



Convoy attacked

Kanhaiya Kumar's convoy was attacked while he was on his way to address a rally against the CAA in Bihar

SHORT TAKES

Talks on Trump's India visit on

New Delhi: The discussions on President Donald Trump's visit to India are on with the US side, the ministry of external affairs said on Thursday. "We are in discussions with the US side," MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said when asked about Trump's visit to India. At a poll rally last week, Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said Trump will visit the Sabarmati Riverfront in the state during his India trip in February.

Lanka PM's visit from today

Colombo: Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa will undertake a four-day state visit to India and hold talks on a number of key areas including trade, defence and maritime security cooperation, his office announced here on Thursday. The visit, beginning today, will be the Rajapaksa senior's first overseas visit since his brother Gotabaya was elected President in November. He will have meetings with President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and external affairs minister S. Jaishankar.

Thailand national raped in Kerala

Kochi: A 46-year-old Thailand national was allegedly raped by two men here, following which they were arrested, police said on Thursday. The accused hailing from a north Kerala district have been arrested on the basis of a complaint lodged by the woman. Police said the accused — Mohammed Insaif and his friend Ansuaruddin from Kondotty in Malappuram district were arrested after recording the statement of the victim. The woman from Thailand had been a Facebook friend of Insaif for the last seven months after she enrolled her child in a school in Malappuram.

Crew detained in Iran released

New Delhi: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday said six Indian crew members of the ship 'Abdul Razzak,' detained in Iran for 11 months, have been released. Jaishankar thanked the Iranian authorities for their assistance. "Six Indian crew members of the ship 'Abdul Razzak' detained in Iran for 11 months have been released. Thank the Iranian authorities for their assistance. Appreciate the efforts of our Embassy in Tehran and our Consulate in Bandar Abbas," he said in a tweet.

CAA: 20 HELD ON SEDITION CHARGES

Azamgarh, Feb. 6: Police have booked 135 people protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act for sedition and arrested 20 of them in the city's Bilariaganj area. In the FIR, only 35 people have been named and the rest are unidentified, police said. The FIR lists sedition among the charges. The protesters accused the police of thrashing them. Police, however, said they used tear gas shells to tackle the protesters.

"The FIR has been registered against 35 named and over 100 unidentified persons involved in the anti-CAA protests on Tuesday near Jauhar park in Bilariaganj area. Of them 20 have been arrested," superintendent of police, Triveni Singh, said. He said Tuesday's protest against the CAA was led by Ulema Council national general secretary Tahir Madni, who was arrested on Wednesday. The officer said a reward of ₹25,000 each has been announced on absconding Ulema Council leaders Nurul Huda, Mirza Shane Alam and Osama. He alleged that the protesters used foul language against Hindus and PM Narendra Modi. An NGO in Azamgarh has alleged that 19 people were beaten up and arrested from Bilariaganj when they were "peacefully" protesting against the citizenship law. "The women were peacefully protesting at Mohd Ali Park. When the women got up to offer namaaz, the police started hurling abuses at them," a representative of the NGO said.

Modi makes Congress his punching bag in Lok Sabha

Says he is abuse-proof, will also work to become 'danda (attack)-proof'

PM says protests will lead to anarchy

From Page 1

Mr Modi said that it was due to these misdeeds of the Congress that the people had shown it the door and it has failed to perform its duty as a responsible opposition. Without naming Rahul Gandhi, Mr Modi in his reply referred to the Congress leader's comments he had reportedly made about "youth beating Modi with sticks over the lack of jobs," and said he would increase the number of Surya Namaskars (a yoga exercise) so that his back can bear the sticks. "In 70 years, no Congress leader has ever become self-sufficient. I heard one leader's manifesto yesterday. He said 'We will beat Modi with a stick in six months.' I can imagine that it is a difficult

prospect, so it will take six months to prepare. In these six months, I will do more surya namaskar so that my back is ready for the beating. I have been subjected to abuses in the past 20 years. I will make myself gaali-proof (abuse-proof) and also danda-proof (stick-proof)," Mr Modi said. Mr Modi, repeatedly took on Mr Choudhury, who was constantly interjecting his speech with protestations. The Prime Minister said that the Congress leader was openly publicising the government's 'Fit India' campaign in Parliament. Responding to Mr Choudhury on the issue of unemployment, Mr Modi said he will resolve unemployment in the country but not his and of his party's. "Aapki berzogari nahin

hatme denge," he quipped. When the opposition sought to question him on the government's achievements in the agriculture sector, he said that he had learnt from farmers. Farmers, he said, toil hard in the fields under scorching heat but sow the seeds when the time is right. Similarly, he added, I have created the space in your (opposition's) minds and gradually I will start sowing the seeds in them. Responding to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor's criticism of the government's measures regarding Jammu and Kashmir, Mr Modi suggested that Mr Tharoor should have some soft corner for Kashmir, after all he was "son-in-law" of the region, referring to his late wife Sunanda Pushkar, who was a Kashmiri. Mr Modi warned that

street protests and arson against decisions of Parliament and state assemblies and people's refusal to accept laws will lead to anarchy, as he accused the Congress and other opposition parties of inciting protests against the CAA and the NPR. Stoutly defending the CAA and the update of the NPR, Mr Modi told Parliament there is an attempt to cover undemocratic activity under the garb of protests and that no one is going to get political benefit. As soon as Mr Modi arrived in Lok Sabha, the Congress MPs countered the BJP lawmakers' 'Jai Shri Ram' chants with 'Gandhiji Amar Rahein,' in an apparent reference to the controversial remarks made by BJP MP Ananthkumar Hegde against Mahatma Gandhi.

Rahul grills Modi on unemployment

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 6



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday for not talking about the main issue of unemployment and "distracting" people by raising other things from Jawaharlal Nehru to Pakistan.

Responding to Modi after the Prime Minister replied to the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address in Lok Sabha, Gandhi said both the Prime Minister and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman have given long speeches in Parliament but have failed to reply on providing employment to youth. He said, "All youngsters of this country want that after studies school, college, university they get employment. We asked the Prime Minister repeatedly that you have given a one and a half hour speech and if for two minutes you can tell the youth about employment and what your government has done about it."

He further added that earlier, the government used to talk about economy, Make in India, \$5 trillion, but the Prime Minister now does not

We asked the Prime Minister repeatedly that if you can tell the youth in two minutes about employment and what your government has done about it

RAHUL GANDHI Congress leader

talk about the biggest issue facing the country and is distracting the people by talking about other things, ranging from the Congress and Nehru to Pakistan and Bangladesh. Both the Prime Minister and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman have failed to reply on issues like providing employment to youth and putting the economy on the right track.

IEDs found before PM visit

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, FEB. 6

In what is said to be a desperate attempt of outlawed Ulfa (I) to make their presence felt, Assam police on Thursday recovered two low intensity Improvised Explosive Device (IED) from one of the most crowded locality of the capital city areas of Assam.

The recovery of IEDs a day before Prime Minister's scheduled visit to Kokrajhar on Friday has created sensation in the security circle. However, security agencies ruled out any connection of IED to Prime Minister's visit.

Informing that IEDs were recovered from Pan Bazaar and Paltan Bazaar in Guwahati on the basis of confessional statement of an Ulfa (I) cadre who was arrested by police in Upper Assam's Tinsukia district, security sources said that Ulfa (I) cadre claimed to have been assigned the task of planting six IEDs.

Pointing out that four IEDs were planted in Upper Assam which went off on January 26, security sources said that two IEDs were planted in Guwahati on February 1 but it failed to blast.

Pointing out that the IEDs were kept in plastic containers, security sources said that the bomb disposal squad has taken the IEDs Panikhaiti area where it will be disposed off.

Confirming the report, Guwahati Police Commissioner Mouna Prasad Gupta said that

■ IEDS WERE recovered from Pan Bazaar and Paltan Bazaar in Guwahati on the basis of confessions of an Ulfa (I) cadre who was arrested by police in Upper Assam's Tinsukia district, sources said.

two IEDs were recovered and a bomb disposal team was called to defuse the IEDs. An investigation in the case is on.

The top police official also said that the IEDs were packed in bags. "We had prior information regarding the planting of the IEDs and based on that input, we carried out the search operation and recovered the IEDs," said the senior police officer who suspected the involvement of Ulfa (I) cadres.

The bombs were planted in Pan Bazaar and Paltan Bazaar areas known as to be the commercial hub of Guwahati.

Mr Modi is scheduled to visit Kokrajhar town in Assam on February 7 to take part in the celebrations organized to mark the signing of the Bodo Peace Accord.

Earlier on Wednesday, the police had recovered five hand-made bombs from a place in Chhaygaon under Kamrup (Rural) district. The bombs were later defused at Kukurmara in Chhaygaon.

KERALA OPPN WANTS CENSUS WORK STALLED

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 6

The Congress-led UDF in Kerala has stepped up pressure on the CPM-led LDF government to put Census operations on hold at least temporarily till the air is cleared on the NRC and the NPR.

The Opposition raised the demand in the Assembly and staged a walk out after failing to get any assurance from the government. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said directions have already been issued to collectors and principal census officers to stop all activities related to the NPR.

The Chief Minister said that census work was important and cannot be put on hold.

Muslim League MLA K.M. Shaji moved the adjournment motion on the census issue. He pointed out that after appointing enumerators for the census operations, the state government had ceased to have any say on these officials.

Now, these enumerators are under the control of central census commissioner and they have to comply with the instructions of the Centre.

MAN HELD FOR HURLING GRENADE AT COPS

Srinagar, Feb. 6: A man who allegedly hurled a grenade on CRPF personnel at Lal Chowk here was arrested on Thursday, official sources said.

A grenade was hurled on CRPF personnel posted on duty near Pratap Park in busy Lal Chowk area of the city on Sunday, injuring two jawans and seven civilians.

Naveed Lateef, a resident of Pulwama district, was arrested from the city in the early hours and he is being questioned, the official sources said.

They said Naveed was preparing for the NEET at a coaching centre here. DGP Dilbagh Singh on Wednesday had told reporters that police had got clues in the Lal Chowk grenade attack case and a breakthrough was expected soon.

digs at Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for frequently rising from his seat and interrupting him. Responding to Mr Chowdhury on the issue of unemployment, Mr Modi said he will resolve unemployment in the country

but not his (Mr Chowdhury's) and of his party's. As soon as Mr Modi entered the Lok Sabha, he was welcomed by the BJP members with 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans to which Congress responded by

'Mahatma Gandhi Zindabad'. The Congress sloganeering soon tapered off. When Mr Modi referred to this, Mr Chowdhury said this was a trailer. Mr Modi shot back: "For you Gandhi is a trailer, for us, he is our guide."

Responding to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, Mr Modi suggested that Tharoor should have some soft corner for Kashmir as he was "son-in-law" of the region, referring to his late wife Sunanda Pushkar.



Members of a tribal community stage a demonstration during a dharna staged by the Trinamul against the NRC and the CAA in Kolkata, on Thursday.

Congress says country's economy is infected with coronavirus

New Delhi, Feb. 6: The Congress on Thursday described Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address in Parliament as one that oscillated between "stand-up comedy" and "rank communalism", and said he should apologise for "misleading" the country by quoting Jawaharlal Nehru "out of context".

Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari said it was unfortunate that the Prime Minister made a reference to Pakistan seven times during his address and accused him of hypenating India with

Pakistan during the last five years. Tewari was referring to Modi's reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address.

He also accused Modi of destroying the Indian economy and said the Prime Minister is covering this up by dividing society through polarisation. While the country's economy is inflicted by "coronavirus," the NDA-BJP government is giving medicines for common cold, the Congress leader said. "It is extremely unfortu-

nate and deeply regrettable that the prime minister's comments oscillated between stand-up comedy, half truths and rank communalism. It is regrettable that the Prime Minister of India should quote one of his illustrious predecessors Jawaharlal Nehru completely out of context," he said.

"The Prime Minister should apologise to the country for quoting an agreement signed with another country completely out of context. The Prime Minister deliber-

ately chose to mislead the House," Tewari said.

Tewari said BJP's Hindu-Muslim and India-Pakistan rhetoric is the only way for the ruling party to cover up for its failure in improving the economy of the country which is in a shambles right now due to its policies.

"That is why I told the finance minister (Nirmala Sitharaman) that the Indian economy is afflicted with the coronavirus and you are trying to give it medicine for a common cold," he said. —PTI

TECH | FREEDOM Govt says communication via internet part of right to speech and expressions

Right to internet not fundamental: Law min

New Delhi, Feb. 6: The misconception about the right to internet being a fundamental right needs to be cleared, Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, emphasising that the country's security was equally important.

Communications, information technology, electronics and law and justice minister Prasad, during the Question Hour, said communication of ideas and views through internet are part of fundamental right to speech and expressions.

"The Supreme Court has clearly stated that no lawyer argued that right to internet is a fundamental right. This kind of miscon-

ception needs to be corrected. What the Supreme Court has stated is that for communication of your ideas and views, the use of internet will also be held a part of your fundamental right of speech and expression," Prasad said in reply to a query.

Prasad said no one can deny abuse of internet for spreading violence and terrorism, and Pakistan has been doing it in Kashmir and IS prospered because of internet.

"While right of internet is important, security of the country is equally important. Can we deny (that) internet is abused by terrorists for violence and there have been attempts to create unrest

■ LAW MINISTER Ravi Shankar Prasad said no one can deny abuse of internet for spreading violence and terrorism, and Pakistan has been doing it in Kashmir and IS prospered because of internet.

■ PRASAD SAID law and order is a state subject and decisions are taken based on ground situation which are reviewed periodically.

in Kashmir from across the border through internet," Prasad stressed. He emphasised that the Constitution which provides rights lays equal stress on its regulation,

saying, "Use Internet but you cannot create violence and weaken unity, integrity and security of nation." In reply to a supplementary question by leader of the opposition in the Upper House Ghulam Nabi Azad, Prasad said that having been a former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir he had also been on the hit list of terrorists and was well aware of abuse of internet.

Whether it is a BJP government or a non-BJP government, Internet has been restricted several times on account of its abuse and "what the Supreme Court has done is they have said temporary suspension of rules must be periodically reviewed,"

he said. He said a committee at the Centre comprising the home secretary, the law secretary and the IT secretary reviews it periodically while there are committees in states too.

Prasad said law and order is a state subject and decisions are taken based on ground situation which are reviewed periodically.

"Once the Supreme Court itself has declared that the use of internet to propagate one's views and ideas will be held to be fundamental rights. I will like to flag, this will also be subject to reasonable restrictions for public order, for security and integrity of India," he said. —PTI

On Jammu and Kashmir, he said he had recently visited Kashmir and on demand of apple growers at Sopore, which produces 300 varieties and sends out 450 trucks daily, had initiated the process of making it an e-mandi.

"People in Kashmir are happy," he said and added voice, SMS and landline services have been restored in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, while Broadband functional in Jammu division.

"We have allowed it for white listed websites. There are 783 white-listed websites of government, banking, tourism, e-commerce, transportation, education," he said.



