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2019	99 (Expected)			154
2018	98			154
2017	105.34			154
2016	116			152
2015	107.34			168
2014	205 (incl. CSAT Marks)	162 (GS) + 140 (CSAT)		

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### NEARBY



#### Nirbhaya case: SC hearing on plea today

NEW DELHI  
The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to urgently list an appeal filed by the Centre challenging the Delhi High Court's rejection of its plea to separately execute the death sentence of the Nirbhaya gang-rape convicts. A Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana said the special leave petition would be listed before an appropriate Bench on February 7 for hearing.

NATION ▶ PAGE 9

#### HC allows minor to abort 24-week pregnancy

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court on Thursday allowed termination of 24-week pregnancy of a minor rape victim, following the report of a medical board that there was a significant risk to the girl in continuing with it.

CITY ▶ PAGE 4

#### JMI asks students to call off stir outside Gate No. 7

NEW DELHI  
The Jamia Millia Islamia administration on Thursday appealed to students to call off protest outside Gate No. 7, saying that the site is being used by various factions of civil society and the students are not distinguishable from the crowd.

CITY ▶ PAGE 4

FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 4 PAGES

## Path chosen by you can lead to anarchy, PM cautions Oppn.

Country can't function when a duly enacted law is not obeyed, Modi says on CAA

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

Putting up a strong defence of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in both Houses of Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday cautioned that the ongoing protests might lead to a situation of anarchy and asked what would happen if people in the Opposition-ruled States refused to obey laws enacted by their own Assemblies.

Replying to the debate in the Lok Sabha on the motion of thanks to the President for his address to Parliament, he accused the Opposition of investigating people and sought to assure the members that no Indian citizen would be impacted by the CAA.

He contended that the Congress was creating a *kalpanik vai* (an imagined fear), something, he said, Pakistan had been doing to mislead Indian Muslims.

**Routine exercise?**  
In the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Modi said the National Population Register (NPR) had been introduced by the UPA government in 2010 and argued that the Congress was now misleading people despite its being a 'routine administrative exercise' that was used to identify the beneficiaries

If the Rajasthan Assembly passes a law but none in Rajasthan is ready to obey it, take out processions and resort to violence.. Your government is there.. What will be the situation? Can the country run like this?

For someone's aspiration to become the Prime Minister, a line was drawn on the map and India was divided into two. After Partition, the way how Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities were persecuted is unimaginable

NARENDRA MODI,  
PRIME MINISTER

of government schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Opposing the NPR was similar to "opposing the poor beneficiaries", he said. "This path will create problems for you [the Congress] as well as the country. I am issuing this warning because we should all be concerned about the country. If the Rajasthan Assembly passes a law but none in Rajasthan is ready to obey it, take out processions and resort to violence... your government [the Congress] is there... What will be the situation? In Madhya Pradesh, you are there. If the M.P. Assembly takes a decision and the people of the State go against it... Can the country run like this? Should we go on the

path to anarchy?" Mr. Modi asked in the Lok Sabha.

In a scathing attack in the Lower House on the Congress's style of functioning, the Prime Minister said India would never have been able to abrogate Article 370, solve the Ram Janmabhoomi title dispute or ban triple talaq if he had followed the same path as the Congress governments.

**A fallout?**  
He also hit out at Jammu and Kashmir politicians, such as Mehbooba Mufti, Omar Abdullah and Farooq Abdullah, contending that their detention was a fallout of the fact that they had tried to instigate the people to rebel, while his government had

### PM distracting people: Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi charged Prime Minister Narendra Modi with "distracting" people by talking about "other" issues while remaining silent on unemployment. "Talk about the main issue Prime Minister ji. Tell the youth what you are doing about jobs. His style is to distract the country." ▶ PAGE 12

faith in the Kashmiris.

Describing Kashmir as India's "crown jewel", he said J&K had seen a massive push in development work.

Mr. Modi, who spoke for 1 hour 38 minutes, mostly targeted the Congress, holding it responsible for the Partition, the imposition of the Emergency in 1975 and the anti-Sikh riots. "For someone's aspiration to become the Prime Minister of India, a line was drawn on the map and India was divided into two. After the Partition, the way how Hindus, Sikhs and other minorities were persecuted is unimaginable," the Prime Minister said, without naming Jawaharlal Nehru.

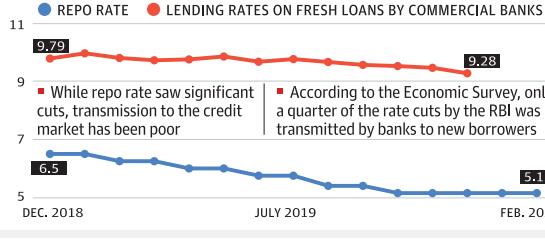
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

## Rates to fall despite RBI's status quo

Repo rate kept unchanged at 5.15%

### Status quo

The RBI on Thursday decided to keep the repo rate unchanged at 5.15%. Repo rate is the rate at which RBI lends money to commercial banks. Graph shows the change in repo rate and lending rates on fresh loans by commercial banks:



SOURCE: RBI

discounted, it's important not to discount the RBI," he said. "It has to be kept in mind that the central bank has several instruments that can be deployed to address the challenges that the economy faces in terms of the sluggishness in the growth momentum."

The central bank took two measures that could ease lending rates further. One, it opened a window to extend ₹1 lakh crore to the commercial banks at the repo rate, which is 5.15%. Second, banks have been exempted from maintaining the cash reserve ratio – which is 4% of the net demand and time liabilities now – for home, auto and MSME loans that are extended from January 31 to July 31.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

LONG-TERM REPOS ▶ PAGE 15

ON THE FRONT FOOT ▶ EDITORIAL

Senate acquits President Donald Trump

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump, impeached by the House of Representatives, was acquitted by the Senate on Wednesday, bringing to a close a bitter process that lasted close to five months.

Senators voted 52 to 48 to acquit Mr. Trump of the abuse of office charge, with Republican Mitt Romney voting alongside all 47 Democrats.

They voted 53-47 as per party lines to acquit the President of the charge of obstruction of Congress.

"The President is guilty of an appalling abuse of public trust," Mr. Romney said before the vote.

Mr. Romney is the first senator in the U.S. history to vote to convict a President from his own party. Mr. Trump was impeached by the House for conditioning \$391 million in military assistance to Ukraine and a crucial White House meeting with its President Volodymyr Zelensky on the Ukrainians publicly announcing investigations into Mr. Trump's rival and former Vice-President Joseph Biden and his son Hunter.



the BJP was using Shaheen Bagh as an election issue and the road would be cleared by the Central government immediately after the election.

### Congress evokes Sheila

The Congress, enthused by its performance in 2019 Lok Sabha election, ran a campaign reminding voters of the development that took place in Delhi during the 15-year Sheila Dikshit government and promised to continue all-round redevelopment with a focus on job creation for the youth. Party leader Rahul Gandhi, in his four election rallies, spoke of developing Delhi into a manufacturing hub so that jobs are created.

## Omar, Mehbooba booked under Public Safety Act

Detention of the NC, PDP leaders extended by 3 months

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Thursday slapped the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) against former Chief Ministers Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah.

"Yes, my mother [Mehbooba] received it [the PSA order] around 9.30 p.m.," Ms. Mufti's daughter Iltija Mufti told *The Hindu*.

A National Conference leader also confirmed that Mr. Abdullah was formally served the PSA order.

By virtue of these PSA not-

ices, the detention of PDP leader Ms. Mufti and NC leader Mr. Abdullah is extended by three months, and could be extended further, first up to six months and then one year without trial.

"As a child, I have memories of my mother going from pillar to post to free boys wrongfully detained by security forces. Today, as I fight for her freedom, life has come full circle. We live to fight another day," Ms. Iltija said.

Earlier, the Act was slapped on NC general secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar

A hard-fought election campaign that kicked off with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asking voters for a second term based on his government's performance ended on Thursday with him calling BJP leaders "fake Hindus" for running an "abusive" campaign. The tenor of the campaign changed drastically in the past two weeks with political parties warring over who can be called a true patriot.

The BJP deployed U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Union Minister Anurag Thakur and West Delhi MP Parvesh Sahib Singh among others to assist Home Minister Amit Shah, who was leading the party's campaign in the absence of a chief ministerial face.

Mr. Thakur and Mr. Sahib Singh were both banned by

the Election Commission for 72 hours and 96 hours, respectively, for their controversial statements, leading the Aam Aadmi Party to say that the BJP had no development

to show nor any vision for the Capital, and was resorting to spreading "hate" and running a "divisive" campaign.

Mr. Kejriwal said he was seeking votes for delivering

on his free water and electricity promise,

and the work done in the fields of education, health and women's safety.

Protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which found a focal point at Shaheen Bagh, turned into a major election issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking people to vote for the BJP to prevent similar protests and blockade of arterial roads.

Mr. Kejriwal, however, said

## Hard-fought Delhi Assembly poll campaign concludes

BJP raises pitch in last two weeks; ruling AAP highlights governance and development issues



E-rickshaws lined up for a roadshow at Nasirpur in support of AAP candidate Vinay Mishra on Thursday. ▶ V.V. KRISHNAN

## Poet's taxi ride ends at police station

Driver reacts to passenger's phone conversation, mentioning 'protest', in cab

DHAIRY GAJARA  
MUMBAI

Little would have Jaipur-based poet Bappaditya Sarkar imagined that his mention of the word 'protest' during a phone conversation while travelling in Mumbai could land him at a police station.

Mr. Sarkar was returning to Kurla from Juhu in an Uber cab on Wednesday, when he called a friend to discuss the ongoing protests in the country against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). However, unknown to him, the driver was not only overhearing Mr. Sarkar's side of the conversation but also reacting to it. And instead of taking the passenger to the destination, he drove the poet to the Santacruz police station.



Speaking out: Bappaditya Sarkar at the Mumbai Bagh protest on Wednesday. ▶ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

In a series of messages, which were later shared on Twitter by activist Kavita Krishnan, Mr. Sarkar narrated his ordeal. "I was at Silver Beach, Juhu, last night, and booked a cab around 10:30-10:45 to go back to Kurla, where I'm staying. As I got in the cab, I called a friend of mine and we were talking about protest cultures in different cities, what happened at Shaheen Bagh yesterday, people's discomfort with 'Lal Salaam' and how we could make Jaipur's protests more effective. Some 1

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Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
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Ghaziabad	366	Faridabad	156
Noida	369	Greater Noida	358
Good	50-100	Satisfactory	101-200
Poor	201-300	Very Poor	>400
Moderate	301-400	Severe	
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours)   Source: CPCB			

## Questions over 'mad rush' to execute Central Vista plan

Over 1,200 people shared views on project at DDA meeting

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Thursday invited over 1,200 people who had put forth their objections and suggestions to the proposed Central Vista for a public hearing.

Following changes in the land use by the urban body for the proposed modification of the Central Vista, the DDA had invited the public to register their objections and suggestions.

Those with objections to the proposed plans said that there seemed to be a "mad rush" to implement the plans for the new Central Vista without a "multi-layered consultation" and that it would not help decongest the city.

Architect Swanzal Kak Kapoor, one of those to forward objections to the DDA said, "Having regard to the nature of the project and opinion of the principal committee, we do not see any prima facie objection to the project. The same must, however, comply with legal requirements and procedures."

The green panel added that in a bid to ensure environmental safeguards for river Yamuna and its floodplains, apart from individual evaluation of such projects, a cumulative impact assessment was required to be carried out.



The DDA had invited the public to register their objections regarding changes in the land use plan for Central Vista.

FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

this."

Adding that felling of full grown trees is also likely to take place due to the project, Ms. Kapoor said, "A three-level basement has been proposed. If that happens, there will be no land left for new trees to grow.

The real concern is that what will be lost cannot be replaced."

Environmentalist Chetan Aggarwal who had also forwarded his objections to the DDA said, "Apart from the massive felling of trees which will take place, the other concern is that institutions like the National Archives, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and others are meant for the public. Converting these into office

spaces would mean that spaces meant for public will shrink."

Stating that the MPD-2021 entails decongesting the Capital, Anil Sood who attended the public hearing said, "You cannot change the land use based only on photos and not a proper blueprint. The MPD-2021 talks of decongesting the city but the same DDA is changing the land use to multiply congestion."

Ms. Kapoor added, "It took two years for the IGNCA to be designed. How can the plan for something like the Central Vista be finalised within three weeks? The government has every right to make changes but the revitalisation cannot be done by 3-4 people only."

## AAP distributes Kejriwal's 'guarantee card'

It bears a calendar on one side and details of work done, promises on the other

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party volunteers on Thursday afternoon were spotted outside their party office near Laxmi Nagar metro station here handing over cards to more than a dozen young men who were sporting the party caps. The card, the party said, was "Kejriwal's guarantee card".

The party volunteers, mostly school and college students, then hit a nearby market and started distributing the cards.

A "door-to-door" programme, through which the party claims to have reached lakhs of households in the city, has been one of the main outreach programmes by the party in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly election.

"Iss side mein calender hain, aur iss side mein sarkar kya kaam kiya hai aur kya karegi woh likha hai [This side of the card has a calendar and the other side has the details of the work done by the AAP government and their plans]," 19-year-old Rahul, a polytechnic student,



AAP volunteers near Laxmi Nagar metro station in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

explained as he handed over a card to a shopkeeper. Mr. Rahul was heading the team.

"We had sent 100-150 volunteers, divided into teams of 10 members, across constituencies every day," said a volunteer who was overseeing the party's door-to-door campaign.

In December, the AAP had brought Prashant Kishor's Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC) on board to work along with the party for the Delhi Assembly election.

The card in the form of a

CAMPAIN TRAIL

tabletop calendar bore 10 promises made by AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal to the people of Delhi printed on one side and a calendar of the current year printed on the other.

"We have trained the volunteers and asked them to talk about three things to the people while distributing the guarantee card – free water we have been giving, 200 units of free electricity and free bus rides for women in city buses," an I-PAC volunteer

"In Priyadarshini Vihar and Bank Enclave we are a little weak, but in Ramesh Park and Lalita Park area we are really strong," he said and added that the party would, however, win.

"Barabar takkar hoga AAP aur BJP ka [There will be neck-to-neck competition between AAP and the BJP]," his 18-year-old friend, Abhishek Kumar, a BSE first year student, quipped. "BJP ka banda bhi strong hai [The BJP candidate is also strong]," he added.

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"In Priyadarshini Vihar and Bank Enclave we are a

IN BRIEF



HC rejects petition of 11 independent candidates

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday rejected a petition by 11 independent candidates against the rejection of their nominations from New Delhi constituency for upcoming Assembly polls, scheduled on February 8. An HC Bench dismissed the plea that had challenged a single-judge order of the court, dismissing their petition against the rejection of their nominations. They were aggrieved by the decision of the Returning Officer rejecting their nominations on January 21.

CBI arrests Delhi govt. official on graft charge

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation on Thursday arrested a DANICS official working with the Delhi government on graft charge. According to the agency, the accused has been identified as Gopal Krishna Madhav. A CBI official said he was arrested for alleged corruption involving more than ₹2 lakh. The accused official was posted in the Secretariat.

## Security to be stepped up at Shaheen Bagh, Jamia

80,000 personnel to be deployed for polls

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The main areas of protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act – Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Nagar – will witness four times increase in deployment of security personnel in comparison with the 2019 Lok Sabha election, said officials.

The police on Thursday said they will deploy around 80,000 security personnel across the city on Saturday to ensure fair and peaceful elections. They said extra security personnel will be deployed in Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Nagar polling stations as these two areas have been termed “critical”.

The police said there will be 190 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), 19,000 home guards and 42,000 Delhi police personnel. They also said there will be drones and facial recognition systems to keep watch on potential troublemakers. All district DCAs have already intensified area dominance exercise. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, 47 companies of Central Armed Poli-

## Surjewala says AAP, BJP acting at behest of RSS

‘Under CM, Delhi became one of the world’s most polluted cities’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

All India Congress Committee (AICC) spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala, on the last day of campaigning for Delhi Assembly elections on Thursday, said AAP and BJP had engaged in a game of deceit and deception that has taken the focus away from the “monumental fraud” by both the State and Central governments.

The two parties were acting at the behest of RSS with the singular aim of diverting people’s attention away from real issues, he said. “Now that the campaigning has come to a close, the propaganda, lies and abusive language used by both the parties will also hopefully end. The people of Delhi will now have an opportunity to think about the real issues,” Mr. Surjewala said.

**Common factor**

He added that AAP and PM Narendra Modi (Prime Minister) came to power on the issue of Lokpal. However, Mr. Modi appointed Lokpal after five years, which still does



AICC spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala at a press conference on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

**C** The last five years have been wasted in squabbling, grandstanding and playing out fixed matches between AAP and BJP. It is time that the people of Delhi bid these two parties goodbye and bring back Congress wali Dilli

RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA  
AICC spokesperson

not have office or staff and Arvind Kejriwal (Chief Minister) is yet to appoint a Lokpal, Mr. Surjewala said.

He added that AAP’s “edu-

cation story is nothing but a drama created by Kejriwal with the help of ads”. He alleged that despite doubling the Budget in education, the pass percentage has come down and nearly 1.32 lakh students have dropped out of schools. He added that under the AAP government, Delhi has become one of the most polluted cities in the world.

“The last five years have been wasted in squabbling, grandstanding and playing out fixed matches between AAP and BJP. It is time that Delhiites bid these parties goodbye and bring back Congress wali Dilli,” Mr. Surjewala said.

AAP teams to check money and liquor distribution

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday formed teams, one in each of the 272 wards, to keep a check on the distribution of money and liquor ahead Delhi Assembly elections scheduled for Saturday.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh said the party has complained to the Election Commission regarding news stating that many BJP MPs will be staying in different constituencies against the rule that they should leave after 6 p.m. on Thursday.

“It has been reported that 240 BJP MPs will be staying in different Assembly constituencies from Tuesday to Saturday. This is an open violation of the Model Code of Conduct as after the campaign ends at 6 p.m. on Thursday, no MP or Cabinet Minister can stay in Delhi unless the person is a resident,” Mr. Singh said. The party also said they launched a website – AmitShahKaUlta-Chashma – to combat the “lies” spread by Home Minister Amit Shah.

## Kejriwal asks Home Minister not to run away from debate

‘BJP’s Hindu-Muslim rants will only take India backward’

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday called BJP leaders “farzi [fake] Hindus” and referring to a section of the holy book, Bhagavad Gita, he said Home Minister Amit Shah should not run away from a debate.

“I will make all BJP leaders sing Hanuman Chalisa as this way their language will improve. They all are farzi Hindus. They do not know Hanuman Chalisa or Bhagavad Gita. They only know how to abuse,” Mr. Kejriwal said while addressing a press conference.

■

PTI



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal at a press conference in the city on Thursday. ■ PTI



Chief Minister,” he said.

The AAP chief said: “I want to appeal to the people of Delhi to cast their votes based on the work done by us in the past five years and to strengthen us by giving us their votes. Elect us in all the 70 constituencies in Delhi, so that we can work with greater conviction in our next tenure,” he said.

Mr. Kejriwal added that he wants to build a 21st-century nation where there are schools, hospitals, industries, employment, roads and transportation. “This will take the country forward. But by their [BJP’s] Hindu-Muslim rants, the country will go backward by 200 years,” he said.

## Security to be stepped up at Shaheen Bagh, Jamia

80,000 personnel to be deployed for polls

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

ice Forces (CAPF) were deployed. “A total of 153 entry and exit points to the city from Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad and Gurugram that include 43 non-motorable routes and 110 motorable routes to be under strict security cover. Paramilitary personnel will be deployed at borders. We have deployed security personnel at porous routes to keep watch on the movement of any suspicious person,” an officer said.

A senior officer said they have installed door frame metal detectors at entry points of Shaheen Bagh for the security of agitators at the protest site. He also said barricades have been placed on both carriageways outside Jamia Millia Islamia.

“We have taken these steps after the three firing incidents that took place in Shaheen Bagh and Jamia. The security personnel has been instructed to frisk visitors at the protest sites with the help of volunteers,” the officer added.

In Delhi, the Election Commission has identified 3,141 critical and 144 vulnerable polling stations.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a roadshow in the city on Thursday. ■ PTI

## Shaheen Bagh joint venture of AAP, Congress, says Shah

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah along with BJP MP Manoj Tiwari held several roadshows and public meetings across the city on the last day of campaigning on Thursday.

He alleged that the protests at Shaheen Bagh against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was a “joint venture” of AAP and the Congress.

National “Kejriwal and Rahul are worried that Shaheen Bagh should not be discussed. I want to ask, why the security of the country should not be an electoral issue? These people are very dangerous

for the security of the nation,” he said.

The Home Minister also attacked AAP and the Congress for supporting the protest at Shaheen Bagh and appealed to the people to vote for the BJP for the development of the city and the country.

Mr. Shah said the AAP government had done no work in the last five years, alleging that various promises regarding schools, colleges, infrastructure had not been fulfilled.

He added that on the other hand, the Centre was constantly working in public interest, providing housing, gas connections and basic facilities.



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## HC allows termination of 24-week pregnancy of minor rape victim

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday allowed termination of a 24-week pregnancy of a minor rape victim following a report of a medical board set up by Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital. The report stated that there was a significant risk to the girl in continuing with the pregnancy.

Justice Vibhu Bakshu held an in-chamber discussion on the medical report with the 16-year-old girl and her parents before delivering the order.

With the directions, the High Court disposed of the plea filed on behalf of the girl.

The High Court had on Tuesday had ordered RML to set up of a medical board to examine the condition of the six-year-old girl and submit a report on whether continuing the pregnancy will pose any risk to her health or not.

The doctor, who was present in court, said the risk associated with the procedure, including surgery, has been explained to the victim and it can be carried out within a few hours of receiving the

### 'Protests outside JMI to be shifted'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Protests outside Jamia Millia Islamia will be temporarily shifted, students under the banner of Jamia Coordination Committee (JCC) on Thursday said.

"Respecting the model code of conduct which prohibits canvassing by political parties within 100 meters of a polling station, we have decided to move our protest to Gate No. 4 of JMI without occupying the roads and without disturbing the traffic movement, even though we are not a political party," the JCC said. It added that they would ensure that voters face no difficulty. The JCC stated that the arrangement would be for Friday and Saturday. From Sunday, the protests would resume at Gate No. 7, they added.

ASHOK KUMAR  
GURUGRAM

The District and Sessions Court here on Thursday held the personal security officer (PSO) of a judicial official guilty for murder of the latter's wife and teenage son in October 2018. The judgment came about a year after framing of charges in January last year.

Pronouncing the verdict, Additional District and Sessions Judge Sudhir Parmar held PSO Mahipal guilty of murder and destruction of evidence under the Indian Penal Code and for use of



Public prosecutor Anurag Hooda (left) and complainant's lawyer Vishal Gupta. • ASHOK KUMAR

arms in contravention of the law under the Arms Act. The accused was present in the court.

Welcoming the verdict,

public prosecutor Anurag Hooda said the Gurugram police did a commendable job in evidence collection leading to the conviction in record time. "The then Commissioner of Police, K.K. Rao, constituted a Special Investigation Team soon after the incident leading to the arrest of the accused in less than two hours. The SIT was reconstituted the next day to add more police personnel to expedite the investigation and the collection of evidence," he said.

Mr. Hooda said the prosecution produced 64 witness-

es, including two eyewitnesses, and the CCTV footage and videos of the incident doing rounds on social media were also important evidence.

Besides, the blood group of Dhruv matched with the bloodstains on the uniform of the accused who had also made extra-judicial confession to the deceased's father additional district and sessions judge Krishant Kant and co-PSO constable Vinay Kumar.

The court has fixed February 7 for arguments on the quantum of sentence in the

case. Complainant's lawyer Vishal Gupta said the prosecution would seek maximum punishment, which is death under Section 302 of the IPC, as the case fell in the category of the rarest of the rare.

Defence lawyer Prem Shankar Sharma said the deaths were caused due to accidental firing during scuffle between Mahipal and Dhruv and the case, at the most, attracted charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder. He said he would go for further appeal in the case.

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DIP/Shabdharth/1352/19-20

## PSO held guilty of murder of judge's wife, son

A Delhi court will pronounce the quantum of sentence in the shocking Gurugram case of 2018 today

The District and Sessions Court here on Thursday held the personal security officer (PSO) of a judicial official guilty for murder of the latter's wife and teenage son in October 2018. The judgment came about a year after framing of charges in January last year.

Pronouncing the verdict, Additional District and Sessions Judge Sudhir Parmar held PSO Mahipal guilty of murder and destruction of evidence under the Indian Penal Code and for use of

arms in contravention of the law under the Arms Act. The accused was present in the court.

Welcoming the verdict,

## JMI asks students to call off stir outside Gate No. 7

SHO requests protesters to vacate road

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The administration of Jamia Millia Islamia on Thursday appealed to its students to call off protests outside Gate No. 7 of the university saying that the protest site is being used by various factions of civil society, neighbouring localities and that students are not distinguishable from the crowd.

It added that the university was responsible for the safety and security of the students within the domain

of the campus and can protest the students and staff.

It requested students not to be a part of an agitating crowd on a public road endangering their safety and security.

The station house officer, Jamia Nagar, it said had also written to the university and had requested the protesters to vacate the road to avoid any untoward incident as "unverified large crowd is not desirable in the run up to the election".

## 50 groups protest Union Budget at Jantar Mantar

Protesters say Budget failed to address 'crisis of unemployment'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Terming the 2020 Union Budget "anti-people and anti-poor", over 50 organisations, including labour unions, farmers groups and others, came together at Jantar Mantar on Wednesday to protest against it.

The protesters said the budget failed to address the "crisis of unemployment". They also called out at the BJP-led Central



Women protesters at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. • FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR

inflation". Eminent economist, Professor Jayati Ghosh, said many figures in the budget were wrong and the government was misleading the people of the country. People gathered at the protest said, "Instead of focusing on the pressing issues that impact people's lives, the government is busy distracting people with divisive agendas like CAA, NRC and NPR".

## 'Celebration of unity' at Shaheen Bagh

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

In a 'celebration of unity', members of Hindu, Sikh, Christian and Muslim communities held prayer ceremonies at the protest site against the Citizenship Amendment Act at Shaheen Bagh, on Thursday.

Carrying a bible and wearing a placard stating his name and his religion, Alexander Fleming, a Catholic, said that there was an attempt to make the protests look like they were "only filled with Muslims", he said, and that he was here to disprove that.

Jabarang Singh, a Sikh



Protesters at Shaheen Bagh conduct prayer ceremonies on Thursday. • BIBEK CHETTRI

farmer who says he has been in the city since the police crackdown at Jamia Millia Islamia on December 15 has been at Shaheen

Bagh since February 1. Dressed as the traditional warrior [Nihang] regalia, along with a spear and two swords, Mr. Singh argued that the CAA would divide the country. "This country has all kinds of religions, languages, even weather. [the Act] was an attempt to uproot [its core values]," he said.

