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LUCKNOW, MONDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2020; PAGES 16 ₹3



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Welcome President Trump

India, US likely to ramp up defence, strategic ties during visit

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

India and the USA are expected to significantly ramp up bilateral relations, especially in the defence and strategic ties, during US President Donald Trump's two-day India visit starting Monday.

Just before he flew for India on Sunday, Trump called Prime Minister Narendra Modi his "friend" and said he had committed to this visit long time back and he was looking forward to be with the people of India.

Trump is accompanied by First Lady Melania, daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and the top brass of his Administration.

Trump will arrive at Ahmedabad around 11.30 am, attend a roadshow, briefly visit Sabarmati Ashram, and also watch cultural performances. Prime Minister Modi is expected to receive him at the airport.

Modi will accompany Trump to the Ashram, which is closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi and India's freedom struggle, in the midst of their joint roadshow from the international airport.

Earlier, confusion prevailed over Trump's visit to the Ashram. Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Friday said the White House will take a call on such visit.

"Trump will arrive at the Ahmedabad International



President Donald Trump, with First Lady Melania Trump, wave as they walk across the tarmac to board Air Force One during their departure on Sunday at Andrews Air Force Base in the US. AP

Airport at around 11:30 am tomorrow (February 24). It was already announced that Trump will land here directly here from Washington. At the airport, he will be given the guard of honour, Ahmedabad city Police Commissioner Ashish Bhatia said while addressing reporters. He said Trump would embark on a roadshow after attending a cultural programme.

"Trump will then proceed for the Sabarmati Ashram which he would be visiting for a very short time. From the

Ashram, Trump will resume the roadshow, and reach the Motera stadium via Indira bridge," the Police Commissioner said.

Modi and Trump are scheduled to address the "Namaste Trump" event at the Motera cricket stadium.

Just before his departure, Trump said he had committed to visit India long time back and he is looking forward to be with the people of India. "I look forward to being with the people of India. We are going to have many millions and mil-

lions of people. It's a long trip. I get along very well with Prime Minister Modi. He is a friend of mine," Trump told reporters outside the White House.

"I had committed to this trip long time ago. I look forward to it. I hear it's going to be a big event... The biggest event they ever had in India. That's what the Prime Minister told me. It's the biggest event they ever had. It's going to be very exciting. I am going to be there for one night," said the US President in response to a

question. The maiden visit to India is expected to significantly ramp up bilateral defence and strategic ties but unlikely to produce tangible outcome in resolving thorny issues like trade tariffs.

The nearly 36-hour-long visit by Trump is also set to send across a clear message of growing congruence of interests on major geopolitical developments in the region and beyond, particularly when China has been expanding its military might and economic clout.

Trump, who is seeking reelection in the US presidential elections in November, will get a rousing welcome.

"Namaste Trump" will be similar to the landmark "Howdy, Modi!" event hosted by the Indian-American community in honour of Modi during his visit to Houston in September 2019.

From Ahmedabad, the US President will travel to Agra to have a glimpse of the iconic Taj Mahal. The Trump family will spend about an hour at the Taj Mahal before sunset. Then they will leave for Delhi for the main leg of the visit.

On the morning of February 25, Trump and the First Lady would be accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. From there, they would go to Raj Ghat to pay homage at the "samadhi" of Mahatma Gandhi.

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Anti, pro-CAA groups clash in Jaffrabad

Police resort to tear gas, situation under control; several injured

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Several people sustained minor injuries following a clash between pro and anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protesters near northeast Delhi's Jaffrabad area on Sunday. The police lobbied tear gas shells and resorted to mild lathi-charge to bring the situation under control. Later in the evening, the police took out a flag march to maintain law and order in the area.

The clash took place at about 4 pm when the two groups started throwing stones at each other. All this happened in presence of heavy police deployment in the area. Witnesses said 500-odd people, mostly women, had gathered to protest against the new citizenship law. The protesters had also gathered in the area on Saturday night demanding that the new law be repealed.

As the anti-CAA group was shouting slogans against the new citizenship law, some people turned up shouting "Jai Sri Ram" slogans. "Suddenly, some people came and started throwing stones on the people gathered in the area," an eyewitness told this newspaper. Soon, both the groups indulged in stone throwing, forcing the police to resort to lathi-charge. The police also lobbied teargas shells to disperse the crowd.

The trouble escalated further after BJP leader Kapil Mishra also decided to hold a rally in favour of the new citizenship law. Mishra, who arrived near the Jaffrabad



Protesters hurl stones after clashes broke out between pro and anti-CAA groups at the Metro Station in East Delhi on Sunday. Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Metro Station at about 3 pm, demanded that the anti-CAA protesters be removed from the road. An hour later, some people came from a nearby street and started pelting stones.

Tension prevailed in the area as the protesters had blocked the road near the Jaffrabad metro station connecting Seelampur with Yamuna Vihar.

This was the second day when the anti-CAA protesters had hit the streets, prompting Delhi Metro authorities to

close the entry and exit gates of the Jaffrabad station. Later in the day, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) also closed the entry and exit gates to the Maujpur-Babarpur station.

A woman, who identified herself as Bushra, had said that till the time the CAA is not revoked, the protesters would not leave the site. Social activist Faheem Baig said there is resentment among people over the way the Government is handling the issue.

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It's honour that Trump will be with us: Modi



A worker walks carrying flowers to plant passes a billboard featuring US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Agra on Sunday. AP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the eve of US President Donald Trump's India visit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that India looks forward to welcoming the US President, who is to commence his "historic programme" from Gujarat.

The US President will be on a two-day visit to India and together with Modi is to participate in a roadshow in Ahmedabad after landing

there. "India looks forward to welcoming @POTUS @realDonaldTrump. It is an honour that he will be with us tomorrow, starting with the historic programme in Ahmedabad," Modi wrote on Twitter.

He was responding to a tweet by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani that said "entire Gujarat speaks in one voice- #NamasteTrump". Detailed report on P5

Donald retweets 'Bahubali' video

Washington: US President Donald Trump on Saturday said he was looking forward to being with his "great friends" in India next week as he retweeted a short video in which his face was superimposed on the hit movie-character Bahubali, showing the President as a great saviour bringing peace to his kingdom.

Trump appears as a great saviour, in the short animated clip, riding on a chariot with First Lady Melania. A few stills later, Trump is seen riding a horse carrying on his soldiers his son Donald Junior and daughter Ivanka.

Later, he is welcomed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a village setting.

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Greeting billboards pique Agra's curiosity



Folk dancers rehearse their performance next to a billboard featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump at the airport in Agra on Sunday. AP

PNS ■ AGRA

Huge billboards on streets near the city airport and public squares in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal greeting the US President have come up ahead of his visit to Agra.

The billboards have added to the air of excitement in Agra that is eagerly expecting the arrival of Trump, who will be in the city for a couple of hours

on Monday evening. Trump's convoy route to the Taj Mahal is about 13 km and along the way thousands of artistes will welcome him with special performances. On the famous Mall Road, which falls on the route, one hoarding reads 'His Excellency Donald J Trump, President of the United States of America, Heartiest Welcome to the Land of Krishna'.

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Protesters clash with police in Aligarh, mobile net suspended

PRABHA SHANKAR ■ LUCKNOW

Clashes broke out between CAA protesters and police in Uparkot Kotwali area of Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh here following incidents of arson and stone pelting on late Sunday afternoon.

Protesters set afire a portion of a shop in the area, vandalised a police vehicle injuring some police officers.

Following the clashes, mobile internet has been suspended for a six-hour period starting 6 pm. A Rapid Action Force (RAF) of UP Police has been deployed.

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Shaheen stir peaceful, police blocking roads, Habibullah tells SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah has told the Supreme Court that the protest at Shaheen Bagh here against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is peaceful and inconvenience being caused to commuters was due to barricades "unnecessarily" put by police on roads far away from the site.

The same stand has been taken by social activist Syed Bahadur Abbas Naqvi and Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Azad in their joint affidavit filed in the apex court in the matter. Habibullah, Azad and Naqvi have jointly filed an intervention application in the apex court which is seized of the matter.

Habibullah had visited the protest site at Shaheen Bagh pursuant to the direction by a Bench of Justices S K Kaul and K M Joseph. The Bench is scheduled to hear the matter on Monday.

The top court is hearing pleas seeking removal of protesters from Shaheen Bagh and ensuring smooth traffic flow in the area.

The apex court had earlier said though people have a fundamental right to protest "peacefully and lawfully", it was troubled by the blocking of a public road at Shaheen Bagh as it might lead to a "chaotic situation".

In his affidavit filed in the top court, Habibullah has contended that "Shaheen Bagh stands tall as a firm example of peaceful dignified dissent, more so in the face of various instances of state-sponsored violence on similar dissents across India."

"We have been sad and mute witnesses to police brutality and negative typecasting of a particular community across the country. Crushing dissent instead of entering into a dialogue is the new norm, but it is alien to our Constitution," he has claimed.

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CAPSULE

GANGSTER PUJARI HELD IN S AFRICA, EXTRADITED
Bengaluru: Fugitive gangster Ravi Pujari has been arrested in South Africa and being brought to India by a team of officials, including senior IPS officers from Karnataka.

VIRUS: 4 MORE INDIANS ON SHIP TEST POSITIVE
Tokyo: Four more Indian crew members on board a cruise ship moored off the Japan coast have tested positive for the coronavirus and those who are not found to be infected would be facilitated to travel back home once all the results are declared.

DR KAFEEL'S UNCLE SHOT DEAD
Gorakhpur: The maternal uncle of Dr Kafeel Khan was shot dead in front of his house at Bankatichak in Raighat area. Dr Nusratullah Warsi (55), a property dealer, was shot dead on Saturday night and police said it appears to be a case of murder due to monetary and property dispute.

Retired babus outdo netas in squatting Govt bungalows

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Politicians may be infamous for squatting on Government accommodations in Delhi, but it's the Government employees — mostly retired — who beat the netas hands down when it comes to illegal occupation of official quarters. As many as 575 Government employees, from bureaucrats to beldars, continue to illegally occupy Government quarters.

The highest outstanding dues of ₹95 lakh for such illegal occupation of Government quarters is in the name of a bureaucrat VP Rao.

Interestingly, even relatives of the babus have been found to be squatting on such premises. There are over 100 houses, where families or relatives of babus continued to occupy Government quarters even after the death of the original allottees. Some of these people have been over-staying for over

two decade. The oldest being a 1998 occupant.

According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, a sum of ₹30-40 crore is due on these illegal occupants as they have not paid rent so far. As far as 11 former MPs are concerned, many of them have vacated their bungalows except former MP Udit Raj. There are a number of babus who retired in 2000 have not vacated their quarters. Of the 565 quarters, 244 are type-II accommodations, while the rest are types VII, VI, V, IV and III categories. As per the list, the family members of one Bale Ram, a beldar who died in 1998, have not vacated the Government quarter. They have also not paid any rent since 1998. The allotment of Bale Ram's quarter was cancelled after his death in 1998.

SS Ramarao retired in 2000, but he has not vacated his type IV quarter so far. He has not paid rent since 2000 and his

outstanding due is ₹67 lakh. Commandant (retired) RK Swamy was allotted Type IV quarter in Vikasपुरi. He retired in May, 2001 but not vacated his house so far. His outstanding rent is over ₹74.38 lakh. Safai Karamchari Vijay Kumar retired in June 2003 but he has not vacated his quarter till date.

RK Sharma died in 2003. But his family is still staying at the Government quarter in RK Puram. They neither vacated the quarter nor paid any rent since 2003. The total due rent is over ₹31 lakh. Pawan Kumar, a senior engineer, retired in 2003, but he has not vacated his type 4 house in Munirka. The total amount of rent is due of ₹67.44 lakh. PS Athmia retired in 2012 but still occupying his accommodation illegally without paying rent.

SP Singh still occupied Type V house in Vinay Marg and his rent amount rose to 34

lakh. Navneet Kumar Saxena's case is unique. He took voluntary retirement in 2009 but not vacated his quarter. The rent amount of ₹57 lakh is pending on him. Indra Mohan Rawat, a havildar, retired in 2018, but not vacated his quarter in Vasant Vihar.

Darneshwar Rai, a retired pump operator, has also not vacated his flat since September last year despite several reminders. In another case, the kins of Assistant Field Officer late RK Sharma have not vacated accommodations at RK Puram since 2005.

A total of 454 houses of type I, II and type III category, are occupied by class III and IV grade employees illegally without paying rent. As per the ministry data, over two dozen cases are related to Kashmiri migrants.

The Delhi High Court has pulled up the Ministry for failing to vacate about the illegal-

ly occupied Government accommodations in the city. "It appears that there is connivance from the officers of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. Connivance over such

a long time amounts to conspiracy under the Indian Penal Code. By their action, there is a huge loss to the Union of India, which is also an offence under the Indian Penal Code,"

the court said.

The Court has directed the Ministry to submit a detailed report on action and recovery of dues from illegal occupants before February 27.



UP to be free from virus-borne diseases by 2025: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath declared that Uttar Pradesh would be made free of tuberculosis, filaria and all virus-borne diseases so that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream could be realised by 2025.

After inaugurating the Arogya Mela at Surya Kund in Darshan Nagar in Ayodhya on Sunday, the Chief Minister said that the state government had started 'Mukhyamantri Arogya Mela' from February 2 so as to ensure better health services to the people. It was the fourth Arogya Mela organised in the state.

Chief Minister Yogi said that the programme was started simultaneously to achieve the goal of health through 4,000 primary health centres and wellness centres within the state.

He said if all the people became aware and committed to bringing the schemes of government to the poor, no

poor would die due to lack of medicines, because Prime Minister Modi introduced Ayushman card.

"Every person should get the golden card of Ayushman made. Those who have got the cards are getting health insurance up to Rs 5 lakh per year. This programme (through Arogya Mela) is essentially being extended on a war-footing," he said.

"By 2025, we have to make India free of TB, filaria and all virus-borne diseases. This programme also has to be taken up by us and for that, 'Arogya Mela' is a big boon," he said.

The CM said that during the last three years, several programmes of health awareness were conducted in the state.

"From 1947 to 2016, there were only 12 medical colleges in the state. Our government laid the foundation of 28 medical colleges in the state in just three years between 2016 and 2019. Seven medical colleges have been started, including the



Medical College at Ayodhya, while 13 medical colleges will be built in places where there are none. Better health facilities will be available in every district," the CM said.

"We are all grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi who delivered what he promised. Today, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India is emerging as a power in the world. Prime

Minister Modi abrogated Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir and prohibited the practice of triple talaq. He amended the citizenship law to create a completely transparent system of giving shelter to the suffering humanity of the world, and under his strong leadership, a way has been paved for the construction of grand temple of Bhagvan Shri Ram in Ayodhya," the CM said.

'Present generation 'lucky' to witness construction of Ram temple'

Ayodhya (PTI): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday described the country's present generation as a "lucky" one for being part of the struggle for having a Lord Ram temple in Ayodhya and being witness to its construction.

The chief minister made the remark during his first visit to the temple town after the September 9 verdict of the Supreme Court last year on the Ayodhya dispute that resolved the centuries-old tangle and subsequent setting up of a trust by the central government to oversee the construction of the temple.

The chief minister was here to inaugurate a health fair, Mukhya Mantri Arogya Mela, at Suraj Kund in Darshan

Nagar area of Faizabad.

Addressing a gathering of Hindu seers after inaugurating the Health Fair, Adityanath said, "Many generations perished in the struggle for the Ram Janambhoomi in last 500 years, but our generation is lucky as we have been the part of the Ram Janambhoomi struggle and we will see the Ram Mandir coming up."

Commenting on the apex court's verdict over the Ayodhya dispute, the chief minister said, "The Supreme Court has shown its judicial power to the world by its verdict over the issue of Ram Mandir."

The chief minister also hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government "for delivering what

he promised" including nullification of Article 370 and revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

"I always told saints of Ayodhya to have trust in Prime Minister Modi as under his leadership, we will achieve our goal of having a Ram Mandir in Ayodhya."

"Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India is emerging as a power in the world. The prime minister abrogated Article 370 and prohibited the practice of triple talaq," he said.

He also amended the Citizenship law to create a completely transparent system of giving shelter to the suffering humanity of the world, and under his strong leadership, a way has been paved for the construction of grand tem-

ple of Bhagvan Shri Ram in Ayodhya," the chief minister added.

In Ayodhya, Adityanath also visited the residence of a Dalit community man, Mahaveer, with whom he had lunch when he had come to the temple town during 2019 Lok Sabha elections after being banned by the Election Commission from electioneering.

"When I was banned by the Election commission, I came to visit Hanumangarhi Temple in Ayodhya, where Mahaveer invited me to his house."

"Mahaveer showed me his four-room pucca house built under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna, before this he had a Kuccha house," he said.

UP govt issues notice to Sonbhadra mining officer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has issued a notice to the mining officer of Sonbhadra for issuing official statement about the discovery of around 3,000 tonnes of gold in the district even as the report was junked by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

Mining officer KK Rai had earlier claimed that the GSI and UP Mining department had discovered around 3,000 tonnes of gold at Sone Pahadi and Hardi village area in Sonbhadra.

"Some newspapers had carried the statement of Rai. The government has issued a notice asking him about the source of his information about the discovery of gold and why he spoke to the media without taking permission from his seniors," a government official told *The Pioneer* on Sunday.

He said the mining official had been given a week's time to submit his answer. "Government believes that wrong information has sent a bad message and raised expectations that India may become 'sone ki chidiya' once again," he said.

Excavation of gold has always been a big news in Uttar Pradesh. In 2016, a hermit, Shobhan Sarkar, had claimed that gold could be found in Dondiya Kheda village in Unnao district. Excavation was carried with the help of ASI but it proved to be an exercise in futility.

Earlier, the mining officer of Sonbhadra had disclosed that the gold was estimated to be around 3,000 tonnes at Sone Pahadi and Hardi village area. But the GSI clarified that it had not estimated such vast

"Some newspapers had carried the statement of Rai. The government has issued a notice asking him about the source of his information about the discovery of gold and why he spoke to the media without taking permission from his seniors"

resource of gold deposit in Sonbhadra district. The northern region of GSI has carried out several exploration works for gold but the results have not been encouraging.

"The exploration was carried out in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 and in the report, it had estimated a probable category resource of 52806.25 tonnes of ore with 3.03 grams per tonne for a strike length of 170 metres in Sone Pahadi area of Sonbhadra district," GSI director and PRO Ashish Kumar Nath said in a press statement.

It was clarified that the total gold which could be extracted from the total resource of 52806.25 tonnes of ore was approximately 160 kg and not 3,350 tonnes, as mentioned in media reports.

The work for finding gold reserves in Sonbhadra started in the year 1992-93 after the Central Geological Survey of India took over. Reportedly, it was the British who first initiated the process to find gold reserve in Sonbhadra region.

Dr Kafeel's uncle shot dead in UP

Gorakhpur (PTI): The maternal uncle of Dr Kafeel Khan, who was recently arrested for allegedly making inflammatory statements during anti-CAA protests, was shot dead in front of his house at Bankatichak in Raighat area here, police said on Sunday.

Dr Nusratullah Warsi aka Dada (55), a property dealer, was shot dead on Saturday night at about 10:45 pm and an FIR against two people was filed in this connection on a written complaint of his family members.

According to police, it appears to be a case of murder due to monetary and property dispute and they are searching for both the accused.

Dr Kafeel Khan, suspended doctor of Gorakhpur BRD Medical College, was last month arrested under charges of giving a provocative speech during a protest against the CAA and NRC at Aligarh Muslim University and was later charged with the National Security Act.

Warsi on Saturday evening had gone to his lawyer Siraj Tariq's house, a few metres away from his own house, and was returning home on foot when a man shot him in his head, killing him on the spot.

"On the written complaint of family members, case of murder against one Imammuddin and Anil Sonkar has been registered and police has initiated probe and is searching for both the accused. Police met the women in their house and is interrogating them," Circle Officer VP Singh said.

Uddhav, kin to seek Ram Lalla's blessings in Ayodhya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The day Maharashtra government completes 100 days in office (March 7), Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, along with his ministerial colleagues and family members, will visit Ayodhya to seek the blessings of Ram Lalla.

The Maharashtra CM, to be accompanied by his wife and son along with state ministers and other Shiv Sena leaders, would directly reach Ayodhya from Mumbai on March 7 morning, Shiv Sena officials said on Sunday.

The Maharashtra CM and others will also have darshan of Hanumangarhi and other temples besides meeting saints during the day-long stay in the temple city.

After the Supreme Court gave its judgement on Ram

temple on November 9 last year, Uddhav had announced to visit Ayodhya. However, his strained ties with the BJP after the Maharashtra assembly polls and formation of his government in alliance with the NCP and Congress delayed his visit.

"It will be a thanksgiving visit when Uddhav Thackeray pays obeisance to Ram Lalla," a senior Shiv Sena official in Lucknow said.

Uddhav had last visited Ayodhya on June 16, 2019 along with 18 party MPs after the win in Lok Sabha polls. During that visit, he had predicted that the Ram temple would be constructed during the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At that time, both the parties — BJP and Shiv Sena — were in alliance and he had praised Modi's leadership.

Uddhav had last visited Ayodhya on June 16, 2019 along with 18 party MPs after the win in Lok Sabha polls. During that visit, he had predicted that the Ram temple would be constructed during the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At that time, both the parties — BJP and Shiv Sena — were in alliance and he had praised Modi's leadership.

PM spending public money on Trump visit: Akhilesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being extravagant and spending the hard-earned wealth of common people for US President Donald Trump's visit to India on February 24.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Akhilesh said thousands of people were being mobilised on the streets of Ahmadabad to welcome the US President. "Despite the mega show at Ahmadabad, people cannot be taken for a ride and made to forget the economic distress," he said.

The SP president reiterated that they would not have any truck with any political party for the UP Assembly elections in 2022. He said his party, like the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), would seek votes in the name of 'work' and not 'Ram' or 'Hanuman'.

"I would not have to cite



Lord Rama or Hanuman for an electoral win in UP. I will, instead, cite the work undertaken in the state during our party's regime between 2012 and 2017," he said.

He was apparently refer-

ring to the speeches of the BJP leaders, especially UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, during their election campaign in the recently-concluded assembly polls in Delhi in which they repeatedly invoked Lord Rama and Hanuman.

Stating at the electorate of Delhi had voted on development plank, Akhilesh said the people of UP would also do the same. "We will seek support of the electorate on the basis of our work. We will also urge them to ask the BJP government to talk about their achievements," he added.

The SP president's remarks assume significance as BSP supremo Mayawati has also hinted that her party would not have any kind of alliance with the SP or other rival parties in the state. The SP and BSP had contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in alliance in UP but their tie-up failed to click. While the BSP had bagged 10 seats, the SP managed to win only five.

DyCM: Cong questions ahead of Trump visit are non-essential

Lucknow (PTI): Hitting out at the Congress, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma on Sunday alleged that the opposition party does not want a strong India and termed the questions raised by it in connection with US President Donald Trump's visit "non-essential". The Congress has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi whether he would raise with Trump the easing of H-1B visas, restoration of GSP status and security concerns over the Taliban. It asked whether Modi would ensure cheaper oil for India after it stopped buying oil from Iran in view of US sanctions and if Indian steel exports would get a boost when New Delhi commits USD 3 billion in defence purchases.

"The questions raised by Congress ahead of President Trump's visit are non-essential. Congress does not want that

India should become strong and hence it is raising questions over India's armed forces and diplomacy," Sharma told reporters in Firozabad.

"Congress should keep in mind that good ties with the US are in India's interest," he said. Earlier, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala asked why Prime Minister Modi is "silent" about his government's "India First" policy as President Trump talked of "America First".

"Post 'Howdy Modi' and 'Namaste Trump' gala events, Will PM ensure restoration of GSP status," he said about the US ending preferential tariffs for India under Generalised System of Preferences in June last year. Surjewala said up till 2018, India imported 250 crore ton crude oil/month from Iran on Rupee payment, 90 days credit and doorstep delivery.

केन्द्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड
CENTRAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

CENTRAL TEACHER ELIGIBILITY TEST

NOTICE

The Central Board of Secondary Education will conduct the 14th edition of Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) on 05.07.2020 (Sunday). The test will be conducted in 112 cities all over the country. The online application-Process for CTET July 2020 examination has been started from 24.01.2020.

It is hereby informed that due to administrative reasons, the last date for submitting online application has been extended till 02.03.2020 and the fee can be paid upto 05.03.2020 till 15.30 PM.

The information Bulletin containing details of examination, syllabus, languages, eligibility criteria, examination fee, and examination cities are available on CTET official website www.ctet.nic.in. The interested candidates may apply through online mode accordingly.

Director (CTET)
&
Secretary, CBSE

केन्द्रीय अख्यक पात्रता परीक्षा एकक, पी० ए० १-२ इन्स्टीट्यूशनल एरिया, आई० पी० एक्सटेंशन, पटपगंज, दिल्ली-110092
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कार्यालय अधीक्षण
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मण्डल, दक्षिणांचल

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कालोनी, गोविन्द नगर कानपुर
-208006 अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा

सूचना अधोहस्ताक्षरकार द्वारा विद्युत वितरण मण्डल-कानपुर नगर के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित विवरण के अनुसार कार्य हेतु अनुमती व सक्षम निविदादाताओं द्वारा निविदाये आमंत्रित की जाती है, निविदा सम्बन्धी पूर्ण सूचना वेबसाइट <http://etender.up.nic.in> पर देखी जा सकती है।

क्र०सं 1 अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सं० 96/वि०वि०म० का०/2019-20 विवरण विद्युत वितरण खण्ड-चौबेपुर, के अन्तर्गत विद्युत वितरण उपखण्ड-चौबेपुर के अधीन विद्युत उपकेन्द्रों पर स्थापित ओ०सी०बी०/वी०सी०बी० मरम्मत एवं आकस्मिक अनुसंधान का कार्य।

क्र०सं 2 अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सं० 97/वि०वि०म० का०/2019-20 विवरण विद्युत वितरण खण्ड-चौबेपुर, कानपुर के अन्तर्गत विद्युत वितरण उपखण्ड-बिल्हौर के अधीन विद्युत उपकेन्द्रों पर स्थापित ओ०सी०बी०/वी०सी०बी० मरम्मत एवं आकस्मिक अनुसंधान का कार्य।

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Two groups clash at Clock Tower; two shots fired

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Two groups of volunteers present near Hussainabad Clock Tower, where anti-CAA stir has been underway for over a month, had a fierce fight on Sunday evening. An advocate opened two rounds of fire on the issue of taking charge of affairs related to the stir. The clash among the youths, over 50 in number, and firing sent chill down the nerves of protesters who mistook it as a ploy to end their protest.

Commissioner of Police Sujeet Pandey said the incident had nothing to do with the ongoing anti-CAA protest. He added that two persons, including an advocate, had been detained.

As per reports, some volunteers who help protesters by providing to them water and eatables, had a verbal spat with another group, also engaged in the same work. The groups came face to face around 4.30 pm on Sunday and taunted one another about 50 metres away from the Clock Tower.

Soon, they attacked one another with sticks and also resorted to stone-pelting. Meanwhile, a youth donning lawyer's uniform reached the



scene and opened two rounds of fire in the air to intimidate the warring groups and those sitting on dharna. The fight among the volunteers and firing scared the protesters, but they did not leave the place. In the meantime, some commuters called the police and a huge force reached the scene to bring the situation under control. By the time the police reached the scene, some

youths guarding the area in which the women were sitting, had overpowered the man who opened fire and handed him over to the cops.

A police spokesman said the groups fought over women-related issue and did not explain it further. He said the advocate who opened fire was identified as Mirza Faisal Ali Beg. "The other youth detained was identified as

Imran Haider," he added.

In his e-byte focused on explaining that the incident had no link with the anti-CAA stir, the Commissioner of Police said the advocate opened fire in the air and the weapon was impounded.

He said no one was injured in the firing. "Two men fought over some personal issue behind the Clock Tower," he said.

Focus should be on zero budget, organic farming, says Governor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The 'Flower and Vegetable Show', which was organised at Raj Bhawan, witnessed the prize distribution on Sunday. Governor Anandiben Patel said that the jail inmates had showcased their creativity by presenting a variety of vegetables at the exhibition. She said farmers should focus on zero budget and organic farming while public should have knowledge about what crops are grown in various districts of the state.

"Just as we have come forward with the concept of 'One District, One Product (ODOP)', we should also come forward with 'One District, One Crop'. The exhibition will remain open on February 24 too," she said.

"Raj Bhawan is for the general public and not only for the Governor. For the same reason, the doors have been opened for all. School student can visit from Monday to Saturday and on Tuesday and Thursday," she added.

The prizes were given away in 49 categories and the maximum went to the superintendent of Raj Bhawan.

The visitors also went around the CISH stall and were attracted towards different varieties of cherry tomatoes. Red-colour guava varieties developed at CISH also attracted people of all age groups. Varieties like 'Allahabad Safeda' and 'Sardar'



Governor Anandiben Patel with children given away prizes at the Flower and Vegetable Show

Pioneer

are available but these unique red varieties are mostly not available. Gardening enthusiasts were interested in having an alternative of Amrapali mango. 'Arunika' variety developed at CISH attracted the visitors due to small trees suitable for cities.

