

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SATURDAY 8 | FEBRUARY 2020

## WEATHER

**Max:** 31°C  
**Min:** 24°C  
**RH:** 68%  
**Rainfall:** Nil  
**Forecast:**  
Sunny Max/Min temp.  
31/24°C

## ASTROGUIDE

**Vikari:** Thai 24  
**Tithi:** Chaturthi  
**Star:** Pusa  
**Rahukalam:**  
9.00 am to 10.30 am  
**Yamagandam:**  
1.30 pm to 3.00 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.22 am  
**Zohar:** 12.28 pm  
**Asar:** 3.43 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.12 pm  
**Isha:** 7.25 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY** 6.12 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 6.34 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 5.21 PM  
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## COUNTER POINT



Our candidates? I thought the contest was only between Modi and Kejriwal!

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**New Delhi:** The CBI on Friday carried out searches at the premises of IAS officer Udit Prakash Rai in connection with the arrest of Gopal Krishna Madhav, OSD to Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, in a bribery case, officials said. Over a dozen more officers of the Delhi government are also under the agency's scanner in the case, they said.



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If surveys are to be believed, the Aam Aadmi Party is all set to return to power in the national capital where polls to all 70 Assembly seats will be held on Saturday.

But if one goes by grandstanding, then the BJP appears set to usher in a new chapter in Delhi and forming the city-state's government on its own after 22 years.

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They give 10 to 14 seats to the BJP. But home minister Amit Shah has claimed his party will be winning more than 45 seats. The saffron party won in just three constituencies in 2015, where the Congress couldn't retain one seat.

According to the ABP News-CVoter survey, Arvind Kejriwal's AAP is predicted to win 42 to 56 seats. The IPSOS-Times Now survey, based on a sample size of 7,321 voters, says the AAP is likely to get anything between 54 and 60 seats, the BJP 10 to 14 seats, while the Congress may draw a blank or win, at best, two seats. ■ P6

## \$50K crore petro project for TN

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 7**

In a significant development, the Kolkata-based Haldia Petrochemicals Limited (HPL) founder-chairman Purnendu Chatterjee met the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. Edappadi K Palaniswami here on Friday, raising hopes of HPL propelling huge investments of the order of Rs.50,000 crore for setting up a petroleum refinery-cum-petrochemical complex in Cuddalore district.

The State government had entered into an in-principle MoU for the proposed petrochemical complex in Cuddalore district, south of Chennai, with HPL as part of the bunch of MoUs that were signed with various captains of industry when Mr. Palaniswami went on a tour of the US last year to attract more industrial investments into Tamil Nadu.

The meeting that took place Friday at the Chief Minister's camp office here is said to be in pursuance of the MoU with HPL, which has symbolised the industrial resurgence in West Bengal in recent years with the setting up of a modern naphtha-based petrochemical complex at Haldia, 125 km from Kolkata.

While the HPL's executive vice-president Robin Mukhopadhyaya was also part of the meeting with Mr.



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Palaniswami, representatives from the Tamil Nadu side included the State Industries minister, M.C. Sampath, Chief Secretary, K. Shanmugam and Industries secretary, Mr. N. Muruganandham, sources said.

This meeting assumes added significance as in November 2019, the HPL had filed a fresh bid for the oil refinery of Nagarjuna chemicals in Cuddalore district, as part of the efforts to turn around that defunct oil plant in coastal Tamil Nadu into a large petrochemical complex and refinery. ■ P2



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## MODI VS RAHUL

# Apology battle rocks LS as mantri, Rahul wrangle

**SREEPARNA CHAKRABARTY | DC NEW DELHI, FEB. 7**

Major trouble erupted in the Lok Sabha on Friday when Union health minister Harsh Vardhan asked former Congress president Rahul Gandhi to apologise for a remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an election rally earlier this week.

Within minutes of Dr Harsh Vardhan's demand, MPs from both the treasury benches and the Opposition were seen facing each other as if in a battlefield and almost came to blows.

It all began when the moment the minister read out the apology demand to the House, Congress MP from Virudhunagar, Manickam Tagore, jumped into the Well and moved towards the minister, but was stopped by BJP MPs led by Kaiserganj MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

As both sides almost came to blows, Congress MP from Ernakulam Hibi Eden was seen playing peacemaker and leading Mr Tagore out of the melee.

After the House was adjourned by the Speaker, MPs from both the ruling side and the Opposition were seen shouting slogans at each other. Many remained in the well.



Opposition members protest in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session of Parliament, in New Delhi, Friday. — PTI

# Word from Modi speech in Rajya Sabha expunged

**New Delhi, Feb. 7:** In a rare move, a word from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in Rajya Sabha was expunged from records.

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu expunged the word used by Modi on Thursday during his reply to the discussion on a motion thanking the President for his address to the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament at the start of the Budget session. "Chairman was pleased to direct expunction of a certain portion of the proceedings of RS

dated Feb. 6 at about 6.20 and 6.30 pm," Secretariat said. Naidu routinely expunges any remark found unsuitable from RS's records after going through the proceedings of the day. This has been done on several occasions but rarely was any remark of Modi expunged. Modi had made the remark as he launched a strong defence of the NPR saying the population register was being updated with demographic info for better targeting of government's welfare schemes.

## TAKE ACTION AGAINST TAGORE: UNION MIN

**New Delhi:** Condemning the Congress and its MP Manickam Tagore for "misbehaving" with Union Minister Harsh Vardhan in Lok Sabha, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Friday demanded that action be taken against him.

# Lay down arms, enjoy life, PM tells militants

**MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI/KOKRAJHAR, FEB. 7**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here Friday that the new Bodo peace accord would bring in peace and development in Assam. Saying it was now time to work together, while addressing a huge public rally at the Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD) of Assam in Kokrajhar, Mr Modi promised that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act would not harm their interests. "A canard is being

"A canard is being spread that lakhs of people will come from outside after the CAA's enactment. Nothing of that sort will happen"

spread that lakhs of people will come from outside after the CAA's enactment. Nothing of that sort will happen," he said.

The Prime Minister also urged Kashmiri militants, other banned outfits in the Northeast and the Naxalites to lay down their arms, join the

national mainstream and "celebrate life". He also attacked the previous non-BJP governments for "procrastinating" on a resolution of vexed issues that alienated people and made them lose their faith in democracy and the Constitution.

"Those still with bombs, guns and bullets in Kashmir, other parts of the Northeast, and Naxalites... Come back. Join the mainstream. Wapas laut aye aur jeevan ka jashn manaiye (come back and celebrate life)," he said.

## Budget session of TN Assembly from Feb. 14

**Chennai:** The Tamil Nadu budget for the year 2020-21 will be presented in the Legislative Assembly on Friday, February 14, when the budget session of the house begins.

■ FULL REPORT ON PAGE 2

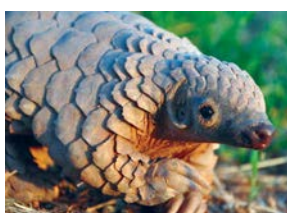
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**Beijing, Feb. 7:** Pangolins could be responsible for the spread of the deadly coronavirus in China, scientists said on Friday after they found the genome sequence separated from the endangered mammals 99 per cent identical to that from infected people.



Pangolins are believed to be one of the world's most trafficked mammals. Thousands of them are poached every year due to their medicinal value and human

consumption in countries like China and Vietnam. The genome sequence of the novel coronavirus strain separated from pangolins was 99 per cent identical to that from infected people,

indicating pangolins may be an intermediate host of the virus, according to a study led by scientists at the South China Agricultural University.

According to Liu Yahong, president of the university, the research team analysed more than 1,000 metagenome samples of wild animals and found pangolins as the most likely intermediate host, state-run Xinhua news agency reported as 73 new deaths were

reported in China on Thursday due to the novel coronavirus.

As of Friday, 638 people have died mostly in Hubei province and its provincial capital Wuhan due to the virus with the total number of confirmed cases jumping to 3,143, Chinese officials announced on Friday. Molecular biological detection revealed that the positive rate of Betacoronavirus in pangolins was 70 per cent, the scientists said. — PTI

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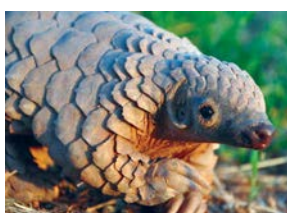
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IN BRIEF

**Flagpole mishap: Woman gets govt job**

**Coimbatore:** A 30-year-old woman, whose injured leg was amputated after a truck hit her scooter while she was avoiding a falling flagpole, was Friday given a government job. Rajeswari received the order appointing as Village Assistant in Sangunar Village from Municipal Administration Minister S P Velumani at a function in the district collectorate. Rajeswari, along with her relatives, thanked the government and Velumani. Both the legs of Rajeswari got grievously injured after the truck hit her scooter while avoiding the falling flagpole erected by the AIADMK on November 11 last. Rajeswari was on her way to work when the accident took place and was in the ICU of a private hospital and her left leg had to be amputated from knee after four days. The incident kicked up a row with opposition DMK raising the issue of erecting flagpoles especially after a banner put by an AIADMK worker fell on another woman and was run over by a lorry in Chennai. —PTI

**'Ceat tyres' top officials also call on CM**

From p1

It may be recalled that HPL has already galvanised a large number of downstream units in West Bengal as the complex has a capacity to process more than 3.50 lakh tonnes per annum of polymers, is a joint venture of the West Bengal government, the Chatterjee group founded by Purnendu, the Tata group and the IOC. The 'Ceat Tyres' chief financial officer Kumar Subbiah and vice president, V. Sundararajan, also met the Chief Minister today separately in connection with the inaugural of their radial tyre factory in the state, sources added.

**Rajapaksa embarks on 4-day visit to India**

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 7

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa reached New Delhi on Friday at the beginning of a four-day visit to India during which he will meet "good friend" Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday in the Capital and will also visit Varanasi, Sarnath, Bodhi Gaya and Tirupati. The Sri Lankan PM tweeted earlier in the day, "I will be in Delhi on a state visit, meeting my good friend PM @narendramodi, the President, the External Affairs Minister and other government officials. Looking forward to building new avenues of cooperation with this visit and



strengthening the already existing ties between our nations." MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted, "On PM @narendramodi's invitation, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka @PresRajapaksa arrived in India to a warm welcome, on his first overseas visit since assuming office. Sustained exchanges at the highest level continue to energise India-SL ties."

**MNM opposes Lankan PM's visit to India**

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 7

Kamal Hassan's Makkal Neethi Maiaam has opposed the four-day visit of Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa to the country from Friday. Besides meeting President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mahinda will hold discussion with Indian delegation and visit religious important places in the country. In a statement, the Makkal Neethi Maiaam has stated that Tamils were subjected to serious hardship after Gotabaya Rajapaksa assumed office

as President and Mahinda took over as PM in the island nation. Citing that Tamil national anthem has been stopped during Independence celebration, even after completion of war a large number of army personnel are posted in Tamil dominant areas in Sri Lanka and Indian Tamils continue to face the heat from Sri Lankan navy in the high sea, the MNM urged the Sri Lankan government to withdraw anti-Tamil policies.

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● MNM has appealed Prime Minister Narendra Modi to highlight the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka and mount pressure on Mahinda to end the anti-Tamil policies.



Mahinda to end the anti-Tamil policies. The visit will be the Mahinda Rajapaksa's first overseas visit since his brother Gotabaya was elected as President in November last year.

Mahinda will have meetings with President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and external affairs minister S Jaishankar. The meet-

ing aims to build on the strong relationship that already exists between the two countries. Mahinda hopes to finalise the implementation of the \$450 million line of credit pledged by Prime Minister Modi to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa during his visit to New Delhi in November. In an effort to enhance sub-regional mar-

itime security cooperation, the delegations from both the countries are expected to discuss key areas under the defence and maritime security initiatives that include the Sri Lanka-India annual defence dialogue and the trilateral maritime security cooperation with India and the Maldives. Mahinda also likely to visit the religious places - Varanasi, Sarnath, Bodhi Gaya and Tirupati. Two Tamil ministers in the Rajapaksa government - Douglas Devananda from the north and Armugam Thondaman from the central tea plantation districts expected to be in the 10-member delegation.

**Stalin reiterates demand for CBI probe**

D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 7

The DMK president, Mr. M. K. Stalin on Friday reiterated his party's demand for a CBI probe into the recently surfaced Tamil Nadu Public Services Commission (TNPSC) recruitment scam and also demanded the resignation of the Fisheries minister, Mr. D. Jayakumar who is also in-charge of Personnel and Administrative Reforms department. Speaking at a marriage function here, Stalin referring to more arrests being made by the Police regarding the TNPSC irregularities and fresh information coming out every day, Mr. Jayakumar, the minister under whose control the

**TNPSC SCAM**

TNPSC comes, should quit on moral grounds. Adverting to reports that some 'top brass' were allegedly involved in the recruitment scam, Mr. Stalin alleged that the State government was trying to cover up the whole issue. Hence, only a CBI probe will be able to bring out the whole truth, said Stalin in backing his demand. He added that the DMK, on returning to power, will take strong action against all those involved in the scam.

**BJP's Hindu card:**

Taking a dig at certain political forces trying to "destroy the DMK" by playing the 'majoritarian

Hindu card' by portraying DMK as anti-Hindu, Mr. Stalin said that will never be possible as "the people are solidly with the DMK." Later, speaking at Royapuram in north Chennai where he stopped by to oversee the DMK's signature campaign against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)/ NPR/ NRC exercises, Mr. Stalin said that they (DMK and its allies) have already collected close to two crore signatures all over Tamil Nadu against their target of one crore signatures. If the Central government did not pay heed to the message from this massive signature campaign pressing for revocation of CAA, Mr. Stalin said the DMK and its

allies will again meet and chalk out a much bigger agitation plan.

**Doctors' leader's death shocking:**

In a separate statement, Mr. Stalin expressed deep pain and grief at the passing away of the noted surgeon from Salem, Dr Lakshmi Narasimhan, president of the Federation of Government Doctors Associations, who died of a sudden heart attack earlier on Friday. He charged the AIADMK government with being responsible for Dr Lakshmi Narasimhan's death through its repressive measures by transferring him to Ramanathapuram after the strike was withdrawn.

**Senthil Balaji granted advance bail by HC**

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 7

The Madras high court has granted anticipatory bail to DMK MLA and former transport minister Senthil Balaji and his brother, who apprehended arrest in connection with a job scam in the transport department. Justice P.D.Audikesavulu granted anticipatory bail to Senthil Balaji and his brother Ashok Kumar on the conditions that they should execute a bond for Rs 50,000 each with two sureties each for a like sum and shall report before the police on the date and time whenever required until further orders.

The judge said it was contended by senior counsel S. Prabhakaran, appearing for the petitioners that at the time of registering the complaint, the petitioners were not even remotely cited as connected in any manner with the alleged offences, much less as accused, but now a false case was being foist-

ed against them due to political vendetta taking umbrage of the order dated November 27, 2019, passed by this court on a petition filed by the Intervener, directing to conduct further investigation in the matter. He further submitted that the first petitioner who was a minister in the government of Tamil Nadu during the period from 2011 to 2015 would fully cooperate with the investigation, but attempts were being made to lower his image in society by implicating him. It was also vehemently argued that the procedure prescribed under section 41-A of the Cr.P.C has not been followed in requiring the petitioners for any interrogation, despite the directions of this court dated January 7, 2019, the judge added.

The judge said public prosecutor A.Natarajan stated that the petitioners have been out of reach for service of any summons for interrogation and have absconded, though no other objections have

been raised for granting anticipatory bail to them. In reply to the same, Senior Counsel Prabhakaran stated that the petitioners would appear for interrogation when any notice was issued to them. In the backdrop of the aforesaid rival contentions, public prosecution Natarajan produced a copy of the summons issued to the petitioners for their appearance in terms of section 41 A of the Cr.P.C. Accordingly, the petitioners were ordered to be released on bail in the event of arrest, before the magistrate concerned, the judge said.

The judge said the petitioners shall not tamper with evidence or witness during investigation. They shall not abscond during investigation and they shall immediately surrender their passports to the magistrate concerned. If any of the aforesaid conditions were not complied, the bail granted shall stand cancelled, the judge added.

**Budget session of TN Assembly from Feb. 14**

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 7

The Tamil Nadu budget for the year 2020-21 will be presented in the Legislative Assembly on Friday, February 14, when

the budget session of the house begins. An official release from the Legislative Assembly Secretariat, by secretary K Srinivasan here said that the Speaker, Thiru. P. Dhanapal has summoned

the Assembly to meet at 10 am on that day. The Governor Mr. Banwarilal Purohit has fixed the date for the presentation of the state budget on February 14. Deputy Chief Minister

Mr. O. Panneerselvam, who is also in charge of Finance portfolio, will present the budget. This communication has been sent to all the Tamil Nadu MLAs, the release added.

**CORONA PREVENTION**

Health secretary Beela Rajesh inspects corona virus infection prevention measures at Stanley Medical College in Chennai on Friday. —DC

School students from Tiruvallur district participate in a handwash awareness campaign to keep away from infections, specially after corona scare in Tamil Nadu. District collector Maheshwari Ravikummar inaugurated the campaign. —DC

**Footwear issue: Minister apologises to boy, mom**

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, FEB. 7

The infamous footwear controversy, involving the TN forest minister Dindigul Srinivasan, came to an end as the minister met the embarrassed tribal boy and his mother, and apologized to them personally. Thus he struck a compromise note, before leaving Ooty on Friday afternoon. The tribal boy, Kethan, a class 9 student in a local school near Theppakkadu tribal village in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), walked to the police station at Masinagudi along MTR border on Thursday late evening, to file a complaint against the minister under atrocities against the Tribes Act. However, the cops who received the complaint asked the boy to come again on Friday morning to register the case as the inspector was not available in station then. While all were expecting some drama at the Masinagudi police station on Friday morning, an unexpected twist saw Kethan and his mother

Kaaliyammaal, their relatives and tribal leaders reaching 'Tamilzhagam' guest house here, where the minister was staying. After an hour-long parley, minister Srinivasan told media persons that he expressed his regret and apologized to the embarrassed tribal boy and his mother, and the issue came to an end. Speaking to mediapersons, Kaaliyammaal, said the minister apologized to them and also promised to look after some of the demands put forth by the tribes in regard to infrastructure and basic amenities in Theppakkadu tribal village. She also said that minister also promised to look after her plea for a job for her in the MTR. "From our side, we promised to withdraw the police complaint against him, as this issue is settled now," she added. Meanwhile, B. Pushpakumar, secretary, Nilgiris Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group Council, said, the tribal boy's family and the tribal leaders who took part in the parley accepted

the regret and apology from the minister, and thus decided to end this issue. On Friday morning, some private organizations staged protest in front of Tamilzhagam guest house here, where the minister was staying. Forest minister Dindigul Srinivasan with Kethan's family on Friday. Collector Divya is also seen. —DC



**Action sought against forest minister**

DC CORRESPONDENT COIMBATORE, FEB. 7

Members of the Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front (TNUEF), The Students' Federation of India (SFI) and Dravidar Tamilar Katchi on Friday morning submitted a petition to L. Balaji Saravanan, deputy commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Coimbatore city requesting that action be taken against State Forest Minister Dindigul C. Srinivasan for asking a teenage tribal boy C B Kethan (14) to unbuckle his footwear.

The incident took place on Thursday in Ooty and on the same day the minor boy's family filed a police complaint. However, on the following day on Friday, the boy's family withdrew their complaint. "Ministers take an oath that untouchability is sin. Contradictory to this, are some of these ministers actions which are punishable under law," the petition said. Moreover, the tone used by the minister to call the boy is disrespectful, the petition added. "Despite the complaint having been withdrawn, the minister must be warned so

that a repeat of the incident does not happen in the future." U K Sivagananam, state deputy general secretary of TNUEF said. Seconding him is Dinesh Raja district secretary SFI Coimbatore chapter who added, "government officials and police personnel were also present when the incident took place. They (officials) must explain why they stood as mute spectators and allowed the incident to take place." The CoP on receiving the complaint assured that it will be forwarded to the legal cell.