"An environment of hate has been created in Delhi," said Mohammed Shahbaz, one of the people helping with the event. The message trying to be conveyed was that "everyone live in peace, treating everyone as brother and sister", he said,

going on to state that people here could not be "recognised by their clothes" as stated by the Prime Minister earlier, highlighting that people of all religions were wearing all sorts of clothes. People in skull caps were seen sporting a red tikka on their forehead, while others were wearing turbans, Mr. Shahab said.

The ceremonies, which included Christian hymns by nuns, a Sikh kirtan, a ritual Hindu yagna and a Muslim Quirat, ended with members of different faiths, addressing the protesters here and holding a joint prayer service.

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9th February	Fashion Show 'Unforgettable Himachal' by Ritu Beri.
10th February	Live performance by Sa Re Ga Ma fame singer Dr. Rinku Kalia.
11th February	Mesmerizing musical concert by famous folk singer Vandana Mishra.
12th February	Scintillating 'Nritya-Keli Kathak Dance' by Jayant Kastuar & Group.
13th February	Medley of performances by international troupes.
14th February	Experience an eclectic jazz classical fusion-Nav Swar Ragini by Subhash Ghosh and Shiv Sameer.
15th February	Delve into soul-stirring 'Roohdariyan'-Ek Sufiyana Shaam by Rashmi Agarwal.
	Hasya Kavi Sammelan by Manjit Singh & Party.

Mela Timings : 10:30 am - 8:30 pm

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2.	North East	Sh. Vinod Kumar	Nodal Officer	9958747776	<a href="mailto:vinodmig346@gmail.com">vinodmig346@gmail.com</a>
3.	South West	Sh. Ashok Kumar Verma	Nodal Officer	9999959150	<a href="mailto:nodalpwdsw2020@gmail.com">nodalpwdsw2020@gmail.com</a>
4.	East	Sh. Subrata Kundu	Nodal Officer	9599924214	<a href="mailto:sdselectioneast@gmail.com">sdselectioneast@gmail.com</a>
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10.	Shahdara	Sh. Raj Kumar	Nodal Officer	9990463588	<a href="mailto:raj.kmr72@nic.in">raj.kmr72@nic.in</a>
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RISE 17:06 SET 06:17
SUNDAY, FEB. 09
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RISE 18:14 SET 07:09

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Delhi Palam Today  
22°C Shallow fog/mist is likely.  
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## Two held for killing of Hindu outfit leader

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LUCKNOW

Three people, including the wife of the leader of a right-wing Hindu outfit Ranjeet Bachchan, were arrested in connection with his murder, a senior police officer said on Thursday.

Smriti Srivastava, described as Bachchan's second wife, her friend Deependra and driver Sanjeev Gautam were arrested, Lucknow Police Commissioner Sujit Pandey said.

Smriti told police that a divorce case was going on between her and Bachchan since 2016, but he was delaying the process by not appearing for court proceedings, Pandey said.

She claimed that Bachchan was creating hurdles in her marriage with Deependra.

Meanwhile, U.P. Police's Special Task Force on Thursday arrested from Mumbai the suspected shooter in the murder case.

Bachchan, 40, was shot dead on February 2 in Lucknow while taking a morning walk.

## Protesting women in Deoband shoo away peace panel members

They shower bangles on the team and raise slogans against CAA and NRC

ANUJ KUMAR  
GHAZIABAD

Women protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Deoband on Thursday showered bangles on members of the peace committee formed by the district administration to reason with them to give up their protest.

The women are protesting against the CAA and the NRC at the Idgah Maidan in the communally sensitive town of Saharanpur district for the last 11 days.

Local sources said the women didn't allow members of the committee, which included former MLA Mavia Ali and municipal corporation chairman Jamaluddin Ansari, to utter a single word and raised slogans against the CAA-NRC. "The women were furious that some of the members of the committee never showed



Women protesting against the CAA and the NRC in Deoband on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

up to support them during the protest. We shouted 'go back' and threw bangles at them. We will not vacate the place till the CAA is rolled back," said Salma Ehsan of the Murtahida Khawatim Committee, the banner under which women are protesting.

Mr. Ali said they were pushed by the administration to convince the protesters to

return home. "But we came during the day when the speeches were on. We will try to convince them during the night. It has been an unusually cold winter and many of them have fallen ill. I, personally, feel they should take a break and return after some days," the Samajwadi Party leader told *The Hindu*.

He said this was also important because the BJP was

using these protests to polarise the Delhi Assembly elections.

Describing the CAA as unconstitutional, Mr. Ali said the Prime Minister and the Home Minister should make a statement in Parliament that the NRC would never be implemented.

Senior Superintendent of Police Dinesh Kumar P. said the administration was only trying to convince the protesters to go home after the government has said in Parliament that an all-India NRC was not being conducted.

### 'Creating paranoia'

"There is no point in creating paranoia about something that is not intended by the government. They have registered their protest and they could return in future if they find that the government has gone back on its promise," said Mr. Kumar.

## Raj Bhavan, Bengal govt. headed for showdown over Governor's speech

Dhankar to address the budget session of Assembly today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SANTINIKETAN

The Raj Bhavan and the TMC government appear to be heading for another showdown with West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar asserting on Thursday that he will "create history" with his address to the Assembly at the beginning of the budget session on Friday.

Mr. Dhankar said he is hopeful that his inputs have been included in the

address.

The TMC was quick to return the fire. It criticised the governor for deliberately "creating problems between the Raj Bhavan and the State government".

**Governor's suggestions**  
Mr. Dhankar said the State government is well within its rights to put forth their achievements in the Governor's address to the House. "But as Governor, as consti-

tutional head of the State, I have also given my suggestions. I won't disclose what were those suggestions. I think it will be incorporated in my speech. I will act as per the Constitution," he said.

His comments came a day after he had said that he might make changes to the speech he is scheduled to read out at the beginning of the budget session on February 7.

## Seven die after inhaling poisonous gas in U.P.

CM orders action against culprits, announces ex gratia

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

Several persons, including a two-year-old, died after allegedly inhaling poisonous gas leaking from a chemical factory in Sitapur, police said.

The incident was reported from a village in the Biswan area of the district. All the dead originally belong to Kanpur district, police said.

Superintendent of Police, Sitapur, L. R. Kumar said prima facie the victims, who were labourers sleeping in a carpet factory they were working in, died from inhaling fumes that emanated after a liquid spilled out from a tanker.

Two stray animals also died due to poisoning, he said.

The entire area has been cordoned off for "isolation," the officer said, adding that a combing operation was on in the nearby areas.



A team of the NDRF and State health department also reached the site for further rescue work and investigation.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered "strict action" against the culprits, a government spokesperson said.

The dead were identified as Ateeq, 45, his wife Saira, 42, their daughter Aisha, 12, and sons Afroz, 8, and Faisal, 2, and two others Motu, 75, and Pehalwan, 75.

Mr. Adityanath announced ₹4 lakh compensation for the family of the deceased.

## High alert in Haryana against locust attack

Special supervision teams constituted

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Agriculture Minister Jai Parkash Dalal on Thursday said that after the reports of locust attack in Punjab and Rajasthan, the State has also been put on high alert.

Special supervision teams have been constituted to tackle the situation and to spread awareness about the same across the State, the farmers will also get the pesticides at 50%

subsidy," he said here.

Mr. Dalal appealed to the farmers to inspect their fields and immediately report the presence of any locust in their fields to the local agricultural officials.

### Special training

He said farmers are also given special training on how to stop the locust attack.

As per the requirement, adequate arrangements of pesticides were also being made, Mr. Dalal added.

**TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT**

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Man arrested for killing wife, uncle over domestic feud

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NAGPUR

A 50-year-old man allegedly killed his wife and her uncle after a domestic quarrel in Nagpur city, police said on Thursday.

The murders apparently took place on Monday and the partially decomposed bodies were recovered from the couple's flat in Dattatreya Nagar area on Wednesday, police said.

The deceased were identified as Manjusha Natekar (55), who was headmistress of a primary school here, and her maternal uncle Ashok Ramkrishna Kate (74), who recently started living with the couple in their apartment.

The accused, Jayant Yeshwant Natekar, was arrested from Nagpur railway station on Wednesday when he was about to board an Ajmer-bound train, a police official said.

The couple used to have frequent fights as the accused was jobless.

When Manjusha did not come to school for three consecutive days and her phone was switched off, some teachers contacted her brother. He reached her house on Wednesday afternoon, opened the lock with duplicate keys and called the police on finding the bodies.

## Coronavirus: armed forces on alert along China, Nepal borders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PUNE

The Indian armed forces are maintaining tight vigil along the borders with China and Nepal in view of the coronavirus outbreak in China, the Director-General of Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) Anup Banerji said on Thursday.

The government has sanctioned 10 research laboratories to screen and test samples of various pathogens, including the coronavirus, Lt. Gen. Banerji said.

He was talking to reporters during a conference at the Armed Forces Medical College here on Thursday.

In reply to a question, he said the armed forces were

## Aurangabad woman set on fire by neighbour dies of 95% burns

Accused will now also be charged under Section 302 for murder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AURANGABAD

The 50-year old Dalit woman, who was set on fire on Sunday by her 40-year-old neighbour after she resisted his move to enter her house died late on Wednesday night, a doctor said on Thursday.

The woman, who suffered 95% burns in the incident that took place in Andhari village of Sillod tehsil was undergoing treatment at a government medical college and hospital in Aurangabad city.

"She died around 10 p.m. on Wednesday," the hospital's medical superintendent Suresh Harbade told PTI.

The accused, Santosh Mohite (50), who knew the woman as he resided in her neighbourhood, was arrested on Tuesday, a police official said.

As per the woman's statement given to police before death, she tried to push Mohite out of her house, but in vain.

This led to a quarrel between them following which Mohite set her ablaze, Sillod (rural) police station's inspector Kiran Bidve said.

"The victim and the accused knew each other and he used to come to her house. But, on Sunday when



**Spontaneous protest:** Representatives of political parties, students and residents come together to hold a rally in Wardha (top) and Pune on Thursday demanding justice for the two women who were set on fire in Aurangabad and Wardha earlier this week. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT JIGNESH MISTRY



he came around midnight, she resisted saying meeting at that hour would defame her," he said.

However, despite her opposition, Mohite entered her house and they had a fight, he said.

"During the quarrel, Mo-

hite poured kerosene kept nearby on the woman and set her afire," he added.

He then locked the door from outside and ran away, the police said.

On hearing the woman's screams, some of her relatives staying in the vicinity

rushed to her rescue and took her to a local hospital, from where she was referred to the government hospital in Aurangabad city.

The accused was earlier booked under IPC Sections 307 (attempt to murder), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 452 (house-trespass with preparation for causing hurt to any person) and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace), but will now also be charged under 302 (murder), Mr. Bidve said.

### Lecturer stable

Meanwhile, the condition of the 25-year-old lecturer who was set ablaze in Wardha district earlier this week continues to remain "critical but stable", according to hospital authorities.

In a medical bulletin issued on Thursday, the hospital said, "No setbacks have occurred till now, although her condition remains critical. Her vitals are being maintained with oxygen supply. She is responding to commands. Her condition does remain critical."

Specialists treating the woman were keeping an eye on anticipated complications like infection and respiratory deterioration, the hospital said.

### Gujarat CM on cow shelters

AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Thursday made a pitch for making cow shelters and cattle shelters self-sustaining to reduce their dependence on government grants. PTI



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## IN BRIEF



Kerala Budget to be presented today

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
Kerala Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac will present the State Budget for 2020-21 in the Assembly on Friday. The State recorded 7.5% Gross State Domestic Product growth against the national average of 7.3% in 2018-19. He will have to proffer policy prescriptions to overcome the challenges thrown by the economic slowdown and the drastic cut in allocations from the divisible pool of Central taxes for sustaining the welfare initiatives.

## Two arrested in Kerala for raping Thai woman

KOCHI  
The Kerala police arrested two persons on the charge of raping a Thai woman on Wednesday. They were identified as Muhammed Insaf, 32, and Ansarudheen, 32, both from Malappuram district. According to the police, the first accused got acquainted with her on Facebook. Both met in a city hotel on Wednesday evening. The victim alleged that the first accused raped her in the room followed by the second accused who reportedly emerged from the toilet.

## Bengaluru international film festival from Feb. 26

BENGALURU  
The 12th edition of Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFes), starting from February 26, will showcase films from the Philippines, Germany and Australia, as well as those that portray Indian music tradition. It will also feature retrospectives of Russian auteur Andrei Tarkovsky and multilingual actor Anant Nag. "The festival will screen over 200 films from over 60 countries," said Sunil Puranik, chairperson, Karnataka Chalanachitra Academy.

# 10 MLAs inducted as Yediyurappa expands Karnataka Cabinet

BJP old-timers kept out; CM promises portfolio allocation by Saturday

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

Ten of the newly elected party-hopper MLAs, who paved the way for the formation of the BJP government in Karnataka last year, were sworn in as Ministers on Thursday. Six berths now remain vacant in the sanctioned Cabinet strength of 34.

None of the BJP old-timers made it to the six-month-old Ministry in the swearing in at the Raj Bhavan and indications are that their wait may be long. Meanwhile, as lobbying intensified among the newly inducted Ministers for key portfolios, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said he would consult the party high command and allot portfolios by Saturday.

Those sworn in were S.T. Somashekhar, Ramesh L. Jarkiholi, B.S. Anand Singh, K. Sudhakar, B.A. Basavaraj, A. Shivaram Hebbar, B.C. Patil, K. Gopalaiyah, K.C. Narayana Gowda, and Shri-



New team: Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Vala and Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa pose with newly inducted Cabinet Ministers at Raj Bhavan on Thursday. ■ V. SREENIVAS MURTHY

mant B. Patil. Of them, only Mr. Jarkiholi and Mr. Singh have been Ministers earlier.

Mahesh Kumathalli was the lone party-hopper MLA who, despite winning in the recent bypolls, was not inducted in the Ministry. Mr. Yediyurappa has promised that he would get "another big responsibility."

Seventeen MLAs had defected to the BJP and were disqualified in July 2019, bringing down the JD(S)-

Congress coalition government. They were disqualified by the Speaker that was later upheld by the Supreme Court. The BJP fielded 13 of them in the bypolls held in December 2019, and 11 won.

Mr. Yediyurappa had promised to make all party-hoppers Ministers. However, the Chief Minister is wary of allotting him the ministry, as it involves handling complex inter-State disputes and legal fights on behalf of the State.

Hours after the expansion, lobbying intensified for key portfolios among the 10 new

Ministers. Mr. Ramesh L. Jarkiholi has demanded the Water Resources Ministry, held by his political foe D.K. Shiva Kumar during the coalition government.

However, the Chief Minister is wary of allotting him the ministry, as it involves handling complex inter-State disputes and legal fights on behalf of the State.

Mr. B.C. Patil has reportedly sought to be made Home Minister.

# KIA car plant not moving out of A.P., says Minister

Company offered site in Tamil Nadu

T. RAMAKRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government is learnt to have offered to Kia Motors a site in the Gummidipoondi industrial complex of the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu, on the outskirts of Chennai.

sales and marketing Manohar Bhatt as saying that he was shocked to see the news report which came at a time when the KIA plant in Andhra Pradesh was doing extremely well.

Minister for Industries and Commerce Mekapati Goutham Reddy denied the

A.P. government and that it was bound to grow at a faster pace. It had no necessity to relocate, he said.

Mr. Reddy said the State had a favourable investment climate and several blue chip companies were keen on foraying into the State. "Unfortunately, some vested interests have spread the rumour that KIA was moving out to Tamil Nadu, to defame the government," he said.

In a press release, Mr. Reddy said the report was false and action need to be taken against those circulating the fake news. He quoted KIA Motors' national head of

Andhra Pradesh, he tweeted.

Special Chief Secretary (Industries and commerce) Rajat Bharat said the news report headlined 'Kia in talks over moving \$1.10 billion India plant out of Andhra Pradesh - sources' cited unnamed sources. He termed it a completely baseless story as A.P. had a strong partnership with KIA.

Mr. Bharat stated the State was enjoying a cordial relationship with Tamil Nadu and its Principal Secretary (Industries) had conveyed that there were no discussions between the two parties (T.N. and KIA).

# Jagan keen on starting work at Vizag soon

Identification of buildings begins

SUMIT BHATTACHARJEE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

Though the final go-ahead on making Visakhapatnam the Executive capital of Andhra Pradesh is awaited, identification of buildings to house various departments and offices has gained pace.

Top sources in the government say that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy will be the first to move to the city, and the Chief Minister's Office may be housed in the Innovation Tower building in the Rushikonda IT Park.

It is learnt that the CM is keen on starting operations from Vizag by March and the other departments are

# CID files FIRs in Amaravati land deals

P. SAMUEL JONATHAN  
GUNTUR

The alleged irregularities in land purchases in the Amaravati region before the formal announcement of the Andhra Pradesh capital appear murkier by the day.

The A.P. Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said it has gathered direct evidence against a few persons who bought land in Amaravati allegedly after obtaining white ration cards using forged documents.

The CID claims it has identified 797 white ration card-holders, including 268 PAN card-holders, who are allegedly involved in transactions in 761.34 acres covering Amaravati, Pedakkani, Tadikonda, Thulluru, Mangalagiri and Tadepalli mandals.

While the market value of the land is ₹291.34 crore, the sale deed value is ₹38.56 crore. The market value has been certified by Mandal Revenue Officers of the respective six mandals.

**'Documents fabricated'** The CID filed four FIRs on Thursday in Krishna district against those who had bought land in Amaravati after allegedly obtained white ration cards at Penamalur, Poranki, and at Yamalakuduru near Vijayawada.

Among them is a retired Railway employee and the spouse of an employee of a public sector bank.

Based on a complaint by the Penamalur tahsildar, the CID booked a case against Pollineni Kondala Rao, a native of Yamalakuduru. The accused was charged with obtaining a white ration card meant for the BPL (Below Poverty Line) families by submitting fabricated documents.

# Protest against police action in Bidar school

Students quizzed after anti-CAA play

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

Around 40 people, including lawyers and members of civil society organisations, staged a protest at the police headquarters in Bengaluru on Thursday condemning police action against students of Shaheen School in Bidar.

Police personnel have been visiting the school and questioning students after they staged a play against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. A teacher and parent have been arrested on the grounds that the play was seditious and inflammatory.

Protesters raised 20 questions that they wanted the

police to answer, and have demanded that the police be sensitised to the Juvenile Justice Act and child rights norms. They submitted a representation to the Director-General of Police stating that the police action was against the Act. "We were assured that the students would not be questioned again," said the protesters.

Mohammed Tahir, a lawyer, said: "Despite outrage by civil society, they are questioning students. This shows that right wing workers want to close down a minority institution." Sharada K.S. of All India Democratic Women's Association said the arrested should be freed.

## Beach yoga



Serene sands: Tourists practising yoga on the Kovalam beach in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, on Thursday. ■ S. GOPAKUMAR

# Yesudas's brother found dead

STAFF REPORTER  
KOCHI

Justin Joseph, younger brother of playback singer K.J. Yesudas, was found dead along the backwaters at Mulavukad here on Wednesday. He was 65.

He had gone missing from his rented house at Thrikkakara around 8.30 a.m. The family was about to register a man-missing case when they came to know about an unidentified body that had washed up near the International Container Transshipment Terminal at Vallarpadam.

"The family identified the body. It seems to be a case of suicide," police said. A regular singer at 'gamelas' in the past, he had later vanished from the music scene.

Those having suicidal tendencies may seek help on the helpline of Maitri 0484 2540530 or Chaithram 0484 23616161.

# A victim then, a healer now

Asna, who lost her leg in poll violence, takes charge as doctor

STAFF REPORTER  
KANNUR

A living martyr of the cult of violence in Kannur, K. Asna officially started her career as doctor at the Cheruvancheri Family Health Centre (FHC) near Koothuparamba, her hometown, on Wednesday.

A six-year-old Asna, who was playing in the backyard of her house on September 27, 2000, was injured after a bomb, allegedly hurled by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh workers during the local body elections, exploded near her. Her right leg had to be amputated below the knee.

**Hard work pays off**  
An undeterred Asna secured A+ in the SSLC examination and passed Plus Two with distinction. Her hard work helped her get admission for MBBS at Government Medical



Showing the way: Asna examining a child at a family health centre in Kannur, Kerala, on Wednesday.

College, Kozhikode. Her desire to become a doctor was fostered by the love and care she received from doctors while she was hospitalised for three months. "Nurses used to give me stethoscope and doctors showered their love, kindling an interest in me to be like them."

"I wish to thank all those who helped and supported us to sail through the tough

times. It is a great opportunity to serve the people who stood with us," she said after joining duty. Asna was accompanied by her father Nanu, who ran a tea shop. She was the first choice from the list of applicants, appointed by the panchayat board. Though a temporary appointment, she is happy to serve the people of her hometown.

# HC closes plea on Piravom chapels

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Thursday closed a petition filed by the Orthodox faction vicar seeking a directive to hand over the control of chapels under St. Mary's Church, Piravom, to him.

A Bench comprising Justice A.M. Shafique and Justice Mary Joseph observed that the Supreme Court had settled the law over the disputes in the Malankara Church. It had held that the management of the properties of the church could be done only by the Malankara Metropolitan and if there was any interference by any other faction, it would be against the SC verdict.

The court had made it clear that the chapels formed the integral part of the church. So, nothing further remained to be decided.

# Hajipur man gets death for triple rape, murders

Incidents took place between 2015 & '19

STAFF REPORTER  
NALGONDA

Marri Srinivas Reddy, 29, convicted of raping and murdering three minor girls between 2015 and 2019 in Hajipur village in Telangana's Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri district, was sentenced to death by the designated special court here on Thursday.

"I have no one and nothing left... even my house was destroyed by the villagers. I did not commit those crimes, the police beat me up and framed me," a weeping Reddy told the court.

Nalgonda first additional district and sessions judge S.V.V. Natha Reddy found him guilty under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, besides kidnapping, rape of minors and concealing evidence. The victims were aged 11, 17 and 14.

The court heard testimonies of 101 witnesses in a trial spread over 42 days in October and November last year. The recording of evidence was completed on January 17.

Defence lawyer appointed by the court S.R. Tagore told *The Hindu* that his arguments in favour of Srinivas Reddy were that the police could not present clear evidence of his role in the crimes.

"My argument always was that the police only had incriminating evidence. Anyway, I respect the judgment, and the accused can still appeal to the High Court," he said.

concurrently, and the accused can challenge the punishment in the High Court, Judge Natha Reddy told Srinivas Reddy.

"I have no one and nothing left... even my house was destroyed by the villagers. I did not commit those crimes, the police beat me up and framed me," a weeping Reddy told the court.

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# Mock drill at hotel leaves British diplomat fuming

It began ahead of schedule; staff did not follow SOP'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM

British Deputy High Commissioner Andrew Fleming got the scare of his life at a reputed star hotel in the city when an anti-terror drill began on the premises ahead of schedule, here on Thursday.

Mr. Fleming told the *The Hindu* that he had received written communication from the hotel management about the drill, but it began 30 minutes ahead of schedule, taking him by surprise.

"I was just checking out at the reception counter when I heard a blast and saw armed security men storming into the hotel. I am trained for such eventualities as I had worked earlier in Afghanistan and Iraq. As per the SOP [Standard

Operating Procedure], I ducked behind the counter to express his displeasure. "The note gave no mention of explosions, men with guns... Very poor," he posted.

Mr. Fleming further said mock drills were conducted in embassies every week. "People should be informed specifically that it is a mock drill and explosives and guns will be used. The hotel staff was clueless."

The drill was organised by the Navy personnel, Coastal Security Police and Octopus, the anti-terror outfit of Andhra Pradesh, ahead of the international naval meet Milan-2020.

Police Commissioner R.K. Meena met Mr. Fleming. "The hotel should have communicated the details to the guests," he said.

# Team Air India flew into an eerily quiet Wuhan rescue

Meticulous preparations marked the operations to evacuate Indians from 'a ghost town'; a Boeing 747 aircraft used

JAGRITI CHANDRA  
NEW DELHI

An eeriness greeted the crew on-board Air India's Boeing 747 aircraft as it approached Wuhan on a mission to rescue the first batch of 640 Indians from the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak. The pilots on-board the plane remember the city as "a scene from an apocalypse movie", a "ghost town".

"Initially it was like any other flight and airways were busy. But when we started descending, the silence started creeping on us. The airport was absolutely silent. All the aircraft were parked and sealed. The streets were empty and it felt like a ghost town," recalled Captain Amitabh Singh, Director of Operations of Air India and in-charge of the 34-member rescue team.

Five pilots and 15 cabin crew were sounded off about a mission to evacuate Indians from Wuhan "2-3 days" before the scheduled departure. A day before the flight,

the pilots and cabin crew underwent detailed briefing on the mission, including from doctors on the disease. The airline also procured medicated suits, protective shoes, gloves, N-95 masks, glasses and caps for the crew and the support staff.

## VVIP aircraft

A Boeing 747 aircraft, usually kept on standby for use by VVIPs, took off from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport at 12.30 p.m. on January 31 for the first rescue flight along with extra fuel, spare parts, and sufficient food and water.

The aircraft, known as jumbo, was chosen for its seating capacity as the twin-deck plane can accommodate 423 passengers. Another pilot, who requested anonymity, said he chose not to inform his family about his role in the mission.

After a four-hour long flight, the jumbo landed at Wuhan and what followed was an anxious wait of nearly



**Heroes all:** Captains Amitabh Singh, Kamal Mohan, Sanjay Achalkar, S.H. Reza and Bhupesh Narain. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

eight hours for passengers to start boarding the flight. The Chinese authorities allowed students to depart from their hotels and hostels for the Indian Consulate only after the Air India plane took off from the Indira Gandhi International Airport.

The students were then allowed to travel to the airport only after the aircraft reached Wuhan, resulting in the long ground halt, explained Captain Singh.

whose responsibility it was to co-ordinate with officials in China.

The flight was operated by Captain Kamal Mohan, Captain Sanjay Achalkar, Captain S.H. Reza, Captain Bhupesh Narain. The cabin crew team was led by Manju Tanwar. A team of three doctors and four nursing staff on-board the flight measured the temperature of all 324 passengers, posed questions from a questionnaire and taught

## All 645 evacuees test negative for coronavirus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

All 645 evacuees from Wuhan, China, have tested negative for novel coronavirus, the Union Health Ministry said in a release on Thursday.

It said 1,38,750 passengers from 1,265 flights had been screened as on February 5.