Fund boost

Usha Reddi, an Indian-American who is running for Senate, has raised over \$100,000 in campaign donations

IN BRIEF

Florida trooper dies in shooting

Palm City: A stranded motorist fatally shot a Florida Highway Patrol trooper along Interstate 95 on Wednesday before he was killed by a passing police officer, the agency said. Trooper Joseph Bullock, 42, died in a shooting about 10:15 a.m. near Palm City, about a 45-minute drive north of West Palm Beach, said Col. Gene Spaulding, the agency's commander. He said a passing police officer from Riviera Beach fatally shot the suspect, whose name has not been released. Riviera Beach is about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from Palm City. Officials declined to say why the officer was in the area. City officials also declined comment. The FHP had issued a statement earlier to the South Florida Sun Sentinel saying the suspect had died by suicide. Spaulding said that Bullock, a 19-year veteran, had been with the shooter for several minutes before the shooting. He released no further information, saying the shooting is under investigation by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Woman spared jail for dog in mosque

Jakarta: A Christian woman charged with blasphemy has escaped jail for bringing a dog into a mosque, the latest religious case to draw headlines in Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation. The case of Suzethe Margareth, 52, sparked outrage last summer when a video emerged showing her in a mosque in Bogor, near the capital Jakarta, wearing shoes and letting her dog run loose. Dogs are considered impure in Islam, and wearing shoes is forbidden in a mosque. A Bogor court ruled Wednesday that Margareth was guilty, but decided not to impose a prison term because she has paranoid schizophrenia. Prosecutors had demanded a nine-month jail term. But Margareth testified that she went into the mosque because she was being chased and heard voices in her head saying her husband was getting married there. Her lawyer welcomed the decision, saying her condition was clear from the way she spoke. But mosque representative Ruslan A Suhady slammed the mental health defence.

Israeli troops hurt in car-ramming

Jerusalem: A car-ramming targeting Israeli troops in Jerusalem wounded 14 people early Thursday in an attack that Palestinian Islamist group Hamas hailed as a response to Washington's controversial Middle East peace plan. A manhunt was underway for the driver who fled the scene outside a popular Jerusalem entertainment spot. The attack occurred shortly before 2 am outside the First Station, an historic Ottoman-era railway terminus that has been turned into a cultural and entertainment centre with bars and restaurants. The attacker struck in the street outside where the soldiers had been marching, the army said. A soldier was "severely injured" and has been evacuated to hospital. Public radio said they were new recruits on their way to an induction ceremony at Jerusalem's Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray. "During the incident, a terrorist sped his car towards soldiers," the army said. Israeli troops "are currently pursuing the terrorist who escaped the scene."

Trump survives historic Senate vote

Impeachment trial gives Prez political victory in election year, bitterly divides nation

Washington, Feb. 6: The Republican-controlled Senate has acquitted Donald Trump in his high-profile impeachment trial, giving the US President a major political victory in an election year but not before bitterly dividing the country and costing millions of dollars to the tax payers. The Senate voted on Wednesday 52-48 to acquit Trump of abuse of power and 53-47 to absolve him of obstruction of Congress, the two charges he faced. The vote along party lines foiled the Democratic Party's determined bid to overthrow Trump from the White House ahead of the November 3 presidential election. The Democratic-led House of Representatives approved the articles of impeachment on December 18 after charging Trump with pressuring Ukraine to smear former US vice president Joe Biden, a potential Democratic rival in the 2020 presidential election, using nearly \$400 million in military aid as leverage. Though Trump, 73, has been acquitted, he will become the first impeached president to seek re-election. A two-thirds majority vote was needed to remove Trump, which was always going to be a long shot in a 100-member Senate controlled by his Republican Party with 53 seats. "For now, the impeachment of Mr Trump appears to have evenly divided the nation," *The New York Times* reported. "The outcome represented a political triumph for the White House and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell..." *The Washington Post* noted. "The President is pleased to put this latest chapter of shameful behaviour by the Democrats in the past, and looks forward to continuing his work on behalf of the American people in 2020 and beyond," a much-relieved White House said soon after Trump's acquittal. Trump announced on Twitter that he will make a public statement on Thursday from the White House "to discuss our Country's VICTORY on the Impeachment Hoax!" White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham slammed the Opposition Democrats. "Today, the sham



President Donald Trump welcomes Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido to the White House in Washington.

ROMNEY 1ST TO VOTE AGAINST PARTYMAN

Washington: Mitt Romney, the only Republican senator to cross the aisle and convict Donald Trump on the first charge of abuse of power during his impeachment trial, has said that the American President is "guilty of an appalling abuse of public trust". In an emotional speech on Senate floor, the 72-year-old lawmaker from Utah, spoke of his own faith and of the possibility for retribution from the ruling Republican Party he may face over his decision to go against Trump in one of the two charges against the president. "I'm aware that there are people in my party and in my own state who will strenuously disapprove of my decision and in some quarters I will be vehemently denounced, Romney, the Republican nominee for US prez in the 2012 election, said. He then went on to ask, "Does anyone seriously believe that I would consent to these consequences other than from an inescapable conviction that my oath before God demanded it of me?" - PTI

I will be making a public statement tomorrow at 12:00 pm from the @WhiteHouse to discuss our Country's VICTORY on the Impeachment Hoax. I have been put through a terrible ordeal by some very dishonest and corrupt people. They have done everything possible to destroy us and by so doing very badly hurt our nation.

— DONALD TRUMP
US President

impeachment attempt concocted by Democrats ended in the full vindication and exoneration of President Donald J. Trump. As we have said all along, he is not guilty," she said. "The Senate voted to reject the baseless articles of impeachment, and only the President's political opponents - all Democrats, and one failed Republican presidential candidate - voted for the manufactured impeachment articles," Grisham said. Trump 2020 campaign manager Brad Parscale said, "The do-nothing Democrats know they can't beat him, so they had to impeach him. This terrible ordeal was always a campaign tactic to invalidate the 2016 votes of 63 million Americans." Democratic Party accused the Republican-dominated Senate of ignoring the facts, "the will of the American people and their duty to the Constitution." "Today, the President and Senate Republicans have normalised lawlessness and rejected the system of checks and balances of our Constitution," said Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives. "There can be no acquittal without a trial, and there is no trial without witnesses, documents and evidence," she said, a day after the powerful Democrat tore her copy of Trump's State of the Union address to Congress. — PTI

Sadly, because of the Republican Senate's betrayal of the Constitution, the President remains an ongoing threat to American democracy, with his insistence that he is above the law and that he can corrupt the elections if he wants to.

— NANCY PELOSI
House Speaker

■ When it was over, the impeachment of Trump produced 135 days of partisan rancour, 17 witness accounts, more than 28,000 pages of documents and testimony, and one big loose end.

Today, the sham impeachment attempt concocted by Democrats ended in the full vindication and exoneration of President Donald J. Trump.

— WHITE HOUSE,
in a statement

Buttigieg clings to narrow lead as Iowa results trickle in

New York, Feb. 6: Pete Buttigieg clung to a slight lead over Bernie Sanders in a new batch of vote totals released by the Iowa Democratic Party on Wednesday, two days after the state hosted its first-in-the-nation presidential caucus. But the race remained too early to call with 96% of precincts reporting. Much of the political world has already shifted its attention to next-up New Hampshire, which holds the first primary election in the Democrats' 2020 nomination fight on Tuesday. Iowa officials attributed their delay to technical problems. The chaos surrounding the reporting breakdown has undermined the impact of Iowa's election, which typically rewards winners with a surge of momentum heading into subsequent primary contests. The two early leaders - Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and Vermont

Senator Sanders - are separated by 40 years in age and conflicting ideology. Sanders, a 78-year-old self-described democratic socialist, has been a progressive powerhouse for decades. Buttigieg, a 38-year-old former municipal official, represents the more moderate wing of the Democratic Party. Buttigieg is also the first openly gay candidate to earn presidential primary delegates. — AP

US ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF INTL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ALLIANCE

Washington: The US announced launch of a 27-nation International Religious Freedom Alliance, which will adopt a collective approach in protecting and preserv-

ing religious freedom. It is an Alliance of "like-minded partners who treasure, and fight for, religious freedom", US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

Zimbabwe mine collapse traps 20

Harare: At least 20 miners in Zimbabwe have been trapped after a shaft collapsed, state media reported on Thursday. The incident occurred overnight at the Globe and Phoenix gold mine in the central town of Kwekwe, around 200 kilometres (120 miles) west of Harare. — AFP

Syrian troops capture key town

Ankara, Feb. 6: Syrian government troops captured a key opposition town in the northwest Wednesday despite threats by Turkey's president to use force if they don't pull back by the end of the month, an observer group and news network reported. The town, Saraqeb, sits at the intersection of two major highways, one linking the Syrian capital of Damascus to the north and another connecting the country's west and east. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and an opposition news network said Syrian government troops entered Saraqeb in the evening after an intense day of fighting with opposition fight-

■ The European Union on Thursday called for an end to the bombings in northwest Syria and the opening of a humanitarian corridor

ers, during which several Turkish observation posts were surrounded. Later Wednesday, the Observatory reported clashes inside the town between Syrian troops and opposition fighters. Turkish troops stationed north of Saraqeb shelled Syrian troops north and west of the town in efforts to break their hold on the town, the Observatory said. — AP

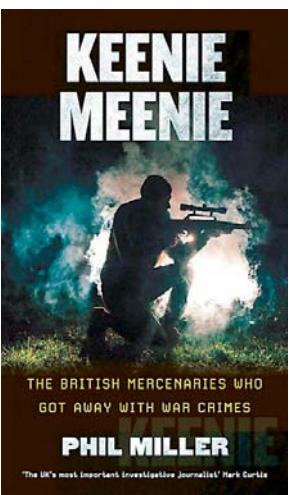


Syrian government forces enter the village of Tel-Toukan in Idlib province, northwest Syria, on Thursday. — AP

NEW REVELATION

Keenie Meenie is Arabic slang for covert activities

India used British pilots against LTTE: Book



London, Feb. 6: British mercenary pilots helped Indian troops in their battle against the Liberation Tigers for Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels in Sri Lanka in the 1980s, a new book reveals for the first time. The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) received air support from these for-hire British pilots despite Indian diplomats publicly condemning the presence of UK mercenaries in Sri Lanka, according to the book, *Keenie Meenie: The British Mercenaries Who Got Away With War Crimes*, authored by UK-based investigative journalist Phil Miller. "Despite India

publicly opposing the presence of British mercenaries in Sri Lanka, my research reveals that by 1987 the Indian military were using white pilots to provide air cover for their operations in Jaffna in what appears to have been a case of my enemy's enemy is my friend," said Miller. India's secret use of British mercenaries lasted for four months after the Indo-Lanka accord was signed between former PM Rajiv Gandhi and then Sri Lankan president Junius Jayewardene in 1987. The book also traces the involvement of British mercenaries in atrocities

against Tamil civilians that occurred prior to the arrival of the IPKF. "Keenie Meenie", from the title of the book, is thought to be an Arabic slang for covert activities and was run by a retired colonel, Jim Johnson, a former Special Air Services commander who had conducted secret missions in Yemen and Oman. Johnson's counter-insurgency experience came to the attention of Jayewardene at the start of Sri Lanka's civil war in 1983, when the Anglophile leader was looking for British aid to defeat the Tamil Tigers. Britain refused to officially send troops to

help Jayewardene, fearing it would have jeopardised "substantial commercial and defence" deals with India, who initially supported the Tamil separatists, notes the account. Former PM Indira Gandhi's personal envoy to Sri Lanka, Gopalaswami Parthasarathy, warned Britain's most senior diplomat Sir Antony Acland that "UK training of Sri Lankan security forces would not be helpful". Instead, declassified documents reveal, Britain allowed retired UK soldiers to work in Sri Lanka under the control of Keenie Meenie Services. — PTI

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
DRM (Electrical)/ECR/ Dhanbad for and behalf of the President of India invites e-Tender for execution of the following works. e-Tender No: EL/34/OPEN/2019-20 Sl. No. 1. Name of work with location and Completion of work: (A) Provision of Facade Lighting for station buildings at Dhanbad (B) Electrical work in connection with Improvement of Front Facade of DRM office Dhanbad. (Completion period: Six Months). Sl. No 2. Approx. cost of the work: Rs. 1,07,93,496.90 (Cost of tender form Rs. 5000/-) Sl. No 3. Earnest money to be deposited: Rs 2,04,000/- Sl. No 4. Date & Time for submission of closing and opening of e-Tender: Closing of e-Tender: On 05.03.2020 at 11:00 Hrs. Opening of e-Tender: On 05.03.2020 after 11:00 Hrs. Sl. No 5. Website particulars: WEBSITE: www.reps.gov.in. Manual offers are not allowed against e-Tender. Divisional Railway Manager (Elect.) East Central Railway/ Dhanbad PR/2180/DHN/ELECT/19-20/36

Telangana State Forest Development Corporation Ltd.
(A Government of Telangana State undertaking)
Regd. Office: 10-1-1200, 3rd Floor, UNI Building, A.C. Guards, Hyderabad-500 004.
Ref. No. 6.5.2018/ET/MT-OPRT/BI/ Date: 06.02.2020
SEALED TENDER NOTICE
Operation & Maintenance of Visitor Amenities facilities wise of SKVBR Botanical Garden at Kothaguda, RE, Kondapur, Hyderabad.
TSFDC is inviting sealed tenders for Operation and Maintenance of visitor amenities, facility wise at SKVBR Botanical Garden, Kothaguda RF, Kondapur, Hyderabad. Sale of Application forms is from 06.02.2020 to 20.02.2020 in the office hours and on 20.02.2020 upto 12:30 Noon. Pre-bid meeting is scheduled on 17.02.2020 at 11:30 AM in the above address. The bids/tenders will be received up to 03:00 PM on 20.02.2020 and opened on 22.02.2020 at 11:00 AM. The intending bidders can obtain the tender documents from above address. For details contact Phone Nos. 8008301612, 8328314731 and website http://www.tsfdc.telangana.gov.in/ Sd/- (P. Raghuvver, IFS) Vice Chairman & Managing Director

Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development
National Institutional Ranking Framework
nirf
NIRF is in process of announcing India Rankings 2020, the fifth edition of this annual exercise. We have received an overwhelming response from Institutions of Higher Education.
Data submitted by the institutions in various disciplines like Engineering, Pharmacy, Management, Architecture, Law, Medical, Colleges, Dental & Agriculture including the Overall rankings of the institutions has been hosted by the participating institutions in their respective websites. The list of institutions who have submitted the data in India Rankings 2020 is available on our website www.nirfindia.org.
The comments/ feedback of the stakeholders are invited through this advertisement from 10th February 2020 to 17th February 2020 by 5 PM on the data submitted by the institutions. The comments/feedback are auto-transmitted through an email without disclosing the identity of the stakeholders to the institution(s). All the Nodal Officers are requested to regularly check their emails to take necessary action on the comments/feedback received from various stakeholders.
Please note that the responsibility and accountability for the data rests entirely with the participating institutions.
Member Secretary
davp 21315/11/0007/1920

MIND POWER
BOB MARLEY ZSA ZSA GABOR

Don't gain the world and lose your soul; wisdom is better than silver or gold | If you can fight directly with your mother, you can save a fortune in psychiatrist's bills

Edit

DECCAN Chronicle

7 FEBRUARY 2020

Will 'carpet-bombing' of Delhi help BJP win polls?

The Delhi Assembly election, to be held on Saturday, has drawn unusual national attention. Ordinarily, a Union territory poll has little outside interest. The heightened focus on how Delhi might vote is primarily due to the fact that it is likely to be the first test of popular endorsement of the controversial CAA, the recently passed citizenship law that has raised passions across India.

Interestingly, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led by energetic chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, hoping to win a second term, has done its best to steer clear of the CAA and is going to the people on the strength of its governmental record alone, in addressing people's needs in a mega-city — highlighting issues like health, education, electricity, water, the state of roads and public transport.

Earlier, by backing the NDA government's move to downgrade Kashmir's constitutional status, the AAP signalled to the BJP's support base that it too could be "nationalist".

While it's seldom easy to call an election, the BJP seems to have become the principal challenger to the AAP's perceived hegemony. Not unexpectedly, the BJP has once again underscored "nationalism" — not in the sense that every Indian may be considered a nationalist and patriot, but in the narrower sense of majority community "nationalism", which is in search of "the other" within society — as its main plank. It has done this by questioning the nationalistic credentials of the Shaheen Bagh protesters, who have made waves through their doggedness and for the peaceful route they have chosen.

The AAP is a relatively new phenomenon in Delhi. Traditionally, in voting behaviour terms the national capital was split between the Congress and the RSS-inspired Jan Sangh (now BJP).