**An opportunity to fast track consumer cases**



A young media executive filed a case in a consumer forum over a manufacturing defect in her expensive mobile phone. The wide gap between statute and reality dawned on her, making her wonder if she will have the resources or the inclination to brazen it out against a global corporate goliath. First it was the shocking practical picture from her advocate on the average time for disposal of the case -

about 3 years, which is close to 10 times more than what Section 13 (3-A) of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, contemplates. Then comes the exploitation of the procedural scope for delay by the opposite party at every stage. No turn in delaying the case is left unstoned! A delay in entering appearance with a Vakalatnama, a delay in filing the written version, a delay in marking documents with a proof affidavit, a delay in filing written submissions and delays in advancing oral arguments. For every delay, there is the condonation escape route. The only whip that the consumer forum or Commission can crack is to

impose costs, which in most cases, are not substantial enough to carry deterrence. And the theoretical setting the party exparte. These orders are invariably set aside that they have become a sure shot strategy to protract the case. The 'delay - exparte - condonation' route has become so common that it is almost accepted as a template today. The longer the duration, the costlier the battle. Corporate entities have retainerships with advocates, individuals don't. It is against this backdrop of a mockery of a legislation intended to be expeditious, that the reported reserving of orders by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court must be seen. In New India

**JUSTICE FOR ALL**

Assurance Company Limited Vs Hilli Multipurpose Cold Storage Pvt. Ltd, the apex court is to rule on whether extra time,

beyond the statutory prescription, can be granted to an opposite party to file his written version. The filing of the written version, which is the response to the complaint, must be done within an extended total period of 45 days (30+ 15) under Section 13(2)(a) of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, or under Section 38(2)(a) of the new 2019 Act. The interpretation of the words "not exceeding" before the extended total period of 45 days, has seen conflicting decisions of the Supreme Court. On the one hand was the court's view in Dr J.J. Merchant Vs Shrinath Chaturvedi (2002) that "the legislative intent"

is to permit a "maximum 45 days for filing the version by the opposite party. Therefore, the aforesaid mandate is required to be strictly adhered to" On the other, is the ruling in Kailash Vs Nankhu (2005) to the effect that "the provision being in the domain of the Procedural Law, it has to be held directory and not mandatory" and that extension of time may be allowed under "circumstances which are exceptional, occasioned by reasons beyond the control of the defendant and grave injustice would be occasioned if the time was not extended."

The right to speedy justice flows from Article 21 of the Constitution. In the state-

ment of objects of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the words "timely" and "effective" are added in the context of settlement of consumer disputes. The pending case presents an opportunity for the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court to rule on not just the 45 day extended period for the filing of the written version but all the stages in a consumer case - right from the limitation period to file a fresh complaint to a cap on the pendency of a case itself. The term "sufficient cause" that pops up in condonation of delay petitions needs to be fleshed out with a possible enumeration of circumstances.

But before all that, can the ministry of consumer affairs please let consumers know the date from which the new 2019 statute, which received Presidential assent 6 months ago, will come into force? As the new Act drastically alters the pecuniary jurisdiction of the three tiers - district, state and national, cases are kept pending indefinitely, defeating its legislative intent itself. Till that happens, one hopes the young media employee with a defective phone stays on line and does not hang up!

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)



## IN BRIEF

## 2 die as car catches fire near Musiri

**Trichy:** Two persons were killed on the spot and five others were seriously injured when an Omni car in which they were travelling caught fire and rolled down into a road side ditch after hitting a tree at Thirunagallur near Musiri on the Tiruchey-Salem highway in the wee hours of Friday. The occupants of the car hailed from Kolappalur in Erode district and were on their way home after offering worship at Sri Saneeswarar temple at Thirunagallur when the mishap occurred. Police said the deceased were identified as car driver Manikandan and Mayilsamy, occupant of the car. The injured including Mrs Loganayagi wife of the deceased Mayilsamy, and his son Yuvagtheesh, father-in-law Arumugam, mother-in-law Mrs Chellammal, and his relative Viswanathan, were admitted to the Government hospital Musiri, police added.

## 1 boy killed, 30 others hurt in bus capsizing

**Perambalur:** A teenaged school boy studying 9th standard was killed on the spot and at least 30 bus passengers were injured when a private bus in which they were traveling tumbled into a roadside ditch after hitting a cement tanker lorry at Othiyam Patahal near Kunnam on the Perambalur-Ariyalur highway near here on Friday. The deceased student was identified as P. Arya. The injured were admitted to the Government hospital Perambalur, police said.

## CME prog for pediatricians in Pudukkottai dt

**Pudukkottai:** The pediatric medicine department of Government Medical College Pudukkottai, organised a continuing medical education programme (CME) on Friday. In a release here, college dean, Dr. AL. Meenakshisundaram who presided over the function said the infant mortality rate was very much reduced in Tamil Nadu because of the continuous and dedicated effort of pediatricians. He appealed to the doctors and the public to ensure 100 per cent immunization for all the babies in Tamil Nadu. In this programme, retired pediatric surgery professor from Thanjavur Medical College Dr T.V. Sathappan delivered a lecture on "common pediatric surgical problems".



The cheque for ₹2 lakh being handed over to family of Yagesh on behalf of Sastra university, Thanjavur.

## Sastra varsity rewards youth's family for bravery

**Thanjavur:** Yagesh, a 23-year-old youth saved the life of a young woman from the hands of notorious auto driver, sacrificing his life in the process. For his act of bravery and sacrifice, Sethuraman, chairman, Sastra University announced ₹2 lakh as a token reward to Yagesh's family and the same was handed over by Srinivasan on behalf of the Thanjavur-based university. At Thiruvallur recently, a woman boarded an auto to go back home, but the driver took a different route and she shouted for help, Yagesh and his friends, hearing the women's cry for help, chased the auto and freed the young woman; but the auto hit the three youth, one of whom, Yagesh fell down. He was taken to hospital with injuries, but he unfortunately died in hospital.

Marriage beyond caste, religion, nations in Namakkal  
Tamil-Swedish couple unite as per 3 wedding customs

**ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC  
NAMAKKAL, FEB. 7**

A week ahead of Valentine's Day, people in this small town of Tiruchengode near here hardly expected to witness a dream, model Tamil-Swedish wedding that went beyond considerations of caste, religion and nationality and performed as per three distinct marital customs.

The blessed two who entered into wedlock were S. Tharani, a youth from Tiruchengode's Sanarpalayam area and working as an engineer in Sweden after completing his MS degree, and Ms. Marina Susan, who belongs to Stockholm.

Tharani first met Susan in Stockholm few years back in a basketball court and their friendship soon blossomed into love. They decided to tie the knot and got the consent of the parents from both sides, but



Susan and Tharani exchange garlands at Tiruchengode on Friday.

they did not want culture-specific marriage customs to pose any hurdle to their wedding.

Both Tharani and Susan were on the same page on this aspect and hence they decided on an inclusive, inter-cultural approach, said a source close to Tharani's family. Not to

disappoint her parents, both Tharani and Susan first entered wedlock as per the Christian tradition.

Tharani, on his part, not to displease his Tamil parents, persuaded Susan that both will marry according to Hindu traditional practices and that

ceremony was held at Tiruchengode on Thursday.

Topping it all, the partners entered wedlock for a third time on Friday in a typical, simple 'Self-Respect Marriage', as Tharani is personally a rationalist, sources said. Today's ceremony was the simplest of the three, the beaming couple, dressed in traditional Indian attire of 'veshti' and 'sari' respectively, exchanging garlands amid their friends and close relatives besides exchanging rings, sources said.

People of Tiruchengode were amazed that to avoid any inter-religious or inter-cultural conflict, the couple decided to marry as per three different customs- Christian, Hindu and Self-Respect marriages. Shanmugavel and Tamizharasi, the parents of Tharani, were all smiles in hosting this rare inter-cultural fusion.

## Sterlite pinch seen in Copper import surge

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 7**

Import of refined copper increased from 44,245 tonnes in 2017-18 to 92,290 tonnes in 2018-19, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal said.

Replying to a question, Goyal told the Rajya Sabha on Friday that export of copper has also gone down from 378,555 tonnes to 47,917 tonnes for the same period. He cited the reason for the decline in copper production in the country to the closure of copper smelter plant of Vedanta Ltd in Thoothukudi in May 2018.

A few days ago Minister for Mines, Coal and Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi told Lok Sabha about the increase in import and drop in export of copper and said that copper consumption in India was growing at 10 per cent compound annual growth rate.

## Oil leaks from ONGC pipe hit black gram crop in delta

**R. VALAYAPATHY | DC  
TIRUVARUR, FEB. 7**

Black gram (Ulunthu Payiru) cultivated in an area of one acre has been totally damaged due to oil spills (leakage) from the ONGC crude oil pipeline which broke at Moolangudi village near Tiruvavur on Friday.

It might be recalled that the ONGC extracts the crude oil in different parts of Tiruvavur district and moved it through pipelines laid under the cultivable farm lands to its refinery for over 50 years now.

The oil spills, in the wake of the ONGC pipeline crack, spoiled the black gram grown field of one Panneerselvam and the crude oil submerged the entire crop, which resulted in its damage.

Mr. Panneerselvam told visiting newsmen that the ONGC authorities should clear the entire oil



Oil spills from the ONGC crude oil pipeline which broke at Moolangudi village near Tiruvavur on Friday.

spill from his field and due to the incident, he was unable to cultivate any crop for at least six years; so the ONGC should pay adequate compensation to him, he urged.

Another group of famers of that village who gathered there pointed out that similar loss was suffered by other farmers of that area and urged the Central govern-

ment to remove all the crude oil pipeline of the ONGC laid under agriculture lands and to protect the farmers' livelihood.

A team of ONGC officials also rushed to the spot and assured the affected farmer that the oil spill will be cleared immediately and the efforts would be made for getting suitable compensation to him.

## Salem grieves death of people's doc

**ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC  
SALEM, FEB. 7**

The medical fraternity here is shocked and pained over the sudden demise of Dr N Lakshmi Narasimhan, a senior surgeon in government medical service and president of the Federation of the Government Doctors Association who had coordinated a prolonged stir to press for the doctors' fair demands.

Dr Lakshmi Narasimhan, 52, from Raman Nagar in Mettur near Salem, suddenly collapsed here on Friday morning following a cardiac arrest. Sources said he was rushed to a private hospital here, but doctors there had pronounced him brought dead. An avid activist, he had been in the forefront of voicing peo-

ple's demands for better medical facilities besides doctors' legitimate demands for last 25 years.

During the recent strike by the government medical doctors across Tamil Nadu, Dr Narasimhan had coordinated their peaceful protests to press for among other things, equal pay for state government doctors on par with central government doctors, time-bound promotions for doctors and appointment for more doctors to cope with the increasing number of patients flocking to government hospitals.

The state-wide strike during November 2019 had virtually brought public health services to a halt, forcing the Tamil Nadu government to warn of severe disciplinary action against the protesting doctors if they did not return

to work. Dr Lakshmi Narasimhan then had persuaded the doctors to call of their stir on the assurance of the Chief Minister, Mr. Edappadi K Palaniswami and Health minister, C Vijayabaskar.

Though the government had also assured that they would not penalize the protesting doctors, sources said that after their agitation, many doctors were transferred. Dr Lakshmi Narasimhan, who was a practicing surgeon at the Mohan Kumaramangalam government hospital here, had been earlier promoted as associate professor in the government medical college hospital, Dharmapuri.

However, after the recent agitation, as coordinator of the strike, he was shunted to Ramanathapuram government hospitals as part

of the 127 service doctors transferred during that period. Depressed by that move, sources said, Dr Lakshmi Narasimhan was under great mental stress, leading to his fatal heart attack today.

The deceased doctors' wife Ms. Anuradha said, Dr Lakshmi Narasimhan had been highlighting the plight of doctors and patients for the last four years and paid a heavy price for it. "He used to organise fasts and other peaceful forms of protest, but the government took no action on any of those demands pulling him into a depression and leading to his death," Ms. Anuradha wailed. "At least after my husband's death, the Tamil Nadu government should fulfill the legitimate demands of its doctors," she urged.



Visitors look at the handicrafts at the Co-optex showroom during the Dastkaar Nature Expo organised in Egmore on Friday.

## Ryots laud tests-based fertiser use

**R. VALAYAPATHY | DC  
PUDUKKOTTAI, FEB. 7**

Field day was conducted by the Agriculture department, at a Paddy cluster demonstration laid out in over 40 hectares of land at Singathakurichi village of Virudimalai block in Pudukkottai district, on Friday.

In a release here, the joint director of Agriculture M. Periyasamy said that under the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture, soil samples were collected in grid sampling method from all the farm holdings in the village, analysed in state soil testing laboratory and soil health cards were issued to all the farmers. Out of total of 120 farm holdings, 40 fields with



Farmers at the demonstration plot near Pudukkottai.

problem soils were selected for cluster demonstration and paddy crops were sown. In these demonstration fields, set of packages like green manure, farm yard manure, gypsum



Visitors take a look at wide collection of 'Thambaalams', (metal plates) at an exhibition-cum-sale organised by Crafts Council of Tamil Nadu in Coimbatore.

## BJP supporters protest Vijay film shoot at NLC

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 7**

Tension prevailed at the Neyveli Lignite corporation after the TN BJP protested against the management of NLC India Ltd, a public sector undertaking, in Cuddalore district for permitting the shooting of actor Vijay's upcoming movie 'Master'.

Actor Vijay busy shooting for his upcoming film 'Master' hit the headlines on Wednesday after income tax department raided his houses in Chennai. The actor returned to Neyveli after extending full cooperation to the Income-tax officials who conducted a 35-hour enquiry with him and declared that no inappropriate cash or accounts were discovered on his premises.

The actor resumed the shooting of 'Master' on Friday. However, things only turned worse, when cadres belonging to BJP conducted protests in

front of the second mines site of the Neyveli Lignite Factory (NLC) demanding the management of the Central government-owned company immediately cancel the permission given to shoot the film and stop the proceedings immediately.

According to media reports, a team of around 200 people including artistes and technicians is shooting in the mining area of the company. The makers of the 'Master' team have reportedly paid Rs 25,000 per day to Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited and they have paid an amount of Rs 2.5 lakh for 10 days of shooting at their place.

Sources said that a few BJP cadres with their flags staged a protest. Neyveli Vijay fans and cadres belonging to VCK party gathered at the NLC in huge numbers and stood in support of the actor. Police initiated a mild lathi-charge to disperse the crowd.

## Relief for veggie traders as temporary market opens

**G.SRINIVASAN | DC  
THANJAVUR, FEB. 7**

Temporary vegetable market on SPCA grounds on Pudukkottai road near Child Jesus church started functioning from Friday at Thanjavur.

Wholesale traders and retail traders of Kamaraj market near palace grounds, shifted their vegetable shops to outlets provided by the city corporation in the temporary market to facilitate the construction of a new market complex under smart city scheme in the place where the Kamaraj market existed.

In the temporary market put up on two acres of land, there are 96 wholesale shops and 224 retail shops. Market started functioning from 4 am on Friday and people started purchasing vegetables, fruits etc from the new temporary market.

History of Kamaraj market, which is to be reconstructed, dates back to 1804. It started as a weekly shandy and later converted into a daily market.

In 1965, a fire devastated the market. The then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu K. Kamaraj ordered con-



struction of a new market and he declared it open with 93 wholesale shops and 212 retail shops.

The plan now is to construct a new market complex on 17.47 acres of land at a cost of ₹17.47 crore. "The market will be completed in eight months time," said corporation officials.

The complex will house 211 shops and will have parking place for eight lorries, 17 four-wheelers and 176 two-wheelers. It will have toilet and drinking water facilities.

Meanwhile, banana traders appealed to the city corporation officials to allot them shops in a more convenient place in the temporary market than the place now allotted to them as it is in a corner and hence could not attract the attention of customers. Traders also demanded better toilet and drinking water facilities in the temporary market.

## nCoV: 100 persons under home quarantine in Kovai

**LAKSHMI L LUND | DC  
COIMBATORE, FEB. 7**

Nearly 100 individuals who are in Coimbatore from China are under home quarantine for a period of 28 days. In the backdrop of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) affecting 24 countries across the globe, the Health and Family Welfare department of the Government of Tamil Nadu has stepped up vigil across the state. Government of Tamil Nadu has strengthened surveillance and control measures against the virus as per the national guidelines." a source from the health department said.

In Coimbatore alone from January 24 to Feb. 4, a total of 78 air passengers from flights from China, Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand were screened universally through thermal screening. During the period, a total of 13,112 air passengers were screened at the various airports across the state of which as many as 1,351 are under home quarantine for a period of 28 days.

The local health department has issued advisory to the public to strictly follow the basic hygiene routine like washing hands with soap regularly and covering face while coughing and sneezing. "Individuals who have arrived from the regions impacted by the 2019-nCoV must be under strict home quarantine, regardless of them displaying symptoms of the virus or not," official said.

## CM urged to grant tea subsidy for small farmers

**Ooty:** In a memorandum to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Ooty Congress MLA, R. Ganesh, had requested immediate steps to grant subsidy to small tea growers (STG) in Nilgiris.

The memorandum stated that there are 65,000 STG families in the Nilgiris whose livelihood depend on tea cultivation. Though the green tea leaf (GTL) which the STG cultivate and supply to tea factories, used to fetch around ₹20 per kg in the year around 1996, but for the past two decades, the GTL procurement price had come down to an average of ₹10 per kg. This is not only non-remunerative, but subjected small tea growers to untold misery and made it difficult for them to make ends meet.

With increase in the cost of farm inputs and increase in wages and other related expenditure, tea cultivation is pinching STGs who solely bank on tea cultivation for their livelihood. The dip in prices of tea is also affecting the tea-based economy in the Nilgiris.

As tea cultivation has become non-remunerative, many STG families have begun to migrate in search of job opportunities in the neighbouring districts, he noted.

So, at this juncture, the govt should come forward to grant ₹5 as subsidy for a kg of GTL to help STGs tide over the crisis till conditions improved, he urged.—DC



IN BRIEF

**Tainted J&K cop claims life threat**

**Srinagar:** Tainted Jammu and Kashmir police officer Davinder Singh and four others including two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) militants and their two alleged 'over-ground workers' (OWG) were on Friday sent to 15-day judicial custody by a special NIA court in Jammu. While Singh was soon sent to Hiranagar jail in Kathua district, the others were lodged in high-security Kotbalwal jail. Singh had earlier pleaded before the judge that he may face a serious threat to his life if he too is lodged in Kotbalwal prison.

**Kerala withdraws calamity warning**

**Thiruvananthapuram:** The Kerala government on Friday withdrew the 'state calamity' warning issued in the wake of the novel coronavirus (nCoV) scare as no new positive cases of infection have been detected over the last few days, even as over 3,000 people are still under observation. State health minister K.K. Shailaja said as of today 61 people are in isolation wards of various hospitals across the state.

**Virus screening at 12 major ports**

**New Delhi:** The government on Friday said it has directed all 12 major ports to immediately put in place screening, detection and quarantine system for disembarking seafarers and cruise passengers as a preventive measure against the coronavirus outbreak. The direction comes against the backdrop of the virus — which first emerged in Wuhan city in China's central Hubei province — spreading to 25 countries.

**Indrani seeks bail by citing parity**

**Mumbai:** Indrani Mukerjea, the prime accused in the 2012 Sheena Bora murder case, Friday told the court that she should be granted bail on grounds of parity as the co-accused in the case, her former husband Peter Mukerjea, was granted bail. She said the CBI's claim that she killed her daughter for money was false as 75% of property was in her name.

**Varsity violence: 10 held, freed on bail**

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 7**  
Around 10 students of SRM University, Kattangulathur campus, were arrested by Maraimalai Nagar police for involving in violence inside the college campus, allegedly carrying deadly weapons like a machete and a gun. The students were booked under IPC sections 147(Punishment for rioting), 148 (Rioting, armed with deadly weapon), 343 (Wrongful confinement for three or more days), 294(b)(sings, recites or utters any obscene song, ballad or words, in or near any public place,) and 506(ii) (Punishment for criminal intimidation).

**IIMR ENCASHES POPCORN CRAZE IN JOWAR PUFFS**

**N.B. HOMBAL | DC BENGALURU, FEB. 7**  
Popcorn is a craze among movie-goers across the world and encashing on this mindset, Hyderabad based Indian Institute of Millet Research (IIMR) has developed a technology using which one can produce Jowar puffs, Bajra puffs and puffs from various types of millets, which not only taste similar to popcorn but are also more nutritious. Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle* on the sidelines of the National Horticulture Fair here, IIMR-NutriHub Technical assistant, Sai Prashant said, "We have received more than 50 inquiries in the last two days on the setting-up of this puff making machine in Karnataka. After tasting our products, many have shown interest but it will take some time to finalise the deals." According to him, IIMR has developed this process for manufacture of millet puffs using explosive puffing or gun puffing where the grain is expanded to the maximum.

**Security up for Delhi polls**

**BJP confident of winning 45 seats as surveys point to AAP win**

FROM P1

Tight security measures have been put in place across the city, especially sensitive areas like Shaheen Bagh, for peaceful polling in which Delhi's 1.47 crore voters will decide whether Mr Kejriwal gets another term as chief minister for the development work done and promised, or the BJP, which campaigned aggressively on the "anti-Shaheen Bagh" nationalism pitch, will get a chance to form the government. The voters' verdict will also decide the political relevance of the Congress in the state it had ruled for 15 consecutive years.

The last two weeks of campaigning for the country's most prestigious electoral battle since the Lok Sabha polls in April-May 2019 saw the BJP roping in almost all Union ministers, 11 chief ministers and 200-odd MPs to hard-sell its nationalistic narrative to garner the support of voters to unseat Mr Kejriwal. Many BJP leaders even tried to polarise voters along communal lines.

