and other Budget numbers while stressing that fundamentals of the economy are strong.

Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty said the Indian economy remains robust and more than meets the requirement of investment grade and above.

"Certainly, I can say that the economy remains robust and more than meets the requirement of investment grade and above," he said. Asked if he is apprehensive about rating downgrade following relaxation in the fiscal deficit target, he said, "No, not at all. Since I see the numbers much more closely, I am strongly confident of the inherent robustness of the economy. It is far too robust than our numbers reflect."

This is the economy that has

"We have to have a dialogue with them. So, we will keep assuaging their fears. The fear is not about this number but the numbers arising out of the future impact - debt-to-GDP ratio, interest coverage and so on and so forth and, in turn, how the entire economy is behaving"

ATANU CHAKRABORTY
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS SECRETARY

just decelerated, he said adding that no contraction took place.

India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth is expected to slow to 11-year low of 5 per cent in the current financial year.

He further said the government will address the concerns of the rating agencies.

"We have to have a dialogue with them. So, we will keep assuaging their fears. The fear is not about this number but the

numbers arising out of the future impact - debt-to-GDP ratio, interest coverage and so on and so forth and, in turn, how the entire economy is behaving.

"That is why it is a comprehensive Budget and speech, which addresses all those questions... I would be flippant if I say that I am not concerned about them," he told PTI in an interaction.

The Budget expects a nominal GDP growth of 10 per cent in the next financial year, followed by 12.6 per cent and 12.8 per cent in 2021-22 and 2022-23, respectively. The government on Saturday raised fiscal deficit target to 3.8 per cent of the GDP from 3.3 per cent pegged earlier for 2019-20 due to revenue shortage.

"We estimate a fiscal deficit of 3.8 per cent in RE 2019-20 and 3.5 per cent for BE 2020-21. This estimation is consistent with the government's abiding commitment to macroeconomic stability," the FM said while presenting the Budget.

Govt plans GST lottery offers up to ₹1 cr for encouraging customers to ask for bills

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE GOVERNMENT is planning to introduce lottery offers between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore under the GST to encourage customers to take bills while making purchases.

Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) member John Joseph said every bill under the goods and services tax (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 price are so high that people will say that by not saving 28 per cent, I have a chance of winning Rs 1 crore or Rs 10 lakh. It is a question of changing the consumer behaviour," Joseph said at an ASSOCHAM event here.

As per the plan, the purchase bill would be uploaded on a portal

As per the plan, the purchase bill would be uploaded on a portal and a draw would be held automatically

and a draw would be held automatically and the winners would be informed.

Under the four-tier GST, goods and services are taxed at 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent. Besides, cess is levied on luxury, sin and demerit goods on top of the highest tax rate. The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising state counterparts, would vet the proposed lottery scheme.

The Council would also decide on the minimum threshold for bills that would be included in the lottery. As per the plan, the money for the lottery would come from the consumer welfare fund, where the proceeds of anti-profiteering are transferred.

Clock ticking for cos depending on China imports

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 4

FOR COMPANIES bracing for losses from China's viral outbreak, the damage has so far been delayed, thanks to a stroke of timing: The outbreak hit just when Chinese factories and many businesses were closed anyway to let workers travel home for the week-long Lunar New Year holiday.

But the respite won't last. If much of industrial China remains on lockdown for the next few weeks, a very real possibility,

RETAILERS IN A RISKY POSITION

If much of industrial China remains on lockdown for the next few weeks, a very real possibility, Western retailers, auto

companies and manufacturers that depend on Chinese imports will start to run out of the goods they depend on

Western retailers, auto companies and manufacturers that depend on Chinese imports will start to run out of the goods they depend on. In order to meet deadlines for summer goods, retail experts say that Chinese factories would need

to start ramping up production by March 15. If Chinese factories were instead to remain idle through May 1, it would likely cripple retailers' crucial back-to-school and fall seasons.

"There's complete uncer-

tainty," said Steve Pasierb, CEO of the Toy Industry Association.

"This could be huge if it goes on for months." Wuhan, the Chinese city where the outbreak hit hardest, is a center of automotive production. It's been closed off, along with neighbouring cities, isolating more than 50 million people and bringing factories to a standstill.

So far, US automakers haven't had to curb production for want of Chinese parts. But David Closs, professor emeritus at Michigan State University's Department of Supply Chain Management, said the clock is ticking.

CHAGUAN

The politics of pandemics

Xi Jinping wants to be both feared and loved by China's people



Every day, state media credit Xi Jinping with personally guiding China to ever-greater prosperity, modernity and global clout. Reuters

IF CENSORS in Communist-led regimes are good for anything, it is spurring creativity. With a new coronavirus stalking China, netizens have been heaping praise on “Chernobyl”, an American-made television drama about the Soviet Union’s worst nuclear disaster. Their aim is to sneak discussion of the outbreak onto China’s tightly policed internet. In less hectic times censors would swiftly stamp out such impertinence. For the parallels with the reactor explosion in 1986, and the official cover-up that followed, are painful for China’s Communist Party bosses, whose system of government was cribbed from Soviet designs. But pointed comparisons keep popping up on China’s social media. One urges Chinese viewers to learn from “Chernobyl” that a free flow of information offers more security than aircraft-carriers, Moon landings and other signs of superpower might. Another contrasts a soothing interview granted to state television by the governor of Hubei, the province where the epidemic began, with a speech by the hero of “Chernobyl”, a Soviet scientist, about the costs of official lies.

Parallels are likely to continue in the real world. Back in the 1980s, Kremlin

leaders scapegoated local officials and engineers, coolly blaming them for the disaster and denying a wider cover-up. In recent days, Chinese state media have dropped heavy hints that the mayor of Wuhan, the industrial city where the virus was first detected, will lose his job. When Li Keqiang, China’s prime minister, was appointed to oversee virus-control work, cynics suggested that his role was to take the fall should the outbreak spark a pandemic—in effect, to protect President Xi Jinping.

As it happens, censors should be relieved that Chinese netizens are focusing on the ills of Soviet collective leadership. It would be more dangerous if online critics were to start exploring a historical parallel closer to home, namely the way that in Chinese history natural disasters undermined an emperor’s claim to rule. More than one dynasty fell after catastrophes signalled that Heaven had withdrawn its favour. It was not only seen as ineptitude when a ruler was unable to protect his people from floods or famine—or, as in the second century during the Han dynasty, from repeated outbreaks of disease (probably smallpox and measles) that killed perhaps a third of the population. Such bungling showed that

the emperor lacked virtue and deserved to be overthrown, people said.

Modern-day Chinese may not believe that a rampaging coronavirus signals divine anger with Mr Xi. Still, the party chief has a great deal at stake in this crisis, precisely because large claims are made about his wisdom, which is now taught in schools and studied by party members as Xi Jinping Thought. Every day, state media credit Mr Xi with personally guiding China to ever-greater prosperity, modernity and global clout. No leader has amassed such individual power since Mao Zedong, or been so lavishly praised. Chinese intellectuals accuse Mr Xi of claiming the mantle of an emperor. They point to Mr Xi’s speeches praising traditional Chinese culture, and lauding codes of morality and deference

to imperial authority, as handed down by Confucius and other sages.

The result is an awkward hybrid. On the one hand, officials make claims about the efficiency of collective party leadership that would be familiar to any Soviet apparatchik. To them, populist insurgencies sweeping the West are proof that multiparty elections, a free press and other forms of democratic accountability are sources of chaos and dysfunction. As they describe it, China’s system is a meritocracy that selects highly competent experts to run the country, with a track record of correcting their own mistakes. Yet at the same time, the party’s propagandists lay claim to a very different form of legitimacy, involving the people’s love for and trust in one man, Mr Xi. So sweeping is their praise of him that it

leaves essentially no room for the idea that Mr Xi could make a serious mistake.

This convoluted claim to legitimacy can be heard in the context of the current coronavirus outbreak, as leaders insist that their system of government is ideally suited to tackling the disease. On January 28th Chinese leaders hosted the head of the World Health Organisation (WHO), a UN body that played an invaluable role in demanding transparency in 2003 after China’s initial cover-up of the extent of an outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which led to many avoidable deaths. Wang Yi, the foreign minister, assured the WHO’s boss, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, that China would be more resolute this time thanks to “the strong leadership of the party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core and the strong advantages of the socialist system”, as well as its experience of SARS.