It has the additional benefit of coloured fruits and regularity in fruit bearing. Different types of lettuce also attracted the visitors. These are full of nutrients and antioxidants thus their demand in Lucknow market is increasing. However, seed unavailability

has limited their cultivation in home gardens.

"Many were interested to grow Chinese cabbage because it looks different from the common cabbage and attract everyone with its lead structure," CISH director Shailendra Rajan said.

Scientific staff at the exhibition stated that many of the queries were related to training programmes conducted from time to time by CISH.

"Many were interested in training on rooftop gardening and hydroponics. A good number of people were inter-

ested in knowing when the institute conducts training on value addition. After visiting the stall, many young entrepreneurs contacted us for starting a career in various areas of institute competence. Awareness about the technologies on horticulture crops has attracted a good number of youths and CISH helped them in fulfilling their ambitions," the director said.

The UPMRC stall also attracted a large number of visitors and the main attraction was the toy metro train which was available for children.

2 killed in separate road mishaps

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Two persons were killed in separate road mishaps in Chinhat and Banthra on Sunday. In Chinhat, a man identified as Atiqur Rehman of Samar Gardens in Ghazipur police station area was hit by a speeding tanker around 11.30 am on Sunday. Due to the impact, Rehman suffered grievous injuries and was rushed to Ram Manohar Lohiya Hospital, where he was declared brought dead.

A police team that reached the scene impounded the

tanker, which was abandoned by its driver after being chased by commuters.

Meanwhile, a man, identified as Rahul (30) of Bhagu Kheda locality in Banthra, was fatally knocked down by a truck near Khatola village in Mohanlalganj area. Rahul was moving via Junabganj Bhagu Kheda road on a bike when the tragedy struck.

Commuters and locals flayed the police for their cosmetic efforts in curbing reckless driving by heavy vehicle drivers. "There is an incident of road mishap on a daily basis

and someone loses his or her life. The police work is limited to registration of cases against errant drivers. They never make any efforts to limit the speed of heavy vehicles plying via densely-populated colonies or on roads where the commuter volume is high," they said.

DUPED

An unidentified SUV driver duped a school manager of Rs 50,000 and mobile phone in Para on Sunday morning. Reports said the victim, identified as Sonelal Nishad of

Para, had to travel to Bangarmau in Unnao for some work. He reached the taxi stand near his house around 8 am. On spotting an SUV, he asked for a lift to Bangarmau and the driver agreed. "I got a call from an acquaintance and I kept my bag containing cash inside the vehicle while I was outside. A little later, the driver asked me to give him my mobile to make a call. I gave him my mobile and he pretended to dial some number. All of a sudden, he sped off with the bag and mobile," Nishad said.

Now, 'Garbha Sanskaar' course to teach aspects of motherhood

Lucknow: In a unique initiative ahead of the International Women's Day, the Lucknow University is planning to launch 'Garbha Sanskaar' course which deals with various aspects and requirements of motherhood.

"The Institute of Women Studies has made its plan to start the Garbha Sanskaar course. It is a certificate and

diploma course. The certificate course is for three months, while the diploma course is from six months to one year.

"We are working on this and it will be implemented in the upcoming academic session of the university," Durgesh Srivastava, Lucknow University spokesperson, said on Sunday.

Women's Day falls on March 8, while the International Mother's Day is on May 10 this year.

"While some of the women on the verge of pregnancy are educated and aware, others are not. Through this course, an effort has been made to tell the women how they should live in a clean environment, what they

should eat and how should they look after themselves, so that the newborn children are healthy. This will ensure that the future generation of the country is hale and hearty," Srivastava said.

The university spokesman said since it is a new course and first-of-its-kind in the country, there is curiosity among the students. "People related to the field of medical education and music will be roped in for this course," he said. Srivastava added that the course is the "vision" of Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel. **PTI**

DM inspects flyovers

Lucknow (PNS): District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash issued directions to the project officers of PWD, Civil Defence, Setu Nigam and PWD for improving city flyovers. During an extensive inspection of the flyovers, the DM said grills should be put up below the flyovers and a green belt created while there should be proper drainage facilities.

He directed LMC to identify broken points of sewer lines and ask Setu Nigam to repair the same. He said drains should be made on the service lanes on both sides of the flyovers. The DM pointed out that all the pillars of Setu Nigam should be cleaned and painted. Saying that utility shifting of electric wires had still not been carried out by LESA near Meena Bakery, he issued necessary directions in this regard. He also talked to the traders regarding the encroachments near the bakery. The traders told him that they would remove the encroachments within the next two days.

Meanwhile, the DM held a review meeting on infrastructural progress in the city regarding parkings and over-bridges. The DM pointed out that Aminabad market was an extremely crowded market and that parking arrangements should be made for both Jhande Wala Park and Gunge Nawab Park.

"The city is also being made a hoarding-free zone, under which at a 100 metres distance from all the crowded crossings, no permission will be given for putting up hoardings. Standards will also be made for the kind of hoardings which can be put up," Prakash said. For better parking facilities, the DM said, the officials needed to work on how many vehicles were there on the road currently, how many extra vehicles adding on to the road and the transport department should provide figures for the same.

He said that foot over-bridges should also be constructed and the old ones be provided additional amenities such as escalators, and lifts.

Buoyed by Delhi win, AAP to shift focus on UP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Buoyed by its decisive victory in Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Party has decided to turn its focus on Uttar Pradesh as it outlined its plans on Sunday to recruit 25-lakh members in the politically-crucial state and contest the panchayat polls later this year.

AAP spokesperson Sanjay Singh said party workers would visit 1.07-lakh villages in the state during the next three months, and gather public opinion and information on issues that affect people. "The entire feedback will be submitted to Kejriwal after three months," Singh told reporters.

The Rajya Sabha member said the Arvind Kejriwal-led party planned to make 25-lakh members in the state and, within a month, 5,000 posters of the party would be put up in every assembly constituency. The membership drive will be held from Monday till March 22 in over 12,000 wards in various cities across the state. "AAP will contest the panchayat elections (likely in October-November) in UP," he announced.

However, Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma dismissed the claims made by the AAP, saying the party had talked about expanding itself in the past as well. The renewed focus to diversify the AAP across the country comes nearly two weeks after the party, founded in 2012, registered a decisive win in the Delhi assembly elections for a



AAP MP Sanjay Singh and supporters taking out a rally in Lucknow on Sunday

Pioneer

third consecutive term.

After its win in Delhi five years ago, the AAP had made moves to expand, but did not find much base. For Uttar Pradesh, the AAP spokesperson said, five ministers with origins in the state have been made ministers in Delhi government. "They will play a key role in various campaigns by the party," he added.

Hitting out at the Adityanath government, Singh claimed that law and order had ceased to exist in Uttar Pradesh and the youth was disappointed with the BJP

government.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had campaigned for the Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the Delhi Assembly election. "The statements made by Adityanath and the action on CAA protesters are a sign of an unsuccessful chief minister," Singh said.

"The BJP is a party with a bad mentality and is known for its bad remarks. The people have defeated BJP's politics of hatred and have given a thumbs up to Kejriwal's politics of love," Singh said, adding that the BJP was raising "all the

unreal issues" while hiding the issues of inflation.

"People are tired of politics of religion," he said, stressing that AAP would focus on farmers' problems. Singh alleged that hooliganism and anarchy were at its peak in the state and attempts were being made under the present dispensation to "harm" democracy.

"All sections of society are fed up with this government. But the CM is busy patting his back and talking falsely about development," he charged, adding only the AAP could

provide a clean governance.

The party, which is eyeing the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, said it would seek votes in the name of Delhi government's "development model", which, Singh asserted, was better than the BJP's "Gujarat model".

"The Delhi Assembly election has proved people are discarding politics of hatred and preferring politics of development," he said. "In Delhi, 15 MLAs belong to UP and they will be given responsibility in the state to strengthen the party's base," Singh said.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning likely in east UP

Lucknow: Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds of up to 40 kmph are very likely to occur at isolated places in eastern Uttar Pradesh, the meteorological (MeT) department here said on Sunday.

The minimum temperature in state capital Lucknow on Sunday settled at 16.6 degrees Celsius, almost 5.5 degrees Celsius above the

normal, it said. The maximum in Lucknow was 27.6 degrees Celsius, the MeT said, adding that the weather is most likely to remain dry over western Uttar Pradesh.

Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gusty winds of up to 30 to 40 kmph are very likely at isolated places over eastern Uttar Pradesh, it said. **PTI**

New rules for builders, developers from April 1

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) will enforce new rules and regulations for builders as well as developers from April 1 in a bid to bring transparency in blue prints of projects related to residential and commercial properties.

The decision was taken at a meeting held at its head office. The meeting was chaired by Vice-Chairman

SK Dwivedi. Addressing the officers and engineers, the Vice-Chairman said the change was made in public interest and to stop builders and developers misguiding the buyers. Even the upcoming government projects will not be exempted, he said.

It is said that individuals who are constructing their houses exclusively for residential purpose are exempted from the changed rules. They have to get their blue prints



approved from the mapping department. According to the new rules, it would be com-

pulsory for the builders and developers to display the details of projects — be it residential or commercial — on a black colour tin board in block letters. Besides, the stretch of blue prints should be displayed prominently with the signature of the competent

officer. It would be compulsory for the officers of mapping and property departments to personally inspect the sites to ensure facts are not distorted. In case of any distortion, disciplinary action will be initiated. LDA secretary MP Singh said the move was aimed at improving the functioning of the development authority. He said the buyers should have correct information of properties they buy.

Pug marks suggest animal on prowl from canine family

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Forest department has identified the pug marks of the animal on the prowl in Karkaha region (Sadar tehsil) near Mohanlalganj as those of the canine family. Deputy director of Lucknow zoo and tranquillising expert Utkarsh Shukla also visited the area on Sunday morning.

DFO, Awadh, Ravi Singh said there has been no movement of the wild animal for the past two days after it last struck on February 20 when it killed two calves. "The pug marks indicate that the animal is not from the feline family but canine family which means it could be a dog, jackal or hyena," he said.

He added that they had increased patrolling in the area and there were three teams (five members each) of Forest department monitoring the area. "We have asked the villagers to ensure certain precautions. They should not go out to answer nature's call in the morning, not allow their children to play outside in the evening and light a fire in the evening in front of their houses," he said. He added that they had also asked the men to ensure night vigil in the night.

However, Shukla, who visited the site for the first time,

THE PUG MARKS INDICATE THAT THE ANIMAL IS NOT FROM THE FELINE FAMILY BUT CANINE FAMILY WHICH MEANS IT COULD BE A DOG, JACKAL OR HYENA

— DFO, Awadh, Ravi Singh

said he would be carrying out further investigations to arrive at any conclusion as to whether the animal was a leopard or not. "The video of attack on calves had gone viral and it hinted that the animal could be a leopard, but I will make a statement only when I get some proof," he said.

Shukla said that the area is a vast forest and if it was a leopard, it might have come from the rivers and then made a hunt before moving on. "A trap has already been placed for the animal. I will visit the area again tomorrow to track the animal," he said. It may be noted that Lucknow has witnessed several man-animal conflicts in the recent past. The latest was in Ashiyana two years back when a leopard was shot dead after it escaped from the net trap laid by the Forest department.

Ireland education fair held in city

Lucknow: The Irish government on Sunday organised its education in Ireland fair in Lucknow for students who wish to pursue higher education in Ireland. The fair saw Irish institutes addressing various aspects pertaining to programmes available, intakes, offer acceptance, campus life, accommodation, international student support, scholarships, culture, and queries of students and parents here, a statement issued by Education in Ireland said.

Other than Lucknow, Education in Ireland fairs will also be organised in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai. Enterprise Ireland, which manages the Education in Ireland national brand under the authority of the minister for education and skills, is responsible for the promotion of Irish

higher education institutions overseas.

"Through the education fair, we aim to provide a transparent and delightful opportunity for the students to access end-to-end Irish education market under one roof.

"The fairs offer a broader percept on the courses, the job opportunities given post studies and various scholarships to interested students and help them make well-versed decisions about their education goals," Barry O'Driscoll, senior education adviser, India - Education in Ireland, said in the statement.

Apart from the wide range of sponsorships from multiple Irish sources, Education in Ireland will also offer 3000-euro worth scholarships to two students present at the fair from each city.

PTI

SCHOOLSCAN



City Montessori School, Mahanagar Campus, organised 'Annual Parents Day and Divine Education Conference' at Gomti Nagar Campus II auditorium on Sunday. Students of Pre-Primary and Classes I and II exhibited their talents and also showcased their moral and divine teachings.

CITYBRIEFS

AWARD FOR CDRI SCIENTIST

Niti Kumar, senior scientist from the Division of Molecular Parasitology and Immunology, CDRI, will be receiving 'SERB Women Excellence Award-2020' by the President of India during National Science Day celebrations at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on February 28.

"The award is given to women scientists under 40 years of age who have received recognition from national academies. The women researchers will be supported by a research grant of Rs 5 lakh per annum for three years by Science and Engineering Research Board, Department of Science & Technology, Government of India (SERB-DST)," media spokesperson Sanjeev Yadav said. "Her research group is trying to understand the protein quality control machinery in human malaria parasite for exploration of alternative drug targets for malaria intervention," he said. Kumar has many awards and recognitions to her credit including, Innovative Young Biotechnologist Award (DBT-IYBA, 2015), INSA Medal for Young Scientist (2010) by Indian National Science Academy, Ramalingaswami Fellowship (2013-2018), EMBO Post-Doctoral Fellowship (2010-2012), Alexander von Humboldt Fellow (2010), Max Planck Post-doctoral fellowship at Max Planck Institute of

Biochemistry (2009), and Marie Curie Early Stage Research Fellowship by European Union under 6th Framework Programme (2005-2006).

DRIVE

Brand ambassador of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Sant Nirankari Charitable Foundation organised a pan-India cleanliness and plantation drive covering government hospitals on Sunday. The drive focused on the cleanliness of the compounds, toilets, drainage/water areas and parks of 1,266 hospitals with the help of about 3.5 lakh volunteers, sewadal and active members of the mission. In Lucknow, Balrampur Hospital and Avanti Hospital were covered under the drive.

ABHIVYAKTI

The second day of the 3-day 'Abhivyakti-2020', the cultural fest of Shri Ramsroop Memorial Group of Professional Colleges, began with the address of executive director Pankaj Agarwal. The major events of the day were RJ Hunt, Swargini, Open Mic Ad Mad, Aawahan, Dracula, Kite Flying, Co etc.

VINTAGE CAR RALLY

A vintage car rally was flagged off from Tourism department on Sunday. About 20-odd vintage cars moved out of the Tourism department. Key organiser Sandeep Das said they were moving out of the city after a gap of seven years and the cars attracted large crowds as they moved



Students performing at 'Abhivyakti'

through Atoria towards Sitapur. The vintage cars included Fiat, Ford A, Fiat Balilla, Standard Coventry, Rover, Morris-8, MGTC, Chevrolet Bus, Hillman Minx, Willy Station Wagon, Land Rover, Mercedes, Pontiac and MG TC.

AWADH QUEER PRIDE MARCH

The 4th Awadh Queer Pride march was held on Sunday. Members of the LGBTQ community danced on the streets from NBRI crossing to GPO. They said that they were marching against the oppressive attacks and discrimination against their community.

WAJID ALI SHAH FEST

The Wajid Ali Shah Fest, which was celebrated on Sunday, saw a lecture by Morari Bapu in the morning at Dilkusha Gardens and the staging of a play in the evening. The play was related to the



Shobha yatra taken out from Khatu Shyam temple on Sunday

Pioneer

organised by Uttar Pradesh Postal Circle from February 24 to 28 at Chowk Stadium. Footballers from different postal circles across the country will take part in the tournament. As of now, teams from Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal,

Odisha and Jammu & Kashmir besides Uttar Pradesh have arrived at Lucknow to take part in the tournament. Chief Postmaster General Kaushendra Kumar Sinha said that last year, the tournament was organised by Kerala Postal Circle.

FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

The 33rd All-India Postal Football Tournament will be



Members of LGBTQ during a pride march in Lucknow on Sunday

Pioneer

BHU team unearths 4000-yr-old crafts village in Varanasi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 4000-year-old urban settlement has been unearthed by a team of the Benaras Hindu University in Varanasi, which experts say is one of the craft villages mentioned in ancient texts. The Benaras Hindu University's Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology which did a preliminary survey of the site in Babhaniyav village, 13 km from Varanasi, said they had found remnants of one of the settlements that have been mentioned in various literature surrounding the holy city.

Initial survey of the site in Babhaniyav village in Varanasi district has found a temple dating back to the 5th Century AD through 8th Century AD, potteries which are 4000-year-old and walls which are 2000-year-old, said Professor A K Dubey of Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, BHU.

"On the basis of the surface materials at the site we can say that the structure is anywhere between 3500 to 4000-year-old," said Dubey, who is part of



the team which will excavate the site from February 23.

He said that it gains significance because of its proximity to Varanasi, which according to legend was founded by the Hindu deity Lord Shiva 5,000 years ago, though modern scholars believe it to be around 3,000 years old.

"The site at Babhaniyav could be a small sub-centre of Varanasi which also grew as an urban town," said Dubey. The

latest findings in Babhaniyav village is significant as it could have been a satellite settlement and feeding centre of the Varanasi-Sarnath region, said B R Mani former Additional Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

He was invited by BHU during its initial survey and said the team has unearthed a 5-metre cultural deposit like the ones found in Sarnath.

"While such crafts villages have been earlier unearthed in Sarnath, Tilmapur, Ramnagar and other areas, Babhaniyav is an addition. They have also found a pillar with a two line text in Kushan Brahmi script which makes the findings at least 3500-4000 year old.

"Once the excavation is complete we will get a clearer picture of the findings," Mani, who now heads the National Museum, told PTI.

Trump visit: Police turn ITC hotel into fortress

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police in concert with the central security agencies has thrown a massive security blanket in and around ITC Maurya hotel where United States (US) President Donald Trump will check-in on Monday. All roads leading to the hotel at Sardar Patel Marg have been sanitised with multi-layered security apparatus in place. Anti-sabotage teams of the National Security Guards (NSG), Army and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) have carried out intense anti-sabotage checks on the routes to be taken by the visiting dignitary.

Indian security agencies are also working in close coordination with the US Secret Service responsible for manning the security of the US President. In view of the spiralling tensions between Iran and the US, there is a higher security threat this time and the agencies are more "cautious and alert" than ever, well placed sources said.

Delhi's sky would be a 'no fly zone' till the US President is in the national Capital, officials



said. Anti-drone detachment of NSG, snipers, elite Special Weapons And Tactic (SWAT) commandos, kite catchers, canine units, sharpshooters on high-rise buildings and Parakram vans of Delhi Police have also been deployed along the routes and areas in and around the hotel where Trump will be staying, they said on Sunday. According to senior Delhi Police officials, personnel from six districts have been deployed for the security arrangements and nearly 40 companies of CAPFs have been requisitioned to be part of the security paraphernalia.

Hundreds of high-definition CCTV cameras with night vision capacity have been

installed across the Sardar Patel Marg where hotel ITC Maurya is located to monitor the situation round-the-clock, the officials said.

Five years ago, when Trump's predecessor Barack Obama visited the national capital, the Delhi Police had rented 605 CCTV cameras and spent more than Rs one crore in hiring, installing and later removing them after the presidential visit was over.

A senior police officer said, "We have also requested the anti-sabotage checking teams from paramilitary and army. They have been regularly conducting anti-sabotage checks along every route to be taken by the US President

during his visit here". Besides the multi-layer security cover, elaborate arrangements have been made by the Delhi Police, including placement of double barricading on all the roads where Trump's convoy is likely to pass, officials said, adding that aerial surveillance of the route will also be conducted as part of the security measures.

Jersey barriers (modular concrete or plastic barriers placed to organise traffic into lanes) will also be put up on the route, a senior police official said.

Delhi Police is also working in close coordination with civic bodies. The route leading to a Delhi government school where US first lady Melania Trump is scheduled to pay a visit will also be under a high security cover, according to officials. Trees have been trimmed according to the directions of the security agencies as part of the protocol.

Meetings have also been held with US security agents on the elaborate security arrangements in place. At the ITC Maurya, a three-layer security will be in place. The hotel, located in Diplomatic Enclave in Chanakyaपुरi, will have police personnel in plain clothes patrolling every floor.

Delhi Police's security wing personnel will form part of the inner cordon that will work in close coordination with the United States Secret Service.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

WELCOME PRESIDENT...

It would be followed by restricted and delegation-level talks between Trump and Modi at Hyderabad House. Prime Minister Modi would host a lunch for the US president following the bilateral talks.

In the afternoon, Trump is expected to attend certain private events at the US Embassy, including a roundtable with industry representatives. In the evening, the US president will meet President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. A banquet will be hosted by Kovind. President Trump would depart from India later that evening.

In their talks on Tuesday, Trump and Prime Minister Modi are likely to focus on a wide variety of bilateral and regional issues including trade and investment, defence and security, counter-terrorism, energy security, religious freedom, proposed peace deal with Taliban in Afghanistan and situation in the Indo-Pacific, according to Indian and US officials.

Trump's visit to India comes at a time when the country has been witnessing widespread protests against a new citizenship law and strain in New Delhi's ties with Islamabad over the Kashmir issue. The visiting American delegation includes Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, Energy

Secretary Dan Brouillette, Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien. Senior advisers to the President Stephen Miller, Dan Scavino, Chief of Staff to the First Lady Lindsay Reynolds, Assistant to the President and Special Representative for International Telecommunication Policy and Senior Adviser to the Chief of Staff Robert Blair, and White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham are the other members of the delegation.

United States Ambassador to India Ken Juster is also part of the delegation.

DONALD RETWEETS...

Hundreds and thousands of people are seen welcoming Trump in the video. "Look so forward to being with my great friends in LA!" Trump said in a tweet.

The president, who arrived at the White House following four days of hectic political campaigning in the western parts of the country, had no public engagements on Saturday. Trump did not go for a round of golf, which is normally the case for him on a bright sunny weekend day in Washington.

Along with the tweet, Trump retweeted an 81-second video by a Twitter account

identified as "Sol" with the handle Solmeses1.

"To celebrate Trump's visit to India I wanted to make a video to show how in my warped mind it will go... USA and India united!" the handle Solmeses1 tweeted in the original post with the video. Trump appears as a great saviour, in the short animated clip, riding on a chariot with First Lady Melania. A few stills later, Trump is seen riding a horse carrying on his soldiers his son Donald Junior and daughter Ivanka.

GRÉETING BILLBOARDS...

It is accompanied with an image of Trump standing next to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Another billboard features the two leaders shaking hands with the message "Welcome to the Land of Holy Rivers Yamuna and Ganga."

Yet another one on the route says "Welcome to the Land of Rich Heritage of Art and Craft". Trump is slated to arrive in Agra on Monday evening after jointly attending with Modi the mega 'Namaste Trump' event at the newly built Motera cricket stadium in Ahmedabad earlier in the day.

The event has been named 'Namaste Trump' on the lines of the 'Howdy, Modi' programme organised in the US last year.

The administration is all geared up for the big day and preparations are in full swing to present "best face of Agra".

Another billboard shows Trump and Modi shaking hands with the message "Two great nations. One great friendship". 'Namaste Trump, February 24'. Outside the Agra Cantonment station at the Atal Chowk, a banner on Trump's visit also greets people arriving in the city.

In Agra, the Trump family will spend about an hour at the Taj Mahal before sunset. They will then leave for Delhi.

SHAHEEN STIR...

Naqvi and Azad, in their joint affidavit, have alleged that "the present ruling dispensation, at the behest of its political masters, had devised a strategy of extinguishing these protests by falsely attributing violence and acts of vandalism to peaceful protesters".

They have also said that police has "unnecessarily" barricaded numerous roads that "have no connection with the protest" and are at a great distance from the site, thereby, "abdicated their responsibilities and duties and wrongly laying the blame on the protest". "It is these barricading of unconnected roads that has led to a chaotic situation,"

Habibullah has claimed and added that if the barricades are removed from the 10 points he has mentioned in the affidavit, "the chaos complained of in the petition would cease".

In a separate affidavit, Naqvi and Azad have claimed the issue of inconvenience to commuters has been "deliberately orchestrated by the police" by blocking all the surrounding roads as well as the arterial roads connecting Delhi, Noida and Faridabad.

They have further alleged that one of the petitions has been filed by lawyer Amit Shani, who is an active member and supporter of BJP posing as a concerned citizen, as his place of residence, office and direct route of daily commute are nowhere near Shaheen Bagh. Habibullah, in his affidavit, has also stated that the protestors have asked him to convey to the apex court that their dissent "was out of desperation and compulsion" as they see the CAA, National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) as a "death knell" for their and future generations' survival and existence.

The other concerns voiced by the protestors were that CAA and the intention behind it, as publicly voiced by those in power, "has struck a deep fear into the hearts of many poor and under-privileged cit-

izens of India".

He has said, "The assembly is peaceful. The question of their security is also crucial. Any attempt to forcibly shift them from the present site would compromise their safety." Restrictions have been imposed on the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch and the Okhla underpass, which were closed on December 15 last year due to protests against CAA and NRC.

The apex court was hearing an appeal filed by Sahni, who had first approached the Delhi High Court seeking directions to Delhi Police to ensure smooth traffic flow on the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch, which was blocked by anti-CAA protesters on December 15 last year.

Separately, former BJP MLA Nand Kishore Garg has filed a plea in the apex court seeking directions to authorities to remove protestors from Shaheen Bagh.

PROTESTERS CLASH...

According to the cops the clashes took place after some protestors, who had gathered outside a police station to ask for permission to erect tents for protection against bad weather, allegedly threw stones and vandalized the vehicle of a local police officer - the Station House Officer -, prompting the cops to respond with a lathi-

charge and fire tear gas shells to disperse the mob.

Speaking to reporters after the incident, Aligarh District Magistrate Chandra Bhusan Singh said the violence was under control and the mob had been dispersed.

"(The) violence started around 5 pm when a local police officer's vehicle was pelted with stones. Soon after, the mob started throwing stones at us to disperse them and we had to use tear gas shells. The situation is under control," Singh said, adding that the cops were also investigating the role of Aligarh Muslim University students in instigating the crowd.

He said the police were identifying them those incited the mob. "We are ascertaining the damages caused by rioters and penalty will be realized from them," he said. "We have held peace meetings and asked Muslim community leaders, including the Imam of the Jama Masjid, to act as interlocutors," Singh added.

ANTI, PRO-CAA...

"This protest is against CAA, NRC and also seeking reservation for Dalits. The movement is primarily led by the women, while the men are only supporting them," a protester named Shadab said. "We have blocked the road and we will not move from the site till the Centre revokes the dra-

conian law," he said.

In the evening Alok Kumar, Joint Commissioner of Police (Eastern Range) said stones were also pelted at the police. "The situation has been brought under control. Adequate personnel have been deployed and are conducting flag marches."

Taking to twitter, Mishra said, "We have given a three-day ultimatum to the Delhi Police to get the road cleared. Get the Jafrabad and Chandbagh road cleared."

In a video tweeted by him where he can be seen addressing the gathering, Mishra said, "They (protestors) want to create trouble in Delhi. That's why they have closed the roads. That's why they have created a riot-like situation here. We have not pelted any stone."

"Till US President is in India, we are leaving the area peacefully. After that we won't listen to you (police) if the roads are not vacated by then," he told the gathering.

The fresh sit-in protest comes at a time when efforts are being made to negotiate with the protesters at Shaheen Bagh whose agitation has resulted in traffic snarls along the Delhi-Noida route. A small stretch of the road closed for over two months was "opened" by a group of demonstrators on Saturday, though police barricades continued on one side.

Conserve biodiversity: PM Modi

MANN KI BAAT

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Urging for conservation and preservation of biodiversity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said biodiversity of India is unique treasure for the entire mankind. Addressing his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' radio address, Modi referred to Tamil poetess Avvaiyar to drive home his point. "What we know is just a handful of sand. What we do not know is like a universe in itself," he said quoting her. Similar is the case with the biodiversity of this country, said Modi.

"The more you know, the more you realise the magnitude of what you do not know. Our biodiversity too is a unique treasure for the entire human kind. We have to preserve it, conserve it and explore further," he said. The Prime Minister said the traditions and the legacy we have inherited teach-



es us compassion toward all living beings and boundless love for nature.

Modi pointed out that more than 500 bird species across the world land in India every year.

He informed that recently, biologists discovered a new species of fish whose habitat is within the caves of Meghalaya. It is believed that this fish is the largest among aquatic species found under the surface of caves. "It a matter of joy that

◆ Our biodiversity too is a unique treasure for the entire human kind. We have to preserve it, conserve it and explore further

◆ The traditions and the legacy we have inherited teaches us compassion toward all living beings and boundless love for nature

◆ Biologists discovered a new species of fish whose habitat is within the caves of Meghalaya

India, and especially Meghalaya, is home to a rare species. It lends a new facet to India's biodiversity. We are surrounded by many such mysteries, which are still undiscovered. To discover such a phenomenal enigma calls for fierce detective passion," he said.