To address the Hindu votebank, the chief minister even recited the "Hanuman Chalisa" at a recent show organized by a news channel where he declared himself to be a diehard follower of Lord Hanuman. On Friday, he along with his family offered prayers at the famous Hanuman Temple in Connaught Place. After his visit to the temple, he tweeted: "Sought blessings of Hanumanji at famous Hanuman temple at CP. Bhagwanji said - 'You are doing good work. Continue serving people like this. Leave the outcome to me, all will be fine.'"

**Ring closes on Naidu as aides face big raids**

**S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 7**

A series of raids in the last 48 hours by Central agencies of the homes and offices of close associates of former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, including his former private secretary, is causing some anxiety in Telugu Desam circles about the future of their boss. Income-tax officials raided the residences and offices of Mr Naidu's former personal secretary P. Srinivasa Rao and Kadapa district TD president Srinivasula Reddy at Vijayawada, Kadapa and Hyderabad.

On Friday, I-T officials reportedly raided Aveksa Corporation in Hyderabad owned by former TD minister Pratiapatti Pulla Rao's son Sharath. Apparently, I-T officials have never raided the house of the personal secretary of a former chief minister before.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal offers prayers at the Hanuman Mandir, in New Delhi on Friday.

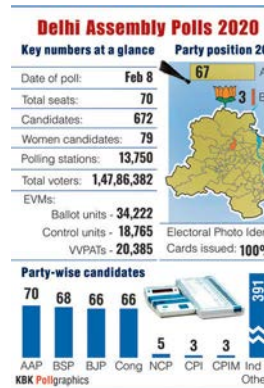
**Sisodia OSD held for graft**

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 7**

The CBI has arrested Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's OSD (Officer on Special Duty), Gopal Krishna Madhav, on the basis of information provided by a middleman who allegedly collected bribes from transporters on his behalf, officials said on Friday. The arrest of Madhav was made by the agency in an operation on Thursday evening, ahead of the crucial Delhi elections, after middleman Dheeraj Gupta, nabbed on February 5, claimed he was collecting money on

behalf of the officer. Sources said that the agency has not found Mr Sisodia's involvement in the case so far. "CBI has arrested Dheeraj Gupta, who is a resident of Delhi, and Gopal Krishna Madhav, the GST officer in trade and taxes department of government of NCT Delhi, who is also the OSD to deputy CM of Delhi, in a bribery case of ₹2.26 lakh," a CBI spokesperson said. During the questioning, Gupta claimed that he was collecting the bribe for Madhav, a Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Island civil service officer

in trade and tax department, officials said. "It was alleged that the private person (Gupta) was acting as a middleman on behalf of some GST department officers, including for the public servant (Madhav), for collecting illegal gratification from transporters for not charging GST from them," the spokesperson said. Madhav was immediately taken to the headquarters where he was questioned in detail by the CBI officers, officials said. Gupta has been sent to judicial custody by a special court while Madhav will be produced before court on Friday, they said.



**FIR LODGED ON AAP FOR SHOLAY SPOOF VIDEO**

**New Delhi, Feb. 7:** An FIR was registered against the Aam Aadmi Party over a spoof video of popular Bollywood film *Sholay* in which Union Home Minister Amit Shah is shown as 'Gabbar' and three BJP leaders as dacoits, police said on Friday. The FIR was registered on January 25 by the Special Cell of Delhi Police on the complaint of the BJP, they said. In its complaint, the BJP alleged that the spoof video of the famous scene from Bollywood film *Sholay* has been edited by the AAP and is being circulated on a large scale on social media and YouTube with an intent to "damage, demean and tarnish" the party's image. It alleged that the spoof video is being projected and circulated on a large scale to influence the voters of Delhi. According to the complaint, the video shows BJP leaders as dacoits.

**Isaac to mop up more revenue**

**DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 7**

The CPM-led LDF government in its last full budget before next year's Assembly elections, announced a slew of measures for mopping up additional resources and providing relief to the poor sections. The government announced welfare programmes for women, raised the social welfare pension by ₹100, 1000 eating outlets to be opened across the state for providing meals at ₹25. She Lodges for women in all major

towns, total ban on use of CFL by November 2020. Land transactions will cost more with fair price being increased by 10 per cent. Tax on luxury buildings increase increased. Cars up to ₹15 lakh will cost more with increase of 2 per cent tax, 1 per cent additional tax on motorbikes not costing above ₹2 lakh. There will be one time 5 per cent tax for all electric vehicles. The government also announced austerity measures. Instead of buying new vehicles, the government will hire cars for official purpose.

**Kerala Budget cover stirs row**

**DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 7**

The CPM led Left Front Government in Kerala utilised the budget speech on Friday to launch a scathing attack on the Citizenship Amendment Act. The cover picture of the budget speech featuring the painting of Mahatma Gandhi's also triggered a controversy. The Left Government defended the picture saying it was to remind the people that Hindu communalists were behind the gruesome murder. Reading out the budget speech Finance Minister Thomas Isaac painted a grim picture of the country: "Democracy and dictatorship are standing face to face in India. The rulers in Delhi speak only in the language of hatred and rancour. The administrative set up has completely yielded to communalism," he alleged. Isaac said the threat of detention camps is hanging over 19 lakh Assamese. In this backdrop, the unity shown by the ruling and opposition parties in Kerala in fighting against CAA, was a model for the rest of the country. The CM and Opp-



The cover picture of Kerala's Budget speech featuring a painting of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination that triggered a controversy in the state.

osition leader sitting in Satyagraha against CAA on the same platform, passing of unanimous resolution against CAA and filing of suit in Supreme Court against CAA sent out a powerful message to the whole country. The Congress led opposition expressed reservations about the use of Mahatma Gandhi assassination picture on the cover of budget speech. Opposition leader Mr Ramesh Chennithala said it was not appropriate to use

**RECTIFY STAND ON ANTI-CAA STIR, CM TELLS PM**

**DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 7**

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi must rectify his statement that malign anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests in Kerala. He said that it was not befitting a PM to be part of those who were disappointed with the fact that Kerala is leading the struggle against the communalism of both the RSS and the SDPI. Mr Vijayan was referring to the statement made by the PM about Kerala during the motion of thanks to the President's address in Parliament. He said the PM's statement was prot-est-worthy and untrue. Mr Modi had referred to Mr Vijayan's recent statement that certain extrem-

ism was not befitting a PM to be part of those who were disappointed with the fact that Kerala is leading the struggle against the communalism of both the RSS and the SDPI. Mr Vijayan was referring to the statement made by the PM about Kerala during the motion of thanks to the President's address in Parliament. He said the PM's statement was prot-est-worthy and untrue. Mr Modi had referred to Mr Vijayan's recent statement that certain extrem-

**Indian cities turning urban heat islands: IIT study**

**Kolkata, Feb. 7:** A team of researchers from IIT Kharagpur has found that most cities in the country are turning into "urban heat islands" in all seasons during day and night, officials said. In their study, researchers from Centre for Oceans, Rivers, Atmosphere and Land Sciences (CORAL) of IIT-KGP and its Architecture and Regional Planning department showed that most big cities in the country with population more than one million have recorded rise in mercury level during daytime while showing an increasing trend in the night hours. The study, *Anthropogenic forcing exacerbating the urban heat islands in India*, noted that the relatively warmer temperatures in urban areas, compared to suburbs, have potential health

hazards due to heat waves apart from pollution, an IIT-KGP statement said on Friday. "Our research is a detailed and careful analysis of urban heat islands of India, which is the difference between urban and surrounding rural land surface temperatures, across all seasons in 44 major cities from 2001 to 2017," Professor Arun Chakraborty, one of the researchers, said. He further said, "For the first time, we have found evidence of mean daytime temperature of Surface Urban Heat Island (UHI Intensity) going up to 2C for most cities, as analysed from satellite temperature measurements in monsoon and post-monsoon periods." In Kolkata, Pune and Guwahati where the urban areas are surrounded by large green cover in suburban regions, there is "an

enhanced cooling effect on surface" in suburban areas during daytime as against cities in arid regions, the researchers said. "Evidence from our study suggests that more green spaces within the city and its boundary could reduce the temperature in the city and its neighbourhood," co-author of the paper Prof. Jayanarayanan Kuttippurath said. Conservation of water bodies and expansion of green areas in and around cities could be an effective strategy to curb the effects of urban heat islands, he said. The construction of buildings and infrastructure with eco-friendly materials could also prove to be crucial to mitigate the effects of heat islands, he said.

**UP's Basti dt may be renamed after sage**

**Gorakhpur, Feb. 7:** The renaming of Basti district after Maharishi Vashishth appears to be on the cards with the local administration sending a proposal on this to the state's revenue board. DM Ashutosh Niranjan said the proposal to change the name of the district has been sent to the revenue board and the expenditure for it is pegged around ₹1 crore. The Adityanath government has changed the name Allahabad to Prayagraj and Faizabad to Ayodhya. It has also renamed Mughalsarai railway station after

Deen Dayal Upadhyay. According to officials, about a year ago during Basti Mahotsav, CM Adityanath had announced that Basti Medical College will be named after Maharishi Vashishth, who according to Hindu mythology was the guru of Lord Ram. After that announcement, a number of people demanded changing the name of the district. On November 28 last year, the proposal of changing the name of the district was sent to the Revenue Board which sought an estimated

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— PTI



IN BRIEF

France pushes arms control

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron warned Friday that European nations "cannot remain spectators" faced with a potential nuclear arms race, urging them to push an "international arms control agenda". "Europeans must realise collectively that in the absence of a legal framework, they could rapidly face a new race for conventional weapons, even nuclear weapons, on their own soil," Macron said in a speech laying out France's post-Brexit strategy for its nuclear arsenal. He added that France had already reduced its number of warheads to under 300, giving France "the legitimacy to demand concrete moves from other nuclear powers toward global disarmament that is gradual, credible and can be verified".

Pak jet crashes during training

Islamabad: A Mirage aircraft of Pakistan Air Force crashed on Friday in Punjab province during a routine operational training mission. The PAF said in a statement that the Mirage jet crashed near Shorkot area in Punjab province. "The pilot ejected safely and no loss of life or property has been reported on ground," according to the statement. The cause of the accident was not known. A board of inquiry was ordered by Air Headquarters to determine the cause of the accident. On January 7, two Pakistan Air Force pilots were killed when their China-made trainer aircraft crashed in Punjab province.

'Shouldergate' dress for auction

London: Labour MP Tracy Brabin, who was branded a "tart" for wearing an off-the-shoulder dress in the House of Commons, is selling it on ebay for charity, with bids already topping £1,250. Ms Brabin, 58, hit back at "sexist" criticism after the top of her outfit slipped down her shoulder as she leaned on the despatch box on Monday. Widespread coverage of the incident - which saw many spring to the shadow culture secretary's defence - reportedly saw a surge in demand for the black pencil dress. An item description accompanying the new ebay auction lot reads: "This is an ASOS dress which has been flying off the shelves... and is now sold out!"

MALALA'S SHOOTER ESCAPES

Islamabad, Feb. 7: Ehsanullah Ehsan, the Taliban terrorist responsible for shooting Nobel Peace prize winner Malala Yousafzai in 2012 and carrying out the deadly Peshawar Army school terror attack in 2014 in which 132 students were killed - has escaped from prison, according to an audio clip released by him.

In the audio clip, which surfaced on social media on Thursday, Ehsanullah Ehsan said that he escaped the confinement of Pakistani security agencies on January 11, claiming Pakistani forces failed to keep their promises made to him during his surrender in 2017.

"With the help of God, I succeeded to escape on January 11, 2020 from the confinement of the security forces," he is heard saying in the clip.

Without revealing his current location, Ehsan said that he would soon make a detailed statement about his confinement.

Malala Yousafzai, 22, was shot for campaigning for girls' education in 2012 in Pakistan's Swat Valley.

In the audio clip, Ehsanullah Ehsan said that he surrendered to the Pakistani security agencies on February 5, 2017 under an agreement but the forces failed to keep their promise made before the surrender.

"I followed the agreement for about three years. But these shrewd security institutions put me in prison along with my children in violation of the agreement," he said, adding that he finally decided to flee from the forces.

The authenticity of the audio and veracity of Ehsanullah Ehsan's claim was not verified by the security forces or the Pakistan government.

Trump unleashes fury

Prez celebrates impeachment acquittal by blasting Oppn Dems

Washington, Feb. 7: A combative President Donald Trump celebrated his acquittal in the grueling impeachment trial by launching a tirade against the Democrats, saying, "they want to destroy our country." A day after he was acquitted by the ruling Republican Party-controlled Senate on the two impeachment charges - abuse of power and obstruction to Congress - Trump appeared confident, energetic and combative as ever against his opponents. "It's a celebration," Trump said of the event, attended by top Republican politicians, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell as well as the members of the Cabinet and the legal team that defended him in the Senate trial. "We went through hell, unfairly, did nothing wrong, did nothing wrong. I've done things wrong in my life, I will admit," Trump said in the East Room of the White House. "This is really not a news conference. It's not a speech. It's not anything. It's just we're sort of - it's a celebration because we have something that just worked out. I mean it worked out," the 73-year-old president said.

In his speech that lasted for over an hour, Trump said, "Now we have that gorgeous word. I never thought it would sound so good." "It's called 'total acquittal'." "They want to destroy our country," Trump said of the Democrats. Trump was impeached by the Democratic Party-led House of Representatives in December for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, but was acquitted in the Senate. —PTI



President Donald Trump pauses as he speaks in the East Room of the White House in Washington. — AP

GOP governor flays Trump

Montpelier (Vermont): Vermont's Republican governor says he thinks President Donald Trump abused his power and shouldn't be in office. Gov. Phil Scott is a frequent Trump critic, but his comments at a news conference Thursday are a notably rare dissent from within party ranks. He says the Senate

should have been allowed to hear from more witnesses during the impeachment trial that ended Wednesday with an acquittal for Trump. Scott says that "I believe he abused his position of power." He also praised Sen. Mitt Romney, of Utah, the only Republican to break ranks with his party and vote to convict Trump. —AP

Warren apologises to 6 women of colour

Derry (US): Elizabeth Warren is apologising to six women of colour who left her presidential campaign office in Nevada before the state's caucuses because they felt marginalised and because their concerns weren't addressed by supervisors. "I believe these women completely and without reservation. And I apologise that they have had a bad experience on this campaign," the Massachusetts senator said after an event in Derry, New Hampshire. "I tried to build a campaign and an organisation that is diverse and welcoming, that celebrates people, that encourages people to bring their whole selves to work every single day," she said. Politico reported that six women have left Warren's campaign office since November. Nevada holds its Democratic caucus on February 22. Campaigning in New Hampshire for the state's Feb. 11 primary, Warren said she understands "the long legacy of racism in this country and what it means". —AP

US kills Yemen Qaida leader

Washington, Feb. 7: President Donald Trump said Thursday that the US at his direction has conducted a counter-terrorism operation in Yemen that killed Qassim al-Rimi, an al-Qaida leader who claimed responsibility for last year's deadly shooting at Naval Air Station Pensacola, where a Saudi aviation trainee killed three American sailors.



Qassim al-Rimi

Al-Rimi is a founder of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The affiliate has long been considered the global network's most dangerous branch for its attempts to carry out attacks on the U.S. mainland. Trump said the U.S. and its allies are safer as a result of his death.

"We will continue to protect the American people by tracking down and eliminating terrorists who seek to do us harm," Trump said.

While Trump confirmed reports that al-Rimi had been killed, he did not say when the U.S. operation was conducted or offer any details about how it was carried out.

Al-Rimi had said in an 18-minute video that his group was responsible for the Dec. 6 shooting at the base. He called the shooter, Saudi Air Force officer Mohammed Alshamrani, a "courageous knight" and a "hero." The shooter

opened fire inside a classroom at the base, killing three people and wounding two sheriff's deputies before one of the deputies killed him. Eight others were also hurt.

The shooting focused public attention on the presence of foreign students in American military training programs and exposed shortcomings in the screening of cadets. In January, the U.S. sent home 21 Saudi military students, saying the trainees had jihadist or anti-American sentiments on social media pages or had "contact with child pornography," including in internet chat rooms.

Trump's announcement confirmed earlier indications that al-Rimi had been killed. —PTI



A passenger plane narrowly escapes being shot by Syrian anti-aircraft fire. — AP

Syria fire targets passenger jet

Moscow, Feb. 7: A passenger plane carrying 172 passengers from Tehran to Damascus made an emergency landing at the Russian-controlled Hmeimim Air Base in Syria on Thursday to avoid coming under fire from Syrian air defenses, Russia said on Friday. The Syrian forces were responding to Israeli strikes on targets in Syria, Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov was quoted as saying by Interfax and other Russian agencies. The incident took place a

Ankara, Feb. 7: Turkey has sent nearly 150 vehicles with commandos and ammunition to reinforce its observation posts in Idlib, Syria's last rebel-held region, Turkish state news agency Anadolu reported Friday.

A Turkish security source emphasised they were only to reinforce the 12 existing posts established under a 2018 deal with Russia to prevent an offensive by Syrian government forces. —AFP

month after a Ukraine International Airlines passenger plane crashed shortly after take-off from

Tehran, killing all 176 people on board. Iran later said its forces had shot it down unintentionally due

to human error. The Syrian defense ministry said on Thursday it had intercepted Israeli missiles over Damascus that were fired at military targets in southern Syria. Israel has declined to comment. The Airbus A320 (AIR.PA) had been coming into land at Damascus International Airport when it was forced to divert to the nearest alternative airfield, the Hmeimim Air Base near Latakia in northwest Syria, which is operated by the Russian military. —Reuters

Democrats set for NH debate

Manchester (New Hampshire), Feb. 7: The Democratic Party's seven strongest presidential contenders are preparing for what could be the fiercest debate stage clash of the 2020 primary season as candidates look to survive the gauntlet of contests that lie ahead.

The field has been shaken and reshaped by chaotic Iowa caucuses earlier this week, and Friday's debate in New Hampshire - coming four days before the state's primary - offers new opportunity and risk for the shrinking pool of White House hopefuls. Two candidates, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and former Midwestern mayor Pete Buttigieg, enter the night as the top targets, having emerged from Iowa essentially tied for the lead.

Those trailing after the first contest - including former Vice President Joe Biden, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar - have an urgent need to demonstrate strength.

Billionaire activist Tom Steyer and New York entrepreneur Andrew Yang, meanwhile, are fighting to prove they belong in the conversation.

The rapidly evolving dynamic means that the candidates have a very real incentive to mix it up with their Democratic rivals in the 8 pm debate hosted by ABC. They may not get another chance.

"This is the time when voters are eager for candidates to show they can compare and contrast, but also show they're in it to win it," said Democratic strategist Lily Adams, who worked on California Sen. Kamala Harris' unsuccessful 2020 presidential campaign.



Democratic presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders speaks during a press conference at his New Hampshire headquarters. — AP

THIS IS the eighth debate of the race, and none has really had an impact. There's been a noticeable lack of attacks or memorable lines, and television ratings have tanked.

"Expect it to get more feisty." Indeed, it was a debate at this same stage in New Hampshire four years ago on the Republican side that then-New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie devastated Florida Sen. Marco Rubio's presidential ambitions with a well-timed take-down. Rubio never recovered, making it easier for Donald Trump to emerge as his party's presidential nominee.

The stakes are particularly high this week for Biden, who has played front-runner in virtually every one of the previous seven debates but left Iowa in distant fourth place. —AP

PALESTINIANS: TRUMP PLAN LED TO CLASHES

Jerusalem, Feb. 7: The Palestinians on Friday rejected United States allegations of incitement after a day of clashes and attacks left three Palestinians dead and more than a dozen Israelis wounded.

They instead linked the violence to President Donald Trump's Mideast initiative, which heavily favors Israel on all the most contentious issues of the conflict and would allow it to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank.

"Those who introduce plans for annexation and apartheid and the legalization of occupation and settlements are the ones who bear full responsibility for deepening the cycle of violence and extremism," senior Palestinian official Saeb Erekat said in a statement.

He was responding to remarks delivered the day before by Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and the architect of the Mideast blueprint, who had blamed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for the latest violence.

"Don't call for days of rage and encourage (your) people to pursue violence if they're not getting what they want," Kushner said on Thursday. —AP

ROYAL | IMPACT

British govt says it has changed policy of flying flags for scandal-hit Andrew

UK ditches flags for Prince Andrew's birthday

London, Feb. 7: The British government said it had changed the policy of flying flags on royal birthdays, with local authorities no longer required to raise the Union Flag for scandal-hit Prince Andrew. Officials earlier said they were considering how the policy applied "in changing circumstances, such as when members of the royal family step back from their duties", according to a spokesman for Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The government

later said it would be advising councils "that there is no requirement to fly flags on the 19th February following the decision by the Duke of York to step back from public duties for the foreseeable future."

The Sun newspaper had published a leaked email sent to local authorities reminding them to fly the British flag for Andrew's 60th birthday on February 19. It came just weeks after Queen Elizabeth II's second son withdrew from



Britain's Prince Andrew

public life and royal duties after a disastrous television interview defending his friendship with the late US sex offender

Jeffrey Epstein. Flying flags on government buildings in his honour "would be wholly inappropriate", opposition Labour lawmaker Wes Streeting told The Sun daily.