Unaccountable, even to Heaven

It is too simplistic to assume that all bad things that happen in China must harm Mr Xi. The virus outbreak could end swiftly, amid worldwide praise for the

bravery of China’s doctors and nurses, the self-discipline of the public and the resolve of Chinese leaders, albeit after a slow start. If the crisis does not end well, scapegoats will be found, and underlings punished. That alone would not have to shake Mr Xi’s authority, which can always be shored up with repression, still greater ideological discipline and nationalist propaganda. But a botched response to the virus would lay bare tensions inherent in the party’s hybrid claims to legitimacy.

Mr Xi’s China is two things at once. It is a secretive, techno-authoritarian one-party state, ruled by grey men in unaccountable councils and secretive committees. It also claims to be a nation-sized family headed by a patriarch of unique wisdom and virtue, in a secular, 21st-century version of the mandate of Heaven. If forced to choose between those competing models, bet on cold, bureaucratic control to win out. For Mr Xi and his team learned their own lesson from the Soviet Union’s fall, five years after the Chernobyl disaster. Expressions of public love for Mr Xi, the “People’s Leader”, are all very well. But keeping power is what counts.

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Modern-day Chinese may not believe that a rampaging coronavirus signals divine anger with Xi Jinping. Still, the party chief has a great deal at stake in this crisis, precisely because large claims are made about his wisdom, which is now taught in schools and studied by party members as Xi Jinping Thought

IRAQI POLITICS

Sadder and Sadr

Muqtada al-Sadr, Iraq’s most volatile cleric, stakes his claim to power

THE HENCHMEN of Muqtada al-Sadr, Iraq’s most capricious—and perhaps most powerful—cleric, not only participated in the anti-government protests that have rocked Baghdad and other cities for months, they defended them. Others who joined the demonstrations stood a good chance of being frisked by Mr Sadr’s men, who looked out for troublemakers. Together with the mainly Shia crowds they demanded a new political system, one not dominated by a small elite, and a fairer distribution of the country’s oil wealth.

But on January 25th Mr Sadr ordered his followers to withdraw, blaming the hostile behaviour of the protesters towards his men. A crackdown on the protesters who remained appeared imminent. Over 600 people have been killed since the unrest began in October. As expected, the police cleared the streets in some cities. The protesters, though, have not gone home. There are more now.

With Mr Sadr throwing his weight behind the establishment, Iraq’s battle lines are clearly defined. The politicians and clerics who champion Shia political Islam, and who are backed by Iran, face protesters calling for a secular, non-sectarian government free of Iranian influence. The result is stalemate and stagnation. Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the prime minister, resigned last year, but he carries on as a caretaker (unconstitutionally, say some).

Ever since America toppled the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the cleric has sought power. He styles himself a local hero who endured American sanctions and Saddam, while other elites lived the high life abroad. That has given him clout on the street, which he occasionally cashes in for a seat at the table

The ruling parties have mulled many possible successors. Each name elicits guffaws from the crowds in the street.

Mr Sadr hopes to fill the post with a loyalist. Ever since America toppled the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the cleric has sought power. He styles himself a local hero who endured American sanctions and Saddam, while other elites lived the high life abroad. That has given him clout on the street, which he occasionally cashes in for a seat at the table. In 2016 he led a large rabble that occupied parliament. Last year the political bloc

that he leads, called Sairoun, won the most seats in parliamentary elections.

Mr Sadr is also eyeing two other important positions. The commander of the Popular Mobilisation Force (PMF), Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis, was killed in the American drone strike on Qasem Suleimani, Iran’s top commander, on January 3rd. The PMF co-ordinates Iraq’s powerful Shia armed groups; Mr Sadr would like to control it. He has been meeting PMF commanders. Last month he made a show of his strength by recalling his Mahdi Army.

But the post he most covets is head of Iraq’s clergy. Currently Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, a respected 89-year-old, sits atop the clerical establishment. Mr Sadr, half his age, has had a go at him before. The Mahdi Army seized the holy city of Najaf, the seat of Mr Sistani, in 2004—until America’s army forced it out. Today followers of Mr Sadr predict he could mount a theological challenge. Though just a *hujjat al-islam*, or junior cleric, he has spent over a decade in the cloisters of Qom, Iran’s clerical capital, improving his scholastic credentials and ties with Iran’s rulers.

Mr Sadr may hope to become Iraq’s version of a supreme leader. But it will be a bumpy ride to the top. Some in his ranks seethe at his betrayal of the protesters. Sheikh Asaad al-Nasari, a close associate, declared he



Muqtada al-Sadr ordered his followers to withdraw, blaming the hostile behaviour of the protesters towards his men. Reuters

would remain on the street. The protesters, for their part, detect disarray in the governing ranks. They sound emboldened. “Without Suleimani the militias are sheep without a shepherd,” says Faiq al-Sheikh Ali, a liberal parliamentarian who claims to be the protesters’ choice for prime minister. He wants American forces to stay in Iraq to keep Iran out.

Both sides hope to exhaust the other, but

they might end up exhausting ordinary Iraqis. Business is grinding to a halt. With oil prices low, the budget deficit is widening. Fears are mounting about the government’s ability to pay salaries. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump threatens to seize Iraq’s foreign assets and impose sanctions if the government persists with its request for American troops to leave. He has allowed Iraq to bypass American

sanctions on Iran and buy its gas and electricity. The waiver expires in mid-February. It might not be renewed, particularly if militias continue to lob rockets at America’s embassy in Baghdad, as they did on January 26th. Iraq is desperate for some calm. But continued unrest is more likely.

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25 TALK

ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



FROM STAGE TO THE SCREEN

Disney is bringing multiple award-winning musical *Hamilton* to the big screen. The deal, which was reportedly signed for 75 million dollars, will bring the musical to theatres in 2021. To be directed by Thomas Kail, it will feature the original cast.

SNAP SHOTS



Vocalist Shubha Mudgal performing in Shaheen Bagh on Tuesday
Gajendra Yadav



Web Debut

DEEPTI NAVAL will star with actor Mahesh Manjrekar in a new web series titled *Pawan and Pooja*, to be directed by Shaad Ali, Siddharth P Malhotra and Ajay Bhuyan. Naval and Manjrekar will play the lead in this relationship drama that explores the lives of three couples belonging to different generations — coincidentally, they are all named Pawan and Pooja. The show will also feature Sharman Joshi, Gul Panag, Taaruk Raina and Natasha Bharadwaj. Malhotra, director of *Hichki*, has conceptualised and created the series along with Ali and Bhuyan. It will premiere on February 14 on MX Player.



Before and After

PHOTOGRAPHER G VENKET RAM has turned to celebrated 19th century artist Raja Ravi Varma for his 2020 calendar. The cover photograph for each month recreates a famous Ravi Varma work. The calendar features, among others, actors Shruti Haasan, Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Ramya Krishnan, and Bharatnatyam dancers Shobana and Priyadarshini Govind. The calendar is an initiative of Naam, a trust founded by Mani Ratnam's wife Suhasini Maniratnam. Haasan and Prabhu took to social media to share their calendar looks and juxtapose them with the original Ravi Varma artwork.



From Their Home

AUCTION HOUSE Christie's will bring under the hammer works from the collection of husband and wife duo Kito De Boer and Jane Gowers. To take place on March 18 in New York, the sale will be part of the "South Asian Modern + Contemporary Art" auction. Well known collectors of Indian art, the couple owns over 1,000 works, dating from the late 19th century to the present day, covering major art movements, particularly the Bengal school. The auction will see prominent works, including Akbar Padamsee's *Paysage Urbain*, Rameshwar Broota's *The Last Chapter* and Ganesh Pyne's *The Animal* (pictured).

Santa Under Threat

MARIANNE JEAN-BAPTISTE (pictured), known for her role in movies such as *Secrets & Lies* and *In Fabric*, has joined Mel Gibson for the upcoming film *Fatman*. The film is being directed by Ian and Eshom Nelms, who are also writing the script. The story follows Gibson, who is a rowdy and unorthodox Santa Claus and is a fighting a declining business. A 12-year-old puts out a hit on him after receiving a lump of coal in his stockings for Christmas. The film also stars Walton Goggins, who will play the hitman.



'I never force anything on my work'

Multimedia artist Marcel Dzama on the influence of cinema, animals in his art and why he put family and friends behind a mask

VANDANA KALRA

KNOWN FOR his intricate and surreal works, New York-based artist Marcel Dzama draws from varied influences, from Dadaism to childhood fantasies, folk traditions and the present times. The multimedia artist's works are in major collections — including Museum of Modern Art (New York), Tate Gallery (London), and Guggenheim Museum (New York) — and homes of actors like Brad Pitt and Jim Carrey. He was in Delhi at the recently-concluded India Art Fair (IAF) with a set of works inspired by Bollywood. Also attracting attention was a wall painted with swirling winds in blue and creatures that were part of Dzama's early works. Excerpts from an email interview with the artist:

Your works at the IAF, which are made for India, feature Hindi cinema dancers and regional wildlife. Do you follow Bollywood?