In his address, the Prime Minister also referred to the 'Hunar Haat' organised by the Ministry of Minority Affairs at the Rajpath. Last week Modi

made a surprise visit to the Haat where he interacted with people, had litti-chokha for lunch and enjoyed a hot kulhad of tea. He said the Haat is a fine example of India's diverse expanse, cultures, traditions, cuisines and the warmth of emotions.

"It is a venue where it is impossible to overlook the country's diversity. Besides handicrafts, it displays the diversity of India's varied cuisine too. In a single row, one

could savour the sight of idli-dosa, chhole-bhatore, daal-baati, khaman-khandvi ...," he said, urging people to visit such haats to be a part of the country's art-culture canvas. "You will also contribute in the progress and prosperity of hardworking craft persons, especially women," he said.

PM also hailed the use of a mixture of 10 per cent indigenously produced bio-jet fuel to fly an Indian Air Force transport aircraft, saying such efforts will not only help bring down carbon emissions, but also reduce the country's dependence on imported crude oil. "This was the first time that this mix was used in both engines. Not just that, the airport from which this plane took off from Leh is not only one of the highest altitude airports in India but also in the world," he said, referring the Indian Air Force's AN-32 aircraft took off from Leh's Kushok Bakula Rimpoche airport using a mixture of 10 per cent Indian bio-jet fuel.

Prepare MPs' participation reports: Naidu to Secretariat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu has directed the Secretariat to prepare reports on the participation of all the members under various windows to inform them at the end of each session of the House.

In its study, the Rajya Sabha secretariat has revealed that different parties got their due share of opportunities of participation under various windows during the first part of the Budget session that concluded on the 11th of this month. The study was done to know if the parties were getting equitable opportunities in the Council confirmed fair and proportional share for different parties with the opposition getting slightly more in the total 1,460 opportunities.

According to sources, the study reveals that BJP with 82 members accounting for 34 per cent of the strength of 239 of the House got 480 opportu-

nities amounting to 33 percent of the total. Congress with 46 members constituting 19 percent of the strength got 345 opportunities which comes to 24 percent share of the total.

"The 10 recognised parties in the House with five members and above each with a total of 190 members accounting for 80 percent of the strength of the Council got about 81 percent of the total opportunities.

Others including regional parties and independents amounting to 20 percent of the membership of the House got 19 percent share of participation indicating broad correspondence between the strength and share of opportunities," it said.

The eight non-NDA parties, featuring among the 10 recognised parties together got a higher share of opportunities in proportion to their strength. Besides BJP that got 1 percent lesser share, JDU could avail 0.55 percent of total chances of

participation as against its strength of 2.51 percent in the House, primarily due to none of its members getting any Unstarred Questions listed during the session.

Among the opposition and non-NDA parties, Congress, TMC, AIADMK got proportionally higher opportunities while BJD, DMK, TRS and CPM got their due share. Only SP got a lesser share.

During the session, 107 members participated in the Question Hour, 100 took part in the two debates on the Motion of Thanks to the President and the General Budget, 76 Zero Hour and 33 Special Mentions were made, 24 participated in the lone discussion on a Private Member's Bill besides 1,120 Unstarred Questions of 118 members replied in writing. This makes the zone of opportunities of participation as 1,460. Equity of participation was analysed against this window of total opportunities of participation.

China urges to resume trade between nations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Embassy of China in India on Sunday urged that New Delhi to review the epidemic situation in China in the wake of coronavirus outbreak and resume normal personnel exchanges and trade between both the nations.

The remarks by Chinese Embassy Spokesperson Ji Rong came following claims by Chinese charity organisations and certain medical institutes that New Delhi has restricted export of medical products to China following the coronavirus epidemic in that country.

Ji added that the World Health Organisation has repeatedly opposed any travel and trade restrictions on China following the coronavirus outbreak and that all parties should follow the recommendations by the global body. It added that recommen-

dations of WHO should be followed by all parties. "It's hoped that Indian side could review the epidemic situation in an objective, rational & calm manner, handle with China's much-needed items in a cooperative and constructive way and resume normal personnel exchanges and trade between us as soon as possible", the Chinese embassy added.

Moreover, according to latest updates by Chinese health officials, the death toll in China due to coronavirus outbreak has reached 2,442 and 76,936 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection have been reported in 31 provincial-level regions.

Among the 40,127 hospitalised patients, 8,583 were still in severe condition and another 1,845 in critical condition.

There was no immediate reaction from the government. Last week, Chinese

Ambassador Sun Weidong urged India to review restrictions on trade and movement of people. Almost all Indian airlines have stopped flights to China while the government has cancelled all e-visas as well as normal visas issued to Chinese citizens.

On Saturday, government sources said that China was "deliberately delaying" permission for an Indian Air Force plane to coronavirus-hit Wuhan to supply relief materials and bring back more Indians from the city. They said though flights from Japan, Ukraine and France were allowed to operate from Wuhan, India's request was not heeded to so far.

India has already evacuated around 640 Indians from Wuhan, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak, in two separate flights. According to estimates, over 100 Indians are still stuck in Wuhan.

Pak mobilising jihadis to destabilise Afghanistan

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan is mobilising its assets including terror affiliate Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) jihadis to Afghan-Pak border in order to destabilise Afghanistan following proposed withdrawal of US troops. Pakistan army is training the Lashkar ultras to damage infrastructure built by India in Afghanistan besides hitting security forces there and aid the Taliban regain more areas under its control in a post-withdrawal scenario.

Amid talks of withdrawal of US forces, the Pakistan Army-ISI complex has started harbouring sinister designs to topple the Afghan Government and replace it with Taliban for its long-term agenda in the region, sources here said.

Apprehending enhanced atrocities on the people in the Balochistan region, Baloch groups have stepped up violence against the Pakistan army and Lashkar men in the area. In the wee hours on

◆ Baloch groups have stepped up violence against the Pakistan army and Lashkar men in the area

◆ The Pakistan Army-ISI combine has begun training sessions for the Lashkar men in Sibbi and Bolan in Balochistan

◆ Former Chief of Inter Services Public Relations Asif Ghafoor has been made the chief of a Pak army division to provide security to US forces when the withdrawal from Afghan is worked out, sources said

Wednesday, the Baloch groups killed 16 Pakistan army men and abducted about 50 soldiers. This was the third such attack by Balochs against Pak Army this month.

The spurt in ambushes by the Baloch groups against Pak army has come in the backdrop of apprehensions that more and more camps of LeT will be set up and lead to enhancement of atrocities against the community.

Pakistan Army had been conducting search and cordon operations against the

funded by India.

An estimated 500-1000 LeT men are being trained by the Pakistan Army-ISI combine in view of the latter's changed priorities and preferences from the tactical perspective in view of the proposed withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan.

LeT men being trained by Pak army to aid Taliban in gaining more control on the ground post-withdrawal of US troops. In a duplicitous move to hoodwink the international community ahead of the FATF plenary in Paris, the Pakistani agencies have lodged LeT chief Hafiz Sayeed in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail where a number of Haqqani Network for elaborate planning to carry out hits in Afghanistan.

Former Chief of Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Asif Ghafoor has been made the chief of a Pak army division to provide security to the US forces when the withdrawal from Afghanistan is worked out, sources said. Pakistan army has been

known to enact abduction of its personnel by its terror affiliates and seek ransom from the US for their so called release from captivity, they added.

Pak Govt set to declare Feb 27 as National Surprise Day

Pakistan Government is set observe February 27 as National Surprise Day to commemorate the capture of Indian Air Force Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman who downed a US-made F 16 fighter jet with a Russian make MiG 21 aircraft last year following the Indian air strike at a Jaish-e-Mohammad suicide bomber training facility in Balakot.

Prez Kovind: Role of judiciary to be crucial in coming days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind said that the role of the judiciary is bound to be pivotal amid dramatic transformations in the coming days.

In his address at the International Judicial Conference being organised by the Supreme Court on Sunday, Kovind said that issues like gender justice, contemporary perspectives on protection of constitutional values, dynamic interpretations of the Constitution in a changing world, harmonisation of environment protection vis-a-vis sustainable development and protection of the right to privacy in the Internet age are issues that influence every member of the global community.

These five distinctly defined topics cover the matrix of challenges faced by the judi-

ciary across the world, he said. The President praised the Supreme Court for carrying out "radical reforms" which, he said, made justice more accessible to common people. He cited landmark judgements passed by the apex court which have strengthened the legal and constitutional framework of India.

"Its bench and bar are known for their legal scholarship and intellectual wisdom. What it has achieved is nothing less than a silent revolution in diagnosing and correcting the afflictions that adversely affected the justice delivery system," he said, as per a press note. The President particularly mentioned the role of Supreme Court in making the higher courts' judgments available in regional languages, terming it "an extraordinary achievement given the linguistic diversity of India".

India looks forward to welcoming Trump: PM

Modi says it is an honour that he will be with us tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On the eve of US President Donald Trump's India visit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that India looks forward to welcoming the US President, who is to commence his "historic programme" from Gujarat.

The US president will be on a two-day visit to India and together with Modi is to participate in a roadshow in Ahmedabad after landing there.

"India looks forward to welcoming @POTUS @realDonaldTrump. It is an honour that he will be with us tomorrow, starting with the historic programme in Ahmedabad," Modi wrote on Twitter.

He was responding to a

tweet by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani that said "entire Gujarat speaks in one voice-#NamasteTrump".

On Monday, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi will take part in a 22-km roadshow from the Ahmedabad international airport. Then they will proceed for the 'Namaste Trump' event at the newly built Sardar Patel Stadium in the city's Motera area, where over one lakh people are expected to be present.

The US President will visit Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad on Monday before heading towards a cricket stadium where he will address over 1,00,000 people.

Sabarmati Ashram was a key base of Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom struggle. He lived there between 1917 and 1930. The US president will later fly down to Agra to visit Taj Mahal and thereafter fly to Delhi for the official engagements where "major trade deals" are expected to be signed by the two sides.

On the morning of February 25, the US president



and first lady Melania Trump will be accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of the 'Rashtrapati Bhavan'. From there, they will go to Raj Ghat to pay homage at the 'samadhi' of Mahatma Gandhi. It will be followed by restricted and delegation-level talks between Trump and Modi at Hyderabad House. 'Namaste Trump' will be similar to the landmark 'Howdy, Modi!' event hosted by the Indian-American community in honour of Prime Minister Modi during his visit to Houston in September 2019, said an official. Trump, accompanied by wife Melania, daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner, will arrive in Ahmedabad around noon on Monday for a little less than 36-

hour-long trip to India.

Other members of the US president's delegation include Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien and Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette.

From Ahmedabad, the US President is to fly to Agra where huge billboards on streets near the city airport and public squares in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal greeting him have come up ahead of his visit.

Trump's convoy route from the airport to the Taj Mahal is about 13 km and along the way thousands of artists will welcome him with special performances.

On the famous Mall Road, which falls on the route, one hoarding reads 'His Excellency Donald J Trump, President of the United States of America, Heartiest Welcome to the Land of Krishna'. It is accompanied with an image of Trump standing next to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Trump is to reach Agra on the Monday evening.

No major outcome from Trump's visit: Anand Sharma

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the US President's two-day visit to India, former Union Minister and Congress leader Anand Sharma on Sunday maintained that the high-profile interaction is unlikely to achieve any major breakthrough in the bilateral agreements.

Sharma, however, went on to say that the visit was important in relation to the fact that the US was a major power, but that is all, Sharma said.

"So far I do not have any positive indication of any major outcome. It will be a continuation of defence and security cooperation, and a reaffirmation of our cooperation in space and nuclear sciences. It is ongoing and it will not be a new thing," Sharma told news agency PTI.

SM Krishna, who was

external affairs minister during the UPA and is now in the BJP, felt though Trump's visit comes in the US presidential election year and a sizeable Indian expatriate population will vote, but "it should not be looked at from the narrow prism of US President's election".

"It needs to be looked at a larger perspective as to what is happening in the region," he told the news agency.

Krishna said China will be closely monitoring the visit and the nature of talks that take place. "It is a very important visit. The US and India have a very close and fruitful relationship especially after the Nuclear Accord. We have moved strategically close to each other and it is important for us to nourish and maintain the relationship further," he said.

Double toll charge for vehicles entering FASTag lanes without tag

NHAI collects ₹20 cr from 18 lakh defaulters who entered FASTag lanes sans tag

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Sunday said it has collected ₹20 crore from 18 lakh defaulters who entered the FASTag lanes at electronic toll plazas on National Highways without the tag.

Rolling out the electronic toll collection programme across India in December, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had said that double toll charge would be collected from the vehicles entering FASTag lanes without the tag.

In order to give prime importance to existing FASTag users, dissuade defaulters and further encourage adoption of



FASTags by national highways commuters, vehicles without FASTags entering the FASTag lane are being charged double the toll fee, NHAI said in a statement.

"Till now, a total number of 18 lakh vehicles defaulted by encroaching FASTag lanes across India has resulted in a double charge cash toll accumulation of about ₹20 crore,"

it said. RFID based FASTag, an electronic toll collection system implemented by the NHAI, has proved to be instrumental in easing the lives of commuters on national highways within two months of its nationwide implementation, it said. Over 1.55 crore FASTags have been issued through multiple Point of Sale (PoS) locations.

NHAI has been observing increased sale rate of FASTags which is a clear indication of this digital system being accepted well, the statement said. As a result, FASTag transaction has crossed a landmark count of 4 million per day, it added.

The statement said FASTag resulted in smooth and hassle-free movement of FASTag users

on highways. The implementation of FASTags across the country has met with the desired response so far, it said adding the adoption of FASTags also means that it has brought in the much-needed transparency in collection at toll booths.

In order to further increase digital collection of user fee via FASTag at national highways fee plazas, NHAI has recently waived off the FASTag cost of Rs 100 for NHAI FASTag from February 15, 2020 to February 29, 2020.

Any road users can visit any authorised physical point-of-sale locations with a valid Registration Certificate (RC) of the vehicle and get a NHAI FASTag free of cost.



Vice President Venkaiah Naidu presents an award to the winners of the 20th All India Police Band Competition at the closing ceremony at Secunderabad in Hyderabad on Sunday

TRUMP VISIT

US prez to get glimpse of India's cultural diversity

Ahmedabad: India's cultural diversity along with rich traditions of Gujarat will be on full display during the roadshow of US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad and their joint address at a cricket stadium here on Monday.

Replicas of historic places in Gujarat are also being placed at strategic locations along the roadshow route.

Dance groups and singers from different parts of the country, including Gujarat, will stage performances on the roadshow route as well as the newly-built cricket stadium in Motera area of the city, officials said on Sunday.

Performers from 28 States have been allotted stages erected along the roadshow route, where the two leaders will be greeted by people on both sides of the road.

There will also be a 'Garba' performance, the traditional Gujarati dance, on one of the



stages, they said.

The performances will provide a glimpse of the country's cultural diversity, the officials said.

Besides, folk and Bollywood singers will also perform on a stage set up at the Motera stadium for the 'Namaste Trump' event, where Trump and Modi will address a gathering of over one lakh people.

Bollywood singers Kailash Kher and Parthiv Gohil, and Gujarati folk singers like Kirtidan Gadhvi, Gita Rabari,

Purushottam Upadhyay and Sairam Dave will perform at the stadium, officials of the Gujarat Cricket Association said.

Students of various Government and private schools have also been roped-in to perform at the cultural events. They were asked to practice for the event over a week in advance, an official said.

Replicas of historic places from Gujarat are being placed at strategic locations along the route of the roadshow. **PTI**

Entry gate at Motera stadium collapses ahead of visit

Ahmedabad: A day before US President Donald Trump's visit to Ahmedabad, a makeshift VVIP entry gate erected outside the newly-built cricket stadium in Motera area here collapsed due to gusty winds on Sunday morning, an official said.

The entire incident was recorded by a bystander and aired on local television channels.

The makeshift entry gate was made of welded steel rods and covered in flex banners.

After sometime, a portion of another makeshift gate structure at the stadium's main entrance also collapsed due to the windy weather, another official said.

No one was injured in both the incidents and work was underway to put the structures back in place, he

said. "The (VVIP) entry gate collapsed when fabrication work was going on. It was not a major incident. No one was injured in the incident," said special commissioner of police, Crime Branch, Ajay Tomar said.

President Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in a roadshow here on Monday and later address the 'Namaste Trump' event at the Sardar Patel Stadium in Motera area where over one lakh people are expected to be present.

The stadium has already received 'Building Use' permission from the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, an official earlier said.

It is the world's largest stadium with a capacity to accommodate 1.10 lakh spectators. **PTI**

Surprise gift for Trump from Tamil Nadu master tailor

Coimbatore: A 90-year-old master tailor from nearby Pollachi has a surprise gift for US President Donald Trump during his two-day visit to India — a white khadi shirt stitched by him.

VS Vishwanathan hit upon the idea after seeing Trump on television many times and in photographs and has expressed confidence that the US President would accept it and appreciate his gesture, family members said.

The shirt has been sent to the Prime Minister's Office in Delhi, marked to the US Embassy, they said.

Vishwanathan had gifted such shirts to various political leaders, including former Tamil Nadu Chief Ministers, the late K Kamaraj and CN Annadurai and also former President R Venkataraman, his family said.

He once ran a tailoring shop but does not do so now due to old age.

At present, he trains budding tailors free of cost, they said. **PTI**

Agra sports new look to welcome him

Agra (UP): Walls are being adorned with paintings reflecting the Brij culture and architectural heritage of Agra, victorian-style lamp posts installed and the lawns of the iconic Taj Mahal bedecked with colourful blooms as the historic city gears up to welcome US President Donald Trump.

Trump is slated to arrive in Agra on Monday evening after attending the mega 'Namaste Trump' event at the newly built Motera cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

The city administration is all geared up for the big day and preparations are in full swing to present the "best face of Agra".

"We are fully prepared, and we wish to present the best of Agra to the US President and his delegation. At the Kheria airport, upon his arrival, expected at about 4:30 pm, hundreds of artists will welcome him with 'mayur nritya'." Agra's Divisional Commissioner Anil Kumar told PTI.

Security has been stepped up in the city ahead of Trump's visit, his first to India. His daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and a galaxy of top US officials will be part of the high-level delegation accompanying him during his visit to India on February 24 and 25.

In Agra, the Trump family will spend about an hour at the Taj Mahal before sunset. They will then leave for Delhi. **PTI**

Massive security cover in place for Ahmedabad visit

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Over 10,000 policemen from different parts of Gujarat have been deployed at strategic locations in Ahmedabad as part of the elaborate security arrangements for US President Donald Trump's visit here on Monday, officials said.

The massive police deployment is in addition to officials of the United States Secret Service, and India's elite National Security Guards (NSG) and Special Protection Group who would also be guarding the US president's visit.

The Secret Service agents along with other US security personnel have already arrived with their equipment and vehicles in at least four cargo planes during the last one week.

Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take part

in a 22-km roadshow from the Ahmedabad international airport and then proceed for the 'Namaste Trump' event at the newly-built Sardar Patel Stadium in the city's Motera area, where over one lakh people are expected to be present.

Police will be using the anti-drone technology to neutralise any suspicious drone on the route, officials said, adding that an anti-sniper team of the NSG will also be stationed along the roadshow route, starting from the airport till the Motera stadium via Indira bridge.

With the help of sophisticated hand-held devices, the entire route has been scanned several times by the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad.

Police and other security agencies have also conducted a rehearsal on the entire roadshow route using over 100

vehicles, they said.

Along with police personnel, who will be led by 25 IPS officers, teams of the Rapid Action Force, State Reserve Police, Chetak Commando and Anti-Terrorist Squad are also deployed at strategic locations.

Before the US president's arrival, at least four C17 Globemaster cargo planes of the US Air Force have landed at the Ahmedabad international airport with security and communication equipment, Trumps' official helicopter 'Marine One' and a mammoth SUV-like vehicle.

The giant SUV, which would be part of Trump's cavalcade during his 22-km long roadshow on February 24, is known as WHCA Roadrunner. WHCA stands for White House Communications Agency.



Border Security Force (BSF) camel contingent patrols a street, ahead of Donald Trump's maiden visit to India, in Ahmedabad on Sunday

UP Gov, CM Yogi to welcome Prez Trump at airport in Agra: DM

PTI ■ AGRA

US President Donald Trump will be welcomed by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on his arrival at the airport in Agra where hundreds of artistes will perform, a top official said on Sunday.

The city has been decked up to welcome the American president who will visit India on February 24-25. He will visit the Taj Mahal in the evening after arriving here on Monday from Ahmedabad, before leaving for Delhi.

"The UP governor and chief minister will welcome US President Trump at the Kheria airport. However, they will not accompany him to the Taj Mahal. The governor and the chief minister would also be at the airport to send him off," Agra District Magistrate (DM) Prabhu N Singh told PTI.

Trump's convoy route from the airport to the Taj Mahal is about 13 km, and along the way thousands of artistes will welcome him with special performances. "At the airport, about 250 artistes will do special performances reflecting the beauty and culture of Uttar Pradesh. **PTI**

Another incident of assault on dalit youths in Raj, 5 held

Jaisalmer: Three dalit youths were assaulted after being accused of stealing donkeys in Jaisalmer district, the third such incident to come to light in Rajasthan in recent days.

Five persons have been arrested and three detained after a video of the incident surfaced, police said on Sunday.

The incident occurred on February 15 in Rama village of Fatehgarh tehsil of the district.

The youths were thrashed with sticks and kicked by nearly a dozen people for stealing donkeys. They were later handed over to Sangarh police.

"Five persons have been arrested and three minors have been detained so far. A case has been registered in the matter under sections of SC/ST Act and further investigation in the matter is on," Station House Officer (SHO) of Sangarh police station Ugam Raj Soni said.

Similar incidents had come to light in Nagaur and Barmer

A chilling video of a man being beaten up brutally in Barmer allegedly for committed a theft had gone viral here, prompting the police to arrest a man and detain another on Friday for their alleged roles in the crime.

The video surfaced on Thursday close on the heels of brutal assault on two Dalit youths on similar allegation

The youths were thrashed with sticks and kicked by nearly a dozen people for stealing donkeys. They were later handed over to Sangarh police

of theft in Nagaur.

The Barmer incident occurred on January 29.

Police have arrested at least seven persons in connection with the Nagaur case which occurred on February 16.

The Dalit men were beaten up, stripped and tortured by staffers of a motorcycle service agency in Karanu village after accusing them of committing theft.

In the video, a group of men is seen thrashing two persons with rubber belts. They later dipped a piece of cloth wrapped on a screwdriver in petrol and inserted it in the private parts of one of the victims.

The incidents have triggered a political storm in Rajasthan with the BJP attacking the ruling Congress.

Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal has alleged that the Ashok Gehlot-led Congress government is unable to rein in crime in Rajasthan. Meghwal, who is an MP from Bikaner, had accused the police of manipulating the Nagaur case. **PTI**

Seven killed, 15 injured in road accidents in Bihar

Darbhangha/Sasaram: Seven people, including three of a family, were killed and 15 others were injured in two road accidents in Bihar's Darbhanga and Rohtas districts on Sunday.

In the first incident, three persons were killed and three others were injured when their car collided with a road divider on NH 57 and overturned near Kakarghati village in Darbhanga district, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Darbhanga, Anoj Kumar said.

Of the six persons, five were of the same family, while one was a family friend.

Three of them died on the spot, the official said, adding the three injured have been admitted to the Darbhanga Medical College and Hospital.

The deceased have been identified as Raju Jha (45), his mother Rekha Devi (75) and sister Madhu Kumari (22), the DSP said.

Jha's wife, his three-year-old son and a family friend were injured in the incident.

The family was going to their native village in Saharsa from Muzaffarpur to celebrate the boy's birthday, police said.

In another incident, four persons,



including a woman, were killed, while a dozen other passengers were injured when the bus carrying them collided head-on with an orange-laden truck near Auwa village on NH 2.

The incident happened under the jurisdiction of Shivsagar police station in Rohtas district, police said.

"The deceased have been identified as Vikram Pal (65), Reshma Khatoun (55), Mukhtar Khan (42), Ajit Kumar (38)," Satyendra Satyarthi, SHO, Shivsagar police station said.

Both the vehicles overturned after the collision, he said, adding the private bus was on its way to Sasaram from Bhabhua, while the truck was moving in the opposite direction.

Sasaram civil surgeon Janardan Sharma said four bodies have been brought to Sadar hospital for post-mortem. **PTI**

TN CM grants ₹2 L aid to girl on NASA visit

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Sunday ordered ₹2 lakh as assistance to a class IX girl student, a space enthusiast, for successfully qualifying in an online test to visit America's space agency NASA and participate in an international conference.

The student V Abinaya studying in Namakkal district got through the exam held by firms here and in America, the Chief Minister, in a statement, said adding the opportunity to visit NASA and take part in a global space science symposium is a "victory for her talent".

Wishing her many more successes in space science, Palaniswami lauded her for the "achievement and to encourage younger generation, I have ordered ₹2 lakh assistance from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund." **PTI**

Held from J'khand, Maoist dies in Bihar police custody

Jamui (Bihar): A top Maoist carrying a total reward of ₹11 lakh on his head died in the custody of Bihar police hours after he was brought from Jharkhand, a senior officer said on Sunday.

Siddhu Koda, a 40-year-old CPI (Maoist) zonal commander, died at a hospital where he was admitted late Saturday night after he complained of pain in chest and abdomen, Deputy Inspector General of Police Manu Maharaj said.

Koda, who hailed from Chakai block of Jamui district, was arrested Saturday morning from a railway station in Jharkhand's Dumka by an STF team comprising policemen from Patna and Jamui.

He was wanted in about 70 serious cases including murder, robbery, kidnapping and extortion, Maharaj said.

After being brought here, Koda was interrogated, the DIG said. Based on the information he provided, raids were

conducted in various parts of naxal-affected Munger district leading to the seizure of a large number of arms and ammunition, Maharaj said.

The Maoist, who carried a reward of ₹1 lakh in Bihar and ₹10 lakh in Jharkhand, complained of severe pain in chest and abdomen around 11 pm on Saturday.

He was taken to Jamui Sadar Hospital where he died. Since he died in police custody, the post-mortem examination was conducted in presence of a magistrate as per rules, the DIG said.

Maharaj did not divulge the details of the post-mortem report.

He said Koda's family has been informed of his death and his body "may be disposed of in accordance with law" by the police if nobody comes forward to claim his mortal remains.

Two automatic rifles — an AK 47 and an INSAS — have been seized from Koda at the time of his arrest. **PTI**

People fatigued with bureaucratic & proxy rule in J&K: NPP

Jammu: Accusing the Jammu & Kashmir administration of failure to address the basic issues of the people, National Panthers Party (NPP) on Sunday said the public were fatigued with the 'bureaucratic and proxy' rule and called for early restoration of democracy in the Union Territory.

NPP chairman and former minister Harsh Dev Singh said elected representatives alone could appreciate the concerns of the public as against the "outside bureaucrats" who hardly have any accountability to the people.

"The general masses were fatigued with the bureaucratic rule. There is a need to end the proxy rule (of BJP) and early restoration of democracy in the

erstwhile State," he said addressing a public meeting in Domana and Gho Manhasan here.

He said the advisors to Lieutenant Governor G C Murmu and secretaries were organising 'public hearing' campaigns but these had "failed to inspire the people in view of their lack of productivity".

"The cosmetic public hearing exercise by the advisors and secretaries and the sojourns of central ministers had failed to inspire the masses who missed the much needed delivery on the ground," Singh said.

He appealed the Lt Governor to put on the official website of various departments, the details of representations received in various public inter-



action programmes, issues discussed therein and action taken in pursuance thereof so as to make the 'public hearings' relevant and meaningful.

Claiming that bureaucratic rule in the erstwhile state had proved a "flop show", Singh claimed people were fast losing faith in the present dispensa-

The NPP leader said the public interaction campaigns of advisors and secretaries had also proved to be "exercises in futility", like the two successive 'Back to Village' programmes earlier.

Decrying the withdrawal of election notification for vacant panchayat seats after having announced the poll dates, Singh said there were several other instances to show that the present regime was moving in fits and starts accompanied by reverses.

"People were repeatedly assured of domicile law for J&K in public meetings by helmsmen and BJP leaders only to be told in the Parliament that the Centre had no proposal in this regard," he said. **PTI**



BJP supporters attend 'Vijay Sankalp' rally at Khanikar field, in Dibrugarh on Sunday

PTI

Pawar trying to implicate Hindutvawadis: Fadnavis

Mumbai: BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday alleged that NCP chief Sharad Pawar was trying to implicate 'Hindutvawadis' (Hindutva supporters) in the Koregaon Bhima violence case despite the absence of any concrete evidence.

Fadnavis made the allegation while talking to reporters a day before the Budget session of the Maharashtra legislature commences.

"During my tenure, the state home department had carried out a thorough probe into the Koregaon Bhima violence case," the former chief minister, who also held the home portfolio then, said.

"NCP chief Sharad Pawar's first reaction on the violence was that Hindutvawadis were behind it. But police did not find any evidence to back up his claims," he said.