Late CM Sheila Dikshit of the Congress is widely given credit for transforming Delhi's infrastructure. For a several reasons, the Congress was unable to wrestle away the challenge from the AAP, which walked away with Congress' social base to a large extent, especially among the poor and the Muslim minority.

The BJP, on the whole, has successfully retained its roughly one-third vote share. But it does well in winning seats when it can add a section of the floating vote to this core support stratum. This hasn't happened for some time.

So this time the party is taking no chances. It roped in 200 MPs and 11 chief ministers for 10,000 locality-level meetings it planned to "recapture" Delhi. This is a carpet-bombing effort. The stakes seem especially high due to the CAA factor. If the party has to sit it out again, it will have gone 20 years without being in office in Delhi.

That can do all sorts of things to the party's morale and faith in its leadership. In sharp contrast to the BJP, the Congress has made itself scarce in this election, concentrating on just a few seats, where micro-level factors may seem favourable.

Perhaps the party is conscious that in a triangular fight, the votes it gets will eventually help the BJP's cause.

His master's voice

It beats one's wits as to how a slice of the Chennai media turns up outside the gates of Rajinikanth's Poes Garden residence, paparazzi style, whenever the actor brims up with his pearls of wisdom. Without turning them away or calling them in, the politician-in-waiting then spilling what gems he has in store, hoping that it is the State that will pick them up.

"Students should be wary of raising the banner of protest sans the advice of elders and professors when it comes to the CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) question" is one such gem. Earlier, the actor had dug in his heels, refusing to apologise for a factual error in his reference to a 1971 event concerning Periyar E.V. Ramasamy. That there was widespread anger across Tamil Nadu did not perturb him in the least since he had nebulous evidence in the form of a 2017 magazine report to wave as proof.

Rajinikanth is least bothered that six states have sought the repeal of the CAA and protests are raging all over the country. In the state that he lives in, a massive signature campaign is on to mobilise people's support against the new law. But the man who aspires to be the chief minister of the state parrots only clichés in favour of the CAA and offers to "fight" if something detrimental happens to someone. That offer evoked a lot of laughter for his earlier remark, "protests will only turn the state into a crematorium", remains fresh on everyone's mind.

So does Rajinikanth believe that to reach Fort St George he must sing a different song before the ordinary people of the state? If not, is he dancing to someone else's tune? Is it that of a master who wants to piggyback on his popularity?

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Iran's links in India: Is there a need to worry?



Syed Ata Hasnain

Atop international news magazine recently focused on an issue rarely addressed earlier by any analyst in India or abroad. It noted that the assassination of Iran's Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani led to a protest against his killing by the United States in a remote corner of India: Kargil. The local Shia Muslim population unsurprisingly took Iran's side, taking to the streets on hearing of Soleimani's death.

Later, anti-US demonstrations by Shias erupted in parts of Kashmir, and a few days later even in New Delhi. Interestingly, it surmised that "if the US-Iran conflict keeps growing, the presence of pro-Tehran entities in a part of Ladakh could hypothetically emerge as an irritant one day".

It's a relevant observation and Shia dynamics in India would need to be analysed for correct deductions. Brief geostrategic and geopolitical observations would also be pertinent. Kargil district is a part of the new Union territory of Ladakh, famously known for the high-altitude infantry and artillery battles between India and Pakistan in May-July 1999 that led to Pakistan's abject defeat. Passing through Kargil is the strategic highway linking Kashmir to Leh, Ladakh's capital, through Zojila Pass. The highway was the objective of Pakistan's 1999 misadventure. Its permanent domination by Pakistani observation and fire would have threatened Ladakh's connectivity with the rest of India and indirectly of the Siachen Glacier, the other high-altitude, glaciated battlefield between India and Pakistan. Adjoining it in the north is the Gilgit-Baltistan sub-region of Pakistan-occupied Ladakh, and further east from Leh is Aksai Chin,

cern being raised; it is testimony to both India's pluralism and Shias' ability to manage the right perception about their sect.

It is with this understanding that one should approach the demonstrations of support for Iran in Kargil and elsewhere in India. It would be interesting to know that during the height of the early manifestation of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its threats towards Shia shrines at Najaf and Karbala, a very large number of passionate Indian Shias volunteered to proceed to Iraq to act as foot soldiers against ISIS which had declared Shias as its enemy.

Shias' involvement with politics in India is minimal, which makes them a poor vote bank. In many ways, however, this is their strength. The proxy war in J&K has seen negligible involvement of the community, which forms almost 12-15 per cent of the Valley's population distributed in few pockets. Discrimination against them in Kashmir is one of the reasons why Kargil, an adjoining district to Kashmir's Ganderbal, did not witness any support for Pakistan's sponsored proxy war in J&K. Of concern, however, should be the fact that it was Pakistan's mainly Shia Northern Light Infantry from the illegally-occupied Gilgit-Baltistan area that was involved in the occupation of the Kargil heights in 1999. Despite this, it got no support whatever from Kargil's population and proxy war remains incubated in the Valley. There is so far no evidence that the Iran-influenced organisations in Kargil have any traits of being paramilitary prox-

ies that can be used in a hostile way.

This could lead to the conclusion that demonstrations in support of Iran and the assassinated Qasem Soleimani, seen in Kargil and elsewhere in India, are only transactional in nature for the expression of solidarity. Yet Iran has admittedly demonstrated no solidarity with India over the recent developments in Kashmir. The nature of India-Iran relations has mostly been transactional, unlike the emerging relationship between India and the Gulf states, where a huge Indian diaspora resides with a major contribution to the Indian economy through remittances. Can the Iranian linkage with Indian Shias therefore turn against India's interests? This seems unlikely as the history of the relationship proves that Iran has often taken such a stance without hurting the relationship. Its relationship with Pakistan too has never been too warm. India too, realising the strategic importance of Iran, maintains a neutral stance on the US-Iran standoff and continues to follow an interest-based relationship. It's in the contingency that India is called upon by the United States to demonstrate the depth of the mutual emerging strategic relationship that it will be under pressure. It would be a difficult call, but India has so far weathered such choices well through its multilateral approach. The sentiments of Kargil and other Indian Shias appear to be yet benign. The Kargil Shias remain an important entity for India's security of Ladakh and its approach towards Gilgit-Baltistan. The demonstrated Shia patriotism must be nurtured for our strategic interests even as a careful watch is maintained on Shia foreign linkages, an action which is always an ongoing exercise for the intelligence domain.

It's in the contingency that India is called upon by the United States to demonstrate the depth of the mutual emerging strategic relationship that it will be under pressure

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former commander of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps. He is also associated with the Vivekananda International Foundation and the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies.

LETTERS

LAW & ECONOMY

Indian economy is facing challenges on many fronts. While some issues can be corrected at the government level, there are global issues that are beyond our control (Domestic IT firms paint a bleak picture, DC, Feb. 6). The Union Budget, many feel, has failed to address key factors that boost investments and consumption. However, no one is talking about law in India. If I give money to an individual, company, or organisation, how safe is it? In case of default, how early can I recover the money if I go to court? If India must progress economically or otherwise, the legal system must be robust.

Amit Agrawal
Hyderabad

POLARISATION

India seems to be in a political era of polarisation (of Hindu majority) under the Bharatiya Janata Party government instead of politics of appeasement (of Muslim minority) during the Congress regime (Ram Lalla back in focus before polls, DC, Feb. 6). Both extremities are dangerous to a country like India which was founded on the principle of unity in diversity by our freedom fighters.

Baratam Raghunadha Rao
Hyderabad

U.S. ELECTIONS

United States President Donald Trump has made a comeback with his marathon speech in the Senate (Unity in shreds as Trump makes case for re-election, DC, Feb. 6). He convinced and influenced the Senate by making America First impact. By giving credit to the military for executing Qasem Soleimani was the final touch to impress the Senate.

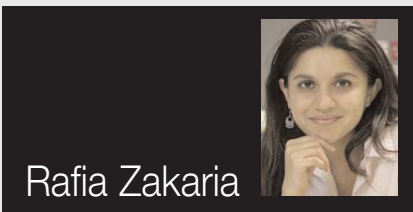
P.R. Ravinder
Hyderabad

GST LOTTERY

The government's proposal to introduce a lottery system in Goods and Services Tax (GST) offering between ₹1 crore and ₹10 lakh is welcome (GST lottery to prod buyers to take bills soon, DC, Feb. 5). There were suggestions from several quarters that instead of keeping huge prize amounts and limiting the probability of winners, it is better to fix the prize amounts at ₹10,000 each. That can attract many more people to demand bills from traders which will coming of use later.

N. Bhaskara Ramam
Hyderabad

Send your letters to info@deccanmail.com, editor@deccanmail.com. You can also send them to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.



Rafia Zakaria

Virus or travel curbs, the borders are closing fast

While the world has been busy absorbing the terrible news from China, with individuals, governments and airlines all weighing the risks of the coronavirus, the Trump administration has issued another set of travel curbs. The new restrictions, which apply to an additional six countries, will be added to the already existing ones. Included are Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan and Eritrea.

The total number of countries facing the US travel ban (which was held up by the US supreme court) now numbers 13. In addition to these countries, the US is also blocking travel to the country by any foreign nationals who may have visited China in recent days. Chinese citizens are still permitted to travel to the US, although it is reported that several of the country's major airports will undertake special screenings of passengers arriving on these flights. They will be looking for increased body temperature, cough-

ing and shortness of breath. While these health precautions may prove temporary as China tries to contain the virus, there is a general feeling, especially in light of America's tightening of immigration, that borders and bans are gaining an increasingly prominent place in the scheme of things. As far as the latest US travel restriction is concerned, the addition of six new countries to the list underscores the premise that certain kinds of people are particularly repugnant to the white nationalists that now control US immigration policy.

African countries, which President Trump has talked about so very disparagingly, are first, followed by Muslim countries and now also some Central Asian countries. The particularities of the bans ensure visas issued prior to Feb 22, 2020, will be valid. Student visas and some other non-immigrant visas may also still be given (although one can be sure that these too will face extra scrutiny). No immigrant visas will be

granted to citizens from these countries, leaving those in line to migrate to the US stuck and suspended.

While it is said that the reason for the restrictions is inadequate screening measures implemented by the countries in question, it is not a stretch to assume that the real reason is to throttle non-white immigration to the US. In addition, all of these countries, small and lacking much international clout, have virtually no means to protest against the ban. The consequence is that thousands of Nigerian Americans and Tanzanian Americans, amongst others, will suddenly face swift estrangement.

If you add these restrictions, imposed by a global superpower, to the curbs necessitated by the recent health concerns, the immediate picture is of a shrunken world wrapped in barbed wire. The toughest knots exist over regions such as Africa and South Asia, the labour exporters whose youth inevitably await visas to the western world in order to make a future and a life for them-

selves. With the UK out of Europe, and the US wrapped up in travel bans, the prospects for those who leave home to earn their fortunes in foreign lands is particularly bleak.

A throttled world is likely to birth even greater hatred. For instance, in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, Asian people living in Europe and the US already report facing discrimination. The world where people moved freely, where fortunes could be sought far and wide, seems already to be a thing of the past. The more populous half, largely brown and black, faces the ignominy of visa queues, rejections and the humiliating beggary of western immigration procedures that impact relationships, lives and more. The other half sets up bans and borders with just as much persistence. The US is likely to continue to add to the list of travel-ban countries, since it does not see any point in permitting individuals from poor, black and/or Muslim countries to cross its borders.

Whether it is pandemic or discrim-

ination, it is the poor who will suffer. Countries such as Pakistan and India that have borders with China and lack the kind of sensitive screening equipment possessed by Western nations could be impacted.

The world of the last millennium was less beset with the scourges of unforgiving climate change, pandemic, racially based exclusion, in fact, the open persecution of any group unlucky to be a minority. Most of these are large structural problems whose solutions seem too forbidding to consider at the same time; the failure to take action is pushing us all towards a catastrophe. Pakistan is not yet subject to a US travel ban. At the same time, Pakistanis must know that it is a distinct possibility, particularly if Donald Trump wins his re-election bid. As in Nigeria today, there will be an outcry. But the world of walls and barbed wire, of war and plagues, is here to stay.

By arrangement with Dawn

Firings at Shaheen Bagh must never be repeated



Mahtab Alam

In a shocking turn of events on Thursday last week, a man brandishing a gun opened fire at the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) protesters near Jamia Millia Islamia, injuring a student of the university. The students were marching towards Rajghat to protest against the contentious CAA and NRC on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom day. It becomes imperative to understand the "chronology" that has led up to this turn of events. Like several other sections of society, the students of Jamia have put up a consistent protest against the CAA ever since its passage in Parliament in December 2019. Taking their protest to Parliament, a peaceful march led by the students on December 15 turned violent when the police tried to push them back. Later that evening, the university witnessed an unprovoked retaliation when, apart from protesting students, those who had clearly stayed away from the protest were severely beaten up by Delhi police personnel. These includ-

ed students, boys as well as girls, who were praying in the mosque as well as those who had been peacefully studying in the university's library. Outrage against the unrelenting repression triggered the women of Shaheen Bagh to start a first-of-its-kind indefinite dharna to protest against police brutality and CAA-NRC. The protests in Shaheen Bagh have been going on since then (December 15), despite constant attacks from several quarters. As a matter of fact, the number of protesters have been swelling day by day. Shaheen Bagh has also presented itself as a model for people elsewhere wanting to protest against the CAA and NRC, and dozens of Shaheen Baghs have been emulated in other parts of the country. The Jamia students have not stopped protesting since then either. The restlessness among the ruling establishment and its allies to break away these protests is palpable when in a repeat of the firing incident on Thursday, another man fired at the protesters in Shaheen Bagh on Saturday. Thankfully, this time around, no one was hurt. Meanwhile, the government, its supporters and all those dis-

contented with these protests, which includes a section of the mainstream media, have been all out spreading not just misinformation but also hatred against these protesters. The protesters have become the prime target of senior leaders of the ruling dispensation, the BJP. In the past few weeks alone, hardly a day has passed when a senior leader of the party has not spread misinformation about the CAA-NRC protests, especially those which have a sizeable and visible Muslim presence. Union home minister Amit Shah has repeatedly targeted the Shaheen Bagh protesters on a daily basis, shortly ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections scheduled to be held on February 8. While addressing an election rally on Thursday last week, he remarked, "On February 8, you will be deciding who should form the government in Delhi... On one side it is Narendra Modi, who conducted airstrikes and surgical strikes on Pakistan's soil to kill terrorists, and on the other, there are these people who back Shaheen Bagh. You have to decide." On an earlier occasion, Mr Shah had also said, "Press the button with such an anger that Shaheen Bagh feels the current." Only a few days ago, Union minister and BJP star campaigner Anurag Thakur was seen chanting "desh ke gaddaron ko", to which the crowd enthusiastically replied "goli maaro saalon ko", translated as "shoot down these traitors who betray the country".

As long as the vilification and hate campaign against the anti-CAA and anti-NRC protesters (especially Muslims) continue, incidents like the Jamia and Shaheen Bagh shooting are likely to repeat themselves

Similarly, BJP MP from West Delhi and one of the aspirants for the Delhi CM's post, Parvesh Verma, while calling the Shaheen Bagh protesters akin to Kashmiri militants, said: "Lakhs of people gather there (Shaheen Bagh). They will enter your houses, rape your sisters and daughters, kill them. There's time today... Modiji and Amit Shah won't come to save you tomorrow". Similarly, other BJP leaders — not just those at the fringe but also those who occupy prominent positions in the party or have been given tickets in the ongoing elections, have not left themselves behind in the vilification campaign. The constant rumour mongering by BJP IT Cell national in-charge Amit Malviya is another case in point. On Saturday last week, while addressing an election rally in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath had also said, "If not words, then bullets will make people understand". This despite the fact that the ongoing protests in Shaheen Bagh and Jamia have peaceful.