Bollywood has endlessly inspired my films and drawings. In this series for India, I referenced some of the films I have seen

over the years, lobby cards I had purchased long ago and a book of Bollywood movie posters from the 1960s. I've always loved the choreography, costumes and music in those films. My favourite soundtracks are by artistes like Mohammad Rafi and Kishore Kumar.

Your recent show in Hong Kong referenced the country's horse racing culture. Tell us about that. Also, do you feel it is important to borrow local elements for an exhibition?

I had visited Hong Kong before my first show there, so I knew a little bit about the city and the culture. I also purchased a lot of older records of Chinese garage rock from the '60s, the titles of which I used for some of the works in the exhibition. I don't know if it's crucial to incorporate the culture of the city, but if it brings me inspiration, I like to use it. I never force anything on my work.

Being dyslexic, in school, you would sketch incessantly. Was art a means to express yourself?

I was drawing before I started school, and it was something I was drawn to (no pun in-



Artist Marcel Dzama at the India Art Fair (above); his works inspired by India

tended), I think because I had dyslexia, I lost interest in school. I had no backup plan other than becoming an artist. I wrote poetry and still do, but drawing comes more naturally.

After you moved to New York in 2004, your work became more vibrant. What changed? In a 2008 diorama you had riflemen shooting characters that had populated your works — bats, birds and giant human heads — was that somewhat of a declaration?

Animals have been in my work from the very start. Growing up in Canada, I encoun-

tered animals almost everywhere. I viewed them as metaphors for body armour, inside which would be a small man or woman.

When I first moved to New York, I found that my drawings were getting more and more claustrophobic, and I wanted to put some order back into them. So I started putting the characters in dancing positions, which led to my interest in ballet, which then led to my collaboration with the New York City ballet. I spent half a year in Guadalajara (Mexico) working on ceramic dioramas, and one of them was based on a drawing that I made as a declaration of some

I've always had the feeling that if you don't learn from the past then your future will be shallow

MARCEL DZAMA
ARTIST

kind of new, darker chapter. This work showed hunters shooting cartoon animal characters that used to appear in my (early) work in Winnipeg.

Masks have been omnipresent in your works since the beginning. How have they evolved?

I like the idea of the character showing what it represents with the mask — yet, underneath, there is still a mystery. In my first few films, the characters were masked because the actors were my parents or my siblings, and they would smile and laugh when I filmed them, so I made masks out of papier-mâché for them to wear to ensure they would not break the character.

How important are collaborations for you as an artist? You have had several — with Arcade Fire, Kim Gordon, Spike Jonze, Raymond Pettibon, and the New York City Ballet.

I collaborated with the New York City Ballet in 2016, which was a dream come true. I always wanted to design costumes and work on stage design for a ballet production. Doing the artist series at the same time made it even more exciting, because I was able to make a book of all the costume designs, display the originals costume drawings and some other ballet inspired drawings and dioramas of possible alternative stage designs. On top of that, I also had a collaborative show with Raymond Pettibon at David Zwirner in New York, and made a short film — all within two months.

Tell us about the influence of Dadaism and Marcel Duchamp on your work.

I was asked by the Toronto Film Festival to make a short film in honour of David Cronenberg. When making the film, I decided to also honour some of the artists I loved, so I recreated artworks by Duchamp, Picabia, Beuys and Goya. I based the whole story on a love affair that Duchamp had with Maria Martins.

How important is it for an artist to comment on politics? You did a series after Trump was elected.

I only get political after I've listened to the news and need to exorcise it from my mind so that I can sleep at night. Goya's *Disasters of War* and writings of William Blake have influenced so many of my works. I've always had the feeling that if you don't learn from the past then your future will be shallow.

Stories of a Land

Writer-anthropologist Onaiza Drabu retells popular folk tales from Kashmir in her new book

SURBHIGUPTA

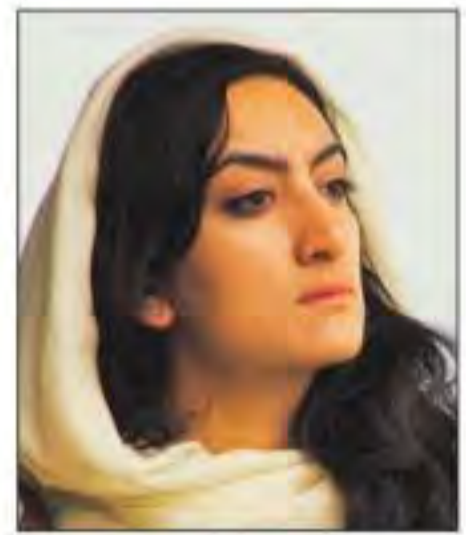
FOR MANY, the story of Him and Nagrai is a memory of being tucked beside their grandmothers, taking in the warmth of the kangri on a cold, winter night, as it snowed outside. Soon, they are transported to another world where Saddaram, who lived in Shopian, longed for a child and feared the wrath of his displeased wife. Till one day, while resting near a *naag*, he bagged a serpent who turned into a beautiful boy, who was in fact Nagrai, the king of serpents. He grows up to fall in love with Him, the daughter of king Balaveer. The story that is full of romance, drama, conspiracy and sacrifice, and has caught the imagination of generations in Kashmir, is being retold, alongside many other folk tales, by writer-anthropologist Onaiza Drabu, in the book *The Legend of Him and Nagrai: Greatest Kashmiri Folk Tales* (Speaking Tiger; Rs 350). "These stories have been a part of the nightlife in Kashmir, especially when the nights are long and cold. They are traditionally the oldest form of entertainment. I have many memories of them being told over and over again," says Drabu.

In the 29 stories that make the book, there is one of a *shikaslad* (pauper) on his way to wake up his luck, which is deep in slumber and lives in Kaminis Zuh, a place of trials and tribulations; another one of Shishrum Nag and his daughter's broom, which turns everything golden, and the story of *ishq* between a shepherd girl and a *wan mohniyu*, a human-like creature with a thick layer of fur on his body, who has long been used to create fear among women. There are stories that explain many popular phrases and idioms in Koshur, like *hapath yaraz*, which literally means a bear's friendship, and is used to describe a friend who does more harm than good, or *harmukhuk gosain*, the ascetic of Harmukh, which is invoked for some-

one who has terrible memory. "Kashmir is a culture that is full of stories. It has great storytellers, and the way they talk is full of metaphor, theatrics and exaggeration. The language is rich and full of visuals. I've always been interested in knowing the fantasy, the folklore, and what it is trying to tell us," says Drabu, who studied anthropology at University of Oxford, and runs an online newsletter called *Daak*, on South Asian literature and art. Her book, *Okus Bokus*, which released last year, familiarises children with different aspects of Kashmiri culture.

The folk tales in the book, also give an insight into the cultural potpourri that Kashmir is, debunking the one-dimensional view that it is seen with nowadays. "There is so much mythology around Kashmir, it's very syncretic, with Sanskritic traditions and Persian *dastans* that are enmeshed together, or tales from the *Panchatantra* told in a Kashmiri context. The folklore has legends from the Buddhist times, Hindu period, and the Persian and Afghan rules. So it was a larger element of nostalgia, of understanding the language better and seeing these different traditions alive that got me interested in folk tales," says Drabu. The collection also gains relevance as "it is a reminder of the magic that exists in Kashmir, its layered past and is also an exercise in documentation".

However, a lot gets lost in the process of translating these oral tales from Koshur into the written word in English. "I don't think much was found, except a hope for posterity. The only purpose English serves is that it gives the new generation of Kashmiris and a wider audience access to these stories. But a lot is lost in writing them down. There is a certain interaction that takes place between the teller and the audience, which cannot be replicated in writing down the tale," says Drabu, who has used many Kashmiri words and phrases to recreate how the stories would have sounded originally in Koshur.