Furthermore, 510 samples had been sent to laboratories, and all had tested negative, except for the three already tested positive.

The Ministry of External Affairs, meanwhile, said 10 Indians in Wuhan had failed the screening process and could not be evacuated.

Delhi at 7.30 a.m. on February 1, where the officials of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and personnel from the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police were waiting. Passengers were then offloaded, medically checked, and escorted to the buses waiting to take them to the camp. But many on Team Air India returned to the drawing board to prepare for the second rescue flight.

The flight returned to New Delhi at 7.30 a.m. on February 1, where the officials of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and personnel from the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police were waiting. Passengers were seated in the Economy Class, the engineers and doctors were seated in the First Class in the front-section, while the extra cabin crew and commercial staff were on the upper deck, in the Executive Class. The pilots were confined to the cockpit.

The flight returned to New

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Friday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with gusty winds (speed reaching 30-40 kmph), hail and lightning very likely at isolated places over Odisha; with hail and lightning at isolated places over Chhattisgarh and with lightning over Vidarbha and West Bengal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 27.1	0.97		Kozhikode	... 35.2	24.6	
Ahmedabad	... 27.8	13.4		Kurnool	... 35.5	20.8	
Aizawl	... 18.1	0.83		Lucknow	... 23.5	0.78	
Allahabad	... 25.8	0.85		Madurai	... 34.0	22.2	
Bengaluru	... 30.3	17.7		Mangalore	... 34.3	22.6	
Bhopal	... 24.3	10.5		Mumbai	... 29.2	17.6	
Bhubaneswar	... 02.2	21.3	16.9	Mysuru	... 31.9	19.4	
Chandigarh	... 19.6	0.64		New Delhi	... 20.0	0.71	
Chennai	... 32.1	20.8		Patna	... 24.4	0.98	
Coimbatore	... 32.7	20.8		Port Blair	... 29.5	21.4	
Dehradun	... 22.0	0.05		Puducherry	... 31.6	21.2	
Gangtok	... 09.2	0.56		Pune	... 31.7	15.7	
Goa	... 31.4	21.2		Raipur	... 18.1	16.0	
Guwahati	... 25.4	0.89		Ranchi	... 23.2	10.6	
Hubballi	... 31.0	18.0		Shillong	... 15.5	0.33	
Hyderabad	... 33.0	19.4		Shimla	... 11.0	0.07	
Imphal	... 22.4	0.54		Srinagar	... 09.3	-3.2	
Jaipur	... 23.7	10.6		Thiruvananthapuram	... 33.8	23.5	
Kochi	... 31.6	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	... 33.3	21.2	
Kohima	... 15.0	0.64		Vijayawada	... 33.2	20.6	
Kolkata	... 26.3	15.6		Visakhapatnam	... 29.4	22.8	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	67	69	20	120	.15	■■■■■
Bengaluru	12	27	54	.62	.89	■■■■■
Chennai	15	51	.51	.52	.52	■■■■■
Delhi	09	29	.27	300	.194	■■■■■
Hyderabad	07	37	13	.60	.105	■■■■■
Kolkata	43	85	20	.237	.236	■■■■■
Lucknow	17	23	.31	.323	—	■■■■■
Mumbai	13	74	.41	.106	.178	■■■■■
Pune	76	23	.78	.108	.93	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	08	45	.41	.55	.74	■■■■■

In observation made at 6.00 p.m., Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 290 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 45

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO<sub>x</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

## Nirbhaya case: SC hearing on plea today

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A three-judge Bench led by Justice R. Banumathi will hear on Friday an appeal filed by the Centre challenging the Delhi High Court's rejection of its plea to separately execute the death sentence of the Nirbhaya gangrape convicts.

The Bench, also comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and A.S. Bopanna, will hear the appeal at 12.30 p.m.

A Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana, on an urgent mentioning made by the government on Thursday, said the special leave petition would be listed for hearing before an appropriate Bench on February 7.

The Centre had challenged a January 31, 2020 decision of the Sessions Court to postpone the issuance of fresh death warrants against the four Nirbhaya convicts, especially Mukesh Singh, whose mercy petition had been declined by the President on January 17.

It argued in the apex court that, under the Delhi Prison Rules of 2018, the pendency of legal remedies or mercy petitions of other co-convicts would have no bearing on the fate of a convict whose plea for mercy has already been rejected.

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## On the front foot

The RBI's efforts to boost growth could change the sentiment in the economy

**T**he humble onion almost halted the onward march of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its endeavour to bring down financial costs in the economy. Almost, because the RBI, despite finding its hands tied by rising inflation thanks to onion prices, found other means to drive down interest rates in the market, and in the system, in its monetary policy announcement on Thursday. At the press conference after the announcement, Governor Shaktikanta Das declared, only half in jest, that the proceedings of the Monetary Policy Committee, which decided to hold rates, had already been discounted by the market. "But don't discount the RBI," he warned, pointing out that the central bank had at its disposal various instruments. True to the statement, the RBI unleashed several measures that had an electric effect on the markets, driving down bond yields by 10-20 basis points in a matter of minutes. The exemption to banks from providing for cash reserve ratio on fresh retail loans disbursed after January 31 to purchase automobiles and residential houses, and to MSMEs, will help banks shave off a part of their costs. The hope is that they will pass on at least a part of that saving to borrowers as lower rates. Second, the introduction of one- and three-year term repos at policy rate of 5.15% for a total of ₹1 lakh crore is also aimed at prodding rates downward as banks now pay 6%-6.5% on deposits. Third, the RBI has fine-tuned its liquidity management process in a manner designed to help banks manage their interest costs better.

Whether banks really do what the RBI has signalled to them – transmit lower rates to borrowers – depends on various factors, not the least of which is demand for credit. The RBI's statement that it would maintain an accommodative stance "as long as necessary to revive growth" clearly signals its commitment to growth. By explicitly saying that there is "policy space available for future action", the RBI has signalled that there could be at least one more cut in the months ahead in this rate-easing cycle. The decision to extend the one-time restructuring of MSME loans, linking pricing of loans to medium enterprises to an external benchmark, and the nod for permitting extension of date of commencement of commercial operations for loans to commercial real estate are all welcome measures that raise questions of excessive forbearance but will certainly help the industry. The inflation projection – 6.5% in the current quarter and 5.4%-5.0% in the first half of 2020-21 – reflects the current realities. The projected GDP growth of 6% for 2020-21 appears achievable, assuming that the nascent signs of recovery sustain. The RBI has gone on the front foot to boost growth in this policy after the conservative Budget presented last week. It is to be hoped that these steps will change the sentiment in the economy.

## For a data firewall

The leak of medical information speaks to the urgent need for a data protection law

**T**he report by a German cybersecurity firm that medical details of millions of Indian patients were leaked and are freely available on the Internet is worrying. The firm listed 1.02 million studies of Indian patients and 121 million medical images, including CT Scans, MRIs and even photos of the patients, as being available. Such information has the potential to be mined for deeper data analysis and for creating profiles that could be used for social engineering, phishing and online identity theft, among other practices that thrive on the availability of such data on the Darknet – restricted computer networks which exchange information using means such as peer-to-peer file sharing. The reason for the availability of this data is the absence of any security in the Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS) servers used by medical professionals and which seem to have been connected to the public Internet without protection. Public data leaks have been quite common in India – from government websites enabling the download of Aadhaar numbers to electoral data rolls being downloaded in bulk, among others. Unlike the data protection regulations in place in the European Union and in the U.S., India still lacks a comprehensive legal framework to protect data privacy. The Draft Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 is still to be tabled but could enable protection of privacy.

The draft Bill follows up on the provisions submitted by a committee of experts chaired by Justice B.N. Srikrishna to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in 2018. The committee sought to codify the relationship between individuals and firms/state institutions as one between "data principals" (whose information is collected) and "data fiduciaries" (those processing the data) so that privacy is safeguarded by design. While the 2019 version of the Bill seeks to retain the intent and many of the recommendations of the Justice Srikrishna committee, it has also diluted a few provisions. For example, while the Bill tasks the fiduciary to seek the consent in a free, informed, specific, clear form (and which is capable of being withdrawn later) from the principal, it has removed the proviso from the 2018 version of the Bill that said selling or transferring sensitive personal data by the fiduciary to a third party is an offence. There are other substantive issues with the Bill pertaining to the situations when state institutions are granted exemption from seeking consent from principals to process or obtain their information. Yet, considering the manner in which public data are being stored and used by both the state and private entities, a comprehensive Data Protection Act is the need of the hour.

# Listening to the call of the informal

The voices of India's tiny entrepreneurs, living in rural areas and the urban fringes, should not be ignored



ARUN MAIRA

**A** week after the Budget, it is clear that successive policies of the government over the years have left the informal sector stigmatised. The government and its policy advisers want to dress the sector up to their preferred versions of formality. However, in the process, they could dampen its growth potential, as two recent papers reveal.

In the first paper, published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, economist Seema Jayachandran argues that there is no strong evidence from studies conducted in many developing countries that formalisation improves business outcomes. In the second article, a background paper for the International Labour Organisation (ILO), economist Santosh Mehrotra calls formalisation an evolutionary process during which small, informal enterprises learn the capabilities required to operate in a more formal, global economy. He says they cannot be forced to formalise.

### The formalisation trap

The key question here is: Who benefits from formalisation of informal firms? Formalisation does reduce the last-mile costs for banks. The state finds it easier to monitor and to tax the firms that adopt its version of formality. However, the process can also produce adverse outcomes for the informal sector firms themselves, as anthropologist James C. Scott explains in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*.

In India, which currently faces

an unemployment problem, the informal sector provides the vast majority of opportunities both for its youth and for people coming off the farm to earn incomes. Hence, India's policymakers need to look at the demerits of formalisation from the perspective of informal sector enterprises.

Ms. Jayachandran's study reveals that most of the formalities imposed from above, while making it easier for the state and the formal sector to do business with the informal sector, add to the costs of the firms that outweigh the benefits of formalisation.

She also finds that informal firms are able to improve their ability to do business in various ways. For example, small entrepreneurs gain from forming effective associations with their peers. They benefit greatly from 'mentoring'. Skills of small entrepreneurs and their employees are best developed on-the-job. This is because they cannot afford the loss of income by taking time off for training. 'Soft' skills, to form associations, manage enterprises, matter as much for the success of the enterprises as 'hard' resources of finance and facilities. In fact, the productivity of enterprises depends on their soft skills.

There is a desire to connect small firms in India more firmly with global supply chains. Mr. Mehrotra points out that the primary motivation of multinational companies for expanding their global supply chains is to tap into lower cost sources of supply. Supply chains compete with each other. When wages and costs increase in their source countries, they look for other lower cost sources. The lowest cost firms at the end of supply chains are generally informal. Thus, the push by the state to formalise firms is countered by the supply chain's drive to lower its costs.



A second-hand clothes market in Kolkata. ■ GETTY IMAGES

The thrust of the Indian government's policies should not be to reduce the size of the informal sector. Rather, it must be to improve working conditions for the citizens who earn incomes in the sector. Their safety at work, their dignity, and their fair treatment by employers must be the thrust of any reform. Indeed, even in developed industrial countries, the informal sector is growing with advances in technologies, emergence of new business models, and growth of the gig economy. There too, policymakers are struggling to invent new systems to project the rights of workers while maintaining the dynamism of an entrepreneurial economy.

### Reorienting policies

Hence, India's jobs, incomes, and growth challenge necessitates a re-orientation of policies towards the informal sector.

First, the government and its policy advisers must stop denigrating the informal sector and trying to reduce its size. Second, the development of an economy, from agriculture to the production of

more complex products in industry, is a process of learning. Informal enterprises provide the transition space for people who have insufficient skills and assets to join the formal sector. Large schemes to provide enterprises with hard resources such as money and buildings, which the government finds easier to organise, are not sufficient for the growth of small enterprises.

Policymakers must learn how to speed up the process of learning within informal enterprises.

Third, policymakers must learn to support informal enterprises on their own terms. And they should not impose their own versions of formality on them for their own convenience. Making it easy for MNCs and large companies to invest will not increase growth of the economy if enterprises and incomes at the bottom of the pyramid do not grow. The voices of tiny entrepreneurs in the rural heartlands and on the fringes of Indian cities must be listened to while developing policies for 'ease of doing business'.

Fourth, networks and clusters

of small enterprises must be strengthened. They improve the efficiency of small firms by enabling sharing of resources; they give them more clout to improve the terms of trade in their favour within supply chains; and they reduce the 'last mile costs' for agencies and providers of finance and other inputs to reach scattered and tiny enterprises.

Fifth, the drumbeat for labour reforms must be changed. A vocal crowd has been harping on the need for bold reforms to make it easier for employers to hire and fire workers. They advocate the raising of the size of enterprises (in terms of numbers of employees) to which laws should apply. These hire and fire laws are already not applicable to the small sector, where the vast majority of enterprises employ less than 10 persons. Hence, there is an urgent need for labour reforms in other ways. The laws should be simplified, and their administration improved. And, their thrust should be to improve the conditions of workers.

Finally, the social security framework for all citizens must be strengthened, especially for those who have to scramble for work in the informal sector. Health insurance and availability of health services must be improved, and disability benefits and old-age pensions must be enhanced. The purpose of 'labour reforms' must be changed to provide safety nets, rather than make the workers' lives even more precarious with misdirected attempts to increase flexibility.

Small enterprises need other forms of support to play their vital role in increasing employment and incomes at the bottom of the pyramid.

Arun Maira is a former member of the Planning Commission

# Complicating the tax regime further

The new system fails to offer any major relief to individual taxpayers, while removing incentives to save and invest



MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM

**A**s the country waited with bated breath for any signs of demand stimulation in this year's Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman delivered the longest Budget speech in the history of independent India. Her weakest punch was reserved for the last round, at which point we were just happy to exhale.

Three quarters of the way into her speech, Ms. Sitharaman announced what she claimed was a move to provide significant relief to individual taxpayers by simplifying the income tax law. The relief, she said, will be in the form of lower tax rates for which individuals will have to give up on the exemptions they enjoy under the existing regime. The simplification of the income tax law, the Finance Minister said, will benefit both the assessee and the assessors.

In essence, the government de-

cided to give a small section of taxpayers an opportunity to pocket more money, in the process hoping that they will give up on their savings instruments such as the Public Provident Fund and various life insurance products, and also abandon their investment in what in India is viewed as a safe haven asset – real estate.

The question that arises here is: Does the new tax regime really put more money into the hands of taxpayers? Taking the case of a typical taxpayer who is not a homeowner – considering that the new regime does not provide any exemption on interest on home loans – it is clear that in a majority of cases, the regime will leave the individual poorer. That said, there may be a few cases, as in the case of salaried personnel without any exposure to standard investments, where the new system might be of some benefit.

**Left worse on both counts**

The second part of Ms. Sitharaman's value proposition was that the new system would provide relief to taxpayers who, she said,

have struggled with a cumber-



some process, with more than 100 exemptions. The Minister's claims would have held true had the older system been discontinued altogether. Instead, what she delivered leaves taxpayers with double the amount of work – they now also have to compare the two systems and make a decision on which one is more favourable for them. Another factor complicating the taxpayers' filing process is that it isn't clear now which exemption will be scrapped in the near term and which one will continue in the long term. The new system, therefore, leaves taxpayers worse on both counts.

The more concerning issue with the new tax system has two elements. One, it marks a departure from a scenario where the state used direct taxes and exemptions to incentivise investment in key sectors; this new regime does without providing an equally effective mechanism on the indirect taxation front. An example of the latter would have been an exemption on the purchase of electric vehicles, with the goal of reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. Similarly, an increase in incentive for home ownership would have provided a sagging real estate sector with some much-needed fillip. It is ironic that the government, while disincentivising investment in insurance on the one hand, is also attempting to publicly sell stakes in India's largest insurance provider on the other hand.

The second important issue with the new tax system is that it removes all incentives to save in an economy that is already seeing a steady decline in our household savings rate, fuelled by unemployment. Nobel-winning behavioural economist Richard Thaler, a favourite of Narendra Modi and who ap-

plauded the Prime Minister for his work on Swachh Bharat, has worked extensively on encouraging Americans to save for retirement. It was his research that persuaded American lawmakers to reform the retirement scheme. This change encouraged employers to enrol workers automatically for the retirement savings plan, increasing participation rates among young American workers. Our government seems to be encouraging the young taxpayers to do the opposite.

Finally, it was disappointing that the Budget gave such a disproportionate emphasis on tax reform, considering the fact that taxpayers constitute hardly 2.5% of the population. With 60% of the population engaged in agriculture and allied activities, any real demand stimulation would have had to begin with the rural sector. Hence, the low allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and PM-KISAN was unfortunate.

Mohan Kumaramangalam is a working president of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### A macabre theatre

Nothing divides India more than its elections. Even going by this maxim, the cleavage has never been as distinct as it is in the poll-bound Delhi. A rising crescendo of calumny against the Shaheen Bagh protests has been on view. The Prime Minister has insinuated publicly that the protests are a "conspiracy" of dubious intent. The Election Commission seems to dawdle and indulge the habitual lawbreakers. In creating such a macabre political theatre, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hopes to dent AAP's well-entrenched credibility. In their desperate attempt to win an election they appear to be losing, the BJP leaders are trying to turn Indians against Indians. It is, of course, a deplorable ploy, rooted in misinformation, canards and toxic slogans. But, it is also pitiable. In a democracy, elections are won and lost. But, at

stake in Delhi is much more than power. In the cauldron of hate and desperation, the BJP is boiling a toxic potion that will encourage vulnerable victims like the self-proclaimed "Rambhakt", who fired at protesters at Jamia Millia. All of which makes the Delhi elections a test of how far popular opinion and social taste may or may not have moved over the last five years of Narendra Modi's rule. Will the hate-filled, polarising communal blitzkrieg wash out from the electoral mind all considerations of actual performance, as it did in the last Lok Sabha elections after Pulwama, or will the electorate hold fast to facts on the ground?

JAVADILAKSHMANA RAO,  
Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

**Vote for performance**  
In the interview, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal comes across as a leader confident of a good show

on account of his performance in the fields of electricity, water, school and hospitals during the past five years (Feb. 6). The decision of the Aam Aadmi Party to fight the election on the basis of performance, and on a secular plan, is a welcome gesture. While running a non-BJP government by itself is difficult, the ordeal would have been greater in Delhi. The bitter experience with the Centre seems to have made Mr. Kejriwal a seasoned politician. However, his comments that nothing extraordinary happened in the past 70 years in Delhi are unacceptable. Former Chief Minister Sheila Dixit was the architect of changing the face of Delhi with Metro and flyovers.

D. SETHURAMAN,  
Chennai

**An opaque system**  
I share James Chau's concern about rumours

relating to the nCoV outbreak expressed in the article "A time for solidarity, not stigma" (Feb. 6). At the same time, we should also focus our attention on the grave lapses on the part of the Chinese authorities in the fight against the deadly virus. When an ophthalmologist in Wuhan posted a message online in December about some people diagnosed with SARS-like symptoms, Wuhan police reprimanded him for spreading rumours. China initiated the fight against the virus only after the infection started killing people after mid-January. The authorities misconstrued reality as rumour and allowed the virus to spread, giving it more than half a month. China has had the history and experience of SARS caused by a virus in the corona family. That virus also originated in the wet markets of China and yet,

no action was taken against wildlife trade. And nCoV also originated from the notorious wet market in Wuhan and it has killed more than 500 people so far. To be blamed here is Chinese system, which lacks transparency and silences whistleblowers. SUKUMARAN C.V.,  
Palakkad, Kerala

**Safe drinking water**  
In an ideal country in which the government provides safe and secure drinking water to all its citizens, there will be no need for the inefficient reverse osmosis (RO) water purification technology. Unfortunately, we are living in a country which is far from ideal as far as quality and quantity of drinking water supply are concerned. Consequently, concerned citizens install RO-based water purifiers, in spite of the high capital and maintenance costs, perhaps erring on the side of health

and safety. But realising the wastage involved, eco-sensitive citizens have started using waste water from RO for cleaning, washing and gardening, among other purposes. The government can educate people about the productive uses of waste water from RO. Besides, it can fund research and development of other affordable and efficient water-purifying technologies so that RO technology is not required. Above all, the government can ensure safe drinking water for every citizen. Under the prevailing situation, any proposal to bar domestic users from installing and utilising RO systems cannot be considered an ingredient in good water management policy (Editorial, "Purifying water," Feb. 6).

A. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN,  
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

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# Does the Budget do enough in providing a stimulus to growth?

PARLEY

By not cutting spending despite constraints, the Budget ensures momentum doesn't backslide

*Presenting the Union Budget for 2020-21 to Parliament, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman spoke of this being the Budget to boost common people's incomes and enhance their purchasing power. In a discussion moderated by Suresh Sesha-dri, Ananth Narayan and V. Srinivasan look at whether the proposed changes in direct taxes and other measures are likely to help spur consumption and investment in the economy. Edited excerpts:*

**The Economic Survey stressed wealth creation as a central theme. Do the Budget proposals address this? If so, to what extent?**

**Ananth Narayan:** What you have to look at from this particular Budget is what does it do by way of stimulus, which is, does it actually spur consumption or investment or get some money going through into the system? And second, does it lay a road map for any kind of deeper structural reforms? If both of them come together in the right ingredients, then wealth creation, which is indicated in the Economic Survey, should follow through.

The Budget gave a lot of good background. The three themes – aspirational India, economic development, caring society – nobody can have an argument with that. But there were severe constraints when it came to actually giving any kind of a stimulus. Frankly, Finance Minister Sitharaman had very, very little space to announce any further stimulus. Really, what you have to be thankful for is that she didn't cut down on spending. She continued with the stimulus, which has been ongoing for the last three, four Budgets now. In fact, government spending is what is holding up GDP growth.

I think what has been disappointing is the second part, on structural reforms. There are a lot of good things which have been spoken about on agriculture, irrigation, start-ups and so on. But some of the real elephants in the room [are]: the health of the financial services ecosystems – banks and NBFCs; and structural issues in sectors such as power, telecom, airline and ship-

ping, real estate, construction. And third, most importantly, getting in foreign direct investment into manufacturing or grabbing some of the top supply chains coming out of China. On all these three structural fronts, personally, I was disappointed by the lack of direction in the Budget.

So, to answer your question, wealth creation: it's not constricted, the government has not cut down on spending because of fiscal constraints, and there are deep fiscal constraints. On structural reforms, the Budget document itself was disappointing. The good news, of course, is that reforms don't have to happen only in the Budget, they can happen separately as well. But as things stand, I don't see enough being done for wealth creation or for the reigniting of the investment cycle.

**Would the various direct tax changes give a boost to incomes and thereby lift consumption spending?**

**V. Srinivasan:** India first needs to have a capex investment cycle going, create more jobs and thereby increase consumption. I think relying on consumption alone and putting money in the hands of people to consume and therefore stimulate the economy is something which can help in the short term, but in the long term can lead to some disastrous results. And clearly, the measures in the Budget have attempted to spur consumption. But I think if you look at the direct tax changes on the personal income tax side, I think it is [at] best status quo. I think more likely than not people would be in the same place where they are, not opting for the exemptions and staying with it at least as of now, till they get more clarity on how exactly these things work and for how long you'll have the option rather than try to sort of give up on the investments and not take exemptions and live with a lower tax.

That's the thing that you really need to wait and watch. But as of now, if you look anecdotally since that's the only social security and kitty which people build for their later years, I think it's more likely that people will



R.V. MOORTHY

continue the exemptions. We need to wait and watch in terms of how the capex cycle comes through, which I think would possibly trigger a much more sustainable consumption cycle than trying to just put money in the hands of people and trying to stimulate the economy.

**Could the new opt-in tax regime end up impacting savings? Household savings have after all been a significant contributor to another pillar of GDP, gross fixed capital formation.**

**AN:** Not directly by the measures which have been announced. Sure, at the margins for certain tax slabs, it is possible that financial investments and savings, which were otherwise encouraged, might no longer make sense. But that's a very small number in my opinion. I don't think the changes incorporate a big change in the behaviour of savings per se. But the broader point you make is quite valid. The savings rate, the financial savings rate for households has been dropping quite sharply over the years. And this is a 10, 15 years kind of a trend, which is a sign of worry.

Frankly, when we worry about things like savings rate and growth and consumption, the starting point paradoxically has to be investment. India tends to earn more and save more when there is investment going through. We saw that, for instance, when the golden quadrilateral was being built 20 years ago; 30 years ago, when the markets were opened up and money came in,

**C** As of now, if you look anecdotally since that's the only social security and kitty which people build for their later years, I think it's more likely that people will continue the exemptions.

V. SRINIVASAN

poured into various kinds of infrastructure investments.

We saw what happened 10 years ago, when we saw a lot of banking money go into infrastructure investments, which unfortunately didn't end well, we saw again growth and consumption that time. So, savings and investments or savings and overall income is structurally I think linked to investments, which is why the structural reforms required for spurring back an investment cycle is what we were all, at least I was, looking for very eagerly. There are lots of small things happening. And I have to acknowledge that, for instance, labour laws are being changed quietly. Likewise, you know, the corporate tax rate cut is very welcome for investments. But it seems a little too little at this point in time. To get back savings, to get back healthy macroeconomic variables, I think we need the investment climate coming back again, and a lot, lot needs to be done on the structural side before that happens.

**The Finance Minister has said the government is keen not to splurge to end the slowdown and will instead focus on creating public assets. As an approach, how relevant is it to the current economic logjam?**

**VS:** It comes back to what we've been grappling with and what in the media's and regulators' talk is 'transmission'. And clearly, resources are limited. Understand that both the RBI and the government are trying to sort of do all that they can to spur investment, increase the flow of money. And 'transmission', meaning irrespective of how much liquidity you put in, rates are not going lower, banks are not lending; the system is, to some extent, broken. So, whatever the Budget does or any sort of policy measure which is taken is hitting a wall till we sort out some of the systemic issues and try and clean the deck and then start from there. And I think that's something which was a hope, at least in terms of, whether in the Budget or outside it, trying to make sure that if someone has to take a hit, we need to take the hit.

If the government has to step in to provide some support, at least clean the deck and then confidence will be back and people can sort of look ahead with reasonable comfort that they are not going to be blindsided by something which they didn't expect. That phase continues and that irrespective of whether you splurge, don't splurge, if you do whatever you're doing, I think it's not helping.

So, I think the biggest thing is whether it's real estate, whether it's NBFCs, we need to clean the deck and make sure people are comfortable with the future. When you're not comfortable with the future outlook, and it's sort of filled with uncertainty, I think you hold back on anything you want to do, and that's the phase we are going through. The Budget, I was hoping, would trigger some animal spirits by bringing some certainty in terms of putting some of these things behind us. [That has] not happened. So, I think we will have to muddle along till we sort out some of the problems ourselves, or something happens which forces us to do that.

