

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SATURDAY 13 | FEBRUARY 2021

## WEATHER



Max: 34°C  
Min: 18°C  
Rainfall: Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Maasi 1  
**Tithi:** Thuvithiyai  
**Star:** Sathayam  
**Rahukalam:**  
9 am to 10.30 am  
**Yamagandam:**  
1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.22 am  
**Zohar:** 12.28 pm  
**Asar:** 3.43 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.12 pm  
**Isha:** 7.25 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.14 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.33 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 7.43 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 7.42 PM**

## CORONA COUNT

| CASES       | DEATHS   |
|-------------|----------|
| (+11,212)   | (+86)    |
| 1,08,91,625 | 1,55,570 |

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 483)  
TN: 8,44,173 12,408

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

10,84,96,690

### DEATHS

23,83,806

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
219

worldometers.info

## 4 dead, 13 injured as bus falls into gorge in Andhra Pradesh

**Visakhapatnam:** Four people died and about 13 others were injured when a bus carrying over 20 passengers fell into a gorge at Anantagiri near Araku in Visakhapatnam district, a senior police official said on Friday. "We have received information that four people died. The bus carrying them fell into a gorge. Our teams have reached the spot for rescue operations," Visakhapatnam range DiGRanga Rao told PTI.

## Uttarakhand disaster: 'Temporary lake' triggers concern, rescue workers battle odds

**Tapovan (U'khand)/New Delhi:** Experts were trying Friday to determine if a temporary lake formed upstream by an avalanche could breach its banks and threaten the rescue work at the sludge-choked Tapovan tunnel, where 25-30 people are feared trapped. The confirmed death toll in Sunday's flash flood in the Alaknanda river system in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district climbed to 38 after the recovery of two more bodies and 166 people still remain missing.

## COUNTER POINT



# Two associates of Faruqui granted ad-interim bail

**Indore, Feb. 12:** The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Friday granted interim bail to two men accused of organising a comedy show in Indore, during which stand-up comedian Munawar Faruqui allegedly insulted Hindu deities. Mr Faruqui, who was arrested on January 1 and was in jail since January 2,

was set free on bail last week by the Supreme Court. A single bench of the high court comprising Justice Rohit Arya granted bail to the two co-accused Prakhar Vyas and Adwin Anthony. In two separate orders that ran identical, Justice Arya observed, "The applicant is held entitled for temporary bail maintaining parity in

## Comedian Faruqui and five others involved in organising the show in Indore were arrested following a complaint by Eklavya Singh Gaud, son of local BJP MLA Malini Laxman Singh Gaud

light of the order of February 5 passed by the Supreme Court (granting bail to Faruqui). "Accordingly, applicant is hereby enlarged on temporary bail on the conditions to the satisfaction of the

trial court, with further condition that applicant shall not indulge himself in any such activity subversive to public order," the order stated. Comedian Faruqui and five others involved in organising

the show in Indore were arrested following a complaint by Eklavya Singh Gaud, son of local BJP MLA Malini Laxman Singh Gaud. The MLA's son had alleged that objectionable comments were made about Hindu deities and Union home minister Amit Shah during the show held on January 1. — PTI

## STATE | 3

**Premalatha: DMDK capable of going it alone**



## WORLD | 5

**Navalny back in court over defaming Putin**



## SPORT | 7

**Karatsev shocks Schwartzmann**



## 12 workers killed in cracker unit blast

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIRUDHUNAGAR, FEB. 12

As many as 12 workers were killed and around 36 injured in a fire accident in a cracker manufacturing unit near Sivakasi in Virudhunagar district on Friday.

The accident occurred at around 11 am when more than 120 persons were working in Mariammal Fire Works at Achankulam village near Satur. The accident is suspected to have been caused by mishandling of the chemical mixture in the process of manufacturing fancy type crackers. It damaged 20 work sheds fully, killing five persons including a woman on the spot while seven more succumbed to burns at the hospital. Around 36 injured persons were undergoing treatment at the government hospitals in Virudhunagar, Sivakasi, Satur, Kovilpatti. Fire and rescue person-

nel from the fire stations at Sivakasi, Virudhuagar and Satur had to struggle for four hours to contain the spread of the fire further and to put it out by 3 pm, according to the district fire officer Ganesan

District collector R. Kannan said after inspecting the accident spot that those workers who suffered more than 50 per cent burns were referred to Madurai Rajaji government hospital for further treatment. ■ P3

## Budget to help India grow fastest, says FM

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 12

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the strong stimulus in the budget for 2021-22 would not only provide quick short-term solutions but also long-term and sustainable growth that will help India remain one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. The budget was the instrument for Atmanirbhar Bharat at a time when economies across the global had suffered due to the pandemic,

Ms Sitharaman said in her reply to the budget debate in Parliament.

"The post-pandemic economies have suffered all over the world and the Union Budget 2021 was an attempt to provide a strong stimulus to deal with this situation," she said. "In doing so, it will not only provide quick short-term solutions that were created, but we also looked at medium, long-term and sustainable growth that will help us remain one of the fastest-growing economies in the world."

## Trivedi announces resignation from RS on the House floor

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 12

In yet another major blow to West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamul Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee, the party's Rajya Sabha MP and former Union minister Dinesh Trivedi dramatically announced his resignation on the floor of the House on Friday, saying he felt "helpless" over the political violence in his state. "The kind of violence that is happening in Bengal... is a threat to democracy," he said. ■ Full report on P4

## SC notice to Centre, Twitter on fake news

**New Delhi, Feb. 12:** The Supreme Court on Friday sought responses from the Union government and Twitter India on a plea seeking a mechanism for regulating content and advertisements spreading hatred through fake news and instigative messages via bogus accounts.

A bench of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian issued notice to the Centre and Twitter Communication India Pvt Ltd on the plea filed by one Vinit Goenka, which said there are hundreds of fake Twitter handles and Facebook accounts in the name of eminent people and dignitaries. — PTI

## Twitter to label accounts of political parties and leaders

**New Delhi, Feb. 12:** Twitter has said it will add labels to identify more government leaders and institutions from next week so that people have a "more informed experience". The roll-out will begin in Canada, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, and UAE. India was not part of the list. — PTI



## 24 HR, 3-PHASE FREE POWER FOR FARMERS: EPS

**Tirupur, Feb. 12:** Farmers would henceforth be provided 24-hour-three phase electricity for their pump sets, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced here on Friday.

Addressing an election rally at Udumalaipettai near here, Mr Palaniswami said farmers in the district made a plea for this when they met him. "Accepting their request, Amma's government would provide 24-hour three phase power supply for pumpsets used by farmers," he declared. Currently, farmers get three phase electricity for pumpsets for 12 hours in Cauvery delta districts and six hours in non-delta regions. — PTI

# Defence ministry denies India ceding Ladakh territory for disengagement

■ 'Even the LAC, as per the Indian perception, is at Finger 8, not at Finger 4'

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 12

The defence ministry said on Friday that India has conceded no territory to China in the disengagement agreement on Pangong Tso and that the next military-level talks will take up the outstanding issues at Hot Springs, Gogra and the Depsang plains in eastern Ladakh. The ministry's statement also said India has persistently maintained the right to patrol till Finger 8 in Pangong Tso, including in the current pact with China.

"India has not conceded any territory as a result of this agreement. On the contrary, it has enforced observance and respect for the LAC and prevented any unilateral change in the status quo," the ministry said.

It said it had taken note of some "misinformed and misleading" comments on the disengagement under way at Pangong Tso. This comes after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "giving away sacred Indian territory to China". Mr Gandhi said the Indian Army held the Finger 4 area in Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control, but now it will move back to its permanent base near Finger 3.

As per the agreement, the Chinese troops will move east of Finger 8 on the north bank of Pangong Tso and the Indian troops will move to their permanent base at Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3. The area between Finger 4 and Finger 8 will be "no go" zone for some time for both the armies.

The ministry said the assertion that Indian territory is up to Finger 4 is categorically false.



Why has he asked the Defence Minister to make the statement, the Prime Minister should say — I have given Indian land to China, this is the truth. Finger-4 is our territory, that is where our post used to be. So, now we have moved from finger-4 to finger-3. Why has the Prime Minister Modi given up Indian Territory to the Chinese? This is the question that needs to be answered by him and by the Defence Minister

— Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

## WAR OF WORDS



A new edition of Congress circus today, again due to @ Rahul Gandhi. Why is he bent upon falsely claiming that disengagement is a loss for India? Is it a part of INC-China MoU? With the armed forces leading the disengagement strategy, isn't this an insult of our brave forces? No Indian land has been given up by the government as part of the current disengagement process. If anyone committed the sin of giving up thousands of sq km, it is one corrupt, cowardly dynasty that has broken the country to keep their power intact



— J. P. NADDA, BJP president

## China's actions created distrust, says Army chief

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 12

Army chief General M.M. Naravane said on Friday that the rising footprints of China in India's neighbourhood and its attempts to unilaterally alter the status-quo along "our disputed borders" have created an environment of "confrontation and mutual distrust."

"The regional security environment is characterised by Chinese belligerence in the Indo-Pacific, its hostility towards weaker nations and relentless drive to create regional dependencies through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative," said Army chief during a seminar on 'Evolving Security Challenges in the North East and Way Forward. The resultant Sino-US rivalry has created

regional imbalances and instability, he said.

The Army chief noted that Nepal, India's traditional long-term partner, which has witnessed heavy Chinese investment, is going through a period of political volatility.

"While Bhutan has been cautious in its approach, we have seen an upswing in our relations with Bangladesh. India is celebrating Swarnim Vijay Varsh to commemorate its splendid victory over Pakistan in the 1971 War for Liberation of Bangladesh. The sight of the tri-service contingent from Bangladesh marching down Rajpath on Republic Day bodes well for our future relations, although growing radicalisation in society remains a serious concern," said the Army chief. ■ P4

## India to set up ITBP command unit in Leh

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, FEB. 12

In view of the increasing incidents of border disputes with China in the Ladakh region, the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which is the Indo-China border guarding force is likely to set up a special command unit in Leh.

The move is significant as this unit will operate independently of the ITBP's western command based at Chandigarh and will focus exclusively on the security situation in the entire Ladakh sector.

At present the ITBP's Western Command based at Chandigarh, is largely responsible for border areas of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. ■ P4

## US welcomes India, China efforts for border de-escalation

**Washington, Feb. 12:** The US has welcomed the ongoing efforts by India and China to de-escalate the situation in eastern Ladakh and said it would continue to monitor the situation closely as both sides work toward a peaceful resolution. "We're closely following reports of initial troop disengagement. We welcome the ongoing efforts to de-escalate the situation," a state department statement said. — PTI







## IN BRIEF

## Cong members arrested in Kumbakonam

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KUMBAKONAM, FEB. 12

The police arrested 70 members of the Congress when they tried to take out a procession with a plough to protest against the three farm legislations brought by the central government at Kumbakonam on Friday.

The members led by G.K. Muralidharan, state general secretary of the Congress, Arivalagan, state farmers wing secretary, O.V.K. Krishnaswamy, a state administrative committee member, staged a demonstration at Gandhi Park demanding the repeal of the laws.

Later, they tried to march to the Kamaraj statue at Palakarai. But the police stopped and arrested them.

## Inquiry to find exact cause of fire

From P1

A detailed inquiry would be conducted, which will help identify the exact cause of the fire that sparked the explosion.