Onaiza Drabu (above); cover of her book



(From left) An artefact that will be displayed at the Antiquities Museum; the Maritime Museum will exhibit objects rescued from shipwrecks; exhibits at the Museum of Natural History



Past Continuous

The year will see the inauguration of new museums across India

DIVYAA

IN HER Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a series of steps to set up and renovate museums across the country to promote tourism. As part of this, she announced an allocation of Rs 3,150 crore for the Maritime Museum coming up at Lothal in Gujarat. Also, it was announced that on-site museums would be developed at five archaeological sites — Rakhigarhi (Haryana), Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh) Shivasagar (Assam), Dholavira (Gujarat) and Adichanallur (Tamil Nadu), besides setting up a tribal museum in Ranchi, Jharkhand. We look at some of the new museums that will open their doors to the public this year:

Antiquities Museum

PURANA QILA, DELHI

A new museum at the Purana Qila complex, where antiquities discovered from across the country during various excavations will be displayed, opens in April 2020. The facility will be set up in the arched cells that are currently under renovation, and will cost Rs 2 crore. An Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) offi-

cial said that over a thousand rare relics from the prehistoric period to the post-independence era, recovered from different sites, will be displayed at the museum. These include tools, pottery, terracotta items, semi-precious stones, sculptures and architectural fragments stored at the Central Antiquity Collection (CAC) section in Purana Qila. "There are over two lakh excavated antiquities in the CAC, which have never been seen by the public. Of these, we will display around 1,000 items at the new museum," says an ASI official.

Three galleries have been planned for the new museum: the first will include objects from the lower Paleolithic to Neolithic period; the second will have objects from the Harappan period till 1000 BC; and the third will include antiquities from the 6th century BC to the medieval era.

Museum of Natural History

BHAIRON MARG, DELHI

It was in 2016 that the National Museum of Natural History lost its address at Delhi's Tansen Marg to a blaze, which also destroyed many of its rare artefacts. The museum was established in 1972, and is known for its collection of

stuffed big cats and a fossil from a 160-million-year old sauripod dinosaur. Large collections of mammals and birds were lost, but some important exhibits on the first floor of the museum, which include the museum's most valuable specimens, were spared. A few months ago, the government awarded the Rs 500 crore project to NBCC (India) to rebuild the museum at a new address: opposite National Science Museum and Pragati Maidan and adjacent to Old Fort and National Zoo. The museum is slated to open later this year.

Maritime Museum

LOTHAL, GUJARAT

The Prime Minister had laid the foundation stone for the maritime museum at Lothal in March 2019. The project is being implemented by the Ministry of Shipping through its Sagarmala programme, with help from the ASI, Indian Navy and Gujarat government. India has partnered with Portugal for the project and the Portuguese Navy will provide assistance, having executed a similar project in Lisbon recently. Lothal had one of the oldest ports in India, dating back to the Bronze Age. The Museum will display salvaged material from shipwreck sites in the Indian Ocean waters. According to UNESCO, an estimated three million undiscovered shipwrecks are still lying on the ocean floor. Reportedly, many of the shipwrecks between 1824-1962 were in the Indian coastal waters. The museum is expected to have a soft launch by the end of 2020.

DE KOCK TON POWERS SA

Captain Quinton de Kock smashed a sparkling century as South Africa eased to a seven-wicket victory against world champions England in the opening One-Day International at Newlands.

SCORECARD >>

Ind U19 vs Pak U19

Semifinal | Potchefstroom | Toss: Pakistan

PAK U19 172 IN 43.1 OVS

H Ali c Bishnoi b Jaiswal 56 (77b, 9x4)

Md Huraire c Saxena b Mishra 4 (6b, 1x4)

F Munir c Ankolekar b Bishnoi 0 (16b)

R Nazir (c)† c Varma b Mishra

62 (102b 6x4)

Q Akram run out 9 (16b, 1x4)

Md Harris c Saxena b Ankolekar

21 (15b, 1x4, 1x6)

I Khan b K Tyagi 3 (9b)

A Afridi lbw b R Bishnoi 2 (3b)

T Hussain c Jurel, b Tyagi 2 (10b)

A Ali c Veer b Mishra 1 (6b)

Md Amir Khan not out 0

Extras: (lb 1nb, w10) 12

Fall of wickets: 1-9 (Mohammad Huraire, 1.6 ov), 2-34 (Fahad Munir, 8.5 ov), 3-96 (Haider Ali, 25.3 ov), 4-118 (Qasim Akram, 30.3 ov), 5-146 (Mohammad Harris, 34.4 ov), 6-156 (Irfan Khan, 37.2 ov), 7-163 (Abbas Afridi, 38.1 ov), 8-169 (Rohail Nazir, 41.4 ov), 9-172 (Tahir Hussain, 42.6 ov), 10-172 (Amir Ali, 43.1 ov)

Bowling:

Kartik Tyagi 8-0-32-2

S Mishra 8.1-0-28-3

Ravi Bishnoi 10-0-46-2

Akash Singh 7-0-25-0

A Ankolekar 7-0-29-1

Y Jaiswal 3-0-11-1

IND U19 176/0 IN 35.2 OVS

Y Jaiswal not out 105 (113b, 8x4, 4x6)

D Saxena not out 59 (99b, 6x4)

Extras: (2lb, 10w) 12

Bowling:

T Hussain 6-1-17-0

Q Akram 8-0-37-0

Md Amir Khan 5-1-20-0

A Afridi 7-0-50-0

A Ali 5.2-0-38-0

Fahad Munir 4-0-12-0

Ind won by 10 wickets



Opener Divyaansh Saxena remained unbeaten on 59 off 99. ICC

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

IN LATE night conversations that the young centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal often had with his local coach Jwala Singh, the boy would pick his brains on what he needed to do differently and if he saw any technical flaws in his batting. Singh always offered diplomatically: "Just enjoy your game."

But deep down, Jwala wasn't too happy. Yashasvi was getting starts but not converting those into big runs. He had made it to the India U19 team on the back of a double hundred for Mumbai seniors in a List A tournament. But in the ongoing World Cup, twice in four innings he walked back after getting those familiar starts while two other times he remained unbeaten. Jwala insisted the world hadn't seen Yashasvi's real game yet.

On Tuesday, against Pakistan, Yashasvi batted with composure to make an unbeaten 105 off 113 balls. His opening partner Divyaansh Saxena (59 not out off 99) was solid at the other end. The opening stand was worth 176 and India won by 10 wickets in 43.1 overs, Jaiswal also made a crucial breakthrough with the ball when he dismissed Pakistan opener Haider Ali to break the third wicket partnership.

For a student who maintained a high standard for himself, a big hundred was needed to please his coach. When it comes against arch-rivals Pakistan in a knock-out match of a World Cup, it becomes even more special. "He (Yashasvi) got selected for the India U 19 World Cup and asked me if I was happy. I said you are playing for India U 19s for the past one year now, so there is no reason to get excited. Just be calm. U 19 WC comes every two years and in those two years we see new talent come and go," Jwala said.

The seasoned coach has seen stars being made and broken from close quarters. In fact, he too had been a promising bowler who went to the MRF pace foundation in Chennai, but never reached the heights he aspired to.

In those conversations following the batting drills, Yashasvi always received a heavy dose of wisdom by the end of the day where Jwala threw some hard realities of life at him. Having come up the hard way, Yashasvi too understood the importance of long-term goals. It's here that Jwala saw merit in introducing Yashasvi to former India opener Wasim Jaffer, the marathon man of domestic cricket. Jaffer too advised Yashasvi that the key to bigger innings was to stay at the crease for long periods. "I told him exactly how many players went on to play for India and within that how many players lasted for 10 years. I told him those will be few in number. Playing for India for one or two matches has no meaning. He should be there for the long run," Jaffer recalls.

Jwala also acutely felt that by now Yashasvi ought to have struck his own terror into the hearts of bowlers, like Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli did. "Bowlers should fear bowling to you, aisa batsman banna zaroori hai (you should be such a batsman). It will happen, the process is on. I still feel people haven't seen his best," he points out.

For a boy who sold pani-puri at Azad Maidan and lived in tents, life has always thrown challenges at him but one thing which Yashasvi has maintained is his discipline and ethics towards the game. He was invited by his Dadar Union Club for a felicitation recently where he reached late as he had a session pending at the gym. On the day of the IPL auctions Yashasvi was batting in the nets. While boarding the flight to South Africa, Yashasvi Jaiswal had a request for his coach: "Don't come to South Africa or I will get nervous."

Singh knew where this anxiety stemmed from but his coach had his own plans. On the eve of the semi-finals, Jwala was in the stands. He would meet Yashasvi and then quietly fly back soon after.

World Cup semi-final | Pakistan | Match-winning unbeaten hundred

Attaboy!



Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal top scored with an unbeaten 105 as India cantered to a 10-wicket win over Pakistan to enter the U19 World Cup final. ICC

'I had this feeling that it would be my day'

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

OPENER YASHASVI Jaiswal's unbeaten hundred was a vital knock as the India Under-19 team beat Pakistan by 10 wickets in the semi-final of the World Cup. Jaiswal feels the job is not yet done with a final on Sunday looming, against either New Zealand or Bangladesh. Jaiswal spoke to *The Indian Express*. Excerpts:

What was going in your mind before the game?