KOREGAON BHIMA VIOLENCE CASE

"The entire investigation and its progress has not been objected either by the Bombay High Court or by the Supreme Court. Still by setting up a separate SIT, Pawar wants to implicate Hindutvawadis in the Koregaon Bhima violence incident," Fadnavis alleged.

According to Pune police, the Elgar Parishad conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017, was supported by Maoists and inflammatory speeches made at the event led to caste violence at Koregaon Bhima war memorial in the district the next day.

Right wing leaders Milind Ekbote and Sambhaji Bhide are accused in Koregaon Bhima case.

The Pune Police have arrested Left-leaning activists Sudhir Dhawale, Rona Wilson,

Surendra Gadling, Mahesh Raut, Shoma Sen, Arun Ferreira, Vernon Gonsalves, Sudha Bharadwaj and Varavara Rao in the Elgar Parishad case for their alleged Maoist links.

Pawar had earlier termed the arrest of activists in the Elgar Parishad case as "wrong" and "vengeful", and demanded that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) be set up to probe the action taken by the Pune police. Replying to a query over it, Fadnavis said, "The Maharashtra police have found a strong evidence that urban Naxal issue is not restricted to Maharashtra alone. It has spread in other parts of the country as well. Hence handing over its probe to the NIA is a welcome move of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray."

Fadnavis attacks Pawar for demanding trust for mosque

Mumbai: Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday attacked NCP chief Sharad Pawar over his demand for creation of a trust for construction of a mosque in Ayodhya on the lines of a similar body for Ram temple.

Speaking to reporters here on the eve of the Budget session of the Maharashtra legislature, Fadnavis asked why Pawar wanted to build a mosque in the name of an invader like Babar.

"Babar (the first emperor of Mughal dynasty in Indian sub-continent) was an invader. Why on the earth did NCP chief Sharad Pawar want to erect a new mosque in the name of Babar? If Muslims want a place for prayer, they should have one but why in the name of Babar?" asked Fadnavis, the Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly.

Speaking in Lucknow on February 20, Pawar demanded the Central Government to form a trust for building a mosque in Ayodhya similar to the trust to oversee the construction of Ram temple.

"I also wonder why Pawar demanded a trust for a mosque when



he knows that a Waqf has to be formed for the same," Fadnavis said.

A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court in November 2019 ruled unanimously in favor of Ram temple in Ayodhya. The court had said the whole disputed land spread over 2.7-acre will be handed over to a trust formed by the government, which will examine the construction of Ram temple at the place.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on February 5 the formation of 'Shri Ram Janambhoomi Tirath Kshetra' trust which would oversee the construction of Ram Temple.

First see what's happening under your surveillance: Uddhav to BJP

Mumbai: Hours after the BJP criticised The Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) dispensation over the law and order situation, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray hit back at the party saying that those targeting his Government should first see what is happening under their watch.

He asked why no "terrorist" (assailant) involved in the attack on students at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) last month has been arrested so far by the BJP-ruled Centre.

Thackeray was talking to reporters on the eve of the Budget session of the Maharashtra legislature.

Earlier in the day, the State BJP criticised his government over the recent incidents of crime against women.

When asked about the BJP's allegations, Thackeray said, "Every crime against women is condemnable and not a single such incident should occur again."

"While targeting us, the BJP should also see what is happening in the States ruled by it. Especially in the centrally-ruled New Delhi, where terrorists stormed



the JNU and beat the students," he said. "I am going to call those assailants as terrorists. Despite so many days, not a single assailant has been arrested so far," he said.

"Those targeting us on unjustified grounds should first see what is happening under their watch and then comment about us," Thackeray added. Thirty-four people, including students and faculty, were injured on January 5 when a masked mob entered the JNU campus and attacked them with rods and sledgehammers.

Uddhav to unveil first list of farm loan waiver today

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As the Budget session of the Maharashtra Legislature gets underway on Monday, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government will put its best foot forward on the first day by releasing the first list of farm loan waiver beneficiaries, even as the Opposition BJP will go all out to drive a wedge between the ruling Shiv Sena and its alliance partners — NCP and Congress — over the contentious issues like the CAA, NPR and Veer Savarkar.

Addressing a news conference after the Opposition BJP boycotted the customary tea hosted by him on the eve of the Legislature session, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that as part of the first list of farm loan waiver, the State Government will write off loans up to ₹2 lakh each taken by farmers across the State.

"Tomorrow, we will announce the first list of list of farm loan waiver beneficiaries

with dues up to ₹2 lakh each. Unlike the previous BJP-led Government (of which my party was a part) which had made farm loan waiver without home work and did not execute its announcement, we have planned the loan waiver scheme well. We will complete the execution of the entire loan waiver process within three months," Uddhav said.

Dismissing the criticism of his Government by the Opposition BJP on various counts, Uddhav said: "I do not think it is necessary for me to respond to the issues raised by the Opposition. Just because it criticises the Government does not make it a good opposition. At a time when the government is doing good work, it is improper on the Opposition's part to say that the Government is not doing anything."

Charging that the Opposition BJP could not stomach the fact the ruling MVA was providing a stable government in the state,

MAHA BUDGET SESSION

Uddhav said: "Our is not a government that is counting days.

The BJP is unable to stomach the fact that ours is a stable government. We have not just made promises, but we are implementing out promises. The people in the state think that it is their Government."

"We are implementing a people-friendly initiative like Shiv Bhojan Yojana (₹10 a meal scheme). Still the Opposition is criticising us. Here is a party (BJP) that did not do anything good for the people when it was in power. We are getting good response for the Shiv Bhojan Yojana. We are planning to enlarge the scope of this scheme in the coming days," the Chief Minister said.

Among other things, Uddhav said that the state government was planning to come out with a legislation along the lines of the

Andhra Pradesh Criminal Law Amendment Act 2019 — better known as the Andhra Pradesh Disha law, which stipulates death sentences to convicts in rape cases within 21 days. "We have set a five-member official committee to study the Andhra Pradesh law and come out with a report on the proposed legislation that we intend to introduce in the State Legislature," he said.

Informed sources in the Opposition BJP said that its leaders would go out all the way to corner the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress front Government over contentious like Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Population Register (NPR) and Veer Savarkar.

Talking to media persons after boycotting the session-eve hosted by the Chief Minister, leader of the Opposition in the Assembly and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis — in an

apparent effort to exploit the differences among the ruling MVA partners on contentious issues — dared Uddhav to move a resolution on the floor of the State Legislature to hail the contributions of Veer Savarkar on the occasion of the latter's death anniversary on February 26."

Slamming the Uddhav Thackeray dispensation for not being able to come grips with the challenges facing his government, Fadnavis said: "Three months have passed but the MVA Government is still in a state of confusion. It has not implemented the promises it made in the run-up to the Assembly elections. Though it announced it would waive the loans of farmers. But, it has not begun implementation of farm loan waiver scheme."

"The Government has lost its control over the increasing atrocities against women. The Government is not sensitive at all when it comes to women issues. The government is trying to erode the morale of the

police force in the State... This Government has stayed the implementation of various decisions taken by our government like the water grid and our flagship schemes like Gram Sadak yojana and Jal Yukt Shivar. The Shiv Sena is not ready to speak on the insults being heaped by the NCP and Congress on the descendants of Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji," Fadnavis said.

On its part, the ruling MVA is preparing to dig up alleged irregularities in several schemes, including Fadnavis' pet project "Jal Yukt Shivar", implemented by the previous BJP-led saffron alliance government. During the course of the budget session, the state government is expected to either order inquiries or come out with details of corruption in the earlier Government.

Coronavirus: 81 of 83 in Maha isolation wards test negative

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government on Sunday said that 81 out of 83 people admitted in isolation wards for suspected exposure to the novel coronavirus have tested negative.

While 80 of them have been discharged, three others continue to be hospitalised. The outbreak of the virus, officially called Covid-19, was first detected in Wuhan in China in December and has since affected thousands of people across the globe.

"Out of the 83 persons, 81 have tested negative for the coronavirus infection. Of these 80 have been discharged.

Three persons are under observation in Mumbai's Kasturba Hospital," a state health department official said on Sunday.

People coming from notified nations including China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Nepal, Indonesia and Vietnam are being monitored as part of the protocol in place to tackle the outbreak, he added. Since the outbreak of the virus in China and its spread across the globe through travellers, the Maharashtra government, acting on the guidelines issued by the Centre, has been placing people in isolation wards and screening those arriving at the Mumbai international airport from places affected by the outbreak.

Since January 18, a total of 48,295 passengers have been screened at Mumbai airport. Officials said a 14-day follow-up of 207 of 291 people who arrived in the state from covid-19 affected areas had been completed.

Cong to have seat-sharing formula with LF for Bengal civic polls: WBPCCC prez

Malda (WB): WBPCCC president Somen Mitra on Sunday said the Congress will have a seat-sharing arrangement with the Left Front for the West Bengal civic polls but will not form an alliance with it.

Going by the formula, the Congress and the Left Front constituents will field their candidates from their respective strongholds, Mitra told reporters here.

Reacting to Mitra's remarks, CPI(M) legislature party leader Sujan Chakraborty told PTI in Kolkata, "We have always called for putting up a joint fight to defeat both the BJP and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal."

Mentioning that the State Election Commission (SEC) should ensure that civic elections are held in a free and fair manner, Mitra said, the Congress is in favour of using electronic voting machines and

not ballot papers for the civic polls.

The grand old party has no problems about the timing of the polls, the WBPCCC president said.

However, the dates should be fixed with due consideration about the schedule of different board exams, he said.

"We have conveyed our stand to the SEC," Mitra said. The state secondary board exam which started on February 18 will end on February 27. The higher secondary examination will be held between March 12 to March 27.

Restrictions are in place on the use of loudspeakers due to the examinations. The state BJP had urged the state election commissioner to be given "ample time" to campaign for the municipal polls as the state board exams will continue till the end of March. PTI

Bengal Govt hikes teachers' pension ahead of civic polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With the municipal elections knocking at the door, the Bengal Government has decided to effect a fat hike to the pension of retired school teachers.

The new pension rate will apply to the teachers who have retired before January 2016 and the order will apply to the family pensioners and teachers of Government-aided schools who have already been getting pension post December 2015.

According to sources in the State Education Department, the new order will imply about 20 percent rise in the pension of those who are in the age group of 80-85 years. Those who are above 85 years and less than 90 years will get a hike of 30 percent sources said.

In any case the Government has effected a minimum revised basic pension at ₹8,500, sources quoting notification said adding the new order will be effective from April 1, this year.

"Bengal Government is facing great financial hardship... but still Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been pleased to allow a hike in pension of retired school teachers," State Education Minister Partha Chatterjee said adding "no other State have shown such genuine concern for the retired teachers the way we have done, despite the limited financial capacity."

Incidentally, Chief Minister has written to the Narendra Modi Government to clear dues worth ₹50,000 crore.

She wrote to the Centre about how there has been a "steady reduction" in the central funds apart from inordinate delays in the release of such funds. "I write to you with deep concern regarding steady reduction of central funds to the state and also inordinate delay in release of funds to us from the Government of India," Banerjee wrote reminding how the Centre was yet to release a grant of Rs 50,000 crore to the State.

This "extraordinary situation" is creating major difficulties in meeting

obligations for the welfare of the state, she said.

Reminding that the delay in release of central funds which were due to the State was creating hardship in implementing the schemes that were essential for a welfare the letter said, "you will, no doubt, appreciate that both the central and the State Governments are expected to fulfill the constitutional obligations and the commitments to the people, so that respective Governments run smoothly... However West Bengal is being deprived of the huge outstanding dues."

Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Sunday reacted to the State Government's repeated grudge against non-payment of its dues by the Centre saying that "the Chief Minister will only write letters and not visit Delhi personally as she will have to provide the accounts of the amount received and spent over the years He termed Banerjee's letter to the Centre a "political ploy to befoul people" ahead of civic polls in the Sstate.

Kolkata 'hottest island': Study

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A 16-year study conducted by the researchers of Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, have made a frightening revelation that rampant deforestation and construction have made Kolkata an extremely heated zone — the "hottest island" of the country.

The study says that rapid urbanisation and deforestation have made the City of Joy the "hottest of all the urban heated islands." While an extended spell of winter has still kept the Kolkatans away from the "burning reality" a sweltering and harsh summer is awaiting the people of the city which till a couple of decades ago would not see the summer temperature climb beyond 36-37 degrees.

Unregulated urbanisation has let Kolkata's temperature climb more than 2 degrees in the past three decades, experts say. A study conducted by IIT-K researchers between 2001 and 2017 have revealed that while day and night temperature of the urban centres including Kolkata has gone up remark-



ably the difference between day and night temperatures has decreased implying a rise in mean temperature, experts said.

This is a trend in 44 big cities of the country including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Pune, Guwahati etc the study has said. While average temperature of the other cities have risen by about 2 degrees in the past 30 years that of Kolkata has gone up even more than that the study conducted by IIT's Centre for Oceans Reverse, Atmosphere and Land Science said.

The problem is going to rise and multiply the experts have cautioned, if necessary measures are not taken with immediate effect.

POCSO cells in Bihar schools soon to hear sexual crime complaints

Patna: Schools in Bihar would soon have "POCSO cells" to hear complaints of sexual misconduct and exploitation, a Government official said here on Sunday. Bihar Education Project Council, an organization dedicated to achieving Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in the State, had last week issued direction to all district education officers to set up POCSO cells in schools, with students among others as its members, she said.

"We have given directions to the district education officers (DEOs) to set up POCSO cells in all schools of the state, starting March 1..."

"There will be a committee headed by the headmaster in each school, which will look into the complaints and take necessary action, accord-

ing to the provisions of POCSO Act," Kiran Kumari, special project officer, Bihar Education Project Council (BEPCC), told PTI.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 aims to punish those engaging in sexual crimes against children, while safeguarding their interests at every stage of the judicial process.

In the first phase, the units would be established in secondary schools, she said, adding that the model would be later replicated in primary and middle schools.

Each committee will have the school principal or headmaster, a senior school teacher, a panchayati raj representative, a girl student, a boy student and a clerk as its members, Kumar explained. PTI

"A student can either directly submit a written complaint of sexual exploitation or misconduct to the committee or leave it in the complaint box, with or without mentioning his or her identity. The complaint box will be opened once every week.

"If the committee deems fit, the complaint will be forwarded to the nearest police station. It will be the panel's job to find out the identity of the complainant at the time of lodging of an FIR. As per POCSO rules, confidentiality of the complainant will be maintained," she said.

Noting that the "cells would work at two levels", the BEPC state programme officer said awareness would be generated about sexual harassment in schools, as part of the initiative. PTI

Patnaik files nomination for BJD's top post

Bhubaneswar (PTI): Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Sunday filed nomination papers seeking his reelection as the BJD president — the post he had been holding since the regional outfit was formed on December 26, 1997.

Accompanied by senior leaders, MPs and MLAs, Patnaik arrived at the state headquarters of the Biju Janata Dal, a party he founded and named after former CM and his father Biju Patnaik, and submitted papers before returning officer PK Deb for the February 26 elections, party sources said.

This is for the eighth consecutive time Patnaik filed

his papers for the BJD's top post. He is the lone leader to have filed nomination for the post, they said.

Organizational elections are held in the BJD every three years, in accordance with the party's by-law. Other party functionaries also filed nominations for the BJD's state executive committee on Sunday, a source said, adding that the results would be declared on the day of polls.

BJD MP and party spokesperson Sasmit Patra said, "There were 10 proposers required for Patnaik's nomination. His name will be formally declared as the BJD president on February 26."



Students of Kala Bhavan paint during River Festival at the banks of River Ganga in Kolkata on Sunday

PTI

Trump is show business and in Modi, he has found a kindred soul. But will anything meaningful come out of his visit?

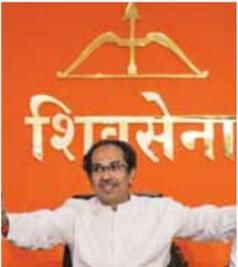


Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election will most likely be repeated in November this year, considering the rate at which things are moving with the Democrats. It isn't surprising, therefore, that Governments across the world, no matter what their personal views on Trump, hitch their wagons to his train. But unlike other pragmatic leaders, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump appear to have a genuine bond, at least in public. The sight of the two men holding hands at the "Howdy Modi" event in Texas dominated world media. It gave heartburn to Opposition politicians not only in India but to other leaders across the world, too. While parents teach their children that they should not look at friendships as *quid pro quo* arrangements, the fact is that India and the US need to leverage the relationship of the two leaders into something much more concrete. Of course, the strengthening of India-US defence collaboration is something that started under former Prime Minister Vajpayee's tenure and was reinforced by the UPA Government under Manmohan Singh. The Modi Government is building on that edifice. India will be buying more American hardware, including helicopters and air defence systems but the signature deal that Trump wants is in trade, which seems to be very far away at the moment. America wants access for its dairy products but India is understandably wary of cattle fed with hormones and animal matter over there. Besides, there's also the need to protect Indian dairy farmers as we are the largest milk producer in the world. On the other hand, India wants access to American markets under favourable terms and the US has said that is only for "developing" nations and as a member of the G-20, India is hardly "developing."

Irrespective of the failure to clinch a trade deal worth just a few dollars — one of the reasons why he is not bringing his key economic aide — Trump's visit will also need the ruling Government to do some tough answering. His appearance today with Modi will take place under conditions when our Government has failed to pass the "religious" test. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which calls for a religion-based code of identity, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR), have put the nation on the boil, with protests refusing to die even two months after they started. The Government's principle of challenging the very Constitution that called for "equality" of all religions by considering some to be less "Indian" than others, has led to several nations, even the UN, expressing concern over its authoritarian ways. The lockdown and detentions in Kashmir have caused much discomfort in the US, even among key Senators, who fear a subvention of democracy in the name of "Hindu India." Allegedly, Trump has vowed not to miss this opportunity to address the issue and is bound to raise it both during his public remarks and certainly in private. He needs Pakistan to keep the Taliban in leash and will need to be seen as pushing some margins in Kashmir. If only as an arm-twisting tactic or to rile up Modi's insecurities at a time when he wants to be seen as a hefty global leader. But we are hard-nosed, too, about business. So treat this as spectator sport; one of the biggest shows that India has ever seen. We could all laugh about the "10 million people" gaffe but there will be more people than Trump has ever seen greeting him. But nothing of substance might come out of it.

Alliance pressure

The Sena doesn't want to burn bridges with either its State allies or the Central BJP leadership



Ever since the Maharashtra Aghadi Government assumed power as an unlikely coalition of divergent ideologies — the Shiv Sena, the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress — there has been much speculation about its lastability. Particularly, the BJP, which lost out the power race despite being the single largest party because of its refusal to accommodate the Shiv Sena, leaves no opportunity to rile up the inherent tensions in the alliance. Which is why Chief

Minister and Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray's flip-flop on some of the most contentious issues like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Population Register (NPR) feathers the split theory considering both the Congress and NCP are vociferously against them. But when both NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut have assured that the alliance government will last five years, it points to a rationalisation of politics at the grassroots level. So the three parties, realising each needs the other to stay relevant, have successfully dissociated the local contexts from the national one. And although they have been long-standing foes for over a quarter of a century over local issues, they are desperate to prop each other up to stay in governance.

The Shiv Sena, being ideologically on the Rightist end of the spectrum, cannot disown the moorings of what made it. It has already successfully rewired nationalism as a definition of Marathi pride. But not quite sure about its run in a convenient arrangement, it doesn't want to exactly burn bridges with the top BJP leadership. To expect it to discard its Right-wing face completely would be wishful thinking. So though he had initial reservations on the CAA, Uddhav is siding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interpretation of it not being against Indian Muslims. The NCP and the Congress are against the exclusionary intent of the CAA, which violates the Constitutional guarantee of equality of all religions. Similarly, Uddhav, while vociferously opposing the profiling-based National Register of Citizens (NRC), is going soft on the NPR, although that is largely being seen as a precursor to the NRC. By walking the thin line, Uddhav is also publicising that he is with the Centre on issues that wouldn't hurt his State. Also, he probably wants to peg the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) on development rather than bringing in the national debate on Hindutva versus secularism. The illusion of calm within the Aghadi was blown off earlier with the Sena favouring an NIA probe into the Elgar Parishad case and NCP-Congress expressing strong dissatisfaction over it. His visit to Ayodhya and the Veer Savarkar issue was hugely discomforting for his partners, too. But such uneasy equations will continue and each party will clench their teeth and fists, knowing the importance of keeping the Government intact. The Sena knows the role of the Congress and the NCP in getting it the chief ministership. The NCP knows it can encash its role as the mediator from both sides. Letting go of the Government and risking the desertion by its regional leadership are the last mistakes the Congress would want to commit. If the alliance is to stay though, it is in the best interest of all three parties to stick to the CMP and not peak out of turn. Else, they could fall to the hawkish plans of the BJP, which loses no opportunity to embarrass the Sena among its core voters. And if they do not budge, they will turn the BJP's dream of the Aghadi crumbling under its own weight into a reality. Unless its back channel diplomacies are making the Sena leaders have second thoughts.

Misplaced enthusiasm

We should focus on the inked papers, determinants and agreements that fructify or don't, pursuant to Trump's visit and not on 'walls' which are of little consequence in policy



BHOPINDER SINGH

"Walls" and the US President Donald Trump seem to have some sticky fixation that goes beyond the contentious Mexico-US border "wall", the cost of building which would be about \$25 billion. The recent case is the much humbler 400-metre-long and seven-feet high wall in Ahmedabad. Trump's visit to this city has led to an estimated drain of ₹100 crore. The said amount will be spent on resurfacing and constructing new roads, on security imperatives, for transport and refreshments of over 1,00,000 guests in the "world's largest stadium", transplanting trees, flower arrangements, cultural extravaganza as also the "contentious" wall-column that seems to have caught public attention for its ostensible purpose.

Clearly, this wall-column hides a slum cluster of some 800 families that dot the unavoidable road stretch — from the airport to the main venue. It does have some security angle, given the heavy population density along the road, which typically necessitates a smooth passage for the presidential entourage. But it is essentially a "beautification" move that is neither unique to India nor necessarily unwarranted in the context of sprucing any location in preparation of such events. It is certainly a sad reflection of the reality that besets any urban dwelling. However, the efforts towards putting forth a "picture-perfect" view is par for course in any civic engagement.

The Government cannot be faulted for projecting a certain ambience and operational flawlessness, especially as the event is aimed to enhance "magnificence" of an emerging India (with the inauguration of the "world's largest stadium"). Putting the best foot forward in terms of visuals is the norm, not the exception. But it certainly is tantamount to glossing over some reality that always lurks in the midst of any city, be it Ahmedabad, New Delhi or even Washington, DC. State visits are necessarily and deliberately over-sanitised and bedecked from all aspects of the diverse reality that always exists in proximity. The majestic drive from the Rashtrapati Bhawan to the splendid Janpath, all the way up to the India Gate, or even to other parts of Lutyens Delhi, does not reflect the socio-economic diversity, reality and depravity of some other parts of the capital that is spared the cavalcade of such dignitaries.

The recent phenomenon initiated by the Modi Government of showcasing different cities across the country (beyond Delhi) is novel as it wily-nilly facilitates a modicum of development therein. Many cities have benefitted from the spotlight — be it Varanasi during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit or Chennai, which hosted Chinese Premier Xi Jinping, Ahmedabad, which had previously hosted Xi and is again prepping for the next high-profile foreign visit, may be benefitting disproportionately



ly from such visits along with the Prime Minister's political constituency of Varanasi. But again, as the son-of-soil of Gujarat and the "people's representative" of Varanasi, he thought he is entitled to that bias.

Similar "walls" had come up at various places in Beijing during the 2008 Olympics. China had strategically used this occasion to announce its "arrival" on the global scale. At that time, the Chinese had spent over \$130 million to just restore and paint their building-temple complexes that dotted the five-mile axis on the main Olympic zone. Much later, Rio de Janeiro had to face much criticism for its "walls of shame" that sprung up to divide the shiny new Olympic city in 2016 from the typical Rio de Janeiro shanties that populated the city. A five mile long highway from the airport was covered with a 10 feet "wall" that was painted with welcoming murals. Everyone knew that it covered the inequities that beset the Brazilian reality.

Later, activists derided such moves as Potemkin displays and used the facade afforded by such "walls" to post expressions of cynicism and revolt against the Government. But then, the alternative of leaving the reality in its naked sores is, perhaps, equally untenable and unhelpful, considering the larger stakes

and ambitions involved in hosting such events.

The Commonwealth Games (CWG) in Delhi in 2010 had led to thick bamboo "curtains" being planted around squalid clusters. Beyond the political blame-game, the event selectively and successfully highlighted New Delhi's gleaming new airport, swanky metro, wide roads with streetlights — an important infrastructural change that did alter the face and perception of the city.

In India, outside Delhi, the architectural development and approach of the city centre from the airport is such that it would entail many improvisations, sprucing up and even the inevitable "walls" from an aesthetic, practical and security perspective. A lot of public emotions is unnecessarily raked with debates on such "walls", which could be more meaningfully directed at the more substantive part of the visit ie, the agreements, compromises and exchanges that take place, which have a long-term impact in affecting people's lives.

While there can never be a universally-agreed formula to determine how much is "too much" on such "walls", common sense suggests that an element of beautification and related requirements does require a semblance of "cover-up." On

the contrary, the public eye on the ball should remain focussed of the inked papers, determinants and agreements (with Trump, even disagreements) that fructify or don't, pursuant to this visit. Puerile debate and passion on "walls" have a tendency to hijack the larger narrative at stake.

It is, perhaps, more pertinent to criticise the waste-of-moment captured in the famous tea ceremony on the swings on the banks of Sabarmati in Ahmedabad when Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted Xi, when at that very moment, the People Liberation Army (PLA) was involved in a face-off with the Indian armed forces at the border. Charm offensives have limited "utility" and the classical *Atithi Devo Bhava* (Guest is God) has very limited resonance with hard-nosed businessmen like Trump or Xi.

Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai (India and China are brothers) of the 1950s is a lesson not to be forgotten as is the memory of the US Naval fleet sailing into the Bay of Bengal in the 1971 Indo-Pak war. The minor "walls" in 2020, though not very elegant, ought not to be the substantive concern of the day.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

“ CHARM OFFENSIVES HAVE LIMITED 'UTILITY' AND THE CLASSICAL ATITHI DEVO BHAVA (GUEST IS GOD) HAS VERY LIMITED RESONANCE WITH HARD-NOSED BUSINESSMEN LIKE TRUMP OR XI. LOOK AT AGREEMENTS, COMPROMISES AND EXCHANGES INSTEAD ”

SOUNDBITE

The rule of law is the most fundamental feature of modern constitutions and its success depends on how judiciaries respond to emerging challenges.



Chief Justice of India — SA Bobde

We feel love, humour, empathy, compassion, hatred...but in overall behaviour of ours, because of education and our upbringing, we know to differentiate between good and bad.



Actor — Riteish Deshmukh

Decolonisation is a process that has to be guided by the needs of communities. People's concerns are varied and it is our collective responsibility to amplify their voices.



UN chief — Antonio Guterres

Nationalism and the slogan, *Bharat Mata Ki Jai*, are being misused to construct a militant and purely emotional idea of India that excludes millions of residents and citizens.



Former Prime Minister — Manmohan Singh

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stop interfering

Sir — It is untenable that China has raised objections to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, claiming that it is in violation of its territorial sovereignty and sabotaged mutual trust with India. New Delhi has done well to stand its ground, pointing out that Arunachal Pradesh is an "integral and inalienable" part of India and Indian leaders routinely travel to the State as they do to any other State.

It has become a habit for Beijing to make unwarranted noises when anyone visits the eastern-most part of the country. It did so even when the Prime Minister was there to lay the foundation stone for a tunnel under the critical Sela mountain pass. But why does it keep raising objections to it? Being a totalitarian regime, it never allows "personal freedom" to flourish. But unlike China, India is a democratic country and individual freedom, culture, religions and so on are always protected here. This is why India has always taken recourse to "polite diplomacy" to make its point.

The Chinese outburst is linked to its frustration. One of

Tourism has opened up new vistas

Man's itinerant exploits introduced him to the wonders of travelling, which have continued since early times. In recent years, it has become much more affordable and convenient for humans to explore unknown territories. More and more people are shedding inhibitions and embarking on pleasure trips to locales across the country. Foreign tours, too, have become common. Exploring new places and appreciating the beauty that nature opens out for guests form the crux of any excursion. Although many travellers love seeing famous monuments, exploring new cultures often provides worthwhile travel experiences. Getting to know about the local people and their lifestyles helps a holiday-maker get an in-depth knowledge of the region. Local food being a fundamental component of a destination's attributes, eating traditional food and cuisine is an integral part of the travel experience.

This is why tourism has opened up new vistas that have enhanced the joys of travelling. The mountains, rivers, the sea and the beaches — all have been given the much-needed tourism "makeover" to make them attractive for visitors. Exploiting the nature's bounties, the Government and other stakeholders have showcased the uniqueness of their land to increase tourism footfalls. Attaining the status of an industry by itself, tourism has gradually



evolved as the chief economic lifeline for many States. However, it is quite disappointing to have the same places in the State featuring as "exotic locales" for years at a stretch with travel operators making no efforts to promote new destinations to hold the interest of tourists. There have been several instances of foreigners touring Goa on their own "discovering" scenic spots that even the locals are not aware of. "Stale" itineraries are the undoing of a system of tourism promotion that refuses to shed the tried-and-tested methods. The need of the hour is to have innovations guiding the grandiose schemes.