Johnson's spokesman said the email, sent by a civil servant in the local government ministry, was an "administrative email about long-standing policy". He said discussions were under way between the ministry and the Royal Household about a change. Designated days for fly-

ing the British flag on UK government buildings include the birthdays of Queen Elizabeth and her husband Prince Philip, their wedding day, the birthdays of their four children and of their grandson Prince William and his wife Kate.

Andrew has strenuously denied claims he had sex with a 17-year-old girl procured by Epstein, a financier found dead in prison last August while awaiting charges of trafficking minors. —AFP

Epstein scandal: Prince defers navy promotion

London, Feb. 27: Britain's Prince Andrew is to defer an honorary Royal Navy promotion after he stepped back from full royal duties over his links to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, Buckingham Palace said Friday.

The former naval officer, who saw service as a heli-

copter pilot during the 1982 war with Argentina in the Falklands Islands, was set to become an admiral for his 60th birthday on February 19.

But a palace spokeswoman said Andrew would push back the promotion until he can resume full royal duties. —AFP



## DECCAN Chronicle

8 FEBRUARY 2020

### A conscious move to deepen social divide

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's lengthy replies in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on Thursday to the debate on the motion of thanks on the President's address underscored a push — on the eve of the Delhi Assembly polls — to deepen the communal divide which his senior colleagues in the BJP and the government have been working hard to sharpen as a vote-polarising tactic.

Perhaps the most graphic example of this came on the same day as the PM's intervention in Parliament as one of his ministers said suicide bombers were being trained at Shaheen Bagh.

When the country is in the grip of a serious economic crisis, it is noteworthy the PM's reply showed no sign that the holder of the highest executive office was sensitive to the impact on the people's lives of the economic downturn caused by faulty policies.

The efforts of Opposition leaders to elicit from the PM a response framed under circumstances of urgency, and doing something special to alleviate the worsening jobs situation, proved futile.

The President's address to the joint session is a document cleared by the government, and is seen as a statement of the government's priorities and intentions. It made explicit that the government would be focused on politics, not economics.

The politics surrounding the revised citizenship law gained pride of place in this as this law is tailor-made for deepening communal schisms if the ruling party is intent on doing so.

Mr Modi lost no time in exploiting the situation. At the theoretical level, he had a hand packed with aces when he declared when a law passed by Parliament or a state Assembly is opposed by the people, this produces a recipe for chaos.

As a broad principle, this is unexceptionable. This is why, in the normal course, laws duly passed are not opposed wholesale and, when they are, the government and ruling party typically come forward with ameliorative amendments in the spirit of democratic sensitivity.

It is only a brute majoritarian government which, in the first place, brings a law that it knows will be deeply contentious and will be bitterly opposed, and then proposes to defend it in the public sphere on the ground that it has parliamentary sanction.

In effect, this amounts to the defence of majoritarian rule, and not of democratic life, ethics and standards.

In the case of the BJP-RSS, the CAA springs from its belief which, at base, sees people of a certain minority faith as the hostile "other". This is not proclaimed officially but no stone is left unturned to propagate this to the faithful.

Forceful civil society interventions are the instrument to diffuse the ruling party's ideological preferences to a wider public.

Looking at this controversy, there would have been no need for a CAA if India had only announced, without naming religious groups, that it would offer citizenship to those facing persecution. For the BJP-RSS, however, a certain religious category had to be openly declared as being excluded in order for it to assert its politics.

### Don't let Kia leave Andhra

A report by international news agency Reuters that South Korean auto major KIA Motors is planning to shift its manufacturing facility located in Andhra Pradesh's Anantapur district to neighbouring Tamil Nadu has rightly created political ripples and public concerns.

The question underlying the political churn and doubts in the minds of the general public is, does chief minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy have the capacity, interest and willingness to focus on development of the state and creating a business-friendly eco-system that will help the state rise in line with aspirations as an industrial and business powerhouse, and prosper.

Mr Reddy has scored in reforms and welfare — he has made English the default medium of school education and delivered on almost all his social welfare promises — but there is clearly more to a CM's job scope — making his state conducive to welcoming investors, creating jobs and setting it forth on a journey of ever-increasing growth. It is on this count that perhaps Mr Reddy has disappointed not only his voters and supporters but the business community.

The new report came as a bolt but it was not from the blue. YSRC leaders — including its Hindupur member of Parliament Gorantla Madhav, who reportedly misbehaved with the global CEO of Kia Motors at the plant inauguration programme last year — have been making unrealistic and unethical demands of Kia — whose denial of the news report was tame and not convincing enough.

Let Mr Reddy not forget the Nano episode — West Bengal under Mamata Banerjee is still to recover from the decision of the Tatas to leave. Mr Chandrababu Naidu put in some effort to bring Kia to AP — in a seeming political zeal to undo every decision taken by the previous government, Mr Reddy must not let Kia leave.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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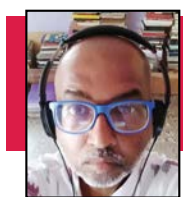
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Subhani

## Saffron rainbow rises as queers police their own



Ashley Tellis

If you still had any doubts that the "queer movement" in India is a right-wing, neoliberal, hellish agglomeration, the events of the last few days should have settled them.

First, there was the singling out of protesters who exercised the democratic right to protest against CAA-NPR-NRC as part of Bombay Pride. And they were singled out and reported by members of the "queer community".

Ashok Row Kavi, well-known, rabid, right-wing *amma* of the LGTBs, reduced them to "Left-Islamist nonsense" and claimed that their colleges were easy to "comb and search".

Several queers took to the social media to condemn the protesters and claim "queer" space and Pride March space as apolitical. The organising body of the march distanced themselves from the protesters, condemning pro-Sharjeel slogans as harming the "integrity of India", even as they claimed allegiance to the Constitution and law, both of which they clearly know nothing about.

Kris Chudawala, a trans student from TISS who exercised a democratic right is in jail under sedition charges and was denied anticipatory bail (along with 50 others). This for raising a slogan in a protest march and reading the Preamble of the Constitution. The "queer community" is delighted with this arrest. They had written to the Mumbai police asking for the arrests.

Then, Pune Pride followed with an equally repulsive statement claiming both distance

from those "supporting anti-nationals" and people who "bring political flags" (what on earth is a non-political flag?) and pollute Pride, which is only about "raising awareness". Clearly, these folk have no awareness of the origins and history of Pride. But "national integrity and security cannot be compromised." *Heil Hitler!*

Then, Delhi had an event against the Budget and all sorts of minority organisations participated, but "queer" groups were conspicuously absent.

The one trans activist present, Meera Sanghamitra, who, by her own public admission, had not intended to speak at all, eventually spoke but did not feel the need to even mention Chudawala and Bombay or Pune Pride. She settled for bland solidarities and a banal rewriting of the national anthem.

Fourth, no "queer" group has come out with a statement condemning the CAA-NRC-NPR, let alone the arrest of members of their community.

Fifth, as an experimenter, I changed my handle on all the gay dating and hookup apps I am on to "No to CAA-NPR-NRC". The barrage of abuse I got from people calling me Muslim (as a form of abuse), wanting

to rape my mother, my wife (yes, most Indian gay men have wives or are going to get them, so they presume all gay men do) was predictable. Jasbir Puar, a US South Asian academic, in her book *Terrist Assemblages* over a decade ago, had come up with the idea of homonationalism by which she meant countries like the US and Israel using gay politics/positions to justify imperialism, claiming the gay for the nation to other the figure of the "terrorist", demonising the Muslim and the Muslim country.

The nation here has done no such thing (the Indian State is robustly heterosexual and masculine and does not want to claim queers at all), but queers are clamouring to be included in the nation. They are each more hysterical than the other in their claim to the nationalist.

Moreover, the "terrorist" is anyone who criticises the State (the duty of a citizen in a democracy) and they don't mind demonising their own community members. This is not a nationalism against an Other outside the nation (the Pakistani) but within the nation.

This is a Hindu nationalism, and while Muslims might be the primary enemy, Christians, dalits, adivasis, women and anyone who is critical of the state is the enemy.

This is not a minority as we understand it at all. A minority is a group underrepresented by the state, demanding rights, offering a critique of the state. The Pride march has its origins in transgenders in

New York finally losing it with police tyranny, whereas these folk are tweeting the police asking them to come arrest members of the community. "Queer" has its origins in demanding healthcare from the state at the height of the AIDS crisis when the US had left gay men to die.

These queers embrace the state and are bending over backward to kick their own to the kerb. These Pride arches are about apolitical frolic and parties at five-star hotels later.

If "queer" lost its political edge long ago in the US (once it was co-opted by US academia), its circulation across the world through the globalisation of sexual governance had little more than an assimilationist and inclusivist rhetoric going for it.

But even that is gone from the new (or were they always that, but it is only now that their fangs are bared?), right-wing Hindu-fundamentalist queers who are now deciding which queers get to be Indian and which don't.

The Left anti-Budget meeting had the usual suspects invoking the usual laundry list of minorities: farmer, worker, dalits, adivasi, woman. The queer was missing. While that usually incenses me, this time it was reassuring. Queers are the enemy.

It is time for the real sexual minorities to stand up, please.

*Tellis is an academic, a journalist, an editor and a writer on LGBT and other minority issues*

The Left anti-Budget meeting had the usual suspects invoking the usual laundry list of minorities: farmer, worker, dalits, adivasi, woman. The queer was missing... This time it was reassuring.

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## LETTERS

### ENSURE DEMOCRACY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned that the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Bill by the Opposition parties across the country will lead to anarchy. It must be remembered that the will or decision of the absolute majority government is not necessarily the will of the majority of the people. The government has passed the bill in haste and is reaping the consequences. It is imperative that the government senses the pulse of the society before framing such sensitive laws to ensure a peaceful democracy.

S. Ramakrishnasayee,  
Chennai

### SO AUTHORITATIVE

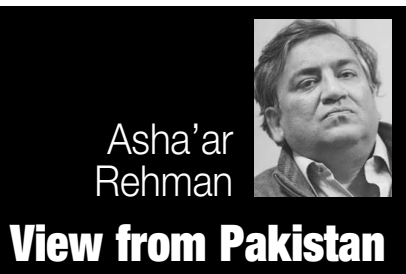
This is with reference to, *Forest min apologises for embarrassing boy*. Tamil Nadu forest minister Dindigul C.Sreenivasan has caused outrage after asking two minor boys from tribal communities to remove his slippers while on a visit to Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and subsequently before entering into a temple nearby. The district collector Ms Divya who accompanied the minister was seen witnessing the incident without trying to prevent it. The act of the minister was in bad taste as the tone of him while calling the boys was so authoritative. The minister who represents the people has to be role model to others instead he was setting a bad precedent; he was not ready to utilise anyone out of the persons who were at his disposal and available with him at the time of the incident, this itself is the proof that he misused his power.

A. Kumar,  
Chennai

### RATES STATUS QUO

The decision of Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to maintain the status quo on basic rates is hardly surprising given the surge in inflation and no sign of it relenting in the coming quarters. While MPC underscored its commitment to accommodative monetary stance to revive growth and indications about cut in rates once there is a discernible fall in inflation, RBI with no restrictions on policy space has taken recourse to credit policy and other tools available to stimulate the economy. By taking recourse to its strategy of hastening the transmission of rate cuts to the broader economy and boosting credit flow to select sectors, RBI has achieved monetary easing without cutting the policy rate. The relief to banks for incremental loans extended to sectors such as automobiles, real estate and Micro small and Medium enterprises, (MSME) by reducing the cost of lending by waiving the requirement of cash reserve ratio will have multiplier effects and helpful in stimulating the economy. But the concerns about the risks of forbearance associated strategy of directing credit to select sectors cannot be taken in lighter vein.

M. Jeyaram,  
Sholavandan



Asha'ar Rehman  
View from Pakistan

### Is okaying Maryam exit freedom or surrender?

There is no end to the twists in this family saga made up of jails, hospitals, vast sprawling estates and foreign dreams, with all kinds of characters and frills thrown in for effect. Mian Shahbaz Sharif has taken the story to the latest dizzying stage with a revelation about the hurdles in the long-awaited and urgently required treatment for Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

Here is a serious patient needing urgent medical intervention and his learned attendants are risking a delay — for whatever reason. There are serious issues with this explanation (to begin with) that could spark an unending debate about roles and responsibilities and blame.

But trust the good old younger brother for trying to be as convincing in his plea as he has ever been. Mr Shahbaz Sharif goes about building his case with typical emphasis on certain words. He wants everyone to believe that he is speaking on behalf of a man whose condition is seriously unstable.

"Mian Sahib was investigated comprehensively at Royal Brompton Hospital, London for the present cardiac status and to determine the need for intervention," reads a story in this paper by Amir Wasim which

cites a statement by the PML-N. "The investigations revealed significant ischemic burden affecting major areas of heart and impaired function as well." And then there is the real purpose of these technical details that another patient wanting some privacy would rather keep under wraps: "In view of the unstable state of health of Mian Sahib, Maryam Nawaz should be allowed to join her father. The more time is passing, the less is the space for intervention."

Desperation begets desperation. Some of the reaction that this rather desperate-looking attempt at masterminding a long-distance flight for Ms Maryam Nawaz is reflective of the disastrous mindset in the PTI camp right now. One quote from a more vocal minister from the same story would suffice.

The worthy minister says that allowing Ms Maryam to leave at this stage would be like striking the last nail in the PTI's accountability pledge. It couldn't have been more damning than this.

It would seem that a large number of people had long got the drift. In various commentaries, it has been discussed how the government would be far better off dispatching the whole Sharif clan across the fence. The absence, it is submitted

with a lot of reliance on common sense, would help the government claim there was a deal behind this escape by the former ruling family.

The removal of as many Sharifs as possible, the point goes, would free the Imran Khan government to concentrate on development. The government cannot be forever bogged down in the romantic ideal of holding everyone accountable for past deeds. Frankly, this is not at all a new angle. The original advice to the PTI government had warned the party against having too deep an obsession with punishing rulers of the past. It is the prime minister who has, against counsel, steadfastly opposed all suggestions that might have found him extending favours to those facing corruption charges.

However, a situation where it seems that Mr Imran Khan has been forced to grant a reprieve has its own demerits. It has an element of surrender to it as opposed to a leader magnanimously, or simply proudly, agreeing to the departure of politicians under trial by invoking the old doctrine of 'good riddance'.

The intended alarm in the latest statement by Mian Shahbaz Sharif signifies the beginning of another, stronger push by the PML-N to carry Ms Maryam Nawaz across the line.

In the hours and days to come, the thrust is likely to intensify. More reports of a long silent Mian Sahib stubbornly shaking his head in rejection to all trying to persuade him to undergo a cardiac procedure were told he ought to have undergone a long time ago, could increase pressure on the accountability-obsessed government.

Indeed the government may be too single-minded. This could spark some very tense moments in the emotionally charged Pakistani politics. If the past is any guide, a growing number of commentators may be swayed by the human side of it to call upon Prime Minister Imran Khan to make this departure.

Meanwhile, the discussion about whatever the PML-N needs right now — leadership, to start with — can wait. What can be guessed is that the task of repairing the party from abroad would be far more onerous this time round than it was two decades ago after the Sharifs were toppled and sent out by Gen Musharraf. It would require some special intervention, the kind of magic spun by Begum Kulsoom Nawaz back then.

We all know the privileged scribes amongst us live in a neighbourhood of their own. Among the other facili-

ties that they enjoy, they have this luxury of falling back on their sources in the world beyond. These scribes get heavenly letters that can neither be denied nor questioned. Unfortunately, the facility is unavailable to the meek and timid, but something we cannot do without, suppose we were to today receive that elusive envelope in the mail? What would the contents of that letter be?

And even more importantly, who would be its sender — that someone important on the other side sufficiently moved by an event to write the long-awaited note? Like "Dear scribe, This is Kulsom Nawaz Sharif. I hope you are doing well and still have enough motivation to occasionally report on voices that are closer to the more obscure versions of truth. "I need your help to convey this message to Mian Shahbaz Sahib ... Next time could he please not mention my illness as he goes about appealing for Maryam's presence by Mian Sahib's side in a London hospital. Illness. Hospital. London. As an elder it is my duty to ensure that there are no unwanted comparisons between family members who have undergone or are undergoing medical treatment."

By arrangement with Dawn



# Trump is on a roll now, India needs to cash in



Indranil Banerjee

President Donald Trump's triumph appears total after the collapse of his impeachment trial in the US Senate, leading to his acquittal Wednesday night. Not only that, his popularity ratings too have soared, according to the Gallup polls. The Democrats are in disarray, and as of now he looks a clear frontrunner in the run-up to the November presidential elections.

President Trump's victory in the Senate trial was a foregone conclusion with its Republican majority standing firm behind their leader. Senate rules require a two-thirds majority for a successful impeachment, and it was clear from the beginning that the Democrats and Mr Trump's rivals could never muster that figure.

Mr Trump continues to be the

Republicans' best and only bet now, and there's simply no credible opposition to him within the party. Senator Mitt Romney, the lone Republican to vote against the President, whom he publicly accused of committing "an appalling abuse of public trust", finds himself ostracised and staring at the end of his political career.

Massachusetts governor Bill Weld, talk show host and former US representative Joe Walsh, and realtor Rocky De La Fuente have thrown their hats into the ring, but nobody considers them serious challengers to Mr Trump. The Iowa Republican caucuses that took place on February 3 gave the President 97 per cent votes, illustrating clearly which way the wind is blowing.

The Democrats, on the other hand, present a much-divided house with as many as 11 presidential hopefuls and a dimin-

ished support base. Former vice-president Joe Biden is widely considered the Democrats' favourite, but some reports suggest Bernie Sanders, the Brooklyn-born senator from Vermont, has a chance of taking the lead.

If the Iowa caucuses 2020 results are anything to go by, the results are significant. While President Trump got an overwhelming majority of Republican votes, the Democrats' vote was split, with Pete Buttigieg securing an unexpected 26.2 per cent share, Bernie Sanders 26.1 per cent, Elizabeth Warren 18.2 per cent and Joe Biden trailing with just 15.8 per cent. These results are not just a big upset, but also reflective of the turmoil within the Democratic Party.

President Trump's popularity, meanwhile, continues to grow despite his unpredictable behaviour, frequent gaffes and claims of past misconduct. According to the latest Gallup polls, approval for Mr Trump has shot up from 41 per cent in October last year to 48 per cent in January this year, which suggests that impeachment proceedings actually helped him!

Gallup's economic confidence index shows an even sharper rise between October 2019 and January 2020, up from

21 (on a scale of 100 to 100) to 40. As much as 62 per cent of Americans said the economy is "excellent" or "good", as against eight per cent, who described it as "poor".

Clearly, the President's hard-nosed economic decisions, particularly the renegotiating of trade deals (with Canada, Mexico, China and India), has the approval of large numbers of Americans. Also, employment is at a 50-year high and the economy has been doing consistently well over the past few years.

Not surprisingly, in the same period, the polls saw a happy rise in US "satisfaction levels", or the percentage of Americans who are satisfied with the way things are going in the country, which is up from 28 to 41 per cent. Satisfaction levels

haven't been this high since 2005.

In short, President Trump is doing pretty good. Yet, on the flip side, Americans have never been as divided as they are today. While President Trump might have been acquitted in the Senate impeachment trial and is pushing ahead with a popular tailwind, it does not mean that the fundamental churning within American society and politics have ended. Far from it.

Timothy Naftali, co-author of the book *Impeachment: An American History*, pointed out in an interview that wrongs do not necessarily lead to impeachment. Bill Clinton was impeached in 1998 but like Mr Trump was later acquitted in a Senate trial.

However, a failed impeachment trial also does not suggest that the charges were wrong. In the end, as in the Clinton case, the Trump impeachment was all about politics and power. The substance of the charges was secondary and in the ultimate analysis of little consequence.

President Trump might have triumphed and is likely on the path for a second stint as US President, but he has not been able to unite the country behind him. If anything, it is

more fractured today with the Gallup polls showing that 50 per cent Americans continue to disapprove of him.

Given the current political configuration in the United States, this disapproval rating will translate to little; politics, economics and the US strategic outlook can be expected to remain consistent over the medium term.

This can only be good news for India. For President Trump, despite his hard dealings in trade and business matters, does not appear to disfavour India.

Even his unwelcome offers to mediate between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue appears more a concession to the Pakistani leadership than an ill-intentioned snub to India. For Washington continues to negotiate with Islamabad over a possible deal on Afghanistan and President Trump has to keep the Pakistani leaders appeased.

Donald Trump will be visiting India later this month as a confident and relaxed President. He will be tough in negotiations and expect concessions from India, which he most likely will extract. Yet, in the overall scheme of things, the strategic engagement between the two countries can

only be expected to intensify during his tenure.

India and the United States have a common opponent in the form of the great disrupter, the People's Republic of China. President Trump has emerged as the first US leader to stop his country's slide into total indebtedness to China. His "America First" slogan, slapping of import duties on Chinese goods and decision to enhance US military presence in the Indo-Pacific region suggest a mindset determined to resist China's total domination of Asia and its spreading global ambitions.