**Does the Budget help keep the economy on track to reach the government's \$5 trillion goal?**

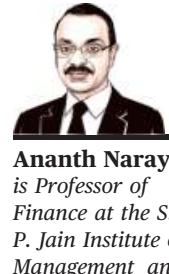
**AN:** At the moment, I don't think we are on track to reaching this \$5 trillion mark by 2024. The good news, though, is that there is no reason why we can't start to improve our growth dramatically. I think our

potential remains pretty high. If we start to address some of the structural issues, I do think given our demographics, given the resources that we have, it's quite within our reach to bring in foreign direct investment, as well as to have our own investment cycle restarted, so as to get us to higher rates of growth. But for that, we have to make a fundamental departure.

One quick point on NBFCs etc., I think where the government is stalled right now is twofold. One is they see a moral hazard and I sympathise with that. 'Why should the government bail out private entities?', and that's a good point. Second, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code is a lovely piece of legislation. It's starting to hopefully settle down, it will work for the future. So, therefore, their bet is things will solve themselves and 'we should not get involved trying to bail out individuals'. I sympathise with the thinking, but I think the size of the problem is just too large. And, therefore, a one-time solution is required alongside making sure there's accountability. And there are structural reforms so that the cycle does not repeat. Unless we take steps like this, and not just in the banks and NBFCs, but the other sectors, and the ease of doing business on manufacturing, I think the realisation of that \$5 trillion potential will remain a bridge too far.

**What do you think are the biggest positives of the Budget?**

**VS:** Clearly, we have not moved back thanks to the Budget. Whatever investment needs to happen, whatever risk capital needs to come into the country, primarily it is coming from offshore through foreign investors because domestic investors and institutions as of now, whether banks, mutual funds and to a large extent insurance companies, lack the risk appetite in terms of putting money, risk capital to work in the current context. And the only people who are willing to do that seem to be offshore investors. So, the Budget recognises that and to some extent offers a much cleaner, easier environment, from a tax perspective, and from an incentive perspective, for foreign investors to access local markets and provide risk capital. And I think that's one of the big positives in the Budget.



**Ananth Narayan**  
is Professor of Finance at the S. P. Jain Institute of Management and Research



**V. Srinivasan**  
is a veteran banker



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

## Reducing custodial deaths

The Indian police continue to torture suspects in custody as they are rarely punished

M.P. NATHANAEL

turture suspects in their custody.

The Central Bureau of Investigation too uses torture as a method of investigation. In September 2016, B.K. Bansal, Director General of Corporate Affairs, and his son Yogesh committed suicide. In their suicide note, the two men listed the names of officers who had tortured their family in connection with a case of disproportionate assets. Bansal's wife and daughter too had committed suicide two months earlier. On the directions of the National Human Rights Commission, an inquiry was held by the CBI. Expectedly, the agency exonerated all the accused.

Taking cognisance of the matter, the Central Vigilance Commission published a standard operating procedure laying down guidelines for interrogation of accused officials.

Custodial deaths have been on the increase in recent years. They increased by 9% from 92 in 2016 to 100 in 2017, according to the National Crime Records Bureau. Since policemen responsible for custodial deaths rarely get punished, they feel emboldened to continue using torture as the tool to get to the truth. In 2015, for instance, the police registered cases against fellow police officers in only 33 of the 97 custodial deaths.

### A historic order

The Supreme Court delivered a historic order in 2006 on police reforms. It stated, among other things, that every State should have a Police Complaints Authority where any citizen can lodge a complaint against policemen for any act of misconduct. However, only a few States such as Kerala, Jharkhand, Haryana, Punjab and Maharashtra have implemented the order. Others have not taken the matter seriously.

Until exemplary punishment is meted out to policemen who are responsible for custodial deaths after proper judicial inquiry, not much can be expected to ameliorate the situation. Proper interrogation techniques coupled with use of scientific methods to extract the truth from suspects can go a long way in reducing custodial deaths.

### Acting with impunity

These incidents have brought into sharp focus the way Indian policemen torture and interrogate suspects in their custody leading to death in several cases. As a result, policemen all over the country have been severely criticised and condemned. Strictures passed against policemen from time to time by learned judges of various courts notwithstanding, the police continue to brazenly tor-



### NOTEBOOK

## Journalism in the time of an outbreak

Reporters risk contracting whatever contagion is ruling the roost

RAMYA KANNAN

A virus is a formidable foe for humans who are periodically affected, often in swarms, but more so for health journalists. In unimaginable ways, a public health emergency sometimes blindsfolds a journalist, disallowing proper employment of the tools and techniques of the trade. There is no press pass that bacteria recognise, no calling card that will impress a virus enough to stay away. Sometimes, just doing one's job could land one in the deep end.

Reporting is about 'being there' as news breaks, as events happen, in the epicentre. It is often about rushing in where angels fear to tread. With a bit of excessive enthusiasm, the reporter could land up with a more intimate experience than she had bargained for.

The modern world, nearly seamless and bor-

derless, has begun to regularly afflict us with outbreaks. Often, in the initial stages, everyone just feels around in the dark. The light eventually slips in through the cracks, and if we are lucky, a cure too.

But in the initial feeling around phase, it is possible that an enthusiastic health reporter has a higher degree of risk of contracting whatever contagion is ruling the roost than the general population, just shades less than the healthcare workers.

A basic prevention protocol automatically kicks in these days, and the masks are deployed early on, but there was seldom such clarity in the past. Health workers with meagre resources would try to overcome outbreaks with sheer will and sacks of chlorine powder.

Cholera and acute diarrhoeal diseases in north Chennai were a common occurrence up until a decade ago. Those sent out to

the area to do a spot story would have to figure out what to drink or eat locally, besides being careful about what to touch, in order not to be visited upon by a virulent vibrio cholerae.

Who knew what protection to take while walking into the wards of government hospitals brimming over with patients, the corners fertile with bodily fluids, and the air heavy with the stench of cheap disinfectant? If mortuary trips became a necessity, as they did during the tsunami, a handkerchief or dupatta would offer protection.

The N95 masks were unheard of then. As for gloves, even mortuary workers used them only for special occasions.

Wandering on the dark sands of the tsunami-ravaged Nagapattinam and Cuddalore coast without the right footwear left its mark on journalists too. Red, itchy patches evolved into dark splotches on the

legs. It was contact dermatitis that doctors found in the local survivors of the big wave as well. Galoshes were not on our mind, as we grappled to report the unprecedented ramifications of the tragedy.

And how do you protect yourself from the female anopheline mosquito carrying the deadly plasmodium vector, in cities that continue to be endemic to malaria? This is a problem especially when a visit to an affected area is the way your story can unfold, naturally putting you in harm's way. In the first wave of chikungunya in the south, in 2006, unsuspecting journalists stumbled right into dens of Aedes mosquitoes, even before it became clear what was making people double up in agony.

Experiential journalism adds value, but in retrospect, these were experiences that were perhaps not necessary.

### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 7, 1970

#### Bhutto's plan to bomb Trombay

Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, who was then Foreign Minister of Pakistan, has accused former President Ayub Khan of turning down his advice to bomb the Trombay atomic complex and Calcutta during the last Indo-Pakistan conflict. According to a report published by Mashriq here [New Delhi], Mr. Bhutto told a public meeting in Sheikhpura on Thursday [Feb. 5] that during the 1965 hostilities he had urged Ayub Khan to allow bombing of Trombay by Pakistan Air Force along with big cities like Calcutta and Bombay. If Ayub Khan had accepted the advice Trombay would have been destroyed and India would not have been in a position to manufacture any atom bombs at least for the next 10 years, he said. Mr. Bhutto felt the only alternative left now for Pakistan was to start manufacturing atom bombs. Mr. Bhutto said that he had always urged his Government to adopt a rigid attitude towards India. If India became a nuclear power it would create a serious situation for Pakistan.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEB. 7, 1920.

Congress Party and the Reform Act.

Lord Willingdon from all that we hear seems to be under a gross misapprehension regarding the attitude of the Congress and Nationalist party towards the Reform Act. His Excellency does not apparently keep himself in touch with current Indian political opinion by acquiring knowledge of the same firsthand and is content to accept opinions foisted on him by those who have most access to him. On no other ground can be explained the belief which His Excellency seems to entertain that the adherents of the Indian National Congress and the members of the Nationalist party can have nothing to do with the Rules and Regulations to be passed under the Reform Act. A singularly ill-natured and offensive effusion appears in New India of the 6th instant in which the following delectable sentiments appear! "The Hindu cries out because there is not a single 'Nationalist' on the Committee. What have the 'Nationalists' to do with any committee connected with the Reform Act?... It is not at all improbable that the Committee will only have to do with the general rules and regulation of business under the New Act. If so there is not likely to be much difference of opinion between the two parties and the Hindu need not be so angry because its friends have not got seats on it."

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Path chosen by Oppn. can lead to anarchy: PM

Mr. Modi, however, chose to extensively quote India's first Prime Minister to defend the CAA and cited a letter written by Mr. Nehru to the first Chief Minister of Assam Gopinath Bordoloi, on the need to differentiate between Hindu refugees and Muslim migrants.

"Was Nehru ji communal? Did he want to create a Hindu Rashtra? I want to ask the Congress," he said.

In the Rajya Sabha, he cited statements by Lal Bahadur Shastri and a November 25, 1947, resolution of the Congress Working Committee to support his arguments.

"I don't believe the Congress was communal on November 25, 1947, and is secular now," he said.

Referring to the ongoing protests against the CAA, Mr. Modi said the "students should ask themselves" if they should support "misinformation".

In a bid to lighten the mood, he said he was inspired by Rajya Sabha chairperson M. Venkaiah Naidu, who is known for using rhymes and acronyms in his speeches, when he quipped "those who used to be silent are now violent".

### Azad walks out

Before walking out in protest, Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad said that while the Congress "supports" citizenship for Hindu refugees, it opposes the law that determines it on the basis of religion.

Taking a dig at the party's 'Save the Constitution' cam-

## Rates to fall despite RBI's status quo

"... it is an effort to ensure better monetary policy transmission," Mr. Das said, explaining the objective behind the move.

The GDP growth for the next financial year is projected at 6%, in the range of 5.5-6% in the first half of the FY21 and 6.2% in Q3. The growth projection for the current financial year was 5%.

The outlook for the consumer price index-based inflation has been revised upward to 6.5% for the fourth quarter of the current financial year and 5.4-5.0% for the first half of 2020-21. It's projected at 3.2% for third quarter of the next financial year.

While holding the rates, Mr. Das reminded that there would be scope for further easing.

"Barring the intensification of global risks, I would like to emphasise that there is policy space available for future action. This space needs to be used appropriately and should be suitably timed to optimise its impact on growth," he said, adding that downside risks

## Bombay HC grants bail to Peter Mukerjea

An ECG carried out in the jail suggested some abnormality and he was shifted to the hospital, where he was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. He had suffered a mild heart attack.

There were four blocks in three main arteries, and the report had suggested that he should undergo either a bypass surgery or an angioplasty at the earliest.

He has been charged under Sections 364 (kidnapping in order to murder), 120b (punishment of criminal conspiracy), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence, or giving false information to screen offender), 302 (punishment for murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

campaign, Mr. Modi said the Congress would do well to remember it a 100 times a day since they were the ones who imposed Emergency, arbitrarily dismissed elected governments, tried to take away the power of judicial review from the judiciary, set up the Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council (NAC) to function as "a remote control" to the Manmohan Singh-led government, while Rahul Gandhi had torn up a copy of an ordinance.

Invoking the contributions of stalwarts like Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Ashfaqullah Khan, Begum Hazrat Mahal and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Mr. Modi claimed that while the Congress looked at them as 'only Muslims' his government looked at them as Indians. "I had the great privilege to touch the feet of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan at a very young age," he said.

Addressing concerns raised by Rajya Sabha MPs about the condition of the Indian economy, Mr. Modi asserted that there was "no need to despair" as the "fundamentals of the economy are strong". Stating that the country was aiming to be a \$5 trillion economy, he said there could be no progress by "thinking small" and being restricted to what is "possible".

Responding to the Opposition's charge that he used to oppose the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax as Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr. Modi said he had addressed the issues he had raised then when he became Prime Minister.

## Rates to fall despite RBI's status quo

to global growth had increased in the wake of the outbreak of coronavirus.

Markets reacted positively to the tone, with the yield on the 10-year benchmark government paper dropping 6 bps to close the day at 6.45%. Economists said that with RBI worried about growth recovery, the next rate cut could be as early as in April - the next policy review meeting.

A Nomura report said, "The RBI delivered a dovish pause with a clear signal that its bias remains towards easing... we continue to believe the next policy move is still a cut; we expect a 25bp repo rate cut in Q2 2020, which could get delivered as early as April".

Abeek Barua, Chief Economist, HDFC Bank, said, "Going forward, our sense is that the central bank could take the first opportunity it gets to cut rates - as soon as the inflation optics start looking better and headline inflation comes closer to the RBI's target band. We now see a high probability of a rate cut (25bps) as early as Q1 FY21".

## Bombay HC grants bail to Peter Mukerjea

On November 24, 2016, the same judge had rejected Mukerjea's bail petition and said, "There is enough material in the investigation to prima facie infer that the applicant [Mukerjea] was not in support of Rahul's relationship with Sheena."

As for Rai, the same Bench had then recorded, "At the outset, it is required to note that the statement of co-accused Shyamvar points the finger at the applicant as regards his involvement. The statement of adopted daughter Vidhi also speaks of disapproval of the relationship between Sheena and Rahul by the applicant. The statements of other witnesses also point the finger at the involvement of the applicant to the crime in question."

The Bench reserved orders on the issue whether the Review Bench could have referred other questions of law to a larger Bench. The CJI said the order would be pronounced on February 10.

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CM YK

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## INTERVIEW | PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

# 'BJP's major plank in Delhi polls is Modi's governance record'

Union Minister says Delhi voted for clean politics, and now there are allegations of corruption against AAP and its legislators

NISTULA HEBBAR

**Union Minister Prakash Javadekar** is the BJP's election in charge for Delhi. He speaks on the campaign, its tonality and the anti-CAA protests that were also a theme running through the campaign.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had a strong campaign theme of the work done by its government. How did you counter it?

■ Our major plank in these elections is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governance record and the development activity he has done. In contrast, in the last four-and-a-half years Mr. Kejriwal [Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal] was only blaming Prime Minister Modi – that he [Mr. Kejriwal] was not being allowed to work, his projects were being blocked, etc. Now, the AAP's campaign slogan says, "Acche Beete Paanch Saal." How is he saying that?

More importantly, he

failed Delhi. Delhi voted for clean politics, and now his party and its legislators have been spoken of as involved in corruption and this has damaged Delhi.

People are disappointed and he [Mr. Kejriwal] has stopped all work.

So much so that he hasn't allowed the good schemes of the Centre to be implemented in the State – he has not allowed Ayushman Bharat or even the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi.

But the municipal corporations have a strong BJP presence and are responsible for much of the civic infrastructure. Do you still think the "no work" tag would stick?

Municipal corporations in Delhi were not allowed to work.

The State government did not give nearly ₹10,000 crore that was due to the municipal corporations.

Our corporators should have highlighted the fact that the Kejriwal government was obstructing funds and works by the municipal corporations.

It wasn't highlighted earlier, we highlighted in the campaign.

The BJP, however, took a conscious decision in the past few days to go hyper-local and hold small meetings rather than a blitzkrieg of rallies, etc.? Were you compensating for the fact that you don't have a chief ministerial face to project?

■ In many States in the past, we had not declared a chief ministerial candidate.



All parties sometimes declare, sometimes don't. We decided to do an intensive door-to-door, street-to-street campaign because this booth-wise campaigning is our strength as a party. We felt there was a gap in terms of door-to-door campaigning which we made up in the past few days.

But the one point where the

■ If you look at other parties, even Congress, it too hasn't projected chief ministerial candidates in previous polls. We ourselves, in 2014, did not project anyone in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana. We came to power and subsequently Devendra Fadnavis, Raghubar Das and Manohar Lal Khattar were made chief ministers, and in 2019, we declared them chief ministerial faces, still we lost Jharkhand. So these things are election-specific and are different in different circumstances. There is no formula.

BJP leaders have said that they will continue with the subsidy provided for power and water. Will that promise be adhered to, if you are voted to power?

■ Government is a continuous process and there is no reason why water and power subsidies will not continue. For example, ration cards

have continued whichever is the government. There is no need to emphasise that.

The tone of the campaign has been very shrill and has seen many of your star campaigners being banned from campaigning by the Election Commission. Was this strictly necessary?

■ It happens in the heat of poll campaigns that some people can make certain statements.

You yourself termed Chief Minister Kejriwal a terrorist.

■ That's not strictly true. I merely pointed out that Mr. Kejriwal has himself confessed he is an anarchist. All I said was that there was very little difference between an anarchist and terrorist.

The BJP raised the issue of Shaheen Bagh in a big way and also framed it as

something that is not keeping with the Constitution?

■ It [Shaheen Bagh protests] is a live issue not only because traffic is disturbed but also because the people of Delhi have seen, over the many years, the plight of refugees from across the border, how they had been treated. If you see some of the anarchist slogans being raised in Shaheen Bagh, it is unacceptable.

For example, how can anyone accept the kind of speech and slogans that Sharjeel Islam has spoken.

We [Union government] haven't disturbed the dharna, and have handled it in a calm and peaceful manner. What Prime Minister Modi said, that the protest is a "prayog" (experiment), is absolutely correct, because the idea of those behind the protests is to spread this across the country.

# 'Removal of PM's portrait a BJP conspiracy'

Madhya Pradesh Urdu Academy to function as a non-political literary body, says new Chairman

SIDHARTH YADAV

BHOPAL  
Madhya Pradesh Urdu Academy Chairman Aziz Qureshi has alleged the removal of portraits of President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi from his office – just the night before he took charge – was intended to provoke a controversy and was the handiwork of the BJP, seeking to derail efforts at course correction at the literary institute.

"It was all a planned conspiracy. It was a mischief of an employee who allegedly removed the portraits for the purpose of cleaning them," Mr. Qureshi, former Congressman and Governor, told *The Hindu*. He denied the charge that the portraits were removed by the employee to mark protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

**'Saffronisation' charge**

Stating that in the past 15 years, the former BJP government in the State had "destroyed" the academy here, he claimed it often pressured employees to march in lockstep. "They



Portraits of leaders hung on a wall at the Urdu Academy in Bhopal. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

dissolved the working committee and the general body, and used funds for political purposes. This won't be allowed anymore," he said.

In March 2016, the charge of the academy's "saffronisation" came to the fore when Urdu poet Manzar Bhopali accused the secretary of it, who then filed a criminal defamation suit in return. He had in the past also written to former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan alleging corruption in the State-run body.

The academy was a dream of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and I was among the advocates of it. The chair is an opportunity for me to promote Urdu.

It will function purely as a non-political, literary body. Irrespective of ideologies, those with merit can step inside," said Mr. Qureshi, who took charge on January 24.

**Sloganeering on Jan. 31**

On the morning of January 31, former BJP MLA Surendra Nath Singh led party workers to the academy, where they raised slogans against the State government, and submitted portraits of Mr. Modi and Mr. Kovind. Mr. Qureshi alleged the BJP workers told the staff, predominantly Muslim, to go to Pakistan.

The employee, against whom the police have registered an FIR on complaint

ment-run institution, and both Mr. Modi and Mr. Kovind hold constitutional posts. When there are portraits of others, why not have theirs too?"

Though the Election Commission of India has prohibited displaying portraits of the Prime Minister in government offices, it hasn't done so for the President.

Still, in 2017, the former BJP government in Madhya Pradesh made it mandatory to display portraits of the Chief Minister along with the Prime Minister in all government offices, an order still in force.

"Any language can't be looked at from the prism of religion or community and is continuously evolving. It is region-specific and not religion-specific," he said.

# India to study air corridors with Central Asian countries

Jaishankar says it's required to expedite transport of goods

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI  
Apart from developing trade via the Chabahar port in Iran, India would like to explore setting up "air corridors" with five Central Asian nations, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Thursday. The air corridors – similar to what India established with Afghanistan in 2018 – would include regular cargo flights with special clearing and customs facilities to expedite the movement of goods, especially fresh fruit and other agricultural produce, and are currently being discussed by the External Affairs Ministry.

"While flying time from Delhi to most of the Central Asian destinations is two hours, it may take two months for containers sent overland from India to reach these places," Mr. Jaishankar said at the inaugural of the "India Central Asia Business Council", which brought together Indian businessmen and diplomats from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

"Availability of air corridors can boost trade in perishable goods, agricultural and food products," he said. The Minister observed that it was a "matter of concern" that a lack of "overland con-



Trade talks: Minister S. Jaishankar during the India Central Asia Business Forum in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ PTI

nnectivity" – a veiled reference to barriers to transit trade through Pakistan – had kept the total trade between India and Central Asia quite low at approximately \$2 billion a year. India, Mr. Jaishankar said, remains committed to the Chabahar port project in Iran.

**Chabahar route**

"India proposes to overcome this challenge through the Chabahar route. India, Iran and Afghanistan believe that Chabahar will become the fulcrum of connectivity for Indian goods to reach Afghanistan and further north to Central Asian states, and for the landlocked Central Asia to find access to ocean through this port," he said, referring to the ₹100-crore investment the recent Budget has proposed to develop the Iranian port.

Businessmen and diplo-

## Panel suggests steps to curb child porn

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary panel has recommended a code of conduct for Internet service providers (ISPs) and strengthening the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights to curb child pornography.

The report, prepared by an ad hoc committee set up by the Rajya Sabha and led by Congress MP Jairam Ramesh, was submitted to the Chairman of the House on January 25. The report was tabled by Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani on Thursday. It recommends a multi-pronged strategy detailing technological, institutional, social and educational as well as State-level measures.

Among its key recommendations is a code of conduct or a set of guidelines for ensuring child safety online. It puts a greater onus on ISPs to identify and remove child sexual abuse material (CSAM) as well as report such content and those trying to access them to the authorities under the national cyber-crime portal.

The committee has delved into great detail in using technology to curb circulation of child porn such as breaking end-to-end encryption to trace its distributors.

## SOUTHERN RAILWAY (CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)

E-TENDER NOTICE NO.02/CE/CN/ERS/2020 DT: 05.02.2020

For and on behalf of The President of India, Chief Engineer, Construction, Ermakulam Jn - 682 016 invites e-tender for the following works as per Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) in the portal [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in). Tenderers/Contractors intending to apply for the tender needs to get enrolled in the portal [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) and only online tenders will be accepted. The cost of the tender form and Earnest Money deposit (EMD) should be made through online payment gateway available in the website by the way of multiple bank's net banking, debit and credit card.

Name of the work

Doubling of track between Trivandrum and Kanniyakumari. Proposed manual linking of track, collection of ballast, insertion of ballast, transportation of P.Way materials, earthwork in filling for subgrade, blanketing of formation, regarding of existing track and modification of level crossings etc. in Eraniel Yard (Km 27100-273500), Nagercoil Town Yard (Km 285/000 - 287/200) and in mid section from km 287/200 - 289/200 between Nagercoil Town and Nagercoil Junction stations.

Approximate Cash Value	Earnest Money Deposit	Cost of Tender Form	Period of Completion in Month(s)	Closing/Opening @15.00 Hrs/ 15.30 Hrs
₹ 103201996/-	₹ 666000/-	₹ 10000/-	TWELVE	26-02-2020

For further details, visit internet site [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) or contact Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Construction, Southern Railway, Ermakulam - 682 016.

Chief Engineer(Construction), Ermakulam Jn.

## SOUTHERN RAILWAY (CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. E148-CN-TPJ-TF-025 Date: 05-02-2020

For and on behalf of The President of India, Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer (General), Construction, Southern Railway, Egmore, Chennai - 600008 invites e-tender for the work of Nagappattinam - Tiruvarapundu New BG Line - Electrification of station buildings, Platforms and LC gate Lodges including power supply arrangements etc in the Nagappattinam (Exc) and Tiruvarapundi (Exc) - Works Contract with the above tender notice. Date of tender opening of the tender is 11.30 hrs of 04.03.2020. All other details of this tender are available in [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) website.

## SOUTHERN RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION

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Executive Electrical Engineer, Construction, Tiruchirappalli

KERALA IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD., T.C. 36/1, NH66 Bypass Service Road, Eanchakkal Jn., Chackai P.O., Thiruvananthapuram-695024

Tender No: KIIDC/267/2020-21 dt: 04-02-2020

KIIDC a Government of Kerala PSU invites offers through two cover e-Tender system from eligible bidders for "Construction of Groynes in Alappuzha District" that is being taken up with the funding of Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB). Estimate PA Rs. 149.88 crores. Last date of submission of tender is 29-02-2020 up to 11:00 hrs. Tender details are available in [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) and [www.kiidc.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kiidc.kerala.gov.in) Tender ID: 2020\_KIIDC\_340728\_1.

Managing Director

## GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ROADS TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM (HPSRTP)

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (REoI)

Name of Project: Himachal Pradesh State Roads Transformation Project (HPSRTP)

Loan No./Credit No./ Grant No.: To be allotted

Date: February 05 , 2020

The Chief Engineer-cum-Project Director, State Roads Project, Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar, Shimla-171002, Himachal Pradesh, India invites Expression of Interest (EoI) Proposals for the Consultancy Services as detailed in the table below:

Sr. No.	Description of Consultancy Services	Date of availability of Detailed Request for Expression of Interest Document on HPSRDC web site	Last Date/Time for submission of Expression of Interest
1.	Selection of Environmental Specialist in the Himachal Pradesh State Road Transformation Program (HPSRTP)	February 06, 2020	March 06, 2020 at 15:00 hours (IST)
2.	Procurement of Consultancy Services for "Project Management Consultant" (PMC) for implementation of World Bank funded HPSRTP in Himachal Pradesh	February 06, 2020	March 06, 2020 at 15:00 hours (IST)

Note: Any further addendum/Corrigendum to this Request for Expression of Interest (REoI) Notice/ Request for Expression of Interest (REoI) documents shall be available to all interested consulting firms on official web site of HPSRDC under <http://himachalservices.nic.in/hpsrtp.html>.

Chief Engineer-cum-Project Director, State Roads Project, Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar, Shimla-171002, Himachal Pradesh, India invites Expression of Interest (EoI) Proposals for the Consultancy Services as detailed in the table below:

Date: February 05 , 2020

# Sham trial is a vindication for Trump: WH

Senators voted to acquit the President on charges of abuse of office and obstruction of justice

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON DC

Shortly after he was acquitted of impeachment charges in the Senate on Wednesday, U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted a video of election signs starting with 'Trump 2024' and culminating in 'Trump 4EVA' (i.e., 'Trump forever'). Mr. Trump has repeatedly joked that he might serve more than the constitutionally mandated limit of two terms.