I wanted to keep myself calm and to follow process, which I have been following. When we got to know that we are playing Pakistan, I was telling myself 'bus acha karna hai'. Since past five to six days, I was only thinking of staying long at the crease. I had spoken to Wasim (Jaffer) bhai also, he said not to get carried away and live in the present.

How did you and team control the anticipation and excitement before the semi-final match?

Credit should go to the coach and support staff for this. Paras Mhambrey sir ensured

that everyone took this as any other game. We watched a short video from Rahul (Dravid) sir who motivated us and his words helped us a lot. He said, 'remember that cricket is played in those 22 yards. Just take it like any other game and keep our focus'.

The century against Pakistan must be satisfying?

Am happy but my job is not yet done. We have one more game to go. This was the first time I experienced what an India versus Pakistan game means. The atmosphere was amazing, people chanting and screaming 'India, India'. It was a totally different experience. Twice during the tournament I got out after being set, so I told myself that today I will play over by over. (Divyaansh) Saxena was batting well at other end and it helped ease the pressure off me.

How tough it is not to get carried away in such a high pressure game?

I had this feeling before the game that it would be my day. I had mentally prepared myself. That's what the process is, try to do same thing again and again. I played each ball on merit. I had spoken to coaches here along with captain Priyam Garg and Wasim (Jaffer)

bhai. They all said when I feel under pressure, just play out the next few overs. *Maiden jaye toh bhi chalega* (even if it is a maiden it is fine). Drink water, take singles. If you watched me batting, you will see that between 50 to 60 I took only singles. And the moment I felt *ab confidence aagaya hai* (I am confident now), I played my shots.

You also made an important breakthrough with the ball?

That's what my role has been. During the Sri Lanka game also, I got a wicket when things weren't going in our way. Today also, they were putting together a good partnership when I was asked to bowl.

What was running in your mind before the chase?

The pitch had dried up before the second innings. We had to ensure that we did not lose early wickets. Once we got a good start, we knew things will become easy as the pressure was on them.

You don't use social media. How tough is it to stay away?

I feel that it could be a distraction. So I stay away.



VVS LAXMAN

So wonderful to see the composure of young Yashasvi Jaiswal and the relentlessness of the bowlers to just not let the opposition get away. A very easy win for India and a 3rd Successive World Cup Final appearance. Best wishes to the boys for the big finals

MOHAMMAD KAIF

Five straight wins over Pakistan U19 since 2014! A 10-wicket win in the semis is some way to storm into the Finals!

IND VS NZ ODI SERIES

Prithvi eyes a new opening after going through many twists and turns

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
JANUARY 2

ABOUT A couple of months ago, as the Indian team had been preparing for an ODI against the West Indies at Vizag, Prithvi Shaw was called up to join the training session. The team management wanted to assess his fitness. Also present at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) that day was Jasprit Bumrah, returning post his injury rehab. While the fast bowler went full tilt at the nets, Shaw was having a fitness session with the Indian team conditioning coach Nick Webb.

The batsman didn't even have the team kit. In a printed shirt, he was the odd man out. And he appeared to be struggling a little, going for the high catches that tested his agility. Then, during Mumbai's Ranji Trophy match against Karnataka, he suffered a "rotator cuff and labrum injury" to his left shoulder and was ruled out of India A team's first two practice games in New Zealand. Things have changed quickly for the better for Shaw. On Wednesday at Hamilton, as India and New Zealand play the first ODI of a three-match series, Shaw is set to make his debut in the 50-over format.

Shikhar Dhawan's left shoulder injury was a reason why Shaw got into the ODI side. He edged Mayank Agarwal, who was part of

the squad during the home ODIs. During an informal conversation a few days ago, a selector had explained the thought process behind Shaw's inclusion. "He (Shaw) and Shubman Gill are the future of Indian batting. The talent they have. They have the ability to dominate bowling," he had said. The only concern was about Shaw's match fitness and once that was OK, the selection committee had no hesitation in picking the youngster, with an eye to the future.

Agarwal has now joined the squad as the injured Rohit Sharma's replacement and as Virat Kohli said at the pre-match press conference, he would be pairing up with Shaw at the top in the first ODI. Agarwal, too, is set to make his ODI debut.

As for Shaw, this could be a new beginning. Circa 2019 was the year of upheaval for the 20-year-old. He was handed a doping ban for "inadvertently" ingesting the banned Terbutaline, commonly found in cough syrups. By his own admission, Shaw took the cough syrup while playing for Mumbai in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy in February last year. He had just recovered from a foot injury that ruled him out of the Australia tour a few months previously. Agarwal replaced him and took to Test opening like a duck to water.

Shaw somehow divides opinion. Nobody questions his talent. But a section in the



Prithvi Shaw last played for India in October 2018. File

Indian cricket fraternity questions his discipline. After he received a doping ban, a former BCCI official lambasted Shaw for not following the protocol. "Why on earth an India cricketer would take an over-the-counter cough syrup? He should have the list of all banned substances," the official had said.

Then, on his comeback in this season's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, Shaw imitated Kohli's celebration – bat is doing the talking – after reaching his half-century against Assam at Wankhede. A lot of fans didn't take kindly to it and social media trolling followed. Bottom line, however, was that he finished

the tournament with 240 runs from five matches with a strike-rate north of 170. Then, in the Ranji Trophy, he hammered 332 runs in three matches including a century and a half-century. Chief selector MSK Prasad was thoroughly impressed. Shaw's return to the Indian team fold looked just a matter of time. The youngster earned it by dint of his performance in domestic cricket.

A 100-ball 150 for India A against New Zealand XI in a List A fixture at Lincoln last month was a carry forward of his good form. Replacing Rohit is a hard act, but Shaw's ability makes him an impact player at the top, someone who can take the game away from the opposition.

And he is not new to opening in high-intensity white-ball cricket. Shaw's IPL career strike-rate is 141-plus.

On the match eve, Kohli confirmed that Shaw and Agarwal would open the innings, with KL Rahul coming down the order. "Prithvi is definitely going to start and whoever the replacement is, we will 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," the skipper said.

With Shikhar Dhawan suffering from inconsistency of late, this is a big opportunity for Shaw to make an impact. "Rohit's injury

is unfortunate but someone who steps in, it's a chance for that guy to experience this kind of pressure and expectation, and for us to see who are the guys that cope with it. So someone who gets the chance, it will be an opportunity for the team to see how he copes with that pressure. I see it that way. I see it as an opportunity for others rather than looking at it negatively," Kohli said.

Maybe, Shaw can take a leaf out of Ben Stokes's book – the way the England all-rounder has redeemed himself after the a-fraiy incident.

"Under the unfortunate circumstances (injury in Australia) he (Shaw) had to get out of the Indian team. He played his first Test against the West Indies like a seasoned pro, the way he got his hundred. Subsequently he had a series of issues which didn't help him. Otherwise, he would have been experienced by another 10-12 Tests by now and maybe would have already made his ODI debut," the outgoing chief selector, Prasad, told *The Indian Express*.

He hoped for a brighter future. "Now that he got over all that, I'm sure the tough time has helped him understand himself as a person and what is needed at this level. This should be the beginning of his emergence as a player at this level across formats."

Live: 1st ODI, 7:30 am, on Star Sports

Mirabai Chanu lifts 203kg to better her own national record

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 4

INDIA'S ONLY Olympic medal hopeful weightlifter, Mirabai Chanu's main aim is to stay injury-free in the build-up to the final round of the qualifications in April where she targets to lift a personal best of 210 kilograms.

Having recovered fully from a back injury that forced her out of the 2018 Asian Games, the 2017 world champion has progressed gradually from a total of 199kg to 201kg, and in the Senior Nationals here on Tuesday, she improved it to 203kg, thereby bettering her own national record.

"I tried 207kg today but lost balance but I'm confident that I will be able to lift 210kg at the Asian Championships," Mirabai said after winning the women's 49kg category gold. "But the most important thing is to stay free from injury which is very common in our sport. So, I got to be watchful. It's also about staying relaxed when there's no training. I love to listen to music to relax. I also take sauna and steam bath three times a week for better performance," she said.

Mirabai is also keeping a close watch on her diet so that she keeps her weight in check ahead of the Asian Championships in Nur-Sultan from April 16 to 25, the final Olympic qualification. "I eat boiled food and more of red meat. I stay away from oil and spicy food. Pressure is always there when whole of India is expecting a medal. But I am happy that I have the chance to do something for India, so I will put my best foot forward," Mirabai, who had a disappointing campaign at the 2016 Rio Olympics, said.