An unrestrained hegemon in Asia is not in India's interest either. Besides, India also faces an economic as well as a strategic challenge from China. New Delhi's repeated requests for greater market access for Indian goods and services or a resolution of border disputes has met with prevarication or obfuscation.

New Delhi will do well to further cultivate a politically rejuvenated President Trump, fresh from his Senate triumph, and determined more than ever before to push through his overall agenda for America.

*The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues*

## Is the BJP paying attention to the voices from Shaheen Bagh?



Shobhaa's Take

The political contradictions and optics are countless and sickening. Looking at the front page of leading dailies... forget visitors from outer space... even we, the citizens of India, are left bewildered and upset. In fact, we are feeling like aliens in our own land. Visitors to a destination called India that we can no longer recognise. We can collectively star in a movie titled, "Aliens in Modiland", and show the rest of the world, what's going on... it's sci-fi meets horror, meets Comedy Central, meets melodrama. A macabre formula for a mega box-office experience, for those who are not a part of the script. I am looking at a perfectly framed photograph of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the DefExpo 2020 in Lucknow. He is shown pointing a lethal weapon, eyes screwed up as he takes careful aim (target, unknown). The report says India should target exporting billions of dollars worth of military gear in the next five years. Hurray! In a small, left hand corner of the same newspaper, we have another megalomaniac, Donald Trump, scowling for the cameras, as Nancy Pelosi dramatically tears up his State of the Union speech. The news of his impeachment and acquittal is so blah, nobody thinks it's worth more than a casual mention. Trump's bombast knows no limits. His boast, the "Great American Comeback", mocked by critics but greeted with loud cheers from his supporters, is a precursor to his expected second term win. Well, our man has no such tension back home. He is comfortably ensconced — and

ain't going anywhere! Deal with it, folks.

The rest of the disturbing and depressing domestic news involves comical clips that would have raised a chuckle had they not been so bizarre. "Tigers must be punished for eating cows, like humans," declared NCP MLA Churchill Alemao after a tigress and her three cubs were killed inside the Mahadayi Wildlife Sanctuary. And no, he was not sacked by his bosses. His bosses happen to be educated, intelligent, seasoned netas — but they let it go. Anywhere else in the world, this man would have been questioned and made to issue an apology/clarification. Not in India. He had raised the "C-word" (cow). And he got away with that outrageous comment.

Cut to a rowdy group of mostly men, waving the tricolour and yelling, "*Desh ke gaddaron ko... goli maaron saalon ko*," ("shoot the traitors/scoundrels"). The video clip clearly shows the police "protecting" this lot, when they should be arresting a few for inciting murder. Who are the "*gaddars*" this lumpen lot wants to gun down? Errrr... let's look at just one. A young Muslim lady called Nazia, who has been protesting at Shaheen Bagh. So, what's special about Nazia? There are thousands of Muslim and non-Muslim ladies at Shaheen Bagh staging a non-violent, peaceful protest. They have been there for over 50 days now, braving the bitter Delhi cold. Yes, the same harsh and unforgiving cold that took the life of Nazia's four-month-old son, who caught a chill, while his mother

**Only cowards and losers with zero imagination and even less intelligence talk in terms of shooting those who disagree with them. They are, in reality, shooting their own feet — and looking like absolute fools. Please guys, your dhamkis are so yesterday!**

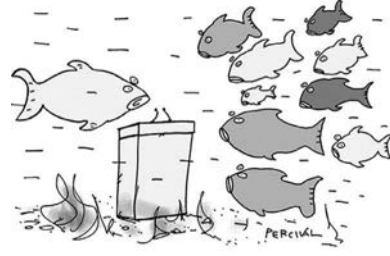
huddled with the protesters and their children, determined to have her voice heard. She is mother to two other children, and this is what she had to say when asked about the death of her youngest: "I am ready to sacrifice myself and my other two children for the cause, if need be." When asked by a reporter why she had taken an infant with her for the protest, she answered simply: "Because there is nobody at home to take care of my child. I have sacrificed one child for the sake of the nation. *Yeh desh hamara hai...* we will not leave our country. If we have to go anywhere it will be straight to Allah."

I wonder: Did Narendra Modi watch that heart-rending clip? What about Amit Shah and the others? Doesn't it tell them something? While they announced the go-ahead for the Ram Mandir, a different drama was being staged in their backyard. What sort of blinkers prevent those in power from paying attention to the

protesters at Shaheen Bagh? Listen to their cries? Respond to their pleas? Nazia has called her son a "*shaheed*" (martyr). How many more *shaheeds* does India need before this government wakes up?

There have been attempts to convert Nazia's son's death into something else and not a sad consequence of him being present at Shaheen Bagh in the bone-chilling cold of the capital. You know what? Such manipulation comes with consequences. Perhaps, the arrogance of those in power does not allow them to confront the truth of Shaheen Bagh. "*Goli maaron saalon ko...*" is such a pathetic response to the far more powerful and stirring cry of "*Azaadi... Hum dekhenge*." Only cowards and losers with zero imagination and even less intelligence talk in terms of shooting those who disagree with them. They are, in reality, shooting their own feet — and looking like absolute fools. Please guys, your *dhamkis* are so yesterday! India is on the brink of a major shift. India has always nurtured a thriving culture of protest and dissent. The Prime Minister can try scare tactics and warn the nation about an "anarchic situation". If he indeed believes it has come to this — step up, mate. Take control. Start a dialogue with those ladies at Shaheen Bagh. Ask the people of India what's bothering them. Then, maybe, we will find a more equitable way through the chaos and sorrow.

Readers can send feedback to [www.shobhaade.blogspot.com](http://www.shobhaade.blogspot.com)



"Our target is to meet net zero by 2035."

## Wanting to kill all is just madness, it's not about religion



Rod Liddle

Sudesh Amman was singularly unsuccessful in his wish to kill kafirs, as he put it, and thereby find himself surrounded by the hoor al ayn — beautiful handmaidens who'll do anything you want, frankly — in the afterlife. He had perhaps not followed the instructions in the book he had about how to stab people. Two were injured by the madman on Streatham High Road; both, mercifully, should live.

However, Amman was shot dead by plainclothes policemen before he could even scream out the old "Allahu Akbar" thing. The cops were already there because Amman was known to them — known very well to them. I suppose, under British law, they were required to wait until he'd tried to stab somebody before they shot him. That is perhaps the first law that I would revisit when it comes to jihadi terrorists. I'd find it preferable if we dealt with them when they emerged from their homes. It would save a lot of time. I wonder how many policemen were tracking Amman? Bear in mind that they have at least another 3,000 known jihadis to keep an eye on and you have an indication of the enormous cost imposed on the taxpayer.

Amman was well-known to the security services because he had just been released from prison for terrorist offences. He had been released, automatically, early — and it is this fact which seems to have caused most outrage. The government is now thinking of ceasing the automatic release of terrorists halfway through their sentences, mindful that some more of them are due for release this year. I am not sure that we are much better off if we simply let the likes of Amman wait another 14 months before enjoying a brief stabbing spree. It seems to me to be missing the point somewhat.

More has emerged about the stabber. He had apparently urged his girlfriend to decapitate his father — and mother-in-law — well, okay, we've all been there. He had expressed a wish to kill the "filthy kafirs" and while in prison had voiced a desire to kill an MP. His mum, meanwhile, a lady called Haleema Faraz Khan, insisted that her offspring was a "nice polite boy" who had been radicalised in Belmarsh prison. Given that he was sent to prison for possession of ISIS material and the aforementioned book about how to stab people, you may think Ms Khan a little wide of the mark, certainly on the "nice" bit, although we cannot be certain that he did not wish his victims a cheery "good afternoon" before he plunged the knife in.

Amman is the latest case of a terrorist released from prison, undergoing a spectacularly unsuccessful deradicalisation programme and then wandering off to murder, or try to murder, kafirs. Usman

Khan, who killed two people near London Bridge in November, is perhaps the most infamous. Khan was actually engaged in a deradicalisation conference when he decided to have a break and murder a few kafirs.

Have we not grasped that these programmes are not terribly effective? Neither the "hard" nor "soft" programmes, the latter of which attempt to divert their subjects into developing agreeable hobbies, such as ping-pong or basketry. Nor, pace Ms Khan, is prison working terribly well. There is no doubt that many are radicalised in such places as Belmarsh. We are not helped by the fact that many imams we allow to minister to these maniacs are followers of the Deobandi sect, which is strictly opposed to integration.

We are also a little hamstrung by our liberalism, as ever. Ian Acheson, who led the independent review of Islamic extremism in our prisons, is opposed to the parole board assessing the threat value of prisoners about to be released and commented: "Cultural sensitivity among [prison] staff towards Muslim prisoners has extended beyond the basic requirements of faith observance and could inhibit the effective confrontation of extremist views."

You would guess that's about right. But there is another point to be made here. We insist, whenever such terrorist incidents occur, that the attack was "nothing to do with Islam". And yet we are not consistent in this belief. The way in which we treat the perpetrators later always contains a genuflection toward the suggestion that these people are in some way enemy combatants on account of their faith. They are afforded imams, they are quartered with other Muslims, they are sent on deradicalisation programmes where Muslim community elders address their violent, er, shortcomings.

Why do any of this? If we are serious that these attacks have nothing to do with Islam, then let us apply some consistency to this apparent conviction. If somebody wishes to kill as many people as possible because they do not believe precisely what that person believes, and further holds that their reward for doing so will be an endless succession of hoor al ayn, they are clearly mad and should be sectioned, incarcerated permanently as a consequence of their derangement. That is what we would do to someone possessed of similar narcissistic delusions who did not dignify them by recourse to the Quran. They are all simply psychopaths, not simple criminals, and should be treated as such.

Wanting to murder us all is surely a conviction rooted in insanity — and given that we have decided the likes of Amman are insane, we can hold them indefinitely and not let them out to be trailed across the country by plainclothes policemen, waiting for them to stab someone. It would be hard for anyone to oppose such an approach, seeing as it also tidily removes Islam, and thus the wider and blameless Muslim population, from the equation.

*By arrangement with the Spectator*

## God, our Father, who sets us free



Francis Gonsalves

To his disciple who persistently prayed to God to fulfil the smallest of his needs, the master said, "When will you stop leaning on God and stand on your own feet?" Astonished, the disciple protested, "But, wasn't it you who told us to call God 'Father'?" The master replied, "Yes! But, when will you realise that a father isn't someone who satisfies your needs all through your lifetime, but someone who rids you of your tendency to lean?"

God is regarded as "Father" in some religious traditions, mainly Judaism and Christianity. In the Bible's First Testament, common to Judaism and Christianity, viewing God as "our Father" is rare, occurring just 14 times. By contrast, in the Gospels containing narratives of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection, Jesus not only calls God "Father" 170 times, but also teaches his disciples the "Our Father" prayer.

Jesus speaks of God as "Abba", loosely translated

as "daddy"; or papa, appa or dadda in Indian languages. Broken up into its constituent pleases, "Our Father" is very meaningful and puts the focus not on selfish, individualistic needs but on a loving relationship with God and with others.

On their request, "Lord, teach us to pray," Jesus instructs his disciples to say, "Our Father" and not "my Father", for God is neither the private property of one particular group nor privileges one specific people, forgetful of others. Hereafter, there are four hallmarks of prayer: praise, surrender, petition and forgiveness.

"Holy be your name!" expresses praise and worship due to God. God's

name is holy. Repeating the thousand names of God brings peace and happiness. For instance, of the *nam-simran*, the Guru Granth Sahib succinctly says: "Repetition of God's name expunges, grief, pain and fear and produces happiness, everlasting."

"Your kingdom come; your will be done!" is trustful surrender of the believer: allowing God to be God. It entails striving for God's universal family where love, joy, unity, peace, prosperity, equality, sharing and caring will prevail, here and now. It's vital that we collaborate with God to build a world community called Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Ram Rajya, Umma, Sangha, Kingdom of God, or whatever.

"Give us today our daily bread!" is a petition for food. God is Annadata, food-giver, who sustains us through the benevolence of mother earth whose resources must be shared by all God's children. How can we allow people to die of malnourishment and hunger if God is abba-amma?

Finally, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" is humble acceptance that each of us is guilty of the vengeance and violence that has turned our homelands into battlefields. May God — called by every name — free us from all manmade divisions and strife!

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**IN BRIEF**  
**Botswana elephant hunting auction on**

**Gaborone:** Botswana, home to the world's largest elephant population, on Friday was set to hold its first major auction for trophy elephant hunting quotas since scrapping a hunting ban last year. The sale will be conducted by a local firm from the premises of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism in the capital Gaborone. President Mokgweetsi Masisi raised the ire of conservationists in May when he revoked a moratorium, just a year after he succeeded Ian Khama, an avid environmentalist, who introduced a blanket ban in 2014 to reverse a decline in the population of wild animals. Masisi fended off criticism of his government's decision, saying the move would not threaten the elephant population. The government is issuing seven hunting "packages" of 10 elephants each, confined to "controlled hunting areas", a wildlife spokeswoman Alice Mmolawa said.

**Texas executes man who killed 5**

**Huntsville, Texas:** Dallas man was executed Thursday evening for a shooting in which he killed his wife, two children and two other relatives during a drug-fueled rage nearly 18 years ago. Prosecutors say Abel Ochoa was high on crack cocaine and looking for money to buy more drugs when he started shooting inside his home in August 2002. Ochoa, 47, was pronounced dead at 6:48 p.m., 23 minutes after receiving a lethal injection at the state penitentiary in Huntsville for the slayings of his wife, Cecilia, 32, and his 7-year-old daughter, Crystal. He also killed his 9-month-old daughter, Anahi; his father-in-law, 56-year-old Bartolo Alvizo; and his sister-in-law, 20-year-old Jacqueline Saleh, and seriously injured his sister-in-law Alma Alvizo.

**Cabbage compound for liver disease**

**Houston:** A natural compound found in widely consumed vegetables such as cabbage, kale, and cauliflower may help treat fatty liver disease, a study claims. The study, published in the journal *Hepatology*, demonstrates how non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) can be controlled by indole, a natural compound found in gut bacteria, and in cruciferous vegetables. It also addresses how this natural compound may lead to new treatments or preventive measures for NAFLD, the researchers said. "We believe healthy foods with high capacity for indole production are essential for preventing NAFLD, and are beneficial for improving the health of those with it," said Chaodong Wu from Texas A&M AgriLife Research in the US.

**BOLSONARO HAS A PLAN FOR AMAZON**

**Rio De Janeiro, Feb. 7:** Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has unveiled a sweeping plan for the Amazon rainforest that would open indigenous lands to mining — a "dream" for the far-right leader, but a "nightmare" for environmentalists and tribal leaders. Bolsonaro proposed a new bill Wednesday that would allow mining, farming and hydroelectric power projects on formerly protected land in the world's largest rainforest, saying: "I hope this dream... comes true." He further stoked controversy by naming a former Evangelical missionary to head the government department responsible for protecting isolated indigenous groups in Brazil, which is home to at least 100 uncontacted tribes, more than any other country. Together, the measures underlined the Brazilian president's commitment to two key groups of supporters: conservative Evangelical Christians and agrobusiness. But they drew outrage from other quarters. "Bolsonaro's dream is our nightmare, and it will be our extermination. The mining industry brings death, disease, and misery, and it will be the end of our children's future," said Sonia Guajajara, of the Brazilian Indigenous People's Assembly (APIB). The clash showed Bolsonaro's determination to press ahead with his agenda for the Amazon basin region, despite international condemnation of his policies last year.

**China to probe Wenliang's death**  
Whistleblower doc was first to raise alarm about novel coronavirus in early January

**Beijing, Feb. 7:** China's anti-graft watchdog on Friday launched a probe into the death of a whistleblower doctor who was reprimanded by police for spreading "rumours" about the coronavirus outbreak in China that has claimed over 630 lives, amid an outpouring of global grief and anger over his demise. China's ruling Communist Party has sent a high-level investigation team to the epidemic-hit Wuhan city in Central Hubei province to probe Li Wenliang's death on Thursday. Li, 34, was among eight Wuhan residents who were reprimanded by local police in early January for spreading "rumours" about the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in the province. The doctor died due to the very virus he desperately tried to highlight in December last year through social media and has become a national icon with millions of netizens expressing their grief and anger over the way he was treated. His death is widely reported by the state-run media which had earlier shunned him. A special team will head to Wuhan to investigate issues regarding Li, state-run People's Daily quoted China's top anti-corruption agency as saying on Friday. The action has been approved by the central government and the team will have a comprehensive investigation into matters related to the deceased doctor, China's National Supervisory Commission said in a statement. Li's death has been mourned by the National Health Commission. The police reaction in stifling his warning of coronavirus which now has become a national and international disaster has evoked public resentment. As of Thursday, 636 people have died due to the virus outbreak with the total number of confirmed cases jumping to 3,143, Chinese officials announced on Friday. "After emergency treat-

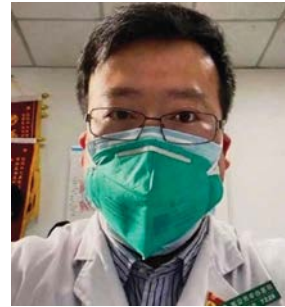


A couple wearing face masks exchanges their rings in a mass wedding ceremony at the Cheong Gapyeong: Shim Peace World Centre in Gapyeong, South Korea, on Friday. South Korean and foreign couples exchanged or reaffirmed marriage vows in the Unification Church's mass wedding arranged by Hak Ja Han Moon, wife of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the controversial founder of the church. —AP

**JAPAN ON FRIDAY reported 41 new cases of the virus on the cruise ship Diamond Princess that's been quarantined in Yokohama harbour.**

**BRITAIN, GERMANY and Italy have announced more cases of the new virus from China, bringing the total number of confirmed cases in Europe to 31.**

ment, Wenliang passed away. We deeply regret and mourn Li's death," the Central Hospital of Wuhan announced on Thursday. The doctor's death triggered an outpouring of millions of comments on China's social media sites as well as concerns from



Li Wenliang

the international community. "We are deeply saddened by the passing of Dr Li Wenliang. We all need to celebrate work that he did on 2019nCoV," the WHO tweeted. According to his post on Weibo on December 30, Li, an ophthalmologist at the Central Hospital of Wuhan, warned in the online chat group WeChat that he had seen a report that showed positive test results of SARS for seven patients. —PTI

**A floating prison': Cruise of Asia ends in virus quarantine**

**YOKOHAMA, Japan:** David Abel's 50th wedding anniversary luxury cruise began with him eating his fill and enjoying the sights of East Asia. It's ending with him quarantined in his cabin aboard the Diamond Princess for two extra weeks, eating a "lettuce sandwich with some chicken inside" and watching as officials in hazmat-style suits escort dozens of infected people, some of them hiding their identities under sheets, off the ship to hospitals for treatment of a new virus. Officials said Friday that 61 people from the ship had the fast-spreading coronavirus. "It's not going to be a luxury cruise; it's going to be

like a floating prison," Abel said on Facebook from the ship in the port of Yokohama, outside Tokyo. He is among thousands of people on two cruise ships in Japan and Hong Kong who are facing quarantine because of the virus. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced Thursday that Japan will deny entry of foreign passengers on another cruise ship heading to Japan — Holland America's cruise ship Westerdam, on its way to Okinawa from Hong Kong — because of suspected coronavirus patients found on the ship. The new immigration policy takes effect Friday to ensure border control to prevent the disease from

entering and spreading further into Japan, Abe said. As Japanese officials loaded the Diamond Princess with supplies to make the quarantine as bearable as possible, passengers took to social media to highlight kindnesses by the crew and to complain about dwindling medicine, the quality of the food and the inability to exercise or even leave their cabins. Their photos and videos showed the vessel that once had 3,711 passengers and crew is now a ghost ship of deserted reception areas, swimming pools and hallways. Babies on the Hong Kong ship were reportedly running out of diapers and milk. —AP

**THAI MINISTER SLAMS TOURISTS**

**Bangkok, Feb. 7:** Thailand's health minister lashed out at "Western" tourists on Friday for not wearing face masks and suggested they be expelled from the country for putting others at risk during the coronavirus outbreak. The outbreak came as the kingdom faced steep losses over a drop in visitors from China. Tourism accounts for 18 per cent of the country's gross domestic product and Chinese holidaymakers make up a quarter of total arrivals. Thailand has detected 25 coronavirus cases and nine of those patients have recovered, while streets, public transport and shopping centres have filled with people wearing face masks. —AFP

**Rains 'breaking the back' of bushfire crisis**

**Sydney, Feb. 7:** Heavy rain was raising hopes on Friday for an end to Australia's unprecedented bushfire crisis, as downpours douse blazes that have burned out of control for months. The devastating fires, fuelled by prolonged drought and record-high temperatures, have raged since September, burning more than 10 million hectares (25 million acres) and killing 33 people. An estimated billion animals have perished in the fires that destroyed more than 2,500 homes. The rains in New South Wales (NSW), which began earlier in the week in some areas and are forecast to extend into next week, are expected to drench a number of the remaining fires and help contain others. "It's breaking the back of this bushfire season, there's no doubt about it," said Shane Fitzsimmons, the head of rural firefighters in NSW, the state worst hit by the crisis. By Friday afternoon there were no bushfires burning in NSW at the most dangerous emergency or "watch and



A couple take shelter under an umbrella during rain in Sydney on Friday. —AP

act" levels — a situation virtually unseen in almost half a year. Beleaguered volunteer firefighters who have fought the blazes day-in-day-out declared themselves "over the moon" at the rain. Even Fitzsimmons — who became the public face of the crisis through stoic daily TV briefings

and consoling children who, like him, lost their firefighting fathers in bushfires — expressed joy at listening to the rain fall overnight and driving with windscreens wipers on. "Obviously we don't want to see lots of widespread damage and destruction from flooding, but it is certainly a welcome

change to the relentless campaign of hot, dry weather" he said. As the bushfire crisis abates, authorities are now bracing for possible flooding. The Bureau of Meteorology issued a string of flood warnings and said some parts of NSW will see their highest rainfall totals in four years. —AFP

**BAT TORNADO WREAKS HAVOC**

The local community of a small town in Queensland, Australia have been plagued by a colony of "fruit bats" which have been causing widespread havoc. What started as an uptick in fruit bat numbers around the small town of Ingham has become a virulent plague which the people of this town have been fighting to root out for the better part of the decade. Sometimes referred to as "flying foxes", the bat colony has reached such biblical proportions that it now outnumbers Ingham's 4,300 residents by gargantuan margins. Residents have called the situation a "bat tornado", with the epicentre residing over the town's botanical gardens and the trees in nearby local primary schools. Pilots and aviation enthusiasts in 2013 had complained about the flying foxes as their presence made flights difficult.

