

State of the Union turns into a snub match

Trump declined to shake Pelosi's hand; she omitted his introduction and shred a copy of his speech

REUTERS WASHINGTON

A bitter feud between U.S. President Donald Trump and top Democrat Nancy Pelosi boiled over at his State of the Union speech on Tuesday, with Mr. Trump denying her a handshake and Ms. Pelosi ripping apart a copy of his remarks behind his back.

Mr. Trump avoided the subject of his impeachment drama in a pugnacious 80-minute speech, but the raw wounds from the battle were evident with fellow Republicans giving him standing ovations while rival Democrats for the most part remained seated.

The Republican-led Senate was expected to acquit him of charges he abused his powers and obstructed Congress during a vote beginning at 4 p.m. EST (2100 GMT) on Wednesday.

Seeing Ms. Pelosi, the U.S. House of Representatives speaker, for the first time since she stormed out of

White House meeting four months ago, Mr. Trump declined to shake her outstretched hand as he gave her a paper copy of his remarks before starting to speak.

Taken aback

Despite having not spoken to Mr. Trump since their last meeting, Ms. Pelosi appeared to be taken aback. She avoided citing the customary "high privilege and distinct honour" that usually accompanies the Speaker's introduction of the President to Congress.

"Members of Congress, the President of the United States" was all she said in introducing Mr. Trump.

When his speech ended, Ms. Pelosi stood and tore up her copy of the remarks he had handed her, later telling reporters it was "the courteous thing to do, considering the alternative."

Kayleigh McEnany, Mr. Trump's campaign spokes-



State of chaos: Mike Pence claps as Nancy Pelosi rips a copy of Donald Trump's speech on Wednesday. •AFP

woman, said of Ms. Pelosi: "Her hatred for @realDonaldTrump has blinded her to the repulsive nature of her smug, elitist behaviour."

After the event, Ms. Pelosi tweeted a photo of her with her hand reaching out to Mr. Trump and said, "Democrats will never stop extending the hand of friendship to get the job done #ForThePeople. We will work to find common ground where we can, but

will stand our ground where we cannot. #SOTU"

The tension was a sign that little legislative progress should be expected with the presidential election nine months away.

Impeachment case

The impeachment case has intensified bitter feelings between Mr. Trump and Ms. Pelosi that have existed throughout his presidency.

He routinely calls her "Crazy Nancy" at his rallies.

As he began the speech, Republicans from both houses of Congress chanted "four more years" while he stood at the lectern in the chamber of the House.

Democrats sat silently and some could be seen shaking their heads as Mr. Trump declared, "The state of our union is stronger than ever before."

Ms. Pelosi, who dropped her opposition to impeachment and allowed Democratic lawmakers to seek the charges against him, sat stoically and grim-faced behind Mr. Trump and paged through a paper copy of his speech as he spoke.

Mr. Trump entered the chamber with Democrats experiencing unease and chaos after technical glitches delayed the results of voting in Iowa on Monday, the first 2020 contest as the party seeks a nominee to face the incumbent Republican.

For Xi, the biggest challenge yet comes laden with risks

President wants to contain virus & safeguard economic stability

ANANTH KRISHNAN

During a visit last September to the Central Party School, an elite institution in west Beijing that trains China's future leaders, President Xi Jinping held forth on the major risks facing his country.

The slowing economy and the trade war with America would have been top of his mind as he warned of "complicated struggles" facing the country. Mr. Xi specifically mentioned the economy, China's diplomatic environment, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

But just four months on after his speech, little would Mr. Xi have imagined that the biggest test of his eight-year rule would come not from far-away America but from Wuhan, a beautiful town of lakes and parks that is famous in Chinese history for launching the uprising that would bring down China's last imperial dynasty.

As China grapples with the fallout of the novel coronavirus outbreak, which as of February 5 has killed more than 490 people and infected more than 24,000, Mr. Xi and the Communist Party of China (CPC) are already counting the costs, both economic and political.

The 11 million people of Wuhan and more than 40 million others in Hubei province have been in lockdown, after Mr. Xi ordered the unprecedented quarantining of an entire city on January 23.