Barring the traffic jam and route diversion, there is hardly any other valid complaint that can be used against the protesters. As far as the issue of the blockade due to the Shaheen Bagh protest is concerned, what has to be kept in mind is that the spatial dynamics of the area hardly provide any open space where the people can organise in such large numbers. Moreover, even if they try to move out of the Shaheen Bagh-Jamia Nagar area, it is clear that they won't be allowed to do so, as has been apparent from the violent attack on the December 15 march and the firing on Thursday last week. The purpose of recounting and enumerating these speeches and the vilification campaign is to explain the kind of impact that it has had on the public at large, especially on the youth like the person who was involved in the Jamia shooting. According to a report, neighbours of the accused believe that "it's the effect of Shaheen Bagh, JNU [Jawaharlal Nehru University] and AMU [Aligarh Muslim University]." This can be corroborated with the fact that minutes before he opened fire on the protesters, he had posted on his Facebook page, "Shaheen Bagh, Khel Khatam", intending that his act was going to end the logjam at Shaheen Bagh. There are enough reasons to believe that what happened in Jamia on Thursday last week was a direct result of the ongoing hate campaign against the anti-

CAA-NRC protesters, especially Muslims. It can be also noted that on Saturday last week, Kapil Gujjar, the man who opened fire in Shaheen Bagh, shouted "Jai Shri Ram" and, "Hamare desh me aur kisi nahi chalegi, sirf Hindu ki chalegi (only Hindus shall have a say in our country, nobody else)", as he was taken into custody by the Delhi police. In the last few weeks, the vilification campaign against Muslims (remember PM Narendra Modi's comment, "those creating violence can be identified by their clothes itself") have created an atmosphere where every anti-CAA and anti-NRC protester is being portrayed and seen as a "gaddar" (traitor) and hence deserving of being killed or jailed immediately. And this is not just limited to right-wing politicians but lawyers as well who have been seen arguing on similar lines. All this has made life as a Muslim even more difficult. They have been selectively targeted by the State as well as vigilante groups. Muslims across the country (in New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, etc) have been specifically targeted for taking part in the protests, putting their lives and liberty at stake. What is worrying is that while just after the Jamia incident, Union home minister Amit Shah assured that "the culprit will not be spared". A few hours later at an election rally, he once again indulged in the vilification of the anti-CAA and anti-NRC protesters, especially those of Shaheen Bagh. What is

also important to note is the way the police acted during the Jamia shooting. According to an eyewitness, "The Delhi Police just stood by and watched" as the accused brandished a gun for a while before opening fire. As per eyewitnesses, "We were shouting for help. We told them (the Delhi Police) to stop him, to control him. But no one did." This only confirms that there is an inbuilt bias against Muslims in the police force as has been documented by several studies and fact-finding reports already. Hence, as long as the vilification and hate campaign against the anti-CAA and anti-NRC protesters (especially Muslims) continue, incidents like the Jamia and Shaheen Bagh shooting are likely to repeat themselves. If the Union home minister and his government are really interested in stopping these incidents and getting the culprits punished for their crime, the first thing that they should do, apart from ensuring a free and fair investigation, is to stop the misinformation and vilification campaign immediately. Until and unless that happens, there is no guarantee that similar incidents will not be repeated in the near future. And for that, nobody else but the BJP's leaders, including Amit Shah, will be responsible.

The writer is a multilingual journalist and writer. He writes on issues related to politics, law, media, human rights and tweets @MahtabNama

Why does the 'rise' of Rajinikanth in TN politics make DMK, AIADMK see red?



T.S. Ramakrishnan

Rajinikanth registered his views on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) very firmly and insisted on the need for the National Population Register (NCR) recently. He also logically questioned how Muslims who remain an integral part of India even after Partition could lose their citizenship because of the CAA. It has been insisted by all the political parties at one or other point of time that India should send back illegal Muslim immigrants of Bangladesh who managed to enter India in the last 45 years and the very purpose of CAA and NPR is to achieve this objective. On expected lines, once Rajinikanth registered his views on CAA and NCR, the political leaders of DMK, Congress and other fringe parties expressed their displeasure and condemned the views of Rajinikanth. The media in TN would chew on Rajinikanth's observations in the next two weeks as if he wants to drive out minorities in India and especially in TN. This was the second consecutive assertion by Rajinikanth since January 2020. On the eve of *Thuglak* magazine's golden jubilee celebrations, Rajinikanth spoke about how by his reaction, the then CM of TN M. Karunanidhi gave enormous publicity to the then fledgling fortnightly Tamil magazine *Thuglak* and Cho Ramaswamy, the then editor of the magazine, for publishing a news item on the procession of Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) headed by E.V. Ramasamy (EVR) in January 1971, portraying obscene images of Lord Muruga, Lord Iyappa and Lord Ram. Instead of acting against the perpetrators of this heinous act, the then M. Karunanidhi government seized copies of *Thuglak* in February 1971, which gave enormous publicity to *Thuglak* and Mr Ramaswamy. What Rajinikanth told was the facts to the core and in fact he highlighted the way Mr Ramaswamy and *Thuglak* gained prominence in TN and nothing against EVR or Karunanidhi. The despicable portrayal of Hindu gods in the Salem procession was also covered in the *Indian Express*, *Dinamani* and the *Hindu*. However, the deputy

CM of TN, O. Panneerselvam, DMK chief M.K. Stalin, Puducherry CM V. Narayanasamy, TN minister D. Jayakumar, Vaiko, TN Congress president K.S. Alagiri and leaders of fringe parties reacted so sharply against Rajinikanth for just uttering the facts. Given this, one would expect that the reaction this time would be much more aggressive as Rajinikanth made his observations on the CAA and NCR. What is happening in TN? Why this outcry? Will the condemnation for Rajinikanth by political parties stop with these two incidents? Certainly not. Rajinikanth already announced that he will start his political party in 2020 and would contest in the TN Assembly elections in May 2021. Both AIADMK and DMK have been ruling TN, giving no space for any other party in the last 50 years. The Congress and Communist parties and other marginal players have been satisfied with the tibbits thrown at them by either AIADMK or DMK, when being part of the alliance. No political party, including the ones founded recently, have managed to become an alternative to AIADMK and DMK in the last 50 years. The Congress has decayed with hardly any presence and BJP has been unable to expand its limited presence. It is this background that gives enormous confidence to both AIADMK and DMK that they can remain dominant players in TN politics, despite not having a charismatic and effective leadership at the helm. If Rajinikanth forms a party and contests elections, it is not impossible for either AIADMK or DMK to win in the hustings, although he may pose a challenge to both. If anti-incumbency against the AIADMK government is a boon for DMK, AIADMK has strong cadre strength. DMK already hired Prashant Kishor, a brahmin election expert from Bihar to devise a strategy for the 2021 TN elections at a monthly payment of ₹15 crores and thereby achieved its long-cherished dream of ethnic cleansing of brahmins from TN. Moreover, both the parties and their cadres have mastered the art of bribing voters with a scientific approach in the previous election to get

Let the electorate decide whether Rajinikanth is an alternative to both AIADMK and DMK. Rajinikanth has been very firm first on his speech in Thuglak's function and then on his observations on CAA and NCR.

available before the electorate, one cannot pre-conclude that the electorate of TN will continue to choose either AIADMK or DMK giving a simple majority to either one of them because they are dominant today. The fact of the matter is that AIADMK and DMK formed a powerful lobby of media owners and personnel, owners of educational institutions, government employees, people who amassed wealth by exploiting natural resources illegally, some sections of lawyers and the judiciary and fringe elements who speak against the sovereignty of India. This lobby has been given liberal concessions by the powers-that-be and this powerful lobby has been reciprocating as much as possible to ensure that there is no third force emerging and becoming strong in TN, challenging either DMK or AIADMK. Rajinikanth has no choice other than to face unprecedented opposition not only from AIADMK and DMK but also from this lobby till the 2021 TN Assembly elections. Rajinikanth's speech, silence, action and inaction till the 2021 TN Assembly elections will be used to tarnish the image of Rajinikanth and assassinate his character. The DK has already made a police complaint against Rajinikanth and filed a petition in the Madras HC on the speech made by Rajinikanth in *Thuglak's* function, which was withdrawn to give the police more time to investigate and act against Rajinikanth. The *Indian Express*, *Dinamani* and the *Hindu* published news on the procession carried out by the DK under EVR in 1971 and the resolution passed therein and had to face a court case from one Chokkappa of DK who claimed that these newspapers defamed him and his party and hence action should be taken against them. Given the influence of DK and DMK in judiciary then and even now, the Madras HC accepted the case filed by Chokkappa and passed orders to that effect. It was only after the appeal in the Supreme Court by the three newspapers, the SC set aside the orders of Madras HC. When Annadurai was the CM of TN, a magazine published a news item that a lady, who gave birth to a girl child, mentioned in the hospital records that the child's father was the then public works department (PWD) minister. But the publisher had to face a defamation case in court by the then PWD minister and was sentenced to imprisonment. Rajinikanth may also have to face plenty of legal entanglement for whatever he says irrespective of whether it stands the scrutiny of law ultimately. Let the electorate decide whether Rajinikanth is an alternative to both AIADMK and DMK. Rajinikanth has been very firm first on his speech in *Thuglak's* function that he will not apologise and then on his observations on CAA and NCR. Rajinikanth proved since January 2020 that he has enormous mettle and tenacity to be in politics and that is the bad news for DMK and AIADMK.

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leader is about becoming a true human being. Leadership is a product of deep, ongoing self-analysis. We need dedication and perseverance to achieve anything. We do not need to act or pose. Our moral leadership and spiritual strength will flow from our words and actions and will reach the hearts of others as naturally and inevitably as a stream flows towards its source. **Sant Rajinder Singh Ji, head of Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission, works towards promoting inner and outer peace. He can be contacted at www.sos.org**

Leadership lessons for youngsters



Sant Rajinder Singh Ji

To be a leader requires knowing what to do, and why to do it. Enthusiasm, motivation, skill and knowing how to do things right is not enough. We have to know whether it is the right thing to do. For that, moral leadership is required. Leadership is about "who we are" and "what we do". Along with learning to act as a leader, we must possess the characteristics, behaviour and habits of mind and heart of true leaders. True leaders have the courage to confront the meaning of existence. They have the courage to live in a manner that offer meaning to others. By their example, they inspire hope in others that they too can become one of God's noble works. Such leadership transcends organisational leadership and also moral leadership. Many focus on the routines of life, such as waking up, getting dressed, eating, driving, working to earn a living, coming home and repeating the cycle the following day. They conclude that there is a higher power within that guides us. That inner spiritual power is the source of morals, virtues, power and life. It does not matter what name we call it — whether God, consciousness, soul — that power is within, enlivening each of us. Once we contact the eternal spiritual power, we connect with the source of the qualities

of true leaders. We automatically and effortlessly inculcate the virtues and characteristics associated with great leaders. The second aspect of leadership is service. Great moral leaders of history have said that service before self was the key to a full and rewarding life. Those who are spiritually aware see the same power enlivening all creation. A life of service is based on deep spiritual and moral principles that are understood and internalised when we contact the truth within. Intellectually understanding service does not provide the conviction we need when we are tested, as we most certainly will be, by people and circumstances. Becoming a true leader is about becoming a true human being. Leadership is a product of deep, ongoing self-analysis. We need dedication and perseverance to achieve anything. We do not need to act or pose. Our moral leadership and spiritual strength will flow from our words and actions and will reach the hearts of others as naturally and inevitably as a stream flows towards its source.



'It's the land of the scot free.'

Telangana United Front formed

By a staff reporter
HYDERABAD, Feb. 6. The formation of a new political group in the Legislature styled as "Telangana United Front", composed mainly of Congress Legislators subscribing to the views of separate Statehood for Telangana or an opinion poll to assess the views of the people of the region, was announced here today. Headed by the former Revenue Minister, Mr. V.B. Raju, the Front has as floor leader in the Assembly, Mr. N. Ramachandra Reddi and in the Council Mr. K. Ramachandra Reddi. The other office-bearers and executive will be announced in due course. Mr. Raju and Mr. N. Ramachandra Reddi, who announced the decision to form

50 YEARS AGO IN
DECCAN
Chronicle

the Front at a news conference this morning, said that a letter would be sent to the Speaker "in a day or two" seeking a separate bloc in the Opposition for the members. Their approach to the problems would be constructive and it was their earnest desire to work with all Opposition groups and parties in the Legislature in securing the democratic rights of the people of Telangana to put an end to all "anti-people's policies of the Government."



Rest in peace

Former Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi, who ruled the country with an iron fist between 1978 and 2002, will be honoured with a state funeral on February 11

IN BRIEF

Africa's last giant tusker dies at 50

Nairobi: One of Africa's last remaining giant "tusker" elephants has died in Kenya aged 50, the country's wildlife service (KWS) has said. Big Tim died in Mada area of Amboseli National Park from natural causes, KWS said in a statement on Wednesday. The celebrated elephant died early on Tuesday morning aged 50, the statement said. He was "a benevolent, slow-moving preserver of the peace at Amboseli," KWS said. "He was well known and loved throughout Kenya." Big Tim's carcass was found at the foot of the snowcapped peak of Kilimanjaro, the Amboseli Trust for Elephants said.

Weinstein groped me: Actress

New York: A woman testified at Harvey Weinstein's rape trial on Wednesday that the film producer trapped her in a hotel bathroom in 2013 and masturbated in front of her while groping her breasts, and told her: "This is what all the actresses do to make it." Lauren Young, a 30-year-old model and actress, is the last of six accusers scheduled to testify in a Manhattan courtroom against Weinstein, a once-powerful Hollywood figure. Young's claims are not part of the criminal charges against Weinstein. She is among three women whom prosecutors are calling to bolster their case against the former movie producer. Young is also one of two accusers in a sexual assault case brought against Weinstein in Los Angeles.

Bumblebees shift mode with load

Los Angeles: Researchers have shown for the first time how bumblebees, which are the heavy-lifters of the insect world, are able to alter their flight behaviour to bring almost their own bodyweight in nectar back to their hives. According to the study, published in the journal Science Advances, bumblebees have two different ways to cope with increasing loads. In one flight mode, the bees increase flight amplitude, which is how far they flap their wings, and they also flap more frequently, generating greater lift, but consuming more energy, the study noted.

BASMATI RICE GENOME SEQUENCED

New York, Feb 6: Scientists have mapped the complete genome of two basmati rice varieties, including one that is drought-tolerant and resistant to bacterial disease. The findings, published in the journal Genome Biology, also show that basmati rice is a hybrid of two other rice groups. Basmati derived from the Hindi word for "fragrant" is a type of aromatic long-grain rice grown in southern Asia. Despite the economic and cultural importance of basmati and related aromatic rice varieties, their evolutionary history is not fully understood, the researchers said. "Rice is one of the most important staple crops worldwide, and the varieties in the basmati group are some of the most iconic and prized rice varieties. However, until recently, a high-quality reference genome for basmati rice did not exist," said Jae Young Choi, a postdoctoral scholar at New York University (NYU) in the US.

565 dead, 28K cases confirmed

WHO says \$676 million needed in three months to fight deadly coronavirus

Beijing, Feb. 6: The toll in China's novel coronavirus outbreak went up to 563 as 73 people died on Wednesday, the highest one-day fatalities so far, while total confirmed cases rose sharply to 28,018. Chinese health officials said on Thursday. Another 5,328 new suspected cases were reported on Wednesday of which 2,987 are in Hubei. Also on Wednesday, 640 patients became seriously ill and 3,859 remained in severe condition, the commission said.