"Had failed presidential candidate @MittRomney devoted the same energy and anger to defeating a faltering Barack Obama as he sanctimoniously does to me, he could have won the election. Read the Transcripts," Mr. Trump tweeted.

#### Romney's dissent vote

Republican Senator Romney, who lost his presidential bid to Obama in 2012, voted with 47 Democrats in the Senate against Mr. Trump on abuse of office charge. Senators voted 52 to 48 to acquit Mr. Trump on the charge. They voted 53-47 as per party lines



All smiles: Donald Trump holding up a copy of *The Washington Post* with the headline "Trump Acquitted" in Washington. ■AP

to acquit the president of the charge of obstruction of Congress.

"Today, the sham impeachment attempt concocted by the Democrats ended in the full vindication and exoneration of President Donald J. Trump," White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham said via a statement.

Speaking before the vote, Senate Democrat Leader Chuck Schumer criticised the arguments law professor and criminal defence attorney Alan Dershowitz had made on the Senate floor in defence of Mr. Trump.

"These are the excuses of a child, caught in a lie."

The Democrat Leader called the arguments in defence of Mr. Trump "as dangerous to the Republic as this President ... a fig leaf so

large, as to excuse any presi-

dential misconduct."

Senate Democrats could

not get enough GOP votes to

summon fresh witnesses and

evidence during the im-

pachment trial. Among the

possible material witnesses

the Democrats wanted to

hear from was former Na-

tional Security Adviser John

Bolton.

Mr. Bolton had, as per re-

ports of a leaked book manu-

script, said that Mr. Trump

had asked him to withhold

the aid to Ukraine pending

an announcement of investi-

gations in the President's De-

mocratic rival Joe Biden and

his son Hunter.

House Democrats are "likely" to subpoena Mr. Bolon, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler told reporters on Wednesday.

"When you have a lawless President, you have to bring that to the fore, you have to spotlight that; you have to protect the Constitution whatever the political consequences," Mr. Nadler said.

At the annual National Prayer Breakfast meeting on Thursday Mr. Trump criti-

cised his political opponents.

"I don't like people who use their faith as justification for doing what they know is wrong," Mr. Trump said in a reference to Mr. Romney, who had alluded to his faith during remarks about voting to convict the President.

"Nor do I like people who say, 'I pray for you,' when they know that's not so," Mr. Trump said, in a comment directed at Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who has said before that she prays for the President.

Ms. Pelosi, who was also

present, was seen standing

and clapping for Mr. Trump

as he was introduced. The

last time they were in the

same room was Tuesday, at

the House, when Mr. Trump

did not shake Ms. Pelosi's

hand and Ms. Pelosi tore up a

copy of Mr. Trump's State of

the Union address after he

was done delivering it.

Mr. Trump is scheduled to deliver remarks on his impeachment and acquittal later on Thursday.

## Buttigieg, Sanders nearly tied

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Pete Buttigieg and Bernie Sanders are nearly tied in the Iowa Democratic caucuses, with nearly all results counted in a contest marred by technical issues and reporting delays.

The race remained too early to call early Thursday with 97% of precincts reporting. Party officials were scrambling to verify the remaining results three days after Iowans gathered at caucus sites across the state to begin choosing which Demo-

rat will take on President Donald Trump in November.

A new batch of results released just after midnight narrowed the margin between Mr. Buttigieg, the former Mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and Mr. Sanders, the progressive senator from Vermont. Mr. Buttigieg has a lead of three state delegate equivalents out of 2,098 counted.

The nearly complete results show Mr. Buttigieg and Mr. Sanders leading Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, with former Vice-Presi-

dent Joe Biden and Sen. Amy Klobuchar trailing behind.

#### Technical problems

But the results in Iowa were muddled by the stunning breakdown of the caucus reporting process in a state that traditionally kicks off presidential nominating contests. Iowa officials initially attributed a delay in reporting results to technical problems with an app that precinct chairs were supposed to use to record votes, then to backlogs as those volunteers tried to call the party to

submit their totals. Even as the total number of results ticked up throughout Wednesday, obstacles remained. Some tally sheets were making their way to party headquarters in Des Moines through the mail, which contributed to the delay.

Much of the political world has already shifted its attention to New Hampshire, which holds the first primary in the Democrats' 2020 nomination fight on Tuesday. Both Mr. Buttigieg and Mr. Sanders are leading contenders there, as well.

## Israeli-Palestinian violence spikes a week after Trump plan

Motorist rams his car into a group of soldiers, injuring 12

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM

National

Security

Agency

Israel

Arrested

Colombo

Kapila Chandrasena, the former chief executive of Sri Lanka's national carrier SriLankan Airlines, was arrested on Thursday over allegations he received bribes for a multi-billion-dollar Airbus aircraft deal. ■AFP

35 IS-linked Russian orphans repatriated

GAMISHI

Syria's Kurds on Thursday handed over 35 Russian orphans linked to the Islamic State group to their home country after their identities were verified via DNA testing in the latest such repatriation of parentless children, an AFP correspondent said. ■AFP

On the boil: Palestinians clashing with Israeli security forces in the Bethlehem area on Thursday. ■AFP

The violence began on Wednesday, when a Palestinian motorist slammed his car into a group of Israeli soldiers, wounding 12, the Israeli military said.

In the West Bank, two Pal-

estinians were killed in clashes with troops. Later, Israeli police said they shot and killed an Arab citizen of Israel, who opened fire at forces in Jerusalem's Old City, wounding an officer.

## Israeli strikes kill 12 pro-Iran Syrian fighters

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIRUT

Israeli air strikes killed 12 pro-Iran fighters in Syria on Thursday, a monitor said, the latest in a spate of raids Israel said has targeted Iran's ambitions to develop a military presence on its doorstep.

Israel has pledged to prevent its main enemy from entrenching itself militarily in Syria, where it is backing President Bashar al-Assad's government alongside Russia and Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The pre-dawn raids killed seven foreign fighters in the Kisweh area south of Damascus, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Estinians were killed in

clashes with troops. Later,

Israeli police said they shot

and killed an Arab citizen of

Israel, who opened fire at

forces in Jerusalem's Old Ci-

ty, wounding an officer.

## China scrambles for beds, supplies as toll hits 563

20 people on ocean liner off the Japanese coast test positive

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

REUTERS

BEIJING

China scrambled to find bed space for thousands of newly infected patients on Thursday, as the death toll from the novel coronavirus soared to 563, with more than 28,000 confirmed infections.

At the Chinese epicentre of the epidemic in Hubei province, the locked-down city of Wuhan was due to open a second field hospital, offering 1,600 beds.

The first hospital, with 1,000 beds, opened earlier this week, and authorities said they were converting public buildings into temporary medical facilities to deal with the influx of sick people.

The city of 11 million is facing a "severe" lack of beds, said Hu Lishan, a senior official in Wuhan, noting that there were 8,182 patients admitted to 28 hospitals that have a total of 8,254 beds. There is also a shortage of equipment and materials, he said.

The central government has announced measures intended to ensure the supply of vital medical resources, with tax breaks for manufacturers.

"We must make all-out efforts across the country to meet the need for essential medical supplies and medical professionals in Hubei Province," Premier Li Keqiang said, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

BGI Group, a genome sequencing company based in southern China, said it opened on Wednesday a lab in Wuhan that is able to test up to 10,000 people per day for the virus.

At least 20 people on board an ocean liner off the



Whistleblower: Doctor Li Wenliang, who first warned about the coronavirus, at a hospital in Wuhan. ■LI WENLIANG/WEIBO

## Doctor who first warned about coronavirus dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING

Chinese doctor Li Wenliang, one of the eight whistleblowers who warned fellow doctors about the coronavirus outbreak but were reprimanded by the police, died of the epidemic on Thursday, official media reported.

Dr. Li, 34, was the first to report about the virus way back in December last year when it first

emerged in Wuhan.

He posted a message in his medical school alumni group on WeChat that seven patients from a local seafood market had been diagnosed with a SARS-like illness and quarantined.

Dr. Li told his friends to warn their loved ones privately. But the messages went viral.

Soon thereafter, the police accused him of rumour-mongering.

Japanese coast have tested positive for the new coronavirus. The vessel, with 3,700 passengers and crew hailing from over 50 countries, has

Americans off. "It's better for us to travel while healthy and also, if we get sick, to be treated in American hospitals," he told Reuters.

In Hong Kong, another cruise ship with 3,600 passengers and crew was quarantined for a second day pending testing after three cases on board.

Taiwan, which has 13 cases, has banned international cruise ships from docking.

## Hollywood legend Kirk Douglas dead at 103

Spartacus star started his career in 1940s



Kirk Douglas

winning actor and filmmaker.

"It is with tremendous sadness that my brothers and I announce that Kirk Douglas left us today at the age of 103," Mr. Michael Douglas said in a statement posted to Facebook.

## German state premier quits, calls for poll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

FRANKFURT AM MAIN

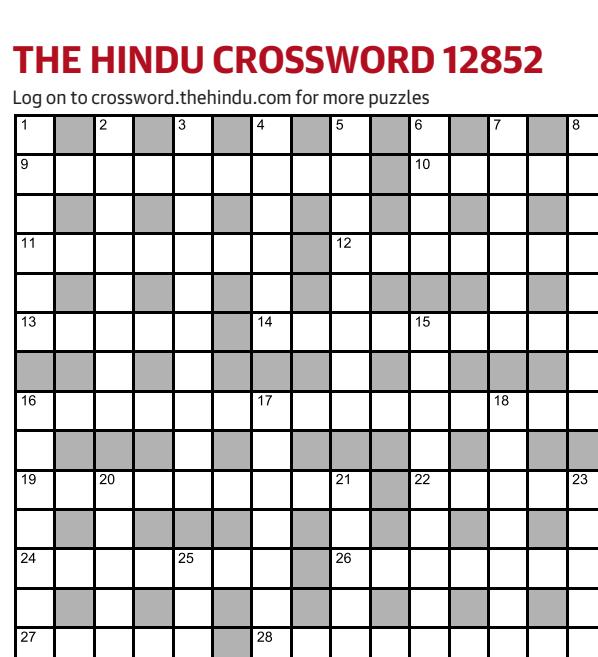
The premier of Germany's Thuringia state stepped down and called for snap elections on Thursday, barely 24 hours after he was elected with the help of far-right AfD in a vote Chancellor Angela Merkel called "unforgivable".

Thomas Kemmerich, from the liberal Free Democrats, said he would apply for the regional Parliament to be dissolved in response to the outrage over his appointment, which drew comparisons with the rise of Nazis in the 1930s.

"We want elections to remove the stain of the AfD's support from the office of the premiership," he said.

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12852

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



### ACROSS

- 9 Mixtures of sound brought about by a little synthesis, incorporating hints of mandolin, ukulele, lute (9)
- 10 Get tip that's about right (5)
- 11 I disapprove of rubbish extremist demagogue leaders taught (7)
- 12 With edges going to point – and now guilty area – all (14)
- 13 Control shower verbally? (5)
- 14 Left country; money sent back overwhelms jar (9)
- 15 Code broken by a German to out Binod Pradhan, perhaps (15)
- 16 Brush fire put out? Clean up! (9)
- 17 Setter returns, embracing India instead of alien customs (5)
- 18 Cancellation of date certain (7)
- 19 Spooner's able to sleep off, ultimately (7)
- 20 Better kick out corrupt leader for political beginner (5)
- 21 Cut wild trees in July, August, and September, perhaps (9)
- 22 Ricketty train transporting us from Vienna (8)
- 23 Hypatia, perhaps as mentor for setting without flaws, for beginners? (10)
- 24 After 6, Vinod eats nothing before lunchtime on vacation – only one

## MARKET WATCH

	06-02-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	41,306	0.40
US Dollar	71.18	0.10
Gold	41,019	0.37
Brent oil	54.35	-2.32

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	370.20	3.60
Axas Paints	1856.80	-16.70
Axis Bank	736.95	12.90
Bajaj Auto	3149.80	-11.70
Bajaj Finserv	9619.70	28.30
Bajaj Finance	4666.35	138.15
Bharti Airtel	546.80	13.45
BPCL	495.05	-6.65
Britannia Ind	3252.20	-3.75
Cipla	439.65	-7.90
Coal India	179.95	0.70
D Dr Reddy's Lab	3158.95	25.60
Eicher Motors	20391.20	904.15
GAIL (India)	123.70	2.75
Gasim Ind	901.00	1.10
HCL Tech.	599.70	4.10
HDPC	2436.45	44.80
HDPC Bank	1239.80	-4.85
Hera MotoCorp	2411.30	38.05
Hindalco	194.00	-2.30
Hind Unilever	2156.40	-3.90
ICICI Bank	541.60	2.50
IndusInd Bank	1334.25	61.45
Bharti Infralet	244.85	-1.20
Infosys	771.35	-13.20
Indian Oil Corp	117.05	2.35
ITC	213.55	-2.90
JSW Steel	276.45	7.20
Kotak Bank	1674.00	-15.75
L&T	1317.60	7.55
M&M	580.15	-4.20
Maruti Suzuki Ltd.	7021.60	-19.30
Nestle India Ltd.	16284.95	-99.90
NTPC	112.00	0.80
ONGC	107.25	0.45
PowerGrid Corp	192.90	3.55
Reliance Ind	1457.80	9.30
State Bank	321.95	10.95
Sun Pharma	430.65	4.40
Tata Motors	178.85	-4.90
Tata Steel	477.60	2.55
TCS	2128.35	-18.20
Tech Mahindra	817.70	3.65
Titan	1259.30	-20.55
UltraTech Cement	4464.90	-6.90
UPL	536.85	-0.60
Vedanta	143.85	0.75
Wipro	243.65	1.40
YES Bank	38.55	0.95
Zee Entertainment	235.80	9.15

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	70.99	71.31
Euro	78.09	78.44
British Pound	92.00	92.45
Japanese Yen (100)	64.58	64.88
Chinese Yuan	10.19	10.23
Swiss Franc	72.83	73.20
Singapore Dollar	51.27	51.50
Canadian Dollar	53.48	53.73
Malaysian Ringgit	17.20	17.30

Source: Indian Bank

## Piaggio unveils its e-scooter, Vespa Elettrica

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Greater Noida  
Piaggio India on Thursday showcased the production version of its electric scooter at the Auto Expo 2020 here and also unveiled its premium scooter Aprilia SRX 160.

"We were the first to introduce a hybrid electric scooter," said Diego Graffi, MD & CEO, Piaggio India.

"We are in the process of introducing an innovative electric mobility solution in India keeping the local consumer in mind," he said.

Piaggio showcased the European version of the Vespa Elettrica and said the customised version for India will be designed and made in India. It is a connected scooter and one can make or receive calls, read SMSes and listen to music while on the move. "As India is witnessing a quick transition to adoption of electric mobility solutions, we are expecting to grow in this vast space in the next three to five years," he said.

According to him, Aprilia SRX is designed for the 'discerning Indian consumer' with the aim of creating a new trendsetter 'Cross-max Design' category, leveraging new age technology.

# RBI opts for long-term repos, CRR exemption to lower rates

Banks have so far cut rates by 69 basis points following RBI's 135-bps reduction

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

While the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to keep rates unchanged during the sixth bimonthly review of the monetary policy on Thursday, it has taken steps to lower interest rates in the economy.

To improve credit flow to sectors such as home and auto loans and also to micro, small and medium enterprises, the RBI has said lenders have been exempted from maintaining cash reserve ratio (CRR) for the incremental credit extended between January 31 and July 31. Banks have to maintain CRR at 4% of their net demand and time liabilities at present.

"The Reserve Bank is actively engaged in revitalising the flow of bank credit to



Rate warriors: Shaktikanta Das, Governor, RBI, along with Deputy Governors in Mumbai on Thursday. ■ PAUL NORONHA

productive sectors having multiplier effects to support impulses of growth," the RBI said.

The central bank also decided that from the fortnight beginning February 15, the RBI will conduct term repos of one-year and three-year tenors for up to a total of ₹1 lakh crore at the policy repo

rate. The move, aimed at improving monetary transmission, will help banks raise funds at the repo rate viz. 5.15%. "Since June 2019, the RBI has ensured that comfortable liquidity is available in the system in order to facilitate the transmission of monetary policy actions and flow of credit to the econo-

my. These efforts are being carried forward with a view to assuring banks about the availability of durable liquidity at a reasonable cost," the RBI said. Banks have, so far, reduced interest rate by 69 bps in response to a 135 bps rate cut by the RBI between February and October 2019.

"The masterstroke by the RBI is the announcement of long-term repo operations. This a step towards credit transmission and demonstrates the RBI's intent towards supporting growth," said Lakshmi Iyer, CIO (debt) and head of products, Kotak Mahindra AMC. "Also, CRR exemption for incremental lending to auto, housing and MSMEs is a good way to channelise credit to areas where demand has not met commensurate supply,"

## INTERVIEW | SHAKTIKANTA DAS

## ₹1 lakh-cr. infusion will enable banks cut rate

Operation Twist aimed at rate transmission in the corporate bond market, says the RBI Governor

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das responds to various queries during the post monetary policy interaction with the media:

What's the reason behind the long-term repo window and CRR exemption for retail, MSME loans?

Inflation. As it looks now, headline inflation has peaked for the current quarter.

Inflation is expected to go down further. Then we have to see how quickly the downward slope actually plays out, on the basis of which MPC will take a decision.

I cannot say at which point MPC will take action because [there are] so many other factors which contribute to and impact inflation.

MPC, like in 2019, will be very proactive even in 2020 [in cutting rates].

## Will the long-term repo operation replace open market operation (OMO)?

■ M.D. Patra: Long-term repo operation will not replace the OMO. The idea is to some

how help banks to reduce cost of funds. It also gives them some assurance of durable liquidity in their hands.

What were your objectives of Operation Twist? If you wanted to reduce rates, could you have cut repo rates?

■ There are several options available to the RBI. You have suggested one option, but we have decided to exercise the other option.

We are keeping the surplus liquidity for better monetary policy transmission.

Operation Twist was conducted to ensure better monetary transmission.

The corporate bonds are a benchmark to the lending rate of the G-seg segment.

So, by Operation Twist, you are able to soften the yields of government securities at the longer end, that acts as a benchmark to the corporate loan rate.

The effort was mainly for monetary transmission in the corporate bond market, not so much to manage the yield of government securities.

At the moment, there is no plan to monetise deficit. Despite the fiscal deficit going up, open market borrowing number of the current financial year remains the same and next year, the increase is only by ₹70,000 crore

## Why is the CRR exemption only for six months?

■ It is a balanced call we have taken. Too early to say if we will give an extension.

Under the FRBM Act, once the trigger is exercised, the government can also monetise the deficit with RBI. Does it concern you?

■ Let me be very clear, at the moment there is no such plan.

Despite the fiscal deficit number going up, the open market borrowing number for the current financial year remains the same and next

year, the increase is only by ₹70,000 crore. And if it is calculated as a percentage of GDP, then it is lower than the current year borrowing.

## Is the RBI concerned over fiscal slippage?

■ What the RBI's concern as a debt manager of the government is, is the borrowing numbers. As I have said, next year's borrowing increases by ₹70,000 crore which is lower as a percentage of GDP which we have in the current year. We do expect it will go through in a non-disruptive manner.

## Maruti unveils petrol Vitara Brezza

Since its 2016 launch, the model has sold over 5 lakh units

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Greater Noida

Maruti Suzuki India unveiled the petrol version of its popular compact SUV Vitara Brezza at the Auto Expo 2020.

It is powered by a 1.5 Litre K-series BS-VI petrol engine.

"Keeping up with its strong, urban and premium appeal, the new Vitara Brezza is bolder, sportier and more powerful... it categorically carries forward the rich legacy of its predecessor," Maruti Suzuki MD and CEO Kenichi Ayukawa said.

Since its launch in 2016, Maruti Suzuki has sold over 5 lakh units of the Vitara Brezza. "Utility vehicles continue to hold consumer interest. With almost 35%



With almost 35% share of the industry, the UV segment is growing rapidly, says Kenichi Ayukawa ■ AFP

share of the industry, this segment is growing rapidly," Mr. Ayukawa added.

The model will be available with five-speed manual and advanced automatic transmissions.

The automatic transmission version will be equipped with next generation Smart Hybrid system with lithium-ion battery and hill-hold assist feature, as a standard.

The model has been designed to offer masculine and futuristic appeal, premium features, efficient powertrain and smart technology.

It was unveiled by HMIL MD & CEO S.S. Kim. The model is the second-generation SUV for new-age customers. With over 5.5 lakh owners, Creta has become the most-loved and admired SUV in the segment, he said. It will be launched in March, added Mr. Kim.

ing in four SUVs in India in the next two years, including made-for-India Taigun.

## Cutting cost

Mr. Knapp added the company had been historically perceived as a high price-maintenance brand. "But we have done a lot... we have aligned our prices in Q1 2018, by more than 15%.

That was a hit to my profit but we had to do that. We also started... four-year warranty and roadside assistance... these actions reduced our total cost of ownership by 30%." He said VW was discussing undertaking another price cut as far as parts are concerned.

Earlier, banks were directed to link the loan rate to an external benchmark for retail loans and credit extended to micro and small enterprises.

fective April 1, 2020.

Earlier, banks were directed to link the loan rate to an external benchmark for retail loans and credit extended to micro and small enterprises.

The step was taken with a view to further strengthen monetary transmission, the RBI said.

## Commercial realty gains

Separately, the regulator has decided to permit extension of date of commencement of commercial

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

In a relief to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the deadline for one-time debt recast for these firms that are in default but have not been classified as non-performing.

**DoT okays Bharti, Tata Tele merger**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Tata Teleservices on Thursday said the Department of Telecom (DoT) had approved the merger of its consumer mobile business with Bharti Airtel.

Tata Teleservices' listed arm, in a regulatory filing, said the DoT, through its letter dated February 6, 2020, had conveyed the approval of the competent authority in DoT for taking on record the demerger of consumer mobile business undertaking of the company into Bharti Airtel Limited (BAL).

The DoT approval is without prejudice to the rights and contentions of the DoT till the telecom petition No. 22 of 2019 filed by BAL which is pending before Hon'ble TDSAT [and appeal, if any, against the judgement(s) of the Hon'ble TDSAT] is disposed of," Tata Teleservices (Maharashtra) said.

Bharti Airtel on July 1 had said that the consumer mobile business of Tata Teleservices Ltd. had become a part of the former.

## NMDC Q3 net profit declines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Public sector mining major NMDC has reported a consolidated net profit of ₹3,394.40 crore for the quarter ended December or a little over 11% from the year earlier period's ₹5,697.77 crore.

The decline in net profit came in the back of a drop in the revenue from operations during the quarter to ₹3,006.38 crore (₹3,649.44 crore). Total income was ₹3136.59 crore (₹3,785.73 crore). On a standalone basis, the net profit (from continuing operations) declined 12.69% to ₹1,376.57 crore (₹1,576.77 crore).

The company has declared an interim dividend of ₹5.29 per equity share of face value of ₹1 each for 2019-2020.

## Nirma to acquire Emami's cement business for ₹5,500 cr.

Nuvoco's total capacity to increase to 23.5 million tonnes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Nuvoco Vistas Corporation Limited (Nuvoco), part of the Ahmedabad-based Nirma Group, has signed a binding agreement with the Emami Group to buy 100% equity stake in Emami Cement Limited (ECL) for an enterprise value of ₹5,500 crore.

Emami Cement Ltd. operates one integrated cement plant in Risda, Chhattisgarh and grinding units in Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha with a total installed capacity of 8.3 million tonnes per annum.

The company has mining leases in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.

With this acquisition and ongoing expansion, Nuvoco will become one of the leading cement players in the country and specifically in the East.

This will bring its total cement capacity in eastern, northern and western India to 23.5 million tonnes (which includes the ongoing capacity expansion project at its Jo-



**Cementing profit:** The deal is expected to be consummated in the next three-four months. ■ AFP

obera plant) and over 60 ready-mix plants. Commenting on the deal, Hiren Patel, chairman, Nuvoco, said,

"This acquisition is a momentous and transformational step in Nuvoco's journey to becoming a major building materials company in India."

"Emami Cement will enable us to take our cement business to the next level and continue to serve our cus-

tomers with innovative and high-quality products that they trust." The transaction is subject to the customary approvals and is expected to be consummated in next three-four months.

### Debt-free group

Manish Goenka, director, Emami Group said, "This transaction is an important step in our group's stated objective of becoming debt-

free and with this transaction, we will substantially achieve this objective.

"We are proud of Emami Cement's achievements in a short span of time and we strongly believe that in Nuvoco, we have found the right acquirer who will be able to develop the business further in the interest of all stakeholders," Mr. Goenka added.

### 'Good value'

Aditya Agarwal, director, Emami Group, said, "Emami Cement has successfully established a very strong brand equity in the market for its highest standard of operation and high-quality products, helping us to get a good value. We strongly believe the Nuvoco and Nirma Group will continue from here and strengthen the business further."

Emami Ltd. shares closed down 1.32% to ₹302.95 on the BSE in a firm Mumbai market on Thursday, valuing the company at ₹13,752 crore.

## Total to buy 50% in Adani's solar projects for \$510 mn

JV firm to house 2,148 MWac projects that AGEL owns now

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Energy major Total will acquire 50% stake in all operational renewable energy projects of Adani Green Energy Ltd. (AGEL) for \$510 million.

"AGEL and Total Gas & Power Business Services SAS (TOTAL) have entered into a binding arrangement for investment of approximately \$510 million for acquisition of 50% stake and other instruments in a Joint Venture Company which will house 2,148 MWac operating solar projects presently 100% owned by AGEL. The balance 50% stake in the JV Co. shall be held by AGEL," the Adani Group firm said in a statement. The solar portfolio is spread across 11 States in the country.



The solar portfolio of Adani Green Energy Limited is spread across 11 States in the country. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

renewable energy sector, as well as Adani Group's commitment towards sustainable development. This is a pivotal step in our journey towards building the world's largest solar power company by 2025 and the world's largest renewable power company by 2030."

The transaction is subject to customary approvals and definitive agreements.

Total chairman and chief executive officer Patrick Pouyanne said, "Total is fully engaged in the energy transition and to supporting India, a key country in the fight against climate change, in diversifying its energy mix in India."

through partnerships in natural gas and now in solar energy, he said.

"This interest in over 2 GW of solar projects represents a real change of scale of our presence in India's renewable energy sector, which has very significant growth potential in the coming years," he added.

"It will contribute to our ambition to deploy 25 GW of renewable energy by 2025. Extending the partnership with the Adani Group to renewable energies will allow us to benefit from its in-depth knowledge of the Indian electricity market."