On Monday, Mr. Xi admitted that the outbreak was "a major test of China's system and capacity for governance", as he chaired a special meeting of the party's top Politburo Standing Committee.

The leadership is scrambling to respond to growing public anger and to make up for days of inaction by the Hubei provincial government that allowed the virus to spread for close to one month before they realised the severity of the situation.



Testing times: Members of the Chinese guard of honour marching on Tiananmen Square in Beijing on Tuesday. •AP

Two-fold agenda Mr. Xi outlined a two-fold agenda: controlling the epidemic, which he warned "directly affects" economic and social stability, and "safeguarding economic and social order".

That is going to be easier said than done. China has come to a standstill because of the measures deployed to contain the outbreak. Factories are shut down. Many workers who were due to return this week after the Lunar New Year holiday remained confined to their villages and towns that are in effective lockdown.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Consumer spending is on pause. Apple and Starbucks are among the many outlets that have shut shop in the mainland. Cities as far away as Hangzhou, home to e-commerce giant Alibaba, are in complete lockdown.

The economic costs will be enormous. The timing, during the New Year holiday, couldn't have been worse, with the outbreak costing the economy over 500 billion Yuan (\$72 billion), say economists. In 2020, growth could fall to 5.6%, down from 6.1% last year, estimates Oxford Economics, the lowest since 1990.

Then there are the political risks. Mr. Xi's comments suggest he is certainly aware that the Party's credibility has been hit. There is an outpouring of anger towards the provincial leadership, and people are asking if China has progressed or regressed since the SARS outbreak 17 years ago.

At the same time, it's simplistic to assume that every piece of bad news in China will hurt Mr. Xi. If the country emerges quickly from the epidemic, an outcome the world will be hoping for, Mr. Xi may well frame it as a defence of the robustness of the Chinese system and further push the political tightening and centralisation that his two-terms have seen. The initial cover-ups, which have brought enormous costs to the people of Wuhan, will become a footnote on what Mr. Xi likes to call the country's road to rejuvenation.

Buttigieg, Sanders likely to win Iowa

Both got 10 pledged delegates each from State. Joe Biden finishes fourth

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN WASHINGTON

As the Iowa Democratic Party began releasing partial results from Monday's caucuses that kicked off the primary race of the party, Pete Buttigieg, the 38-year-old Mayor from Southbend, Indiana, led the candidates in state delegates, followed closely by progressive candidate Bernie Sanders. Former Vice-President Joseph R. Biden performed poorly as per polls prior to the caucuses.

The Iowa race is crucial to winning the nomination as it

provides candidates with momentum to carry them through to July, when the Democratic Party will choose its presidential nominee.

The party released results first around 4 p.m. and then later on Tuesday night, with 71% of 1,765 precincts reporting. Mr. Buttigieg led with 26.8% of state delegate equivalents, followed Mr. Sanders, at 25.2%. Mr. Sanders' fellow progressive candidate Elizabeth Warren, Senator from Massachusetts, came in third with 18.4% of the vote followed by Mr. Bi-

den at 15.4% and Senator Amy Klobuchar, from Iowa's northern neighbour, Minnesota, in fifth place with 12.6%.

Lead in popular votes

Mr. Sanders, however, led Mr. Buttigieg narrowly in the first two popular vote statistics – the first and second alignment (the first round of voting and the second round of voting when supporters of non-viable candidates realign with a viable candidate). The Democratic party is reporting the first and second alignments as well as the state delegate equivalents this year as opposed to just the third number, which has

been historically reported. The state delegate equivalents is used to calculate the number of 'pledged delegates' a candidate sends to the nominating convention in July (currently Mr. Buttigieg and Mr. Sanders are equal on that count, with 10 pledged delegates). Mr. Buttigieg, who came out as gay a few years ago, addressed supporters in New Hampshire, where Democrats will compete against each other next week in a primary race.

"It validates for a kid somewhere in a community wondering if he belongs or she belongs or they belong in their community, if you believe in your country, there's

a lot backing up that belief," Mr. Buttigieg said.