Money to fight virus The World Health Organisation (WHO) said, "The plan is to stop further transmission of 2019-nCoV within China and to other countries, and to mitigate impact of the outbreak. The total estimated resources required to be mobilised by the international community to implement priority public health measures for countries to respond is \$675.5 million. The resource requirement for WHO is \$61.5 million. The response requirement period is three months, from February 1 to April 30, 2020." — Agencies

THE KREMLIN said Thursday it has begun checking the body temperature of officials and reporters attending events involving President Vladimir Putin due to coronavirus fears. "This is a precautionary measure," presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state news agency RIA Novosti after journalists underwent checks at the Kremlin on Thursday afternoon. "There is a new screening procedure in the Kremlin now — someone holding a thermal camera to take your temperature," Anton Zhelnov, a journalist with the independent channel TV Rain, said on Facebook.



A medical worker in a protective suit walks by as patients diagnosed with the coronavirus, at a temporary hospital that was transformed from an exhibition centre in Wuhan of central China's Hubei province. — AP

30-hour-old newborn youngest to be infected

Wuhan, Feb. 6: Two newborn babies in Wuhan, China, have been infected with the novel coronavirus, according to China's state broadcaster CCTV. The youngest baby was diagnosed at just 30 hours old. The baby's mother was also infected with the virus, and CCTV suggested that "there may be mother-infant transmission," where the mother passes the virus on to the baby in utero. Without more details, it's impossible to know if the infants were infected

in the womb. There are other ways they could have been exposed — through handling by healthcare workers, mothers coughing, breastfeeding or even in the delivery process. "Was this just contact? Did baby get infected because, you know, mucous membranes were exposed to some virus that the mother was excreting or was it blood borne through the placenta? We have no idea," said Susan McLellan, a director at the University of Texas Medical Branch. Paul Hunter, a

medical professor at Britain's University of East Anglia, said that a baby born vaginally is exposed to the mother's gut microbiome — meaning "if a baby does get infected with coronavirus a few days after birth we currently cannot tell if the baby was infected in the womb or during birth". Nancy Messonnier, a director at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, warned that "there is a lot about the novel coronavirus that we don't know." — Agencies

SAUDI BARS CHINA TRAVEL

Dubai, Feb. 6: Saudi Arabia on Thursday barred its citizens and residents of the kingdom from travelling to China amid the new virus outbreak. The kingdom's General Directorate of Passports said the measure was in response to the new virus believed to have stemmed from central China. It warned that any resident of the kingdom who violate this order will not be allowed to return to Saudi Arabia. It also said that regulatory provisions on travel documents would be applied to citizens who violate the travel ban, without further elaboration. — AP

China protests over suspension of flights

Beijing, Feb. 6: China said on Thursday that it has lodged diplomatic protests with countries whose airlines have cancelled flights to Chinese cities alleging that they are spreading panic in the wake of deadly coronavirus. It has spread to more than 25 countries. Several international airlines have cancelled flights to China over fears of the virus spreading across the world, a move which Beijing described against the WHO guidelines. Several countries have also announced travel bans. Foreign Ministry spoke-

person Hua Chunying said, "We deplore and oppose those countries who went against WHO's professional recommendations and have lodged stern representations with them. Their actions, which sowed panic among the public, will not help prevent and control the epidemic," she said. "We hope all countries can assess the epidemic situation and China's efforts in a calm, objective and rational manner and do not overreact," the spokesperson added. — PTI

Storms pummel NSW, Queensland



A powerful cyclone batters the Australian coast.

Canberra, Feb. 6: Heavy rain is pouring on parts of Australia which have been ravaged by wildfires over the last few months, offering a brief respite from the fire season. The Bureau of Meteorology has issued flood alerts for more than 20 areas in New South Wales (NSW), with rainfall expected to last several days. The deluge, described by Sky News' weather chief Tom Saunders as "the heaviest rain in years" has helped to douse some of

the country's most damaging blazes. "There's going to be a huge amount of rain," he said. "It's enough to extinguish some of the larger bushfires but not enough to fill up the dams, considering how dry the catchment has been." More than 11.7 million hectares of land have been burned since September, in fires which have killed 33 people and an estimated 1 billion animals, and destroyed more than 2,500 homes. — Agencies

Turkey avalanche wipes out rescue team, toll 41

Istanbul, Feb. 6: The death toll from two avalanches in eastern Turkey rose to 41 on Thursday, the government's disaster management agency said, as rescue teams continued a difficult search for two missing people. Five were killed in the first avalanche in Van province bordering Iran on Tuesday, only for rescuers to be hit by a second avalanche the following day. Three more bodies were recovered Thursday, the DHA news agency said, with the AFAD disaster agency saying a total of 84 people had been injured in the twin avalanches.

Rescue efforts continued despite adverse weather conditions that caused transport problems. Authorities have banned civilian access to the scene, DHA reported. Last month, the eastern province of Elazig was hit by a powerful 6.7-magnitude earthquake that killed 41 people and injured more than 1,600 others. A 2009 avalanche in the northeastern province of Gumushane killed 11 climbers in the Zigana mountains. — AFP



Rescue members and firefighters at the wreckage of a plane after it skidded off the runway at Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen Airport. — AP

PLANE SKIDS OFF ISTANBUL RUNWAY, KILLS THREE

Istanbul, Feb. 6: Three people died and 179 were hurt when a plane skidded off the runway at an Istanbul airport, caught fire and split into three after landing in rough weather. Live images broadcast on Turkish television showed several people climbing through a large crack in the severed aircraft and

escaping onto one of the wings at the rear. The Boeing 737 operated by Turkish low-cost carrier Pegasus Airlines, caught fire and split into three after landing in rough weather. The plane was apparently buffeted by strong

winds and heavy rain lashing Istanbul. Three Turks were killed and 179 injured, Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said. Istanbul governor Ali Yerlikaya said the plane "slid some 60 metres" after skidding off the runway, and then "fell about 30-40 metres" down a bank. — AFP

2 PILOTS FACE PROBE OVER NEGLIGENCE

Istanbul, Feb. 6: Turkey will investigate two pilots for possible negligence after Boeing 737, operated by Turkish low-cost carrier Pegasus Airlines, skidded off an Istanbul runway killing three passengers, state media reported Thursday.

Istanbul's prosecutor will probe the pilots on suspicion of causing death and injury through negligence, the TRT broadcaster reported. The pilots are among those in hospital and will give statements to police after their treatment is complete, the channel added. Pegasus CEO Mehmet Tefvik Nane said the aircraft's black box was being examined for clues to the cause of the crash. "Such accidents occur not because of one factor but many factors," he said. The airline's planes were relatively new, with an average age of 5.3 years, and that "their technical reliability is very high", Nane added. — AFP

FEMME | FEAT Shatters spaceflight record for women with a stay of almost 11 months aboard the International Space Station

Astronaut Christina Koch back on Earth after 328 days in space



NASA astronaut Christina Koch is helped out of the Russian Soyuz MS-13 space capsule about 150 km south-east of Zhezkazgan, Kazakhstan, on Thursday. — AP

Almaty (Kazakhstan), Feb. 6: NASA's Christina Koch returned to Earth safely on Thursday after shattering the spaceflight record for female astronauts with a stay of almost 11 months aboard the International Space Station. Koch touched down at 0912 GMT on the Kazakh steppe after 328 days in space, along with Luca Parmitano of the European Space Agency and Alexander Skvortsov of the Russian space agency. Koch was shown seated and smiling broadly after being extracted from the Soyuz descent module in the Roscosmos space agency's video footage from the landing site. "I am so overwhelmed and happy right now," said

Koch, who blasted off on March 14 last year. Parmitano pumped his fists in the air after being lifted into his chair while Skvortsov was shown eating an apple. Local Kazakhs on horseback were among those to witness the capsule landing in the snow-covered steppe as support crews gathered around the three astronauts, NASA commentator Rob Navias said. "I've never seen this," Navias exclaimed, reporting that the men stopped to chat with engineering personnel. Koch, a 41-year-old Michigan-born engineer, on December 28 last year beat the previous record for a single spaceflight by a woman of 289 days, set by NASA veteran Peggy Whits-

■ KOCH BEAT the previous record for a single spaceflight by a woman of 289 days, set by NASA veteran Peggy Whitson in 2016-17. ■ SHE MADE history as one half of the first-ever all-woman spacewalk along with NASA counterpart Jessica Meir — her classmate from NASA training — in October last year.

on in 2016-17. Koch called three-time flyer Whitson, now 60, "a heroine of mine" and a "mentor" in the space programme after she surpassed the record. She also spoke of her desire to "inspire the next generation of explorers". Koch also made history as one half of the first-ever all-woman spacewalk along with NASA counterpart Je-

ssica Meir — her classmate from NASA training — in October last year. The spacewalk was initially postponed because the space station did not have two suits of the right size for women, leading to allegations of sexism. Ahead of the three-and-a-half hour journey back to Earth, Koch told NBC on Tuesday that she would "miss microgravity". "It's really fun to be in a place where you can just bounce around between the ceiling and the floor whenever you want," she said, smiling as she twisted her body around the ISS. She will now head to NASA headquarters in Houston, via the Kazakh city of Karaganda and Cologne in Germany, where she will undergo medical tests. Koch's medical data will be especially valuable to NASA scientists as the agency draws up plans for a long-duration manned mission to Mars. Her return comes after an advert for a skincare brand ran during an intermission in the American football Super Bowl with a call to "make space for women". — AFP

China set
to cut
tariffs on
\$75 bn
US importsCar companies put
on a brave face

Overleaf

quick
BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	41306.03 0.40
Nifty 50	12138.00 0.40
S&P 500*	3,345.49 0.32
Dollar (₹)	71.22 -0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.49 -0.71
Euro (₹)	78.54 -0.26
Gold (10gm) (₹)	41,019.150 0.36
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.04 -0.24
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.446 -0.059
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.661 0.012

* As of 9:30 pm IST

Cognizant net
dips 39%;
D'Souza to exit

Cognizant posted a 39% fall in net profit at \$395 mn for the December quarter over factors like restructuring charges and said it expects topline in 2020 to grow by 2-4%. It said co-founder and vice-chairman Francisco D'Souza will leave the board from March 31. Vinita Bali, ex-CEO of Britannia Inds has been appointed as a new independent director.

Rice exports hit
8-year low over
price increase

India's rice exports in 2019 fell 18.1% from a year ago to their lowest in eight years, as demand moderated from key Asian and African buyers due to higher prices. Exports stood at 9.87 million tonnes in 2019, the lowest since 2011, and down from 12.05 mt in 2018, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Instant e-PAN on
Aadhaar proof
from this month

The government this month will roll out a facility to issue online PAN cards instantly on furnishing Aadhaar details, revenue secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey has said. The budget has proposed a new system under which PAN shall be instantly allotted online on the basis of Aadhaar without filling up the detailed application form as an easy process of PAN allotment.

Sun Pharma Q3
net profit falls
27% to ₹914 cr

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries reported a 26.43% decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 913.52 crore for the December quarter against Rs 1,241.85 crore in the year-ago quarter. Consolidated income from operations stood at Rs 8,038.65 crore against Rs 7,656.71 crore. The board has declared an interim dividend of Rs 3 per equity share of Re 1 each, Sun Pharma said.

Printed & Published by T Venkateswaru on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press at Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. #563/9/D&9/E, Behind Andhra Bank Pet Basheerbagh, Kompally, Ranga Reddy Dist. Editor: T.Venkateswaru, RNI Reg No.APENG/2008/24282. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle is prohibited.

Cash reserve ratio cut for home, auto & MSME loans

Policy measures to
drive credit growthFALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

In a bid to lower interest rates for housing, auto, and micro small and medium enterprise (MSME) loans and push bank credit growth, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Thursday relaxed the requirements for banks to maintain the cash reserve ratio for these loans. The special dispensation will be for all bank credit to these sectors for a period of six months — between January 31 and July 31.

The central bank also extended External Benchmark Based Lending for better interest rate transmission to medium-sized enterprises. In September 2019, the RBI had mandated that banks would link all new floating rate personal or retail loans and floating rate loans to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) to an external benchmark effective October 1, 2019. Subsequently, most banks linked lending rates for housing, personal and

MSEs to RBI's repo rate. According to RBI, in the October-December 2019 quarter, the weighted average lending rate of domestic banks on fresh loans declined by 18 basis points for housing loans, 87 bps for vehicle loans and 23 bps for loans to MSMEs. Consequently, RBI has announced that beginning April 1, 2020, pricing of bank loans to the medium enterprises would also be linked to an external benchmark to further strengthen monetary transmission and reduce the borrowing costs of these enterprises.

Reflecting its concerns on the financial sector, the RBI announced multiple measures to improve monetary policy transmission and boost credit growth such as infusion of long-term liquidity. The RBI announced a new ECB-style long-term repo operations (LTRO) facility to give banks long-term liquidity by conducting term repos of one-year and three-year tenors of up to Rs 1 lakh crore at the policy

	Reverse Repo Rate	Repo Rate
2018		
Feb 7	5.75	6.00
Apr 5	5.75	6.00
Jun 6	6.00	6.25
Aug 1	6.25	6.50
Sept 5	6.25	6.50
Dec 5	6.25	6.50
Feb 7	6.00	6.25
2019		
April 4	5.75	6.00
June 6	5.50	5.75
Aug 7	5.15	5.40
Oct 4	4.90	5.15
Dec 5	4.90	5.15
Feb 6	4.90	5.15

rate. This will enable banks to fund at the repo rate at 5.15 per cent, below the existing deposit rates. The central bank revamped the liquidity framework by dismantling quantitative ceilings for liquidity operations at the weighted average call rate versus one per cent of net demand and time liabilities; increasing scope to conduct longer-term variable rate repo/reverse repo operations exceeding 14

days and improving communications and transparency on liquidity operations.

The RBI eased guidelines on project loans to the commercial real estate sector by allowing a one-year extension on the date of commencement of project loans that have been delayed for reasons beyond the control of promoters, without attracting a downgrade of asset classification. This brings them in line with other project loans in non-infrastructure space. The RBI will also be reviewing the regulations for housing finance companies, where it has recently taken over their supervision from the National Housing Bank.

The RBI extended the cut-off date for the one-time debt restructuring scheme for MSMEs which is meant for loans that were in default but "standard" as of January 1, 2019. This would help speed up monetary transmission, improve credit flow and help address the NPA problem to an extent.

Financial sector stocks rally

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

Shares of housing finance companies (HFCs), non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and public sector banks (PSBs) were major gainers after the Reserve Bank of India announced measures to boost liquidity to cash-starved sectors by providing Rs 1 lakh crore additional liquidity and also took additional measures to ease their financial distress.

The gainers among the HFCs and NBFCs on the BSE included Indiabulls Housing Finance (15 per cent), Piramal Enterprises

(7.60 per cent), LIC Housing Finance (8.17 per cent), Shriram Transport Finance (7.66 per cent), PNB Housing Finance (4.91 per cent), Can Fin Homes (2.12 per cent), GIC Housing Finance (1.61 per cent), Dewan Housing Finance (5 per cent).

The PSBs also gained with Nifty PSU Bank Index closing up by 2.83 per cent. The top gainers on the NSE included SBI (3.23 per cent), Bank of Baroda (3.86 per cent), PNB (2.99 per cent), Canara Bank (2.77 per cent), UCO Bank (4.64 per cent) and Central Bank of India (1.68 per cent). Sandeep Agarwal, head -

Real Estate Finance, Centrum Financial Services said, "RBI has given a window to lenders including Banks & NBFCs to not classify projects or developers as having delayed / defaulted, if the reasons for delay in providing Occupancy Certificate to buyers are beyond the control of the promoters." The RBI would later announce the qualifying criteria for this policy.

S Ranganathan, head of research at LKP Securities, said, "The one-year extension for loans to commercial real estate benefits several NBFC and HFCs."

Inflation worries RBI

FC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said that the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will "persevere with the accommodative stance as long as necessary to revive growth" and that it "recognises that there is policy space available for future action".