The local villagers, who first rushed to the rescue of the workers on hearing the deafening sound of the blast, however, complained that eight workers were made to work in a shed against the permitted four. This caused congestion that prevented workers from running out when the accident occurred, said a villager.

The work sheds were located too close in violation of the norms that two sheds should have a minimum distance of 10 metres between them. The cracker unit owned by one Santhanamari, however, was given in lease to another person, which is also against the norms.

## PM to hand over Arjun tank to Army in Chennai tomorrow

New Delhi, Feb 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hand over the Arjun Main Battle Tank (MK-1A) to the Army in Chennai on Sunday and also inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of several projects in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

A PMO statement on Friday said these projects, including the launch of a Chennai Metro project and a petrochemical complex in Kerala, will add crucial momentum to the growth trajectory of these states and help hasten the pace for them to realise their full development potential.

In Chennai, Modi will hand over to the Army the state-of-the-art the Arjun tank, which has been indigenously designed and

developed, and manufactured by the Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment, DRDO, along with 15 academic institutions, eight labs and several MSMEs, it noted. Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu and Kerala are expected to be held in April-May. During his visit, the prime minister will inaugurate the Chennai Metro Rail Phase-I extension, completed at a cost of Rs 3,770 crore, and commission passenger services from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar. This 9.05 km long extension will link North Chennai with the Airport and Central Railway Station.

The PMO said he will also inaugurate the fourth railway line between Chennai Beach and Attipattu stations. This 22.1 km section, laid at a cost of Rs 293.40 crore, traverses through Chennai and Thiruvallur districts and will ease up traffic from Chennai Port. This section connects the Chennai Port and Ennore Port, and passes through major yards, providing operational flexibility for the movement of trains, the PMO said.

Modi will inaugurate the electrification of a single-line section of 228 km, completed at a cost of Rs 423 crore. This will enable free flow of traffic without the need for a change of traction between Chennai

Egmore and Kanyakumari and would result in saving of Rs 14.61 lakh per day on fuel cost, it added. He will also lay the foundation stone for the extension, renovation and modernization of the Grand Anicut Canal System and the Discovery Campus of IIT Madras.

The canal is important for irrigation in the delta districts and the modernization exercise will cost Rs 2,640 crore, leading to an improvement in its water-carrying capacity. The Discovery Campus of IIT Madras will be built at Thiyur near Chennai at an estimated cost of Rs 1,000 crore in the first phase over an area of 2 lakh sqm. —PTI



Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam inspects Koyambedu wholesale market along with Dr. D.Karthikeyan, secretary, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) on Friday. —DC

## Premalatha: DMDK capable of going it alone

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 12

DMDK treasurer Premalatha Vijayakanth gave an indication that her party might go it alone in the coming Assembly elections, after severing ties with the AIADMK-led alliance in the state.

Speaking to mediapersons at the DMDK headquarters, to which party founder Vijayakanth made a visit to commemorate the party's 'flag day', she said that they were prepared to contest from all the 234 constituencies.

Asked about the talks on the alliance, she said that all was well and that they had to ask the question to the alliance leader, AIADMK, as they would have to take a decision. Though she did not say



DMDK founder Vijayakanth along with his wife and party treasurer Premalatha arriving at his office in Koyambedu on Friday. —DC

anything to indicate that the relationship with the AIADMK has strained in view of the alliance leaders adamant stand on not conceding to the demands placed by DMDK leaders on the seat allocation, the grapevine has it that not all was well. AIADMK leaders were not very keen on having the DMDK in the alliance in view of their 'unreasonable'

demands. Also it is said that the BJP needed to be given more seats as the national party might go in for an internal tie-up with the T T V Dhinakaran's AMMK. In such an eventuality, some of the top leaders of AMMK would contest the election as party of the alliance and the AIADMK would not be fielding candidates in those constituencies.

## Cabinet meeting today at Secretariat

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 12

The state cabinet is meeting on Saturday morning at the secretariat to take key decisions before the presentation of the interim budget for the year 2021-22 at the Budget session of the Assembly beginning on February 23.

Finalisation of the government's schemes and the announcements and issues relating to the Prime Minister's scheduled visit the next day, on February 14, to Chennai would also be part of the agenda for the meeting, official sources said.

The Chief Minister, who would be presiding over the meeting, would launch the seventh phase of excavations at Keeladi, near Madurai, through video conference before the start of the Cabinet meeting, the sources said.

However, there is a speculation that the meeting could also discuss the arrival of expelled AIADMK general Secretary V. K. Sasikala in Chennai as there is talk of some ministers having allegiance to her.

## Defamation case against Stalin

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 12

Governor Banwarilal Purohit has accorded sanction to the Chennai city public prosecutor to file a complaint against DMK president M. K. Stalin in a court of competent jurisdiction for making defamatory

statements against fisheries minister D. Jayakumar.

A government order announcing the issuing of orders for the prosecution said Stalin had, on January 10, alleged that Jayakumar had indulged in irregularities in the purchase of walkie talkies meant for

communication with fishermen going to the sea. It said that the statement, made at a People's Gram Panchayat held at Dhanalakshmi school campus in Royapuram, was not only devoid of truth and good faith but its intent went against the interest of public good.

## Farmers hail 24-hour 3-phase supply to agri pump sets

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, FEB. 12

The farmers of Thanjavur district have welcomed the announcement made by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami that 24 hours three-phase supply will be given to agriculture pump sets.

Sundara Vimalanathan, secretary, Thanjai district Cauvery Farmers Protection Association, said they demanded 20 hours

● Sundara Vimalanathan, secretary, Thanjai district Cauvery Farmers Protection Association, said they demanded 20 hours power supply. The Chief Minister has increased the duration. It will help the farmers who cultivate summer crops. Many farmers lost the Samba crop in the unseasonal rain during January.

power supply. The chief minister has increased the duration. It will help the farmers who cultivate summer crops. Many farmers lost the Samba crop in the unseasonal rain during January.

V. Jeevakumar, a farmer from Budalur, said that now three-phase supply is given to agriculture pump sets for only six hours. The government should ensure three-phase supply round the clock.

## Suburban trains can be used by students from Monday

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, FEB. 12

In view of popular demand, students will be permitted to travel on Chennai suburban trains from February 15. The students, both boys and girls, will be allowed to travel throughout the day including peak hours, a Southern Railway release said on Friday.

The students are directed to carry the valid photo identity card issued by their educational institution and produce them at ticket booking counters while purchasing tickets or passes. The ID card should be produced along with ticket/pass during journey for verification by the ticket examiner.

The students are requested to strictly adhere to all Covid-19 standard safety protocols such as wearing masks and social distancing.

In view of the Covid-19 situation, the Southern Railway has been permitting various categories of passengers in a phased manner on Chennai suburban services. All women passengers have already been allowed to travel on Chennai suburban trains throughout the day without time restrictions.

## In suicide bid, man slashes throat with blade

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC  
SALEM, FEB. 12

A man who tried to commit suicide by slitting his throat with a blade, claiming that the city police here had filed a false case against him, caused a flutter for a while.

Sources identified the man as Byros (40) hailing from Salem, Kichipalayam, Jalalpura area. He was released after serving eight years in prison for a murder that happened in 2008. He is now working in a butcher's shop.

Byros attempted suicide by slitting his throat with a blade in front of the Salem city police station on Friday evening. Auto drivers who

saw him, rushed him to the government hospital for treatment, but Byros did not cooperate for the treatment.

Byros said, "The Salem city police are registering a false case against me. Each time, it costs ₹15,000. I cannot continue with this. Kill me." He is now under intensive medical care. Police are investigating.

The Salem Town Police Station, which was recently awarded the best police station award in Tamil Nadu, has caused great concern after a 40-year-old man attempted suicide. Similarly, the mother of a lemon trader died at the town police station, a few months ago.

## Auto scrapping rule: Driver kills self

DC CORRESPONDENT  
SALEM, FEB. 12

An auto driver Saravanan committed suicide by taking poison following the Centre's announcement that vehicles over 15 years old would be scrapped.

Saravanan (59) hails from Ponnammappet area in Salem. He is survived by wife Padmavathi, two sons and a daughter. Saravanan has been driving an auto for over 30 years. He had also borrowed a car and had been driving it.

Sources said Saravanan was upset over the Centre's announcement and tried to commit suicide by taking poison on February 3. His family rushed him to a private hospital, and was later admitted to the government hospital for treatment. But, he died on Friday morning. Inspector Krishnamurthy has registered a case and is investigating.

## Evasive rogue wild jumbo tranquilised

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, FEB. 12

Forest teams here on Friday managed to tranquilize a wild jumbo on the 'wanted list', by 3 pm. The tusker identified as 'Shanker', also fondly known as 'Othaikomban' in Cherampadi limits on the Nilgiris border.

Shankar had killed three persons in two days in mid-December last. Efforts taken by the foresters to capture it then went in vain as it vanished into the jungles after receiving tranquilizer darts in mid-December.

While it is said to have crossed to Kerala then, it returned to Cherambadi on the Nilgiris border a few days ago. From then on, forest teams with the help of half-a-dozen kumkis from Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), tracked it patiently, and by 3 pm on Friday, the forest veterinary team



"Shankar" alias Othaikomban near Nilgiris border.

tranquilized the animal, which was moving along with a herd.

Now, Shanker is being taken to the MTR elephant camp. An interesting point here is that out of half-a-dozen kumkis deployed for the capturing operations, a kumki named 'Srinivasan' also known as 'Chinnkomban', is in fact a disciple of Shankar alias 'Othaikomban'.

Mentored by Othaikomban, Chinnkomban was also a rogue and responsible for

frequent man-elephant conflicts within Cherambadi-Pandalur limits in 2015-16. However, foresters then captured Chinnkomban and shifted him to the MTR elephant camp, where he was trained into becoming a kumki, sporting a new name 'Srinivasan'.

In the operation to capture Shanker, kumki Srinivasan chipped in with its prowess to capture its guru 'Othaikomban' - now 'Shanker'.

## Human rights commission's findings are binding



Sanjay Pinto



## JUSTICE FOR ALL

officer in question? Is the officer found responsible for violation of human rights entitled to challenge the finding under Article 226 of the Constitution?

The crux of a seminal judgment of the Supreme Court on the need for compensation due to executive excesses in Nilabati Behera Vs State of Orissa (1993) was that "the old doctrine of only relegating the aggrieved to the remedies available in civil law limits the role of the courts too much as a protector and guarantor of the indefeasible rights of the citizens. When the court molds the relief by granting 'compensation' in proceedings under Article 32 or 226 of the Constitution, it does so under the public law by way of penalising the wrong-doer and fixing the liability on the

State. At the heart of this debate is Section 18 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, on the steps to be taken by the State Commission during and after an inquiry. A comparison was made between a Human Rights Commission and a Commission of Inquiry under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, as being 'pari materia' or similar. This is both odious and flawed. As rightly argued, a Human Rights Commission draws its legitimacy from the statute, which in turn flows from fundamental rights under the Constitution of India, an Inquiry Commission rests on its terms of reference. They are not Even Stevens.

There is where the divergence arose. A single judge of the Madras High Court in Rajesh Das Vs Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission (2010) had ruled that its findings are "neither an order nor an adjudication" and that it is "not binding on the parties to the proceeding, including the Government."