Mr. Biden, 77, who like Mr. Buttigieg, is making a play for moderate and independent voters, had relatively slim crowds at his events in the run-up to Monday's caucuses, based on reports. The former Vice-President is banking on the South Carolina primary later in February, where he is expected to win, as per polls, with support from African Americans.

For now, candidates have begun canvassing in New Hampshire, where Mr. Sanders has an advantage, as per the latest state poll, with Mr. Biden and Mr. Buttigieg tied for second place.

Rough landing



Narrow escape: A plane carrying 177 people skidded off the runway and split into three after landing in rough weather at an airport in Istanbul on Wednesday. About 120 people were injured and taken to hospital. •REUTERS

More Chinese cities shut down as virus toll rises

Desperate bid to contain spread as toll inches close to 500

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE HANGZHOU

Millions more people have been ordered to stay indoors as China battles to curb the spread of a new virus that authorities said on Wednesday has already killed nearly 500 people.

With more than 24,000 cases in China, a growing number of cities have been imposing a range of restrictions in recent days far from central Hubei province, the epicentre of the outbreak.

Global concerns have risen as cases continue to spread abroad, with 10 people testing positive for the virus on a ship quarantined off the coast of Japan.

In Hangzhou, some 175 km southwest of Shanghai,



A woman collecting items ordered online from outside her house in Hangzhou. •AFP

fences blocked streets near the headquarters of Chinese tech giant Alibaba as a fighter jet circled overhead.

The firm is based in one of three Hangzhou districts subject to new restrictions that allow only one person per household to go outside every two days to buy neces-

sities. "Please don't go out, don't go out, don't go out!" blared a message on a loud-speaker urging people to wear masks, wash their hands regularly and report any people who are from Hubei – reflecting a common fear that people from the province might infect others.

At least three other cities in Zhejiang province – Taizhou, Wenzhou and parts of Ningbo – have imposed the same measures, affecting 18 million people.

Similar restrictions have been put in place in Heilongjiang province on the Russia border. In Zhumadian, authorities said one person would be allowed to leave each household only every five days.

Baby tests positive in Wuhan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BEIJING

A baby in China's Wuhan city has been diagnosed with the novel coronavirus just 30 hours after being born, Chinese state media reported on Wednesday.

The infant is the youngest person recorded

as being infected by the virus.

CCTV quoted experts as saying it may be a case of "vertical transmission", referring to infections passed from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth or immediately after.

Unpaid leave for Cathay staff

REUTERS SYDNEY

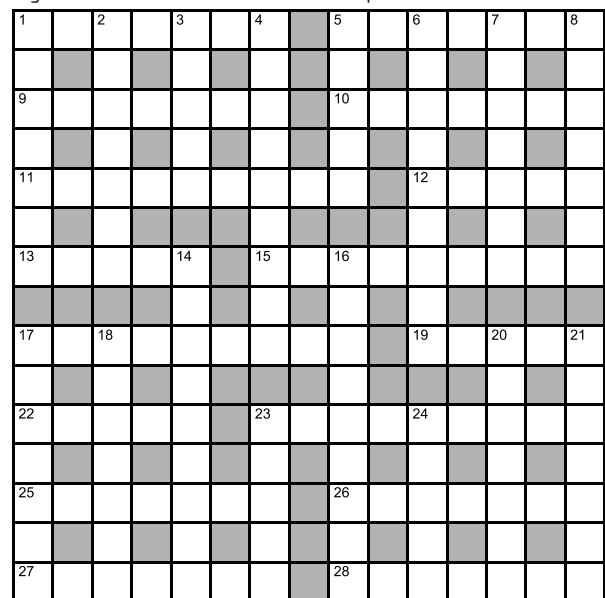
Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways asked its 27,000 employees to take three weeks of unpaid leave, saying preserving cash was key for the carrier and that

conditions were as grave as during the 2009 financial crisis due to the epidemic.