She is currently ranked fourth in the world behind the Chinese duo of Huihua Jiang (212kg) and Zhihui Hou (211kg), and Korean Ri Song Gum (209kg). A total of 13 lifters will make the cut for Tokyo Olympics in every category after the the Kazakhstan event. Training at NIS Patiala national camp meant that Mirabai has not gone home to Manipur for long and she misses her favourite dish Iromba, a curry made with fermented fish as an ingredient. "I miss it but at the end of the day we are here to achieve something for our country and that's the priority. I will visit my home once I achieve something big," Mirabai signed off.

National coach Vijay Sharma said his ward is on the right track for Tokyo Olympics. "We missed two lifts, if she had cleared one (either in snatch or clean and jerk), we could have achieved the target here. Our target here was between 203-205kg," Sharma said. "She was not at her peak from it's the pre-competition period. Our target was this only. We wanted to give a check and I think she is on right track."

Mirabai's next target is to achieve 210kg in the Asian Championships. "We have planned our journey as per our limits. We don't want to rush things, keeping injuries in mind. But I'm strongly hopeful we can make it," Sharma said.

On the Chinese challenge, he said: "They have been doing 210kg-plus for last four years. But we have gradually improved from 194kg and reached 203kg today."

"The Chinese may have achieved 211kg-212kg in other competitions but at Olympic level, I think a gold will come in range of 207kg-210kg," he said, strongly hoping that Mirabai will win India's first gold in weightlifting since Karnam Malleswari's bronze in Sydney 2000. "It's about making some minor adjustments and focus strongly on the fitness and power-strengthening ahead of the qualifying meet," Sharma said.

I tried 207kg today but lost balance but I'm confident that I will be able to lift 210kg at the Asian Championships. But the most important thing is to stay free from injury which is very common in our sport."

MIRABAI CHANU
AFTER SETTING NATIONAL RECORD

RANJI TROPHY 2019-20



PLAY STOPPED BECAUSE OF PASSING CARS

Cars drive past the sight screen at Chandigarh's Mahajan Cricket Ground during a Ranji Trophy match on Tuesday. Nitin Sharma

Day of the comeback boys

Himmat, Bidhuri strike half-centuries to rescue Delhi from a precarious position against Gujarat

VISHAL MENON
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

WHEN KUNWAR Bidhuri scored the match-winning knock of 104 for Delhi at the CK Nayudu Trophy fixture against Gujarat in Surat, little did he realise that it would translate into a Ranji Trophy call-up. The following day, he and his team-mates had just landed in Ranchi for their upcoming duel against Jharkhand, when Bidhuri received a phone call from a selector, who asked him to return to Delhi that evening.

Three days later, he made his first-class debut against Punjab at the Feroz Shah Kotla. The all-rounder gave a good account of himself on his debut, top-scoring with 27, even as others struggled against Siddharth Kaul's superlative exhibition of swing and seam bowling. Delhi lost that match by 10 wickets, but the 23-year-old was dropped after just a solitary appearance. After a fleeting stint with Ranji Trophy, he was drafted back into the U-23 squad for the rest of the season.

Like Bidhuri, Himmat Singh is another player who has made sporadic appearances for the Delhi senior team. Back in 2012, Himmat was billed as the next big thing in junior cricket, scorching his way through junior age-group cricket and peeling off humongous three-digit scores with ridiculous ease. A product of Tarak Sinha's academy, he had graduated to the senior squad in 2017.

Since then, he has featured in 12 first-class matches, continuously shuffled between Ranji Trophy and the U-23 level. More than his poor batting form, it's the finicky nature of Delhi's selectors that's the reason for his travails. Bolstered by his 145 in his recent U-23 match against Madhya Pradesh at the St. Stephen's Ground, Himmat was once again summoned to beef up the senior team's fragile middle-order.

On Tuesday, Himmat and Bidhuri struck splendid half-centuries that rescued their team from a precarious position on Day 1 of their penultimate league encounter against Gujarat at the Feroz Shah Kotla. Delhi were in strife at 136/5, having lost opener Hiten Dalal for a well-compiled 69 and the rest of their top order just after the lunch interval. This was when Himmat was joined by Bidhuri.

The duo's 134-run fifth wicket alliance took Delhi to a respectable score of 270/6, when stumps were drawn on the opening day. Bidhuri was unbeaten on 78, while

Himmat was dismissed for 56 on the final delivery of the day to Axar Patel. Their stellar acts of resurrection provided a throw-back to their U-19 days, when they had forged a similar stand against Gujarat five seasons ago. "I was looking to get a single in that final over, but that was the first delivery (from Axar) that drifted away and instead of just nudging it, I managed to nick it to the first slip," Himmat said at the end of the day's play.

Despite the rare moment of indiscretion, he displayed tremendous fortitude in this knock that was punctuated with eight boundaries and a six. On the other hand, it was Bidhuri's maiden half-century in his sixth match. During their stint, the Kotla track was bereft of the early morning moisture, making it conducive for stroke-play.

Bidhuri was the aggressor, and the manner in which he took on Gujarat's spinners over the mid-wicket region was an absolute treat to watch.

"The pitch was hardly doing anything when we were batting. Their fast bowlers were not getting any movement off the surface and our plan was to bat out the day. But sadly, that did not happen," Himmat explained, before adding that making the constant shifts from junior cricket to Ranji Trophy was an arduous task. "Obviously, it's never easy when you're making the shift from U-23 level to first-class cricket. But I cannot complain its part of the game."

Himmat may not be complaining, but the lack of sustained run at Ranji Trophy had an effect on his not-so-flattering stats. These are still early days in his career, but in 12 first-class games, he has managed to accrue 545 runs with six half-centuries to his name, a highest score of 99 and an average of just a shade less than 33.

In his limited game time so far, Himmat has mostly batted at No.6, a position that usually sees him batting with the tail. "The tempo of the game changes when you're batting with the tail. Your chances of getting boundaries are negated as opposition captain stations fielders on the boundary. So singles becomes your only scoring option," he opined. Himmat will be ruing the fact that he has missed out on a possible three-figure score in his comeback game. Nevertheless, he will be buoyed by the manner in which he and his good friend have bailed Delhi out of trouble.

BRIEF SCORES: Delhi 1st Innings 270/6 (Kunwar Bidhuri 78 batting, Hiten Dalal 69, Himmat Singh 56) vs Gujarat.



Delhi found the going tough on Day 1 against Gujarat. Praveen Khanna

RANJI ROUNDUP

Sarfaraz, Mulani rescue Mumbai

Continuing his rich vein of form, Sarfaraz Khan smashed a counter-attacking 78 against Saurashtra in Rajkot. **Brief scores:** Mumbai 249/8 (S Khan 78, S Mulani 59*; D Jadeja 5/90)

Punjab nose ahead after Kaul's hat-trick

Siddharth Kaul ran through Andhra's line-up, bagging five wickets including a hat-trick. **Brief scores:** Andhra Pradesh 97 (B Sumarth 22; Kaul 5-24) & 31-4 (Pranith 13; Vinay 3-11) vs Punjab 108 (Mandeep Singh 23; Ashish 5-50, Shoaib 5-46)

Haryana take the lead against Assam

Haryana have taken a 101-run lead after bundling out its opponents for 97. **Brief scores:** Assam 97 in 37 overs (Rajjakkuddin Ahmed 35 not out; Tinu Kundu 5/35, Harshal Patel 4/32) vs Haryana 198 for 9 in 46.3 overs (R P Sharma 59; Ranjeet Mali 3/34, Mukhtar Hussain 3/38)

Openers put Tamil Nadu in command

Openers Abhinav Mukund (73 not out) and L. Suryaprakash (61 not out) took Tamil Nadu to 135/0 at stumps on Day 1. **Brief scores:** Baroda 174 (A Sheeth 53; M. Mohammed 7/68) lead TN 135/0 (A Mukund 73*, L. Suryaprakash 61*) by 39 runs

Samarth roars back into form for Karnataka

R. Samarth, who has been struggling for runs this season, struck an unbeaten 105 against Madhya Pradesh in Shivamogga. **Brief scores:** Karnataka 233/3 (R Samarth 105, Siddharth KV 62 not out)

Mukesh Kumar runs through Rajasthan

Bengal pacer Mukesh Kumar picked up six wickets to restrict Rajasthan to a fairly middling score of 241. In reply Bengal finished the day's play at 41/1. **Brief scores:** Rajasthan 241 (M. Lomror 52, Mukesh Kumar 6/62) vs Bengal 41/1

At Chandigarh's 'MCG', vehicles drive past sight screen

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 4

FLOUTING RULES and match referee Rajib Debbarma's guidelines, two cars entered the Mahajan Cricket Ground, venue of the Ranji Trophy plate group match between Chandigarh and Mizoram, during play on Tuesday. With two overs remaining on Day 1 of the tie, and with Chandigarh batsmen Uday Kaul and Raman Bishnoi in the middle, the two cars crossed the kutcha road between the boundary rope and sight screen, with official ball boys seated roughly six feet away.