Pachu Menon Marga

the major concerns for China is the ongoing infrastructural projects undertaken by our country over there. Beijing maintains that until a settlement on the border issue is achieved, no one can visit

Arunachal. But do we have to pay heed to it? We are a sovereign republic and none can tell us where Indians can travel.

TK Nandanam Chennai

Unaddressed issues

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Message of Shaheen Bagh" (February 19). The protest at

Shaheen Bagh is the longest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The Supreme Court has done well to appoint mediators to open the road blockade. The Government, too, has made it clear that it is ready to negotiate. But it is disheartening that it took the initiative to end the logjam only after a long wait, when the court intervened. Further, the Government's sole interest is to get the road vacated. Shaheen Bagh became a major challenge for it with its peaceful and civil character. What about finding a solution to the concerns raised by the women?

Niharika Via email

Respect orders

Sir — Indeed, protests are meant to serve a wake-up call for democracy. But it is important for Shaheen Bagh protesters to consider the disruption they have caused. They must abide by the Supreme Court's orders.

Ashok Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Mitigate India's water stress

The Govt should come up with a comprehensive roadmap and the States have to step up their efforts for successfully achieving the JJM target



SONIA GROVER

NIYATI SETH

India is a water stressed nation with per capita water availability of about 1,544 cubic metres. It has been ranked 13th among 17 extremely water-stressed countries as listed by the Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas released by the World Resources Institute (WRI). The country, closely followed by neighbouring Pakistan, was under "extremely high" levels of baseline water stress. As many as 12 of the 17 water stressed countries were from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the document warned that climate change may complicate the crisis in coming years.

A region is said to be water-stressed when the demand exceeds the available volume of water or when poor quality restricts its use. Alarming, both groundwater and surface water in the country are extremely exploited. In a grim reflection of the situation in the country, groundwater levels declined by more than eight centimetres per year between 1990 and 2014 in northern India.

The rapidly declining per capita water share, source vulnerability and growing contamination of groundwater are some of the causes for serious concern India. Both surface and groundwater resources are highly exploited and figures released by the Ministry of Jal Shakti paint a dismal picture. About 1,186 of 6,881 groundwater "assessment units" are categorised as over-exploited. It has been reported that India extracts more groundwater than China and the US combined. Also, the latest report of the Niti Aayog mentions that 21 cities of the country will exhaust their groundwater resources soon. Of the States and Union Territories, Chandigarh was the most water-stressed, followed by Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

To address these concerns, the Union Government launched the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) which promises water to every household in the country by 2024. In the Union Budget 2020, under the head of Wellness, Water and Sanitation scheme, (about ₹3.60 lakh crore was approved earlier for the JJM) ₹11,500 crore has been allocated for 2020-2021. The main focus this time will be on source sustainability and augmentation. Various water conservation measures like rainwater harvesting, renovation or rejuvenation of tanks and lakes, reuse of waste water, development of recharge structures, desalination along with watershed development and intensive afforestation will also be undertaken. These measures will not only enhance the water availability of the country but also ensure sustainability of the available resource. This is a much appreciated step as it was the need of the hour. The Government's plan is a well-thought-out approach which will focus on the source which is needed for sustainable management of the resource.

However, the allocated Budget for 2020-21 is just 15 per cent higher than the previous year's Budget that was around ₹10,000 crore (the allocation for 2019-20 was almost double of that for 2018-19). It is an ambitious target to be achieved in the next five years, given that previously the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (currently subsumed under the JJM) aimed at providing drinking water supply in rural areas by 2030 at an estimated cost of ₹6 lakh crore. But the JJM has low Budget allocations with a shorter timeline. Also, the allocation this year is just about three per cent of the total Budget sanctioned for the scheme, given that the first year is critical to impart momentum to this flagship programme. Also, there are lessons to be learnt from past programmes such as the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) which has now been subsumed under the JJM.

The target under the NRDWP was to provide piped water tap connections to 35 per cent of rural households by 2017 but the latest figures of 2019 showed that the connections have only reached around 18 per cent of the households. The performance of NRDWP was not very satisfactory and some of the reasons were that the contribution of States was on the lower side. Also, some States faced paucity of funds for the piped water scheme. Telangana had to borrow money from banks to operationalise its mission for piped drinking water supply from surface water sources (Mission Bhagiratha). Another key factor was that the allocated amount usually remained unspent because of late submission of proposals and the long time taken for implementation of the sanctioned projects.

The Government should come up with a comprehensive road map and the States have to step up their efforts for successfully achieving the mission target. Perhaps 2020 is a crucial year for both the Centre and the State Governments to overcome the challenges and expedite the implementation process.

(Grover is Fellow and Seth is Research Associate, Water Resources, TERI)

THEY SAY WE'VE KEPT OUR WOMEN IN FRONT. ONLY THE LIONESSES HAVE COME OUT AND YOU'RE SWEATING. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF ALL OF US COME TOGETHER.
—AIMIM LEADER WARIS PATHAN

POINT COUNTERPOINT



IT APPEARS PER SE BOTH THE AIMIM AND THE BJP HAVE COME TOGETHER AND CHALKED OUT A DIVISIVE AGENDA.
—MAHARASHTRA PCC GENERAL SECRETARY SACHIN SAWANT

A tricky road ahead

India must ensure that it does not cede ground in dealings with US negotiators accompanying Trump and end up doing what doesn't suit its national interests — an Iran yet again



VIVEK MISHRA

As US President Donald Trump visits Ahmedabad-Agra-Delhi today, the spectrum of expectations remains variegated. Although the agenda of the bilateral meet seems holistic, with a 12-member delegation accompanying Trump during his two-day visit to India, apprehensions remain regarding the deliverables coming out of the trip.

Besides, there have been quite a few changes in Trump's itinerary and agenda, signalling last-minute negotiations, disagreements and possibly discontent on either side, on the key issues of trade. The US has adopted a hard negotiating position vis-a-vis India and has signalled its unwillingness to retract from that stance. Among other things, the US has been reluctant to reinstate India's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) status and has continued to seek market access for its dairy products.

New Delhi has held out till now, but it is going to be difficult to predict the course of negotiations in the coming future. If nothing concrete comes out of bilateral trade talks in the few months following Trump's visit to the country, he could further harden negotiating grounds for the US, as was the case with China.

Even though many have held that the centrepiece of this visit, a substantive/mini-trade deal between the US and India, may have collapsed, the political signalling of Trump's visit is strong for both the countries. For India, it means a continuation of the growth in strength of Indo-US ties with each successive President.

The short, 36-hour stay of Trump is being utilised in the most effective way, in so far as signalling is concerned. The Ahmedabad "Namaste Trump" event, Agra's Taj Mahal stopover and the critically-decisive talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump along with the visit to the Raj Ghat, tie concrete deliverables with cultural symbolism.

For the US, as the domestic primaries are heating up, running up to the presidential elections at the end of the year, the timing and the targeted constituency of the Indian-Americans as vote bank, could draw significant advantages for the Republican Party and the Trump administration.

Trump's tweet that, "We're not treated very well by India", but that he happens to "like Prime Minister Modi a lot" underscores the comfortable-uncomfortability of this visit. Both leaders realise the value of each other's partnership in times when China is not the same option for partnership for either country as they are for each other.

Trump's declaration that he is "saving the big deal" with India for later and he "does not know" if it will be done before the presidential election in November, signals two things: First, that the ongoing negotiations on trade are a hard bargain for either side and that neither party is willing to give concessions or cede positions. Second, both sides have desisted from earmarking a deadline for the finalisation of these negotiations, which speaks of the complex nature of the consultations involved.

In the end, the lack of availability of an immediate trade deal to sign for Trump may not be a pressing irritant. India's trade surplus with the US has significantly come down in the last

“ IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY MEGA TRADE DEALS, BOTH SIDES WILL TETHER THE PROJECTION OF SUCCESSFUL US-INDIA BILATERAL RELATIONS TO DEFENCE DEALS, SECURITY COOPERATION AND A COMMONLY-VISUALISED REGIONAL ORDER IN THE INDO-PACIFIC. AS SUCH, DEFENCE DEALS ARE LIKELY TO BE THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE VISIT. IN PARTICULAR, THE \$2.6 BILLION DEAL TO BUY 24 SEAHAWK HELICOPTERS FROM AMERICAN DEFENCE MANUFACTURER LOCKHEED MARTIN CORPORATION IS GOING TO CAPTURE HEADLINES ”



few years owing to energy imports from it, which is the sixth-largest source of crude oil imports for the country currently. Besides, the US continues to be India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade expected to cross \$150 billion for the first time this year.

In the absence of any mega trade deals, both sides will tether the projection of successful US-India bilateral relations to defence deals, security cooperation and a commonly-visualised regional order in the Indo-Pacific. As such, defence deals are likely to be the highlight of the visit. In particular, the \$2.6 billion deal to buy 24 Seahawk helicopters from American defence manufacturer Lockheed Martin Corporation is going to capture headlines.

The Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Modi recently cleared the purchase of the 24 helicopters and the deal is going to benefit India as these platforms are expected to boost the Navy's anti-submarine warfare operations — an emerging area of maritime cooperation with the US and a critical component of the Indo-Pacific security resolve. At the level of the regional order in Asia, two issues will be very critical during this visit. The Trump administration could nudge New Delhi to play a larger and stronger regional role in the Indo-Pacific region.

First, the role that New Delhi would play in the Indo-Pacific region is of utmost importance to Washington. For a long time, the US and other partners of the Quadrilateral security grouping view India as a "dithering" member. The US views itself as having taken quite a few steps in the Indo-Pacific that haven't been well reciprocated

through actions by India. Among them, the renaming of the Indo-Pacific Command to pragmatically engage India directly in all matters relating to the Indo-Pacific. Washington views New Delhi as a key player in the US' strategy in the Indo-Pacific.

The Raisina Dialogue held in January in New Delhi witnessed an important development regarding the Indo-US joint vision in the Indo-Pacific. The US moved to correct a potential disconnection in the Indo-US common view by declaring that its own vision in the Indo-Pacific now includes the Gulf region, which the US' *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* excluded initially. This small but significant change builds a common platform to advance cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region for both the countries. However, even as both countries try to find common ground in the Indo-Pacific to work with, New Delhi should try to emphasise certain uncompromising positions of geopolitics in this vast region. India's own relation with Iran has to be worked up, despite pressures from Washington and significant cuts in oil imports from Tehran.

India should deftly employ strategic hedging to work with both Iran and the US. While New Delhi knows that for a middle power like it, balancing between two major players — the US and China — is going to be much easier than balancing between a major force and a regionally-strong yet sub-middle power like Iran. The real challenge of diplomacy for India lies in its ability to navigate successfully without creating hostilities, especially in times when partisan geopolitics has threatened to become a diplomatic norm,

beckoning the polarisation that characterised half a century before the current one.

In the continental dimensions of the Indo-Pacific, Afghanistan is going to be a critically-important factor given the timing of domestic politics in that country, China's increasing role in Kabul and the US withdrawal lined up. Trump is a known pusher for India's greater role in Afghanistan and this visit could see a diplomatic nudge to New Delhi to change its role in Afghanistan, if not increase it. President Ghani's return to power in Afghanistan, the US' deal with Taliban to be signed on February 29 and its subsequent withdrawal could be used as diplomatic tropes for India to increase its security role in Afghanistan.

India should be wary that it does not cede ground in dealings with the hard negotiators accompanying Trump and end up doing what doesn't suit its national interests — an Iran yet again. Even if nothing much comes out of the upcoming Trump visit, India should prepare for uncompromising negotiations. Yet, the visit has the potential to catapult bilateral ties to a new level and set new grounds for engagements in the future. If Modi has initiated the culture of "informal talks" with China, with the US it is the "grand events" that mark a distinct note in bilateral relations. As such, the Ahmedabad event in the cricket stadium further pushes the idea of a large gathering to welcome visiting Heads of State towards a concrete diplomatic norm.

(The writer is Deputy Director, Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies, Bhubaneswar and Research Fellow, ICWA, New Delhi)

The monster that they created still lurks

The Reagan Govt spent millions on printing textbooks propagating jihad and disseminating them in Pak madrasas and schools in the 80s



NADEEM PARACHA

In 1992, while working as a reporter for an English-language weekly in Karachi, I was assigned a feature on certain books that were part of the curriculum in schools operating in two low-income areas of the city.

These were not Government schools. They were largely run and funded by "charity organisations", two of which were eventually banned by the Government in 2003. I managed to acquire two Urdu textbooks that were being taught to students between the ages of eight and 12. In simple Urdu, the books had chapters on jihad, infidels, obscenity and so on. When I asked an active member of one of the charity organisations about the books, he told me the tomes were not originally published in Pakistan. To my astonishment, the books were actually reprints

of textbooks that were first authored and printed in the US in the early and mid-1980s. They were then shipped to Pakistan, where they were distributed to various schools and madrasas countrywide and to madrasas and schools in the villages of Afghanistan near the Pak-Afghan border. This was done during the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan between 1980 and 1988. Afghan and Arab insurgents were stationed in Pakistan and sustained by financial aid and support from the US and Saudi Arabia.

In the March 23, 2002 issue of *The Washington Post*, Joe Stephens and David Ottaway write that, during the insurgency, Ronald Reagan's Government spent millions on the printing of textbooks (in Pashto, Dari and Urdu) "filled with violent images and militant teachings, as part of covert attempts to spur resistance to the Soviet occupation." These books were sent to Pakistan with the billions of dollars' worth of "aid" that Pakistan received from the US to facilitate the insurgency.

Stephens and Ottaway add that the books "were filled with talk of holy war and featured drawings of guns, bullets, soldiers and mines." After the Soviet

forces left the region, in the late 1980s, these books became part of the Afghan school system's core curriculum. Stephen and Ottaway write that the same books were also used by the violent Taliban regime that came to power in Kabul in 1996.

In 2002, just months after the US forces ousted the Taliban from power, an American foreign aid official stated that a major "scrubbing operation" in Pakistan and Afghanistan had been launched "to purge from the books all references to killing." This was briefly covered by a 2002 issue of *Daily News*, the now defunct Pakistani English newspaper. The reporter had added that, before "scrubbing" the books that it had circulated, the US was the first non-Muslim power to have propagated "holy war" among Muslims to undermine a "common enemy." This is not correct.

The first to do so was Germany. On October 14, 1914, a senior cleric in Istanbul — which at the time was the capital of the Ottoman Empire — declared a "holy war" against Britain, France, Russia and Serbia. He did this with the approval of the Ottoman Sultan and on the behest of Germany. The bankrupt empire had decided

to become an ally of Germany during World War-I. The Sultan accepted a hefty payment from Germany to bolster the ailing Ottoman economy. He also saw the alliance as an opportunity for the empire to regain the regions that it had lost in the 19th century and onwards.

In the April 2011 issue of the journal *War in History*, historian Mustafa Aksakal writes that, to anti-German forces, the Ottoman jihad proclamation was understood as "a linchpin of the German scheme to revolutionise Muslim populations in territories of Germany's enemies."

According to Aksakal, the German lawyer, historian and archeologist Max von Oppenheim was one of the main architects of the "scheme." A propaganda organisation, the Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient (The Intelligence Bureau for the East), headquartered in Berlin, produced and then circulated jihadist literature among the Muslims of Asian and African territories held by the British. The two most prominent texts in this context were a booklet by Jewish scholar and founder of Modern Islamic Studies in Germany, Eugen Mittwoch and a 1915 brochure by the Muslim scholar Salih Ash-Sharif Al-

Tunisi. According to Samuel Krug, in his essay for the research project *Making War, Mapping Europe*, the booklet contextualised jihad according to contemporary politics, whereas Tunisi's brochure explained it as a binding theological concept. Both texts were published in Berlin by the German Society of Islamic Studies.

The fallouts of the two schemes, one by Germany and the other by the US, were completely different. Due to the fact that Germany and the Ottomans badly lost the war, secular Muslim nationalism and hybrid Leftist ideas completely sidelined the jihadist fervour roused by German propaganda. German and Ottoman defeats strengthened secular nationalist narratives in Muslim countries and discarded theocratic ideas.

On the other hand, as British author Jonathan Steele demonstrates in his 2011 book, *Ghosts of Afghanistan*, even though it was the collapsing Soviet economy that forced Soviet forces to leave Afghanistan and then the stopping of aid to the Government that it left behind in Kabul, the US and Pakistan spun the Soviet departure to mean a "victory of faith against communism." It was this perception that saw

militant propaganda devised by the US to linger in the region. No wonder then, when the US forces invaded Kabul to topple the Taliban regime in 2001, they found madrasas still using textbooks that the US had circulated in the 1980s. What's more, according to a December 2014 report in *The Washington Post*, despite the fact that, ever since 2002, Unicef in Afghanistan destroyed almost half a million of these books, many were still being taught to children in areas under the control of Taliban insurgents.

In 2015, Pakistani soldiers found similar textbooks in seminars and schools in areas that were once dominated by extremist groups. These groups were ousted through a military operation. In other words, until 2015, textbooks authored and published in the US in the 1980s to glorify "holy war" in the minds of young Muslims were still being used in various seminars and schools of the region.

Some commentators suspect many of these tomes are still out there. And they are expected to make a full comeback if (and/or when) the Taliban manage to return to power after the imminent departure of US forces. (Courtesy Dawn)



FOREIGN EYE



VICTORY OF THE GREEN BRIGADE

The return of the blue whale, the world's most majestic ocean traveller to southern waters should serve as a showpiece for wider possibilities of conservation. Ecological wrongs can be righted, or at least mitigated, with sufficient will and organisation. The more general comeback of the whale, for which environmental campaigners should take a great deal of credit, can be an inspiration for victories yet to be won. (The Guardian editorial)

TOPPERS

Scheme	NAV	1Yr %	Fund-Reg(G)	Aditya Birla SL Resurgent India Fund-2-Reg(G)	12.77	16.94	Tata Index Fund-Nifty Plan(G)	73.15	13.10	Franklin India Equity Advantage Fund(G)	80.90	9.39		
SBI Tax Advantage Fund-III-Reg(G)	30.41	40.99	ICICI Pru US Bluechip Equity Fund(G)	33.33	21.42	IDBI Equity Advantage Fund-Reg(G)	28.52	16.89	UTI MEPUS	113.81	13.08	ICICI Pru Value Fund-13(D)	10.60	9.39
SBI Tax Advantage Fund-II(G)	43.91	37.90	Principal Emerging Bluechip Fund(G)	115.06	21.29	Edelweiss Large Cap Fund(G)	38.62	16.82	UTI Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	91.68	13.08	ICICI Pru Bharat Consumption Fund-3-(G)	10.79	9.32
SBI LT Advantage Fund-IV-Reg(G)	15.39	34.38	DSP Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	52.63	21.26	SBI Equity Opp Fund-Sr IV-Reg(G)	16.52	16.75	Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Sr I-Reg(G)	14.31	13.05	Franklin India Opportunities Fund(G)	73.92	9.15
Sundaram Services Fund-Reg(G)	13.67	33.81	PGIM India Diversified Equity Fund-Reg(G)	14.56	21.03	SBI BlueChip Fund-Reg(G)	41.59	16.69	SBI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	103.80	12.89	Aditya Birla SL Mfg. Equity Fund-Reg(G)	13.28	9.12
BNP Paribas India Consumption Fund-Reg(G)	13.95	33.67	Axis Capital Builder Fund-4-Reg(G)	12.04	21.01	L&T Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	142.57	16.66	Principal Dividend Yield Fund(G)	55.84	12.88	HDFC Equity Fund(G)	661.37	9.02
Invesco India PSU Equity Fund(G)	20.39	33.18	Tata Large & Mid Cap Fund(G)	222.75	20.98	Sundaram Emerging Small Cap-Sr-II-Reg(G)	8.96	16.61	Aditya Birla SL Nifty Next 50 ETF	289.23	12.84	Canara Rob Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	10.91	8.99
Sundaram Multi Cap Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)	11.99	31.50	IDFC Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	40.79	20.93	SBI LT Advantage Fund-I-Reg(G)	14.18	16.60	IDBI Focused 30 Equity Fund-Reg(G)	10.39	12.81	Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Reg(G)	9.78	8.99
Sundaram Multi Cap Fund-Sr I-Reg(G)	12.02	31.27	Aditya Birla SL Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	31.05	20.82	Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity Fund-A(G)	24.50	16.58	Franklin India Technology Fund(G)	180.20	12.77	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series IX-Reg(G)	13.16	8.40
DSP Equity Fund-Reg(G)	46.00	30.85	Kotak India Growth Fund-Sr 5(G)	10.64	20.64	ICICI Pru Value Fund-18(G)	12.33	16.54	HDFC Growth Opp Fund-Reg(G)	116.57	12.73	Kotak India Growth Fund-Sr 4(G)	9.58	8.44
Invesco India Smallcap Fund-Reg(G)	12.29	30.47	Sundaram Large and Mid Cap Fund(G)	38.15	20.63	DSP US Flexible Equity Fund-Reg(G)	28.81	16.43	Aditya Birla SL Index Fund-Reg(G)	118.46	12.70	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series VIII-Reg(G)	10.73	8.38
Sundaram Fin Serv Opp Fund(G)	48.12	30.30	Sundaram Select Focus(G)	198.23	20.51	Canara Rob Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	46.89	16.35	IDBI Nifty Index Fund(G)	22.27	12.70	IDBI Long Term Value Fund-Reg(G)	10.73	8.38
Sundaram Select Small Cap Series-VI-Reg(G)	11.17	29.93	Tata India Pharma & Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	10.14	20.43	HDFC Sensex ETF	4334.06	16.34	Nippon India Index Fund - Nifty Plan(G)	20.20	12.69	Principal Nifty 100 Equal Weight Fund(G)	71.81	8.36
Sundaram Select Small Cap Series-V-Reg(G)	11.45	29.78	Mirae Asset Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	12.11	20.35	Aditya Birla SL Sensex ETF	384.91	16.31	IDFC Tax Advt(ELSS) Fund-Reg(G)	56.89	12.63	Edelweiss ETF - Nifty 100 Quality 30	289.77	8.33
Tata Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	21.49	28.94	Invesco India Tax Plan(G)	56.78	20.30	Tata Value Fund-Sr-2-Reg(G)	10.26	16.25	Nippon India Power & Infra Fund(G)	97.25	12.59	Tata Digital India Fund-Reg(G)	16.13	8.20
Invesco India Infrastructure Fund(G)	19.33	28.52	SBI Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	16.15	20.28	Franklin Asian Equity Fund(G)	24.96	16.22	Tata India Consumer Fund-Reg(G)	18.58	12.58	DSP World Agriculture Fund-Reg(G)	17.62	8.14
Motilal Oswal Midcap 30 Fund-Reg(G)	29.03	28.52	L&T Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	11.89	20.28	Tata Value Fund-Sr-1-Reg(G)	10.59	16.19	Nippon India Pharma Fund(G)	165.19	12.50	UTI Dividend Yield Fund-Reg(G)	66.83	7.98
ICICI Pru Smallcap Fund(G)	27.73	28.44	Invesco India Multicap Fund(G)	52.54	20.26	Baroda Multi Cap Fund(G)	104.72	16.12	Aditya Birla SL MNC Fund-Reg(G)	812.57	12.49	UTI LT Adv Fund-IV(G)	10.39	7.91
SBI Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	20.71	28.32	DSP Equity Opportunities Fund-Reg(G)	241.00	20.02	IDBI Diversified Equity Fund(G)	22.68	16.07	Franklin India Index Fund-NSE Nifty(G)	95.48	12.47	Franklin India Equity Fund(G)	597.79	7.79
Kotak World Gold Fund(G)	11.16	28.20	IDFC Equity Opportunity-6-Reg(G)	11.28	19.62	Kotak US Equity Fund(G)	19.17	16.05	DSP Global Allocation Fund-Reg(G)	13.80	12.42	UTI LT Adv Fund-V(G)	9.54	7.67
Franklin India Feeder - Franklin U.S. Opportunities Fund(G)	38.34	28.14	Import of AIR MASKS (in crore)			IDFC Sensex ETF	424.86	16.03	Aditya Birla SL Resurgent India Fund-3-Reg(G)	12.23	12.41	IDFC Sterling Value Fund-Reg(G)	49.64	7.66
Axis Focused 25 Fund-Reg(G)	32.29	27.93				Invesco India Largecap Fund(G)	31.07	16.02	Baroda ELSS 96(G)	46.22	12.32	UTI Core Equity Fund-Reg(G)	61.79	7.66
Sundaram Select Small Cap Series-III-Reg(G)	16.30	27.93				Nippon India Banking Fund(G)	286.75	15.97	UTI Nifty Next 50 Index Fund-Reg(G)	10.2312.30		HDFC Top 100 Fund(G)	486.04	7.63
Sundaram Select Small Cap Series-IV-Reg(G)	16.31	27.74				Baroda Mid-cap Fund(G)	9.61	15.92	SBI Technology Opp Fund-Reg(G)	71.74	12.27	Sundaram Smart NIFTY 100 Eq Weight Fund-Reg(G)	11.81	7.54
Axis Long Term Equity Fund-Reg(G)	51.84	27.28				PGIM India Large Cap Fund(G)	179.32	15.91	ICICI Pru Nifty Next 50 ETF	28.97	12.24	Nippon India Capital Builder Fund-IV-B(G)	7.80	7.51
SBI Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	162.49	27.27				Kotak Infra & Eco Reform Fund(G)	20.52	15.90	L&T Equity Fund-Reg(G)	84.95	12.23	ICICI Pru Nifty Low Vol 30 ETF	91.72	7.49
Baroda Banking & Fin Serv Fund(G)	26.16	26.56				IDFC Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	35.13	15.91	Aditya Birla SL Tax Relief '96(ELSS)	33.09	12.21	ICICI Pru NV20 ETF	57.83	7.39
Invesco India Financial Services Fund(G)	64.22	26.44				HDFC Index Fund-Sensex(G)	365.86	15.81	Aditya Birla SL Tax Relief '96(G)	33.09	12.21	SBI-ETF Sensex Next 50	325.80	7.12
DSP Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	12.41	26.08				DSP India T.I.G.E.R Fund-Reg(G)	91.58	15.81	Aditya Birla SL Frontline Equity Fund(G)	232.96	12.19	UTI LT Adv Fund-VII(G)	8.90	6.81
Axis Emerging Opp Fund-1-Reg(G)	14.17	25.96				Sundaram Emerging Small Cap-Sr-I-Reg(G)	8.67	15.76	Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity Fund-B(G)	19.45	12.15	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series XIV-Reg(G)	8.58	6.59
Axis Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	42.76	25.62				Baroda Large Cap Fund(G)	15.59	15.74	PGIM India Large Cap Fund-2-Reg(G)	13.08	12.02	IDFC Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	14.04	6.44
PGIM India Global Equity Opp Fund(G)	22.66	25.54				IDFC Core Equity Fund-Reg(G)	47.82	15.73	IDBI Small Cap Fund(G)	9.55	11.96	Templeton India Equity Income Fund(G)	46.68	6.42
Canara Rob Consumer Trends Fund-Reg(G)	45.71	25.51				HDFC Mid-Cap Opportunities Fund(G)	57.43	15.72	Aditya Birla SL Resurgent India Fund-5-Reg(G)	9.79	11.89	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series XII-Reg(G)	9.68	5.34
L&T Emerging Opp Fund-II-Reg(D)	11.00	25.19				UTI Mastershare-Reg(G)	131.81	15.65	Principal Global Opportunities Fund(G)	32.33	11.70	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series XI-Reg(G)	10.26	5.00
UTI Focussed Equity Fund-I(G)	15.27	25.13				ICICI Pru Growth Fund-1(DP)	11.83	15.64	ICICI Pru Nifty Next 50 Index Fund(G)	25.40	11.69	SBI Contra Fund-Reg(G)	105.05	5.22
Kotak Emerging Equity Fund(G)	43.60	25.09				Mirae Asset Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	54.35	15.63	Tata Large Cap Fund(G)	232.83	15.63	HDFC Equity Opp Fund-Sr 2-1126D-May 2017(1)-Reg(G)	32.06	4.95
UTI Focussed Equity Fund-IV(G)	11.01	24.99				Tata Index Fund-Sensex Plan(G)	101.49	15.58	Motilal Oswal Multicap 35 Fund-Reg(G)	27.71	15.57	Aditya Birla SL Small Cap Fund(G)	8.50	4.93
Motilal Oswal Focused 25 Fund-Reg(G)	24.78	24.98				35 Fund-Reg(G)	27.71	15.57	ICICI Pru Sensex Index Fund(G)	12.79	15.55	UTI LT Adv Fund-VI(G)	8.29	4.89
Kotak Small Cap Fund(G)	80.24	24.97				ICICI Pru Sensex Index Fund(G)	12.79	15.55	Nippon India Capital Builder Fund-IV-D(G)	7.93	11.61	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series X-Reg(G)	8.51	4.88
Axis Bluechip Fund-Reg(G)	33.43	24.97				Nippon India ETF Nifty Midcap	15067.39	15.50	Edelweiss Emerging Markets Opp Eq. Offshore Fund-Reg(G)	14.02	11.60	IDFC Equity Opportunity-4-Reg(G)	7.47	6.26
DSP Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	61.74	24.58				Kotak India EQ Contra Fund(G)	56.56	15.47	Nippon India Multi Cap Fund(G)	100.08	11.59	Aditya Birla SL Resurgent India Fund-4-Reg(G)	9.92	6.21
SBI LT Advantage Fund-VI-Reg(G)	11.76	24.56				SBI Magnum Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	77.28	15.47	IDBI Nifty Junior Index Fund(G)	21.61	11.54	ICICI Pru India Opp Fund(G)	10.27	6.20
Aditya Birla SL India GenNext Fund(G)	94.77	24.52				Nippon India Value Fund(G)	76.81	15.32	PGIM India Euro Equity Fund(G)	14.89	11.45	HDFC TaxSaver(G)	508.13	6.16
Axis Emerging Opp Fund-2-Reg(G)	13.56	24.40				Edelweiss ETF - Nifty Bank	3152.30	15.30	Sundaram TOP 100-Sr VII-Reg(G)	12.71	11.43	ICICI Pru Manufacture in India Fund(G)	10.23	6.12
Edelweiss Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	12.37	24.36				Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)	15.67	15.24	ICICI Pru Global Stable Equity Fund(FOF)(G)	17.08	11.42	JM Large Cap Fund(G)	68.13	5.80
Canara Rob Bluechip Equity Fund-Reg(G)	28.46	24.28				SBI PSU Fund-Reg(G)	10.34	15.11	SBI Consumption Opp Fund-Reg(G)	122.68	11.36	Sundaram Value Fund-VIII-Reg(G)	10.92	5.61
Motilal Oswal Long Term Equity Fund-Reg(G)	19.52	24.27				Nippon India Index Fund - Sensex Plan(G)	20.22	15.02	Invesco India Feeder - Invesco Fund(G)	14.14	11.35	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series X-Reg(G)	9.32	5.37
BNP Paribas Mid Cap Fund(G)	35.74	24.25				Edelweiss Multi-Cap Fund-Reg(G)	15.57	14.99	Aditya Birla SL Midcap Fund(G)	288.93	11.39	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series XI-Reg(G)	9.68	5.34
PGIM India Midcap Opp Fund-Reg(G)	20.40	24.24				JM Core 11 Fund(G)	9.74	14.95	SBI Consumption Opp Fund-Reg(G)	122.68	11.36	SBI Contra Fund-Reg(G)	105.05	5.22
JM Multicap Fund(G)	35.91	24.06				L&T Tax Advt Fund-Reg(G)	56.57	14.94	Invesco India Feeder - Invesco Fund(G)	14.14	11.35	HDFC Equity Opp Fund-Sr 2-1126D-May 2017(1)-Reg(G)	32.06	4.95
Axis Multicap Fund-Reg(G)	13.29	23.86				Tata Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	55.91	14.83	Aditya Birla SL Global Emerging Opp Fund(G)	14.72	18.52	Aditya Birla SL Small Cap Fund(G)	8.50	4.93
DSP World Gold Fund-Reg(G)	15.25	23.83				Nippon India Capital Builder Fund-IV-A(G)	10.40	14.72	SBI Magnum Equity ESG Fund-Reg(G)	14.72	18.52	UTI LT Adv Fund-VI(G)	8.29	4.89
BNP Paribas Large Cap Fund(G)	100.35	23.77				SBI Magnum Global Fund-Reg(G)	183.61	14.69	Sundaram Small Cap Fund(G)	83.15	14.62	Sundaram Value Fund-VII-Reg(G)	8.51	4.88
DSP Focus Fund-Reg(G)	25.83	23.71				Tata Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	11.04	14.66	Nippon India India Opp Fund-Sr-A(G)	11.01	14.55	ICICI Pru Value Discovery Fund(G)	140.86	4.81
Invesco India Midcap Fund(G)	55.27	23.51				Franklin India Focused Equity Fund(G)	42.16	14.66	Sundaram Value Fund-III-Reg(G)	17.72	14.54	HDFC Capital Builder Value Fund(G)	286.124.80	
Nippon India US Equity Opp Fund(G)	18.66	23.44				Sundaram Emerging Small Cap-Sr-V-Reg(G)	10.28	14.40	Sundaram Infra Advantage Fund(G)	32.97	14.53	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series XVI-Reg(G)	7.79	4.52
BNP Paribas Long Term Equity Fund(G)	43.18	23.37				Sundaram Small Cap Fund(G)	83.15	14.62	Edelweiss Multi-Cap Fund-Reg(G)	15.57	14.99	ICICI Pru Focused Equity Fund(G)	28.94	4.51
Mirae Asset Emerging Bluechip-Reg(G)	59.58	23.37				Nippon India India Opp Fund-Sr-A(G)	11.01	14.55	JM Core 11 Fund(G)	9.74	14.95	DSP Equal Nifty 50 Fund-Reg(G)	9.75	4.35
Axis Growth Opp Fund-Reg(G)	12.58	23.33				Principal Multi Cap Growth Fund(G)	149.6814.34		L&T Tax Advt Fund-Reg(G)	56.57	14.94	Franklin India Smaller Cos Fund(G)	51.11	4.30
Canara Rob Equity Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	73.89	23.29				Nippon India Focused Equity Fund(G)	48.45	14.32	Tata Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	55.91	14.83	Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr V-Reg(G)	8.17	4.29
UTI Focussed Equity Fund-V(G)	10.66	23.21				Sundaram Value Fund-III-Reg(G)	17.72	14.54	Nippon India Capital Builder Fund-IV-A(G)	10.40	14.72	Aditya Birla SL Resurgent India Fund-7-Reg(G)	7.96	4.05
JM Tax Gain Fund(G)	19.18	23.20				Sundaram Infra Advantage Fund(G)	32.97	14.53	SBI Magnum Global Fund-Reg(G)	183.61	14.69	Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Reg(G)	8.31	3.98
UTI Focussed Equity Fund-VI(G)	11.17	23.11				Sundaram Emerging Small Cap-Sr-IV-Reg(G)	10.28	14.40	Franklin India Focused Equity Fund(G)	42.16	14.66	PGIM India LT Equity Fund-Reg(G)	14.67	10.88
Nippon India Growth Fund(G)	1242.92	23.03				Sundaram Small Cap Fund(G)	83.15	14.62	Tata Equity P/E Fund(G)	137.88	11.01	ICICI Pru Value Fund-16(G)	11.23	10.86
Principal Focused Multicap Fund(G)	72.04	22.70				Nippon India India Opp Fund-Sr-A(G)	11.01	14.55	ICICI Pru FMCG Fund(G)	252.97	10.93	Nippon India Quant Fund(G)	26.89	10.64
Kotak Equity Opp Fund(G)	134.02	22.70				Sundaram Value Fund-III-Reg(G)	17.72	14.54	PGIM India LT Equity Fund-Reg(G)	14.67	10.88	Principal Tax Savings Fund	210.89	10.47
BNP Paribas Multi Cap Fund(G)	51.71	22.50				Sundaram Infra Advantage Fund(G)	32.97	14.53	ICICI Pru Value Fund-16(G)	11.23	10.86	Sundaram Global Brand Fund(G)	18.58	10.46
Tata Mid Cap Growth Fund(G)	153.54	22.11				Sundaram Emerging Small Cap-Sr-III-Reg(G)	10.28	14.40	ICICI Pru Value Fund-16(G)	11.23	10.86	L&T Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	15.76	10.44
ICICI Pru LT Wealth Enhancement Fund(G)	11.94	22.09				Sundaram Emerging Small Cap-Sr-IV-Reg(G)	10.28	14.40	ICICI Pru Value Fund-16(G)	11.23	10.86	Aditya Birla SL Global Real Estate Fund(G)	21.77	10.39
L&T Emerging Opp Fund-I-Reg(D)	10.39	22.00				Sundaram Emerging Small Cap-Sr-III-Reg(G)	10.28	1						