The central bank has revised higher its headline retail inflation (consumer price index) projection by nearly two percentage points to 6.5 per cent y-o-y in Q1 2020 (versus 4.7 per cent previously) and 5.4-5.5 per cent in Q2-Q3 2020 (versus four to 3.8 per cent previously).

However, it sees inflation trending lower through the year with inflation set to decline below its four per cent target to 3.2 per cent in Q4 2020, with risks broadly

balanced. The Reserve Bank of India cited the inflation outlook as "highly uncertain".

Even though vegetable prices are likely to decline, it flagged upside pressures from the broader food basket, particularly milk, pulses and other protein food items.

It has also sounded cautious on supply-side shocks on core inflation from higher telecom charges, pharmaceutical prices and the impact of new emission norms, and stated that it remains vigilant on these pressures to become generalised.

However, households' one-year ahead inflation expectations eased by 70 basis points after a sharp rise in the previous survey.

On growth, the Reserve Bank of India believes GDP growth has troughed and will pick up sequentially

from 4.5 per cent y-o-y in Q3 2019 to 4.9 per cent in Q4, 5.5 per cent in Q1 2020, 5.5-6 per cent in Q2-Q3 2020 (versus 5.9-6.3 per cent previously) and 6.2 per cent by Q4 2020.

For FY21, the RBI expects GDP growth to pick up to six per cent y-o-y from five per cent in FY20, led by a recovery in private consumption (particularly in the rural economy), easing global trade tensions, improved policy transmission and measures announced in the budget.

Despite pencilling in a recovery, the RBI sounded worried on growth, stating that "economic activity remains subdued and the few indicators that have moved up recently are yet to gain traction in a more broad-based manner".

Economists now expect the Monetary Policy Committee to cut rates in the second quarter.

Realtors happy
with relief, but
wanted rate cutSANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 6

The Reserve Bank provided some relief to the realty sector by extending asset downgrade of commercial project loans by a year and allowing scheduled commercial banks to provide incremental credit to the residential sector. However, the sector finds that the decision to keep repo rates unchanged will not address its biggest issue—low consumer demand.

"It has been decided to permit extension of date of commencement of commercial operations (DCCO) of project loans for commercial real estate, delayed for reasons beyond the control of promoters, by another one year without downgrading the asset classification," the RBI said. This is in line with treatment accorded to other project loans for non-infrastructure sector and would complement the initiatives taken by the government in the real estate sector; the central bank said.

The industry welcomed the move. "This is a big move and will bring the much-needed relief to the cash-starved real estate sector - and to both developers and the housing finance companies from the liquidity perspective. It will help ease out the time for maintaining and managing cash flows for cash-strapped developers and help them to completing several stuck projects," said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Property Consultants.

According to Jaxay Shah, chairman, Credai National, RBI's decision to permit extension of date for commercial projects stuck for reasons beyond control of the developers under institutional debt will be instrumental in bringing much-needed relief to developers.



Recognising the real estate sector as a productive sector having multiplier effects to support impulses of growth, the RBI allowed scheduled commercial banks to deduct the equivalent of incremental credit disbursed by them as retail loans for automobiles, residential housing and loans to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), over and above the outstanding level of credit to these segments as at the end of the fortnight ended January 31, 2020 from their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) for maintenance of cash reserve ratio (CRR). This exemption will be available for incremental credit extended up to the fortnight ending July 31, 2020.

"With the lower provisioning requirement for retail loans extended to the housing segment, we hope that the new measure will translate into lower cost of loans for home buyers as well," said Shishir Bajaj, chairman and managing director, Knight Frank.

However, the sector has been looking forward for rate reduction and better transmission of rates to push demand at the consumer level.

"After a no-show Budget, the real estate sector was keenly looking towards the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for providing some lending rate concessions to boost demand," said Rajan Bandelkar, president, Nardeco Maharashtra.

India Inc welcomes
RBI growth booster

New Delhi, Feb. 6: India Inc on Thursday welcomed the measures announced by the RBI to boost growth and improve liquidity, but called for slashing the policy rate, which was kept unchanged for the second time in a row.

The repo rate — at which the RBI lends short term money to banks — was kept unchanged at 5.15 per cent at the central bank's last bi-monthly monetary policy announcement for 2019-20 on rising inflationary concerns.

In a major decision for effective transmission of monetary policy, RBI said it will conduct long-term repo operations aggregating up to Rs 1 lakh crore from February 15 by allowing one- and three-

year repos to banks. Currently, the lenders can access only short term repos, such as for overnight tenor.

"RBI's decision to hold on to the policy rate comes on the back of inflation moving beyond the central bank's comfort zone. While the outlook for inflation remains uncertain, FICCI is of the view that this is largely a supply side phenomenon," the chamber said.

As growth in the industrial sector and the economy is still not on a firm footing, greater support from the central bank by way of a cut in the policy rate by 15-25 basis points would have been timely, FICCI chief Sangita Reddy said. — PTI

Banks can borrow at lower rate

FC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

In an attempt to infuse liquidity in the banking system, the Reserve Bank of India on Thursday said it would conduct Long-Term Repo Operations (LTRO) under which it would offer funds to banks at the repo rate (at 5.15 per cent) and also announced a revised liquidity management framework.

These measures would allow banks to borrow at a considerably lower rate from the Reserve Bank of India and lend the money

to sectors like auto, housing and MSMEs at a higher rate.

This measure would increase profitability of the banks, whose finances are in doldrums, and is akin to the support extended by US Federal Reserve to American banks after the 2008 subprime crisis.

According to State Bank of India chairman Rajnish Kumar, "The RBI policy is a statement of intent carefully using a repository of policy novelties to address the current delicate balance of growth

and inflation. The decision to allow Long-Term Repo Operations for one year and three year for total amount of ₹1 lakh crore at repo rate will bring down the cost of funds for banks and will facilitate better transmission within the current constraints of downward rigidity of deposit rates."

"Exemption of CRR maintenance for all additional loans given for retail loans for automobiles, residential housing, and loans to MSMEs is positive for banks, auto sector, residential housing

and MSMEs will also help to lower the cost of funds. Extension of date of commencement of commercial operations (DCCO) of project loans for commercial real estate by another one year without downgrading the asset classification will allow the real estate sector to focus on project completion. Extending the date of restructuring of MSME advances will also help the sector to navigate the current business downturn and is a logical corollary of budget announcement" added Mr Kumar.



Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das, flanked by his deputies, arrives for RBI's sixth bi-monthly monetary policy review meeting of 2019-2020, in Mumbai on Thursday — PTI

6

Long-term repos for 1-year and 3-year at the repo rate, will bring down cost of funds for banks and will facilitate better transmission within the current constraints of downward rigidity of deposit rates

— Rajnish Kumar,
chairman, SBI

The tone of the MPC's statement was rather dovish, especially given the reiteration that policy space is available for future action. The accommodative stance will be maintained for as long as necessary to revive growth

— Aditi Nayar,
economist, Ica

Notwithstanding unchanged policy rates, introduction of Term Repo opens up ways to transmit the signal rate changes

— A.K. Das,
MD&CEO, Bank of India

Given the expected inflation trajectory, we do believe there is room for one residual rate cut, possibly in the August policy. While inflation is likely to remain elevated until Q2FY21, the room for easing will open up only at the beginning of Q3

— Anagha Deodhar,
economist, ICICI
Securities

The changes in development and regulatory policies were a positive surprise and could potentially turn out to be a big support to the troubled sectors in the economy.

— Rajni Thakur,
economist, RBL Bank

The RBI's decision is not surprising as the economy is showing classic signs of stagflation. Sharply higher inflation has come in the way of RBI playing the rate-cut card, even as economic weakness persists.

— Kunal Kundu,
India economist,
Societe Generale

Core CPI inflation is still soft at the sub-4% zone. Pricing power for several industrial commodities remains modest, as reflected in the WPI inflation reading of 2.6% YoY in December. Overall, the recovery in economic activity will likely be only gradual, suggests a host of lead indicators

— Siddhartha Sanyal,
chief economist,
Bandhan Bank

At this juncture, rate modification is not required as the interbank market has a huge surplus of close ₹3 tn (\$42.08 bn) to support the liquidity requirements of the system, and this alone will ensure that the short-term rates do not move up

— Joseph Thomas,
head of research,
Emkay Wealth
Management

Toyota logs nine-month profit gain

Tokyo, Feb. 6: Toyota on Thursday reported a surge in net profit on record sales for the nine months to December, and upgraded its full-year profit forecasts.

But the maker of the Camry sedan and Prius hybrid warned it was closely watching the impact of the new coronavirus in China, where the firm has suspended operations at more than 10 plants.

Toyota said net profit for April-December surged 41.4 percent on-year to 2.0 trillion yen (\$18 billion) with sales up 1.6 percent at 22.8 trillion yen, the highest ever for the period. The profit jump was mainly due to strong revenue, cost-cutting efforts and gains in shares it holds.

By region, sales in North America — its cash cow — as well as Japan and Europe increased for the nine months but those in Asia declined. The company revised upward its full-year profit forecast, now projecting a net profit of 2.35 trillion yen for the fiscal year to March, compared with its earlier estimate of 2.15 trillion yen, thanks to foreign exchange gains.

—AFP

Volvo Cars creates new sales record

Stockholm, Feb. 6: Chinese-owned Swedish auto maker Volvo Cars said Thursday it sold a record number of cars in 2019 and expected continued growth in 2020 despite concerns over the new coronavirus.

For the sixth consecutive year the company broke its sales record. "I am very pleased to see that for the first time in our history we sold more than 700,000 cars," CEO Hakan Samuelsson said. Sales increased in all of its three main markets, going up 7.0 percent in Europe, 10.1 percent in the US and 18.7 percent in China.

Revenue for the year rose 8.5 percent to 274 billion Swedish kronor. The car maker, which is owned by China's Geely, reported a net profit of 7.1 billion kronor (\$740 million, 673 million euros), up from 6.8 billion kronor the previous year.

Volvo Cars did not give an expected sales figure for 2020, only saying it expected "continued growth in sales and revenue."

—AFP

ArcelorMittal posts net loss of \$1.9 bn

New Delhi, Feb. 6: ArcelorMittal on Thursday reported a net loss of \$1.9 billion for the quarter ended December, with the company calling 2019 a "very tough year".

The world's largest steel maker had posted a net income of \$1.2 billion in the year-ago quarter, the company said in a statement.

The company reported a "net loss attributable to equity holders of the parent" of \$1.9 billion in the fourth quarter.

ArcelorMittal follows January to December fiscal year. For the whole year, it reported a net loss of \$2.5 billion as against net income of \$5.1 billion in 2018.

Revenue in 2019 was at \$70.6 billion as compared with \$76 billion in the previous year. Its crude steel production stood at 89.8 mmt, while iron ore production was at 57.1 mmt. Chairman Lakshmi Mittal said, "2019 was a very tough year, clearly reflected in our significantly reduced profitability. However, our cash generation remained strong helping to reduce net debt to the lowest ever level."

—PTI

Car cos put on a brave face

The motor show is now open for general public till February 12

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, FEB 6

The second day of the 15th edition of the Auto Expo, India's biggest motor show at Greater Noida, continued with its somber mood with plummeting sales in a slowing economy hitting the industry hard even as automakers tried to put up a brave face with launches and unveils of cars and two-wheelers to drum up excitement and buzz in the market.

Market leader Maruti Suzuki, which will not introduce its electric car in the near future on Thursday unveiled the all new powerful and stylish Vitara Brezza BS6 Petrol compact SUV. The latest version offers an enhanced sportiness, bolder looks, stronger stance, and premium interiors and comfort.

Launched in 2016, the Vitara Brezza became an instant hit as it took the market by storm, emerging as the most awarded compact SUV. Its dominance over the segment is evident from the fact that in less than four years of its launch the Vitara Brezza has sold over five lakh units.

The car is powered by the 1.5-litre petrol engine, which replaced the 1.3-litre diesel as part of Maruti's larger plan to withdraw diesels from its line-up by April 1, 2020.

The carmaker will launch and announce prices for the refreshed Vitara Brezza in a couple of weeks. Variants with the 5-speed manual are rated at 17 kmpl while the automatic, with the mild-hybrid tech, has an ARAI rated 18.76 kmpl.

Mercedes-Benz, India's biggest luxury car maker, launched its V-Class Marco Polo, the latest luxury MPV range. The Marco Polo has been priced at ₹1.38 crore at pan-India showroom, which means it sits at the top of the V-Class range, even above the V-Class Elite variant priced at ₹1.10 crore.

The two variants of the V-Class Marco Polo are the Marco Polo Horizon and the Marco Polo, priced at ₹1.38 crore and ₹1.46 crore respectively. "The V-Class and V-Class Elite pioneered the luxury MPV segment in India and has witnessed much success ever since their launch," Martin Schwenk, MD and CEO at Mercedes-Benz India, said.

He said Mercedes was now expanding this segment with the launch of the Marco Polo, based on the V-Class. "It create a new benchmark in the luxury MPV segment and the compact dimensions of the Marco Polo and vehicle technology inherited from the V-Class, the Marco Polo and Marco Polo Horizon are suitable for long journeys and at the same time for day-to-day and urban usage," Schwenk boasted.

The Marco Polo combines functionality with utmost luxury, unparalleled comfort, convenience, and uncompromised safety. Mercedes-Benz also unveiled the future of mobility the unique Volocopter, which aims to offer affordable on-demand air taxi services and save people time by flying them safely to their destination.

At present, the company is striving for commercial certification through the European Aviation Safety Authority and expects to open the first commercial routes within two to four years.

Korean brand Hyundai, India's second biggest car maker, took off the covers of the India-specific, second-generation Creta SUV on Thursday. Revealed as the new-generation ix25 in China last year, the new



Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan poses in front of the all new Creta SUV



A model poses for photographs with the newly launched Piaggio SXR 160 two-wheeler and the Vespa refresh at the Auto Expo 2020, in Greater Noida on Thursday



Two men standing next to a Suzuki motorcycle.



Aprilia SXR 160 unveiled

Greater Noida, Feb. 6: Italian two-wheeler maker Piaggio on Thursday unveiled its premium scooter Aprilia SXR 160, which has been designed specifically for Indian conditions.

Aprilia SXR 160 will be launched in the third quarter of 2020 and booking would commence in August.

Piaggio, which is also working on India-specific futuristic electric mobility solutions, has also h o w -

cased the European version of Vespa Elettrica at the Auto Expo here.

Stating that electric mobility will grow at a fast pace in the country, Piaggio Vehicles India Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Diego Graffi said, "India continues to remain a strategic market for us".

"In the past few years, we have seen the changing preferences in Indian consumers. Aligned to these changes, we are proud to

Creta not only comes with revamped exterior and interiors but will also come with a new BS6-compliant engine line-up.

Hyundai will reveal the Creta's interior and more details closer to its launch in mid-March 2020. It is likely to be priced in the ₹10-16 lakh range.

The original Creta not only defined what a mid-size SUV ought to be but also dominated the segment for much of its life. This all-new Creta will take the legacy of Hyundai brand forward.

Volkswagen is in the

midst of a massive transition towards electrification globally. At the Auto Expo 2020, the German brand gave a glimpse of what is to come with the I.D. Crozz electric SUV concept, the production version of which Volkswagen intends to launch in India by 2021.

The I.D. Crozz employs an 83kWh lithium-ion battery, which powers a 102hp/140Nm electric motor at the front, and a 204hp/310Nm electric motor at the rear, resulting in a combined output of 306hp and 450Nm of torque. Volkswagen said the I.D. Crozz has a range of

over 500km with top speed limited to 180kph.

First shown at the 2017 Shanghai motor show, the I.D. Crozz concept has evolved and the final product due for reveal in April 2020 could see more changes. The concept's coupé-like roofline will likely make way for a traditional roof, while the rear sliding doors will be replaced by a conventional hinged arrangement.