The guards at the entry gate initially stopped the two cars. However, they were given approval by officials of the Union Territory Cricket Association (UTCA), the governing body of Chandigarh cricket. The cars eventually drove towards the parking area behind the pavilion.

Chandigarh's previous four home matches were all played at the Sector 16 Stadium, including Chandigarh's last week tie against Puducherry. However, this game was shifted to the Mahajan ground to give groundsmen time to maintain the outfield and tend to the pitches at the Sector 16 Stadium.

In the past, the Mahajan Cricket Ground has hosted two Col CK Nayudu Trophy games and one Vijay Merchant Trophy. However, the venue, which is owned by former UTCA secretary Subhash Mahajan, is hosting its maiden first-class match.

The ground is situated inside a farm house and is not too far from former athlete Milkha Singh's place. A narrow road separates the boundary ropes and sight screen, and it is the only way to reach the parking spot.

UTCA secretary Desh Deepak Khanna said the vehicles 'must be carrying' important match-related material. "I am not aware of the matter yet. It's a new ground and the vehicles must be carrying some important material required during the conduct of the match. Since the mud track is the only way to parking and dressing room, the cars must have crossed the road to reach the parking," said Khanna told *The Indian Express*. "Sector 16 Stadium has hosted four matches and the ground and pitches need time to be in right shape after conducting the matches. Hence it was decided to conduct the match at Mahajan Cricket ground," said Khanna.

Chandigarh were 193 for 3 at end of day's play, with Bishnoi batting on 73 runs and Kaul on 62 after Mizoram were bundled out for 109 runs in 41.2 overs.

BRIEF SCORES: Mizoram : First Innings : 109 all out in 41.2 overs (Taruwar Kohli 77; Gurinder Singh 4/18, Jagjit Sandhu 3/34, Jaskarandeep Singh 2/26) vs Chandigarh : 193 for 3 in 40 overs (Raman Bishnoi 73 no, Uday Kaul 62 no, H Ralte 2/46)

Goa make strong start

Sovima: Group leaders Goa frittered away a strong start to be 260 for five against Nagaland in their Ranji Plate fixture here on Tuesday. Opener Vaibhav Govekar (71) and number three Smit Patel (66) struck half centuries but the home side clawed their way back in the second session with Shrikant Mundhe (3/36) and Imlivati Lemtur (2/77) sharing five wickets between them.

Electing to bat, Goa made steady progress but Mundhe broke the opening stand for 98 by trapping Sumiran Amonkar lbw for 33. In five overs, Govekar departed failing to convert his start after being bowled by Imlivati Lemtur, while skipper Amit Verma (2) followed suit in the space of eight balls to leave Goa in disarray at 127/3. Wicketkeeper batsman Smit Patel then took charge of the proceedings with a quickfire 66 from 98 balls (7x4, 2x6) before being dismissed by Lemtur.

Suyash Prabhudessai (36) and Darshan Misal (18) were at the crease at stumps on day one. **PTI**

[SPORTS BAR]

ISL: FC Goa take on Hyderabad

FC Goa will begin life without Sergio Lobera on Wednesday when they take on Hyderabad FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Margao. The Gaurs will look to keep the momentum in order to not lose out in the race for the top spot which guarantees a berth in the AFC Champions League group stages. The management took the decision to part ways with Lobera and instead have appointed Clifford Miranda as the interim coach with Derrick Pereira as the technical director. Hyderabad FC have six points from 15 matches and need another four to avoid having the worst points tally after 18 matches in an ISL season.

Real Kashmir sign two players on loan

Real Kashmir FC on Tuesday roped in striker Robin Singh and wing-back Lalhman-gaisanga Ralte on loan from Indian Super League club Hyderabad FC to strengthen themselves in the rest of I-League campaign. Robin made his ISL debut with Delhi Dynamos in 2015 and moved to Hyderabad FC last year. Lalhman-gaisanga Ralte, popularly known as Sena Ralte, began with Royal Wahingdoh of Meghalaya and helped his team earn promotion to the top division in 2013-14. Real Kashmir are lying at sixth spot in the I-League standings with 12 points from eight matches.



Sai Praneeth defeated Parupalli Kashyap 15-14, 14-15, 15-14.

Sai Praneeth beats Kashyap in a thriller

World Championships bronze medallist Sai Praneeth of Bengaluru Raptors held his nerves to beat Mumbai Rockets' Parupalli Kashyap to help the defending champions remain in contention for the semi-finals of the Premier Badminton League. In a thrilling match, Sai Praneeth edged the 2014 Commonwealth Games champion 15-14, 14-15, 15-14. In a clash of youth and experience in women's singles, Mumbai's Shriyanshi Pardeshi began well against world No. 2 Tai Tzu Ying to have a slender lead of 4-3 before the Raptors ace stormed back to inch ahead 8-6. Having wrested the momentum, Tai Tzu did not waste any time to pocket the opener 15-8. Tai Tzu opened up a 4-0 lead in the second game and raced away to 8-3 lead. Pardeshi, however, showed excellent retrieving skills to engage Tai Tzu to a 28-shot rally and get to within two points of the former world No. 1 at 7-9. But the Chinese Taipei ace was soon able to regroup and steer her way to a 15-8, 15-12 win to remain unbeaten this season.

AFC Cup: Bengaluru FC face Bhutan's Paro

Indian Super League champions Bengaluru FC will start as favourites when it takes on Paro FC of Bhutan in a preliminary round match of the AFC Cup in Thimphu on Wednesday. Bengaluru FC has been a regular feature in the AFC Cup knockout rounds between 2015 and 2018 and, having missed out of the continent's second tier club competition last year, it is eyeing a return with a bang. The first leg of the preliminary round 2 will be played at the Changlimithang Stadium. The second leg will be played on February 12 in Bengaluru.



Barcelona's Dembele out with torn hamstring

French international striker Ousmane Dembele has suffered a badly torn hamstring, his club Barcelona announced on Tuesday. "Tests carried out on Tuesday on Ousmane Dembele have shown that the player has a complete proximal hamstring tear in his right thigh," the club announced. "In the next few hours a decision will be made on the treatment to be followed for his recovery." The 22-year-old has struggled with hamstring problems. He had only just returned from an injury to the right thigh he suffered in November before suffering a fresh problem in training on Monday. The striker joined Barcelona from Borussia Dortmund in August 2017 in a deal worth up to 147 million euros. He has played 21 times for France and was part of the squad that won the World Cup in 2020.

Sports too bitten by the Bug

The following is a list of international sports events affected by the coronavirus, which has killed over 420 people and infected more than 20,000 in China so far.

ATHLETICS

The World Athletics Indoor Championships had been scheduled for Nanjing from March 13-15, were postponed until next year. World Athletics is working with organisers to settle on a date to host the biennial event in 2021.

■ The Asian Athletics Association cancelled its Feb. 12-13 indoor championships in Hangzhou.

FOOTBALL

Asian Champions League matches involving Chinese clubs Guangzhou Evergrande, Shanghai Shenhua and Shanghai SIPG have been postponed. Guangzhou and the two Shanghai clubs will now join the competition in April, with their group matches due to be played by the end of May.

■ A four-team women's Olympic soccer qualifying tournament involving China, Australia, Taiwan and Thailand was moved from Wuhan and rearranged to be held in Australia by the AFC. Organisers were also forced to change the match schedule after China's team, which arrived in Australia on Jan. 29, was placed in quarantine in Brisbane until after Feb. 5.

TENNIS

The ITF moved the Fed Cup Asia/Oceania Group I event featuring China, Taiwan, Indonesia, South Korea and Uzbekistan out of Dongguan to Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana) in Kazakhstan. But the Feb. 4-8 event was later postponed after Kazakhstan declined to serve as substitute hosts.

BADMINTON

The Feb. 25 to March 1 China Masters tournament in Hainan was postponed after several players withdrew. The BWF said it hoped the flagship Badminton Asia C'ships could still go ahead in Wuhan from April 21-26.



Medical officers spray Indonesian nationals with antiseptic after they arrived from Wuhan. Reuters

BOXING

The IOC announced Jordan as hosts of the boxing qualifiers for Asia and Oceania after an event in Wuhan was cancelled. It will now take place in Amman from March 3 to 11.

BASKETBALL

The IBF moved the Feb. 6-9 Tokyo Olympics qualifiers to be held in Foshan to Belgrade.