Taking a diametrically opposite view in T. Vijayakumar Vs State Human Rights Commission, Tamil Nadu (2010) Justice K. Chandru, hailed as a champion of human rights, had held that it would lead to "a paradise of remedies for the delinquent Government

servant not once, but three times. First before the Commission, second before the State Government which had accepted the Commission's report and third before any amount were to be recovered pursuant to acceptance of report of the Commission by the State Government." The Court went on to observe that "undue sympathies" or a "liberal approach" will "embody a delinquent Government servant to commit further human rights violations with impunity." What about the principle of natural justice? Interestingly, it clarified that "the concept of natural justice is not immune from restrictions, nor it is an inscrutable concept."

Reference was made to the landmark verdict in D.K. Basu Vs State of West Bengal (1997) in which the Supreme Court had relied upon Article 9(5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, which enunciated that any victim of unlawful arrest or detention shall have an enforceable right to compensation.

In fact, before the divergent single judge decisions, the First Bench of the Madras High Court in T. Loganathan Vs State of Human Rights Commission (2006) had eloquently observed that "by augment-

ing the human rights protection machinery in the State, the Government is, in fact, acquiring a partner in good governance. The law casts an obligation on each State Government to sustain the human rights apparatus by acting in its aid rather than at cross-purposes."

The upshot of the present Madras High Court Full Bench verdict is that the State Human Rights Commission's findings shall be "legally and immediately enforceable." The government can only seek judicial review of the recommendations.

Compensation ordered can be recovered from the officer concerned after a show cause notice seeking a response only on the quantum and not on the decision. The findings can be assailed by the officer in court only on "substantial legal grounds." The Court has suggested "suitable amendments in the Act" for the State Human Rights Commission to enforce its recommendations and "become complete in all fours, leaving no room for procrastination."

A day must come when complaints to the human rights commission make perpetrators shudder.

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

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| <b>National Entrance Screening Test 2021</b>  |  |
| <b>NEST 2021</b><br><b>Admission to 5-year Integrated MSc Programmes in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics at NISER (Bhubaneswar) and UM-DAE CEBS (Mumbai)</b><br>(Autonomous Institutions under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India)   |  |
| The National Entrance Screening Test (NEST) is a compulsory test for admission to the 5-year Integrated MSc programme in basic sciences - Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics - at National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER), Bhubaneswar and University of Mumbai - Department of Atomic Energy Centre for Excellence in Basic Sciences (UM-DAE CEBS), Mumbai. NEST 2021 will be conducted in around 90 towns and cities all over India on <b>Monday, June 14, 2021</b> . |  |
| The candidates admitted to the programme are eligible to receive an annual scholarship of Rs 60,000 through DISHA program of Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India. In addition, the scholarship recipients receive a grant of Rs 20,000 per annum for summer internship. Candidates selected by DST for the INSPIRE-SHE program are endorsed for INSPIRE scholarship by NISER and CEBS.   |  |
| For detailed information on NEST 2021 application procedure and previous years' question papers please visit NEST 2021 website: <a href="http://www.nestexam.in">www.nestexam.in</a>  |  |
| <b>Application:</b><br>Through ONLINE portal ONLY.<br>Visit <a href="http://www.nestexam.in">www.nestexam.in</a> to apply.<br>Online portal opens on <b>Feb. 24, 2021</b> , & closes on <b>Apr. 30, 2021</b>  | <b>Examination:</b><br>ONLINE/computer based ONLY.<br>Date of examination: <b>June 14, 2021 (Monday)</b><br>Time: <b>9:00 AM - 12:30 PM (1<sup>st</sup> session)</b><br><b>2:30 PM - 6:00 PM (2<sup>nd</sup> session)</b><br>Results announcement : <b>June 30, 2021</b> |
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## SHORT TAKES

## MP COPS PROVIDE SECURITY TO KANGANA

**Bhopal, Feb. 12:** Madhya Pradesh police have put in place thick security cover around Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut in the wake of a threat by some state Congress leaders that they would not allow her shoot for a film if she did not apologise to farmers over her tweets, an official said on Friday.

Shooting for *Dhaakad*, Ranaut's new film, is going on in Sarni area of Betul district. Sarni City Superintendent of Police (CSP) Abhay Ram Choudhary said, "Security has been tightened for the actress after MP home minister Narottam Mishra directed Betul Superintendent of Police Simala Prasad to do so."

Police personnel equipped with batons and firearms are deployed around the coal handling plant (CHL) near a power project, where the shooting is on, he added.

"Police will man gate numbers two and four of the CHL, from where actors usually enter the shooting venue," Choudhary said.

An inspector has been assigned to oversee Ranaut's safety at the resort, located around 45 kms from Sarni town, where she is during for the shoot, he said.

"We will ensure that she does not face any disturbance during the shoot," the CSP added.

## ASSAM CUTS FUEL PRICES BY ₹5, DUTY ON LIQUOR BY 25%

**MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, FEB. 12**

Assam government on Friday announced to cut petrol and diesel prices by ₹5 and reduced the duty on liquor by 25 per cent. The new rates will come into effect from Friday midnight.

The announcement has come months before the Assembly election and especially at a time when fuel prices have been touching new highs across the country.

While presenting a vote-on-account for six months, finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told the Assembly that the move will result in losses of nearly ₹80 crore revenue per month.

"When the Covid-19 was at its peak, we had increased taxes on petrol and diesel. With the Covid-19 situation improving and the additional burden on the health sector reducing, the state cabinet has decided to withdraw the additional taxes on these fuels," Sarma said.

"Effective from Friday midnight, prices of petrol and diesel will decrease by ₹5 per litre. As a result, Assam will have the record of providing cheapest petrol in the country after Gujarat. Even prices of diesel would be the lowest after Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh," he stated. Sarma further announced that additional taxes of 25 per cent imposed on liquor products at the peak of Covid-19 has also been withdrawn.

## INDIA RECORDS STEEP DECLINE IN COVID-19 CASES

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 12**

India on Friday recorded 9,309 fresh cases and 87 deaths due to Covid-19 as the country's total active caseload saw a sharp decline, falling to 1.35 lakh.

The positive cases now comprise only 1.25% of the total cases and the day to day change of active cases in the last few weeks is showing a consistent decline, said Union health ministry officials.

The distribution of new cases in India in the last 24 hours shows a positive picture with only one state reporting over 1,000 cases while the rest of the states and UTs reporting less than 1,000 new cases. Four states and union territories have not reported any new cases in the last 24 hours. These are Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Ladakh, Tripura and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

A significant decline in the daily deaths too has been noticed as 18 states/UTs have not reported any new deaths in the last 24 hours while 13 states/UTs have reported between 1-5 new deaths.

National Recovery Rate is 97.32 per cent, which is one of the highest globally. Officials said the continued high rise in the recoveries has led to progressively improving national Recovery Rate.



TMC Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Trivedi pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi after resigning as MP during the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

## TMC MP Trivedi resigns, says party no longer in Didi's hands

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 12**

In yet another major blow to West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Trivedi dramatically announced his resignation on the floor of the House on Friday, saying he felt "helpless" over the political violence in his state. He added, "The kind of violence that is happening in Bengal, it is a threat to democracy. I feel very strange sitting here. I think of what I should do. I think of Rabindranath Tagore. Obey party discipline? Of course, but I feel stifled. My soul is saying I sit here and say nothing, what is the point? I resign."

## KHARGE ALL SET TO BE LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN RAJYA SABHA

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 12**

Senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge is all set to replace retiring member Ghulam Nabi Azad as the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha. There were several frontrunners to the post of LOP but the scales were loaded in favour of Kharge as he is a loyalist and has the experience of leading the Congress from 2014-2019 in Lok Sabha.

He was sent to Rajya Sabha after he lost the 2019 Lok Sabha election. He was also handling the affairs of Maharashtra till recently as the General Secretary of the AICC. Others who were in reckoning included Anand Sharma, P. Chidambaram and Digvijaya Singh. In the end it was loyalty and seniority of Kharge that ensured his selection.

He is a nine-time Karnataka MLA and two-time Lok Sabha MP. He has also held the important portfolios at the center of Railways and Labour.

Ghulam Nabi Azad was given an emotional farewell by the House and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who broke into tears while heaping praises on the Congress leader.

In his speech, Prime Minister said it would be difficult for anyone to fill the shoes of Ghulam Nabi Azad as he cared not only about his political affiliation but also about the country and Rajya Sabha.

Azad was a member of the Upper House from Jammu and Kashmir, which does not have an Assembly currently after it was made a Union Territory with the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

Hence, it was difficult to repeat him and at present there is no vacancy. He officially retires on February 15.

He said he was feeling "suffocated" in the TMC which he said was "no longer in the hands" of Mamata Banerjee. Trivedi's resignation came two days after he endorsed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in the Lok Sabha in which he had called for a key role for the private sector.

Trivedi, a former railway minister, announced his resignation in the Upper House during a debate on the Budget, saying he can't speak about the violence in his state. He handed over his resignation to Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu and it has been accepted. He explained to Naidu that he had resigned of his own will and there was no pressure on him to quit.

Minutes after his resignation, BJP general secretary and West Bengal in-charge Kailash Vijayvargiya said Trivedi was welcome in the party.

Trivedi said, "If you sit here quietly and cannot do anything, then it is better that you resign from here and go to the land of Bengal and be with the people. The way violence is taking place in our state, sitting here, I am feeling perplexed as to what I should do."

Talking to reporters after submitting his resignation, he said, the TMC is no longer in Mamata Banerjee's hands. It has been taken over by a corporate professional who doesn't understand politics. And there is no forum within the party to air our views."

Trivedi had endorsed Modi's Lok Sabha speech on Twitter, saying, "I am personally in agreement with this. The way forward is to let our young talented minds innovate, create and distribute wealth. Pay Govt levies, create jobs. For that, our Govt officers (babus) too, need to encourage the youth." He was trolled for his tweet with many saying he may switch from the party.

TMC Rajya Sabha deputy leader Sukhendu Sekhar Ray said that Trivedi was "ungrateful" and had betrayed the trust of the masses. "For the last so many years he (Trivedi) did not say anything. Now all of a sudden, just months before the Assembly polls, he has complaints. This shows his true colours," Ray said.

## Fake news is root cause of many riots, apex court told

**New Delhi, Feb. 12:** The Supreme Court on Friday sought responses from the Union government and Twitter India on a plea seeking a mechanism for regulating content and advertisements spreading hatred through fake news and instigative messages via bogus accounts.

A bench of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian issued notice to the Centre and Twitter Communication India Pvt Ltd on the plea filed by one Vinit Goenka, which said there are hundreds of fake Twitter handles and bogus Facebook accounts in the name of eminent people and high dignitaries.

Advocate Ashwini Dubey, appearing for Mr Goenka, said directions are needed for establishing a mechanism to regulate hateful content on the social networking site.

The bench said that it is issuing notice in the matter and tagging the plea with other pending matters.

The plea said these fake Twitter handles and Facebook accounts use real photo of constitutional authorities and eminent citizens.

Therefore, common man relies upon the messages published from these Twitter handles and Facebook accounts.

The PIL said that fake news is the root cause of many riots, including the one in Delhi earlier this year, and bogus accounts are used to promote casteism and communalism which endangers fraternity and unity of the country.

Presently the total number of Twitter handles in India is around 35 million and total number of Facebook accounts is 350 million and experts say that around 10 per cent Twitter handles (3.5 million) and 10 per cent Facebook accounts (35 million) are duplicate/bogus/fake, the plea said.

Political parties use fake social media accounts for self-promotion and image building and to tarnish the image of opponents and contesting candidates, especially during the elections, the plea submitted.

The plea has also sought directions to make a law as per which an action can be initiated against Twitter and their representatives in India for willfully abetting and promoting anti India tweets and penalize them.