Volkswagen said the I.D. Crozz combines the design of a sports car with the off-road capability of an SUV. China's Great Wall Motor,

which debuted at Auto Expo 2020 has made quite a statement with a slew of Haval SUVs at its stand. But it is not just the SUVs that are attracting attention but also the interesting ORA R1 EV. The Chinese carmaker has also made an investment of \$1 billion or about ₹7,123 crore in its India project.

Internationally, the R1 is sold as part of Great Wall's 'ORA' EV sub-brand (which stands for Open, Reliable and Alternative). The R1 electric car is based on the company's ME pure-electric platform. What will be a major draw for the R1 is its affordability. In China, prices for the R1 start as low as CNY 59,800 or ₹6.15 lakh. It remains to be seen how Great Wall Motor proposes to make the R1 as affordable in the Indian market, though the Chinese carmaker has already announced it will take over General Motors' plant in Talegaon for its India operations.

Great Wall Motor has confirmed that it will launch the Haval brand in our market in 2021, followed by their sub-brand for electric cars - GWM EV.

The motor show would be throw open for public tomorrow for the next six days till Feb. 12.

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Budget proposals to impact growth of life insurers

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

The government's move to withdraw dividend distribution tax (DDT) and transfer the tax liability of dividend income to investors will impact the margins and the valuations of life insurance companies.

According to analysts, the net impact of the change will range from 50 basis to 200 basis points on the margins and upto 5 per cent on the valuations. Another blow to life insurers will also come from withdrawal of Section 80C deduction for assesses that opt for the new tax regime.

The Union Budget introduced a new optional personal tax regime and removed dividend distribution tax. These changes are likely to impact both demand and margins for life insurance products.

Analysts have cut the individual new business growth assumptions for FY21 estimates and valuations of life insurers.

Insurers till now enjoyed tax benefit on dividend income received on investments, and thus their effective tax rate was lower than the corporate tax rate. The Budget abolished the DDT and makes dividend taxable in the hands of the recipient. However, this will partly be offset by new section 80 M which allows insurers to take the benefit of dividend on investments received by them (up to the extent of dividend distributed by them to their shareholders).

Jefferies India in its report said, "As per HDFC Life, the net impact of the (DDT) change will be around 80 basis points on the value of the new business margins and around one per cent on the embedded value. As per Max Life, they will have around one to 1.5 per cent impact on embedded value

and around 50-80 basis points margin impact. The impact for ICICI Prudential could be slightly more given its higher mix of ULIPs. SBI Life reports numbers in both methods (without using Section 80M benefit through), where margin difference in 200 basis points and the embedded value impact is 5 per cent between two methods (numbers are provisional, exact numbers will be reported in 4Q)."

Madhukar Ladha, Analyst, HDFC Securities said, "Our calculations suggest that individuals with income in the range of ₹7 to 15 lakh will have lower propensity to invest as the tax savings on incremental investment is in the range of around 19-30 per cent. Additionally, individuals within this lower income range may prefer a higher disposable income as against higher tax savings. We expect individuals earning higher than ₹15 lakh to continue to prefer using deductions/exemptions as tax reduction on incremental savings is 43.2 per cent (for income of Rs 22 lakh). While it is difficult to quantify the impact of this on demand we have cut our FY21E APE estimate between 1.7-5.8 per cent for all companies."

On abolishing of DDT, Ladha said, "While the Budget abolishes DDT and makes dividend taxable in the hands of the recipient, it allows for deduction of dividend paid by the company to its shareholders thus providing some relief to companies. Our calculations suggest that this move reduces FY21 estimated value of new business margins of insurers by upto 70 basis points. We expect HDFC LIFE's margin to be most impacted by 70 basis points, while MAX Life's margins are not likely to get impacted at all."

China set to cut tariffs on \$75 bn in US imports

Beijing, Feb. 6: China on Thursday said it will halve punitive tariffs on \$75 billion in US imports from February 14, a month after Beijing and Washington signed a truce in their long-running trade war.

The reduction will apply to levies of five per cent and 10 per cent that were imposed on more than 1,700 items in September, according to the State Council Tariff Commission.

Products that had been hit by the 10 percent tariffs included fresh seafood, poultry and soybeans. Tariffs also applied to items such as tungsten lamps for scientific and medical purposes, as well as some types of aircraft.

The move is aimed at "promoting the healthy and stable development of China-US economic and trade relations", the Commission said in a statement.

It added that the reduction will kick in at 05.01 GMT on February 14 — the same day Washington is expected to halve tariffs on \$120 billion worth of Chinese products.

The Commission added it "hopes that both parties will be able to abide by their agreement, strive to implement its relevant content, (and) boost market confidence".

Other retaliatory tariffs,

however, remain in place.

The US and China in January signed a partial deal that dialled down tensions in their bruising trade war, with Beijing agreeing to buy an additional \$200 billion in American goods over the next two years.

As part of the phase one deal, the US would halve its tariffs on \$120 billion of Chinese goods to 7.5 per cent, and the Trump administration called off added tariffs that would have taken effect last December.

At President Donald Trump's annual State of the Union address this week, he said US-China relations are the "best" ever currently.

China's latest tariff reductions come as it grapples with a shortage of resources in a fight against a new coronavirus, which has claimed more than 560 lives. On Tuesday, a top US trade official said the virus outbreak will delay Beijing's plans to buy goods from the US under the phase one deal. But Washington expects "minimal impact" from the virus on the US economy. China's recent virus outbreak has caused Beijing to impose travel restrictions across cities, with millions of consumers staying home during its otherwise busy Spring Festival holiday.

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India warming up to snackification, says global study

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 6

'Snackification' is a trend catching up in India, says a report presented by Euromonitor International, a global strategic market research firm as people in urban centres have longer commute to their workplace.

Market intelligence, innovation, self-disruption, localisation were the other major trends in India's food retail sector, according to food retail industry leaders assembled at India Food Forum 2020.

The Indian food consumption market — including food retail and foodservice sectors — is valued at \$900 billion.

Talking about the 'snackification' of food, Pradeep Srinivasan, senior analyst, Euromonitor said, "The fact that time-pressed lifestyles and on-demand economy have led to people looking increasingly at convenience. More and more people are opting for foods with less preparation time and more convenience, thereby increasing the opportunity for pre-prepared foods." Indians have a lot of

The fact that time-pressed lifestyles and on-demand economy have led to people looking increasingly at convenience. More and more people are opting for foods with less preparation time and more convenience, thereby increasing the opportunity for pre-prepared foods

— PRADEEP SRINIVASAN, senior analyst, Euromonitor



snacks in between meals as against people in Western countries having three meals — breakfast, lunch and dinner. "Fluid eating habits is another opportu-

nity for snack manufacturers. While snacking has increased, there is a visible difference in treating and snacking. This has led to the demand for healthier

snacks. The pack size of pre-packed snack is also reducing," Srinivasan said. "The presence of smaller disruptive players are making sure that success is

beyond few food majors. Also the brands which focus on regions or clusters will achieve success and scale. Also companies are now trying to be present in multiple product categories. Also gourmet and health are new niches that will see higher growth," said Saloni Nangia, president, Technopak.

"Interest from investors like private equity (PE) and venture funds and government would provide the growth impetus, given the fact that more than ₹10,000 crore rupees have already been invested in packed food

and food& grocery e-commerce since 2015," Nangia said. Kishore Kumar, head-Brand Intelligence, Big Basket, an online food and grocery store said, "The key trends in food retailing included concept of "Grandma is Right", like desi cow ghee, honey, jaggery and ayurvedic products as consumers were going more towards what was better for them and not just a value add.

"More and more consumers are demanding both taste and health in their food item," Kumar said.



Lee stays on

Leander Paes has retained his place in the six-member Davis Cup squad for the tie against Croatia next month; will also play Bangalore Challenger this month

SHORT TAKES

Venu grabs fifer for Andhra

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 6

Andhra's Venu V. emerged pick of the bowlers as Hyderabad were restricted to a modest total in their Under 23 Col CK Nayudu Trophy match being played at Ongole.

Venu bowled an exceptional spell, snaring five wickets for 21, which was well complemented by Y. Sandeep's three for 20. Put to bat first, Hyderabad could only manage to post 218 runs on the board in the first innings. In reply, Andhra made 23 runs for no loss at the end of day's play.

Brief scores (Day-1):

Hyderabad 218 in 68.2 overs (Ajay Dev Goud 53, Pragmay Reddy 64, M. Samhith Reddy 47, Venu V 5/21, Y. Sandeep 3/20) vs Andhra 23/0 in 9 overs.

Nikhil shines for Concorde CC

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 6

S. Nikhil of Concorde CC put up a brilliant show with the ball to rout Nizam College in the HCA A-2 Division Two Day League Championship played here on Thursday.

In a lop sided match, riding on Nikhil's incredible spell of six for 49, Concorde CC restricted Nizam College to a paltry 143 which they easily chased down in mere 17 overs.

In another match, Vijay Hanuman claimed an easy win over New Blues CC. Batting first, New Blues were skittled out for a lowly 75 in 23 overs, a total which Vijay Hanuman chased down in mere 17 overs with the help of E. Harish's unbeaten knock of 52 runs.

Brief Scores

- Nizam College 143 in 33.1 overs (Abhinav Kumar 66, Y. S. Varun 3 for 52, S. Nikhil 6/49) lost to Concorde CC 147/2 in 17 overs (Y. S. Varun 39, R. P. Praneeth 57 n.o.)
- New Blues CC 75 in 23 overs (Nadeem Khan 30, Md Awaiz 3/19, S. Vikas 3/23) lost to Vijay Hanuman 76/0 in 71 overs (E Harish 52 n.o.)

Golfer Diksha is tied-61 at Oz event

Beach Golf Links, Australia: India's Diksha Dagar birdied each of the four Par-5 and carded one-under 71 on the Par-72 Beach Course to be placed tied 61st after the first round of the IPS Handa Vic Open golf tournament here on Thursday.

The 19-year-old Dagar started on the 10th and birdied the Par-5 11th, but she had a double bogey on Par-3 12th. She got back a shot on 18th to turn in even par in the event, which is co-sanctioned by Australian Ladies PGA and LPGA of America.

MRF gear up for European rally

Chennai: Team MRF Tyres will be returning to the international rally stage this year with a full season in the European Rally Championship campaign. Ireland's Craig Breen and co-driver Paul Nagle will spearhead the campaign driving a Hyundai i20 R5 prepared by the Italian BRC Racing Team, a press release here said.

Breen is an experienced rally driver, having competed in 61 WRC rallies, twice finishing on the podium while Nagle has won five WRC events as a co-driver.

The MRF Tyres Rally team has won the FIA Asia Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) nine times, and made an entry into the World Rally Championship in 2018 in the WRC2 class for gathering data for product development. This led to a year of testing and development in 2019 of the next generation of MRF Tyres with Breen and WRC legend Mikko Hirvonen.

"I am really happy to start this adventure with MRF Tyres. We worked together last year placing emphasis on tyre development. Now I am really looking forward to embarking on this journey in the European Rally Championship," Breen said. The first round will take place on the Portuguese island from March 26 to 28.

Sonburn for Saints

Tottenham edge past Southampton in FA Cup

London, Feb. 6: Tottenham Hotspur rode their luck to reach the FA Cup fifth round as Son Heung-min's late penalty sealed a 3-2 victory in a rip-roaring replay against Southampton on Wednesday.

As in the 2-0 Premier League win against Manchester City at the weekend Jose Mourinho's side were often outplayed but showed character to set up a home tie with Norwich City.

South Korean Son has often been the go-to player when lead striker Harry Kane is injured and again he stepped up to convert in the 87th minute after being taken down by keeper Angus Gunn in a frenetic finale.

Son's conversion was his 11th goal in the FA Cup since the start of the 2016-17 season — more than any other player.

It was tough on Southampton who deserved more, according to Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho.

Southampton played nearly all the football after unluckily falling behind in the 12th minute when Jack Stephens attempted to block Tanguy Ndombele's off-target shot but only deflected it past a helpless Gunn.

Ralph Hasenhuetl's side responded in dynamic fashion with Danny Ings smashing a shot against the bar after 18 minutes.

They did level after 34 minutes when Shane Long netted from close range after Hugo Lloris parried the ball into his path after a smart turn and low shot by Nathan Redmond.

Southampton's James Ward-Prowse was carried off five minutes before halftime. — Reuters



Tottenham's Son Heung-min scores his side's third goal from the penalty spot during their English FA Cup fourth round replay match against Southampton at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London on Wednesday. Tottenham won 3-2. — AP

BARCA COACH STAYS CLEAR OF MESSY ROW

Barcelona, Feb. 6: Barcelona coach Quique Setien said he would not get involved in "Lionel Messi's life" after the Argentine superstar became entangled in a row with the club's sporting director Eric Abidal.

Messi hit back at Abidal on Tuesday after the Frenchman had earlier blamed slackness in the dressing room for the departure of recently-fired boss Ernesto Valverde.

In an interview with Spanish newspaper Sport, Abidal said under Valverde, who was fired in mid-January, many players had been unhappy, had not worked hard enough and had not communicated properly.

"I'm not going to get into Messi's life, or anyone's life," said Setien, who replaced Valverde.

"What interests me is football, everything else are situations that I will not be able to control, therefore I do not sweat on it," the 61-year-old added.

Messi signed his last contract extension in 2017. — AFP

I'm not going to get into (Lionel) Messi's life, or anyone's life. What interests me is football, everything else are situations that I will not be able to control, therefore I do not sweat on it.

— QUIQUE SETIEN
Barcelona coach

BETTER TEAM LOST: MOURINHO

London, Feb. 6: Jose Mourinho admitted Tottenham got lucky after Son Heung-min's late penalty secured a dramatic 3-2 win against Southampton in FA Cup fourth-round replay.

"I have to be honest and say I think the best team lost on the pitch but my team were the ones with more heart and went to their limit," Mourinho said.

"We suffered but we deserved to win because we were in our limits. Southampton were fresher than us but we played with our souls and heart and gave absolutely everything."

Tottenham, who last won the FA Cup

in 1991, will host struggling Norwich in the fifth round in the first week of March. Taking credit for the win in classic Mourinho self-promoting style, he said: "I think I did very well because I had to manage a team with so many difficulties. The priority is to survive. We have lots of difficulties. I'm not speaking just about Harry Kane, I'm speaking about injuries to Giovanni Lo Celso and Erik Lamela. Today was a team completely unbalanced, really hard to organise it."

Tottenham are without a major trophy of any kind since the 2008 League Cup. — AFP

Two-shot lead for Khalin at Masters

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, FEB. 6

Bengaluru's Khalin Joshi posted a four-under-67 to take centre stage in round two of the Golconda Masters Golf Championship being played at the Hyderabad Golf Club. Joshi grabbed a two-shot lead as his halfway total stood at 11-under-131.

Gurugram's Veer Ahlawat fired a 68 to move into second place at nine-under-133. Shamim Khan produced

the day's best score of 63 to rise to tied third at eight-under-134. The three others in joint third were Kolkata's Shankar Das, Bengaluru's Trishul Chinnappa and Chandigarh's Angad Cheema.

The halfway cut was declared at one-over-143. Fifty-five professionals made the cut.

Venkat Gautham (69-72) was the only Hyderabad-based professional to make the cut. He was in tied 37th at one-under-141. Former Indian

hockey captain Dilip Tirkey, playing as a professional for the first time, missed the cut as he totaled 26-over-168.

Shamim produced a fabulous run of five consecutive birdies from the 13th to the 17th during his 63. He sank a total of 10 birdies against two bogeys.

Prominent names including Delhi's Rashid Khan (69), Pune's Udayan Mane (67) and Patna's Aman Raj (71) were in tied seventh at seven-under-135.