(With PTI inputs)

## Soon, insurers, TPAs to disclose hospital details

Bid to improve information flow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Health insurance policyholders may soon be able to get an idea of the infrastructure facilities and healthcare providers at network hospitals with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) planning to make such disclosures mandatory for insurers and third party administrators (TPAs).

"To improve information flow to policyholders about the hospitals engaged by insurers and TPAs for providing cashless health services, it is proposed to mandate insurance companies and TPAs to disclose various parameters about the network

hospitals, in their respective websites," said IRDAI.

The regulator said this is issuing a draft circular on disclosure of hospital quality indicators. Stakeholders have time till February 14 to send in their comments or suggestions.

### Network providers

Under the existing provisions, the insurers ought to keep the insured informed of the list of network providers (hospitals) and display the information on their websites.

Such lists shall also be displayed geography-wise and updated as and when there is any change in the network providers.

## CDPQ, Piramal Asset set up \$300 mn private lending platform

To offer credit solutions to firms across industries in India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ), a global institutional investor, and Piramal Asset Management Private Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises Limited (PEL), have announced a platform of \$300 million to target private credit financing opportunities in India. CDPQ is contributing 75% of the investment and Piramal, the remaining 25%.

"The platform aims to leverage the significant market opportunity for alternative pools of capital to provide valuable solutions in the private credit space," said chairman Ajay Piramal.

"This is another opportunity for CDPQ to work with the best partners in a market where we see many possibilities over the long

maceuticals, logistics, among others. This partnership is aligned with both CDPQ's investment strategy in a country with significant long-term economic growth potential and Piramal's direct lending strategy to mid-market companies and major corporations," PEL said.

"This platform aims to leverage the significant market opportunity for alternative pools of capital to provide valuable solutions in the private credit space," said chairman Ajay Piramal.

"This is another opportunity for CDPQ to work with the best partners in a market where we see many possibilities over the long

term," said Anita M. George, executive V-P and Head of Strategic Partnerships, Growth Markets at CDPQ.

"Through our partnership we are able to support growing businesses and invest in India's thriving entrepreneurship," she said. The partnership will focus on performing credit and look to invest in companies with a scalable business model that have demonstrated strong execution capabilities, robust cashflows and a validated repayment history

and that requires capital to support continued growth of their businesses, said Khushbu Jijina, MD, Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd.

## Nippon India MF drags IRDAI to appellate tribunal

Challenges order on Reliance insurance

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR  
MUMBAI

Nippon India Mutual Fund has dragged the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) challenging the insurance watchdog's order that stated that the pledging of shares of Reliance General Insurance with the fund house was in violation of the law.

The matter dates back to March 2018, when Reliance Home Finance issued non-convertible debentures to raise about ₹400 crore. Nippon India MF was one of the subscribers.

The company, however, defaulted on its payment

obligations, and Reliance Capital, the promoter of Reliance Home Finance, restructured the terms by providing additional collateral by pledging its 100% shareholding in Reliance General Insurance Company.

The company, however, again defaulted on its payment obligations and Nippon India MF invoked the pledge.

IDBI Trusteeship, which was acting as the depository trustee, took possession of the shares of Reliance General Insurance from the depository account of Reliance Capital.

Later, IRDAI declared this pledge 'null and void ab initio', which the fund house has challenged in the SAT.

## Indian companies in China brace for uncertainty amid outbreak

Factory workers, office staff largely confined to hometowns

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
CHENNAI

Indian firms based in China are bracing for an uncertain month ahead amid the coronavirus outbreak, which has brought factories and the services sector to a grinding halt.

Several company executives told *The Hindu* they expected the month of February – and perhaps the entire first quarter of this year – to be a write-off because of the outbreak, which has, as of February 6, infected more than 28,000 people and killed 560.

While there is little presence of Indian firms in the epicentre of Hubei province, a spreading lockdown reaching across China and limiting travel has constrained businesses, with current focus of the Chinese government on stopping the spread of the epidemic.

Most Indian companies in China are based in the south and east, in Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Jiangxi provinces, through English notifications sent through apps such as WeChat.

Factory workers and employees remain largely cloistered in their home towns, where they had returned over the Lunar New Year, and face a 14-day quarantine if returning to work. Major trade fairs, including



A cleaner washes the street in Wuhan of Hubei province.

ing hygiene, so there is a sense they are bringing this under control."

Kamal Dhuper, who heads NIIT China that runs training centres and on-campus training facilities in several Chinese provinces including Guizhou, Shandong, Ningxia and Heilongjiang, said one immediate concern for companies was providing masks. Even major cities like Shanghai are facing a shortage, leaving unclear how employees will be able to come back to work on February 10.

"What most of us are doing is looking at ways to minimise risks, for instance by getting people to work from home when possible," he said, adding that the timing over the new year was a mixed blessing since many people had already travelled back home and universities were closed.

The bigger concern is for start-ups in China that could start facing cash flow problems if the slowdown continued beyond February. While the spread of Indian companies is mainly in Shanghai, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and those that are into sourcing down south, their customer base is across China so business will be affected. We can, perhaps, only look at Q3 this year to get stabilised."

### Bright spot

One bright spot, he said, is that provincial authorities have been keeping foreign firms regularly up-to-date with the situation in their provinces, through English notifications sent through apps such as WeChat.

"We can see how they are using technology to deal with this, and to a large degree, people are closely following the guidelines, from wearing masks to maintain-

### MOTHER DAIRY

G.K.V.K. POST, YELAHANKA, BANGALORE-560065  
(A Unit of Karnataka Co-operative Milk Producers' Federation Ltd.)

e-mail: purchase@moterdaikymt.in  
Tele. No. 080-22179004, Fax: 080-28462652

IFT.No.MD/PU/ER-Proc/T-163/2019-20 Date: 04-02-19

### SHORT TERM TECHNICAL CUM COMMERCIAL TENDER FOR SUPPLY OF PACKING MATERIALS, & SERVICES THROUGH e-PROCUREMENT

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1) 10Kg Tins for Packing Whole Milk Powder-50,000 Nos. 2) 7 Ply Corrugated Boxes for Packing 10Kg WMP Tins with Upper & Lower, Middle Partitions-25,000 Nos. 3) Strapping Roll- 2,153Lakh Mtrs 4) Soldering of 10Kg WMP Tins (Material+Labour) Job Work -1 Job.

The manufacturers, dealers or interested eligible tenderers are requested to participate online only. For further details, Tender documents can be downloaded from the website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> from 07-02-2020 and submitted on or before 24-02-2020 upto 17.00 Hrs and Pre-bid Meeting held on 13-02-2020 at 11.00 AM at Mother Dairy GKVK Post, Yelahanka, B'lore-65.

Sd/- Director, Mother Dairy

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2. UNIT : MM COMPLEX : ENQ/19-20/003154/MM01(06) dt.24-01-2020: Due Date of opening: 27-02-2020

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# Unguarded BEATS

Musician Ben Böhmer kicks off his 'Breathing' tour in South Asia, and shares his landmark career moments from Berlin's underground scene

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

As the standards of pop and EDM started to tragically sink in the 2010s, a new breed of musicians came into the mix with new sounds for all ears. Active since 2015, Ben Böhmer is one of Germany's must-see talents in the alternative music space and he is currently on tour, having just completed a leg in Mauritius and in Mumbai. Tonight, he is set to perform in Kathmandu, Nepal, with the next two days reserved for Hyderabad and Delhi.

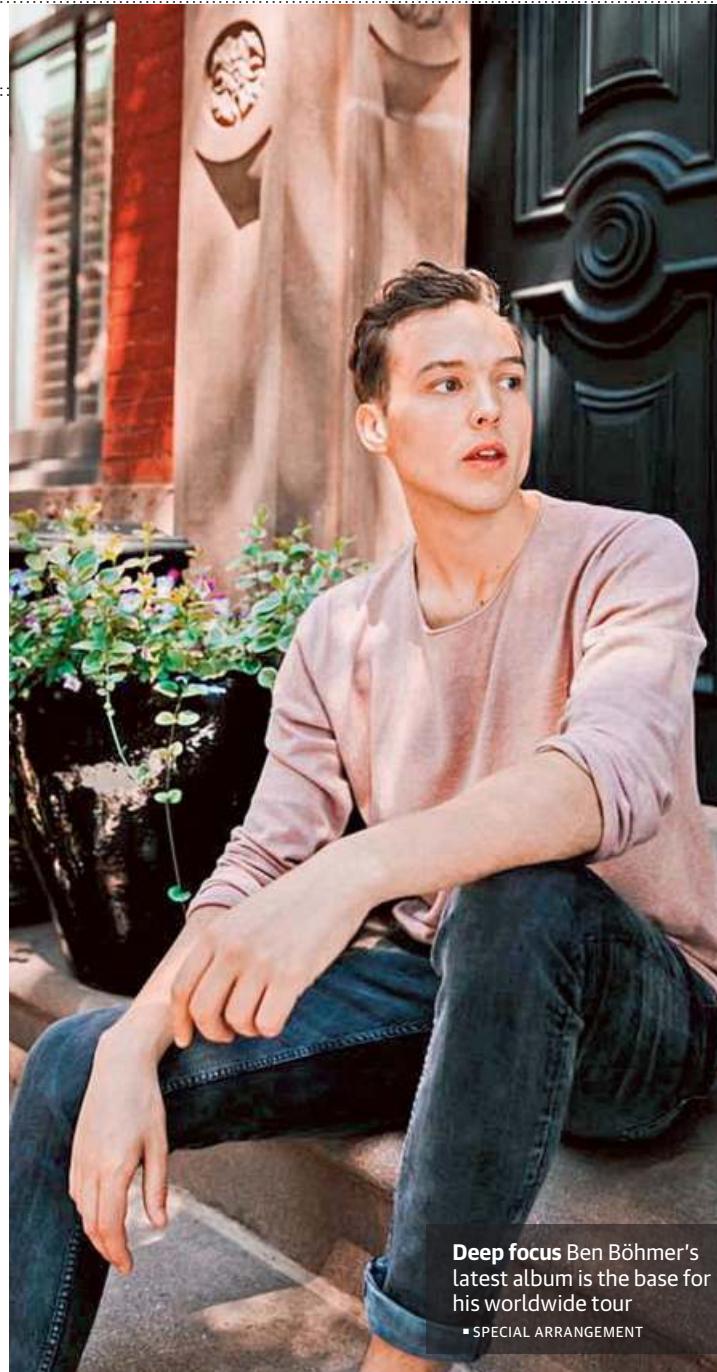
In an email interview, the rising star says the tour has been exciting so far, the gig in Mauritius being wonderful. "I'm really excited about the next gigs in Asia, North America, Australia and Europe. It is the biggest tour I have ever planned. It is nice to see...that ma-

ny cities were sold out within a short time. It is an indescribable feeling to reach so many people with the album *Breathing*."

## Dialling back a bit

Ben reminisces the value of his music-dense education, which commenced with a tryst with a synthesiser. But things really took off when he moved to Berlin from Göttingen. "It was the entry into the big world of electronic music, it was the playground to explore and learn more about the music and to make contacts. I was fortunate enough to play my first live shows in the iconic clubs Tresor and Magdalena. Little by little, I started my own label, Ton Töpferei, on which I released the *Promise You EP*."

He says that at the time he did not know how a label works, how to



Deep focus Ben Böhmer's latest album is the base for his worldwide tour

\* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

market music or how to reach listeners. *Promise You* caught a few ears for its mellow and bass-heavy melodies. "After this, larger labels contacted me," he recalls. "Then Anjunadeep (a U.K.-based record label) contacted me and the first tracks were released on this label," he says. When BBC Radio 1's disc jockey Pete Tong's released the 2018 Essential New Tune playlist which featured Ben's track 'After Earth', it soared in popularity.

I was fortunate enough to play my first live shows in the iconic Berlin clubs Tresor and Magdalena.

Anyone who thrives in Europe's underground music scene would know 'After Earth' for its chart-topping placement. But Ben looks at the release of his November 2019 debut album *Breathing* as his biggest career landmark so far. On Spotify, he has 8,79,783 monthly listeners, if that offers up some perspective on his popularity. Tracks such as 'Maelstrom' and the eponymous track 'Breathing' remain favourites

even months later, a triumph in the fickle music industry.

## Musical magnetism

What about being a modern, young musician in the 2010s and 2020s? "A very good quality of a young musician is to have a lot of energy and passion for knowledge, which is very helpful for travelling the world," he says, adding that we live in a diverse musical era. "Everything is possible and every sound is accepted. Many musicians no longer try to fit into a genre and focus on their own sound. This creates clever and creative ideas. I think that is great!"

Perhaps the fact that Ben often finds himself truly opening up to the world when he gets musical explains why he is magnetic. It is no secret that Berlin's underground scene is a multi-sensory experience. If you are a musician in this realm, you are also an artist. Ben says he usually adjusts his sets to his shows, though the list of tracks and the order are fixed.

"The room for improvisation is with each individual track, because I can work on the individual elements of the track separately; there are changes in the arrangement, in the effects and combinations of different tracks. In addition, I play a synthesiser, with whom I play melodies or improvise melodies."

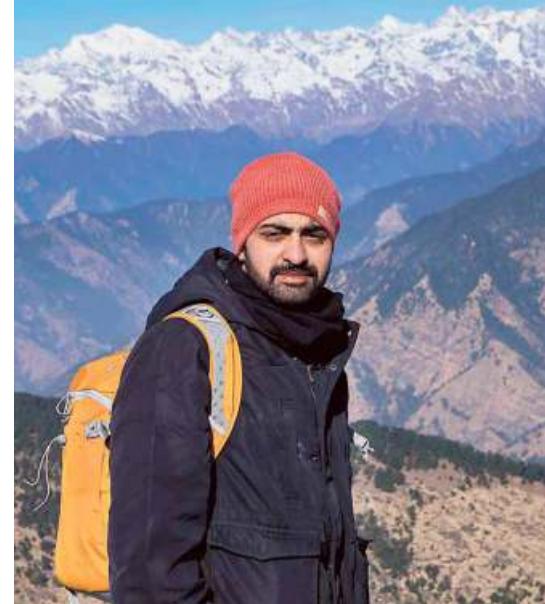
But it is not just opening up to the crowd; it is also opening up to the world's different cultures. "It is a symbiosis that is important to me. By playing live I experience the emotions of the listeners live. A give and take arises and connects with the listeners. Playing live is also important to gather new impressions that can be poured into the music. Without this exchange, it would be harder for me to create. Nevertheless, it is sometimes very challenging to travel the world and to find time in between to create music. So I like to take breaks to gain a focus on both elements. A great learning was to stay focused on myself. I learned a lot about making music for myself. This gives me emotional authenticity that the listener can feel."

*Ben Böhmer will perform live at Auro Kitchen and Bar, Siri Fort, on February 9 for his Breathing Tour*

## PEOPLE

### Mountain tales

Listen and contribute to traveller tales of hills and valleys in this fireside chat



Himalayan Talkies, a non-profit, is organising a meet and greet this Sunday. Navneet Sodhi, who heads the organisation, and a traveller himself, says, "It's a gathering for all kinds of travellers. It can be the spark for beginners who haven't travelled, but want to start. For occasional travellers, it's an exciting forum to learn more and to move on to the next level, and for regulars it's a space to share their experiences, meet more like-minded people and motivate others to travel to beautiful destinations."

There will be a 30-minute-long Travel Talks session by the Himalayan Talkies team, about their recent trips to the Himalayas. This will be followed by a Q&A, where participants can ask travel queries. There will also be a module on responsible travel in the Himalayas. Sodhi talks to us about the meet.

#### What is the purpose behind this meet?

To let people know about new places, make them aware of all the aspects of Himalayan travel. Secondly, for people to know more about raw places which are not often visited and how they should make their travel more responsible if they go to such secluded places by not littering or using plastic.

#### Being a regular traveller to the Himalayas, what is the most challenging thing you have faced or done?

Last year, in February, I was stuck in a place called Dingboche, a Sherpa village in the Khumbu region of north eastern Nepal for three full days, because the snowfall did not stop and I didn't know whether to go up or go down. Luckily after three days when the snowfall subsided, I decided to go up. I had to walk for 25 km in snowfall for the whole day. That moment where I was stuck at 4,400 metres, waiting for the snowfall to stop so that I can take my decision, was a very confusing time.

#### What is one piece of advice to people travelling in the Himalayas?

I have seen so many people getting hurt and even killed while travelling in the Himalayas, so people should be safe and plan on what and how they are going to do. Also they should stay away from making a lot of noise because this creates a lot of disturbance to the wildlife and even for the people living there.

At Kunzum Travel Café, Hauz Khas Village; February 9th, 3:15 p.m. to 5 p.m.

SUPRIYA RAMESH

## PRESS PLAY

### Just read



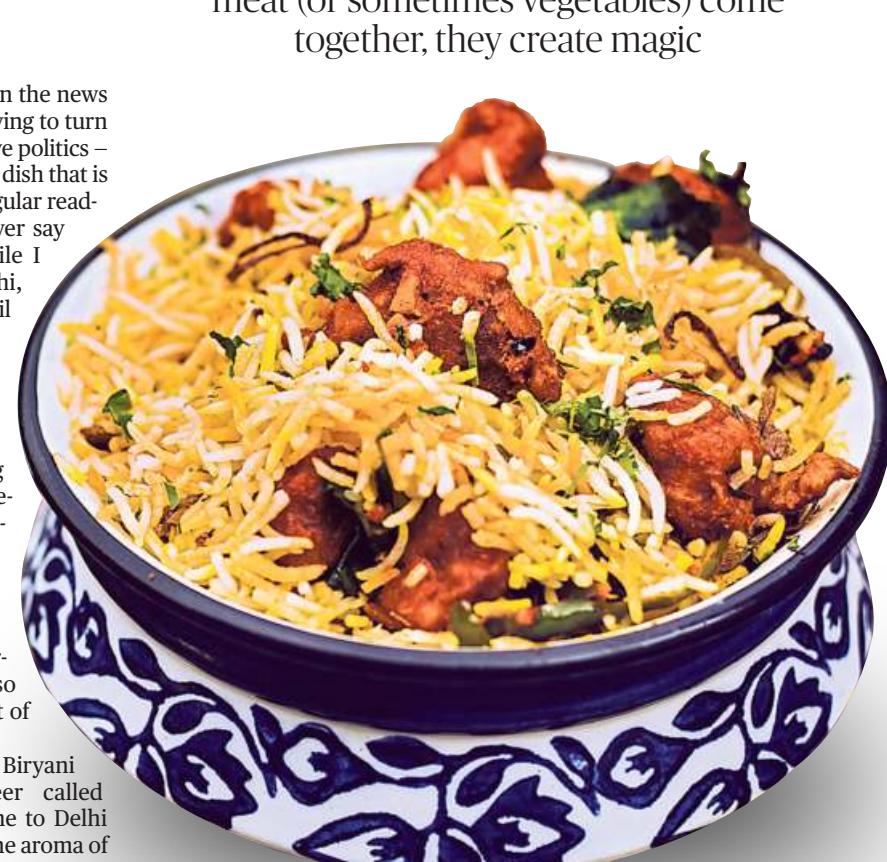
Aromatic delight (left) Mutton Biriyani; Shami Kabab

\* SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

What they call the Stuffed Chicken Shami Kabab (₹269 for four pieces) is a bit like Shikampuri Kabab, I thought, but with a small core of fresh cottage cheese, green chillies and coriander leaves adding to the taste.

I ended my meal with just a spoonful of Shahi Tukda (₹129). This dessert of fried bread soaked in sugar syrup and topped with nuts was just the right way to end what turned out to be a very nice meal, indeed. I am glad that young Ahmed followed in his mother's footsteps - and realised his dream.

The writer is a veteran food critic



Is in the heart, because when rice and meat (or sometimes vegetables) come together, they create magic

while. Ahmed is from Hyderabad, and I am told he was inspired by his mother, who ran a catering business. He trained the chefs at the outlet, and introduced them to the intricacies of Hyderabadi cuisine. The outcome is the kind of food that you relish.

On the menu are various kinds of biryani dishes such as Chicken 65 Biryani, Egg Dum Biryani, and Keema Dum Biryani. It also offers Chicken Korma, Chicken 65, Nargisi Kabab, Paneer 65, Soya 65, Potato 65 and Vegetable Chowgra (a dish of mixed veggies and cottage cheese).

Right now, the outlet (at Ganga shopping complex, Sector 29, Noida; from 11:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; 8010755755) delivers only to Indirapuram and Noida, but plans to expand to other areas.

I tried out the Chicken Zafrani Biryani (₹319) and the Mutton Zafrani Biryani (₹289). Both the rice dishes were well cooked, with juicy pieces of meat nestling in the aromatic grains of rice. The mutton biryani had boneless pieces of meat, deliciously tender and spicy. It had been cooked on dum - on slow heat in a sealed container - and came with raita and salan. I enjoyed the salan, too, which was mildly spicy. The vegetable dum biryani (₹229) is cooked with beans, carrot, cauliflower and peas.

I loved the Golconda Signature Haleem (₹219). This meat-and-lentil dish was creamy and smooth, and had just the right proportion of spices. The ingredients had been mashed just right, too. The addition of coriander leaves to the haleem gave it a nice colour and twist.

—

The writer is a veteran food critic

## 5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



### ART

#### Group show

An ongoing group art show called Bahaara: Notes from Spring, organised by Gallerie5, features a wide range of works which bring alive various facets of daily life in vibrant colours. The participating artists include Tejinder Kanda, Jitender Dangi, Farhad Hussain, Jagmohan Bangani and Shailesh Mohan Ojha.

**VENUE:** Golf Course Road, Gurugram

**TIME:** 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.



### FILM

#### Period drama

The American Center will screen John Crowley's 2015 film *Brooklyn*, which is based on Colm Tóibín's novel of the same name. The film is set in the 1950s, and follows the life of a young Irish woman who emigrates to New York for a life with better prospects. It is a story of one young girl's awakening, to the world and to herself.

**VENUE:** 24, Kasturba Gandhi Marg

**TIME:** 6 p.m.



### MUSIC

#### Hindustani vocal

IIC is hosting a Hindustani vocal recital by Pt. Bhola Nath Mishra, in memory of *dhruvap* singer Ustad Nasir Faiyazuddin Dagar. He will be accompanied by Ustad Akhtar Hassan on the tabla and Zakir Dhaukpuri on the harmonium. This will be followed by a *dhruvap* recital by Ustad Faiyazuddin Wasifuddin Dagar.

**VENUE:** C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, IIC

**TIME:** 6:30 p.m.



### CINEMA

#### Japanese family drama

The Japan Foundation will screen *Dad's Lunch Box*, a 2017 Japanese film, this evening. Directed by Masakazu Fukatsu, this is a story of a divorced father who had never cooked before, but now prepares his daughter's school lunch. The film explores the nuanced relationships between single fathers and their children.

**VENUE:** 5A Ring Road, Lajpat Nagar IV

**TIME:** 6:30 p.m.



### EXHIBITION

#### Sculpture

Organised by Chawla Art Gallery, an ongoing solo show called Bronze: Single Edition will exhibit the works of Tapas Sarkar. Curated by Shibani Chawla, the sculptures depict daily life, and the human connect with nature. Some of the artist's works reflect an emotional bond between animals and human beings.

**VENUE:** Square One Mall, Saket

**TIME:** 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

# New day, new kitchen

The rise of restaurant and bar takeovers is opening doors to some great learning for professionals involved, and innovative results for food-loving patrons

RUTH DSOUZA PRABHU

Each year, the F&B industry goes through some interesting trends. One such is that of restaurant and bar takeovers. Chefs as well as bartenders and mixologists are opening up to the idea of another professional coming in to takeover the burners and bars, for a set number of days. The result has been some interesting collaborations.

## Culinary riffs

At the recent takeover of O Pedro in Mumbai, Chef André Magalhães of the famed Taberna da Rua das Flores in Lisbon, offered diners a culinary journey: Finding Lisbon in Goa. The idea was to present the influence of Portuguese culture on Goan cuisine. In preparation, Chef Andre and executive chef of O Pedro, Hussain Shahzad, spent a few days together in Goa, visiting local markets, eating at places known for their Portuguese rendition of Goan dishes, exchanging notes with local chefs.

"The beauty of such takeovers is to see how chefs step into someone else's kitchen and create something new," states Hussain. "Most of these events are dictated by what is happening in the restaurant and the city at that time."

It's amazing to see how chefs can riff off each other and create new things that are seasonally relevant and apt for the situation."

Prateek Sadhu, executive chef and co-



owner of Masque, Mumbai, talks about the creation of a poached barramundi and millets dish from the 8 Hand Dinner at Masque, a takeover that had chefs Ivan Brehm (Nouri, Singapore), Trevor Moran (The Captain Seat, Nashville) and Matt Orlando (Amass, Copenhagen) coming together. "It was the first time we had so many head chefs in one kitchen. The four of us were bouncing ideas off one another on how to use the fish – one decided to use the skin in a crispy salad, the flesh itself was poached, and then someone else thought to cook down and purée the bones and head, add starch, and make noodles out of them. Every part of the fish was used across the menu. It began as a conversation about how to use the fresh seafood we had just got, but I think each chef had developed this zero-waste instinct in their cooking that kicked in in creative ways."

Such takeovers offer everybody involved something. Ishaan Sarkar, Director - Hospitality and F&B, The Whitefield Arms (TWA), Bengaluru, says, "These takeovers



are spike events that attract millennials and are hits on social media. This gives the place a differentiator." Ishaan recalls the time when Chris Moore of London's Coupeette took over TWA. Besides creating a compact cocktail menu that infused local ingredients in high-end spirits, they also got a little adventurous with cocktails, using sparkling wine and liqueurs. Chris brought in some signature British humour in his interaction with guests and also taught the team some tricks of the trade.

IQI Kitchen & Bar, Bengaluru, has, on occasion, experimented with having two guest bartenders working together. Teams tend to form and guests begin cheering for their bartender, turning things into a friendly competition. "Takeovers are unique and exciting. For venues, it is an opportunity to collaborate and the

**Better than one** (Clockwise from top) Prateek Sadhu and Ivan Brehm at Masque; a dish called Mom's Magic; Candolim midnight beef stew • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ideal platform to showcase and promote themselves in a more interactive manner," says Anirudh Kheny, Partner, IQI Kitchen & Bar.

## Building fraternities

Prathik Shetty, Founder-Partner, The Reservoir, Bengaluru, wants to encourage a bartending culture in the city. For World Cocktail Day, the pub invited seven bartenders and mixologists to a panel discussion and got them to make their signature cocktails for guests. "The highlight was the bonding between bartenders as a fraternity, which though tight-knit, rarely gets to meet up. Through such takeovers, bartenders get to know of the culture at The Reservoir vis-a-vis the bar they are working at, learn new techniques, and share theirs," Prathik says.