AGR-HIT TELECOM INDUSTRY

Govt officials discuss options for relief to telcos

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of the telecom department and other key ministries met on Sunday to discuss urgent relief measures that can be extended to the telecom industry, which is battling an unprecedented crisis on account of massive statutory dues it owes the government.

The meeting, held at the Department of Telecom, lasted for over an hour and is said to have deliberated on options before the Government to provide much-needed lifeline to

the AGR-hit industry.

Telecom czar and Chairman of Bharti Airtel Sunil Mittal had last week made an appeal to the government for cut in levies and taxes to pull the sector out of what he had described as an "unprecedented crisis".

Telecom department officials remained tightlipped after high-level government meeting on Sunday, where officials from NITI Aayog and Finance Ministry are said to have been present. DoT Secretary Anshu Prakash remained unavailable

for comments. The crucial meeting comes at a time when the telecom companies are staring at ₹1.47 lakh crore in unpaid dues — ₹92,642 crore in unpaid licence fee and another ₹55,054 crore in outstanding spectrum usage charges.

Of the estimated dues that include interest and penalty for late payments, Airtel and Vodafone Idea owe about 60 per cent.

While Airtel has raised \$3 billion in last few months and is expected to have sufficient

funds to tide over the AGR crisis, Vodafone Idea — that has only paid just seven per cent of its total ₹53,000 crore statutory dues — remains deeply vulnerable.

The Government, meanwhile, is looking to strike a balance between complying with the Supreme Court order on AGR dues, ensuring health of the sector and safeguarding consumer interest.

Both Mittal and VIL Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla continued to meet top government functionaries throughout last week to seek prompt measures that would offer a breather to the sector.

A top Government official had said recently that attempts are being made to balance the need for health of the sector, consumer interest while complying with the Supreme Court order on statutory dues.

Although the official had



not elaborated, sector watchers had said the statement alludes to the government keen on ensuring adequate competition by retaining the present three-plus-one model of competition (three private players

and one public sector company). The statutory dues arose after the Supreme Court, in October last year, upheld the government's position on including revenue from non-core businesses in calculating

the annual Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) of telecom companies, a share of which is paid as licence and spectrum fee to the exchequer.

The Supreme Court earlier this month rejected a plea by

mobile carriers such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Ltd for extension in the payment schedule and asked all of them to deposit an estimated ₹1.47 lakh crore in past dues for spectrum and licences.

It threatened to initiate contempt proceedings against top executives of these firms for non-payment.

Some telecom firms are already struggling with mounting losses and debt and the additional liability has raised concerns of them defaulting on existing loans.

Vodafone Idea has so far paid only ₹3,500 crore in two tranches. Airtel has paid ₹10,000 crore out of its estimated liability of over ₹35,000 crore. Tata Teleservices has paid ₹2,197 crore, the entire outstanding it believes to have arisen after the October ruling of the apex court for calculating dues.

DoT's test checks on variations in telcos AGR dues standard audit procedure: COAI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Termining "test checks" proposed by the Government on telcos' AGR arithmetic as standard audit procedure, Industry body COAI has said the DoT needs to ensure consistency among its different circles on calculation of dues to minimise any differences.

Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) also cautioned that any decision to encash bank guarantees will precipitate an already precarious situation.

COAI Director General, Rajan Mathews told PTI.

Mathews termed the 'test checks' being proposed by the telecom department to examine deviation in calculation of dues by companies as a "standard audit procedure".

He pointed out that while amounts need to be finalised as soon as possible, operators too should be given a fair opportunity to explain the deviations in calculation.

"There should be consistency amongst all LSAs (Licensed Service Areas) of the DoT (Department of Telecommunications) on how the amounts are calculated, so the differences are minimised,"

Mathews added. The Government has made it clear that it will verify the companies' claims on AGR math and examine any deviations from its own calculation, through random 'test checks' before March 17.

The Government will conduct 'test check' for any one year (of telcos' dues) to examine variances between telecom companies' assessment and the government's own calculation of AGR liabilities.

The test check will happen for all telecom firms, but could start with those, which have already claimed they have made full and final settlement towards their statutory liabilities, like Tata Teleservices.

In all, as many as 15 entities owe the government ₹1.47 lakh crore — ₹92,642 crore in unpaid licence fee and another ₹55,054 crore in outstanding spectrum usage charges.

These dues arose after the Supreme Court, in October last year, upheld the government's position on including revenue from non-core businesses in calculating the annual adjusted gross revenue (AGR) of telecom companies, a share of which is paid as licence and spectrum fee to the exchequer.

The Supreme Court earlier this month rejected a plea by mobile carriers such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Ltd

for extension in the payment schedule and asked them to deposit an estimated ₹1.47 lakh crore in past dues for spectrum and licences.

The apex court had warned that it will initiate contempt proceedings against top executives of these firms for non-payment.

Some telecom firms are already struggling with mounting losses and debt, and the additional liability has raised concerns of them defaulting on existing loans.

Of the estimated dues that include interest and penalty for late payments, Airtel and Vodafone Idea owe about 60 per cent. Vodafone Idea is confronted with total AGR dues of over ₹53,000 crore. Of this, it has so far paid only ₹3,500 crore in two tranches earlier this week.

Airtel has so far paid ₹10,000 crore out of its estimated liability of over ₹35,000 crore. Tata Teleservices has paid ₹2,197 crore, the entire outstanding it believes to have arisen after the October ruling of the apex court for calculating dues.

Tata Teleservices and Tata Teleservices Maharashtra have submitted to the government the details of calculation in support of its payment, but sources in the DoT said that wide gap between the company's calculations.

Global community has opportunity to design new int'l taxation: Nirmala

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said the international community has a unique opportunity to design a new international tax system to handle the challenges of digitalisation with a cost-efficient dispute prevention mechanism.

She called upon the G20 countries to ensure that the consensus solution being developed by G20 inclusive framework for addressing tax challenges arising from digitalisation is truly inclusive, according to tweets by the Finance Ministry.

The Finance Minister emphasised on the need for a closer collaboration between revenue agencies to investigate tax affairs of offenders who cross-borders for escaping tax investigation, a tweet said.

During the second day of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in Riyadh, Sitharaman highlighted the efforts under-

She called upon the G20 countries to ensure that the consensus solution being developed by G20 inclusive framework for addressing tax challenges arising from digitalisation is truly inclusive, according to tweets by the Finance Ministry

it default swap market, changing the method of buying and selling bonds electronically through exchanges, and facilitating on-tap issuances for all, among others, for further enabling greater investments in India's bond market.

Speaking during the session on infrastructure investment, Sitharaman welcomed the efforts underway in G20 to develop infrastructure technology — the InfraTech Agenda.

However, she also cautioned that G20 should refrain from developing any common prescriptive approach since various countries are at varied stages of adoption of technology in infrastructure, according to the tweets.

The Minister highlighted successful Indian experience in the area of adoption of technology in infrastructure such as FASTags. She also pointed out the efforts being taken for installation of smart energy meters across India to reduce revenue leakages.

FM appraises G-20 on steps taken to boost Indian bond market

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday appraised the G-20 countries on the steps taken in the Union Budget to open up India's bond market.

During the Finance Ministers & Central Bank Governors meeting in Riyadh, she outlined the efforts taken to deepen India's bond market such as removal of capital controls for identified categories of G-Secs and increased FPI limit on corporate bond market in the session on "Financial Resilience & Development" on the second day of the conference, the Finance Ministry said.

FPI limits with respect to investment in corporate bonds are proposed to be increased to 15 per cent. This may be a step towards local bond inclusion in global indices and internationalisation of the rupee.

The Finance Minister's announcement should help boost investments in the Indian debt market, the Ministry said, adding Sitharaman looked forward to continued engagement with the G20 on this agenda.

Hiking the FPI limit in corporate bonds and concessional tax rate on interest income earned by FPIs are among the steps that can increase capital flows into the market.

To promote a deep and liquid market, the government has announced that a netting legislation would be formulated to expand the scope of the corporate default swaps market. This would also significantly help banks manage their capital requirements and exposure monitoring.

Sitharaman also congratulated the G20's Saudi Presidency for identifying development of capital markets as a priority area.

Natural gas prices in India likely to be cut by steep 25% from April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Natural gas prices in India are likely to be cut by a steep 25 per cent beginning April, in line with the slump in global rates, sources said.

The price of most of the natural gas produced by state-owned ONGC and Oil India Ltd, which account for the bulk of India's existing gas output, is likely to be cut to around \$2.5 per million British thermal unit for the six-month period beginning April 1, from \$3.23 as of now.

This will be the second reduction in six months and will reduce rates to the lowest in two-and-half-years.

Sources said the price of gas produced from difficult fields too is likely to be cut to \$5.50 from \$8.43 per mmbtu now.

Prices of natural gas, which is used to produce fertiliser and generate electricity and is also converted into CNG for use in automobiles as fuel and cooking gas for households, are set every six months — on April 1 and October 1 each year.

The rates, besides dictating the price of urea, electricity and CNG, also decide the revenue of gas producers such as Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC).

Natural gas price was last cut by 12.5 per cent on October 1. Rates were cut to \$3.23 per mmbtu from earlier \$3.69. For difficult fields, the rates were cut from an all-time high of \$9.32 per mmbtu to \$8.43.

Sources said the reduction would impact revenues of India's biggest producer ONGC as well as Reliance Industries and its partner BP plc which plan to start gas production from their 'second-wave' of discoveries in eastern offshore KG-D6 block from mid-2020.

The cut in price will lower the earnings of producers like ONGC but will also lead to a reduction in the price of CNG, which uses natural gas as input.

It would also lead to lower cost of natural gas piped to households (PNG) for cooking purposes as well as of feedstock cost for the manufacturing of fertilisers and petrochemicals.

Central Bank of India plans to exit housing finance subsidiary

PTI ■ MUMBAI

State-run Central Bank of India is looking to sell its entire 64.40 per cent stake in its housing finance subsidiary — Cent Bank Home Finance (CBHFL), a top bank official said. The lender has floated a request for proposal (RFP) for appointing merchant bankers. The shortlisted bankers will help the lender scout for a potential investor to buy its

stake in the mortgage financier. "We plan to exit from Cent Bank Home Finance. The bank already provides housing loans, and so, we feel that there is no need to have a housing finance subsidiary," Central Bank of India managing director and chief executive officer, Pallav Mohapatra, told PTI.

The bank holds 64.40 per cent in the unlisted housing finance company, while the remaining stake is held by

Housing & Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), Unit Trust of India (UTI) and National Housing Bank (NHB). The bank is facing operational curbs under the Reserve Bank's (RBI) prompt corrective action (PCA) framework.

Mohapatra said the process of determining the valuation of the Bhopal-headquartered home finance company will begin as soon as the merchant bankers are appointed.

Lotteries to attract 28% GST from March 1

New Delhi: A 28 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) will be levied on lotteries from March 1, according to a notification. The GST Council had in December last year decided to impose a single rate of 28 per cent on state-run and authorised lotteries.

The revenue department notified the GST rate on supply of lotteries and amended its earlier Central Tax (Rate) notification. Accordingly, the Central Tax rate for supply of lotteries has been amended to 14 per cent and a similar percentage will be levied by the states. This

will take the total GST incidence on lotteries to 28 per cent.

"This notification shall come into force on the 1st day of March, 2020," the revenue department notification said.

Currently, a state-run lottery attracts 12 per cent GST, while a state-authorised lottery attracts 28 per cent tax.

There were demands that a uniform tax rate should be imposed on lotteries following which a group of ministers were set up to suggest the GST rate. Following this, the GST Council in December voted for a single rate of 28 per cent on

supply of lotteries. AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said: "Gambling in the form of Lottery has been allowed in a few states, where it has penetrated at grass root levels, now changing the tax rate from a prospective date would help the dealers in effectively implementing the new tax rate".

EY Tax Partner Abhishek Jain said a uniform rate on lottery brings a parity between state-run and authorized lotteries; thereby aligning an equal footing for businesses in the same line. PTI

CAIT may challenge stay on CCI probe against Amazon, Flipkart

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Following the Karnataka High Court ordering a stay on the anti-trust probe against e-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) is likely to file a petition challenging the stay in the Supreme Court in the coming week.

Speaking to IANS, Praveen Khandelwal, National General Secretary of CAIT said that the trade body's lawyers are currently working on filing a petition.

"I hope by Thursday or Friday we will be able to file the petition. The lawyers are already working on it," he said.

"We can go to Supreme Court, because that is the right forum as the High Court has given its order. Most likely, it will be Supreme Court," Khandelwal told IANS.

On February 14, the Karnataka High Court ordered a stay on the CCI probe into violation of competition laws by e-commerce majors. The order came on the writ petition filed by Amazon seeking a stay on the investigation.

The High Court was of the view that the ongoing investi-

gation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) should be completed first. Last year, the ED initiated investigation against both Amazon and Flipkart for alleged violation of the foreign exchange law.

The anti-trust body had in January ordered an enquiry into the operations of both Amazon and Flipkart on multiple counts, including deep discounts and exclusive tie-ups with preferred sellers.

Further, days after the Karnataka High Court ordered a stay, Walmart-backed Flipkart moved the court urging it to set aside the probe. In its writ petition, Flipkart Internet Private Ltd said that although the High Court has ordered a stay on the investigation, the probe order of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) "deserves to be set aside".

It said that the CCI directed an investigation without the existence of a "prima facie" case. It further said that the order was passed in a pre-determined manner, by treating allegations of abuse of dominance as an anti-competitive agreement.

In its petition, Flipkart also questioned the "bona fides" of

CAIT, which has been protesting against what it calls "deep discounts" by the e-commerce majors and reached out to the CCI and the government against them.

"The CCI is duty bound to act with caution, especially, in assessing the bona fides of the informant. In this, the petitioner submits that Confederation of All India Traders has repeatedly indulged in forum shopping against the petitioner by approaching various judicial forums, directly and through its sister entities raising exactly the same baseless allegations against the petitioner," it said.

The organisation has time and again written to and met Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, among others, to register their protest against what it describes as deep discounting and unfair means by both the online platforms, which has impacted the offline traders.

CAIT has blamed both the platforms of violating the norms for foreign direct investment (FDI). The traders body had staged protests across India during the visit of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to India last month.

Coronavirus puts global economy recovery at risk: IMF to G20

Riyadh: The deadly coronavirus epidemic could put an already fragile global economy recovery at risk, the International Monetary Fund head told G20 finance ministers and central bank governors on Sunday.

Global growth was poised for a modest rebound to 3.3 per cent this year, up from 2.9 per cent last year, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said at the meeting in the Saudi capital.

"The projected recovery... is fragile," Georgieva said.

"The COVID-19 virus -- a global health emergency -- has

disrupted economic activity in China and could put the recovery at risk," she said in a statement.

"I reported to the G20 that even in the case of rapid containment of the virus, growth in China and the rest of the world would be impacted."

Alarm has been growing over the new virus as Chinese authorities lock down millions of people to prevent its spread, with major knock-on effects economically. The virus has now claimed 2,345 lives in China, cutting off transportation, disrupting trade and fanning investor alarm as busi-

nesses are forced to close their doors. Georgieva told the two-day Riyadh gathering that the outbreak would shave about 0.1 percentage points from global growth and constrain China's growth to 5.6 per cent this year.

The IMF chief urged G20 nations to cooperate to contain the spread of the virus.

"COVID-19 is a stark reminder of our interconnections and the need to work together," Georgieva said. "In this regard, the G20 is an important forum to help put the global economy on a more sound footing." AFP

US surpasses China to become India's top trading partner

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The US has surpassed China to become India's top trading partner, showing greater economic ties between the two countries.

According to the data of the commerce ministry, in 2018-19, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at \$87.95 billion.

During the period, India's two-way commerce with China aggregated at \$87.07 billion.

Similarly, during April-December 2019-20, the bilateral trade between the US and India stood at \$68 billion. It stood at \$64.96 billion with China in the same period.

Trade experts believe that

the trend will continue in the coming years also as New Delhi and Washington are engaged in further deepening the economic ties. An expert said that if the countries will finalise a free trade agreement (FTA), then the bilateral trade would reach at different levels.

"FTA with US will be very beneficial for India as the US is the biggest market for domestic goods and services," Federation of Indian Export organisations Director General Ajay Sahai said.

He said that India's exports as well as imports are increasing with the US, while with China both are declining.

America is one of the few countries with which India

has a trade surplus. On the other hand, India has a huge trade deficit with China.

In 2018-19, India has a trade surplus of \$16.85 billion with America, while it has a deficit of \$53.56 billion with the neighbouring country.

The data showed that China was India's top trading partner since 2013-14 till 2017-18. Before China, UAE was the country's largest trading nation.

A top American business advocacy group has said that a free trade agreement between India and the US is a key to resolving their trade disputes as it will cover biggest irritants in ties, including tariffs and mobility of Indian professionals. Professor at Indian Institute

of Foreign Trade (IIFT) Rakesh Mohan Joshi said that India should be a bit cautious while negotiating a trade pact with the US in areas, including agriculture and food products, as America is the world's largest producer and exporter of certain commodities like maize and soybean.

"A trade deal between the US and India would further increase the trade between the two countries easing tariff restriction and opening up of bigger market for products. India is a major exporter of steel, steel products and aluminium products with combined exports of \$22.7 billion last year.

"Steel exports to the US

have continued to decline and it went down from \$372 million in 2017-18 to \$247 million last year. This is only 2.5 per cent of our overall \$9.74 billion steel export to the world," Pawan Gupta, the Founder and CEO of online trade platform Connect2India observed.

Commenting on trade with China, Gupta said despite the fall in volume exports to the Asian neighbour increased 25 per cent last year to \$16.7 billion while imports decreased by around 8 per cent to \$70.3 billion last year.

The major reduction in imports from India has been on electrical machinery, equipment and apparatus category, the CEO said.

S Korea on virus 'high' alert, Iran and Italy take drastic steps

PTI ■ CODOGNO/SHANGHAI

South Korea went on high alert Sunday following a sharp jump in coronavirus cases, and Italy and Iran took their own drastic containment steps as an epidemic that has killed nearly 2,500 people in China continued a relentless global expansion.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) also warned that Africa's poor health systems left it vulnerable to the COVID-19 disease, which spilled out of China to more than 25 countries.

South Korea is raising the nation's alert to its "highest" level, President Moon Jae-in said on Sunday after the number of infections nearly tripled over the weekend to 556.

Led by an outbreak cluster in a religious sect in the southern city of Daegu, South Korea now has the most infections outside of China apart from the Diamond Princess cruise ship docked in Japan, which has seen more than 600.

"The next few days will be crucial," Moon said following a government meeting on the virus.

"The government will raise the alert level to the highest level according to experts' recommendations," Moon did not specify what those measures may include.

South Korea reported 123 new cases and two deaths on Sunday, taking the countrywide toll of fatalities to four.

More than 300 cases have been linked to the Shincheonji Church of Jesus sect in Daegu — whose founder claims the mantle of Jesus Christ and vows to take 144,000 people with him to heaven on judgement day. Some 9,300 Shincheonji members have either been quarantined or asked to stay at home, according to the Korean Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than 1,240 have reported symptoms.

Elsewhere, Italy and Iran began introducing the sort of containment measures previously seen only in China, which has put tens of millions of people under quarantine lockdown in the epicentre province of Hubei.

More than 50,000 people in about a dozen northern Italian

towns near the business hub of Milan were urged by authorities to stay home, while shops and schools were shuttered.

With dozens of cases, Italy on Friday became the first European country to report one of its nationals had died from the virus, followed by a second death on Saturday.

Both were elderly. The government was weighing "extraordinary measures" to halt further infections, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said.

China reported another 97 deaths in its daily update Sunday, taking its total to 2,442, plus 648 new infections. Nearly 80,000 people have been infected worldwide, the vast majority in China.

China's outbreak remains concentrated in the locked-down city of Wuhan, where the virus is believed to have emanated from a live animal market in December.

The city was locked down exactly one month ago as of Sunday, followed by surrounding areas.

China's infection rate has slowed from early in the epidemic, but Chinese flip-flop-

ping over counting methods has sowed confusion over its data.

There also was growing concern over the difficulty of detecting the virus.

Japan on Sunday confirmed that a woman who tested negative and disembarked from the Diamond Princess later tested positive. Similar instances have been reported elsewhere. Japan has been criticised over its handling of the cruise ship.

Many passengers were allowed to disembark without being properly tested or despite having close contact with infected people.

More than 1,000 crew remain on board and are expected to serve a 14-day quarantine.

Iran ordered the closure of schools, universities and cultural centres across 14 provinces from Sunday following five deaths in the Islamic Republic — the most outside East Asia and the first in the Middle East.

Iran's outbreak surfaced Wednesday and quickly grew to 28 confirmed infections. "The concern is ... that we

have seen ... a very rapid increase (in Iran) in a matter of a few days," said Sylvie Briand, director of the WHO's global infectious hazard preparedness department.

Iraq on Thursday clamped down on travel to and from Iran, and flag carrier Kuwait Airways has suspended flights to the country.

Although Egypt is the only African country with a confirmed case, the WHO warned that the continent was vulnerable, urging more African Union cooperation.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said necessary treatment tools such as respiratory support machines were "in short supply in many African countries and that's a cause for concern".

The US State Department said anxiety was being stoked by a coordinated effort by thousands of Russia-linked social media accounts spreading conspiracy theories that the outbreak was a US-orchestrated ploy to damage China, officials said.