Round one leader Karandeep Kochhar of Chandigarh shot a 75 and thus dropped to tied 20th at four-under-138.

Khalin (64-67), lying overnight tied second and one off the lead, got off to a flying start on Thursday with a birdie blitz on the first three holes where he played his wedges to perfection.

The 27-year-old former Asian Tour winner landed his lob wedge approach from 44 yards within an inch of the pin on the second hole.

Khalin then had a bumpy stretch as a three-putt and two erratic tee shots brought him three bogeys in exchange for two birdies between the fifth and the ninth. Joshi, a four-time winner on the PGTI, made his fourth three-putt of the tournament on the 10th where he made par after missing a two-footer for birdie.

However, Khalin salvaged the round and emerged leader with birdies on the 14th and 15th making a 17-footer on the latter.

Raptors make PBL semis

Hyderabad, Feb. 6: World No. 2 Tai Tzu Ying and Brice Leverdez combined to take the Bengaluru Raptors into the semifinals and help them stay on course for a successful defence of their title at the Star Sports Premier Badminton League at the GMC Balayogi SATS Indoor Stadium here in Hyderabad on Thursday.

The Raptors faced the Awadhe Warriors in a must-win tie with both the teams contending for the last semi-final spot to join the North Eastern Warriors, Chennai Superstarz and Pune 7 Aces.

With the Raptors being on the fourth spot in the league table and separated from the Awadhe team by three points, they needed to ensure that the Warriors don't manage to get four points. Even though the Lucknow-based franchise began the highly-awaited tie with a win in men's doubles, Brice Leverdez beat the Awadhe Trump Ajay Jayaram to turn the tie on its head and then Tai Tzu Ying fetched another vital point to take the Raptors into the last-four.

The face-off between the former World No.1 Tai Tzu Ying and World No.14 Beiwen Zhang was obviously the cynosure of all eyes. Zhang trails the



Tai Tzu Ying of Bengaluru Raptors in action during her women's singles match against Beiwen Zhang of the Awadhe Warriors in Hyderabad on Thursday.

Chinese Taipei ace 2-8 in their head-to-head record on the BWF World Tour but she put in a show on the court that oozed brilliance and determination. Tai, of course, ran away to a 7-4 lead, stamping her authority in this clash. Zhang took her time but once she settled into the

match, she gave the Bengaluru talisman quite a hard time. By elevating the shuttle height and by extending the rallies, she kept testing Tai's defence. The American's tactic rattled the Raptors shuttler and the two were soon tied at 10-10. With the two locked at 12-12, it needed Tai's wizardry to eke out the first game 15-12.

The two orchestrated an enthralling second game with Zhang even inching ahead to take a 10-9 lead. In the end, the Bengaluru player used her deception to finish with a 15-12, 15-12 victory.

Former India No.1 Ajay Jayaram has a 2-0 head-to-head record over World No. 39 Brice Leverdez on the BWF World Tour with none of their matches going the distance. With such a phenomenal record over the Frenchman, Jayaram was given the responsibility of the Awadhe Trump. Jayaram was also coming off a win in his last match against Kazumasa Sakai when the Warriors took on Pune 7 Aces.

Earlier, in the men's doubles between Awadhe Warriors' Ko Sung Hyun and Shin Baek Cheol and Bengaluru's Arun George and Rian Agung Saputro, the Raptors rallied to win the tie 14-15, 15-7, 15-11. — Agencies

TATA OPEN

DUCKWORTH BEATS DANIEL, MAKES LAST-8

Pune, Feb. 6: Australian ace James Duckworth held his nerves during thrilling three-set 6-7 (4-7), 7-6 (8-6), 6-3 over Taro Daniel to enter the quarter-final of the third edition of Tata Open Maharashtra at Mhalunge Balewadi Stadium in Pune on Thursday.

Despite losing the first set, the sixth seeded Duckworth made timely comeback to win the hard-fought second set. However, the Australian had continued the momentum to win the decider easily to complete victory.

Meanwhile in doubles category, pair of Romain Arneodo and Andre Begemann caused a major upset in the tournament as they knocked out top-seed pair of Robin Haase and Robert Lindstedt with a thrashing 6-3, 6-3 win to enter the semifinals. However, third seeded Jonathan Erlich and Andrei Vasilevski also made their way into the last four. Erlich-Vasilevski had fought hard before registering 5-7, 6-1, 10-8 win against Stefano Travaglia and Paolo Lorenzi. — Agencies



The American Fed Cup team comprising Coco Gauff (clockwise from left), Alison Riske, Serena Williams, Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Sofia Kenin pose for a photograph on Thursday.

Women gear up for country sides

Paris, Feb. 6: Serena Williams enters her fourth decade as a Fed Cup player with the United States on Friday and Saturday as the 2020 qualifiers get under way.

The 38-year-old icon teams with newly-crowned Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin and teenage star Coco Gauff as the US tackle Latvia in Everett, Washington.

In total, there are eight ties with the winners earning places in the new-look Fed Cup finals in Budapest from April 15-17 where 2019 champions France, runners-up Australia, hosts Hungary and wildcard Czech Republic will be waiting. It was back in 1999 that Serena Williams made her Fed Cup debut in a semi-final win over Italy.

Teammate Sofia Kenin was just eight months old while Coco Gauff was still almost five years away from being born. Williams has a 100 percent record in singles in the Fed Cup, winning 13 out of 13 rubbers.

However, despite her longevity, her relationship with the tournament has been very much on-off, playing only in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2018.

Kenin, now the top-ranked US player at seven in the world after her stunning Grand Slam breakthrough in Melbourne, has a Fed Cup singles record of 1-3 while 15-year-old Gauff has yet to make her debut.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka is making her first Fed Cup appearance since helping Japan defeat Great Britain in the 2018 World Group II play-offs. The world number 10 has won five out of six singles ties she has contested since her 2017 debut. — AFP

FIXTURES

- At Washington: USA vs Latvia.
- At The Hague: The Netherlands vs Belarus.
- At Cluj-Napoca (Romania): Romania vs Russia.
- At Florianopolis (Brazil): Brazil vs Germany.
- At La Manga (Spain): Spain vs Japan.
- At Biel (Switzerland): Switzerland vs Canada.
- At Kortrijk (Belgium): Belgium vs Kazakhstan.
- At Bratislava (Slovakia): Slovakia vs Great Britain.

SPEARS FAILS DOPE TEST, GETS BANNED

Paris, Feb. 6: Former Australian Open mixed doubles champion Abigail Spears of the United States was banned for 22 months after failing a drugs test, the International Tennis Federation announced.

Spears tested positive for banned substances prasterone and testosterone at the 2019 US Open. "The ITF accepted Ms. Spears' explanation as to how the prasterone and testosterone entered her system and that her use was unconnected to sports performance... although her fault was deemed to be high," said an ITF statement.

Her ban was backdated to November 7, 2019 and will end on September 6, 2021.

Spears has won 21 doubles titles in her career with the highlight her Australian Open mixed doubles title with Juan Sebastian. — AFP

PAYET, RADONJIC SHINE IN MARSEILLE'S 2-0 WIN

Paris, Feb. 6: Dimitri Payet scored a brilliant goal as second-placed Marseille claimed a 2-0 victory at Saint-Etienne on Wednesday to cut the gap to Ligue 1 leaders Paris Saint-Germain back to 12 points although hundreds of their diehard fans were stopped from watching the game.

Andre Villas-Boas' Marseille opened up a six-point lead over third-placed Rennes, who lost 1-0 at Lille on Tuesday, by bouncing back from successive goalless stalemates against Bordeaux and Angers.

The match was delayed by 15 minutes after clashes between the two sets of fans outside the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard. According to firefighters and the Saint-Etienne prosecutors' office, there were no injuries or arrests. However, the game was played without visiting supporters — believed to number around 400 — who left under police escort despite making a round trip of around 650km.

Payet gave Marseille a seventh-minute lead with a magnificent individual goal, shaping to cross before cutting onto his left foot and hammering the ball past Stephane Ruffier from what seemed an impossible angle. Nemanja Radonjic drilled a fine left-footed shot in the 85th minute to seal the match. — AFP

Lewandowski on target for Bayern

Munich, Feb. 6: Robert Lewandowski scored two goals to take his season tally to 35 as Bayern Munich came from behind to beat Hoffenheim 4-3 on Wednesday and reach the quarterfinals of the German Cup.

Bayern are back on target to win the German domestic double again this season after retaking the lead in the Bundesliga on Saturday. However, the win over Hoffenheim was marred by defensive errors. Thomas Muller put Bayern into the lead in the 20th off a cross from David Alaba. Lewandowski scored in the 36th and 80th minutes Hoffenheim wasted a string of second-half chances. — AP



Archer Out

Top England fast bowler Jofra Archer has been ruled out of the upcoming Indian Premier League due to a stress fracture in his right elbow

Fairytale run

From selling paanipuris to scoring Cup ton, Yashasvi's rise has been remarkable

New Delhi, Feb. 6: Yashasvi Jaiswal has taken the ICC U19 World Cup by storm. His unbeaten century in India's 10-wicket win in the semifinal against Pakistan took his tally in the tournament to 312 runs, making him the top scorer.

Jaiswal was unbeaten on 105 off 113 balls in an innings laced with eight fours and four sixes. It was part of an unbeaten 176-run opening stand with Divyaansh Saxena (59*) in a woefully one-sided semifinal.

It was an innings that garnered praise from all quarters, with Pakistan fast bowler great Shoaib Akhtar saying that Jaiswal is destined for big things. "Remember my words that Jaiswal is going to go places. He has the power, passion and interest for the game. He will represent the senior team, this is a guarantee," Shoaib said on his YouTube channel.

"Pakistan players need to learn from Jaiswal's history. He is running behind

excellence and money is running behind him now," he said.

It has been a roller coaster ride for the UP-born player, who had to make ends meet by selling paanipuris in the streets of Mumbai in his initial days after his father moved to the big city.

"I love cricket and playing the sport gives me immense joy and pleasure. I used to watch Sachin sir bat and from that time onwards, I wanted to be in Mumbai and represent Mumbai," Jaiswal had told the ICC in December last year.

"When I came here (Mumbai) with my father, I used to visit the Azad Maidan. I loved playing cricket there. I started practicing there but my father said 'let's go back home (Uttar Pradesh)'. But I said I will stay here and play for Mumbai. I took all my stuff and came to Azad Maidan. At that time, a match was happening and Pappu Sir told me that if I performed in that match,

there would be a tent for me to stay in. I played that match and performed really well. As a result, I got to live in the tent. But it wasn't easy for me as there was no light and no toilet," he had said.

Limited monetary means meant that Jaiswal had to find ways to keep his passion alive. "During those times, I didn't get much support from my family on the monetary front. So I used to sell paanipuris in the evening and earn some money. It was an embarrassing situation for me when the players with whom I used to play would come at the shop I worked in. I used to feel so bad because I would score a century in the morning and in the evening I used to sell paanipuris. But it didn't matter it was a small job, as it was important for me. Yet my only focus was on cricket," he said.

Just as his determination was beginning to falter, Jwala Singh, a coach in the maidan, spotted him and decided to take young

Jaiswal under his wings. "I didn't have the money to buy food and didn't have a place to stay either. However, sir told me to just focus on cricket and he would take care of everything else. I got selected to play for Mumbai in the Vijay Hazare Trophy in 2019. I went for the match and created the record of being the youngest to score a double hundred in List 'A' cricket," he said.

Jaiswal smashed 203 off 154 balls for Mumbai against Jharkhand in that Vijay Hazare Trophy clash. The rise has been quick for Jaiswal since then and his inclusion in the U-19 squad hardly came as a surprise. —Agencies



Yashasvi Jaiswal

ALL CLEAR FOR BOOKIE CHAWLA EXTRADITION

London, Feb. 6: The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on Thursday rejected alleged bookie Sanjeev Chawla's application for an interim measure on human rights grounds to block his extradition from the UK to face match-fixing charges in India.

The legal paperwork process for his extradition will now go ahead through the UK Central Authority, for Scotland Yard officers to hand Chawla over to their counterparts from Delhi Police to be flown back to India within days.

Chawla had lost a last-ditch High Court appeal on human rights grounds against former UK Home Secretary Sajid Javid's extradition order at a hearing in the Royal Courts of Justice in London last month.

The 50-year-old British national, a key accused in the match-fixing scandal involving former South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje in 2000, must therefore be extradited from the UK by February 19. Chawla is alleged to have played a central role in conspiring with Cronje to fix a South African tour to India. —PTI

Anuj ton keeps Delhi in game

New Delhi, Feb. 6: Wicketkeeper batsman Anuj Rawat's stroke-filled hundred gave Delhi a slim chance of an outright win after Gujarat got the all-important first innings lead in the Ranji Trophy Group 'A' match here on Thursday.

In reply to Delhi's 293, Gujarat scored 335 after starting the day at 269 for 4 with Manprit Juneja (124, 190 balls) and Dhruv Raval (94)'s 221-run stand for the fifth wicket proving crucial in a 42-run lead.

However, Anuj, a former India U-19 captain, then took the attack back to the opposition camp with a superb 133 off 194 balls that had 15 fours and two sixes.

Delhi ended the day at 228 for four with a lead of 186 runs going into the

final day. While the chances of an outright win on a good batting track might not be more than 25 per cent but Anuj's innings certainly gave Delhi a glimmer of hope if they can get a lead of 275 by lunch and get 60 overs at opposition. The feature of Rawat's innings was the punch in his drives as he was severe on pacer A Nagwaswalla (1/62).

He also hooked pacer Chintan Gaja for a six and a pulled one off Axar Patel. He added 106 with Jonty Sidhu (48) for the fourth wicket stand before being holed out trying to hit Rujul Bhatt.

With India's keeping cupboard in red ball cricket bare, Rawat could soon become a serious India 'A' prospect with his stamina. —PTI

BRIEF SCORES

- **At Delhi:** Delhi 293 & 228/4 (Anuj Rawat 133, Jonty Sidhu 48) vs Gujarat 335 (Manprit Juneja 124, Dhruv Raval 94).
- **At Rajkot:** Mumbai 262 and 285/3 (Suryakumar Yadav 134, Shams Mulani 67 not out) vs Saurashtra 335 (Sheldon Jackson 85, Chirag Jani 84 not out, Royston Dias 4/64).
- **At Baroda:** Baroda 174 and 259 (Krunal Pandya 74, A. Sheth 70, K. Vignesh 5/62) lost to Tamil Nadu 490/7 declared.

Women look to improve batting

Melbourne, Feb. 6: The Indian women's cricket team will have to address its batting woes when it takes on England Women in a crucial league match of the T20 tri-series here on Friday.

A mid innings slump led to India's four-wicket defeat in their previous match against hosts Australia. This was after beating England by five wickets in the tournament-opener last week.

Except for opener Smriti Mandhana (35) and captain Harmanpreet Kaur (28), Indian batters showed complete lack of application on a pitch offering extra bounce at Canberra. India lost their last six wickets for 21 runs to concede the match with seven balls to spare.

Sixteen-year-old Shafali Verma, touted as

the next big thing in women's cricket, lasted only three balls while Jemimah Rodrigues crawled to 1 off 11 balls, leaving their team at 16 for two in three overs.

The experienced Mandhana and Harmanpreet stitched a 40-run stand before the captain's dismissal triggered a collapse.

The Indian bowling attack did all it could, stretching the game till the penultimate over but there were not enough runs on the board.

The tournament, which is an important preparatory event ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning in Australia on February 21, is intriguingly poised with all the three teams on 2 points from as many matches after one win and one defeat each. —PTI

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Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20

Printed and Published by T. Venkateswarlu on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Plot No. 9 Alwal Village, Vallabh Nagar Taluk, Medchal Malkajgiri Dist. Telangana and Published at 36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3. RNI Registration No. 3081/1957. Editor: Aditya Sinha