The petition further said that a representation to the authority concerned to act in accordance with the law of the country against social media giant Twitter was filed but no action has been taken so far.

It also pointed out that the Ministry of Home Affairs has banned Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) under the Unlawful Activities and Prevention Act on July 10, 2019, yet it continues to have an active presence on Twitter and allegedly espouses hatred, terrorism and sedition, criminal acts. — PTI

## HARMFUL | CONTENT

## On Feb 4, Twitter was asked to take down 1,178 a/cs with links to Pak Twitter: Won't block a/cs of journalists, leaders

**New Delhi, Feb. 12:** Twitter has blocked over 97 per cent of the accounts and posts flagged by the IT ministry for provocative content and misinformation around farmers' protest, sources said.

This followed a meeting between Twitter representatives and the information technology secretary on Wednesday evening where the US-based microblogging platform was issued a stern warning to comply with local laws or be prepared for action.

The ministry had questioned Twitter's delay in taking action on its order to block provocative content that could impact public law and order, whereas the American company

had been quick to crack down when a similar instance occurred at US Capitol Hill.

According to the sources, Twitter has now complied with the orders and over 97 per cent of the accounts flagged have been blocked.

Twitter did not respond to queries on the matter.

On February 4, Twitter was asked to take down 1,178 accounts with links to Pakistan and Khalistan supporters that were spreading misinformation and provocative content related to farmers' protest.

Prior to that, the government had sought blocking of 257 tweets and handles in connection with the agitation by farmers over the new agricultural laws. Twitter had complied with

the orders only to restore the accounts hours later. Twitter on Wednesday morning had said it has suspended over 500 accounts and blocked access to several others within India, but maintained that it would not block accounts of "news media entities, journalists, activists and politicians" as doing so "would violate their fundamental right to free expression" guaranteed under the

country's law.

It, however, yielded to the orders later after the crucial meeting on Wednesday evening.

In a statement after the meeting, IT ministry had stated that the microblogging platform had been asked to take strong action against "well-coordinated" campaigns "designed to create disharmony and unrest" in the country.

Monique Meche, Twitter Vice President Global

## ITBP command unit in Leh likely

Spl unit will operate independently, will focus exclusively on Ladakh sector

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 12**

In view of the increasing incidents of border disputes with China in the Ladakh region, the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which is the Indo-China border guarding force is likely to set up a special command unit in Leh.

The move is significant as this unit will operate independently of the ITBP's western command based at Chandigarh and will focus exclusively on the security situation in the entire Ladakh sector.

At present the ITBP's Western Command based at Chandigarh, is largely responsible for border areas of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

But following recent incidents of incursions by Chinese Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) in some parts of the Ladakh sector there is a growing view within the home ministry that a separate specula command unit should be set up exclusively for the Ladakh region for ITBP as this had now become an "extremely sensitive sector."

"The special command unit based in Leh will ensure quick and timely action as a team of senior officers will be permanent stationed who can take decisions seeing the ground situation. They will not have to wait for decisions from the Chandigarh based Western command. Since the security situation in Ladakh is constantly evolving we need to take decisions according to the increasing Chinese activities in the region," a senior home ministry official said.

The 90,000 strong ITBP, with 56 service battalions and several other technical and specialised units, is responsible for the peacetime management of the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, with some of its posts being located at heights of 20,000 feet. During the ongoing stand-off with China, the forces bolstered its presence along the LAC, particularly in the Ladakh sector where the deployment of ITBP has been substantial enhanced.

In addition, latest surveillance equipments and weapons have also been provided to the ITBP unit deployed in the entire Ladakh region.

## SC panel meets farmers' unions

**New Delhi, Feb. 12:** The Supreme Court-appointed committee on Friday held consultations with 12 farmer unions and peasants from eight states, including West Bengal, on the controversial farm laws enacted by the Centre recently.

This is the seventh meeting held by the panel so far. The three-member committee is holding consultations with stakeholders, both online and in person.

In a statement, the committee said it held its

## PM A COWARD, CEDED LAND, ALLEGES RAHUL

**New Delhi, Feb. 12:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday questioned the government over its agreement with China on disengagement in eastern Ladakh, and alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "ceded" Indian territory to the Chinese.

His attack on the government came a day after defence minister Rajnath Singh assured Parliament that India has not conceded anything in the sustained talks with China and it will not allow even an inch of its territory to be taken away by anyone.

Addressing a press conference, Mr Gandhi said Mr Singh "sheepishly" made a statement on the LAC situation in both Houses of Parliament and it emerged that Indian troops are now going to be stationed at Finger 3.

"Finger 4 is our territory, that is where our post used to be. Now we have moved from Finger 4 to Finger 3. Why has Prime Minister Modi given up Indian territory to the Chinese? This is the question that needs to be answered by him and the defence minister," Mr Gandhi said. Why have Indian troops, after the hard work that they had done in capturing Kailash ranges, been asked to move back, he asked. — PTI

## Army chief: China's move led to distrust

From Page 1

He pointed out that the ongoing dynamics in these neighbouring countries directly impacts the security environment in India's North East. "A large number of initiatives are already underway to leverage military diplomacy with our Eastern Command playing the spring-board for fostering stronger bilateral relations," said Gen Naravane. He said that the regional and internal

connectivity is acutely linked to security. "It is central to unleashing the potential of the North East and balancing the influence of China," said Gen. Naravane. "With failure to deliver on promises, delivery deficit has plagued our efforts at improving regional connectivity," he said and pointed out that the Kaladan Multimodal Transport Project and the Trilateral Highway have both seen cost and time overruns.

## SC panel meets farmers' unions

interactions through video conference with farmers, farmer unions and farmer producer organisations (FPOs).

Twelve farm unions and farmers from Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal participated in the detailed deliberations with the committee members, it said.

"All the participating farmer unions, FPOs and farmers gave their detailed views and sugges-

tions on the three farm laws," the committee added.

On January 12, the apex court had stayed the implementation of the three contentious farm laws for two months and asked the committee to submit a report within two months after consulting the stakeholders.

Thousands of farmers, have been camping at Delhi's borders for over two months seeking repeal of the new legislations, introduced by the Centre last year. — PTI

Public Policy and Jim Baker, Deputy General Counsel and Vice President Legal, had affirmed Twitter's commitment towards following Indian laws and rules.

The executives had also requested for better engagement between the Indian government and the company's global team. Sources said Twitter's latest move to block the flagged accounts is itself a validation that the government's orders were backed by sound reasoning and logic.

The government had made it clear that it will not negotiate with the platforms while insisting on compliance with its orders as it believed that a private commercial entity in India

cannot unilaterally decide on public law and order, ignoring the democratic values of the country.

IT ministry was of the view that Twitter, being an intermediary, was required to take immediate action after receiving the government's notice to block handles, but did not move with haste to take down "atrocious" hashtags and "incendiary" content even amid a volatile situation.

IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had recently emphasised that the government is all for freedom of speech and expression and that it remains investor-friendly, but disrespecting democratic values is not acceptable. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

DANISH INTEL  
ARRESTS 14 FOR  
TERROR PLOT

Copenhagen, Feb. 12: Fourteen people arrested in Denmark and Germany suspected of planning an attack with explosives had "militant Islamist" motives, Danish intelligence services said on Friday.

Thirteen people were arrested at the weekend in a suburb outside Copenhagen, Denmark's PET intelligence service said Thursday, confirming another arrest had been made in Germany.

"The operation took place due to suspicions that a terror attack motivated by militant Islamism was being prepared," PET said in a statement.

The 13 arrested in Denmark were remanded in custody suspected of "planning one or more terrorist attacks or being accessory to attempted terrorism," PET said.

TIANWEN-1  
PROBE SENDS  
VIDEO OF MARS

Beijing, Feb. 12: China's space agency released video footage from its spacecraft circling Mars on Friday, two days after it successfully entered the planet's orbit in Beijing's latest ambitious space mission.

In the video, published by state broadcaster CCTV, the surface of the planet is seen coming into view out of a pitch black sky against the outside of the Tianwen-1, which entered the orbit of the Red Planet on Wednesday.

White craters are visible on the planet's surface, which fades from white to black through the video as the probe flies over the course of one Martian day, said official news agency Xinhua.

The five-tonne Tianwen-1 — which translates as "Questions to Heaven" — includes a Mars orbiter, a lander and a solar-powered rover and launched from southern China last July.

UK DEVELOPS  
TEST TO DETECT  
WOMB CANCER

London, Feb. 12: British scientists announced on Friday they had developed a test to detect womb cancer using urine samples, explaining the method could replace a painful and invasive procedure currently in use.

At present, clinicians diagnose the cancer by taking a biopsy, a process which requires a narrow telescope called a hysteroscope, to examine inside of the uterus and remove cells. Nearly a third of women who undergo the procedure have the process repeated because of technical difficulties or intolerable pain, the research showed.

Thousands of women in Britain who do not have womb cancer also undergo the procedure, with huge financial implications for the country's state-run National Health Service (NHS).

The study from Manchester University has developed a new detection tool which examines urine or vaginal samples that can be collected by women on their own at home.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Communications, showed analysis of the samples correctly diagnosed 91.7 percent of women with womb cancer.

18 BAGS OF  
HACKED-UP BODY  
PARTS FOUND

Mexico City, Feb. 12: Prosecutors in the western Mexican state of Jalisco say that police have found 18 plastic bags full of hacked-up body parts on the outskirts of the city of Guadalajara. Police found one human limb near a highway overpass, which led them to the heap of taped-up bags in a gully nearby, the agency said late Thursday. The severed limbs are being examined to determine how many corpses the parts belonged to.

In November, authorities recovered 113 bodies and additional human remains from a secret grave in the town of El Salto, just outside Guadalajara. A total of 189 corpses were discovered in the town throughout 2020.

The state is home to the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, one of Mexico's most violent and powerful. More bodies have been found in secret graves there than in any other state in recent years. The cartel has been fighting a breakaway faction in and around Guadalajara for years.

Myanmar protests swell as  
US sanctions coup leaders

Over 23,000 prisoners released as part of prison amnesty, no word on Suu Kyi

Yangon, Feb. 12: Huge crowds thronged cities around Myanmar to demand the return of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Friday for a seventh straight day of protests, after Washington announced sanctions on the generals behind last week's coup.

A torrent of anger and defiance has brought hundreds of thousands of people out in nationwide rallies demanding the country's generals relinquish power.

Demonstrations have so far largely been peaceful, but police fired rubber bullets on students while dispersing a sit-down protest in the city of Mawlamyine, arresting at least five.

With teachers, bureaucrats and air traffic controllers among the government employees walking off the job to demand an end to the junta rule, the country's new military leader Min Aung Hlaing told striking workers to return to their offices.

"Those who are away from their duties are requested to return to their duties immediately for the interests of the country and people without focusing on the emotion," he said, in a speech reported by state media.

The new US sanctions target Min Aung Hlaing and other top generals, after President Joe Biden



Protesters holding signs with the image of detained Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi take part in a demonstration against the military coup in front of the Chinese embassy in Yangon on Friday.

announced his administration was cutting off the military's access to \$1 billion in funds.

Ahead of another day of mass rallies, state media announced the release of more than 23,000 inmates as part of a prison amnesty. Friday was a public holiday in Myanmar and mass pardons to empty the coun-

try's overcrowded prison system are common on significant local dates.

More than 260 people have been detained in the days since the coup and about 20 released, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

But there was no indication that Suu Kyi or any of

her allies were among those set to be freed.