Russia's foreign ministry dismissed the allegation as "deliberately false".

Doctor succumbs to virus in Wuhan, medical staff toll 10

PTI ■ CODOGNO/SHANGHAI

Biggest health emergency: Xi

Beijing (AFP): The coronavirus epidemic that has killed over 2,400 people is communist China's "largest public health emergency" since its founding, said President Xi Jinping on Sunday.

"It has the fastest transmission, widest range of infection and has been the most difficult to prevent and control," Xi said at a meeting on curbing the epidemic.

A heavy price in treating the surging number of cases.

China's National Health Commission earlier said that a total of 1,716 medical workers had contracted the infection as of February 11. Xia's death takes the death toll among the medical staff to 10.

On February 20, Peng Yinhu (29), who postponed

his wedding to treat patients infected with the coronavirus, died.

Earlier, Li Wenliang, a 34-year-old doctor, who was one of the first people to sound the alarm about the new outbreak died on February 7.

Li sent a message to his medical-school alumni group on December 30, warning that seven patients had been quarantined at Wuhan Central Hospital after suffering from respiratory illness that seemed like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Liu Zhiming, head of the Wuchang Hospital too died due to the virus. Liu Fan, a senior nurse of the hospital, also died along with her parents and brother from the disease.

Ninety-seven more people died in China due to coronavirus, taking the death toll to 2,442, while the confirmed cases rose to 76,936, officials said on Sunday.

Four more Indians on cruise ship test positive for COVID-19

PTI ■ TOKYO

Four more Indian crew members on board a cruise ship moored off the Japan coast have tested positive for the coronavirus and those who are not found to be infected would be facilitated to travel back home once all the results are declared, the Indian embassy said on Sunday.

With the fresh infections, the total number of Indians infected with the virus on the vessel rose to 12, the embassy said.

Passengers showing no signs of the deadly disease started disembarking the ship, Diamond Princess, after the quarantine period ended last week.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that over 1,000 passengers and crew will remain on board the ship after

the disembarkations.

On Saturday, around 100 more passengers, who were in close contact with the infected people on board, were allowed the disembark the ship.

"Unfortunately, results received as of 1200 JST (Japan Standard Time) include 4 Indian crew members having tested positive," the Indian embassy tweeted.

Earlier, eight Indians were tested positive for the COVID-19. "All 12 Indians are responding well to treatment," the mission said.

The Indian embassy said that the Japanese authorities have confirmed that samples from all passengers on board the ship collected for the test are being processed.

"All results expected by 25/26 Feb. Indian nationals on the ship, who would not test positive, will be facilitated by

Indian Embassy soon after," it tweeted.

The embassy had on Saturday said that Indians, who are still on board the ship, will be tested for the virus infection along with others after all the healthy passengers have disembarked.

"All Indian nationals, amongst others, on board Diamond Princess will be tested for COVID-19 by Japanese authorities, after all passengers disembarked yesterday (Friday)," it said.

A total of 138 Indians, including 132 crew and 6 passengers, were among the 3,711 people, on board the ship when it docked at the Yokohama port, near Tokyo, on February 3.

It was quarantined after a passenger who disembarked last month in Hong Kong was found to be the carrier of the

disease. The ship has the largest cluster of COVID-19 cases outside China. Two former passengers of the ship have also died.

According to an AP report on Saturday, with the latest disembarkation, a 14-day quarantine is expected to start for those still on board as many of them did not undergo isolation because they were needed to keep the ship running.

Ninety-seven more people died in China due to coronavirus, taking the death toll to 2,442, while the confirmed cases rose to 76,936, officials said on Sunday.

A team of WHO experts also visited the worst-affected Wuhan city in Hubei province to conduct a detailed probe about the virus which reportedly originated from a seafood market in the city in December last year.

Moscow targets Chinese with raids amid virus fears

AP ■ MOSCOW

Bus drivers in Moscow kept their WhatsApp group chat buzzing with questions this week about what to do if they spotted passengers who might be from China riding with them in the Russian capital.

"Some Asian-looking (people) have just got on. Probably Chinese. Should I call (the police)?" one driver messaged his peers.

"How do I figure out if they're Chinese? Should I ask them?" a colleague wondered.

The befuddlement reflected in screenshots of the group exchanges seen by The Associated Press had a common source — instructions from Moscow's public transit operator Wednesday for drivers to call a dispatcher if Chinese nationals boarded their buses, Russian media reported.

A leaked email that the media reports said was sent by the state-owned transportation company Mosgotrans told dispatchers who took such calls to notify the police.

The email, which the company immediately described on Twitter as fake, carried a one-word subject line: coronavirus. Since the outbreak of the new virus that has infected more than 76,000 people and killed more than 2,300 in mainland China, Russia has reported two cases.

Both patients, Chinese nationals hospitalised in Siberia, recovered quickly.

Russian authorities nevertheless are going to significant — some argue discriminatory — lengths to keep the virus from resurfacing and spreading.

Moscow officials ordered police raids of hotels, dormi-

tories, apartment buildings and businesses to track down the shrinking number of Chinese people remaining in the city.

They also authorised the use of facial recognition technology to find those suspected of evading a 14-day self-quarantine period upon their arrival in Russia.

"Conducting raids is an unpleasant task, but it is necessary, for the potential carriers of the virus as well," Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said in a statement outlining various methods to find and track Chinese people in the city approved as a virus prevention strategy.

The effort to identify Chinese citizens on public transportation applies not only to buses, but underground trains and street trams in Moscow, Russian media reported Wednesday.

Metro workers were instructed to stop riders from China and ask them to fill out questionnaires asking why they were in Russia and whether they observed the two-week quarantine, the reports said.

The forms also ask respondents for their health condition and the address of where they are staying.

In Yekaterinburg, a city located 1,790 kilometers (1,112 miles) away from Moscow in the Ural Mountains, members of the local Chinese community also are under watch.

Self-styled Cossack patrols in the city hand out medical masks along with strong recommendations to visit a health clinic to Chinese residents.

Human rights advocates have condemned the targeting of Chinese nationals as racial profiling, not an effective epidemic control strategy.

Bernie wins Nevada Democratic Caucus

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US Senator Bernie Sanders on Sunday secured a convincing victory in the crucial Nevada caucus, giving a big boost to his campaign for the 2020 White House bid as the race to Democratic party's nomination gathers momentum over the next few months.

Multiple American media outlets declared Sanders as the winner of the Nevada Caucus for the Democratic Party's presidential primary.

The 78-year-old senator from Vermont had 54 per cent of the county delegates available when several national news networks, including Fox News and MSNBC, called the race with only four per cent of precincts reporting.

When last reports came in, Sanders had garnered more than half of the votes, with former vice president Joe Biden trailing at 19 per cent.

"Breaking: We won Nevada! We are building an unprecedented grassroots movement, and together, there is nothing we cannot accom-

plish," Sanders tweeted.

Sanders, who lost to former secretary of state Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential primaries in New Hampshire, had won the New Hampshire primary recently and was in a virtual tie with underdog Pete Buttigieg in Iowa.

Trump congratulated Sanders in a tweet.

"Looks like Crazy Bernie is doing well in the Great State of Nevada. Biden and the rest look weak, and no way Mini Mike can restart his campaign after the worst debate performance in the history of Presidential debates," the president tweeted.

"Congratulations Bernie, and don't let them take it away from you!" Trump tweeted.

"We did it! We won the Nevada caucus, and we won BIG!" said Faiz Shakir, the campaign manager for Sanders.

"This win is our win, in large part because of the record number of donations and volunteer enthusiasm for Bernie in the state," he said.

Nevada is the first state with a diverse population to

hold a nominating contest.

"In Nevada, and in New Hampshire and in Iowa - what we showed is that our volunteers are prepared to knock on hundreds and hundreds of thousands of doors," Sanders was quoted as saying by CNN in San Antonio.

"That no campaign has a grassroots movement like we do, which is another reason why we're going to win this election."

"Trump and his friends think they are going to win this election," Sanders continued. "They think they're going to win this election by dividing our people up, based on the colour of their skin, or where they were born, or their religion or their sexual orientation. We are going to win because we are doing exactly the opposite. We're bringing our people together."

Ahead of the US Presidential election later this year, White House hopefuls are contesting for their party's nomination in primary elections, known as primaries, across the country.



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., right, with his wife Jane speaks during a campaign event in San Antonio

Pakistan shuts border with Iran

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Sunday said it has declared a medical emergency and temporarily closed its border with Iran to counter the threat of coronavirus from across the border.

Iran has so far witnessed eight deaths and 43 cases of infection due to the novel coronavirus. The deadly disease, which initially broke out in China, has caused 2,442 deaths and infected 76,936 people in 31 provincial-level regions of the Communist nation.

Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove said that Pakistan's border with Iran in Balochistan province was temporarily closed.

"We have closed the border. The measure was taken due to the threat of coronavirus," Langove told reporters here.

The provincial government of Balochistan said that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has set up a 100-bed tent hospital at the border town of Taftan.

"All people coming from Iran are being screened by the medical teams deputed at the border crossing," a statement issued by the provincial government said.

Langove said Balochistan has also imposed ban on the travel of pilgrims from Pakistan into Iran by road.

Thousands of Shiite Pakistanis travel to Iran every year to visit various religious sites.

Six districts of Balochistan including Chaghi, Washuk, Panjgur, Kech and Gwadar are on the border with Iran.

However, most of the legal traffic comes through Taftan in Chaghi.

Bilawal: Sharif was a 'selected' PM

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has said that like Imran Khan, PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif was also "selected" for the post of premier, in a U-turn from his earlier comments that opposition parties are united.

"Before Imran Khan, Nawaz Sharif was a selected premier," he was quoted as saying by the Dawn News.

Not sparing Sharif's younger brother Shabbaz Sharif, the PPP leader said: "Like the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) also does not give importance to parliament. The role of opposition leader in the National Assembly is important but he (Shabbaz) is in London. We hope that he will return soon

and play his role as opposition leader." Taking on the Sharif brothers further, Bilawal said when the people of Punjab needed their leaders they "disappear".

Former premier Sharif has been undergoing medical treatment in London since November last while Shabbaz Sharif is there to look after him.

Reacting to Bilawal's comments, PML-N parliamentarians told the daily that they could give a befitting reply to the PPP chairmen's tirade against the Sharif brothers but this was not an appropriate time.

"Bilawal is a child and responding to his anti-Sharif remarks may not reflect well on the politics of the opposition. The PTT is looking for a divide among the opposition parties desperately," a PML-N lawmaker was quoted as saying by the daily.

Debris found in fuel tanks inspected 737 Max jets

AP ■ CHICAGO

Debris has been found in the fuel tanks of 70% of grounded Boeing 737 Max jets that have been inspected by the company, Boeing confirmed on Saturday.

Inspectors found the debris in 35 out of about 50 jets that were inspected. They are among 400 built in the past year that Boeing hasn't been able to deliver to airline customers.

Boeing temporarily halted production last month because the planes were grounded after crashes in Indonesia and

Ethiopia that killed 346 people.

Although debris hasn't been linked to those crashes, metal shavings, tools and other objects left in planes during assembly can raise the risk of electrical short-circuiting and fires.

On Tuesday the company had said debris was found in "several" planes but it did not give a precise number.

The debris was discovered during maintenance on parked planes, and Boeing said it immediately made corrections in its production system to prevent a recurrence. Those steps include more inspections

before fuel tanks are sealed.

"This is unacceptable and won't be tolerated on any Boeing aircraft when it's delivered to the customer," the company said in a statement Saturday.

Boeing previously said the issue does not change the company's belief that the Federal Aviation Administration will certify the plane to fly again this summer.

A Boeing spokesman cautioned against applying the 70 per cent to all 400 jets, saying there's no way to know how many have the same problem until they're all inspected.

Quake in Iran kills eight in neighbouring Turkey

AFP ■ ISTANBUL

A magnitude 5.7 earthquake in northwestern Iran on Sunday killed at least eight people in neighbouring Turkey and injured dozens more on both sides of the border, authorities said.

"We lost eight of our citizens, including three children," Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu was quoted as saying by the official Anadolu news agency.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said 21 people were injured and eight of them were in critical condition, according

to Anadolu. Turkish broadcaster NTV showed images of collapsed adobe houses in several snow-covered villages in Van province on the Iran border.

"There is nobody trapped under the rubble as of this moment," governor Mehmet Emin Bilmez said.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone with his interior minister to receive information about the search and rescue operation in the region, the Turkish presidency said.

The epicentre of the quake, which struck at 9:23 am (local time), was near the Iranian vil-

lage of Habash-e Olya, less than 10 kilometres (six miles) from the border, according to the US Geological Survey.

The earthquake had a depth of six kilometres, according to Tehran University's Seismological Centre.

It injured at least 40 people and 17 of them have been hospitalised in Iran's West Azerbaijan province, according to the country's emergency services. The same source also said there was damage to buildings in 43 villages.

Iran sits on top of major tectonic plates and sees frequent seismic activity.



The chronicles of mankind

When tolerance is lost, man loses his patience, self-control and spirit of non-violence. If it had been sustained, all or many other virtues would have survived, too, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Do you know the reason why world has no peace today? Well, it is because many nations and most individuals deny the supremacy of a moral order. The numbers of such people are increasing day-by-day, who think that wickedness, cunningness, vice is better than virtue and violence is better than non-violence. There are so many societies and nations that think man is merely an animal, hankering after material progress and comforts. They refuse to accept the evident, that man has higher aspirations, such as for peace, calmness and bliss. Even the most corrupt person has an inner aspiration for solace, satisfaction and peace. However, they fail to realise that peace, contentment and bliss are not the qualities of bodily cells; they are the qualities of conscient self in its state of moral greatness.



The scholars, with materialistic thinking and attitude, have presented their interpretation of history to the society. This view of man and history has been popularised and publicised by historians, economists and social scientists. The result is that the modern man does not believe in the supremacy of the moral law. Man has, therefore, ceased to apply human values to the problems he faces in day to day life. For example, take the problem of nuclear weapons. There have been many agitations and conferences to bring about disarmament. The conversations are vitiated and they do not lead to actual disarmament because no moral values are brought to bear the problem. Thus, it can be easily said that the lack of sense of moral responsibility is, in fact, the most sinister aspect of the modern civilisation. In fact, the whole modern thinking of man is characterised by lack of moral responsibility.

A psychiatrist, today, would explain that a person committed a murder because he had developed a complex after his father had beaten him with a stick when he was a child. So the responsibility is of the father, who had been cruel to his son. In many other forms, the attitude that 'I am not responsible', runs through every aspect of modern life. This has undermined the moral quality of life. So if we want world peace, the real effort lies in giving man a sense of moral responsibility. Let him realise that with all his limitations, he can, in this life, conquer attachment, lust, greed, anger and pride. And, he should think that it is his moral responsibility to eliminate these issues because these disturbs not only him but the peace of others as well.

Today, we see humans killing each other in the name of religion but does any religion has ever taught its followers to kill innocent people? The chronicles of mankind bear witness to the truth that millions of people have lost their peace because of intolerance that ensued from a hurt ego or an unfulfilled selfish motive or narrow-minded. Can anyone calculate or even imagine how many people have lost their peace and harmony and how many cities and civilisations were ruined because of intolerance? If only this virtue, called tolerance, had been sustained, all or many other virtues would have survived. When tolerance is lost, man loses his patience, self-control and spirit of non-violence. Therefore, as they say it is never too late. If even now those, who are mercilessly killing innocent people, begin to observe this virtue, mankind can be saved from the scourge of wars, communal riots and conflict on the basis of difference in religious beliefs.

IT'S ALL CONNECTED

Landscape architects shift emphasis to the ecosystem. They say there is a need to bridge the divide between personal gardens and the larger global situation

Landscape architects are finding themselves on the front lines of the climate change crisis, having to come up with creative ways to adapt and help mitigate problems like rising oceans and extreme weather as they design projects across the country.

"The focus on sustainability has been building slowly for a long time among landscape architects but in recent years that commitment has really taken hold," says Jacquelyn Bianchini, a spokeswoman at the Washington, DC based American Society of Landscape Architects. She said those in the profession "have to deal with climate change more than almost any other design fields."

Landscape architect Kate Orff heads the firm Scape, known for ecologically driven projects around the country. She feels a responsibility to take on projects that emphasise sustainability. "Our profession has been working hand in hand with the carbon-driven world since the field's inception. We've been living in this world where we're creating beautiful gardens in the foreground while the planet is collapsing in the background," she says.

"My goal is to flip that relationship around so the focus is on ecological systems and we then link what we do with policy ideas and infrastructure to

that reality," says Orff, who recently became the first landscape architect awarded a MacArthur "genius" Fellowship.

She is the lead designer of a \$60 million barrier reef and shoreline restoration project off Staten Island, New York, called Living Breakwaters. It incorporates oyster reefs, wetlands and strands to reduce the effects of storm surges. In Atlanta, it is developing a 100-mile trail linking communities along a vast distance to encourage mobility, equity and sustainability.

While landscape architects often focus on large, community projects, they say consideration of the environment also needs to take place at home, when people are designing their own

gardens and deciding what to plant in their backyards.

"Even though gardening is listed in the top five hobbies of Americans, somehow we've not translated that into care for our environment. We need to try to somehow do a better job of bridging the divide between personal gardens and the larger global situation. It's all connected," says Orff.

Todd Forrest, vice president for horticulture and living collections at the New York Botanical Garden, concurs. "People who are creating home gardens or people like me who manage gardens for the public, deal with the reality of climate every day and always have. A gardener is the first person and the last person you should

talk with about climate change, and we deal with issues of plant adaptability in everything we do," he says.

Forrest, who used to teach a class called Gardening and a Changing Climate, says, "every citizen of the world should look across all their activities and ask themselves, 'How can I live more simply or thoughtfully so that I'm not contributing to the eventual loss of native biodiversity around the world?' We can design our gardens to provide habitat for insects. But we can also over-fertilise and damage the environment."

To be a good environmental citizen, he says, you need "to learn and pay close attention, to adapt and at the same time be a part of the effort to

reduce carbon emissions."

At the botanical garden, that's meant experimenting with more plants native to the southern mid-Atlantic states, a region south of New York City. The Long Leaf Pine is one example. "No one thought that it would grow here, and it's now thriving here," he says. "The challenge is that models suggest more extreme weather events, not a steady change. It's hard to plant a garden that's impervious to a hurricane or nor'easter. Even as the climate warms, we're still going to have New York winters, so you're looking to plants that can handle extremes."

In 2017, the American Society of Landscape Architects convened a blue-ribbon panel on "Climate Change and Resilience" which resulted in a broad set of suggested strategies and policy guidelines. And last year, the group highlighted 20 case studies of projects that put the report's recommendations into practice. That "Smart Policies for a Changing Climate" exhibition is on view at the Center for Landscape Architecture in Washington. "It's everyone's problem, and landscape architects are in the best position to help deal with this," says Bianchini.

—AP

Let it bee

Backyard gardeners can act to help bee populations

Chemicals are routinely applied around residential landscapes to kill insect pests and troublesome weeds but many are indiscriminate and devastate pollinators in the process.

Over the past 30-plus years, pollinator populations have crashed worldwide due to a variety of reasons, including pesticide and herbicide exposure, invasive pests and diseases, loss of habitat, loss of species and genetic diversity and a changing climate, scientists say.

Pesticide contamination of lawns, gardens and waterways is widespread, and even at sub-lethal levels can impact pollinators' foraging ability and hive productivity. "Honeybees are not the most impacted of pollinators," said Katie Buckley, pollinator coordinator with the Washington State Department of Agriculture. "Once-common butterfly and native bee species have become rare, with some on the verge of extinction." The rusty patched bumble-



bee, island marble butterfly, Taylor's checkerspot butterfly and the familiar monarch butterfly were among those singled out by Buckley as greatly depleted.

Pesticides are over-applied by many backyard gardeners, said James Dill, a pest management specialist with University of Maine Extension. "They don't read the labels, or they eyeball



the amounts," Dill said. "Sometimes, if maybe an ounce is called for, they'll use two ounces. They often will use a calendar spray schedule or just spray because they had a problem in the past."

But well-informed gardeners can be a big help in reversing the pollinator declines, especially those caused by chemical poisoning. "In general, the best

defense is to avoid spraying plants that are in bloom, use pesticides that have a short half-life when possible and use pesticides with low toxicity to bees and other beneficial insects," Buckley said. "Whether as a farmer or a homeowner, it is critical to always read and follow the label."

Clothianidin, dinotefuran, imidacloprid and thiamethox-

am are highly toxic to honeybees by contact and ingestion, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's toxicity classification scale for bees. Thiacloprid and acetamiprid are moderately toxic, the federal agency says. If you keep bees, finding the right apiary location is an important way to reduce pesticide exposure. Keeping colonies as far away

from commercial agriculture as possible (4 to 5 miles) is the safest," Dill said. "Drive around your area where you intend to keep hives and get the lay of the land so you know what you are dealing with. If you have a large, pesticide-free foraging area with diverse flowering plants nearby, that would be ideal."

Supplying honeybees with uncontaminated water is also an effective deterrent, said Kevin Jensen, a pesticide management compliance investigator with the Washington State Department of Agriculture. "If the bees do not have a water source in the apiary, they will be forced to look for water elsewhere during the hot months," Jensen said. "This can result in bees being attracted to an area that is being sprayed, even though that area may not have flowers blooming in it."

Even pesticides allowed for use in organic agriculture can harm bees and other beneficial insects like flies, beetles, moths and wasps, entomologists say. "Homeowners should avoid using pesticides in backyards and instead use nontoxic methods such as soapy water to get rid of pests such as aphids," said Ramesh Sagili, an associate professor-apiculture with Oregon State University.

—AP

Raise your words, not voice. It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder.

—Rumi

BIARIATRIC SURGERY MAY HELP OBESITY

Researchers have found that surgical treatment of obesity is as effective for individuals who developed the disorder early, by the age of 20, as for those who have developed obesity later in life.

The results, published in the journal Diabetes Care, are based on data from the Swedish Obese Subjects (SOS) study. For the findings, the researchers covered a total of 4,026 adult individuals who had developed obesity. Half of them had undergone bariatric surgery and the other half were a control group.

"We were surprised at the results. Since the group that had developed obesity by the age of 20 had been exposed to obesity and its risks for longer periods, we'd expected that bariatric surgical treatment in these participants would be less effective in terms of weight loss and obesity-related sequelae than in other group. But it was not so," said study researcher Johanna Andersson Assarsson from University of Gothenburg.



OLIVE OIL IN MEDITERRANEAN DIET IS BENEFICIAL

The Mediterranean diet, which is commonly referred to as a heart-healthy way of eating, has been linked to a number of potential health benefits, now researchers have found that olive oil in this diet may hold the key to improving lifespan and mitigating aging-related diseases.

Early studies on the diet suggested red wine was a major contributor to the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet because it contains a compound called resveratrol, which activated a certain pathway in cells known to increase lifespan and prevent aging-related diseases.

However, the study published in the journal Molecular Cell, suggests that it is the fat in olive oil, a component of the Mediterranean diet, that activates this pathway. "We found that the way this fat works is it first has to get stored in microscopic things called lipid droplets, which is how our cells store fat," said study researcher Doug Mashek from University of Minnesota.



MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES HIGHER IN YOUNG MOTHERS

Researchers have found that two out of three young mothers have at least one mental health issue. The study, published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, found that teen mothers have a much higher prevalence of mental health challenges than mothers aged 21 and older and teens who aren't parents.

Almost 40 per cent of young moms have more than one mental health issue, including depression, a range of anxiety disorders and hyperactivity.

This is up to four times higher than in mothers aged 21 years or older and teens without children, the researchers said. "Now that we understand that young mothers can struggle with problems other than just postpartum depression, our findings can be used to develop better screening processes, more effectively detect mental health problems in teenaged mothers, and direct treatment," said study researcher Ryan Van Lieshout from McMaster University in Canada.



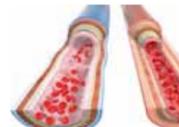
FAT AROUND ARTERIES MAY BE GOOD FOR HEALTH

Researchers have found that fat around our arteries may play an important role in keeping those blood vessels healthy.

The fat, known as perivascular adipose tissue, or PVAT, helps arteries do what scientists call "stress relax," or let go of muscular tension while under constant strain. This is similar to the bladder, which expands to accommodate more liquid while at the same time keeping it from spilling out.

"In our study, PVAT reduced the tension that blood vessels experience when stretched, and that's a good thing because the vessel then expends less energy. It's not under as much stress," said study researchers Stephanie Watts from Michigan State University in the US.

The findings, published in the journal Scientific Reports, could affect how researchers test for treatments related to plaque buildup in our arteries, or atherosclerosis, an issue that can often lead to a heart attack, which is currently a leading cause of death in the US.



CASUAL PARTNERS MORE LIKELY TO USE CONDOMS

People having sex with casual partners are more than twice as likely (85 per cent) to use condoms as people in committed relationships (36 per cent), says a new study.

Researchers from McMaster University peered into the most intimate moments of sexually active women and men across Canada to ask if they're using condoms, all in an effort to gather data that could inform decisions around public health and sex education.

For the study, published in the journal PLOS ONE, the researchers looked at penile-vaginal intercourse, a broad area that has been under-explored in recent decades. It found that condom use is greater among more educated people (50 per cent of college and university graduates) and among people who have received some kind of instruction in how to use condoms. (50 per cent of those who have received instruction)



Trend Slazer

Sonam not happy with Mr India 2.0

Actor SONAM K AHUJA is not happy with the announcement of the remake of *Mr India* by filmmaker Ali Abbas Zafar.

She finds it disrespectful since no one bothered to consult her actor-father Anil Kapoor, who featured in the original, and acclaimed director Shekhar Kapur, who helmed the popular 1987 film.

"A lot of people have been me asking me about the *Mr India* remake. Honestly, my father didn't even know that the film was being remade, we found about it through social media when Ali Abbas Zafar tweeted. It's quite disrespectful and underhanded, if it is true, since no one bothered to consult my father or Shekhar uncle — two people who played a major role in making the film what it was and is," Sonam wrote on social media.



Although I played a husband in the short film *Zindagi InShort*, this was a very different role

that I played. Morally, it was a very tricky character. Set in a small town, it is the story of a couple and the involvement of a third person between them. The story addresses the topic of marital rape, which is a prevalent topic. It is a couple that looks perfect on the outside but there is darkness inside.'

—Sanjay Kapoor

Actor KARTIK AARYAN has begun shooting for the second installment of the *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* franchise in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

He took to Instagram to share a video where he is seen dressed in the godman's attire from the film. He is seen humming the tune of the title track of the film.

He captioned the video: "Iss look mein smile hi nahi rukti... Ting ding ting tiding ting... lets Roll... Mango Season Begins. Directed by Anees Bazmee, the film also stars Kiara Advani.



Not using any dating apps: Ben

Actor BEN AFFLECK has debunked all rumours suggesting he has turned to dating applications to find love.

Affleck has been single since last spring (2019), after splitting once more from his on/off girlfriend, *Saturday Night Live* producer Lindsay Shookus. In October, he was reported to have signed up to Raya, an exclusive dating app favoured by celebrities.

He said, "I am on any of the dating apps. I know so many people who are on them and they have a fun time, but not me." He added that he prefers to do it the old fashioned way.



LOVE WILL FIND A WAY

Writer and filmmaker FARAZ ARIF ANSARI has woven various themes of womanhood, sexuality, Islam, nationality and identity into one narrative to make the audience think over them sensitively in his short film, *Sheer Qorma*. He tells CHAHAK MITTAL how he's trying to fight the mindset that a queer person isn't normal or is different from the rest

What's your definition of mainstream? Something that catches the common eye easily? For filmmaker Faraz Arif Ansari, it's something that each and every person present can relate to. "When we talk about mainstream, our understanding of it is quite limited. We think there would be dance, music, drama, action or some comedy. But the term's actual meaning is 'universal'. Everyone in the room should relate to what is being showcased. It doesn't need to be loud or have a wedding. And it can still be called mainstream with elements as subtle as they could be. My film very much tries to re-define and re-explore what mainstream is and should be," says the director of short film *Sheer Qorma*, starring Shabana Azmi, Divya Dutta and Swara Bhasker, which is set to hit the screens soon.

For Faraz, cinema has forgotten how to depict love. "Love is multi-layered. We're just worried about plot-lines and how to sell it. If you look at Bollywood films, depicting the problems of the LGBTQ have just become a topic to cash in on a popular trend. They don't genuinely exercise the practice of inclusion. The issue has only become commercial. But I just focus on how many lives my work is going to change," says he.

The film, he adds, is, hence, also a lot about representation. He tells us, "I have to break this pattern in the industry where people are so non-inclusive even though they harp about inclusion all the time. Around 96 per cent of my crew and cast in *Sheer Qorma* were women, which is intentional because representation matters, no matter how big or small."

It was after *Sisak*, the award-winning short film and the first Indian silent LGBTQ love story, that Faraz felt that something more needs to be done around the issue, while focussing on women. "I realised that nobody is talking about women in the queer diaspora. The conversations are still very related to men. There is so much of patriarchy and inherent misogyny even within the queer community. You'll always come across stories of a man loving another man. But when it comes to a woman loving another woman, people get uncomfortable for some strange reason. They don't want to talk



about it," he says, explaining why he decided to give this film an angle where women explore their love for each other in the backdrop of a Muslim household.