Internationally, takeovers have been happening regularly, but it's relatively new in India and promises to be a great way for exchange knowledge. It also means that guests will have something to look forward to.

# Let peas prevail

This vegan restaurant combines a plant-based buffet with a panoramic view of Stockholm

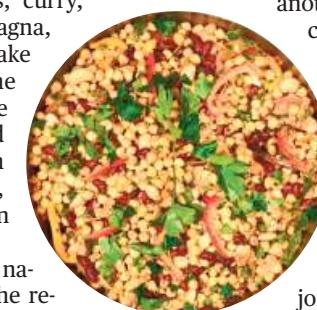


CHITRADEEPA ANANTHARAM

When I was in Stockholm recently, at least a half a dozen people recommended Hermans Vegan Restaurant. As I stepped into the restaurant at Fjällgatan for lunch, I was stunned by its location. Perched atop a hill, it overlooks the harbour and has a spectacular panoramic view of the city. The place was packed, and I had to wait for 30 minutes before I found a table.

The buffet table was plentiful and lavish. I paid my 220 Swedish Krona at the counter, and received my plate. As the focus is on upcycling, plates and cutlery are sourced from second-hand shops, which explains why they are in different sizes and shapes.

Soup, bread, four types of salad, two types of dressings, two types of sauces, four types of pickles, curry, stew, pasta, rice, lasagna, and spinach potato bake were all a part of the buffet. It also has one Indian rice dish and lentil-based salad each day. On weekends, they boast a live vegan grilling station.



In Stockholm

Both the vegan cuisine and the staff are multicultural

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Guests clear their plates and cutlery in designated bins, and throw food waste in another bin. Food waste is processed in-house and converted into biofuel, while vegetable waste is composted and used for the kitchen garden. Staff T-shirts and aprons are made of organic cotton and bamboo.

Hermans' vegan desserts are popular. Pastry Chef Devi

Prasad Nair said that when she joined a year ago, it was a challenge to find vegan ingredients for every dessert she wanted to

prepared in their kitchen. Devi did a course in baking at the De Pastry School in Kochi, followed by a certificate course in cake decoration

in Stockholm.

Last year, she attended a week-long masterclass at Vegan Gastronomy Culinary Academy, Spain. Hermans offers an enormous spread of vegan desserts, but the most popular on the menu are the cheesecakes, mango delights, muffins, pancakes and Belgian chocolate cakes.

Desserts are not part of the buffet, but can be bought separately. Only in December, does the Julbord Buffet include one dessert.

## POOCH CAFE



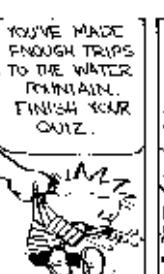
## PEANUTS



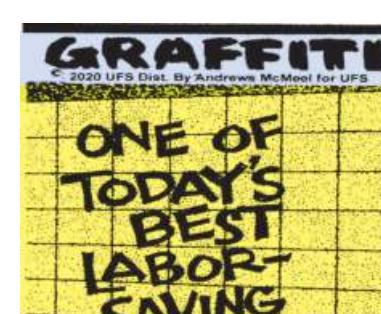
## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



## CALVIN AND HOBBES



## TIGER



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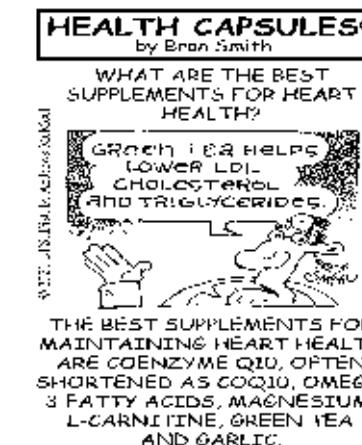
To play the Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- 2 Withdrawal (13)
- 3 Facing (8)
- 4 Without exception (2,1,3)
- 5 Austen novel (4)
- 6 Quarrelsome (13)
- 7 Closely related (7)
- 12 European capital, venue for the 1952 Olympics (8)
- 13 Building's highest point (7)
- 15 Rice dish (6)
- 18 Female relatives (5)
- 19 Ill-defined (4)

The solution will appear on February 8, 2020.

Solution No. 13295

## WUMO



## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



- Across
- 1 Inaccurate (4,2,3,4)
- 8 Numbers (abbr) (3)
- 9 Highland game bird – giant ramp (anag) (9)
- 10 One suffering memory loss (8)
- 11 Islamic ruler (4)
- 13 Responds (6)
- 14 Aniseed-flavoured aperitif (6)
- 16 Welsh industrialist (1)
- and social reformer, founder of cooperative communities, d. 1858 (4)
- 17 African capital on the Congo River (8)
- 20 From another point of view (4,5)
- 21 Scottish John (3)
- 22 Naval NCOs (5,8)
- Down
- 1 Money (informal) (5)

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# End of the road for Paire and Prajnesh

Marcora stuns No. 1 seed while Kwon knocks out the Indian; Purav-Ramkumar duo beats Paes-Ebden

## TATA OPEN

N. SUDARSHAN  
PUNE

Tata Open Maharashtra's worst fears came true on Thursday as top seed Benoit Paire, India No.1 Prajnesh Gunnswaran and crowd favourite Leander Paes all crashed out of the tournament.

First Prajnesh was beaten 6-3, 7-6(5) by South Korea's Soonwoo Kwon; then Paire turned in an abject performance to lose to Italian Roberta Marcra 6-4, 6-4 before Paes' defeat in his last appearance in an ATP 250 at home rounded off the evening.

The Indian doubles legend and his partner Aussie Matthew Ebden were thrashed by Purav Raja and Ramkumar Ramanathan 6-2, 6-1.

The Indian pair was ruthless on the night, winning 82% of its service points and not providing a single opportunity to break.

### Mystifying surrender

Paire's, on the other hand, was a mystifying surrender. The World No. 19 lost to an opponent ranked a whopping 155 places below him. Marcra broke in the fifth game of the first set to take it 6-4, before breaking at a similar stage in the second to establish a firm grip. Paire got one break back but lost serve immediately to hand the initiative to Marcra. The Italian did go down 15-40 while serving at 5-4, but the result never seemed in doubt.



**Powering through:** Purav Raja and Ramkumar Ramanathan proved too strong for Leander Paes and Matthew Ebden. ■ R. RAGU

In contrast, Prajnesh showed a lot more fight. He displayed much attacking verve and constantly took up aggressive court positions. But Kwon, the tournament's fourth seed, while being resolute in defence, transitioned seamlessly into attack mode.

On the day, he would hit one winner more than Prajnesh (22 to 21) and commit 12 errors fewer (35 to 47). After the two traded breaks in the first two games, Prajnesh down a break-point at 2-3, dumped an easy overhead into the net.

He went on to lose the set 6-3. The 30-year-old played a much better second set, staying with his opponent for the first eight games.

### Uping the ante

Kwon, however, upped his level in the ninth, earning multiple break points. But Prajnesh proved equal to the task by saving four of them. The match slipped into a tie-break and there the World No. 88 outshone Prajnesh.

At 3-3, the 22-year-old Kwon hit an ace before a wide forehand by Prajnesh left him on the threshold of a win.

Prajnesh netted a back-

hand to give Kwon two match points and the South Korean took it on the second with an easy forehand volley.

"I don't think I played a bad match," said Prajnesh. "I am not much better than him, but at the same time not much worse. So they were really small margins. But these are the kind of matches I should be winning consistently."

### The results:

**Second round:** Soonwoo Kwon (Kor) bt Prajnesh 6-3, 7-6(5); Roberto Marca (Ita) bt Benoit Paire (Fra) 6-4, 6-4; James Duckworth (Aus) bt Taro Daniel (Jpn) 6-7(4), 7-6(6), 6-3; Egor Gerasimov (Blr) bt Nikola Milojevic (Srb) 2-6, 6-3, 6-2.

**Doubles (quarterfinals):** Purav Raja & Ramkumar Ramanathan bt Leander Paes & Matthew Ebden 6-2, 6-1.

### Order of Play

#### Centre Court

- Jiri Vesely (Cze) vs Ilya Ivashka (Blr)
- Yuichi Sugita (Jpn) vs Ricardas Berankis (Ltu)
- Roberto Marca (Ita) vs James Duckworth (Aus)
- Soonwoo Kwon (Kor) vs Egor Gerasimov (Blr)

# Indians' schedule goes haywire after Coronavirus outbreak

N. SUDARSHAN  
PUNE

title in 2018 and reached the final last year.

Ramkumar has played three Chinese Challengers in each of the past two years and reached the final of a \$125,000 Challenger in Chinese Taipei in April 2018.

Both Prajnesh and Ramkumar won't be travelling this year.

In the recent past, Prajnesh Gunnswaran (No. 122), Ramkumar Ramanathan (182) and Sasikumar Mukund (263) have used the rapidly improving East Asian swing of the ATP Challenger circuit in March and April to prop up their rankings.

But with the ATP cancelling all four Challengers in China during March (Qujing, Zhuhai, Shenzhen and Zhangjiagang), the players will now have to look elsewhere. The ATP is yet to make a decision on the tournaments in April, but with apprehensions about travelling very high, the Indians are set to miss the whole swing.

The \$162,480 Ningbo Challenger scheduled for April has been a happy hunting ground for Prajnesh. He won his maiden Challenger

"I don't have a schedule, where can I plan next?" said a worried Sasikumar. "The tournaments got cancelled last Tuesday. For now the

plan is to stay in Europe. I don't know what's going to happen going forward. The Olympics are at stake if it goes on like this."

China alone was set to host 14 Challengers this year and there are now fears that with the events getting cancelled, the entry cut-offs at other tournaments will go higher. Prajnesh, however, downplayed it.

"Doesn't really make it more difficult," he said. "It's just a bit more tricky in that it involves more travelling."

### Closely monitored

The ATP said it was monitoring the situation closely. "We had to cancel / delay the Chinese Challengers in March," said Alison Lee, the ATP's Executive Vice President, International Group. "We have had to adapt, shift a few tournaments so that player flow was not affected. Natural occurrences like this happen and we have to be prepared. But it's mainly China. Although we may look at delaying the April tournaments."

### Hard blow

For Sasikumar, in particular, it will be a hard blow, for he played five Challengers in March and April across China and Chinese Taipei, including the two in Shenzhen and Zhangjiagang that have been cancelled.

"I don't have a schedule, where can I plan next?" said a worried Sasikumar. "The tournaments got cancelled last Tuesday. For now the



Sasikumar Mukund. ■ R. RAGU

Ramkumar Ramanathan. ■ R. RAGU

Prajnesh Gunnswaran. ■ R. RAGU

# Paes named in team for Croatia tie

## DAVIS CUP

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

The All India Tennis Association (AITA) has announced a six-member team for the Davis Cup World Group qualifier tie against Croatia to be played on indoor hard court in Zagreb on March 6 and 7.

The team will have Prajnesh Gunnswaran, Sumit Nagal and Ramkumar Ramanathan for singles. There will be three doubles players in Rohan Bopanna, Leander Paes and Divij Sharan.

Rohit Rajpal continues as the captain of the team, even though he was originally supposed to be the skipper only for the tie against Pakistan. Zeeshan Ali will be the coach.

"Once the Davis Cup tie was shifted out of Pakistan and played in Kazakhstan, it was decided that Rohit would be the captain of the



Leander Paes... back in the mix. ■ R. RAGU

team for the year 2020," clarified Akhouri Bishwadeep, CEO, AITA.

The selection committee meeting was held under the chairmanship of Balram Singh on Thursday, and was attended by Rajpal and Ankit Bhambri.

Zeeshan and Nandan Bal were consulted over phone

before the team was finalised.

**What happened?** When asked about the withdrawal of the press release a few minutes after it was sent by the AITA, the CEO clarified that the person who had sent the release thought that there was a mistake.

"The selection committee had also decided that Anand Dubey and Yash Pandey would be the physios for the team. But, it was brought to the attention of the committee that Anand could be busy with the Fed Cup team, if it was held the same week," said Bishwadeep.

Even though a six-member team has been announced, only a five-member team has to be intimated to the ITF. One player would travel as a reserve, and the name would be decided in due course.

**Clarity needed** "We could have announced the team later, but some of the players whose availability we had sought, wanted clarity as they needed a three-week period to enter tournaments, if they were not selected for Davis Cup duty. Hence, the team has been announced now," said the CEO.

# Manage your expectations: Lee

Target players ranked 10-40, says ATP Executive VP

N. SUDARSHAN  
PUNE

In light of the Tata Open Maharashtra not featuring a single top-10 player for the first time since 2003, ATP's executive vice-president Alison Lee said on Thursday it would have been prudent for the organisers to have pursued players ranked 10 to 40.

### Pushed back

With the ATP Cup taking the coveted start-of-the-season slot and Doha 250, with its hefty prize purse, running concurrently, Pune had to push its dates by a month.

"This is not necessarily a bad week," Lee said on Thursday. "Montpellier and Cordoba this week have very good player fields. They've been in those weeks for a long time and know they

"Getting top-10 players is very difficult. You look at Roger [Federer], Rafa [Nadal] and Novak [Djokovic]. How many 250s did they play last year? I'm not saying it would be impossible to get a top-10 player, but I think the focus should be on those from 10 to 40," she said.

**Changes likely** But she acknowledged that while a comprehensive review has been planned for 2023, there could be changes to the calendar before that.

"The 2021 calendar is already published and Pune will be in the same week. But 2022 is not set and I know Doha is very keen to move out of week one. So while Pune is in this week now, it may not be here forever," she added.



Alison Lee.  
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

have to go after players fairly aggressively.

"The tournament director here [Prashant Sutar] acknowledges they didn't know what to really expect. They have seen that they have to go after other top players or rising stars. I think everyone has to manage their expectations," she said.

# India fined again

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DUBAI

Team India was fined 80 percent of its match fees after Wednesday's first One-Day International against New Zealand for a slow over rate, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said.

It is the third consecutive match that Virat Kohli's side has been fined for the offence, having been deducted 40 percent following the fourth T20I and 20 percent after the fifth T20I last Sunday. Kohli accepted the charge after India's four-wicket defeat in Hamilton on Wednesday.

ICC rules state that teams are fined 20 percent of its match fees for every over it falls short in a specified time. India was four overs short before the cut-off point as New Zealand chased down 348.

# Bangladesh to meet India in final

## U-19 WORLD CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
POTCHEFSTROOM

Bangladesh stormed into its maiden ICC under-19 World Cup final with a comprehensive six-wicket win over New Zealand here on Thursday, setting up a title clash with record four-time champion India on Sunday.

Mahmudul Hasan Joy rose to the occasion with a 100 off 127 balls, helping Bangladesh overcome the 12-run target in 44.1 overs.

After losing the openers cheaply in the chase, Joy paired up with Towhid Hridoy (40) first before teaming up with Shahadat Hossein (40 not out) to share a 101-run stand for the fourth wicket and fashion a resounding win.

New Zealand had recovered to make 211 for eight after being 74 for four at one stage, courtesy an unbeaten 75 off 83 balls from Beckham Wheeler-Greenall.

**The scores:** New Zealand 211/8 in 50 overs (Beckham Wheeler-Greenall 75, Nicholas Lidstone 44) lost to Bangladesh 215/4 in 44.1 overs (Mahmudul Hasan Joy 100, Shahadat Hossein 40 n.o.).



**Game-changers:** The experienced Taylor and stand-in skipper Latham, right, gave India a reality check. ■ GETTY IMAGES

and to actually win the game, it was great," he said.

Taylor smacked an unbeaten 109, with Tom Latham knocking 69 off 48 balls. Their stand broke India's bowling strength in the middle overs. Nicholls paid rich tribute to the two senior batsmen.

**More than just runs** "Having someone like that at number four, especially with Kane Williamson not being

there as well, the experience he brings is immense. It is not just about the runs, because batting with him in the middle, you keep having those conversations that help your batting too."

"The dimensions of the

ground helped us and he certainly likes batting there. It was a great partnership and great knock from him. Ross being there till the end to be not out and win the game was immense for us," Ni-

cholls said.

On Latham's knock, he said: "Tom and I have played together for a long time, so I have certainly seen him play like that before. He is very versatile and adaptive to the game scenario and conditions. The way he started, well it was slow, 2 off 10 balls or something. But he managed to put the pressure back on Kuldeep (Yadav) and their other spinners. Being captain he led from the front and that partnership changed the game for us," he said.

Seddon Park's dimensions came into sharp focus, as a shorter boundary on one side benefitted the chase. The second ODI will be played at Eden Park which has still shorter boundaries.

"The short boundary proved to be really important for us. There was some breeze as well in the evening. So whenever they bowled through the middle, or bowled short, we pushed back with boundaries. Their attacking bowlers couldn't bowl with the bigger boundary and it played into our hands.

Ross managed it pretty well and again for Tom to come to the crease, and attack the way he did, it really changed the game."

## Raptors storm into semifinals

Leverdez and Sai Praneeth help the team blank Warriors

### PBL

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

The brilliance of Brice Leverdez and captain B. Sai Praneeth helped defending champion Bengaluru Raptors outplay Awadhe Warriors 5-0 and enter the semifinal of the Premier Badminton League at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium here on Thursday.

Warriors got off to a perfect start with the men's combine of Ko Sung Hyun and Shin Baek Cheol scoring an impressive win over Arun George and Rian Agung Saputro.

Raptors' World No. 39 Brice Leverdez cruised past World No. 64 Ajay Jayaram in the Trump card for the latter. The former overcame a hesitant start – he looked rattled by Jayaram's deceptive shots at the net – to score six points in a row in the first game and wrap it up in quick time.

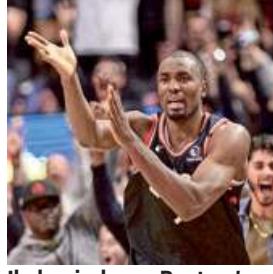
In the second, Leverdez was more aggressive as he took a comfortable 8-2 lead only to see Jayaram fight back with a solid net game. However, the Raptors shuttler shifted gears and came up with telling smashes to

beatable 4-0 lead. Sai Praneeth's ability to get his smashes right whenever he was under pressure proved decisive in the final analysis.

## TV PICKS

**NBA:** Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 9 a.m.  
**Pakistan vs Bangladesh:** 1st Test, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 10.30 a.m.  
**Under-19 World Cup:** Star Sports 3, 1.15 p.m.  
**Tata Open Maharashtra:** SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 3.10 p.m.  
**PBL:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 7 p.m.  
**ISL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



Ibaka sizzles as Raptors' clinch record triumph

Spanish centre Serge Ibaka scored a season-high 30 points and powered defending NBA champion Toronto Raptors to a club-record 12th consecutive triumph on Wednesday by beating Indiana 119-118. **The results:** Detroit Pistons 116 bt Phoenix Suns 108; Boston Celtics 116 bt Orlando Magic 100; Brooklyn Nets 129 bt Golden State Warriors 88; Toronto Raptors 119 bt Indiana Pacers 118; Atlanta Hawks 127 bt Minnesota Timberwolves 120; Oklahoma City Thunder 109 bt Cleveland Cavaliers 103; Memphis Grizzlies 121 bt Dallas Mavericks 107; Denver Nuggets 92 bt Utah Jazz 95; Los Angeles Clippers 128 bt Miami Heat 111. AGENCIES



Spears gets 22-month ban on doping charge

Former Australian Open mixed doubles champion Abigail Spears of the United States has been banned for 22 months after failing a drugs test, the International Tennis Federation has announced. Spears, 38, tested positive for banned substances prasterone and testosterone at the 2019 US Open. Her ban was backdated to November 7, 2019 and will end on September 6, 2021. AFP

## Injured Farah pulls out of London half marathon

LONDON Four-time Olympic champion Mo Farah has withdrawn from this year's London half marathon due to injury. The 36-year-old decided to withdraw from the meet after sustaining a minor Achilles injury in training. IANS

**Kenkre and Sethu move into last four**

## SPORTS BUREAU

BENGALURU Kenkre FC and Sethu FC booked semifinal spots with victories in their last group stages matches of the Hero Indian Women's League (IWL) football tournament here on Thursday. **The results:**

Kenkre FC 2 (Asha Kumari 46, Techi Akung 56) bt Bangalore United FC 1 (Amooya Kamal 86).

Sethu FC 6 (Sandhya 9, 15, 75, 82, Amsavalli 34, Karthika 78) bt Baroda FA 0.

**Bidyandana nets MCFC's winner**

## SPORTS REPORTER

MUMBAI A stoppage-time winner from Bidyananda Singh helped Mumbai City FC overcome Jamshedpur FC 2-1 on Thursday.

The host remained fourth with 26 points in 16 matches while Jamshedpur was seventh with 16 from 15 games.

**The result:** Mumbai City FC 2 (Amine Chermiti 60, Bidyananda Singh 90) bt Jamshedpur FC 1 (Nee Acosta 7-pen).

ACOSTA 7-pen.

# Rawat ton helps Delhi stay in the hunt

Juneja gets his hundred; Rawal falls short as Gujarat manages a 42-run lead

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Having conceded a lead of 42 runs, Delhi's bid to score briskly and give its bowlers a chance to have a go at Gujarat worked partially well on the penultimate day of their Ranji Trophy match here on Thursday.

After claiming six Gujarat wickets and restricting the visiting team to 335, Delhi rode on the shoulders of opener Anuj Rawat's 133 to reach 228 for four at stumps.

Delhi is now 186 runs ahead and aims to score some quick runs in Friday's first session before making Gujarat bat again. Since nothing other than six points from this match will help Delhi's cause in the championship, it is trying to make a match of it.

Gujarat, assured of three points in case of a draw, will obviously assess the situation before deciding on how to go about the run-chase.

Resuming the day with optimism, Gujarat's hopes of building a big first-innings lead did not quite materialise after Dhruv Rawal fell quickly, six runs short of a well-deserved century.

Though Manpreet Juneja went on to score 124, the Gujarat lower-order could not



On the go: Anuj Rawat's quick scoring has given Delhi the right platform for an all-out assault. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

contribute much. Delhi's hard-working medium-pacer Simarjeet Singh finished with five wickets.

When Delhi batted a second time, the early fall of Hiten Dalal did not deter the

host. Rawat and skipper Dhruv Shorey raised 86 runs for the second wicket before Gujarat tasted two successes in quick succession.

The dismissals of Shorey and Nitish Rana, who failed

for the second time in the match, raised Gujarat's hopes of forcing an outright win.

But once Jonty Sidhu joined Rawat, Delhi scored briskly. During their century

stand, Gujarat was on the defensive. Late in the day, Rawat perished in his pursuit of quick runs.

## The scores:

**Delhi – 1st innings:** 293 & 228/4 in 69 overs (Anuj Rawat 133, Jonty Sidhu 44 batting) vs Gujarat 335 in 85.2 overs (Samit Gohil 51, Manpreet Juneja 124, Dhruv Raval 94, Simarjeet Singh 5/7).

**Jaipur:** Rajasthan 241 & 201 in 63.3 overs (Rajesh Bishnoi 46, Nikkanta Das 4/26) vs Bengal 123 & 185/4 in 67 overs (Koushik Ghosh 64, Abhimanyu Easwaran 62).

**Nagpur:** Vidarbha 326 vs Kerala 191/3 in 54 overs (Mohammed Azharuddin 81).

**Third day's play abandoned.**

## RANJI SCORES, ROUND 8, DAY 3

## GROUP A

**At New Delhi:** Delhi 293 & 228/4 in 69 overs (Anuj Rawat 133, Jonty Sidhu 44 batting) vs Gujarat 335 in 85.2 overs (Samit Gohil 51, Manpreet Juneja 124, Dhruv Raval 94, Simarjeet Singh 5/7).

**Jaipur:** Rajasthan 241 & 201 in 63.3 overs (Rajesh Bishnoi 46, Nikkanta Das 4/26) vs Bengal 123 & 185/4 in 67 overs (Koushik Ghosh 64, Abhimanyu Easwaran 62).

**Nagpur:** Vidarbha 326 vs Kerala 191/3 in 54 overs (Mohammed Azharuddin 81).

## GROUP B

**Vadodara:** Baroda 174 & 259 in 63.3 overs (Krunal Pandya 74, Atit Sheth 70, K. Vignesh 5/62) lost to Tamil Nadu 490/7 decl.

**Points:** TN 7 (19), Baroda 0 (14).

**Delhi bowling:** Siddhant 19-4

68-2, Simarjeet 22.2-4-75-5,

Khejriwala 17-1-63-0, Bidhuri

10-1-35-1, Baroka 11-0-52-0,

Rana 6-2-19-2.

**Delhi – 2nd innings:** Anuj Rawat c Kalaria b Bhatt 133, Hitien Dalal lbw b Gaja 1, Dhruv Shorey c Merai Patel 34, Nitish Rana c Juneja b Nagwaswala 10, Jonty Sidhu (batting) 44, Himmat Singh (batting) 3; Extras (nb-2, w-1): 3. Total (for 4 wkts. in 69 overs): 228.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-22, 2-33, 3-78, 4-88, 5-309, 6-315, 7-326, 8-335.

**Delhi bowling:** Siddhant 19-4

68-2, Simarjeet 22.2-4-75-5,

Khejriwala 17-1-63-0, Bidhuri

10-1-35-1, Baroka 11-0-52-0,

Rana 6-2-19-2.

**Delhi – 2nd innings:** Anuj Rawat c Kalaria b Bhatt 133, Hitien Dalal lbw b Gaja 1, Dhruv Shorey c Merai Patel 34, Nitish Rana c Juneja b Nagwaswala 10, Jonty Sidhu (batting) 44, Himmat Singh (batting) 3; Extras (nb-2, w-1): 3. Total (for 4 wkts. in 69 overs): 228.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-10, 2-96, 3-113, 4-219.

**Gujarat bowling:** Kalaria 14-1

49-0, Gaja 11-4-35-1, Nagwaswala 16-1-62-1, Patel 21-1-56-1,

Bhatt 7-1-26-1.



Ashutosh Aman 60, Kengo Bam 5/67.

**Chandigarh:** Mizoram 109 & 122 in 37 overs lost to Chandigarh 58/7 decl. **Chandigarh 7 (36), Mizoram 0 (12).**

**Mangaldoi:** Meghalaya 174 & 155 bt Sikkim 128 & 135 in 44 overs (Iqbal Abdulla 76 no., Sanjay Yadav 5/51, Abhay Negi 4/41). **Meghalaya 6 (27), Sikkim 0 (10).**

**Dimapur:** Goa 318 & 221/4 dec. in 41 overs (Sumiran Armonkar 42, Amit Verma 66, Snehal Kauthankar 68 no.) bt Nagaland 176 in 67.3 overs (Shrirkant Mundhe 64, Amulya Pandrekar 5/31) & 134 in 36.4 overs (Stuart Binny 58). **Goa 6 (43), Nagaland 0 (19).**

## GROUP C

**Patna:** Arunachal Pradesh 351 & 162/8 in 69 overs (Ashutosh Aman 4/65) vs Bihar 291 in 85.2 overs (Md. Rahmatullah 140, T. Pradeep 52 no.).