Cathay is also asking suppliers for price reductions, putting in place hiring freezes, postponing major projects.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12851

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



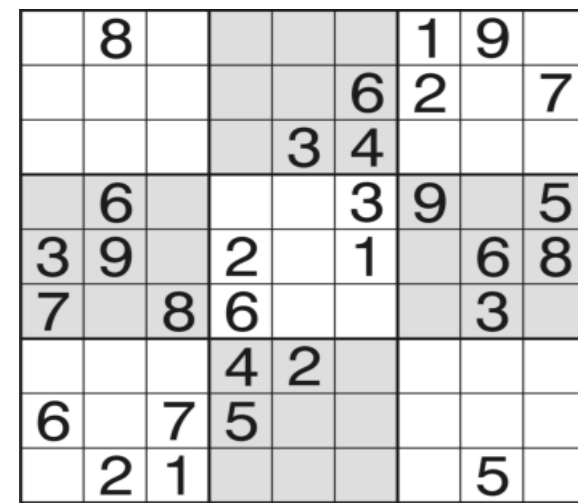
(set by Avtaar)

- Trendy locomotive model I despatched is on the way (2,7)
- Coach reviewed staff guide (9)
- When clubs run out of capital, the result is consolidation (5)
- Husband visits famous seaside resort for recess (5)
- Modern female puzzle makers, wanting opportunities, ultimately get restrained (2,7)
- Passe-partout's escape, possibly following path taken by running mare (6,3)
- Stop launch of baroque, expensive clothes (5)
- Firm support for snake (5)
- Cousin ate bananas fast (9)
- Nobleman's medal that is fixed to the side of the head (7)
- Papers about acquiring hospital, maybe? (7)
- It is common knowledge here? (7)
- With energy, Avtaar is back – invited by retiring chiefs of Southern newspaper – he is difficult to beat (7)
- Currency recovered in a missing jacket (5)
- Extremely unfit snake is put inside vessel (1-4)
- Fearless virgin, perhaps, has fun after removing top (9)
- Start of Easterly monsoon, making advance, south of European island nation (7)
- Youngsters, on vacation, going over for new book briefs (1-6)
- Exciting late overs – they take you to a different level (9)
- Spooner's curious blower that is used for making dosas (6,3)
- Thane doctor came back to his roots (7)
- A big, cold expanse in Southern part of Europe (7)
- Buy, say, fried samosa – for the most part. It gives energy (7)
- One-second breaks without curbs (7)
- Diminutive, under-20 and young (5)
- In presence of mother, bird ascends (5)

DOWN

- Return of rule from abroad (7)
- Dad's dad, say, is acting funny after onset of amnesia (7)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12850

1	2	7	5	3	9	6	4	8
3	9	5	4	6	8	7	1	2
4	8	6	7	1	2	3	5	9
2	7	9	3	4	1	8	6	5
8	1	4	2	5	6	9	3	7
6	5	3	8	9	7	1	2	4
7	3	8	6	2	5	4	9	1
5	6	1	9	7	4	2	8	3
9	4	2	1	8	3	5	7	6

FAITH

Curse and blessing

Evil and good co-exist in the individual as well as in society in various proportions. The uniqueness of the Bhagavata Purana is the positive vibrations it generates when dealing with this sensitive issue from various angles and contexts that the characters get exposed to, pointed out Sri Ramanujam in a discourse.

In the case of Parikshit, he is the righteous ruler and grandson of the Pandavas; he is the vanquisher of Kali Purusha as well. But he commits an inadvertent act of disrespect towards a sage during a weak moment when he is tired, hungry and extremely thirsty after a long hunting session. Finding no water in the vicinity, he asks for water from a sage in a nearby hermitage. The sage, steeped in meditation, does not respond; but at that moment Parikshit forgets his principles and hurls a dead snake on the sage. He regrets it immediately and leaves the place. Moreover being a Kshatriya ruler responsible for maintaining law and justice, he knows too well that these are not arbitrary and that he is subordinate to the rule of law. In early times, kings are expected to act out of truth. Truth, dharma and justice are integral for society to thrive at all times.

On getting back to the palace, he imposes expiatory measures on himself for this unpardonable act. He renounces kingdom, riches, family, etc, and also gives up hunger and thirst that had caused him to sin against the sage. In fact, he is grateful to them as one would be to a true friend for making him realise what is truly beneficial for any human being. Likewise, the curse of the sage's son that he would die of Takshaka's bite in seven days time is also seen as a blessing; for he is now only bent on making the best use of the limited period of life to get liberated.