Produced by Marijke De Souza, the film, *Sheer Qorma*, Faraz says, is a gentle, heart-rendering narrative of the longing for love and acceptance felt by queer children in their households. The story is told through delicate characters of courageous Muslim queer women. With multiple themes of ethnicity and culture at play within the narrative, the story sensitively confronts the harsh reality of disrupted family dynamics through a sensitive and universal tale.

Faraz says that he has woven a lot of themes into the narrative to make the audience think over it sensitively. He points out that there is a common perception that queer people don't have a religion or a family. He adds, "But that's not true. Why isn't anybody making a film about us? We're real people like everybody else. I identify as a gay, non-binary, Muslim person. For me, my religion has always been a part of me as much as my sexuality. And our generation is more about co-existing

rather than discarding. I felt that while I am talking about LGBTQ women, I should also address the persisting Islamophobia, which too exists within the queer community in the Indian and Middle East belt. This is why the film has so many layers. It is layered with women, non-binary people, Islam, nationality, identity, and sexual preferences. Moreover, the portrayal of Muslim women has been very stereotypical in Hindi cinema."

He tells us that his inspiration for this film has been his *khala jaan* (mother's eldest sister), who he calls a "badass" or a tough



woman at a time when it wasn't even normal for women to be rebels. "She never got married and was the manager of one of India's leading banks. She brought up her siblings when they lost their parents. She would tell me not to listen to anyone and do my own thing. I grew up with her courage. My mother, on the other hand, has been the complete opposite. She's very worried about what people would think, which is probably why, even though I came out to her when I was 21, she still hasn't fully accepted me. She still hopes that one day, I will get better and realise that it was just a phase."

Growing up around inspiring women, who've done some path-breaking things in their lives, you certainly gain a very different understanding of the world. He says, "I've always wanted to make films. It started with me as a child, who used to stage elaborate skits with characters like Barbie and He-Man for family gatherings during festivals. It's not a very toxic-masculinity kind of understanding. Even my father is a very gentle creature. And the film, too, has no man surrounding the women because in Bollywood, even though the films that have been about women, there is always some man bringing in the masculinity some way or the other.

This is way different from that. This one is all about love and why it's the only thing we need to win hearts. Hate cannot heal the world."

The filmmaker says that his fight is also with the terms "normal" and "different." He says, "In school, I heard a lot of 'he's not like us, or 'he's so different' or 'he's not normal'. When we talk about 'normalising' it, I even hate the term normal. It makes it seem like we are talking about something that is otherwise not usual or present around us. So when my sexuality and being a Muslim came into play together as part of my identity, I just carried on with my life and did what I believed in."

Fighting yet another mentality, the *Taare Zameen Par* writer and creative director points out that if two women are in love, the perception is that the love must be different from the rest. He says, "I'm trying to fight this mindset. I had interacted with many women and shared my draft with them. They'd ask, 'How did you know about our lives?' I'd answer, 'By knowing about my life'."

He adds that the biggest compliment, perhaps, came from actor Shabana Azmi when she called the film "gender-free."
(The film's trailer will be released on February 25.)

TECH TALK

Man or machines?

Can AI flag disease outbreaks faster than humans? Not quite



detailed report went out about 30 minutes after the terse HealthMap alert.

Early warning systems that scan social media, online news articles and government reports for signs of infectious disease outbreaks help inform global agencies such as the World Health Organisation — giving international experts a head start when local bureaucratic hurdles and language barriers might otherwise get in the way.

Some systems, including ProMed, rely on human expertise. Others are partly or completely automated. And rather than competing with one another, they are often complementary — HealthMap is intertwined with ProMed and helps run its online infrastructure.

"These tools can help hold feet to the fire for government agencies," said John Brownstein, who runs the HealthMap system as chief innovation officer at Boston Children's Hospital. "It forces people to be more open."

The last 48 hours of 2019 were a critical time for understanding the new virus and its significance. Earlier on December 30, Wuhan Central Hospital doctor Li Wenliang warned his former classmates about the virus in a social media group — a

The text-scanning programmes extract keywords from online text but may fumble when organisations variously report new virus cases in a given time interval. The potential for confusion means there's almost always still a person involved in reviewing the data.

"There's still a bit of human in the loop," Madhav said. Andrew Beam, a Harvard University epidemiologist, said that scanning online reports for key words can help reveal trends but the accuracy depends on the quality of the data. He also notes that these techniques aren't so novel.

"There is an art to intelligently scraping web sites," Beam said. "But it's also Google's core technology since the 1990s." Google itself started its own Flu Trends service to detect outbreaks in 2008 by looking for patterns in search queries about flu symptoms. Experts criticised it for overestimating flu prevalence. Google shut down the website in 2015 and handed its technology to nonprofit organisations such as HealthMap to use Google data to build their own models.

In early January, Isaac Bogoch, a researcher at Toronto General Hospital, analysed commercial flight data with BlueDot founder Kamran Khan to see which cities outside mainland China were most connected to Wuhan.

Wuhan stopped outbound commercial air travel in late January — but not before an estimated five million people had fled the city, as the Wuhan mayor later told reporters. "We showed that the highest volume of flights from Wuhan were to Thailand, Japan, and Hong Kong," Bogoch said. "Lo and behold, a few days later we started to see cases pop up in these places." In 2016, the researchers used a similar approach to predict the spread of the Zika virus from Brazil to southern Florida.

Now that government have launched measures to curb disease transmission, it's harder to build algorithms for predictions, Bogoch said.

Artificial intelligence depends on prior data to train computers how to interpret new facts. But there are no close parallels to the way China is enforcing quarantine zones that impact hundreds of millions of people. —AP

WEBBED



ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES

Two teens facing personal struggles form a powerful bond as they embark on a cathartic journey chronicling the wonders of Indiana. Starring Elle Fanning, Justice Smith and Luke Wilson, the film releases on Netflix on February 28.



ALWAYS A WITCH

A young 17th-century witch time travels to the future to save the man she loves, but first must adjust to present-day Cartagena and defeat a dark rival. Starring Angely Gaviria, Óscar Casas and Sofia Araujo, season 2 releases on February 28 on Netflix.



ALTERED CARBON

After 250 years on ice, a prisoner returns to life in a new body with one chance to win his freedom: by solving a mind-bending murder. Starring Anthony Mackie, Lela Loren and Simone Missick, season 2 releases February 27 on Netflix.



Cheteshwar Pujara out, bowled by New Zealand's Trent Boult for 11 during the first cricket test match

Boult, Southee leave India on thin ice

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

The Indian batsmen, caught between over-cautiousness and impetuosity, produced yet another inept batting performance to put New Zealand firmly on the driver's seat at the end of third day's play in the first Test here at Basin Reserve on Sunday.

At stumps, India reached 144 for 4 in their second innings as the top-order found Trent Boult's (3/27 in 16 overs) high-quality swing bowling too hot to handle.

India now trail New Zealand by 39 runs going into fourth day, which could well be the final day of this game unless Ajinkya Rahane (25 batting, 67 balls) and Hanuma Vihari (15 batting, 70 balls) show the art of survival that was distinctly lacking in some of the other top-order batsmen.

Asked what kind of total can be defended in the fourth innings, senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin remained non-committal.

"I know to keep it simple and say this is defendable and this is not, (it) is pretty much how you would want me to present it, but it's too much — like six sessions to go and we are not even at a stage where we can say what is



Virat Kohli celebrates during the first cricket test match

a good score to defend," he said.

There is still something there in the Basin Reserve pitch, reckoned Ashwin.

"We have to take every ball at a time to be honest because there is still enough in the surface. We are not yet in a stage of the game from our perspective

NZ vs Ind (1st Test, Day 3)
Live from 4:00am IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

where we can look at it very far."

After New Zealand's tail wagged big time to post a good first innings total of 348, the deficit of 183 understandably put India under severe pres-

sure.

If Cheteshwar Pujara (11 off 81 balls) paid for his ultra-defensive mindset shouldering arms to an in-dipper, skipper Virat Kohli's (19 off 43 balls) split-second indiscretion became his undoing as he went for a needless pull-shot to a well-disguised short ball.

"We're in a good position. The partnership out there is a big one but if we can get a couple more early in the first hour or so. We should be in a good position."
—Trent Boult

"They (New Zealand) are bowling lovely lengths and incisive in second innings even when the pitch is not the same as first day. They have made it hard for us and like the Test has just begun for us. They have bowled 65 overs and we have to see how they wake up and we have to bat another session in morning."
—Ravichandran Ashwin

Mayank Agarwal (58 off 99 balls) was impressive in one session and lost concentration in the second, ditto to what happened on the first day and was caught down the leg-side.

The bowler on both the occasion was Boult, who successfully took over the job of tormenting the Indian batsmen from Tim Southee (1/41 in 15 overs) and Kyle Jamieson (0/33 in 17 overs). It was a top-class seam and swing bowling show on a third day pitch, which still had something for fast bowlers.

Boult bowled with a lot of fire as he exposed Prithvi Shaw's (14 off 30 balls) poor technique, laying a trap for the opening batsman.

A short ball hurried the flamboyant Mumbaikar, whose huge back-lift became his undoing. By the time the ball grew big on him, he was fending it awkwardly with a closed bat and at the short square-leg Tom Latham was waiting gleefully for that chance.

Pujara and Agarwal did add 51 runs for the second wicket but it was largely because of the Karnataka opener, who played his shots and showed positive intent. He, in fact, hit Ajaz Patel for a six and a four but Pujara, at the other end, only looked keen on defending.

Just like first innings, Pujara was leaving balls on length but at one stage, he was stuck on personal score of 6 for 28 consecutive balls. While leaving Jamieson from length was not an issue, Pujara did not account for Boult, shouldering arms a delivery that came in sharply.

In the first session, Jamieson (44) continued with his dream debut as he and No 11 Boult belted the Indian bowlers for fun.

Ishant Sharma (5/68 in 22.2 overs) remained the stand-out bowler for India.

India face B'desh in Women's T20 WC

PTI ■ PERTH

Their confidence on a high after the impressive win over title holders Australia, India will look to carry forward the momentum against a plucky Bangladesh in their second Group A match of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here today.

Leg-spinner Poonam Yadav's magical spell helped India beat Australia by 17 runs in the tournament opener on Friday but the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side can't afford to take Bangladesh lightly as their eastern neighbours had beaten them twice in the 2018 T20 Asia Cup.

Jemimah Rodrigues and 16-year-old promising opener Shafali Verma, who hit a typically aggressive 29 off 15 balls against Australia, were not a part of that Asia Cup team and the duo will need to play crucial roles if India want to beat Bangladesh.

In the last five meetings between the two sides, India lead 3-2 on head-to-head record and a win today will take them closer to the knock-out rounds from the five-team group.

India will, however, need to improve their batting performance as they scored a below par 132 against Australia.

Since the tri-series preceding this World Cup, the Indian batting has been inconsistent and has not posted big totals barring a few matches.

Captain Harmanpreet and opener Smriti Mandhana, who both have done well in the tri-series before this World Cup, contributed little with the bat in the previous match and both will need to fire for India to put up a big total or chase down a target.

Another key middle-order batswoman Deepti Sharma came



India vs Bangladesh
Live from 4:30pm IST
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good against Australia with an unbeaten 49 off 46 balls and she would look to continue her good form.

Medium pacer Shikha Pandey also bowled well against Australia and Harmanpreet is happy that her team is not dependent on a few players only.

For Bangladesh, the key players will be all-rounder Jahanara Alam and top-order batswoman Fargana Hoque.

The 26-year-old seasoned Hoque has a T20I hundred to her name. She had played a major role in Bangladesh's group stage win over India in 2018 T20 Asia Cup.

Alam is another key player for Bangladesh and she was a part of the IPL Velocity team under Mithali Raj in India's domestic Women's T20 Challenge tournament in Jaipur last year.

Hazard suffers right ankle fracture

AFP ■ MADRID

Eden Hazard's season could be at risk after Real Madrid announced on Sunday that he had fractured his right ankle during his team's 1-0 La Liga defeat at Levante.

Belgium forward Hazard, whose first season at Real has been plagued by injury, will now miss Wednesday's Champions League last 16 clash with Manchester City and the Clasico with league leaders Barcelona next weekend.

Madrid did not announce a recovery time for Hazard but his latest setback will be a worry for Belgium boss Roberto Martinez ahead of Euro 2020 this summer.

On Saturday, Madrid coach Zinedine admitted that the 29-year-old's injury "doesn't look good" ahead of those two huge matches, which could define his side's season.



LaLiga

AFP ■ ROME

Lazio kept their bid for a first Serie A title in 20 years on track as a 3-2 victory at Genoa on Sunday kept them one point behind leaders Juventus, but four Serie A football matches were postponed amid growing coronavirus fears in northern Italy.

Reigning champions Juve had edged out bottom club SPAL 2-1 on Saturday, but Lazio responded to keep the pressure on at the top, extending their unbeaten run in the league to 20 games in the north-western port city.

Third-placed Inter Milan, who are six points behind Juve, saw their game scheduled for later on Sunday at the San Siro postponed, with Thursday's Europa League match against Bulgarian club Ludogorets at risk, along with next weekend's league clash with Juventus in Turin.

Three other top-flight matches were also pushed back — between

Proteas end Aus win streak

AFP ■ PORT ELIZABETH

South Africa's bowlers held their nerve as the hosts bounced back from a record defeat to win the second T20I against Australia at St George's Park on Sunday.

Opening batsman David Warner hit an unbeaten 67 for Australia but it wasn't enough as South Africa defended a modest total of 158 for four to win by 12 runs and level the three-match series.

Australia lost three wickets for eight runs in the last 2.1 overs to finish on 146 for six. It was their first T20I defeat in nine matches going back to November 2018.

South Africa captain Quinton de Kock was named man of the match after he slammed 70 off 47 balls to get the home team off to a blazing start as they set out to recover from a record 107-run defeat in the first



match in Johannesburg on Friday.

He hit two sixes in the second over, bowled by Pat Cummins, and raced to 50 off 31 balls.

Warner, Aaron Finch and Steve Smith got Australia off to a similarly fast start but both teams found scoring increasingly difficult on a slow pitch with low bounce as the ball lost its shine and hardness.

"We realised the new ball is really key with the bat," said De Kock. "It gets more difficult towards the end so we were trying to capitalise on the powerplay." "We thought 160 was par because we know this wicket. It was always going to be more difficult towards the end."

The series decider takes place on Wednesday at Newlands in Cape Town, the scene of the ball-tampering scandal which led to bans for Smith and Warner.

Lazio stay on Juve's heels



Torino and Parma, Atalanta versus Sassuolo and Hellas Verona against Cagliari.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced late on Saturday evening

that all sporting events in two northern regions would be suspended on Sunday.

Strong measures are being taken in Italy with over 132 confirmed cases in an outbreak that has claimed two lives in the country.

"I think it's right to take the necessary precautions," said Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi.

"Do a lot of prevention, try to defeat and understand the problem by stopping the championship, because we shouldn't underestimate what is happening."

In Genoa, Adam Marusic scored the opener for Lazio with less than two minutes on the clock before Ciro Immobile, the top flight's leading scorer this season, netted his 27th Serie A goal of the campaign six min-

utes into the second half.

The Italian striker pulled six goals clear of Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo who scored for a record-equaling 11th consecutive Serie A game in his 1,000th professional match against SPAL.

Francesco Cassata pulled one back for the relegation-threatened hosts, but Danilo Cataldi secured Lazio all three points despite Domenico Criscito's late consolation.

"We're doing something great. The lads know it and I'm not hiding from saying it," said Inzaghi.

"In 21 games between the championship and the Super Cup we have won 17 times. In other championships we would be first, but here you have to fight with Juve and Inter. "We are there in the chase and we will try to fight."

Gujarat thrash Goa by 464 runs, enter Ranji semis

PTI ■ VALSAD

Left-arm spinner Siddharth Desai grabbed a fiver as Gujarat thrashed minnows Goa by a whopping 464 runs to storm into the Ranji Trophy semifinals, here on Sunday.

Set a daunting target of 629 for an improbable win, Goa were bundled out for 164 in their second essay on day 4 of the quarterfinals at the Sardar Patel Stadium.

Desai (5-81) ran through the Goa batsmen and got able support from pacer Arzan Nagwaswalla (4-18).

Barring Suyash Prabhudessai (66), no other Goa batsman could even put up a fight.

Earlier, Goa's medium-pacer Lakshay Garg (4/30) grabbed four quick wickets as Gujarat declared their second innings for 199/6, with an overall lead of 628 runs.



J&K OUT FOR 192
JAMMU: Karnataka took the crucial first-innings lead after bowling out Jammu and Kashmir for 192 on the fourth day.

Resuming the day on 88 for two in reply to Karnataka's 206, Jammu

and Kashmir let the advantage slip by losing wickets at regular intervals to be bundled out in 62.4 overs.

Pacer M Prasad Krishna (4/42) impressed once again as he returned with a four-wicket haul, while Jagadeesha Suchith (2/46) and Ronit More (2/40) grabbed two wickets each and Krishnappa Gowtham (1/30) claimed one.

For the hosts, Abdul Samad scored a 50-ball 43.

In their second essay, Karnataka reached 245 for four in 67 overs with opener Ravikummar Samarth (74) and Krishnamurthy Siddharth (75 not out) doing the bulk of the scoring.

BENGAL VIRTUALLY IN S/F
TANGI: Bengal put up a strong batting display in their second essay to

virtually seal a semifinal berth with a massive 443-run lead over Odisha.

At close on the penultimate day, Bengal were 361 for seven following half-centuries from Shreevats Goswami (78), Abhishek Raman (67) and Shahbaz Ahmed's unbeaten 52.

It was almost all over for Odisha as there was no sign of a declaration from Bengal, who already had secured three points by virtue of a first-innings lead to put one step into the semifinals.

SAURASHTRA ON TOP
ONGOLE: Saurashtra batted Andhra out of their quarterfinal by extending their overall lead to a mammoth 658 runs.

By stumps on the fourth day, Saurashtra had made 375 for nine in their second innings.

Jesus' strike lift City

AFP ■ LEICESTER

Gabriel Jesus struck late to give Manchester City a 1-0 win at Leicester on Saturday, strengthening their hold on second place behind champions-in-waiting Liverpool despite more woe from the penalty spot.

Pepe Guardiola's men have endured a turbulent week after they were banned from European club competitions for two years for breaches of financial fair play rules.

But a second-half winner from substitute Jesus after Sergio Aguero had failed to

convert a penalty put them 17 points clear of Tottenham and sends them into their midweek match against Real Madrid in good spirits.

City looked like they might have to settle for a draw after squandering their fourth penalty in a row in the Premier League, with each being missed by a different player.

"We have missed four penalties in a row but maybe we will shoot a penalty when we need it to win something," Guardiola told the BBC. "The keepers are good too, but the next one we are going to score."

Naim, Afif back for ODIs

DHAKA:

Bangladesh have called up uncapped batsmen Mohammad Naim and Afif Hossain for their 15-man squad for the first two ODIs of a three-match series against Zimbabwe next month.

Naim and Afif have played T20 for Bangladesh, but were not part of the ODI side to be led by pacer Mashrafe Mortaza. Mashrafe was retained as captain despite concerns over his future, and will lead the side for the first time since the World Cup last year.

Batsman Liton Das and all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin also return to the ODI side after missing the previous series against Sri Lanka in July.

The first two ODIs against Zimbabwe will be held in Sylhet on March 1 and 3.

Jitender ensures place in Indian team for Olympic Qualifiers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jitender Kumar sealed his place in the Indian team for the Olympic Qualifiers with a Silver medal at the Asian Championship here on Sunday, a result that could slam the Tokyo Games door on veteran Sushil Kumar.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sushil had skipped the continental event citing an injury.

A Gold eluded India on the second day of the men's freestyle competition with Deepak Punia (86kg) and Rahul Aware (61kg) finishing with Bronze medals.

Up against Kazakhstan's Daniyar Kaisanov, Jitender showed tremendous defensive skill, but was lacking in attack. The Indian lost 1-3 to the defending champion.

However, his performance was enough to convince the national federation that he should travel to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan for the Olympic Qualifiers, without a re-trial.

It means that Sushil, who also competes in 74kg, will have to wait and see how Jitender fares in Bishkek, where the finalists will directly qualify for the Tokyo

Games.

If Jitender reaches the Gold medal bout there, it will affect the prospect of Sushil, who has been struggling since the 2018 Asian Games.

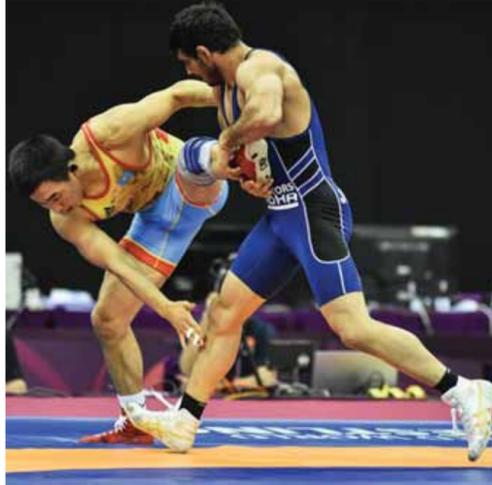
If Jitender fails to seal an Olympic quota in Bishkek, the last chance would be through a World qualifying event in April.

"I tried one move towards the end but could not execute it properly, it could have got me the Gold. There are improvements in the my game and it could be seen. This Silver is special. Now I will try harder to get Olympic quota," said Jitender.

His attacking moves from a distance were not good enough to get a good grip on his rivals. Largely, he was defending from standing position.

In fact, in the semifinal against his Mongolian opponent, all three points were scored on passivity and the bouts lacked flare.

Before that, Jitender had won his qualification bout rather easily but just about managed to win his following bouts against Iran's Mostafa Mohabbali Hosseinkhani (2-2) and Mongolia's Sumiyabazar Zandanbud (2-1).



Jitender Kumar in action against Kazakhstan Daniyar Kaisanov during 74 kg match PTI

"We will not have trials in any category in men's free style. We will see how our wrestlers perform in Bishkek," Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh said.

Much to the disappointment of the home fans, world championship Silver medallist Deepak lost his 86kg semifinal to Japan's Shutaro Yamada.

His style was identical to Jitender's and his moves from dis-

tance did not yield the desired result.

Against Yamada, the only points he scored from a takedown were removed after a successful challenge from his opponent's camp.

In the fight for Bronze against Issa Abdulsalam Abdulwahhab Al Obaidi, the Indian looked a different man, winning it easily. He defeated his Iraqi rival by technical superiority.

"I had not trained enough because of an injury I suffered during training after I arrived in India from Russia. I had six stitches just above my right eye," Deepak, who won a Silver at 2019 Worlds, said.

In the non-Olympic 61kg category, Rahul, who won a Bronze at the Worlds in Nur Sultan, paid the price for being overconfi-

dent as his unnecessary challenges cost him dearly.

His movement was terrific and so were his attacks but untimely challenges resulted in him losing points in both the quarterfinal and semifinal.

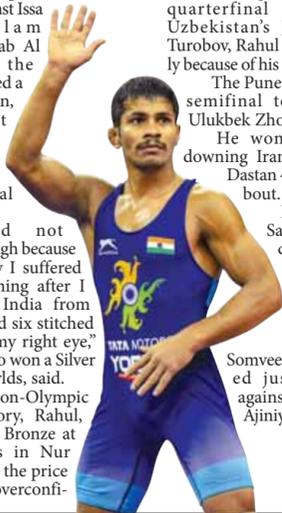
In a fast-paced, high-scoring quarterfinal bout against Uzbekistan's Jahongirmirza Turobov, Rahul won 11-9, largely because of his superior defence.

The Pune grappler lost his semifinal to Kyrgyzstan's Ulukbek Zholdosbekov 3-5.

He won Bronze after downing Iran's Majid Almas Dastan 4-2 in an exciting bout.

In the 125kg, Satender won his qualification bout but later lost his quarterfinal and repechage rounds.

In the 92kg, Somveer's challenge lasted just 24 seconds against his Uzbek rival Ajiniyaz Saparniyazov.



Sharath, Sathiyan settle with Silver

BUDAPEST: Indian men's doubles pair of Achanta Sharath Kamal and Gnanasekaran Sathiyan settled for a Silver medal at the ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open after losing the summit clash to German combination of Benedikt Duda and Patrick Franziska.

The Indian pair, which defeated top seeds Ho Kwan Kit and Wong Chun Ting of Hong Kong 3-2 in the semi-finals, put up a strong effort in the summit clash but eventually went down fighting 5-11, 9-11, 11-8, 9-11 to the 16th seeds German pair in a 30-minute showdown on Saturday.

It is Sharath Kamal's second medal from the prestigious tournament. He also won a Bronze with Manika Batra in mixed doubles.



Gnanasekaran Sathiyan & AS Kamal pose with the Silver medal Sharath/Twitter

Tsitsipas defends Marseille trophy

MARSEILLE: Stefanos Tsitsipas successfully defended his Marseille title on Sunday with a straightforward victory over Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Greek star Tsitsipas eased to a 6-3, 6-4 win to leave Felix still waiting for his maiden ATP title after his fifth final defeat.

Tsitsipas, who had arrived in southern France with a 3-4 losing record this season, enjoyed an emphatic return to form as he clinched his fifth ATP trophy.

"I did well mentally," said Tsitsipas. "I didn't crack when I was under pressure."

Auger-Aliassime would have been confident of finally ending his wait for tournament success after two wins from his three previous meetings with Tsitsipas, but has still failed to even win a set in his five



Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates with the trophy after winning the men's singles final AP

Tour-level finals.

"Playing a final is wonderful, you have to have that perspective, remember that everything is going in the right direction despite everything," said Auger-Aliassime.

"It's heavy, losing every time in the final. There is a little doubt... when will it be my turn?"

World number six Tsitsipas, the ATP Finals champion, broke in the third game and saved three break points to serve out the opening set. The second seed got the better of a run of three successive breaks in the second set to move 4-3 in front and only dropped one more point on serve.

He will now travel to the UAE for the Dubai C'ships, where he is second seed behind number one Novak Djokovic. AFP

SINGLES

FURY CRUSHES WILDER IN WBC REMATCH

LAS VEGAS: Tyson Fury reigns again as a heavyweight world champion after battering Deontay Wilder to a stunning seventh-round stoppage in their World Boxing Council title rematch. Fourteen months after their dramatic split-decision draw, Britain's Fury dominated the American champion — who had blood dripping from his left ear and leaking from his mouth when referee Kenny Bayless called a halt as Wilder's corner threw in the towel. "The king has returned to the top of the throne," said Fury, who had dropped Wilder in the third and fifth rounds as he remained unbeaten while handing Wilder the first defeat of his career.

NISHIOKA REACHES DELRAY BEACH FINAL

MIAMI: Unseeded Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan rallied for a 1-6, 6-4, 6-0 victory over sixth-seeded Ugo Humbert to reach the ATP Delray Beach final. Nishioka, apparently refreshed by a second rain delay, roared through the final set to advance to his second career final. He won his only prior title match at Shenzhen in 2018.

THIEM THWARTED IN BID TO PASS FEDERER

RIO DE JANEIRO: World number four Dominic Thiem of Austria missed a chance to reach a career-best third in the ATP rankings with a Rio Open quarter-final loss to Italy's Gianluca Mager. Mager, a 128th-ranked qualifier playing in only his eighth career tour-level match, defeated 2017 Rio champion Thiem 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 in a match that was halted on Friday by rain. Had Thiem reached the semi-finals in his 2020 clay-court debut, he would have overtaken Roger Federer for third in Monday's ATP rankings.

GOA TO HOST ISL FINAL: NITA AMBANI

MUMBAI: Margao in Goa will host the final match of this season's Indian Super League on March 14, Football Sports Development Limited's founding chairperson Nita Ambani said. The summit clash will be held at 7:30 pm on March 14 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium at Fatorda in Margao. "Goa deserves to host the ISL final. There is no denying that Goa loves its football and we would like to bring the most crucial football event to the city for the people of Goa," Ambani said.

WINDIES RECALL RUSSELL FOR SL T20S

COLOMBO: West Indies recalled big-hitting all-rounder Andre Russell for their upcoming T20I series against Sri Lanka. The 31-year-old Russell, who played a key part in the Windies' 2016 World T20 triumph, last played internationally at last year's 50-over World Cup and has not featured in a T20I since August 2018. Shimron Hetmyer, who along with fellow batsman Evin Lewis was left out of the ODI squad in Sri Lanka for failing to meet minimum fitness requirements, is also back in the squad. The Windies face Sri Lanka in two games in Kandy on March 4 and 6.

HANSINI WINS BRONZE IN ITTF EVENT

NEW DELHI: In her maiden appearance at an International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) junior circuit event, Chennai's table tennis prodigy, Mathan Rajan Hansini put up an impressive performance by bagging the Bronze medal in the Mini-Cadet Girls' Singles category at the Swedish Junior and Cadet Open in Orebro, Sweden. AGENCIES

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