"There is a serious concern that the sudden release... is to clear space for the detention of political prisoners," the AAPP said. Massive rallies were back underway in the commercial hub of Yangon on Friday, including a contingent of Premier League fans who

put aside their club rivalries to protest the coup.

"I hate the military coup more than Manchester United!" read one sign.

But further east in the port city of Mawlamyine, police moved quickly to clear a sit-in protest by university students, and footage showed officers hauling away several demonstrators.

Trump impeachment trial  
lawyers to urge his acquittalTwitter suspends pro-Trump  
activist group for violations

Washington, Feb. 12: Lawyers for Donald Trump take the Senate floor on Friday to rebut the Democratic-led impeachment of the former president for inciting insurrection, with Republican lawmakers then widely expected to vote to acquit.

Democratic impeachment managers rested their case on Thursday after two days of often emotional presentations.

Now the Republican property tycoon's lawyers will get a chance to respond. They are expected to make arguments brief, hastening the Senate verdict.

"There's no reason for us to be out there a long time. As I said from the start of this thing, this trial never should have happened," one of the lawyers, David Schoen, told Fox News.

The impeachment team charged Trump with stoking an insurrection after losing re-election to Joe Biden on November 3.

According to the case against him, the former president began to lay the groundwork for the riot within weeks of refusing to concede with claims

San Francisco, Feb. 12: A conservative activist group notorious for its use of undercover footage and publicity stunts was permanently suspended from Twitter on Thursday, after the group reportedly violated the platform's policies on sharing private information.

Project Veritas, a brash team of right-wing activists which has long been one of former US President Donald Trump's most fervent backers, was banned for "repeated vio-

lations of the companies anti-doxing policies", the group's founder James O'Keefe said in a tweet. The suspension came a day after the group posted a video in which its journalists confronted Guy Rosen, Facebook's head of integrity and security, outside his home.

In a statement shared to multiple US outlets, Twitter said the group had been "permanently suspended for repeated violations of Twitter's private information policy", but

did not specify which tweets had broken those rules. The group had over 7,00,000 followers on Twitter at the time of its suspension.

O'Keefe's account was also removed from the platform, though it returned after only a few hours. Project Veritas and O'Keefe came to prominence for their provocative sting efforts aimed at exposing "corruption" among progressive activists or liberal elected officials.

— AFP

that he'd only lost because of mass voter fraud.

On January 6 he staged a fiery rally near the White House, calling on the crowd to march on Congress, which was in the process of certifying Biden's victory.

The mob then invaded the Capitol building. Five people, including a police

officer and a woman shot during the unrest, died as a result of the mayhem. Impeachment managers insist that Trump, who has never expressed remorse for his encouragement of the violent crowd, is so dangerous he should be barred from holding office again.

But the former president's lawyers are set to argue that his speech was rhetorical and that he cannot be held responsible for the actions of the mob.

They also argue that the trial itself is unconstitutional because Trump is now out of office, although the Senate rejected this claim earlier this week.

— AFP

## Biden in 'dilemma' on Afghan pullout

Kabul, Feb. 12: US President Joe Biden faces "serious dilemmas" in Afghanistan as a deadline to withdraw troops nears and the Taliban show no sign of ending their bloodshed, a top US official warned.

The new US leader has ordered a review of the deal Washington cut with the Taliban last year,

which promised the withdrawal of all foreign forces by May 1 in return for security guarantees from the militants and a commitment to peace talks with the Afghan government.

The talks are progressing painfully slowly, but scarcely a day goes by without a bomb blast, attack on government

forces, or a targeted assassination somewhere in the country.

"Violence level remains very, very high... which is shocking and deeply disappointing," a senior US State Department official told AFP this week on condition of anonymity.

"It is unquestionably damaging the atmosphere for any kind of a settle-

ment of Afghanistan's conflict." The Taliban routinely deny responsibility for the attacks — and many are claimed by the rival jihadist group Islamic State — but Washington has no doubt who is to blame.

"In our view, the Taliban are responsible for the vast majority of the targeted killings that we have

seen," the official said, adding they had created "an ecosystem of violence".

"It is clearly intended, I think, to demoralise citizens... to add to doubts that people have about their government and to add to the aura of inevitability of (a Taliban) victory," he added.

— AFP

## Online dating apps on front line of loneliness

Paris, Feb. 12: Dating apps are booming in lockdown — no longer just a way of hooking up but also of simple interaction at a time when the coronavirus inflicts loneliness on millions.

Rodrigo, 18, had never considered joining a dating app until the months of lockdown boredom finally forced his hand.

"At the start, we told ourselves the crisis will pass, that we just have to have a bit patience. But when temporary becomes permanent, you have to try new things," he said.



A Valentine's Day decoration, signed by first lady Jill Biden, sits on the North Lawn of the White House, on Friday, in Washington.

— AP

With school mostly online and limited options for going out with friends, "I had the feeling I was

spending my entire life with my parents." Rodrigo now visits dating apps every day. More than just chasing the thrill of a hook-up, they have become a place to simply hang out.

He has made friends with four people his age through the apps and chats with them daily — a way of "relieving the stress and frustration" of the pandemic, he says.

"It's all we have left," he sighs, especially since Portugal was plunged back into lockdown last month. Match, the group

that includes several leading apps such as Tinder, Hinge and Meetic, says it added more than a million users in the last quarter of 2020, up some 12 percent to around 11 million worldwide.

"It sounds like a cliché, but the apps have really kept me from sinking," said Sebastien, a 19-year-old student in France.

"When we can't go to college, and the bars, restaurants, and cinemas are all closed, we spend entire days on our own, stewing. It's horrific," he said.

— AFP

Americans to be  
vaccinated with  
200 mn doses

Washington, Feb. 12: US President Joe Biden announced plans to vaccinate most Americans by the end of July with the help of 200 million newly acquired doses, as the country's inoculation campaign kicked off a new phase in drugstores and supermarket pharmacies, some of which will offer shots as of Friday.

Even as the Biden administration inked deals to acquire "100 million more Moderna and 100 million more Pfizer vaccines" and Covid-19 cases fall in Europe, the World Health Organisation warned against rash reopenings, in a sobering reminder of the long global battle ahead in taming the pandemic.

"The decline in cases conceals increasing numbers of outbreaks and community spread involving variants of concern," said WHO Europe director Hans Kluge.

"At this point, the overwhelming majority of European countries remain vulnerable," he added, pointing out the "thin line between the hope of a vaccine and a false sense of security." More than a million cases are still registered every week across the 53 member states in the UN agency's European region, which includes several Central Asian countries.

With the latest vaccine purchases, the United States — the world's hardest-hit country with more than 4,70,000 deaths — is on track "to have enough supply for 300 million Americans by the end of July," Biden said, meaning enough inoculations for all eligible people.

He made the announcement Thursday after touring the National Institutes of Health near Washington, with a million previously acquired vaccine doses already headed to around 6,500 drugstores and supermarket pharmacies.

The US immunisation

OZ ORDERS CITY  
WITH 6 MILLION  
INTO EMERGENCY  
LOCKDOWN

Melbourne, Feb. 12: Australia ordered more than six million people into an emergency Coronavirus lockdown on Friday, throwing a showpiece tennis tournament into disarray as the pandemic's economic cost was laid bare in badly hit Britain.

The decision to confine the people of Melbourne and surrounding areas to their homes for five days illustrates the tough choices faced by many nations as they struggle to balance reopening and keeping infections under control.

"It's rough. It's going to be a rough few days for everyone," said tennis star Serena Williams, reacting to the lockdown news moments after her latest victory.

The move comes as the Covid-19 death toll heads towards 2.4 million, with 107 million people sickened since the virus emerged in China a little over a year ago.

— AFP

campaign got off to a shaky start in December, and even as recently as Thursday, Los Angeles moved to temporarily close five major inoculation centers including its giant Dodger Stadium site, due to vaccine shortage.

Mass Covid-19 vaccination programs are being ramped up in many countries in the race against more contagious variants, and governments are urging populations to continue to cope with closures as the inoculation campaigns move forward.

Worldwide deaths now stand at nearly 2.4 million, with the Middle East surpassing 1,00,000 fatalities on Thursday.

— AFP

Ex-EU banker to  
be Italy's new PM

Rome, Feb. 12: With almost all the political parties behind him, Mario Draghi on Friday entered the final straight in his bid to form a new government to lead Italy through the Coronavirus pandemic.

The former European Central Bank chief, called in after the outgoing centre-left coalition collapsed, could visit President Sergio Mattarella as early as Friday evening to be officially named prime minister.

Draghi has spent the last nine days assembling a government of national unity to manage the deadly pandemic that hit Italy almost exactly one year ago, triggering a deep recession.

After securing the support late Thursday of the

final key player, the populist Five Star Movement (M5S), Draghi has almost all the main parties on board, from leftists to the far-right League.

"The Draghi government is born," headlined Rome-based daily Il Messaggero, while Milan's Corriere Della Sera added: "Draghi in the home stretch." The 73-year-old economist must present a list of ministers when he visits Mattarella, but he has kept extremely coy, speaking in public only once since being asked to form a government.

With the outgoing government due to hold one last cabinet meeting on Friday, there was speculation that Draghi might wait until Saturday before heading to the presidential palace.

— AFP

| VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC)  |   |             |                              |
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| 1   | Providing Greenery and Beautification of Ryves Canal Bund for 3 Km stretch. With Reverse Tendering Process. | 3rd call    | 300.00                       |
| <b>Contact:</b><br>Superintending Engineer (P), VMC, Vijayawada - 99639 95283.<br>Further details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ <a href="http://www.apcprocurement.gov.in">www.apcprocurement.gov.in</a> .<br><b>Download of bid documents starts from</b> - 15-02-2021 from 03.30 P.M.<br><b>Last date / time for receipt of tenders</b> - 01-03-2021 upto 4.00 P.M.<br><b>Sd/- xxxx</b><br><b>CHIEF ENGINEER</b> |   |             |                              |

| GUDALUR MUNICIPALITY (THENI DISTRICT)  |          |                  |                                |                          |                      |
|--|----------|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| E-Tendering and Short E-Tendering Notice   |          |                  |                                |                          |                      |
| Rec No : 3184/2020/E1  |          |                  | Dated : 11.02.2021             |                          |                      |
| Government of Tamil Nadu sanctioned a Water supply work and Road Work in Gudalur Municipality under I&A - 2020-2021 in Theni District. Under this scheme the Municipal Commissioner, Gudalur invites sealed bids from the eligible and qualified contractors for the following works as detailed in the table given below:   |          |                  |                                |                          |                      |
| Sl No  | Packages | Estimate Amount  | Tender document available from | Tender opening           | Period of Completion |
| 1  | I        | Rs. 30.00 lakhs  | 13.02.2021<br>11.00 AM         | 02.03.2021<br>at 3.30 PM | 6 Months             |
| 2  | I        | Rs. 250.00 lakhs | 13.02.2021<br>11.00 AM         | 02.03.2021<br>at 3.30 PM | 6 Months             |
| <p>Pre-Bid conference: <b>16.02.2021 at 11.00 AM</b> in the office of Gudalur Municipality.</p> <p>Tender document and schedule available in <a href="http://itrntenders.gov.in">http://itrntenders.gov.in</a> can be downloaded at free of cost from <b>13.02.2021</b>. The Bidding document will be received by the Commissioner, Gudalur Municipality by way of off-line and e-submission also in 2 cover system upto <b>02.03.2021, 15.00 Hrs.</b> Earnest Money Deposit: 1% of the value of work should be submitted along with the tender. If tender the EMD should be dropped in the tender box before closure time, it is at <b>3.00 PM on 02.03.2021</b>. Evaluation of bids will be done as per Tender Transparency Act 1986 of Government of Tamil Nadu and rules there in. If the said tender date happens to be a holiday, the tenders will be opened on the next working day. The Municipal Commissioner reserves the rights to accept or reject any bidding document at any time without assigning any reason there of. Eligibility criteria and other details can be had from the Bidding document.</p> <p>For other details contact e-mail address : <a href="mailto:commr.gudalur-mdu@tn.gov.in">commr.gudalur-mdu@tn.gov.in</a> Commissioner</p> <p>Contact No : 0455423136 DPE/1039/TENDER/2021 Gudalur Municipality</p> |          |                  |                                |                          |                      |



## DECCAN Chronicle

13 FEBRUARY 2021

### Go slow on peace thrust, up the ante during talks

Once the breakthrough was achieved after several rounds of talks at various levels, the India-China agreement on disengagement at Pangong Tso in Ladakh is only a promising start towards peace. Surprisingly speedy the process of China moving back its armour from the shores of the lake may seem, but India would have to be most cautious on how the de-escalation exercise works out because it will be surrendering a lot of leverage in giving up the Kailash range heights for securing just the Pangong Tso disengagement in the north and south banks.