**T-shirt weather in Antarctica?**

**Antarctica, Feb. 7:** Antarctica has logged its hottest temperature on record, with an Argentinian research station thermometer reading 18.3 degrees C, beating the previous record by 0.8C. The reading, taken at Esperanza on the northern tip of the continent's peninsula, beats Antarctica's previous record of 17.5C, set in March 2015. A tweet from Argentina's meteorological agency on Friday revealed the record. The station's data goes back to 1961. Antarctica's peninsula — the area that points towards South America — is one of the fastest warming places on earth, heating by almost 3C over the past 50 years, according to the World Meteorological Organization. Almost all the region's glaciers are melting. The Esperanza reading breaks the record for the Antarctic continent. The record for the Antarctic region — that is, everywhere south of 60 degrees



For representation only

latitude — is 19.8C, taken on Signy Island in January 1982. Prof James Renwick, a climate scientist at Victoria University of Wellington, was a member of an ad-hoc World Meteorological Organization committee that has verified previous records in Antarctica. He said that Australia it was likely the committee would be reconvened to check the new Esperanza record. He said "Of course the record does need to be checked, but pending those checks, it's a perfectly valid record and that [temperature] station is well maintained." —Agencies

**SHRINKING | COUNTRY** ■ **UN has stepped in to help what is being considered a national emergency**

**Exodus! Serbia struggles with population decline**

**Blagojev Kamen Serbia, Feb. 7:** Uros Trainovic remembers when his small mining village in eastern Serbia was a vibrant home to 200 families, had a school of its own, a doctor and a shop. How times have changed. Now, 60-odd years later, it's a ghost village with just eight residents. The transformation of Blagojev Kamen is not unique in a country that experienced years of war and sanctions in the 1990s following the break-up of Yugoslavia. In a twist of historical irony, one of the causes behind those years of war was the idea of cre-

ating a Greater Serbia out of the ashes of the former Yugoslavia. Near-empty villages with abandoned, crumbling houses can be seen all over Serbia — a clear symptom of a shrinking population that is raising acute questions over the economic well-being of the country. The decline is happening so fast it's considered a national emergency and the United Nations has stepped in to help. "This village used to be full of people, I used to go to school here," the 71-year-old Trainovic recalls. "It is such a pity and so sad that everybody left ...

now there are only few of us and there are no young people any more." However it's measured, the numbers look stark. According to the World Bank, Serbia's population of just below 7 million is projected to fall to 5.8 million by 2050. That would represent a 25% fall since 1990. The Serbian government says the Balkan country is effectively losing a town each year, and that as many as 18 municipalities have fewer than 10,000 people. "We are 103 people less each day." Population changes are a fact of life across Europe,

but the problem is acutely different in Central and Eastern Europe where the low fertility rates that are commonplace in developed countries combine with high migration rates and low immigration more akin to developing nations. The economic knock-on effects on a country striving to join the European Union are evident and amount to billions of dollars in the short term. In the longer run, there are also costs related to the fact that a smaller population of working age will have to contribute more to support the ranks of those

of pensionable age. The U.N. Development Program and the U.N. Population Fund have assembled a group of seven international experts of different backgrounds and specialities to help out. The members visited Serbia last month for a fact-finding mission. Wolfgang Lutz, an Austrian expert in demographics at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, or IIASA, said the main problem is related to the make-up of those leaving Serbia rather than the overall population decline. —AP



An abandoned factory seen near the town of Kucevo, Serbia. —AP



quick  
BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	41,141.85 -0.40
Nifty 50	12,098.40 -0.33
S&P 500*	3,335.54 -0.32
Dollar (₹)	71.40 0.28
Pound Sterling (₹)	92.56 0.09
Euro (₹)	78.23 -0.08
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	41,249.112 0.27
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	54.85 -0.08
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.439 -0.007
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.602 -0.042

\* As of 9:30 pm IST

RBI to conduct  
long-term repo  
ops on Feb. 17, 24

The RBI will begin the first tranche of its long-term repo operations on Feb. 17 with three-year repo of Rs 25,000 crore, followed by another on Feb. 24 for an equal amount. The operations date is announced a day after the RBI's monetary policy wherein it said long-term repos aggregating up to Rs 1 lakh crore will be conducted in tranches from mid-February to ease liquidity in the system.

Tata Steel  
reports ₹1,228 cr  
net loss in Q3

Tata Steel reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 1,228.53 crore for the December quarter, mainly due to lower sales and impairment provisions for its European operations. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 1,753.07 crore for the year-ago quarter. Its gross sales fell to Rs 34,774 crore from Rs 38,086 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total expenses for the quarter were at Rs 35,849 crore against Rs 35,930 crore.

ACC net profit  
drops 62.7%  
to ₹273 crore

Cement maker ACC reported a 62.68 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 273.28 crore for the December quarter from 732.35 crore in the year-ago quarter. Its total income was up 4.89 per cent at Rs 4,117.85 crore from Rs 3,925.61 crore. Total expenses of the company, which follows January-December as its fiscal year, were at Rs 3,709.42 crore against Rs 3,585.32 crore of the corresponding quarter, up 3.46 per cent.

General Atlantic  
invests \$200 mn  
in Byju's

PE investor General Atlantic has joined the latest round of funding in ed-tech firm Byju's. According to sources, Think and Learn, which owns K-12 learning app Byju's, has received from General Atlantic a funding of \$200 mn, which is almost similar to what Tiger Global had pumped into the firm in January. Byju's was then valued \$8 bn. Sources said the current round values the firm at about \$8.2 billion.

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Large-caps see more earnings cut than SMIDS  
Earnings downgrades  
outstrip upgrades in Q3ASHWIN J PUNNEN  
MUMBAI, FEB. 7

With companies reporting tepid top line growth, there are more earnings downgrades than upgrades in the current results session. For the results declared so far, 57 per cent of companies have seen consensus FY21 EPS (earnings per share) estimates being cut by analysts.

Interestingly, large-cap companies are seeing more earnings cut than small and mid-cap firms (SMIDS), even as mid-cap and small-cap stocks are ruling at a premium to large companies.

Earnings expectations are largely pushed down in companies in sectors like power, retail, FMCG and cement, while companies in telecom, agri-chem, auto and NBFC sectors are seeing upgrades in earnings.

"We continue to see downside risks to consensus Nifty EPS growth of 28 per cent for FY21, said Emkay Global in a report. "Our preference stays with consumption themes such as auto and consumer goods - which could be the earliest beneficiar-



ies of any turn in consumer sentiment. Our Underweight positions are in engineering/ capital goods and financials remain," the report further said.

An analysis shows that there is broad-based stabilisation in top-line growth but overall numbers still remains weak, analysts said.

At an aggregate level, the top line across all companies that have reported was flat YoY - showing continued weakness but arresting the declining trajectory of previous quarters. Top-line growth for SMIDS is still positive though.

While nearly a third of

these companies reported a deceleration in sales growth in Q2, in Q3 half of the stocks reported an acceleration in top-line growth trends.

The improvement in top-line trajectory was evident in agri-chem, auto, power and retail, while pharma, media and chemicals, while most companies in other sectors report a weak top-line trajectory.

The aggregate operating profit growth remains stable at 10 per cent YoY, indicating improvement in margin trajectory.

However, a disaggregated analysis shows that nearly 57 per cent of the companies have seen a

slowdown in operating profit growth as against 54 per cent in the previous quarter.

Most companies in speciality chemical, media and insurance showed a slowdown in their operating profit trajectory.

The companies in retail, power, FMCG and durables largely missed expectations on operating profit, while those in agri-chem and auto largely beat expectations.

"Private banks, NBFC, cement and IT sectors have met expectations, while consumer has delivered a beat," Motilal Oswal Financial Services said. It says there are several concerns on corporate growth, capping the upside in market.

"The ongoing 3QFY20 results season has highlighted several concerns, especially on asset quality and elevated slippages in some banks. We expect the market to stay narrow until the emergence of greater evidence of growth recovery.

Meanwhile, select sectors with better earnings visibility will continue enjoying valuation premium over the broader markets," it further said.

Firms see disruption if  
China shutdown lasts

Suzuki Motor looks outside China for components

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, FEB. 7

Manufacturing activity in India across industries may get stuck if closure of factories in China gets extended beyond a week. Suzuki Motor Corp, parent of India's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki, has already declared that virus infection in China threatens to disrupt vehicle production in India.

Consumer durable-makers, who source most products from China, are also concerned. And so do tyre and drug companies. "As of now we hear that units (in China) might get opened by February 10. But if this gets extended, manufacturing might get affected across sectors, as China is the main component provider for most of the products. Even if units in China resume production, we do not know how fast they will be able to scale up to their peak production levels. In that case, there could be a lag effect on our manufacturing," said Kamal Nandi, president of Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association.

Suzuki said that it is bracing for disruption in production and supply chain, and is looking for sourcing vehicle components from outside China. However, industry insiders find that sourcing from alternate markets may not be an immediate solution. Suzuki does not produce or sell any cars in China, but procures components for its plants in India. Other automakers, like Toyota Motor Corp and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles are also reportedly staring at a disruption.

Consumer durables and appliances are heavily dependent on China for their components as some brands just assemble the imported parts in India. For electronic components, television panels, LED chips, compressors for refrigerators and air-conditioners as well as motors for almost all the products and brands are dependent on China. Consumer durables, especially fridges and ACs, are already into their biggest season sales in summer.

"Most of us currently have enough inventory for March sales. But Chinese companies have already lost one week of production. If it prolongs, sales during the peak season of April, May and June can get disrupted," said B Thiagarajan, joint manag-

ing director of Bluestar. In the tyre industry, 15 to 40 per cent of the raw materials are being shipped from China. These include synthetic rubber, carbon black, chemicals, nylon tyre coat fabric.

"There is no alarm as yet because the Indian domestic consumption is not looking up. Have we been in our peak production, there would have been an imbalance. However, if the product-halt in China continues till end of February or mid-March, we will definitely see disruption," said Raviv Budhraj, director general, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association.

Drug manufacturers get active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) from China for their formulations. Usually they stock raw materials for a month. But the lag effect of the closed days will remain in the supply chain.

"We are unable to assess the magnitude of impact. We are dependent on the \$4 billion imported APIs from China. Formulation supply will get affected if the closure prolongs," said S. V. Veeramani, past president of the Indian Drugs Manufacturers Association.

## E-com firms under govt radar

FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, FEB 7

E-commerce giants have come under the scanner as the government is looking into matters related to unfair business practices of firms like Amazon and Flipkart, against whom the commerce ministry has received predatory pricing complaints.

The Centre's move comes on the back of the order issued by fair trade body Competition Commission of India (CCI) in January, which asked the ministry to enquire into the operations of both Amazon and Flipkart, including their 'illogical' discounts and exclusive tie-ups with preferred selling agents. The Department for

Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the commerce ministry is looking into all complaints, alleging predatory pricing and excessive discounts on e-commerce platforms. The government was alerted after the CCI conducted a market study on goods, food services and accommodation segments and started investigation against Amazon and Flipkart over alleged anti-competitive practices.

Confirming the move, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal told the Lok Sabha in a written reply that representations have been received from DPIIT alleging that some e-commerce platforms are engaged in predatory pricing and are providing

excessive discounts.

"The extant foreign direct investment (FDI) policy on e-commerce sector, inter-alia, specifies that e-commerce marketplaces will not directly or indirectly influence the sale price of goods or services and shall maintain a level playing field. These representations are under examination," he said.

The government, however, noted that services should be provided by the e-commerce marketplace entity, or other entities in which the e-commerce entity has direct or indirect equity participation or common control, to vendors on the platform at arm's length and in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, FEB. 7

A day after the central bank announced several measures to boost liquidity and bring down the cost of funds for lenders, State Bank of India and Bank of India announced a cut in their marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR).

SBI announced a reduction in its MCLR by 5 basis points across all tenors while BOI cut MCLR by 10 basis points for maturities up to six months. SBI's one-year MCLR to which home loans are linked will now stand at 7.85 per cent per annum from 7.90 per cent.

The actual effective home loan interest rate of

SBI will, however, depend on the loan amount and other factors.

However, the impact of MCLR cut may not be immediate as there is a reset-period clause in MCLR-based home loan contracts which is generally of 12 months after which the interest rate gets reset.

Similarly, BOI housing loan will now be available starting from 8 per cent per annum and vehicle loan from 8.5 per cent.

The reduction for both lenders is effective February 10.

In a release, SBI said the impact of recent RBI policy measures and reduction in deposit rates will be reflected in the next review of MCLR.

In view of surplus liquidity in the system, SBI also said it is realigning its interest rate on retail term deposits (less than Rs 2 crore) and bulk term deposits (Rs 2 crore and above). The bank slashed term deposit rates by 10-50 bps in the retail segment and 25-50 bps in the bulk segment.

Banks have been reluctant in aligning their lending rates in response to the rate cuts as effective transmission of rates was mere 69 basis points against 135 bps of rate cuts by the RBI during February to October 2019.

The RBI on Thursday allowed banks exemption from maintenance of CRR on incremental disbursement on auto, housing and

MSME loans. The CRR is the percent of cash deposits a commercial bank must maintain with the RBI. This money earns no interest. The current CRR level is 4 per cent, which means that for every Rs 100 of deposit that a bank holds, it keeps aside Rs 4 with RBI.

The RBI has now said that new retail and MSME loans disbursed till July 31, 2020, will be adjusted against a bank's CRR requirements while ensuring that banks meet at least 90 per cent of their CRR requirements.

This would free up the banks to monetise more of their liquidity and over the next few months should soften interest rates further.

Coronavirus to slow China  
GDP growth to 3.8% in Q1RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, FEB. 7

Global rating agencies and brokerages have started assessing the impact of the deadly coronavirus on the Chinese and global economy and they expect China's first quarter growth to fall sharply to 3.8 per cent and full year growth to 5 per cent.

They also expect the virus to be contained by as early as March 2020 to May 2020 as it doesn't like sunlight, high temperature and humidity.

According to Nomura, the first quarter growth rate in China may dip to 3.8 per cent before a bounce back in Q2 on pent-up demand. Outside China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand will be impacted the most.

Virus was not so deadly outside Wuhan with just two deaths outside China and much lower mortality rate outside Wuhan in China, says brokerage firm CLSA after interaction with a leading Hong Kong-based medical expert working on such viruses for the last 25 years.

S&P Global Ratings estimates China's full-year GDP growth will fall to 5 per cent in 2020, from 5.7 per cent projected earlier, but it feels the lost ground will be made up in 2021.

"Most of the economic impact of coronavirus will be felt in the first quarter, and China's recovery will be firmly in place by the third quarter of this year," said Shaun Roache, Asia-Pacific chief economist for S&P Global Ratings.



"We now expect an above-trend 6.4 per cent growth rate in 2021, compared with our previous forecast of 5.6 per cent," S&P said.

"China accounts for one-third of global growth so a 1 percentage point slowdown in the country's growth rate is likely to have a material effect on global growth.

"The global impact will be felt through four real economy channels: sharply reduced tourism revenues, lower exports of consumer and capital goods, lower commodity prices, and industrial supply-chain disruptions," S&P said.

"These spillovers could become larger if markets start to price in the risk of a material global slowdown and financial conditions tighten as risk premia rise across asset classes. Pressure on the renminbi exchange rate will be important to track, but for now, markets are taking the impact in their stride," the rating agency said.

The impact of coronavirus is still uncertain, but Japanese brokerage

Nomura expects China's GDP growth to slow from 6 per cent year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2019 to 3.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2020 (previously 5.8 per cent), before rebounding to 6.4 per cent in the second quarter. For full year of 2020, Nomura now expect 5.6 per cent versus 5.7 per cent earlier.

"For the rest of Asia, the economic impact for now is mainly indirect via weaker China demand, disruption to supply chains, collapse in visitor arrivals from China and lower commodity prices rather than direct lower tourism revenues, impact on vulnerable local services, as infections outside China are low," Nomura analyst said.

However, IHS Markit, a London-based information provider said on Friday, said the outbreak of coronavirus will have a larger negative effect on the global economy than the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2003, as any slowdown in Chinese economy would send ripples but waves across the globe.

"The slowdown in Chinese growth may be a significant drag on global growth. In 2002, China contributed 23 per cent of world GDP growth, in 2019 China contributed an estimated 38 per cent of world growth," IHS said.

In 2019, China's oil demand was 13.9 million barrels per day or 14 per cent of world market as compared to 5.6 million bpd in 2003 which equated to 7 per cent of world demand.

Voltas Beko  
opens first  
plant in India

Sanand, Feb. 7: Voltbek Home Appliances Private Limited, a joint venture between Voltas and Europe's leading consumer durables player Arçelik, opened its first manufacturing facility in India at Sanand, Gujarat.



(L to R) Mr. Hakan Bulgurlu, CEO, Arçelik, Mr. Jayant Balan, CEO, Voltbek Home Appliances Ltd and Mr. Pradeep Bakshi, MD &amp; CEO, Voltas Ltd at the launch of Voltas Beko's first factory in Sanand, Gujarat.

Mr. Pradeep Bakshi, MD & CEO, Voltas, said, "Since its launch in 2018, Voltas Beko has established itself as one of the fastest growing consumer durables brands in the country and is expected to sell close to half a million units by the end of this fiscal year."

"We continue to see huge growth opportunities for consumer durables in the Indian market."

## Over 4.6L card data on sale

ARCHAK SENGUPTA  
HYDERABAD, Feb. 7

With digital payments expected to more than double to \$135.2 billion by 2023, India has become a favourite target for nefarious actors, thanks to its poor digital safety practices. In less than four months, cybersecurity firm Group-IB discovered a new database containing records of over 4.6 lakh cards that have been put on sale in a popular underground cardshop in the dark web. The Singapore-based cybersecurity firm, in October 2019, had also discovered a database containing records of nearly 13 lakh cards on the same Joker's Stash cardshop.

While the source of the latest leak is unknown, nearly 98 per cent of the records are from some of the biggest Indian banks.



Moreover, not only does the database reveal very sensitive information such as card numbers, expiration dates, CVV/CVC codes, it also reveals the cardholders' full name, emails, phone numbers and addresses, the cybersecurity firm said.

According to Group-IB 'ybercrime research unit head Dmitry Shestakov, "Such type of data is likely to have been compromised online—with the use of phishing, malware, or JS-sniffers. In the previous case, we dealt with card dumps (the information

contained in the card magnetic stripe), which can be stolen, for example, through the compromise of offline POS terminals."

According to Rohan Seth, technology policy analyst at The Takshashila Institution, a Bengaluru-based think-tank, Indians need to take greater care about their digital safety. "India is reportedly the second most affected country due to cyberattacks. Almost 70 per cent organisations are at risk of a data breach... Indian organisations have been guilty of leaving parts of their websites exposed. So information that should only be accessible to people with a username and password, comes up indexed in Google, allowing anyone to access it. There have also been reports of Aadhaar data being stored and transported in hard disks," he said.