**Rajkot:** Mumbai 262 & 285/3 in 53 overs (Jay Bista 46, Suryakumar Yadav 134, Shams Mulaani 67 batting) vs Saurashtra 335 in 114.2 overs (Sheldon Jackson 85, Arpit Vasavada 46, Chirag Jani 82 no., Royston Dias 4/64).

**Points:** TN 7 (19), Baroda 0 (14),

**Delhi:** Himachal 283 & 240 in 8 overs vs Railways 54/7 dec. in 16.92 overs (Arindam Ghosh 204 no., M. Ashutosh 60, Karn Sharma 82, T. Pradeep 52 no.).

**Rajkot:** Mumbai 262 & 285/3 in 53 overs (Jay Bista 46, Suryakumar Yadav 134, Shams Mulaani 67 batting) vs Saurashtra 335 in 114.2 overs (Sheldon Jackson 85, Arpit Vasavada 46, Chirag Jani 82 no., Royston Dias 4/64).

**Patna:** Arunachal Pradesh 351 & 162/8 in 69 overs (Ashutosh Aman 4/65) vs Bihar 291 in 85.2 overs (Md. Rahmatullah 140, T. Pradeep 52 no.).

**Dimapur:** Goa 318 & 221/4 dec. in 41 overs (Sumiran Armonkar 42, Amit Verma 66, Snehal Kauthankar 68 no.) bt Nagaland 176 in 67.3 overs (Shrirkant Mundhe 64, Amulya Pandrekar 5/31) & 134 in 36.4 overs (Stuart Binny 58). **Goa 6 (43), Nagaland 0 (19).**

**59, 2, Courage (8) S. John 59, 3, Dream Catcher (5) T.S. Jodha 59, 4, Knotty Ash (4) Antony 59, 5, Mauritania (3) David Allan 59, 6, Multifaceted (2) Suraj 59, 7, Saint Petersburg (10) R. Marshall 59, 8, Silver Ikon (6) Kiran Rai 59, 9, Tutankhamun (7) Trevor 59 and 10, Lady Legend (9) Sandesh 57.5, 1. MRS THATCHER, 2. KNOTTY ASH, 3. MAURITANIA**

**7 BHARACHUKKI PLATE (Div. II), (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 4/45-1, Dallas (1) Arvind Kumar 60, 2, Slice Of Heaven (9) R. Marshall 59, 3, Port Of Beauty (2) Antony 57, 5, Knotty Ash (4) Antony 59, 5, Mauritania (3) David Allan 59, 6, Multifaceted (2) Suraj 59, 7, Saint Petersburg (10) R. Marshall 59, 8, Silver Ikon (6) Kiran Rai 59, 9, Tutankhamun (7) Trevor 59 and 10, Lady Legend (9) Sandesh 57.5, 1. ARECA ANGEL, 2. PRIME STAR, 3. ELITE AGENT**

**4 BHARACHUKKI PLATE (Div. I), (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 3-15-1, Indian Empress (6) S. John 60, 2, Daring Sweetheart (6) S. Mubarak 60, 3, Mrs Thatcher (1) David Allan 60, 4, Up Front (8) S. Shareef 60, 5, Aeroplane (4) R. Manjunath 59, 5, Deepika 5, 6, Devika 53) bt Odisha 2 (Dipali Larka 32, 55).**

**Maharashtra 2 (Rutuja Pisal 30, 52) bt Jharkhand 1 (Albea Rani Toppo 12).**

**BENGALURU:** Multifaceted, who is in good form, may complete a hat-trick of wins in the Sprinters Trail Stakes (1,200m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Friday (Feb. 7).

False rails (width about 6.5m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

**1 FOREVER ELEGANCE PLATE (Div. III), (1,200m), rated 15 to 35, 1-45 p.m.: 1. Country's Spirit (1) Mark 60, 2. Daring Sweetheart (6) S. Mubarak 60, 3. Mrs Thatcher (1) David Allan 60, 4. Up Front (8) S. Shareef 60, 5. Aeroplane (4) R. Manjunath 59, 5, Deepika 5, 6, Devika 53) bt Odisha 2 (Dipali Larka 32, 55).**

**2 FOREVER ELEGANCE PLATE (Div. I), (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 3-15-1, 1. Blazing Gold (10) M. Naveen 55, 2. Daring Sweetheart (6) S. Mubarak 60, 3. Mrs Thatcher (1) David Allan 60, 4. Up Front (8) S. Shareef 60, 5. Aeroplane (4) R. Manjunath 59, 5, Deepika 5, 6, Devika 53) bt Odisha 2 (Dipali Larka 32, 55).**

**3 FOREVER ELEGANCE PLATE (Div. II), (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 3-15-1, 1. Happy Dancing (8) Rayan 60, 2. Desert Mirage (11) Kiran Rai 59, 3, Special Stone (4) M. Naveen 59, 4, Star Citizen (5) Chetan 59, 5, The Preacher (3) S. Mubarak 59, 6, Hidden Soldier (6) Sai Kiran 59, 7. Islet 59, 8. Singhaab (1) M. Naveen 56, 9. Yerwazan (1) Tauseef 55.5, 10. Lawrence Of Arabia (10) T.S. Jodha 56.5, 11. Princess Holly (7) Trevor 53.5 and 12. Zee Top (1) Chisty 55.5.**

**1 CODE OF HONOUR**

# India eyes improved batting show

Takes on England in crucial match today

## TRI-SERIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MELBOURNE

India Women will have to address its batting woes when it takes on England Women in a crucial league match of the T20 Tri-series here on Friday.

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

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

The Indian batters, especially in the middle and lower-order, will need to produce a much-improved show against England to brighten their chances of reaching the final.

**The squads:**



**Need to fire:** Smriti will have to assist Harmanpreet in carrying India's hopes. ■ GETTY IMAGES

**India Women:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Shafali Verma, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Veda Krishnamurthy, Tanya Bhatia, Deepti Sharma, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Radha

Yadav, Richa Ghosh, Arundhati Reddy, Harleen Deol, Nuzhat Parveen and Poonam Yadav.

**England Women:** Heather Knight (Capt.), Amy Ellen Jones (wk), Danielle Wyatt, Natalie Sciver, Fran Wilson, Katherine

Brunt, Tammy Beaumont, Lauren Winfield, Freya Davies, Sophie Ecclestone, Sarah Glenn, Anya Shrubsole, Georgia Elwiss, Kate Cross and Mady Villiers.

**Match starts at 8:40 a.m. IST.**

## Four-nation series: Ganguly in UK for talks

IANS

NEW DELHI

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly has headed to England to discuss the possibility of a four-nation series. He will have an informal meeting with officials of the English and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). It remains to be seen if Cricket Australia (CA) joins the talks. Days after taking over, Ganguly announced that the BCCI was looking at a four-nation series involving India, England, Australia and a top nation.

## Will try to win medals in CWG and Asiad: Sanjita

She still wonders what the doping episode has in store for her

**Y.B. SARANGI**

KOLKATA

After winning the women's 49kg silver in the National weightlifting championships here, K. Sanjita Chanu may have stepped on the road to redemption but still wonders what the doping episode, which stole more than a year of her career, has in store for her.

A Commonwealth Games champion in 53kg, Sanjita was handed a provisional suspension by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) in the World championships in the USA in

2017. However, her case courted controversy due to several procedural lapses.

The IWF, which revoked her provisional suspension about a year ago, has been tight-lipped over the case and has not delivered the final decision yet.

"I am sad that they are not giving any final decision. I came here to compete but the thought kept coming that more than one year was wasted. My name and life got spoiled and we don't know yet the exact reason why it happened. This should not happen to anybody else,"

Sanjita told *The Hindu*.

"After that episode, I thought of quitting. Then I thought, 'why should I quit like this? I have not taken anything that is banned'."

### Big relief

Two successful lifts, one each in snatch and clean and jerk, amid distinct nervousness helped Sanjita come a distant second with a total of 185kg behind Mirabai Chanu. But it came as a big relief for the 26-year-old from Manipur.

"I was nervous. I was making a comeback after such an

episode and everybody was watching me. I had tension and the body got tight because of that. That's why I dropped most of the lifts.

"After the 2018 Commonwealth Games, I am competing now in a big event. I competed in 53kg in my last Nationals in 2018. Last year, I did not have much time to compete in the National. No one allowed me to train because of the doping story and there was no facility at home. I competed in inter-Railways and slowly got into the training mode.

"Since I struggled to in-

crease my body weight, it would have been difficult to go up to 55kg after the shuffle in weight divisions. That's why I chose 49kg. I did 88kg and 113kg in the inter-Railways and had hoped to repeat it here."

Sanjita was hopeful of reviving her career. "I will improve my performance and will try to win medals in the Commonwealth and Asian Games," said Sanjita.

## Sharath tames Sathiyan and Harmeet as Indian Oil clinches title

Manika's twin-win in vain as Indian Oil loses to ONGC in thriller

## TABLE TENNIS

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

For years, the best team final in the country's table tennis has been witnessed in the Petroleum inter-unit tournament, and not the National championship.

This is bound to happen since the Petroleum sector uses the services of every member of the National team. The resultant clash involves those forming the creamy layer of Indian table tennis in both sections.

In the men's team final that lived up to expectations, Indian Oil's Sharath Kamal and Manav Thakkar joined hands to end the unbeaten run of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation since 2015 with a 3-2 win at the Thyagaraj Sports Complex here on Thursday.

**Blistering form**  
Riding on Sharath's blistering form, Indian Oil twice levelled the match with the nine-time National champion beating World No. 30 G. Sathiyan and the newly-crowned National champion Harmeet Desai.

ONGC, which had taken the lead when Desai scored



**Firepower:** ONGC upstaged Indian Oil in the women's final. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

over Thakkar in the repeat result of the recent National final, and again when former National champion A. Amalraj beat Sudhanshu Grover, now looked at Sathiyan to pull off the deciding singles.

Thakkar, who stunned Sathiyan in the National semifinals at Hyderabad on Sunday, started slowly and conceded the opening set. In the next two, Thakkar came back strongly with some well-measured backhand placements to repeatedly fox Sathiyan.

In the fourth and fifth sets, Sathiyan opened up 4-0

leads but with contrasting outcomes. Though he managed to win the fourth to force the decider, he could not prevent Thakkar from making it 4-4 and 6-6 before trailing for the first time in the decider.

Though Thakkar squandered a match-point, he regained his composure to win 12-10 and became a member of Indian Oil's winning team for the first time. The triumph was a kind of revenge for Indian Oil which was upstaged in the women's team final on Wednesday evening.

Having beaten ONGC in

the league stage, Indian Oil did not spare much thought in finalising its combination in the final. The decision to make youngster Diya Chithale play two singles and the National runner-up Krittika Sinha Roy one backfired.

Manika Batra twice levelled the tie-score by winning her singles but found no support from her Indian Oil teammates. Diya lost the first singles to Ankita Das and Krittika surprisingly surrendered to Divya Deshpande in the third. In the fifth, Pooja Sahasrabudhe overpowered Diya to clinch it for ONGC.

**The results:** Team champion-

ship (finals): Men: Indian Oil bt

ONGC 3-2 (Manav Thakkar lost

to Harmeet Desai 8-11, 6-11, 7-

11; Sharath Kamal bt G. Sathiyan 5-11, 11-9, 11-7, 11-9; Sudhanshu Grover lost to A. Amalraj 5-11, 5-11, 8-11; Sharath bt Desai 9-11, 11-6, 11-3, 10-12, 11-4; Thakkar bt Sathiyan 9-11, 11-7, 11-7, 4-11, 12-10).

**Women:** ONGC bt Indian Oil 3-2

(Ankita Das bt Diya Chithale 11-7, 11-8, 11-3; Pooja Sahasrabudhe lost to Manika Batra 11-13, 9-11, 8-11; Divya Deshpande bt Krittika Sinha Roy 8-11, 11-8, 11-7, 11-8; Ankita lost to Manika 7-11, 8-11, 12-10, 7-11; Pooja bt Diya 11-5, 11-9, 11-13, 11-9).



**Having the last laugh:** Indian Oil pipped ONGC in a thriller. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## A day to remember for Pardeep

Improves snatch record, clinches 102kg gold

### WEIGHTLIFTING

Y.B. SARANGI

KOLKATA

Pardeep Singh bettered his snatch record with an effort of 151kg and went on to win the men's 102kg gold medal in the National weightlifting championships at the Khudiram Anusilan Kendra here on Thursday.

Pardeep, who had 150kg and 201kg in snatch and clean and jerk for a total of 351kg in the Asian championships in Ningbo (China) last year, improved his own snatch record by one kg.

Pardeep, who had 150kg and 201kg in snatch and clean and jerk for a total of 351kg in the Asian championships in Ningbo (China) last year, improved his own snatch record by one kg.



**Power-packed:** Pardeep Singh took the top spot with an impressive performance. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

National coach Vijay Sharma.

### Sharsti 'snatch'es gold

Sharsti Singh rode on her superlative snatch to aggregate 205kg for the women's 81kg title. The 10kg lead in snatch proved decisive for her as she did an identical 112kg in clean and jerk with the second-placed Baljinder Kaur.

**The results:** Men: 96kg: 1. Vikas Thakur (SSCB) (snatch 154, clean and jerk 192, total 346); 2. Jagdish Vishwakarma (Cht) (147, 180, 327); 3. Suresh Yadav

(Odi) (140, 170, 310).  
**102kg:** 1. Pardeep Singh (RSPB) (151kg – NR; Old 150, Pardeep], 195, 346; 2. Shubham (SSCB) (145, 180, 325); 3. Ashutosh Kumar Singh (Utk) (140, 176, 316).

**Women: 76kg:** Deepika Handa (Chd) (92, 119, 211); 2. R. Rockiya Alish (TN) (89, 118, 207); 3. A. Tumina Devi (Mani) (83, 104, 187).

**81kg:** 1. Sharsti Singh (RSPB) (93, 112, 205); 2. Baljinder Kaur (Chd) (83, 112, 195); 3. T. Dharmashni (TN) (85, 109, 194).

**87kg:** 1. P. Anuradha (RSPB) (97, 122, 219); 2. Madhusmita Barua (Asm) (87, 113, 200); 3. Anu (Pun) (86, 110, 196).

**Plus 87kg:** 1. Monika (RSPB) (95, 115, 210 – NR; Old 208, Ashwini Malage); 2. Ashwini Malage (Mah) (89, 119 – [NR; Old, 117, Jasbir Kaur], 208; 3. Jasbir Kaur (Pun) (89, 117, 206).



**Pulling her weight:** Sanjita Chanu is hopeful of reviving her career. ■ RAJEEV BHATT

# MARCHING ON IN MELBOURNE

**COACHING WITH A DIFFERENCE**  
Ravi Shastri has a vision for the current Indian cricket team and his plans involve keeping the bench strength strong. Known to have studied the modern concepts of the game, Shastri finds himself evolving with time. He loves the game.

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**SPORTSTAR**

# Timeless wisdom with chief coach Bahadur

Provides tips to young shot putters to help them develop their technique

## ATHLETICS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

As the afternoon sun tries to provide the warmth against a cold breeze, the athletes are scattered, training at the vast sports complex of the National Institute of Sports.

With most of the prominent athletes training in different parts of the country, chief coach Bahadur Singh is happy to provide tips to young shot putters to help them develop their technique.

"The javelin throwers have returned from South Africa. We will soon have Neeraj Chopra and others training here," said Bahadur.

### Finer points

Talking to the chief coach is an education, as he recalls so many instances and drives home the finer points in his inimitable fashion.

He points out that most of the athletes would start training at the NIS soon, as they would be preparing for the Indian Grand Prix which will be held in Patiala, Sangrur and Delhi on March 20, 25 and 29, to be followed by the Federation Cup in Patiala from April 10 to 13.

Watching Commonwealth Games bronze medallist dis-



**Tipping point:** Discus thrower Navjeet Kaur Dhillon discusses with chief coach Bahadur Singh during a training session as coach Yuri Minakov looks on. ■ KAMESH SRINIVASAN

cus thrower Navjeet Kaur Dhillon, Bahadur makes a few sharp observations, even as the athlete nods in acknowledgement, and goes through a training session with coach Yuri Minakov of Ukraine. "The fundamentals remain the same. You have to get the left foot out quick so that the release is powerful," he observed.

Quite happy at Neeraj Chopra achieving the Olympic qualifying standard, Bahadur was categorical that it was important for the Asian Games gold medallist to stay patient for so long, to strengthen himself after surgery, and come back this strong in competition. "I had stopped when he wanted to compete earlier. Hundred per cent fitness was important. Now he is in good shape," he said.

Conceding that only seven athletes had qualified for the Olympics so far, including the mixed relay team, Bahadur emphasised that there was a lot more time left for athletes to qualify and reach their peak performance levels in time for the Olympics.

"Shiv Pal is also good in javelin. Tejinder Singh Toor had won Asian Games gold. He is capable. Both the men's and women's relay teams have a good chance. We don't have top-class discus throwers in men, after Vikas Gowda," he said.

These are early days for

Indian athletics. The focus is on training well and prepare purposefully for the season ahead. Apart from training abroad, different bunch of athletes have also been training in Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram.

Some like Tejinder and Navjeet, among others, are happy to train in Patiala, in the breathtaking environment and energising weather, listening to timeless wisdom.

# East Bengal to return to Salt Lake

Needs to tidy its performance to improve its position

## I-LEAGUE

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA

KOLKATA

The East Bengal fans will have the benefit of watching the remainder of the team's I-League engagements at the original home venue – Salt Lake Stadium from February 13.

This happened after the West Bengal Government – the owner of the stadium – agreed to an appeal from East Bengal and allowed a huge discount on the rent.

East Bengal now needs to pay only ₹15,000 per match instead of the regular rent of ₹15 lakh. As the discount is not available to clubs with corporate sponsors, East

Bengal could not avail it from the start owing to the presence of its investor, Quess Corp.

With the fans urging the club to initiate steps to get Salt Lake Stadium as the regular venue, the East Bengal officials appealed to the state Sports Minister, Aroop Biswas. As the appeal came from the club and not its investor, which has already announced its decision to dissociate from East Bengal, the Minister agreed to reduce the charges.

This will see East Bengal taking on Punjab FC at the Salt Lake Stadium on Feb. 13. Before that East Bengal needs to appear at the Kalyani Stadium on Friday to take

on the challenge of the former champion Aizawl FC. Left struggling at seventh with 11 points from nine matches after a surprise loss against Indian Arrows in the previous outing, East Bengal needs to tidy its performance to improve its position.

### Marcos to be missed

The host will miss striker Marcos de la Espada, who was sent off in the defeat against Arrows. New recruit Ansumana Kromah may get a look in as East Bengal tries to regain the rhythm.

The Aizawl outfit has its own problems on the performance front as it has managed just one win in the nine matches played so far.

# Sachin to flag off New Delhi Marathon

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Sachin Tendulkar will flag off the fifth IDBI Federal Life Insurance New Delhi Marathon on February 23. More than 13,000 runners have already registered for the event.

Competitions will be in four categories – marathon, half-marathon, Timed 10k and 5k Swachh Bharat Run.

Organised by NEB Sports, the New Delhi Marathon is certified by the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races, and recognised as a National marathon championship by the AFI, being a qualification event for major marathons across the world as well as continental championships.

With the last date for registration being February 12, those interested can still register on the event website.

"It's a great time to run in Delhi. The wintry weather will allow racers to push themselves and the fast, flat course will help runners attain qualification marks and shatter records," said race director Nagaraj Adiga.

# T20 WC has the potential to turn around women's cricket: Lanning

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DUBAI

Four-time champion Australia's skipper Meg Lanning believes the upcoming ICC Twenty20 World Cup has the potential to turn around the fortune of women's cricket across the globe.

The ICC Women's T20 World Cup will be hosted by Australia from February 21 to March 8, and Lanning said with so much hype and buzz around, the tournament has the potential to infuse life into women's cricket.

"This tournament can be a real turning point for women's sport around the world, it's a really big event, there's a lot of talk around it – certainly more hype than I've ever experienced before – so hopefully that's a sign of everyone jumping on board and getting involved," Lanning wrote in her column for the ICC.

"Hopefully we can look back on this tournament as a real moment from which women's sport takes off."

The event will kickstart with title-holders Australia taking on India in Sydney and Lanning said their only goal is to feature in the



**Eye on the prize:** Meg Lanning's Australia will take on Harmanpreet Kaur's India in the tournament-opener in Sydney. ■ GETTY IMAGES

March 8 final at the MCG.

### An honour

"Having taken in an incredible atmosphere at a sold-out MCG, the chance to lead my country in front of a full house would be an honour to experience," she said.

"There are a few hurdles to get over before we can think about the MCG, but to play there in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Final, on International Women's

Day, would be amazing for all of us.

"We're very aware of what we need to do to get there, there's a lot of hard work involved and we need to make sure we start off well in that first game against India and go from there. There are no guarantees in this sport," she added.

The 27-year-old batter said it's a huge honour for her to lead the team in front of home fans.

"It's a huge honour to be able to lead this team, it's a great group of players and people who put in a lot of hard work together, we've got a group who make my job really easy," Lanning said.

"I'm captain of this side but when I go out to bat, I'm just a batter looking to contribute for my team. I look to score as many runs as I can every time I go out there and hope I can contribute some big scores and performances for this team."

Taking about the pressure of playing in front of the home crowd, Lanning said: "World Cups carry pressure and expectation for any team – and being at home doesn't make it any different for us or any other side."

**Savouring the moment**  
"We want to make sure that we're enjoying the moment and embracing everything that comes with it. We're not daunted by that; we want to take it on and focus on what we can control."

"So far, we've done that well and we've put ourselves in a good position to carry that on."

**Serena gears up for a fourth decade in Fed Cup**

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Serena Williams enters her fourth decade as a Fed Cup player with the United States on Friday and Saturday as the 2020 qualifiers get underway.

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

In total, there are eight ties with the winners earning places in the new-look Fed Cup finals in Budapest from April 15-17 where 2019 champion France, runner-up Australia, host Hungary and wildcard Czech Republic will be waiting.

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

**Serena's senior service**  
It was back in 1999 that Serena Williams made her Fed Cup debut in a semifinal win over Italy.

Teammate Sofia Kenin was just eight months old while Coco Gauff was still almost five years away from being born.

Serena has a 100% record in singles in the Fed Cup, winning 13 out of 13 rubbers.

However, despite her lon-



**Keeping it going:** Serena Williams has a 100% record in singles in the Fed Cup, winning 13 out of 13 rubbers. ■ AFP

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

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

she has contested since her

she has contested since her 2017 debut.

However, Japan, whose best Fed Cup run was a semi-final spot in 1996, has a tough task this weekend, facing Spain in La Manga.

The tie is on clay, easily playing into the comfort zone of a Spain team led by Carla Suarez Navarro, her nation's top player in the absence of Garbine Muguruza.

It will be an emotional week for 31-year-old Suarez Navarro as the World No. 55 is in her final season as a professional, 12 years after her Fed Cup bow.

Spain is five-time champion, behind USA (18), Czech Republic (10) and Australia (seven) on the all-time list.

Places at the Tokyo Olym-

## Fed Cup qualifiers (Friday and Saturday)

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

pics are also up for grabs on Friday and Saturday in the eight ties.

Under Fed Cup rules, players are required to be part of a nominated team on at least three occasions in a four-year Olympic cycle.

That excludes players who have represented their nation 20 or more times in their careers, who must be nominated on at least two occasions in the Olympic cycle.

Crucially for this week, all players must be nominated at least once in the 2019-20 cycle.

# Ibra return adds spice to Milan derby

AC Milan director Zvonomir Boban praises his impact



**Key player:** Ibrahimovic's return has proved a boost with Milan now eighth, seven points adrift of CL berths. ■ FILE PHOTO

Ibrahimovic posted on Twitter a video of himself roaring, with the caption: "Lions don't sound like humans"

ere, here the whole stadium sings, there will be so much noise, it will be beautiful."

**Ronaldo in Verona**  
Juventus travel to Verona on Saturday will Cristian Ronaldo bidding to extend his scoring streak to nine consecutive league games, to keep pace with Lazio's Serie A top scorer Ciro Immobile's 25 goals.

Verona is on a seven-game unbeaten run and held Lazio to a goalless draw in Rome midweek. Simone Inzaghi's Lazio are just one point behind Inter in third and will be targeting a record 18th successive match unbeaten.

Roma hosts Bologna on Friday after losing to Sassuolo last time out, as it tries to stay in the Champions League race. The side from the capital is equal on points with fourth-placed Atalanta which travels to Fiorentina.

"I've seen it on TV in the past but playing now will be very different," the Dane told Gazzetta Dello Sport.

"Compared to London, I expect a different atmospher-

# Setien not to get involved in Messi-Abidal row

Denies he had spoken individually to the Argentina star about the incident

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BARCELONA

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

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

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

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

"What interests me is football, everything else are situations that I will not be able to control, therefore I do not sweat on it," the 61-year-old Setien denied he had spoken individually to the Argentina star about the inci-

dent but said it had been briefly discussed in a training session by the squad.

Messi signed his last contract extension in 2017, with his current deal running through to next year but reportedly containing a clause that could allow him to quit Barcelona in June.

**Same behaviour**

Former Real Betis boss Setien said Messi's behaviour remained the same despite the falling out with Abidal.

"I have seen him smiling, I have seen him looking happy, he loves to come to training, he loves to be here and I have seen him just like he was yesterday or the day before yesterday," Setien said.

Setien said his only focus was Thursday's Copa del Rey quarterfinal tie at Athletic Bilbao.

"The importance of tomorrow's match, the obligation we have is to focus totally and absolutely on the match," Setien said.

Spanish media reported later on Wednesday, citing sources close to the club, that Abidal had met with Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu who would no longer consider, as speculated beforehand, to demand the Frenchman's resignation.

Messi on Tuesday criticised Abidal's comments, saying that his former teammate should "name names". "Sincerely I don't like doing this kind of thing but everyone has to be made responsible for their actions and what they say," Messi said on Instagram.

"We the players in the dressing room are the first to admit it when we haven't played well. The directors need to take their responsibilities too."

"I believe that if you talk about the players (in this way) you should name names instead of worrying everyone and encouraging rumours that are far from certain."

Barcelona visits Real Betis on Sunday in La