Given the history of fraught relations exacerbated by border tensions over the last few years since China's intrusion in 2017, it should be considered fortunate if this initial pullback leads to lasting peace. India would do well to remember how disadvantageous the narrow agreement seems right now because armed Chinese soldiers can be present at Finger 8 while India will be confined to its Finger 3 base and will be unable to patrol up to the Chinese perception of LAC, which used to be east of Finger 8 prior to April 2020.

The disengagement is indubitably positive but India must monitor the progress closely and also press for the resolution of all remaining issues, which are many considering the number of hotspots in Ladakh and further east, including the Depsang plateau where China has held Indian territory of around 1,000 sq km and the PLA has also been stopping the Indian troops from patrolling traditional points. Obviously there is far more to do in terms of tough negotiating in military commander level talks that are to be held within two days and in higher-level negotiations afterwards.

The border situation cannot be dealt with in isolation as China seemed to demand in its call to set right ties, including trade even as talks went on about de-escalation. The point to ponder is whether China is aiming for a larger resetting of ties in a global sense in view of the change in the White House, which Joe Biden signalled with a tough sounding phone call to Chinese President Xi Jinping. It would be a great development for world peace if indeed China is willing to negotiate even from its stronger position post-Covid vis-a-vis economic recovery from worldwide lows imposed by the pandemic.

The trust deficit, including between China and its largest trading partner, the United States, has been enlarged by suspicions over the origin of the coronavirus being Wuhan. A sliver of hope is to be spotted in China seeking peace while agreeing to try and resolve the border issue, even if it did so only on facing India's strong position on its capturing of the Kailash range heights. Doubts will remain over whether China will remobilise quickly as it has the advantage over India in terms of infrastructure capabilities, which is why abundant caution is advised as well as the highest vigil on friction beyond Eastern Ladakh. Negotiations over easing punitive economic actions taken by India can wait until it is established that the push for peace is real.

### Kamal's black humour

There is never a dull moment in Tamil Nadu's political scene, particularly when the state gears up for an Assembly election. But when a celebrated actor like Kamal Haasan tickles the funny bone, the entire realm turns a theatre of the absurd. When the general council of Mr Haasan's party, named differently as the Makkal Needhi Maiam (People's Justice Centre), made him the "permanent president" by passing a resolution, his detractors, who never miss an opportunity to pick holes in whatever he does or says, raised serious questions, quite out of sync with the prevailing mirth.

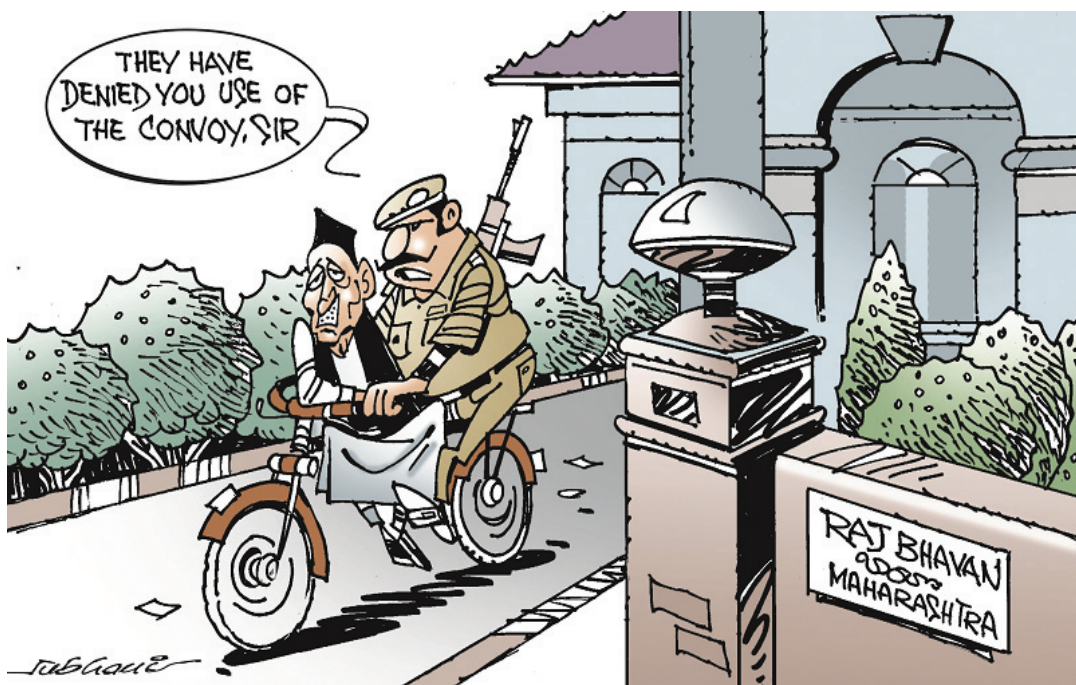
What's that general council? How were those members elected? By whom? So wondered the dirty disparagers without realising that it's an internal matter of the party that others should not poke their noses into. They also asked if someone could remain permanently on a high pedestal in a domain where there are no permanent friends or enemies. But Mr Haasan, who hails from a world of make-belief, perhaps believes in the juxtaposition of surrealism with harsh political realities, hoping that it would provide relief from the ennui caused by the ubiquitous harangue and pageantry.

Whatever it was, he made the people laugh though they had heard of even "permanent chief ministers", as hailed in the rhetoric of fawning sycophants, in the past. Displaying a similar sentiment, those who inherited the mantle of running the government from the late J. Jayalalithaa accorded her the exalted status of "permanent general secretary" of the AIADMK posthumously and kept the post vacant "permanently" after throwing out V.K. Sasikala, who had succeeded her. Perhaps it was the spectacular return of Ms Sasikala to reclaim the post that inspired Mr Haasan to look for permanency in the party president's job. Anyway, the same general council's resolution to make Mr Haasan the chief minister of the state did not evoke any laughter.

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Subhani



## Why China 'disengaged': Always carry a big stick

Syed Ata Hasnain

After nine rounds of talks at the military theatre level which appeared to be tapering off without any results, we find a positive development announced by the Raksha Mantri in Parliament on Thursday: a decision to disengage between the Indian Army and China's People's Liberation Army in the over nine-month-long standoff in eastern Ladakh. The issues worth examining are the triggers which created a positive sentiment, the modalities involved in the disengagement and the strategic dynamics for the future.

Why has China accepted a mutual disengagement? There is speculation that its strategic objectives having been met, it was willing to disengage; but this many not entirely be true. The objectives have been analysed to a great extent. My belief veers on the coercion theory; that India's soaring strategic confidence through the past five years deeply worried China. The feasibility of India actually becoming a part of military equations and thus upsetting the strategic balance in Asia was not too appealing for China. India's talk about regaining all territories of J&K was perceived as becoming a national obsession, emboldening beyond acceptable limits. Limited military coercion to force India back to the starting line was felt necessary. However, China was surprised by India's push-back and deep sense of resolve to stick it out. A border conflict or even general war was not the intent as it was unwinnable for China without a major redeployment. It couldn't afford creation of near permanent voids elsewhere. A continuing standoff gave

no real advantage to China except the projection of threat of a two-front war for India, which too sounded hollow given Pakistan's precarious internal economic, political and social health.

With the world slowly recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, shaking into a reset and a potential new order emerging, China cannot miss the opportunity to draw favourably from it. Remaining in confrontation mode with committed troops paid no real dividends. By agreeing to disengage it is attempting to project a sense of reason and political maturity; in reality it is an exit that is giving it face. No one should expect that the agreement to disengage will be achieved overnight or that conflict resolution is on the cards. There are likely to be many revisits, especially because India just cannot trust China to implement what it has agreed upon.

The Indian government invested in a new strategy of trusting its military leadership to undertake negotiations which were really in the political-diplomatic-military domain. In nine rounds, the military stood its ground well, reflecting an intellectual and pragmatic approach. Of course, it runs the risk of coming up against obstacles in implementation. The last time it tried implementing what was agreed upon in theatre level border meetings, it led to the Galwan incident. The Indian Army is not one which will simply move back to implement an agreement with a country with whom there is virtually zero trust. It will verify and verify, just like its officers and soldiers did in June 2020, which led to Galwan. With caution and the lessons learnt, that procedure has to be implemented all over again.

It is unlikely we have

seen anything close to a final agreement. I do perceive it is incomplete at present as it primarily relates only to the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso. While the actions in north Pangong Tso have been spelt out more specifically, the same is absent in relation to the south. The details of this will need to be probably thrashed out when the stage for the pullback of forward deployed infantry comes up. Limits have been put on patrolling north of the lake to avoid physical contact between the troops of both sides. The theatre-level military-diplomatic talks will at some stage have to come down to border meetings at lower levels to restore trust and confidence.

What India should be insisting upon is the physical delineation of the LAC without prejudice to anything permanent. It will get rid of the one issue which is the bane of the LAC's management: that is, the perception about where ours or the Chinese claim line exists. This is unlikely, of course, but must remain the pressure point on the Chinese side as a terminal objective of the current talks, the tenth round of which is likely to come up soon. The Raksha Mantri in his Rajya Sabha statement laid it out clearly: "The House should also know that there are still some outstanding issues with regard to deployment and patrolling at some other points along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. These will be the focus of further discussions with the Chinese side". The reference was to other areas in contention, especially Depsang, where a much greater threat exists to our defences, as also an

opportunity for us to threaten the main Chinese highway to Xinjiang. Without an operational-tactical advantage, if this is vacated at the Kailash heights, it is difficult to foresee any further concessions by the Chinese. Perhaps there is more to it and will emerge in due course as understandably full transparency on military operational issues is not currently possible.