**IN BRIEF**

**Jameela says she identifies as queer**

**London:** Actress Jameela Jamil came out as queer in a Twitter post on Wednesday. *The Good Place* star had added a rainbow to her Twitter name years ago, but she had never revealed her sexuality officially, Jamil said in a post to her Twitter. "I kept it low because I was scared of the pain of being accused of performative bandwagon jumping, over something that caused me a lot of confusion, fear and turmoil when I was a kid," Jamil said that it was scary to come out as a South Asian actress in her 30's, and that Twitter was not the place she wanted to do it. This week, Jamil has been addressing backlash surrounding her involvement in *Legendary*, an upcoming HBO Max ballroom competition show. — *Agencies*

**Viola to play Michelle Obama in TV series**

**New York:** Oscar-winning actress Viola Davis will play former US first lady Michelle Obama in a new TV series on the Showtime cable network, it was announced Wednesday. *First Ladies* will focus on the wives of US presidents and their lives in the White House, and media reports said Eleanor Roosevelt and Betty Ford would also be portrayed. "Presidents' spouses have wielded remarkable influence, not only on the nation's leaders but on the country itself," Jana Winograde, president of entertainment for Showtime, said. Davis, 54, has been nominated three times for Oscars, winning in 2017 for her supporting role in *Fences*. — *AFP*



**Lucy Boynton to play Marianne Faithfull**

**Los Angeles:** *Bohemian Rhapsody* star Lucy Boynton is set to play the role of iconic British singer-songwriter Marianne Faithfull in a musical biopic. The film will be directed by Ian Bonhôte, best known for helming documentary *McQueen* about British fashion designer Alexander McQueen. Titled *Faithfull*, the film will be set in mid-1960's London and track the singer's rollercoaster career from initial stardom, her time as a homeless drug addict, and her subsequent recovery. According to Entertainment Weekly, the movie will also chronicle her tumultuous romance with singer-songwriter Mick Jagger that inspired some of their greatest songs. Julia Taylor-Stanley of Artemis Films, Colin Vaines of Synchronic Pictures, and Andee Ryder of Misfits Entertainment will produce the movie. — *PTI*

**U.S. LOST 'MORAL LEADERSHIP': HARRISON FORD**

**Mexico:** Harrison Ford, in Mexico City on Wednesday to promote his latest film, decried the collapse of US "moral leadership" on issues such as improving the environment and immigration policy. "We need moral leadership. We've lost some of our credibility and we are anxious to regain it," the Hollywood star told reporters. Ford was in town to talk about his starring role in *The Call of the Wild*, an adventure film set in Alaska in the 1890s and based on a novel by US author Jack London. Relaxed and smiling, the veteran actor also touched on his iconic Hollywood roles in the *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones* and *Blade Runner* movies. A fifth *Indiana Jones* movie, starring as the swash-buckling archaeologist with the unusual first name, is also in the works. "To do another *Indiana Jones* movie, it seems like a good idea, if we had a good script and I believe we are very close to have the script that we really want, so I am excited about the idea," he said. — *AFP*



Harrison Ford

## H'wood legend Kirk Douglas dies at 103

Veteran actor was a humanitarian, one of the last stars of Hollywood's Golden Age: Micheal

**Los Angeles:** Veteran actor and Hollywood's Golden Era icon Kirk Douglas, known to fans world over for his films such as *Spartacus*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *The Bad and the Beautiful* and *Champion*, has passed away at the age of 103, his family has announced.

The actor died of natural causes on Wednesday. His son, actor Micheal Douglas shared the news of his father's death on social media.

It is with tremendous sadness that my brothers and I announce that Kirk Douglas left us today at the age of 103. To the world he was a legend, an actor from the golden age of movies who lived well into his golden years, a humanitarian whose commitment to justice and the causes he believed in set a standard for all of us to aspire to.

"But to me and my brothers Joel and Peter he was simply Dad, to Catherine, a wonderful father-in-law, to his grandchildren and great grandchild their loving grandfather, and to his wife Anne, a wonderful



► Douglas was the son of Jewish Russian immigrants who rose through the ranks to become one of Hollywood's biggest-ever stars

► The famed actor, who was one of the last of Hollywood's Golden Age, made more than 90 movies in a career that stretched across seven decades

► Films such as *Spartacus* and *The Vikings* made him one of the biggest box-office stars of

the 1950s and 60s

► He was nominated three times for the best actor Oscar in 1949 for *Champion*, *The Bad and the Beautiful* in 1953 and *Lust for Life* in 1957

► Douglas never received an Academy Award for an individual film but the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded him an honorary Oscar in 1996 for his role as a creative and moral force in the industry

husband," he wrote alongside pictures of Kirk Douglas through the ages. Michael Douglas said his father leaves a rich cinema legacy behind but he will also be remembered for his contribution to public service.

"Kirk's life was well lived, and he leaves a legacy in film that will endure for generations to come, and a history as a renowned philanthropist

who worked to aid the public and bring peace to the planet.

"Let me end with the words I told him on his last birthday and which will always remain true. Dad - I love you so much and I am so proud to be your son," he wrote.

His daughter-in-law, actor Catherine Zeta-Jones also shared a loving photo with Kirk Douglas. "To my darling Kirk, I

shall love you for the rest of my life. I miss you already. Sleep tight..." she wrote.

Filmmaker Steven Spielberg, who presented Kirk Douglas with an honorary Oscar at the 1996 Academy Awards, remembered the actor who retained his movie star charisma right till the end.

Born as Issur Danielovitch Demsky in

## Essence event affirms power of black women in Hollywood

**BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., Feb. 7:** Through laughs, tears and speeches that turned into sermons and affirmations, the overarching theme of this year's star-studded Essence luncheon was that in an unforgiving industry that often overlooks, black women need validation from Hollywood - or elsewhere - to appreciate their self-worth.

"No one in this room derived from luck. We are a powerful force field that derived from greatness," said "Captain Marvel" actress Lashana Lynch at Thursday afternoon's Essence Black Women in

Hollywood event. "We work hard on our craft and our self love, and have to remind ourselves daily that we deserve a seat at the table."

"Queen & Slim" director Melina Matsoukas, another honoree, echoed Lynch's sentiments when she received her award from "Insecure" actress and creator Issa Rae, who tapped Matsoukas to direct the hit HBO comedy series.

"It feels incredible to be seen, respected and have your work valued; it means more when that acknowledgement comes from your own communi-

ty," she said.

Matsoukas, who has also directed videos for A-listers including Beyoncé's "Lemonade" opus, added: "Recently I've been battling my own rage. As I keep saying, the daily onslaught of white supremacy and colonization is infuriating and also exhausting."

"I shared my sentiments with Ms. (Ava) DuVernay the other night, and what she said went deep. It was simply: 'Don't let them steal your joy,'" she said to applause. "Since then, I've been thinking about how to reclaim my own joy." — *AP*



People walk in snowfall past one of the four famous horse sculptures on the Fontanka River in St. Petersburg on Thursday. — *AFP*



Derek Mackay

**Minister quits over messages to teenager in Scotland**

**London:** Scotland's finance minister has resigned, hours before he was due to deliver his annual budget, after he reportedly sent hundreds of messages to a 16-year-old boy on social media.

Derek Mackay quit on Thursday, saying he had "behaved foolishly".

The *Scottish Sun* newspaper reported that 42-year-old Mackay sent the teen more than 270 messages on Facebook and Instagram, telling the boy he was "cute" and offering to take him to a rugby match and to dinner.

Mackay is not accused of breaking the law.

"Serving in government has been a huge privilege and I am sorry to have let colleagues and supporters down," Mackay said in a statement.

Mackay was a rising star in the Scottish National Party, which runs Scotland's semi-autonomous Edinburgh-based administration.

He had been seen as a potential successor to First Minister Nicola Sturgeon as leader of the SNP, which advocates independence from the United Kingdom for the nation of 5.5 million. — *AP*

**NEWS INUGGETS**

**'Penguin call shares traits of human speech'**

**Italy:** The call of the penguin, a wheezing bray that sounds like a donkey in distress, follows some of the same linguistic laws found in human languages, scientists have found.

According to researchers, just like in our own speech, more frequently used sounds within the call tend to be shorter, while the longer the call, the shorter the sounds within it. It is the first time this pattern has been shown outside primates. — *Agencies*

**Sleep issues common in infants: Study**

**London:** Sleep problems in children are common, and improve with time, according to a study which help parents understand if their toddler's sleep patterns are normal or not.

The study, published in the journal *Sleep Medicine*, found that the time taken to fall asleep reduces to an average of 20 minutes by the age of 6 months, and by the time infants are two years old, they wake up only once during the night on average. — *PTI*

**'Yarn made from human skin could soon be stitching up your wounds'**

**Paris:** It may sound like a gruesome detail from a movie, but scientists believe yarn grown from human skin could soon be used to stitch up surgical patients and repair organs.

The researchers say their "human textile,"

which they developed from skin cells, can be used for knitting, sewing and even crochet, and can aid in medical procedures.

The string-like substance would have the ability to "truly integrate into the host's body," scientists.

## Letterman reveals Tarantino once threatened to beat him up

**Los Angeles:** Veteran TV host David Letterman has revealed that Quentin Tarantino once threatened to thrash him and in his response, he gave the filmmaker an option to choose his weapon — his fists or a bat.

The 72-year-old shared the story during his appearance on Showtime's *Desus & Mero*.

He said the feud started after he interviewed a "famous star", who was apparently dating Tarantino at the time.

"There was one guest on the show and her girlfriend was somebody he was dating. A famous star.

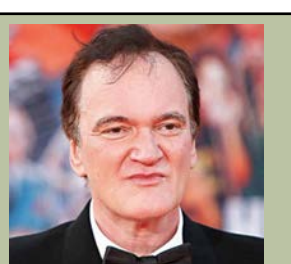
And I was saying, 'No, you're not dating Quentin Tarantino.' And she said, 'Yes, yes I am.' And I said, 'Oh, please tell me this isn't true... I'm pretending that I'm stunned that this glorious movie star is dating this little squirrely guy,' Letterman revealed.

Days later, Tarantino called up the TV host and threatened to beat him to death.

"He starts screaming at me, 'I'm going to beat you to death, I'm going to kill you. I'm coming to New York and I'm going to beat the crap out of you. How can you say that about me?' I said, 'Quentin, hang



David Letterman



Quentin Tarantino

► After Letterman joked about Tarantino during an episode of *The Late Show*, the director allegedly called him with some explicit words. He said though Tarantino was not ready to apologise, his publicist made him do so.

on a bit.' This is so good, I'm going to get my producer to pick up the other line..."

After his producer joined the call, Tarantino again threatened Letterman.

"He was full blown, clinically goofy," the host said.

He then asked Tarantino, "How do you want to do this? Bat or fists?" He said, "Bat. You get me a bat and I'll beat the hell out of you with

it... There's no cooling off. It just keeps blowing up."

Letterman said he finally met Tarantino when the filmmaker came to promote "Inglorious Bastards" on his show.

"He was in the make-up



**New show on Marilyn Monroe in the works**

**Los Angeles:** The show business' love affair with one of its favourite muses, Hollywood icon Marilyn Monroe, refuses to die as a new project on the legend is in the works. According to The Hollywood Reporter, *Yellowstone* producer 101 Studios and UK production company Seven Seas Films are collaborating to develop a TV series based on the final months of Monroe's life.

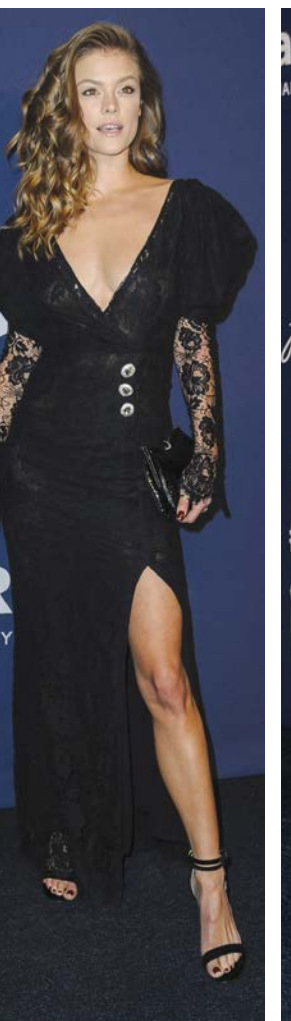
The show, based on Keith Badman's non-fiction book *The Final Years of Marilyn Monroe*, is the first filmed project about the late star's life to be endorsed by Authentic Brands Group, the owner of the Monroe estate.

CEO David Glasser said though many people have explored the life of the *Some Like It Hot* star, the upcoming series will be a class apart.

"Beloved Marilyn Monroe has had many memoirs created about her life, but none quite like this. Keith Badman has uncovered gems of never before released details, centered around the last few months of her sensationalized life and the accusations made. The series pays homage to her," Glasser said. — *PTI*



Jessica Simpson at Macy's Herald Square to promote her new memoir *Open Book* in New York on Wednesday. — *AP*



Devon Windsor, Nina Agdal and Heidi Klum attend the amfAR Gala New York AIDS research benefit on Wednesday. — *AP*



**SHORT TAKES**

**NZ 'A' post 276/5 vs India 'A' on day one**

**Lincoln (New Zealand):** India 'A' bowlers struck at regular intervals but middle-order batsman Glenn Phillips' fine half-century guided New Zealand 'A' to 276 for five on the opening day of the second unofficial Test here on Friday. Phillips smashed nine fours and a six in his 80-ball 65, while Dane Cleaver and skipper Hamish Rutherford also chipped in with useful contributions after the hosts won the toss and decided to bat. For India, medium pacers Mohammed Siraj and Avesh Khan took a couple of wickets each, while spinner Shahbaz Nadeem also snapped one scalp. — PTI  
**Brief Score:** New Zealand 'A' 276/5 in 90 overs (Glenn Phillips 65; Avesh Khan 2/57, Mohammed Siraj 2/58) vs India 'A'.



Shaheen Shah Afridi

**Pak's Shah bowls Bangla out for 233**

**Rawalpindi:** Lanky paceman Shaheen Shah Afridi took four wickets to help Pakistan dismiss Bangladesh for a paltry 233 on the opening day of the first Test here on Friday. Shaheen recorded figures of 4-53 in 21.5 overs and was ably assisted by fellow pacer Mohammad Abbas and spinner Haris Sohail to justify Pakistan's decision to send Bangladesh in to bat on a greenish-yellow Rawalpindi stadium pitch. Pakistan were due to bat for five overs but bad light forced umpires to call it a day. — AFP

**Brief scores:** Bangladesh 233 in 82.5 overs (Mohammad Mithun 63, Najmul Hossain 44; Shaheen Shah Afridi 4/53, Mohammad Abbas 2/19) vs Pakistan

**CCB files charge sheet in KPL fixing**

**Bengaluru:** The Central Crime Branch investigating into the Karnataka Premier League match-fixing scandal has filed charge sheet in three cases, Additional Commissioner of Police Sandeep Patil said on Friday. He said the charge sheet in the case at Cubbon Park police station was filed against six accused-team owners of Belagavi Panthers Ali Asfak Thara and Ballari Tuskers Arvind Reddy-, KCSA management committee member Sudhendra Shinde, two cricketers C M Gautham and Abrar Kazi and a bookie Amit Mavi. In the second case registered at the JP Nagar station based on a complaint by Ballari Tuskers player Bhavesh Gulecha, charge sheets were filed against four accused, Bhavesh Bafna, Sayyam, Jatin Sethi and Harish. — PTI



# All pumped up

Jolted India to take on resurgent New Zealand in the second ODI

**Auckland, Feb. 7:** Some of their bowling and fielding frailties exposed in the series-opener, India will aim for quick course correction when they take on a resurgent New Zealand in the second ODI here on Saturday.

Flying high after the 5-0 whitewash of New Zealand in the T20 series, India were brought to the ground after the hosts took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series with a four-wicket win in the first ODI.

The Black Caps chased down their highest-ever total in ODI cricket at Seddon Park and the toss will be crucial once again at the even shorter Eden Park where the side batting second will have a clear advantage.

New Zealand opted to bat here in both the T20s, but India chased well in both instances albeit in different circumstances. India find themselves in a familiar situation after the loss in Hamilton.

But the visitors have come from behind against the West Indies and Australia to win their last two ODI series and Virat Kohli's men will look to do the same here. Like in Chennai against the West Indies, or in Mumbai against Australia, India's loss at Hamilton was down to their lack of ability to



KL Rahul carries the weight of expectations after his recent performances in limited-overs format.

take wickets in the middle overs.

The opposition batsmen took advantage to hit big and the Indian attack didn't have any answers. In the first ODI, skipper Virat Kohli turned to Jasprit Bumrah every time he went searching for

**LIVE on TV**

India vs New Zealand on STAR Sports 1, HD

@ 7:30 AM

a wicket. This over-dependency is something

India would want to address in their composition. India's fielding too will be under the scanner.

In each of those losses at Chennai, Mumbai and Hamilton, it was poor despite flashes of individual brilliance.

— PTI



New Zealand's Kane Williamson at a training session with his teammates ahead of the second ODI against India at Auckland.

— BLACKCAPS

**INDIA-NEW ZEALAND AT AUCKLAND**

Team	P	W	L	T	N/R
India	9	4	4	1	-
New Zealand	74	34	35	2	3
India (vs NZ)	8	3	4	1	-

Stats: S.PERVEZ KAISER

**HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS**

India: 314-9 in 50 overs v New Zealand in 2014

New Zealand: 340-5 in 48.4 overs v Australia in 2007

**LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS**

India: 108 in 32.5 overs v New Zealand in 2002

New Zealand: 73 in 26.3 overs v Sri Lanka in 2007

## Sridhar concedes downward curve in fielding

**Auckland, Feb. 7:** India's fielding hasn't been particularly good in the ongoing series against New Zealand, coach R Sridhar said on Friday but refused to blame tight schedules for the "downward curve" despite conceding that hectic travelling is affecting the side's practice plans.

Sridhar said India's fielding has at best average in the last four months. He said fatigue could be a contributing factor to losses during this time period, including the one in the first ODI against New Zealand at Hamilton on Wednesday. "...the West Indies series

at home was somewhere we really dropped. We were average, to say the least. But definitely we have not lived to the standards as we did in the world Cup or even in the build-up to the World Cup in the last couple years," he said.

Sridhar said they have accounted for the downturn in fielding standard by a grading system privy to the support staff. He said the team management keeps a sharp eye on

the workloads and practice schedules of all players.

"We keep reminding the players about attention to basic detail...In a T20 game, each fielder has to be his own captain. He need not wait for the captain to move him or the bowler to move him in a certain direction or to a certain

position," he said. "We try and tell them to think ahead of the game, you as a fielder captain yourself, see which way the breeze is, which way the batsman's tendencies to hit are, what's the bowler's plan and position accordingly."

**'Kuldeep's irregularity affects his rhythm'**

Sridhar dismissed reports raising question marks over Kuldeep Yadav's fitness, saying the spinner is fully fit but not playing regularly is probably having a negative impact on his bowling.

Yadav has been fairly inconsistent in his inter-

national outings of late and conceded 84 runs in his 10 overs and took two wickets in the first ODI against New Zealand on Wednesday. It was his first game of the tour after being left out of the eleven in the five T20 Internationals.

"He is fully fit and he is not carrying any injury. He is totally cleared to play all the games. He has played a lot of ODI cricket, played all three games against Australia. He didn't play the T20s as Chahal was there. Maybe Kuldeep is the kind of guy who needs a lot of overs under his belt to get his rhythm.

— PTI

## Labuschagne is special: Sachin

**Sydney, Feb. 7:** Indian cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar on Friday picked Australian Marnus Labuschagne as the player who most reminds him of himself, calling the fast-rising batsman a special talent with impeccable footwork.

Here to coach a side at Sunday's charity fundraiser for the devastating bushfires in Australia, Tendulkar was asked to name the player who he thinks comes closest to resembling him at his prime. "I happened to be watching the second Test match at Lord's between England and Australia. When Steve Smith got

injured, I saw Labuschagne's second innings," Tendulkar responded.

"I was sitting with my father-in-law. I saw Marnus get hit off the second ball from Jofra Archer and, post that, the 15 minutes he batted, I said, 'This player looks special'," he recalled.

"There is something about him. His footwork was precise. Footwork is not physical, it's mental. If you're not thinking positively in your mind, then your feet don't move," he added.

The 25-year-old Labuschagne became Test cricket's leading scorer last year with 1,104 runs. He broke into the scene after coming in as a concussion substitute for Steve Smith during the Ashes last August.

Grabbing his chance with both hands, Labuschagne made four consecutive half-centuries to notch up with 353 runs at 50.42 in the Ashes.

Tendulkar said Labuschagne's fine footwork is also a sign that he is a mentally strong player. "...because if you're not, your feet will not move. His footwork was incredible," he said.

Labuschagne has amassed 896 runs this Test summer, notching up four centuries. Tendulkar, however, refused to be drawn into the debate on who among Virat Kohli and Steve Smith should be considered the better. "I don't like getting into comparisons. People have tried comparing me to a number of guys and I've said, 'Just leave us alone,'" said Tendulkar.