GOLF

■ The elite women's LPGA golf tour cancelled the March 5-8 Blue Bay tournament to be held on Hainan. The Hong Kong Ladies Open, scheduled to take place from Feb. 28-March 1, was postponed to May 8-10.

ALPINE SKIING

■ Skiing's governing body cancelled the Feb. 15-16 World Cup in Yanqing.

X-GAMES

■ The first winter X-Games scheduled to be held in China, in Hebei province from Feb. 21-23, was postponed.

FUTSAL

■ The AFC Futsal C'ship that was scheduled to be held in Turkmenistan between Feb. 26 to March 8 has been postponed, with new dates to be announced later. REUTERS

Ruthless Prajnesh goes for the skill

India's top singles player records first-ever ATP main draw win at home; Paes-Ebden in second round

SHAHID JUDGE
PUNE, FEBRUARY 4

A HIGH ball toss, knees bent, then the spring-like leap upwards to meet the ball with the full face of his racquet. On the day, Prajnesh Gunneswaran's serve was effortlessly crossing the 190 kmph mark. It's one of his two biggest weapons. And in the early exchanges in the opening set of his match against Germany's Yannick Maden, at the Tata Open Maharashtra, it was near flawless.

But as the set went on at the Balewadi Tennis Stadium in Pune, at the most crucial of stages, that serve deserted him. He was serving for the set at 5-3, when two double faults helped the German break back – the second double fault coming when Prajnesh was facing break points.

Later at 5-5, he faced another break point. And that's when it was time for his other weapon, the forehand, to take over. An inside-out forehand drive found the German unable to put the ball back in play. That's how Prajnesh went on with his game, when the serve dwindled, the big left-handed forehand kicked in to win the point.

After an hour and 39 minutes of play, India's highest ranked singles player wrapped up the match with a 7-6(4), 7-6(5) win – his first ever main draw win at an ATP-level event in India.

The 30-year-old's performance was a stark contrast to the way he played the last time he was on court, in the first round loss at the Australian Open, against the world no 146 Tatsuma Ito. A wrist injury had already been nagging him before that match, but early in his Australian sojourn, the elbow too took a blow.

"That was really just because I hadn't played so much tennis. I was resting my wrist I just hadn't been serving so much," he had said on Sunday. "And then when I started to sort of go after the serve in the match, just tweaked something."

The serve was hampered, and the wrist injury forced him to play much flatter than he usually likes to – resulting in a high percentage of forehand errors. But all the machinery in his left playing arm was on sound on Tuesday.



Prajnesh Gunneswaran made the most of his big left-handed forehands during his 7-6(4), 7-6(5) win over Germany's Yannick Maden. Daniel Stephen

"I held up quite well with my wrist and elbow. Served well, used my forehand well," he says after his match. "It was much closer to my regular style. I am happy. I played a good match. I should have held serve at 5-3. It was my first bad game. Two double faults. The first was okay, but the second was bad. Shouldn't have happened."

But the weapons kicked in at the right time, and it was crucial that they did in the tiebreakers.

In the first set breaker, Prajnesh was down 3-0 but then won the next seven of eight points. In the second set breaker, Prajnesh entered a 20-plus shot rally with the score at 2-2 on Maden's serve. The world no 122 stayed

The 30-year-old's performance was a stark contrast to the way he played the last time he was on court, in the first round loss at the Australian Open, against the world no 146 Tatsuma Ito.

on top, using the forehands to drill the ball into corners, playing a few backhands to keep in play, and then striking another forehand cross court that ended with the German scrambling a backhand slice into the net to concede the mini-break. A few shots later, a forehand winner – his 28th off both flanks in the match – secured the match.

The first time Prajnesh competed at the Indian ATP was back in the qualifying rounds of the Chennai Open in 2012. His second entry was again in the qualifiers in 2016, and he started at the same stage for the next two years. Last year he lost to American Michael Mmoh after getting a wild card to the main draw.

This time, though courtesy of a depleted foreign field, he made the main draw cut on merit. At the Australian Open he was guilty of wasting the chance of getting into the main draw as a lucky loser, and then losing to a lower ranked opponent.

But on Tuesday, he took full advantage of the opportunity.

Paes-Ebden beat Sharan-Sitak in first round

Leander Paes, in his farewell season, paired up with Australian Matthew Ebden for the first time in his career. And on the day that the 46-year-old played his first round match at India's only ATP tour, against Divij Sharan and Artem Sitak, it was the 32-year-old Australian who made the difference – helping his side win 6-2, 7-6.

Paes too had his moments at the net, but his most crucial contribution to the match was striking a 168kmph ace up the T, at 3-2 in the tiebreaker.

At 6-5 in the tiebreaker, he hit another well-angled serve straight to draw a weak return, that Ebden smashed to seal the match.

I went viral for the wrong reasons: Jose

REUTERS
FEBRUARY 4

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR coach Jose Mourinho wants Premier League referees to use pitchside monitors to make more key decisions, but conceded on Tuesday that watching the same replays himself can push him over the edge.

A clip of Mourinho running to confront the fourth official after a video assistant referee (VAR) decision in Spurs' 2-0 win over Manchester City on Sunday has gone viral on social media, and the Portuguese said emotion got the best of him.

"I think the fact that now it is allowed to have the screen in front of us is not good for our emotions," Mourinho told a news conference ahead of Wednesday's FA Cup fourth-round replay against Southampton.

"We watch exactly the same (thing) as the VAR and... the referees don't see it as well as we can. My reaction was just based on being able to watch everything on the screen... but okay, I went viral for the wrong reasons."

Mourinho was unhappy when Raheem Sterling was shown a yellow card instead of red for a foul on Dele Alli and was further frustrated when the City forward escaped a second booking for simulation after City had missed a VAR-awarded penalty.

"I was immediately very upset that Sterling didn't get the red card and then that situation happened again and in one minute I was laughing and the next minute fuming," he said.

Mourinho said on-field referee Mike Dean should have taken the call on the penalty himself and that Sterling escaping the second booking after going down under slight contact from goalkeeper Hugo Lloris was another unacceptable VAR 'mistake'.

"In this moment, the referees that are in the pitch are not making the most important decisions of the game," he added. "I don't accept the mistakes by the video referee."

"When I play PlayStation I don't make mistakes. I only make mistakes when I'm on the touchline. The referee... can make mistakes and I have full respect for them because it is very, very difficult."

"When they have time on the VAR it is more difficult to accept and we are being punished, very punished by decisions of the VAR."

We watch exactly the same (thing) as the VAR and... the referees don't see it as well as we can. My reaction was just based on being able to watch everything on the screen... but okay, I went viral for the wrong reasons."

JOSE MOURINHO
ON HIS VIRAL TOUCHLINE CLIP

He's not God: Verstappen wants to dethrone Hamilton

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
LONDON, FEBRUARY 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.

Hamilton, 35, has dominated F1 in recent years, winning five of the past six championships, and will this year equal Michael Schumacher's record haul of seven titles if he secures another triumph.

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 when we get that fight and if we are really close I am pretty sure we can do better."

Verstappen, speaking at a Red Bull media event on Monday, resisted the lure of a move to either Mercedes or Ferrari by committing his long-term future to Red Bull with a four-year contract extension.

Hamilton's next move is uncertain, with his Mercedes deal set to expire at the end of the year. "It is a good thing my future is sorted because it takes away any doubt," said Verstappen, who won three times last year and finished third in the championship behind Hamilton and his Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas.

"There are no question marks any more. When you go into a season and your contract is up at the end of the year, at one point it is going to be a bit awkward. I didn't want

Ron's no-show to pinch Korean promoter

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
SEOUL, FEBRUARY 4

A SOUTH Korean court ordered a local promoter Tuesday to compensate fans for Cristiano Ronaldo's no-show at a friendly match in Seoul last year.

The Juventus star stayed on the bench throughout a 3-3 draw with a K-League all-stars team at the Seoul World Cup Stadium in July, despite rounds of appeals from a sell-out crowd of 65,000.

Match promoter The Fasta had run adverts heavily featuring the Portuguese striker. Tickets – priced from 30,000 won (\$25) to 400,000 won – sold out in less than three



Max Verstappen finished third in the championship behind Hamilton and his teammate Bottas last season.

minutes, with many eager to see the 34-year-old superstar in action.

Two fans sued The Fasta, accusing it of false advertising, and the Incheon District Court ruled the promoter should pay them 371,000 won each, the South's Yonhap news agency reported.

No order was made against Ronaldo or his club. South Korean fans' frustration has led to the coining of an online phrase, "acting like Ronaldo", to criticise someone who only seeks benefits without fulfilling promised action.

"If he had played just for 10 minutes, everyone would have walked home happy," one user wrote on the country's largest portal site Naver.