Progress on the agreement and subsequent moves towards more positive signs is not contingent upon only the events in eastern Ladakh. Everything here is linked to geopolitical issues relating to Chinese and Indian interests elsewhere in South Asia; relations with countries such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka being an example. It would be helpful if India can detach the developments in eastern Ladakh from the dynamics of Sino-Indian relations elsewhere. India will find itself under increasing pressure from China regarding its strategic equations with the Quad nations. Having come thus far and also having received fair importance from the United States in its perception of India's role in the Indo Pacific region, New Delhi may feel it's in a dilemma. However, its interests clearly lie where it has established greater trust and identified commonality of interests. It cannot afford to be seen to be submitting unreasonably to Chinese demands. The inevitability in India's approach towards the emerging situation should be to waste little time in enhancing its conventional military capability through the self-reliance route towards modernisation. As far as its northern borders are concerned, all disengagements and de-escalation will always be a temporary phenomenon. While remaining positive in its stance, India will always need to carry a big stick, as big or bigger than all its adversaries.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps

### LETTERS

#### DISENGAGEMENT AT LAC

After months of heightened military tensions along LAC (Line of Actual Control), both India and China have now agreed to disengage their troops from key strategic points. No doubt, it is a positive development which has once again underscored the significance of sustained dialogue and diplomacy in resolving the issues of contention between the two countries. Strong message from Indian leadership after the beginning of border stand-off at LAC in April last year, manifested itself in the decision to ban Chinese companies and scrutinise Chinese investment might have prompted Chinese leadership to soften its aggressive stances and persisting with misadventure on LAC.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

#### DISASTER MANAGEMENT

UTTARAKHAND IS home to the fragile mountainous region of the Himalayas and has witnessed a series of natural disasters over the last 20-30 years. The current tragedy only shows that our monitoring of vulnerable areas is still inadequate (Bid to save men trapped in Uttarakhand tunnel resumes, Feb. 12). In fact, after the 2013 deluge, experts and environmentalists had warned that back-to-back dams on upper reaches of Ganga river and its tributaries had intensified the magnitude of the disaster, and this could amplify floods and earthquakes due to the impact on the river's course, water levels and the ecosystem. Perhaps, India needs to realise that environmental security should have a place in the country's national security policy and strategy. The Centre needs to identify those areas in which the military can be given autonomy in such a manner that it can take more comprehensive and forward-looking initiatives in environmental security with the cooperation of the civil agencies.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

#### DISINVESTMENT POLICY

THIS IS with reference to the editorial *To save public money, start to disinvest fast*. It is a clear case of poor financial management. It seems that the present NDA government is bent upon undoing what all the Congress government did since independence of the country. From demonetisation to abrogation of Article 370 to introduction of CAA and NRC, everything was done very hurriedly and surreptitiously without having any well designed framework and good planning. As a result it is the people and the economy of the nation which got the drubbing. Why should the government enterprises and companies be sold when they are the backbones of the country rendering good service to people giving good returns to the government as well?

Manoharan Muthuswamy, Chennai

Farrukh Dhondy  
 Cabbages & Kings



"Oh Bachchoo let's have due regard for the story-telling genius of Scheherazade Who over a thousand and one nights Scaled creation's narrative heights

She held a king under her spell Assuring him there was more to tell And so, with each inventive breath Do story-tellers stave off death."

— From **Lambey Laments** by Bachchoo

To: UK Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London SW

My dear Priti Patelli,  
 I am writing to apply for the post of Chief Speechwriter for which you advertised this week.

Your advertisement specifies that "the successful candidate will be someone who can imitate the Home Secretary's personal style".

Let me start by saying, Pritiji, that I have closely followed your career, from the time you were thrown out of your job by the then PM Theresa May, for attempting unofficial deals and private contact with Israeli officials and businesswallas, to when you favoured

hanging and capital punishment, to your generous policies regarding police pay, illegal entrants to Britain and your speeches attacking anti-terrorism and the Covid crisis.

I am sure that, being a Parsi with a knowledge of fluent Gujarati, I am best qualified for the job. Please tear up and bin any applications from Goras, Punjabis, Pakistanis, Bengalis, etc. None of them will understand the prejudices you have imbibed as a child of immigrant shopkeepers from Uganda. I must confess never having been to Uganda or kept a shop, but as a writer of stage plays, etc, I constantly think myself into the mentality, prejudices, and styles of thought and speech of different characters. I am sure you will consider this my Trump card (I know you got the joke. Ha ha!).

Of course, I don't expect you to call me instantly and offer me the job without testing my abilities to deliver superb text in your voice, so I am setting out some samples below:

The first is a sample address to the Tory Conference.

"Comrades, Lords and Ladies, I stand before you as your new Home Secretary appointed by our brilliant

elected Prime Minister Doris Bronson who has very perceptively recognised my fantastic talents for this job. I am fully aware of the heavy responsibility that this places on my head such as keeping the wogs out of the country (loud cheers and standing ovation), making the police more effective by cutting their numbers and pay (shuffling in the audience), zero tolerance for criminals with a lock-up-and-throw-away-the-key approach, with the building of five thousand more jails and bringing back hanging (second standing ovation) — er um... I didn't mean by ropes, I meant hanging as in suspending people, like my Chief Civil Servants if they express any opinions...."

I guarantee Pritiji, these thoughts of yours which I have humbly attempted to put into words will get you to be PM after this fellow —whose name you characteristically forget.

Secondly, here is a sample address to the Police Federation as you are now in charge of all PC Plods.

"My brave and dedicated servants of the law, let me start by announcing that I intend to immediately boost police pay (huge applause and cat

calls). I have instructed my office to see that every police officer gets paid at least £3 and 12 shillings per week (total silence). This is in recognition of the fantastic work your forces are doing in fighting and combatting anti-terrorism, which must be wiped off the face of this planet. (Huge cheers from Islamicist policemen)...."

And next, Pritiji, your address to the House of Commons on immigration.

"Mr Speaker, the gravest crisis facing this country is not the shortage of grave-diggers caused by the Covid virus, but the illegal entry of immigrants and so-called asylum seekers across our land-borders with Europe. The previous Labour government under Terrestrial May lived up to its Prime Minister's name by declaring that these criminals *May* use the *Terrestrial* tunnels to enter our country (Here you pause for the laughter that will certainly follow this joke!). I propose, Mr Speaker, to build a wall across these borders with barbed wire on top to stop people coming in. We shall have a Ugandan and Cayman Island style immigration policy by which all Asians will have to leave the country and only tax-

doggers and drug lords will be admitted to the free ports declared by our hedgey-boy chancellor Wishy Anorak. Doris has already told me that he will get the Norwegians to pay for this wall...."

And then perhaps Pritiji, the PM may ask you to take to the TV lectern to address the nation on the Covid crisis and the government's efforts to combat it in accordance to the science. So, here's what you might say:

"It is with great sadness that the statistics today reveal that Britain has suffered 66 million deaths in the last 24 hours. My thoughts and condolences go out to all these deaths' families. Now despite some mother lovers opposing lockdown, what the epicologists, etc tell us that not only is lockdown a good thing, we should also have lock-up — which means anyone who tests positive for Covid should be locked up and the key thrown away. And if any scientist or civil servant opposes my sane policies they can bloody-well F-off and die — ebbing wankers — I know where you live...."

Your future ventriloquist, Obsequiously, Farrukh Dhondy

How to apply for a job to home secy of Blunderland!



## SHORT TAKES

## WI take charge as Bangla totter

**Dhaka:** Shannon Gabriel claimed two wickets and Alzarri Joseph complemented his brilliant batting with a prized scalp to put the West Indies firmly on top in the second Test against Bangladesh in Dhaka on Friday.

The West Indies reduced Bangladesh to 105-4 at stumps on the second day after posting 409 runs in their first innings on the back of half-centuries from Joshua Da Silva (92), Nkrumah Bonner (90) and Joseph (82).

Mushfiqur Rahim was batting on 27 alongside Mohammad Mithun at the close, helping Bangladesh prevent further embarrassment after the early damage. — *AFP*

**Brief scores, Day 2: West Indies 409 in 142.2 overs** (N. Bonner 90, Silva 92, Joseph 82; A. Jayed 4/98, T. Islam 4/108) vs **Bangladesh 105/4 in 36 overs** (T. Iqbal 44; Gabriel 2/31).

## Etienne, Rennes out of French Cup

**Paris:** Last year's beaten finalist Saint-Etienne and 2019 winner Rennes both went out of the French Cup in the round of 64 on Thursday.

Saint-Etienne lost 1-0 at second-tier Sochaux and Rennes followed suit with a 2-1 defeat at fellow first-division team Angers.

Midfielder Angelo Fulgini scored two early goals for Angers before striker Serhou Guirassy replied shortly after the break for Rennes, which beat Paris Saint-Germain in the 2019 final. Sochaux, which is seventh in the second division, took advantage of an error to score after five minutes through striker Chris Bedia. Defending champion PSG won 1-0 at second-tier Caen on Wednesday but lost striker Neymar for four weeks with an adductor injury. — *AP*

## Six-pack Bayern clinch club WC

**Al-Rayyan, Qatar:** Bayern Munich won the Club World Cup final in Qatar on Thursday as Benjamin Pavard's second-half winner sealed a 1-0 victory over Mexico's Tigres, the Germans claiming a "six pack" of titles within 12 months. Pavard's close-range tap-in was enough to give European champions Bayern their sixth title in quick succession. This is the eighth year in a row that Bayern have gone on to win the Club World Cup, as Bayern follow in the footsteps of last year's champions Liverpool. Bayern are the second side to win all six available titles within a year after Barca managed the feat in 2009.

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Indian captain Virat Kohli during a practice session at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday.

— *BCCI*

## PITCHED BATTLE

## Chepauk surface in focus again as India look to hit back

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 12

The wound hasn't healed. And the dust is yet to settle. Four days after being battered by the visiting England team in their own den, India have the unenviable task of lifting themselves for yet another 'pitched' battle at the same venue. Round two starting here at the M.A. Chidambaram stadium on Saturday will be a test of character for Virat Kohli & Co.

India find themselves in an unexpected situation. It's only the second time this decade that India have started a bilateral series (minimum three Tests) at home on a disappointing note. When it happened last time, against Australia in February 2017, they roared back with vengeance to clinch the series 2-1 eventually.

Much like in the opening game, the focus will once again be on the pitch. A different strip with black clay on the top layer will be used this time around. With just a three-day gap, the groundsmen didn't have much time. Both teams know what to expect — the track will turn from day one.

England skipper Joe Root has already shown the ideal way for countering spin in subcontinental conditions. But this pitch is expected to pose a bigger challenge to Root.

Annoyed with the flat surface, Kohli had blamed his supporting spinners Shahbaz Nadeem and Washington Sundar for leaking runs. But he backed Ajinkya Rahane despite his poor run of form. Rohit Sharma, who has just one half-century



Rohit Sharma plays a shot during a practice session at the Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday.

— *BCCI*

in his last eight innings, hasn't faced much scrutiny either. Kohli still felt "all was well" in his batting unit. If not for the brilliant first innings knocks from Rishabh Pant and Washington, India would have slumped to further embarrassment.

With allrounder Axar Patel deemed fit and set for his Test debut, Shahbaz is back in the standby players' pool. If the team management decides to retain Washington for his batting ability, Kuldeep Yadav will continue cooling his heels. He hasn't played a Test since he took

a five-for at Sydney in January 2019.

England, on the other hand, have made four changes in their team. James Anderson who used reverse swing to rattle the Indian top-order has been rested. With Jofra Archer too being ruled out with an elbow injury and off-spinner Dom Bess to be replaced by Moeen Ali, England's bowling attack will sport a new look. In Anderson's absence, another experienced campaigner, Stuart Broad, will spearhead the attack. Fast bowlers Olly Stone and Chris Woakes will fight for the final spot.