**'No-brainer in joining Bushfire charity game'**

It's a country which almost gave him a new accent and this "special feeling" for Australia was one of the reasons why Sachin Tendulkar didn't think twice before joining the Bushfire Bash charity game on receiving a call from his former on-field foe Brett Lee.

Tendulkar, who will coach the Ricky Ponting XI during Sunday's charity fundraiser match at the Junction Oval here, said the moment he got a call from Lee, it was "no-brainer" that he wanted to join the project.

"I received a message from Brett Lee. Brett said that Kevin (Roberts, Cricket Australia's chief executive) would like to be in touch with you. It was a no-brainer." — PTI

## Gujarat push Delhi out of Ranji knockout race

**New Delhi, Feb. 7:** Gujarat virtually pushed a lacklustre Delhi out of the knockout race after grabbing three points from their group A Ranji Trophy match, which ended in a draw here on Friday.

On the basis of their 42-run first innings lead, Gujarat grabbed three points from the contest to take their tally to 29 from seven outings. They now sit atop the cross pool (group A and B) standings.

The top five teams in the cross pool will qualify for the quarterfinals.

Top two from Group C and the best side in the Plate Group will complete the line-up. Delhi are now left with a home game against Rajasthan, starting here from February 12, and they have to get seven points (including bonus) to have any chance left.

**WOMEN'S TRI-SERIES**



Australia's Natalie Sciver en route to her half-century against India in the T20 triangular series at Melbourne on Friday.

— ICC

## Another defeat for India women in T20

**Melbourne, Feb. 7:** The Indian women's cricket team produced another listless batting performance to suffer a second successive loss in the T20 triangular series, going down to England by four wickets here on Friday.

Sent in to bat, Indian batters failed to capitalise on their starts as they struggled to 123 for six in 20 overs with opener Smriti Mandhana emerging as the top-scorer with a 40-ball 45.

Chasing the total, Natalie Sciver smashed a strokeful fifty as England romped home comfortably, scoring 124 for six with seven balls to spare. Sciver's 50 off 38 balls contained six hits to the fence and a six.

For India, Rajeshwari Gayakwad (3/23) was outstanding with the ball, while Radha Yadav (1/24) also took two wickets but the total on the board was just not enough. India had beaten England in their first T20 of the series.

After their disappointing show with the bat against Australia, which resulted in a four-wicket loss in their last match,

**BRIEF SCORES**

India 123/6 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 45; Anya Shrubsole 3/31) lost to England 124/6 in 18.5 overs (Natalie Sciver 50; Rajeshwari Gayakwad (3/23)

India were expected to put up an improved show but Harmanpreet and Co. were once again below par.

Sixteen-year-old Shafali Verma, touted as the next big thing in women's cricket, continued her disappointing run as she lasted just nine balls. She was bowled by Sophie Ecclestone in the sixth over.

Mandhana, who smashed seven fours and one maximum in her 40-ball innings, was the next to go as she was caught behind by Amy Jones off Katharine Brunt's delivery in the 10th over.

Jemimah Rodrigues (23) and skipper Harmanpreet (14) were off decent starts only to throw them away. India will next play against Australia on February 8. — PTI

## WC can revolutionise game: Harmanpreet

**Melbourne, Feb. 7:** Performances of the teams have gone better and better in the last two years and the upcoming women T20 World Cup has the potential to revolutionise the game even further, India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said on Friday.

In a column for the ICC, Harmanpreet wrote how women's T20 cricket has come a long way in the last two years.

"It wasn't so long ago that a par score in T20 cricket was 120 or 130. Now, that's not enough. Teams are looking much more confident and trying to get bigger scores on the board," said Harmanpreet.

"It's that change in the mindset that means performances are getting better across the board and



Harmanpreet Kaur

the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2020 has the potential to revolutionise the game even further." The tournament begins in Australia on February 21.

"If I look back two years, India's 50-over side was doing well and our T20 was struggling. But in the past two years, we have transformed as a T20 team and are very positive going to Australia." — PTI

**BRIEF SCORES**

**In Delhi:** Delhi 293 & 333/8 decl. (Himmat Singh 70) drew with Gujarat 335 & 128/2 (Manprit Juneja 51 no). Points: Gujarat 3. Delhi 1.

**At Rajkot:** Mumbai 262 & 362/7 decl. (Suryakumar Yadav 134, Shams Mulani 92; Prerak Mankad 2/52) drew with Saurashtra 335 & 158/7. Points: Saurashtra 3, Mumbai 1.

**At Shimoga:** Karnataka 426 & 62/1 drew with Madhya Pradesh 431 (Aditya Shrivastava 192, Venkatesh Iyer 86; Abhimanyu Mithun 3/69). Points: MP 3, Karnataka 1.

**Mumbai out of contention**

Multiple-time champions Mumbai were knocked out of the ongoing Ranji Trophy after drawing against Saurashtra in the fourth and final day of their elite Group B match at Rajkot on Friday.

Dharmendrasinh Jadeja and Kamlesh Makwana played patient knocks to deny Mumbai an outright win. Saurashtra, thus, took three points from the

drawn affair, courtesy their first-innings lead. Mumbai, whose fight back was led with Surya Kumar Yadav's ton, had to be content with a lone point.

Mumbai, the most successful team in the history of Ranji Trophy with 41 titles, still have a game left against Madhya Pradesh, but their campaign is over as they have only 14 points and even an outright win won't help them to make the knock-outs. — PTI

There is something about Labuschagne. His footwork was precise. Footwork is not physical, it's mental. If you're not thinking positively in your mind, then your feet don't move. — SACHIN TENDULKAR



SHORT TAKES

Osaka stunned by Sara at Fed Cup

**Madrid:** A tearful Naomi Osaka followed up her Australian Open disappointment with another surprise defeat on Friday when she was beaten 6-0, 6-3 by world number 78 Sara Sorribes Tormo in the Fed Cup. Spain took an unexpected 1-0 lead over Japan in the tie in Cartagena after Sorribes Tormo capitalised on a careless performance from Osaka, who made an astonishing 50 unforced errors in the 15 games. Sorribes Tormo enjoyed the backing of a sizeable home crowd at La Manga Club and her consistency proved too much for Osaka. "We knew that Sara had the game to make it very uncomfortable for Naomi. She stuck to the game plan perfectly," Spain captain Anabel Medina Garrigues said. Osaka, a two-time Grand Slam champion, has endured a shaky start to the year after being knocked out by 15-year-old Coco Gauff last month. — AFP

Mirabai adjudged best weightlifter

**Kolkata:** Chandrakant Mali of Services smashed three records to take the concluding day honours even as Railways reigned supreme, grabbing both the men's and women's trophies at the Senior National Weightlifting Championships here on Friday. Former world champion Mirabai Chanu, who had shattered three records to win women's 49kg title, was adjudged the Best Senior Women's Lifter with 865.796 'Robi points'. Youth Olympic champion Jeremy Lalrinnunga, who created a record in clean and jerk on way to winning the men's 67kg for Services, became the Best Senior Men's Lifter with 658.962 'Robi points'. 'Robi Points' is the official IWF calculation method to compare individual athlete total results across each of the IWF body-weight categories. Mali hoisted a total of 330kg, improving the previous mark of Ankit Chhoker by 6kg. — PTI

Ayushi, Divya win at shooting trials

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Ayushi Podder won the women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions (3P), while T. S. Divya and Adarsh Singh claimed the titles in the women's 10m Air Pistol and men's 25m Centre Fire Pistol T1 events respectively on the penultimate day of the National Shooting Trials for Rifle and Pistol here on Friday. West Bengal's Ayushi, in fact, won both the senior and junior categories in women's 3P, shooting 452.3 in the senior category and 0.1 less in the junior final to take home a coveted double. She got the better of Tamil Nadu's N Gaayathri in the senior final by 0.4 points and Madhya Pradesh's Bandhvi Singh in the junior event by 0.9 points. Ayushi had earlier topped qualification in both categories with a score of 1166. In the women's 10m Air Pistol final, Karnataka's Divya came up trumps in a low-scoring final, finishing ahead of experienced Shweta Singh. — PTI

POONACHA, KADHE GET WILDCARDS

**Bengaluru:** Reigning national champion Niki Poonacha and Pune's Arjun Kadhe have been given the singles wildcards for the upcoming Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger, that kicks off on Monday. A total of five wildcards will be given in the main draw of 48 in the singles. "I am thrilled to have received a wild card for the Bengaluru Open which is taking place in my city. I have been playing well but unfortunately it is not fructifying into great results," said the 24-year-old Poonacha, who won the National Championship in Delhi last year. "I thank the KSLTA and AITA for having given me this opportunity and I will strive to make the best use of the wildcard," he added. Kadhe, ranked 219 in doubles and 612 in the singles, also thanked KSLTA. "There are strong and competitive players in this edition of the Bengaluru Open. We hope to see some exciting action. Both Kadhe and Poonacha are talented players and deserve a chance to prove themselves. We hope they utilise the platform to the best," said Sunil Vajaman, Tournament Director. Prajesh Gunneswaran, Sasikumar Mukund, Sumit Nagal and Ramkumar Ramanathan have all got direct entries into the main round. — PTI

BIG TWO BOMB

Barcelona, Real Madrid beaten in Spanish Cup

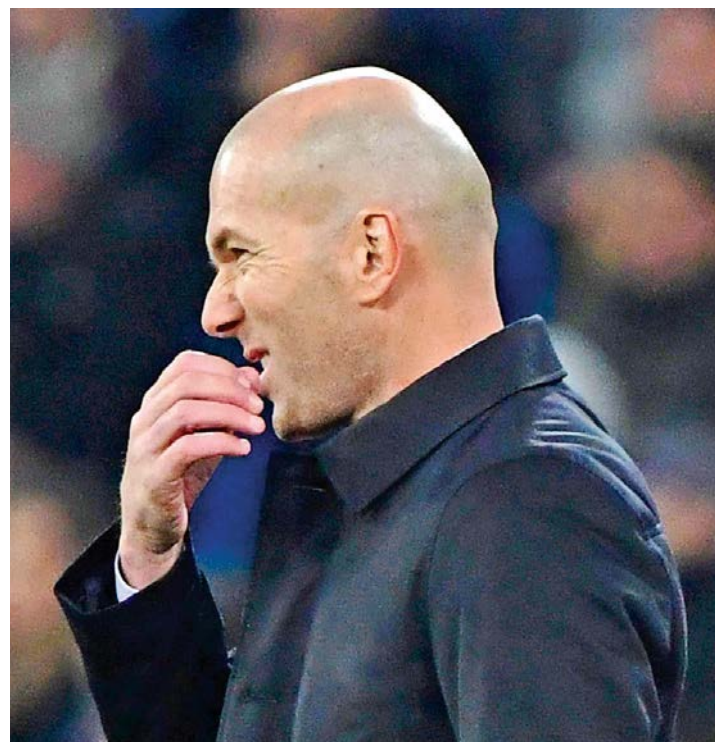
**Madrid, Feb. 7:** Barcelona and Real Madrid both crashed out of the Copa del Rey as Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad pulled off a shock Basque double to reach the semifinals. Barca were beaten 1-0 by Bilbao at San Mames, where Inaki Williams headed in a dramatic 93rd-minute winner, after La Real had seen off Madrid 4-3 in a seven-goal thriller at the Santiago Bernabeu on Thursday. Two sensational upsets added another layer of excitement to a competition that has been full of surprises this season, with Bilbao and Real Sociedad joining Granada and second division Mirandes in an unfamiliar line-up for the draw on Friday. For Barca, defeat was particularly painful, coming at the end of a turbulent week that saw Lionel Messi engage in a public spat with the club's sporting director Eric Abidal and Ousmane Dembele ruled out, probably for the rest of the season, with another hamstring tear. To make matters worse, Gerard Pique hobbled off with his own injury problem in the second half against Bilbao and looks doubtful to face Real Betis in La Liga on Sunday. Messi's riposte that "everyone should take responsibility for their own decisions" after Abidal suggested Ernesto Valverde was sacked last month because of the players, means Barcelona are in political turmoil off the pitch. And the fear is Messi could even leave in the summer by activating a clause in his contract that allows him to walk away from the club for free. Defeat in the Copa del Rey, a distant third in Barca's list of priorities this season, will not dictate Messi's thinking but another setback certainly adds to the sense of a club currently in crisis. Quique Setien has lost two of his opening six games in charge, with a Champions League tie against Napoli fast-approaching. The fall-out from another failure in Europe would prove longer-lasting. For a rotated Madrid side, who sit top of La Liga, the loss against Real Sociedad was perhaps less damaging, even if they conceded as many goals in 69 minutes as they had in their last 11 matches put together. Martin Odegaard, on loan at La Real but allowed to face his parent club, found the opener before



Above: (from left) Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Sergi Roberto, Dutch midfielder Frenkie de Jong and French defender Samuel Umtiti react after Athletic Bilbao's Spanish forward Inaki Williams scored in their Spanish Copa del Rey (Kings Cup) quarterfinal at the San Mames stadium in Bilbao on Thursday. Below: Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi (left) reacts during the match. Real Madrid's French coach Zinedine Zidane (right) looks on during the Copa del Rey quarterfinal against Real Sociedad at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Thursday. — AFP



the superb Alexander Isak hit two to give Real Sociedad a remarkable 3-0 lead. Marcelo and Rodrygo both scored late in the second half and while Mikel Merino added a fourth for the visitors, a Nacho Fernandez header set up a wild final three minutes, in which Andoni



Gorosabel was also sent off. Ten-man Real Sociedad held on for a superb win to progress to the last four while Madrid's run without success in Spain's domestic cup extends to six years. "It hurts, we have to be honest," Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said. — AFP

THE RESULTS

Real Madrid (Marcelo 59, Rodrygo 81, Nacho Fernandez 90+3)	3
Real Sociedad (Odegaard 22, Isak 54, 56, Merino 69)	4
Athletic Bilbao (Williams 90+3)	1
Barcelona	0

North East race into PBL final

GANDHARV KAMALA | DC HYDERABAD, FEB. 7

The dream run of the North Eastern Warriors continued as they made it to their maiden Premier Badminton League final, defeating Chennai Superstarz (3 to -1) in the fifth season being played at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad on Friday.

The Indo-Thailand pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Bodin Isara playing for the Warriors, defeated the Indian duo of B. Sumeeth Reddy and Dhruv Kapila 15-13, 14-15, 15-10 in their men's double match to help the Warriors slay 2017 champions Chennai.

Krishna and Bodin added insult to the injury as they won Chennai's trump match.

Earlier, Lee Cheuk Yiu got the Warriors off to a good start as he beat Tommy Sugiarto of the Chennai Superstarz in the men's singles. Yiu got the better of Sugiarto 15-12, 15-12, handing him his first defeat of the league.

The World No.18 made a strong statement by winning the first four points of the opening game to put the Indonesian on the backfoot. Sugiarto stole three quick points to make it 4-5. Both Yiu and Sugiarto traded shots in an exciting encounter before the Hong Kong player taking the first game 15-12.

Not once in a match, that lasted 27 minutes, did the World No.21 manage to get a lead over Yiu, losing the second game too with an identical scoreline of 12-15.

Earlier, in the opening match, the South Korean pair of Lee Yong Dae and Kim Ha Na, representing the league-stage toppers Warriors got the better of B. Sumeeth Reddy and Jessica Pugh of the Superstarz.

In a topsy-turvy rubber,



Lee Cheuk Yiu of the North Eastern Warriors plays a shot during his match against Tommy Sugiarto of Chennai Superstarz in the first semifinal of the Premier Badminton League in Hyderabad on Friday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Krishna Prasad Garaga and Bodin Isara of the Warriors beat Chennai trumps B. Sumeeth Reddy and Dhruv Kapila to add insult to injury.

Dae and Na won the first game 15-12. But the Indo-Brit pair of Reddy and Pugh were not going down without a fight. They took the second game 15-9 to make it one game apiece. In the decider, both teams continued to draw a point each until the scores read 14-14. With all to play for, the South Koreans held onto their nerves to win the final point and sealed the match 15-14 in favour of the Warriors.

WOMEN PULL OUT OF ASIAN BADMINTON

**Hyderabad, Feb. 7:** The Indian women's team will not participate in the Badminton Asian Championships, scheduled to be played from February 11 to 16 in Manila, Philippines, in view of the Coronavirus scare. However, the men's team will go ahead with the event. "Unforeseen health hazard apprehension due to the Corona Virus outbreak has resulted in withdrawal of the women's team for the upcoming Badminton Asian Championships," Badminton Association of India (BAI) secretary Ajay Kumar Singhania said in a statement.

"BAI had reached out to the concerned authorities in Badminton Asia (BA) for assurances regarding the current situation and necessary health advisory and precautionary measures taken. After receiving complete assurances from BA, BAI had discussed the same with the Indian squad, the men's team agreed to travel and confirmed their participation. They will leave for Manila on February 9. However, the women's team was withdrawn owing to concerns showed by parents and players," the statement read.

India up against world champs

**Bhubaneswar, Feb. 7:** They are confident after a stupendous debut at the FIH Pro League but India have their task cut out when they host world champions Belgium in their second round of the tournament, starting here on Saturday. After skipping the first edition of the tournament in 2019, India made a dream debut at the League, collecting five points from the opening tie against the Netherlands. World number five India thrashed Netherlands 5-2 in the opening match of the two-leg tie before beating the Dutchmen 3-1 in shoot-out after both the teams were locked 3-3 at the end of regulation time in the second match here last month. But since then, the Manpreet Singh-led side has not featured in the league so far, thus slipping to the number five in points table. Belgium are currently leading the standings with 11 points from four games, while Netherlands are placed second with seven points from as many matches. Australia are placed third with six points from six points from four games, followed by Germany and India. But irrespective of the



Indian captain Manpreet Singh and chief coach Graham Reid pose with the FIH Hockey Pro League Trophy in Bhubaneswar on Friday.

confident start, the Indians are expected to face a tough outing against Belgium at the Kalinga Stadium, a venue where the Red Lions won their maiden FIH World Cup in 2018. Belgium, who recently replaced Australia in the coveted top position in the

Briels believes India will be a totally differently opponent, especially after their morale-boosting win over Netherlands. "India are looking really sharp and they have been playing well which is something we saw in their initial two matches against the Dutch," Briels had said after arriving here. "We expect a tough couple of matches, and it's going to be a good fight for us as well. Of course, we are wary of the threat that they (India) possess, but we are really excited to play a tough opponent like India so we can improve further before the Olympics," he said. Even though India are the hosts, Belgium are taking confidence from the fact that the venue Kalinga Stadium has been a happy hunting ground for them. "It feels really good to be back in the city where we became the world champions. We have some amazing memories of playing here, and it is always a great spectacle when we step foot onto the turf at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium." India and Belgium have played 10 times here with the visitors coming out on top on eight occasions while two games ended in draws. — PTI

Captain credits fitness for run

**New Delhi, Feb. 7:** Skipper Rani Rampal feels the improved level of fitness has played a key role in the Indian women's hockey team's recent success. Last year marked an eventful season for the Indian women's team as it booked its ticket to 2020 Olympics, where for the first time in the history of the game it will make back-to-back appearances. The team also scripted creditable victories against quality sides like Spain, Ireland, Japan, China, Korea among other countries last year, while defeating higher ranked teams like New Zealand and Great Britain in 2020. "The starting of the Olympic year has been good. Specially, because last year we managed to qualify for Tokyo. Since then women's hockey's graph is going well. In the last three years the team has done quite well," Rani said. The skipper feels South African Wayne Patrick Lombard, who was appointed as the scientific advisor of the women's team in 2017, has made a significant contribution in improving the fitness

level of the players, something the squad had lacked earlier. "The combination of fitness and skill has been great. Earlier we used to lag behind in fitness. But that has improved in the last three years. Wayne Lombard, has worked really hard with the team, personally and individually. — RANI RAMPAL Indian women's hockey captain

level of the players, something the squad had lacked earlier. "The combination of fitness and skill has been great. Earlier we used to lag behind in fitness. But that has improved in the last three years. Wayne Lombard, has worked really hard with the team, personally and individually," she said. "In today's time if the fitness is good we can play well but if there is no fitness even the skill won't help," she said. Rani, who currently has more than 240 caps for India, feels the improved level of fitness has brought a belief in the players that they can beat any team irrespective of the rankings. — PTI

CORONAVIRUS SCARE NIXES HOCKEY TOUR

**New Delhi, Feb. 7:** The outbreak of the deadly Coronavirus has forced the Indian women's hockey team to cancel their tour of China, leaving the federation with the difficult task of finding an opponent to compete with as part of its preparation for the Olympics. The Indian women's team was scheduled to travel to China from March 14 to 25. However, due to the fast-spreading disease, that has killed over 636 people and infected at least 31,161, it has been cancelled. "We had to travel to China but that has been cancelled due to the virus. So a lot of teams are also not available to play with because they are participating in the Pro Hockey League," Indian skipper Rani said. "Hockey India and our coaches are working out whom to play," she added. With less than five months left for the Olympics, time is crucial for preparing for the quadrennial event. "For good preparation, you need to play with good teams," Rani added. — PTI