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, FEB. 12

"I am sure it will turn from day one," India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane said it loud and clear. The flat pitch that offered no assistance to bowlers was one of the talking points after India's eight-match winning streak at home came to a halt in the opening Test against England earlier this week.

As India prepare to bounce back in the series, it's no surprise that "the wicket looks completely different."

"However, we have to wait and see how it behaves in the first session. We have to forget what happened in the first Test and focus on the job at hand. We know these conditions really well, so we have to put our best foot forward and move on," said Rahane.

Rahane's average of 37.35 in 28 Tests at home is not as impressive as his away numbers — 44.44 in 42 Tests. His last two innings of 1 and 0 have put him under the scanner. However, the Mumbai batsman doesn't want to read too much into the stats.

"We are playing at home after two years. The last big home Test series was against South Africa. If you take the records out, I'm sure you will find something there. And, it's not about individuals, it's always about the team. My focus is always on con-

tributing to the team's success. If you take out the last 10-15 Tests, you will see my performance. I don't worry about what happened in the first Test. I only worry about what the team wants from me," said Rahane.

England batsmen not only looked comfortable, but also played efficiently by employing sweep shots against the Indian spinners, but the same cannot be said of the hosts.

"It (shots that we play) depends on how they bowl. We play according to their line and length. England have come up with a plan to play sweep and reverse sweep. It's not necessary we have to copy them," further added Rahane.

When queried about the team's negative body language in the first Test, Rahane said: "There are moments when you don't have that energy but that doesn't mean it has happened because of a change in captaincy. As I have said earlier, Virat is our captain and will remain our captain. If you are trying to dig and find some masala, unfortunately you will not get it."

The second Test will allow 50 per cent spectators in the 45,000 capacity stadium. Rahane is excited to have the crowds back.

"We know how much that means for us. I hope people will come enjoy the cricket," added the seasoned Test batsman.

## England look at big picture, the series

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, FEB. 12

England's rotation policy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic has drawn a lot of criticism from former players, but it seems to have worked in favour of the team. England are on a six-match 'away' winning streak and have rattled the formidable Indian side.

The England team management pulled off a surprise on Friday when it announced that James Anderson would be rested for the second Test despite his brilliant performance on day five of the opening Test.

"With Jimmy, it gives him the best opportunity to be fit and available for those last two games. Everyone's heart was in favour of him being available for this game but also you look at the bigger picture and ideally he is available for two of the last three, that's a huge asset for us as a team with the way he is bowling," said Root. Another tough decision England had to deal with was leaving off-spinner Dom Bess out in favour

of Moeen Ali. Bess took four wickets, including Virat Kohli's, in the first innings.

"Dom has contributed fantastically well and has made a real impact. With him missing out, the message for him moving forward is to keep working on his consistency and game, delivering that skill time and again, we talk about building pressure over long periods of time and I think, as well as he has done, that is one area that he can improve on," added Root.

Despite having won the series opener rather convincingly, Root says the visitors can't be complacent.

"It certainly provides a stern challenge but it's not going to be as tough as being 1-0 down. We are in a really good position. We played brilliant cricket and will take a lot of confidence forward into this week. But we won't get ahead of ourselves. I think we are very understanding of how much work it's going to take to win in these conditions," he added.

## Karatsev shocks Schwartzmann

**Melbourne, Feb. 12:** Russian qualifier Aslan Karatsev pulled off the biggest shock of this year's Australian Open when the world number 114 blitzed eighth seed Diego Schwartzmann into submission 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 Friday with a barrage of winners.

Karatsev is making his Grand Slam debut at Melbourne Park and is incredibly yet to drop a set as he set up a fourth-round meeting with one of the Canadian pair Denis Shapovalov or Felix Auger-Aliassime, who clash later. The 27-year-old Russian secret weapon powered 50 winners, including nine aces, past the shell-shocked Argentine who could muster only five of his own in return in a 1hr 52min drubbing.

Meanwhile, ice-cool Dominic Thiem rallied from two sets down to tame flamboyant Nick Kyrgios. Kyrgios produced a virtuoso performance in the first two sets, using every trick in the book, including underarm serves and tweeners but he couldn't sustain the intensity as US Open champion Thiem, last year's runner-up, found his groove with some dominant serving to fight back and outlast the 25-year-old 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

In women's singles, Naomi Osaka had to deal with a butterfly landing on her nose but was otherwise little bothered as she breezed into the last 16 of the Australian Open and a showdown with last year's runner-up Garbine Muguruza.

## SELECTED RESULTS

**Men's singles third round:** Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Taylor Fritz (USA x27) 7-6 (7/1), 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 6-2; Milos Raonic (CAN x14) bt Marton Fucsovics (HUN) 7-6 (7/2), 5-7, 6-2, 6-2; Dusan Lajovic (SRB x23) bt Pedro Martinez (ESP) 6-7 (6/8), 7-5, 6-1, 6-4; Alexander Zverev (GER x6) bt Adrian Mannarino (FRA x32) 6-3, 6-3, 6-1; Dominic Thiem (AUT x3) bt Nick Kyrgios (AUS) 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x18) bt Pablo Carreno-Busta (ESP x15) 6-0, 1-0 abandon; Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x20) bt Denis Shapovalov (CAN x11) 7-5, 7-5, 6-3; Aslan Karatsev (RUS) bt Diego Schwartzman (ARG x8) 6-3, 6-3, 6-3.

**Women's singles third round:** Hsieh Su-wei (TPE) bt Sara Errani (ITA) 6-4, 2-6, 7-5; Marketa Vondrousova (CZE x19) bt Sorana Cirstea (ROM) 6-2, 6-4; Garbine Muguruza (ESP x14) bt Zarina Diyas (KAZ) 6-1, 6-1; Naomi Osaka (JPN x3) bt Ons Jabeur (TUN x27) 6-3, 6-2; Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x7) bt Ann Li (USA) 6-3, 6-1; Serena Williams (USA x10) bt Anastasia Potapova (RUS) 7-6 (7/5), 6-2; Iga Swiatek (POL x15) bt Fiona Ferro (FRA) 6-4, 6-3; Simona Halep (ROM x2) bt Veronika Kudermetova (RUS x32) 6-1, 6-3.

The third seed clinched an easy 6-3, 6-2 victory over Tunisian 27th seed Ons Jabeur in 1hr 18min.

Also, Serena Williams said a deep love of tennis kept her motivated in pursuit of a 24th Grand Slam title as she wore down Anastasia Potapova 7-6 (7/5), 6-2. — *Agencies*

## LIVE RICH FINANCIAL Chronicle

## quick BITES

| INDICATORS             |            | %     |
|------------------------|------------|-------|
| Sensex                 | 51,544.30  | 0.02  |
| Nifty 50               | 15,163.30  | -0.07 |
| S&P 500*               | 3,924.27   | 0.20  |
| Dollar (₹)             | 72.74      | 0.17  |
| Pound Sterling (₹)     | 100.42     | 0.38  |
| Euro (₹)               | 88.14      | 0.27  |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹)       | 46,847.661 | 1.41  |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)*  | 62.35      | 1.98  |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield    | 5.990      | 0.47  |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.195      | 0.037 |

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Kumar is advisor to Kotak's \$1-bn bad assets fund

Former SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar was appointed as the exclusive advisor to a \$1 billion-stressed assets fund floated by the Kotak Mahindra Bank Group. Kumar retired from SBI in October last year. It had announced a fund raise of \$1 billion in August 2019.

## ■ India keeps trade share in pharma, loses in apparels: Unctad study Global trade recovers in Dec. quarter

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 12

Global trade recovered in the last quarter of 2020, reducing the overall decline for the year to about 9 per cent, finds an Unctad study. Some of the less competitive countries lost their market share during the pandemic while competitive ones improved their share in global trade.

The recovery of Q4 2020 was largely driven by the trade of goods from and to developing countries, especially by the very strong performance of East Asian economies, including China, Taiwan and South Korea. The effect of Covid-19 on global trade was most severe during the first half of 2020, with a drop in value of about 15 per cent. Global trade began to recover in Q3 2020 and more strongly in Q4 2020. The recovery in the second half of 2020 was largely due to the rebound of trade in goods rather than in services.

During the pandemic, Vietnam, Uganda, China,



Switzerland, Turkey and Taiwan experienced relatively better export performance. In contrast, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Colombia and Nigeria performed relatively worse.

India lost its global trade share in apparels and minerals, while it managed to retain its share in pharmaceuticals and chemicals during the pandemic. India did not improve its trade share in any of the sectors in one of its most challenging years.

India, which had 3.4 per cent share in the global apparel trade in 2019, seems to have lost it significantly during 2020. India is among the top countries in apparels to have lost their competitiveness or market share by more than one per cent. Among

India's competitors, Vietnam, Malaysia, Turkey and Cambodia increased their market share during the pandemic and Bangladesh and Indonesia managed to retain their share.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (Unctad) global trade report assessed the competitiveness of different economies by measuring the change in market share between 2019 and 2020. Economies that lost and gained competitiveness saw changes in market share larger than 1 percentage point.

Despite the export growth recorded in pharmaceuticals, India could not improve upon its market share and its global

share remained unchanged. In chemicals, too, the country could only retain the trade share.

The report does not find India having gained share in any sector. India had increased agri-food exports during the pandemic. Most of the cereals, including rice and wheat, had witnessed significant growth in exports. However, this could not improve its share by more than one per cent to find a place in the list. Canada and Mexico are the top two countries to have increased their share in the category.

The report also finds that among India's top export sectors, minerals de-grew by 23 per cent and lost its market share. Various machinery

exports too de-grew by 11 per cent.

More worryingly, in 'export volatility' ranking, which indicates exports vulnerability of a country, India is among the worst performers at 0.75 points, with Ethiopia slightly better at 0.74 and Peru and Cameroon worse at 1.05 and 1.27, respectively. In contrast, Indonesia and Taiwan have a strong score of 0.03 each, followed by Australia and Singapore having 0.04 points each. This points to the huge ground that India has to cover on stabilising its exports over the medium- to long-term.

China, meanwhile, improved its share in global trade in different sectors, including chemicals, various machinery, metals, pharmaceuticals, precision instruments, road vehicles, textiles and transport equipment.

The report also noted that exports of services from China and to a lesser extent from India appeared to have fared relatively better than other major economies throughout 2020.

## Clogged courts: Gogoi says only corporations ready to try luck at SC

UPMANYU TRIVEDI FEB. 12

Former chief justice of India Ranjan Gogoi says he won't go to the Supreme Court with his grievances because he would have to wait endlessly for a verdict, a comment that lays bare the nation's clogged legal system.

"You want a \$5 trillion economy but you have a ramshackled judiciary," said Gogoi, who retired as chief justice in November 2019 and is now a member of the Rajya Sabha, at an event.

Gogoi's remarks calling for an overhaul of the judiciary's capacity and efficacy highlights the country's troubles with delayed verdicts and enforcing contracts. Court systems in Asia's third-largest economy are clogged with over 43 million cases and a shortage of judges means that some cases can end up taking years, even



Ranjan Gogoi

decades, to find a resolution. Companies invested in India have a tough time once entangled in a legal dispute.

Only corporations, willing to take chances with their millions of rupees go to the Supreme Court, he said. "If you were to go to the court, you'd be only washing your dirty linen in the court. You won't get a verdict. I have no hesitation in saying it," Gogoi said.

Gogoi made the remarks responding to a question whether he plans to sue a politician who alleged that he presided over a matter that heard allegations of sexual harassment against him during his tenure as the chief justice. — *Bloomberg*



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